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Susun Weed • Jon Young • Betzy Bancroft • Jessica Moore

TRANSCRIPT

Susun Weed, November 30, 2006

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The following is a written transcript from John Gallagher's interview with Susun Weed on November 30, 2006.

The interview was part of The Herbal Teleconference Series, which was an event celebrating the release of *Wildcraft! An Herbal Adventure Game* by LearningHerbs.com.

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For more information about Susun Weed, please visit www.susunweed.com.

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John Gallagher: So, we'll officially start here in a couple of minutes here but first, someone wanted to know Susun, what was your favorite anti-inflammatory herb and why?

Susun Weed: Well, I'm going to answer this question in a way that's fairly typical to me and that might seem not exactly directly on to the question. The question on the face seems fairly simple: What's my favorite anti-inflammatory herb? Won't you just spit out the name of an herb, Susun, that's what the question is asking for?

John: Yes, exactly!

Susun: Right. But you see, I'm more involved in the question behind the question.

John: Yes.

Susun: And the question behind the question treats herbs as drugs with green coats on them and people

as disease bearing entities. So, I don't deal with either people or herbs in those ways. In other words, I wouldn't necessarily advise someone to take an anti-inflammatory or if they were taking an anti-inflammatory drug, I wouldn't necessarily say "Oh, this anti-inflammatory herb would be useful."

In fact, one of the reasons that I am an herbalist and not a druggist is because herbs are not single acting. Herbs have multiple actions. So, we could compare it to somebody saying "what's your favorite food for vitamin C?"

John: Exactly, exactly. So there are plenty?

Susun: Well, yes! There's certainly lot of foods that are rich in vitamin C, and if we say, if I say well I really like Myer's lemons, and then somebody says, "Oh, well, Susun gets all her vitamin C from Myer's lemons." Well, that of course, that isn't so at all.

John: Right, you get it from the leafy greens that you eat, you get it from...

Susun: Pine needles, from baked potatoes, from sauerkraut, right, and even there, even to talk about vitamin C will really be doing a scientific thing, which is taking a complex whole and reducing it to an active part.

Most people, if asked what vitamin C was would say ascorbic acid and would think that they were taking more vitamin C if they were taking ascorbic acid and yet, vitamin C, like all vitamins is a complex of many many different constituents, just as herbs are many many different constituents working together, working in concert so that we get to the wise woman perspective where the whole is greater than the sum of it's parts.

John: That's right, that's right. And I even heard you once say that all of the ascorbic acid was made by one company or something like that?

Susun: All of the ascorbic acid that is for sale is made by one company, Dupont. And of course, things change very quickly out there, I do keep active with trade journals but that doesn't mean I necessarily see everything and it's certainly possible that from the last time I looked until now that has changed!

But I know that there was certainly one point at which not too long ago quite a few vitamin manufacturers had to pay anti-trust fees because they were the sole source of these. So, if you buy vitamins, there might be a name on the bottle, but that's not the name of the maker, that's the name of the formulator.

John: Right, right, right.

Susun: So, all that aside [singing lin, lin, lin lin, feel my heart. You can bring me a brand new start!]. One of my favorite trees is linden. And linden, I think is an herb with anti-inflammatory properties but most people don't know enough about.

John: Exactly.

Susun: Do you use linden?

John: I have not, I've seen the tree and you know, it's one of those things I've wondered about, but I have not used.

Susun: Eule Gibbons used to say that the linden tree is a tree that you find by listening and what he meant was when the linden tree is in flower the flowers are so sweet that the are honey bees lined up in queues waiting to get at the flowers and buzzing so loudly that you hear the tree before you see it or smell it.

[Singing I smell fairies at my feet, I'm sitting under a linden tree]

Each one of my apprentices has to have a plant ally and Margaret's ally was linden. She wrote these wonderful verses about the linden, and of course it's the leading anti-cold and anti-flu remedy, both preventative and curative. And because we make our

remedy from the flowers of the linden it's very sweet tasting and a great favorite with children.

John: That's good to know! That's one I will definitely need to try.

Susun: Yeah! So linden flowers: I make a pretty strong infusion of it and to really increase the anti-inflammatory effect I do a second brew on the same linden flowers with cold water to pull out that mucilage, because many plant mucilages are more soluble in cold water.

So here's what I do: I take a quart jar and I put half an ounce by weight of linden blossoms in the quart jar and I fill that right to the top with boiling water, put a tight lid on it and I let that sit for, usually I let it sit for overnight, because that's just easier for me.

But, even after a couple of hours, you could use it, and I strain the liquid away from the linden blossoms and then I take the linden blossoms out of the jar, put them in a pan with two cups of cold water and put it on a fire, and bring that up to boil.

John: Wow, I can't wait to like...

Susun: Put a lid on it, then turn the fire down and let that sit for at least two hours. And you'll see that that second brew, if you touch it, or if you put it in your mouth, it will be much much more slippery. And that slippery-ness, of course, that mucilage, is a part of what helps it to have an anti-inflammatory effect.

John: So, taking this around to our question, we know see how there isn't just a favorite herb or drug for an anti-inflammatory situation, but we're talking about whole experience, wholeness, something greater than the sum of its parts.

So, we're not just having the experience of having our throats soothed by linden, but we're also getting connected to linden by having this incredible experience and ritual with the plant, which we're

learning so much in actually connecting with the plant.

Susun: and that's what I love about your work, John, is that you keep reminding people that it's not just this kind of dry knowledge that you get for the sake of having the knowledge, but that it's really about intimacy and being more intimate with your own body and with the planet that we live on.

John: I'd be bored if it was just about the dry knowledge! [both laugh].

Susun: I guess I never thought of it, but I guess I would [be bored] too!

John: Since we're a little past the hour here everyone's probably on the call right now, and I'd like to say Good Evening everyone, this is John Gallager, from learningherbs.com, and this is the fourth teleconference in our series, and once again, if anyone accidentally gets kicked off, just call back, you can't disturb anything.

The purpose of these calls is to talk about how we approach learning about herbs and, so far in the series, we have just learned - we've been keeping it simple, learning that it's about relationships with the plant, learning one at a time, having experiences - it's all about having experiences, not about, as we were just saying, the dry knowledge in the book, what not. So, tonight, we have our own renowned herbalist, Susun Weed, who has written loads of books and published and re-published some great herbal... And I can tell you from my own experience and I know that healing wines have touched my soul and brought me to who I am now as an herbalist and a health-care provider.

