

2005 Essay Contest

*We have a winner for our 2005 Essay Contest!
Please join us in congratulating*

Diane Daugherty of Clarksville, Tennessee

The 2005 Annual Joshua Tree Event focused upon Wild Dreaming and other Shaman's Delight. Everyone has what he or she needs, the mirrors. Each of us has asked, before being born, for everything needed. The problem is, when we are born, we become caught in the dream. We are born into a kind of sleep. To become enlightened is to wake up from that dream.

For the 2005 Essay Contest, participants answered the following questions,

What is a Shaman's Delight? It is a Shaman's delight to:

- **Live with a generosity of spirit**
 - **Be enchanted with life's shine**
 - **Live in your power without fear**
 - **Find your own song, dance and rhythm**
 - **Discover joy in your own reflection**
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Here is Diane Daugherty's Winning Essay:

Only a day after I downloaded the requirements for this Joshua Tree contest, I was at the theater watching the performance "River Dance". I had seen it years before, but I was even more excited to see this performance. I knew this performance would connect me with one of my Shaman delights. So there I was on the edge of my seat waiting for the show to begin.

Finally the lights dimmed and the musicians began to play their Celtic melody. The energetic link to my Irish ancestors began to stir within me, and as I listened, I could imagine a time when the people of Ireland played these songs not just for their entertainment, but more so with a purpose full of urgency and sacredness. The stage now covered in fog, glowed with a mystical haze.

Then it happened. The dancers took the stage over with the power and grace known only to those who have mastered their craft. They were an entity of their own making. They chose this path, and owned it with every inch of their being. Their talent was a gift from God and they chose to express it to the depths of their soul. The dancers moved on stage with the power of someone who "knows". With the beat of every drum and the electric cadence of violin, keyboard, and cello, the dancers careened across the

stage leaping, taping, and twirling with the divine in each step they took.

This was power I thought to myself, a creative power that reached within me and shook things up. I don't know if the dancers realized the importance or magnitude of what they do, but you could feel the joy in their hearts for their passion, and I felt like I had been blessed with a tremendous gift to witness a sincere expression of someone's spirit. This was more than just a performance, it was a celebration of life, without fear or self imposed restrictions. This experience helped me to understand that this beautiful creative power lives within me also as one of my Shaman delights.

I can imagine a day when I will be able to live from the depths of this sacred well of creative expression in every moment of my life, which leads me to my next Shaman delight of transformation. Like the butterfly searching for the sweet nectar of a flower, so I search through life for those experiences that will satisfy my appetite for knowledge, power, truth, and wisdom. With each experience or challenge that graces me, I pray for the ability to walk forward with dignity, strength, courage and awareness. I encourage my life to be extreme, lush and fragrant.

And like the butterfly who has metamorphosed, each experience transforms me, imprinting my shield with the strength, courage, knowledge and power that I thirst for. My consciousness is changed as well, from that of a "caterpillar" to one of a beautiful creature who is not limited by the confinement of the physical world and who is ready to fly to the stars.

Interviewing Diane was a revelation in itself. The path of this quiet, strong woman could be anyone of ours.

"If you have faith in yourself, there isn't anything you cannot do," says Diane Daugherty, winner of the 2005 Joshua Tree essay contest about shaman delights. "I have entered every contest, and for me the whole experience of writing is fun. When you sit down and write something like this; you tap into a part of yourself, that you really need to reach."

Diane believes in the magical aspects of life. Her path in life is an expanding one, where she comes to understand herself on deeper and deeper levels.

Diane grew up Catholic. When she walked into church, the artwork would greet her and tell her its story. She was drawn to the feminine aspects of spirituality symbolized by Mary. Here she learned of the beautiful rituals of prayer.

As she grew older, intuition led her to various metaphysical books. And her view of life expanded dramatically.

Diane is now a Reiki therapist and avid dreamer. "People, who knew me 10 years ago,

wouldn't understand me," she laughs. "I am definitely not the same person I was then."

Diane loves dreaming, feeling that it is the closest she can get to divinity. When she has spiritual dreams, she feels there is something about it that lights something in her, that keeps her going. Her dreams are varied. Some are lucid. Some are shamanic with power animals. Others provide her with astonishing answers. She has learned that in the dreamtime there is a different reality, that humans are not always used to.

In her own words, Diane's essay is a reflection that:

"We all have a voice;

we all have a song.

It is our choice whether or not we sing,

but the world will be a better place for it, if we do."

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