

*HOW THE CHARTRES LABYRINTH CAME TO BE
ON WHAT ARE NOW THE GROUNDS OF
THE RETREAT CENTER OF THE BLESSED FOUNDATION*

Many have asked John and I how we came to construct the Chartres Labyrinth on the property that John and I have lived on for more than 30 years. Below are excerpts from an article published August 14, 1999 in The Akron Beacon Journal and written by Jim Carney, columnist.

*Note:Paranetical items in the article have been added as updates.

Dee Curci first learned about the concept of the labyrinth as part of the Sacred Space women's spirituality group in Cleveland several years ago. She encountered another one four years ago when she walked a canvas labyrinth on Kelley's Island on Lake Erie.

Two years later, in August 1997, both she and her husband walked a labyrinth at a religious conference in Connecticut.

Later that month on Dee's 50th birthday, the couple had a powerful moment together over breakfast. "Why don't we build a labyrinth here?" John said to his wife of 32 years.

So in September 1997, Dee and John began working on their project, finding the perfect spot on the east end of their property -- she said it was as if the land was waiting for the labyrinth to be constructed.

The couple hand-dug the labyrinth over the next several weeks,....**Continue Here...** placing rocks into 11 concentric circles along path markers dug 4 inches deep. All told, they dug about a half-mile's worth of trenches to create the labyrinth.

Their quest began during trying times. In August 1996, Dee's mother, Adelaide Sautter DePolo, 86, of Cleveland, died. Three months later, John Curci's father, John S. Curci, 89, of Lorain, died.

And Dee's father, Peter M. DePolo Sr., 90, was suffering from Alzheimer's disease and was in rapidly declining health. He died before the labyrinth was finished.

As they worked, they worked out their grief and rested in their faith in God.

"You felt like someone was watching us -- someone was beside me," John Curci said of the spiritual presence he felt as he worked on the labyrinth.

And Dee Curci said the work felt like the couple was "being pulled toward life."

Since the labyrinth was built, the family has purchased concrete statues of Jesus, Mary and an angel that are placed outside of the walkway. There are also two benches in the parklike area around the labyrinth.

And they have encouraged people to come to their sacred space in the country.

In addition to the labyrinth, John Curci, (retired CFO of Summa Holdings 2009), has created other paths around their property that all lead back to the labyrinth.

They also keep a (log of visitors to the retreat house and) journal (at Kairos retreat house), for visitors to write down their thoughts after they visit the labyrinth.

One writer in the journal gave thanks for the peace and love that led to the labyrinth's creation.

"Thank you for sharing," the writer said. "My load is lighter, my journey more sure."

Another writer called the labyrinth a "sacred circle." She said walking the path enabled her to "fill myself up with God's energy and to warm my heart."

Dee Curci said building the labyrinth was a way for the couple to honor their parents "whose lives are remembered in the circle of life by the labyrinth."

And, she said, it was a way "to provide space to tangibly be reminded to seek wisdom and walk with wisdom. It was a way to remember that home is at our center . . . that our fathers and mothers go before us to bring us to a place of greater homecoming."

And, she said, the passing of parents "creates transition for us in a way that gives opportunity to more deeply discover the Mother/Father God of love who awaits and longs for our return."