Pagans & Pioneers: Celebrating the Summer Solstice in Casper, Wyoming

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On the far eastern side of Casper Mountain -- some thirteen miles from downtown Casper, Wyoming -- is the Red Butte. Here, the earth is deep red, shaded by tall pines and clusters of aspens. The view to the south opens onto a sagebrush covered valley, across to Muddy Mountain and beyond to the Deer Creeks, the Pedros, and the vast plains. In the midst of this spectacular landscape is Crimson Dawn Park. The site was originally the homestead of Elizabeth "Neal" Forsling and her family. In June of 1930, Forsling held a party with a few mountain neighbors in honor of Midsummer's Eve. Neal Forsling was a gifted storyteller and in order to entertain her daughters and friends, told tales of a pantheon of witches, elves, and forest spirits that once inhabited the mountain. Forsling has shared her stories with the Casper community, and the Midsummer's Eve event has involved three generations of area residents. Twenty shrines dedicated to the likes of the Topaz Witch, the Emerald Witch, the Blind Minstrel, and the Phantom Woodchopper now line a well-worn path through the trees. On Midsummer's Eve, the crowd weaves along the trail, pausing to hear a story recounted at each shrine.

On the surface, the "pagan" celebration at Crimson Dawn seems incongruous with the conservative cowboy culture of Wyoming. Yet few area residents seem to be concerned with the content or themes of the annual event. Quite to the contrary, hundreds attend each year, and the community has continued to observe Midsummer's Eve long after the death of Forsling in 1977. As the Midsummer's Eve celebration has grown and changed over the years, so too have the meaning and significance of the event to the residents of Casper. The symbols and motifs employed in the celebration are mutable. They have meant various things to the different people who have observed, participated in, and heard about the event. There is no one meaning of Crimson Dawn. According to folklorist Beverly Stoeltje, festivals "occur at calendrically regulated intervals and are public in nature, participatory in ethos, complex in structure, and multiple in voice, scene, and purpose."[1] This paper will explore the complex and multiple meanings of Crimson Dawn and the Midsummer's Eve celebration, on both an individual and a community level. The legends associated with Crimson Dawn and Neal Forsling have many layers of meaning: from the use of and reaction to the Witch motif, to insinuation and action about ecology and community, to the classification or invention of a pioneer or Old West theme. This paper suggests that these varied interpretations of the site and the celebration help ameliorate the contradictions between the pagan ritual and the right-wing background in which it is enacted. Indeed, the changing interpretations are essential to lure and survival of the Crimson Dawn tradition.

The holiday calendar has expanded markedly to include a variety of special occasions, but with the exception of Halloween, most Americans do not celebrate the old saints' days or seasonal festivals. Most traditional European "popular" festivals, like Midsummer's Eve, were rejected in colonial America, due to the influence of the Puritans.

> In a notorious incident in Massachusetts in 1627, the old English customs of May Day confronted the calendrical severity of Puritanism. With an eighty-foot-high Maypole topped with deer antlers and with the concomitant dancing, drinking and singing, Thomas Morton and his fellow 'Madd Bacchinalians' at Merry-mount outraged the settlers at Plymouth. William Bradford expressed his disdain in a pun, attacking 'this idle or idoll May polle,' which the devout soon vanquished. The play on words captured Puritan opposition to popular holidays and festivals. They encouraged both idolatry and idleness. They were both religious and social evils.[2]

While many people today do hold neo-pagan beliefs and honor seasonal rites, solstice rituals rarely occur in this country as community celebrations. In Casper, however, the "idolatry" and "blasphemy" of the Midsummer's Eve observance are not reviled. Instead, the connection to venerable European ways elevates Crimson Dawn to the status of ancient tradition. It suggests that the history and heritage of Casper are far older and grander than the hundred years of the city's existence.

Despite the existence of summer observances such as the Sun Dance among indigenous Wyoming peoples, Neal Forsling based her Midsummer's Eve ceremony on European rites. The summer solstice occurs when the sun reaches its highest point in the sky; it marks the longest day of the year. Its astronomical and seasonal significance has been honored throughout the world since ancient times.[3] Forsling claimed the celebrations in Scandinavia were her inspiration for the Crimson Dawn festivities, but she noted that the event had Druidic origins as well.[4] While the summer celebrations based on Native Americans' rituals could be contested or reclaimed, Forsling and Casperites are free to create their own meanings from their Midsummer's Eve event.

