



Labyrinth Network Northwest News

Special Report

Robert Ferré Returns To Oregon Labyrinth Facilitators' Training #2

by Paulianne Balch-Rancourt



The September 2007 training filled up so fast that people had to be turned away. Labyrinth Network Northwest quickly scheduled a second training for Labyrinth Facilitators that was held at Legacy Meridian Park Hospital on April 26-27, 2008. Forty-seven lucky, dedicated people from three countries gathered to learn from Robert's extensive experience in studying, sharing and building labyrinths (over 1,000 to date). Participants benefited not only from Robert's inspired personal teaching, they also received a 3-ring binder packed with enough information to keep a month-long class busy.

Friday night Robert dazzled an attentive crowd of 60+ people with his lecture on "*Chartres Cathedral: Its Relevance, Yesterday and Today*." He knows this subject very well, having visited the hallowed spot more than fifty times. Beautiful slides and Robert's passionate enthusiasm inspired and excited everyone there. The Marketplace was open too, allowing people to browse its many offerings (see DC's report); others walked colorful personal labyrinths thoughtfully provided in nearby rooms.

Saturday's Opening Ceremony on the hospital's labyrinth was, by turns, both solemn and fun. Toby Christensen played the healing drum. Jan Mahood welcomed us and made introductions, then we danced the blessed circle open. After honoring Mother Earth through the four compass-point directions, we invoked three more: Above, Below and Within. (This weekend we would hear about Sacred Geometry's unique 'virgin' number Seven.) Opening Ceremony finally dissolved into laughter as two lines of people holding hands threaded and wove themselves through all the arms.



Down to business. Robert was our guide on a wide-ranging *Visual History of Labyrinths*, knowledgeably romping through their estimated 3,500- to 5,000-year history. His slides showed labyrinths around the world, revealing both similarity and diversity. A comment about Mercury really sparked my imagination, his suggestion that the planet walks a 7-circuit classical path in the heavens as it stations retrograde and direct. (Robert's book *The Labyrinth Revival* attributes this concept to Sig Lonegren.) Mercury, so near and bright, was surely known to the ancients. If it was the original labyrinth's source of inspiration, that would answer what is otherwise unknown: how a single pattern arose in so many different cultures and locations over time.

A labyrinth is a path through which my spirit finds its journey, is restored and renewed, and better prepared for whatever comes next into my life. Kathy Waltz

The next topic was *Nuts and Bolts of Conducting Labyrinth Events*, its key lesson the importance of honoring every person's personal experience. We learned that effective support is not always obvious to an inexperienced facilitator (hence the training). Robert's words were echoed by students sharing hard-won lessons. The workbook further expanded the point, providing examples of things one should NOT say to someone who feels confused by their walk. Robert stressed the facilitator's responsibility to those who come to the path through us or with us, and strongly urged everyone who didn't already have empowerment training to pursue it. This proved to be a pivotal moment for me: on the spot I pledged to seek further training, in order to serve others appropriately and well.

Morning session ended with a spirited discussion about *The Difference Between Ritual and Ceremony*. Robert has definite opinions on this subject and stood firm in his convictions, though some students had difficulty completely accepting his view (I am one). After lunch, Aryana Rayne from Victoria, B.C., Canada, spoke of her project, a first-of-its-kind, equal-access labyrinth designed with the sight-challenged especially in mind. Aryana astounded Americans by saying she has documented 29 public labyrinths within 90 minutes of Victoria. (Watch for her first guidebook, now being reviewed by publishers.)

Robert shared his insights about *The Labyrinth Revival: Why Now? Why Here*, before turning our attention to *Constructing the Classical Labyrinth*. His deep understanding of this most ancient design was impressive, and he showed us how to create it from a seed pattern, concentric circles, a spiral, a rainbow. We got to put theory into practice when bags of lentils appeared, tables were brought forward (we ignored Robert's idea to use the floor) and students worked, alone or together, to create the form. Some people had more success than others; experienced labyrinth maker and landscape artist Stephen Shibley WOWed everyone with his unique interpretation. Robert's own familiarity was further revealed when he showed how to lay out the pattern with just a rope and a few stakes. Late in the day many students were feeling overwhelmed by all the information, so when the laser pointer's battery died, the situation turned hopelessly funny. During the last few minutes of class time, Robert hurried to explain complex-sounding details, referencing numerous points on the overhead design, though we had no idea where he was pointing.



