

The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News

APRIL 2011

RFNL 2421

RFNL TURNS 20!

As some of you may have noticed, the RFNL April 2011 issue marks the 20th birthday of this family history publication. Since that date it has grown in size and complexity. The April, 1991 issue was a single page with no pictures and only a few brief articles.

The second issue contained a color photograph. Unfortunately, color copies at Kinkos were too expensive, and we had to live with black and white copies until the digital camera became available. We quickly went from one to two pages, and not long afterwards to four, which now is standard.

As computer technology advanced we began to rely more and more on its use. The cut, paste, and Xerox copier gave way to the printer and scanner, and four page full color issues became the standard. Distribution, however, became a problem. At one time we were up to nearly 40 hard copies per month, all printed and mailed out to a distribution list. Also, as grandchildren became older and more mobile it became more difficult to keep track of addresses as they spread out around the country (and world.)

It became apparent that e-mail would be a more efficient way to go, and eventually Margaret took over as distribution manager, created a Riel Family site on the internet, and now family

members are notified when an issue is available for their review. I do believe, however, that a hard copy stuck to the refrigerator door gets more attention from family members than an e-mail notice that the issue is available. We do recommend that recipients print a hard copy to pass around to their family and friends.

Recently, Ed Riel volunteered to help out with writing articles and organizing pages, and he now is the associate editor and a great help in getting out issues.

So much for the past. The immediate future (including this issue) was put together largely by Robert Riel, who has kindly offered to help with future RFNL issues. As we now see it, I will assume more of an editorial role, defining topics to be covered, often written by a family member. In the past we have had much support from members writing about their various activities and accomplishments, or those in their family. This has been much appreciated, and we hope it will continue.

In conclusion, we want to thank all who have contributed to the success of the RFNL, and look forward to the continuing improvements. In the first issue of RFNL we stated that the objective was "to help everyone to keep up on what is going on in the family." This is still true today. - Frank Riel

I have never had the privilege of meeting any of you but Eloise Riel sent me the RFNL for years. What a joy it was to see you all and the family joy! Great job and my hat is off to you for the sharing and caring! Georgia Beavis

"The RNFL is the strongest link to keep us connected in the present, especially as we spread out into the world. It will also prove to be a strong link to our past as we tell stories to our children and grandchildren of what an amazing family we come from." Love, Michelle

I just want to say thank you to Dad for faithfully writing, editing, producing, and creating our amazing family newsletter. Nothing can compare with the history he has preserved by producing a four-page, with pictures and captions, time line highlighting the accomplishments of my brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, and family friends over the last twenty years. Thank you Dad for prodding and pushing us all to make our contributions and to provide the news that we all loved hearing about. You are an inspiration to all of us! Much love, Listy

Hi Grandpa! I just wanted to say thank you for 20 years of dedicated service to our family. I was watching Aunt Birdy's Riel Bowl video the other day (amazing!!) and for the first time I found out how the whole Riel mania began. Hearing you tell that story was the coolest thing ever, and it made me appreciate everything you have created for us even more. If it weren't for you, we would be just like everybody else...and I am sooooo glad we aren't. I am so lucky to have such a fun family and you and grandma are the reason for that. Thank you so so so much for everything you do for us. I hope that when I am a young 90 something years like you, I am even half as productive and dedicated as you are. I love you so much! Love, Annie (grandchild # 5,283 in case you lost count)

Dad, you have found a wonderful way to make a big family seem small. I personally looked forward to each and every newsletter. I always felt like I knew what was going on in the lives of my siblings after reading each and every publication. I may not have attended all the plays or sports events that I went on in this family, but I always felt like I was there via the newsletter. You have done such a wonderful job recording our family history and we all are forever in your gratitude. Much love and appreciation, Birdy, Bruce and family