When Forsling invented the local Midsummer's Eve tradition, she deliberately included many elements of older rituals and celebrations. Indeed, when Forsling moved to the isolated mountain cabin in 1929, one of the only books she took was James Frazer's classic The Golden Bough.[5] This book, an analysis of magical and superstitious beliefs, was at the height of its popularity in the 1920s. It was an important reference text for the Wiccan revival of the same period.[6] Frazer's work greatly influenced the content of Forsling's tales and the structure of her Midsummer's Eve ceremony.

The highlight of ancient summer solstice celebrations was the bonfire.[7] Some scholars suggest the fires were symbolic of the power of the sun. Others insist that fire and smoke were used for purification or blessing. For example, livestock used to be led near the bonfires in order to prevent disease. [8] The highlight of the Midsummer's Eve celebration at Crimson Dawn has always been the bonfire, lit from wood gathered throughout the Red Butte area. A bonfire commenced the ceremony until 1984, when it was moved to the end of the evening's festivities.[9] Attendees at Crimson Dawn are still instructed to throw a handful of the red dirt into the fire, chanting "Red Earth, burn." If the clump does burn, she or he will have good luck throughout the year.[10] Rites of divination also marked European summer solstice traditions.[11] At Crimson Dawn, children would gather small stones and pebbles, and Neal Forsling would read them like crystal balls, telling the children's futures.[12] Midsummer's Eve was also associated with lovers and fertility, and the preference for June weddings is often linked to this belief.[13] Attendees at Crimson Dawn can perform a rite to find their

true love at the Shrine of the Heart's Desire.[14] Forsling was interested in folklore and incorporated her knowledge of magic, charms, and rituals into the Crimson Dawn celebration.

Midsummer's Eve, like other sacred days on the ancient calendar, was believed to be a time when the boundaries between worlds were thinned. The night was often associated with fairies or witches.[15] Frazer characterized European summer solstice traditions as attempts to rid the countryside of hags and wicked spirits. However, Forsling's celebration honored witches. To Forsling, witches were good -- mischievous, perhaps, but harmless. Seven witches were the main characters in the stories Forsling told about the mountain: the Cardinal Witch, the Star Witch, the Topaz Witch, the Lavender Witch, the Black Witch, the Emerald Witch, and Undine, the homesick sea witch.

On Midsummer's Eve, some Casper residents dress up as the witches and stand at each shrine as the crowds pass. Their costumes are very colorful, matching the shade of the particular witch: the Lavender Witch wears purple, the Cardinal Witch wears red, and so on. The witches also wear hennins, the tall, pointed hats fashionable for wealthy women of the Middle Ages. Only the Black Witch looks like the stereotypical Halloween witch, although children are always assured she is not evil.[16] The witches in their medieval attire may seem out of place in the woods of Wyoming. The costumes, then, not only add to the gaiety, but shift the mountain into a festive and mystical realm. The witches are re-contextualized, thus, in a new locale that itself becomes magical, or even sacred.

The Witch has many definitions and manifestations, from historical events, like the Salem witch-trials, to popular culture, like The Wizard of Oz. Forsling was aware of these varied meanings and of their history. To create her witch characters, she drew on both romanticized fantasy and historical fact. According to Forsling, the Cardinal Witch moved to Casper Mountain in the seventeenth century to escape persecution in her native Italy. The Cardinal Witch and her aunt were the village "wise women" -- herbal healers and midwives.[17] This detail about the witch's background shows that Forsling was knowledgeable of the history of witchcraft. Forsling always dressed up as a witch on Midsummer's Eve, but was reluctant to claim that she herself was one.[18] Perhaps even into the twentieth century, a single, propertied woman dared not speak such "heresy." She was aware of the positive and negative interpretations of the Witch, but she was not afraid to include the image in her tales or celebration.

