

Wiccan rite sheds light

Witches' full-moon service celebrates power of love and peace

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Bordered by fig trees and leyland cypress, a circle of witches in black and white robes celebrated the recent full moon under the watchful eye of an off-duty police officer.

He was there to make sure the neighbors didn't do anything evil while the Ravenwood coven worshiped.

The Ravenwood witches are a long-time institution in Atlanta, founded by high priestess Lady Sinstana in 1975. They use Inner Spaces, next door to the Phoenix and Dragon bookstore in Sandy Springs, as a public meeting place to introduce newcomers to the faith.

Their invitation-only, full-moon

gatherings and eight sabbath festivals are held in Lady Sinstana's Decatur backyard off Interstate 20.

Soon after dusk, about 25 to 35 people of all ages strolled single-file from Lady Sinstana's family room, gathering in a circle under a harvest moon glowing through the tall pines.

On the altar was an impressionistic figure of the goddess of the universe. Surrounding it were stag horns, representing maleness, and items representing the four primordial elements: air, fire, water and earth.

Flute and guitar provided music, and the moment the candles were lighted, the group became reverent, and gods were greeted in all directions.

The service itself was a joyous cele-

bration, with a priest making the sign of a triangle in oil on everyone's forehead.

The triangle represents the divinity manifested through the male and female principal.

The witches set a peaceful tone by holding a "thread of consciousness" in which the priest and high priestess called out words and participants responded with the first words that came into their minds.

They held hands and skipped in a circle, then reversed the spiral, passing one another with a friendly buss on the cheek and a giggle.

Instead of blood sacrifice or communion, cookies and milk mixed with hon-

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