

Harbinger Community, 1967 - 1969 (Harbinger Commune)

Living, Working and Learning

Harbinger was a physical facility located at Harbin Hot Springs, Lake County, northern California. The Harbinger facility functioned as a common living, working and learning center, a commune. Harbinger was also the home for the functions and activities of Frontiers of Science Fellowship. Both of these entities were founded, in 1967, by Donald James Hamrick, physicist, architect, artist, visionary [1].

To differentiate this commune's name, from the similar or identical name of numerous other entities, Harbinger is designated here, at all things Wikipedia (and Wikibin) as **Harbinger Community**.

Harbinger operated as a commune from 1967 to 1969. In more recent years, the same facility has operated commercially, as a spa and healing center. The obtaining and the maintenance of Harbinger was possible through Hamrick's major contribution of money from the sale of his company, Syndyne Corporation[2]. As well, there were monthly financial contributions from the National Council of Churches, lecture circuit donations, donations from participants and visitors, donations raised during musical benefits, and even personal contributions from musicians themselves.

Located four miles from a major road, situated amongst 1,085 acres of forest, meadows and rolling hills, Harbinger had originally been constructed as a resort. With two and three-storey apartment dwellings, numerous single houses, grouped here and there, interspersed with roads, there was plenty of living space.

The facilities included a large, dining hall, and attached kitchen, with a walk-in refrigerator, an outdoor, roofed shop, a large barn, a large fruit orchard, large vegetable and herb gardens, a covered fish (carp) pond, several large meeting and class rooms, a separate meditation facility, a scientific research and development laboratory, an extensive library, a number of administrative / office and publishing facilities, a large outdoor parking lot and automobile repair shop, as well as 5 spring-fed therapeutic pools.

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Earth moving equipment was required, for site development and the digging of drainage ditches.

With access to an airplane landing strip, contained on the Harbinger property, Frontiers of Science Fellowship purchased a Cessna C10J airplane, for Hamrick, and another Harbinger director, both pilots, to fly to and from their destinations, on almost a daily basis.

Harbingerites

This was, and still is, a term adopted by participants in Harbinger's activities, both on and off site.

Most Harbingerites lived on site, but there were those who maintained employment elsewhere and visited on weekends. A core group of 120 to 140 people were housed and fed, for the duration of the commune's existence. Approximately 15 of the full-time participants were children and toddlers who were provided loving care by multiple adults. When children were ready, schooling was provided on-site, by accredited teachers.

In addition to teachers for childhood education, work skills and academic studies were highly varied and complementary. These skills and knowledge bases were in the areas of: physics, environmental studies, biology, chemistry, language, psychology, sociology; architecture, engineering, planning, design, metallurgy, scientific research and development; philosophy, meditation, deep relaxation, counselling; writing and publishing, public speaking; heavy equipment operation, machining, mining; art, art history, clothing design, tailoring; 'hippydom'; health care: medicine - psychiatry, dentistry, nursing, massage therapy; music, musical group management; administrative / business / office management.

Participants, if they so chose, were welcome to bring and contribute their office and kitchen equipment, home furnishings, clothing, prior skills, new skills, time and efforts. With most or all resources being shared resources, the facilities were well equipped with hand tools, garden implements, washers, dryers, a sewing and material cutting room, one large clothing closet, first aid services, and even a dental chair and dental equipment.

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A team was required for the repair and maintenance of 27 shared vehicles. Teams were also needed for coordinated efforts such as crop planning, planting, maintenance, harvesting; purchasing, storing and preparing of food from stores; preparing and exchanging supplies / products with other nearby communes; developing and maintaining the property.

Turning On to Life

One of Hamrick's intentions was to help people by having them displace their use of street drugs, with the development of meditation skills. Numerous attempts were made through individual and group sessions. Sessions were recorded, transcribed and duplicated, then made available to participants, visitors and to outside groups. Some people did make successful transitions, during and after the Harbinger era.

