



*Happy
Birthday
Carol!*



Carol Celebrates her 60th Birthday!



Jeff knew that he couldn't let Carol's 60th birthday pass without some kind of party to commemorate the big event. So he decided to host a tropical themed party that would be held on the patio dining area at BJ's restaurant in La Mesa.

So on August 2nd family and friends gathered at the restaurant to celebrate the big event. And by family we also include all of Carol and Jeff's kids and grandkids as Jessica, Miguel, Benny and the twins were all in town for the event. - By twins we mean the 3rd generation twins Sofie and Matty. Maybe it's time we designate that the use of "Twins" is to mean Listy and Birdy, "Twins2" will be Nate and Chris and then "Twins3" are, of course, Sofie and Matty.

Jeff's selection of a tropical theme was perfect as even the weather cooperated by giving us some

much needed rain but truly a tropical storm as the temperatures were well in to the high 70's. Fortunately the patio area was covered so there was no need to cover up from the rain.

The party started about 4:00pm with many guests scurrying in from the rain. Carol was running a bit late as she had the Twins3 with her and they needed a little changing if you get our drift. So most everyone was there when Carol arrived and were able to give her a big welcome. As she was being congratulated for reaching the very young age of 60, she had a sash placed on her that read "Another year of Fabulous" and of course she had to wear her 60th year tiara as well.

Soon everyone was happily chatting and catching up on all the latest happenings. But it didn't take long for all the grandkids to steal the attention of





the adults. It truly is amazing how many new kids we have in the 4th generation of the Riel family. Nine new ones in the last year alone have joined the group and many have started to walk and even say a word or two. It really was a lot of fun to see the progress these kids have made in just a few months.

It wasn't too long before the food; salad, great pizza, and pasta, were served, and we all sat down to enjoy it. During this time Jeff arranged for a video of Carol's life to be shown. It documented her "many" years from growing up on Lyndon road, to her role as grandmother 5 times over.



It was really nice to have so many of the family members there and the RFNL photographers took the opportunity to get plenty of family shots as you can see by the pictures in this article. It was a real treat to have the entire Benesch clan available for a family picture. Besides having all her kids and grandkids with her, I think getting a complete family photo was Carol's favorite birthday present.

To top things off, Jeff had a very nice cake made and we all sang happy birthday to Carol a video of which is available at Riel.org. Note to the family: if you're looking for that perfect family gift for Riel Bowl this year, you might want to consider group singing lessons, we really need it!

The party was a big success and we all thank Jeff for hosting such a wonderful event. Everyone there had a really great time and can hardly wait for the next "Benesch Bash".



Baby Number #2, Grandbaby #6 Is on the way !

OK, so here I am sitting at Carol's birthday party and I notice that Lauren has a small but definitely noticeable poof in her stomach area. So I lean over to Karla and ask, "Is she pregnant?" After all, just because I am editor of the RFNL it's not like I am first in the food chain of news in this family. So I just figured maybe I missed the memo. But Karla told me that she didn't hear any news either.

Hmmm what to do? It's not like you can just go up and ask "Hey are you pregnant?" I mean after all what if she wasn't? Most likely, Uncle Robert would be stricken from the Christmas card list! However, being the so called family reporter I felt it was my duty to check the story out, but unfortunately my best source of news (Listy and Birdy) were not in attendance (Listy was on vacation and Birdy was not feeling well). What else to do? I could ask Carol, but again what if I'm wrong? I could literally wind up with cake on my face!

Fortunately, I didn't have to ask as Dustin and Lauren made the announcement that they were expecting number 2 on Valentine's Day. So now we have three more 4th generation kids on the way. A boy in December (Keith's #3), a boy in January (Lane's #2) and Dustin and Lauren's #2 (sex unknown as of this point) in February. Congratulations to all and thank God I left the party without getting a black eye!



Runny Nose Department,

Bruce's August Update

Well it seems as though it has been a while since I offered up an update on my on-going medical crapola. So much has transpired over the past few months it is hard to filter what is new, what is pertinent and, frankly, what won't bore you to death!

