



# Lyle And Cindy Get Married



By Birdy Hartman

Weddings are always special. You see two people stand before family and friends making vows that you know will last a lifetime. It always melts my heart and makes me think of how lucky my family has been in love because of the number of marriages we have had that have made it through the test of time. Not just in my siblings but all of the grandkids that have married continue show me that this family knows how to make a commitment and values relationships.

Many of you know that Lyle Allen and Cindy had a civil marriage over a year and a half ago. However, that was done out of necessity and was never meant to serve as their true wedding where they would stand before her parents and his. With Cindy's family living halfway around the world, planning a wedding that they could attend took time. There were visas to get and planes to catch. But finally, everything aligned as it should, and Lyle Allen and Cindy were married on August 24th, 2018 at The Ramona Castle. It was a lovely ceremony followed by a spirited wedding celebration! Everyone that attended was so joyful and excited to see these two get together. It is hard to pinpoint the best parts of this wedding weekend, so I will just have to give you Birdy's top 10 favorite moments.



1. Attending the rehearsal dinner given by Lyle at the Brigantine Restaurant in Poway. The food was wonderful, the setting was elegant, but the speeches given by the two proud dads was by far my favorite. Each of them spoke from the heart and beamed with pride for this special couple.

2. The party bus. It was such a treat to get to ride up to the wedding in this enormous stretch limousine bus with the bride, groom, wedding party and family members. It was just one more reason to share the excitement for the big day!

3. Seeing Cindy's dress for the first time. I was sitting up stairs with Big Al, Bridget and Carinda when the photographer hassled through with the bride in tow looking for another beautiful place to take her picture. Cindy looked absolutely radiant and filled with the love of her day that was about to occur.

4. Witnessing the "first look." The photographer was directing Cindy to go down the stairs so that Lyle Allen and her could enjoy a little private moment before the action really got crazy. Lyle Allen was standing alone on a platform while Cindy majestically walked towards him in her flowing white dress. It was so sweet to see her gently tap Lyle Allen on the shoulder and we (from afar) got to witness his beaming smile!

5. The vows. There is never anything better than when a couple writes special vows to be said to one another. It makes the whole gathering go quiet while we hear the words that are so meaningful between them. The most touching part of the wedding was when Cindy choked on her words and began to tear up. Her dad immediately sprung from his chair to hug his daughter and then gave Lyle Allen a warm embrace! It was clear for all to see how much he loves his only daughter.





6. The Champagne toasts. Ok....toast are always fun but let's face it, when you have a Jeroboam bottle to get the party going, you know it is going to be a fun wedding!

7. The Wedding Dance. Seeing Lyle Allen dance with his mom was so special for me because I clearly remember the feeling of doing that with two of my sons. There is something extremely special about that moment in time for me and now for Lyle's Allen's mom, Jane. However, Cindy took the father/daughter dance to a new level of love. She began to dance with her dad and her mom....and then soon invited her aunt, uncle and cousins. It was heartwarming to see her entire family going around and around in a joyful circle laughing and smiling. Truly a favorite for me!



8. The Party Bus Home. Maybe that wasn't a favorite because it meant the night was over. But the look of happiness in everyone's face brought this party to a wonderful conclusion.



9. The after-wedding family luncheon. The next day, Lyle invited the Riel clan and Cindy's family to his place for a special party. It was a little touch and go when the caterer had called to say that he was in a horrible accident and would not be there to help us for this event. With an hours' notice, Chef Bryce jumped into action and saved the day with his homemade guacamole, bruschetta to die for and ceviche. He was our hero and certainly my favorite nephew!!!

10. The best and most memorable in my mind was missed by most of you. At the conclusion of our luncheon Cindy's family presented us with some very thoughtful gifts. Lyle received a hand embroidered tie that is more valuable to us than gold. His sister, Leslie, and I received beautiful silk scarfs also handmade. Brett, Carinda, Bryce and Bridget were given their names in calligraphy done by Cind

# *Honeymoon in Kauai!*



**By Annie Mulholland**

We had the best time on our honeymoon in Kauai! Everyday was a combination of hike, sit on the beach, snorkel, eat delicious food, repeat. We couldn't have asked for a better way or place to spend our honeymoon and are so lucky to have had the opportunity to go there!



