



CLOSE TO MOTHER EARTH

A NEWSLETTER FOR EARTHY SPIRITUAL
COMMUNITY

August ushered in the season of harvest festivals. The Wheel of the Year turns toward Fall, birds begin to migrate, and we can feel the Fates working in our lives. It is a good time to follow the old tradition of ascending the mountaintop to ask Divine guidance, for now Humanity faces the ultimate harvest of our ways: climate change, species extinction, pollution, ill health, injustice for the poor and people of color. The deadline to mitigate the worst effects is upon us, it is now or never.

Spiral Grove's Beloved First Elder Changes Worlds

Phenix Carolyn Lavinia Hearn 1948-2015

by Maya who offers this detailed obituary in the spirit of Southern storytelling—Phenix shared many stories of her Southern origins and adventurous life.

Spiral Grove's first ordained Elder, Phenix, passed from this world to the next on January 17th of this year, attended by members of her beloved community. She was ready to make her transition, as chronic illness (rheumatoid arthritis) had robbed her of any remaining quality of life. Blue Ridge Hospice made her journey as comfortable as could be, with infinite tenderness, expertise, and beautiful surroundings. At the Winter Solstice, the Grove gathered around her in a circle and sang "Deep Peace". The local Native American Church leaders came later to support her journey back to Great Spirit with ceremony in a Native Way.

Phenix Hearn came into this world a triple Scorpio on November 1, 1948 of Yuchi-Seminole descent, in Phenix City, Alabama. Although many native people often wait to see signs before naming their babies, hospital staff pressured Phenix's mother, Katrine, to choose a name, so she looked through a book of First Ladies' names and settled on Carolyn Lavinia for
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Self-Portrait by Phenix

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Phenix *(continued from front page)*

for her daughter, altering First Lady Caroline Lavinia Harrison's name slightly.

Katrine was known as an expert threader of spools in the local cotton mill industry and Carolyn's father, Willie Floyd Lester Monroe Hearn, worked when he could in the mills, but he had a drinking problem. He brought the family to the Chattahoochee River regularly and fishing became a lifelong passion of Phenix's life. The beauty and danger of that southern river became a part of Phenix with tales of boating among deadly water moccasins and red corn snakes. Although the family frequented the pool and Community Center at the Yuchi Reservation, they did not live on the reservation.

Carolyn had a close call with a tornado that took out an area of town while she and other children sheltered in a gym. She was haunted by the destruction that she saw and for the rest of her life would watch the skies closely when thunderstorms darkened.

After Carolyn's grandmother, Philoma Jane Sparks, passed away (as Phe said, she walked out to the porch swing after dinner and had a stroke and was gone), Katrine, in order to work in the mills, hired a woman of color to help take care of her daughter. Carolyn worked as early as she could to help support the family and quit high school despite excellent grades. She earned her GED later. She loved working in a local bakery because she could bring day old products home to family and friends. She also loved cake decorating.

Being an androgynous tyke (what they used to call a "tomboy", *see photo on right*), Carolyn's favorite times were on the River or being rambunctious outdoors, often injuring herself in the process. However, she faced gender oppression from religious and domestic harassment and abuse. One day after church services the minister called Carolyn into a back room where he demanded that she lift her shirt to prove she was a young woman. Her uncle molested her during family outings. When her mother found out that she was in love with a woman, Katrine beat her daughter from "one end of the house to the other." Katrine eventually came to accept her daughter's sexuality, however, and she was a staunch supporter of her daughter in their local community where they both played softball. Phenix told the story of how her mother threatened to beat up another mother when her children were bullying her daughter.

In her late teens, Carol ran away with her first woman lover to Florida where they worked in the fields to make money. Throughout her life, however, she always returned to her mother's side when needed to help care for her during many health crises. Her mother and father separated and Katrine became involved with Vietnam soldier, Earl Stout. Earl worked as a cook at the Army base in Aberdeen, MD, and with Carol and Katrine's help, ran a catering business on the side. Carolyn liked to cook and liked cooking for large groups of people all her life.

Later known as Kris, she connected with the gay subculture of Baltimore, MD. In 1971, she joined the Diana Press collective, an all-woman printing company, where she learned to run a printing press. After Diana Press went through a major upheaval and reorganization, she moved on to volunteer at the Baltimore Rape Crisis Center. In 1975 she joined the U. S Army Reserve and trained to become a Physical Therapy Specialist, Combat Medic. However, she was injured during training and was forced to leave

Tomboy Carolyn is not pleased by the taunting of a boy in the pool.