I'm an acupuncturist and I approach it from...I'm a five element acupuncturist and I approach it from a 'wise-woman' perspective. I always keep that in mind. When we were pregnant with both of our kids, "Childbearing Year" was the only book we used. You know, everyone wants to give you advice when you're

pregnant. Everyone. Everyone has the book; everyone has the piece of information. We just found everything we needed in that little pink book. Thanks for helping us keep it simple there, Susun.

Susun Weed: Oh, thank you so much, John. That really makes me smile from heart right out.

John: Oh, good...

Susun: It's so lovely. I have young women coming up to me, clutching the book and saying, "My mother used this book when she gave birth to me and now she gave me a copy."

Susun: So it's very nice to see that wheel turning and going on.

John: Gosh, you must have published that a while ago then, huh?

Susun: Indeed! About twenty years ago.

John: Twenty years ago. You just had 200 people clap when we announced, when we introduced you, but you couldn't hear any of them.

Susun: Oh, well...

John: [laughing]

Susun: I can just be here on this warm Catskills night, unseasonably warm. It's in the 60's today. In the 60's, yes, 60's Fahrenheit at the end of November. In the Catskills Mountains, sometimes we've had feet of snow by this time.

John: I think we've traded weather because we've got it now.

Susun: Oh, I see. [laughs]

John: We've got.. gosh, now, another story...[laughs] You know we were just talking about, you mentioned things when we were talking about women... You said you had your premises ' Pick an Ally.' Now this whole thing, and what I'm doing here,

is how to learn about and connect with plants, and I tell you, Susun, with the first time I ever got into plants was with my Peterson's Medicinal Guide. [laughs]

And I'm going around and it's "This plant is good for this, this, this, this, and this. And the native Americans would use it for this, this..." Not thinking that anyone would actually use them now...

Susun: Right, right, right.

John: I think there are some great references. There are some great herbal books out there, but as great as the references are, I think they're a little intimidating for people. If I'm wanting to know how to learn about herbs, I think if you could tell everyone about how to pick an herbal ally, that would be great.

Susun: Oh, well, I'm not sure that anyone could tell you that picking an herbal ally; as a matter-of-fact, many of the apprentices feel that their herbal ally picked them.

John: Ah!

Susun: But I can tell you what to do once you're either picked or been picked by a green ally and, of course, if you want to be picked by then you simply set that as your intention - that you would like some plant to be in touch with you to trip you up outside or to come into your dreams and say, "Hey! I want to be your ally."

But once you have made that decision, and you can choose a different ally every year, so you don't to panic about "Oh, my goodness, there's so many plants." Just one will be a lot for a year. We want to breathe with that in a way that sounds almost too simple; but when we think deeply and experience deeply, the fact that what we breathe in, the plant has breathed out. And what we breathe out, the plant is going to breathe in. I'm not talking 'theoretical stuff' here, am I? We're talking actual molecules of carbon and oxygen are being traded between you and

the plant. We know that it takes seven years to replace every cell in our body, but most of us don't know that every atom in our body is replaced every four days.

John: Hmmm...

Susun: So I asked my apprentices to spend ten minutes a day sitting right next to their green ally and breathing with it. [pause] Imagining, envisioning, pretending, visualizing... however you can do it to understand that the connection between people and plants is a giveaway dance. That we're dancing together with that breath.

[pause]

John: Well, that is... And so then so when you have an ally chosen and you connect with the plant that you want to work with for however amount of time you're working together, you can explore, right? Different ways of learning about that plant and bringing it into your life. I think a great example of healing wines is where you just take all these different herbs, very common and great herbs, and you just have this multifaceted way of relating, whether it be food or medicine, healthcare, I mean, health and beauty, use it whatever.

Susun: Yes. There's a wonderful book called "Planting the Future" which was done to separate the United Plant Savers, and I was one of the thirty herbalists who was asked to write a monograph on a particular plant for that book. And we were assigned our plants, and the plant I was assigned was *Mechelen repens*. I said, "First of all, this is such a common plants. It's all over." And they said, "Well, actually through much of its range, it's not anymore; and that's why we assigned it you, because its common where you live, in the Catskills." I found - it's a very low-growing plant, *repens* means creeping, right? - and I found that sitting low in a meditative posture and breathing with that plant wasn't close enough. I had to really lay down on the earth, either on my belly or on my back, in order to get close enough for that plant, to

be able to write the monograph for that book.

One of my apprentices a couple of years ago, chose that as her green ally and after the first week she said to me, "I don't know. You know, I'm breathing with the plant, but I don't seem to be getting anywhere." And I looked at her and I said, "Are you breathing in the plant's airspace?" She looked at me and I said, "It's a very low-growing plant. You've got to get your head Down there." And she came back the next day and said, "Oh, my gosh, I never would have imagined! It just makes all the difference in the world!" I said, "Yea it sounds like a theoretical thing. It sounds like a thing out of some new-age book "You Are One With Plants., : breathe with the plant, you will be one." But no, No! We're talking "Susun with Taurus moon and Taurus rising here," who's into what's real! And what's real is that the atoms of you are being made by the exhalation of the plant.

John: I've taught classes where I've said nothing about the plant we're going to learn about, and I have them go and sit with the plant for an hour. When I get everyone back together again and we go around in a circle and they tell me everything they got from that experience. Usually, they've told me everything that's in the book, so...[laughs]

Susun: [laughing] That's beautiful.

John: So they speak before me. I have people come to classes and have the plant teach for me. [laughs]

Susun: YES! Yes, absolutely! That is one of the most beautiful that we can do as teachers is to really take a backseat and let the plants speak for themselves because they certainly have plenty to say.

Now I do have blatant advertising pitch here. I do have a correspondence course for working with a Green Ally. And there are 26 projects that you do over the course of a year to connect with your Green Ally - a huge variety of things, from interviewing people who know about your Green Ally, to actually hands-on projects with it. With the apprentices who

are living with me, however, there is an interesting kind of restriction, and that is, it kind of goes along with what you're saying, and that is, at the culmination of their apprenticeship, they have to give a report on their Green Ally and show us different things that they've done with their Green Ally and how to use it, and so on, but they're not ever allowed to look in a book.

John: Good.

