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Site Dance #1

The College van stopped at our house at 5:15 A.M. The moon was just past the full; it was a clear cold morning. Nobody talked til we picked up Sue and Rick and Sue's mother in Rutland. We began to wake up and by the time Agi and a young couple joined us at Bill's Country Store in Killington several conversations were going at the same time. Darkness was lifting, we could see the shine of the river on the other side of the mountain. The van left the black-top and bumped along a dirt road into the woods. Barbara said, "Now we enter the twilight zone". We climbed out of the van and walked through drifts of leaves to the site. The hollow in the woods was all gold in the early light: soft pale gold in the trees and on the ground. ~~It's an enchanted place whether or not it's an authentic ancient site.~~

~~The four dancers explored the ground. They had prepared their dances but had not visited the site before.~~ On one side of the hollow there is a stone shelter dug into an earth mound, high and wide enough to walk around in. ~~Great trees grow on the mound so from the other side, outside the hollow it looks like a little hill.~~ The opening faces East and here the drummer sat and began to beat softly on his tom-tom, ~~a handsome box he had made from teak wood and mahogany.~~ The four dancers walked out of the mound and stood quietly. They turned their heads to the place where the sun would rise, and each lifted one arm in salute. [ The moon was behind them and the dawn light was spreading. They were wearing sweat shirts and long-johns in subtle shades of green, soft red and brown. They were bare-foot, and most of the time bare-waisted as their arms and bodies swung to the beat of the tom-tom. The drumming and the crackling

and shuffling of dry leaves were the only sound. The rhythm quickened and the dancers leapt and whirled, their flung-out bodies and swirling hair made wonderful moving patterns. It was a dance of joy and thanks for the returning sun.

How did they dance bare-foot on the stony ground? Their steps were so light and sure I wasn't aware of the difficulty til I saw them pick their way over sharp ridges hidden under the leaves to the next site, a wide shallow pit.

The dance in the <sup>wide shallow</sup> pit seemed to call forth the spirits of animals: birds, little woods' creatures, horned creatures and beasts of prey, claws raised and teeth bared. All four <sup>dancers</sup> joined together and became one ~~great~~ antlered animal. Then three of the dancers carried the fourth to a great fallen tree-trunk in the middle of the pit where they stretched her out for sacrifice. One by one they raised their arms and stabbed the victim, then slowly and quietly arranged themselves around her body, one stroking a hand, another a foot and another her long flowing hair.

→ [ We walked out of the hollow to the top of the ridge where a great stone is set in the earth in such a way that it defines the changing of the seasons. ] <sup>Now Finish</sup>  
The sun was shining on the tops of the trees and the dancers faced West, silent, sitting back on their heels, hands resting on knees. One by one each performed her own dance: the first seemed to be invoking a powerful spirit, the second was under the spell, giving way to the enchantment, the third reacted with fear, and the fourth seemed to rebel and pay homage to the stone. [ Then they stood facing each other, pledged with right hands joining, and returned to the ridge-stone where they knelt, each one becoming a silent image. Now the sun was high enough

to touch them and a bird called.

We all filed quietly back to the van. No one spoke for a while and the drummer fell asleep. Bob Gershon drove both ways and also video-taped the performance. Pretty soon we were back in this world, on the black-top, talking about the experience we'd just had and wanting good hot coffee.

Emily Jennison  
October 9, 1981

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Friday

Dear Sue,

I wanted to write this before much time had passed. You asked me to give you my impressions, and in some cases you may think, "how did she see that?" I was Terribly enthusiastic about the project and looking forward to being with you. One of the most impressive things was the feeling that we were, for a little while, in a timeless world. It could have been any time maybe even B.C. There was no noise of this century, no wires on poles, no machines in the distance. So when you came out of the round opening I was all set to believe whatever you did. I seem to look for a sequence in things, and the second dance in the pit was my favorite. I just loved it, the way you portrayed the animals and I hope that part of the video-tape is destroyed because it doesn't bring it off. The first dance



I found very exciting, the dance to the sun.  
The third was not as clear to me as the others  
and the lovely <sup>held</sup> poses around the rock at  
the end - were they listening conscious crea-  
tures? I thought so (they came out of the hollow  
and began to find their own selves) but I  
wondered.

Thanks for wanting me to come along.  
Oh - I forgot - Joan Costin did call to tell  
me she couldn't do it, shortly after you  
called. I'm glad I met your Mother and  
I wish she lived nearby. I enjoyed it all  
immensely.

with love

Emily