



A shower turned into a surprise!



By Listy Gillingham

Tim and Federico are Engaged!

Everyone knows that Ed and Jan are full of surprises, which is exactly what happened when Jan decided to pull a fast one on her own son, Tim. She arranged to have Tim and Federico to come down for Thanksgiving and then persuaded them to stay longer to “help cook” for the Sprinkle she planned to celebrate Kevin and Nicole’s third baby.

They took the challenge and made quite the spread for the party, but little did they know that they were actually making appetizers that would be served for their own surprise Engagement Party. Just as one party ended, Jan and Ed had a dozen pizzas from a local pizzeria delivered to their house. More friends showed up and eventually the words “Surprise” came out as the party shifted

from being about Nicole and a new baby to a Surprise Engagement party for Tim and Federico.

The guests were treated to their famous cooking and the best pizza in OB as well. Another surprise came in way of a special movie from



Federico's family as they created a video to be shared for the occasion. Each family member gave a special wish for Federico's happiness with Tim. The grandmother took the show away with her sincere message in Italian holding a poster with written English subtitles. It was very touching and truly showed the love surrounded around this special couple.



After the video, the Gillinghams stepped in with a famous song written by Bob to be sung by everyone. Jan had requested the song be written to the "Time of Your Life" inspired by the movie Dirty Dancing, which is the one Tim used on his 30th Birthday to flash dance around San Francisco with.

However, the Gillinghams chose the Time of Your Life written by Green Day not realizing they had the wrong tune. But in the end, it didn't matter because the words selected were done with love and the surprise singers (everyone at the party) did a pretty decent job pulling off the song with the tune that was selected. Listy announced that the sisters (Margaret, Birdy and Carol) had a traditional ice bucket that had been personalized with Tim and Federico's name for the special occasion but it was delayed in the delivery process due to lousy weather back east. We all toasted the couple and can't wait for a wedding date to be set soon for 2021.



Tim and Federico's Song (Sung to Green Day's "Time of Your Life")

It's like a musical, this couple's so in tune,
They love to bike and cook, and spas will make them swoon,
Their online intro was what brought them here today
A proposal in Japan... truly set them on their way

They've cooked up something wonderful, this pair is just so right,
We hope they have the times of their lives!

A trip to Guerneville's a favorite thing to do,
The Russian River sings a calming song that soothes,
The stress of Facebook... and management recedes,
Together with each other, it's all that they will need.

They've cooked up something wonderful, this pair is just so right,
We hope they have the times of their lives!

Tim and Federico, we wish you all the best,
Your dreams of home and fam we hope with these you're blessed,
You've found each other and your future is so bright,
Your loving family will keep you in their sights.

They've cooked up something wonderful, this pair is just so right
We hope they have the times of their lives.



Welcoming Baby Riel

By Margaret Riel

On a week of rain, Jan Riel had a "Baby Sprinkle" to welcome "baby Riel" whom should be with us in a matter of days. It was lucky that the rain stopped, and we were able to use the outdoors as well as the indoors to celebrate this exciting development.

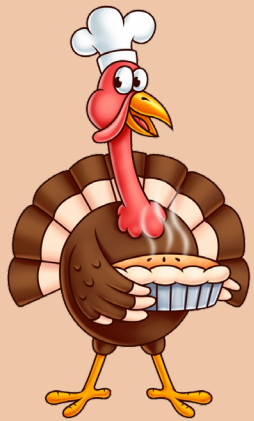
Jan set out paints and stencils to decorate bibs for the new baby. Nicole was radiant and there was a great deal of speculation about the size and shape of the baby bump and the likely gender of this new child. As Nicole and Kevin have a boy, Blake, and a girl, Quinn, they have decided not to know the gender of their third child ahead of time.

Blake was the life of the party engaging all of the adults into his imaginative play. The food for this event was made with a great amount of flare by Tim and Frederico. They did not know that getting them to cook for the baby party was partly a ruse to keep them around for the next party-- a surprise engagement party. It is not often that the plan for keeping a party a secret involves having the guests of honors cooking the food for the party. Also, the theme of rainbows was the perfect intersection for the two parties.

The food was incredible and there was clearly enough to feed an army (good thing as the whole Riel family is the size of a small army). The only ones who didn't know that the second party would close the baby party were Tim and Frederico. So, when the pizza delivery man appeared a few minutes early with a huge stack of pizzas, well, that gave away the secret and the second party was on (see Listy's Story for more).



Kevin and Nicole commented that were "deeply grateful for all of the preparation and hard work that went into the party. The transformation of the backyard and the food by Tim and Federico were amazing! All of the planning by Jan down to all the details were so appreciated. We are so thankful for such a generous and loving family!!!"



A Riel Thanksgiving



Thanksgiving Traditions

By Margaret Riel



For the first time in Riel Family recorded history it rained on Thanksgiving in Encinitas. Since there was an 80% chance of rain all day, Bob and Listy came to Margaret and Bud's rescue and offered their larger home for the event.