Susun: Right. Now that's because of course they're here, and they're doing lots of other book stuff, and of course if you're doing the Green Ally correspondence course, you're looking in lots of books, and you're making a book yourself about your plant. So it's a little bit different than being here, but I say to the apprentices, I say, "Part of what we intend to do here is to stretch you in two directions." So every day they have to know the botanical name, species, genus, and family of a plant that we can see in flower that day.

John: Wow. That is... I'm laughing because I use to teach a computer course, and I would walk in every day, and I would go, "OK, extra credit: Name five flowering trees that are in flower right now."

Susun: Right now.

John: Every day. And it had nothing to do with the computer course, but I would have a plant question for them every time. And nobody ever got it. The people could have passed the course without even doing any of the work.

Susun; Right, if you just looked and seen what was flowering.

John: "Get your heads out of the computers, people."

Susun: Right. "Look up, look up."

John: You told me the other day that, hey, if you're a teacher, you've got to want to like repeating yourself, and I know there's a lot of new ears out here tonight.

And being that I know that, when you're speaking and answered the anti-inflammatory question for me, there's a whole paradigm in a way of thinking about your approach that you teach people, and so if I'm just going to say, Susun, it's about keeping it simple, standard brews, vitamins and minerals, what comes to mind there for you? What other kind of thing do you want to tell people?

Susun: Well, I'll tell you one of the things that I like to say, John, is that being 60 now I can look back, and I can kind of look at the landscape of the things that I've taught and thought, and I can see that I have indeed had three good ideas. And those three good ideas are: the traditions of healing, the steps of healing, and nourishing herbal infusions. So I have identified three traditions of healing: the linear scientific, which measures, the circular heroic, which cleanses, and the spiralic wise woman, which nourishes. And I think that has been incredibly beneficial for many people to be able to see that there are many different ways to approach something, that we can't assume that because someone is an MD that they're strictly scientific, or that because someone is a chiropractor that they're not scientific, indeed, in that tradition. And of course people can be mixes of that. Nourishing herbal infusions, which are called standard brews - that wasn't sexy enough for me, so I changed it.

John: Oh, right. OK. Yeah.

Susun: And standard brew's absolutely fine because I learned it from Juliette Levy, and that's what she calls them, is standard brews. And as I said, it just didn't seem sexy enough.

John: Yeah, you're right.

Susun: People like things that are sexy, that have a little juice in them. So nourishing herbal infusion.

John: I like that.

Susun: Yeah. I took that word "infusion" because it's got a lot of oomph to it there, a lot of energy, like you

get when you drink the nourishing herbal infusions. And they're kind of my Aquarius way of finding the one thing that works for everybody. Right. I don't divide people up into casa or zata or any of those things. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that. I'm just saying it's not a way that I've found useful to work. I really want to see, in what way are we all really alike. And one of the bases of the wise woman tradition is nourishment. And so looking at nourishment, it was pretty clear to me that there were a lot of minerals, especially trace minerals and micro-nutrients, that are missing from the modern diet, and missing for a huge variety of reasons. And I found that by encouraging people to make strong brews - not teas but infusions, very strong infusions - of herbs that don't contain poisons; in other words, herbs that don't have volatile oils, so we wouldn't use peppermint for nourishing herbal infusion; herbs that don't contain resins, so we wouldn't want to use yarrow for nourishing herbal infusion; herbs that don't contain alkaloids, right. Generally we would want to avoid making a nourishing herbal infusion of something like goldenseal or bloodroot, right. And we don't want to use herbs that contain glycosides, like pokeroot.

John: Right.

Susun: Right. Because those are all poisons. So we're looking at nourishing herbs. And of course the funny thing about that is that there are actually many herbalists, and probably many healers, who feel that any plant that doesn't contain a poison isn't medicinal.

John: Exactly.

Susun: Right. And that the ones I'm talking about - oat straw, nettle, red clover, linden blossom, comfrey leaf, chickweed, raspberry lace, these safe, nutritive herbs can make a real difference in people's health. And of course what's required is a little personal activity, because you actually need to make the infusions yourself. You can't just take a tincture, or go out and buy the already-made thing - you have to buy

the dried herb and make it yourself. And so, going along with what I know that you do, is that we know that our own health doesn't come from somebody else or from some substance - it comes from us.

John: Right.

Susun: Somebody called up, and she was apprenticing with one of my apprentices, and she said she had this great idea, that she was going to make tea bags of the nourishing infusion herbs because she had friends who kind of maybe would do it but they didn't want to touch the herb.

John: They didn't want to get messy, or get their sink all full of...

Susun: Exactly. And I was not kind to her. I said, "No, no, no. Don't do this." We want people to have to touch it. Right. And she said, "Oh, well, but if they didn't have to, they'd do it." And I said, "And maybe scientifically we could say they were getting the same nourishment, but nourishment is not just about things that we can measure. It's not just about vitamins and minerals."

John: No.

Susun: So the third good idea - lest I spend all my time talking about nourishing herbal infusions, which I can easily do - is an idea that I use in my book, especially in "Breast Cancer? Breast Health: The Wise Woman Way" and in "New Menopausal Years the Wise Woman Way: Alternative Approaches for Woman 30-90", so that when there's a problem, that problem in those books is approached through the six steps of healing, which are, first of all, do nothing. Step zero, do nothing, which is to be distinguished from, don't do anything.

John: Right.

Susun: Right. Don't do anything is to be in denial. Do nothing is to be present and to really understand that something is going on but to take more time. And then of course the next step is to collect information,

and to collect that information both from what I call "interior" and "exterior sources." Or what some people would call "intuitive" as well as "rational sources." Right. I don't tend to draw the line between rational and intuitive in that way, but I understand that some people do and it's an easier way for them to think of it. And then we want to engage the energy.

John: Right.

Susun: All the wonderful, different, energetic ways. Of course, you know one of the energetic ways that we're talking about here is people getting their hands on the herb.

John: Yeah.

Susun: Not that they necessarily have to go out and harvest it, but that they should squeeze it when they're straining their infusion. And then too, nourish and tonify and to be very clear about what it is that nourishes us. In that Gorchev way, I'm sure you've read some Gorchev, and what a horrible misogynist he was. He really didn't like women at all, but he had some good ideas nonetheless, and one of them was his idea that we are nourished by all of our senses.

John: Yeah.

Susun: Yeah that everything we've taken in is a vibration.

John: Yeah.

