

R F N I L

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**Welcome
Aro !!**

Aro Nash Sorem Joins the Family

By Brett Sorem



Late to the game with this whole becoming a parent thing in the Riel Family, Carinda and I were excited to join the rest of the team and see what the "fuss" is all about.

We were convinced at first that Aro was going to be at least a week late. At week 36, Aro's estimated weight was already 7 pounds 6 ounces, and with a half a pound a week growth average, if Aro didn't poke his head into this world until week 41, (using my well-honed math skills passed down from Big Al), that would put Aro dangerously close to being a 10-pound baby.

Carinda was not too thrilled with that possibility, nor do I think any woman would be.

So once week 39 hit, she started to do everything possible to help convince Aro to leave his quaint New York flat. She continued working out for at least 15 minutes a day, sometimes twice. She had many Cali burritos with hot sauce. She drank raspberry leaf tea, ate dates, and did pretty much whatever she could short of getting an industrial strength vacuum and try to-well... you see where I'm going.

Oct 2 arrived, Carinda's original due date, and we were convinced it was just like any other day. We woke up, walked the dogs, grabbed acai bowls, and relaxed at the house praying to God Aro came before next Saturday the 9th. Carinda's water still had not broken, she was not even sure if the baby had dropped, and just didn't really feel like any progress had been made.

We decided to go have a late lunch, as food was really the only thing that could shave the 10-pound stress off her mind for a minute or two. We ordered sandwiches at the counter and made our way to our table. I imme-



diately knew then I had made a mistake. I looked at Carinda and said, "I definitely should have ordered a beer." So, I got up and went to the to go line and ordered up their best Hazy local IPA, which is pretty mediocre when compared to SD local brews.

I went back, sat down and Carinda said, "I think something is happening." She was starting to get some mini contractions.

We collectively decided it would be best to avoid the chance of her water breaking in a restaurant; so we finished our food and left. To my dismay, I only got to drink half my beer. If it was a Stone Tangerine Express, I would have pounded it like a champ, but this beer wasn't quite worth it.

We got back to Big Al's where the waiting game commenced. One thing was certain. We were not going to be those people who show up to the hospital in pain, and then get sent back home because they were only 2 cm dilated. Amateurs.

10 PM hits and Carinda is having contractions maybe 7 minutes apart, but every other contraction is very mild, like a Tapatio-esk tremor. Goes down good and easy. Then the opposite contractions were much more intense, kinda like medium spiced Indian food where the waiter swears it's not that bad, but you're sweating 60 seconds after the first bite.

We decided it was time even though we had not quite hit the 5-1-1 rule and jumped in our car that I had prepacked earlier that evening. We definitely packed way too many clothes, although I have to keep telling myself we really didn't because we were preparing for the worst, a C-section and a stay of 4 nights.

We left Big Al's knowing that the next time we returned, we'd have a plus one. I thanked God my work allowed me to be remote, otherwise at this point we could have been stuck in LA traffic on the 405 going nowhere at 11 PM because, yes, it's always traffic time in LA.



A brisk 10-minute commute to Mercy Hospital was exactly what the doctor ordered. We got checked in as an outpatient and saw our first nurse, I think her name was Erin, we will go with that. She asked us all of the usual questions, in which Carinda responded as eloquently as a woman in pre labor could, or so we thought.

Erin then asked us how long and far apart the contractions were. This was my turn to prove my worth. I told her they were 6 to 7 minutes apart averaging around a minute. My job was so tough.

She started to measure Carinda's contractions, which were actually almost 2 minutes long at this point. We asked if that was worrisome. Erin told us that sometimes you don't feel the beginning or the end of the contractions, but they are there. She also said that we are likely in the early stage of pre-labor and that her body is "practicing" going into labor by producing longer contractions.

You could see the frown form under my stoic face. I looked at Carinda and we both thought, "damn, looks like we should have waited longer before coming in. Who knows how much longer we need to wait, a day, another week." Yup, it looks like we were those people I absolutely did not want to be.

Erin proceeded with the checkup, talking us through what was going on and likely the scenarios. She checked Carinda's cervix and immediately stopped talking. After a moment of silence, she said, "you're a sneaky one."

Carinda ended up being 7 cm dilated at that time, which means for you few rookies out there, that she is technically in labor. An audible sigh of relief exhaled from our lungs, much like the noises Big Al makes every time he opens the sliding glass door or lifts his cup of coffee off the countertop, "Ahhhhhh."