Phenix holds a juvenile Sharp-shinned Hawk while banding birds for a conservation project at Back Bay.



(continued next page)

Phenix *(continued)*

the reserve.

In the late 70's, Kris made fateful connections when she joined a working class lesbian writers group that was forming in Arlington, VA. The group named itself, "Palms Read, Free Massage with Every Reading" and produced a bawdy poetry reading in Dupont Circle, Washington, DC. Two members of the group became her lifelong friends, Lynn Martin and Toni White (later known as Maya White Sparks). With them and other women from Northern Virginia, Phenix moved onto land in Rappahannock County with the goal of founding a women's community called "Turtle Wimmin's Land". They lived in tents and, with poet/carpenter Lynn Martin's guidance, built the foundation for a small octagonal house. However, one of the land's co-owners decided she had to liquidate her half and the land had to be sold and the collective disbanded.

Maya and "Kris-co-kid" felt lucky to take over a rustic rental occasionally used by a few DC feminists, including the author Susan Sojourner. Sue reserved the right to come out and work in the shed near the house and did a few times. Maya suggested Kris change her name to Phoenix — Kris chose the spelling of her birthplace and then became known as "Phenix." Living in four rooms with no running water on 1000 acre cow farm, Maya and Phenix transformed their relationship from lovers to friends after the challenges of a non-monogamous lifestyle became too much. Singer Abbe Lyons moved in for a while and many friends from the DC women's community came out for weekend parties. With local friends they teamed up to bring alternative spiritual teachers out to Rappahannock county at informal weekend gatherings.

During these years Phenix delved into her Native American heritage, hungry for the Native spiritual perspective that she was denied as a child since her family had passed as white most of the time. She also immersed herself in self-healing, unraveling psychological dynamics and patterns that resulted from early victimization. Being a triple scorpio, her emotional life could be intense, but she could often balance that with childish (Kris-co-kid) enthusiasm and fun.

In the 1980's Phenix took off for a life on the road, working at Women's music festivals around the country. She was also a visiting worker at Arco Iris in Arkansas where she helped city kids have country experiences. Phenix felt called by the stone and crystal people and started digging for crystals and Herkimer "diamonds". She studied the spiritual and other properties of rocks and crystals, made Atlantean-style wands, and formed a small business selling her wares, "4th World Psychic Tools". She also danced with a lesbian Native American dance troupe called Two-Spirited Thunder People.



Phe was given an Native American ribbon shirt to honor her as an Elder on her last birthday (shown with friend of 35 yrs, Maya)

1990-95, Phenix lived with the Abenaki nation in northern Vermont. She was lovers with Daisy during this time and together they volunteered their energies to assist the tribe as it worked toward recognition as a nation. With Daisy's help, Phenix obtained a grant, started, and coordinated the Mississqua Riverkeeper Project. She also was Bodyguard for Chief Homer St. Francis and Tribal Judge Mike Delaney. She used her training in nonviolent activism to support Abenaki tribal nation status by running tribal license plates on her car. Many times as she drove through the area she was stopped by local police who not only ticketed her but also pulled her roughly from the car and injured her. She also spoke at schools in Vermont, educating students and teachers about the Abenaki and helping kids discover their own native heritage.

It was physically very challenging for the Alabama gal that Phenix was to live in the frigid north of Vermont, especially since she often slept in vehicles. She only found temporary living arrangements and became overwhelmed, stressed, and ill and went on disability insurance to survive.

Around this time, 1995, Earl had a stroke and her mother was seriously ill, so she came home to Aberdeen. There she closed down their home while Earl passed on and her Mother required nursing home care. Phenix found the best care she could for her mother and moved in with Maya who had just left the rustic setting to rent a house with running water in preparation for her mother to move in.

Phenix and Maya had a solid friendship and teamed up once again to work in Spiral Grove, which Maya had founded while Phenix was away. In a dream, Phenix was given a new name for the Spiral Grove's newsletter, "Close to Mother Earth." Phenix started a new section for the newsletter, "Native News," and through her vivid, well-loved writings bridged the worlds of neo-paganism and Native politics, culture, and spirituality.

(continued back page)

Auguries from The Fates: When the Pope Sounds Like a Pagan, It is Time to Listen!

Close to Mother Earth is happy to introduce a writer from our community, Bettie “Bells” Davis. She here summarizes two critical, recent publications of our age: *Laudato Si*, an official letter on *Care for our Common Home* from Pope Francis to his Church and the World and a report in *Science Advances* by Ceballos et. al., “Accelerated Modern Human-induced Species Losses: Entering the Sixth Mass Extinction.”

