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Bud and Margaret's Winter Vacation



TRAVEL TALES FROM BUD AND MARGARET

By Margaret Riel

We just returned from a very successful three-part trip with all of the connections and travel working just the way it should. The three parts were New York City, Iceland, and England. This trip, like most of our travels, was

prompted by professional work. This time it was Margaret who was invited to be an opponent (an external examiner) in a Ph.D. dissertation defense. The University of Iceland has only recently started offering Ph.D. degrees. Most people in the past went to Denmark for graduate work. (The island was ruled by Denmark until 1944 when it became independent.) So, their process for the defense is based on the Scandinavian model. The student's department brings in two opponents, people with expertise in the area of the dissertation. These people provide both written guidance and public commentary to test the candidate's ability to respond to difficult questions. That is how we found our way to Iceland. We were surprised to see this small Island has become a major destination for so many people. When I started to plan the trip, we could see why--more on that later.

NEW YORK CITY

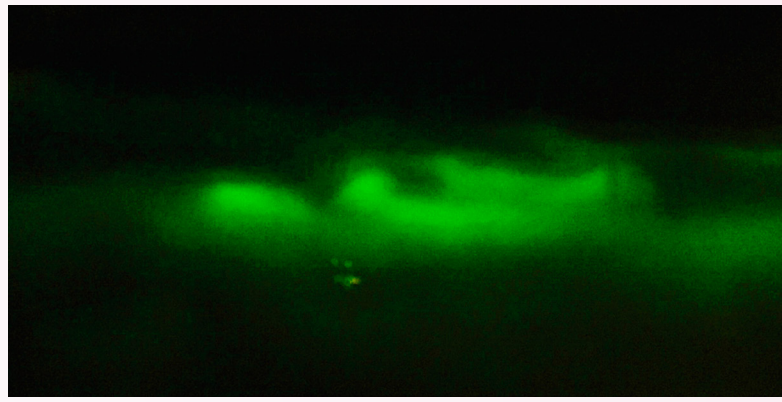


Margaret had some work with a non-profit organization that promotes global learning and citizenship for K-12 students in NYC. So, a stop in New York was a good way to break up a long trip and provided a chance to visit with family. Bud got us tickets to see "To Kill a Mockingbird. It was so timely, and the performance was great. Bud read the book on the way and we talked about what we remembered from reading it in high school so many years ago. Then we had an unbelievably great meal

at Bryce's restaurant. Too bad Bryce had to cook for us, but we did get to see him between courses. You can see from the picture that Margaret, Bud, Bridget, Brett, Corinda, Jessica and Miguel did some serious eating.

REYKJAVIK, ICELAND

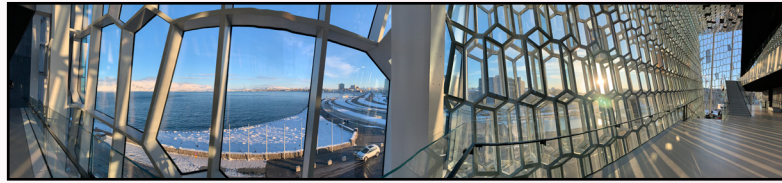
Being so far to the north, anywhere away from city lights is a great place to view the northern lights. We went on a tour the first night and the guides were not optimistic as it had been three nights of no lights. We stood and watched from two different locations from 8:00pm-11:00pm and just as they were about to quit, we saw first a hazy white mist moving horizontally across the sky. In another 20 minutes, the white mist gradually turned to green and there were wave-like curls of fluorescent green. It was not the most brilliant display but well worth the very cold and windy wait.



The name of this capital city means “Smokey Bay” and came from when Arnarson who settled in 1871 saw the steam rising from the many hot springs. Iceland uses geothermal resources for both electricity and heat. Iceland's unique geology makes it such an interesting place to visit. Located on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, it is one of the most tectonically active places in the world with over 200 volcanoes and 600 hot springs. The North America and Eurasia plates have crashed together, and we stood on the point in which they join on one of our tours.



