

PART TEN

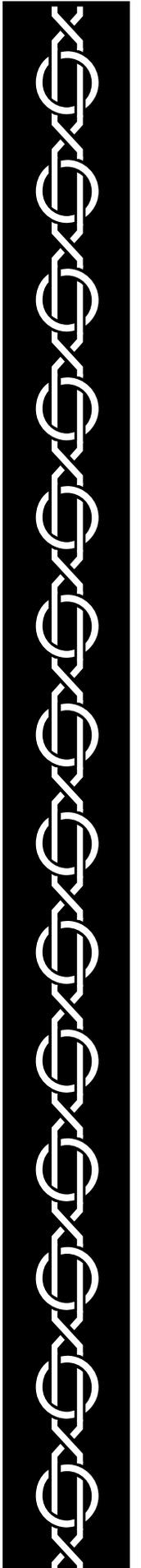
ORAL

HISTORIES

Introduction

It is my intention to provide the reader with more than one history of Reformed Druidism by presenting the reader with transcripts of oral interviews with prominent Reformed Druids. Their viewpoints should provide more balance than my voice alone could provide.

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David Frangquist, '66 Deborah Gavrin Frangquist, '67

October 31, 1993

Eric: This is Eric Hilleman, the Archivist at Carleton College, and I'm conducting an interview today with David Frangquist, class of 1966, and his wife, Deborah Gavrin Frangquist, class of 1967. The Frangquists have both been very involved with the Carleton Druids, and we're expecting that to be the main topic of discussion today, but I think I'd begin by asking you, David, to tell us something about your own personal background, how you got to Carleton College, and then we'll get into the founding of the Druids right after that.

David: I was born in Chicago in 1944 and grew up in the North Shore Suburbs, Lake Forest specifically. As far as coming to Carleton: about the middle of my junior year in high school, we started, as juniors do, thinking about colleges. I think actually Carleton first came to my attention in an article in the *Chicago Tribune* about quality liberal arts colleges in the Midwest. I suffered from childhood asthma, and so one of my concerns was to be as far north as possible to get away from the ragweed areas, so we drew a line through, oh, about Milwaukee and looked at places north of that. Carleton really seemed to be the outstanding school in that area. I did visit other schools that were at that time in the same conference as Carleton; I looked at Ripon and Lawrence and visited Macalester, but Carleton was the place where I just felt most at home. Carleton seemed to have it together better than the other places that I visited, and Carleton was the only place I applied.

Eric: For this tape, actually, I think it would also be relevant if you wanted to say something about your religious background, if any—I don't know what that might be.

David: I was raised in the Presbyterian Church in Lake Forest. I think the main reason that my parents chose that church was that it was the largest, most active church in town, having been founded originally by the McCormicks, or at least largely supported by McCormick money for a long time. So it was sort of interesting: it was the society church in Lake Forest, and there was a lot going on there, so that's what they chose. I was not real active; I mean I attended Sunday school and all that. I was never active in the high school youth group, although there was one.

In the middle of high school I started becoming interested in other religions, and began buying books about other religions. I had my own copy of the Koran. I acquired through the services of some Mormon missionaries a copy of the Book of Mormon and actually read the whole thing. Perhaps my interest in doing some of the scriptural writing for the Druids came from that period—and wanting perhaps to do a better job than Joseph Smith did! Nevertheless, I became interested in world religions at that time, and was doing a lot of questioning and exploring, as students will do at that

age. So I was ready when I came to Carleton just to do more exploring, and the idea of the Druids intrigued me.

I don't believe that I have ever at any point abandoned my sense of being a Christian. The strength with which I have felt that has varied over time, but my interest in other approaches has been one, for me, of personal accretion: that the more that I could learn about other belief systems, the more I felt that that was a benefit and useful. I've always been intrigued by parallels that would exist in different religious traditions. That began in the middle of high school, but I never felt the need to jump from one religion to another. It was largely a matter of curiosity.

Eric: The Reformed Druids of North America began during your freshman year, and I'd like to hear your perspective on the founding and early days of that illustrious organization.

David: Well, at that time of course there was a requirement that we all attend chapel or something like it seven out of ten weekends in the quarter. I didn't particularly question that; I was used to the notion that schools made you do things you didn't want to do, necessarily. And I initially generally did attend chapel, because that was convenient, and it left the rest of Sunday free to do other things. I can't say that I found the chapel services all that meaningful at the time. They were of a general Protestant nature: a little hymn sing, a little reading, a sermon that might or might not mean something.

In the spring of that year, I just overheard that there were some people, some of whom that I knew, some friends of mine, who were starting up this group of Druids, and they were doing it, clearly, to protest the chapel requirement—which we in those days always referred to as “the religious requirement.” Nowadays we tend to say “chapel requirement” because it's a little clearer, I think, for people hearing what we're talking about, but it was the “religious requirement” that they were protesting.

I was not involved in the initial founding meeting, which I believe occurred in Goodhue, and involved David Fisher and Howard Cherniack. I think Norman Nelson was present for that also, although I was not there, so I'm not certain. I know that Howard was one of the people who was particularly interested in getting something going here, and I believe that he saw it largely as a political thing. The motivations of others who were involved is murkier; best to ask them, I guess.

I don't know who actually came up with the notion of having Druids be the form, because the discussion, as I understand it, started out with the idea that we needed to form some new religion on campus. The wording in the Catalog, as I recall, was that you could get credit for attending chapel, or the Sunday evening program, or any regularly organized service of public worship. So they said, “Let's organize something.” And the idea was that it should be sufficiently off-the-wall to obviously be a protest to challenge the established order, but to be believable enough that a credible argument could be made that this was, in fact, a valid alternative religious

service.

I think the thing they liked about the Druids so much was that so little was known about Druidism. Looking at what few references were available in the Carleton library at the time, we knew that Druids existed; we knew that they had something or other to do with the priesthood of the pre-Roman Celtic peoples in Britain; and not much else was known, partly (probably) because their rituals were secret and nothing was written down. Or at least if anything was written down, it hadn't been found. So we were free, really, to invent as much as we wanted about what Druidism was going to be here at Carleton. But nevertheless it was something that had historical reality; it was not being just totally made up out of whole cloth—we did not have to pretend to have a latter-day revelation from some source that had been started all off fresh. We could at least pretend to have some continuity with an older tradition.

The first meetings were held in April of that year [1963]. I was not present at the first service, which involved setting up David Fisher's record stand on Monument Hill. They put a draping of cloth over it, and that was the altar for the day. I do believe I was present at the second service. I'm no longer sure who invited me to that. I knew David Fisher at the time through work at KARL, where he was an announcer and I was a control operator. For quite a while I was control operator for David, and I can't remember now what years I was his control operator for a Saturday night program that he did. I may have already been doing that at that time, and it's quite possible that he invited me. Jan Johnson was another person that I knew from dorm life who was involved in those days with the founding of the Druids, or the early meetings. Either of them might have been the person who got me out there.

There were just, maybe, half a dozen of us at the time, a circle of friends who started the meetings. At that time, we hadn't worked out much in the way of calendar and ritual and so on that we later did. Now of course we would say the meetings would normally be held between May 1st and November 1st, during the summer half of the year, but at that time, holding our services in April didn't bother anybody because we hadn't figured out there was anything wrong with April!

David Fisher, as far as we know, made up the ritual. He had an Episcopal background and is currently an Episcopal priest, and there are certain echoes of Episcopalian Prayer Book language that show up in his design of the service. He pretended—perhaps that's a pejorative word—he *represented* that he had been ordained as a Druid somewhere in Missouri by someone else, and so therefore there was continuity with the past, and he could come in here and be Arch-Druid and carry the tradition into Carleton. But he was always vague about this prior experience and who this was and where it occurred, and I have to say that I don't really know anything about it, other than the fact that he said that it occurred.

All of the rest of our Druid tradition, then, springs from David Fisher as the first Arch-Druid here at

Carleton. We can trace lines of ordination from one person to another, and it all goes back to him. If it goes back prior to him—well, you'll have to ask David Fisher about that. He was the source of our early liturgy, and where he got it from—who knows?

We did decide after a couple of meetings that the little metal record stand was not really a very adequate altar. The idea was that we would build something a little more substantial. It seemed like Monument Hill was the right place to do it: there were all of these inscriptions on the monument about first services of various sorts that had occurred on that site, and so, therefore, this seemed like a good place in Northfield to start another religious tradition. So we found a bunch of rocks. At that time in a little grove of trees near Monument Hill there were quite a few rock piled up because, I believe, Williams had been torn down only a couple of years before, and some of the rubble from that had simply been dumped in this little spot in the trees. So it wasn't hard to go and find rocks and cart them over to Monument Hill and pile them up—which is basically what we did to create our altar.

It didn't last very long! In fairly short order, people we identified as the Anti-Druids came—we believe that these were mostly jocks from Goodhue, who probably had a keg amongst them prior to this escapade—they came and ripped all the rocks apart and threw them about Monument Hill. All of this is written up in the *Early Chronicles*. I have to say that when I wrote the *Early Chronicles*, I really was describing in there true events. Now the language is in some cases deliberately vague, or deliberately flowery, but the events behind it all really did occur. So the language in there about the building of the altar, and the Anti-Druids coming and tearing it down, and all this—that all happened. We made several attempts at building the altar, and after a while we kind of gave up that spring, because, well, it was getting to be a bit of a chore!

At the same time we were also carrying the protest to official levels. This was the thing that Howard was the most interested in. We filled out the little slips—I believe they were little green slips that we had to fill out for chapel. You'd put on there the date and the institution that you attended, and turn it in. In the case of the men, we would turn it in to our proctors, and women turned them in to...

Deborah: We turned them in to the Dean of Women's Office. My recollection is that they were yellow, which may have been women's slips, I don't know.

David: OK. Maybe I'm confusing the convo slips with the chapel slips. Anyway, we filled out little slips saying that we had attended these Druid services, and we expected to have credit.

Deborah: We may have given them to our house mothers; they got to the Dean of Women's Office, anyway.

David: Again, after this passage of time I don't remember exactly when all these things happened, but I believe we did do it that first spring. It met with varying responses,

in that the men's slips were rejected as being not legitimate or not qualifying for credit, [while] only a couple of slips were turned in by women, but they did, in fact, get credit. We had great fun speculating over why the women got credit. In the case of the men, the slips were reviewed by someone in the Dean of Men's Office (the Dean was then Casey Jarchow), and they spotted these things and said they were not legitimate.

So a delegation was led by Howard Cherniack to the Dean's office to protest this action, and to raise the question: why would the Druids not be acceptable? They went armed with Yellow Pages from the Twin Cities and lists of various strange and wonderful groups that met there. I remember there was something about the Seventh Hour Trumpeters, and several other groups that sounded very strange. Nevertheless, these were established churches—they were in the phone book. So Howard said to the Dean: well, suppose that one of us wanted to attend one of those churches and put that on the chapel slip; would *that* be acceptable? And he said no. So Howard said, well, then, what gives you the right to decide what is a religion and what isn't? These others are established churches, and you're saying they're not legitimate. What gives you that right? To which Casey's response basically was: the fact that I'm the Dean of Men. I get to decide. There was no pretense here to any intellectual defense of this position; it was purely arbitrary.

Being the good, obedient children of the fifties that we were, when our slips were rejected, we simply went off to chapel, or whatever we needed to do to get enough points. We did not push the thing to the wall. We were not going to jeopardize our Carleton education for this thing, but we did try to make a lot of noise about it.

One of the difficulties that we had was people tended not to believe that we existed. We thought that we had this wonderful protest vehicle, and yet when we tried to get students excited about the fact that we were being denied credit, and that this was not legitimate, it was very hard to get other people on campus interested in that. They simply believed that we didn't exist. Occasionally we would get people to come out to the Hill and meet with us on Saturday afternoons, but many people that we tried to invite simply believed that we were pulling their legs, and that if they went out there, they would be the fools for showing up for something that didn't in fact happen. So we never were able to drum up a ground-swell of opinion. We couldn't get the *Carletonian* to write editorials on our behalf, or any of that sort of thing—which we found very interesting, given the climate of protest that was beginning to develop in a number of areas having to do with things like women's hours and the like.

So that was kind of where we were at the end of that first spring. The following fall we made an attempt to get a little more organized. By that time I was writing things that later became *The Druid Chronicles*, trying to put together some "scripture" and add a little more legitimacy to what we were doing. We also printed some pamphlets, and we got ourselves a table at the day where various campus organizations could put out literature

and get people to sign up. We got ourselves a table and passed out pamphlets and tried to get people to sign up. Not too many did. And again, we kept getting this response: oh, well, this is all just a put-on; there aren't really any Druids; you're just pretending. But a few people would believe that we really were there, and [would] come out and meet with us.

At some point we decided that when we had thirty people, that was a magic number of some sort, and we declared that that was a *multitude*. So whenever we had thirty, we could say, "Oh, we had a *multitude* present for our meeting"—and that did happen a couple of times.

I believe we had a multitude present for Halloween that year, the Samhain service. That was really quite an elaborate affair, with a number of people in robes. We had torches, and we had a grand procession through the Arb from Monument Hill to a nice fire area in the Upper Arb somewhere near the southern-most bridge and up the hill a little bit. I probably could find it again if I went out and tromped around out there. We had this long procession along the various trails through the Upper Arb to get there, shocking a number of people along the way. I don't know whether they were more shocked by our regalia or just by the fact that we were carrying all of these flaming brands through there.

Again, the events that are recounted in—by this time the *Latter-Chronicles* that evening really did happen. We had sort of a fortune-telling period, which started with a process of melting bits of lead in a ladle in the fire, and pouring them into water, and then people would look at whatever shapes were formed in the water, and attempt to interpret them, much as you would tea leaves. I had read somewhere that this was a fortune-telling technique, so we did that. And as people got into the swing of it, there were some things that sounded a little bit like prophecy, and like some people were in fact having some kind of profound experience—one of which we later interpreted to be a foreshadowing of Kennedy's assassination. There were enough echoes in that prophecy—and it is described in the *Chronicles*—that it really later sounded like, gee, that fits. Which was a little scary—there were some people who weren't at all sure that they liked this. It was beginning to sound awfully real.

And there were, in fact, I think, a number of us who were beginning to value the experience we were having. Is it a real religion? Well, that's always one of the questions. Were we just playing games, or were we really doing something here that has validity in the spiritual realm? I think that's a question that each of us has to answer for ourselves. It was certainly becoming something that was increasingly important to us in ways outside of the initial protest idea.

After November 1st, we decided it was convenient—by that time Fisher had worked out the notion that there were these two halves of the year, and that there was going to be a period of the Waters of Life in the summer, and a period of the Waters of Sleep in the winter, and so we would not meet between November 1st and May 1st. This was the period of the Waters of Sleep. And besides, it was not very congenial to be meeting

outdoors in the bosom of the Earth Mother during that part of the year.

Deborah: Well, not only the Waters of Sleep, but the suggestion that the Earth Mother herself was asleep during that season, which did make a great deal of sense here in Minnesota.

David: Right. So there wasn't much activity during winter, other than I kept on writing on *The Druid Chronicles*. I do remember having a discussion with David Fisher about that time (I think it was more toward the spring) in which he was beginning to feel that maybe this thing was going too far, that maybe we should just stop it, that it was in danger of becoming a "real religion." I remember him saying very specifically to me, "Well, I don't want to become another Joseph Smith." And, basically, I told him that it was too late, that this was going to happen anyway, and that I had no problem at all with being Brigham Young! But I think in many ways he was hooked anyway. He was definitely enjoying playing the Arch-Druid.

Deborah: He always had a flair for the dramatic.

David: Yes.

Eric: At what point did the structure of Arch-Druids and Preceptors and all the various offices get established? Was that something that happened very, very early?

David: That happened very early. I would have to go back and look at the dates that occur on the copies of the constitution that we have. One of the aspects of the political gambit here was to become a recognized, legitimate campus organization. We felt this would help our argument that we should get credit for this. To do that, there were prescribed formalities. You had to adopt a constitution. You had to submit the constitution to CSA and have them recognize you as a campus organization. You had to have a faculty adviser. There were a number of things to be checked off.

So it was necessary to write a constitution. I believe that Howard Cherniack wrote the constitution, and in the course of that developed the terminology: the Arch-Druid, the Preceptor, the Server as the offices. I don't remember any specific conversations with them about where those things came from. The Arch-Druid was obvious. It's a term that you see in the literature about Druids. We believe that there was somebody that at least we call the Arch-Druid, who was a leader of Druids in Britain.

The other terms—I don't know where they came from. It appears that Howard may have designed the rôle of Preceptor for himself. The description in the constitution says that the Preceptor is charged with responsibility for secular matters, which involved things like writing the constitution, getting it submitted to CSA, leading the delegation the Dean's Office, and so on. But I, at least, had no direct involvement in the development of the constitution, but that was all done the first spring in '63, I believe. So we were going through those mechanics of trying to get recognition the following school

year.

Eric: Do you know anything about how a faculty advisor was obtained?

David: Well, Jon Messenger was on campus the year '63-'64. I think he was only here a year, as a visiting professor. But his area of specialty was Celtic studies.

Deborah: It was fairly obvious, and he was willing to do it.

David: So I believe Howard approached him, and he said, oh yeah, sure. He was quite willing to do that. He was not actively involved, in that he did not come out to our meetings and so on. We chatted with him a few times, and he shared some lore with us. [He played] largely a figurehead rôle. He understood that he needed to be there as an advisor, and that that was mainly what we required of him. Later, after he left, we approached Bardwell Smith, whom we believed to be sympathetic to our point of view, as indeed he was, and he was quite happy to be our official advisor. But again, Bardwell never really took an active rôle in working with the Druids. He was simply willing to lend his name to the project, and chat with us one on one if we wanted to.

Deborah: There may be a small gap, historically, there, because Bardwell was on sabbatical '64-'65, and if our recollection is correct, that Jon Messenger left at the end of '63-'64 school year, I'm not sure who we had as faculty advisor '64-'65. But if we remained a club in good standing, we found someone.

David: Well, I don't believe there was an advisor that year, and I don't believe we were a club in good standing, either!

Deborah: That's possible.

David: During the '63-'64 year we did make all the proper applications and so on, and my recollection is that CSA had no problem with our being a campus organization. Anybody who wanted to be an organization could, as long as you got the appropriate things checked off. I do have correspondence from Jon Kaufman, who was one of the CSA people responsible for putting together a booklet about campus activities, and we had submitted a piece about the Druids for that booklet. The correspondence that I have is essentially an apology for the fact that that piece had been deleted just prior to the final printing at the end of the '63-'64 year. Without any prior warning or discussion or anything, it had simply been summarily deleted by whoever finally put the thing together. So there was certainly an atmosphere of persecution there. There were people who really didn't want us to be legitimate, for whatever reason.

The thing that changed, of course, was that in the summer of '64 the chapel requirement was abolished. Suddenly the rules of the game were all different, and the importance of our being an official campus organization greatly diminished. We were never interested in getting any money out of CSA, or anything like that, so what point was there, really, in being an official organi-

zation, other than perhaps getting your name in a booklet, which they obviously weren't going to allow? So I think we paid less attention after '64 to the details of whether we really were a club in good standing. I don't remember spending any time on it when I was Arch-Druid, walking paperwork through CSA or anything like that. I think we just decided that that didn't matter so much any more.

Deborah: '64-'65 was certainly a year of some soul searching, the question being whether we had any reason to exist any longer. That was an important topic of discussion during that time, more important, as David says, than our official status.

David: To back up a little bit: during the '63-'64 school year we were still attempting to get organized. I guess I had a little more interest in that sort of thing than the other people. I was busy writing the *Chronicles* and finding what I could in the library about Druidism. One of the things that happened: in the course of events David Fisher had made some references to the Ten Orders of Druidism. He said he was a Third Order Priest, and he was busily admitting other people to the First and Second Orders. Well, what about Fourth through Tenth? What were they? He was not very specific about that, and I suggested that perhaps we should associate each one of them with some god or goddess from Celtic mythology. That was all right with David Fisher, so I went off to the library, and combed through the books, and managed to come up with some names, and invented the so-called higher orders.

Then the problem was: how were we going to get them populated, since this whole thing was sort of a bootstrap effort. I was having great fun inventing structures and procedures, and so invented this mechanism whereby each order would elect the Patriarch of the next order. There was no consideration of Matriarchs at this point; everything was still very patriarchal, and I'm sure Deborah will have things to say about that when it's her turn. It just didn't occur to us that that was an issue yet. "Us," I say—the men. It did not occur to the men that that was an issue. So we were going to have a Patriarch of each of these higher orders, and the Patriarch would be able to consecrate anyone that he chose as a member of the order, and when the order felt like getting around to it, it could elect the next Patriarch.

So we had a structure that would allow us to climb up the ladder and get somebody into each of these higher orders over a period of time. Norman Nelson was very sympathetic to that. Norman particularly liked to collect titles, so he wanted to be member of a bunch of different orders. My recollection is that David Fisher was a little luke warm about the whole "higher orders" thing. Perhaps because it would dilute his primacy as Arch-Druid? I don't know. I should not attribute motives to him. But Norman definitely was interested, so we put that all together.

Meanwhile, my own ordination as a Third Order Druid occurred in April of '64. I think this was a watershed for David Fisher, certainly. When I told him that I wanted to be ordained as a Third Order—become a

priest—he was really very reluctant at first, perhaps because that meant that it really was going to move beyond his control. He would no longer be completely in charge. It would have more of a life of its own than he had initially anticipated, perhaps. But he did go along with it.

We had an extenuating circumstance, in that we had made one more attempt to build an altar on Monument Hill. This time we had put the thing together with mortar, and we needed to give the mortar a chance to dry before somebody would come and take it apart. David did the talking about, well, to become a Third Order, you had to do this all-night vigil. I don't know where he came up with the notion. Of course, vigils have occurred in various traditions. There are vigils in the course of becoming a knight, for example. At any rate, that was the test that he prescribed: that you'd have to do an all-night vigil on the bosom of the Earth Mother. This worked out very nicely with the fact that we needed somebody to guard this new altar.

So that's what I did: I sat up next to it with my little fire all night, and made sure that nobody came and disturbed it. David came up in the morning, and we had the ordination of the first Third Order Druid after David. Shortly thereafter, Norman Nelson wanted also to be ordained as a Third Order, and David and I together performed that ceremony. David actually performed the ceremony, but I was present for it.

