

Kerry Johnson

Interviewed by Diana Brown in Lawrence, Kansas

June 25, 2014

Transcribed by Diana Brown

Abstract: Oral history interview with Kerry Johnson conducted by Diana Brown at the Village Witch in Lawrence, Kansas, on June 25, 2014. The Village Witch is a shop co-owned by Kerry and Kacey Carlson; Kerry also owns the Black Cat Café in Eudora. This interview discusses Kerry's discovery of Paganism, and the various incarnations of The Village Witch. This interview was conducted for the Religion in Kansas Project as part of a summer fieldwork internship funded by the Friends of the Department of Religious Studies.

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DIANA BROWN: Great. Okay, my name's Diana Brown, and it's June 25th, 2014. Um, could you say your name, and kind of age, where you're from, what you do, just the basics.

KERRY JOHNSON: Uh, my name is Kerry Johnson, I'm 53 years old, I'm originally from Harpersburg, West Virginia, but I've lived in Lawrence, Kansas since about 1970.

DIANA BROWN: Okay. My, uh, uh, sort of ex-boyfriend I guess, uh, is from West Virginia, his whole family is from West Virginia.

KERRY JOHNSON: I always meet people from West Virginia, it just always shocks me, like, it doesn't seem like you would.

DIANA BROWN: Yeah, they're all over the place.

KERRY JOHNSON: Yeah, yeah.

DIANA BROWN: So, that's funny. Um, but uh, okay, so, I guess I want to ask first of all what your prior religious background was, were you raised [. . .].

KERRY JOHNSON: Um, well I was raised, uh, Baptist, um, yeah, and uh, when I was probably eleven or twelve I started going to lots of different Christian churches like the Pentecostal Church, or the Methodist church, and um, then kind of quit going to church altogether. And when I was in, I don't know, probably in my twenties, um, maybe a little bit older, I actually became an atheist, so I was an atheist for a couple of years until I started studying Paganism. Um, and then from Paganism actually discovered Wicca. And so I've been practicing Wicca since about '93.

DIANA BROWN: And how did you discover Paganism?

KERRY JOHNSON: It was really weird, um...I had gone to school with this girlfriend and hadn't seen her in years, and we, we had a mutual friend, so this mutual friend comes over and says, "Oh, hey," you know, " want to go see this friends of ours," and I said, "Sure, I haven't seen her in years," and we go over to her house and she has a Tarot deck, and so we're playing with the Tarot deck, she's doing readings for us and stuff, and we sort of reconnected and started hanging out together some more, and then I was finally like, "You know, there's a kind of a religion surrounding this," I wasn't really sure what it all meant, or didn't really know anything about it, but then, we sort of started studying together. So, that's how I went from being atheist to being Pagan. And you know, for awhile I just was like, I'm Pagan, I didn't, I was just a very generic, it wasn't until a couple of years after studying that I kind of hit on Wicca. And decided that it was exactly like what I'm looking for.

DIANA BROWN: And what were, I guess, the kinds of resources that you used to learn about--

KERRY JOHNSON: There was absolutely none. There was s some books out, um, they were kind of hard to find here. Um, and so, I just, we just sort of fumbled along, um, you know, we'd find books here and there, um, until I, her and I decided to open this shop, and this was like in 2000. And, um, so we opened the shop in February 2000, thinking we were probably the only Pagans and witches in Lawrence. And, um, I think I had been open , it seems like seven or eight months, until one of my customers introduced me to Kacey, and , uh, at that time Kacey was, uh, coming in and she was, you know, teaching classes and uh, reading cards, and I met through her, uh, George and Rhiannon Moyer, who ended up being my high priest and high priestess eventually to train me, but from these three sources, I just started picking their brains, every opportunity I could get, I would pick their brains. I'm sure I drove them nuts, but, um, so, and I would attend all the classes Kacey offered, um, and so finally, um, I'm thinking in 2001, uh, Rhiannon, Asher, George Moyer and I founded Nine Roses Coven, and uh, that's when my really formal training started, but a lot of my resources, I got very lucky, were meeting those three people. So, I mean, they had like a wealth of knowledge.

DIANA BROWN: It's almost like you started the, the shop and the shop, like, called in your resources.

