

LIVING WICCA

The background of the cover is a dark, atmospheric forest scene. A woman in a white robe stands in the center with her arms raised. To her left is a large tree trunk with an owl perched on a branch above. To her right is a deer with large antlers. In the foreground, there are several rabbits. The overall tone is mystical and naturalistic.

A Further Guide for the
Solitary Practitioner

Scott
Cunningham



“Once we’ve learned the basics of Wiccan beliefs and practices, living our religion is, logically, the next step. How we allow it to affect our lives is completely up to us.

“I’ve written this book as a guide not only to Wiccan practice, but to Wiccan life. Still, its contents are merely ideas and suggestions. Each of us has to find the perfect path. May the Goddess and God assist you in this quest.”

Scott Cunningham,
1956–1993

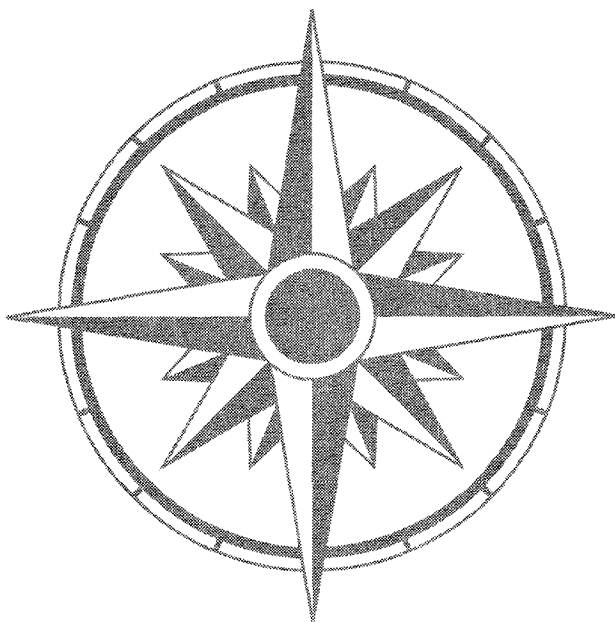
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott Cunningham was born in Royal Oak, Michigan on June 27, 1956. He learned about Wicca while still in high school and practiced elemental magic for twenty years. He experienced, researched, then wrote about what he learned in his magical training. He then rewrote it, as many times as it took, to get it right by his high standards. Scott is credited with writing more than thirty books (both fiction and non-fiction). His style is simple and direct. He passed from this incarnation on March 28, 1993, but his work and his words live on.

LLEWELLYN'S PRACTICAL MAGICK SERIES

Living Wicca

A FURTHER GUIDE FOR THE
SOLITARY PRACTITIONER



SCOTT CUNNINGHAM

1997

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>A Note to Traditional Wiccans</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xiii</i>
PART I: LEARNING	
Chapter 1: Tools of Learning	3
Chapter 2: Secrecy	15
Chapter 3: Should I Do It While I'm Sick?	23
Chapter 4: Magical Names	29
Chapter 5: Self-Initiation	33
Chapter 6: The Wiccan Mysteries	39
Chapter 7: Everyday Wicca	45
PART 2: PRACTICE	
Chapter 8: Effective Prayer	53
Chapter 9: Daily Prayers and Chants	63
Chapter 10: Prayers and Rites of Thanks and Offering	67
Chapter 11: Simple Wiccan Rites	73
Chapter 12: Magic and Solitary Wiccan	77

PART 3: YOUR OWN TRADITION

Chapter 13: Creating a New Path	85
Chapter 14: Deity Concepts	89
Chapter 15: Tools, Altars, Dress and Ritual Jewelry	105
Chapter 16: Ritual Design Part 1	113
Chapter 17: Ritual Design Part 2	127
Chapter 18: Beliefs	135
Chapter 19: Rules	139
Chapter 20: Wiccan Symbols	151
Chapter 21: The Book of Shadows	181
Chapter 22: Teaching (Widening the Circle)	187
Chapter 23: Living Wicca	195
Glossary	197
Annotated Bibliography	207
Index	215



A NOTE TO 'TRADITIONAL' WICCANS

This book, a further guide for Solitary practitioners of Wicca, isn't an attack on conventional Wicca, Wiccan traditions, covens or usual training procedures. It was written (as was its predecessor) for those without access to conventional Wicca, Wiccan traditions, covens or usual training procedures.