We began some traditions at that time, too. In the course of the vigil, existing Third Order priests on campus should please come out and spend some time with the person; make it a little easier to get through the night: some conversation, a little story-telling, some reading, whatever—provide company. Also, all the Third Orders around should if possible attend the ordination service, but at the very least, have breakfast together afterwards. After that ordination of Norman Nelson, we all got together in Goodhue for breakfast, and had what counts, I believe, as the first meeting of the Council of Dalon ap Landu, at which we began the process, that I was outlining in the *Chronicles*, of how we would populate the higher orders. I believe it was at that breakfast meeting that we elected David Fisher as Patriarch of the Fourth Order.

At about the same time, David Fisher resigned the office of Arch-Druid and turned it over to Norman Nelson, who as I say, was interested in collecting whatever titles he could collect. He wanted to be Arch-Druid for at least a couple of months before he left Carleton. (He was a senior that year.) So he finished out the year as Arch-Druid. Then since he was gone from campus, that meant that the following fall we had to have some sort of passing on of the torch to somebody else. It was at that time that I was elected Arch-Druid. David was not particularly interested in taking that on again. As a senior he had plenty of things to do, and was quite willing for me to do it.

In the spring of '64, then, on one day we populated as many of the higher orders as we could at that time. It was sort of an assembly-line process in which David Fisher first admitted Norman and me to the Fourth

Order. We had our ceremony doing that—this was all on the Hill of the Three Oaks—and we all sat down and had our meeting of the Council of the Fourth Order and elected Norman as the Patriarch of the Fifth Order. Then we all stood up and did the ceremony that Norman had written. He admitted David and me to the Fifth Order, and then we sat down and had our meeting of the Fifth Order to elect me as Patriarch of the Sixth Order. The rationale there simply was that I was going to be at Carleton longer than either of them, so by having me as the Sixth Order, I would have an opportunity to admit some other people to the Sixth Order, perhaps, and elect someone in a later class to be Patriarch of the Seventh Order and so keep it going. At least that was the plan.

I don't believe that there was any sense that we wanted [any] higher order to be higher than another. This was certainly one of David Fisher's concerns; he didn't want that to be true, and I didn't see any reason for it to be true. The only reason we were doing this was because at one point he had said there were ten orders, and so we were trying to make that happen. And it was fun, and a lot of what we did was done for fun. There's no question about that.

We were really quite clear that the most important order, in the sense of the continuing Druid activity, was going to be the Third Order: that Arch-Druids would be drawn from the Third Order, anyone who wanted to be admitted to the higher orders would first be Third Order, and so on. The rest of it was just icing on the cake. At least, that was certainly part of the argument that I made to get myself elected to the Sixth Order!

Eric: As an historical footnote, when you mentioned Bardwell Smith, it reminded me that I had mentioned to Charlotte Smith that I was going to be talking to you, and she said, "Be sure to have them note, for the record, that [our] son was the first pupil in the Druid Sunday School."

David: Yes!

Eric: OK, good: it's on the record now, Charlotte.

David: Yes, I do remember Brooks coming to at least one service. He babbled on quite happily while we did whatever it was we were doing.

Eric: This probably is a natural time to bring Deborah into the conversation, since we are now chronologically up to the year that you arrived. Why don't you start the same way that David did; tell me something about your own background, religious as well as otherwise, and how you came to Carleton, and how you encountered the Druids.

Deborah: Actually, I was fascinated by the fact that David chose to tell us when he was born, because that wouldn't have occurred to me, but I will do that. I was born in Brooklyn in 1947. I spent some time as a very young child in New York City, and then in Long Island, but did most of my growing up in Tarrytown, New York, which is probably best known as the site in which the

Legend of Sleepy Hollow took place. Washington Irving lived in the town *that way*; the Legend of Sleepy Hollow took place in the town the other way, and my elementary school was on the site Katrina Van Tassel's home, and in fact my high school was Sleepy Hollow. And our team was the Horsemen.

I say this because I think it may actually have some relation to my willingness to explore non-mainstream traditions, that there was even in this rather respectable New York suburb a slight odor of feyness to what we did as we grew up in the schools. I come from a non-believing Jewish background. It was explicitly non-believing. That is, my father had grown up in an Orthodox Jewish home, my mother in a non-believing home. Their religion was Freudianism. They were both trained social workers, and they didn't have any use for any of that stuff. It was a psychological crutch; virtually any religion [was].

By the time I arrived at Carleton, I had done some significant religious searching of my own, starting when I was about eleven. Starting with the local Jewish Temple, which at the time, I think, was very much in the mainstream of Reformed Judaism—which meant it was extremely rational, and there was no hint of the supernatural, or the transcendent, or much of anything except Jewish history and how to do the rituals. I went to a Quaker camp in Vermont for a couple of years, as a result of which I attended Quaker meetings for some years, which was probably the first hint of any kind of spiritual life that I got tuned into.

Then I began, I guess about the end of my junior year in high school, a rather odd process of attending the local Episcopal church, and also the local Roman Catholic church, because there were a group of us who attended the Episcopal church, but some of those people were Roman Catholic. So after the Episcopal service was over, we had to run down the street and go to Mass so that they could go to Mass. Since most of us who weren't Roman Catholic were studying Latin, and it was still the Latin Mass, this was sort of fun. So I can't claim any major spiritual quest, but I was sure mucking around with a variety of religious traditions and, like David, had begun a process of reading spiritual books, or scripture or whatever, from a variety of traditions by that time.

I came to Carleton as a 16-year-old. My parents had had me skip one grade in elementary school because they felt I wasn't stimulated enough, and then in what should have been my junior year in high school, I decided I didn't want to do any more high school. There were a number of possible pretexts for that, including the threatened election of a couple of John Birchers to the local board who were proposing to eliminate all Advanced Placement courses, which would have made my senior year a *real* desert.

I had already, being an extremely diligent child, early in my sophomore year gone to the guidance counselors, and said, "I want to go to a small liberal arts college somewhere." They had given me a list of, I don't know, seventy schools nation-wide, or something like that. In those days, one could write away to colleges

and get entire bulletins, the entire course catalog and everything: there were no viewbooks that I remember. I had these things stacked all around my room for much of a year, as I sort of whittled things down. So when I decided I wanted to go to Carleton College, I had some idea of places I wanted to check out, even though this was really a year early, and applied to three colleges. The deal my parents made, since this was only my junior year, was that if I could get into a college of the quality they were sure I could get into after four years, I could go. The Admissions Office was doing interviews in downtown New York in a hotel, so that was where I was interviewed. I had taken the SATs by then, but late; so we didn't have any scores or anything like that.

I visited the other two colleges I was interested in, Brandeis and Radcliffe, because they were closer. I had never been to Carleton before I arrived here, but basically made the choice partly on the basis of that interview, because I liked the way the interviewer approached me. It was far less patronizing than the Radcliffe interviewer. That was part of it—the sense of being treated as somebody who sort of belonged in a college. Also, [I was] very attracted by the Social Co-op, and by the total lack of sororities and fraternities here. I have sometimes found myself wondering how different my life would have been if I'd gone to Brandeis, because I probably would have ended up as a good Jew if I had done that.

Anyway, I ended up here in the fall of '63. I may actually have been at that first Samhain service. I cannot remember the chronology exactly, but I remember the kind of procession with torches, and I don't remember whether we did that the same way the following year. I also believe I remember Druids coming through the library in procession, calling people to join in that service—robed Druids.

Eric: Not with the torches, I hope!

Deborah: Not with the torches in the library, no. But with robes.

David: I do remember doing that. I'm not sure which year that was.

Deborah: And I certainly remember the fortune telling with the melted lead, and do not remember how many times we did that. I think I was present at more than one. But what I was actually doing that freshman year, in terms of any kind of religious life, was seriously looking into the Episcopal church: attending Canterbury Club Sunday Mornings, sort of checking out whether I was interested in this stuff. I did not become significantly involved in Druid life or services, except maybe for the great festivals, until the following fall of '64.

But I knew Druids, because I got involved in KARL very early in my freshman year. I ran into the radio station at one of those—whatever they called them then—where there were tables to sign people up. But there was also a radio station open house that I was invited to on that occasion. This was in the days when freshmen wore beanies for about six weeks. One day, very early in my tenure at the radio station, when I was

typing something at the typewriter, the then station manager came up and removed the beanie from my head, and announced that I didn't have to wear it *there*. This sealed my commitment to the radio station, and therefore created a commitment to a place where there were a number of Druids, including David and Dave Fisher, who were present. So I certainly knew *about* Druid activities my first year here, even though, as I say, my recollection is of not being involved, except maybe for the major festivals (since I like bonfires) that first year.

My second year, the '64-'65 year, I began attending Druid services regularly. I'm not sure of the chronology in terms of my doing that and our becoming a couple. That whole fall there was a certain amount of figuring out how we felt about each other, but that didn't get clarified until Thanksgiving, so that was certainly after Samhain. The kind of advice women were given in those days involved appearing, at least, to be interested in the things that interested a man you were interested in. So my motives may not have been at all pure, becoming involved in Druid activities. By Beltane we were a couple. We did stuff on February 1st; we did something with the Waters of Sleep that year; I think it was indoors.

David: Yes, it was in 2nd Willis.

Deborah: And I remember that. One of the things that was going on during that period, in terms of women's status within the Druids—well, there were several things going on. I remember an under-current of slight titillation about possible sexual overtones to a few of the things which I now remember with a kind of horror. One of them was that—although, as David said, we didn't talk about Matriarchs much—the fact is the names you'd come up with for the ten orders, the Tenth was Fertility, and I think was in fact a goddess. So there was some discussion of the idea that that ought to have a Matriarch rather than a Patriarch.

It was also difficult, if not impossible, for us to think about a woman vigiling at that point, because we had curfews. Again, this surprises me a little. We didn't have bed checks, so if you didn't sign yourself out, they wouldn't know that you were still out. But we were very good, even when we objected. You would have had to do a little bit of stuff to not sign yourself out, because if you left the dorm after 7:00, you were supposed to sign yourself out. But with a little bit of advanced planning, with a place like the radio station to leave one's gear during the day, for a vigil, it would have been entirely possible just not to go back to one's dorm after some mid-afternoon hour, so that one didn't have to sign oneself out, so that they—the authorities—would never know that one was still out. It would have been necessary to wait past 6:00 [a.m.], when they reopened the doors, probably until about a quarter of eight, to get back in again without being seen, but this could have been done. We just didn't think about it. We weren't supposed to stay out all night.

So there was this apparently unstopable obstacle—that you couldn't do a vigil if you were a woman—so you couldn't become a Third Order Druid. But there was

the beginning of a sense that that was perhaps not equitable, so I think it was Fisher came up with the idea that a woman could a priestess *unto* an order—of one of the higher orders, but not *of* any of the orders, and could not be a Third Order Druid. There was someone—I cannot remember who she was—but I was present when she was made a priestess *unto* the Fourth Order.

David: It was Danny [Hotz].

Deborah: Danny, right. It was a fun ceremony, again with these little odd under-currents of there maybe being something sexual about this, but nobody quite knew what. And that was sort of where it rested, and I think she was the only priestess “unto” one of the orders that I recall.

David: As far as I know, yeah.

Deborah: As far as recall, that was it.

David: I think I actually came up with the term “unto,” but it was in response, as I recall, to David Fisher’s wanting to be able specifically to appoint Danny as a priestess, and to get around the fact that she would presumably would not be able to vigil.

Deborah: Right. When you look back at it, we’re basically talking about the 24 months following the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, which none of us had heard of. This is proto-feminism, if it’s anything like that. We were treated pretty much as equals in the classroom, but none of us had much expectation of social equality, notions of mutuality of relationships. It came very fast thereafter, but it wasn’t there then.

So my participation with the Druids my sophomore year became more frequent. I was a regular attendee at services. I became a Second Order Druid very quickly, but then there was this wall about becoming a Third Order Druid. Meanwhile, our relationship got closer during the summer of ’65, when we were both on the first of the revived Carleton in Japan programs, conducting a courtship in various places in Japan, including many Buddhist and Shinto temples. And there certainly was, I think, some sense of an enhanced importance to the nature-worship aspect of Druidism as I learned more about Shinto. I was studying one of the Shinto fertility goddesses—who’s now pretty much a goddess of wealth, rice having gotten transformed into yen over the generations. It’s possible that in my own mind some of this titillation was settling down a bit as I began to deal with this in an ancient culture that was relatively better documented than the Druids.

That year, ’65–’66, I was both taking formal instruction to prepare for baptism in the Episcopal church (with Bardwell Smith) and trying to figure out some way that I could become a Third Order Druid. In that year there was a loophole created in the system. Upper class women—I think it was *only* upper class women—could get letters from our parents which were filed with the Dean of Women, saying that we could sign ourselves out for some specified number of overnights a term. These were explicitly supposed to be *not* in

Northfield. They were intended to allow us to stay overnight with friends in the Cities if we went to a late play or concert. But it meant that there was a mechanism to sign yourself out. As I was saying before, there was this problem of getting out of the dorm before the hour at which you had to sign yourself out. [This] made it simpler to think about that, and I decided that this was the chance I was waiting for to become a Third Order Druid. We discussed how this should be done, and I decided that I was not comfortable with lying about where I going. I could have in fact claimed that I was going to visit friends in the cities; there were friends who would have insisted that I was there, should I need such backup. But I simply signed myself out to the Hill of Three Oaks.

To backtrack slightly, one possible explanation for why the women who submitted Chapel slips back in the first year got them accepted and the men did not was that because the women were locked into their dorms, there was a system whereby there was someone who stayed up all night just inside Gridley, which connected to all the other dorms, to admit legitimate late arrivals—that is, the other dorms were locked at 11:15, but seniors could have a certain number of times out ’til midnight, and then later to 1:15 or 1:30—but also to admit miscreants who arrived in the middle of the night after falling asleep after who-knew-what sinful activities in the Arb. These were older women from downtown who were employees of the Dean of Women’s office but not regular college employees. And one of their night-time tasks involved checking off Chapel slips. So they just checked off names, and were simply not part of the administration in the way that the Dean of Men’s staff were.

It’s my belief that some similar oversight was why nobody wondered where the heck the Hill of the Three Oaks was, why I hadn’t given a phone number or anything like that. That was how I managed, I think only a year after Danny sort of gave up on the idea of being a Third Order Druid, to become a Third Order Druid.

The experience of vigiling *is* an important experience, and it may have been enhanced for me by the sense of there being something a little daring in doing this, and then of being visited by men during the night, because of course the only other Third Order Druids there were to visit me were male. In a sense, though, we were all taking this very seriously, which was very important to me. So I am both a Third Order and a Sixth Order Druid, since David was still around and could do the Sixth Order [ordination]. Within a couple of years the curfews were gone and it wasn’t an issue at all, but it was an important change that suddenly we had to start thinking about the idea that Third Order Druids were women as well as men. I don’t think we were equipped to think about it very well, because as I say we weren’t thinking very much about changing the nature of female rôles in society.

Eric:

Let’s talk a little bit about “taking this all very seriously” in connection with the fact that in the summer of 1964 the Religious Requirement is gone; the initial reason

for founding the Druids has been removed, but the Druids didn't stop. Say something about why that was.

David: I for one at least had become fond of the Druids. I had put a lot of work into writing the *Chronicles*, and coming up with solutions to various organizational problems. We had had formal meetings of the Council the previous spring to adopt some of the early resolutions that would clarify things after Norman went on to other pursuits, and so on. It would certainly hard to drop it, but I don't believe it was the force of my personality that kept it going, or anything like that.

What had happened in the course of the previous year was that a number of people had found that they were getting something out of it. At least one person, Dick Smiley, considered Druidism to be his *only* religion. He didn't believe in anything else, and yet there was something very compelling about Druidism for him. A lot of fun, of course—he enjoyed playing the game as much as anyone else—but there was something more to it than that. We had made quite an effort, I know David Fisher did and I did also, to find readings that would be meaningful to people. We adopted a tradition, that I don't think was ever formalized in the written liturgy, of there being three meditations as part of each service: there was the Written Meditation, the Spoken Meditation, and the Silent Meditation, in that order. We would read something, and then whoever was presiding (usually the Arch-Druid) would make some observations about what was read, and then there was a period in which we would all sit quietly together, much in the style of a Quaker meeting—although nowhere near as long as you would do in a Quaker meeting—and simply think about what had been said, if that's what you wanted to think about, or think about the noise that the wind was making in the trees, or think about whatever you wanted to think about. A period of being together as a group, and *quiet* together—and doing whatever happened during that period.

People liked that. They enjoyed it. They found it refreshing. They were getting something out of it that they valued. I certainly saw, when I became Arch-Druid, a goal of introducing people to the riches of other religious traditions, which, as I said earlier, I had started exploring in high school myself. [I] had found a number of passages in Buddhist literature, in Taoist literature, in Zen. I was getting very enthusiastic about Zen at that point, and did quite a bit of reading in Buddhism in preparation for the summer in Japan. I wanted to share those things, and I think David Fisher had much the same sense, that he wanted to share things that he had discovered. He was more into Hindu literature than I was. There were treasures that seemed to relate to our Druid tradition of focusing on Nature as an area to concentrate our worship, but that are found in various traditions. We combed the Psalms looking for the nature psalms, so occasionally there would be something from Jewish or Christian tradition that would

be the reading for the day. The idea was to spread it around as much as possible.

I think we sensed, even after the Chapel requirement was dropped, that there was work to be done, that the experience of most students at Carleton was very narrow in terms of what was out there to be learned about people's spiritual experiences. We saw a task to be performed there in terms of broadening that experience, and people responded to that. At least there were enough people who kept coming and listening to what we were doing to keep it going.

Deborah: It's hard now to know what my concepts were at the time, but several things I think are relevant. First of all, one of the arguments made against the Chapel requirement was that it had become an interference with, rather than a furtherance of, spiritual and moral growth for people. It was producing a reaction against religious tradition, which was contrary to its intention. I think there was some feeling that Druidism could be sort of the proof of this claim, that if we were able to follow our—what I would now call our spiritual paths but I don't think was talked of that way then—that there would be some things for us to discover. I still find the opening prayer of the Liturgy—which at one point I believe I was told Fisher had found in Hindu scripture—the one that says

(In the original) *O Lord* (and I would now say *O God*),
forgive these three sins, which are due to our human limitations:
Thou art everywhere, but we worship Thee here;
Thou art without form, but we worship Thee in these forms;
Thou hast no need of prayers and sacrifices,
but we offer unto thee these, our prayers and sacrifices.

I still find that one of the most profound spiritual statements I have ever heard. It informs my understanding of what I as a believing Christian am doing in Christian liturgy, including the Eucharist. Every time I ended out on the Hill somewhere saying that prayer, I was moved anew by it, and I don't think I was alone in that.

The meditations that David was describing, in fact, for me significantly echoed my experience of modified and short Quaker meetings at my Quaker camp. On Sundays we had a full hour of meeting, but every day we had brief chapel services that were Quaker meeting style. But because we were a children's camp, both on the weekdays and on Sundays our counselors read things to us—very much the kind of thing that we also did in Druid services. Perhaps a little more of the Prophet at camp than in the Druid services, but also readings from Buddhism, readings from Hinduism, readings from the mystics of the Western traditions.

There was what I would now call a kind of spiritual freedom in the opportunity to, either on one's own or in formal classes in Eastern religions, find moving passages or thought-provoking passages, and bring them as written meditations to the Druid services. When I look back at what was available in other religious life—this was just *before* things began to explode with experimentation in some branches of Christianity—this was some of the best stuff around, I think for most of us.

David: Another dimension of it that I felt: one of things that was very important at Carleton, and I believe it's important now, is the sense that there is something very real about being intellectually honest. That's a very important value at Carleton. Having said as part of the protest against the Chapel requirement that we should be treated as a legitimate religion, that we were just as legitimate as anybody else, it was necessary to follow through on that. If we had just disappeared when the requirement disappeared, it would have in some way validated the position of the Dean of Men that this wasn't real, that it was purely political, that there was nothing to it. And we were going to do that! We were going to somehow prove that there really was something to this after all, that our claim had been legitimate.

I don't think *that*, in and of itself, would have been sufficient to carry it more than a few months, but I think that was at least part of my initial feeling in that next fall after the requirement was gone. Part of what gave me the energy to keep it going was to demonstrate in some real way that there really *was* something there, that the claims we were making were valid. Over time, things change. New dimensions get added. It begins to take on other aspects of its own life. But in that first year I think that was part of what was going on.

Deborah: That desire gave us enough space to begin to discover that we wanted to continue meeting on the Hill of the Three Oaks on Saturdays during half of the year, that there was value in our lives [there].

David: Also, I was talking before about how a great many students refused to believe that we existed. Even at my own 25th Reunion I had conversations with people, talking about having been one of the founding Druids and having people say "Oh, but they didn't really exist, did they." By now we are officially mentioned in the 125-year history of the College, and yet there are still people saying, "Oh, but they weren't really there." And there was this stubborn insistence that yes we did exist, yes we really did happen, and we were not going to be wished away by people. That sense of being outcasts in some sense, of being an identifiable minority struggling against the rest of the world, gave us cohesion as a group and fueled that desire to prove to people that we could stick it out.

Deborah: There was something else as well, which you touched on when you talked about the fortune telling and the sense that maybe we were onto something more powerful than we thought, which was the weather magic. Which we continued. Before football games, which was essentially what our meeting time was on [Saturday], there was a spring when the skies were very gray and dark, and we processed to Mai Fête Island, and the skies cleared as we did it. There was a sense that we might be performing a public service!

David: There was also one occasion, I remember, where Mark Steinberg and I (Mark was the station manager of KARL and I was the news director at that time) had an invitation from United Press International to come up to the Twin Cities and attend a Twins game. There was going to be a reception beforehand at which we got to meet Eugene McCarthy, and this was a big deal. This was in the old outdoor stadium, and it was raining cats and dogs all morning. It was dreadful. But we had left a request with the Druids that they do the proper incantations and make the weather nice.

Deborah: I think I lead that service.

David: I remember it continued to pour right up to almost game time. We'd had our meeting with Eugene McCarthy, and we came out and went up into the stands, and as we did so, the clouds all drifted away and the sun came out! And the game went on as scheduled.