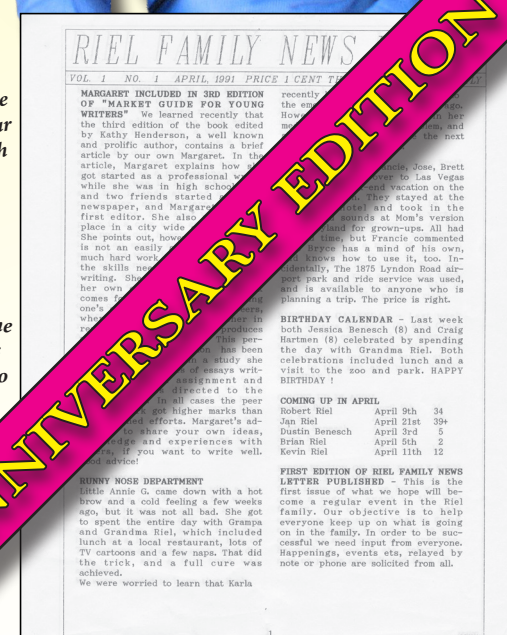
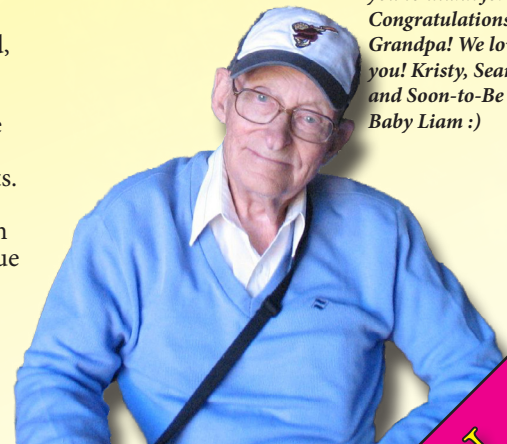
The RFNL has been a real inspiration, and I'm seriously thinking of beginning one for the extended Gillingham Family. The hours Frank has invested have reaped many benefits including keeping the whole family informed about the many and varied activities of this remarkable and diverse group, but most importantly, they have also served to nurture the connections necessary to keeping the family viable and intact. For that, I am grateful. Bob Gillingham

There is no where in the world that has 20 years of monthly updates on a family of this size. Someday in the far future someone might discover this history and imagine what impressions they will have of the 20-21 century life. They will say, did you know that people "in the olden days" (as Megan referred to my childhood) celebrated Christmas by playing jeopardy and had this wonderful tradition of taking grandchildren to the zoo on their birthday. How quaint! We love our family traditions and we are so fortunate to have such a complete record of them-- thanks Dad, for this gift. Margaret

Growing up, I remember ripping through the RFNL every month to look for pics of me and my immediate family. It was so exciting when I was young to see if I made the news. Now I appreciate it for the news about everyone else and keeping me up to date. Thanks Grandpa! - Craig Hartman

Dad, Wow, how could you be publishing this amazing history of our family for 20 years when I was barely old enough to read 20 years ago! Great way to keep us all together!!!! Love and thanks, Francie

Wow! 20 Years is an amazing accomplishment! The RFNL is such a gift for our family, and we have you to thank for it! Congratulations, Grandpa! We love you! Kristy, Seamus, and Soon-to-Be Baby Liam :)



20th ANNIVERSARY EDITION

KRISTY IS SHOWERED WITH GIFTS



THIS WILL BE THE YEAR OF THE GREATS, GREAT - GRANDCHILDREN!

Listy invited friends and family of Kristy to a party at their home to celebrate and prepare for, the appearance of **LITTLE LIAM** this summer.

Listy served the lunch in her brand new and remodeled kitchen which is a beautiful work of

art destined to become the center of many more family gatherings.

The guests were invited to play two games, one to match the offspring of movie stars to their parents, and the second to count the number of candy pieces in a baby bottle. The younger crowd knew their movie stars, but Listy and Margaret had their estimation skills ready.