Thank you so much to Aunt Birdy for lending us her beautiful condo in Princeville! Some of our favorites from the trip include hiking the sleeping giant, which leads to the top of a mountain with almost 360 views of the island. We also loved the secret falls mud hike/ kayak. Turns out I am a terrible kayak-er despite Kevin's efforts to teach me how. But I felt cool so that's all that matters. We also LOVED shave ice, which is just an icee with ice cream on the bottom but tastes like heaven. My favorite was also the chickens running around everywhere and the roosters waking us up in the morning. I swear I am a farm girl at heart and I one day dream to make chickens running around my reality (we'll see how that goes over with Kevin).



Kevin had never snorkeled before so that was a fun adventure and we even saw a little puffer fish! Our biggest adventure was taking a helicopter tour over the island, which was slightly terrifying but an amazing way to see the island. I swear I felt like the pilot was going to fly us right into the mountains but I guess he knew what he was doing. We survived!



A really special moment was getting to see where Lyle and Francie got married in the Waimea Canyon; it was SUCH a beautiful lookout point and I could absolutely feel Francie's love and beauty in that place. We had just the best time relaxing and exploring and want to go back ASAP- Oh wait- we are!!! See ya in 2019, Kauai! Gillingham-Keith-Mulholland's are coming for ya!

On a different note, we want to thank everyone so much for helping us celebrate our wedding! We are so blessed to have so many friends and family come to show us their love and support and make our wedding so memorable!



Thank you especially to all the helper bees: Uncle Robert, for an AMAZING video capturing our lives and love and for taking such beautiful pictures all weekend; Aunt Birdy and Uncle Lyle, for letting us take over their house, providing food, taking pictures, etc. etc. etc. the list never ends; Aunt Carol & Uncle Jeff, for helping make our wedding venue so beautiful; Curtis, Lauren, Craig and Ana, for making the cutest and sweetest slash most professional flower girls I have ever met; Katy, for taking the lead and handing out programs/ being a beautiful greeter; Brett and Carinda, the best clean-up crew post invasion of Lyle's house/ clubhouse; Brian & Drew, Michelle & Family, for making the trip all the way out; Holly, Rex, Kym & Doug, for ALL the set up and help in the world slash Doug for marrying us!!!; Mom and Dad, for everything and then some; Mom, for endless hours of prep, errands, and fun; Kristy and Seamus, best MOH ever and bro-in-law, thanks for providing the cutest boys ever and bringing it on the dance floor!!!; David and Bethany, for running all our errands and keeping the party raging.

If I forgot anyone, please know we are SO grateful for all of your love, support and help!! We have the best families in the world and are so lucky to have had such an amazing wedding. And now, we are SO happy to pass the torch to the lovely couple, Brett and Carinda. Congratulations, we cannot wait to celebrate YOUR big day...hopefully soon?! Much love, Kevin and Annie





# The Benesch Bunch News You Can Use

By Carol Benesch

We are very proud of Jason's new position as a Senior Software Engineer L4 with Walmart Labs. Walmart Labs is the company's technology arm; the under-the-radar San Diego outpost is responsible for a number of processes critical to the retailer's online operations. That includes testing any changes to the website, creating a link between the company's in-store and digital assets, and managing a wealth of data.

The following is a link to an article about Walmart Labs and their new office in Carlsbad.

<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/business/growth-development/sd-fi-walmartlabs-sd-20180816-story.html>

Jason has purchased a Tesla to ease his daily commute to Carlsbad, which allows him to use the carpool lane, but he has had to adjust to commuting again to an office. His prior routine of working out of the home office (with pool privileges) is over for the time being. ☹️ Meanwhile, he loves the self-driving feature of the Tesla, which allows him to do crossword puzzles, play video games and read the paper while driving to work.

