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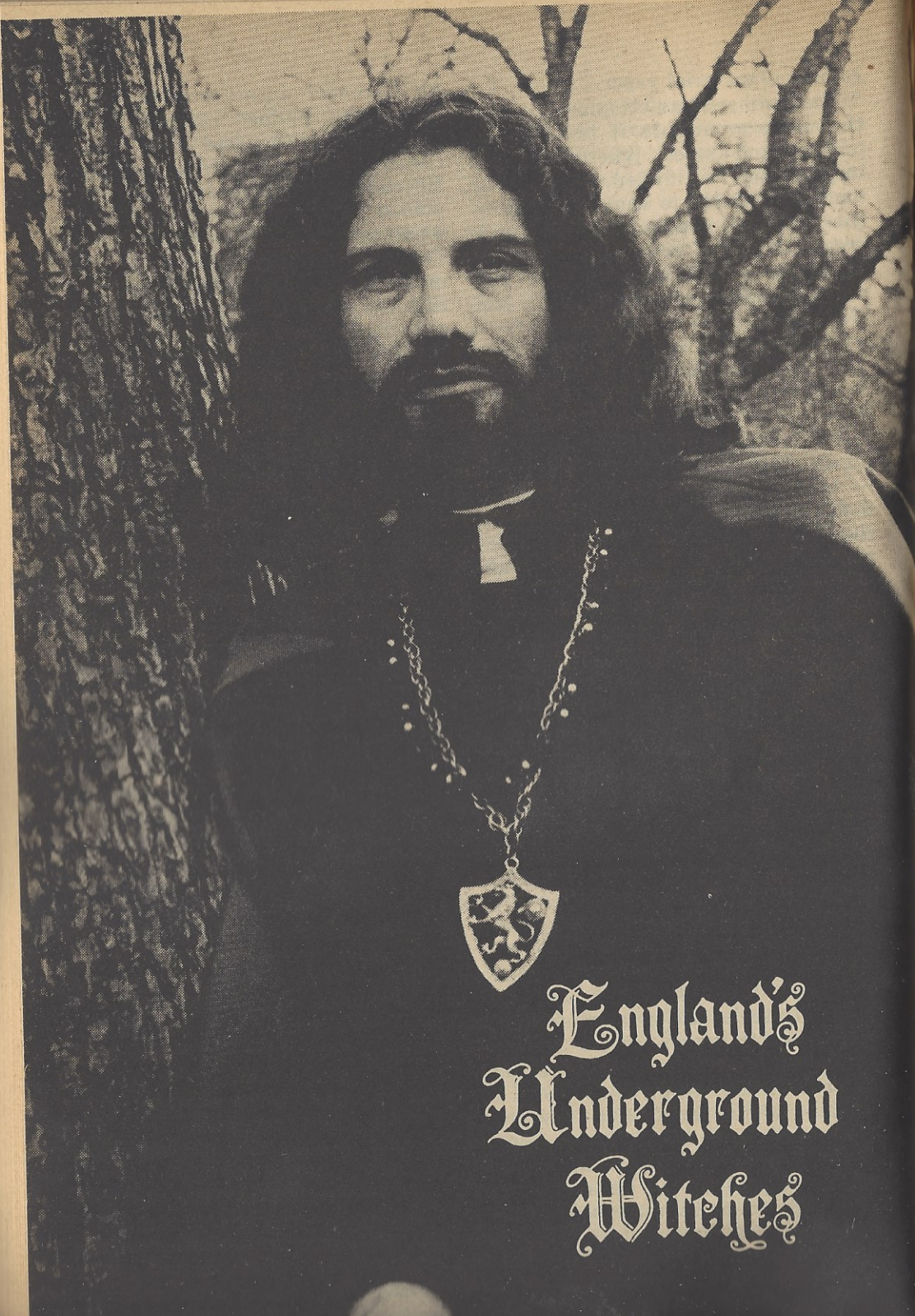
OCCULT

NEW DIMENSIONS OF LIFE IN THE FIELD OF PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