We swam in one of the hot springs just south of Reykjavik—the Secret Lagoon--and it was an incredible experience. The air was freezing. The water was as hot as you could stand. A natural hot spring feeds the lagoon with 38-39°C (just over 100°F) water bubbling up from deep within the earth. Established in 1891, is the oldest bathing pool in Iceland. It was about 4 feet deep and the size of a large swimming pool. You could not get within three feet of the source of the hot water as it was too hot for comfort. But most of the pool was like a huge hot tub with steam that soaks and then air that freezes your hair. Margaret wore a ski hat to keep her hair dry.



They have over 20 high-temperature steam fields that are between 150 -250 °C [300-482 °F]. This makes it possible for Iceland to harness geothermal energy, and these steam fields are used for heating everything from their houses, driveways and swimming pools. In some places they run hot water through pipes under the pavement, so they don't have to shovel snow. Drilling into the earth and waterfalls provides most of their electricity.

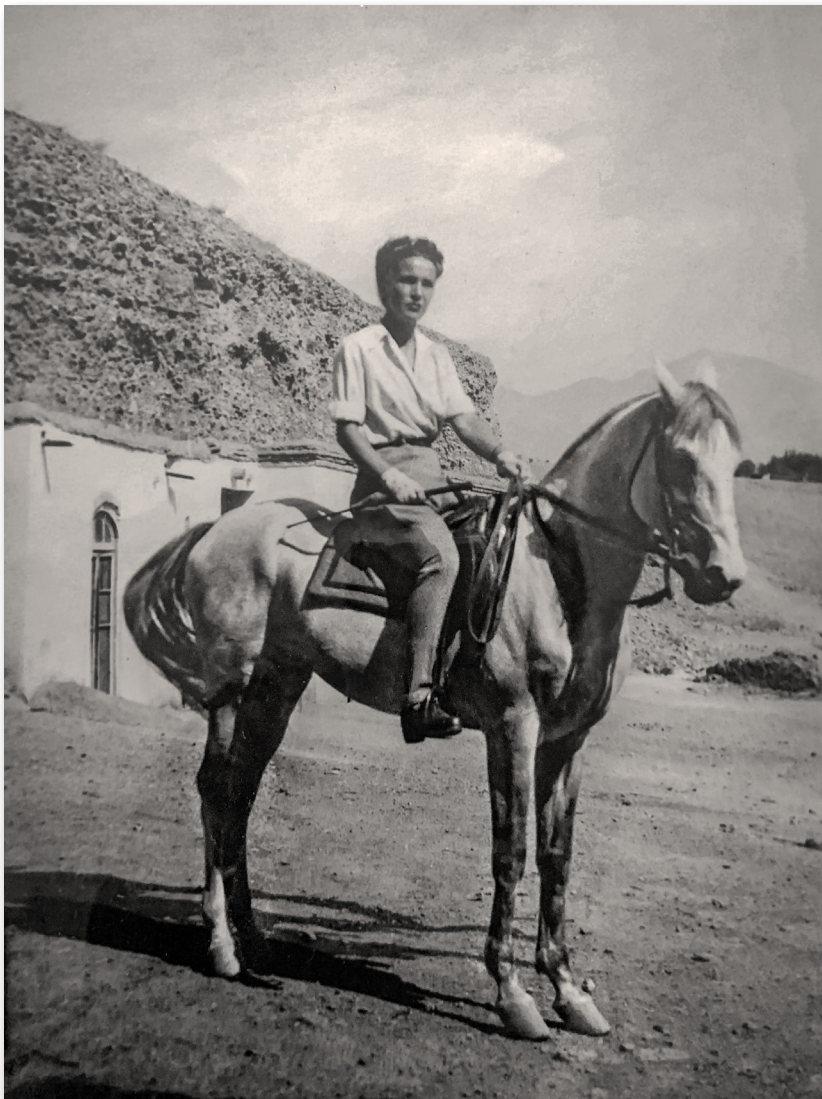
We visited the Golden Circle of formations, including the Stokkur Geyser which erupts every 5-10 minutes creating a cloud of steam billowing up in the cold air. We also saw the inverted waterfall with water pouring down into the earth. We posted a short movie about our travels on Facebook.