It was GO-time. The nurse's speed at which she operated went from a casual Sunday stroll to a Ladainian Tomlinson dash with his patented stiff arm. Nothing was slowing this nurse down. She quickly called over Bailey, our delivery nurse to transition us to inpatients. Before Erin left, she told Carinda that she was so jealous of how she was handling everything, and that she would be the talk of the town amongst the nursing staff that evening.



I'll spare the rest of the gory details, but a little more than 6 hours later and no real sleep, Aro Nash Sorem entered the world at 8 pounds 5 ounces and 20 inches long.

We could not have been happier. Most of you reading this have probably gone through birthing a child and can totally relate when I say that it isn't much short of a miracle.

Aro is happy and healthy and loves to keep us on our toes. Hopefully by the time this hits the press we have gotten into a bit more of a routine. We are still in AZ at Big Al's place but are finally heading back home to Austin Nov 5th. Carinda, myself, the two dogs, plus one. -- Love you all.



Brian & Drew, Celebrate 5 Years Together!

By Brian Riel

We celebrated our 5-year anniversary a few weeks ago! The gift for 5 years together is wood, Brian stayed true to the theme and got Drew a nice watch made from wood. Inscribed on the back was a personalized message that reads "5 years later and I still wood!".

Drew got Brian the Lego Harry Potter Hogwarts Castle set that we have been wanting for years. It took 3 days to build this 6,020-piece castle, we took turns and worked in shifts to complete it. We also plan on adding a light kit to help it really shine.





After our wedding 5 years ago, our honeymoon included a trip to Universal Studios Hollywood to visit Harry Potter world. This year, we went back to Universal Studios to celebrate 5 years and revisited some of our favorite honeymoon memories.

We also took our niece Emma so she could experience it all. She got her wand and tasted butterbeer and pumpkin juice for the first time. We stayed and did Halloween Horror Nights at the park; this is where the whole park turns into a free for all including haunted mazes themed after classic and new horror films/shows. It also has many actors walking around with masks and props ready to jump out and scare you. We are thankful for these past 5 years and are so excited to see what our future brings.



Family Challenge on How I met my Amazing Husband

By Listy Gillingham



It's hard to imagine how two people from different backgrounds could meet and alter each other's paths along the way. I'm caught wondering how my husband Bob at the ripe old age of 20, was attracted to be a camp counselor at a job fair at SDSU over 45 years ago, after being a camper there in his teens. He was a school bus driver/college student trying to figure out his career path and met up with Ed Greaves (camp director at the time) who sold him the idea of working with kids would be a rewarding experience as his job went dormant over the summer months. I was 17 at the time and had volunteered the previous summer a few weeks to work at camp because my older sister, Carol, was a counselor at Marston and felt the experience was a perfect match for her twin sisters as we all loved babysitting and working with kids. Committing to the next summer, as a full-time counselor, seemed like a great fit and good way to explore a possible teaching assignment as that was my career aspiration at the time.

I remember the first time I saw Bob at spring camp, which was billed as a training for the summer camp. We arrived with snow in the mountains, which was a rarity for San Diego County. Bob was bundled up with a red jacket tied closely around his head, so all you could see was his curly hair and a beard poking out. We met with the camp director by the ball fields, in a tight circle to hear announcements and room assignments. Bob remembered seeing me for the first time in the cafeteria. I arrived early because I had "set-up" responsibilities (I don't remember what they called it back then). I set the tables for all the counselors as the campers had not arrived yet. After doing my job, I sat at the table alone, waiting for the other counselors to arrive. Bob entered, saw me alone, and asked if he could sit down. There were no sparks or falling in love, but it was

a moment in time we both remembered. I was in high school, headed to SDSU in the fall, and we shared growing up around town stories. After that meeting, we blended into working with kids and never gave the “chance meeting” another thought.

In June, we met up again for the summer weeklong staff training. Again, I don't remember much about seeing Bob again; he was just part of the summer team. I do remember noticing him when we were walking down a pathway with a large group of counselors, and someone mentioned playing volleyball on the field. I loved sports and volleyball was a great game for me. Bob seemed enthusiastic about that idea, which drew my interest and off we all went to play. Again, it's a moment I remember because it was another brief encounter that caught my attention this time regarding meeting him.

