

BUILDING ASTERION THE LABYRINTH AT CARMANAH LIGHTHOUSE

This story begins with a death. On December 4th 1995 an accident killed my seventeen year old nephew Axel. And with this I realized that life had meaning and so did death. At forty-four I was suddenly trying intently to grasp that meaning.

Almost a year later I heard Lauren Artress on a radio interview expressing ideas that were so close to those I was searching for. And this was the first I had heard of labyrinths. Another year passed and my father died and my grief mounted.

Once again I heard a radio interview on the subject of labyrinths. This time it was April Stanley, a minister at an Anglican church in Vancouver, talking about the new labyrinth there. And finally, at Christmas 1997, I saw a picture of a labyrinth. My sister, Axel's mom, came to visit and brought in an Utne Reader with a story about Grace Cathedral in San Francisco.

My sister and I decided to make a labyrinth on the beach and I hurriedly enlarged the two square inch diagram in the magazine into an eight inch diameter circle. My husband Jerry suggested that we could build it on the front lawn.

So we got a rod and some string and a big plastic pitcher and poured dolomite lime in twelve concentric circles. Then using the diagram skuffed out the turns. The diameter was fifty-one feet and it covered the lawn. It was very crude, very spontaneous and very beautiful. Over the next few days we walked it over and over and poured more lime as the rain washed away the lines.



The Early Days

Over the past thirteen years I have tried it up in many ways. I read about the proper dimensions and expanded the centre from about four feet to nearly thirteen. Many of the paths were 'wowed' as the uneven topography of the lawn had made the original lines bow and sag.

The biggest original mistake was that I hadn't seen that the entrance path wasn't on the centre axis. I changed that and eventually changed the centre axis alignment from true east/ west to slightly north of east and south of west so that it would line up with the light in the tower. So far I have left the north/south alignment true.



Jerry carried many big smooth round stones to make the lunations. At some point we began to add 'treasures'. The biggest being a 111lb red rock in the centre which I call 'Asterix'. The labyrinth I called 'Asterion' which was the name of the minotaur. I found the puzzle of that legend so much like the puzzle of life and death. Why would they call such a monster 'Star'? There are also bones from a grey whale that fit so well into this monster. And many glass balls beachcombed from our Pacific sands, beach glass and sea shells.

Each summer many hikers on the “West Coast Trail” that passed through the station, walk the labyrinth. Some with their packs still on! Many of them are now familiar with labyrinths and have seen and walked them elsewhere. Kids love to run it.

So, fourteen years later, I am still searching for the meaning of Axel's sudden death. The labyrinth has given me a very strong sense of being connected to the spiritual nature of that quest. I love to work on the labyrinth as much as I love to walk it.

April 1st 2010. I Finally finished the lunations. I am convinced that they represent a visual look at pi. As I worked for five days spreading the sand and spacing the big rocks I kept pondering the significance of their numbers. Finally I realized that if you divide 360 degrees by π you would get 114.59 units. Hide the fraction in the entrance and you would 'see' one more way in which pi is present.



Today, between the forest and the sea

More photos can be viewed at the following Flickr site:

http://www.flickr.com/photos/em_girardi/sets/72157623882469252/

About the Author:

Janett Etzkorn is a child of the universe. She was created from the pure love of her wonderful parents, a northern Alberta farmboy and a bright eyed Irish lass from southern Ontario. Janett remains dedicated to her many interests at her home on the West Coast of Vancouver Island. These include: tracking the stars and planets, maintaining and walking our Labyrinth, Sacred Geometry, religious and biblical history, France and her wonderful language and the complex beauty of our natural surroundings.

Author notes and photos by Jerry Etzkorn

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