Some will see this book as an insult to their form of Wicca, so I repeat: this is a guide for Solitary practitioners who have no access to your form of Wicca. This in no way lessens it or any other Wiccan tradition.

Read with an open mind and remember the time when you, too, were seeking.

INTRODUCTION

This book consists of further instructions for the Solitary Wiccan Practitioner. It assumes that the reader has gained some experience in our religion and, thus, doesn't stop to define every specialized term and ritual reference. For a quick review, check the glossary.

Part I of this book contains essays on a variety of topic of importance or interest to Solitary Wiccans. Part II is a collection of daily prayers and rituals of offering and thanks, together with guides to effective prayer and magic. Part III is a recommended system for creating your own Wiccan tradition.

This book has been written with a single premise: that Wicca is an open religion. All can come before the altar and worship the Goddess and God, whether alone or in the company of others; initiated or not. Wicca is available to all interested people.

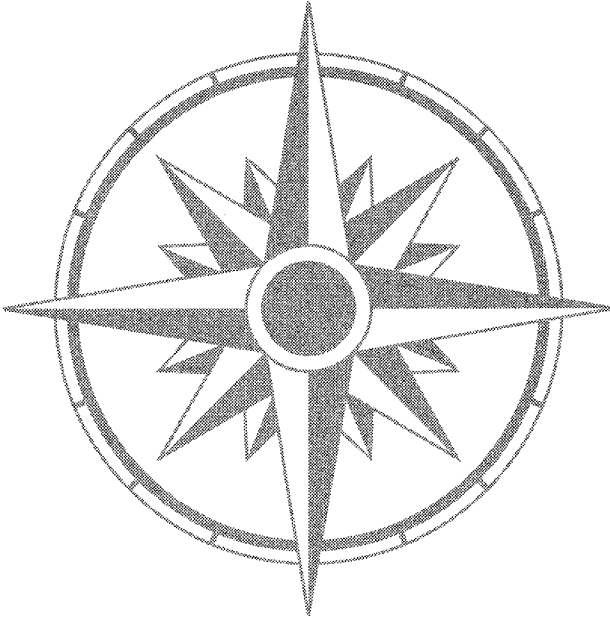
Living Wicca has been written for those who have become enchanted by the moon shining through trees; who have begun to investigate the sublime world that lies out beyond the fabric of daily life, and who stand in smoke-shrouded circles, raising aloft their hands to greet the Goddess and God as the candles flicker on the altar. It's written for those of us who, through choice or circumstance, meet with Silver Lady and the Horned God alone.

Readers of *Wicca: A Guide for the Solitary Practitioner* asked me to write another, similar work, because so little Wiccan writing is aimed at the solitary practitioner. I hope that this book fills at least part of this need.

Until next time, I'll say Blessed Be.

Scott Cunningham
La Mesa, CA
July 10, 1992

PART ONE:



LEARNING



I: TOOLS OF LEARNING

MEMBERS of covens have access to teachers, attend learning circles, and can enjoy the experience of other Wiccans in guiding and enriching their Wiccan knowledge. Solitary Wiccans lack all of these opportunities. What, then, are our tools of learning?

We must be creative. Self-teaching is a great challenge, but it can be accomplished through the use of four tools:

Study

Thought

Prayer

Experimentation

The use of these tools is the most effective method by which Solitary Wiccans can increase their knowledge and understanding of Wicca. This four-fold approach may answer nearly every question you have if you're willing to trust yourself; if you're willing to think; and if you're not caught up in worrying that you're doing something incorrectly.