You have all seen Facebook pictures so telling you that the last 5 years have taken their toll is probably not necessary. The trajectory of my overall condition shows a serious decline so this update will just cover the past couple months.

Most all of you know that I took 8 weeks off from work as a test. I needed to know that I was not exacerbating my problems by working too much or by adding more stress etc. After the 8 weeks was up I felt confident that I wasn't making anything any worse and I recognized that I certainly hadn't improved any. I can be miserable at work and stay busy or remain at home and be miserable and bored! I choose working. I am very fortunate that my employer is willing to work with my schedule of chemo, IVIG and doctor appointments that keep me away for 5 to 8 days per month and sometimes more.

Honestly I have lost count of the number of hospital ER visits I've endured; but between shortness of breath, heart problems and kidney failure there have been a few. Two months ago I went for my routine blood tests and when my doctors got the results they went into DEFCON 4. I got a call from my cardiologist and my rheumatologist urging me to head to the ER immediately because too many things were out of control to treat on an outpatient basis. I caved and went in. As is typical they kept me for three days, pulled off a ton of fluid, reversed the renal failure and released me with nothing really fixed. I consider it my 3 day spa visit!

A month later my cardiologist called following more routine blood work and when she couldn't reach me, she called Birdy. She told her that my blood sodium level was dangerously low and that this was an emergency situa-



tion. I was not to drive for risk of heart attack, seizure, passing out etc. She insisted that Birdy drive to my work to pick me up and immediately take me to the ER where there would be instructions left to admit me and begin treatment. When the Bird called me (scared to death) and told me all of that...well I won't tell you exactly what I said but it is two words beginning with B and with S. I agreed to going into the hospital but I was not going to play their silly "emergency" game. I finished what I was doing at work and drove myself home, took a shower, had dinner and then Birdy drove me to the ER. After three or four days they got me out of "danger" and let me go home. I don't remember what happened next since it all becomes a blur but I was back a few days later for another three days. You would think I would look better with all these "spa" days!

For the last seven or eight years I have had the same rheumatologist. She has an incredibly cold personality and I have never liked her much since she seldom offered new meds, trials, additional testing etc. I have always done the research and brought suggestions on medications to try or tests to run. She was always willing to try my suggestions but I often wondered if things would be better if she was doing some research, after all she went to medical school not me. Finally she pissed me off for the last time and I fired her! Damn that felt good! I have to admit that Birdy had been telling me to do it for a long time but I was always reluctant. I was assigned a new rheumatologist and had my first appointment with him a month later on the "Thursday from hell."

Since this was a new doctor, Birdy wanted to meet him. We went in at 9:00 on a Thursday and met with a young, good looking, well spoken Asian doctor. I was impressed that he had obviously spent a lot of time reading my medical file and had a ton of my medical history confined to memory. He kicked off the conversation with a huge dose of reality which sort of chopped both Birdy

and me off at the knees. He wanted us to understand that my prognosis is not a good one and didn't want either of us to hold any false hope of me getting better. He went on to say that they have thrown every known treatment at me and acknowledged that nothing is working. That simply means I have the worst version of a myopathy one can have but we knew that. Not surprisingly, all he can do for me is to help control symptoms and pain. There was no sugar coating to anything he said (which I actually liked a lot). He wants to get me off some of the meds that are not working



to reduce my overall toxicity, so we started with one of the chemo drugs that was making me nauseous every morning. Glad to see that one gone! When we walked out Birdy was a little teary eyed from getting (everything she already knew) thrown at her in one big concentrated dose of reality. That was the start of the "Thursday from hell."