KERRY JOHNSON: Right. Exactly. And, and it was really, I can, I shudder to think now back to when I, early early days of the shop, how little I really knew. I didn't really even know exactly what I should be selling. I knew a few things, you know, herbs and incense and stuff like that, but really, not, not having any idea at all, and it was also my first retail business. I've ran restaurants, I've owned restaurants since about 1990, and I, so that was kind of what I always did, restaurants and bars. And so the shop was my first retail business, and it was some hard learning along the way, not just in the objects I should be selling, but how I should be running the business. Quite different than running a restaurant.

DIANA BROWN: So what kind of, um, I guess, what kind of Wicca was it that George and Rhiannon were [. . .]?

KERRY JOHNSON: George and Rhiannon, um, taught a, a, a, very, uh, well, we kind of call it neo-Gardnerian, because the initiations were Gardnerian, um, a lot of the rituals were Gardnerian, but we didn't really adhere to some of the kind of stricter rules or, or rituals that Gardnerians do. Um, so, we kind of considered ourselves Gardnerian, but other Gardnerians might not have.

DIANA BROWN: Gotcha.

KERRY JOHNSON: Yeah. And, um, George passed away in 2010, and, um, Rhiannon has kind of retired now, so I've now taken over Nine Roses coven, um, which is a teaching coven, so we are training people to actually go start other covens.

DIANA BROWN: Is there a difference, then, that there are some covens that are teaching and there are some covens that are [. . .]

KERRY JOHNSON: Some covens are just working together, they're closed, um, Kacey's kind of, our coven structures are similar in that we have a solar group, which is the group that celebrates the Sabbats, um, and pretty much anyone can come to those, and then we have the lunar group, which are the initiated members of the coven, and what we'll do is, you know, work with solar people for awhile, and then pull them in as we, you know, once we realize how well we work together, everybody gets along, everybody feels comfortable about it, and at that point when we pull them into lunar is when they start their training.

DIANA BROWN: Gotcha. So what was I gonna say...Oh, and then, I guess, insofar as it's Gardnerian, was there sort of a lineage that it was coming from?

KERRY JOHNSON: I do have a lineage, um, and, um, I actually, when, what you do is you, you take the lineage of your high priestess, so my lineage would be Rhiannon and Asher, and then who trained her, who trained her, who trained her, on down the line. Um, I'm not sure how far back it goes, but I think it goes back pretty far, because I think George and Rhiannon were kind of, um, I know, I think they were kind of involved in like, the '70s. Um, I know that they had a lot to do with the starting of the Dragon Fest, Festival in Denver, Colorado.

DIANA BROWN: What is the Dragon Festival?

KERRY JOHNSON: Dragon Fest is a Pagan festival. Um, and I know that they were pretty involved with it initially, um, but then they moved to Kansas, and, I think they moved here, I want to think it was right around 2000, 2001, it was shortly before I met them. Um, so yeah, there is a lineage, uh, which really absolutely means nothing, really, when you think about it. I mean, I'm sure it may [. . .] to somebody who's more into having the label of Gardnerian, it probably is important, but I, I'm sort of not really claiming a tradition at this moment, I'm sort of using what I want from wherever, and,

although our initiations are still Gardnerian initiations, they're they're based exactly on what the Gardnerians do for initiations, but, so.

DIANA BROWN: Let's see. I feel like you've answered a lot of my questions already. In very quick succession. I was gonna ask, you know, how has your practice, your personal practice sort of evolved, which I, I can still ask, actually.

KERRY JOHNSON: It actually has a lot. I mean, I can remember when, um, my friend Gretchen is the one that I kind of sort of got started with, who had the Tarot cards, um, we would do, and this was long before the shop opened, um, we would have little, we called them circles at my house, and there would be, you know, anywhere from three to five of us, and we would do spell work. Each person would be doing their own spell work, we really did not know the construction of ritual, you know, as far as casting the circle, and calling the quarters. So, here we are, you know, we're fumbling along, and, and a lot of the things that I learned later, you know, I look back and look at the, like, we're doing spell work without the added protection of a circle, you know which is, can be kind of dangerous, um, and so, when I opened the store, even before I met Kacey, we would have other, you know, like, more trained witches would come in and go, "Hey, can we do a open Sabbat at your store, you guys are welcome to join us," and we'd be like, "Oh, we're all about it," you know, so, that's sort of how we started learning how to construct a ritual in the proper way, and so now it's like, it's so funny because I have people come in the shop all the time and they're doing the same thing I used to do. [Pause] And so now I sort of get to be the one that sits here and tells people, "Here's how you put up wards and barriers and safety nets before you start doing stuff like that," but, um, you know, I, even though I've done nothing but learn for the last several years, I'm still learning. I still learn new stuff all the time. Um...

