



WOW DAD! 90! Happy Birthday

On the day after Thanksgiving, Mom and Dad thought that we were invited to a modern day version of a Christmas Carol at UCSD with Margaret and Francie. When Lyle picked them up, Francie discovered that she left the purse with the tickets at Francis Parker where she had been working with Birdy on what must have been the secret plans for the party the next wee. So they drove to the school and Birdy brought the purse out and they turned around to leave. But by then, fifty or so people had walked out in the street to block the car. And these people were family and friends of Frank Riel. The birthday came early and was a great surprise.

The entry to the room was through posters of pictures from the life span of Frank and Edith and their long and wonderful life together. The auditorium was decorated with a newsroom theme and copies of some of the earlier newsletters were in large posters around the room.

After some time for drinks and food, the theater began. It was a friendly family roast using the newsletters for content and acted out as Laugh-In slap stick routines. The older "kids" (even the twins are 50 year olds!) remembered these skits from TV when the family was young. The set was a number of doors that opened and closed to reveal the actors and actress. Jessica Benesch played Francie, Carol and Twins switching costumes (mostly head bands). And Brett played Margaret (long braids), Eddie (cowboy hat) and Richard (cap). Bud had a starring role as Dad but Jeff and Bob Gillingham got the most laughs with their clever impersonations of Edith Riel. Francie and Margaret would introduce a skit by reading content in the newsletter and then draw a humorous contrast to some of the best stories in the family lore. And off stage was Dad looking for the can opener that always seen to be missing. After about 6 skits, we handed Frank a ukulele (with at least two string) and asked him to lead him in a song he taught us and that we discovered we had in turn sang to our kids—"Oh How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning."

This was followed by a catered dinner which was organized by Listy and featured fish tacos with halibut caught by Robert. After dinner we turned the lights down low for movie time. This was the toast. After much planning and many hours of visits with Frank to collect stories, plus contributions from all of the families, Birdy spliced together a great record of Frank's life starting from early school days and ending with the present. It is a story of ninety years of love.

After the movie was over Frank thanked the people who shared the spirit of love that moved throughout the video. He told us that in the past he had shared five secrets to a long life. They are: don't drink, don't smoke, don't take drugs, and be physically and mentally active. But he said he was holding out. There was another secret. This was to marry someone as wonderful as Edith Riel. He continue with a very emotional tribute to the women who has been his partner through more than sixty years of marriage and who together with him was responsible for creating this wonderful family. It was quite emotional and a great end to the movie. But it was not the end of the party.

Parties are not complete without cake and ice cream and there was a great big cake in the shape of 90, which was lovingly made without eggs



Mom and Dad enjoying the video

so Frank could eat it. And for course, his favorite cherry ice cream. And finally there were the presents.

One of the things that frustrate adults of all ages is trying to find the right remote and the right combination of keystrokes to get the TV to do what you want it to. Frank is not the only adult in the family who has had to get his kids to write multiple pages of instructions. Well, no more. He now has one smart remote programmed by Robert to respond to simply plain language requests. I want to see a movie. Or I want to watch my favorite show.

And Bruce helped Edith and grandkids get Dad a large screen computer monitor to make editing the newsletter easier. And so the party ended and the younger generation went on to the after parties while the adults called it a great night.



The Originals



The New and Improved

The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News

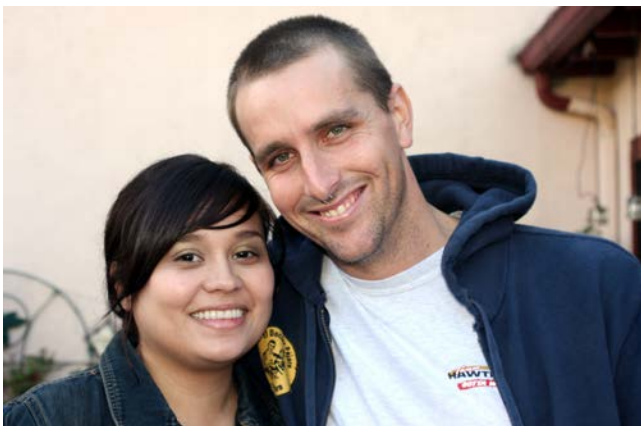
December, 2008

Ana Passes The Bar

At this writing, Ana passing her bar exam is no longer news; most in the family knew the results within days after Craig and Ana received notice. None the less, even if belated, the accomplishment is awesome and deserves the high praise for which this publication is so tasked. What is also worth noting, that for the several months between her taking the exam and the positive notification, the collective worry of the family. The worry was, in deed, demonstrated by how quickly the good news spread. Could it be that the communal family was even more worried then Craig and Ana themselves?

