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March-2020

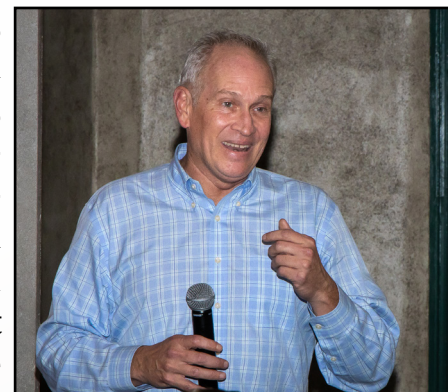
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Our Wedding

By Carinda Sorem

Brett and I took a year and half to plan our perfect day. To be honest, it was fun at times, stressful, and Brett and I didn't always agree on everything. However, one thing was for certain, we loved each other, and all we wanted was for our guests to have an unforgettable experience. We wanted to make Francie proud of what we had accomplished that day, and even though she wasn't there in person, we All knew she was there. She wouldn't miss this. Also, thank you Marianne & Carol for filling such an impossible role of being mothers of the groom. It meant so much to us.



Wednesday, February 19, 2020, was the start of our wedding festivities, which was the rehearsal dinner at Stone Brewery. It was a fantastic venue. The food was delicious, and the staff was very attentive with our drinks. After we ate dinner, we heard some wonderful speeches. As tradition, Brett's family sang a song written about Brett and I by Jeff Benesch. Once speeches were done, we played a slide show that was edited by Brett. Of course, it was a really beautiful video!

What's interesting about that video, is that Brett and I were both born and raised in San Diego. You would think we grew up far apart from each other, but we actually grew up very close to one another. We even played sports at the same recreational centers. The video made me feel that it was only a matter of time for Brett and I to meet. Thank you, Lyle and Birdy, for helping us put on a wonderful rehearsal dinner. It meant so much to us to have everyone there to bond with, laugh with, and even cry with. It was the perfect start to the wedding weekend!



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Rehearsal Dinner

By Birdy Hartman

Rehearsal dinners are always very special. It is a time for the wedding parties to get together and celebrate the wonderful event that is pending. Carinda and Brett had requested to have the rehearsal three days before their wedding so that they could have some vacation time in Palm Springs with their wedding party team!



So, Lyle and Big Al got together, as the fathers for the groom, and invited us all to Stone Brewery in Pt. Loma on February 19, 2020. The room was buzzing with excitement and love for the happy couple. There was a long table filled with Carinda's family, a long table filled with Brett's family members and a long table in the center filled with the wedding party.



Birdy had created wine bottle centerpieces with the help of Aunt Margaret, Uncle Bud, Aunt Listy, Aunt Carol, Uncle Jeff and Uncle Ed. It turned into a family affair following one of our famous lunch bunch dates. Everyone enjoyed a wonderful dinner, speeches were made, a song (written by Jeff Benesch) was sung by all, and Brett had made a one of a kind slideshow, filled with pictures of Brett and Carinda growing up and falling in love. Everyone was so touched, and we just knew that the wedding was going to be such a memorable celebration! Let the good times roll!





Gettin' Married
 Song to the tune of the 59th St. Bridge song

Hey guys, it's comin' fast
 Your single days are nearly past
 The nuptials but 3 days away
 Feelin' the love, you're getting married!
 Ba da da da da da, gettin' married!

Hey Carinda, we so adore ya
 As for Brett, he'll never bore ya
 Welcome to our fam-i-ly
 Doo ait n doo dah, getting married
 Ba da da da da da, gettin' married.

We've got vows to read, and promises to keep
 To the desert we go, and there's no time to sleep
 Let this Saturday drop all it's pleasures on you
 Guys we love you, you're getting married!
 Ba da da da da da, gettin' married.

A year of planning, now back in Cali
 And witnessed by your friends and fam'ly
 Your futures 'twined forever more
 A joyous nite, you're getting married!
 Ba da da da da da, gettin' married!



On Thursday morning, we headed to Indio to stay at our venue (The Bougainville Estate). Most of you figured it out on Saturday, but we had 43 bridal party members. Yes, 43! The idea is simple. You only get so little time with everyone on your wedding day. We thought that wasn't enough time, so we did something different. We decided to create a wedding weekend to spend more time with our closest friends. The plan was to have our bachelor parties Thursday night, pool party/relax on Friday, wedding Saturday, and R&R on Sunday. It wasn't easy to plan, but it was SO worth it! Our bridal party told us that it was one of the best weekends they've had in a long time.