Wanting to help people "tune in, turn on and drop out" in other places as well, Hamrick and the second pilot flew the plane throughout California and the southwestern United States, so that Hamrick could provide pre-scheduled lectures across university and college campuses, at conference hotels and in people's homes.

Psychology Today magazine sent a journalist, Tim Thomson, to spend a number of days at Harbinger. Immediately upon arriving, he was handed a baby to temporarily care for. He wrote an article about the *Life Style Research* being conducted [3].

Local Self Reliance

In its attempts to be *locally self reliant*, not only did Harbinger sell publications, sell audio recorded lectures and hard-copy transcriptions, and trade fresh garden produce for other necessary supplies, with other communes of the day, there was ongoing research in the areas of ecosystemic *Life Essentials Technologies* and metallurgical / mining research projects.

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Daily Life

Food

There were numerous vegetable and herb gardens on the grounds. Fresh food was harvestable all year round. A number of participants were committed to eating a Macrobiotic diet which tended to be a mainstay. While there was a team of staff dedicated to supplying food on a daily basis, anyone could prepare food for themselves and for others if they wished.

Olompali Ranch [4] was located in nearby Marin County. Completely funded by an individual, Don McCoy, the 22-room onsite mansion housed a few dozen people. Olompali supplied Harbinger with fresh baked bread; Harbinger reciprocated with garden fresh produce.

Synapse Board

No one forced anyone to do anything. It was common practice to ask newcomers and visitors to relax and to listen to audio recordings and read transcribed lectures. There was a room containing chairs and tables and what was called the Synapse Board. Open 24 hours a day, anyone could go in, write down an issue that needed to be treated or a project that needed to be started, when it needed to be done, what was needed to do it, how it was to be achieved, etc. Others could go in, read the list, add their name and what they could take responsibility for.

Rules

By choice, no one owned anything. When asked who owned anything on the premises, the answer was "God".

There were only two rules or two governing principles:

- No hassles
- Clean up your own mess

While there were only two 'rules', to truly understand them and to truly implement them required strategy, communication, coordination, mindfulness and service to all. In fact, there really were no rules, just real consequences.

During Hamrick's lecture tour, offering baskets would be left at the entranceways.

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His idea was that if anyone had something to contribute, because they thought what was being offered was worth supporting, they put it in a basket. But, if someone had needs, greater than the needs of those providing the service, they could take money out. It wasn't long before the baskets were always empty. Audience members became concerned that Harbingerites were going away empty-handed every time. After a jam session, Jerry Garcia handed Hamrick cash to make an airplane payment.

Visitors

Visitors included anyone, and everyone, who could manage to walk, or ride, to the facility. Troubled youth, street folk, run-aways and discouraged adults could find a place of refuge, a place for assistance. They could make a contribution, in the forms of work and study, if they stayed for any length of time and chose to do so. People who had served time in prison, could gain life essential skills.

Representatives or directors of other communes, such as Stephen Gaskin, later the founder of "The Farm" [5] visited frequently, to share ideas and ideologies. There were massage classes and water massage classes, held in one of the numerous pools, offering therapy for participants and visitors as well as offering training for therapists. People who simply came for the therapeutic benefits of the natural springs were also welcome.

Family and friends came to visit and sometimes ended up moving in. People who attended lectures in other counties and states, began following Hamrick from one lecture event, to the next lecture event, and then often came to Harbinger also. People from Canada who had heard audio recorded lectures, or had heard radio programs, such as those broadcast through Pacifica Radio would visit. IBM representatives, journalists for newspapers and magazines came to meet and have discussions with staff, sometimes for days at a time.

Delegates from the National Council of Churches (NCC) came for observation, discussion and to study meditation. Pomo Indians had originally inhabited surrounding land and often came to visit. Tibetan Buddhist monks also came and some played gongs. A Zen monk and artist was a keeper of the grounds before Harbingerites arrived.