Class over, folks made their way to Trinity Cathedral in downtown Portland for an evening event organized by Sharlene Inglis and Pam Maben. LNN leaders (and a behind-the-scenes mate) transported several grateful out-of-towners to the gathering, earning our heartfelt thanks. A wine reception provided welcome relaxation after the classroom intensity. Chef Louise Rose lovingly prepared a delicious meal,



festively presented, and relished by all. Our busy day ended quietly on Trinity's inlaid wood labyrinth, beautifully garbed in flowers and candles, while Laila Murphy played the flute. Pam told an inspiring story to start, and each person received a gift as they entered the circle. Thank you, kind people of Trinity, for a magical evening and a tangible touchstone to carry home and recall our time together.

(continues on page 4)

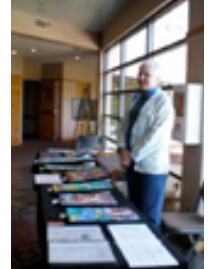
A labyrinth is a place where one may meet themselves for the very first time. Tom Chatterton

The Marketplace View

by DC Donohue



Over one hundred visitors and participants enjoyed a robust Marketplace in the lovely and light-filled foyer of Legacy Meridian Park Hospital's Community Health and Education Center during the April Robert Ferré Facilitator Training. Marketplace offerings included music CDs, DVDs, tapestry art and prints, collage/paintings, poetry and writing prompts, labyrinth books and umbrellas, finger labyrinths, prayer shawls and greeting cards. Marketplace sales raised nearly two hundred dollars which goes to the Labyrinth Network Northwest Scholarship Fund. Thank you to all artists and patrons for your generous contribution! We also feel deep gratitude to Chaplain Carolynne Fairweather and the Hospital for their sweet hospitality.



Julie Irmer,
Collage/Paintings

The complete list of artists, writers and craftspeople, with their contact information:

Toby Christensen, Drumming cd's and instructional video, info@healingdrummer.com

Peg Edera, *Journey Cards* and poetry, ederap@comcast.net

Robert Ferré, Books on the why's and how's of the labyrinth, robert@labyrinth-enterprises.com

Julie Irmer, Collage/Paintings of exuberant feminine divine, irmerpants@spiretech.com

Gloria Jost, wee labyrinth art paper books, gloria@paperglory.com

Nancy Kloss, Tapestries and Prints, tapestry1@mindspring.com, www.klosstudios.com

Joan McMillen, Music CD, *Remembering the Way: Ceremony in Honor of the Labyrinth at Chartres*, joanmcmillen@mcn.net

Grace Memorial Episcopal Labyrinth Guild, greeting cards, prayer shawls, books, linda@opusnet.com

Labyrinth Network Northwest, labyrinth umbrellas and Gael Hancock's *108 Ways to Use Labyrinths in Schools*, info@labyrinthnetworknorthwest.org

A labyrinth is about journey
the body moves in time and space.
The soul/spirit is not so bound,
and thus can journey where it needs to.
Sometimes the mind is allowed
to glimpse this journey.

— lgd



Peace Place Tapestries by Nancy Kloss

Robert Returns, from page 2

Sunday morning began with a scramble as trainees from several hotels converged to carpool to St. James Episcopal Church in Tigard. Once there, some gathered to enjoy one of Portland's newer labyrinths, posing for pictures, drawing smiles from colleagues watching our antics from above. By 9 AM we were inside, ready to hear Robert speak on an intimate topic, *Take A Stroll With Your Soul*. Once last minute adjustments were done (it eventually involved scissors), Robert carried a large room full of people with him on a spiritual quest, holding our rapt attention on this journey of two worlds. He made the point that we often think we don't have enough time, but what we really lack is space, we are squished in by too many things to do. This concept seemed to resonate with listeners, I heard it referenced many times by different people over the next two days.



Many trainees stayed for church service, and seemed to be glad they did. I had not been in a large Episcopal church before, so found it impressive and moving. We had just enough time to grab lunch, quickly convert some Canadian and English currencies into U.S., and race to class. Luckily we didn't miss Robert's great surprise: he entertained the appreciative group with an excellent rendition of Bob Dylan. That was a performance that would be hard to forget!

