

# The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch The News

April 2012

RFNL 254



# Jeff Turns

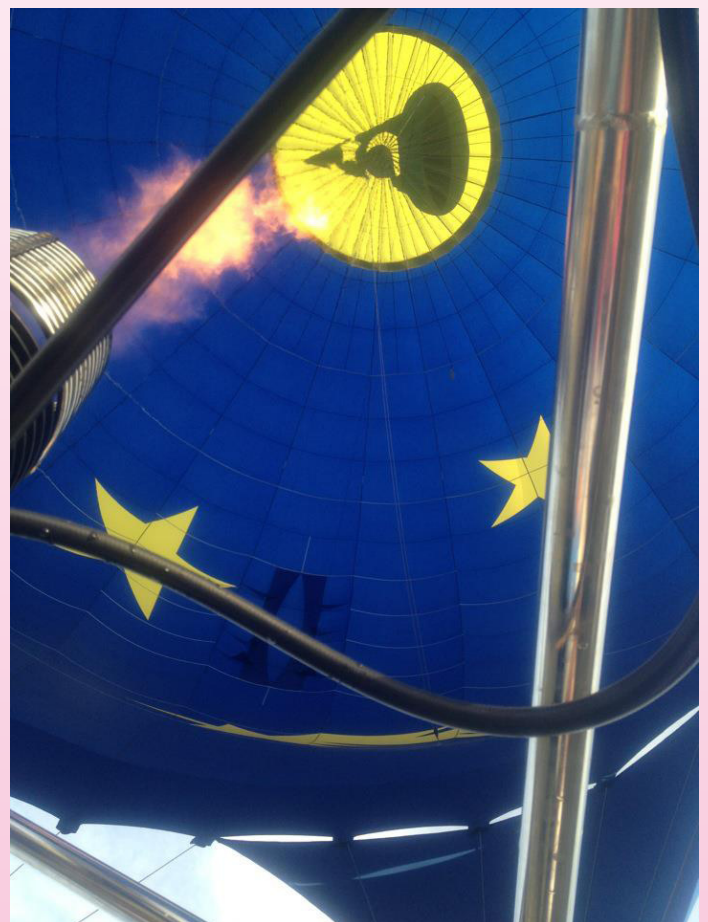


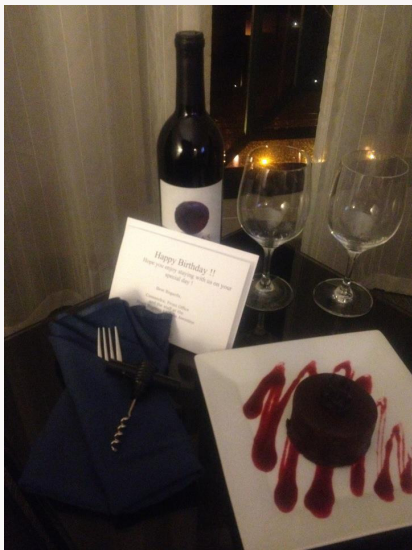
# Happy Birthday Jeff !!



On Friday, March 23rd, Jeff officially became a senior citizen by turning 60. To celebrate this momentous occasion, Carol had a full day's worth of activities set up. Most involved going to every place that offered "discounts" to men of Jeff's status in life, like Denny's senior's breakfast platter, soft eggs (easy on the teeth), prune juice (easy on the gut) and fresh fruit just to keep him "regular".

Seriously, Carol had a wonderful day planned for Jeff which started out with a hot air balloon ride over the northern parts of San Diego. Carol tells us how she was "not all that comfortable" with being that high so she didn't take a lot of pictures. But they both





had a wonderful time and enjoyed the view as they floated along on a beautiful Southern California day.

Next it was dinner at the Americana Restaurant in Del Mar, where the couple enjoyed a romantic dinner for two. That evening they took a mini vacation for two at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in La Jolla where the management provided a nice dessert and a bottle of wine so the couple could toast the night away.

The next day included sleeping in, very late, breakfast and some other “keep Jeff Busy” activities to distract him from the real plan that was coming together back home, which of course was a surprise party in his honor. So, later that evening, when Carol and Jeff came back home, the house was filled with friends and family all wishing the “Old Man” a happy birthday.

