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HELLO ARO!

And the Family Keeps Growing

By: Brett and Carinda



Carinda and I are thrilled to be expanding the Sorem/Riel/Benson family. If you are reading this hot off the press, Carinda is starting her 20th week today. Aro Nash Sorem is happy and healthy and his mom is doing fantastic.

I am learning how to make some great mocktails to keep Carinda feeling included in the ongoing party of parenthood. Carinda is eating for two, which means I am drinking for three. It's a lot to place on my shoulders, but I am up for the task.

Aro is a Scandinavian name (tribute to the Sorem's Norwegian roots) that means "high mountain, mountain of strength, enlightened."

Nash, on a lighter note, was a professional basketball player, soccer enthusiast, and all-around top-notch human being. I actually got to play soccer with him, perfect time to photo brag, and Nash happened to be a nickname of mine on the local courts up in Harlem.

I was actually hoping for Aro Switchblade Sorem, but Carinda won that battle ;) I guess the initials were just not meant to be.

Many of you may be wondering where is Aro going to be born? Where are we going to live??? Don't worry, include Carinda and I as founding and functioning members of that group.



Carinda is currently set to have Aro up in Los Angeles however she could change that down to San Diego if her current project for work takes her down there. I, on the other hand, kind of need to stay in LA unless I can get cleared for working remote down in SD. We also need to figure this out by July as the owners of the home we are squatting in get back in early July. Shout out to the Steinkamp family for letting us use the house.

So yeah, it's not ideal, not knowing where we will be or what roof we'll have over our heads. I pitched Carinda the idea of camping out under the stars the last few months. Los Angeles seems to value its sidewalk tent communities, what could go wrong?

Regardless of whatever happens, we will be fine, as will Aro, he's got a mountain of strength behind him, and an even bigger family. - Brett

I'm blessed to say that Aro has been treating me very well with a smooth pregnancy. My birth plan is to have Aro in 5 minutes, and all I have to do is sneeze for him to come out. That's a normal request, right?! HA!

I know Brett is going to be an amazing dad which has really helped calm my nerves to have such a supportive partner. I couldn't do this journey without him.

Our little guy is so very lucky to have so many amazing family members that will love him just as much as we will!!! I know Francie is beaming with joy with this news and will always be watching him. Knowing Brett and Francie, we'll definitely make sure he has a cool hair style at least...and maybe a great shoe collection. ;)

Carinda



Kieran's 1st Birthday & 1st time meeting Grandpa Al (& some other special family members)

By Birdget Sorem

On March 29th, Kieran turned 1! His birthday was baseball themed since the season began on April 1st and well, even if it hadn't, Bryce probably would've insisted since the Padres are on fire lately. Kieran enjoyed his cake more as something to play with than to eat.