In a brief interview with Ana, conducted with the help of Anne (thank you), Ana was quick to relate the influences that her mother had, in her own legal-add practice, toward her present calling. When asked about her current responsibilities at the law firm downtown, she responded that she would be starting her carrier dealing with business liability issues covered by insurance companies and then returned quickly to speak about how her mother was the inspiration to her achieve occupation.

The family now turns its collective, old-person, worrying to the much more important worry; the arrival of Mathew's new brother or sister. When it happens, we will all hear of it, lastly, in this paper, but it will include the family building commentary and plenty of memory implanting pictures that is our Dad's created tradition here at the RFNL.



Ana and Craig

MORE B-DAY PICTURES



The Originals with the Innocents?



Dad the Original



Dad Portrayed by Bud



The Original Cake



Mathew and G___M___ Birdy
(Can you believe it?)

The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News

December, 2008

Family celebrates Thanksgiving 2008

Thanksgiving with Bud and Margaret has become a family tradition, and a big crowd showed up this year. Prior to the meal, Margaret and Bud arranged two contests for everyone to enter. In the first one a series of pear fruit samples was provided for tasting, with the objective of identifying each type. The second contest was a wine tasting session, with each contestant provided with a small sip and asked to cost rank each of the following Cabernet wines: 2\$ -Charles Krug, \$5-10 – Managea Trois, \$10-15 Chateau at Michelle, \$10-20 Beringer, \$30-40 Sterling. There was a tie, with Jessica and Michael both correctly named the cost ranking. For the pear tasting, Margaret selected seven varieties: Yellow Bartlett, Green Anjou, Red Anjou, Bosc, Comice, Seckel, and Forelle. Jeff and Carol were the Pear experts and for this they won a gift basket with a card that said – most good things come in pears – and included were three pairs of bills : ones, fives, tens. Afterwards, dinner was served, buffet style, with a huge turkey, stuffing, potatoes, salad, drinks, and, of course, dessert. We missed Jeff's mom, Audrey, who usually attends, but enjoyed seeing Lyle's mom, Celeste. Other guests (of Francie) were Emily's parents, Bill and Janice Edgar and sister Stacey, who were visiting from their home in Missouri. It was another great party, and as usual we thank Bud and Margaret for their hospitality.



The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News

December, 2008

News from Curtis in Iraq -

Hi all,

Curtis ships out to Kuwait and then Iraq Monday. If you have a moment today, give him a call. It would be nice for him to get through this day with some well wishers. He is a bit nervous...so am I... love,Birdy

Birdy Hartman

From: "Curtis Hartman" <chaosandbisquick@gmail.com>
To: "Birdy Hartman" <dezidoc@cox.net>
Sent: Monday, November 24, 2008 9:50 PM
Subject: Hi from Iraq

Hi mom,

Here I am at last in beautiful camp Sykes. My first impressions:

This place obviously used to have a lot more soldiers than it does now, it is kind of a ghost town, which is rather interesting. It is nice since the facilities (like this internet cafe) are a lot bigger than they need to be to handle the population.

The dining facility here is amazing. In addition to the main line every day there is a barbecue bar and a hot sandwich bar as well as a bar that changes every day of different ethnic cuisines. Additionally there is an ice cream bar and smoothie bar and it is all free.

Internet here will run me \$80 bucks a month, not terrible but not great, but I haven't got it in my room yet. The shipping container that my computer is in is somewhere in Iraq, but not here. Hopefully it will be here soon.

Hmm things are off to a slow start here, we have no office or equipment (the equipment was in the same shipping container as my computer) so we have been told to look busy and stay out of trouble. Should be interesting for a couple weeks at least till everything gets here and settles down.