DIANA BROWN: And do you learn mostly from people?

KERRY JOHNSON: I learn mostly from people, yeah. And like I said, Kacey gets her brain picked on a regular basis because she's not only extremely knowledgeable about Wicca, but other, uh, religious systems like Hindu, she's extremely knowledgeable about all sorts of systems, so she's still someone that I sort of, like, pick her brain every once in awhile, um, um, I will even go to her for advice sometimes if I'm having an issue with someone in my coven that I need to address something, I'll kind of bounce it off of her, she'll give me ideas, so, but I mean I learn, I'm constantly learning, you know, and, and that's what I try to impart on people that come in here--you're never gonna be done learning. It's just never, you're just going to continue going on, so...

DIANA BROWN: And that's a good thing.

KERRY JOHNSON: Yeah. We sort of view our store, Kacey and I both, as, um, above all, of course we need to make money, because we have to do that to stay open, but above all being service to the community, you know, we're both high priestesses, so it's sort of what we're supposed to be doing anyway. Um, so, that's like, why it's so important to us that this shop make it, and actually the shop is doing better than ever.

Um, and I think that's because, you know, you're seeing a spike in people having spirituality and looking for different paths, um, and a lot of the times they'll come in here, and I can help them with the Wiccan path, but Kacey, you know, can really just give them all kinds of information on all kinds of systems, so, it's really nice to have her around.

DIANA BROWN: Um...what was I gonna say...So would you identify yourself then, primarily as a Wiccan? Is there any other word--

KERRY JOHNSON: As a Wiccan. I don't mind witch at all.

DIANA BROWN: You don't mind "witch."

KERRY JOHNSON: No, nope, I'm reclaiming it, um, it doesn't really, it doesn't really offend me, um, and I can remember, like, when I first opened the store, the local news, um, would like every Halloween, here they come with their cameras, and it was so funny 'cause they came in one time and I was, I was dressed as a witch, you know, with the black hat, black dress, and, and one of the questions she asked me was, did it offend me that people dressed like witches for Halloween. And I said, "Do you think this is how I dress, like, all the time?" Because I'm actually in a costume, and so it was so funny to me, like, you know, people really weren't quite getting, I think, you know, there's more understanding now, it's, it's kind of sort of coming out of the closet slowly but surely, and so, you know, I think that, I get less of the really kind of crazy questions.

DIANA BROWN: Have there been other shops like this in Lawrence, or...

KERRY JOHNSON: There have been, not quite to the extent we are, I mean, we're totally, we're witches, this is it, this is a witch shop, it's not New Age. Um, but there have been a couple of shops that do similar things, um, Sacred Journey which turned into Persephone's Journey, which turned into Sacred Journey, carried a lot of items like we carry, and did kind of the witchcraft thing, and Sacred Sword, which was downtown, um, oh, I think like around 10th and Mass., something like that, um, they did a lot of stuff like this, and then, um, the Healing Stone, which was, um, actually a friend of mine that had that. Um, I think her focus was mostly on, on gem stones, but you know, Kacey and I are the only ones that I know of that are like, we're a flat out witchcraft shop.

DIANA BROWN: This is "The Village Witch."

KERRY JOHNSON: Yep. And, you know, when we were downtown, that was not our name, um, I originally opened the shop as The Good Earth Mother, and then when Kacey came in, um, we were, you know, we were in business for a little while, and we decided to change the name to The Ninth Path, um, and then, uh--

DIANA BROWN: And what did that mean, "The Ninth Path?"

KERRY JOHNSON: You know, it was basically, there were nine paths that you could go on, uh, Kacey would probably explain it better than me, but nine paths you could go on to get to the, the divine-

DIANA BROWN: I see.