Last week, we lost a very special woman, Sandi Fionda, Chavva's mom. Noah and Madeline's "Choo Choo" Grandma passed away on Tuesday, September 4th. She died from a blood infection, a complication from her recent cancer treatments. The death was sudden and unexpected. Sandy was a generous and involved mother and community member, especially active in the Temple Tifereth Israel Sisterhood. She will be sorely missed by all.

In other news, Noah started TK at their neighborhood school Hill Creek Elementary and played in his first soccer game with Crusaders Soccer Club!! And little princess Madeline keeps us all smiling with cheerful personality.



# Meanwhile, in New Zealand:

We are very proud of Dustin who recently moved up to a new position with Vodafone and is really appreciating a shorter commute to his new office. I thought you might find this article about his office interesting:

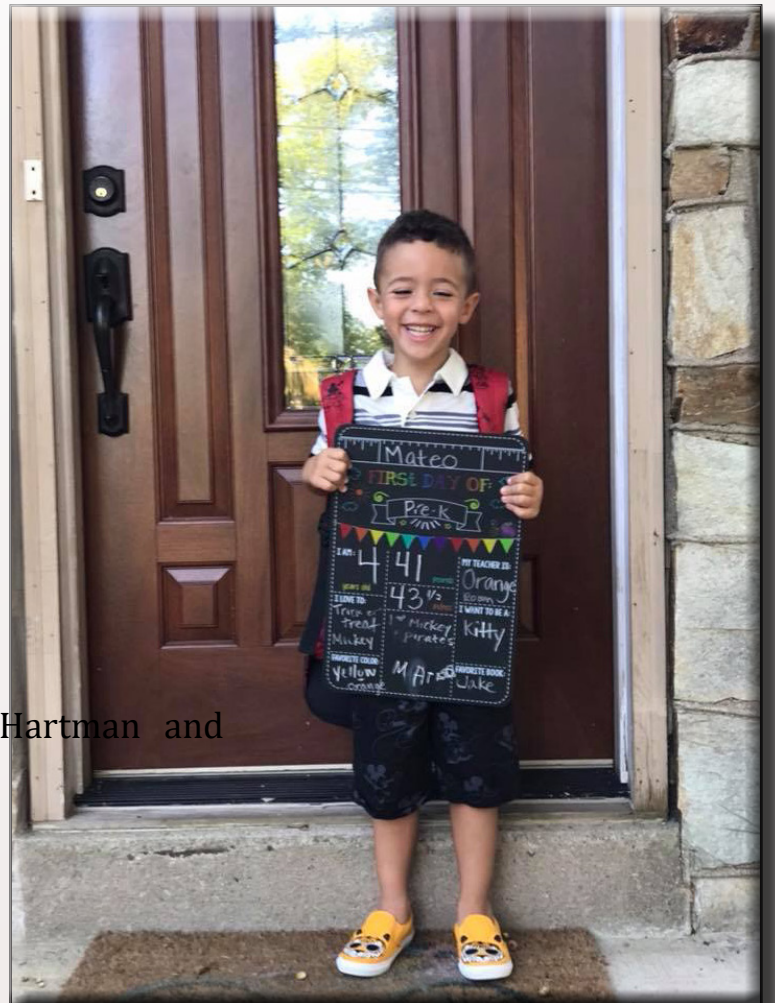
[https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=3&objectid=12120360](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=12120360)

Along with his new job, he is busy coaching lacrosse, heading a Kiwi national junior team. And also, in bigger news announced last month, there is a new Kiwi Benesch; Paxton Benesch born August 10. He is healthy, eating (drinking) like a champ, and happy to be surrounded by his band of brothers!!



# And in Edison, New Jersey:

Miguel continues his recuperation from recent knee surgery, and is almost ready to go back to work, and Jessica is busily working as a lactation consultant in her new nursing job. She also spends a lot of time heading the PTA for a second year at Ben's Elementary School. Ben, Sofie and Mateo just started a new school year as evidenced in the pictures below, taken in front of the Rios Residence



By Birdy Hartman and Lyle Hall

# Trip of a Life time



By Birdy Hartman and Lyle Hall



This, apparently, was the year to go to Europe because we were the third family unit to make the trip. Now what can I tell you that you haven't already heard about from the Brett clan, Craig's family and Benesch's? But I think we get the prize for moving around the most in such a short period of time. Let me give you a quick tour of our tours.

