



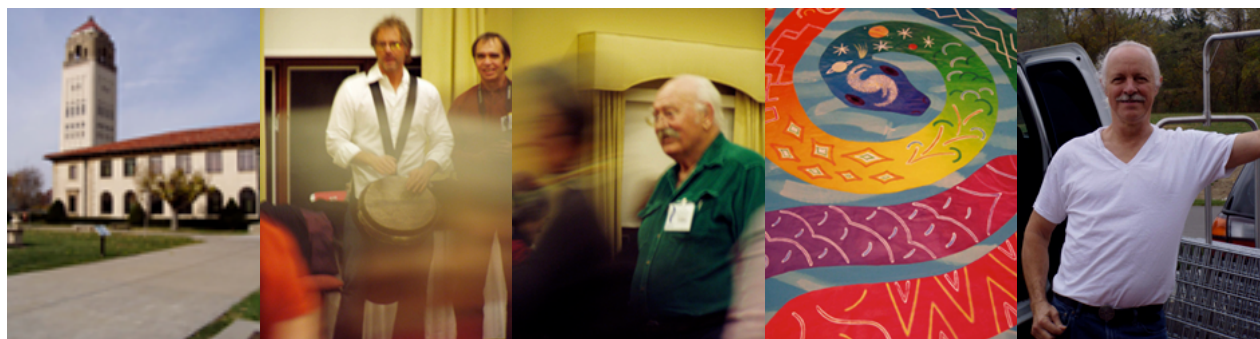
Labyrinth Network Northwest News

Special Report:

The Labyrinth Society Annual Gathering 2007

Unity Village, Leesburg, MO, November 8-11

By DC Donohue



From November 8th through the 11th, 2007, I had the pleasure and privilege of attending **The Labyrinth Society's 9th Annual Gathering** in Unity Village near Kansas City, MO. My trip was funded by a generous grant from **Labyrinth Network Northwest** and made possible by two significant scholarships from The Labyrinth Society itself. I have to tell you: *I had a remarkable time and I heartily recommend that if you are ever in a position to attend one of these Gatherings, you should jump at the chance.*

The theme for the 2008 meeting was "A Colorful Journey of Many Paths" and the focus was on honoring and celebrating "the colorful experiences, stories and wisdom that each individual weaves into the path of the collective tapestry of life"...all of which is a poetic way of saying that this was a get-together of 125 people with similar spirits and interests holding the common goal of thoroughly enjoying one another's company for a good long weekend in a beautiful location. What follows is an overview of the four labyrinth-wonder-packed days at Unity Village.

Thursday

Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony, orchestrated by Toby Evans, was a luscious ritual of rainbow chakra colors, dancing women with candles, singing bowl and song. Toby is a powerful speaker and ritualist and she managed to bring one hundred and twenty-five people firmly into the present moment, all ready to dive into the rich, deep weekend ahead.

Keynote Speaker

After the Opening Ritual, drummer extraordinaire Toby Christensen offered the Gathering's keynote address, "The Heartbeat of the Labyrinth." Toby is a provocative wildman motivational speaker who admitted to wondering what the heck people would want to 'walk around in circles' for when he first

encountered the labyrinth a few years ago. Toby's work is with drumming and healing the spirit. (We in the Northwest are very fortunate that he will be involved in the upcoming **Robert Ferré Facilitator Training** in April at Legacy Meridian Park Hospital in Tualatin. Do not miss this opportunity!) Toby managed to pick up the celebratory gauntlet from the Opening Ceremony and to mesmerize and delight the crowd with a rhythmic feast of sound that had everyone smiling and nodding and many people dancing in the aisles.

Appleton Dance

Some twenty years ago, visited by chance and good luck on an outdoor classical labyrinth, Jon Appleton discovered that two people simultaneously walking a labyrinth, one on the way in and the other on the way out, could somewhat magically walk together for a good part of the journey and that this made a kind of dancing promenade. Jon told us about the origin and technique of this Appleton Dance and most of the crowd joined him in it for a romping, laughing, grounding good time. (If you come to the LNN meeting scheduled for January 31st at Grace Memorial Episcopal Church in Portland, you will have the opportunity to learn and enjoy the Appleton Dance.)

