

“Ten Years in Gold Hiking Boots”

Possibly due to a professional sports event, audience turnout was very low. The show itself was one of the best I've ever done and included three of my friends: Rita Rae, who I've known and sung with on occasion since college in the mid-1980s; Anita Cocktail, a new friend but a very experienced performer and drag queen; and Miss Markie Woods, a transgenderal person who has been a featured guest within three different episodes of my cable-access television show, “Sister Who Presents...”.

Which song was the highlight of the evening? That's difficult to say, since we did fourteen different songs, each of which was deep and beautiful and moving. The most wonderful challenge in which the audience participated was perhaps when we performed “The Benediction of Sister Who” as a round at the end of the evening: “May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be!”

The set was a rainbow curtain twelve feet high and almost thirty feet wide with a glittering string-art window over eight feet tall in the center and my two oldest costumes displayed at either side of the performance area.

Only two days before I had finally managed to finish a new edition of my costume, so the material was fresh and black, as opposed to faded, as my other costumes have become during their many parades, mountain hikes, and volunteer events through which they have been worn.

The real magic of the evening, however, was of course the filling of the space with music and words and emotions--the real guts of life, the stuff that lets us know we're truly alive, that we exist in fullness, that we also have a past, and that we also have a future.

By seasons of friendship and personal and spiritual growth, we chart our progress, verify our position, and continue onwards. We acknowledge our symbols and the ways in which they guide our decisions and actions. We acknowledge things that have become symbols by the roles they have consistently played within our lives. All of

this and more formed the heart of the celebration of ten years of progress, though I confess I still have not viewed the videotape of the evening's performances. Hopefully I will do that before the next week is over, and begin to make the requested copies for those unable to be physically present during the actual show. Certainly I would be happy to make a copy for any and all subscribers to this newsletter as well, though I would request a donation of \$8.50 to cover the cost of the actual tape, mailing envelope, and postage.

Blessings, love, and peace to each and every one of you! May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be! And here's to the next ten years of traversing the world in gold hiking boots!

Subscription Information:

“Sister Who's Perspective” is a monthly newsletter available for an annual subscription price of \$25.00 (please make checks payable to Denver NeVaar with the initials SWP on the memo line of the check).

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Sister Who's Perspective

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Life is a collaborative effort, encompassing more than we know. In a time of abundant “information overload,” news, communication, and travel across great distances, we often talk at each other without listening, communicating, or understanding. Humanity needs its icons, but also its iconoclasts to grow beyond the good and bad qualities that now limit and describe us. The essences of both God and us remain, in the midst of questions, to be discovered, experienced, and expressed. Please share in this ongoing dialogue, remembering to indicate whether and how you wish to be identified. Blessings, love, and peace to you.
---Sister Who

The Changing of the Seasons

First of all, my apologies for the lateness of this particular issue. It has definitely been a busy month, but more on that later.

As much as I love winter with its snow and restfulness, the season when all one has to do to be comfortable is to put on another layer of clothing whenever necessary, it is nevertheless a season when every seed planted will fail to sprout, every tended plant will fail to produce fruit, and survival depends upon how much one was able to put into storage at the end of the last season of harvest.

Yet the season of spring comes at last, when seeds begin to sprout, plants begin to grow, and new resources appear as more or less free gifts from the earth. We do not so much create these new resources but rather must simply show up to receive them. The book of Job in the bible is essentially the story of someone's experience of a very harsh winter. It came more or less without warning and not as the direct result of anything Job did and eventually it left, again more or less without warning and again not as the direct result of anything Job did. In both instances, however, it is clear that the coming and going of seasons are orchestrated by God in keeping with some more transcendent rhythm which is more often than not beyond human understanding. Additionally, it must be noted that no season has the final word and that all seasons are subject to change.

How thankful we are when spring returns and our labor seems less in vain, how delighted and even inspired we become. Even more so, however, how

compassionate we need to be toward those still caught in the grasp of winter. Is it not obvious to everyone that we do not all go through the same seasons of life at the same time, that the challenge of envy is specifically the acceptance that our individual seasons are not synchronized with each other? I have occasionally during a time when things were not going well for me, asked someone whether things were going well for him or her. In each case, the person knew of my difficulties and responded affirmatively with hesitation, to which I immediately answered, “Well that's good news. If things weren't going well for SOMEONE, it would certainly have been a wasted day on the calendar.” I thus simultaneously acknowledged my own struggles and gave thanks that my struggles were not typical of the life experience of everyone else around me.

All of that being taken into consideration, I am very thankful that within the last couple of months I have been blessed with both a new “day-job” that pays well and also a home in the mountains just outside of Denver, Colorado (albeit one in need of major repair and renovation). After three years of not knowing where home is, it feels almost too wonderful to be true. The job came to me through a friend of a friend and was never advertised or posted in any formal way. I think I was the only one interviewed for the position as well. The home appeared at the end of a long and winding trail of searching for a more stable housing situation. Once I move into my new home, the count of moves within the last three years alone, just trying to keep a roof over my head, will

be nine. I think I will not be moving again for a very long time (then again, the future remains as uncertain as ever, still making no guarantees) since this is a home I am purchasing rather than renting.

Situations at my current day-job could also change overnight, considering the high volume of chaos and stress that each day there may include. Like a situation of domestic violence, there are certain events to which the only intelligent response--regardless of how otherwise luxurious the situation may be--is departure. Neither psychological nor physical abuse can be tolerated without forfeiting the ownership of part or all of one's soul. Life on this earth is too short to remain in situations which become destructive. Either they must be healed or they must be left behind in some way.