There's no one correct method of casting a circle; of invoking the Goddess and God; of ritually observing the seasons or performing Wiccan magic. The fact that there are numerous methods of casting circles, invoking the Goddess and God and observing the seasons points to the unique opportunity that lies in wait for the Solitary Wiccan: to discover new forms of worship that others, conditioned to accept only certain avenues of Wiccan expression, may have missed.

How can you do this? By studying, thinking, praying and experimenting.

STUDY

Books have always been tools of magic. With the turn of a page, we can be transported to the bottom of the ocean; to the limitless desert; to the surface of the moon. Books can lift our spirits, heal our wounds, steel our courage and strengthen our religious resolve. They can also arouse our curiosity, sharpen our minds, teach us new skills and alter our opinions. Books are powerful tools of change.

Many people first learn of Wicca through reading books, and most use books to guide their first steps on the Wiccan path. Such books, if written in a clear manner by experienced Wiccans, can be valuable learning tools. Quality books of this kind become their readers' High Priestess and High Priest, coveners and friends.

Indeed, due to the scarcity of those willing to teach Wicca, and the small number of students that they can effectively instruct, we've thrown the mantle of experience and authority around books written by Wiccan authors. Such works have largely become the teachers of the new era of Wicca.

Sometimes, however, reading more than a few books may lead to confusion. Authors may make contradictory statements regarding Wiccan ritual practices and concepts. Some may deliberately obscure Wiccan knowledge with mystic prose. The Solitary Wiccan, grasping for answers, may only come up with more questions, as expert after expert states that her or his way is the best or most effective (this tendency is disappearing in Wiccan books today, but many older books that contain such statements are still in print).

One book may state, "the altar is always in the East"; in another, the North. An author might write that counterclockwise movement within the circle is forbidden; another will direct the reader to move in precisely this

direction. Dates and names for the Sabbats and Esbats vary widely according to the author. Tools are given differing names, attributes and functions.

Eventually, the books that originally inspired the new Solitary Wiccan may become a source of confusion and despair, and she or he may pack them away, deciding that no real learning can be achieved with them.

This is a shame, and can be avoided by keeping this concept in mind: Each book is a different teacher. Each teacher has distinct ideas concerning the subject being taught. Think of four experienced race-car drivers who are teaching beginners. Each instructs his or her student in the basics of this dangerous sport. The fastest engine designs; the best oil; the most effective strategy to use during the races themselves. Each driver teaches this subject in a different way, and expresses her or his biases, but they're all teaching racing.

Wiccan books, as teachers, are quite similar. Experience and training have created specific ideals concerning Wicca within each book's writer, and these ideals are clearly presented within her or his books. Divergences of opinion are natural in experts in any field and shouldn't dismay those who are confronted by them.

When you're challenged with seemingly contradictory information, examine this information and make a decision as to which to follow. Listen to your intuition. In other words, feel free to pick and choose among the published rituals and ritual textbooks to decide what *feels* right. It's this selectivity that will usually prove to be the most effective.

I can already hear some of you saying: "Wait! I could never do that! I—I wouldn't know if I was doing it right. I need someone to teach me!"

That's where you come in. You become your own teacher, and books provide some of the lessons. Learn to trust yourself. Settle questions in the best way that you can. Think. Pray. Experiment (see the next three sections of this chapter). And just do it.

Books aren't foolproof. Some books contain virtually no accurate information. Many readers are apt to believe anything in print. "After all," they say, "it's in this book right here. That proves it's true." Unfortunately, nearly anyone can write a book and even have it published. Does this ensure that its contents are true?

No. In fact, a few specialty publishers continue to publish lie-packed books describing the 'Satanic' nature of Wicca; that describe its rites as those of human sacrifice, orgies and prayers to the Devil. Such books, written by a few virulent self-styled Christians, are easily spotted among others on the shelves by the repeated use of Biblical quotations. These hateful tomes have nothing to teach and are best avoided.

Other books, while written by scholars or others interested in accurately recording Wiccan beliefs and practices, may contain misinformation. Most surveys of Wiccan belief (such as by Tanya Luhrman's *Persuasions of the Witches' Craft*) are so slanted by the author's bias that little truth has managed to squeeze onto their pages. Again, it's best to avoid books of this nature and all books written by non-Wiccans about Wicca.