Deborah: We really came to count on that. We were married in July of '68 in an indoor service in a friend's home, but then the reception was all outdoors on a hillside overlooking the Hudson River in my hometown. The weather forecasts were a bit iffy, but there were quite a number of Druids in attendance in Tarrytown for the wedding the next day. We had a Druid service the night before, rather than the morning, and it was a gorgeous day. It was just perfect! So by that time I think we'd come to count on the weather magic as something that somehow we had found our way into. We didn't quite know how, but it was reliable.

Eric: I'm reminded of the anecdotes in the *Chronicles* about the efficacy of the Curse that David Fisher invoked at one time: anti-Druids coming to great harm, and something to do with a lightning bolt.

David: There are a couple of different stories in there. One had to do with cursing the weather and nearly being struck by lightning, so therefore saying, "Be careful with this." Another had to do with laying a curse on the anti-Druids, the result of which was that one of them did sprain an ankle. And this was taken to be a sign.

So, yeah: when things like this start to happen, you begin to raise questions about what's really going on.

Deborah: And again I would say, looking back on it, that was not an easy time to think (never mind talk) about the supernatural or the transcendent among our peers. We were uncomfortable doing it even in explicitly traditional religious contexts. The official religion of the College was very intellectual. That was one of the things about the sermons in the Chapel services, both before and after the end of the Religious Requirement: if you didn't know that you were in Chapel, and if they hadn't been shorter than 70 minutes, it would have been hard to tell the difference between a lecture and a sermon at Carleton.

David: Lectures didn't normally have a choral accompaniment.

Deborah: Right, and they lasted longer, but the basic presentation style was rational argument. Perhaps somewhat fewer facts than were presented in a Bio lab, but basically you were intended to deal with this mostly with your intellect, rather than with you gut or your psyche or any of those things.

Getting out there on the Hill, in the weather, did what I would now call "pulling us out of our heads" so that we could react with our whole selves. That was a good thing, and I think we recognized that.

David: And for me at least, as I did more studying of Buddhism, the part of Buddhism that became increasingly intriguing was Zen. Of course, there was a lot of Zen going around at the time. It was a faddy sort of thing. Alan Watts was writing his book. But still there was something very compelling about that point of view that challenged the purely intellectual approach to reality, that there were realities that were not purely rational. We had to acknowledge that and deal with them in some way. I think part of what we were doing, sometimes tongue in cheek, sometimes not, was saying, "look, there is more going on here than you can deal with in pure logic."

Deborah: We had also done something rather wise by declaring early on—I don't know whether this was Fisher or a consensus—that Druidism was compatible with any other religion, and every other religion, even if the other religions denied that. (We weren't sure how the Roman Catholic Church felt about this claim of ours.) We were, in a sense, laying claim to a kind of quest that was possible to anyone without having to burn any bridges. I think that fits with some of the Zen explorations that a lot of us were doing at the same time: that there was more than one way to get at truth.

David: It fits with Zen. It also, I think, was a reflection of our feeling, many of us on campus, whether we were Druids or not, that one of the main things that was wrong with traditional Western religion was the exclusivity of it: that you had to be one particular brand, and that if you were that particular brand, then you couldn't be any other brand. In order to become a particular de-

nomination, you'd have to renounce all the others. Many of us believed that this was simply not true, particularly as we began studying the Japanese approach to religion, which is very eclectic.

Deborah: And syncretic; you can be as many things as you want simultaneously.

David: That's right. As they became of new religious traditions, they tended to just incorporate them. Except for Christianity, because the Christians wouldn't let them! It's a great loss, both to the Japanese and to Christianity. But many of us reacted that that's the approach that makes sense. Why not welcome in as much as you can? Therefore, it really did become an article of the faith that you could be a Druid and you could be *anything else you wanted* and it was fine with us.

David Fisher had some problems with that, I have to say. Particularly as he approached the end of his Carleton experience and began looking ahead to the possibility—the probability—of going to seminary. He was afraid that the people who admit people to seminary would not agree with our point of view, and wanted to resign his orders and withdraw from Druidism.

The rest of us simply told him that that was not possible. His being a Druid was part of who he was; it was part of his life experience. It was not a question of rules. It was simply not logically possible to renounce that or to abandon it. As far as we were concerned, he was always going to be a Druid. He could believe whatever he wanted, but he was always going to be a Druid, and that was that.

Eric: We talked a few times about Dave working on the *Chronicles*. When did that come into final form? Was that before you became Arch-Druid those were all finished?

David: Yes, I believe that was all put together finally in the spring of '64. I remember putting out a little pamphlet, "The Song of the Earth," which had excerpts from the various books. By the time that pamphlet came out, I had the shape of the five books, and mostly written and figured out what was going to go into the various pieces of it. Some things got added later. The last chapter of the Latter Chronicles was written by Norman Nelson and contributed fairly late in the game, and it just seemed like a natural way to wrap up the Latter Chronicles. But by spring of '64 I had figured out what the five books were going to be and basically what was going in each one. I had been working on them all through that year, which may explain some of the grades that I got that year, but those grades may also be explained by the fact that my father died during that period.

I dearly wanted to be able to put it in people's hands. I wanted there to be a *real* scripture, that people could

carry around with them the way they carried Bibles around. Not just a pretend scripture, but something really *in print*. Again, this was part of making the whole thing legitimate and real. But there were real, practical production problems in that period. We did not have plain paper copiers.

Deborah: We did have a mimeograph machine that belonged to KARL.

David: No, it belonged to student government.

Deborah: It belonged to student government, but we had access to it because we used it to produce the Noon News Bulletin.

David: Well, I was the official campus mimeograph operator.

Deborah: That's right.

David: People could prepare stencils for campus organizations and functions, and leave them in a box where I would collect them, and I did this, oh, three times a week, I would collect these stencils and run them off, and they were charged at a piece rate to the organization. In the case of the Druids, since we didn't have an account with CSA, we did have to pay cash money for the things that I ran off.

Deborah: For which we passed a hat, as I recall.

David: Not as part of the service. We did not engage in passing filthy lucre around as part of a Druid service. It was not appropriate. But off on the side you could. Some of the materials I donated, and I got other people to help me. We would buy a ream of paper: a "printing" of the *Chronicles* was a ream of paper, because we would buy a ream and then use it. It was cheaper. I donated my labor. Otherwise, if we had to get the paper from the CSA stocks, then the whole charge would be higher.

Getting all those stencils cut was a very time-consuming process.

Deborah: Figuring out how the pages went together on the stencils was exciting.

David: For the *Chronicles* that was not such a problem, because those were full size 8+ by 11 sheets. The pamphlets were a little more complicated, because you had to get it to work out right when you folded it over and cut it.

I typed most of the *Chronicles* myself. I would make typos, and then you had to get out the correction fluid and fill in the holes and wait for it to dry and then retype it.

Deborah: All manual typewriters, of course.

David: All manual typewriters. We did have an electric typewriter. Was it electric? Maybe it wasn't. No, it was just a big old clunky manual.

Deborah: That big old clunky manual. It was a good quality manual, but it was old.

David: The *Chronicles* were all done on the KARL typewriter.

Deborah: Right.

David: The same one we used for the Noon News Bulletin, which was also done on mimeograph stencils. That had nothing to do with Druids, other than the fact that it was the same typewriter, and often the same typist. We would take the news off the UPI wire each day. It would be the 11:00 [news], the latest headlines, the latest Dow Jones averages—get them in, get the Bulletin reproduced, and then we had . . .

Deborah: . . . runners that went to the dining halls, which didn't open until noon.

David: One person for each dining hall would grab these copies and bring them there. They were let in early so that they could put them on all the tables. It was quite a production. I don't know how many years that went on. Tremendous logistics involved in getting that Bulletin out every day.

But it took me a long time to get the stencils made for the *Chronicles*. I believe they were ready, I think we had the first printing by Beltane of '64.

Deborah: Yes, I think that's right.

David: Then we carefully preserved the stencils so that we could do later printings. There was a printing history in the inside cover of each copy of the *Chronicles*. Those early editions were all done from the same set of stencils. The only stencil we would change would be the one that had the printing history on it. Everything else was kept the same; once the typos were in there, and there are some errors in the cross-references, once they got in there, too bad! We weren't going to go through all that again!

Eric: By the time, David, that you became Arch-Druid, you started to have graduation of former Druids, and the issue would come up of people who had been Druids at the Carleton Grove going off and continuing their Druidism at other Groves, founding other Groves. I don't know what the history of that is at all, but perhaps you can say something about the founding of Groves elsewhere beyond Carleton.

Deborah: Norman was the first.

David: Norman was the first, yes. He was the first of our initial group of three to graduate, and he wrote back that

he had found some kindred souls in South Dakota and was in the process of forming a Grove there. I don't know whether he ever really officially founded a Grove or not, but he was the first one to raise the question of how would one go about doing this, and we had some correspondence to that effect. There seems to be a logical problem here. In order to have a service and to admit new members to Druidism, they had to partake of the Waters of Life. This was really the only requirement for First Order, to partake of the Waters of Life and subscribe to the Basic Tenets. How could you do that if you didn't have enough people to officiate at a service? Didn't you, after all, have to have an Arch-Druid and a Preceptor and a Server, and they all had to be at least First Order? If you didn't have those people, how could you have a service, and therefore have legitimately consecrated Waters and admit new members?

Well, it seemed to me that he was just putting up unnecessary obstacles, that there was nothing that required any of this stuff. I talked it over with David Fisher, and we came up with the notion that, well, really, all you had to do was to have a Third Order there to conduct the service. We came up, really, with the notion of a Mission, almost. In the Episcopal Church, you have established churches, and you have missions. In other words, you could have a missionary go out and set up a mission. This was a slightly different class of organization than an established church—or in our case, an established Grove. A Mission could be conducted simply by having any Third Order, and the Third Order could consecrate the Waters of Life.

We did have the notion that you couldn't really have a Druid service with only one person. This didn't make any sense. You had to have at least two. If you didn't have an elected Preceptor, Server, and all that stuff, the other people present could as a group do the responsive parts of the service. The answers that the Preceptor would normally give could just be done by everyone present. Therefore, having Waters of Life was no problem at all, and once you had Waters of Life, then you could have First Orders, Second Orders, and everything flowed from that. When you wanted to, you could adopt a constitution and create a new Grove.

Our model for this was essentially the CSA model. You want to have a legitimate organization? Write a constitution; adopt it. We have forms for you; you just use the same constitution that Carleton uses. We'll just fill in the blanks: instead of saying "Carleton College," it could say "South Dakota" or "New York," or whatever you wanted it to say. Same three officers; you really only needed to have three people to have a legitimate Grove, because then you had a person to fill each office. We didn't think it was quite legitimate to have the same person fill two offices; that wasn't right. So you need at least three people, and then you could have your constitution, you could have your Grove.

In the original tradition, you had to be an Arch-Druid of a properly constituted Grove in order to admit other Druids to the Third Order. I know David Fisher and I felt that that number three was important in terms of demonstrating that you really had gotten something going, that it wasn't just one person out there playing games, that there really was interest. Unless you had those three people out there, there was something that wasn't quite right about having somebody creating other priests.

I guess that's a tradition that has been somewhat modified over the years, but initially at least, you had to get another Grove going before you could legitimately call yourself an Arch-Druid, before you could then consecrate other priests.

Deborah: To backtrack a little: some of this, Norman's desire to create another Grove, also contributed to this reappraisal, once the religious requirement was gone, about what we were doing here. There was some initial discussion about whether you could be a Druid away from Carleton. Norman obviously had a strong desire and interest to be able to continue to be a Druid while not resident here, and he was really the first person for whom that became a pressing issue. But that was another way in which we got to take a look at this question of what does it mean to say that you're a Druid, and what does it mean to be practicing as Druids. I recall that—particularly some of the times when Norman would come back, because he wasn't that far away, and Betsy was still here, so he would come back not infrequently, considering—that was one of the things we talked about: did it have to be the *same* at other places as it was at Carleton? South Dakota never did get to be that important, but I think that was kind of foreshadowing of some of the issues that came up later, in the Seventies, in particular, and other places.

David: I made an attempt to establish another Grove at my summer camp, where I was a member of the staff. This was a Boy Scout camp, Camp Ma-Ka-Ja-Wan. The camp itself is in northern Wisconsin and serves a Boy Scout Council in the North Shore suburbs of Chicago. I actually did have about eight or so people there: other members of the staff, for the most part high school students, and so very impressionable. They were willing to follow my lead, and they expressed an interest, and we had several services in the course of the summer.

Two of that number expressed an interest in becoming Third Order, and I did consecrate them—sort of in absentia, because by the time they decided they wanted to do that, it was already the end of the summer and we were going our different ways. I wanted some sense that they had some idea what was going on here, so I asked them to write to me some things about their reflections on Druidism before I would agree to the consecration. Since I was not going to be at camp the fol-

lowing summer (I was going to be in Japan), I allowed them to consecrate each other in my name. I don't think they ever did anything with it. I lost touch with both of them after I graduated from Carleton, so the Grove didn't really continue there.

But it did pop up in some other places, in particular in the San Francisco Bay area and Berkeley. One of our Druids here, Bob Larson (whom we always called "Larse") . . .

Deborah: Who was probably the first real Celtic hobbyist among us.

David: Yes, he was definitely a Celtic hobbyist. He determined that we were pronouncing a whole bunch of things wrong, and we continued to pronounce them wrong, and it was fine.

Deborah: But he didn't.

David: Right, he always pronounced them in an authentic way. I could never get the accent right, so I gave up. He was one of the people that David Fisher was very suspicious of. He was afraid that Larse was *really* taking this all much too seriously. And perhaps he was, who knows? That's his problem. I did consecrate Larse to the Third and Sixth Orders, and then he went off to Berkeley.

Deborah: Having flunked out of Carleton in his final trimester.

David: Yes, he never actually did graduate.

Deborah: But Berkeley was a good place to be at that point. By the time we arrived, a year or so later, he had hooked up with Isaac.

David: Right. We both wound up in San Francisco because I went into the army after Carleton, and through just pure dumb luck got assigned to the Presidio in San Francisco. So in 1968 I was at the Presidio, and we were married and set up housekeeping out there. I don't remember quite how . . . I think Larse found us.

Deborah: Marriage announcement in the *Voice*, or something like that.

David: And so Larse introduced us to Isaac, whom he had by then consecrated to the Third Order, and they had a Grove going in Berkeley. We attended a number of services over there, at various hillsides overlooking the campus.

Deborah: That Grove was *my* introduction to Neopaganism. That was not a word we used when I was here, but the Berkeley Grove was definitely NeoPagan. I remember one service on a hillside in Berkeley in which Isaac called upon a great number of gods and goddesses and spirits by name, and I am quite sure they were there, and was

far less comfortable with their presence than I perhaps would be now. [This] was another one of these moments of "what in heck have we gotten ourselves into?" Isaac was a very powerful presence, wherever Isaac was; small rooms, large mountain tops—it didn't really matter.

David: One of the things we were doing with Druidism [was] being very vague with people about whether we took this seriously or not.

Deborah: That was part of the appropriate Third Order stance!

David: Right. The idea was always keep everybody guessing. Well, Isaac picked up on that in spades, and we never did really know whether Isaac believed this stuff or not. I mean, at moments there would be the tongue-in-cheek approach to it all that we really recognized as being very much Carleton "good hume" type approach, and at other times it seemed very real. I don't to this day pretend to know what Isaac was really doing. Eventually he took the stance that Druidism should put itself squarely in the NeoPagan camp. Those of us who had experienced Carleton Druidism really could not buy that. I think the main problem with it was that it was becoming exclusive again. It was shutting things out, at least by implication. We could not be squarely in any camp, except our own.

Deborah: There could be Groves whose practice was NeoPagan and whose membership was heavily NeoPagan, but that was not to say that those Groves were better or worse, merely different from other Groves. There was sort of a suggestion, it seems to me, that the NeoPagan Groves were taking Druidism where it was supposed to go, and that was the piece that we resented and resisted.

David: I don't think, personally, that the things they were adding were any more legitimately Druid than whatever things we had added. I think Isaac would argue that they were, because *they* were really NeoPagan and the Druids were pagan. But they were various kinds of mythology and anthropology that he had collected from goodness knows where.

Deborah: Just as badly documented as the early stuff we used!

David: Right! So there was quite a controversy about that, which Dick probably could speak to a lot better than we can, because he was in the middle of much of it. Since this is not a video tape, we should mention that Dick Shelton is sitting in the back of the room listening to this.

Eric: We did an interview with Dick, this past spring I believe, and went into the Isaac wars to some extent.

David: I don't know that I need to add very much to that, except that we were very much in touch with Isaac and Larse during 1969–1970. In the summer of 1971 we went off to Germany, where I had a job with the US

government, and basically lost touch with them during that period. Occasional correspondence, but not terribly aware of what was going on, except as the result of the correspondence that we got through Dick.

Deborah: It is worth mentioning, in terms of the Carleton connection, that although we finally met Dick just yesterday, that it was through the Carleton connection that we got to know him and Ellen, mostly through correspondence back when these issues arose, and that we have always been able to find each other through the College directories and so on. That was part of how we became involved, at least tangentially, in some of these issues; not only as people who were physically present in the San Francisco Bay area and trying to figure out what we were going to do in relation to Isaac, but also in terms of this larger question, which Dick was dealing with . . . by that time I think you were in Ann Arbor, if I'm not mistaken?

Dick: Yes.

Deborah: This question of could there be legitimate Groves in the Seventies that were not NeoPagan, and what was the stance of Carleton as the Mother Grove, and what kind of authority lay here, and so on. That was probably of continuing importance to us, even though we at that point were no longer practicing Druids. [We] identified as Druids, but there was no real community to practice in.

Eric: In a formalistic sense, of course, the Council of Dalon ap Landu is continuing. You have membership on that, and if any body has to decide these questions, at that time that's the duly constituted body.

Deborah: Right. That was one of the interesting questions. When you got people like Isaac, who had no tie to Carleton directly, except through Druidism, how do you find people who are Third Order and therefore members of the Council. As long as we were all Carls, there was a fair degree of trust that we would that we would always be able to track each other down. This sense that somehow, in the course of following the nature of Druidism, we'd gotten people in there who didn't buy into the same kinds of values and, just, who were different, raised certain kinds of uneasiness, that I think were independent of the personalities involved.

David: I think I had an early sense that, whatever happened with Druidism, it was going to tend to revolve around Carleton. The Council early resolved that the Arch-Druid of Carleton would be the ex-officio Chair of the Council, in the belief that that most likely to be the most workable approach; that if we had the focus go anywhere else, it would probably get lost.

Deborah: Yes.

David: And think that over time, events have borne that out.

Deborah: That the communication channels that run through or around the College serve us well.

David: The College itself provides nice services in that regard.

Deborah: As this interview attests!

David: And we always tell everyone if you lose track of us, simply call the Carleton Alumni Office. Even if we don't let anyone else know where we are, we will always let the College know. That's a promise.

Another Grove that was founded, and I believe flourished for a while, was started by Dick Smiley at Purdue. I know he did have a number of followers there. He conducted services regularly for several years. We have clippings from Purdue newspapers identifying some of the services that he conducted there, and he did admit people to the Third Order. That was without adding Neopaganism or much of anything else, I believe, other than what Dick wanted to make up.

Deborah: More importance laid on the solstice perhaps than some other practitioners, but that was *perfectly* consistent.

Michael Scharding: My father remembers Dick Smiley just from reading clippings saying somebody was always having a huge bonfire. It was always Dick.

Eric: You say that after a certain point you were no longer practicing Druids, but [in] 1982 you were going to make a visit back to campus, and you had an ad run saying that Druids were coming back to campus and you'd be happy to meet with interested people. That had the effect of starting up I believe what had become largely a defunct Grove again.

Deborah: I had had continuing relationships with the College. In fact, in 1978, shortly after we got back from Germany, I came here in the summer for a week-long course for alumni that was something the College was experimenting with at the time. Even though it was, I believe, July, there were enough students on campus, and I found some poster that there was going to be a Druid service on that Saturday. So I went to a service that was *fairly* recognizable to me, but that did exist, and which I enjoyed. That was when I discovered that in the Seventies it had become pretty normal for the Arch-Druid to be a woman, which was, as we've said, very contrary to our previous practice.