Susun: And that our cells are vibrating and therefore much is food that nourishes us. And I often say this when I'm outside teaching. I say, "Look at the nourishment that you're taking in." While we're doing this it's very different than if we were in a classroom. All right, so to really recognize all of those different aspects of nourishment and to clearly distinguish between tonification and stimulus.

John: Right.

Susun: and I find that that's something that is not very clearly distinguished in most of our...

John: And nursing and tonification can be some pretty tricky for some people to understand.

Susun: Well, here's something...

John: The difference, that is.

Susun: that I talk about when I'm teaching about this. I ask the people in my class to give the person next to them a hug. And then there's a small pause while hugging is going on. And then I have them sit down and I ask them if they got something from the hug. And of course everybody says, "Well yes I got something from the hug." And then I ask them if it can be taken away from them. And no one has ever said, "Oh yes it can be taken away." And generally people say, "No. What do you mean? It's my hug and it can't be taken away from me." And I said, "Right. That's nourishment."

When you get it, you got it and it can't be taken away from you after that. I said, "Now if you never got another hug in the rest of your life, would this hug still count?" Well yes it would. Wouldn't it? So hugs don't have to be repeated. Nourishment doesn't have to be repeated in order to be effective. Of course if it is repeated, it is more effective. But nourishment itself carries what it carries and we get it from any one single instance of it.

Now suppose that you decided tomorrow morning to go out, and having never run before, to run 10 miles. Would that improve your cardiovascular fitness?

John: Not at all. I'd probably drop out dead.

Susun: Drop out dead, me too. Right? Suppose instead that you ran a quarter of a mile twice a week for the next 20 weeks.

John: Then I'd get in shape.

Susun: That's only 10 miles.

John: Right, but hey but I was doing it every day.

Susun: You were repeating it.

John: Repeating it, right.

Susun: Also with tonification is that it must be repeated.

John: And my run could be a nourishing experience too which the 10-mile thing wouldn't have been. The little short run I'm taking it easy. I'm looking at the birds and smelling the fresh air.

Susun: Exactly, exactly. And so this leads us interestingly enough to one of those herbal myths that just stays around and stays around, and that is the myth of the broken dose. It's a myth of homeostasis. And I'm sure you have heard this from people say, "Oh well. You have to stop taking this or any herb. You have to stop taking the herb after a while because it doesn't have any effect any more."

John: Yeah, what about that? And I've heard...

Susun: You've heard that right?

John: Yeah definitely.

Susun: Well that would be like saying, "Well you have to stop drinking coffee after a month or it won't have any effect." Obviously the coffee is still having effect. People drink it every single day. So what we're talking about here is actually what I call "buried with them." When we're working with tonifying herbs like burdock root or dandelion root, like sassafras leaves or passionflower leaves, or ginseng root, we want to break the dose. We don't want to take a tonic herb in the same way we would take a nourishing herb. We want there to be a rhythm. That's what tonification is about. Right?

John: That's exactly it.

Susun: It's rhythm. And so we want to take the herb in a rhythmical way. Now that rhythm can be every day, and if so it should be at the same time every day

to keep it rhythmical. And I'm reminded of the old-timers around the Catskills who taught me about ginseng and what they said was that you chew a little piece of ginseng every day for six weeks in the fall, and then you don't do it at all until the next year.

John: Wow!

Susun: Now that's a rhythm too isn't it?

John: Right. It is. It is. Even year-to-year that's a rhythm.

Susun: Exactly! So this is something that they were planning on doing, and most of them have done, every single year of their lives. And so it was a yearly, a long yearly rhythm that they were engaging in. So it's not that we want to stop taking herbs because they don't work. Of course when we think of it, that is patently absurd. But if we're using tonifying herbs, then we want to pay attention to the rhythm. And whether that's take it five days a week and then not for two days, or is it take it three weeks out of the month and then not for a month, or six weeks out of the year and then not for the rest of the year.

John: And then I need to know then, OK, so when I'm taking my daily herbal infusion and for me it's usually the same, but you know what seasonally sometimes I feel like different things. In the winter I like to put a little more kelp in it or things like that. You know I just feel like that for some reason. I just kind of trust my intuition in it.

Susun: So let me say that I am very pointed about using one herb in your infusion.

John: Ha. Thank you.

Susun: One, just one.

John: Yeah. Just one.

Susun: Just one. And you will rotate that so today I'm drinking linden. Yesterday I drank oat straw. The day before that I had nettle. The day before that I

had red clover. The day before that I had comfrey leaf.

John: I'm getting it now. All right, OK, so...

Susun: You do not mix them together.

John: Do not mix them together.

Susun: And you don't mix them together for the same reason that you don't usually go to bed with six people at once.

John: OK.

Susun: Not that it's not fun, but it's not...

John: But every day?

Susun: It's just not intimate, right?

John: Right.

Susun: And we're talking about intimacy.

John: Wow! So then the, what's tonifying and this nourishing experience then, is the rhythm of the ritual of the infusion.

Susun: I call them nourishing herbal infusions.

John: OK. You just keep the word "tonifying" out of there.

Susun: Exactly.

John: OK.

Susun: Exactly and I have heard herbal speakers say something like, "This is a wonderful tonifying herb which nourishes and stimulates." And I think, "Are we trying to make any sense here? Or are we just throwing words around?"

John: Well, someone may feel a sense of stimulation if they start drinking nuttall after eating a really bad diet, they may feel like, "woah!" [laughs]

Susun: No, they will not. Stimulation means to be pushed beyond the place you can sustain.

John: Right, right.

Susun: Nourishment increases the form, the organ, the organism. Tonification increases the functioning of the form, the organ, or the organism. But stimulus pushes the organ or the organism to function at a faster level than it can sustain. So stimulus always erodes health.

John: Right.

Susun: So, that does not mean I will never stimulate. If my choice is stimulate and erode somebody's health or they die, I will stimulate.

John: Mmm-hmm. Mmm-hmm.

Susun: Or sedate, all right? I am not against relieving pain. But what we have to understand is that when we are stimulating, when we are sedating, we cannot be building health.

John: That's right, that's right, and I'd like everyone to know too that when you see, like on my web site, about, like treating a cold naturally, I'm talking about nourishment there in a different way once you have a cold and maybe you need a little extra relief and maybe need to use herbs in different ways. But the object here is to stay healthy so you don't really need those phases.