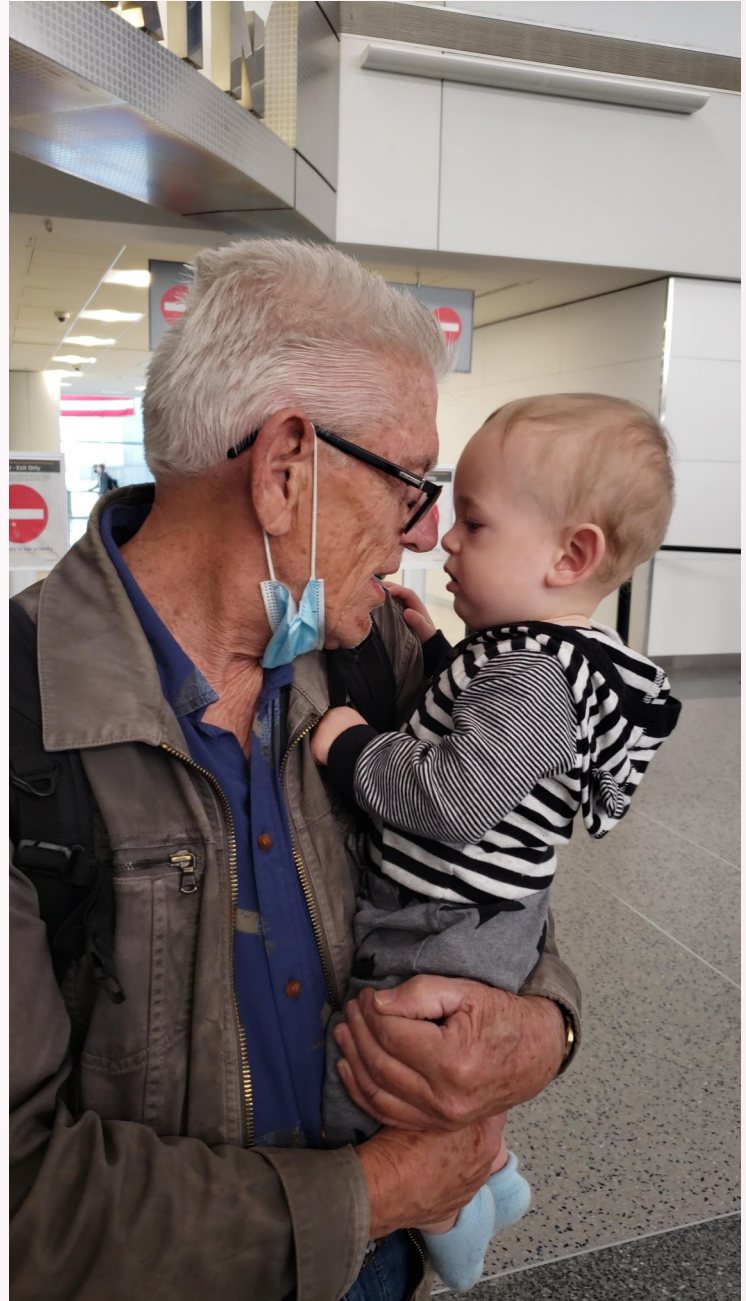


It was an extra special day because Grandpa Al, Uncle Brett, and Aunt Carinda were there to celebrate in person. It was the first time they met Kieran. Here's how it went:





Bryce, Bridget & Kieran met Grandpa Al inside the airport with a welcome sign from Kieran. Big Al picked up Kieran, took off his mask so he could recognize him, and Kieran stuck his finger inside grandpa's mouth. It was a true "welcome to the family" moment.



Grandpa got to spend 2 whole weeks with Kieran. It was such a special time with his first grandchild. Kieran has been Facetiming with Al very frequently, so Kieran didn't need much time to warm up to him.



Brett and Carinda also came to New Jersey to celebrate Kieran's 1st birthday. They both spent quality time with their nephew and found out just how fun and tiring little munchkins are as they prepare for their first one! Brett is also Kieran's godfather, so he and Grandpa Al will be back on May 16th for Kieran's Baptism



Right before Big Al left, we had a really nice surprise visit from Carol, Jeff, Jessica and the kids! This was aunt Carol and Uncle Jeff's first-time meeting Kieran. Carol played with Kieran and soaked him up the whole time. It was another special day.



Just like so much this year, Covid has ruined a lot, but the long-awaited moment of seeing Big Al meet Kieran was truly priceless. We are excited to visit San Diego in August and stay with Lyle and Birdy. We hope to see you then! Kieran wants to meet his San Diego family!

Bryce is back on the "line"



A new exciting journey begins today. Terroir is finally opening again with me, Bryce Sorem, as the chef.

Everything on the menu is from me and I'm excited to share it with you all. It has been a struggle to find a line cook, so for now, you can watch me struggle on the line.

Thank you to my wife @bridget-siobhan for helping me get to where I am today!!! See you all soon! - Bryce

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a black long-sleeved athletic top with grey patterned sleeves, black leggings, and blue and yellow running shoes, stands on a narrow, reddish-brown rock ledge. Her arms are raised high in the air, and she has a joyful expression. The background shows a deep canyon with more red rock formations and a blue sky with white clouds. The text "TRAVELING NEWS!!" is at the top, "By Carol Benesch" is on the right, and "FINALLY, WE GET TO TRAVEL AGAIN!!" is at the bottom.

TRAVELING NEWS!!