When training resumed we took a fascinating peek into the world of *Sacred Geometry*. Did you know the Chartres Labyrinth is one-millionth the diameter of Earth – how could its builders have known? Robert's rapid overview gave us a tantalizing glimpse into a few of the many mysteries of Sacred Geometry, a human attempt to understand the design of Creation as revealed through its numbers and proportions.

Next up was *Constructing the Chartres-style Labyrinth*, which Robert says is easier to make than the classical. *Healing Aspects, Use in Health Care Settings* as well as other *Contemporary Settings* rounded out the day. Our time together closed with a quick round of student introductions, letting each person share a few words about their project or involvement with labyrinths.

The labyrinth is a source, a mirror, an embodiment of our own soul and our connection to something greater. For me, its greatest beauty is that it meets each person exactly where they are in that moment.

Paulianne Balch-Rancourt

Labyrinthine Me

Born
each time
Die
to an old self
encountered
along the way
Dwelling
in no time
Bringing, seeking, letting go
Inheriting space
above and below

Martha M. Hall

Robert Ferré at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility

by DC Donohue

April 29th, 2008: A couple of days after the Robert Ferré Facilitator Training event, Robert and a few members of Labyrinth Network Northwest were fortunate to visit the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, Oregon's only women's prison, to meet with inmates and speak about the labyrinth.



Robert gave a fantastic talk, copiously illustrated, about several women who have greatly influenced either labyrinth history or his own experience with the labyrinth. His talk opened with photos, first of the Coffee Creek Facility sign and then of an aerial view of the Fort Leavenworth, KA Military Prison, where Robert spent some time in the late sixties as a conscientious objector to the war in Viet Nam.

The women at Coffee Creek are not lightweights when it comes to the labyrinth. Robert's talk was interspersed with dialogue that showed that these women have not only spent a good deal of time walking the labyrinth but have also read and studied widely about the history and use of this ancient spiritual tool.



The Coffee Creek Labyrinth Program looks something like this. The Prison Chaplain, Emily Brault, created her own large canvas labyrinth of a modified classical design to fit perfectly into the prison chapel. Each Monday evening, a prison volunteer, Anita Trudeau, comes to facilitate a labyrinth walk. The labyrinth walk is well attended by about 14 inmates. These women spend a nourishing hour or so in the most peaceful place in the facility, walking the labyrinth and then talking about their experiences. Anita Trudeau has been instrumental in providing this space

and leadership for the walks at Coffee Creek. She's been volunteering for almost three years now, and she has helped create a real devotional, committed energy in the women. For many of them, it is the still, quiet spot of their hectic, noisy weeks that helps ground them.

The women at Coffee Creek made Robert and the visiting LNN members feel most welcome and we were all grateful to spend yet another couple of good labyrinth hours after the weekend training.

Chaplain Emily also maintains the chapel library where there are several books on the labyrinth, all of them clearly well read. Since the women at Coffee Creek wanted to know more about Labyrinth Network Northwest but have no access to the internet, LNN has given printouts of information from the LNN website and Jeff Saward's book *Magical Paths* (referenced by Ferré in his talk) to Coffee Creek library. Labyrinth Network Northwest plans to continue their relationship with the women at Coffee Creek through educational events and additional materials for their library.

If you would like to participate in LNN's outreach to Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, contact info@labyrinthnetworknorthwest.org

For more information about the facility at Coffee Creek, see
<http://www.oregon.gov/DOC/OPS/PRISON/cccf.shtml>

To communicate with Chaplain Emily Brault or donate labyrinth books or materials to the prison chapel, write to Emily.R.Brault@doc.state.or.us



One of the weekend's highlights was not even on the menu! On Sunday Crystal Dawn Walker arrived with recent purchases, two ropes and a box of large paper clips to secure them. During the first break motivated people began straightening the clips (these worked *great* in the soft sod) and soon we were laying out the ropes. Second break saw us eager to continue the impromptu project, and within minutes we were walking the new labyrinth. One person 'flew' it with outstretched arms, smiles and laughter bubbled from the walkers and also those watching, and on their way through the circle its delighted creators hugged each other with overflowing joy. Thank you, Crystal Dawn, for thinking "it's easy, we can do this" and for taking the initiative to provide the supplies.

And so the Labyrinth Network Northwest's Second Robert Ferré Labyrinth Facilitators' Training came to an end. We learned a lot, and had so much fun together. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make the weekend possible.