Controversy over this very matter erupted in 1989, some twelve years after Forsling's death. For the first time in the history of Crimson Dawn, protesters interfered with the event. Members of a local evangelical church, Sonlight Ministries, picketed the Midsummer's Eve celebration. "God in the Bible says that witchcraft is an abomination before the Lord," protester Mike Lockwood said.[19] In 1990, protesters were present again, and they tried to drown out the voice of Forsling's daughter, Mary Martin, as she led the procession.[20] The following year, the sheriff's department restricted the protesters' access to the celebration. Unable to stir up any large-scale revulsion towards the event or cause any momentum to close down the celebration, protests have fizzled in subsequent years. Even the "Letters to the Editor" section of the local newspaper -- the forum for debate on many issues of civics and sin -- has been silent on the matter. Only two letters opposing the Midsummer's Eve celebration have appeared recently, both written by the same individual.[21]

The protests against Crimson Dawn were likely a local expression of the nation-wide fundamentalist movement of the Eighties. However, the community at-large rejected the interpretation of the event that Sonlight Ministries so decried. Crimson Dawn never meant Satan worship to Casper residents. Audrey Jarvis, who attended the event in 1989, called the protest "disgusting. I think they should go find their own parties. This one's been going on for a long time."[22] Another attendee asserted that the stories Forsling told were "simple and pure."[23] Even local clergy seemed reluctant to label the Midsummer's Eve event "pagan," "Satanism," or "witchcraft." A priest from a local Catholic church said, "I saw the Crimson Dawn celebration as a more entertaining type of thing. There have always been myths and these myths teach us something. I think of Satanism as having a tendency to destroy us. . . . These annual celebrations are something different."[24] Midsummer's Eve may have had pagan origins, and Forsling may have been influenced by the mythology surrounding it; but Casperites refused to accept the meanings protesters imposed on the Crimson Dawn celebration. Preferring to label the festival as "innocent" or even "meaningless," Casper residents rallied to protect this annual tradition from signifying something controversial.

Undeniably, there is a certain New Age element to Crimson Dawn that attracts attendees, but most residents of Casper do not believe they are merely re-enacting archaic rites. Indeed, the parallels between Forsling's rituals and pagan rites are not the focus of the event's narrative. Forsling once told the crowd that ancient people would sometimes sacrifice humans in the Midsummer bonfires, effectively distancing herself and her ceremony from a "barbaric" past.[25] In 1990, the celebration began with "The Lord's Prayer" in Indian Sign Language, although organizers insisted its performance was not for the benefit of protesters.[26] While the pagan rituals are downplayed, the connection to nature and the environment remains a primary part of the event.

According to folklorist Jack Santino, "the solstice seems to represent nature itself, rather than culture (as a reference to a specific holiday might) with implications of unmediated, natural experience flowing from direct personal encounter with solar and celestial events."[27] In addition to European heritage and tradition, the Crimson Dawn celebration does honor the changing seasons and the relationship between area residents and their natural surroundings. The summer solstice truly does mark the end of winter on Casper Mountain, for often it snows until May or June. Neal Forsling described early gatherings on her land as a celebration that she and her mountain neighbors had survived another long Wyoming winter.

The celebration of nature on Casper Mountain extends beyond the seasonal change. Neal Forsling felt a deep connection to the land at Crimson Dawn. It was her sanctuary after she divorced her husband. The landscape and environment are intertwined with the tales, rituals, and shrines Forsling created. She would walk through the woods with her daughters, and coming across a particular color rock or shaped tree, would invent a spirit or story to accompany it. Yellow stones marked the Topaz Witch's dwelling. Green ones became "witch jade."[28] Near the homestead was a cavern filled with mica crystals. According to Forsling, this was home to the Cardinal Witch, and the petroglyphs on the cave walls foretold the arrival of Neal Forsling to the mountain.[29] This imaginative twist on the idea of "Manifest Destiny" reveals that the land and Neal Forsling are interconnected and that the Midsummer's celebration was meant to be.

Other Casper residents share Forsling's view that the mountain is special, if not magical. Some say that the constant wind, the pollution, and the troubled economy contribute to the general feeling of the city as a place of "spiritual unrest."[30] Casper Mountain, on the other hand, offers solace and escape into the wilderness. According to Ruth Jones, Crimson Dawn is "such a mystical, special world for adults and children. You can leave your troubles at the foot of the mountain and let your imagination go up there."[31] While some place names in Wyoming such as Devil's Pass and Hell's Half Acre connote hardship, suffering, and struggle, Crimson Dawn suggests beauty, promise, and new beginnings.