Thursday night, our bridal party met us at our venue. We had dinner, caught up with everyone for a bit, and then we went our separate ways to start the bachelor parties. Two of SD girlfriends (and Kendahl) created games, swag bags, and which bars we were going to go to. We drank, we danced, you get the picture. It was a lot of fun, and it was exactly what I wanted that night. The boys bar hopped and then came back to swim and hang out. Surprisingly enough, no one got hurt, kidnapped, lost or hospitalized lol.



On Friday, we went over to the bridal party house. It was only 5 minutes away from the venue. We organized a pool day where we BBQ, swam, played volleyball, soccer, yoga, something for all our friends to enjoy. It was an incredible day of relaxing, catching up, and even breaking a sweat. That evening, Brett and I went to The Saguaro Hotel to grab margaritas with the guests who came in on Friday night. Thank you to everyone who came out to see us! Unfortunately, Brett and I hit a wall. We were SO tired



from the long day with our friends, day drinking and from the lack of sleep from the bachelor parties. So, we didn't spend too much time because of it. Now, here's the crazy twist to that evening...the shrimp tacos I ate at The Saguaro made me sick that night. Yes, I was throwing up the night before the wedding! Of course, I was getting worried about how I was going to feel on my wedding day. Being sick on your wedding day is NOT what you dream of!!

However, I had a light breakfast and a smoothie in attempt to rehabilitate myself. I started feeling better after that. Whew!

FINALLY February 22, 2020 comes and without question, it was the best day of our lives!!! I know that sounds a little clique, but we just witnessed in one day the overwhelming feeling of love and support. Thank you so much for giving us that incredible feeling!

Besides having a rough night, I had so many inner feelings going on that day. I was both a calm and nervous bride all in one. So many high and lows. I tried so hard to keep all my stress inside, but I think I couldn't at certain points. LOL

With all the nerves, the ceremony was my favorite part of the day. It was a bit chilly in the beginning, but the sun came out. We would like to think Francie was there to open up the skies to show her presence. From the ring warming, to the letters,



to the vows, to the flower toss, it was beautiful and perfect. Our officiant/dear friend Will Springhorn Jr exceeded our expectations.



The reception was a freaking blast! We walked out to AC/DC Hell's Bells (Go Pads), and our bros and Carol gave the best speeches we could ever imagine. Brett and I decided to do a choreographed dance routine which was a Tennessee Whiskey Chris Stapleton/ My Love Justin Timberlake mix. We really enjoyed dancing together, and then OMG the groomsman dance was an EPIC surprise!!! How in the hell did Brett pull that off without me knowing??? Lol It was so fun to watch him up there grooving and creating a performance just for me.





Thanks, Will, Kendahl, Bryce and Brad for taking the time to practice with Brett. Thank you, Chris Brown, for creating the choreography! It really kicked off the dance party!

For us, the rest of the night flew by. People jumped in the pool, danced, laughed, drank, cheers'd, and even the ladies had a dance party in the shallow pool. We shared so many unforgettable moments with our friends and family.



Queen Bohemia Rhapsody rocked the house to close out the reception. We loved that everyone came together singing their hearts out!! It was a memory that we will always remember. With so many people not wanting the party to end, we had an impromptu hot tub party. Fortunately, our hot tub was larger than our Brooklyn apartment, and was able to fit 30 people. It was nice to just wind down from a crazy, emotional filled day!





It took a village to make our wedding possible, and an amazing village at that. We want to thank our parents for making this possible!!! We couldn't do it without you!! We want to thank Matt Young, Chelsey Sinclair, Brad Liber, Mattresses twins, Brian C, Bryon L, Uncle Bob, Aunt Birdy for capturing the moments, Karin Sorem / Richard Sorem for the delicious desserts, my mom Kim for creating the table decor and arbor, Xylon Jones for building the arbor, Aunt Margaret for the succulents, Brittany Cormack for steaming all the ladies dresses, and Uncle Bill for my beautiful bouquet. We couldn't be more grateful for all the help we received. We want to thank all our friends and family for coming, supporting and helping make our wedding day to be the best day of our life. We had guests from all over. People travelled from SD, LA, SF, NY, NJ, WA, Louisiana, FL, Sweden and Norway! So cool!!