I also had a 3:00 appointment scheduled with interventional pain management on that same day. This is a department within the anesthesia department where they treat patients with chronic pain. Again, Birdy wanted to be at this appointment. I was being evaluated for a neuro-stimulator to be implanted in my spinal cord to block or confuse pain signals in my low back. This appointment went similarly to the rheumatology appointment earlier in the day. The anesthesiologist explained that because they had removed the back portion of ten of my vertebrae there was no bone left to secure the wires to. So that led to a lot of questions and ultimately I asked "What can you do to control my pain?" to which he answered "I'm sorry there is nothing we can do for you." My only options are very strong pain meds (dilaudid) which I hate because of how stupid it makes me feel... or live with the pain. Most days I choose the pain

but when I hit the wall I medicate. It all made for a super crappy day to hear twice that there is nothing they can do to make things more tolerable. This sort of news seems to have a bigger negative impact on Birdy than it does on me so we went out and shared a bottle of wine that evening... anesthesia so-to-speak!

There is no doubt that this disease is kicking my butt pretty well. The muscle weakness is progressively worsening in my lower back and along with the nerve scaring and impingement means I'm only able to stand for a very brief time. My legs are shaky and weak so I get wobbly and find I need a cane to help with balance. Some days I look like a drunk when I first get up. The heart is a bit of a mess but it still works! My muscles are getting worse for breathing, chewing, swallowing. The heart muscle itself is weakening so I am huffing and puffing like an old steam locomotive with the slightest of exertion. I find that if I push it I start having SVT's (supra ventricular tachycardia) which has led too many times to ambulance rides and hospital admissions. I want to be clear that despite what the hospital says by virtue of my ridiculously high "LACE score" <http://www.medpagetoday.com/HospitalBasedMedicine/RiskManagement/18741> I'm not on my last leg or circling the drain. I plan on hanging around a long time to watch my grandkids grow up...I just wish I could be a little more of a participant and less of a spectator some days!

This Aug4 was our 35th wedding anniversary. I am so lucky to have been blessed with such a perfect partner that puts up with all this crap and takes the best care of me you can ever imagine. We are heading to Napa on the 15th for three days to celebrate with our dear friends Holly and Rex. I got dinner reservations on the wine train for Saturday night and we plan on sampling onehellotalot of wine all weekend. Should be a good time feeding our livers. There will be plenty of pictures and a write-up to follow! So cheers to all for being so supportive during this rollercoaster ride that I call "life!"



Sorem Euro Trip IV

By Bret Sorem



It was Friday June 27th. Just like any other Friday to the rest of the world, but for me, it was anything but ordinary.

I called Big Al around 2 after ditching the office early. Though he could not see the smile on my face, I am damn sure he could hear it. He picked up the phone and I said. "WHO'S OFFICIALLY ON VACATION??? THIS GUY."

I was so happy. Just before that, I strutted out of the office, threw my hands up in the air like I was walking back out onto Petco Park Field after throwing a No-hitter. That's right, unfortunately none of us know what that feeling is like, 'cause the Padres have never thrown a no hitter. Just like you have no idea how I felt when I busted out of those doors, you can only imagine.

Fast forward to Monday morning landing in New York, I met up with the other cast members of this adventure. Big Al, AKA Alan Sorem, Chef Sorem, AKA Bryce Sorem, & Sickie, AKA Bridgette McCarthy. Now I know that is a horrible nickname for such a lovely lady, however Bridgette was just coming down with a killer cold that lasted

near the entirety of the trip, bad timing to get sick Bridgette!

Before seeing Bridgette, on the 2 hour car ride back to Hoboken, all us Sorems could talk about was scenarios...

HOLD UP, let me take a moment to explain the nature of our Euro trip. Yes, like before, we were hoping to hit as many bars as possible, and hoping to avoid any kind of imminent disaster. However, believe it or not, we Sorems have grown up a bit. We have another agenda that was not just focused on local bars and beers. We had a plan. That plan was to travel to Europe, and watch the last 5 games of the World Cup, in whatever country was playing, in hopes to watch the World Cup final in a European country.

Now granted, we would be watching all of those games in bars, but the difference is that we were not just going to bars to drink tasty local brews, we were going to bars to watch the World Cup, AND drink tasty local brews. Yes sir, we have matured.

Back to the car ride, there were four

games left to be played before we would figure out what country we were going to first. We had booked flights into Italy, but they got knocked out already, so our best hope was France & Switzerland. I hate to cheer for France, but I will make exceptions. And I'm sorry but Switzerland was not going to beat Argentina, so that was a lost cause. Both France and Germany won that Monday. Time to celebrate with two more European teams in the final 8.