It was a challenge for Bob and Listy even with their larger home, but they extended the traditional Riel family dining room table and benches then added a number of tables and chairs. With this configuration they were able to accommodate all of the Riel family members, indoors and together.



Interestingly enough, the last time we all sat around that table was when the family was much smaller, and we were having thanksgiving at 1877 Lyndon Rd. Another big change was that it was the first thanksgiving without at least one parent. There was no Dad smiling and recording the good time had by all or Mom telling us it was the best thanksgiving ever.



There were other firsts. First time for Bud and Margaret to get up at 5:00am to have the turkey ready for transport. First time for Michael to cook Tri-Tip in a downpour with an umbrella covering him and the grill. And the first Thanksgiving where Bob spent most of his time sloshing around in the rain trying to divert a mud slide around, rather than into, their swimming pool.

But there were also lots of Riel traditions. Jeff and Bud carved the Thanksgiving Turkey which was surprisingly good despite a short pause in roasting for transport. There was no shortage of good food by many good family cooks. And of course, we had Carol's world-famous traditional orange salad. There was a harvest contest - guessing apple varieties. Carol and Jeff were the big winners with Annie and Kevin coming in for a close second. Finally, there were all the amazing pictures that Robert always takes.

And so, as always, a good time was had by all. The best Thanksgiving ever, God bless you children.







By Margaret Riel

EXPLORING MERICA FAMILY HISTORY...

Recently Bud and Margaret wandered through the streets of Fener, Istanbul and Turkey. Margaret was looking for the footsteps of the Merica family. Many years ago, Margaret had traveled to England and sat with Uncle Michael, (one of Edith's older brothers) and looked at pictures as he explained how the family had lived in Constantinople for many, many years-- back to 1500s.

Margaret has always wanted to see Constantinople - now called Istanbul. If you look at the map below you will see that the Western half of Istanbul is located on a small part of Turkey that borders Greece and is part of Europe.



The Bosphorus Strait cuts the city of Istanbul in half, connecting the Black Sea on the north side of Turkey to the small Sea of Marmara opening to the Aegean Sea which surrounds Greece and Southern Turkey. The East side of Istanbul, and the larger part of Turkey, is in Asia and borders Iran. And so, we planned a trip to Turkey-- a nation straddling Europe and Asia with cultural connections to ancient Greek, Persian, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman empires.



Above, are photos from the Bosphorus Strait and the photos below are from the Fener neighborhood on the western half of Istanbul, an area that had been home to the Greeks and to the Merica family. It was a quaint neighborhood with an odd mix of new and old. The cobblestone streets wind up and down small hills. We saw an abandoned structure that looked centuries old with open-air windows connected to the walls of the next structure that has been restored or modernized. On the hill was a beautiful building that had been a college, then a primary to high school, and finally a high school. This building had been there since the early 1800s and it is possible that generations of Mericas attended school there.



PHANAR GREEK ORTHODOX COLLEGE

Phanar Greek Orthodox College and Primary School, also known as The Red School or The Old School, is publicly known as the red school since the present building was built with the red brick brought from France after the decree by Mehmed II in 1454 which allows it for the Orthodox people to have their education in their own language, a school was established in Phanar and their education started. The school which was known as Church Academy and Greek Old School in due course was given wide opportunities. The school turned into a high school giving classical education in 1861. Its present glorious building was built by Architect Konstantin Dimadis in 1881. The land of the school building was endowed by Moldavian Prince Dimitri Kantemir who was a graduate of this school. The building consists of a basis and three floors. Its dome has the height of 40 metres from bottom to top and it has an area of 3020 m² available for use. It is said that its panoramic view resembles the figure of eagle.

BAŞKANLIĞI 2011



It was on the Bosphorus Strait that Theodore Merica started his first business. He could see that in a city cut in half by water and surrounded by waterways, getting goods from one dock to another would be profitable. He knew from sponge divers that there were a number of sunken barges on the bottom of the Strait. He figured out a way to use the intestines of farm animals as balloons that could be attached and inflated underwater to raise the sunken ships. He then restored them and used them to ferry goods at a much lower price than other shippers. He managed to create a business of 6 barges while he was still a very young man. Another source of income for Theodore were Russian jewels. In 1917 with the Russian Revolution, many people left Russia with only the family jewels and Theodore was able to buy them at very good prices.

But his father (Edith's grandfather), Nikolaos, was already the head of a powerful shipping business on the Black Sea. In 1861 Greece and Persia had signed the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Shipping which had opened up trade routes to Persia. Nikolaos decided to invest in trade with other wealthy Greek merchants in Tabriz, Persia.

He was a perfume chemist and he made the perfume by importing rose petals from Iran. He opened an office in 1887 and soon had a number of warehouses trading goods back and forth from Tabriz to Constantinople traveling on what had been the ancient Pontos-Erzurum trade route (Silk Road). Margaret and Bud visited the railroad station of the Orient Silk Road Express in Istanbul and then in the middle of the country, the Sultanhanı caravanserai which was built in 1229 by Selçuk Sultan Alaaddin Keykubat. A caravanserai was a roadside inn where



travelers and their animals could rest and recover from the day's journey. Caravanserais supported the flow of commerce, information, and people across the Silk Road



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Theodore, (Edith's father) joined his father in the trade business which they inherited in 1911 along with the family home. Our great grandfather, Nikolaos died at 67 when Theodore was not yet 30 and he and his wife Evrikia, had two young sons, Romulus (3 years) and Nicolas (1 year). To understand why Theodore and his family left their Greek home in Constantinople/Istanbul and moved to Tabriz and then Teheran, Iran, you have to know about the histories of these regions and the wars that defined them.