Finally, I (Carinda) would like to share something that means a lot to me. One of the reasons why I fell in love with Brett, was because of his incredible family. I come from such a small, diverse family so it was different for me growing up. Francie used the term "Ohana" because that is what you all display in this family. With that said, thank you for being so kind, generous and accepting of me from the very beginning. Even more so when Francie passed. You all have been so helpful and supportive in our lives. It really means a lot to both Brett and me. I love being a part of this family, and I adore you all so much.



We look forward to many more memories with you all and as now, Mr & Mrs. Sorem!!





I'm Carol, Brett's Aunt and Francie's little sister and very proud to be both!!

Before I begin my toast, could everyone think of Francie for just a moment and think of a word that reminds you of her. Share it with someone share or say it out loud.

Now think of Brett and I'd be willing to bet that every word you just thought of also describes him. ...Thoughtful, generous, classy, competitive, a little cheesy, driven, but most of all, a heart so full of love that everyone who sees him with Carinda knows that they are well on their way to a happily ever after! There's nothing more heartwarming than to feel Francie's presence when Brett is around.

Roses are red
Violets are blue
The dress is important
But not as much as the shoes

Francie and I spent a lot of time shopping for Bryce's wedding. The dress was easy, we found one right away, but the shoes took a lot longer. Part of that was she needed comfortable Pre

wedding flip flops, high heels for the wedding ceremony and of course, fancy dancing reception shoes!!3 pairs of shoes for one event... gotta love her. It was all about the shoes but not really. It was about the time we spent together looking for the perfect shoe while talking about Bryce, Bridget, Carinda and Brett. She was so proud of her boys and her 2 new daughters in love. We had lots of good talks over shoes.

I would try to justify wearing my Birkenstocks to being on my feet all day teaching, Francie would roll her eyes while sporting 5-inch heels cutting her 30th customer of the day. We would laugh, and the journey continued.

Shoes! When Brett first started walking, Francie started her never-ending research. She needed to know what shoes were going to be the best for her son. She did her due diligence and was convinced (and then in her very Francie-ish way), convinced all of us that the ugly, expensive white boots by Stride Rite were the only shoes you should be putting your kids in. Only the best for her Brettly.

As Brett grew older, the Stride Rite shoes became sports shoe, Nikes, Air Jordan's, baseball cleats and then came the skateboarding years. The cute little outfits, Oshkosh overalls and button-down shirts, fancy jeans, and sweat-shirts were over. Vans and skateboarding were in and Brett now had his own sense of style.

Francie was a great shopper beyond shoes, her boys always had their hair perfect, their clothes matching and the right shoes for the event. Francie was the same she had her style, and it didn't matter if you liked it or not, or if it was "in" or not, she always said you had to feel good in whatever you wore and you would look good. She always made me dress outside of the box just to see if I could feel good in it as well. I loved and admired the fact that Francie

could shop from Nordstrom's to Forever 21, to find what she liked, not what name brands told you to like. Francie loved her shopping and did it well, very much like Brett. He is my only nephew that, even without Francie, still participates in the Black Friday tradition. I know Francie loves that as much as all of us. Keep on walking in those shoes.

On one of Francie and Lyle's many trips to Hawaii Francie learned the word Ohana, Ohana means welcome in the Hawaiian culture, but in a much wider sense, to include not only one's closer relatives, but also one's cousins, in-laws, friends, and other neighbors, it means no one gets left behind, family sticks together and always supports each other. Ohana is the family you choose.

Francie, Alan and Lyle have a huge Ohana heart. They all love everyone. No one is ever left behind. If someone was different or felt left out, Francie would jump in and come up with a wonderful idea to help. From haircuts, to Padre games, skateboard ramps, charger games, taco Tuesday's, Margarita Monday's, parties, dinners, text messages, lunches, and the gifts.... Francie loved giving gifts, she loved giving more than she ever loved getting. And she always found the right gift Personalization.com must really miss Francie. And Brett, I'm so sorry I didn't get you and Carinda a cheesy door mat like Bryce and Bridget got at their engagement party... But I know Francie would want the personal touch, so brought you some personalized LOVE. When you see it one the gift table think of your mom.

Brett and Carinda, you have a huge Ohana, that is here for you always and everyday in every way.

