



Judy Flavell felt called to explore service as a vision quest guide after her profound experience as a participant of WomanQuest in 2006, under the guidance of Ann Linnea and Pam Noble. She is a member of the Wilderness Guides Council and a certified Wilderness First Responder. Thank you Judy for this month's tale!

Circle Tale, March 2009

The Power of Circle in Unexpected Moments

As we prepare to call the Circle and open our arms to the abundant spirit of WomanQuest 2009, I realize I am entering this year's quest experience with a renewed trust and a more humbled heart as a vision quest guide.

This time last year, I was roaming in east Kentucky woods on a Medicine Walk in some despair that, in my first year as a "real" guide, I had yet to step into my own confidence. I asked myself why I wasn't feeling more "ready" when I had served as apprentice the year before under Ann Linnea and Pam Noble – two inspiring, experienced, full-hearted and wonderful elders, teachers, and models. I had learned about circle through the Tenfold process nearly 15 years ago from Christina Baldwin and have been practicing it in most facets of my life ever since. Two years running, I had co-guided groups of college freshmen in canoes on their fledgling journeys down the Allagash in Maine, holding with them the rim of circles of deep sharing. Plus, I had been doing my personal work with great commitment, reading, writing, walking, breathing and opening. How could I not feel ready?

WomanQuest was only a few short weeks away! On this Medicine Walk I asked the natural world for signs and teachings about how to transform my sense of leadership. I so desired to be of good service to the sixteen brave women who would come to the Sacred Mountain in search of a vision. I received gifts that day – a pair of snail shells, a long conversation with a fly, and comfort from the water. The gifts felt mysterious. I walked out of the woods at dusk that Sunday evening last April with no clear answers, but still holding to a trust – albeit somewhat shaky – in the process.

Several weeks later, in late May, I was on my way to Abundance Summit in North Carolina to lead WomanQuest, expecting to be guiding with Paulette Lawrence, as well as Ann and Pam; and with the support of Amanda, Shirley and Paula in base camp. The questers would arrive the following day, and I could feel the excitement of the base camp team across the miles. In the early afternoon I stopped for fuel and called Abundance Summit to tell Paulette when I would arrive. I heard the strain in her voice and learned that Ann and Pam had been in a car accident. Stunned and deeply concerned, I could not imagine I would not see them at the foot of the Mountain within the next couple of days.

Upon arriving, I learned that Ann had suffered a serious neck injury and Pam had fractured her sternum. It was dawning on me – on all of us at base camp -- that Ann and Pam would not be with us to guide the quest. Paulette and I realized that the mantle of leadership had fallen upon our shoulders. She and I would be serving as co-guides for the quest. Paula and Shirley, our base camp support, agreed to assist with guiding the quest as well. I was surprised at my heart's response. Along with my concern for Ann and Pam rose a fierce commitment to serve this quest well in honor of the teaching I had been given. I felt totally ready, trusting that the container of circle would hold and support both the guide team and the questers.

As the women arrived, we explained the situation, and, early in the evening, sat in our first circle together to move through the disappointment of the absence of Ann and Pam (some had traveled far because of a connection and desire to work with Ann Linnea). One quester said, "Initially I wanted to leave, but with more reflection and being in this circle, I realize the person I'm here for is me and that I traveled here for a larger purpose. I can do what I came to do in this circle." Then with deep trust we launched the quest.



Paulette and I were co-guides; Paula and Shirley served as base camp support; and Amanda was our bridge to the outside world. Each time all staff and questers sat in circle, we lit a candle for Ann and Pam, honoring their heart presence with us.

The women quested. They had profound journeys and found great truths for their lives. This group of questers has continued their connection by creating a community among themselves that lives on today, nearly a year later, with emails and conference calls. They are still supporting each other in living the story of their quests.

It is through this experience that I have truly learned what I thought I knew all along -- circle is a powerful, loving, and flexible container. It links energy near and far. WomanQuest 2008 was different with Ann and Pam healing at a distance. (They have both totally recovered.) And it was beautiful. WomanQuest 2008 was the shared experience of Paulette and me as co-guides and of Paula, Shirley, and Amanda holding together base camp. And it was co-created with Cyndi, Judith, Catherine, Diana, Kathy, Lisa, Sheri, Trish, Anne, Jane, Regina, Kathie, Eileen, and Deborah. It was all about a beautiful experience of circle.

To register for WomanQuest 2009, a quest Ann Linnea and PeerSpirit worked hard to establish and highly recommend, please refer to the Abundance Summit website: <http://www.abundancesummit.org>.

If you have a tale to tell, contact the PeerSpirit office and we'll help you share it.

*For more information on many applications of circle, visit our web site at www.peerspirit.com and subscribe to our monthly Circle Tale newsletter. Your e-mail address will **not** be shared or used by anyone other than PeerSpirit, and you can unsubscribe yourself at any time.*