The modern countries of Greece (1830), Turkey (1920) and Iran (1935) have a much longer history with many different names and continual territorial wars and internal political conflicts. The Ancient Greeks were overrun by the Romans. The Turks came from Mongolia and streamed into that part of Asia Minor that is now called Turkey. Both Greece and Asia Minor, along with what is now Iran, Iraq, and Syria were from the 15th to 19th century all part of the Ottoman Empire. [\(This short video visualizes the rise in 1200 and fall in 1923 of the Ottoman Empire.\)](#) Greece left

the Ottoman Empire to become a county by 1830 yet was engaged in an internal struggle for how it should be governed.

When World War I (1914-1918) broke out, the Ottoman Empire sided with the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary). Greece had joined the Allied forces (Britain, France, and Russia). This alliance with the west came with the prospects of territory gains on the Western and Southern parts of Turkey including Constantinople. As a consequence of losing the war, the Ottoman Empire was divided into smaller countries by the Allied forces. However, Greece did not get the territory they had hoped for and this among other hostilities led to the Greco-Turkish war (1919-1922) which ended with the defeat of the Greeks. The Treaty of Lausanne recognized the independence of the Republic of Turkey and its sovereignty over Asia Minor, Istanbul, and Eastern Thrace. The discord between these two countries lead to a population exchange, where Christian Greeks were expelled from Turkey and Muslims in Greece were expelled to Turkey.





The defeat of the Greeks left the powerful Merica family in a precarious situation. Theodore and his teenage sons were in Constantinople, but because of the wars, Theodore had already sent his wife and young daughter Xanthippi (Marie-Hélène) to live in Athens, where both

Byron (1920) and Mom (1925) were born. Theodore had many international connections and received a bit of advance notice that the Turks were coming to seize his home, business, and assets. He was able to escape with the help of the U.S. Consulate. The US Marines made their way to the Merica home and rescued the family taking them to Greece on a warship. The only resources that they were able to take with them were the Russian jewels he had amassed hidden in oil containers. The Greek ancestral home they abandoned in Istanbul has now become the home of the French Consulate.

They joined the family in Athens, Greece where Bryon and Edith were born and began plans for a permanent move to Iran. They lived on money they got from trading Russian jewelry.

Why didn't the Merica family stay in Greece? Greece was suffering from refugee problems as 1.5 million Greeks were expelled from Turkey. Political problems and poor infrastructure restricted business opportunities. Theodore would need to rebuild wealth. Thanks to his father's business skills, the Mericas family offices and warehouses in Tabriz, Persia where he had a place to start. In this way, the Merica family and many other Greek families made their way to Tabriz and later to Tehran. Despite the financial setback, Theodore was able to rebuild his business empire. In 1951, he contributed about 90% of the funds to build a two-story large Greek Community Center that included the Holy Church of Saint Mary. (Greek church pic) The center with Greek schools provided a gathering place for Greeks in modern Iran. (For more information, you are welcome to borrow the book Greeks in Modern Iran by Venetis, translated from Greek by Michael Merica. <https://kaveh-farrokh.com/uncategorized/evangelos-venetis-greeks-in-modern-iran/>)



From this point most of us know the history. Mom was brought up in Teheran with many trips to Tabriz where her brother was settled. She went to a French school run by Catholic nuns. She met Frank and became the last of the Merica children to marry. After generations of Greek families, the children of Theodore and Evrika each married someone of a different nationality finding homes around the globe. Below, Theodore is on the right side of the book's cover picture.



EVANGELOS VENETIS

GREEKS IN MODERN IRAN

With the collaboration of
ELLI ANTONIADES



POREIA

FAMILY SHORTS



Margaret and Bud spend last weekend in NYC. Margaret had a board of directors meeting at iEARN-learning with the world. They also planned a Friday night dinner with all of the NJ/NY nieces and nephews. It was so much fun that one lonely person photo bombed our family pictures. Margaret and Bud also saw Moulon Rouge while they were there but... Almost didn't. Ticketmaster sold the same ticket multiple times and so their ticket was not accepted. However, a larger family of 13 had two family members missing so they invited us to join their family. They were happy to be able to sell the tickets, and we had fun joining them. The names we caught were Molly, Megan, Elizabeth among others and all about our own age. Now we are in discussions with Ticketmaster to figure out how they failed us.

Ed Riel is almost finished with his current set of houses in La Mesa. He thinks that after this project is completed, it might be time to enjoy retirement.



Highlights of Michelle's recent deployment with the Navy. Thank You Michelle we are all very proud of you!