Our wish for you is to keep walking in those Fancy Francie shoes. Francie would tell you, keep your dreams big, make your worries small, and know your Ohana loves you and wants the same for you. Continue growing your own Ohana and never skip the chance to enjoy a good Margarita or a taco Tuesday.





Hi! Here is the Francie letter that she wrote Brett for his graduation from High School. I feel like people would like to see this! - Carinda Sorem

5-7-97 - graduation day

My oldest son Brett,
I wish in this envelope; I could place a key that would unlock all of life's puzzling mysteries for you. I wish I make your entire life one of joy & happiness...but I don't have the power to do that. You do.

You decide every day, when you wake up in the morning, what kind of day it will be. Whether the circumstances surrounding you are difficult or scary, you are the master of your own destiny.

In your lifetime, you can have many things taken from you, but never, can anyone take your ability to thrive and be happy. Use that too, it is the most valuable one you have.



Treat others with respect, remember, when your dad and I are long gone, your brother will be the only family you have. He looks up to you for just a kind word or two. Help him to be all he can be.

And most importantly, love yourself! You are a wonderful & intricate human being with many qualities & gifts. But, to successfully love another, you must love yourself. I hope you learn to accomplish that first a lot sooner than I did.

I love you so much! - Mom

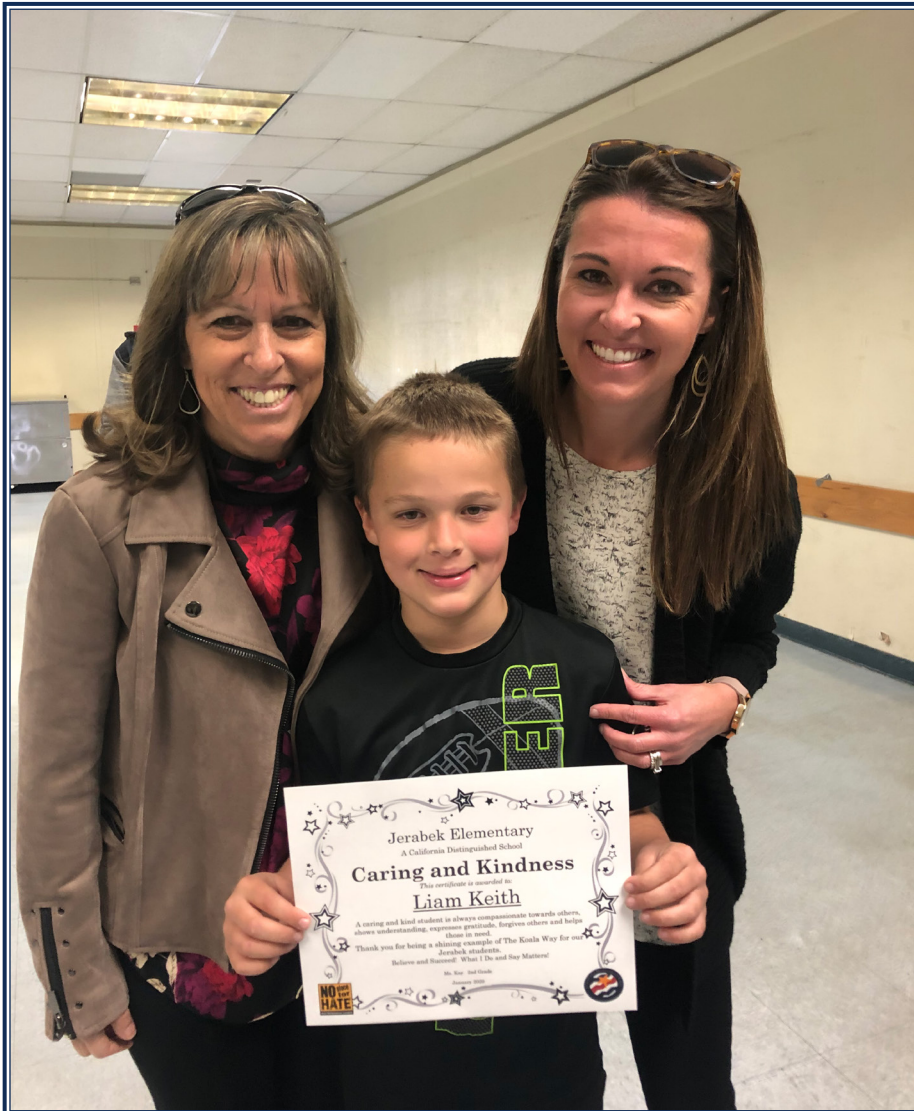


Liam & Braeden are Recognized at School

By Listy Gillingham

Jerabek Elementary celebrates their culture of kindness by selecting three students per grade to be recognized for their acts of good citizenship in the classroom.