Later that night, we had dinner at Commerce, the restaurant in the West Village where Bryce cooks at, which, as it turns out, was probably the best food I had on my entire trip. We had a guest star, Maria Sorem, who is a long lost cousin that just moved to New York. Actually the biggest difference between this Euro trip and our last one to the UK, was that instead of eating predominately at McDonalds, we ate out at nice restaurants almost every night.

After Chef Sorem cooked us some delicious steaks we moved on to a bar to meet my friends who came to bid us farewell. Where else would we go but

Revel, my old bar in the Meatpacking District, to have a few pints and shots of Jameson, and by a few I really mean like 7.

The next day, hung-over, but excited beyond belief because the USA vs. Belgium game actually mattered, I decide to try running off my slight head irritation by traveling along the boardwalk. It was a beautiful morning, I could smell victory, but I could also feel a knot bouncing in my head. Didn't make it much further than a mile before I surrendered.

The Hudson Hall was my choice to watch the two games, it was an amazing atmosphere despite the outcome. I don't want to go into it much more, however, I will get Belgium back later on this trip for the defeat they served us. Argentina won their game, USA lost ours. BOOO!!!!

Demoralized from defeat, yet thrilled for adventure, we departed JFK without too much of hassle. In typical Sorem fashion, Big Al claimed he was not able to check us in online and we almost missed our flight. We got ushered through the lines, though the only thing I had time to eat was either airplane food, gross, or McDonalds. Once in a while the universe throws you a nice fat change-up right down the middle. You just have take it when you can.

Flying in the 21 century is soooooo much better. Your own personal TV with "On Demand" new movies. Never again will I be able to fly overseas without Ryan Gosling or George Clooney, NEVER AGAIN.

This is where the Sorem/McCarthy trip got put on hold. I took a detour to Lake Como with Mandy, who has already been in Europe for 3 months. Obviously it was great to see her again. Those three days flew by like you wouldn't believe. Lake Como is definitely a place to see before you die.

The others went on to Cinque Terra and then Lyon France to watch the France Game. France lost. Big Al almost got his foot blown off by a firecracker, so they tried to tell me, but it was nothing more than a mere flesh wound.

Game Day 1 - France

Current Sorem Trip Country Wins: 0-1

After a pit stop in Torino to see her Brother Dan and the family, we went our separate ways, Mandy to Turkey, and off to Brussels for me to meet the other Three B's. We had Mussels in Brussels, which were quite good, and found a place to watch the Belgium/Argentina game.

Belgium lost, everyone was sad. I had my Messi Argentina Jersey underneath my sweatshirt. Just like it felt so good to watch the Brazilian fans cry on TV when they got beat 7-1 by Germany, it felt that good to watch the Belgian's cry. Ha-ha!!! That was for beating the USA! Though we did watch the Netherlands game later that night with some locals and got to celebrate with them.

Game Day 2 - Belgium

Current Sorem Trip Country Wins: 0-2

Let me also add that once we hit Belgium, it rained for about 9 of the 11 days left we had in Europe. And I brought 1 light sweater. Bummer.

We went on to stop in Bruges, a quaint town in Belgium. It rained the whole time, though we did stop to see one of the few Michelangelo Sculptures out-



side of Italy! It is called the Madonna. Look at that, the Sorems doing something besides drinking. Ok back to the beer.

We moved on to Amsterdam. I remember it being a little dirtier last time. Our first day would be one of the two sunny days of the trip. We took a nice boat ride through the canals and



had a beer while drifting along. One thing I will say that sucks about Amsterdam is parking. We paid 45 Euro's to park on the street for 24 hours. And that was not like the only expensive block that is how it is EVERYWHERE. I can think of a few things you can do in Amsterdam that don't even cost 45 Euros. Luckily we chose to park the car instead.



Finally we woke up with another Game Day ahead of us. We were off to Dusseldorf, which is probably the best night we had, in my opinion, all around, minus the fact that our hostel leaked from the window and soaked my phone. Thank god I have the Samsung G5 Active or I would be out a camera for the trip (Endorsement check please).