Overall this should be an interesting tour. Ill send you pics when I have my own computer. They are strict on no thumb drives here so I cant get my photos to you. Sorry if my typing is somewhat sporadic, these are well used keyboards and they keys are a bit sticky.

The gym here is nice, which is where we will probably spend a lot of the time we are killing. The PX here is tiny and useless. So I will need to acquire various sundry items elsewhere. I Miss you guys a ton and I cant wait to be more established here so I can send you pics and everything. I love you.

Curtis

The above is the first written communication from Curtis since he arrived in Iraq. The following came by e mail.

SGT Curtis Hartman

A Company, 163rd MI Bn, FOB Sykes

APO, AE 09351

The PX here is very small and has almost nothing. I would love to receive a gift box, which would be so much fun. Anything you guys send will be appreciated. I know you always give gifts from the heart. I met a friend here from Korea who will be leaving Iraq very soon, so he is going to give me his TV. So, I will have something to watch DVDs on. I know that me going out on missions is less than ideal, but I don't want you guys to worry, everything will be just fine. I'll send you some pics of Tal'afar so you can get a feel for where I am. No, I am not training the Iraqis, but I am going out with the unit that is, so it should be interesting. The Iraqi army can't train itself because we foolishly disbanded the standing army after we initially occupied the capitol and turned all the soldiers into insurgents. So, the army is starting from scratch. As to what kind of war this is, I think everyone is still figuring that out. I really am not even sure. But I will try to figure it out for you. We have a cold front moving in, so we are all bundling up. It is

supposed to get down to 40 degrees tonight and rain, no fun. I will let you know how cold it gets. I love you guys a ton. Wish me luck on my first ever convoy mission in Iraq tomorrow. I promised Lauren I would text her when I got back to the base, I'll be sure to text Dad too (since mom's phone is on the fritz), so you guys know when I am safe. I will talk to you soon. Hopefully my computer will get here soon and I will be able to use vonage, but we shall see. I love you.Curtis

From: Curtis Hartman

To: Birdy Hartman

Sent: Thursday, November 27, 2008 6:13 AM

Subject: Happy Thanksgiving

Hi Mom, Just wanted to wish you, Dad, and the Family a happy thanksgiving. I am still here in Iraq. So far, no big news. There have been a few problems lately with Iraqi Army guys getting paid to shoot Americans who are trying to train them; there have been two shootings so far this month. I will be going out with the Iraqi Army this Saturday so wish me luck, I'll be getting a tour of Tal'afar and the surrounding area and meeting some Iraqi army officers: Should be a good time for everyone. It has been a bit cold here. It gets down to about 52 degrees at night and is about 65 degrees in the day. The hottest day so far has been about 75 degrees. I doubt my luck will last this well for the whole tour. We have been trying to set up shop. We just got our building but our equipment (and my computer) still has yet to arrive, which is more than a little frustrating. We had a big Thanksgiving dinner at the cafeteria today. The food was actually really good. The cafeteria here is amazing, and free, so really no complaints in that department. I plan on getting some good pics of the local area, so I will be able to send them to you guys as soon as my computer gets here (who knows how long that will take). My digital picture frame is awesome and all the pics you sent me are great. I love looking at them. Looks like we will be doing a lot of joint missions with the Iraqi Police force, which should be a lot of fun. I will let you guys know how our mission on Saturday goes. We are still trying to track down someone to give us ammo so we can go outside of the base. That is the mission for tomorrow: getting ammo should be interesting. Ok, have a great Thanksgiving, and I love you guys. Tell everyone I said hi.
Curtis

Thanks, Curtis, good luck, and keep the news coming.

The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News

December, 2008

Bob Gillingham competes in Ironman race in Arizona

Bob is no stranger to this type of competition; since this is his fourth race. He finished well in the previous ones, and as you will learn from the following report, he was successful again. We have Listy to thank for this excellent report plus the pictures and captions.

Bob is an Ironman Times 4!

