

Bewitched for four generations

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By **Emily Wilcox**, CNC Newspapers



Ishtar's Avalon owner and witch Patrice Hatcher posed with "Nevermore", her crow. The ancient Celts and their Druids were pagans who revered the crow god, Bran. **Photo by Emily Wilcox.**

His great-aunt Marion was born with a veil, what is referred to in medical terms as a "caul." It's a hood of porous skin that covers the head of a newborn. It's extremely rare to be born with a caul, which, for many, indicates a "third eye" or heightened psychic ability.

She made good on the psychic predictions. She was capable of reading portents, telling a person's future, intuiting things beyond what seemed possible.

Marion's niece, Ferne, married a staunch Catholic, Bob Callahan, whose sister, Anna, was a witch. Anna read tarot cards, tea leaves and palms.

Marion's great-nephew and Ferne's son, Dennis Callahan, learned his pagan roots stretched back generation upon generation on both sides of his family. He learned he is a fourth generation hereditary witch.

For the past 400 years, his ancestors have been



Fourth Generation Hereditary Witch Dennis Callahan gives 15 minute Tarot readings regarding people's careers, love-life and finances. He also offers longer readings, which go into greater detail. All his readings include a taped recording of the session. Photo **Photo by Emily Wilcox**

magic doesn't work - send evil to someone else and you'll just get it yourself.

The early years

Callahan grew up in a spiritual household where prayer was a component of every facet of life. As a child, he watched his Aunt Anna give readings and gaze into strangers' futures with the accuracy of 20-20 vision. She also offered suggestions and even warnings about what was to come.

Callahan swore he would never give tarot readings, in spite of his own natural psychic abilities and the training he received from day one. His mother taught him to hone those abilities and instructed him in herbs, carefully handing down curative information that had been passed along for centuries, since the time of the Druids.

At school, Callahan had little interest in sports and didn't fit in with the popular crowd. But he could recite

witches who read tarot. But Callahan's pagan ancestry stretches even further back to the Druids, who practiced a type of paganism unknown today because they didn't write.

Paganism is associated with the earth, and embraces more than one god in a pantheon that includes strong goddesses.

Pagans also embrace many ideas and tenets espoused by monotheist religions like Christianity. Callahan noted that paganism, or witchcraft, is rooted in the principle that any energy that you put out comes back to you. It is similar to the concept of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you, reaping what you sow, or karma and the power of prayer. Black magic, or willing evil or negativity upon a person is strictly forbidden. Pagans also know black

the medicinal properties of every herb, and knew which oils were best for which spells, or witch spells. Callahan explained that spells are simply prayers with a ritual. Pagan spells are always positive or protective in nature and send out a request to the universe.

He noted that many today practice a similar type of spell when they make a wish before blowing out the candles on a birthday cake.

Pagans, or witches like Dennis Callahan, are not all the same, however. Some pagans pray to many gods while others, like Callahan, incorporate other philosophies and tenets, like the teachings of Jesus.

His upbringing reflects this plural attitude. While his father argued the Catholic way was the only way, Callahan learned that Jesus' teachings align to so many of the pagan teachings of turning the other cheek, respecting the earth and the overwhelming importance of kindness and goodness. His mother, whose name, Ferne Bunny Flower, reflected her Native American heritage, was a strong, subtle woman. Ferne was a "green witch" who worked with herbs and was somehow able to ease the tension between the two philosophies under her roof.

"I began to learn early on that I needed to respect these women," Callahan said. "But I got to see both sides, and that gave me a sense of balance. We never referred to ourselves as witches."

Callahan made a pagan cape out of blankets and was surprised when school administrators wouldn't let him wear it. He is still mystified by the negativity some people associate with witchcraft and paganism.

At home, he studied tarot, in spite of his oath never to give readings. It came naturally to him. He seemed to have been born able to divine peoples' futures through tarot cards, tea leaves and runes.

He grew up in a brownstone on the corner of Park and Merlin streets in Dorchester. (Yes, one of the streets was actually Merlin.) It was a happy spot for young Callahan, but it didn't last. The family then moved into a Brockton building that was a former funeral parlor. It was the kiss of death for the psychic boy.

"Which is a great thing for a person exploring their psychic ability!" he said sarcastically. "To move into a former funeral parlor! Not!"

Callahan was besieged by voices - voices that had no corporeal form. He likened it to standing on a train platform with dozens of other commuters who are all talking, only there's no one else on the platform.

These voices of the dead kept him up at night, making his life at home extremely difficult. In time, however, Callahan connected with several of the voices who became his spirit guides. His sense of humor saved him from becoming a nervous wreck over his ability to "hear" the dead.

Years later, Callahan would hear other disembodied voices during his work as a hospital security guard. And the readings he gave to friends were so dead-on accurate, they came back for more. His psychic ability combined with his kooky sense of humor made him a huge draw. In time, he realized working as a security guard wasn't a good use of his psychic gifts.

Today

Dennis Callahan is first and foremost a spiritualist who believes in a higher power he often refers to as God. But he says he's not a big fan of organized religions.

"Religion is a way of controlling people. Spirituality frees people," he said. "If you want to get to God, you have to do it yourself. For those that believe, no proof is necessary. For those that don't believe, no proof is sufficient. The Mayas, the Aztecs, the Druids understood that knowledge is power. This is a short time we're here. The only piece of you that survives is your soul."

Healing people is what Dennis Callahan's work these days is all about. Fifteen years ago, he embraced his roots and started doing what he swore he would never do. He started giving tarot readings.

Today, he gives tarot, rune and crystal readings at Patrice Hatcher's witch shop, Ishtar's Avalon, at 5 North St., Plymouth, doing what he can to guide people toward happier futures.

"Beware con artists"

What bothers Callahan and Hatcher, who is also a witch, are the unqualified charlatans whose aim is to cheat their customers out of hundreds of dollars. Callahan warned that some businesses that offer psychic readings have hidden microphones in the shop, which record customers' conversations before the reading. The reader then uses information gleaned from the tape to appear to "know" things about the customer. In other cases, a reader will have another so-called psychic interrupt a reading to warn the customer that he or she is the victim of a hex. The customer is then told the hex can be reversed for a fee, which is usually steep. Callahan and Hatcher said aura cleansing is another con game practiced by some unethical businesses.

Crystals and herbal smudging can help “cleanse” an area, by absorbing or deflecting negative energy, they said. But spending hundreds of dollars on such a service is ludicrous.

“When you go in for a reading, nothing more should become part of that reading,” Hatcher said.

Smudging, for the uninitiated, is the practice of igniting cleansing herbs like mugwort, sage or sweet grass, blowing out the flame and wafting the smoke throughout an area or around a person.

But, in addition to the con artists, Callahan said he also doesn’t understand the witches who walk around with big egos about who they are. This attitude completely negates the whole point of pagan spirituality for Dennis Callahan.

“I’m not an ego-maniac,” he said. “If you want to own the world, you have to be nothing. You have to be one grain of sand on a beach. If you have nothing, then you have everything.”

For more information on tarot, rune and crystal readings, contact Dennis Callahan at dennis@ishtarsavalon.com or visit him at Ishtar’s Avalon, which offers walk-in readings with him.

“I do readings, not for personal gain. I pray to get answers to the questions they need answers to, not the ones they want answers to,” Callahan said. “Whatever your spirituality is, you should try to heal people. I pray that I’m able to help them on whatever path they’re on.”

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