We went to this bar called Brauerei Zum Schluessel. It's in the middle of the town on a street with a plethora of bars. This bar however, had a secret

language that we found out before. It is very similar to McSorley's in New York, without the piercing smell of urine and grimy decor. They only served 1 beer, dark, that is a local brew. The trick is, if you want more beer, you do nothing. The waiter comes back around every five minutes with a tray full of mugs, if your beer is almost empty, he plops down a fresh one, makes a mark on your coaster and moves on to the next. This was the ONLY waiter in a beer house full of 200 people, and I NEVER waited for a beer! This is what you call a system that works efficiently.

If you did not want a beer, you were to place your coaster on top of your beer to clearly indicate that you were tapping out like a sissy. I think we had about 30 beers altogether and I have the coaster to prove it.

This was the Semifinals game between Germany and Brazil. Germany trounced Brazil 7-1. It was like the Riel teens VS. the Riel Adults in their later years, Adults never stood a chance.

Game Day 3 - Germany

Current Sorem Trip Country Wins: 1-2

That night was also Bryce's Birthday, July 8th. We met this amazing lady named Bubsy AKA Manuela. She is a local, and she was probably the most entertaining person we met and drank with on the trip. If I could have packed her in our bags and took her around with us, I would have. She was kind enough to give Bryce her Deutschland Scarf that she had been wearing around her neck and which looked old enough to be a family heirloom, as long as he promised to wear it in Netherlands the next day.



The next day we hit up some shopping. Bridgette got herself a nice coat and Bryce got a dope G-Star jacket that I am jealous of, thanks to Big Al and Bridgette as a B-day present. Oh yeah, and it rained the whole time.

On to Maastricht, Netherlands. Another small town that I would defiantly go back to. We had a great hostel on the river, and a short walk through a cool park, in the rain, to town center where we watched the game. The town center was surrounded by a wall, why I don't know.

Netherlands/Argentina. Yes, I again had my Messi Jersey underneath my sweater. And yes, Argentina won! We watched it inside a bar about as big as Uncle Robert's family room but with 2 hundred people instead of 40. We all got very comfortable with our neighbors.

Game Day 4 - Netherlands

Current Sorem Trip Country Wins: 1-3

The next few days in Switzerland were some of my favorite. I drove us about eight hours through Germany and France. I got up to 170 KM per hour in our little Fiat. I am not sure it will ever go that fast again.

Bryce insisted we stop and have a fine dining lunch in France since they did not get to do it the last time they were there. Bridgette had some beef tartar, Bryce some Frogs legs, I had some fish and Big Al had some Pasta. The food was great, a little too much substance for lunch for me, but I was just along for the ride. The funny thing about that stop was I think we found a lady for Big Al, who seemed to enjoy his company. She was either the owner or the manager, and for some reason she took a liking to Big Al. Now the reason I am still a little unsure is that she also tried to pawn off her young 16 year old daughter on us/me. She brought out her daughter whom I guess makes the coffee, and introduced her to us and told us we can take her back with us to California. Now she may have been kidding, it was

lighthearted, but with a hint of seriousness. All in all, Big Al should go back to that restaurant and chase her down.

We continued on our way, minus the 16 year old French girl who loves One Direction. Made it to Interlaken. The water in the river and lake in this town was iceberg blue. I kid you not, it was just beautiful. The town had little water



fountains throughout the city for people to drink fresh water out of the river, and it was delicious. That night we ate at this Mexican food place, which was pretty authentic for being over there, just as they claimed to be. However, a fairly standard burrito that you could get from any 'burritos in California cost 30 Francs. HAHA ridiculous. We had fajitas.

The next day was one of the best sight-seeing days. We saw the inside of a glacier waterfall, some beautiful country side in the middle of the Alps, and a small town called Murren, that you can only get to by train or ski lift. Murren was definitely my favorite city that we visited. So peaceful, good restaurants, some hiking, I wish I was there for more than a few hours. Maybe next time.