Both Liam and Braeden Keith have earned this distinction, one in Oct. for respect and the other in January for caring and kindness. Students are called up at flag raising to be honored with parents and grandparents in attendance.



A proud moment for everyone. Grandma Listy got to stand in for Seamus during Liam's recognition due to a trip which took him out of town. We are proud of our amazing grandsons!



Margaret Turns 70!

By Margaret Riel

It's great to be alive and healthy, but it is scary to be 70. I am officially vintage (and at risk of death from the coronavirus 19) although I can't say I feel too much different. My birthday weekend began with the arrival of Megan from Seattle. Unfortunately, we had to stop ourselves from hugging. Ashley brought Emily and Addy home from school on Friday, my birthday, and they were bubbling with enthusiasm for a party. Michael arrived and party moved into high gear with dinner at the Pacific Coast Grill. Our family, great food and a view of the ocean--What could be better!



This was just the start of the weekend. Megan's Christmas present sent Emily, Bud, and I to watch Cirque du Soleil on Saturday afternoon. On Sunday, Bud had decided that the San Diego Zoo would be the best place to celebrate 70 wild years, especially since my family spent so many wonderous weekends at the zoo while we were growing up. I was excited to learn that they offer a scavenger hunt -- the ZOOOPER Challenge. There is nothing like a bit of competition to bring people together. Our guests divided into 5 teams. Each team was given a map of the zoo, a deck of clue cards with pictures and text to help us find answers to questions. The clues were crafty and required running all over the zoo. This gave the teams with the younger people on them a bit of an edge. Both Michael and Megan were on winning teams. The oldest family team (which had Bud, Carol, Jeff, and me) might have had more knowledge about the zoo but less traction for moving around quickly. All the teams had fun, especially the teams that got bonus points for taking a photo of an animal pooping.



The quest was followed by drinks, dinner, and toasting. The singing of happy birthday was followed by one of Jeff's masterpiece songs—sung, appropriately to “The Lion Sleeps Tonight.”(Jeff complained that nothing rhymes with Margaret). Everyone sang with some great harmony flowing from different parts of the room. Bud gave a very sweet tribute working off of my traits of passion, compassion, and persistence. Carol shared some sister love.

I ended with 7 life lessons that I didn't learn in kindergarten, (apologies to Mrs. Cooke, but



maybe I was a slow learner). They are condensed here:

1) Face scrubbing is a plot of the beauty industry to get us to spend great amounts of money on exfoliants and creams-- skip the washing and save money and time.

2) Few get the family they want, but if you invest time and energy into the family you have, as Francie taught us, you will have a family to love, and that is life's greatest treasure.

3) A parent's cagey comments can inspire a lifelong love of zoos. "Why do you want a pet when you have the most exotic collection of animals in your back yard, and, best of all a staff of people to clean cages, exercise and feed them???" --Wisdom offered by my dad, Frank Riel.

4) The only family you get to choose is your spouse-- Choosing well leads to a joyful journey. I found a red-bearded leprechaun, so my journey has been magical.

5) My best legacy and the greatest teachers in my life are my kids, Megan and Michael.

6) With credit to Francie, we extend our family by finding an Ohana--the people who give life sparkle, nourish our spirit, and care for those who follow. These include my daughter-in-love (Also borrowing from Francie), her family, and our friends and neighbors.

7) Finally, I do credit, Mrs. Cooke, for the arrested development of my inner child. This spirit has never aged past 5 and I am so happy to have playmates that understand me. Shout out to Emily and Addy!

The weekend was remarkable, and my good weather karma held off the rains. Thanks to everyone for making it so special!

JEFF AND CAROL GO WHALE WATCHING

By Carol Benesch



If petting huge Grey Whales in Magdalena Bay is on your bucket list or viewing majestic Blue Whales in the Gulf of California excites you, then we've got the trip for you! All you need to do is make your way to the quaint Baja Sur town of Loreto (daily flights from Tijuana) in February or March.

