

## THE FIRE PIT March 4, 2011

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### THE STORY OF THE FIRE PIT

I don't know exactly how it started but for some reason I got it into my head that I wanted to build a fire pit, and not just any old little fire pit. I wanted a big fire pit with all kinds of ambiance like space and seating and a sense of being a real mandala – an offering. This was back in the early 1970s.

The only problem is that I did not have enough room in my yard (rented yard at that) for the kind of space and ambiance that I had in mind. And once I get one of these dream-like visions going it is hard for me to let it go without just doing it. No yard? So what? No big deal. I would just build it in someone else's yard. After all, I didn't have to own it. I was happy just being able to use it. All I wanted to do was to create this space I imagined would be nice to be in. Let someone else own it.

As it turned out my landlord was open to my building it on his property which conveniently was right next door to where I lived at the time out on the north end of Ann Arbor across from the river and the junk yard. Problem solved and I happily set about making my dream into a reality.

Most of it I did myself but I did rally the friends and family for at least one day of hard group work. And I gathered materials from all over, hauling most myself. In fact I kind of injured my back trying to carry a full-sized wooden railroad tie all by myself. Not so cool.

The grill itself was a piece of work. Not sure how well you can see it in the photos but it is made of welded steel with a circular grill on the outside and an open area on the inside so that you could see the fire and add wood. I welded a very long coil of steel myself aided by my good friend (and local potter) Peter Grams. It took a long time but was very lovely and functional.

I also found and hauled a ton of old fire bricks and arranged them in ever-widening circles on the outside of the pit. I then found large chunks of limestone, old columns, etc. and hauled them in for seats. Plus the fire pit was surrounded by long wooden seats on three sides. All of this was kind of set back in a hillside with overarching trees and bushes, almost a hidden place.

I include some photos here including one of the work party and another with the fire leaping while I was tending to it. Looking back I don't know what made me want to do it and the simple fact is that once built I seldom used it, so what's that all about?

The simple answer is that for me the process is often more important than the result. The sheer thrill of designing such a magic space overshadowed the actual use of that space. In other words, the process can be the real result and not the more obvious traditional "result" result. Make sense? I hope so.



Here I am tending the fire.



A work party. I see my daughter lotis leaping off a stone column.



The Fire Pit.



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