We spend that night in a hotel in Zurich which was the only one we stayed in during our trip (hostels are where we normally stayed). We were only there for a short time, and thank god for that,

otherwise I would have come back broke. That city is the most expensive city I have ever been to.

WORLD CUP FINAL DAY

The culmination of our trip was upon us. The World Cup Finals, and YES, thank god a European team was in it, otherwise we all would have looked like idiots. We decided to sport our USA jerseys loud and proud. Our first stop was the infamous Hofbrauhaus. I think I had 96 ounces of beer before lunch. Three different parties came and went at our communal table while we held down the fort.



I made the bright decision to go home and nap, while Bryce Bridgette & Big Al, walked around a bit more.

We watched the World Cup Final on Leopold Street. Picture 5th Ave in New York, but instead of shops it was restaurants and bars, not necessarily big bars or restaurants but just a bunch of places lined up. The important thing to visualize is the size of the street. This place had about 50 thousand people in a 4 block radius, and it would easily triple before the night ended.

Game Day 5 - Germany

Current Sorem Trip Country Wins: 2-3

Germany won on an amazing goal in the 113th minute. That night was a night to remember, I have never experienced something quite like it. It was not like over the top crazy, it was just a huge celebration on the streets. There weren't any riots, no car fires, it



was just two hundred thousand people happier than you could imagine. I can only dream of experiencing something like that for our country, or our city. We had to walk about 40 minutes out of the area before we could cab it back to our place.

The next day, originally was just going to be a transit day, back to Milan, but it ended up being one of the best days of our trip. It did start out raining, but turned into a beautiful sunny day. I decided to take the other three B's to Bellagio, which is in Lake Como, because I thought they would love it, and it was on the way down to Milan, yet not that far out of the way. However what I didn't know, was that the small road we took, went straight over the top of the Alps.

I have never seen switch backs like this, even on golf courses. It was absolutely insane. A road like this would never exist in America. We drove by so many tiny, undiscovered towns on the way, stopped at a few for a photo or a beer, and made our way

to Bellagio. We took our car across a ferry, did some shopping, and then ate some delicious pizza.

That night in Milan was more of a pain. I remember not really liking that city too much and again, I was not impressed. It seems as if that city has construction everywhere that is not really being worked on, and has no end date. The shopping area was beautiful though. I am sure there are cool parts to Milan, but I have been there twice now, and haven't seen any.

All in all, that was it in a flash. We had a great time, saw some amazing places, and met interesting people. It is a great life lesson being out in the world experiencing new things.

I am so glad Francie and Big Al have taken us to so many places, and I can't wait for the next adventure. Look for the Video of the Sorem/McCarthy Euro Trip 2014 to hit the streets sometime when I get it finished, which could be in 2016.





Bob Gillingham Does it Again!

By Bruce Hartman

Well...he's been at it again! That Bob G. rates right up there with best of them! I'm thinking sainthood...Maybe even a contender as the next Pope! Let me break it down for you:

Listy was hanging out with the Bird (I know shocking, right?) and we were all talking. I mentioned that a project I had in mind was to build a raised planter box in which I could grow vegetables and herbs (culinary not recreational) without needing to bend over or kneel down. Listy keyed in on this idea and when she went home she convinced Bob that he needed to get right on this for me.

Bob asked me about my idea and asked that I sketch out what I had in mind. He showed up at my house the next morning with a pickup load of redwood lumber, his trusty tools and a “get-er-done” attitude. He banged out the rough boxes and left with the promise of returning the following weekend to complete the job.

What started in Bob’s mind as a simple half-day project quickly turned into consuming the following Saturday from early AM to 6PM. The finished products are awesome and are exactly what I had pictured in my mind’s eye.

Craig came over on Sunday and we went to Home Depot for potting soil, mulch, gravel etc. and returned home to fill the planters, install irrigation and ready them for the plants. I spent the rest of Sunday afternoon planting: Tomatoes, Basil, Chives, Oregano, Jalapenos, Cilantro, Sage and a Mexican dwarf lime tree.