Is Ectoplasm Tangible Proof of the Spirit World?
UFOs—Still Unidentified, Still Flying • England's Underground Witches
Did Satan Surface in San Francisco? • The Devil's Wickedest Disciple
How You Can See the Human Aura • Voodoo—An Orgy Ritual



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England's Underground Witches

The author (at left), one of our most well-known witches, is always interested in exchanging views with those involved in the Craft. This report is the result of his visit to England

BY DR. LEO LOUIS MARTELLO

From the rugged wilderness of Morocco's Atlas Mountains to the sunny slopes of Sicily's Mount Etna, from breaking bread with the Berbers to eating pasta with my Sicilian *paisans*, from a background that was ostensibly Catholic to the public admission of belonging to the Craft of the Wise, my life has been a constant journey for both spiritual fulfillment and self-discovery. I've traveled half way around the world and back. I've met people of all races, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds. When I say self-discovery, I don't mean that I didn't know who I was. I did. Nor was I seeking spiritual fulfillment outside of my own faith. I had this, also. I was seeking the common bond that links all people.

Born into a family of *strega* (witches), baptized a Catholic, ordained a spiritual independent minister (nonsectarian), initiated into four other witchcraft traditions besides my own, my life would appear to be that of a spiritual gypsy. In the constant search for knowledge, I've studied the occult extensively, been initiated into both Subud and Transcendental Meditation, participated in séances, and given psychic readings in spiritualist churches.

Recently another male witch, Raymond Buckland, wrote and asked me why I had been initiated into so many different traditions. He further wrote: "I would have thought that your own tradition would have been sufficient. I'm sure you don't intend to practice them all. And it's obviously not necessary to be initiated into a

tradition in order to familiarize yourself with it."

Mr. Buckland raises a number of valid points. I replied to him that I was interested in firsthand knowledge rather than in second-hand information. And while my own tradition is sufficient, when I'm with Sicilians I worship their way, when with continentals or traditionalists or hereditaries I practice their rites. Also, since only an initiate is permitted to enter into the circle, it was necessary to be initiated into the various traditions of witchcraft.

In April, 1973 I visited Arnold and Patricia Crowther. The Crowthers have run covens in Sheffield for years. Patricia has appeared on British radio and TV and is author of the bestselling book *Witch Blood: The Diary of A Witch High Priestess*. She was initiated into witchcraft by Dr. Gerald B. Gardner himself and was one of the persons mentioned in his will. She and Arnold have also authored *The Secrets of Ancient Witchcraft*. Besides their Gardnerian initiation both of them have also been initiated into a Scottish hereditary group with whom they work closely.

THE REAL INITIATION

Though both of them are what is called Third Degree Gardnerian, Patricia said to me: "Both Arnold and I think that degrees as such have no place in the Craft. With initiation, people are shown a way of life, then it's up to them whether they prefer to follow it or not. If they are sincere,

and eventually can perform magical acts, then they are given the real initiation or, if you like, are made real witches. In that they are given a certain ritual which usually reacts on the physical plane and they go down into *Awyn* or the abyss. It has never failed yet. If they come through they are fit to follow the path. The Great Rite should only be performed by a perfect couple, privately, and at their own discretion. It is not and has never been a way of elevating anyone. It is not a so-called degree at all."

I asked the Crowthers about Gerald Gardner's views on this. Patricia said, "Gerald did not write everything down nor did he give everything away. He knew a great deal about the rites which he gave us orally. And we have kept them secret. In the *Book of Shadows* that you gave me, the laws

"We never mention who is in our coven and members do not know each other's surname."

seem to be an exact copy of ones used in the Middle Ages, which have since been brought up-to-date. The revised ones have not been let out. Why should non-initiates read our secrets? It only lessens craft power."

The *Book of Shadows* is a sort of witches' bible containing all the laws, feast days, rites, and recipes of the Craft. They vary from tradition to tradition. As I had handcopied a number of them in America, I was most interested in comparing books with the Crowthers to determine what had been added, changed or deleted.