Another pitfall that may be encountered within books consists of glowing descriptions of negative magic. Such passages are usually found in spell books, not in Wiccan texts. Still, Solitary Wiccans are apt to peruse magical texts, and the majority of these describe the wonders of cursing and reveal numerous methods of hexing one's enemies. Such books may otherwise contain fine information, but passages like these can perpetuate the false idea that negative magic is acceptable. Material of this nature can be weeded out by a simple recitation of the Wiccan Law: *Harm none*.

Finally, some older books by Wiccans contain what seem to be absolute statements of fact that are absolutely false, such as "Wicca is a British religion"; "You must be naked in your rites"; "Sexual rites are necessary in Wicca", or our old friend, "Only a Witch can make a Witch" (i.e.,

initiation is necessary). These statements are framed within the context of these authors' Wiccan traditions, and may be quite correct within them. However, they have no validity to those outside their tradition. Such statements, where they appear in books, needn't concern us.

One of the most popular forms of misinformation concerning Wicca are found in books on the ancient history of Wicca. I won't add to this argument, but I will advise you to read tales of ancient Wicca with a great deal of discernment and a large grain of salt.

While books aren't infallible sources of information, they can be valuable allies on the Solitary Path if you keep these things in mind:

- ❖ Books are tools that are meant to be used. They provide lessons; we have to put the lessons to work.
- ❖ Books can't answer every question, but neither can any High Priestess or teacher.
- ❖ Be discriminating when reading books. If an author makes wild statements that you know to be untrue, consider the book as a *possible* source of incorrect information.
- ❖ Mark up your books. Underline (with pencils) important passages, or use bookmarks to indicate valuable sections. You may wish to add to the index (many Wiccans do this). (Purists may purchase a second copy of the same book and leave this one in pristine condition on the shelf.)
- ❖ Combine information from a number of books on a specific topic, such as magic, energy raising or circle construction. Write notes and study the combined teachings of several books. This may facilitate the process of assimilating (and using) this information, and will give you a greater chance of finding what's right for you. (This

process of collecting information, combining it and utilizing it is one of the most important parts of learning any new skill, profession, hobby or religion.) (See Part III of this book.)

- If books are too expensive for your budget, budget differently, or haunt used book stores in your area. Libraries are another possible source of Wiccan books, but don't expect to find them on the shelf: they're usually stolen if openly shelved. Most libraries keep occult books behind the counter or in storage. Some librarians may look with disgust at you for checking out books on Wicca. If this is a problem, say you're working on a paper, ask the person if she or he has a problem, or simply say nothing and stare down the librarian. (Actually, most librarians don't care what books are checked out.)
- Finally, don't see reading as a passive activity. Make it an active process in which you play a vital role. Question everything, even this book and these instructions. Think about what you're learning (see next section). Never take an author at her or his word. Search for similar themes. Remember 'harm none'. Books are wonderful teachers, but we must allow ourselves to hear their messages and trust ourselves so that their lessons can begin to unfold.

THOUGHT

I've already mentioned the importance of independent thought during study. This thought process should continue after you've closed the book. Many Wiccan teachers state that the classes that they lead are just the beginning of the lesson; that they should be springboards to continual learning. This can take place only when we reflect upon what we're being taught.

This is in direct opposition to the 'think this way, believe this way' attitude of most educational systems in this country. Independent thought thrusts a stick into the spokes of conventional education, and is seen as a real threat to the old order. It discourages at any but the highest levels of education and in the most obscure disciplines (Masters degree programs; medical research; physics and so on).

Thought is often combined with questioning. The question initiates (pardon the pun) the learning process. "How do I make a magic circle?" can be answered by reading, then reflecting on what's been learned. This thought process *must* follow the uncovering of new information if it is to be available for use as needed.