The Pontiff and the Potoroo or: Spirituality and the Sixth Extinction

by Bettie “Bells” Davis

Mother Nature is in trouble. This is something that is well known to those of us who live with Earth-centric faiths. We can hear her cries for mercy from the ravages that humanity has visited upon her. We can feel her pain from the holes drilled into her body, the plastic that encases her form. Yes, we can feel it, in our very bones. The argument between scientists and climate change deniers may rage on, but we know. On May 24, 2015, millions of Catholics worldwide joined us in that knowing, with the release of Pope Francis' encyclical letter “Laudato Si”.

In a beautifully moving plea both to the Catholic community and “every person living on this planet”, Francis draws inspiration heavily from his chosen namesake, the much-loved Saint Francis of Assisi, opening his letter with a direct quote: “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs.” To us, this sentiment rings familiar. Thus begins a plea for the life of that Sister, for “We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life”.

What follows is a heartfelt exhortation for change, accompanied by practical ideas for how to do so. The very real threats of pollution, climate change, water shortage, and loss of biodiversity are all addressed, with accuracy and sensitivity. In many respects, the Pope's views are far more progressive than those who he leads in faith. Actively 'calling in' misguided believers he refers to as “obstructionists”, he levels the label of 'sin' not on those who don't follow the same creed, but those who commit crimes against the natural world. He quotes an elder of his faith; “...for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life – these are sins”.

Reaching beyond his faith system, Pope Francis appeals to “the whole human family” to come together to “form a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet”. Arguably one of the most influential people living on this Earth, we can only hope his call to action is answered with the same amount of enthusiasm those in his flock invest in other issues regarding our Sisters and Mothers, for time is short.

Released on the heels of Pope Francis' letter comes a scientific study showing just how desperate the situation has become. Published in *Science Advances Magazine* on June 19, the research team lead by Mexican university ecologist Gerard Ceballos proved that the oft-repeated prediction that the planet is facing its sixth major extinction event is in fact coming to pass. Previous studies (articles, books, films) revealing humans' devastating impact on biodiversity could be disputed on the grounds that extinction rates are demonstrably difficult to measure. Ceballos' team proves that even with the most conservative estimates of current extinction rates and assuming a 'normal' rate of extinction (without human impact) of nearly double the commonly prevailing numbers, the data shows that we are not merely teetering on the brink of a massive loss of species on this planet, it is already underway.

A Prayer for Our Earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it,



No longer on this Earth, the extinct

Broadfaced Potoroo,

~drawing by John Gould

that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

~Pope Frances

The paper, entitled “Accelerated modern human-induced species losses: Entering the sixth mass extinction”, goes on to paint a grim picture of our prospects. According to the data, the planet has likely lost more than a hundred species just in the past few decades, with many more (such as the entire genus from which the potoroo hails) critically endangered. Looking back further in history, the documentation of the human impact on the rest of the creatures of Earth is staggering. There are nearly four hundred species that have been verified extinct since 1500, nearly half of these occurring since the Industrial Revolution. If these figures were to include the other species that survive only in captivity or are simply ‘possibly’ extinct, they would double in size. The effects of this trend continuing would be catastrophic for the Earth and for all those who call her ‘home’.

What makes this study notable is it’s ability to show that even in the best possible scenario, we humans have already caused irrevocable damage to the ecosystem and the creatures that inhabit it. If we don’t effect a drastic change in our society’s habits, the human race will not survive the next couple hundred years. We are all interconnected, and if we destroy nature we destroy ourselves. This concept is well illustrated by the quote; “Time and space are not independent of one another, and not even atoms or subatomic particles can be considered in isolation. Just as the different aspects of the planet – physical, chemical and biological – are interrelated, so too living species are part of a network which we will never fully explore and understand.”

Would you be surprised to learn the above was quoted not from the scientist, but the clergyman? When the ecologist and the ecclesiastic have come to the same conclusion, when their opinions on climate change and the gravity of our destruction to the environment are nigh indistinguishable, the time time for all of us to band together for change is at hand. As Francis states; “The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change.”

There is not yet a conclusion to this story, as we look hopefully toward a future of intersectional environmentalism*, we are left only with a sense of urgency and a prayer from Pope Francis above.

* “Intersectional environmentalism” can be defined as an analysis of ecological issues that takes into account how different individuals and groups relate differently to environmental problems due to their position in prevailing power structures. Pope Francis uses this approach when he discusses the disproportionate affects of pollution on the poor and disenfranchised.