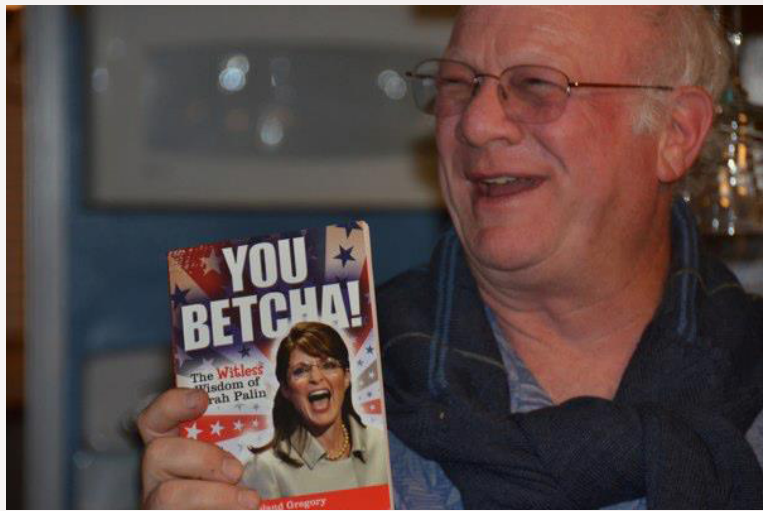


The house was decorated with all kinds of photos of Jeff from throughout his life. In fact, there was a big “60” made up entirely of pictures of him. Jeff’s brother, Pete, made a video entitled “60 Years of Jeff...” We asked Pete and Carol what genre the video would fit into like: Comedy, Drama, Fantasy, Action, etc. and of course her answer was all of the above!

Jeff received many gifts but his favorite was a book about Sarah Palin. It turns out that Jeff is somewhat of a Palin follower. It just seems he can’t get enough material on her. We are told that every time he reads one of her quotes he gets all misty-eyed and can’t even find words to describe his feelings. Next time you’re around Jeff, just ask him his opinion on the lady and he will be glad to let you know exactly how he feels!

It was a wonderful party and it topped off a great birthday weekend for Jeff. What better way to move into that next stage of life (you know, walkers, drooling, telling the grandkids to pull your finger) then to spend it with the people you love.

Happy Birthday Jeff! And many more!



# Letters From The Past

By Listy Gillingham



**We** have all heard the story about Mom's (Edith's) travel to America and her marriage to Dad (Frank Jr.). As I became a parent, I often wondered how in the world would Mom's parents agree to let her leave Iran to marry Dad and let him sweep her away into a country they knew very little about. Going through some old letters and papers (Bob thought I needed to be productive while immobile), it was clear that Mom was determined and played her hand very well in convincing her Dad to let her go. There were a few surprises (not huge) but worthy of mentioning from reading these documents. So here's what I gathered from a few old letters saved by Dad.

First I share a bit of context provided by Mom. Frank was stationed in the Middle East during WWII. He met Edith at an Embassy party; later he went to see Edith in Tabriz and asked her to marry him. He gave her the only ring he had, his Citadel College ring. Mom suggested he wait to ask her father until she could smooth the way. She asked her mother who asked her father. Unfortunately, he said no, she was too young at just barely 18 and told her to give back the ring. Mom said that the ring didn't matter as they had pledged their hearts- it was just a matter of time.

Frank returned to the US after his tour of duty. Letters went back and forth. Most of them were from Mom's Dad, Theodore, but written by his son, Bryon, who had a better command of English. On January 25, 1946 Mom wrote a letter to Dad talking about her disappointment in not being able to get an earlier passage to America (almost a year delay) because the American Consul could not make the arrangements quicker. Mom's Dad, Theodore, wanted Mom to attend school in England where her brother, Michael, lived. But in her letter she says she flat out refused to go to England as her wish was to go to America and learn "the America way of living while

improving her English."

She continued planning by suggesting that Frank ask his father, Frank Sr. to write a letter to her Dad, Theodore asking for Edith to be their daughter-in-law. Mom stated this was the traditional way and her father was very much a traditionalist.. She then asked Frank to let her know if his parents were willing to do this by sending a telegram with this coded message- "Merica Teheran for Edith approved." That signal would then give Edith more time to prepare her father for the letter that

was likely to come. She stated, "My Father will never consent to our marriage without your parent's approval." Mom even typed her letter and sent it twice to make sure Dad got it.