"The land" is of central importance to Wyoming, both in terms of economy and identity. An advertisement for tourism in the state describes the relationship to nature in the following way: "Cowboys and ranchers, like the native Plains Indians before them, are tied so closely with their rugged turf that the story of Wyoming is essentially a story of the land."[32] The story of Crimson Dawn is also a chronicle of the environment. The symbolism of the land expressed in the celebration and folktales is flexible enough so as not to offend the sensibilities of a community based on ranching, mining, and drilling. Forsling's stories criticize the development of the mountain, but do not cast judgment on other aspects of local environmental destruction. At the celebration in 1967, Forsling announced,

> "All the witches have sent messages they wanted us to celebrate Midsummer Night's Eve," Mrs. Forsling said, "Even though they have left the mountain." The witches have left because they came to hate the bulldozers that were tearing over the mountain, Mrs. Forsling stated. But they didn't hate the people.[33]

Forsling insinuated that environmental destruction and commercial development of the mountain had caused the witches to depart. While the magic of Crimson Dawn was threatened, Forsling did not blame the people directly, but rather the machinery, the bulldozers, were rebuked. It may be that the fairy tale genre allowed Forsling to be didactic or moralistic and to say things otherwise unacceptable about land use.

When Forsling homesteaded the Red Butte area in the late Twenties, that part of the mountain was quite isolated. There were few permanent residents on the mountain, other than sheepherders. However, by the Sixties, Casper Mountain had become a popular location for summer cabins. Forsling felt the encroaching development, and she had been forced to sell off portions of her homestead due to financial hardship. After 1972, the Midsummer's Eve trek had to be shortened as a new road on the east end of the mountain cut across the established path.[34] In order to protect Crimson Dawn from real estate development, Forsling gave one hundred acres of her land to Natrona County in 1973. She signed the deed on her 84th birthday, announcing that it was a present to herself.[35] Not only would the land be protected, but the folklore and festivity would be preserved. Crimson Dawn became a park, and the Midsummer's Eve celebration was officially transformed from a private to a community event. For her actions, Forsling was awarded the "Outdoor Recreation Achievement Award" in 1975 from the Secretary of the Interior (and former Wyoming governor) Stan Hathaway.[36] Forsling is buried on the land, near the spot where the annual bonfire blazes. Her headstone aptly reads: "For my epitaph, look around you."

Whether remembered as a pagan shrine or as an ecological park, Forsling's gift to the county has insured that Crimson Dawn will continue to exist. However, as a public place, rather than private property, its meaning is open to further interpretation and revision. There has been little government interference in the celebration per se, but the site itself has been altered. A parking area was created; wooden fences were placed around the shrines; and plaques were added to create an "interpretive trail."

In the summer of 1980, Forsling's log cabin was transformed into a pioneer museum, displaying family artifacts as well as some of Forsling's artwork.[37] There is no money allocated in the county budget for the museum, so it has been supported by local volunteers.[38] In some ways, the pioneer museum legitimizes Crimson Dawn, and it is the pioneer element that is often highlighted when Crimson Dawn appears in tourist guides.[39] However, Forsling herself admitted that she hardly fit the conventional pioneer image. Nothing in her upbringing prepared her for life as a homesteader. She came from an artistic and literary family and had once taught interpretive dance. She was a "city" woman, not a rural one, and her background had been "cultural and creative rather than practical."[40]

Forsling also defied the pioneer stereotype in the way she acquired her homestead. Although feminist scholarship has promoted the notion of the independent woman homesteader, most people still picture the pioneer woman as attached to the pioneer man.[41] Forsling moved to Casper in 1920 with her husband, attorney Don Ogilbee. She divorced him nine years later and moved to the remote area of Casper Mountain with her two young daughters. As she was now the head of the household, she could file a claim on the 640 acre homestead. Most Casperites were stunned that a woman could turn her back on "society." Her move

> . . . caused considerable comment: Did the "arty" woman want to haul water the rest of her life? Who hung around the Red Butte but sheepherders? Who would cut wood to heat the one-room shack she'd have to live in? What lone woman would want to take two little kids to such a place?[42]

Forsling's actions were not interpreted as "pioneering" but as highly suspect and uncouth. Her ex-husband's family sought custody of the two girls, insisting that the location of their isolated home was not beneficial to their growth.[43] Despite the hostility towards her relocation, Neal Forsling was able to make business alliances with local sheepherders; they hauled her water in exchange for grazing rights on her land.[44] She married a local rancher in 1931, and they survived the Depression era by selling lumber from the homestead as well as some of Forsling's poetry, prose, and paintings. Her new husband died tragically in a snowstorm in 1942. Alone again, Forsling worked as an airplane mechanic at the Casper Air Base during World War II.[45] So despite the designation of Crimson Dawn as a pioneer museum, Neal Forsling's life was quite different from the popular perception of a frontier settler.