But then somewhere between then and fall of '81, I joined the Alumni Board and attended three meetings that year; then was off the Board for a year, but involved with development work, so I came for at least one meeting during that; and then got back on the Board for two years. So I began a period of being on campus from one to four times a year, for about five years there. I did that again some years later for my 25th reunion committee, but it was particularly at that

- period in the early Eighties when we were doing that. And I was getting the *Carletonian* as a member of the Alumni Board; I received the *Tonian* regularly. In one of those issues there was a letter to the editor bemoaning the demise of the Druids at Carleton, and did anybody know what happened to the Druids? So we wrote back.
- David: As I recall, that letter was particularly concerned with the valuable functions that the Druids had performed in providing decent weather on the weekends for arbing.
- Deborah: The spring Board meeting was very close to Beltane, because I remember we had our daughter's first birthday on that trip as well, so it was the spring of '82. We were going on to visit other family in the midwest, so David and Joel came with me, as well as Judith (whom I had brought to all the Board meetings because she was a nursing infant). This was very good timing, in terms of this letter showing up in the *Tonian* and our response to it, announcing that we would in fact be here and would be glad to re-establish the tradition.
- David: I don't know if we took out an ad; I think we sent another letter back.
- Deborah: I think we sent a letter back that was then run in the *Tonian*, and we were approached on the strength of that. Or we may also have written to whoever had signed that first letter, because we had his name, and you could just write in care of the College. So we didn't start this, but we responded eagerly to this initial stimulus. We met with people here.
- David: We had a discussion in Sayles-Hill. Several people attended that and expressed an interest, and we talked about Druidism and all.
- Deborah: The discussion was advertised on campus in some way or other; flyers or something. I don't remember that anymore.
- David: So I said, well, is anyone interested in having a service? Yes, there was interest in doing that, so we held a service on the Hill of the Three Oaks. And then also raised the question: you really want to get this thing started again; is anybody willing to do a vigil? And sure enough, we had three volunteers.
- Deborah: I think these were all people who lived in Farmhouse?
- David: No; Bob Nieman lived in Farmhouse, I believe.
- Deborah: In any case, we were at least partly tapping into some of the then still relatively new (by our lights) ecological and nature interests.
- David: Bob invited us to have dinner at Farmhouse, which was wonderful. Good cooks over there at that time! We had a very pleasant evening with him. Let's see; it
- was Bob and Tom Lane and Meg Ross.
- Deborah: Yes.
- David: They all did vigil, and I tromped over there in early morning at dawn and performed the ceremony. This was all very spur of the moment, so I did not have ribbons to present them. They got their ribbons in the mail after I got home.
- I believe that it didn't take very well. I didn't get much in the way of correspondence from them; didn't get too much in the way of responses to my letters. I did get a letter from Tom Lane a year or so later, saying, well, they hadn't really done too much.
- Deborah: There was a small cache of Paraphernalia which then ended up in the attic of Farmhouse to be rediscovered later.
- David: I don't really have first-hand knowledge of what really happened there.
- Deborah: One of the other things in terms of what it means to be a practicing Druid: aside from, I believe, the January '82 Alumni Board meeting, when with the wind-chill factor it was unbelievably cold here (the final Board meeting in Great Hall became exceedingly uncomfortable because we were sitting on metal folding chairs and it didn't matter how much we were wearing by the end of that hour and a half; the room was just unheatable)—aside from that, I don't believe I have ever made a visit to campus without going out to the Hill of Three Oaks, whether there were any other Druids that I knew of or not. I suppose in some way that says for me that my Druidism is still anchored at Carleton.
- Eric: What is it about Carleton that made it a hospitable environment for Druidism to go on? I know the historical reasons it started here, but is there something about the nature of Carleton itself that, in your view, makes Druidism particularly compatible here?
- Deborah: Well, one thing that occurs to me when you ask that is my sense of the Carls I've known well having always a bit of tongue in cheek in thinking about ourselves. We can take ourselves very seriously, but we also have a sense of humor about ourselves. I think that is a quality that made this perhaps more hospitable to Druidism, in various times, than perhaps some other schools would have been. It may have been an accident that it started here, but then that made it more possible to perpetuate Druidism. The time was ripe in the sense that there was also the beginning of encouragement of intercultural studies, area studies. I think President Nason on the academic level was strongly encouraging; in other words, I think the intellectual climate was getting more hospitable towards the idea that we didn't all have to be white-bread middle-Americans. For those of us who were beginning to get very worried about the

idea that when we left Carleton we might have to turn into white-bread middle-Americans, this was very satisfying.

Eric: What about the geography of the campus? Is a place like the Hill of Three Oaks a place of spiritual power because of its significance to the Carleton Druids, or is it a place that has something special about it regardless of Druidic associations?

Deborah: I think that's one of these chicken-and-egg questions. As far as we know, it had no name before the Druids called it the Hill of the Three Oaks. That was one of the things people used to give us grief about at first. When we'd announced that we had meetings on the Hill of the Three Oaks, they would insist that not only that we didn't exist, but that *it* didn't exist. We've been very gratified by the fact that *that* at least has become enshrined in the maps, that it's properly recorded.

David: I think the fact of the Arb is very important. It's just impossible for me to imagine something like this starting up, say, at a place like Macalester.

Deborah: Or if we had just the Bald Spot. That wouldn't have done it.

David: I don't think Druidism could flourish meeting in rooms with chairs. It needs to happen outdoors somewhere. I think in all the various other Groves that have been started, that that was a significant component, that they had to meet outdoors somewhere. There are wonderful places above the campus at Berkeley in the Oakland Hills, in the Berkeley Hills, to hold services like this, and I just don't think you can do it without that kind of setting. So the very existence of the Arb was, I think, crucial.

Deborah: Yes.

David: Because I think we all did believe, and do believe, that Nature and an awareness of the world around us, an awareness of Nature as an organic whole is important to us spiritually. You cannot get away from that and have a complete spiritual life. We weren't talking ecology yet at that time, but again, if you look at the history of what was going on in the world, this was at about the same time that awareness of ecology began to be running through the rest of society. Whether Carleton was the right place or not, the *time* was right.

Deborah: And the place was appropriate, in terms of the Arb and the spirit.

David: And I think also, as Deborah has said, that a very important element of Druidism for us—and I think part of what has kept the spark alive, or has allowed it to return over the years—is the sense of not taking ourselves *too* seriously. A meaningful spiritual life is one which has a significant component of humor, of hav-

ing fun together, of enjoying each other's fun, and enjoying each other's company. That's something that I associate with being a Carl, what life at Carleton is like, at least for the people I associated with. We've often said that we never met a Carl we didn't like. There's perhaps one exception to that, but in general, when we have gotten together with other Carleton people where we've had no previous association, and the thing that we have in common is the Carleton Experience, though sometimes separated by decades, we still find that same spark of humor, of having a good time together, much of which is intellectually based: good banter, ability to kick ideas around and have fun with them.

Deborah: Sounds like Druidism to me.

David: Druidism is of a piece with Carleton in that sense. Not to say that there aren't other places that can have that same experience, but it is definitely something that has happened here, and is part of at least our sense of what Druidism is all about.

Michael: I'd like to ask a question. Would you consider the Carleton Druids to be a fraternity attempt at Carleton? With alcohol, big parties, secret rites . . .

David: No.

Deborah: No. David can speak in terms of the men who were involved in the early period, but one of the things that was characteristic of our Druid times here was that alcohol was used very sparingly in Druid rites. Alcohol, for all that we drank, was probably used less, and abused less, in that period in the early Sixties than it was maybe in the succeeding half-decade, when pot also arrived on campus in significant quantities in the late Sixties and early Seventies. Our partying, if you will, the big festivals for the Druids then, have to me a very innocent quality. The party was the fire, the fellowship, the seriousness and silliness of things like the fortune-telling, and about a shot of alcohol shared with everyone who was present. And that was all we drank together, as Druids. Some of us were also friends, and maybe partied elsewhere.

David: We also didn't put much emphasis on secrecy. I don't recall any attempt to keep anything secret from anyone else. The services were always open. There is this pretense of passing on the lore, what some of the words mean, if you go through the Third Order ordination service, but if somebody else wanted to get up at dawn and come up there on the Hill and attend the service, that was fine with us.

Deborah: Right.

David: We were not keeping anything secret from anyone, or "passing on the mysteries." It didn't have that quality at all. Perhaps if there had been fraternities and sororities and things here, there wouldn't have been the time

- or energy to make up the silly rituals; I don't know. Maybe our focus would have been drained off in that direction, so in that sense there may be a connection. But I don't think we were trying to create a fraternity substitute.
- Deborah: Even implicitly. I don't think so. There were some contexts then—*Tonian*, KARL, Players—where there were intimate sub-communities among Carleton students, because people worked together in intensive ways, and I think for some people who were not as deeply involved in any of those, that was certainly one of the attractions of Druidism. It was another place where you could get together with people and have some continuity without having to study together and stuff. But I don't think that was particularly conscious either. That also wasn't why you joined the *Tonian* or Players.
- David: I didn't mention, in terms of why I came to Carleton, one the attractions (I don't know that it was the deciding factor) was the absence of fraternities. I didn't feel that fraternities were an appropriate thing to be doing with my college time. I don't know that I'd thought all this out before actually arriving on campus, but by the time I'd been here a while, I believe my sense was that these naturally forming interest groups were a much more appropriate way to form community and to have a sense of bonding than fraternities would have been (which always struck me as highly artificial). I was sort of intrigued by the notion of fraternities, secret rites, and all that sort of thing, but when it came right down to it, it wasn't what I wanted to do.
- Deborah: In any case, one of my criteria for considering colleges, I would not look at any place with sororities, and places which had fraternities, even though no sororities, were sort of downgraded on my list. That was very practical. In those days, as a Jew, there were too many sororities I would have been excluded from. I had no interest in buying into a society in which people would be excluding me. Druidism would not, even if had developed that way, would not have had that problem, but I think probably most of us would not have felt very comfortable if it had begun to feel too much like a secret society. Those of us who were here in our time. Except maybe Norman. But he would have done it with great zest for the sheer fun of it.
- David: I think most of us who were involved were having too much fun with the theater aspects of it to have gone in for any secrecy.
- Deborah: Yes. I hadn't thought of it that way, but I think that's absolutely accurate.
- Eric: Other than the people who refused to believe that you existed, and the Goodhue jocks who would destroy the altars (for whatever reason) . . .
- Deborah: We believe. This is tradition, but we have no proof.
- Eric: ...and administrative hostility, did you experience any hostility toward the Druids as a group from other students, people who were offended by your existence. Particularly the question might relate to existing religious groups on campus, the traditional Carleton religious groups. Did they feel threatened by the Druids, or were there misunderstandings about what the Druids were about?
- Deborah: If so, it was damned low-key. I certainly don't remember anything in Canterbury Club. Inter-Varsity wasn't very active.
- David: I don't remember any specifics of outright hostility. I had maybe a couple of conversations with people who were essentially fundamentalist Christians who believed that dabbling in any of this kind of thing was dangerous and sinful and dealing with the devil. The sort of people who are uncomfortable with Hallowe'en costumes.
- Deborah: Took the spirits far more seriously than we did—do.
- David: Right. But there are always such people around, and they have their point of view. I didn't think that was particularly meaningful.
- Deborah: It wasn't very common as a stance at Carleton when we were here. Certainly not the people we hung out with.
- David: I suspect that there were more fundamentalist or nearly fundamentalist Christians than we were aware of. It was certainly less popular at that time to express that point of view openly, but *somebody* continued to go to Chapel on Sunday morning, even after it wasn't required.
- Eric: Well, I'd like perhaps as a way to bring this to closure, to probe for some reflections on your part about what Druidism has meant in your own lives, how it has informed your subsequent philosophies and outlooks and altered things for you.
- David: I think one thing that's definitely been true: what started out in some ways as a practical matter of being as incorporating as possible, of not wanting to do anything that would turn somebody off, of trying to be as welcoming as possible (part of that was we were trying to get people to join!) turned into a philosophical stance that I now believe very strongly: that a proper outlook on spiritual journey is to be as inclusive and accepting as possible. It doesn't mean you don't make judgments about things; it doesn't mean you don't sort out for yourself what you choose to believe and what you don't choose to believe. But to be open to ideas and to be as accepting of other people and their belief systems as possible is just a way of enriching your own life, your own spiritual experience; and I think it's the only way to go about it. That is something that has grown on

me. It started out as sort of an official stance for me within Druidism, but has really been very much internalized.

Deborah: I would say something similar, and I think my experience of the last nine years has been even more informed by it. I was essentially becoming a Christian at the same time I was becoming a Druid. I'm not sure how much of that stuff I wanted to believe, but [was] very drawn to the people. One of the things, given my background, was that Carleton was the first place where I found people of faith whom I could respect intellectually, which broke with one of my parents' insistences about the nature of the world.

There was a period after I left Carleton where I was spending more energy exploring the Christian faith that was newly mine, but during that period I also began to articulate my one religious and spiritual absolute, the one thing which is always a guiding factor for me, which I see as very Druid: never trust the theology of anyone who cannot laugh at themselves. This has been a wonderful touchstone for a wide variety of groups that I have run into, and was great for clearing away some of the underbrush about people who claim to have hold of the true faith when I was a young Christian. Because it did help me to tell who were the people who were on the wavelength that I was on.

In the last going on ten years, my Christian experience has been very informed by feminism, by lesbian and gay liberation movements, by the spiritual journeys of a number of women that I sort of travel with spiritually (which are not Christian; some of which are NeoPagan). There's been kind of a return to Druid roots in this time, and I'm not sure how much of the rather long process of coming to really abandon a patriarchal image of God was informed by Druidism, but I see a continuity there. There have been times when I found it very reassuring to remind myself that this was not the first time that I had called upon God as the Earth-Mother or as the Goddess; that lightning had not struck me then, and that I was probably on the right track now.

There's a real significant sense in which this is a piece of my spiritual journey that I am reclaiming. I lead women's spiritual circle gatherings in a couple of different contexts, and have been conditioned to adding recent feminist and lesbian theology. I've been thinking a lot as I've put together the most recent ones of how comfortable this is for me. I haven't actually gotten out any liturgies; it may be time to do that the next time I lead a circle. So it's both informed by apparently mainstream religious life, and been what I think of as a kind of underground spring for much of my spiritual journey since Carleton, since I became a Third Order Druid; a real source of energy and life.

David: I mentioned in my opening remarks having been raised

in the Presbyterian Church. Subsequent to that I did seek Confirmation as an Episcopalian, although the service was performed by the old Catholic bishop of Germany, which I rather like, because things were just murky and open-ended and as eclectic as possible. One of the things that I continue to find congenial about the Episcopal Church is that, at least in its better moments, it does seem to allow for things to be pretty much open-ended. We believe that it's better to remain in dialogue, even when we disagree with each other; it's better to allow the possibility of different and multiple answers to fundamental questions than to try to nail down *the* truth or *the* single Truth. We've just experienced evidence of that this weekend; we're in Minnesota to attend the consecration of our former rector from San Francisco as Episcopal bishop of Minnesota. There was a protest on the floor of the hall during that ceremony over the fact that this man has announced that he will ordain practicing gay and lesbian people.

Deborah: Non-celibate.

David: That he will allow within the diocese the blessing of same-sex relationships. (He still won't call them marriages because there are legal ramifications having to do with the use of that word.) But these were very controversial positions. They seem in some people's opinions to be directly in conflict with resolutions in the House of Bishops. How can the House of Bishops say one thing and then turn around and allow a person who holds a differing view to be consecrated as a bishop? Well, I think that's delightful. Why not allow that to happen? Why not allow things to remain open-ended and murky; because I think that's the only way that we can continue to move toward anything that would be spiritually malleable for us.

Eric: All right. I thank you very much for the time you've spent with me, and for your memories and reflections and thoughtfulness. Unless you have anything else to say, I think I'll declare this interview closed.

Deborah: It's been a pleasure.

David: Thank you.



David and Deborah Frangquist, 1993

Richard Shelton, '71

May 8, 1993

Eric: This is Eric Hilleman. It is Saturday afternoon, May 8, 1993. I am recording an interview in the Carleton College library for the Carleton Oral History Program. I'm talking with Richard M. Shelton, a graduate of Carleton in the class of 1971. Mr. Shelton, who is currently Principal Mathematician for Unisys, was a Carleton math major who subsequently went on to earn a Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Michigan.

Dick: That I have to correct: I was in the Ph.D. program, but I left before finishing my thesis.

Eric: I stand corrected. At Carleton, Dick was heavily involved in a number of things, including folk dancing and the Carleton Druids, more formally known as the Reformed Druids of North America, Carleton Grove. I'm told there was actually a large overlap in his time between those two groups, including both himself and Ellen Conway, who is now Ellen Conway Shelton. Mr. Shelton became Arch-Druid of the Carleton Grove during his time here, and has involved himself with interest in the subsequent ups and downs of the Carleton Druids ever since. That will form the principal subject of what we're going to talk about today. Dick, I wanted to start with some general things about your own background, and what brought you to Carleton, and things like that. Why don't you tell me about that.

Dick: I grew up in Illinois, down-state Illinois, nowhere near Chicago. Of course, Illinois is two states: Chicago and the rest of the state. My father's family is deeply rooted in Illinois, and I was born in Jacksonville, Illinois. My father went to school at Illinois College [in Jacksonville] and subsequently did graduate work in chemistry at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. He worked for a brief time at Dupont in Clinton, Iowa, but discovered that he didn't really like the industrial life, and—I'm reconstructing now—he jumped at the first academic job he found, which was at Western Illinois University in Macomb. That's where I grew up. Macomb is a very odd town, because it's in the middle of Bible belt rural America, but it is a university town. As a result, I grew up very strange: a faculty brat in a culture that I was very much not a part of.

Almost the only person in Macomb that I still feel comfortable talking to is my high school librarian, who graduated from Grinnell College. She suggested that I look at Grinnell, or more generally at the Associated Colleges of the Midwest. When I discovered Carleton, I applied here for early admission, and was subsequently accepted. I came here because of my roots, I think. [I was] an ardent Republican, but events in Vietnam and on campus changed that fairly soon. I'm now considerably more liberal, and now find myself in America at large sort of isolated and in the milieu of a culture in which I no longer feel I belong. So in a very real sense,

nothing has changed!

That's how I came to be here. When I applied for admission, I was interested very much in music and in astronomy. I was convinced I was going to be an astronomy major. But when I came here, I discovered I didn't get along very well with the orchestra conductor, and the astronomy department at that time was sort of a college disgrace. It very quickly became clear that I wasn't going to major in astronomy. So I ended up sort of by default in mathematics.

Eric: Were there particular professors at the time who favorably impressed you, or pushed you in that direction, or moved you in that direction because they were good—or was it not something that had so much to do with the teachers you encountered?

Dick: Oh, that's difficult to say. I think like many people that age I didn't have a real strong notion of what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I considered majoring in several departments. I had come with a fair amount of mathematics under my belt from high school. My high school was not a regular rural Illinois high school, but the Laboratory School of Western Illinois University. We had the opportunity to take college courses there, so I came here with a fair amount of mathematics. Toward the end of my sophomore year I finally decided that mathematics was clearly what I'd had most of, and seemed to be best at, so I might as well stick with it.

There were a few professors that impressed me very favorably. Roger Kirchner, in particular, I had several classes with. I think any math major has to put in a plug for John Dyer-Bennett, who—for math majors—was a very good instructor, and taught me a great deal about the way mathematics is done, rather than specific mathematical material.

Of all the professors I had here, though, I think the person who left the deepest mark on me was not a math professor at all, but David Porter in Classics, from whom I had beginning Greek and (I think more importantly) the course in mythology, which is where I learned that I have a soul. I don't think it's exaggerating too much to say that it changed my life. I had been interested in mythology before then, but as a very academic sort of thing. It wasn't until I had that course that I began to see the relationship between the dry and dusty mythology that you read about in Bullfinch and people's real emotions and religious needs. I believe it's that course, more than any other at Carleton—or indeed any other time in my life—that made me realize that there is another dimension to the human experience besides the academic one.

Eric: Is that a course that you encountered real early at Carleton?

Dick: Fall term of my sophomore year.

Eric: Since it's relevant, as we get into talking about the Druids, do you want to say something about your religious background? You said that was when you first learned

you had a soul; did you *have* a religious background when you came to Carleton?

Dick: My emotional framework is very much a product of my father, who is a typical product of rural Illinois: dyed-in-the-wool Republican, very stiff upper lip. It's almost a cardinal sin to show emotion. I remember vividly one occasion: he had borrowed a tape recorder from the university for some reason—I forget what it was now—but we were having fun just trying it out. At one point he read some Shakespeare into the thing. I thought that was rather interesting; I mean, I had never thought of my father as being interested in literature at all. It turns out in fact that his main extra-curricular activity at Illinois College had been the literary society, but I didn't know that, which gives you some indication of how much he kept things bottled up inside. At one point he read out "In Flanders Fields," which commemorates the fallen in World War I, and about mid-way through he started choking up. After a while, he just gave up trying to finish the poem, and said, "What's the matter with me? I don't understand." There was a big block on the expression of emotion of any sort.

In addition to this, my father, rather atypically for rural Illinois, was a devout atheist. When I was growing up, I remember a couple of occasions—once in nursery school and once in kindergarten, I think once in first grade—some attempt was made to make me familiar with Christianity, but it was clear that it was not something my parents were part of, and it was not something that I was particularly interested in, really. It didn't really touch my life very much. Basically, it involved just being dropped off at Sunday school and picked up. One of the things, I believe, that Druidism is about is that American Sunday schools do very little in actually talking about religion or ethics or morals, or anything of that sort. They're essentially just daycare centers.

It wasn't until I was in, oh, junior high school, I'd say, that I had any significant brush with Christianity. A friend of mine was a Baptist, and he invited me to Sunday school. I went for a few times, and I went to Vacation Bible School class during the summer one year, and became fairly familiar with the Bible. I found it fascinating. I don't think I could ever say that I really believed anything that was in it, as far as the existence of God, much less Christ as the son of God. And to this day, I tend to think that that sort of "religion" is not important to me. It's not what I derive my ethical bearings from. The religious elements in there don't represent things that I regard as historical—although certainly there are a lot of historical things in the Bible. I think my primary interest in the Bible is the historical development of that culture and how the religious elements played off the historical elements.

But I think it's fair to say that by the time I graduated from high school, I had a much sounder grounding in Christian tradition than many people of comparable age in today's society. In fact, I find it very disturbing that many of the ideas and many of the references to religious things or Biblical things one has to explain today; you can't just take for granted that people will know and make the connection. I believe that impoverishes our culture.

But I cannot call myself religious, and it wasn't until Porter's mythology course that I began to understand what religion really is about, and why it is that religion exists as part of human culture. That was the beginning of a very profound change for me. I'm not sure that most people would call me religious now. On the other hand, in a very real sense I am a very religious person, and I think the conjunction of the mythology course and my introduction to Druidism broadened my life dramatically. My spring term sophomore year academically was a disaster, but in a very real sense it was the beginning of my life.

Eric: Let's talk about your introduction to Druidism and your memories of your first encounters with this on campus, or how you got involved.

Dick: Early in sophomore year there was an article in the *Tonian* about Druids, and it mentioned that there were three on campus. There was a photo showing all three of them holding a service. I didn't really think very much of it at the time. It so happened, however, that one of the three, the Arch-Druid, was a good friend of mine by the name of Steven Savitzky, who was two years ahead of me. Steven was involved with a group of people on Third Burton, which was a hot-bed of campus radicalism at the time. The ring-leader, undoubtedly, was Joe Schuman. (Both Joe and Steve were class of '69.)

Joe Schuman looms large in my view of Carleton, and I think many people's. He was, I believe, in Israel my freshman year, so I didn't meet him until my sophomore year, when he came back as a senior. I was taking Econ 10 my first term, and he was in that class. That was an eye-opener; I was still nominally a Republican at that point, I think, although changing fast. '69 of course was the year that the Vietnam war took serious dramatic turns, especially since everybody expected that after the '68 election Nixon would wind the war down. It not only didn't happen that way, it went very dramatically in the opposite direction. It really galvanized the radical community at Carleton, of which I was not a part. But I became good friends with many people who were a part of that.

