



Wisdom Keepers' Stories

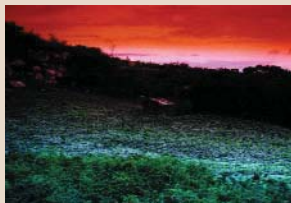
The following interview took place in April, 2001 at New Orleans with a woman who continues using some of the old ways.

Louisiana Folk Healers

New Orleans and Louisiana have a rich history of healing practices that involved African, Creole, Cajun, and Indian cultures.

Aleat Batiest

My mother passed away when I was a year-and-a-half-old baby and my grandmother took me in under her care. I lived with her until I was 13 years old. That's when she passed away. She was a very old, Creole lady. She was a traditional healer and she believed in healing with prayers, spirituality, and the



ways of the church. She used her hands when she healed others and she would speak in tongues. When the spirit hit her, she would speak that way, but I didn't understand what she was saying. People called her Mama Alice. She brought me up in the bayou country and taught me how to use the herbs and blessings. People say, "Oh New Orleans way of Creoles," and imply that it's voodoo, but it's not. She taught me how to work in the traditional ways of the Blessed Mother, the mother of Jesus.

She would tell me how to mix certain things for the blessings. She would work in a simple way. To heal the body, she'd use household ammonia and salt. That's all it would be. She would have you take a bath with a blessing and use this solution for nine days. You'd take a bath with it every day over a period of nine days and she'd pray over you. She'd say the Lord's Prayer and she'd sing "Precious Lord." Her singing would soothe you. When you came out of the bath she would take a plain egg and hold it over the top of your head and run it down your body to the bottom of your feet. She would rub that egg all over your body. It was supposed to take out the aches and pains. Then she'd take that egg to the backyard, break it open, and leave it outside. You weren't supposed to go back and see it again. She'd take a box of salt and have you walk to the far corner of the yard and then come back toward the house. As you walked back, you were supposed to throw salt over your left shoulder. That was supposed to take the evil spirit out of your body. And it did. Your whole body felt relaxed when you did this. She also kept her Bible open to Psalm 91 because those verses have to do with cleansing. They also call out to God to put his angels around you. After nine days, you were supposed to feel the healing. When you went through her treatment, you would feel like a different person. You can't imagine the wonderful peaceful feeling it brings.

After she died, I had a vision. It looked like I was in a body of water with lilies in the pond. In the dream, I kept saying, "Mama, I want to go with you. I'm all alone. I don't have anybody." She answered me, "No, I can't take you now. You were left for a reason." I'm still trying to find more about that reason. Since Mama left, I noticed that when I pray for people, they have a change in their life. I don't see that I'm doing anything, yet this happens. I don't know what is happening.

I give the Lord's Prayer and I pray to the Blessed Mother for their healing. After praying for people, they have left rehabilitation units and changed their lives and they have given up thoughts of committing suicide. The results are very fast and dramatic.

I was raised as a poor girl. There is nothing special about me. I just pray in the manner taught to me by



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my grandmother. Like her, I will help cleanse people. I take nine lemons, squeeze out the juice, and have them use it for bathing. I ask them to use it for nine days. My grandmother taught me that. I also use the household ammonia and salt like she did. She taught me that nine is a healing number. That's why we use nine days.

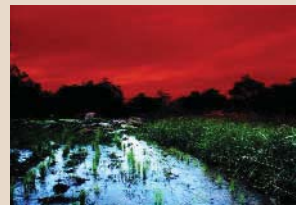
In 1996 I had a stroke and was bed stricken. I was paralyzed for a week and could not move at all. My grandmother then appeared to me and stood over my bed. She said, "At least, get up." I replied, "Mama, I'm sick." She said, "You can walk. Now get up." I stood up and started walking. It was a miracle.

I went home and started bathing with the ammonia and salt. And I became totally refreshed. There is still power in her way of healing.

I dream of a person dying before he or she passes on. This is what used to happen to my grandmother. I had a dream of seeing my neighbor cleaning her house. When I asked her in the dream why she was doing all that cleaning, she replied, "I've got to move." She died soon after that dream.

I foresaw the death of James' sister. In the dream I saw the number of her house as we walked down a street. She died right after that. I foresaw his brother's death. These things come to me. I have many visions, but I don't like talking about them. When they show me what will happen, I get frightened. I don't want to know those things.

Just the other day I was walking in my yard and my arms were automatically lifted up towards the sky as a voice spoke in my ear, "I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know." Then the voice said, "You've got to grab somebody and hold their hand. You've got to touch somebody." James was nearby and I asked him, James, did you hear that?" He said, "You were singing. But that is strange because you can't carry a tune."



Then I met you within a few days after that dream. You said you wanted to hold my hand. When I touched you, I felt a fire go through my whole body. When I told my friend, Georgia, she said that her husband felt that same fire when you and I held hands. He was standing next to us and he felt the same fire. This is the power of the Holy Spirit. God works in mysterious ways.

I still remember watching my grandmother when I was a little girl. She was an old black woman who lived on the bayou. She had long jet-black hair that would lie on her lap. She would tell me things about how she healed the people in the bayou country. She told me how they would go out in the fields and pray nonstop for several days. That's how they'd get their visions.

My grandmother had fiery looking eyes. She could look right through you. I can still see her in my mind. She was very thin and she walked proud. She had a lot of power. My grandmother will never leave me. She is by my side. I like to see her in my dreams, but I don't want to see anyone else. I see her right now. I feel her presence in the room. There's a blue light. She is floating on the water. She says that everything is going to be all right. There is always blue water around her. It's the same water I saw in a vision after she died when I was 13 years old. Thank you, grandmother. Thank you for all that you given me.