KERRY JOHNSON: Um, which was, kind of nobody knew what that meant, nobody really knew what Good Earth Mother meant, and we would have people come in the shop and see a pentacle and flip out and run out the door. Now that didn't happen very often, because, you know, Lawrence, fairly enlightened city, but it'd happen once in awhile, and so we had a fire at our shop, and we were closed for about seven months, and then we, when we opened back here, um, a couple of years earlier after we had changed the name to The Ninth Path, Kacey had mentioned that she had always, uh, wanted the name "The Village Witch" for her witch store, and I said, "God, I love that name," and she's like, "Well, I've kind of always been leery about using it, you know, because I'm afraid that it would have a bad impact on people," and I was like, "Not in Lawrence, you know, that wouldn't be, like not a big deal at all," and so when we moved over here, we decided, we're going to be The Village Witch, or Village Witch, and people will know exactly what they're walking into, and so we don't have those kind of awkward surprises or freaking people out, you know, like we did in the other place. So, um, that is why the name is The Village Witch, and it's going to remain Village Witch, and what's funny is about a year and a half ago, we kept getting these messages on our Facebook page going, "You know, I was in there talking to you, " and we'd be like, "We don't remember talking to you," and we couldn't figure it out, and come to find out, there's a Village Witch that just opened maybe a years and a half, two years ago in the United Kingdom. Which I thought was pretty funny, so yeah. There's a bunch of us around.

DIANA BROWN: Yeah. Yeah I think it's great. This was actually one of the first things I really saw when I drove into town when I moved here in August, you know, we were like, you know, driven in, being sort of towed [. . .] and I was like, there it is, there's you know, the shop!

KERRY JOHNSON: You know the name really, I mean, when we moved over here, we were moving from downtown, you know ,even though we were on Vermont Street, we were only one street off Mass., it was like the downtown district, and you know, we, Kacey and I were just, you know, driving everybody crazy because we didn't have our shop, and were having meetings that were going nowhere on what we're going to do about the shop, and I mean, it was, it was a very difficult time for anybody that had to be anywhere near us, and she found this place, and she said, what do you think of this place, and I said, well, I think it's the kiss of death for retail, I mean, are you crazy? You know, and she was like, let's just look at it. And so we came in here and you know, when uh, the fire happened, I had just moved to a different little section of the building, so I did not have like, my lease, um, and I kept getting the, telling the landlord, I need my lease, well, consequently I had no insurance. Now I lost very little in the fire, uh, because at some point between my space and the rest of the building someone had erected a firewall. And Kacey lost a lot, and she was in the middle of redoing her lease, so, no insurance. So we have nothing, we have our inventory. So we come in here,

and we're talking to the landlord, and finally, you know, we're being very upfront, going, you know what, she has like eleven dollars, and I have eight. You know, this is our situation, and I have a, you know, one of my extra bedrooms is stuffed to the ceiling with, with product, and so the landlord goes, "Tell you what I'll do, I won't charge you a deposit, and I'll give you a month and a half [. . .]. Get in, get open," and there we were. But it was so funny, because, you know, the big thing then became you know how can we wrestle up \$25 to get a can of paint you know, and we bought literally paint, we bought it one can at a time, it was that, it was that crazy, but we managed to do it, you know, we've been here since 2006. Rough times, though.

DIANA BROWN: For sure.

KERRY JOHNSON: Yeah. Rough times.

DIANA BROWN: So is there generally, I guess I'm wondering sort of like, social, I don't, I don't know if there would be any sort of, do you, do you have contact with other people who run shops like this, is there any sort of social network that's kind of--?

KERRY JOHNSON: Actually, I do. On Facebook there's a page called The Fellowship of the Shops, and it's The Village Witch, um, it's The Herb Charmer in Leavenworth, um, it's Aquarius in Westport, Missouri, um, and um, Crescent Springs in, uh, I believe Overland Park, and then, um, uh, Enchanted Gifts in Olathe. And, um, oh, actually I think Mystic Myths in, in Manhattan has now kind of joined on that too. Um, and I haven't been able to attend meetings, 'cause I don't drive and they're out of town, but we keep in touch on, on Facebook, and pass ideas, you know, to each other, get advice from each other, you know, so, and I really don't know of any other retailers that do that. You know, there's absolutely no competition there at all, because we all understand there's room for all of us. And even if there's another store that opens in Lawrence, like when, when uh, Persephone's Journey first opened, they really didn't carry witchcraft items, like Wiccan items, and it was after our store burned down and I went in there, 'cause they had come and introduced themselves to us when they first opened. So I went in there and um, she said, "I hope you won't be mad but I'm gonna start carrying Wiccan items," and I said, "Of course I'm not gonna be mad, because it makes Lawrence a destination," when you have, say you have three Wiccan shops here, Wiccans would be flocking to this town to go to all the Wiccan shops in one place, so, I've never, even the stores here in Lawrence, we've never had that sort of competitive issue. And as a matter of fact, Third Planet sends a lot of people here, I send a lot of people to Third Planet, or uh, uh, The Earthbound Trading Company is a new place I've kind of been sending people you know because they have the Himalayan salt lamps and, so, I mean, and, and these businesses will do the same for us, they send people here all the time. So I mean, we don't really have that sort of um, competitive thing with each other and we all pretty much get along.