Steve was one of them, and I had known him in other contexts as well. He was a computer nerd; I didn't really consider myself a computer nerd, but I knew how to use the computer. I don't think I realized at that time how large computers would eventually loom in my life, and they didn't for a long while—not until after I left graduate school, in fact. Of course, at Unisys I live and breathe them. But I was very early attracted to them, and that was another context in which I was familiar with Steve.

One day, in April of '69, we were just sort of walking together, talking about something—at this point I can't remember what; it was probably related to computers—and at one point he just sort of turned and looked at me and said, "You'd make a good Arch-Druid." I was blown away! Over the next few weeks he gave me a few things to read about Druidism, and I glommed on to it. At this point in my spiritual development it was *exactly* the input I needed: a large window into several different religious traditions.

After the original purpose of Druidism was accomplished (the abolition of the religious attendance requirement) back in the early '60s, Druidism shifted to become the sort of thing that I found it to be: a spiritual anchor for people who, for some reason or another, needed something to hang on to. In Druidism there are largely two main groups. There are people like me, who are essentially religious *naifs*, if you will; and then there are the "spiritually battered": people who grew up in very strict hellfire-and-damnation traditions, who simply find that it is more damaging than it is helpful. Steve and I were of the former camp. There was always a large contingent from KARL, the campus radio station at the time, who were also of that camp; technical nerds, with essentially no religious upbringing.

The *Druid Chronicles* I found very interesting. I think more important, however, was the tradition in Druidism of bringing readings and discussion of other religious traditions, particularly Taoism and Zen Buddhism, the two big threads in Druidism at that time. Both of them, I think, go back to David Frangquist, who was one of the founders. Taoism, to me, was the "universal truth," and I still believe it. The formal trappings of Taoism are something I never had much truck with, but the underlying philosophy speaks very deeply to my soul, and it's largely what I understand by the term "Druidic." It was very liberating for me, and it gave me a framework in which to explore my religious or spiritual feelings.

After Druid services were started again that spring at Beltaine—there were something like *seventy-two* people at Beltaine, which shows you what Steve had done with Druidism...

Eric: It shows you what an article in the *Carletonian* can do!

Dick: Well, I think, too, it was because Steve was involved in so many things, and a large number of those people were friends of Steve, and friends of Joe's. A large number of them were folk dancers, which both Steve and Joe were involved with, as was I. Toward the end of the year, [since] Steve was graduating, he appointed me Arch-Druid pro tem, and the next fall I was elected formally as Arch-Druid. I held the office for two years, until I graduated two years later.

Eric: You hadn't been Preceptor nor Server prior to that?

Dick: No.

Eric: Seventy-two people! That's a high point!

Dick: Druidism goes in cycles. It was quite popular when it was founded, probably for all the wrong reasons: it was an easy way to protest the religious requirement. After the religious requirement was abolished, it still stayed in strength for a while, I think largely on the strength of David Frangquist. I've never met him, but the trail I've seen in the Grove Archives and the College Archives and the correspondence I've had with him has been full of a very charismatic personality.

When Frangquist left—I believe he left campus in '66—Druidism started to fade. Gary Zempel was his successor as Arch-Druid. Zempel himself is an interesting character, a radical who "caught Quakerism" and dropped out of society, all the time remaining a chief engineer for General Electric. He had a great deal of trouble reconciling General Electric with his spiritual beliefs.

His successor, Thomas Carlisle, left campus early—I don't know the details. He was the last Druid priest left on campus, despite the fact that there were still a few people interested in Druidism, mostly at KARL. Marta Peck called Frangquist and was consecrated to the priesthood via long distance. She started the grove up again, and turned it over to Steve, and Steve took it and ran—we were on another cycle here. We caught the radicalism of the 60s, and that became the core of the next generation of Druidism.

After I left in '71, the Grove carried on for a couple of years, but starting dying down again in the early 70s, until the Isaac affair, at which [time] a good friend of ours on campus, Don Morrison, started the Grove up again. It went again for a few years, and it dropped back. And then I didn't hear a lot about Druidism for a long time, until in the early 80s, I had a letter from somebody on campus. I can't remember who it was now. I sent a copy of the *Chronicles* and I believe a copy of *The Green Book*, a collection of readings that Frangquist put together from, oh, all kinds of places: Zen Buddhism, Taoism, a few things from the Old and New Testaments. We stuck in something, "Sayings of the Psychologists," a reading from [Robert] Ornstein's book about how people repeat formulas over and over again, until what becomes important is the formula, rather than the underlying spirit.

And then again we didn't hear anything until the mid-80s. I got a letter from Heiko Koester, and I came down and celebrated Beltaine here with them on May 1. It must have been 1988, because it was the 25th anniversary: we set this thing up and were converting the date into the Reformed Druid Calendar, in which the year is dated from '63, the founding—and it came out 25! We sat there and looked at each other: my God, it's the 25th anniversary! It was impossible to believe!

By this time, the Grove had taken an interesting turn. I don't really know where this impetus came from, although I suspect Isaac had something to do with it. The people who were interested in Druidism were dealing not with the traditional religious cultures, like Zen Buddhism and even Christianity, but with alternative religions—things like paganism and Wicca (I think they pronounce it wik-ka, but the original pronunciation was wit-cha, a good old Anglo-Saxon word). Heiko was interested in Native American religious tradition, and several of his friends were too. I think the chief focus of their activity was a sweat lodge that they'd set up—I don't know precisely where it was, somewhere around the Farm House.

That was fine with me; I didn't have any trouble with that. The first letter I had from Heiko was a *little* careful, because I think he was—*afraid* is not the right term—

concerned that us older Druids might not see paganism or Native American spirituality as an acceptable form of Druidism. But that's just nonsense. Druidism isn't about acceptable forms of religious spirituality; it's about religious needs. I myself find paganism, as it's practiced in modern America, a bit on the silly side in most cases, but Heiko and his friends had put something together that I found quite attractive, actually. The Beltaine service that they held was the first overt Druidism that I had done for years, and it was in a very real sense a homecoming—quite apart from the fact that it was here on campus.

So I wish these people luck. I am certainly willing to help preserve traditions, but it is not my place to set these traditions in concrete, to try to force them on anything, because not forcing things on people, in a religious sense, is what Druidism originally began for. It's the underlying principle that, I think, connects all of this stuff.

Eric: I'd appreciate it if you could talk a little bit about the forms of Druidism as they existed at Carleton when you were getting involved with it; what a typical gathering would have been like, the kind of rituals that were done, or whatever went on. What happens when Druids get together?

Dick: A lot less than meets the imagination of the unwashed! The original services had a very strong Christian flavor to them. They were modeled, I think, unabashedly on Congregational and Episcopalian rituals. A large amount of Celtic mythology was intermixed, to try to make it as outlandish as possible, because an important part of the original formulation of Druidism was to make it so outlandish that if, for some reason, religious credit were granted for these ridiculous services, then Druidism could be unmasked as just another way to get chapel credit, holding the whole religious attendance requirement up to ridicule.

But when they put the service together, they included a few remarkable things, including something that when I read it the very first time—actually, I didn't read it; I heard it at a service the very first time—it hit me right between the eyes:

*O Lord, thou art without form
yet we worship thee in these forms;
O Lord, thou art everywhere
yet we worship thee here;
O Lord, thou hast no need of prayers and sacrifices
yet we offer thee these prayers and sacrifices.*

Over time—in fact, already that's not the original form; the original form talks about sins: "Overlook these three sins that are due to our human limitations"—already that had been changed to "errors," and since then I think the Lord has dropped out of it. (Druidism at Carleton today sort of sees itself as a Goddess religion, rather than a patriarchal religion; I have no real complaint with that.) I guess the point I'm trying to make here is that in putting this thing together, they actually touched—at least for me and I believe for many other people, or it wouldn't still be around—some very deep religious or spiritual currents.

After that invocation, the Arch-Druid and the Preceptor would draw a Druid symbol on the ground. (The Druid sign is a circle with two [parallel] lines through it.) The Arch-Druid would enter it and consecrate the Waters of Life—which were rumored to be one part scotch to seven parts water, but when I inherited the Paraphernalia, I sat down and actually measured the thing, and it turned out to be one part scotch to two parts water, so it was quite a bit stronger than people realized. And on Beltaine, the ratio was reversed. You have to realize that at this time this was one of the few places one could get liquor on campus, or even legally drink it!

Eric: The seventy-two people becomes clearer.

Dick: And then the Waters of Life would be passed in a chalice around the circle. People would partake of them. The chalice was carried from person to person by the Server (whence the name). After that there was usually a period of silent meditation, and then the Arch-Druid would "do something." Depending on the Arch-Druid, it might be a reading. Fisher (the original founder of Druidism) used the occasion to give a sermon, and since that time has become an Episcopalian priest. He was into this in a big way. A lot of the original trappings were stolen directly from the Episcopalian way of doing things. After the sermon, people would petition the Earth Mother for things, like good weather for the weekend, or something like that.

This was all done in a very light-hearted way. I think that's the other thing that I learned from Druidism, that spirituality is not just serious. If it is only serious, it is missing a large part of the human experience. Certainly the original Druidism was very light-hearted. On one occasion—this is, I think, documented in the Archives now—Howard Cherniack, who is now I believe a lawyer and not religious at all, from everything I've heard of him, was the Preceptor. In the formula of consecrating the Waters of Life, at one point the Arch-Druid is supposed to ask the Preceptor, "Has the Earth Mother given forth of her bounties?" The proper response is, "She has!" One day, he just said, "Yup!" and they had hard a time keeping a straight face during the service for weeks thereafter!

This became known, by the way, as the "Cherniack Response." It's an official part—inasmuch as anything is official in Druidism—an official part of the liturgy. On occasion you will have a Cherniack Response. And it's very difficult to keep a straight face!

I wasn't very good at giving sermons, so I generally tended not to. I confined myself to readings, for the most part, originally chosen largely from *The Green Book* that Frangquist had put together—it's just a marvelous collection of things—and then from my own readings, particularly from Sufism, which I was interested in—still am to some extent. Again, a large part of the trappings of Sufism I don't find particularly attractive, but the underlying philosophy and much of the poetry is just pure gold. One of the objections that I had to the original *Green Book* is that there was very little there from Islam. I never really understood that, because there are some marvelous things in Islam. But

like many of the Judeo-Christian religions, a large part of it is hellfire and brimstone and doesn't really say much, personally, to me.

The weekly services were pretty much as I've just described. Each of the major feast days had its own ceremony. Again, although originally there were set ceremonies, by the time I joined Druidism, the liturgy had become fairly fluid, and a lot was left to the discretion of the presiding priest. The feasts were almost always celebrated in the evening—the evening *before* the official day. Samhain, for example, the beginning of the religious year, is an ancient festival from the Celtic tradition. The official day of Samhain is November 1st, but it actually begins at sundown the previous day. This period was considered a day between years. It was during that day that the forces of the underworld could come out, and that's the origin of Hallowe'en.

"Us Reformed Druids" were pretty tame: no burnt sacrifices, certainly not human sacrifices, although in the Celtic tradition there is very strong evidence for them. (Although, one always has to remember that virtually all of the historical information about the historical Druids came from their enemies; so a lot of the stuff you have to take with a grain of salt.) Our celebrations chiefly involved lighting a fire; the basic service was pretty much the same as the ordinary weekly service, but it had additional parts in it to commemorate the specific day.

Eric: Where did you hold your meetings? Was it on the Hill of Three Oaks?

Dick: We had three locations that were used with some regularity. I'd say the majority of services were held on the Hill of Three Oaks. I always preferred Monument Hill, although in passing I have to mention that at that time Monument Hill was kept quite mowed, and it was much more manicured than it is now. The grove near the monument, the circular grove, was a very wide and open place, and from it you could see a lot of the Upper Arb. To me, that's the heart of Druidism, and in fact, that's where Druidism started. That's where the first services were held.

Occasionally we would hold services on what we knew as Faculty Hill. If you take the drive that goes behind Goodhue, and go down across the creek and up on the other side where there's that Postage Stamp Prairie, there's a road leading off towards the east that goes by an open area that we knew as Faculty Hill. That's where the Classics Department Picnic was usually held. The Arch-Druid, if he happened to be a Classics student, usually presided over that ceremony as well. That's where the first Samhain service was held, and traditionally, in our day, that's where we usually held Samhain services. But typically those were the only services that were held there.

Nowadays there are several other spots that they use, and I know that they don't use Faculty Hill, because when I walked by there with Michael Scharding, he was surprised to discover that any services had ever been held there. And it's not called Faculty Hill anymore; I'm not sure what they call it. It's not really a hill anyway. But those were the three main locations.

Eric: It was you, wasn't it who actually added something in Greek to one of the books of liturgy?

Dick: Yes. I was asked to do the officiating there [at the Classics Department Picnic], and a friend of mine helped me write a "traditional" Greek sacrifice—traditional in quotes; who knows what actually happened in ancient Greece! We knew that one was supposed to pour libations in the name of various gods, so we did that. And then in addition, I translated the opening part of the Druid service, that I just recited a ways back on the tape, into Greek, and that's there as well.

Eric: You mentioned earlier having received the Paraphernalia. What exactly was all that?

Dick: The most important part of the Paraphernalia were the mimeograph masters for *The Druid Chronicles*, which I believe have since vanished. We did a printing in '71, and I believe that was the last time they were actually used. There was another printing after that, but I haven't seen a copy of that, and I don't know whether [it] came from the same masters or not.

In addition there was a red glass chalice, about four inches in diameter, I'd say. That, I'm pretty sure, was not original. The original chalice, I believe, was green; the tradition is very fuzzy on that. There was a reversible chasuble that was made—I forget by whom—back in Fisher's day for Fisher himself. Fisher had a flair for the dramatic. Everybody else wore sheets, but he wore black! So he stood out, with this chasuble in addition to that. It was primarily green on one side and primarily red on the other. The tradition very early grew up that during the summer half of the year, from May until November 1st, one wore the green side out, and for the [other] half of the year—when actually very little ever happened, except on February 1st, which was one of the feast days—you wore the red side out. (During the winter half of the year, also, the Waters of Life were the Waters of Sleep: they didn't have any scotch in them.) That chasuble was still around in my day, and still around in Don Morrison's day; but I think it's since vanished.

There was originally a staff for the Arch-Druid, but that was lost before my time. A friend of mine gave me a staff, but it turned out not to be particularly useful, because in getting services ready and hauling stuff to wherever the service was to be held, you needed all the hands free you could get. The staff just got in the way, so I tended not to use it. I don't think that's part of the tradition anymore anyway.

Then there were three books. These were all named because of the color of the covers they were in: *The Black Book*, which contained all the liturgy; *The Green Book*, which was the book of readings that Frangquist had put together; and *The Blue Book*, which was all kinds of miscellaneous archives. To this day, when we say "the Carleton Archives," we have to be careful about whether we're referring to the Grove Archives, which was *The Blue Book*, or the Carleton College Archives, which, after a couple of these busts in the boom-or-bust cycle of Druidism, we began to appreciate as the Right Place to keep things!

The sort of things that were in *The Blue Book* were letters from various places, including a note from Lee Mauk, the chapel monitor who informed Fisher (I believe) that the Dean of Men did not look kindly on these chapel slips being submitted by Reformed Druids, and would not count toward the chapel requirement. There were copies of *Tonian* articles, and things of that sort, things of vague historical interest.

That was largely it.

Eric: These things were always passed on from one Arch-Druid to another?

Dick: Yes. In addition to the chalice, there was a clear glass cruet, which is what you used to mix the water and the scotch together. It had a line marked on it: so much water, so much scotch. That's what I was referring to earlier when I said that I sat down and measured what the actual proportions of things was. That, too, I think has vanished.

These things went astray several times. One of the Arch-Druids, three after me, by the name of Steve Corey, didn't appoint an Arch-Druid when he left campus. So he had all of the Paraphernalia in his apartment [in the cities], and when he left the cities, he turned them all over to a friend and said, "Here, take care of these while I'm gone." Well, he never came back, and at one point Don Morrison had enlisted my help trying to run these things down, because I had known Steve. We were looking all over the cities where we could think to find them. I say "we"; I was doing this by long distance, because I was in Ann Arbor at the time. One of my Carleton roommates was my leg man here in the cities, and he was quite amused that we had managed to lose the "Dead Sea Scrolls," as he called them.

But that's about all there was in the Paraphernalia. It wasn't an extensive collection. I think the interesting things were the historical documents. Although many of the originals have, I think, been lost, when I left I Xeroxed most of the stuff of interest there. My successor, Glenn McDavid, also made several copies, and I think left copies of a lot of this stuff in the College Archives, so most of that stuff has not vanished irretrievably. But the non-paper things that were in the [Paraphernalia] I think are all completely vanished now.

Eric: In your day was there a permanent, or semi-permanent altar? In the early Druid days they built an altar and the anti-Druids came and destroyed the altar, and they built it again. Was there one in use?

Dick: First of all, with two exceptions, we never really used an altar in my day, and there wasn't a "built" altar anywhere. One of the two exceptions was the big boulder that's still on the Hill of Three Oaks. Whenever we really needed an altar, that's what we impressed into service.

The other exception was the IBM 1620 in the computer lab, which is where we held the Oimelc service on February 1st. As near as we can tell, historically, Oimelc was a celebration of the birth of lambs, which

occurs about this time in England. The Christian church took it over and made it Candlemas. The Christian church has this wonderful way with holidays: if anybody insists on celebrating something, the general attitude is, "Well, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em; we'll just co-opt this thing and make it a holiday"—which is why, by the way, Samhain is not the festival of any particular saint, but the festival of All saints: one saint wasn't enough to make that properly Christian, I guess!

But Oimelc was always held in the computer lab because it's damn cold on February 1st in Northfield!

Eric: The Druids always have a strong streak of the practical!

Dick: Yes, there's that to be said. The other reason it was held there was because one of the early Druids—the connection with computers goes back almost to the very beginning—was a man by the name of Richard Smiley, who later went on to graduate school in computer science. While he was at Carleton he wrote a program that set up various repetitive loops in the 1620 computer, and you could program this so that you could get the loops to resonate in various frequencies. Because there was a fair amount of electro-magnetic radiation from the computer, you could pick this up on a radio. So you took a transistor radio down there, and you programmed in the notes that you wanted to have the thing play, and you could program it to play any song you liked.

So he wrote this program up for the IBM Systems Journal. It was published as a separate program available to IBM users everywhere in the world, and part of the documentation includes several songs that came pre-programmed in the deck of cards that you'd get with this program. One of the songs was the "Chant to the Earth Mother," and that's what we had the computer play as part of the Oimelc service. For that occasion the 1620 became our altar!

Imagine, if you will, slaving away at a computer program in the dead of night, and having, all of a sudden, the door open, the wind whistling in from the outside, and in march three or four, maybe five or six people dressed in outlandish robes who come around and circle the computer, chanting, "Hallow this altar; hallow this altar"—and then set up a radio on the thing and push off a program that plays some weird tune, and then pass a chalice full of milk (this was, you remember, commemorating the birth of the lambs) and hold this off-the-wall ceremony—and then vanish! We saw an awful lot of startled faces.

Eric: About the garb for people: did all the communicants—or whatever the proper term is—appear garbed outlandishly, or was that mostly the people officiating?

Dick: That was primarily the officers. If there were several priests around—this happens on occasion, but not often; there were during my senior year, and there were in the year after the founding, but typically there are only a couple of priests. But if there are a lot of priests around, it's sort of a badge of honor to wear *something* to set you apart. Not to set you apart as a priest, but to draw attention to the fact that we are Druids.

It was fairly common for priests to have some kind of special garment. I went so far as to have a tunic and a chasuble made up for me, but most people contented themselves with a cape or something of that sort.

Eric: Tell me about becoming a priest, your passage through the orders, as it were.

Dick: One becomes a First Order Druid by partaking of the Waters of Life at a service and letting the Arch-Druid know that you want to be a Druid. That's about all it takes: a verbal commitment of interest. Well, that happened to me at the very first Druid service I ever attended. The next week, I was inducted into the Second Order, which involves polishing off any Waters of Life that are left after they're passed. Ordinarily, the remainder are consigned to the Earth Mother, poured out on the altar or onto the ground, to the formula:

This portion of thy bounty we return to thee, O our Mother, even as we must return to thee.

But if you're inducting somebody to the Second Order, you give him the rest of the Waters of Life.

And then the following—no: it was at the [new] moon. Part of becoming a Third Order priest is performing an over-night vigil, staying awake all night, and I insisted on doing it at the [new] moon, because some obscure passage in *The Druid Chronicles* recommended the new moon as the time to begin New Projects.

I really paid for taking this literally, because it was the worst weather we have had in spring for a very long time! It rained cats and dogs; it was just a disaster. I couldn't keep my fire going. But I resolutely refused to take that as a sign! About half-way through the night, the rain started going away. By dawn the weather had become much more decent.

It was long before this, even before I had become a First Order Druid, that I had what I believe I can legitimately call a "religious experience." It was after Steve and I had been talking about Druidism and religion in general and Zen Buddhism. We had sort of been talked out, I guess, and we just sort of sat there on the Hill of Three Oaks. I sat there looking up, at the Oaks, at the clouds in the sky, and a very odd experience came over me. It's very hard for me to put into words what, really, it felt like. But I had never felt like that ever before in my life: a feeling of being at one-ness with the world, of being part of something that is very much bigger than my own personal life, a sense of connectedness, if you will.

Between bouts of being soaked on my vigil . . . I firmly believe that the whole point of the vigil, as with many other (not necessarily religious) induction ordeals that may involve sacred drugs, or physical hazing of some sort, I really believe that underlying all of these things is an attempt to disconnect the cerebral cortex from rationality: to get it to perceive the world in a different way than it's used to. And it's this dimension that somebody as deeply involved in academics as I

was in my first year at Carleton, and somebody who was taught from birth, practically, that one should keep one's emotions bottled up inside—it was this whole dimension that I had really never uncorked before. And it just came spilling out during my sophomore year. This particular instance on the Hill of Three Oaks with Steve, and later at my vigil, just feeling a part of everything in a way that had no rational sense to it—it was a very moving experience, one that I've felt many times since then, usually not in a religious context. Druid services never really touched me very deeply, with a few exceptions. Most often during a reading that meant a lot to me. Or as I mentioned earlier, the very first time I heard the original incantation, it just spoke voluminously to me, that, yes, this is Right.