We began in Quebec and stayed at the Fairmont Le Chateau Fontenac which was an impressive castle fortress that rest high on a hilltop overlooking the lake. The views were spectacular, the foods were incredible and the shopping was paradise!



Then we hopped on our next jet to Athens, Greece! This has always been on my bucket list. Uncle Bruce always felt that it would be too hot to go there (which it was) but I have always longed to see the place where my mom was born, and her family was from.

Our first day was visiting the major tourist sites and ooh-ing and awing over each one as we melted in the sticky heat. Greece is very dry and the landscapes are beautiful with their old buildings set on the hillsides. But most of what we saw were downtown areas and there was a lot of graffiti that spoiled the beauty of this city.

At first, I was a little disappointed in Athens, and was glad that we only scheduled two days here. However, on our ride back from a beautiful seaside restaurant, we met George. George was our driver and soon to be best Greek friend. Once he found out that we only had one more day in Athens, he wanted to become our personal driver to show us the best of the city. He got us out of the touristy places and we got to see the city he loved through his eyes.

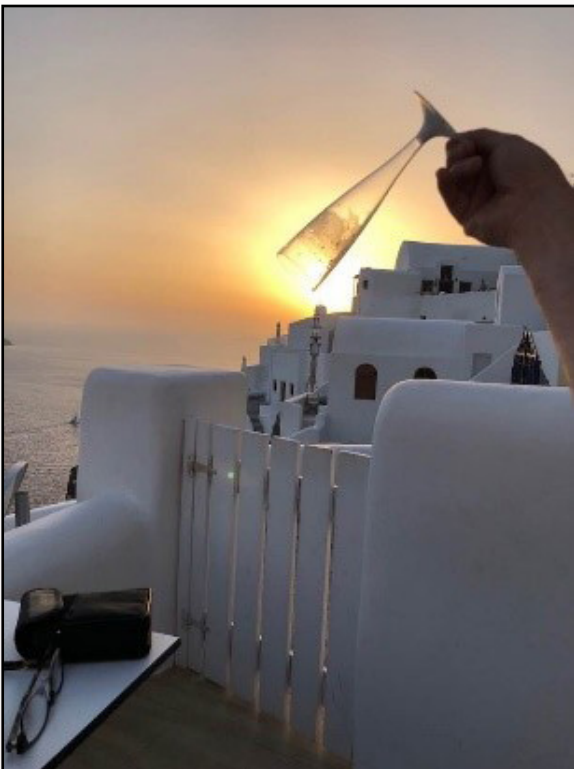
It was a high speed (I am not kidding because he drove 175K to get us to the airport on time) and glorious tour. He took many pictures of us and kept us laughing with his stories about his homeland. We left Athens in love with the place and the people (mostly George)!



Our next 2 day stop was to the island of Santorini which is known for its picturesque white and blue domed buildings. We stayed in one of the famous cave homes in the Caldera of Oia that were literally built into the mountain side with breathtaking views of the island and the Aegean Sea.

Our first night was spent sitting on our deck drinking champagne as we watched the sunset. Apparently, watching the sunset is quite an event on this island because tourists come from miles around just to sit up on the hillsides as the sun takes its final dip from view. And what we found most surprising was that when this occurred, everyone clapped! Who knew that sunsets could cause such an emotional response of appreciation.

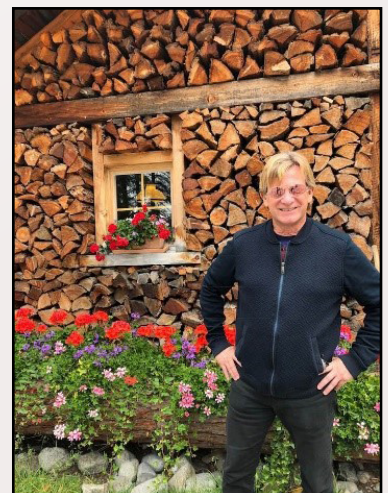
We spent our next day with Santorini's BEST Driver. He was just like George and very eager to show us the best of what Santorini had to offer. We went all over that island and I can tell you that there are so many beautiful sights to see. There are red, black and white sand beaches. And the wine tasting is superb! If you ever make it to this side of the world, Santorini is a must see!