Perhaps this confusion over images and interpretations helps explain why Crimson Dawn appears in so few tourist guides and state and local promotional material.[46] Despite attempts to lure the summertime tourist dollar into the state, the divergent meanings make Crimson Dawn difficult to promote. The site and the Midsummer's Eve celebration are curiosities and do not fit with the image of the "Old West" that Wyoming markets. Most tourist sites in Wyoming focus on the mountain man, the

cowboy, or the Plains Indian image; most tourist celebrations or festivals center around stereotypical "Wild West" events, like the rodeo, the pow-wow, or the rendezvous. These representations are in many ways as "mythological" as Forsling's fantastical creations, but as folklorist Dan Ben-Amos notes, "myth is believed to be true, legend purports to be true, and folktale is inherently untrue."[47] While the community depicts the tales of Crimson Dawn as "untrue" and non-threatening, Neal Forsling actually challenges many of the established myths of the region. Even in the Equality State, there is a notion of "woman's sphere" and "the cult of domesticity." Forsling defies the view of the frontier as a bastion of masculinity or of conquest. In addition, the typical portrayal of the pioneers' piety and endurance clashes with the pagan celebration at Crimson Dawn. The Witch motif seems odd even compared to the burgeoning market for Native American spirituality. Crimson Dawn also undermines the image of the frontier as new, unique, and distinct from Europe. The variety of meanings of Crimson Dawn is problematic to those looking to promote a hegemonic West.

Like the tourist guides, local newspapers ignored the annual event until the late Sixties, although Forsling herself was featured in earlier articles for her artistic and literary achievements. An article appeared in The Denver Post in 1954 describing the "Lady on Casper Mountain," but it primarily focused on Forsling's poetry and artwork and on her survival in the "primitive surroundings" of the mountain wilderness.[48] There was no mention of the annual June gathering. When the local Casper newspapers began reporting on the Midsummer's Eve celebration, the articles often used ghoulish words like "ogres," "trolls," and "goblins", even though monsters had nothing to do with the event.[49] Although these titles sensationalized the festival, they also cast it in a negative light. In the Seventies, as Forsling was nearing the end of her life and as Crimson Dawn became a public monument, the articles invariably used the phrases like "legend," "legacy," and "living legend" to describe both her and the Midsummer's Eve ceremony.[50] The newspapers increased their coverage as the celebration and Forsling grew old. What had been neglected in earlier years became laudable once the occasion had the patina of age. Since the Seventies, the Casper Star Tribune has regularly advertised the event beforehand and has usually printed a follow-up article as well. Despite the newspaper and television coverage, the event's notoriety has remained localized.

In recent years, the number and popularity of summer solstice celebrations throughout the United States have increased.[51] For example, the Burning Man festival, now held in the Nevada desert, began with a small group of friends honoring the solstice by burning a wicker man. The event is now a multimedia spectacle with live coverage from MTV and CNN, an interactive website, and with tens of thousands of attendees annually.[52] Yet despite the potential for promotion, Crimson Dawn remains a local, almost private, affair. Just as Forsling sought to protect Crimson Dawn from commercial development, Casper residents seem to want to prevent the event's commercial exploitation. Although many local festivals are created and promoted by boosterism, no one in Casper appears to be willing to "cash in" on Crimson Dawn.

Of course, there are limitations to attendance due to the size of the site; Crimson Dawn could never hold ten thousand guests. When there is a large throng of people on Midsummer's Eve, it is difficult to see the witches' costumes or shrines or hear their stories. This was particularly true when the event was led by the aging Neal Forsling or her daughter Mary Martin. If the crowd grew, the gathering

would lose the intimacy of the storytelling performance. The intimate storytelling aspect was important to Forsling and remains so to attendees. The relationship between the Forsling and the children was central; yet, as in most fairy tales and folktales, certain portions of the stories, such as Forsling's political satire and commentary, were directed at the older members of the audience. Nonetheless, Midsummer's Eve continues to be a family event. The community bonds established and reinforced in small storytelling settings such as Crimson Dawn could not be duplicated on a grander scale.

Undeniably, Forsling's storytelling and the Midsummer's Eve celebration serve as entertainment and escapism. It is noteworthy that the tradition began during the Great Depression. The rejuvenation associated with the changing seasons -- the end of winter and the beginning of summer -- had particular resonance. Casper has continued to experience "boom and bust" cycles, due to its reliance on the minerals industry. The fairy tales may help people forget the hardships of reality; the witches offer entertainment and consolation. The celebration marks seasonal, personal, and community renewal.