While I didn't find the letter Frank Sr. wrote, I did find the letter in response, written by her brother Romulus to Frank Sr. acknowledging the receipt of his letter on March 25th. He responded back on May 4, 1946 (can you imagine Mom being patient enough to wait for close to 5 months to get this approval?). Again, it contained a few extra facts I didn't know. Theodore mentioned meeting Frank and how he was "correct and polite" at all times. He also noted that he felt it was his "duty towards the soldiers, who were their allies, to allow him time to spend in their house." He stated he "ignored the interest Frank had shown for his daughter" and called it a "childish young people's affair and nothing more." He said, once Frank left, that was the end of it all.

He noted his intention was to send Edith to England to spend time with her brother and how Mom stated that she would prefer to go the U.S. and then brought up Frank again. At this point, he gets reflective...as parents do, and begins to talk about his ideas and hopes for his children. He states that he is a Greek Christian Orthodox and that though Protestants have his deepest esteem, he always wished that his sons and daughters married a Greek. He stated "he was of the opinion that when somebody marries, it's forever and understanding between people from the same country is easier." He then stated that he had no success with this wish as his two sons and eldest daughter had all married foreigners yet, he admitted, he liked them all (Go innocent bystanders!). He then noted, "even after a child passes their 20th year, it is tradition to have both parent's consent to the marriage. He states that the letter written in March demonstrates their consent and he would not hesi-

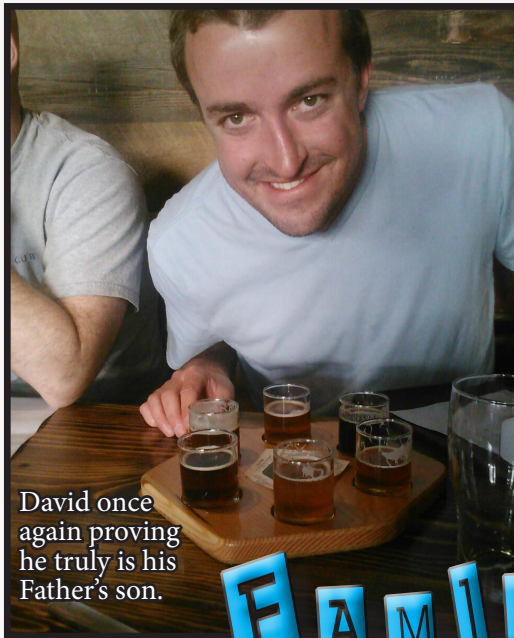
tate anymore. He then goes into the details of Mom's departure to the U.S. and signing her up to attend the University of Dubuque as she would need to learn the language of her future husband. He says that she will likely visit their family and "after some time (I should prefer to wait at least one year, and your son and my daughter continue to feel they can live together and be happy, they then could declare the marriage." He then noted that Edith should not be a financial challenge for her husband as she will have her own dowry (wow...I wanted one of those). Theodore then states that he is 62 years old and his wife is 56, and they both liked to travel. He noted that it may be possible to visit America if they were feeling up to it in the future (They never came). He closed the letter by saying, "I love very much Edith and my only preoccupation is to see her happy and your letter (from Frank Sr.) gave me the impression that if the marriage would be declared, she would be happy with Frank Jr." (Little did he know how happy they both would be).

On Oct. 29, 1946, there was one last letter from Theodore (written by Byron) to Frank Sr. stating again that he wanted the marriage to wait at least a year. He then stated that his eldest son, Romulus, had several letters from Edith asking her brother to get her Dad to give an earlier consent (for the Christmas holidays). Theodore was not thrilled with the idea, but understood that finding lodging for Edith away from Frank, while she was in school, wasn't easy. He admitted to not understanding the American way of life, but gave in by giving his consent to the earlier wedding. The 2nd page to the letter was gone, but it does explain his final acceptance and offers assistance in preparing the furnishings for their future home.