Then we flew straight to Milan and hopped on a train to Lake Lugano, in Switzerland. We stayed at Villa Principe Leopold which also had an amazing view of the lake. It was striking to go from the dry hillsides of Greece to the gorgeous greens of Switzerland. We couldn't get over the contrast. We ate fabulous meals here and took a funicular to the top of Mount San Salvatore that offered us amazing views of the lakes below. Truly a high light for us both!

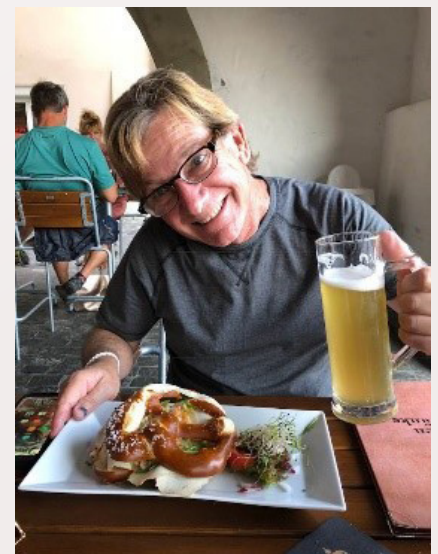


Next, we took a bus ride to then catch the Bernini Express train (which offered us amazing views of Switzerland and the alps) that would take us into St. Moritz, Switzerland where we stayed at the Kulm Hotel. I loved this charming historical hotel with a view of the St. Moritz lake. Lyle and I couldn't believe how gorgeous every place that we visited was. When you picture the alps, I am sure you think of the green trees, lakes, flowers and lush vegetation. But you also probably think of the snowcapped mountains. Well, St. Moritz had it all and we did not want to miss our chance to see a glacier in Switzerland. So, we jumped aboard a gondola that took us high into the mountains and we got a chance to hike in the snow in the middle of July! It truly was amazing and just made us appreciate the sensational views that we have gotten to see on this trip. Then we went to a small working cheese factory where we were served the most tantalizing cheese platter that I have ever been treated to in the middle of a small forest where we sat at picnic tables. It was charming and fun!



We picked up a car in St. Moritz and Lyle expertly drove us through the winding roads to get us to Lucerne, Switzerland. Lucerne is best known for its historic bridge that the river flows under. It was beautiful to behold, and we enjoyed walking around this gorgeous town. We were served the BEST pretzel sandwich of our trip and Lyle made sure to sample beers from each town that we visited. I took a sip of each one and can truthfully say that they all just taste like beer to me. But if you want a full explanation of which beers were the best, you will have to consult my traveling beer expert.

The highlight of Lucerne was that it put us close to Jungfrauoch, known as the Top of Europe because it is surrounded by glaciers and eternal snow. The observation deck offers a panorama view that you can't stop marveling at and the train ride is one of the very best in all of Europe. I was so happy to share this with Lyle. They also had an ice caves for us to slip and slide through. And I enjoyed a glass of their blue champagne drink with our lunch that offered a once in a lifetime view of the glaciers.





Our next leg was to leave Lucerne in the morning and drive the Alps to Baden-Baden Germany. We stopped to have lunch in Zurich, which brought back warm memories of my first trip to Europe with Bruce. We stayed in Zurich and I loved walking to the train station with him as we traveled here and there.



Lake Zurich is as beautiful as all the other swiss lakes and I enjoyed the little café where we sat to enjoy the vistas. Then we zoomed to Baden-Baden Germany. I really did not think that we could find a better hotel then the ones that we had already stayed in but I was wrong. Brenners Park

Hotel has to be the most luxurious hotel I have ever seen. We had sweeping views of the gardens below, a huge living room, a giant bedroom, a humongous dressing area with his and hers closets, and a bathroom big enough to throw a party in. Wow!