Festivals are an important time for communities and individuals. Issues of ethnic, regional, and cultural identity are examined and celebrated. According to folklorist Kristin Kuutma, celebrations mark "personal affirmation, political action, [and] social revitalization."[53] In Casper, the Midsummer's Eve festival creates a sense of what Victor Turner termed "communitas."[54] That is, the celebration brings people together from a variety of backgrounds -- mountain residents, New Age followers, friends of the Forsling family, and the merely curious. By celebrating the Midsummer's Eve ritual at Crimson Dawn, these people's individuality is briefly subsumed under the solidarity or communion that allows them to celebrate the diverse meanings of the occasion.

Significantly, it has been the community, rather than the county park system, that has kept Crimson Dawn "alive." Despite the varied meanings of the site, the desire to preserve the event has now outlived Neal Forsling and one of her daughters. While Forsling's tales were the impetus of the event, many other community members have contributed to the celebration and its preservation. Friends of Forsling have formed the Crimson Dawn Association to plan the event each year and to perform the various characters. Children and adults have built shrines. In the past, local celebrities -- sheriffs, authors, and schoolteachers -- have played the roles of witches and forest characters. The owner of the local A&W restaurant provided hot chocolate and coffee at the celebration for over twenty years.[55] A local librarian collected years of newspaper clippings on Crimson Dawn, establishing a special "Neal Forsling" file in the community college archives. Most importantly, Casper residents have attended in the hundreds and have brought their children to learn the folklore of Casper Mountain. Neal Forsling and Crimson Dawn have become local legends. Even people with only a vague knowledge of Crimson Dawn's history or who have never attended the Midsummer's Eve event know the mountain is "haunted."[56]

Historian Ronald Hutton suggests that the Midsummer's Eve traditions faded in Britain by the eighteenth century.

> What seems to have doomed the custom was the attrition of the belief that it actually brought protection; after that the effort of keeping it up appears to have caused its demise in most

places long before community links and old style farming practices themselves started to disintegrate.[57]

People no longer believed in the magic, so they no longer staged the solstice festivities. The contrary seems true in Casper. Few ever believed in the witches, and the event has meant many different things. The "community links" Hutton speaks of have disintegrated, even in small town Wyoming. But in this case, the public has made the effort to maintain the tradition, perhaps as a way to retain or conserve community itself.

The longevity of Crimson Dawn has not altered its quirkiness. It is a bohemian festival in a conservative climate. It is a pagan, or at least nature-worshipping celebration in a community whose economy is based on nature's exploitation. Despite the varied and changing interpretations of Crimson Dawn, the Midsummer's Eve celebration has lasted seventy years. The story of Crimson Dawn is now part of local folklore and local identity. According to cultural critic Lucy Lippard, "every place name is a story, an outcropping of the shared tales that form the bedrock of community. Untold land is unknown land."[58] The people of Casper know the mountain in large part due to Neal Forsling. The stories of Crimson Dawn -- the tales and the history -- do show the connection between the land and cultural identity. Neal Forsling has created a tradition that is tied to an imagined past. This whimsical nature allows the interpretations of the celebration to be less uniform or stable than other commemorations of local history. Nonetheless, Crimson Dawn continues to keep Casper "spellbound."

Footnotes

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[4] Mike Curry, "Witches Have Been Bulldozed Off Casper Mountain," *Casper Star Tribune* June 22, 1967; "Witches, Ogres, Trolls to Make Appearance Saturday," *Casper Star Tribune* June 20, 1969; "At Annual Goblin Festival," *Casper Star Tribune* June 1969. Casper College Goodstein Library "Neal Forsling" vertical file; "Witches, Trolls Ready for 'Midsummer's Eve,'" *Casper Star Tribune* June 21, 1970; Joseph Wheelan, "Witches, Fairies Lurk on Mountain," *Casper Star Tribune* June 23, 1974.

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[13] Brendan McWilliams, "Midsummer a Time for Frolics," *The Irish Times* June 23, 1997: 2.

[14] Diane Marshall, "'You Can Almost Believe It's Real,'" *Casper Star Tribune* June 22, 1998.