But the services themselves—of course, I never really experienced services as an on-looker. I was involved in putting them on from very early on. So a large part of my experience during these things [was] thinking of the stage management. A large part of my religious growth at this time was reading things to find appropriate things to bring to a service to read after the Meditation. I did an extraordinary amount of reading, particularly Zen Buddhism and Taoism, but in other traditions as well.

Eric: Have you had religious experiences beyond the feeling of connectedness? In my readings in *The Druid Chronicles* some people talk about visions that they've had in the Arb or on the Hill. Is that something that has any relevance to you, yourself?

Dick: Robert Graves speaks of a feeling of, or a perceiving of, the Numinous. I wouldn't go so far as to say that I have had visions, but there are definitely times that I've been overwhelmed by—something. I believe that it's that kind of experience that underlies things like visions in people that are more visually suggestible than I am, perhaps. Is it God visiting us? I don't really know. The oriental religions have this wonderful phrase: "That is a question not tending to edification." I believe this is one of those questions; that worrying about what this thing actually *is* is not the right response to it. It's a *rational* response to it. The correct response to it is simply to let it happen, and to let the feeling one has when this happens inform and become a part of one's life in other situations as well.

I have never felt that the feeling I have in situations like this forms the rock upon which one can build an ethical system, much less a religious mythology, which is what I believe most of the Christian religion, and many other religions, to be, primarily. There is a core there of an appreciation of the Numinous that gets expressed in mythological terms, and then somewhere along the line, the truth of the mythology somehow becomes the important religious question. When that happens, you're no longer talking spirituality, you're talking something just entirely different—politics, in fact, is all it really boils down to; power politics.

The number of people that I've talked to that feel that they are religious, but feel that their particular church has *nothing* whatsoever to offer them spiritually, I find just astounding. I think it's just part of the natural course

of religion, that the way people try to describe their religious feelings, the mythology they use to describe it, the ceremonies they use to try to evoke it, somehow take on their own life and become divorced from the actual underlying spiritual experience that started this whole process in the first place. At some point along the way, frequently one finds priesthoods being set up, priesthoods becoming entrenched political entities, and at this point you're so far away from meeting the spiritual needs of people that I think it's a mistake to call them a religion—if by religion one means something spiritual.

Eric: Is Druidism a religion? To you?

Dick: To me? No. I don't think I would call it a religion. Is *my* Druidism a religion? It is for me. I think that's a large part of what "Official" Druidism is about: helping people to find their own solution to the Spiritual Problem, or their own answers to their spiritual needs. I would not characterize what I feel, or what I believe, as Reformed Druidism; it's my own brand. I believe any true Druid has his or her own brand, which of necessity goes beyond the Basic Tenets as spelled out in *The Druid Chronicles*.

Is it reasonable to categorize it as religion? For example, does it make sense, as we tried to do on one occasion, to get a Druid priest classified as a priest for a IV-D deferment for the draft (which was an important issue back once upon a time)? Well, I think I'll dodge that issue and say that this is one of those questions that does not lead to edification. The proof is not in the definition, but in the living of the life.

Eric: I'd like to ask about reactions from others at Carleton, and since Reformed Druidism is one of those things that people aren't used to, when they encounter it I'm sure you've had quite a range of reactions. I'm curious about, especially at Carleton, how your peers who were not Druids saw the Druids at that time, and what their reactions were. I mentioned before that in the *Early Chronicles*, there is talk about the anti-Druids. Did you have experience with anti-Druids during your Arch-Druidship? I'm interested in the reactions of others.

Dick: Carleton in my day was a very tolerant place. When I was there—here—I don't think I ever encountered what I would characterize as anti-Druidism. There was some of this in the early years, although many of the founders thought that it was primarily because these people didn't like them as people, rather than that there was anything religious involved in it. We have always had a great deal of flak from St. Olaf. I think more has been written about Druidism in the St. Olaf newspaper than in the *Tonian*, and it is all very self-righteously negative.

After I left Carleton, one of the things that pained me greatly was the advent of a large group of fundamentalist Christians on campus. To this day, it is difficult for me to understand how fundamentalist Christians would choose Carleton as a place to come. But there were such people, and several Druids had rather heated discussions and on occasion even violent interchanges with fundamentalist Christians on campus. And that con-

tinues to this day, which is something, as I say, I have a great deal of difficulty understanding.

I do not believe that Druidism is fundamentally incompatible *even* with fundamentalist Christianity. Druidism, I believe, says more about the importance of somebody coming oneself to be convinced of the correctness of one's spiritual ideas, [and] the importance and value of examining other religious traditions. In that sense, I suppose, some fundamentalist Christians would object to it. I don't mean to lump all fundamentalism into the Christian camp. There are fundamentalists in other religions as well. But I think, as a historical fact, people who have come to Druidism came to Druidism because traditional Christianity does not meet their spiritual needs, and so as a simple historical fact, people who have been through Druidism by and large tend not to settle down into mainstream Christian traditions. I think a large number from my day have ended up in *some* kind of Christian church, although the boundaries here are a little wavy: a lot of people would not call Unitarianism Christian.

This is worth saying, too: Druidism as I know it is very much a Carleton phenomenon. Druidism transplanted away from Carleton—and there have been many attempts—has never done well. We tried to start a grove in Ann Arbor and failed miserably. This is very ironic, actually: I keep saying that an important part of Druidism for me was to help me get away from the rational straight-jacket that my life was being played out in, and yet Druidism for me is only possible among a community of very intelligent people. This is a paradox that I've never quite understood, and never plumbed to my satisfaction. But the fact remains that I do not enjoy Druidism in the company of people who are credulous—and that's usually what we got when we tried to hold services in Ann Arbor, despite the fact that that is another very enlightened place with lots of intelligent people around. There's something about the liberal arts tradition that made Druidism click, and Druidism away from Carleton just does not work.

What I believe is the biggest threat to Druidism did not come from Christianity at all, but rather from paganism: *l'affaire Isaac*, the whole affair of Isaac. I've never met Isaac, and to this day I cannot be sure what his motives were. We were not particularly charitable in assigning him motives at the time. It seemed to us that what he wanted to do was to turn Druidism into his own private bailiwick, and set himself up somehow as a Druid pope, a Big Man In Paganism, if you will—latching on to an organization that was older than any of the other pagan organizations that were common at the time that paganism took off.

His original letter [in 1974] proposed that we stop shilly-shallying around about what Druidism really is, and say, "This is what Druidism is"—and then put out a paragraph that was the most nonsensical thing that I have ever read in a very long time. It was just anathema to what many of us thought—ah, yes, here it is. This is the paragraph that Isaac proposed:

The Reformed Druids of North America
is an Eclectic Reconstructionist Neo-Pagan

Priestcraft, based primarily upon Gaulish & Celtic sources, but open to ideas, deities and rituals from many other Neo-Pagan belief systems. We worship the Earth-Mother as the feminine personification of Manifestation, Be'el as the masculine personification of Essence, and numerous Gods and Goddesses as personifications of various aspects of our experience.

Well—that doesn't say anything to *me*. I'm not sure I worship anything; I'm not even sure I know what worship is. But this, at any rate, was not what Druidism was about for me, or for any of the Druids, certainly before my time, and for most of them after my time, until Druidism at Carleton began to take on a paganist flavor. And even when it did take on a paganist flavor, it was a responsible paganism.

Chiefly what we objected to with Isaac's approach is the incredible amount of formalism that he wanted to graft onto Druidism. Rule books, and ceremonies that had to be performed just so, and all kinds of various orders of priesthood—just all the kinds of religious paraphernalia that we were trying to escape from in Reformed Druidism. It was just antithetical to the way we saw spiritual things.

For me this was a very agonized period. The letter came out in '74, and the affair really ended in '76 when he published his huge compendium of paganist writings. When he finally published it, we had made it clear to him that it was fine with us if he published it, but that it was not a Druid publication, it was his publication. We said, "We're not about to stand in your way, we're not even going to say that this is not a Good Thing, because for you it clearly is something that means something greatly to you. But it's a mistake to portray this as Reformed Druidism, because that's not what the Reform is all about." And several people suggested, rather pointedly, that he might want to go off and schis. So he had a schism, and called himself the Schismatic Druids of North America. After the publication of his volume, Schismatic Druidism faded rather quickly.

But during this period, from '74 to '76, there was a lot of correspondence with Isaac and with other more traditional Druids, trying to figure out how we should deal with Isaac. During this period I first faced the question of what, really, do I believe. What *does* religion mean to me? And it was only after I saw myself getting *very* upset, almost homicidally upset, that I began to appreciate the difficulties that can accrue to a religious dispute. I had always wondered before this time what the fuss and hooroar was in Northern Ireland: how can two religious—two *Christian*—sects get so far from the teachings of Christ that they would kill one another over things? In my own small way I began to appreciate that, and it really drained me.

It also changed my willingness to hold services in Ann Arbor at the time. We were having trouble with the grove there anyway, because as I mentioned it was not religiously satisfying to hold services there. But after the Isaac affair, I was no longer even willing to *try* to explain to people, "No, that's not what I'm doing; *this*

is what I'm doing, and this is why I'm doing this." My Druidism became a very much more private affair from that point on.

I'm still very happy that there is something like Druidism going on. I'm still willing to come out of retirement to help when things get sticky. And I don't object to leading a service in the company of right-minded people—doesn't that sound awful? But I am not an evangelist. For a while I would have characterized myself as an evangelist, I think. But I no longer am.

In fact, I've come to believe that in its own quiet way, Druidism is about non-evangelism; that it is one of the cardinal errors of mankind to propagate what one believes by any means other than by *example*. If one feels strongly enough about something, the right way to make people understand that is to live it—not to preach it. It wasn't until Isaac that I really understood that.

Eric: Did you meet him?

Dick: No. I came *this* close. He was in the cities for a while during '75-'76, I think, and actually came down and participated in some services here at Carleton. At the reunion in the summer of '76, several of us old-style Druids came, and I had written to Isaac, saying, "I would like very much to meet you; I think you should meet us." Arguments on paper have a way of living their own kind of life and cut more deeply than they are meant to. I felt that it was important for us to meet face to face. But he made excuses and left for the west coast before then. So I never did have a chance to. I understand now he's severely disabled, from some disease or another, which is not anything I would wish on my worst enemy, even Isaac. I haven't heard from him in—literally—decades.

Eric: I wanted to ask also something about the organizational phenomenon of the RDNA. As part of becoming Arch-Druid at Carleton you became *ex officio* Chair of the Council of Dalon ap Landu. I wonder if you wanted to say some things about that, and the phenomenon of people, after having graduated from Carleton, going out, still being part of the organizational structure; and maybe something about the strengths or weaknesses of the Council.

Dick: Originally Druidism was *simply* a Carleton phenomenon. Several of the early Druids, however, when they left Carleton didn't want to drop Druidism, and started groves in other places. Very shortly it became evident that there needed to be some broader organization than just the campus organization. The priests of the time—there must have been three or four maybe—decided (out of the air really) to say that the supreme authority, such as there is any in Druidism, is the Council of Third Order Priests. The Third Order is the Order of Dalon ap Landu, so this is the Council of Dalon ap Landu.

There are several higher orders, but they function more or less like honorary degrees. There's no real activity in the higher orders. Originally, I think, they were simply part of the initial cult of outrageousness. They've not proved useful and have largely died out. It's the first three orders that are important.

The basic structure of a grove is to have a priest to lead the service, and a Second Order Druid to assist, and a First Order Druid to serve as the Server. These three people are our minyan. You have to have three to start a local organization. If you don't have at least three, there's no real point in having a formal organization.

Fairly soon after the original founding, Robert Larson, who was a Carleton student, left for Berkeley and founded a grove at Berkeley. I have no idea whether this is still going on, but for a very long time it was the only other grove that survived with any permanence at all. There were several early groves. One Fisher founded in New York City, that was doomed to extinction. Frangquist founded one at the summer camp that he worked at during the summer. Of course it died when he left. Norman Nelson founded one at his graduate school in Vermillion, South Dakota, and one at his home city of Rapid City in South Dakota. And they all died. There was one founded by Savitzky at Stanford that went along for a while, but again, I have no idea if this is still a going concern. And we founded one in Ann Arbor that lasted for a couple of years and died when we left. Died before we left, really; we stopped holding services long before we left.

But officially, anything that embraces the Reform as a whole—the organ for deciding things like that is the Council of Third Order Priests. In '76 there were something like 30 of us, maybe a bit more than 30. I have no idea how many there are now.

Fairly shortly after this mechanism was put into place, a series of resolutions were passed: formalizing the normal local grove structure; stating explicitly that there is no official liturgy, with the single exception of the induction into the Third Order. There were some other things as well. Practically from the beginning these were all passed by mail, because never once since the first couple years of Druidism have all the priests been together in one place, or even a quorum of them. All of this business was done by mail.

The last thing that passed was in '71: I insisted that we formalize the equality of men and women. There was a lot of male-chauvinist-pigism in the early years of the Reform, and it's not entirely due to the fact that women had less freedom at Carleton at that time (due to the women's hours). It is directly traceable to the Christian tradition of Fisher and some of his friends. Chief players against that were Frangquist and his wife, and myself. We pushed hard to get this thing; even went to the extent of looking up Druids that we had hadn't heard from in a long time to try to get their votes on this thing.

And in the end it passed by consensus. There were no votes dissenting from the part that was officially adopted. We cultivated that as an ideal. Nowhere will you find it written what a quorum is in the Council of Dalon ap Landu. As an historical fact, everything that was adopted by the Council was adopted by consensus.

When Isaac came along and started consecrating all of his pagan friends to the Third Order, we rapidly saw that if he really wanted to take this and run with it, it

would be possible for him to swamp the Council with pagans, and then he could do whatever he pleased. And so very, very strongly we pushed the notion that *anything* the Council adopts has got to be by consensus, because we knew that when it comes to Neo-Pagan sorts of things, things could not be adopted by consensus. There was no consensus on that sort of thing. But since '71, nothing has happened.

Eric: Do you consider that the Council still exists, in any sense?

Dick: Oh, sure. Sure it exists, just by the fact that there are people in the Third Order. It's never done business for a long number of years, and, I'm convinced, never will. I used to have this recurring notion that we had to be careful with this, because it is exactly this kind of organization that pulls a religion away from the spiritual into the formal and political. If one wants Druidism to survive as an organization—which on the face of it is nonsense; Druidism isn't about organizations—but if one wants Druidism to stick around, you have to have some formalism.

Perhaps the best way of perpetuating this formalism is as, in fact, has happened: by word of mouth, from one retired priest to a struggling undergraduate here at Carleton, trying to understand all this stuff, what the founders had in mind when they wrote this kind of thing. I feel strongly enough about Druidism that I'm willing to go out of my way to be part of that. But I think setting up a formal structure to try to keep this thing going is a mistake; it's the trap that religion falls into.

I didn't always believe that. In fact, when I first started as Arch-Druid, I set about codifying all the tradition I could find. It was in the summer after I was appointed Arch-Druid pro tem; I put together a "Codex of Form" (as I called it) that had all of the tradition that I could glean from *The Blue Book* and everything I could put together about what old-style Druidism was about. It was full of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" and so forth. It was such an anti-Druidic sort of thing; I have done penance for this many, many times over! But I was put right in no uncertain terms by several people. It was the beginning of a long correspondence with many people whom I've never met but value as friends. And this, too, is a part of my religious education, in understanding just exactly what true religion is all about.

And it was exactly this sort of thing that we objected to in Isaac: just form run rampant. Yet "Thou art without form."

Eric: If your goal is to continue as an organization, he had at least the point that the Council was not a very effective method of having an organization.

Dick: By design, I would say.

Eric: One of the points he would bring up would be the unreliability, from time to time, of the Carleton Grove Arch-Druid taking their responsibility seriously in reporting to Druids at large happenings and changes.

Dick: And I can understand that kind of frustration, even if he weren't into a power play trying to be Big Fish himself. There was a real divide in Druidism at this time, between Carleton Druids and non-Carleton Druids. The non-Carleton Druids, I'm sure justifiably, felt themselves on the outside, and I'm not saying we're entirely innocent of fostering that. But it remains true that the Druids I'm comfortable with, that I commune with, that I can understand, are the Carleton Druids. I'm firmly convinced that the Reformed Druidism that I know is a Carleton phenomenon, and so it's not particularly important to me that there be an organization for the rest of Druidism.

At the same time, I don't want to give the idea that I don't think people outside Carleton aren't important, or that spiritual development outside Carleton isn't important. But I am convinced that the kind of organization that Druidism adopted survives well only at Carleton. Spiritual enlightenment for other people is important, but probably ought not to be done that way.

Eric: I was reading yesterday, preparing for this, through a lot of the correspondence that I have, a great deal of which comes out the '74-'76 Isaac wars. This correspondence pretty much stops as soon as Isaac's *Druid Chronicles (Evolved)* is published. At that time there had been talk about a Provisional Council of Arch-Druids to do some of the—well, people had different ideas as to just what it would do. There were indications that you would not necessarily be opposed to being part of it if it was going to exist. Did anything ever come of that, or did that just fritter away, or what? What's the end of that story?

Dick: I don't really know the end, to tell you the truth. The Provisional Council of Arch-Druids was suggested by Robert Larson of Berkeley as a way of trying to keep the official face of Druidism somewhat more consistent than the Arch-Druid of Carleton was capable of doing. You have to realize that most Arch-Druids of Carleton had very little in the way of resources, and little time, to spend on this kind of thing. The argument is just, that if Druidism was going to be a nation-wide phenomenon, there needed to be something beyond the Arch-Druid of Carleton to give it some kind of permanence.

At the time [though], most of us from Carleton deeply mistrusted Isaac's motives. We were not at all clear just what the Provisional Council was designed to accomplish. What made us even more suspicious was the fact that this thing was organized—as we saw it—behind our backs, because no Carleton Druids were involved except Robert himself. But again, that's not necessarily attributable to them; they didn't know of the Ann Arbor grove. Although we had announced it to the Arch-Druid of Carleton, she had left campus and not issued anything like a formal report, as she is required to do by the Council.

A large part of the animosity at that time is attributable certainly to deep differences in spiritual matters, but also to a bad lack of communication. It's exactly that sort of thing that the Provisional Council was to try to correct. But the Provisional Council really didn't meet the needs of anybody, so it died fairly soon. It didn't

meet Isaac's needs, because Isaac wanted to be leader himself, and this was yet another obstacle in his way. It didn't meet our needs, because Arch-Druids and groves in general, beyond Carleton, have not been particularly important to Carleton Druids.

If Druidism was to be a national organization, the need for something like that was clear—but it's never been clear that Druidism *needs* to be a national organization. Some of us at the time thought, wouldn't it be just *terrible* if Druidism became a religion in this sense! One of my recurring nightmares would be to wake up and discover that Druidism had been declared the state religion! Something to rob Druidism of its essential nature; and that would do it very rapidly. So the Council didn't really answer anybody's needs, and it didn't survive very long.

Eric: I wanted to back up just briefly to a minor point. You [spoke] about the higher orders as being the equivalent to honorary degrees: did you get such an honorary degree?

Dick: Yes . . .

Eric: What orders were you?

Dick: I am a Druid of the Fifth Order, which is the order headed by Norman Nelson, whom I regard as probably the quintessential Druid. He was one of the original founders. The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Orders were all created in a single day, by who were then the three priests of the time: Fisher, Frangquist, and Nelson. They each became Patriarch of one the higher orders. I've had a lot of correspondence with Norman, and at one point he sent me a letter that said, "Find somebody to consecrate you to the Fifth Order!" So I did. It was in fact Steve [Savitzky], and I asked Norman's permission to have Steve consecrated to the Fifth Order, and he granted it, so I consecrated Steve to the Fifth Order.

Eric: As I understand it, you never were consecrated to the Fourth Order?

Dick: No, that's right. Beyond the Third Order it's just catch as catch can. I'm honored that Norman thought enough of me to grant me this honor. It's not an honor I wear on my sleeve. It's not the sort of thing that I will admit to unless I'm asked it point blank, because I do not believe that it is fundamentally an essential part of my religious experience, or fundamentally a part of Druidism.

Eric: Continuing with the trivial historical footnote, then: as far as I could tell from my readings, it wasn't clear that anybody had ever gone beyond the Seventh Order, which was the Order that Gary Zempel was made Patriarch of.

Dick: Right. Gary Zempel was the Arch-Druid after Frangquist. The first three Arch-Druids were Fisher, Nelson, and Frangquist, and they became Patriarchs of their high orders in that single day back in '64. As sort of a matter of course, the Sixth Order elected Zempel, the next Arch-Druid, to be the next Patriarch. But Zempel never

selected any other priests to his order, and not too long after he left Carleton, he sort of dropped out. At one point, he felt that he should do something about the fact that the line of higher orders had stopped there, and mentioned to me that he wanted to be considered as retired, and somebody else should be appointed as Seventh Order [Patriarch]. So I wrote to Frangquist, the Patriarch of the next order down, which is responsible for electing the Seventh Order Patriarch, and said, "Well, Gary doesn't think that he's Patriarch anymore, or doesn't want to be considered Patriarch anymore. This is your bailiwick; if you want to do anything about it, fine." And nothing happened. I didn't expect anything to happen. As far as I'm concerned, he's still Seventh Order Patriarch, and there are no other Seventh Order priests, and it's ending there. It's not a big deal for me. It was for Isaac.

Eric: There have from time to time been other orders created, besides the numerical things, some of them not within the RDNA structure, but others "possibly" within. The Archives includes something from a person who was a Carleton Arch-Druid, at least during the summer of 1978. (It's not too clear what the chronology is in some of those years!) She's announcing the creation of a new order, and she considers herself RDNA. Do you have any comments on that kind of thing, or are these higher orders or not? Where is that for you?