Susun: Exactly! We are talking about the steps of healing here, right?

John: Exactly.

Susun: So nourish and tonify is a step, and then the next step after that is stimulate-sedate.

John: Mmm-hmm.

Susun: And the next step after that is use drugs.

John: Mmm-hmm.

Susun: And the next step after that is break and enter.

John: Break and enter, which can be surgery or a number of other things.

Susun: Any number of other things. Now, I also talk about these not just as the six steps of healing but also as the seven medicines.

John: Mmm-hmm.

Susun: So it's: serenity medicine, story medicine, energy medicine, lifestyle medicine, herbal medicine or alternative medicine, pharmaceutical medicine, and high-tech medicine.

John: I like this. Is this going to be, or in a book?

Susun: Yes, yes it is. I'm working on it right now. And so, people seem to resonate a little more with the medicines than they do with the steps. There's something much more graspable about serenity medicine than about do nothing. And one of the important points for me is that we see that whether it's six steps or seven medicines, that it's basically broken up into two groups. And that is that the first four, serenity medicine, story medicine, energy medicine, and lifestyle medicine, always promote health.

John: Mmm-hmm.

Susun: So the more we do those things, the healthier we are going to be.

John: Oh, I think that book is going to make a big impact.

Susun: The last three steps, which is herbal medicine or alternative medicine, pharmaceutical medicine, and high-tech medicine, although they are excellent for saving lives, don't build health.

John: No, they don't.

Susun: And this, again, is where I see many people kind of using herbs as replacement drugs, and therefore not really getting as much as they can from herb, from understanding that herbs can provide this high-level nourishment for us with virtually no calories.

John: Somebody actually asked what your thought was on herbal capsules, and when I'm teaching about nettle I like to teach all day on one plant when I'm teaching with the wilderness awareness residential program...

Susun: Oh, that's beautiful.

John: and we just focus on connecting with plants. I make this beautiful infusion and we pass it around and then I make this...

Susun: So you make an infusion with dried nettle?

John: With dried nettle because I want to get a lot of those cell walls broken up and...

Susun: Exactly.

John: and then we make a soup and we collect it...

Susun: Mmm.

John: and at the end I say, "Now you know about nettle. What if somebody tells you, 'Nettle is healthy for you, ' " and then I hold up the little bottle of capsules, and then I take the little capsule and break it open and I go poof.

Susun: [laughs] Right, then blow it away, literally.

John: "Now let's compare what you did today with this capsule."

Susun: Right. Oh, that's beautiful, John. I love the way you teach. It's really, really magnificent. (Laughs) OK, what I can observe is that if you want to risk the worst adverse reaction possible to the herb, then you will take it by powdering it and putting it in a capsule. If you want to totally make yourself

dependent on someone else's expertise, then you will grind up an herb and put it in a capsule. Let me give you just a few case-in-points so you really see where I'm coming from here. There's an herb that I know that you know about, it's been used in China for at least 3,000 years, and it's called Ma Huang. Now, do the Chinese fear that Ma Huang will kill people?

John: Not at all.

Susun: Not at all. As a matter of fact, I personally have not come upon ANY warnings about Ma Huang and the possibility of any deaths. The very similar plant, a different species, grows in Utah, and there it's called Mormon Tea. And if we think by that name that the Mormons drank it as tea, we are right, aren't we?

John: Mmm-hmm.

Susun: They did. How many Mormons died from drinking Mormon Tea?

John: [laughs] I don't know?

Susun: None. None that we can find. So, people are going, "So, all right, Ephedra. Ephedra? What do you mean Ephedra? Yes, this plant is Ephedra.

John: Right.

Susun: And we have had DOZENS of people die from taking Ephedra in capsules.

John: Right, right. And also it's often mixed with all kinds of stuff.

Susun: But how do you know, if it's powdered and in a capsule? You don't. It's very hard to know. And even if it's printed on the bottle, it can be printed in a way that's very hard to read or to understand that you're getting something else. Kava Kava is a plant from the South Pacific. It's used there as a social lubricant. You know, on small islands you better get along or else, so every day this Kava Kava ceremony. Everybody feels really good, everybody drinks Kava

Kava: pregnant women, lactating women, little kids, old grandmothers, old grandfathers. Everybody drinks the Kava Kava.

John: I've been to Fiji, I've seen it. Yeah.

Susun: Right? Are they worried that somebody's going to die?

John: Not at all.

Susun: Are they worried they're going to go into liver failure?

John: (Laughs) No.

Susun: No.

John: They're not taking capsules.

Susun: In Germany where people say "Oh, Germany, they have laws and they're so strict," in Germany some herbal manufacturer put Kava leaf, a known liver destroyer, in capsules and gave it to people thinking it was the same as Kava root. Thirty people went into liver failure.

John: (Sighs) So that's the answer to your question, out there.

Susun: So, what I teach my students is NEVER take an herb in a capsule, right? Now of course, as we all know, never and forever are words that beg to be disagreed with. A woman wrote me and told me that the only way she could get ginger down to quell her morning sickness was in capsules and so that's what she did. And I certainly understand that. But what we're saying in general, both you and I, is if you want to really spend the maximum amount of money for the least amount of effect and the most amount of risk. Herbs and capsules is the way to go. Right. If what you want is to get the most effect for your money, then stay away from herbs and capsules. If what you want is to be safe, then stay away from herbs and capsules.

John: Right, right.

Susun: Thus sayeth Susun Weed.

John: That's exactly how I was trained too because I was trained by people who trained with you.

Susun: And I just know that my ancestors were not gulping down double o caps.

John: No they weren't. They weren't at all. They were slow cooking.

Susun: Right.

John: They were slow cooking and they were eating foods in season from where they live and they had those deep connections with the plants of where they lived. And since we're on that, and since I just said that, being that it's wintertime, coming into winter now. When we talk about slow food cooking and eating from your ecosystem and all that, what do you like to do? What's your favorite way of? Because I know you speak a lot about those things as well. Which I know to a lot of people it won't seem like herbal medicine, but to me it is. People ask me, "What tincture do you take for this and this?" I've got a tincture, one or two that we use throughout the year at some point if we need it for this or that. But I'm mostly drinking infusions and cooking with my herbs so.

Susun: Really bringing them into our lives you know,

John: Yeah.

Susun: in a real direct, nourishing way. That's definitely the Wise Woman Tradition.