Author’s Bio

Elizabeth “Bettie” Davis, more often known simply as “Bells”, is an autodidactic artist whose primary medium is the written word. Raised in a Pagan home, her primary influences are Jungian psychology, feminist anthropology, and Taoist philosophy. When not writing, Bells commonly spends her days joyfully embracing the Mother archetype and transforming illness into enlightenment.



A View from the Grove

by Maya

Cleansing Prelude to New Earth

When you attend any Spiral Grove event, please bring a potluck dish to share, utensils, cup and plate for yourself in order to cut down on paper and plastic waste.

Feel free to bring items for the altar, drums, and other musical instruments. You are also invited to contact facilitators ahead about ritual elements you would like to see included or to guide. If you bring a suggestion the day of the rite, we will do our best to include it, but it is best if the ritual guide has time to think about how best to incorporate it. A token of thanks for the facilitator is traditional (e.g. a candle, incense, or whatever you feel inspired to give). However, you are **not required to bring anything to a ritual.**

If you are in need of anything, contact Lynnette Nicholas of the People in Need and Feed the People projects, 540-868-2664 or email her at whichcolor2008@gmail.com.

If we don't have what you need, we can put the word out over Spiral Grove's email list (anonymously if you wish). Donations are also accepted.

When the International Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers met in the sacred Black Hills last September, the primary message our reporter, Morning Star, came away with was, "Cleansing." On the physical plane we are witnessing record wildfires, drought, and floods... cleansings by water and fire. Behind many of these physical manifestations is the stepping up of the long-awaited energizing and purging of the energy field of Gaia. The old energy grid is being upgraded, actually transformed, to be one that will activate consciousness to a new, higher level on the Earth (the New Earth). As energy is pumped into Gaia from galaxy, moon, sun, and the spiritual planes, higher vibrational frequencies are causing a shaking off of the karmic "goobies" (astral congestion of all kinds) from the Earth's grid—and, from our energy fields, because we are one with Gaia. Galactic particles penetrating into the core of the Earth are likely to amplify Earth changes like earthquakes, eruptions, and extreme weather. It will also affect our emotions and bodies.

Many of us who have agreed to stay on the Earth during these cleansing times have begun to endure the deaths of those who are leaving and other discomforts. Many people feel the release of ancient fears, anxieties, distortions, lies, and who knows what else. In order to prevent unwanted astral disturbances in my personal space, I have been keeping the Powers of the Directions called into my sphere of guardianship (renew their protection every two weeks). I have recognized that much of the fear flowing out of me in waves (especially in the early morning), though hard to take while it is moving through, is from past life experiences. Therefore, I try not to let it ruin the rest of the day, I try not to identify with it, because it is a process of letting go of the past. I have been using an inexpensive, relaxing homeopathic tablet from the health food store called "Calms" to help me get through any lingering anxiety. I also use a calming breath from Kundalini yoga that is simple but powerful: inhale to the count of 5, hold that breath for the count of 5, exhale to the count of 5 and repeat. If you try this, do it until you feel a shift or for 3 minutes. You can also hold your hands loosely in a prayer pose while you breathe. *If you have ways that are helping you get through this, you are invited to write to us to share with others.*

Those who have not used auric clearing practices or have failed to grapple with the processes of transforming old, dysfunctional patterns will do well to find some techniques or helpers to move things along. Otherwise, you may feel toxic and disoriented. Although we will have rough moments as we are cleared from the past, we are becoming more our free and *True Selves* that come from beyond time and space, with our potential for great things set free, like our ability to see into other dimensions. *Keep focused on your truth and your mission whatever chaos stirs around you! Help others see the purpose in what we are going through and to keep to their true missions.*

It is unfortunate that those who chose domination and control have made such a mess of things. We find ourselves colliding with Climate Change and Species Extinction at the same time that an Earth Grid Upgrade has been planned since the beginning of time. Things will be churned up as our lives go on in this century. Things will be changing. We must be willing to evolve (whatever our age). Elders must equip the young with survival skills for the vast Earth Changes that are likely to erupt.

Some Harvest Festivals Around the World ~

Irish Lughnassah and Timoleague-Tigh Molaige • British Lammas (early August) • Cherokee Mature Corn Ceremony (mid-August) • African Yam Harvest Festivals (August or September) • Russian Ukraine, Savior of the Apple Feast Day (August 19) • Autumn Equinox: Mabon/Witches' Thanksgiving • October Native American Gourd Festivals

Upcoming Spiral Grove Celebrations and Council

~Free and Open to All~

We are proud to offer marriage ceremonies for LGBT couples, always have.

