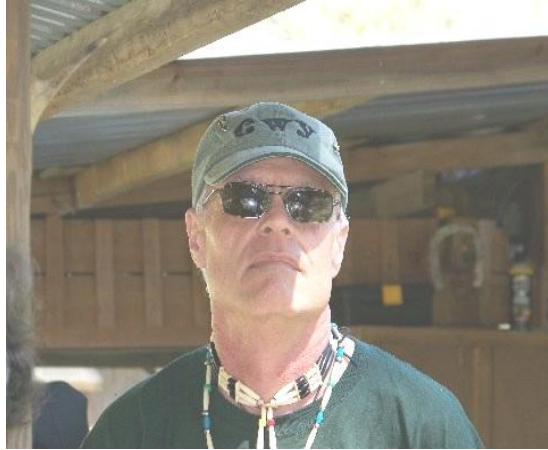


First New Moon of Spring 2011

By Lee Spotted Pony Billingsley



Lee Spotted Pony Billingsley, Ceremonial Leader Of First New Moon Of Spring

I left home on St Patrick's Day, had an uneventful though slightly hurried flight, & went from a land half snow & all chilly, to the tribal grounds where I found flowers in bloom, leaves on trees, middle 80 temps & little lizards on the porch. I arrived late afternoon, & the greeting meeting quickly became an informal council session where we discussed the future of the grounds, tribal finances, the newsletter Talking Leaves & ceremonial plans; all topics we would discuss later at the official meeting.

Friday morning we found coffee & breakfast at the cook-shack, or we could go to Pam's Place where it was indoors & little warmer. We picked Pam's Place. We planned the day's ceremony which involved awakening the grounds with water, sage & tobacco. Joyce showed us her beautifully beaded pipe stem & the story that goes with it. By now it's warmer, time to break to the cook-shack for lunch.

Awakening & cleansing the grounds took longer than usual as we had fewer of us doing it. There were some grounds repair

projects as well, & these activities took most of the afternoon. Black Wolf ran the ATV, as his knee is out of service & he walks with difficulty.



Tar Morning Star and Joyce Spirit Wind, two members of the Blue Heron Medicine Lodge.

Time for dinner. I noticed how much of the activity on the grounds involves feasting. We told stories all around. As we all know, Ken lives in a 55+ community so he told some stories of his neighbors. Joyce brought out some craft items to work on. (Does she really travel with that big pile of leather? Apparently yes) The full moon rose while we were here, huge, the closest it has been to earth in a long time. The evening became chilly so it was an early night for all.

Saturday morning the chill was still with us, coffee weather, then we went for morning ceremony in the council house. This is very informal, no one feels like doing a lot of preparation so early. We left with prayers that we respect everything, since showing respect leads to our learning & growth, & to walking in beauty.

The official meeting was the same as the earlier informal one except that Joyce took notes. We discussed finances, which are bleak but not quite dismal, & how all we do with registrations, the newsletter, & the tribal grounds are affected by our financial situation. We discussed bands/clan procedures & offered healing prayers for those members going through difficulties.

By now it is quite warm, & time to begin mid-day feasting. Black Wolf brought out his

5-gal bucket of kosher garlic pickles to go with the hot dogs. After lowering the bucket significantly we began to prepare for the afternoon ceremony. The women decorated the mound beautifully with flowers. Wood was gathered & prepared. We had a drum & dancing, a great addition to the gathering. The grounds were prepared, the fire was lit, we all smudged & went to water, & it was time for ceremony. First New Moon of Spring is about cleansing & repair of both the grounds & ourselves from the winter, hope for a good harvest & healthful GOGI, warm season, coming up. The message was about healing, which is spiritual & different from curing, which is physical. Warrior feathers were presented to Dewey, Ken, & Shawnee. Pam received a 'Thanks for all you do behind the scenes' feather in appreciation for her work which keeps things going on the grounds even though we may not see all of it.



Dewey Lawson received warrior feather from James Blackwolf

The tribe pulled out all the stops for the afternoon feasting, a big part of Cherokee gatherings. Dinner was fantastic, especially that experimental Cherokee Casserole with burger instead of venison. No shortage of guinea pigs for experimental dishes on these grounds.

There was a quick shower for me, then a fast exit since I had to leave for an early return flight the next morning. This was probably good since I did not have time to dwell on having to leave, & did not have time to say goodbye to everyone. Tar & I went on a drive through Pecan Country in a **(continued next page....)**