Thinking through new material (such as various methods of casting the circle) allows you to closely examine it to weed out unsatisfactory information. If a published athame consecration leaves you cold, or requires two people, you can easily place it in the inactive file of your mind. Thus, thinking about what you've learned is part of the process of elimination, and of finding your ideal Wiccan practice. It's an integral aspect of the learning process.

Everything stated above applies equally to questions regarding the nature of the Goddess and God, reincarnation, morality and every other aspect of Wiccan belief and practice.

Many new Solitary Wiccans have a great number of questions regarding the Goddess: "What does She look like?"; "What's the best method of contacting Her?"; "Is She really real?"; "Can I touch Her?"; "Where did She come from?"; "Which myths should I use?" Many of these and similar questions can be answered through study and thought; others require prayer and experimentation.

Thought should also be combined with *feeling*. We've been taught to distrust our feelings. In Wicca, however, we can realize that our feelings are usually

what attracted us to Wicca in the first place. Would it be wise to toss them aside. I don't think so.

Intuition (the unexplained knowledge or feeling that makes itself known in our conscious minds) is a form of psychic awareness. Use of this tool while learning Wicca is of the utmost importance, for it's the filter through which you can evaluate questionable information. Your reactions to this information may profoundly affect your final decisions.

Thought, then, is a necessary part of learning Solitary Wicca. It can be summed in the following manner:

- ❖ Determine questions (if necessary).
- ❖ Study to uncover knowledge.
- ❖ Determine your feelings concerning this knowledge. Rely on your intuition.
- ❖ Based on this, determine what information is applicable to your Solitary Wiccan practice.

Such processes are necessary for Solitary Wiccans. Reflect on what you've studied. Trust yourself, your intuition, your feelings. And learn.

PRAYER

Prayer is another tool open to the Wiccan. When you're absolutely stuck, when the information can't be found in books, or when found confuses you. When you have a real need for assistance, ask for it. Prayer of this nature needn't be accompanied by lengthy ritual (particularly if you haven't yet determined your best ritual forms). You might accompany your prayer with the lighting of a candle or a walk in the woods or park. You may pray while petting your cat, staring into a fire, standing in a shower or sinking into a tub. You

might also use a popular tool of divination, such as tarot cards, a pendulum, rune stones, but use such tools *following* prayer – not before.

The structure of the prayer isn't as important as the emotion that you place within it, and the clarity of your request. You might direct it solely to the Goddess or to both the Goddess and the God. Express your need for this information or for guidance with the present situation, and thank Them in advance for Their assistance.

True prayer is more than spoken words, for the devotee releases energy through the prayer to the Goddess and God. Because nature abhors a vacuum, an answer will appear (see Chapter 8 for more information regarding Wiccan prayer).

This answer may take many forms. It can be something as simple as a voice suddenly saying, "I have much to teach you. Place two candles on the altar. Hold Sabbats at night after everyone else is asleep. You need not initiate yourself at this time. Wine is fine, but apple cider or grape juice can also be used." Such direct communication with the Goddess is possible because we each contain a spark of Her divine fire within us. However, such direct communication is rather rare.

More commonly, the messages may appear in symbolic form: a cloud may suggest a shape; the shape may suggest an answer. Cards or stones or the movement of a pendulum could give you answers. Prayers for information before going to sleep might be answered in dreams. Record all such important dreams, think about them and determine if they're relevant to your question. (During sleep, communication with the Goddess and God is much easier, for the doubting conscious mind has been unchained and we operate in the subconscious [psychic] mind.)

There are numerous other ways in which your prayer may be answered. You may suddenly find a book that contains the needed information, or

come across an article in a Wiccan publication that's just arrived in the mail. Prayers are always answered, but not always in direct ways.

Keep in mind, however, that the answers you receive may not be relevant for anyone but yourself. If the Goddess has spoken to you, it is to you that She has spoken – not to all Wiccans. Her messages may have little or no meaning to others. If you've always been fascinated by semi-precious stones and She tells you to create a circle with them, this knowledge is correct for you but may be completely incorrect for others. Divine revelations are usually of a personal, not global, nature. Though knowledge received in this fashion certainly should be used, it doesn't invalidate the ways of other Wiccans. Though we may receive divine messages, no one can ever be *the* spokesperson for the Goddess.

