

**RELIGION IN EVANSTON**

# Donna — good witch of Chicago

What image does the word "witch" conjure up? A wicked stepmother enticing her daughter to eat poison apples? Bent hags cavorting around bubbling pots? Mysterious, potion-bearing neighbors as in "Rosemary's Baby?"

Well, a witch was in Evanston Apr. 16, and she didn't fit any of these descriptions.

A tall, animated girl with soft black hair pulled to the nape of her neck, Donna Cole of Chicago, witch, was in Evanston's Unitarian Church to discuss "Witchcraft as a Religion." Wearing a soft figured black and red blouse and long earrings, Miss Cole spoke to approximately 30 members of the YWCA Solo Club, some who were open skeptical, some who were fascinated.

**SHE DISCUSSED** her life as a witch and used exotic terms in a matter-of-fact way, as though she were discussing ways to sew a skirt or find a job. Most of her time was spent explaining away the audience's preconceived notions about witches.

Witchcraft has had bad press, starting with the Christian era and continuing through "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," Miss Cole explained. The craft is an ancient attempt by man to understand the universe and draws on an undefined cosmic power he can use to his benefit.

Christians associated witchcraft with Satan and other undesirables, but pre-Christian witchcraft, which Miss Cole practices, has nothing to do with Satan, she says.

Instead, she uses her power to do good, which is white magic, rather than using the power to do harm, which is black or satanic magic.

**MISS COLE**, a psychiatric social worker, has been a practicing witch for four years and meets with a coven or group of six other witches every two weeks in a member's home. After ritual worship, they decide what work they want to perform and try to invoke and use the power they believe they all possess as witches.

"We put ourselves into a condition that is conducive to making the power flow," she explained. The incense, music, the trappings work up the power. Sometimes, when the ritual is really clicking, you can feel the change in atmosphere, you can feel the power slipping from you into others."

Dancing in a nine-foot circle is part of the ritual, and the group tries to meet in

the same home so that power can become established.

"Anyway, it's a great house. It has a fireplace and a nice rug for dancing," she says contentedly.

**MISS COLE'S COVEN**—which could grow to 13 members—has three Ph.Ds, one in mathematics, and three of the members have master's degrees. They do not actively go out and search for members. Somehow, whenever an additional member is needed, he turns up.

Most of the rituals are secret, says Miss Cole, mainly because they are powerful and would be dangerous if used by the wrong person. Also, until very recently, witches have had to work underground to avoid persecution.

The position of the moon is very important during rituals, she said, and full and waxing moons are the best times to work. The waning moon is usually reserved for "death things."

"You want to work in the full moon, she states flatly. "The power's greater then."

Miss Cole's group concentrates on healing and helping people with mental

problems, but also claims some success in keeping friends out of the draft.

"We don't work any black magic," she explains. "But we've done some things against a towing company in Chicago that tows away illegally parked-cars." They also have performed rituals to protect baby seals from hunters in Alaska.

**MISS COLE** came to witchcraft after experimenting with yoga, theosophy, and Buddhism. She spent some time in London when the craft was becoming popular and discovered it fit her powers.

Reincarnation is a central belief in witchcraft, and Miss Cole can trace back fragments of eight lives.

"I think I was an Eastern European peasant most of my other lives. . . nothing too spectacular. Of course, some people think they were Cleopatra, which is more glamorous."

In other lives, says Miss Cole she did black magic but doesn't think it is "appropriate" for this life.

Miss Cole explained the craft's ethics, which include great reverence for life, and added that witchcraft was involved with ecology and nature foods before it became popular.

Someone in the audience asked her if she was frightened by her powers.

"I've never been scared of the idea," she replied. "I grew up with it and was never frightened, but then I've never experienced hauntings or possessions. My ability is in causing things to happen . . . think witchcraft is pretty effective."