John: The wintertime, what do you recommend for people?

Susun: So well I know that there are people from all over, right. And somebody once said to me, "Well if you're going to eat seasonally, then you can't eat anything in the winter." And I said, "Now excuse me. First of all our ancestors knew how to store food."

John: Yeah.

Susun: Right. It's not like as soon as it came on they just starved for the rest of the year. They actually fermented things. So I live in the Catskill Mountains in New York State. One of the things that I do as the cold weather comes on is I get in touch with my friends who live about an hours drive south of me in the apple growing area of the Hudson River Valley. And I go down and I buy a ton of apples, which is 2000 pounds of apples.

John: Wow!

Susun: And I bring those apples back up to my place and over the next several months I make apple cider, which we have a press for, and we make applesauce. And we make apple butter. And we give apples to the goats and we give apples to the rabbits. And sometimes we, like this year because it's so warm, the apples are really spoiling. They just don't keep well at 60 degrees.

John: No.

Susun: The temperature out there should be in the 30s now, which is great for the apples. Right, they don't even mind it being a little cool. But if we have a lot of cider, and we're going to have a lot of cider this year, we'll boil some of that cider down and make cider jelly and apple syrup.

John: What about drying them? Drying them too? Do you dry them too?

Susun: We generally find that I don't use dried apples. I have dried them. I have some very nice dried apples that I dried about 15 years ago.

John: And they're still on the shelf?

Susun: And they're still on the shelf, yep.

John: That'll tell you something.

Susun: Right. Right there with my backpack, which I have not had on in many, many, many, many, many years. Or basically haven't had on since I started

keeping goats, which means I can't go away overnight unless somebody's taking care of the goats.

John: Yeah that's true. The goats are a lot of, at Ravencroft I remember there's always somebody having to be there if one ran away.

Susun: Exactly. Somebody has to do that. And we belong to a CSA, which is Community Supported Agriculture. And so throughout the summer as we've gotten our CSA shares and what we've brought in from the garden, many of the meals that we've had, we might cook a double share of greens and then freeze those for the wintertime.

John: Ah!

Susun: So tonight for dinner I had winter squash, which we baked, and we'll make a casserole and a pie from leftovers because we baked a lot of squash. It's very hot so it's hard to keep the squash in this heat too. So we're just cooking it up.

We had barbecued goat. Our buck did his job and we didn't want him to get the young goats this year pregnant, so we converted him into food. And I barbecued the bonier parts of him to get all of the minerals of the bones, of course. Because I'm a Texan, so when I say barbecue I mean meat that's been slow cooked and we usually cook our barbecue for 12 to 14 hours in a very acidic tomato-based sauce.

John: And you said you added the dregs from your homemade wine into your sauce.

Susun: That's exactly right. When we were talking the other day we were talking how I made homemade wine...

John: Yeah.

Susun: and I said oh I just put it right in the bottle. I don't do a secondary ferment in a carboy. I do it right in the bottle and airlock with a balloon and then I just pour carefully. And the last little bit, which is the

dregs, which is real cloudy, has a yeasty taste. I just hold back and put that in my barbecue. As a matter of fact, since I know I'll be making barbecue at least once or twice a year, I keep all manner of weird things like the last little bit out of the jam jar. I save back for the barbecue, or oh somebody bought a thing of juice and it fermented. Oh don't throw it out. Here, I'll just put it in the back of the refrigerator loosely lidded. Right? Fermented fruit juice great in barbecue sauce.

John: You collect all these things in a container or leave them all in separate containers.

Susun: I keep them all in separate containers. Goodness only knows what kind of science fair project I could put together. Oh dear, kitchen bombs. Oh my gosh.

John: Oh, we...

Susun: Let me tell you a wonderful story that a woman shared with me. And I asked her if I could share it and she said, "Well that's why I wrote it out for you, because I really wanted you to share it." It's just such an interesting story. At the age of 57 this woman had a bone scan at her doctor's office, and her doctor was incredibly alarmed and said, "Oh my goodness! You have osteoporosis. You have to start taking drugs immediately. We really have to deal with this." And she said, "No. I don't want to take any drugs. And I feel just fine and I'm not going to do anything about my osteoporosis."

And needless to say, this caregiver was very distressed and continued to do bone scans. He continued to tell her year after year, "Your bones are really in bad shape. You've got to do something about this." And three years later when she was 60, her daughter graduated from a liveout apprenticeship program with me. And she said to her, she said "You know I am feeling so tired and I just really need something for energy. Now you've learned all this stuff about herbs. What kind of herbs can I take to give me more energy?"

Well if her daughter had had like a pharmaceutical apprenticeship, then she could have suggested some drugs to give her energy. We know they're both legal and illegal drugs that give you energy. Or if she'd had a heroic herbal training, she might have suggested stimulants like guarana or cayenne or ginger, things like that for energy. But because she was trained in the Wise Woman Tradition, she said to her mother, "Stinging nettle infusion."

Stinging nettle is the life-force energy of the planet. And when you drink it, you will have more energy than you ever thought possible. And she explained to her mom that she needed to buy dried nettle, put an ounce by weight in a jar, cover that with boiling water and let it steep for at least four hours or overnight. Strain it out, squeezing the herb - there's that 'messy' we were talking about. Squeeze that herb to get the last of the 'good' out of it and then drink that nettle infusion over the course of a day or a day-and-a-half. Keep it refrigerated - very high protein - and it will 'go off' if it's not refrigerated, especially if it's warm. So, June's mother started drinking nettle infusion and, within months, she called her daughter and said, "My Gosh! I have more energy than I've had since I was a young woman! It's amazing - I feel so good, not like a burst of energy and then I'm let down; it's like this sustained energy and it's there whenever I call on it."

John: Yeah it's kind of like my sister-in-law - she wanted to get pregnant and she couldn't get pregnant - and I told her about the nettle infusion and everything and she basically said, "Oh I don't believe it that kind of stuff." And then I said...And then she said that as she was making soup and I said, "Well, do you believe in soup? Do you believe in broth?"

[Susun laughs]

John: "What are you, getting nourished from that kale." This is the plant that has very high and lots of things.

[Susun murmurs assent]

John: So you're just making an extremely powerful broth...

Susun: Right.

John: ...when you are making an infusion.

