

Local witch discusses practices and religious identification

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Ezra Maille

Copy Desk Chief

emaille@unca.edu

A practicing witch since the mid-1970s, Dixie Lee Deerman said she didn't declare herself a witch on purpose, but when asked by a classmate at the age of 13, she confirmed suspicions.

"My psychic abilities were well known," Deerman said. "I was approached on the playground and they said 'Are you or aren't you?' and I said 'I am.' I've been practicing and teaching ever since."

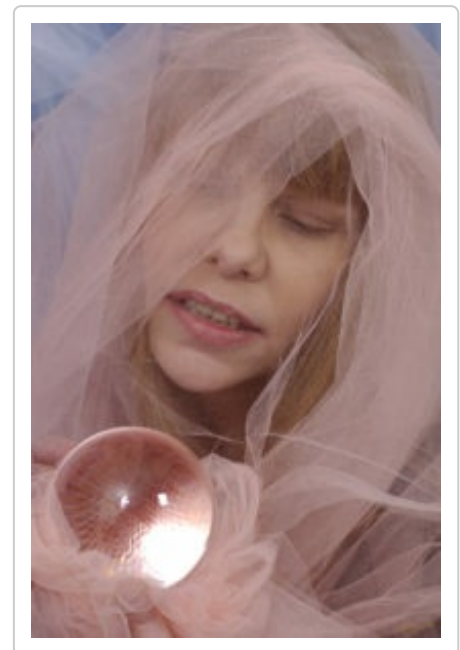
Deerman said she studied traditional witchcraft for four and a half years and rose through the ranks of magical abilities. She said she earned the rank of Lady and started her own coven, a traditional meeting place where witches can practice and learn. Deerman's full magical name is Queen Lady Passion.

"Queen means I've spawned several covens from my own, Lady means I'm a high priestess and Passion is my magical name," Deerman said.

Deerman said she was born with powerful psychic abilities, her main power that attracted her to witchcraft. She said her mother rejected her abilities, calling her "devil spawn" and forcing Deerman to practice in secret.

"I was born terribly, terribly, awfully psychic and I thought everybody could do it," Deerman said. "It is what I am. I have these major abilities and all I did was just continue to hone them until I polished them to perfection."

Deerman noted her magical specialty as divination. She said when she helps people see things through the use of physical tools such as tarot cards, it's really just there to make her subject feel more comfortable.



Dixie Lee Deerman, better known as Queen Lady Passion, High Priestess of Coven Oldenwilde, has been a practicing witch since the 1970s.
Photo by: Dixie Lee Deerman

"I don't need it, it's just a tool. It's just a benefit, lessens their discomfort with me reading their mind," Deerman said.

In addition to divination, Deerman said she is also a healer. She said she helps heal people of all ages and walks of life including the elderly and even prisoners on death row.

"I fulfill a lot of roles for a lot of people. I'm all things to everyone," Deerman said. "Everybody's got talents and gifts, I just learn to identify them and show them to those people and get them out so to speak, become the best they can be."

Deerman said there are a multitude of skills witches have. She said everyone is born with different gifts and that it is unnatural to believe in just a single thing.

"It's natural to be a pagan, it's natural to be a witch. It's unnatural to think that there's only one thing, one male god, one way only, that sort of thing. That's not manifested in the universe, the stars, living beings even on our own planet," Deerman said.

When it comes to helping people overcome challenges, Deerman said there are times when people come to witches to conquer phobias or let go of the past. She said through certain practices, people can be freed from their fears to explore their talents.

"We'll do a past life regression, identify the origin of the phobia in this lifetime and then eliminate that," Deerman said.

As an example, Deerman said a woman came to her with a debilitating fear of crossing bridges, despite the fact that her family and grandchildren lived across a bridge from her. Deerman said through one of these regressions, they discovered the woman had been hung from a bridge in a past life and the lingering trauma continued to haunt her.

"She was still hung up on that so once she relived it, instead of being retraumatized, she was freed of it. She could put it into context and she could visit her grandchildren and do her witchy thing without impediment," Deerman explained.

Deerman said magical practices are very appealing to people. She said it allows for much more individual expression but can also be practiced in groups. She said it's much more fulfilling than religions such as Christianity.

"Just in the last 10 years, people are fleeing Christianity in droves. It doesn't work, it's browbeating, it's costly, it's not fulfilling and so they're running to magic as fast as they can," Deerman said. "We're the fastest growing religion nationwide."

According to a university study published by the *New York Times*, Wicca is the fastest-growing religion with 134,000 adherents. The *Times* acknowledged, however, that this number could be greater as many practitioners may have been unwilling to identify themselves for the

survey for fear of judgement.

Bridgette Perrott, 22, said Wicca is a religion one can subscribe to at their leisure. She said Wicca is an earth-based, "buffet religion" in that it is whatever the practitioner makes of it.

"Wicca accepts people of all races, genders, sexual orientation, religions, you name it. It's also one of the first religions I've found that doesn't position men over women or vice versa. Each is valued in their own way and one cannot exist without the other," Perrott said.

Perrott is the host of *The Devil, The Witch, and My Wardrobe*, a podcast discussing the occult, the paranormal and other strange occurrences. She said Wicca is very accepting and welcoming, something that initially attracted her.

"Wicca has been demonized for years, causing people to live in fear of a beautiful religion that isn't any more evil or dangerous than all the others," Perrott said. "Read a book by a wiccan author to get a better idea before casting judgement."

Deerman has written a plethora of books on magic and spells. According to her website, she and the high priest of her coven are professionals who have officiated memorable Pagan/Wiccan events and are even empowered to legally marry people.

"They've done both kinds of rites for decades in enchanting ways that please everyone," the website boasts.

When it comes to putting magic into practice, Deerman said it is all based on reason. She said the choice for what ingredient or what physical practice to choose is based on what each spell is trying to achieve.

"We cast circle, we do fire calls and fire leaping, we curse, we bless, we turn the wheel of the seasons to make sure we still have some, we fight against political foes that are trying to kill us all," Deerman said. "There's really nothing a witch can't do."

Deerman said witches don't just act out of self-interest but are activists in the community. She said they fight publically and behind the scenes, depending on what they hope to accomplish for the greater good.

Deerman hosts a Samhain, an important celebration for practicing witches on the evening of Oct. 31, what non-witches would call Halloween. She said this will be her 25th year hosting a Samhain, the theme of which will be "Witch Bling."

"So I want people to come laden with every witch symbol, bracelet, necklace, you name it," Deerman said

This event is free and open to the public and Deerman said she encourages the local community to be a part of it.

“We all are born with some witch skills,” Deerman said.