We took a lovely hike to see an old castle that was perched high on the mountains. And we did some shopping in the old town areas. Lyle was hot on buying some nice German made knives so that when Chef Bryce visits, he can dice and slice with ease. This was a place that sparked fun memories for Lyle because he

and Lyle Allen came to Baden-Baden when Lyle Allen graduated from school.



When we left Baden-Baden and we drove to see Rothenburg for the day. Rothenburg is the best preserved medieval town in Germany. It is known as a walled city because there is a wall that encircles the town. It is about 2 and a half miles around and fun to walk on the old planks as you enjoy the different views of the town. We entered the old town area and enjoyed a nice lunch as the breezes kept us cool. This is definitely a place worthy to stop and see. I was so thrilled that Lyle picked this as our last day trip in Germany. After that we went straight to Frankfurt and had to take a 12 hour plane ride home. Ugh!

This was a trip of a lifetime for sure. We loved taking it together but we both wore the sadness of not having Francie and Bruce along with us. It is a bittersweet emotional ride. We are enjoying getting to know one another and our relationship is such a blessing for us both. However, our hearts long for the love of our lives and we hope that they smiled down at us as we trudge through our lives without them.

This trip was really a tribute to them because they taught us all that life is short. Don't put off for tomorrow what you can do today because no one knows if you get to have that tomorrow. So, we are ready to live and we appreciate all the love and support that has guided us through the last year from each of you.



# FAMILY SHORTS



## Rich Riel has a Website

Hi Family,

I too wanted to let the family know that I have a new website to share my ideas about the current state of America. Since I am posting my opinions publicly, I wanted the family to know about the site. I would love to hear any comments you might have. More information can be found at [ambs.live](http://ambs.live) - Rich

## News From Gérard

- 3d June, christening of Alexander Beltsos in Santorini (Greece) Orthodox Cathedral. Alexander is the second son of Ira (son of Evy Merica and grandson of Romulus) and Yanni Beltsos. Present were Nicholas ("Colia"), Evy's bro, Catherine (daughter of Maria, Evy's sister), Don Mc Cullin, her husband both from Batcombe, Somerset and Gérard (Evy's cousin) and his wife Katrin from London.
- 3d July pub dinner at Notting Hill, London watching England beat Colombia in the World Cup. Occasion, for Elizabeth (daughter of Michael Merica), Gérard (son of Xanthippi/Marie Hélène), and his wife Katrin to meet Jeff and Carol Benesch.
- 12 August. Geneva, Switzerland : memorial Orthodox service for Nicole of Philadelphia, Pa. Nicole was the daughter of Byron and Opho Merica. Present: Neal Sin-cov, her lifelong companion, her siblings Helli & husband Ron Fortune (Divonne, France), Hemon (Geneva) and Lili (Brussels), her siblings, plus Gérard, their London cousin. t's all folks! Love, Gérard

## Michelle Is Being Promoted!



I found out today that I've been selected for promotion to Lieutenant Commander. It's a big day. A happy one. This journey started off rough. But I rose above it. I've challenged and pushed myself. I recognize too that I have had opportunities beyond what I could have planned out on my own. I couldn't have done it without support from my love David, family, mentors and friends along the way. It hasn't always been easy. Thank you all. Most of you aren't military, so I'll go ahead and explain that it will probably be a solid year before I actually get promoted, but nonetheless, a reason to celebrate.

# Jeff and Carol's Great European Adventure (Planes, Trains, and Automobiles!) Part One

By Carol Benesch



We had a wonderful 22 days on our recent trip, which was both eventful (many great adventures, and lots of exercise, friends and vistas) and non-eventful (no missed planes or trains, few delays, no picked pockets or lost items, no illness or rain to speak of.) Just lots of wine, cheese, bread, pasta, laughs, great meals, walking, biking, museums, churches, tours, art and artifacts, and sight-seeing in many of Europe's great cities. We got together with long lost relatives (cousins Gerard, Katrin and Elizabeth in London, Jessica, Miguel and kids in New Jersey), 15 members of our camping group in a beautiful Tuscan villa, and a couple of good friends and tour guides in the beautiful Italian city of Ascoli Piceno.