Susun: Right. So she said to June, "I just feel so good drinking this nettle infusion. What other kinds of herbs did you learn about?" And June said, "Well! There's red clover, and that's a really wonderful one. It's everything you could hope soy would be with none of soy's very big down-side." She said, "And there's comfrey leaf," which is just... she often teased that comfrey only improves the bones, the tendons, the ligaments, the skin, the digestive system, the respiratory system, and the nervous system, and the brain. Other than that, it has no action.

[laughs]

And so her mother tried some of the other nourishing herbal infusions and she decided that, in her letters to me, what she was going to do was, on Monday, she was going to brew a quart of nettle and a quart of red clover.

John: Mmm.

Susun: And then, over Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, she would drink them. And Thursday night, or Friday, she brewed a quart of nettle and a quart of oatstraw.

John: Wow.

Susun: And then over the next three or four days, she drank those two quarts. So, two years later, she was back at her doctor's - she's 62-years-old now - and her doctor says to her, "Well, I'm glad to see that you finally started exercising!"

She said, "What do you mean? I haven't started

exercising." He said, "Well, you're taking calcium supplements?" She said, "No, I'm not taking any calcium supplements." He said, "So you're taking drugs..." She said, "What are you telling me?" He said, "Well, your bone mass is improving!"

John: Wow!

Susun: And she said, "Well, I'm not doing any of that." And she said, now I'm writing you now, she said, "I'm now 65-years-old. I've just come back from the doctor. I've now been drinking four quarts of nourishing herbal infusions a week for five years and my doctor says that I not only don't have osteoporosis, I have the bone mass of a 40-year-old woman."

John: Hey...Wow!

Susun: She says, "And I want you to remember that I was drinking these because I wanted the energy. I didn't even know they would have any effect on my bones."

John: Now everyone who bought the herbal medicine-making kit, remember that you have that pack of nettle in there, and the very first chapter in the Continuation Course using Healing Wise and tells all about this. So if you haven't gotten to that part yet, you can make an herbal infusion with nettle tonight.

Susun: Yes! To have one tomorrow!

John: Exactly. And we're going to be giving the very last kit that we have in stock away tonight - I forgot to mention that, so hold on until the end of the call.

Susun: Oh, that's exciting!

John: That is, isn't it?

Susun: [murmurs agreement]

John: You know that when Kimberly was pregnant and they took a blood to match her blood to an

osteopath - the midwife took a blood test - and they said, "You're very low in iron and you need to take this." And there's this big bottle of something and we're like, "No, no, it's OK, we're going to try this." And it happened to be nettle season and we just had nettle in every way possible. You know, we picked it down the street, we brought it in - and we were living in an RV at the time, so we couldn't really dry much; we had no room where we lived.

Susun: Right, right.

John: So we were making soup and making soup and making soup and making lasagna and everything you can think of that you could do with nettle. I think that was my ally at Ravenscroft that year. And then the next blood test came in and they were like, "Wow! Well, you must have been taking your supplements!"

[laughs]

[Susun laughs]

John: They were like, "Aha!"

Susun: Aha! [laughs]

Susun: You know Michael Moore, the herbalist, Michael Moore, really wonderful herbalist, told us in a recent class that I took with him, that the charge, the minerals in the nettle, is such that it is magnetized into the blood and that it doesn't have to be digested, that the minerals are simply taken up when they are coming from the nettle.

John: Wow.

Susun: Isn't that amazing? Even more amazing, when you understand that this is a man who started his workshop by looking at all of us - not just me, but all of us - and saying, "Let's be clear here: if a plant can't kill you, it's not a medicine."

John: Hmm.

Susun: Now that is the scientific approach!

John: Mmm-hmm.

Susun: There's nothing wrong with that approach, but we need to understand it if we don't think that way. In other words, if we're thinking, "Oh, herbs are benign" and someone comes up to us and says, "Oh, no, herbs can kill." Right, then we have to understand that is true; there are herbs that can kill.

John: And I'd like you to speak to as we're getting near an end here, because that's how I really feel, everyone. That if we really look at our diets and we look at ways that herbs can nourish us that, and there are so many amazing ways that herbs relationship one at a time that you can get to know by ally that will take you years to develop wonderful friendships with. And Susun mentioned comfrey, and oatstraw, and nettle and, of course, there's dandelion, burdock... all the ones in healing wines and more that, that's enough. There's so much there and then you feel safe because you have a relationship with the plants and you know them and you're friends with them and you're using them in your diet day-to-day and they are just not these little bottles of something in your medicine cabinet waiting for you to get sick and they are going to wait and wait and wait because you aren't really going to get that sick.

[Susun laughs]

Susun: Is that a threat? Are you threatening them with being well?

John: (laughing) I'm sorry; you're going to get well, folks. But, anyway, it's all about...

Susun: Be well! You know, John, I was at this conference and this person was standing and talking to me - I was actually talking to an M.D. and she came and didn't realize I was talking to somebody else - complaining bitterly about how M.D.s didn't know nothing about health. And so this M.D. I was talking to looked at her and said, "You know what? You're absolutely right. It's true. I'm an M.D. and I know nothing about health. And I haven't studied

health and I wasn't taught about health. I'm a disease expert and if you want to know about disease, you come to me because I can tell you about disease." "Susun," she said, "now Susun, is a health expert." And I said, "You're right. And if you got some big major disease I'll probably catch it, but the ones that happen to one out of ten thousand folks, I'm not going to catch it. You want to know about disease, you better go to her."

John: And wouldn't it be the goal here of everyone here tonight, too, for us all to become our own health expert?

Susun: So long as we understand that that means being expert about ourselves and that we don't have to be expert about everything there is to know about health because nobody can do that!

John: No way, that's too intimidating.

Susun: That is too intimidating! Matter-of-fact, they even say to be an herbalist will usually take about seven lifetimes. So be patient with yourself.

[John laughs]

John: I like that!

Susun: There's a lot to learn and a lot to unlearn, too, eh?

John: And you know, since we are kind of getting to the end here we will kind of switch gears a little bit and lets everyone hang on there because I have one big announcement to make and I have got their kit to give away. So, please hang in there with us. I would like you to tell me about. You heard about the one correspondence course, now that's not ABC's one is it?

Susun: Its not. The one that we were talking about was the Green Allies course.

John: Now what's the ABC's one?

Susun: The ABC's course is my response to people complaining about the Green Allies course.

John: Hum.

