

The Tale of "Straddle the Turtle"

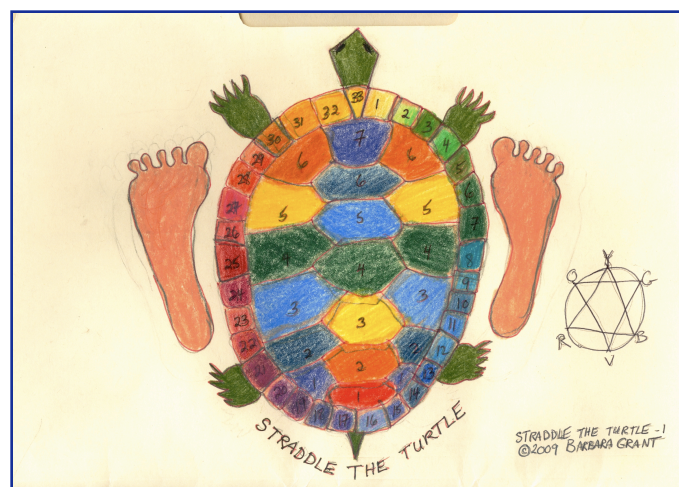
One warm, Spring day I was running late for my yoga class in town. To make up time, I decided to drive a little faster than usual along a stretch of road that was clear of pedestrians and traffic. On the winding road leading out of the Kettle Moraine forest, I noticed a turtle slowly moving across the road in the left lane. I had no problem driving past her. But further along, where I was able to pick up more speed, I saw another turtle crossing from the right side of the road. I made a calculated decision to straddle her between the wheels of my Jeep. After I passed over her and for the rest of my ride into town, I kept thinking, "I straddled the turtle... I straddled the turtle... **I straddled that turtle!**" I made it to my class in time, but I had trouble focusing as I thought of the harm I could have caused that fertile turtle. I also admitted a truth to myself - I have a chronic habit of trying to do way too much in too little time.

I related this incident to my good friend, Karen, who knows about the symbolism of turtles. She shared that since ancient times the turtle has represented 'being grounded'. It is believed that the turtle unites and balances heaven and earth - it's upper shell being heaven and the body being mother earth. Karen suggested that I might consider this a 'message' - to think about going into my shell, do what I need to do, come out when I'm ready, and pay attention to a more natural and slower rhythm - an unhurried one. Pondering her counsel caused me to focus anew on the straddling of that turtle.

When I mentioned this to my husband, Bob, he immediately conjured up a vision of me sitting atop the turtle, holding reins (like straddling a horse). The image of riding a slow moving turtle should remind me to slow down, he thought. So true!

Instead of speeding past the moments, hours, and days of my life, I need to commit to slowing down. In other words, to "straddle the turtle."

Because I really took this incident to heart, I decided to illustrate this message. After researching the structure of turtles, I altered the typical scute design (the bony plates on the turtle's shell). I drew 7 scutes along the turtle's spine to represent the 7 chakras using their assigned colors. The marginal scutes reflect the sectors of the Color Wheel.



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Original sketch on manila folder

Note: In the coming year, as this concept develops further, I will post it on www.StraddleTheTurtle.com. Your feedback is most welcome. ~ ~ ~ Barbara Grant