We flew stand-by for the most part, which when it works out, is an inexpensive and flexible form of air travel which includes free bags! Our adventure started in San Diego on June 12th on a direct flight to Frankfurt, Germany on Lufthansa. Fortunately, they had a window seat for us, though in the back of the plane, we're not complaining. We landed the next morning in Germany and immediately boarded a fast train to Munich.

We used Eurail passes for all our long travel days in Europe and it's a great way to get around without the security hassles of airports (you can literally arrive at train-side one minute before it pulls out) and then view the countryside out of your window. In Germany, we viewed picturesque rivers, farms and castles as we traveled the Rhine valley. Once in Munich, we discovered our hotel, while not near the Old City, was right next to a transit stop and a train into town. Most of Europe has much better transit options than San Diego. We were also directly next to a nice grocery store (which also sold hot prepared food) and we took advantage of that option for several meals and snacks to go. It was one of the last hotels we stayed at with an elevator. We have discovered that 3-star accommodations in Europe usually don't include elevators or rooms on the ground floor:-{



We took the train the next morning to Dachau, the “model” concentration camp on the outskirts of Munich which was the only one of the 80 Nazi death camps to last the entire 12 years of the 3rd Reich. To say it was a somber, but educational visit understates the horror the tens of thousands of Jews, Gypsies, POWs, dissidents, and “undesirables” that worked and perished within the Dachau compound. It was encouraging to see many young German students on field trips to Dachau as the current government strives to teach the lessons of past intolerances and bigotry to future generations of leaders. That Hitler rose to power in 1933 in a Munich beer hall on the basis of racist, xenophobic bombast, is not lost on this generation of Germans, or Americans for that matter.



Our time in Old Munich was centered around Marianplatz, a large walkable shopping district which includes old churches and ancient homes, but also scores of up-scale stores. In fact, Munich has more “Rodeo Drive” areas of high end stores, we were wondering who supports all these fancy retailers. We discovered (thank you Rick Steves) wealthy Middle Easterners love to fly in for a few days and frequent Munich’s best stores and 5-star hotels. We decided to leave the fancy digs to the oil barons. We did dine one evening at the famous Hofbrau Haus, (on a recommendation by family Germany experts) but were disappointed by the crowds, the lack of service, and the few non-Wurst menu options. The beer, however, was good, as was the oompah band right next to our table.



Most of ancient Munich survived the Allied bombings, and it was an eminently vibrant and walkable city. Munich is a mix of old and new, and the ancient buildings and churches that make up the Old City stand among modern architecture and businesses.

After 2 days at the foot of the German alps, we trained to Salzburg, just over the Austrian border, and enjoyed a brief, enjoyable stay in the birthplace of Mozart, and the Trapp Family singers. The Sound of Music references are everywhere, to the convent where Sister Maria found refuge, to the cemetery where they confronted and escaped the Nazis, to the wonderful Alpien vistas where the film took in the Austrian countryside. We took a bus tour which hit the highlights of the Salzburg river and city outskirts, along with the centuries-old castle which commands the high ground above the city. Maybe our favorite part of Salzburg was the funicular which takes you to the top, and the exploration of the castle, from which you can see the grandeur of the Austrian Alps and also the entire city of Salzburg below. We learned that the salt trade of the Middle Ages made Salzburg, both the river and town, a major trade hub where the valuable mineral was mined and transported to much of Medieval Europe. We know Kevin and Nicole were married in Salzburg, and wondered if it was in this beautiful Medieval fort above the city?



Part 2 will cover Vienna, Venice, Rome and Florence, our pre-Villa stops and adventures.





Ok Back to school photos are a normal sight in the September edition of the RFNL but what about the two photos to the left?

## Whaaaaaataattttt???

Is that Brett on one knee and is Carinda sporting a... dare we say it... Engagement Ring? Stay tuned!

