



Coda

Musings from the *Other Anne*

My mission here at *Crone* is to weave the ribbons of story gathered by editor Ann Kreilkamp into a single tapestry. As part of that process, I am constantly discovering and rediscovering the many ways of being crone.

One crone-ish path is that of (re) discovering our creativity. Artistic impulses are often laid aside during frantic mid-life years dedicated to careers and families, but can be rediscovered (or revived) during our crone years. Helen Redman, the subject of Ann Kreilkamp's interview in this issue, is a crone not only by virtue of her age but has been concentrating her artistic vision on crone images for over half a century. Her witty and razor-sharp self-portraits confound our expectations of beauty and challenge us to expand our definitions of self, crone, and art itself.

Another opening into crone awareness is through deepening our connection with the natural world, a path richly demonstrated by the life and work of artist, designer, and philosopher Bobbi Gill. Maggie Fenton paints a portrait of Bobbi's uniquely integrated world: one in which the realms of human, plant, and animal intertwine through artwork, landscape, and interior design to create a life in which all beings are made welcome and acknowledged with grace and gratitude.

In many philosophical systems, the ideal life cycle is believed to conclude with a stage in which the seeker withdraws from society and devotes herself to solitary contemplation. Although she enjoys an active lifestyle, Lady Oliva Robertson, foundress of the Fellowship of Isis and decades-long occult practitioner, exquisitely exemplifies the life of the spiritual seeker. Lady Olivia shares both her mystic vision and down-to-earth wisdom with Aya Rose in an enigmatic but rewarding interview certain to pose as many questions to contemplate as it answers.

In marked contrast to the path of internal contemplation, many of us choose to embrace crone by moving outward into the wider world. Mostly found among the so-called "young old" (women in their fifties and sixties) these crones take advantage of their newfound freedom (in retirement) to go trekking around the world. Belying the stereotype that crones are physically fragile and socially withdrawn, women like explorer extraordinaire Helen Thayer are robustly engaged role models whose adventures are often tied to wider social issues. Even if (like me) you are mostly an armchair adventurer, you'll enjoy Connie Dawson's conversation with this intrepid, optimistic and opinionated activist.

Most of us won't feel inspired to walk to the North Pole like Helen Thayer, but we have at least one thing in common with her: we don't let people tell us what we can (or cannot) do. Among the many manifestations of blossoming crone consciousness is often an overwhelming impulse to "tell it like it really is." This spirit of change is exemplified by the crone-filled activist movement "the Raging Grannies," profiled in this issue by Crone Action department head Win Fiandaca. After reading about their cheerful (and effective) action, you may want to join a local gaggle — or to start your own!

The RGs harken back to the work of our foremothers in the abolitionist, temperance and women's suffrage movements. One way to connect with our inner crone (at any age) is to explore the herstory of our female ancestors. Clara Oropeza and Sara Kosmyna both found inspiration in the strength and tenacity of their grandmothers, and share their experiences of discovering their deep connections to their ancestors in this issue's Crone Encounters.

The past doesn't always manifest through story and memory, however; sometimes the actual goods and possessions our elders held dear come into our lives. Ila Dezarn finds comfort in discovering the presence of her parents in the simple objects she inherited after they died, but Susan Chernak McElroy discovers that an unexpected side effect of recycling the goods of her deceased neighbor is a radical reevaluation of her own possessions, and a contemplation of the ultimate act of letting go: death itself.

Of course, letting go of people is far more wrenching than releasing material wealth as Win Fiandaca reflects in her poignant remembrance of Ruth Gardner, the "Crone Mother of Arizona." Multitudes of other stories — an introduction to the Colorado Croness Circle of Wise Women, Rita Bresnahan's adventures with burp clothes, Patricia Leyden's croning day, and Lee Pelham Cotton's tales of toads — shimmered like jewels in my mind's eye as I worked to bring this issue together. All these women, so varied in their life experiences and outlooks, are visionaries in their own right. To me, they are heroines, all!

At the age of 50, my experience as crone is rather thin on the ground, but in the process of creating this issue, I've had the chance to imagine what kind of crone I might someday grow up to be. Let's see, one part Adventure Crone (I'm about to take my motorcycle rider safety course); another part Raging Granny (I've participated in political protest since I was in my early twenties); and a double-handful Re-Energized Artist (I haven't painted since my nineteen-year-old son was born, but I still have my easel!). Oh, and probably a pinch of Lady Olivia (I find myself increasingly longing to come back into active participation with the Goddess community) and a smidgen of that unique archetype "the Uppity Old Lady" mixed in there for good measure. If this issue proves anything, it's that there's no shortage of crone role models for me to take inspiration from.