DIANA BROWN: Have you found that to be the case with other businesses that you were in?

KERRY JOHNSON: Um, well, actually it was so funny, because when I, when I like I think it was in '99, I went to um, uh, Amesbury, Massachusetts, um, to attend a friend's funeral, the friend was my partner at first, her brother's funeral, and her and I had gone into a couple of the stores in Salem, and one of them was um, like, I said, you know, can you, I'm gonna open a store like this in Lawrence Kansas, can you give me advice, and they're like, we don't talk with the competition, we don't share our information, it was really shocking, and it happened to me too at a place in Chicago. I had gone there and I'd already had the shop by then, but they, I'd found an herb that I had been looking for, and so I say, " Gosh, I've been looking for this for like three years, can you tell me where to get it," and they're like, " NO, we don't share that with our competition," and I'm like, I'm not your competition--

DIANA BROWN: I'm in Lawrence, Kansas.

KERRY JOHNSON: I could call one of the shops in Lawrence, Kansas, or even in Kansas City and ask the same question, and they would give us, like, when we first met Barb, Gretchen and I, who owns Aquarius, um, you know, we were telling her about our store and she's like, "Listen girls, if you need an order that you can't meet a minimum order on, you just call me, I'll throw it on my order," I mean this is the way these people operate. You know. And so it really shocked me that I would go to these other towns and they were just, really rude about it, I mean, really kind of awful, and really it kind of you know shocked me. And it was kind of, it kind of hurt my feelings too, 'cause it's like, well, you know, shouldn't we be wanting more of this stuff, like, this religion is really growing, you know, and, and so that's kind of always been my stance too is that, this, this religion cannot be kept a secret anymore, it has to be talked about, it has to be learned about, because that's how we're going to grow the, you know, and evolve this religion. But it was really funny because, you know, Kristen at The Herb Charmer in Leavenworth came in here and she said, "Uh, I hope you're not mad, but I'm going to open a store in Leavenworth, and can you tell me where to get some of this stuff," and I was like making her lists and lists and lists, you know, there's just not reason for it, I've never seen, even [. . .] restaurants, they don't act that way with other restaurants, they don't try to outbid or out do...

DIANA BROWN: You currently own a restaurant.

KERRY JOHNSON: I currently own a restaurant in Eudora called The Black Cat Cafe.

DIANA BROWN: Oh, cool.

KERRY JOHNSON: Yeah, um. So, which is not occult at all, 'cause a lot of people think, Black Cat Cafe came from me being Wiccan, but actually, I always liked sort of the English pub names, you know, like I had a bar called The Laughing Dog Saloon, I mean, so I've sort of stuck with that, and, and, you know, several years ago my husband was like, what do you think about The Black Cat Bistro, and I was like, I kind of like the way it rolls, but I think I'll lose the bistro, 'cause it's not a bistro. And so we opened The Black Cat Cafe in Eudora, and would love to have a second location in Lawrence, if we

could ever find a place to rent here, because let me tell you, as soon as a restaurant closes here, it's already rented.

DIANA BROWN: It's prime space.

KERRY JOHNSON: Oh, you know, anywhere, all over town, we've been all over, you know, we'd love to be downtown, but just, you know, any other places that come up open, they're just snapped up like that, so, I think the economy in Lawrence is probably a bit better, you know, than, than other places, it's just, it's insane that we cannot find a place. And you know, the couple that are for rent are sort of out of our rent league, um, but, or maybe you know, too big for what we're doing, um, 'cause our food is home cooked, made from scratch, you know, we can't do like a huge restaurant, without like an entire bevy of cooks, but. [. . .]

