



The San Diego circle, Women of Ancient Wisdom, is a source of support for local women celebrating the third stage of life. It provides a forum and sense of community that enhances each participant.

Women of Ancient Wisdom is based on five concepts:

- To support and honor women of age;

- To be a conscious spiritual group directing crone energy to honor our unique gifts;

- To heal ourselves and this planet;

- To promote crone circles in our community, and

- To develop crone leadership and mentoring. These tenets continue to provide a foundation as the circle grows and changes.



CRONE

Circles

SAN DIEGO CRONES

Women of Ancient Wisdom

Members of WOAW, from left to right:
Joan Blue, Jan Gist, Virginia Tennes, Barbara Schatzer, Helen O'Neil, Sunny Harper-Owen, Renee Frank, Susan Reilly. Eldest WoAW member Laura Simon is in the front row.

story and photos by Jean Stein & Marion Karpisek

Begun in 1995 for the purpose of planning Crone Counsel V, the circle quickly took on a life of its own and has persevered ever since. In the beginning, one woman assumed responsibility for sending monthly meeting notices, writing a quarterly newsletter (The Touchstone), handling donations, and leading the circle preparatory to the program.

After ten years under this system, it was agreed by the group that this structure gave too much responsibility to a single person, and we decided to become a leaderless group. However, in order to keep communications and basic functions running smoothly, a treasurer, newsletter writer, and e-mail correspondent take responsibility for these specific tasks.

Crone Circles are created to bring women together. Imagine a circle of women laughing from their bellies or singing their spirits. Imagine yourself in a circle of women or remember a group that has special meaning to you. How can we spread the magic of crone circles? Please send in your stories of crone circle experiences. We want to share the ways that crone circles begin and how they thrive. We want to connect readers to local groups of women to expand their circles. Do you have photos of your circle to share? Do you have suggestions for beginning a circle? Please submit your crone circle stories for Crone magazine to me at jstein444@aol.com or write to Crone, P.O. Box 687, Forest Grove, OR 97116.

— JEAN STEIN, sixty-three, is the Coordinator of Volunteers at the Kroc Corps Community Center. Jean has served on advisory boards of both the Older Women's League & Crones Counsel.

We have been fortunate have a rent-free room for meetings located in the Joyce Beers Community Center, named for the local woman who founded a homeless shelter for women in San Diego.

Our meetings take place in a circle around an altar created by the program leader. Each woman present places something representing herself on the altar. We begin with announcements in which we share news, information and opportunities. The circle is opened as we introduce ourselves using our matriarchal lineage or the name of a mentor or special woman in our lives. We drum and connect with our heart rhythms and hear the words that remind us of our purpose and reason for being.

Each meeting is led by one or more members; we do not use professional speakers or anyone from outside the circle. Each year at the January meeting we take suggestions from all those in attendance and vote on eleven of the ideas as topics for the year's meetings. One member then offers to be responsible for each topic and chooses the month to present it.

The meeting dates, topics and facilitators have been chosen in this way for many years. Topics have included "Finding our Foremothers," "Storytelling," "Poetry," "Crone Talent Show," "Appreciating Abundance," "Writing our Stories," "Finding our Voices," "Community Building," "Meaning of Crone," "Peace," "Connecting with Animal Spirit Guides," and "Journaling."

Additional activities have expanded the Women of Ancient Wisdom community. A dinner group provides a time when women can get together and enjoy each other's company informally, it occurs before the meeting and is open to all.

WoAW has no official membership and no dues, but we do request attendees to donate to our organization in order to cover our expenses. Over the years we have used WoAW money for scholarships to Crone Counsel gatherings, for a Peace Pole, for donations to our local homeless women's shelter, and for other uses chosen by a vote of the group.

Each project provided opportunities for our members to work together and become better acquainted.

Has it always gone smoothly? No. We've faced obstacles including having to find a new meeting location, losing key members, and controversies over the circle's direction.

But each time we overcome these obstacles and the circle emerges stronger than ever. Two years ago, we sat in our circle and called

out our feelings about WoAW: "acceptance," "diversity," "mighty companions," "full of life," "honoring of the authentic self," "empowerment," "flowing harmony," "incredible sense of specialness," "reconnections," "singing our songs," and "celebrating feminine wisdom." The list was a powerful representation of what WoAW means to each of us.

Marian adds, "Women of Ancient Wisdom has become a central force in my life. I am connected to women of integrity, caring, and fun who enrich my life and my being. My dearest friends are part of WoAW."

Jean offers, "My WoAW friends are my sisters. I always attend our monthly meetings for the renewal of my spirit and my connection to these incredible WoAW women.

The experiences we've shared over the years give me deep personal connections I'll treasure forever."

WoAW will celebrate thirteen years in December. We look forward to many more years of sharing wisdom, joy, sorrow, and our connection as women of ancient wisdom. ©

— MARIAN KARPISEK, sixty-nine, and JEAN STEIN, sixty-three, are long-time members of the Women of Ancient Wisdom crone circle in San Diego.

