

What Is a Crone and When Does It Happen?

Hello, this is an official Crone speaking. I was croned and renamed in 1998, at an island park in South Bend, Indiana. At the time, I was 69 years old, or as the new saying goes, "I had 69 years of experience". It was a joyous celebration of my life. I am now in the process of trying to educate the women of this conservative, ethnic, Catholic community about what the word "Crone" means. It is an awesome responsibility.

How do you picture a Crone?

An old hag? A witch with long tangled hair and a big nose, bent over a cane? Not this Crone ... I sparkle! I often get compliments on my style of dress. I am a free spirit, who says and does what I please without guilt. Oftentimes, I am having more fun than I did in the first 50 years of my life.

Recently I attended the Midwest Unitarian Universalist WomanSpirit 2000 Convention. One of the workshops I attended was about "Exploring your Personal Crone". Imagine my surprise when I entered a room full of women in their 40s, including the teacher! How could this be? They were far too young.

Let me try to explain what a Crone is, not what she isn't. In the old days, Crones were the women who were called to assist at births, and to prepare bodies for burial. Today although this role has been taken over by impersonal professionals, elder women still hold the key to such rituals. They are the respected elders who can guide others through life's most vital passages.

Nowadays, being an old woman is treated as something to be ashamed of. Women dye their hair, have face-lifts, and falsify their age, trying to be forever young. Not this old woman (although I do admit to dying my hair different colors as the mood



strikes me). I am proud of my status as Crone.

I am asking the question; at what age does one become a Crone? At menopause? That could be as early as 40, if done surgically. Or does it happen at 50 or 55? Women are living longer, making these ages seem relatively young. Women who are 50 today have a life expectancy of living to be 80 or 90.

Being called a crone should be an earned title, like PHD. We need to think of an additional stage of life, between "Mother" and "Crone." Still "Mother", but with many years of experience yet to learn from. Lots of energy, full of new freedom. Maybe "Liberated" could be the title. If every woman over the age of 50 were considered a Crone, then who would the women of wisdom be? Half the population? We should be so lucky.

A song my drumming circle sang to me goes...."Old and Strong, she goes on and on, like a Mountain." Crones are walking, talking history books. Women my age have lived through the depression and World War II. We have seen life and death many times. We are "weathered baskets", as a poster I once saw called us. We are physically weaker in body. Sometimes we even use a cane. But we are wealthy in wisdom, in stories and in history.

So I say, a Crone must have at least 60 years of experience. Only then will she have the right stuff for such an honored title. And as the population's life expectancy increases, maybe the age bar should be raised again.

As you go through life's passages, keep your heart and mind open, so when it is your turn to be Crone, you will have wisdom to share. And don't RUSH it!

— Marj Stradley - a.k.a. 'Sparkling Wisdom'

If every day is an awakening, you will never grow old. You will just keep growing.

~ Gail Sheehy