Yet I still find myself looking back to the nine years I had with my now ex-lifepartner and missing him, wanting to share all of these new triumphs with him. Yet for all of our similarities and the things we shared, I must remember that of the many possible reasons for our separation, differences we tried unsuccessfully to integrate are at the top of the list. To put it another way, I think we ultimately discovered that we could not live in each others' world.

More specifically in this context of this article, we were gazing at each other across the calendar from the context of widely varying seasons of life. I was Spring and he was Autumn. One slips into summer, the other into winter, evolving into the greatest contrast two seasons can have. Yet the love and the memories (and thankfully the friendship) remain.

As I continue to press forward, I am intrigued by the myriad of metaphors lighting my pathway and guiding each creative choice of the formation of my new home. Each material element seems rich with symbolism and especially symbolism which is remarkably consistent with my life and its characteristics and challenges.

For example, my new home is just the right size for one person and is not the

least bit pretentious in any way. As I reflect upon the current phase of my life, it does seem that the work of Sister Who is taking center stage more than ever and I have found that there is rarely a way for a lifepartner to share in that work with a sense of equality.

I am reminded of a comment made by Elizabeth Taylor in reference to her many husbands, something to the effect that as one of the most major movie stars of all time, creating any sense of equality within a marriage relationship is virtually impossible for her to do. There is for all essential purposes, no way that any man could ever measure up to her.

I would like to clarify that this was not a statement of arrogance but rather a statement revealing deep understanding of the world's people and their ways of relating socially. Objectively speaking, the statement is true. Those who live in the public eye will always have a difficult time finding lifepartners because, like Queen Elizabeth for whom the Elizabethan age of English history is named, they are in a sense "married" to their places within history.

I recall a quote from King Arthur to Guenivere just before the final battle within the movie, "Excaliber", something like, "Perhaps we will meet again in another time and place, when our lives will belong to ourselves rather than to history."

Certainly we will not all be historical figures like Arthur and Guenivere, but each of our lives matters to someone while also being in a sense both empowered and entrapped by its own season. One of the current generation's qualities which is both a trap and an opportunity is that the current age is so completely obsessed with economics and financial gain. I can only hope that music and dance and creative painting have not become forgotten arts before humanity wakes up to how very essential these things are to our survival and how vitally important it is to integrate even their most unconventional forms into the spectrum of our world.

Christmas is my favorite holiday of the year and I remember its celebrations fondly, but I do not celebrate it all year long. There is a time for unpacking the ornaments and a

time several weeks later for repacking them back into storage again. I accept each time with its individual demands without lying to myself about which of the two I prefer.

Again and again, it seems, we are brought back to the saying, "Life is what happens while you're making other plans." I will probably never have all of the answers and will probably always continue to be surprised by unanticipated and sudden changes in my life's course, but I can promise to always strive to be listening and watching, allowing each moment to be whatever it is and contributing to each moment all of the beauty and love I have within me. These qualities are part of me and ultimately what we bring to each situation is all of ourselves. As a friend in Wyoming whom I've never met face to face encouraged, "Remember who you are."

A Ritual for a House-warming

At the core of a house-warming is the desire to spiritually transform a house into a home. Certainly there are at least a thousand ways to do this, as well as another thousand we haven't discovered yet. Here's one possibility.

The key ingredient is to see and use the possibilities of symbolism to illustrate prayers, wishes, and fond thoughts.

Start with a simple grapevine wreath, such as can be purchased at nearly any hobby and craft store or perhaps even made by yourself if you happen to have a grapevine nearby. In the latter case, form the wreath while it is still green and allow it to dry within a shallow clothing box for several months beforehand. Simply make a circle with the vine, going around several times, then begin going through the center of the wreath and wrapping the vine around the circle in order to hold its shape; in through the center, up and around on the outside and in through the center again, finally tucking the end in between the core strands of the wreath when it becomes too short to go around even one more time.

Now that we have a basic wreath to act as the skeleton of our ritual gift, we begin attaching specific objects to the wreath with

bits of black cotton thread, to signify our prayers and wishes. Music might be symbolized by the addition of a small jingle bell or two. Wealth could be a gold or silver bead. A seed pod of some kind could signify potential growth and new beginnings. Safety and security could be symbolized by a snail shell or some other personal armor. Native Americans used the buffalo skull to stand for the place in which higher thoughts, insights, and even divine connection are stored within the physical body. Craft stores have an amazing array of miniature objects which could symbolize all sorts of things.

Then there are the possibilities of personal history. A button from the coat the particular individual wore on his or her first day of school, an earring purchased during a trip to a foreign country with the recipient of the wreath, and a lapel pin representation of the individual's favorite pet or breed are all possibilities with special significance.

Colors bring added dimension to the wreath. The recipient's favorite color would be a good place to start, but other hues with potential meaning could also be added, whether as beads, ribbons, or strands of yarn. Blue is often associated with purity and cleansing. Green can be growth, health, or economic abundance. Yellow is expansive, like the sun, encompassing light, warmth, and power. A gentle sort of orange is often associated with creativity, being the combination of yellow and red. Red, perhaps most obviously, is associated with love and strong healthy life, specifically because it relates to the blood which continuously circulates and nurtures our bodies. Purple, as the combination of blue and red, symbolizes many things including the healthy integration of masculine and feminine energies and especially spiritual transformation and growth.

Just to be sure your communication is clear, it is wise to add a small card, enumerating the symbolisms you've intended and reminding that, like every creative work, there are certainly more meanings waiting to be discovered.

Ultimately, such a wreath is a gift of friendship and a unique and special gift of yourself.