Answers received in prayer deserve attention and thanks (rites of thanks to the Goddess and God can be found in Chapter 10).

Don't discount prayer as a tool of information gathering. It seems ethereal, but when we consider its source, is this so surprising?

EXPERIMENTATION

So, you've read many books, thought about what you've read and compiled information from a number of sources; you've filtered this knowledge through the sieve of your feelings (intuition) and have prayed to the deities for assistance. What's next? Putting the information into practice.

Wicca is, after all, a living religion. Religions don't exist within theories and ritual plans; they come to life only when they're being practiced and lived. The outer forms (rituals, uses of tools) are important because they symbolize non-physical processes, and remind us of what we're doing in Wicca in the first place.

Begin to experiment with various ritual forms. Piece them together in various ways, discarding unsuccessful combinations and holding onto those that you find fulfilling. Questions such as "Is this the right way? Am I doing it wrong?" should not be allowed to interfere with your creative process. Such questions will only delay your progress.

The process of experimentation is necessary for determining all aspects of Solitary Wicca: everything from seasonal festivals to Esbats, power raising and sending techniques, magical rituals, the use and meaning of tools, self-initiations and every other exterior aspect of Wicca.



This four step self-learning plan can certainly be of value in sharpening your Wiccan beliefs and practices. How important is reincarnation in your Wiccan practice? How far can the law 'harm none' be taken? When's the best time to perform rituals? Do you have to hold a circle on every full moon and Sabbat? Can you do them at other times as well? Each of these questions can be answered through study, thought, prayer and experimentation.

A complete guide to creating your own Solitary Wiccan Tradition and writing your own *Book of Shadows* can be found in Part III of this book. The information in that chapter should be useful if you decide to take this step.

You may decide that none of this is necessary. You might find a set of rituals and follow them to the exclusion of any others. This, too, is fine. But when you have questions about these rituals you may wish to use the process outlined in this chapter to discover the answers.

The path of the Solitary Wiccan can be difficult, but the school of trial and error is an excellent one. As your experience increases, so will your knowledge, and so too will your questions, which will lead to *study, thought, prayer and experimentation.*

LIVING WICCA

Having access to all the answers isn't the goal of the Solitary Wiccan – finding the most important of those answers is; and we can find them by practicing our religion and through the use of these tools of learning.



2 : SECRECY

Secrecy has been granted such importance in both Wicca and magic that a few words concerning it here seem appropriate. In this chapter, we'll separately discuss each topic.

KEEPING YOUR WICCAN ACTIVITIES SECRET

In the recent past, when there were far fewer members of our religion and public understanding of Pagan faiths was non-existent in this country, Wiccans were usually quiet about their religion. The threat of broken marriages, loss of home, job, and even children was quite real. Wiccans had learned to keep their religious activities wrapped in the shadows. Only the closest of relatives or friends knew what these people did on the nights of the full moon (and the reason why they always asked for the day off after the Sabbats).

These Wiccans were usually members of covens and had been sworn to secrecy during their initiations. Among the many things that they could not reveal were their magical names, the identities of other members of the coven, activities that occurred during a circle, and their group's specific religious and magical rituals. Even if some Wiccans were willing to speak of their religion, public opinion and oaths of secrecy were stacked against them. Most Wiccans lived double lives: one related to work, PTA, fighting with the neighbors, budgeting, washing the car and other mundane activities; the other immersed in religion and magic.

Today, the picture has somewhat changed. Every issue of *Circle Network News* (see the Appendix) lists a large number of positive articles that have appeared concerning Wicca in general-interest magazines and newspapers. Articles on Wiccans and Goddess-worshippers have appeared on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*. Television talk shows revel in 'Witch' episodes, where invited Wiccans discuss their religion.

This coverage has tremendously expanded the awareness of the existence of our religion within non-Wiccans. They may have incorrect ideas concerning Wicca, but they've been exposed to its existence.