[15] Frazer. *The Golden Bough*; Julia Llewellyn, "Happy to Be off with the Fairies," *The Daily Telegraph* June 21, 1996: 18.

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[17] Forsling. *Crimson Dawn*.

[18] Curry. "Witches Have Been Bulldozed Off Casper Mountain."

[19] Dan Neal, "Church Group Protests Midsummer's Eve Stories on Mountain," *Casper Star Tribune* June 22, 1989.

[20] Deirdre Stoelzle, "Group Demonstrates at Crimson Dawn Festivities," *Casper Star Tribune* June 22, 1990: A2.

[21] Joan Madrigal, "Cover Witches, Cover Jesus" (Letter to the Editor), *Casper Star Tribune* July 19, 1994: A7; Joan Madrigal, "Good Word, Not Witches" (Letter to the Editor), *Casper Star Tribune* July 25, 1995: A7.

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[23] Ibid.

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[25] “Witches, Ogres, Trolls to Make Appearance Saturday.”

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[39] Crimson Dawn Park & Museum pamphlet; “Casper: A Celebration of History and the Arts.” 1995. http://www.trib.com/CASPER/art.html. (February 4, 1999).

[40] Simpson Curry. “A Woman to Match a Mountain.”

[41] Dee Garceau, “Single Woman Homesteaders and the Meaning of Independence: Places on the Map, Places in the Mind,” *Frontiers* 15.3 (Spring 1995): 1-27; Margaret Walsh, “State of the Art: Women’s Place on the American Frontier,” *Journal of American Studies* 29 (1995): 241-255; Elizabeth Jameson, “Frontiers,” *Frontiers* 17.3 (September-December 1996): 6-12. See also the work of historians Peggy Pascoe and Glenda Riley for further analysis of women in the West.

[42] “The Living Legend of Casper’s Crimson Dawn,” Casper College Goodstein Library “Neal Forsling” vertical file.

[43] Ogilbee died shortly after the divorce, choking on a piece of steak at a dinner party. I was relieved to find no mention of “witchcraft” surrounding his demise.

[44] Simpson Curry. “A Woman to Match a Mountain.”

[45] Ibid.; Marguaret Peterson, “Neal Forsling Surprised Midsummer’s Visitors,” *Casper Star Tribune* June 27, 1976.

[46] Although my search has been by no means exhaustive, I have found only two books -- both written by Casper residents -- that talk about Crimson Dawn: Vaughn Stephen Cronin, *Casper Mountain: The Magic of Yesterday & Today* (Casper, WY: Education Books, 1998) and Irving Garbutt. Casper Centennial 1889-1989. Natrona County, Wyoming 1890-1990. A few tourist guides, particularly those that are specific to Wyoming, mention Crimson Dawn, including Don Pilcher, *Wyoming Handbook* (Chico, CA: Moon Travel Handbooks, 1997) 223-224.

[47] Dan Ben-Amos, “Folktale,” *Folklore, Cultural Performance and Popular Entertainments,* ed. Richard Bauman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 102.

[48] Bernice Reed Conger, “Lady on Casper Mountain,” *The Denver Post* 1954.

[49] “At Annual Goblin Festival.”; “Witches, Ogres, Trolls to Make Appearance Saturday.”; “Witches, Trolls, Ready for Midsummer’s Eve.”

[50] “A Living Legend.”; “The Living Legend of Casper’s Crimson Dawn.”; “A Legend Bequeathed,” *Casper Star Tribune* February 8, 1973.

[51] Jay Walljasper, “Midsummer Night is More Than a Dream: The Revival of Summer Solstice Festivals,” *Utne Reader* 58 (July/August 1993): 30-31.

[52] John Marks, “Burning Man Meets Capitalism: How a Strange Cultural Event Became a Viable Commercial Enterprise,” *US News and World Report*. 123.4 (July 28, 1997): 47.

[53] Kristin Kuutma, “Festival as Communicative Performance and Celebration of Ethnicity.” May 1998. http://www.haldjas.folklore.ee/Folklore/vol7/Festiva.html. (February 4, 1999): 1.

[54] Victor Turner, *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982).

[55] “Witches, Faeries Return to Crimson Dawn.”; Richards. “Casper Mountain Legend Celebrates Summer Solstice.”

[56] Carol “SnyderExc@aol.com,” email correspondence, January 28, 1999; Susanne Walsh, personal interview.

[57] Hutton. *The Stations of the Sun* 318.

[58] Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997) 46.

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