By Carol Benesch

**FINALLY, WE GET TO
TRAVEL AGAIN!!**



Right after Easter, Jeff and I took our first plane trip in over a year! We went to see our East Coast grandkids and got to finally meet our 1-year old great nephew, Kieran. We got to be part of Mateo's opening day baseball parade and Mateo's first game. Ben's was cancelled because of rain, he was disappointed, but we would be back at the end of the month and we promised to see him play then.



Bryce and Bridget invited all of us to see their new house and Kieran. It was really good to see Bryce and Bridget, and lucky for us, Alan was also there! Their house is simply adorable, but little Kieran is even more!! He is such a happy little guy with a big personality...but would you expect less? Bryce shared some of his home-made bread and cheese and Bridget poured the wine, and I got to hold Kieran!! It was a really fun evening!



We spent a week with Jessica and Miguel and had a lot of fun catching up with Ben, Matty, Sofie and Shelby, their new puppy.



After getting back and unpacking, I packed back up to go on a girl-friend trip to Sedona!! It was a lot of fun being out and about again with good friends. No husbands this time, just some good old girl-friend hiking, eating, drinking, gaming, and jacuzziing. Sedona with its beautiful red rocks has trails from easy to very difficult each with their own spectacular views and legends. We spent the four days hiking, Slide Rock State Park, Boynton Canyon including The Subway Cave and Vista Trail, Bell Rock, Sedona Rock Chapel and Montezuma's Castle National Monument and Montezuma's well!



Our favorite was our all-day trip in Boynton Canyon. We headed out towards what we thought was the vortex. About a mile in we met a man. He introduced himself as Robert and asked if he could give us a gift. We were all a bit skeptical but then he handed all of us our own heart shaped rock and said, "A love heart rock for you my dears, a gift for you from Mother Earth. The heart symbolizes unconditional love. Unconditional love is all that you will need to receive and give back to our mother universe." And then he turned and left as quickly as he came.

We thought it was cool and moved on in search of the vortex. We kept asking people if we were headed the right way and one person told us we needed to go to the subway cave which was about a mile further. He showed us pictures and we knew we had to continue. We reached the cave and although it was not where we started out to go and the climb was a bit scary (I decided that this would be the last hike in my slippery tennis shoes) we made it! The view was amazing...

but this was not the vortex point we had headed out to find, so we continued our walk. We finally found the spot where the vortex is supposed to be strongest. You ask what is a vortex? Sedona vortexes are thought to be swirling centers of energy that are conducive to healing, meditation and self-exploration. These are places where the earth seems especially alive with energy. Many people feel inspired, recharged, or uplifted after visiting a vortex.

As we were relaxing, taking in the view, and getting recharged, who should show up again out of nowhere, but Robert, the heart man. He stopped for a quick picture and while we were getting ready to go, we look back and he had magically scaled this very high rock and was playing his flute for all to enjoy. It was beautiful and a very magical ending to this inspiring hike!!

I googled Robert when we got home and apparently we are not the only ones that have stumbled in to Robert's Rocks of Love, <http://www.vagrag.com/talking-with-strangers/roberts-rocks-of-love>.



Back home again for a few days and then it was time to head back to New Jersey to celebrate the twin's 7th birthday! We missed their birthday last year because of COVID and promised we would be part of their 7th!! We also decided to take Noah with us. This would be our first trip with one grandson, and Noah's first trip without his parents and to NJ/NY. I was a little nervous that there would be some homesickness and as Noah put it, his parents were going to be 5 hours away and he just couldn't go home. But once we got there, all nervousness disappeared and the four cousins had a great time playing capture grandma, running wild, exploring NJ and NY and of course playing a little XBOX!



The highlight was Sofie and Maty's birthday. It started with the traditional chocolate chip pancakes with sprinkles and whipped cream, then a few presents and the party!! The party was at a bowling alley with laser tag and arcade games. The kids had 2 rounds of laser tag, then pizza, French fries, chicken fingers and bottomless lemonade and then a couple hours in the arcade! Everyone had a great time and it was one of the easiest parties yet!