The Crowthers, conservative and cautious, are very strict, very traditional, and are appalled by what is known as "quickie initiations." Arnold told me: "Of course, if people are allowed to write out what they want,

they will change what they don't like or what doesn't suit them. You can't stop quick initiations. But you also can't stop the dire consequences of such actions. In ancient times anyone who brought shame on the Goddess would have been found with his throat slit."

As to some of my own writings, the Crowthers said: "Yes, we heard that you were anti-Gardnerian, but we wanted to hear what you had to say about it." It's true that I have been against some Gardnerians. These are the ones who make a great to-do about being Gardnerian, a term not used by true witches in England and, as the Crowthers explained, invented by two men after Gardner's death. It seems that the ones who knew the least were the loudest in their claims. Though I do disagree with the Crowthers on a number of things, I nevertheless respect both their loyalty to Gardner and their dignity in conducting their covens, circles, and Craft public relations. As they told me: "We never mention who is in our coven and members do not know each other's surname. We have little connection with others and are too far north to visit London covens. We associate mostly with the underground Scottish witches who take things much more seriously than do most of the others."

THE CONE OF POWER

Recently Arnold Crowther underwent a lung operation in which he was in the hospital for two months. I immediately put his name on the healing registry of our covens and asked others to work magick for him while raising the Cone of Power. Our healing registry is absolutely free to anyone who requests our help. Emphasis is on the healing and not on the problem or ailment. Thus no correspondence is necessary. And we do not solicit "love offerings" or donations of

"We're not interested in numbers. Only in genuine people who qualify for the Old Religion."

any kind. Because of the volume of requests we've inaugurated a system of writing petitioners' names on parchment paper which is then inserted into a Tibetan prayer wheel. This is revolved around and around while the Witches raise the Cone of Power, dancing faster and faster until all of them fall to the floor exhausted. Though our files are full of testimonial letters, for both our healings and our exorcisms, we make no claims, promise nothing, unless it is to do what we say we will do.

In a letter from Arnold, dated Feb. 8, 1974, he said: "Thank you for your healing help. You will be pleased to know that my recent X-ray has proved to be clear, but I still have a long way to go to clear up the after-effects of the treatment."

Arnold Crowther is a professional stage magician. Among the famous magicians he met in his early years were Houdini and Dante. He also met many of the famous in the occult world such as Montague Summers, Margaret Murray, the famous psychic investigator Harry Price, and the infamous Aleister Crowley.

Arnold met Patricia when they were both working in a stage show. When they were married, Dr. Gerald Gardner flew in from the Isle of Man and performed the Witches' ceremony. The next day they were married in a civil ceremony at the Sheffield Registry office. Since it was the first time in history that two self-admitted witches were married, there the newspapers had a field day. The bride wore black velvet. Every newspaper in England carried the story. After this they were flooded with requests by people who wanted to join a coven. If they weren't dedicated to the Old Religion and sincere in their faith,

they could have had covens going in every part of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. As Patricia said to me: "We're not interested in numbers. Only in genuine people who qualify for the Old Religion. Even now not all of our members live in Sheffield. Some have to travel over 300 miles to attend our meetings."

In discussing the various kinds of initiations I've either seen, participated in or know about, the Crowthers said: "Many of the things you mention are recent inventions. Blood is not used in any true witch rites. The *Book of Shadows* is the property of the coven and should not be bandied about for all members to do with as they wish. One cannot be initiated and raised to another degree on the same day. Time must pass between these things and then one is raised only if he or she is worthy of it. They must prove themselves to be true children of the Craft and demonstrate that they can work magic. It usually takes a year or more. Generally, only a qualified couple who are ready to start their own coven, with the permission of their High Priestess, are awarded the Third degree."

