ForeWord Reviews

BODY, MIND & SPIRIT

Spirit Stones: Unraveling the Mysteries of Western Europe's Prehistoric Monuments
Dianne Beeaff
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Silent and somewhat forbidding, the stone structures erected by our megalithic ancestors continue to evoke awe and wonder. *Spirit Stones*, ten years in the making, combines Dianne Ebertt Beeaff's lifelong love of history and travel with her quest to understand the spiritual significance and meaning of the stone monuments of Western Europe. Her book is an affirmation that these objects, and others like them around the world, have much to teach us about living in the present.

Two words are key to Beeaff's exploration: "mystery," and "message." While there is no shortage of information on the monuments, there is no agreement or certainty as to their meaning; in fact, they have been assigned meaning and function based more on the beliefs of those who studied them than on any actual evidence that such interpretations were accurate. "Effectively, we buried the old mysteries," says Beeaff. "We stowed away their force and their function;" interpreters through the ages, depending upon the particular focus of the times in which they lived, have seen them as astronomical observatories, places to hold fertility rites, or even the constructions of alien beings.

Beeaff skillfully weaves past and present into a narrative that does not claim to have all the answers to the meaning of these treasures of prehistory, but which opens the doors to the mystery and awe that surround them, leading to an exploration, not so much of what they might have meant to their creators, as of what wondrous imaginings they might inspire in us today. She begins with descriptions of Neolithic and Bronze Age culture and architectural design, richly enhanced by color photographs; part two looks at four areas of perennial concern to humans: life and death, heaven and Earth, the secular and the sacred, and body and soul. Most chapters are followed by a section called "Spiritual Fitness," which offers ways to integrate knowledge of the past with life in the present.

Beeaff characterizes the monument-builders as strong, sturdy, and unsentimental folk whose lives were marked by brevity and suffering; they appear to have been vitally interested in the weather, the fertility of Earth and its creatures, and in devising ways to appease the deities that they believed controlled all these. While what they actually thought about all these things,

and what role the stone structures played in their lives, will always remain a matter of conjecture, this lively and engaging work explains why the ancient monuments continue to renew our sense of the wonder and mystery of life.

Dianne Ebertt Beeaff is the author of the award-winning novel, *Power's Garden*, and two nonfiction books, *Homecoming*, and *A Grand Madness*: *Ten Years on the Road with U2*. Her magazine articles, poetry, watercolors, and graphite sketches have been featured throughout the United States and Canada. A native Canadian with a lifelong love of history and travel, she now resides in Tucson, Arizona.

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