Dick: I've never understood this penchant for creating orders. It's largely a Neo-Pagan phenomenon, the orders created beyond the first [set of] higher orders. The first higher orders, I think, were created simply because Frangquist and Nelson wanted a bigger piece of the action. The higher orders have never been important to me as part of my religious experience. Do I recognize these as orders of Reformed Druidism? Well, I think probably Orders Four through Ten I will acknowledge as part of Reformed Druidism because they're in the *Chronicles*. Are they an important part of Reformed Druidism? Not at all. Are the other high orders important to Reformed Druidism? Well, they're not to my Reformed Druidism. To their members they may be important; far be it from me to gainsay that. I'm perfectly willing to live and let live. Am I going to refuse to have anything to do with somebody that comes to a service wearing the insignia of such an order? No, not at all. I don't feel the need to wear my insignia; it doesn't bother me one way or the other if they want to. It's just not part of my view of Druidism. I know they're there; certainly to me they're not important.

Eric: OK, I want to do a radical shift of where we've been, and return you to college and talk a little bit about some of the other things that were going on at Carleton while you were there, possibly as they relate to you as Arch-Druid, and possibly not. For instance, in May of 1970 the college has its Strike for several days following the invasion of Cambodia. As when I'm doing an interview with *anybody* who was here at that time, I'm interested in knowing your perspective on that and how it affected you, what part you may have played. This is turning into a long question, but I noticed, I guess it must have been in the Black Book, you had a poem or a chant "In Time of War," with the notation that it was

written following the invasion of Cambodia. Obviously international politics was on your mind at the time.

Dick: The Exorcism.

Eric: An Exorcism, that's right. There; it's a long question; run with it!

Dick: In the mid sixties several things happened at Carleton. In the earlier sixties, about the time that Druidism was founded, various requirements were being abolished, like the religious attendance requirement. In my freshman year convocation requirement, the requirement that you attend the convocations, was abrogated. In the early sixties a lot of these *in loco parentis* things were falling, and there was a great deal of animosity between the student body and particularly the Dean of Men's Office, to some extent to President Nason as well, because—and, I feel, rightly—the students resented these things as not being an appropriate part of an adult educational experience.

I was not really part of that. A large part of this bitterness was over and done with by the time I got here in '67. In '67 the burning issue was race relations. The year book for that year ['67-'68] was virtually taken over by essays about the relationship between races. Oddly enough, that seems to have been restricted pretty much to that one year, I think largely because while I was at Carleton we never did have much in the way of a minority student population. I think that's changed somewhat now, but we had a few token blacks, and that was it.

But increasingly as the years went on, certainly by the time I was a sophomore, when Joe came back from Israel, the burning issue, bar none, was Vietnam. It consumed every aspect of our lives, from watching the body counts on TV to the Damoclean sword of the draft hanging over every male one of us. The death of somebody whose name I've forgotten, and whom I never knew, who was the only Carleton grad I know of that was killed in Vietnam—these were all impinging on us all the time.

The election of 1968 really galvanized the campus, and large numbers of students went on buses to Wisconsin to help in the primaries for Gene McCarthy. Many of my close friends, in fact, went on that. I did not, because, I think, at that time I was still a Republican. I had come to campus in '67 supporting the war. It did not take long to change my mind. (This was quite apart from worrying about the draft, although my mother certainly did! It hadn't yet really crossed my mind that *I* myself could possibly be drafted. This changed later on!)

When it became evident that Nixon was not going to wind down the war in Vietnam, there was a dramatic change of attitude on campus, I believe, and people became radicalized in a way that heretofore had not been.

My junior year was the year of the Strike. I was involved as a member of the CSA government: I was a

CSA senator for a while, and then I was secretary of CSA, because I got so fed up with the incredibly poor performance of the previous secretary. One of my duties as secretary was to issue minutes for the meetings. This involved typing them up on mimeograph masters and then taking them upstairs to Fourth Willis. (Willis at that time was the Union.) Fourth Willis was where the government offices were and where the mimeograph machine was.

In the process of doing that, I came to know another person who was up there frequently. She had an office up there, but also she used the mimeograph machine. She had been a graduate student at the University of Michigan. Even before the Strike we had had conversations about what had happened at the University of Michigan. I don't know if you're aware of this history, but Michigan, outside of Berkeley and Columbia, was probably the most radicalized campus, and it was that campus that was overrun by the sheriff's office. Really brutal police tactics were used against students there. In fact, a couple of years later I myself went to Michigan as a graduate student, and I remember thinking once, walking past a building on campus, realizing—something suddenly clicked—*that's* the building where all this happened! It was like a thunderbolt from a distant time.

But this woman I talked to quite a bit, and she was a large part of my radicalization. During the Strike we were up on Fourth Willis every day, churning this mimeograph machine, trying to gather and put out all the rumors from all across the country that we knew about. After Kent State and the calling out of the National Guard, there was a very real sense that the powers that be in this country were starting to turn—maybe “Nazistic” is a little too strong a term—but repressive and Fascist. The March on Washington happened—I forget precisely when it was, but I'm sure it was that spring—and Joe was part of that. (I didn't go on that, having essentially no resources and no way of getting there—and refusing to hitch-hike.)

But basically the whole educational structure of the campus came to a halt. There may have been some classes, but virtually everybody stopped going to most of the classes. I can still remember standing by the teletype (KARL had a teletype; that was on Third Willis, I think) and watching as these things came through, and literally ripping them off the teletype and taking them upstairs and typing them onto mimeograph masters. There was a very strong feeling that you couldn't trust the national press. You couldn't trust anybody over 30; that was the phrase, right?

It was a very paranoid time. The threat of the draft really burned that into us: if we got out of line, we *would be drafted*. Our draft boards would be told, and our deferments would be canceled, and we would be called up. I don't really believe that happened a lot. I know it did happen on a couple of occasions. But that was one of the threats that was held over us.

I can still remember the first draft lottery. I think it was when I was a sophomore; it must have been the spring of '69. The numbers came off the teletype, and they

were ripping them off the teletype and posting them on the glass window in the KARL studio. I remember coming into the room—it was packed—and starting at the beginning, looking for February 28. I was aware by the time I had gotten to the second of these sheets (there must have been maybe ten of them all together) that my heart was beating so hard I was sure everybody could hear it. As I got farther and farther along down the sheets and I still hadn't found February 28, I started to relax—until I got all the way to the end of the sheets and I *still* hadn't found February 28, and I realized I'd missed it and it might very well be the second date for all I knew!

It turned out it was number 299, which, even I knew at that time, meant effectively that I wouldn't be called for the draft. And there was a real moral crossroads for me: once the threat of the draft had been removed, was I really as radical as I said I was? This was something I had to think long and hard about. I knew that I was against the war in Vietnam. Would I actually march in demonstrations against it? Well, I didn't—until the invasion of Cambodia, and at that point I was finally pushed over the line; I realized this was something you had to stand up and be counted about, and it was then that I wrote the Exorcism. We held that Exorcism complete with blazing torches that we smothered to put the flames of war out.

Earth Day also happened about the same time. I forget just what year that started.

Eric: Same year.

Dick: Druids were part of the first Earth Day. We gave an invocation. The summer that Ellen and I graduated, we were married that August. The wedding present that I remember best, and that we still have, was *The Last Whole Earth Catalog* that was sent us by Steve.

Eric: How appropriate!

Dick: But it was all part of the times. The radicalism of those couple of years is just impossible to forget, and it really shaped an entire generation. It's been said so many times that it sounds almost trite now. But those were the formative experiences of my generation.

Eric: Do you want to say anything to wrap up—you've touched on this many times, of course—summing up the meaning of the Carleton Druids in your life. That sounds much too vast! Anything that would be an appropriate way to close, stepping back and putting it in its place for you.

Dick: Well, for me personally Druidism was another one of those formative events—experiences, not really an event. Druidism determined the way that I look at life, the way that I deal with not just my spirituality but with almost every aspect of my life, the way I approach writing a computer program, even. A very strong belief that (thinking of it in terms of a computer program now) the user must be respected. As the designer of a program, you can't foist your way of looking at things on the user; you have to adapt your program to what the

user wants to do, what is valuable for him. And that's just another bit of Druidism, really. The whole idea of making life user-friendly, if you will.

In a very real sense I live and think and breathe Druidism every day, every hour of my life. As a formal religion I scarcely ever think about it any more, except when I get calls of distress from Carleton! I am occasionally asked to speak about it by other enlightened groups, like the Unitarians. It is not important—no, that's not true: I was going to say it's not important to me that Druidism continue as a "religion". I am very pleased that it has, and not because it validates in any sense something that I was a part of or something that I helped to continue, but because I believe very strongly in its principles and its approach to life.

As religious fundamentalism rises in this country, and in the world, I feel very strongly that it's important that we stand up for an alternative view; that we make clear that no matter how firmly someone may feel that fundamentalist Christianity is the only way to salvation, it is important in a pluralistic society (I would say important anywhere in the world, but certainly in America) not to let that destroy the fabric of society, no matter how sinful you may view that society. In the long run, that is the road to, I won't say damnation, but certainly to destruction. It's important to me that this contrarian view be promoted.

It's not important to me that that view take on a particularly Celtic view or form, or a Reformed Druidistic form, although I would say that this entire contrarian view is a druidic—small d—outlook. So the particular forms that it takes are not really important to me, but the principle itself I think is one that is one of the most basic in our society.

It's not an anti-Christian view; it's an anti-totalitarian view. I have nothing against the beliefs of Christianity; there are many beliefs of Christianity that I believe in. The moral teachings of Christianity I feel quite in tune with. But the modus operandi of fundamentalist Christian sects is to me just another version of totalitarianism, and it needs to be called that, and it needs to be countered.

Then again, one can apply the same principles in other situations that are not spiritual at all. The traditional top-down management that I encounter every day of my life at Unisys is totalitarianism, and it is counterproductive, and it's why the Japanese are beating us. And this is another way in which I am Druidic, trying to sabotage this top-down management.

Western civilization has from the very earliest times been pushed by and propagated by control freaks. At root, that is what I think Druidism is: a statement against control; that the best things in life come by letting them happen, not by controlling them to make them not happen. All valuable change—well, this is awfully dogmatic—but all valuable change (yes! I firmly believe this!) has come about in situations where the status quo simply can no longer hold, and the people who are trying to keep it from changing are willing to stoop to totalitarian tactics. It is at junctures like these where the

Druidic approach is *necessary*.

Eric: Thank you.

Notes added by Dick during the editing of the transcript:

1. *Although at the time of the interview I had not met either the Frangquists or Isaac, I have since met both: the Frangquists in October 1993 and Isaac in April 1994.*
2. *My numbering of the floors of Willis may leave some puzzled. The government offices were on what is generally known as Third Willis, the fourth floor if you count the Ground Willis as the first floor. My account is probably influenced by the memory of the three long flights of stairs from the ground floor where I got my supplies to the top floor where I ran off the minutes.*



Richard Shelton, 1993

Interview with Robert Larson '66

April 20th, 1994 c.e.

Mike: I am Michael Scharding, class of 1994, and I am interviewing Robert Larson, who was an important Druid because he knew the ways of the original Carleton Druids and also the ways of the Berkeley Druids. Robert founded the Berkeley Druids and thereby with Isaac, he set the stage for the birth of the Neo-Pagan Druid movement in America in 1969. As Archdruid of Berkeley 1969-177, his views will help us to understand the Berkeley Grove during the troubling times.

Robert: Hi, everybody!

Mike: You're probably the only Third Order Druid from Carleton who I've not phoned, talked to or written to yet.

Robert: Well, congratulations.

Mike: Except Fisher.

Robert: Well, yeah.

Mike: You're also the only Druid to have known most of the competitors in the New and Reformed Druid movements. So you'll be helpful to my paper. Let's start off with what you remember of the early Founding Days and how you came to find the Druids at Carleton.

Robert: Ah, well, that was my Sophomore year. 62-63. I was at, I think, the second service. I made it to most of the services thereafter. Have you talked to Fisher? Fisher won't talk?

Mike: Fisher won't talk.

Robert: That figures. With the ideotheos of young intellectual people, you come up with strange ways of passing the time. The early 60s they still had the religious requirement in force. That went out about 65. That's when you had to go to a certain number of services every term and they made it pretty easy though. It was all nicely hypocritical. At any rate, David Fisher's method of rebellion was forming secret societies which never really took off.

Mike: Oh, I didn't know there were other secret societies.

Robert: Well, he had a couple others that he tried to get off the ground beforehand. Nothing ridiculous or outrageous, but they were illegal by the laws of the college at that time.

Mike: One of things that Bonewits mentioned is whether Fisher was a member of the United Ancient Order of Druids.

Robert: I have no idea. I don't believe he was. I have no idea of what was in his background.

Mike: Ah. But what you said there made me suspicious.

Robert: Well, no. It was just his method of rebelling against college regulations. We all had our own ways. Mostly sneaking girls into the guys' dorms and getting drunks. But there were other ways, as Fisher never had much of a head for alcohol and he was planning on becoming a minister, it was just his way of rebelling, I guess. I really didn't know Dave that well, and we didn't get along that well. At any rate, he came up with this Druid thing to resist the Chapel requirement, the idea being that when we put in our religious slips we'd write down the Druid thing, and if they accepted it it would prove that the religious requirement was absolutely ridiculous, and if they denied it we could claim religious discrimination. Funny thing was when the men put it in, it was denied, but when the women put it in, the women's dean said "fine".

Mike: What happened there, according to Deeborah Frangquist, is that the slips were checked by dorm mothers over at the women's places. And they didn't know anything and they said, "whatever. pass. whatever. pass".

Robert: Well, I know one guy, who was not a Druid, named Bob Miller who was getting by putting in things like the "Wesleyan Presbyterian and Fire Reform of Colorado" and they were getting accepted. But we had trouble with the Dean, but that was straightened out. Most of us covered our butts by going to the Sunday night lecture any way, which was a painless way of fulfilling the religious requirement. At any rate, there we were in 63 and we went away and came back the next year. For some reason, people found something in in, people on a religious search or philosophical search, kids trying to find their basis of being. "Roll your own religion" has always had an attraction to me, and I rolled my own. At first year, you had Fisher as ArchDruid & Howie Cherniack as Preceptor and we had various serverss, but it eventually came down to Frangquist. He eventually became Preceptor and then Archdruid after Fisher had left, and I was his Preceptor for awhile. Anything else you need to know of the early days?

Mike: What was your idea of what the RDNA meant to you at that time?

Robert: As I say, it's a nice excuse to get out in the woods on Saturday, but I've always looked at it as a way to search for philosophical/ethical/religious truth. Of course, the search is more important than the finding in those cases. The search led you in various directions. Nature is the focal point. My personal predilection even at that time, although in the introductory state, was in Celtic language, history and practices. I've always had a taste for the obscure.

Mike: I know what you mean.

Robert: Among Northern Europeans, the Celtic mythos was one of the more obscure and one of the more puzzling. I always had a tendency for the pagan religion, but most of my formative experiences were influenced by Nordic traditions. The Celt mythos & ethos & world

view is more conducive to my particular soul. There are many more good books now coming out, but at that time there was very little available and you just had to get your information where you could and I had always been interested in that culture since the age of 12, although for no reason that I could figure out. It's just one of those things, I mean, where do your interests come from? It didn't really become focused until I was in my 20's and since then I've tried to pick up everything I could find on it, which is fairly good. I did more than a bit of work on Muenster Gaelic and now I can..... (long discourse on languages)

Mike: So you graduated in 65...

Robert: No, I didn't graduate...

Mike: Oh, you didn't graduate, what happened?

Robert: Loss of interest mainly. The final term I was laid up with one sprained ankle on another. I was majoring in English, which was interesting, but not overwhelmingly interesting. I just couldn't see working that hard. The general academic atmosphere just got to me.

Mike: I know that the Third Order was pretty much fixed at this point.

Robert: You mean in the ritual and how you became a Third Order?

Mike: Yes, I think so.

Robert: Yeah, it was pretty much fixed. As far as I know, it was fixed when Fisher ordained his first one, Nelson or Frangquist, I can't remember which was first. The ritual has not changed that much since, in order to keep some ilk of apostolic succession going.

Mike: And did you have the traditional curse of having it rain on your vigil?

Robert: No. But on my vigil, it was colder than an Eskimo's outhouse and I couldn't get my fire going. I found some deadfall in one of the thickets, and I had a nice staff that I was trying to whittle on to pass the time. It was a cold one. Eventually the dawn came, after I was walking around for awhile slapping my arms to my side for two hours, saying "When the fuck is Frangquist going to show up?" Just as dawn came, off to the west from the Hill of Three Oaks, where I stood my vigil, was a nice lightning bolt striking the ground in the shape of my staff.

Mike: Whow!

Robert: Wasn't that a lucky thing? Fortunately there was no thunder at the time of the ordination!

Mike: Yes, I know we had to do that with the ordination of one of my friend. There was a lightning storm going on and everytime it thundered we had to start it all over again.

Robert: That's one way to do it.

Mike: By the end of it, I was speaking 6 times the ordinary rate.

Robert: The way we would have done it is, "Well we're going to have to do this again." Because at that point we were taking it halfway seriously. Still got snow on the ground out there?

Mike: I'd say no, but if I do then we'll get another foot in the morning.

Robert: Oh, I know. Minnesota weather sucks.

Mike: We've had six of seven springs so far.

Robert: Has the Cannon River flooded yet?

Mike: Oh, you should have seen it last July! You know it was my fault. I ordained two people that night in July. There was a backlog for ten years when no one was third order and so when Shelton came down and ordained me, absolutely everyone wanted to catch up before they left.

Robert: Oh that's good. A new crop.

Mike: So, two people wanted to be ordained, and I think that was too much, and we got the Flood.

Robert: I ordained two on one night once. The problem out here is that we separated them, otherwise the vision quest doesn't go down, but mankind two or three visits each night, they were about a mile apart. It was one of those nights. We had a crazy Christian up in the hills back then. Never again will I try two in one night. It wasn't convenient to go home and lie on my own bed while they vigiled, because then I would have to make a mile or two mile hike to check up on them. So I had to stay up all night too...even though I'm a night person...

Mike: I've so far ordained 8 people and I've never been able to sleep on those nights.

Robert: No, you're concerned for them.

Mike: Yeah, you're concerned for them. So you trot out and check up on them, even if they don't see you.

Robert: Well, yeah, it's always the nice thing to do to give them a scare around 12:00.

Mike: A scare? Oh no!

Robert: Oh, yes, it's part of the vision quest. If you're in fairly dense woods, it's almost impossible not to give them a scare tracking through the goddammed underbrush. It's about 1 o'clock at night when things are getting a bit hairy. It's a matter of getting their adrenaline going, which at that time they can probably use to keep awake.

Mike: Sometimes, I don't know about you guys.

Robert: We're a little crazy. If you're half-way intelligent, you're

already crazy. If you aren't crazy by the time you're 20, the world will drive you crazy by the time you're 30. I never really intentionally scared anybody, because I'm the type if you snuck up behind me and startled me, I'd jump up about three feet in the air. Most people are that way, especially in the woods at night.

Mike: You left in what year then?

Robert: Spring of 66, after winter term.

Mike: That was when Frangquist was winding down?

Robert: Yes.

Mike: And most of the rules had been passed?

Robert: Yeah. The originals had gone on.

Mike: During that brief flurry of voting, do you think they expected a vote to happen again?

Robert: I'm sure Fisher didn't.

Mike: I heard he always got pulled into consensus.

Robert: That's an interesting tale there. You're familiar with the stalled patriarchate of the upper orders? It stalled with Zempel at 8th? When they were starting up with the Druids, we thought, "Let's make some more Orders so that we can put more initials after our names." and so it was Fisher, Nelson, Frangquist, Zempel, and Zempel wanted the eighth but he got the seventh.

Mike: I wanted the Eighth!

Robert: Everyone wanted the Eighth or the tenth, because there is all sorts of initiation possibilities. But the idea at that time, that I got from Dave Frangquist, was they wanted to edge Dave Fisher out because he was getting a bit too Christian and so they gave him the honor of being the first patriarch of the Fourth Order. He raised the others up to Fourth order, and they elected the fifth order, and then the sixth Order, and that's as far as they got until Zempel. Everyone would be appointed to the higher order, but the point would be that Fisher would be the lowest ranking Patriarch. Since he always wore black anyway, he was preparing himself to become an Episcopalian priest. He's always been embarrassed by the whole thing. We once had a science fiction novel with busty broads on the cover and we gave it to him to autograph, and he turned pale at the sight of it.

Mike: So you went off somewhere after Carleton?

Robert: I went home for a while and, let me assure you, living in Indiana is no treat for someone who wants to do something. Well, I went over to Berkeley and my main objective was keeping out of Vietnam, which I managed to do with one trick. Overweight.

Mike: But you didn't actually enroll at Berkeley?

Robert: No. I was a hanger-on. I was a typical 60s hippie, but I didn't do as much drugs as some other people. I did my share, but everyone did back then. But that was before you time, wasn't it.

Mike: Yeah. I wasn't around then. I was born in 1971.

Robert: You weren't even a sparkle then. Oh, young ones... (Conversation trails off into Scottish & Irish History)

Mike: So, there never really was a Berkeley College Grove?

Robert: No. Religious groups are not allowed in Berkeley at all. It's a state institution. So that can't have groups directly connected with the campus. At that time, Berkeley was a hotbed of radical politics and anti-Vietnam, which is where I was at the time.

Mike: Not even Catholic groups could meet?

Robert: Not for religious services. I'm not sure of the rules there. The first service that we held out there, we purposely flaunted this regulation and had it in the Eucalyptus Grove or somewhere along strawberry creek. After that we had all of our services in Strawberry Canyon out beyond the Stadium.

Mike: Did that inhibit your ability to recruit on campus?

Robert: I've never been into proselytization. I don't believe in proselytization for any religion or philosophy.

Mike: So how did members find you?

Robert: They found us. That's always been the way I've conducted things, you let people who look who find. If you're not looking, you won't find. But then we wouldn't want you if you're not looking for something. It really took off when Robert Anton Wilson was out here, he's the author of the Illuminati Trilogy, and we used to meet at his house before we went off to the hills, in order to arrange transportation. At that time I didn't drive and most people didn't have cars.

Mike: So did you notice a different type of people who came looking for Druidism?