We went into the city twice using trains, subways and ferries. One day we took a double decker bus tour of New York and the next day a ferry to Governor's Island. The ferry went right next to the Statue of Liberty, so the kids got to see her up close without the crowds. Governor's Island was a great place for kids, with a playground that had the best equipment ever! There were long twisty slides that were cut into the rocks, climbing ropes, and very unique swings. We also took a bike built for 5, (even though we were able to fit all 7 of us on it), all around the island enjoying the views of the New York/New Jersey skyline and the Statue of Liberty. And of course, the day ended with the traditional ice cream!!

The worst part was leaving New Jersey for home the next morning. There were tears and very sad faces. It was a fun trip, full of memories and hopefully will become a yearly event!





By Birdy Hartman-Hall

Why are you traveling to Alabama? That was the question that everyone asked me when I told them about our upcoming travel plans. We went for Lyle's association with ASFA but honestly, it was worth traveling there just to see Alabama.





The resort we stayed on was situated on Mobile Bay and had a breath-taking property that wrapped around the bay front. Apparently, Alabama gets a lot of rain. But we were fortunate to dodge the hurricanes and enjoyed two sunny days. I sat by the pool while poor Lyle went to meetings. But by the second day he finished early, and we enjoyed a golf game on the course right across the street.

Since they do get a lot of weather, the surrounding area was lush and gorgeous. We were amused by the many animals on the course. We saw a turtle and some cute Alabama versions of squirrels that looked more like mini black bears. The other unique aspect of this course was that half-way through there is a cemetery on the grounds sandwiched between to stunning homes. Personally, I can't imagine living next door to tombstones but at least they won't be throwing any wild crazy parties that keep you up all night.



We enjoyed wonderful dinners with great friends, and I went on some fun shopping trips as well. So, if someone invites you to Alabama don't be afraid to go on the adventure. The people are extremely friendly and the grits we had would have put a smile on Grandpa Riel's face!





Back on the Road

Bt Robert Riel

Yes, we are back on the road again in our trusty RV. We decided to take the month of May as vacation time before the real crowds of summer started. One of the side effects of the pandemic has been the explosion of RV families. In the good old days, we could go during May and never need a reservation and just let the wind carry us to where and when we wanted to go. But now, we have to make reservations at the beginning of January and even at that time, June – August was booked. Additionally, many of the national parks are requiring reservations just to enter the park! Fortunately, Yellowstone has not got to that stage yet.



Many of you have asked me why we keep going back to Yellowstone and all I can say is that I never get tired of it. Yellowstone is truly a different place each day we visit. Sure, the landscape remains fairly constant, but the colors and wildlife change all the time. In May there is a good chance of snow one day and 70-degrees weather a few days later. But mostly it's the animals and seeing them in different settings that makes it fun every day. I think it's because I enjoy photography so much and the hunt for that special shot just keeps me coming back.



On a side note, the RFNL will be published from Yellowstone this month. But this isn't the first time it has been published somewhere else than San Diego. It has been published in the Borrego Desert, the Mount Rushmore area, Yellowstone (several times) and from along the coast in California. I can remember times when I would have to drive (70 miles or more) to somewhere that had an internet connection just so I could publish the Newsletter.





Back to the trip. Since Karla could only take three weeks off, I left by myself for the first week which mostly consisted of driving to the Yellowstone area. I did make a quick side trip to Brice and Zion but mostly just a drive through. I arrived in Yellowstone on Tuesday and spent the next few days just taking pictures and looking around. One of the benefits of being by yourself is that you're not boring someone else while concentrating on taking photos.



On Saturday I drove down to Jackson Hole Airport to pick up Karla. Originally, she was to arrive a bit after 5:00 pm but her flight was delayed by bad weather and didn't arrive until around 9:30. I spent the time waiting by driving around the Tetons National park taking, what else? Pictures. Since the south entrance to Yellowstone was still closed, we had to drive around to Idaho to get back to the RV (in West Yellowstone) arriving just after midnight.



The rest of the week we have spent inside the park enjoying scenery and all the newborn baby animals. The weather has run from the 20s and snow to into the 70s and very sunny. We leave on Monday and head to Moab to visit Arches and Canyonlands National Parks. Then over to Durango Colorado, to meet up with our friends Jim and Lorelee. After a few days there we move on to Sedona for a few days then back home on the 30th. Having a whole month off will be like a practice retirement and who knows, maybe by next year it will be a full one!



