



# Corn Mother News

*Women Who Desire to Grow into Wise  
Old Woman Become Empowered!*

September, 2008  
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*Hello... and Welcome Everyone, I'm so glad you stopped by.*

Happy Fall Equinox! Did this summer evaporate or what? And I don't know what happened to August. Well, yes I do. It was one of those "life happens, so just accept it" months for me. And there were as usual lessons learned.

First, living in the mountains as I do, I find myself (and I'm not alone) scurrying around like a little squirrel preparing for winter. Instead of hoarding food for the cold months ahead, for us humankind it's wood. Getting enough wood in to last through the winter months can be a real chore and I love it. I used to work out at the gym and still go there for yoga, but what I really prefer is to have a good part of my exercise built into my daily routine, outdoors if possible.

Hauling, cutting and stacking wood is a fair amount of exercise. It's out in the fresh mountain air and in my opinion, it cannot be beat. It's what helps keep me fit, healthy and dare I say "youthful." Using muscles to lift and throw with a cautious eye on my old back injury, I have proceeded.

Now, last year I acquired *Black Beauty*, a shiny black pick-up truck just for this purpose of hauling wood. I hauled 6 pick-up loads, unloaded each load and stacked all that wood (2 cords worth) with nary a tweak to my lower back. All by myself mind you, I took my time; one truck bed, loaded and unloaded per day with a few days in between each load worked great.

Well, this year I was not quite so fortunate and it was all due to my poor judgment. You see, this year I had help. You would think two people working together would make the whole job a bit easier on the ol'bod, but not this time. The friend who so generously offered to help was one of the sweetest guys you'll ever find, but he's still a mountain man who prides himself on digging into a job with gusto. I didn't want to be the little woman standing by and watching a man do all the work, plus this is work I can do and furthermore enjoy doing. Remember, this is part of my exercise program.





Caught up in a bit of “mountain ego”, I suppose, I wanted to be strong. But basically, I didn't realize how much I was stressing this 60 something body of mine. I probably would have been a little sore, but okay, had we done my usual one truck load. Three loads done rapidly in succession on Saturday and four loads Sunday were just too much. Sunday morning came with my lower back beginning to raise it's voice and I knew better, but I wanted to be up for the job at hand. This nicest of nice guys would have willingly completed the job alone and I wanted to help. I did slow down the second day, but by that time injury had occurred and I needed to have stopped completely.

I who have been so independent for so long really didn't feel comfortable accepting help without participating equally, and I also wanted to be part of the action. So it was that I ended up with a severely wrenched back requiring multiple forms of body work and weeks to heal.

I'm taking this time and space to share my story with you because it brought home to me what I know, oh so well, about 'letting go.’ I, who frequently remind folks that as we age, all along the way, time and again, we are presented with situations where we need to ask for assistance, didn't take my own advice. Inevitably, instances appear where in the not so distant past we were quite capable to go it alone and now need to ask for help. Letting go of foolish pride, the fear of losing control or accepting that at the moment you cannot do we want to do is something we need to learn little by little as each situation presents itself.

It is conscious awareness that asks, “Ok, what's happening?” “How am I feeling?” and “Now, how is the best way for me to handle this?” Those three simple questions can help grow your personal power. Knowing what you can do and how much you can do without weakening yourself, that is, without losing your independence, is an ongoing challenge. Done consciously you take control of your life, rather than forfeit control....hurt yourself and really weaken your body.

August also brought a death in my family, computer glitches, some health challenges and exhaustion. I have further life reflections I may share in subsequent issues, but for now remember to ask yourself on a regular basis...How am I feeling (both physically and emotionally) and move forward with conscious choices. We all have to experiment as we go. As an old friend used to say to me, “Take it easy, but take it.”

### **Lessons from Elizabeth: The elegant simplicity of survival or How to stay in your own home and avoid the nursing home conveyor belt.**

Elizabeth came from an educated, professional family in German. Her father, a physician who played the violin, often treated fellow musicians who had succumbed to “violin elbow.” As a little girl growing up one of Elizabeth's fondest memories was of the gathering of musicians at their home. The chamber music which ensued was indeed a salve for this young soul. Elizabeth herself, had studied art with some prominent artists of the time, but her talent was never fully developed. These were troubled times. As a young married adult, she and her family fled Hitler and then Mussolini until they eventually ended up in exile in the United States. Her simple, sensitive water colors fell to the wayside, except for an occasional depiction of nature (she loved the Colorado mountains) or a view from her porch.





Although her father and husband (an Attorney), were highly educated. I don't think Elizabeth had more than a Bachelor's degree, if that. In my eyes she was the epitome of the good housewife whose job it was to care for her family. I can't image Elizabeth ever sitting down with a book(s) to study self-improvement or empowerment yet---Elizabeth was very self-empowered in her own way.

After her stint in the hospital recovering from a broken hip she was allowed to return home under the condition that she have Home Care in place. Her husband had passed away and she lived alone. As the Home Care assessment person, I found Elizabeth was sharp, humble and very on top of her situation. Her fear had vanished and she was in control. I liked her immediately, we lived in close proximity and intuitively I felt she had a lot to teach me. Once the assessment of her needs was completed, I approached the Home Care admin. folks with a proposal. I had decided I wanted, pending Elizabeth's approval, to be the person who assisted Elizabeth on her return home.

At 83, as Elizabeth waited to be released from the hospital, she gave her situation serious thought: what kind of help she would need, the number of hours each day and when during the day she would need that help. We, Elizabeth and I, discussed her ideas and had a plan in place day 1 of her arrival home.

Mornings it was decided were most important. Grounded and realistic Elizabeth's view of her condition and what she would need was spot on. If she had help to get her day started and thus conserve her energy, she would be able to manage the rest of the day and the evening on her own.

Working with Elizabeth was an absolute pleasure. She was so self-possessed, yet not the least bit arrogant. Basically, she would do what she could do and ask me for help with things like putting on her socks and shoes that were difficult for her to maneuver. I felt she was always conscious that she needed to continue doing as much as she possibly could and that to have me do more and make life too easy for her would in the long run weaken her. She was determined to live out her days in her own home and being as self-sufficient as possible would make that desire a reality. I wish I had a video of Elizabeth directing her life. She was such an example of how to ask for what you need without negative feelings like guilt or shame lingering in the aftermath. In another edition, I'll share more about how Elizabeth structured her environment and was the director of you life.

**Announcing *The Return of the Corn Mothers*.** A photo journal exhibition at the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History. October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 to January 30, 2009. "One of the most unique exhibits to come out of Colorado.... Women 29 to 89 tell stories that help shape and nurture our country." Contact Dulce Aldama [Dulce.Aldama@Colorado.EDU](mailto:Dulce.Aldama@Colorado.EDU) or Renee Fajardo-Anstine, [reneefaja@hotmail.com](mailto:reneefaja@hotmail.com).

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**"I want to be an old woman when I grow up."**

From a CD by Michelle Shocked, *When I Grow Up*.

Your input is important. Send your comments and suggestions to:  
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I am available for presentations, speaking engagements and workshops. 303-258-0660

*The Corn Mother News* is dedicated to *Las Tres Viejas*  
Frances Grace Higgins, my mother.  
Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios, my spiritual guide and healer,  
and Elizabeth Golm, my mentor.

