Common Threads



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The Newsletter of Harrisville, New Hampshire

SHEILA WILLIAMS, DOWSER

It was a kids' book called *Liars,* by P. J. Petersen, that started Harrisville's Sheila Williams on the path to dowsing. When Sam, the book's protagonist, learns to dowse, he discovers that he can also tell when people are lying. A useful skill. "Unfortunately," says Sheila with a laugh, "it's not so easy." But she was curious and set out to learn more.

A custodian at the Lincoln Public Library, where Sheila worked at the time (she now works as the audio-visual librarian at the Keene Public Library), introduced her to the basics of dowsing for underground water. "He cut a fruit tree branch [in the form of a "Y"-shaped stick used as a divining tool], and we dowsed the library property and actually found quite a bit of water," she says.

Sheila believes that all the early New England wells were dowsed. "Most of them are less than 30 feet deep," she says and would have been hand dug. Knowing where the water was before starting to dig would have been especially useful.

There are different theories about dowsing and how it works. Indago Felix, or the fruitful search, is the motto of the American Society of Dowsers. "We are all searching for something," Sheila says, physical or otherwise. "Everything is energy . . . even thoughts, so what I'm doing is looking for the energy of the thing." And the easiest one is water, "because we are water."

Sheila believes anyone can dowse. But you have to shut down part of your way of thinking. "Your logical mind is going to tell you that this is not possible . . . to find something by dowsing. That's just crazy talk!" But she says, it is possible.

She tells a story about Ted Kaufman, a skilled dowser in New York State, who located two missing men in February 1981. Kaufman, then in his eighties, did a map dowsing and determined that the two men were in the middle of Lake George. "He went to the police, and the police said, 'Thank you very much, Mr. Kaufman.' [But] come spring, one of the bodies washed up on shore, so the police came back to Mr. Kaufman." He went out in the boat with them. The police stopped where Kaufman's dowsing indicated the vehicle would be. They dropped the anchor right into the bed of the pickup truck. "The police chief was so impressed that he actually went on record as saying that dowsing works, and this is what we did and how we did it."



PHOTO: REBECCA UPJOHN SNYDER

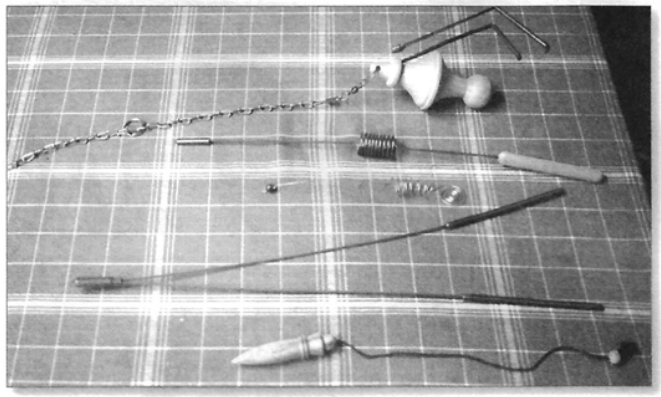
Shelia Williams, dowser.

Dowsing has also been used in the search for minerals, oil, unmarked graves, missing pets, missing items, and missing persons.

Before beginning to dowse, Sheila always asks herself three questions: "Can I? May I? Should I?" It's part of the meditative process of getting into the frame of mind for dowsing. "If I get a no response on any one of those three questions, I don't do the dowsing."

There are dowsers, called geomancers, who work with the energy of the land. "I use that aspect of dowsing to clear houses of noxious energies," she says. "There's a lot of electrical . . . and

wireless stuff going on now, and some people are very sensitive to that. They don't realize it's affecting their health." Clearing the energy isn't a cure, but it can alleviate some problems.



Dowsing tools.

There are many different tools that can be used for dowsing. Y-rods, L-rods, pendulums, bobbers—each has a different way of picking up energy. They are all antennae, Sheila says. "But you are still using your body. It is a very physical thing."

Finding water is usually straightforward. Either you find it or you don't. Sheila has been in both situations. "I don't like not finding water, especially if there is a need." But finding it "with a cut branch . . . it's almost like it comes alive," she says. "It's really kind of spooky. I like that spooky aspect." Fruit tree branches and willow work well, but she says she uses whatever is handy. Any pliable freshly cut branch can work. And dowsing tools can be made of just about anything: coat hangers and pen pieces as L-rods, string with a fishing sinkers, keys or rings as pendulums, plastic or cut-branch Y-rods.

L-rods are useful in answering directional questions. "Please show true north," Sheila asks, and holding an L-rod loosely in each hand, walks slowly forward. After a few steps one of the rods swings away from its forward pointing position to the right . . . in a northerly direction. The L-rods are used often for dowsing water veins. Not only can you find the edge of the vein but also the direction of the flow. "And then you can ask . . . where the best placement of the well would be," she says.

The pendulum is used for finding information and for map dowsing. "This is where you get a yes or no answer." If you get a mixed response, sometimes it is because "you're really not in a good place to be dowsing." If you are tired or hungry for example, it can make the process difficult.

When asked what she likes about dowsing, she says, "I think it is just my personality . . . being a librarian, I love . . . being able to find an answer. If it is something a little bit out of my realm, I can still find an answer." And does it ever steer her wrong? "Only the question is wrong, never the answer. So that is the trickiest aspect of dowsing, to make sure you ask the right question." She adds: you're going to get an answer even if it is not the answer you were looking for.

Sheila teaches others to dowse and sometimes people hire her for house clearing in particular. She donates all the money she earns from dowsing to Water for Humanity, a charity of the American Society of Dowsers that puts wells into remote villages around the world. "Water is just so important," she says. "You hear stories of these little villages in Nepal where the women have to walk five miles and carry gallons of water back with them, and you think, I just have to walk over there and turn on the [tap]; you know we are just so spoiled by comparison. So that's my gift back to the world because I do think it's a gift."

To learn more:

American Society of Dowsers: *http://dowsers.org/*

For a reenactment of the Ted Kaufman story see: Strange But True S02E06 Pt1 *https://youtu.be/df6iQKgCOS0?list=PL7D63E9D27340FF44*

Rebecca Upjohn Snyder

COMMUNITY NEWS

A Changing of the Guard

Sadly, all good situations do seem to come to an end. In this vein, *Common Threads* says a regretful farewell to our talented production and graphics star, Janet Grant. She has created our layout and look for the past 11 years and, in fact, has been key in forming the excellence of the publication. Now she is relinquishing this assignment, as much as she has enjoyed it. Janet especially loved being part of a talented group doing something they love for the benefit of the town they care so much about.



L-R: Lindy Greenwood and Janet Grant

As we bid adieu to Janet, we warmly greet Lindy Greenwood in her stead. Lindy has more than 30 years' experience in graphic design; in fact, she worked for ten years at IDG in Peterborough, where she met Janet in 1987. She is familiar with inDesign, the program used for *Common Threads,* and looks to integrate her skills and personality with the work Janet began.

Lindy works at Harrisville Designs, where she has done the graphic design for eight years. Chick and Pat Colony have graciously agreed to let Lindy use their equipment, and they support her additional venture in the life of Harrisville. Lindy is enthusiastic about her new work with production of *Common Threads,* and she looks forward to learning more about the Harrisville community and residents.

The staff bids a regretful but warm good-bye to Janet, thanking her sincerely for all her work over the years and wishing her the very best. We also greet Lindy with great cheer and anticipation of setting up an equally warm relationship with her.

Sherry Sims