LONDON, OXFORD, STRATFORD, ENGLAND



We stayed with our dear friends in Oxford and also visited family in London. We have maintained a close family friendship with Phil, Bev and their son Andrew Davies for over 40 years. They took us to Stratford for a play which was a modern adaptation Moliere's comedy—Tartuffe. It was set in a modern household, located in Birmingham, England and the religion was shifted from Catholic to Muslim. The “chorus” was provided by a comedic house cleaner who in the end provides a number of serious morals ending with "be nice to your house cleaner."



We made a day-trip to London and had lunch with cousin Gerard (son of Marie Hélène, Edith Riel's only sister), and his wife Katrin. Also joining us was Elizabeth who is the daughter of Michael, one of Mom's older brothers. I did see a picture of Mom's sister, the first I have ever seen, and Gerard shared stories about her life. She shares with Edith an experience of falling in love early with older men in distant countries from Iran (France and USA). Both were married without any member of the Merica family attending the wedding. I will write more about our Aunt Marie Hélène soon.



A Little to Say about a lot of Stuff

By Brett and Carinda

January and early February was a busy month for the new East Coast Sorem's to be. January 20th could have been a bummed day all around as it was a year ago that Francie

passed away. While we had some time to reflect and remember, Bryce and I did the only thing we knew how to do to honor and carry on Francie's Legacy...have a Taco Tuesday.

Bryce of course made the apps, guac, and meat tacos. I took care of the salmon tacos and the margaritas. Bryce and Bridget hosted at their awesome condo in Jersey City, and friends from all walks of life who knew Francie came to celebrate and remember. Bryce, Bridget, Carinda and I told stories about Francie throughout the multiple toasts of the evening. Other people shared their memories as well. It was a great time!

Carinda take over for a second!

I'm excited to share that I said, "yes to the dress!" I went to BHLDN which is Anthropology's company. I knew I found the right wedding dress brand because when I previously went in to ask questions and check it out, I saw a dress that (I kid you not) was labeled "Brett." It had to be a sign, right?

I invited Bridget, Maria Sorem (cousin from Norway), and my three New York best friends. I had wanted to go to San Diego and have that experience with my family, but they understood that it made sense doing it in New York instead. That day, I tried on several dresses, but nothing compared to the FIRST one I tried on. Afterwards, I planned a bottomless brunch. We were in a private room, drinking mimosas and acting pretty silly that day. It was such an unforgettable experience! I can't wait for 02/22/2020



Back to you Brett.

Last but not least, well, maybe least :) I turned 36. It was quite frightening to be honest, I am now officially closer to 40 than 30. AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH! So, in order to attempt to make myself feel young, I hit up a skatepark out in Brooklyn with Carinda and my friend Jeff who was in town for my Bday. It was freezing, but I was able to get a few good tricks in. I'll be shooting my annual skate Bday session on Feb 15th, hopefully I get all the way through it!

And finally, when I thought it was all over, Carinda organized a surprise birthday party for me! We went to a great little dive bar in china town called the 169 bar. Super close to the SD area code so I'll let it slide :) Many of my friends, new and old came, and I had way too many Jameson shots but still was able to beat a few people at pool before my hand eye coordination went down the drain. You know you're getting older when you're in bed by 11 PM.

We are also planning on coming to SD early March and are starting to organize a low-key engagement party on the 9th. TDB details to come.

All and all, it was a great month, we survived the polar vortex and our eyes are on the horizon anticipating the warmer weather soon to come.



Richard offers his opinion on the wall

Editor's note: The opinions in this article are the author's, and do not necessarily represent the views of RFNL or any other family member.

