

# Faerie Camp Destiny

The Walt Whitman Gathering May 25-28 2001

BY VINCENT DOWNING

I just came from a delightful and instructive weekend at the Radical Faerie Camp Destiny near Grafton, Vermont. It was my first visit. These folks have 150 acres of land, and are making plans as to how to use it in order to create an Intentional Community. The land is beautiful. Tall deciduous trees (the names of which I don't know) with a heavy canopy that prevents just about any undergrowth cover the entire property which spans the side of a mountain from its top down to a stream and thigh deep swimming hole. They've owned this land since 1997. The only shortcoming of their parcel is that it's on a Northern exposure.

About halfway up the side of the mountain they've built a yurt and a temporary kitchen. Both these structures have been recently built and are of excellent quality. The yurt - traditional home of the Mongols - is about 25-30 feet in diameter and a beautiful ritual space. It consists of a wooden floor, and a wood frame covered with deep green and tan vinyl. A lovely little Franklin stove in the center. A hodgepodge of ritual equipment which I did not examine closely.

The kitchen is of a similar size, also of quality workmanship. It is a temporary building like the yurt, but square shaped and made from an aluminum. The roof is plastic and four sided with rain gutters that gather rainwater for a huge plastic cistern about five feet to the side. The kitchen contains a stove with four burners of the kind that you'd find in any house which is fueled by propane, a sink to discard grey water, and lots and lots of counter space. There are plenty of utensils of every kind and size right up to a frying pan that must be two feet across on the bottom. Next to the kitchen are five picnic tables covered by a huge tarp. About 100 feet away from the kitchen is a small (20 X 15) plywood stage protected by a large metal frame over which they have stretched another huge tarp so that they can do "no talent" shows while being protected from the rain.

There are two Circles higher up on the side of the mountain that are designated holy places. Both approximately 30 feet in diameter. There is little by way of structures in these: stones placed in a circle, fire pits in the centers. They were basically clearings in the woods. Along the trails to these are rock sculptures consisting simply of rocks balanced on top of each other. No more than two or three rocks to sculpture. A

few of these were really beautiful. The striking thing about them is that they have, despite their precarious appearance, endured through at least one winter. The trails and Circles were clearly well worn by human feet leading me to believe that they have been well used.

There were at one count fifty men and one woman at the Gathering. I enjoyed the friendliness of the people. They were all obviously very glad to be there and were happy to talk with an outsider such as myself. I sensed little or no cliquishness. My outsider status arose naturally from not having spent time with them and in no sense from being deliberately excluded. I was curious to see if the young lady present was being snubbed or ignored, but judging by her demeanor, her interactions with others, and her prominent role in a ritual performed on Sunday night, she was met with the same goodwill as I was.

Most of the men there were in their thirties on up. It seems to be a genuinely multigenerational group. The guys I met ranged from early twenties to their sixties. Many beards in evidence; these boys definitely are bear flavored. I didn't ask many people what their profession was, but I'm guessing that there is a preponderance of artists and other highly creative types among them. In retrospect it seems that there were an unusual number of good listeners among the guys I spoke with. Many of these men actually seem to pay attention to what you are saying rather than impatiently waiting for their turn to speak.

At least one night I was there with a group drumming/dancing/erotic massage & some sex in the yurt, but I was not prepared to do this with people I didn't know at all. Too uptight. Ah well. I've also not seen so many attempts at flirtation through the ruse of discussing a beautiful young man's astrological chart with him to emetic detail in quite some time. Some people were smoking pot. A few people were drinking beer. But I saw no evidence of hard liquor or hard drugs. Most of the folks didn't participate in the dance/massage/what have you in the yurt and I sensed no judgmental stuff against either the participants or the non participants. Only the most homophobic or prudish could conclude that anything other than playful fun was being consented to by the adults present.

The morning Circles are informal affairs that started anywhere from about 10:30 to 12:00 noon and lasting up to two hours. With

the exception of one that was held in the yurt, these took place around a fire pit about 50 feet from the kitchen. The first arrivals call to everybody else with three cries of "Yoo Hoo!" spaced at about ten or fifteen minutes apart. I attended only the Circle held on Friday afternoon. We passed around a talking stick, and everyone got a chance to talk about who they were and how they were doing generally. Plans were made for the weekend and/or day. Announcements about parking, volunteers for necessary chores, and the meeting of the Land Use Plan-It (Plan-Its being committees) were made.

I was gratified to see that during the course of the weekend, volunteers stepped up to handle whatever needed doing. The only lack I saw was a failure to change the water often enough at the hand washing stations (one next to the porta potty and one next to the kitchen) and in the tubs used to wash the dishes in the kitchen. I never saw a single piece of trash lying on the ground anywhere. Not even a cigarette butt.

Meals at Camp Destiny are vegetarian affairs. You can eat meat, but you are requested to prepare and eat it privately. There was no shortage of food available in the kitchen, almost all of it organically grown and purchased from local food coops. Although only the first dinner of the gathering was potluck, and we were responsible for providing our dinners on Saturday and Sunday, both nights people volunteered to cook. Saturday night the volunteers made fettucini Alfredo and Sunday burritos complete with all the fixins. Breakfasts and lunches are provided by the Faeries and there was a gratifying variety of food including granolas, pancake mix, eggs, salad ingredients, breads, cheeses, peanut butter, jellies, pasta, nuts, dried beans, yogurts, fruit, milk, soy milk, teas, and-Gods be praised-coffee. There was a welcome absence of junk food of any kind.

Sunday afternoon I participated in the sweat lodge down by the stream. The lodge is a domed frame of fresh springy branches tied together and secured to the ground with stones with four maybe five large tarps draped over it. It stands about six feet high and is about eleven feet in diameter. Inside is a small pit and a floor paved with flat rocks from the stream. Most of the work we did that afternoon was digging the ashes out the fire pit next to it, gathering firewood and new stones from the stream, and heating the stones until some of them

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!

**f l y n n**  
mainstage  
2001  
2002

Season Highlights

Trisha Brown Dance Company & Dave Douglas  
*My Fair Lady*  
LINES Contemporary Ballet and Nzamba Lela  
Youssou N'Dour  
*Of Mice and Men*  
Noche Flamenca  
Spalding Gray  
Canadian Brass Christmas  
Pilobolus  
Kronos Quartet  
*Sleeping Beauty on Ice*  
Copenhagen  
John Hammond's Wicked Grin/  
Blind Boys of Alabama  
Kenny Garrett/Charlie Hunter  
Ahmad Jamal  
Buena Vista Social Club presents Omara Portuondo  
Laurie Anderson

order on-line at  
[www.flynncenter.org](http://www.flynncenter.org)

On right: Pilobolus Above: Kenny Garrett

For a complete, 34-event season brochure, call 802-652-4500

Save Up to 25%!  
Discounts End September 28.

153 Main St., Burlington, VT  
802.863.5966

**FLYNNCENTER**

**Ben Franklin**  
Creative Crafts & Framing

Monday-Saturday 9-9  
Sunday 11-5

518 Shelburne Road  
Next to Mall 189

862-0646  
[www.benfranklin.baweb.com](http://www.benfranklin.baweb.com)

**remember it**

Get discounts join our Craft Club!

Acid-free pens, papers, picture sleeves and binders ... if it's got anything to do with preserving memories, we've got it.

**VT modular**  
.com info@VTmodular.com

**VERMONT MODULAR HOMES**  
DAVID E. CURTIS 802.864-4195  
BURLINGTON, VERMONT

*Building Vermont Dreams*