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He and a number of other caretakers, were asked to stay on and he became a Harbinger participant. His father, also a Zen monk, who spent 6 months each year in a Japanese monastery, lived at Harbinger for the other 6 months.

So many visitors walked up the road on a daily basis, that a bus was purchased to haul people away, at the end of each day. The bus was named 'Simply Wonderful'.

Way Houses were also set up at alternative locations, outside of the facility, where visitors would find a welcome to learn. Way Houses were equipped with study materials, transcriptions, and audio recordings of classes and lectures. Local authorities had an issue with more than one family living in a facility and not being able to refer to Harbinger as a public facility. Local health and building inspectors found numerous reasons to visit, even to issue a quarantine for a non-existent infection, at one point. The occasional CIA agent unsuccessfully attempted to blend in.

Functions and Activities

Frontiers of Science Fellowship (F.O.S.F.)

The Frontiers of Science Fellowship offices were originally located on Redwood Highway, in San Rafael, California. As soon as the site became available, the fellowship relocated to Harbinger.

The following functions and activities were undertaken by Frontiers of Science Fellowship, either on site or off site:

- the creating of Harbinger University
- Lecture Circuit throughout the south-western USA
- formal Classes on site
- Audio Recordings and Transcriptions
- scientific and social Research and Development
- Life Style Research
- Musical Events: Celestial Synapse
- Massage Therapy and Training
- Water Massage Therapy and Training
- other forms of Health Care, Therapy and Training

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- Meditation Therapy and Training
- Hypnosis
- Group Actions
- Way Houses
- The Synapse (Synapse Room and Synapse Board)
- Publishing: *Changes*, magazine;
Harbinger, newsletter;
The Love Letter Heaven Sent, newsletter.

The Beginning of the End

By 1969, things seemed to be going for Harbinger and Frontiers of Science Fellowship. The formation of the alternative university, Harbinger University was well under way. Newsletters and magazines were both well established. The Celestial Synapse was hosted by Frontiers of Science Fellowship, on February 19th, 1969. A conference was scheduled to begin the following day, at the Harbinger Community. The musical event went very well, but tragedy during the conference's opening event was the beginning of the end. Hamrick and his family left Harbinger facility, on the night of February 20th, never to return.

February, 1969 was not a good month for northern California communes: Olompali's 22-room mansion burned to the ground on February 2nd. Harbinger was raided and the Hamrick's fifth child was murdered, essentially putting an end to that community as well, on February 20th.

Hamrick and family stayed with Pam and Henry Rasmussen, in San Francisco. However, traumatized by a sequence of events that occurred, Hamrick and his wife could not reconcile their marriage. They separated with his wife keeping the children and remarrying shortly thereafter. It would be 1990, before Hamrick would meet his two oldest sons again. His second oldest daughter died, in 2005, before they could meet again.

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Harbinger Two (Harbinger East)

By early spring, of 1969, a handful of original members of Harbinger accompanied Hamrick, to live in Nova Scotia, where they set up tents and camped for many months. Numerous lecture sessions were held (most, or all of which, were audio recorded and preserved) and, being ocean-side, they all dined daily, on fresh-caught lobster and butter.

In the fall of 1969, Hamrick met **Dr. Eleanor Hamilton, Ph.D.**, Canadian professor and author [6], in Nova Scotia, Canada. He stayed in Dr. Hamilton's home for some weeks, reading her sizable collection of unpublished manuscripts written by **Dr. Wilhelm Reich, M.D.**

Hamrick rented a property owned by Hamilton that contained a 29-room facility. This new facility would provide a fresh start in a far less drug-infested part of the continent. However, the same people who facilitated the collapse of the original Harbinger, arrived, uninvited, intent on moving in. With their insistence of their right to use drugs, Hamilton relinquished the property, ending *Harbinger Two (Harbinger East)* before it began.

See Also

- Frontiers of Science Fellowship
- Donald James Hamrick
- Syndyne Corporation
- The Celestial Synapse

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References

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