DIANA BROWN: Um, I wanted to, I guess just ask a couple more things about um, let's see, um, I guess I know that, um, for a lot of people I've talked to, um, Gaea for instance has been sort of important to them. I don't know if there's any particular, if land is important to you at all in your practice, or...

KERRY JOHNSON: Yeah, I'd love to do my, I'd love to have land to do my, my rituals at, it's, it gets sometimes hard to do them at a house, um, but you know, respect for the land, of course, we have to, and I mean, whether you're Wiccan or not Wiccan, you must respect the Earth, I mean, because any time this Earth wants to, it can just shrug us right off, I mean, that's, that's all there is to it. So, you know, land is important to me, um, but, you know, we're urban witches, we don't have a field, you know, and so often ritual will be either in my living room or a friend's yard. But you know, that's what we have to do, I mean, it's my dream to have a covenstead at some point, but I don't know when that will ever happen.

DIANA BROWN: And then I guess, um, how um, has sort of art and creativity play a role for you, do you think?

KERRY JOHNSON: Uh, I think, you know, creativity, maybe not so much in the Wicca thing, but creativity you know is a lot with my shop, I have to think of ways to package things you know that kind of intrigue people, so um, but you know, there's also an art to casting spells and doing ritual and so I guess that would be a part of it too, also, you know, you come up with your own rituals, I mean, you know, I might say, "We're going to do," like last time we did ritual, we did a particular, um, piece of work called the mill of magic, which is not mine, it's somebody else's, but often times, and this is one thing my high priest George used to do to me, um, I would show up for ritual, you know, for them to be the high priest and high priestess at ritual and I would show up and he'd go uh, "Oh by eh way, you're the high priestess, you have fifteen minutes to come up with a ritual." And so I'd have to like you know, and of course I'd have to have knowledge to sort of be able to put all that together but there's an art to it as well. You have to make people feel engaged. You know, and, and, sometimes that's really kind of hard to do, you know.

DIANA BROWN: There's a sort of, well, yeah, there's sort of a people skills that go into it as well.

KERRY JOHNSON: Right, right, and it was very hard for me, because I'm very private, um, when I was young I was extremely shy, and it was very hard for me to like, talk in front of people or chant in front of people or sing in front of people and not only did I have to kind of get through that, now I have to be the one that's like leading it all, and you know, I think it's, it's changed me for the better, but you know, it was uncomfortable there for awhile.

DIANA BROWN: I was about to say though, that's interesting that sort of like, um, a religious practice that for you demands a sort of like personal growth [. . .].

KERRY JOHNSON: It does, personal growth and one thing, the first thing you learn when you become a high priestess is now you're the servant. You are the servant when you're the high priestess, and I, it used to be funny, there used to be this guy at this bar I went to, and when he found out I was Wiccan he was like, "Oh, let me kiss your feet," and I said, "Why are you trying to kiss my feet?" and he goes, "Because you're the high priestess," and I'm like, "First of all, I'm not a high priestess, an second of all, the high priestess kneels for you, not the other way around," um, you do not kneel before the high priestess ever, she's in service to you, and I think that a lot of people don't understand that and you know, Kacey can tell you, like, horrendous stories of how she's just, often put on a pedestal, I mean to the point that, I mean, she's like, "I can't even function because they're gaga," you know, and she has to kind of make them understand that, "I'm here for you," not the other way around. Um, and she gave me a lot of warning, you know, about, because she's been running a coven for quite some time, so she's given, she's given me a lot of advice and warning on how to sort of maintain that, you know, where you don't start getting this big head, and of course you don't, because, you know, you're a slave, basically.

DIANA BROWN: Yeah. When I think about the work that goes into...

KERRY JOHNSON: Yes, it's a lot of work that goes into it, also, no group is extremely perfect, there's always gonna be conflict every once in awhile, and then now you have to delicately handle that in a balanced way that's not going to make someone feel like you're on their side, or you know, blahblahblah. So it's been, it's, and we've had a couple of those bumps. And, um, because you know, you have to make people be able to go into circle together in perfect love and perfect trust. That's a lot harder to do than you might think it is, and um, especially you know if there's been issues that's not related to the coven but outside issues that they've had and they're bringing it into the coven and you've gotta sorta, how are you going to do things, but having you two put that down while we're in circle, because we cannot have that energy in circle.

