

Riel Bowl XIX, January 1, 2010

For the 19th year the family gathered at the Bob and Karla home around 11am to celebrate Christmas and the New Year. As usual, by noon most were busy enjoying snacks, drinks and the exchange of the latest on their own activities. Lunch was served, and the two prime rib roasts were great. In addition, there was an impressive array of other items: baked mashed potatoes, veggies, salads, etc, enjoyed by all. Next on the schedule was the ever-popular Jeopardy game. Robert and Margaret created a charade contest to select the participants. Grandchildren formed three person charade teams, to select the five teams f.

This year's Jeopardy game questions were on two subjects: events and middle names (a new category). Since middle names are not commonly used we expected they would be a big challenge, but to our surprise only a couple were a problem. His toughest one was Grandma's, and therein lies a story. According to what she was told by her parents, the name selected for her was Edith, but the Greek Orthodox priest rejected it because it was not Greek. According to him all Greeks must have Greek names, so he christened her "Sophia". To validate this story Grandpa had brought in the passport used by Edith when she came to America in 1946, and it indeed lists the owner as "Sophia Edith Merica", so her real middle name in "Edith". Tim Riel's team (with Jessica and we think Chris) won the Jeopardy game.

After Jeopardy the White Elephant commenced. This was the first year that the Grandparents and Grandchildren all participated together and it was fun for everyone. The RFNL dine out certificates were both won by Grandchildren, Katy and Kevin Riel, and Katy and Grandpa were already planning a buffet/bingo party at Viejas Casino, as soon as Mom, Dad, and Brian can be available.

Next was Yaya's 85th birthday was celebration (story is reported on page 2). Before one of the best Riel Bowls ever ended, Robert officially announced that next year's Riel Bowl (the 20th) will be the last Riel Bowl to be held in Alpine. Needless to say, we are planning a special program commemorating his many years of service as the Riel Bowl Commissioner. Watch for more news on this in future RFNLs.



Grandma celebrates 85th birthday

As is the custom, Grandma enjoyed her 85th birthday as a part of The Riel Bowl XIX celebration. While we were waiting for the prime rib to be done Margaret surprised Mom with a special birthday hat, and Birdy and Listy supplied a birthday cake complete with five candles for half one half decade. Everyone gathered around the kitchen table, watched her blow out the candles, and wished her a great big **HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!** Later she opened a pile of presents from the whole family. There turned out to be components of a Wii Intendo system, including Wii fit. She is now joining the game-playing- generation and engaging in virtual golf, running around the virtual islands and heading off soccer balls.



News from Merica Clan in England

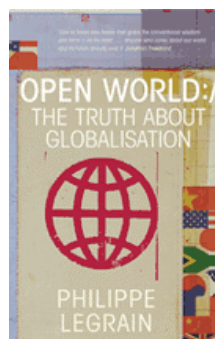
Philippe Legrain is the eldest son of Edith Riel's nephew, Gerard Legrain who grew up in London. He is now a British economist, journalist and writer. He writes about globalisation, migration and European issues. This statement is taken from his website:



I'm a journalist and writer, based in London but interested in the whole world. I'm fascinated by how economics, politics and culture combine to form the big picture and how the world is coming together through globalisation while becoming ever more diverse

through cultural mixing and individual choice. I write primarily about globalisation, migration and European issues, but through this site's [blog](#) and my contributions to the Guardian's [Comment is free](#) group blog I am now ranging more widely. I am also a contributing editor to [Prospect](#) and as of September 2007, I will be a Visiting Fellow at the [European Institute](#) of the [London School of Economics](#). I have followed up my first book, [Open World: The Truth about Globalisation](#), with a new one, [Immigrants: Your Country Needs Them](#), making the case for freer international migration (immigration).

More happily, I have written for many interesting publications in Britain and the US such as the [Financial Times](#), [The Wall Street Journal](#), [Europe](#), [The Times](#), [The Guardian](#), [The Independent](#), [New Statesman](#) and [The Ecologist](#), as well as [The New Republic](#), [Foreign Policy](#) and the [Chronicle Review](#). In 1999, I was highly commended as Young Financial Journalist of the Year in the Harold Wincott Press Awards. I appear quite often on BBC TV and radio as a commentator on globalisation and migration. Perhaps my favourite TV moment, though, was [going head-to-head with Neil Cavuto on America's Fox News](#) where I wiped the floor with him — or at least I like to think so.