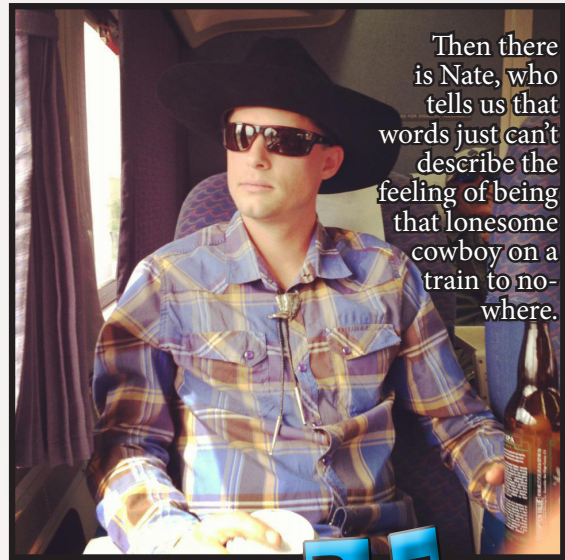
As a parent, with a daughter living in Spain, reading and summarizing the letters was helpful in learning a little bit about the grandparents I never met and my understanding of their ability to let go of their youngest child. It was obvious to me that they (all four parents) loved their children and wanted them both to marry and live happily ever after. Sixty-five years (plus a few months) after, it seems that all of their hopes and wishes (which we have for all of OUR children) continue to live on through Mom's and Dad's marriage commitment. A true love story that took persistence, hard work (8 kids), and everlasting love to endure the challenges that the many, many, years of married life provide.

Holden says:

“Happy Birthday Grandpa and Daddy!”



David once again proving he truly is his Father's son.



Then there is Nate, who tells us that words just can't describe the feeling of being that lonesome cowboy on a train to nowhere.

# FAMILY SHORTS

A surprise visit to Dusty on his 27th Birthday, found Jeff, Lauren, Carol and Holden in Danville!



It's amazing watching Benicio grow. Seeing the look of awe and wonder in his eyes as he discovers the world around him is the greatest gift I could ever ask for. He has taught me the meaning of the word "joy."  
- Miguel with Jessica Rios



Brett and Mandy, who now live in the LA area, after moving back from New York, got back into the California lifestyle by running the Hollywood half marathon with Mandy's sister Annie. Another pair of runners hit the streets of California!

Ana reports that poor Craig has to go to Tahiti for work and maybe Spain too. Please send prayers for him, his life is so hard. Craig on the other hand decided to shave his head in anticipation of more tattoos.



Rich was able to enjoy a mini Citadel reunion with his classmate Dennis at the Sheerwater Restaurant located in the Hotel Del Coronado. They even had a bottle of wine from their 35th class reunion to enjoy afterwards.



Here is Corbin proving that real men can wear pink flowers whenever they want to!!





## Robert and Karla Vacation in the Desert

Spring is here and the flowers must be blooming somewhere, but unfortunately for me and Karla, there were not very many of them during our annual 4-day trip to the Anza Borrego State Park. Fortunately, we had rented a 4X4 jeep to take with us. So armed with a jeep trail map, off we went to visit the many off road sites that the park has to offer.

We decided to visit the mud caves which were an easy drive down a gravel road past the Hollywood and Vine sign (yes there really is a street sign in the middle of the desert), left at the wash and follow it on up until you get to the caves. The park has one of the largest areas of mud caves in the United States. They really are amazing we went through one that had to be at least 200 yards long and really dark!

After the caves we decided to follow the wash to what the map called a "drop off". Little did we know that, in jeep trail lingo drop off is exactly what the trail does! So down we went and found yet another drop off, well going down is better than up, so down we went again. Looking back it was fun but at the time it was a little scary, after all, if we got stuck we would be literally up the creek without a jeep.

Once we got to the bottom we found ourselves in a really rocky riverbed. But the jeep just kept right on going and we finally found our way out. Emboldened by our experience, we went on to try river crossings and even went up the "Granit Staircase" which is nothing but a bunch of granite rocks and boulders that form a sort of stairway up and over a mountain. Needless to say we had a great time!

But all too soon it was time to come home, even worse, it was snowing in the mountains between us and Alpine. The good news was that Karla was driving the jeep. The bad news is that I had to drive the motorhome. Actually it was a very easy drive up Banner grade, where it started to snow, then back down Hwy 79, where it snowed most of the way, and on to Interstate 8 then Alpine.

We had a great trip and both agreed that having the jeep with us made it even better. Which leads us into the next story...





## Robert Buys A New Jeep

Well after 11 years and 300,000 miles with my old Acura I finally decided to get a new car. At first I was just going to buy a new Acura as I really did enjoy my old one. But... you just can't easily tow an Acura behind a motor home and it's just not an off road vehicle.