Friday and Saturday

General Talks & Panel Discussions

Friday and Saturday's Workshops were interspersed with general talks and panel discussions by enthusiastic speakers on evocative topics: first, a panel discussed the art of dowsing--that intuitive interpretation of the earth's and its inhabitants' subtle energy fields. Sig Lonegren spoke of dyslexia as a possible openness to spiritual realms and a second panel discussed how we who work with the labyrinth might open doors to Labyrinth experience. Speakers included Robert Ferré, Sig Lonegren, Lauren Artress, Toby Evans, Crow Mitchell and Taffy Lanser. (You may google each of these names to find news and blogs that will keep you busy for hours.)

Workshops

One of the most difficult aspects of the Gathering involved deciding which workshops to attend in each of the weekend's five workshop sessions. In total, there were 25 workshops available, out of which only five could be chosen! This dilemma made me wish cloning were a perfected science so that I would not miss a single thing. In the absence of duplicating myself quickly, my methods for choosing workshops ranged from engaging a sense of responsibility (I had to make reports back home at LNN on some specific aspects of the event), to wild shirking of responsibility to pure chance, which is to say, on two occasions, I tossed a coin. (In one of the coin tosses, I didn't like the way I felt about the answer the coin oracle gave, so I went with my gut feeling and attended the alternative workshop instead! And there was a kind of science involved in that process too--divination enhanced by physiology!)

The workshops I attended include: **Children & The Labyrinth** with Lea Goode-Harris, **Recognizing Intuitive Hits** with Karin Lonegren, **The Classical 7 Circuit as a Problem Solving/Issue Resolution Device** with Sig Lonegren, **Living Labyrinthically** with Kimberly Saward and **Labyrinth Drumming For Stress Relief** with wildman drummer Toby Christensen. Each workshop left me with copious notes and things to consider for years to come. By the end of the weekend, my heart and mind were brimful and my cheeks hurt from having smiled so very much.

Accommodations

For each Labyrinth Gathering, the Labyrinth Society members do their utmost to ensure that food and accommodations will be superlative and in Unity Village they found a phenomenal venue with excellent amenities. We ate as if we were on a cruise ship—salad bar, delicious entrees (including vegetarian choices), desserts, drinks—nothing was wanting. And the rooms, from the cottages to the main hotel, went from clean and comfortable to downright luxurious and all were surrounded by the peaceful beauty of the Unity Village acres. There were a number of temporary labyrinths on the grounds, created by members, as well as an enormous Chartres painted on a parking lot. This last one was where we had our Gathering Photo taken...



Sunday

Sunday morning was a time for packing up and making final connections with people who on Thursday were strangers and who had, over the course of a few short days, become comrades. I have realized in the weeks following the 2007 Gathering that it's not every day that I can walk into a crowd of people with interests and intentions so similar to my own. Spending an entire weekend with a hundred and twenty five of them was a long drink of water from a deep well for me, one that I trust will sustain me until I can make it to another Gathering. (See the Labyrinth Society website about the Atlanta Gathering in November 2008.)

Happily, I don't have to wait for the annual Gatherings of the Labyrinth Society to connect with people of similar spirit. **The Labyrinth Network Northwest** is my local and ever present opportunity to join seasonally with people who see the labyrinth as a metaphor for this crazy, unpredictable thing we call **life** and who consider it a meaningful tool for navigating it.

Pictured Above: Unity Village; Keynote Speaker Toby Christensen; Jon Appleton of Appleton Dance fame; Snake Labyrinth on Canvas by L. Crow Mitchell; Robert Ferré; The 2007 Gathering Circle Photo Day

For more information on the Gathering and its contributors, Google: The Labyrinth Society, Unity Village, and all the names you find in the article above. If you do that, you are guaranteed a long and gratifying journey into the labyrinth.