Some more Christmas celebrations

On Christmas Eve Grandpa and Grandma were invited by Francie and Lyle to celebrate with them. Prior to the celebration we attended mass at St Vincent's church. We attended the 4:00 p.m. service, and were joined by Richard. We stayed on for the 5:15 service and were joined by Francie, Brett,



Bryce, and Carol. There were Christmas carols and a nativity scene acted out by children from the school. From the church Francie drove us to her home, where Lyle and her Mom welcomed us. We spent an enjoyable evening and had a delicious meal, and we thank Francie, Lyle, Alan, Brett, and Bryce for letting us share in the Christmas Eve celebration.



On Christmas day Grandpa and Grandma were invited to a Christmas dinner with Bruce/Birdy and family and friends. This was an especially special time for Bruce and Birdy in that all four of their children, Craig, Curtis, Michelle, and Scott, were home for Christmas. With Curtis leaving for college in Washington, D.C., Michelle perhaps bound for post-graduate studies in Germany after she gets her PhD, and Scott soon moving to Tulsa, Oklahoma to join his partners in their new restaurant venture, another full family Christmas like this may be a ways off. First off, we enjoyed a delicious meal prepared by Bruce and Birdy, with help



from items provided by guests. Afterwards we all gathered around the beautiful Christmas tree and gifts were distributed to all. It was a great celebration, and we thank Bruce and Birdy for inviting us.



SAVE THE DATE

Dustin & Lauren

August 7, 2010

The "Save the Date" postcards went to the aunts & uncles, however, Dustin and Lauren wants to be sure that everyone knows their Wedding Date. Photos and information can be found on their website <http://www.mrandmrsbenesch.com>.



Michele's Germany

AS WAS REPORTED IN LAST YEARS RFNL MICHELE'S TRIP TO GERMANY WAS WELL DOCUMENTED IN HER BLOG "SUNNY BUNNY". WE INCLUDED A STORY OF A GERMAN SURFER AND PROMISED MORE STORIES IN FOLLOWING ISSUES. AS THE HOLIDAY FAMILY NEWS PILED UP THAT PROMISE WAS REPEATEDLY WAYLAID – BUT NO MORE.

Schwetzingen Castle

Just outside of Heidelberg.... with the most amazing garden! I love gardens.



Third Reich Tour

So on my last day in Munich, I took a walking tour that was about Third Reich architecture and art and history in general. The woman who gave the tour got her masters degree in Art History and is also a museum tour guide. She was a tiny little thing from Bavaria. It was incredibly interesting to learn history about the Hitler era from a German perspective. To be honest, before my holiday, I still thought of Germany as a scary place to be simply because of the Holocaust. Even having German friends didn't change my skepticism. After all, my grandfather was in the army during World War II.



What was most striking to me about the tour was the emphasis that the tour guide put on Germany's current struggle for identity. After all, not every white skinned, blonde haired German was a Nazi. Even the ones that were Nazi's were coerced into being Nazi's because if they didn't join, they would have to watch their entire families being killed before them. Many of them in fact, were completely unaware of the existence of the concentration camps and it was hard work by others to make that known.

The identity problem today, as I understand it, is that it is hard for Germans to be proud of their heritage as they feel the burden of having started two world wars in the last century. The tour guide said that she had been in France on vacation as a little girl and someone walked by and said "oh what a cute little [brown-haired] French girl" and she felt so proud that they didn't think that she was German. I could hardly believe it when I heard it. Germans make it clear that any feelings of superiority in any way is a bad thing... so if a person is boastful about anything, it is very much frowned upon (going back to the shame associated with Hitler's ethnic cleansing). Munich itself has even more identity problems because it was Hitler's favorite city and the place where all of the terrible happenings of WWII began.

It is also very rare to see a German flag flying on buildings or anywhere! I took a picture when I saw one because I hadn't seen many. The German people are counting on the current younger generation to shape what the world image of Germany will be; a generation to hopefully accept the past and move forward with a better and brighter future. Hopefully for Munich this will also mean more sites around the city marking it's important history.