DIANA BROWN: Gotta keep your defenses down.

KERRY JOHNSON: Right, you gotta, you know, so, it's, it's not a job that I really strove for, but it's sort of, I was the only one there that could actually step in and keep the coven going, so.

DIANA BROWN: Well it sounds like, just, like, with the store, it's not like you felt like you were this great expert or something, but saw a need, and...

KERRY JOHNSON: Geez, I just, I remember how ignorant I was when I first opened this store, and sometimes it just cracks me up to think about it. It's like, man, I mean, I, I hope I didn't hurt anybody giving them wrong advice or something. And then it got to where, you know, when Kacey came in it was just so, it was such a relief because now I have someone that actually knows what they are doing and talking about. So it, people would ask me something and I would go to Kacey [. . .]. But you know, that's how I learned, when she came in, um when she, she was, she was in this for awhile as the reader and the, and the, um, the teacher, um, and then so when we, she decided to open her part of it which was the gem stones, which I knew absolutely nothing about gem stones, and I couldn't even identify most of them, and so that's another great chunk of knowledge that I've gotten from doing this store is, gemstone knowledge, and, and not just gemstone, lots of stuff, I mean, because like I said, she is very knowledgeable on lots and lots and lots of subjects. Um, but yeah, I just, oh, yeah, you know, it's, it's sort of the way like, I think with Kacey, she wasn't even a high priestess but suddenly she was thrown into that role out of necessity and that's sort of what happens to you sometimes. Sometimes you just get thrown in a fire and go, "Hope you do well!" and we've had to do it with males, you know, um, because there's not enough men in Wicca, um a lot of them for years didn't feel, um, welcome, you know, because when Wicca was sort of emerging so was feminism, and it was touted as this whole Goddess worship, but what a lot of people don't understand is there's also a God in Wicca, and so, you know, you must have that representation as well, and, um, so, you know, I just got lucky that I got with an incredible couple that had worked together for years, you know, I mean, and so, I think, uh, Gretchen, the girl that used to be my partner here, um, 'cause she was the one of the founders of the coven as well, her and I were George's last third degrees, I felt so honored, and I feel bad that other people aren't going to be able to get degrees from him, he was, he was quite stellar. So.

DIANA BROWN: But you can pass that on.

KERRY JOHNSON: I can pass that on. I need more men. I need more males.

DIANA BROWN: Um, what else was I gonna...oh, are George and Rhiannon, are they still around, are they in Lawrence?

KERRY JOHNSON: George has passed away.

DIANA BROWN: Oh, George has passed away, you told me in 2010.

KERRY JOHNSON: Rhiannon is living in Baldwin, um, but I think she's thinking of moving her home and moving here to Lawrence.

DIANA BROWN: I wonder if, if you think she would be interested...

KERRY JOHNSON: I don't know, she's pretty busy, she's raising, she's raising her two granddaughters who are young, and she also does, uh, parent-teacher at their school, so, hard to say. But I could ask. But, yeah. Hard to say. She might be able to do something on the phone. You know. So if you would want to leave your number with me, I can call her and ask her.

DIANA BROWN: Yeah. That would be wonderful, actually.

KERRY JOHNSON: She's a real sweetie.

DIANA BROWN: Well, is there anything else you feel like is important to say?

KERRY JOHNSON: Not, no, I think we've pretty much covered everything, have you talked to Kacey?

DIANA BROWN: Um, I haven't talked to Kacey, she's actually been interviewed before for this project, so I wasn't sure whether to interview her again or not, I mean, some of my questions...

KERRY JOHNSON: Because Kacey's' another one that just like, knowledge, knowledge, knowledge.

DIANA BROWN: Yeah, I mean she gave me a really interesting interview for a project I did last semester actually that was about communal living. Um, so I don't know, I guess I can, um, uh...

KERRY JOHNSON: She's another one you might want to think about if you need another, um, person, but, yeah, um, yeah, I could ask Rhiannon and see.

DIANA BROWN: Okay. That'd be great. Well, thank you so much. This was really great.

KERRY JOHNSON: Sure, no problem. And you need me to sign that?

DIANA BROWN: Oh, yes, I do.

[00:35:53]

[End of recording]