Projects like this used to be something I loved to do on the weekends. My health has made this sort of thing impossible to do anymore and it was soooooo incredibly painful to only watch as Bob did everything! I had to fire him Saturday evening because he threatened to come back and do even more of the project.

It was so very nice of Bob do this and there is no THANK YOU big enough to say just how much I appreciate his help and moreover his friendship. I will have the most expensive tomatoes in all of San Diego but it is a lot of fun to watch them grow...

Thanks Bob, you’re the best!!!! ... Thanks also to Craig and Corbin (the garden hose man) ...and Josie, our cheerleader!





SHORTS

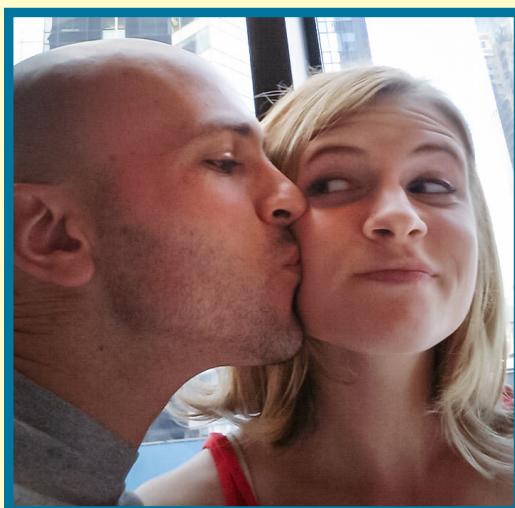
This June I had the opportunity to walk part of the Camino de Santiago. The Camino began as a religious pilgrimage to for those looking to witness the place (Santiago de Compostela) that supposedly houses Santiago's (Saint James) remains. Today, people from all over the world go on the pilgrimage for religious, athletic or touristic reasons. I was mostly interested in taking on the adventure because during my time in Spain I had heard so much about it and wanted to see the country in a unique way.

The Camino in its entirety is about 800km. I only had ten days so I decided I would aim for 200km. I started in a town called Ponferrada, which is 212km from Santiago. The first day, I was pretty nervous about knowing where to go, how I would feel walking with a backpack and if I would meet anyone. After the first ten minutes, I turned down a street and saw a stream of

backpackers and all my nerves were gone. That day I met a group of Spaniards who became my Camino family for most of the time.

I really enjoyed the experience of walking through the mountains, small villages and fields while chatting with people from all over the world. A typical day on the Camino involves waking up at 6, walking by 7, after a few hours stop to have breakfast, walk for a few more hours and arrive in the town where you decide to stay the night. I usually arrived by 12 or 1 and waited for the albergues to open.

Every place I stayed cost 6 euros per night. We would often go to lunch in the town and then make dinner at the albergue. It was a relaxing and incredibly rewarding time that I would absolutely recommend. I was definitely sorer than I have ever been and was often worried about how I was going to walk another 20km the next day, but it was amazing how after a few kilometers my body just adapted. I would love to go back and walk the whole thing- I'm sure it would be an even more rewarding experience! - Annie



We are doing really well, Karen's great, she has not started a blog yet, we've seen so many cool things I can't even begin to tell you but I'll post pictures with explanations. I messed up twice, once not charging my camera and once not putting it in my backpack so I missed out on some of the best photo ops, but well go back to each place again.

Prague is amazing! The TEFL house is OK, but the kitchen was filthy. There is a cleaning lady there 4 hours a week but I don't see what she does. I cleaned the kitchen yesterday since all the last group finished moving out and my group all moved in. We all agreed to keep everything much cleaner than the last group left the house. Our roommates are really nice. There are 6 from all around the USA and 2 from the UK that will be arriving today. We also have 1 Czech roommate named Oleg who is super cool.

Most people here speak English fairly well or at least a little so getting by is easy enough. Public transit is outstanding here so were able to get all around town easily. The group that just moved out told us that the program is very intense and rigorous so we will be fully committed to that starting tomorrow for the next month, then hopefully we get jobs and an apartment and can start having fun again from there. - Scott