Jeff and Carol did just that at the end of February! We flew from TJ on Volaris Airlines on the 25th after crossing the bridge in San Ysidro directly to the airport on the Mexico side. After arriving in Loreto that afternoon, we checked into our rustic hotel on the beach just south of town and visited some of our favorite shops and restaurants (great seafood, good beer.)



Our Grey Whale tour began early the next morning and we loaded into a van with 10 other tourists and were driven about 2 hours to Puerto Lopez Mateos on the Pacific side of the Baja peninsula. Soon we were on a small open Panga boat driven by our very experienced pilot, Captain Jesus. It was just a few minutes out of harbor in this tranquil bay that we saw our first mom and calf grey whale. Heading North about 2 miles, we saw other pangas and they were all right next to a few of the females and their calves, now mostly 2 months old. Jesus got us into a good position with a large (older?) cow and an already large calf, and they frolicked for over an hour right next to our boat and a neighboring panga. Finally, mama (we called her mama, and she was twice the size of our boat), allowed us to all rub her snout and back, all the while encouraging the baby to stay close alongside. Carol got a good hands on experience, which Jeff filmed in entirety, and then Jeff got his turn. After an hour next to a big whale and her baby, you almost feel as though you've developed a relationship! We'll never forget time next to this huge gentle soul and her 20-foot-long offspring. Our whale boat trip ended with an excellent seafood lunch right at the port.

The next day, we were disappointed that the rough water in the Gulf of California prevented us from our second scheduled whale watch, to see the Blues and Humpbacks, so we toured the town and bayside on bikes, and continued our eating and shopping (and downing Margaritas!). Our biggest frustration was the very poor internet service at our hotel. We actually stopped at another place just to have a drink and use their internet.



When the Friday weather provided a smooth bay in which to start our Gulf trip to see the really BIG whales along the Eastern shore of Baja, we again met our tour operator early in the AM, this time right at the Loreto Harbor. This time also provided something we didn't get in Magdalena Bay, a knowledgeable English-speaking naturalist to tell us what we were looking at. David was a mid-thirties Irish biologist who loved the big whales, and has spent every Summer in Loreto the last few years imparting his considerable knowledge to his anxious boat mates. Again, an experienced pilot captained our open boat, slight larger, and definitely more powerful than the panga of 2 days earlier. We weren't out more than 10 minutes when we found ourselves in the midst of a large pod of Common Dolphins. David, who would know, estimated this group, which was seemingly endless, at about 600 dolphins. There were many babies, but the synchronized swimming and leaping of these swift and agile mammals was a sight to behold. We surmised they must have settled on one of the numerous sardine schools which frequented the bays off Loreto and can number in tens of thousands of fish.



We left the dolphins behind and soon saw a large spout of a blue whale in the distance. Blue whales are the largest animal that has ever lived, and their 25-meter spouts are evidence of their power and bulk. We saw no fewer than 6 or 7 blues, and each one dove and surfaced several times in our close proximity. You are required to stay at least 100 meters from the Blues, so we judged their size

and grandeur by the time it took to see the whole body of the whale while it swam slowly by, and the size of the fluke when it would finally dive. We also spied a couple of humpbacks, but not close enough to see them well, and none were in the breaching mood. Carol got some great Blue whale tale pics using a telephoto lens on the bigger camera and will share them with this article.

We spent 5 hours out on the Gulf, and then headed back to port to spend the last night in Loreto, including dinner with a fellow whale lover we met on the boat. We recommend this whale of an adventure to anyone loving the magnificence of these noble creatures.



FAMILY SHORTS



Cousins - Hoping they are still as excited about the \$1/hour rate we negotiated when they hit babysitting age.



Good family news continue to grow. It has already been reported in the RFNL that Bryce and Bridget are expecting a baby in late May. But the Sorem/Hall Grandparent watch has another pending bundle of joy. Lyle Allen and Cindy Hall are expecting their first child in late June!



And the even more exciting news is that we know what the sex of the baby is....drum roll please....yes, another GIRL is due to be in the arms of us all quite soon!

Ed and Jan's Grandkids just keep getting bigger and more lovable each day. Kevin and Nicole are two very lucky parents!



We are beyond thrilled about having a granddaughter join the family. And Grandpas Lyle and Big Al could not be more excited about FINALLY joining the grandparent team! Congrats to all!