SICILIAN TRADITION

My own Sicilian tradition is vastly different from that of the Crowthers. In centuries past, Sicily was constantly conquered by other peoples. Its natives banded together in secret societies as a matter of self-protection. They adopted whatever pose—civil or religious—that was expedient and necessary for self-preservation. At one time, a Sicilian initiation consisted of a blindfolded initiate being brought to a certain place and left there for the

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night. Just before the others left the initiate's hands were unbound and he or she was told: "You may remove your blindfold at the stroke of mid-

night. You will have to spend the night here. This is a life and death matter. If you are untrue you will die here. Our Mother always protects her own. *Buona fortuna.*" The members left. After a long while, the initiate

removes his blindfold. A moment of terror seizes him. He is paralyzed with fright. He looks up to see a moon-filled sky. To his horror he realizes that he can't get out of there. He explores his surroundings only to find that he has grasped a handful of dirt. He is in a deeply dug open grave. If the initiate doesn't have heart failure after his spending the night in an isolation cell with four dirt walls and a starry sky and every sound in the night magnified into hallucinatory horrors, he has successfully undergone the first part of his initiation. And in the past, when the practice of another religion in Catholic-dominated Sicily was cause for burning at the stake, betrayal was unheard of.

In England there are two hereditary groups which are totally underground. Though they are aware of all the other traditions, they have never made direct contact with any of them and I am under oath never to reveal who they are. I will say this: They do not have any kind of degree system. And the magister, unlike the Gardnerian and other traditions, can initiate both men and women. Some of their ancestors were known as "cunningmen" or "wise women." One of their major differences from most modern witchcraft groups is that their main tool is not the athame (sacred knife). In fact, their tradition forbids the bringing of any kind of iron or steel into the circle. They do not use the word circle and, though they do keep a book, it is not called "Shadows."

An initiation is only as valid as the one receiving it. The one criterion is the person's own sincerity. Just as the Christian God is not Catholic or Baptist or Christian Scientist, so too the witch goddess is not Sicilian, Continental, Traditionalist, Gardnerian, or Alexandrian. Her many names depend upon country of origin. She is not concerned with titles, degrees, or

what witch tools are used as much as she is with the heartfelt dedication of her followers. The Horned God helps all those who seek his aid. But when being a witch is more important than the worship, when status in a coven replaces sincerity of purpose, when ego-props are a substitute for genuine love, when personalities and politics predominate instead of the true spirit of paganism, when covens become a cult for the curious, and when knowledge is suppressed because the High Priests and High Priestesses demand that their members bow to their arbitrary decisions and whims, this is not the Old Religion. Sincerity, simplicity and common sense are the "mystic threes" compatible to the triple aspects of the Goddess. Hope, helpfulness, and a healthy mind complement the Horned God. One happy solitary witch is much more powerful than a dozen discontented ones.

I have never been unhappy in the Craft. I have been very disappointed by many people who call themselves "crafters." The two are not to be confused, although, unfortunately, in the public mind what some crafters may do reflects upon the Craft. Differences of viewpoint, disagreements, and occasional discord happen in all areas of life. But if there is an underlying sincerity of purpose, goodwill, and dedication, this will surmount such problems.

The new initiate to the Old Religion in America is limited by those who follow British-based traditions. However, there are others who are springing up. Most of them become organized without having any real history of direct descent. This does not make them invalid, however. Even the oldest traditions have lost much of their lore because nothing could be written down during the burning times. Then, too, an oral tradition can be altered and things forgotten or changed in the course of transmitting it to the new witch.

Those hereditary groups which do exist in all countries keep to themselves as do the Crowthers. They are aware of the new upsurge of public interest in the Old Religion, but they don't want to become involved in Craft conflicts. Those who head the covens are those who are the most knowledgeable. They abhor all titles, degrees, or status symbols. They feel that all these things detract from them as human beings, from the real reason for being together, and dilute the true teachings. They believe that they are all students on the path of knowledge and that the comradeship of the covens exists because they are all there voluntarily. Each student must function and follow through on his own level of development. If his

eye is on the Third Degree, then he must follow his own vision. In the final analysis, the laws of karma are always operative: false vision will breed faulty results. He can either correct his karma or continue on the path which will produce more of the same. Self-responsibility is the true key to the Craft. It is the essence of an Old Religionist.

My witch journey has taken me to many places, yet the most important part of all of these travels is the voyage to self-discovery, that vast uncharted land of the inner self, the unexplored domains of the mind, the sacred city of the soul. The only entrance requirement is virtue, and the only guides are the Goddess and the Horned God.