Fall Equinox Ritual/Witches' Thanksgiving at The Land Celebration, Gore, Virginia September 19th, 2015 @ 2pm

Spiral Grove Priestess, Maya White Sparks, will facilitate a Ritual to give back to the land, growing ones, water, light grid, and air. We will do this by sharing light in the woods with the Naturespirits, Archangels and Devas. Food can be refrigerated in the kitchen and we will have access to main lodge, commercial kitchen and cafeteria at approx. 4 pm for our Witches' Thanksgiving Dinner. If you wish to spend the night, the Land Celebration offers cabin rentals \$80 for night, bunk rooms \$30 and tenting \$15. (See the Land Celebration Website for pics and details) If you want to reserve a space or to attend the ritual, please contact Maya at: 540-868-2664; spiralgr@shentel.net.

SG Community Council

October 3, 2015 at Artemis House in Stephens City, VA. Noon.

Participate in planning upcoming events and share your ideas. Contact Maya at 540-868-2664; spiralgr@shentel.net to send along ideas if you cannot come or for directions.

Samhain Gathering at Sacred Maples Madison, Virginia October 24, 2015

Hosted by Spiral Grove Priestess and Priest, Cellina Rhiannon Whiteflame and Glasshawk. Contact Cellina at the_spiral_grove@yahoo.com for details.

The Gathering

Oct. 30-Nov.1

Clarke County Fairgrounds
Berryville, VA
\$5 admission/Under 4, free

Native American people and
neighbors celebrating with:

- NATIVE AMERICAN HARVEST DANCE
- VIRGINIA GOURD FESTIVAL
- KIDZ HARVEST FEST
- TRADING POST
- LIVING HISTORY EXHIBITORS
- MULTICULTURAL THANKSGIVING
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www.harvestgathering.org

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Volunteers Needed

Phenix 1948-2015

(Continued from page 3)

Despite the onset of severe health problems in the form of Rheumatoid Arthritis, Phenix volunteered her time whenever she could in the Grove community, coordinating the Youth Group and many annual Witches' Faires. She also founded the Grove's lake stewardship program.

Around the year 2000, Phenix co-founded the Front Royal, VA group, "Women's Alliance for Environmental Justice and Renewal." She was a leader who helped the group monitor the EPA's cleanup of a local Avtex Superfund Site (where she had worked briefly before the plant was closed, but quit when they sent her to the ER after chemicals dripped on her from a tunnel ceiling.) She went on-site to monitor wildlife and helped organize community forums and canvassing. Within a few years she enrolled in the Natural Resources Program at the local community college. The highlight of her studies was her participation in a bird-banding conservation project at Back Bay (*photo page 2*). Unfortunately, she had to abandon her studies, which she loved, due to chronic illness.

Phenix became the first ordained Elder in Spiral Grove and she was beloved by both children and adults. She combined straight-talking, hard won wisdom with down to earth humor. People cherished her unique character, and she loved her community, welcoming new folks so that they quickly felt a part of it all. She could talk with all kinds of people and always expressed her gratitude, e. g. with her warm appreciation, she charmed hospital workers who were used to being taken for granted. She made friends with neighbors and thus formed a local community for her, her neighbors, and friends—discovering ways diverse people can connect and share and be there for each other. She was a storyteller in the southern tradition where the sharing of a tale was part of family entertainment, and as she told tales to new friends, she drew them in and they found themselves appreciating an androgynous, lesbian, feminist, native american, naturopath, whether they consciously knew all that about her or not.

Abbe Lyons wrote of Phenix, "... I learned from her about the complexity of human beings. My first impression of Phenix was that she was strong and sure of herself, and indeed, she was. Yet as I came to know her I also saw that she was about as tender-hearted a person as I have ever met and that she also struggled with self doubt. . . . Her love, trust, generosity, and honesty is echoing back to me now over these long years and I am once again inspired."

When I stand back from Phenix's adult life, to which I have been a witness, I believe it is her great integrity and truth that have made such an impact on so many. She was herself, and could not be other than herself, no matter that it meant she could not keep a traditional job or how weird she may have appeared in mainstream culture. I believe her Being has helped others to be their true selves. And when it comes down to why she did it all, in the end, it was out of Love. Love for nature, love for spiritual truth, love for justice, love for her ancestors wisdom, love for all who crossed her path.

Spiral Grove

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