At the center of all of the activities was Kristy ...and all the presents. The newest coolest

tool for baby care was a piece of pliable plastic that could make any sink into a baby-size lounge bathtub. The most surprising gift was the set of golf clubs and golfing clothes that little Liam received from his uncle. And the softest by far, was the snuggle baby blanket knitted by Katy.

Finally Grandma, who is always thinking ahead, gave Kristy a running stroller so she could take Liam along on her "get back in shape" runs.

News from Massachusetts

On March 21st I had surgery of the first metatarsal on my right foot. They basically cut a wedge out of the bone in my foot that leads to the big toe. By cutting out the wedge and re-joining the bone it should decrease the severity of my arch and by doing so should get rid of all of the problems that I was having.

The problems started about two years ago when I had started training to do mini triathlons. I was running and biking a lot, and as a result, I had some severe foot pains. I found out that the cause of the pain was because fluid was accumulating in my toe joints along with sesamoiditis with periostitis (just like shin splints, but in the foot). Although these were the symptoms I had, the real underlying cause was because of my "pes cavus" foot type (a congenital foot deformity of extremely high arches in the feet). The doctor said that, simply because of the shape of my foot, it was a matter of time until I was going to be experiencing difficulties with my feet and that my feet were never meant to run and that I should switch to low impact activities permanently.

I went to see a podiatrist and then a foot & ankle orthopedic specialist, and after two years of trying orthotics and stretching and no running, there was little improvement with my foot pain. We decided surgery was not only the best option for me, but also the only "permanent" option. With non-surgical treatments I could be back in pain after any trigger.

Right now, I am completely non-weight bearing on my right foot for 6-8 weeks, which means I am on crutches. I am getting my splint off on April 13th and will be in a removable boot, which should help me sleep better at night. I should be off the crutches in time for my graduation! Pain was fairly severe the first two weeks following my surgery but has subsided and I am doing well.

Updates to follow!, Love, Michelle

Gillinghams Remodel Kitchen

Overt the last few months Bob has been busy by remodeling and expanding the kitchen into what was once their dinning room. He completely gutted both rooms, floor to ceiling and removed the wall between them. Also gone is the dining room sliding glass door, being replaced by a new window. Then he added a pass through to the living room, reworked the plumbing and electrical, and then with the help of Jeff, dry-walled and painted the area. New cabinets, counter tops, appliances and flooring completed the area. Listy and Bob are now ready to host many a party in their new kitchen. Make your reservations early; as they are already booked up through the summer!

Update From Bruce

Hi All,

I thought it was a good time to offer an update to this ongoing back problem I have been dealing with. As most everyone knows the plan for the March 17th surgery was to perform decompressive laminectomy on the five lumbar vertebrae and (what had grown to a total of six) vertebrae in my thoracic spine for a grand total of eleven vertebrae. The purpose of which was to relieve the pressure on my spinal cord relieving pain and neurologic deficit and the threat of more serious and permanent deficits.

The surgery was to be performed by two surgeons and take approximately 5 hours. At about 3½ hours into the surgery Birdy got a call from the surgeon explaining that there was an unforeseen complication that was changing the plan. He found while turning my body over that there was significant instability at the L5-S1 joint that required fusion so that the two sliding vertebrae could not damage the spinal cord. Birdy needed to make the decision on the use of cadaver bone – vs- harvesting hip bone for the fusion as well as Okaying the procedure. She made all the right decisions and the surgeon went back to work.

The fusion, which involves long bolts, metal rods and the removal of the disk,

took significant time to complete. After seven hours of surgery it was necessary to call it quits to bring me out of the anesthesia leaving the planned surgery incomplete. No work to the thoracic spine was performed but the entire lumbar spine was completed as well as the fusion.



I spent one week in the hospital, admittedly very uncomfortable, after which I was allowed to come home. Once home I tested out the handles strategically hung from beams in the ceiling over the bed, next to the bed and over the sofa in the family room that Craig helped me with the week prior to the surgery. I was very pleased with the placement and lengths and found that they allowed for my independence. Craig also helped with adapting a toilet for me to use which then gave me complete independence...That is huge! I finally got to take a shower after a week which was wonderful too!