One of my media friends tells me he gets calls from rookie CNN and MSNBC reporters all the time asking for background information on the failure of the Wall. The Wall, thanks to President Trump is a visceral example of what happens when a community gets the government to listen. The Wall, Trump is referring to was constructed in the San Diego area in the 90's because the Citizens in San Ysidro wanted to live the American dream.



Anyone who lived at the Border prior to and after the wall was completed will tell you that the wall worked. I was a member of the San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce during that time. My friend, business partner, and fellow mayoral candidate Paul Clark would tell stories of daily confrontations with illegal border crossers. The police department was overwhelmed by calls about confrontations between citizens and illegal aliens. It was a dirty little home town secret that it did no good to call the police because they were always busy.

Until you experience lawlessness on a regular basis it can only be imagined. The volume of people crossing the border illegally makes it hell on those who live, work and go to school there. If you lived in San Ysidro, you were the forgotten American citizen. You were subject to poor people and criminals walking unopposed through your neighborhoods on their way to work for; and in



some cases, to rob Americans. These Americans who were the beneficiaries of this policy piously objected to stopping people who were working for them and ignored the criminals.

In the 80's it was estimated by Border Patrol illegal crossings were in excess of one hundred thousand (100,000) people a month.

For years Paul and I representing the Chamber, lobbied for the Wall. We attended countless meetings speaking on behalf of the businesses and homeowners about the reality of border crime and the impact it had in San Ysidro. People who cross the border illegally are criminals. They leave their garbage and human waste in the yards of the neighborhoods. They break into homes and businesses looking for food and shelter. Crime, including assault, rape, drugs, sex crimes and battery were common place until the Wall was complete.

In 1992, Border Patrol reported apprehending 565,581 migrants in the San Diego sector, with a much larger number likely evading capture. Preliminary fence construction in the mid-1990s brought that number below 200,000 by 1999. By fiscal year 2017, for a variety of reasons—more barriers, more technology and personnel, a changed demographic and socioeconomic reality in Mexico—Border Patrol apprehensions had fallen to 26,086 people, or 95 percent fewer than in 1992, with agents capturing a much larger portion of attempted crossers.

Building a fence reduced illegal crossings in San Diego-Tijuana because of population density. As the Senate Appropriations Committee put it in the explanatory statement for its 2018 budget bill, “physical impedance and denial of access can be the most efficient and effective form of border security in high traffic areas with short vanishing times.” A barrier slows down a would-be border crosser for several minutes. Those several minutes make a great difference in urban areas, where border-crossers can vanish among the population almost immediately after touching U.S. soil.

Ask anyone who lives and works in the community of San Ysidro about the Wall. The quality of life for the Americans living in San Ysidro since the wall was completed has improved immeasurably. San Diego's experience corroborates the efficacy of a wall.



FAMILY SHORTS



Liam and Braeden ran their first 5K last weekend (February 2nd!) It was the Cardiff Kook run in Encinitas. Liam ran the entire thing, which was super cool! Braeden did about half and then scooted the second half. Riley rooted us all on from his throne in the stroller. :) Pretty cool news for this crazy family of runners! We're super proud of them!

Last weekend (Feb 8-10) we went RVing in Borrego Springs and were surprised to discover that the area flowers had already started to bloom. There were several areas that sported hillsides of purple, yellow and white flowers. None of the cactus flowers had come out yet but still there was plenty of green on all the hillsides.

There is some talk about a super-bloom this year, something that doesn't happen to often (usually every 15 - 20 years, although we had one in 2017.) I would encourage everyone to take some time out over the next 3 - 5 weeks and make the trip out to see them. Just remember go early to avoid the traffic (in 2017 they had a 20 mile back up), bring food, water and your cameras (iPads are NOT cameras) and enjoy a beautiful day. BTW we will be camping out there the weekend of March 15 - 17. Stop by and see us if you're in the area!



Will there be a super bloom this year?