For the past year or so Karla and I have been renting Jeeps during our vacations so we can car hike. We have enjoyed it so much that we decided to get a 4X4 Jeep of our own. It started out simple enough, first it was we'll just buy a used 2 door, something just to have fun in. Then, well maybe we need a four door because there really isn't much room in the 2 door. Next, we should really buy a new one so we won't have to worry about breaking down in the middle of nowhere. Finally it was why not just get a really nice one that I could drive every day and get rid of the Acura that had served me so well.

But I am not the first in the family to drive a Jeep, Grandpa Frank had one while he was in the army back in 1943. Almost 70 years later, when he saw my Jeep he instantly knew that it was just like the one he drove... well almost! A few things were different but still a Jeep will always be a Jeep!



## JEFF CELEBRATES 40th BIRTHDAY SURPRISE PARTY FAILS TO FOOL WISE OLD DADDY DUE TO TELEPHONE CALL MADE BY CATERER

**PARTY THEME IS "OVER-THE-HILL OLYMPIAD"**

Sunday, March 22, was a special day in the life of the Benesch family, because on the following day Jeff reached the grand old age of 40! In order to celebrate this event, Carol organized a carefully thought out surprise party, complete with secret invitations. In order to fool Jeff, there was a Benesch family dinner party on Saturday evening, and Jeff assumed (wrongly) that the surprise would take place then. He was somewhat disappointed when the dinner party was just that. The carefully contrived plan for Sunday was based on the concept that Carol was needed to help out at Greene School, along with Margaret, and that Bud would join Jeff at the Benesch home, to watch the UCLA basketball game. In the meantime, the guests would gather at the party site. Due to inclement weather, the location was moved from Tuxedo Park to indoors at Greene School. The plan was that when all was ready Margaret would call Jeff to tell him that Carol had fallen off of a ladder and hurt her back. The extent of her injury was not known, and Jeff was needed at once, to decide if medical assistance was necessary. Just before this clever plan was initiated, however, it happened that the caterer for the lunch to be served at the party called the Benesch home and ask Jeff how many guests were expected for the party. This tended to somewhat diminish the potential for a surprise. Hence, when the call came from Margaret Jeff responded by saying he would rush right over, as soon as it was half time at the basketball game. True to his word, Jeff eventually rushed in, by the rear door, wearing a wig, and disguised as a medical technician, complete with a toy first aid kit. By that time it was apparent that nobody had been fooled by all of this action, and the party then was able to go ahead as planned. In addition to Bernie and Audry plus children from Thousand Oaks, the Riel family was represented by Grandpa and Grandma Riel, Margaret, Bud, Richard, Liz and Listy. Many friends of the family also were there, including the SD Soccers star goalie, Victor Nogueira, who is a friend of Jeff.



**GRANDMA RIEL IDENTIFIES JEFF DISGUISED AS EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN**

As soon as birthday greetings had been expressed, the game sessions began. Because of the indoor location, many of the planned games were canceled, but an active goal kicking contest was carried out, followed by a sports trivia question contest. Next on the agenda was a delicious lunch, catered by El Pollo Loco. After everyone had eaten the cake cutting ceremony was performed, and dessert was enjoyed by all. The final portion of the party was the opening of the gifts, which included some humorous references to the onset of old age by the guest of honor. Thus the party was concluded, and all agreed that being 40 isn't so bad as long as it is an excuse for a party such as this one. **HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JEFF, AND MANY HAPPY RETURNS!**

### **NEWS ON THE NEXT 40th CELEBRATION**

We have an update from Francie on the status of the great social event of the year, the Frances Forty Phoenix Frolic, scheduled for the week-end

of July 17-19. Details were printed in the August, 1991 issue of RFLN, and all is going as planned. Approximately twenty relatives and friends have signed up, and Francie is busy planning an exciting week-end of activities. There is still room for a few more participants, so if you are interested call Francie at 565-2521, or Brenda, at 280-1934 or 293-7233.

### **NEW CAR FEVER HITS FAMILY**

The new car bug bit both Grandpa/Grandma and the Castro family in March. Grandpa decided that the time had come to replace the old Toyota. In true scientific fashion he undertook a lengthy study of all the options available, using the book Consumers Guide 1992 Cars. This publication defines most of the new cars in detail, including specifications, cost, and comments on performance, quality, etc. After a selection of several candidates was made, we visited dealers, looked at and drove the models chosen. We were much helped by