

FROM DUNGEON TO GROTTO

In 2003, I met my cousin Dawn, from in Portland, Oregon, at the Denver airport. We picked up a rental car and drove into the mountains. Dawn and I were both turning 50 later that year and decided to have a retreat together.

We spent a wonderful week traveling around Colorado, enjoying the beauty of the earth, and reconnecting with each other. We shared stories from our past and survival skills to carry us into the future. We visited the Great Stupa, stayed at the Buddhist Shambhala Mountain Center, and drove through the majestic rocks in the Garden of the Gods at Colorado Springs. I enjoyed the shops in Boulder and driving over the Continental Divide at the top of Loveland Pass but the best part of the trip, for me, was soaking in the pools of hot mineral water, deep inside the mountain at Indian Springs Resort.



We spent several days there and soaking in those pools with the mountain over and around us was like being in the womb. It was a feeling I wanted to savor and share with others, but Colorado is a long way from Pennsylvania. I decided I had to recreate the experience closer to home.



I was never interested in having a hot tub on the back porch or out in the yard as many people have. I did not enjoy soaking enough to put up with the dirt that would accumulate and the cold in between. However, underground was a completely different thing and I knew just how to create the place.

Off the furnace room, in the basement of our old house, is what used to be the coal bin. At the time, it was dark and dirty and unheated so we were using it as junk storage during the remodeling of our house. We called it the dungeon but suddenly, in my mind, it became something more - a cave! When my husband picked me up at the airport, I had it visualized and greeted him with, "Hi Honey. I want a cave."

Once we got everything out of the dungeon and rearranged elsewhere, we began the cleaning. The room was filthy and had coal dirt ground into the walls at one end but those walls are solid massive stones. We borrowed a power washer for a day and, hundreds of gallons of water later, it was much better. We could stand to sit in there and plan our next steps.

This room is actually under the front porch so we needed some insulation between the rafters and then a ceiling. We went shopping at our local lumber and remodeling supply stores for ideas. I decided on unfinished exterior wood siding for the ceiling and part of one wall. I laid out the 4 by 8 sheets on sawhorses in the garage and sanded them until I got the texture I wanted. I soaked in two coats of water seal before staining so that the color would not get too dark. After more water seal, I finished with



several coats of marine grade urethane. That wood will NEVER rot!

Mike changed some plumbing and added the electrical outlets I wanted. We used leveling compound on the concrete floor to prepare it for the hot tub, sprayed the walls with sealant and were ready to start the ceiling. Now I should explain that this space is 7 by 14 feet and the main water and gas lines enter here. It was tight to work in with many pipes to accommodate. We managed to get the ceiling up in three sheets because of the precision measuring and cutting, and fitting and more cutting, in which my engineer husband excels. As it started to look better, I came up with more ideas, as usual, to make it even nicer.

We had some ceiling paneling left so we put in part way down another wall. There was a ledge between the stone and bricks so we added a wooden shelf. We built a creative wooden unit to hide the main water shut off valve. I found lovely light fixtures and a carpet remnant that was perfect. We replaced the ugly door with a new one, painted dark green. My simple cave was getting elegant.

Meanwhile, I shopped online for a hot tub that would fit into that space, after coming through the basement door and down the stairs. I finally found just the perfect fit and ordered it so we would be finished and waiting when it arrived. Even before the tub arrived, I loved to sit in that room to relax and meditate. While showing it to some friends, one of them said it felt like a sanctuary or sacred place or grotto, and that is what it became - the Grotto.



Getting the tub in through the outside door and tilted slightly to fit down the stairway was quite an adventure. I was so careful about the measurements. According to the manufacturer's specifications, it would just fit! However, when it arrived we discovered the manufacturer's specifications were wrong. It was one inch deeper than it was supposed to be. By taking the trim off the door, we could get it through but it would not make the little turn it needed to come down the stairs. We did the only possible thing. Mike fired up the chain saw and cut a three-foot section out of the wall. Then,

with the help of a bunch of my teenage son's friends, and much grunting, it was in and down and placed!

What a wonderful place it is. The combination of earth and water energy in that room is very special. I like to soak but sometimes I go there just to meditate. No outside sounds or influences invade the peace and solitude. I occasionally use the space to do Reiki attunements on students, too. The location just makes the ritual even a little more special.

Now that my Reflexology office is in the basement, soaking in the Grotto is available to my clients. Just today, two women had a "spa day". They soaked then enjoyed Reflexology and Massage. They enjoyed the relaxing music, hot water, and candles.



I love the Grotto. It is like entering the embrace of the earth.

<http://www.shambhalamountain.org/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loveland_Pass

<http://www.indianspringsresort.com/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garden_of_the_Gods

Patricia Kenworthy November 2006