Recognized Wiccans are sometimes invited to speak to church congregations to explain their religion. Many work directly with prisoners, just as do the clergy of other religions. Some Wiccan groups are recognized by the I.R.S. as tax-exempt churches (though Wicca as a whole hasn't been granted this recognition). The U.S. Army instructs its chaplains to recognize Wicca as a legitimate alternative religion. Occasionally, articles about Wicca actually appear in the Religion section of newspapers.

Still, the prevailing climate is one of confusion, doubt and fear. Those raised to believe in one faith feel threatened when another makes its presence known; especially one as misunderstood as Wicca. Occasionally, this leads to violence and even murder.

Such reactions are the direct result of the misinformation continually being fed to an unsuspecting public. The major sources of these lies are television evangelists (who have had their day and who are now fading from existence), but many small-town preachers continue to speak of us as satanic, child-killing devils with one aim: to rule the world. Even the recent media-promulgated "New Age" has been widely discussed as a satanic threat to Christianity.

Though we know this is absurd, many non-Wiccans do not. In such a heady climate, is it best to reveal your religion to your parents, mate, chil-

dren, friends, employers, landlords and neighbors? If only to some of these, which ones? Could such a revelation create anger, fear and misunderstanding to the point that you wished you'd never said a thing?

It's possible. The alternative is also possible. Telling your mate that you're practicing a different religion may actually strengthen your bond ("Well, at least you believe in *something*") or settle unresolved questions ("So *that's* what you've been doing at midnight once a month").

The alternative is true as well. Your mate may grow cold, your employer may let you go, your neighbors might shun you, your parents may become extremely distressed (if they subscribe to a more conventional religion), your landlord may give you 30 days notice, or up your rent.

An understanding employer might let you have days off for your religious practices. Your neighbors will know not to drop in on the nights of the full moon. Your landlord? Well, maybe it's best not to tell everyone. You must carefully weigh this decision, for such a revelation could quickly affect your place of residence.

The decision of if and when to break the news to others, and to whom, must be based upon your knowledge of Wicca, your involvement in the religion (after a while, it can become rather difficult to hide), your relationships with those you might tell, the prevailing religious climate of your area, and the ease with which you can discuss such a highly personal subject as religion.

It usually isn't necessary to make such a revelation, not even to your husband or wife. If she or he asks, you may wish to discuss it, but no one has the right to know what you do on October 31. Religious freedom is just that—freedom of religion, freedom from oppressive religions, and the freedom from discussing your faith.

For 13 years I lived in a second floor apartment in a rough neighborhood. The building was owned by a born-again Christian who ran a gun

LIVING WICCA

shop and vacuum cleaner repair business next door to the building. I saw this man on a daily basis; he was in my apartment many times, and I had met much of his family. While I lived there I had 10 magic and Wiccan books published, gave countless television, radio and newspaper interviews, taught hundreds of classes in the general area, performed many rituals and hosted dozens of coven meetings. I stared at the stars at night, recited incantations over the herbs and plants that I grew on my porch, meditated on thunderstorms and in every way acted as a Wiccan.

And yet, during all those years my landlord never spoke to me about my religion. Yes, he used to write rent receipts on the back of religious tracts, but the subject simply never came up. I held my tongue, he held his, and we had a satisfying business relationship.

If I'd marched into his store one day and announced that I was a Witch, he'd have certainly sent me packing. My decision not to discuss my religion allowed me to live in a large apartment, at low rent, for a great many years during my salad days as a writer.

The decision of whether to inform others of your Wiccanhood must be a personal one. However, I'll give you a warning: many people simply don't care what you believe or who you invoke. They have no interest in the subject.

Some Wiccans decide to tell the world that they're Wiccans (or 'Witches') purely for shock value, to attract attention, make money and to gratify their egos. This is the worst reason for revealing your religion to others.

MAGICAL SECRECY

Virtually everything said above also pertains to the practice of magic, but other factors are pertinent only to this subject. Magic, as the projection of natural energies to manifest needed changes, is a vital part of Wicca. Within the