Susun: Right, see as far as I am concerned learning herbal medicine is about being intimate with the plant and you start with one. When you learn all the variables with that one, then you can apply it to anything else. But, I understand that we live in a culture where people want a lot. They want to learn about a lot of things even though if we learn about a lot of things we tend to learn in a more shallow way. In a less intimate way so the ABCs of Herbalism course is that. It's a lot of herbs and so its much less deep and so to kind of ash wage my conscience for putting out that kind of information I also include several projects to do with a green ally and encourage the students who are doing the ABC class to develop and work with a green ally so that they have that in depth experience even while they are exploring fifty-two herbs and about twenty different health problems and my favorite ways to approach them.

John: And of course you can find out about those courses after you get off the call at susunweed.com and of course that's s-u-s-u-n weed.com.

Susun: And of course brilliant Justine bought those spellings of it.

John: Oh, and Justine by the way I just have to tell everyone here is Susun's lovely daughter who is the web mistress of all the amazing researching.

Susun: [laughing] Is she ever. What a web she has spun there for us. Thank you.

John: If anyone has not been to it please go as well to the forum because I spend a lot of time there from time to time I go there and contribute and get questions answered. A lot of times if I need a question answered I go to the forum at susunweed.com and there are thousands of users and there are thousands of articles. It's an amazing resource. Tons of Susun's articles and there is even

little free mini-courses you could navigate all around through various sites.

Susun: Yeah, it's all free as a matter of fact.

John: It's all free?

Susun: There is nothing at all on the website that you have to pay for.

John: Wow, and you can also find out about it. You can go over to ashtreepublishing.com, Susun's publishing company, and I love that you did that because I know from experience that hey, if you put your publishing in the hands of somebody else it could go out of print. Make sure that her books stay in print and she also brought back some of the, brought in some of Juliet's things.

Susun: Yes, and we are working on a few more of those too.

John: Great, and if anyone wants to branch out and have a book with a lot of herbs in it and one of my personal favorites that is right always in reach of me is Gail Edwards's *Opening Our Wild Hearts to the Healing Herbs*.

Susun: Isn't that a beautiful book?

John: It is yeah.

Susun: Oh she just did such a nice job with that.

John: Fantastic. At some point I am going to be weaving this into something that I put together.
[laughing]

Susun: Good, Good.

John: [laughing] Because that was also one of my absolutely favorites. And you said, "When can I expect a new book?" I am waiting.

Susun: Well, yes. Make it snow. What can I say? Make it snow so I can stop doing things outside because as long as the weather is nice I just want to

be in the garden and I don't want to sit at the computer and work. So that's your real problem gang. Susun is having too good a time here.

John: So everyone has to stop driving.

Susun: Everyone has to stop driving and cause global warming so that Susun can sit by the computer.
[laughing]

John: Oh. [laughing]

Susun: Oh goodness gracious. What a delight it has been talking with you tonight. Did you say that you were giving something away tonight?

John: I am, I am and before I do that. Well let me do that and then I will say good-bye to you. After we give something away.

Susun: OK good.

John: Well first of all I don't want to let go so here.

Susun: I hear you.

John: So, the big announcement folks is that before I give the kit away is that I sent an email out today and you probably got it saying, "Hey you now Wildcraft is going on sale at midnight tonight." And now I feel so good about that because they are actually coming to the house tomorrow. They are going to be here. We are really excited about that. We got these free gifts that we are giving away. One of them is really limited. There is like fifty or one-hundred of them or so left and it is, I don't know if you have seen it Susun but, Cori Young did this chart on the vitamins and mineral sources that are in herbs and foods. It's really colorful, beautiful.

Susun: I have not seen it. No. Wow.

John: It's really cool. It's a really cool chart and I am sure Justine has it or something because I know Cori used to do a lot on your website.

Susun: Huh.

John: She is from New Zealand, but its really cool and she is a wise woman herbalist and I sell a couple of her charts and she has this really cool one that if you want to know you can look at vitamins and minerals and it has what they do in our bodies, and then it has food sources and herbal sources. I am giving that away for free. I sell it now for \$10 on the site, but you are going to get it for free tonight. But, I am giving you guys a head start because if you go online and order while Wildcraft after this call before you know before anyone else knows that you can buy it now. You can get on and get that chart for free. People are also going to get written transcripts of this teleconference and other ones and some other cool things. So anyway, that's on sale now so you can go right after you are off this call so you are going to check that out and you are also going to susunweed.com.

Susun: You did a lot of homework.

John: Yeah, I know. You've got some web work to do. The herbal medicine making kit now my handwriting is so horrible I wrote it down here. It's Linda Zumig I think and I think that's the last name here. The first six digits of your phone number 98562 can apply to that and we will get that kit to you.

Susun: Linda is the winner?

John: Yeah, that's Linda. Linda is the winner.

Susun: Linda is the winner. All right Linda.

John: Yeah.

Susun: Yeah.

John: You know everyone out there that it takes somebody with a special gift to shake us out. Shake us up and open our eyes to new ways of thinking and looking at things and I know I was raised with a certain paradigm that if it is broken you fix it. If something is wrong here, if something is not going right not to look for this gift in illness and now how I can grow, heal and learn from experiences and not

about the nourishment; but I have come to that and Susun has that gift. I thank you so much for inspiring us, educating us. Inspiring teachers like mine and Kimberly's mentors at Ravencroft: Sally King and Eagle Song at ravencroftgarden.com in the Seattle area have helped so many people. So your roots really spread deep and wide.

Susun: Thank you so much and thank you John for carrying it on because herbal medicine is people's medicine and if people like you reminding us that we all feel as you so beautifully put it " Just safer here on the planet."

John: Yes, and it's for all of us. We are all, the plants and the herbs are here for us all to connect with.

Susun: That's right.

John: So once again, I hope you will go and get your Wildcraft tonight and Susun you know before we hand up this call I don't want to put you on the spot but you know would you bring us out with a song?

Susun: [laughing] Well lets hear the whole Linden song. I smell fairies at my feet. I am sitting under a Linden tree. Bees buzz and birds tweet. A Linden blossom sure smells sweet. Linden, Linden heal my heart, you can bring me a brand new start. So we start with Linden and we end with Linden and how beautiful she is.

John: And everyone you have a peaceful and wonderful holiday and New Year.

Susun: Green blessings.

John: Goodnight.



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