Reporting from Arizona, the Gillingham family took a road trip to watch Bob Gillingham compete in Ironman Arizona on November 23, 2008. The weather conditions were perfect with little wind and mild heat hovering from 50-80 degrees. Kristy, Annie, and David got their first chance to see what it takes to compete for over 12 and one half hours in this grueling endurance sport. There was a mass start in a salt-water reservoir at a tepid temperature of 63 degrees. Bob was one of two thousand competitors and completed the first phase (a 2.4 mile swim) in 1:20:22 hours, placing him in 1393 place. He next jumped onto his tri bike (one of six bikes he owns...don't ask me why...I'm sure there's a difference....smile) and raced in his favorite event, completing three large laps for an even 112 miles. This changed his standing dramatically, placing him in 677th place with a 5:42:31 bike time. The last event was the marathon and he started off as planned with a steady 9-minute mile pace. Unfortunately, after mile 8, he reported a sore hip pain stating, "It feels as though there is shattered glass in my hip every time I run." But, as a true Ironman competitor, he was determined to complete the race and after 5:15:39 hours for the run, he crossed the finish line with a total swimming, biking, and running time of 12:33:03 hours. This 140.4 mile event is an amazing accomplishment for every athlete who competes in it (It's amazing to hear the announcer declare every finisher with the same line, "Congratulations! YOU are an IRONMAN!"). Bob finished right in the middle at 1055th place.

He inspired all of us as we had a tough time keeping up with him....eating three meals and stopping for a few margaritas and beers to check the score on the Charger game. And true to form, not long after the race (the next day), still limping, I might add, Bob was already planning his next Ironman race in hopes of continuously improving his overall results (most people call that NUTS). Go Bob!



We had to wake up at the crack of dawn to watch him dive in that cold water.. good thing we had .. Starbucks



2,000 bikes ready and waiting for the swimmers to jump on.



We had to wait all day for him to finish and well....it's hard work for us to keep up with his pacing....



Bob zipped past us on the bike....we missed his first lap because he was ahead of his original pacing plan. It was great seeing him feel so good!

Bob looking very content with Annie after the race.

Thanks, Listy, for this great report on Bob's latest race, and congratulations to him for making such a great showing in this very demanding competition!!! And Bob, you are setting a great example for your children, and all your nephews and nieces to follow. CONGRATULATIONS!!!



The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News

December, 2008

Some new family friends – Over the past few years some new guests of kids have begun to appear at family functions. Some have reappeared frequently enough to suggest that “going steady” was under consideration. Some have lead to marriage: Craig and Ana, Kristy and Seamus. It can be confusing for older family members to keep all the names straight, and who is going with whom. Recently Birdy provided us with a series of close up pictures along with captions naming associations. We hope this will be a useful aid in identifying everyone at future family functions.



Francie's kids
Bryce and Laura
Brett and Emily



Ed's son's "Nathan and
Brooke/ Chris



Carol's daughter Jessica and Miuael



Carol's son "Dustin and Lauren



Margaret's son Michael
with Ashley



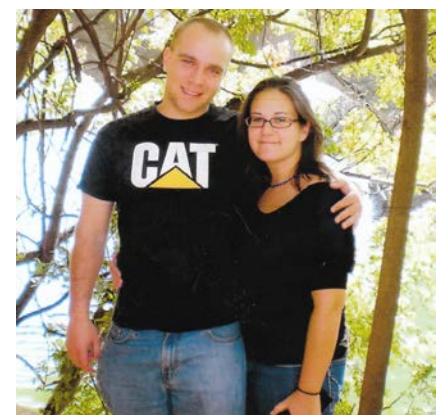
Ed's son "Kevin and Nicole"

Recently we got a call from Listy advising us that she had appeared (briefly) on TV 6. Her school had been selected to illustrate an emergency earthquake safety drill. She was not informed in advance and missed the initial and rerun showings. However, she did get a web site code where the broadcast could be viewed. A click here will turn on the entire broadcast.

<http://www.sandiego6.com/mediacenter/local.aspx?videoid=536253@xetv.davport.com>



Carol's son Jason and Chava



Birdy's son Curtis and Lauren

It's almost time for Riel Bowl XVIII Yes, another year has rolled around, and the Commissioner and his team are in the process of organizing the program. Due to lack of general interest we are dropping the cross word puzzle and replacing it with another game, to be announced. For the White Elephant gift exchanges (parents and kids) we suggest that the inexpensive gift be something from a 99 cent store, rather than a home discard. We will continue with the gift exchange and the Jeopardy game. Other activities are being considered, and you will receive a program and schedule of events when you arrive: noonish