Robert: oh. Well, it's hard to say, because Carleton is much more homogenous than anything in Berkeley, Carleton's a much smaller environment. The thing in Carleton was that lots of people were coming out for a good time. Just following their noses a little bit. Most of the people here were searching for something, but I've never been sure with any of them, though there was a definite pagan or anti-Christian bent... at that time, the anti-Christian bent did not bother me, although it does now to a certain extent. I've mellowed over the years. But, the pagan bent never bothered me, although they tended to go too far into the occult, magical aspect of paganism, rather than the cultural aspects, for my taste. But I find, I believe you'll find, if you continue on... that what will happen is that the type of people that you get in a grove (that you set up outside the College) will have a fairly similar outlook to you. If they don't like your services, they ain't going to come

and the result is, (although you'll have all sorts of factions and people you don't like, some people you like and some people you don't give a damn) you'll find that the general milieu is fairly homogenous within the group. And that's the interesting thing about Druidism, that because of the lack of dogma and the lack of standardization, disorganized religion as we always called it, in a sense it's very Mao-istic with "Let a thousand heresies bloom!" And they do! And I think that's good, because it makes people think. And thought is the main part of the search, that and experience and feeling, which is why the search goes on until you finally kick the bucket, then you may find out something,... or you may not.

I always kept the magic to a minimum although I was always very good at calling the winds, and I always got very good results. But theologically, or rather philosophically, I got more conservative than the group, and my bat has always been paleo-paganism rather than neo-paganism. I could make excellent arguments for human sacrifice.... if I wanted to.

(laugh)

In the original group, I probably would have been on the side of the animal sacrifice. Let's sacrifice a cricket, rather than a purely vegetarian passport, ... but whatever works. And it worked, though the building of the altars and the fire was really a nice touch, after they got rid of the portable record stand, which was definitely not a good altar. But the anti-Druids of the old days, Jocks in other words, were drunks (but so were we, so what the hell!). It's a matter of what side you want to be on.

Mike: You mentioned that in Berkeley people came searching for things. I always thought the Carleton group, back in the early 60s, broke down their beliefs into the very basic question of fate.

Robert: Some of them, probably. For others, no. For some of them, well, Carleton at that time was a fairly Christian place, but not offensively so. Not like Bob Jones. But barriers were falling everywhere in the early 60s. You have to remember that this was the time of the Civil Rights, the time of Vietnam. Of course, the early 60s were before Vietnam, but the Civil Rights were very big. There was a big thing about getting blacks on campus. There was a big thing about getting more sexual freedom, about getting more open houses. At that the dorms were strictly segregated by sex, and college kids being what they are, that was a real big issue at that time. It was the start of the general breakdown of society, which has continued to this day. As soon as we wreck the old form of oppression, we'll erect a new form of oppression. That's what's happening now. My bent has always been towards anarchy rather than socialism, or rather towards conservatism. I always believed you should let people go to hell in their own handbasket rather than your own handbasket. And definitely most people will. That's their choice.

Mike: Let's talk about how you met Isaac Bonewits.

Robert: That was in Berkeley, of course. Interestingly, at that time, he was involved in infiltrating the Church of Satan.

Mike: I heard about that.

Robert: And the cult of Tony Levay, as he called him. He used to come out on the Gate Entrance with a nice black wooden throne and would heckle the Christian bible thumpers. That was just off campus, you see, where all the stuff was happening. Just off of what is called red square. And I was, at that time, in my hippiedom, to use an Irishism, and I was selling newspapers to skin a living at the Gate, which is one of the better places to sell, if you wanted a congenial atmosphere rather than money. I soon met up with Isaac. Isaac, at that time, was collecting ordinations, he'd join any group in order to be ordained, just to collect them. So, I said what the hell, let's do it real quick and we did it real quick. And at that time, I was in financial trouble which is no stranger, and we took up rooming together. He had to get out of his place and I had to get out of my place, so we roomed together in an apartment. We got along fairly well for a while. There are a few things between us now, but I've mellowed out quite a bit since then. Monetary again. But that was how I met him. I always thought he went a little overboard on the magic/paganism bit. But that may be part of my essential laziness. I don't believe in enthusing myself over anything, whereas he gets enthused over anything, I control my enthusiasm better than his.

Mike: Okay. When did the actual grove get set up?

Robert: Actually to legally ordain someone, you have to have a grove. So we did that real quick, too. Was Zempel out here at that time?

Mike: Really?

Robert: Zempel was out here for a while.

Mike: Wow!

Robert: And he was studying in physics for graduate work. I don't know whether it was Zempel or another guy. I can't remember, it must have been one of our guys. It was ordain a server quick, ordain a second order quick, to get enough people for a grove, and then, "okay, It's time to ordain some one." But as for getting it going, as an ongoing thing it was a few years thereafter. And I'm not sure what year it was, but Isaac and I were both members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Isaac more than I. He set up things for them, and I started doing things for them, and it evolved from there. But my recollection of those days are grim. And it kept going for few years. How long...

Mike: I think you were Archdruid until 1977.

Robert: About then.

Mike: And then you went to join Clann na Brocheta?

Robert: Yeah, and that thing broke up fairly quickly. And since then I have only been to one service and that was

Stephan Abbot's (in 1993) 30th anniversary service at Beltane of last year. I always thought that I had run a loose service! And I didn't know what a loose service was. (Laughter.) Of course, Stephan has never been the most focused individual.

Mike: Yes, I've had many conversations with Stephan.

Robert: You poor boy. (Laugh). I've had met him face to face, trying to figure out between what he wants and what he needs, which are two separate things. But, he's a nice boy.

Mike: He's also a Celtic scholar.

Robert: He likes to think he is. He knows his tarot well. He knows a certain amount of Celtic things, but you can't get into Celtic things unless you learn the languages. And as far as I know he's never taken the trouble to learn one. As far as I'm concerned a language is the heart and soul of a culture.

Mike: It is.

Robert: What language you speak orders how your brain will think, as any linguistics person will tell you.

Mike: I get the impression from other people that although you were the Archdruid from 68 all the way up until 77, officially, it seemed that Isaac was doing all the work.

Robert: Work? What work? I don't know what you mean by work?

Mike: Organizing people to do things.

Robert: Oh. I always allowed people to organize themselves. I've always felt that if you as Archdruid try to organize things too much, you will defeat Druidism, which is to let people to discover in themselves. Rather that you discover, you have let them discover what they think. If you organize things too much, you direct things too much, what you're teaching people what you think, and that's not my way. I never believe in that. I always believed that the preceptor should do more of the scuffling work. My main responsibility was providing the service, and in making sure everything was there for the service, and trying to collect the money for the waters, which is impossible I've found. Finally I decide, if you want cheap shit, contribute, if you want good stuff, contribute. And people contributed a little after that.

Mike: What was your favorite brand?

Robert: At that time I was into Tattie's, but now I'm into Powers. I don't drink that much, but Irish whiskey is always very nice. I've never liked Scotch that much, except for single malts, but that is prohibitively expensive for waters. Besides, you're supposed to water them down for services, except for Beltane and (hmmph!) Second Order Ordinations. Speaking of drinks, Stephan had some of the worst waters I've ever tasted at that May thing. He doesn't do alcohol and some of his alternative drinks are positively atrocious. The mead which was home-made, and not necessarily bad, was pretty rank. At any rate, we got through it. It was kind of fun seeing some people again. Just like when I resigned from my Archdruidship, and it turned out to be Joan, I believe that when you step down you ought to go away and let them develop their ways, although I've been curious. But I don't want to see what they're doing unless they need help. If anyone asks me for help, or asks me for an opinion, I'm perfectly willing to give it. But, I'm not going to impose upon them. Again, it's not my way. I very much "live and let live" even though I have strong opinions.

Mike: How much of what was written during the Isaac Wars was his part and how much of it was representing the Berkeley Grove?

Robert: As I've said, Isaac has his enthusiasms, which tend to be pro-pagan, anti-Christian. To a certain extent I understood them. In fact, to a certain extent, I shared them, but not to the same radical extent as Isaac, who had unfortunately spent some time in Catholic seminary, which will do it to you any time. Most of the anti-Catholic and anti-Christian people I have known have gone to Catholic schools.

Mike: In the period when you were Archdruid, did you group ever refuse to allow people to join who were Christian?

Robert: No. Not as far as I know. Some people may have tried to discourage them. But they may not have felt welcome, considering the pagan bent of most of the members, which even I was feeling at that time, but as far as I am concerned, everyone was welcome. If what we do doesn't suit you, you don't have to stay. If something we do offends you, go away. If you offend us with the way you act, we'll tell you. I don't recall any problems of that ilk. If so, it wasn't brought to my attention, as it should have been. If they didn't bring it to my attention, I'm rather pissed. I'm a libertarian in that.

Mike: Carleton College had a very, very heavy enthusiasm for Asian religions in the 60s.

Robert: Must have been after my time. Of course Zen Buddhism in the 50s... I got into Zen for awhile, to a lesser extent. There is the Japanese connection at that time, when students went over to Japan to spend sometime.

Mike: Primarily in the 60s.

Robert: I wasn't aware of a heavy enthusiasm for eastern religions in my times. However, in the later 60s, everybody was interested in Asian religions. But Eastern religion and Buddhism are always interesting paths to look into and it's different way of approaching things. I know that Dave Frangquist was one who went over to Japan and that, for a while, he was heavily exploring Buddhist thought. Fisher I doubt.

Mike: Fisher was more into Hinduism, I've heard.

Robert: That makes sense. It's a bit more organized. Anyone who's searching religiously, is going to look into Buddhism and look into Hinduism, as being available to

people. Definitely, the Druish meditative thing (although it was fairly short and people spent the time looking around at Nature like you're supposed to do) is sort of Buddhistic. I read some Zen when I was in highschool, Alan Watts and such, and it interested me at that time. I'd already given up on my native religion, but what can you say about Christian Science? It was, what did Crowley say?, "an excellent grounding for magic, black magic, but magic nonetheless." On the other hand, Christian science, once you get out of the bullshit aspect, has an interesting viewpoint. But they try to control people's mind too much. It's another pseudo-christian religion heavily influenced by eastern thought. But Christianity is Judaism, itself influenced by eastern religion and pagan European thought. That's another kettle of fish altogether.

Mike: I always wondered if Druidism's Eastern influence kept the Druids from evolving into what Isaac thought was it's natural destiny. Becoming Celtic, like it's framework suggest.

Robert: Possibly. The main problem with getting Druids off the ground, as Isaac was always want to do, was it's predilection for disorganization rather than organization. When you get alot of independent thinking people (or at least they think they are independent thinking) into a group and you start developing their own views that do not coincide. So, to get any type of organization going is very difficult and once you have a grove structure and a totally decentralized hierarchy, organization becomes counter to what Reformed Druidism is. It just doesn't work. If you get organized, if you start a putsch going, you're going to get dogma. You going to get ritualistic formalism. There is a certain amount of fixed ritualism between apostolic succession, but when you try to get a consistent viewpoint, you won't get that with Druidism as it was structured in the beginning. Now if people want to put forth a dogma and list beliefs in that dogma and then build a church based on that dogma that's fine, but that's not Reformed Druidism. They can call it what they want.

Mike: I can tell that Isaac was headed this direction early on.

Robert: Oh yeah.

Mike: With the SDNA.

Robert: I'd like to see the movement grow. I would like to see it grow to a magnitude of force that Isaac wanted, but not as an organization. I'd rather see it as a method of thought and as a method of looking into things rather than as a method of organization and control. That should never happen to Reformed Druidism. When Smiley tried to organize and put down rules and regulations and traditions....

Mike: You mean Shelton?

Robert: Right. Smiley was another guy. Yeah. He [Shelton] got some nasty reactions from me and most of the others because it wasn't against what he was saying, but for putting it down as a tight little thing. At that time, it was time of do your own thing, and to a large extent, it should continue to be the bat of the druids.

Mike: One of things I've noticed is that the hierarchy of the Druids gives a great deal of autonomy to the individual groves.

Robert: yeah.

Mike: Any damn thing they want as long as they leave the third order alone.

Robert: Right.

Mike: What made Isaac want to bring everyone into his own system, rather than his own grove?

Robert: I think you can call it psychological error. That's a matter between Isaac and his conscience. I hope that he's matured from that viewpoint. I don't know, and I haven't talked to him in many a year. I have a feeling that it was his Catholic seminary upbringing, which gives you a very tight structure and a desire towards a structure. He's a neat freak, I'm a messy freak. I guess you call it anal-retentive in Freudian terms. He always had a tendency to over organize. It's the problem every politician of trying to make people fit in molds. People are very very resistant to fitting in molds. In a mass, you can predict what people will do, but individually it's off the scale. If he ever got the thing going as a big mass, then he probably could get things organized like he wanted to. But then, getting that mass going together as an organization, given the traditional Druid resistance to being plugged into holes, is very difficult. It is probably beyond anyone, but an organizational genius. Who wants a fuhrer? Especially in the late 60's/early 70s? They were everything from Protestant to Unitarians, from every radical movement of that time, and they've become more so since that time. I've always felt that Druidism would be an excellent umbrella organization if you could get it to a reasonably size organization, if you get enough groves going, to incorporate as a non-profit church organization. God knows, it's always been non-profit. To give an umbrella of legitimacy to other odd-ball sects and I think there's a certain amount of need for that in the paleo-pagan, neo-pagan, occult, magickal community, and even for some of the stranger Muslim, Christian and Buddhist sects. There are a lot of very strange sects out there, some of them are dangerous, and some of them are just strange. They have their own little viewpoint. I don't care what someone believes as long as they don't try to put it on someone else and make them believe it. As long as he acts upon his own beliefs in his own group, that's fine. I think there is a need for that time of Umbrella organization and there have been attempts to set up those sorts of umbrella organizations. Most of them failed through the same problem as the Druids; that when you don't have a tight little dogma, people go off on their own little spritzes and pretty soon everything is breaking apart.

Mike: I know there were alot of things during the early 70s which may have made Isaac write in a slightly ruder style. I mean there are three years when nobody wrote to anybody and it looked pretty dead.

Robert: That was the time he was in Minneapolis and he was trying to get things going with the Gnostica newspaper. When you get involved in the old form of the occult community you run into organizational stasis

- and I suppose that was very frustrating for him, even though there were new people coming in. The Llywellyn press are very much 1920s operations...You have to remember that Isaac has always had a bent for ceremonial magic and that requires a tremendous amount of organizational control both mentally and physically. You can see where you would carry this bent over into the Druidism and attempt to over organize. As I say, if that's the way you want to set up your grove, fine!, But don't try to make me set up my grove that way.
- Mike: Did you like being Archdruid in the early 70s?
- Robert: Yeah. It was a nice thing to do occasionally. I missed conducting services since I resigned, and I've always wanted to get together with people near Beltane and Samhain and to hold a service. Actually getting together, since I'm out of contact with many people, is very difficult. Maybe one of these days, it'd be nice.
- Mike: Did you always have weekly rituals outside of Quarter Days and Cross Quarter Days?
- Robert: No. That's the way we started out. Then I worked out the phases of the moon nearest to Sunday and Noon. I didn't have them on Saturday because I like to watch Football myself, I was a 49ers fan before they became good. That was the way we continued most of the time.
- Mike: I heard that you used to have alot of pizza conversations at the pizza parlor.
- Robert: Some. After Cody & I got together, after each service we'd make a run down to Silano's and have an ice-cream splurge. There's always late night conversations. One winter I tried to organize classes in Gaelic, they lasted a little. I suppose people learned something. At that time I was only middling in my Irish and I could only teach basics. Mainly there were a lot of bullshit session at Bob Wilson's house, before we got going up to the hills. It's at bullshit sessions that you meet people. But organized bullshit sessions, no.
- Mike: There weren't any other Druid groups in the Bay Area then?
- Robert: There was the Order of Druids. They were a beneficent organization. They still have a few buildings called "Druid's Hall" which are nice to see. But I don't know if they still meet. It's kind of like the Scottish Rite Hall in Oakland, which is mostly a venue for concerts and conventions. I don't think the masons are very active in that hall anymore. I was just printing some directories of cemeteries this week and there are a couple of Druid cemeteries in Sonoma county..... Just Masonic offshoots founded in 19th century.
- Mike: But in the Neo-Pagan community?
- Robert: No, I don't think so. None that I'm aware. Wait, there were some people basing themselves out of Welsh tradition. I never observed whether they had services.
- Mike: So, pretty much the Reformed Druids were sitting out alone in the field?
- Robert: Usually it's in a grove. Usually we were sitting around passing the pipe or passing the bottle. I believe in very informal once you get past the winds. You had the sacrifice. You had the meditation and then the bullshit session for 15 minutes and then break it up. Don't want to have long sermons. I've never been into long sermons. I usually took my readings out of the Chronicles, or occasionally dip into poetry (Yeats, Manningly, Hopkins). Everyone knew what was coming after I said the first word, but I thought they were important verses for people to think about.
- Mike: What does the word "Neo-Pagan" mean to you?
- Robert: To me, it's an attempt to reawaken the spiritual sides that we lost when the evangelical Christian movement took over Europe. Unfortunately, most of the Neo-Pagans have taken alot of New Age philosophy, most of which is clap-trap, and attempted to plug it in, rather than attempting to study what the pagans really thought and felt. Read your Roman philosophers, read your Greek philosophers, read your Celtic & Norse myths and attempt to extrapolate off that and you're better off. I'm more for a paleo-pagan viewpoint. ON the other hand, for many people, a good exploration of their roots and developing a belief system on the natural world rather on the revealed world. For me, the revealed world is never true. It is true to the person who reveals it only, it is not true necessarily to anyone else, but maybe true to some. This is especially true when it has gone through the garbling that happens with all the holy books of the world. The bible is a prime example, although the Koran does a fine job of garbling Mohammad's message too. The Buddhist texts are probably not the bad of an example because they were never that organized or even pretended to be organized nearly as much. The Vedas are also garbled mythologies, but good mythology when you get down to it. Man's religious views were originally developed out of his relationship with nature and in order to understand what man is, one must get in contact with that side. The churches, especially the revealed churches, obstruct that path. The Puritan church in particular define Nature as the realm of the Devil. Well that may be true from the viewpoint of primitive man, because Nature is dangerous and not kind or evil or good, it merely is. You've got to understand where you stand in the phynotony of lifeforms. One of the problems I have with the radical environmentalists is that they understand where the animals and plants fit in, but they don't understand where man fits into that relationships; just as the heavy timber industry doesn't understand where the animals and plants fit in. You have to consider both. The only way... not the only way.. there's no such thing as the only way....one way for me is through the Nature question. Not necessarily an intellectual quest but a soul and vision quest than anything else. SO you can feel where you are and who you are. Find your spot and make it sacred.
- Mike: That's seems to be the message that the RDNA is trying to use. The cautiousness of ever trying to instruct somebody.
- Robert: Right. What is true for you. Even for something as simple as "2 + 2 =4" is not necessarily true if you are using a base three. (Laugh) If you agree with the Zuni, who don't count 1-2-3-4-5 on their fingers, but who

count on the interstices of their fingers 1-2-3-4. You would end up with a base 8 as a result. The truth may be objective, but the perception is very individual. We all only glimpse one facet and if we move we might see more facets. The object of research is to move and see as many facets as possible.

Mike: I like that.

Robert: You never get to glimpse them all. It's just like science. In the 19th century they figured they reached the end of physics, they had all the answers. Then came atomic theory. Everytime we think we are getting close to understanding the universe, it throws us a curve and I think the curves are going to keep coming as long as man continues or intelligent life survives, because the little universe we have in our brain case is changing it's perception all the time.... I think that each of us desires stasis, unchanging universe, and unchanging within an area of life. So we don't get surprised all the time. So we don't feel threatened all the time. Unfortunately the world doesn't work that way. IF you don't learn to flow a little bit, yourself, you're going to get run over by the river. Druidism is a way to flow. That's not a good analogy.

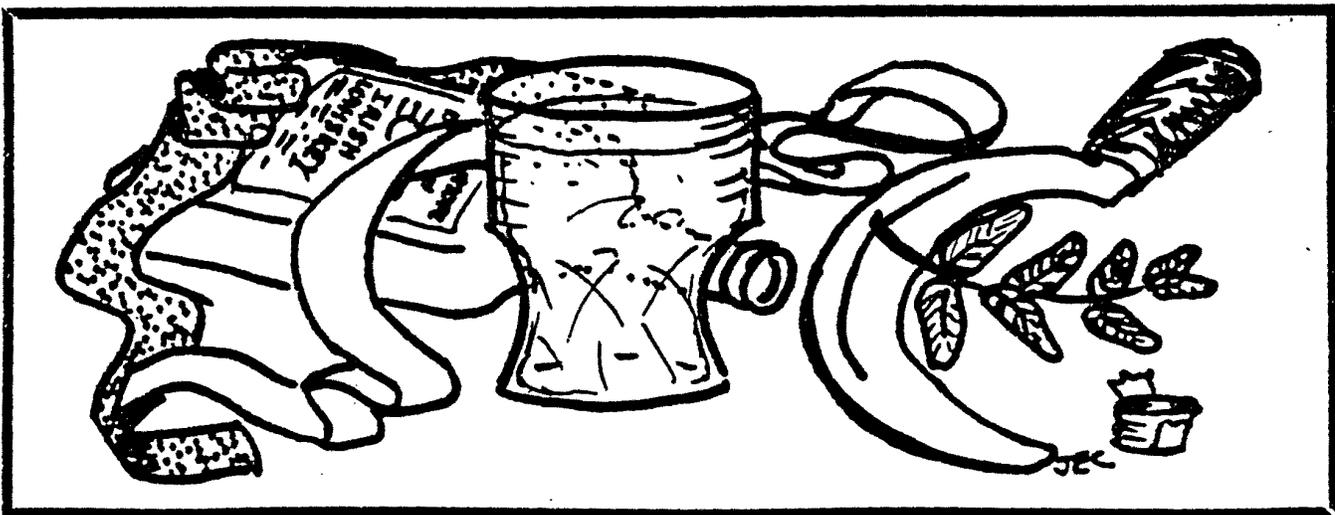
Mike: Religion is a difficult thing to pigeonhole.

Robert: They try. Every little sect of an organized religion thinks they have a copyright on the truth, and that's one thing that pissed off Isaac considerably and one thing that attracted him to Druidism. We didn't claim to have a copyright on truth, or to be the only way of approaching it. Unfortunately, once he found his truth he tried to pigeon hole it himself and that's where he and I part our philosophical company.

Mike: Well, that's all the room we have on this tape. Thank you for this interview.



Robert Larson, c. 1965



To be continued in... *Son of A Reformed Druid Anthology: The Druid Strikes Back*