

Around the Fire Pit

Suprise Farm
Retreat Center



1st edition of the SFRC, unofficial, unsanctioned, rogue newsletter

December 2018

Recent Events

On Dec 14th and 15th we were graced with Don Marcelino's presence for a fire ceremony, to clarify our intent in this new venture, and to see if Don Marcelino would make a commitment to return once a year for 5 years to help bless and support our endeavor.

The fire was lit at 4:30 and soon after 5pm we were gathered around the fire. Don Marcelino and Beto set up the ritual objects, which included 5 candles (more about the candles later).

There were 10 adults and 2 children around the fire. Don Marcelino sang 3 songs during the course of the night, one for the fire, one for the sun, one for the earth. Each song was roughly an hour long, and each was different in tone, rhythm and feel. They were all moving and expressive. Our inability to understand the language, while a hindrance to full understanding, did not reduce the impact of the singing. A 4th and last song was sung, which as we learned was a type of farewell and leave taking- to close to ceremony in a respectful way- giving thanks to the fire, earth and sun for allowing us to be in conscious relationship with them.

After each song, Marcelino would speak at length in Spanish, and Beto would in turn pass on the comments to us. After the 1st song, we learned that the fire had scolded Marcelino; asking him why he was there- that this was not his place and he was far from his land. He negotiated with the fire, explaining our intent to begin this venture where the land could bring healing and wholeness to all who come to it.

Don Marcelino asked us some questions which were very different from the usual way our western culture looks at the land and farming; he asked us to discover what the land wanted from us. What the sky and the wind wanted from

us. He also pointed out that the cultural divide between his culture and world view and ours was fairly wide. He stated several times "no lo intiendo". We do not understand. But we could feel the power of the songs and after his explanations, have a hazy picture of what was actually occurring in the ceremony and what direction we should go in bringing the Surprise Farm and Retreat Center to fruition.

Between the 1st and 2nd song, we had a chance to eat some of the wonderful food everyone had brought, giving us strength for the night ahead.

The 2nd song was very lively, active in tone and feel, and the masterful way he used his voice triggered an ever changing cascade of emotions. I was physically moved, and the rhythm and cadence made me stand and sway and tap my feet.

Each song brought with it an emotional payload and after the subsequent explanations and translations, a deeper understanding of what we must do to give the SFRC not only a grounded beginning, but how to sustain it. Don Marcelino's supreme commitment and humor made the event truly transcendent.

Several people around the fire shared what was happening for them during the songs- dreams, visions, emotions, etc. Though we could not understand the words, the songs were a motive force we could follow or ride into new realms of experience.

There were originally to be 5 songs, and there was one candle for each song. The candles were not lit during the ceremony. Don Marcelino determined that he would not make the 5 year commitment, because as the fire told him; this was not his place. He did give us some guidance and advised us on certain ritual procedures to follow and incorporate into the SFRC:

- Ask the earth what it needs from us.*
- Incorporate the fire into each activity: when we plant, when we launch new activities, etc. It need not be as large a fire as we used for the ceremony that night (which was a big fire with large oak logs), but it must be present and offerings must be made.*

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- The 5 candles were now charged with energy, intent and power. They are stored in a safe place and will be lit at auspicious times in the days ahead to add their power to events to come. Don Eulert will lead us on when to light them.

We concluded about 12:30am, and everyone got a bit of sleep before the dawn greeting, where we gathered around the fire at about 6:40am for more offerings and greeted the day.

From my perspective, to sit with a group of committed souls, in the mystery of the night, with an extraordinary man, who from our western perspective really is from another world entirely, where his knowledge that everything is alive, and that he communicates and negotiates with the elements and energy in all things, not as a belief or a symbol, but as a working practice in his everyday world, was not only an honor, but created a profound shift in how I perceive the world.

What Comes Next

After the dawn greeting on the 15th, Ute led a few of us on a walking tour of the farm and the work which has been done, the areas where new form is just being started, and areas where something new is just a twinkle in our collective eye. The work already done is impressive and I applaud the massive physical labor that went into all that is done so far. Everywhere I looked there was possibility. One thought I had about how we approach the 'development' of the place, springs from what Marcelino said about what the land wants from us. Borrowing from the medical profession: 'First, do no harm'. The land can tell us, if we listen, where our humble additions should be, where to plant, what to plant, etc.

After our walking tour, a few of us had an impromptu meeting round the fire, then under the awning at the picnic tables. Lots of ideas, which had been in the wind during the night, bubbled up:

- The first official workshop will be Don Eulert's Haiku workshop. A fitting beginning

from the man who planted the seed for the SFRC.

- A 'sampler' workshop was discussed- a full day event, with a bit of everything the farm has to offer. Some ideas were floated about how long each segment would be and how they would flow into each other, with one segment setting the stage for the next segment.
- Workshops for children, workshops for adults, workshops for adults and children together.
- Song writing workshops, mask making workshops, the possible use of the area in front of the rock amphitheater for presentations by participants. This area could have a small stage at the base of the rocks beneath the tree there, with the nature provided seating on the rocks.
- Discussion on the placement of tents and their construction (they should have actual doors if they will be permanent tents)
- Safe, appropriate, non-invasive lighting of the paths at night (my pet project).
- Discussion on how to incorporate the fire and offerings in our regular events and rituals.
- I've probably forgotten some of the great ideas which were discussed, so please chime in with any I have omitted.

Respectfully,

The
Scribe