Birdy has been here non-stop to help

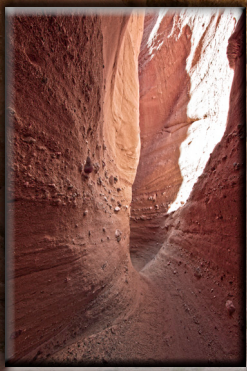
me with everything. She has cooked incredible meals and taken care of my every need...She has been fantastic! This surgery has redefined the word "pain" for me. The first two weeks have been difficult but I am noticing a significant drop in pain going into the third week. I get around the house with the help of a walker and have gone outside and walked as far as three houses down the street and back a few times. I won't lie...that's a bitch... but necessary!

I have an appointment to see the surgeon this week at the three week mark to get the 50 or so staples removed from the 10" incision. At that appointment we will discuss when to go back to finish the 5 hour

thoracic spine surgery, which gets a little harder to look forward to after experiencing this, but nonetheless necessary.

At the time of this writing I cannot say whether things are any better since the surgery was so invasive and the pain and swelling from that has not gone away yet but I am hopeful that this will make a big change for the better in my life especially as it relates to standing and walking. Thanks to all of you for the nice thoughts and prayers and especially for hanging with Bird and supporting her.

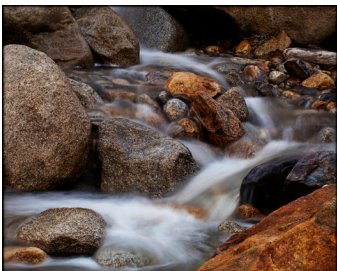
WEEKEND IN THE DESERT



IT'S SPRING TIME!!!

Yes, it's that time of year when; Grandpa's thoughts turn to Padres baseball; many of us are worrying about taxes; and the college going kids are all thinking about one thing... Spring Break!

Well why should they have all the fun? So Karla and I set off for our own spring break weekend in the desert. We packed up the motor home and on Friday the 25th set off for the Anza Borrego State park (I had taken the day off but Karla had to work so she joined me later that evening.)



Even though it rained all the way through the Cuyamaca Mountains and half way down Banner Grade; by the time I got to the desert the sun was shining and the flowers were blooming!

We had a nice RV spot a mile from the visitor's center and after setting up camp, I walked over to see where the hot spots for the flowers were. Turns out, that just west of the center was a great spot for viewing. Now I have never been to see the "bloom" as they call it and this year is touted as a "below average" year. But I found many areas full of yellow, red, purple, green and white flowers. Everything was so green it was hard to tell you were actually in the desert.

The next day Karla and I set off for the eastern borders of the park to hike up a slot

canyon a friend at work told me about. It was a wonderful morning, sunny, blue sky, and a gentle wind, if you can call 20-mph wind gentle. But once we got into the canyon we were sheltered from the



wind and had a wonderful hike up to the fallen arch and then into the slot canyon. It gets really narrow at points and only one person at a time can traverse the path. But most of the time you are walking up a wash with 50-75' canyon walls on each side.

That evening we watched the sun set over the Laguna Mountains as we hiked up a

flowing river, lined on each side by many colorful flowers. One thing you should understand is that different flowers, bloom at different times. The ocotillo plants that normally look like dead sticks, were in full bloom with bright green leaves and red honeysuckle flowers. The yellow daisies were already past their peak and the cactus flowers were just starting to open up.

It is only an hour's drive from our house to the Visitors Center (in the car, the motor home takes a bit longer) and I now am sorry we haven't been out in years past. It was a wonderful weekend and we enjoyed it so much that Karla, I and Katy drove back out the following Sunday for a one day visit. By then the cactus flowers were in full bloom and we had a great time taking pictures and enjoying the sights.