After that, it's hard to say why we ended up together. I do remember running against Bob for camp president one session. Bob was eager to use his brawn to get votes and announced at the campfire that if he won the camp presidential election he would give every camper a piggyback ride around the ball field, which got all the campers excited. Not to be outdone, I got up for my speech and acknowledged Bob's amazing promise stating though I may not be able to give every camper a piggyback ride around the ball field, I was prepared to give Bob (who was 6'1" and outweighed me by a lot) a piggyback ride in front of everyone from one spot in front of the campfire to another (about five feet). Bob was reluctant, but with all the cheering, he got on my back, and I truly carried him the five feet and got a standing ovation from the campfire crowd. I won the election and was voted in as Camp President that year.

We did “go out” on a few dates that summer, but not many as Bob was more interested in cars and cherished his weekends away from camp (sounds familiar?). When camp ended and SD State started, I wondered if our camp romance (that was very spotty) would go anywhere. However, to my surprise, with 30,000 people enrolled at SD State, our paths (a freshmen vs. a senior) crossed on the first day of school as our classes ended up being nearby. Though it was an unexpected moment, it allowed Bob the chance to ask me to the Aztec Football games, which we attended every Friday night. And from there, our true romance began. I sealed the deal when I let him rebuild the Datsun engine of the car Carol, Birdy, and I shared over Christmas break as it was leaking oil like crazy. He came over every day and I “helped” by sitting in the cab of the car reading while he worked, ready to give him a hand if he needed it. Who knew that in two more years from then, he'd ask me to marry him on Christmas Eve.

Why am I writing this article? At the end of August, Camp Marston celebrated its 100th Anniversary of hosting camps. We went up with Carol and Jeff to relive our memories and help celebrate our camp director, Ed Greaves, who was being honored for his long-time service to the YMCA. We returned to the scene of the crime where we met in the cafeteria and sat in the same seats, 45 years later, together to eat lunch. Though the cafeteria has been rebuilt, the spirit of what it looked like when we were there was still present.

I'm now challenging MY kids, YOUR kids, and YOU to tell your story for the RFNL of how you met your spouse or significant other and I'm hoping Robert will get enough responses to fill up our newsletter for MANY months.

No Kids – No Kidding!

By Annie Mulholland



Kevin and I were lucky to be able to escape for a kid-free weekend in October. HUGE shout out to the Keiths and Grandparents for taking such good care of our baby while we were gone! We were feeling the reality set in that, in a few months, we are back to square one with a newborn and won't feel freedom again for... too long! We were looking for somewhere that felt like we were going on an adventure, somewhere with some outdoor activities and somewhere with beer (for Kevin). We decided to go to Boise, Idaho for our getaway. Boise honestly hit all the marks and then some!

We arrived Saturday morning and spent all of Saturday walking through the downtown, checking out different restaurants, shops, and breweries. One of my favorite stops was to the Basque block. Apparently, there is a big Basque population in Boise, and it felt like a mini-Spain! We were able to grab some pintxos at the Basque market and I was in heaven.

On Sunday, we got up early to go explore beyond Boise. We set our destination for the Boise National Forest but made a few pitstops along the way. The drive itself is called the Ponderosa Pine Scenic Byway, which by itself was worth the trip. The byway parallels the Payette River and with all the fall foliage and colors, it couldn't have been more picturesque. One of my favorite stops along the way was the Kirkham Hot Springs, a natural hot spring right next to the Payette River. It was so incredibly beautiful and peaceful.





We also stopped in Idaho City, an old gold mining town, which happened to have their town festival when we stopped by! Our furthest stop was Stanley, Idaho, a town with a population of 63! Kevin was sure that it had to be a typo on the sign, and they missed a zero, but I assured him it was not! It is a super cute town situated next to the Sawtooth Mountains. My biggest takeaway from the road trip was the peace of all the open space and the beauty of the nature surrounding us. It was honestly such a nice way to relax and see something new.



Monday was our last day and we decided to rent bikes and bike along the Greenbelt, which is the riverwalk that goes through Boise. It is so well maintained and such a fun way to check out Boise. We were able to bike through Boise State University and also stop at

some breweries that we found along the way,

Overall, Boise was such a great getaway, and we had the best time enjoying time sans child. However, if we're being completely honest, we missed our girl Evie so much and were also so glad to come home to her sweet face. Now it's time to get ready for our lives to change again soon with baby #2!

Jeff and Carol do New England in the Fall

By Jeff Benesch,
Pictures By Carol Benesch

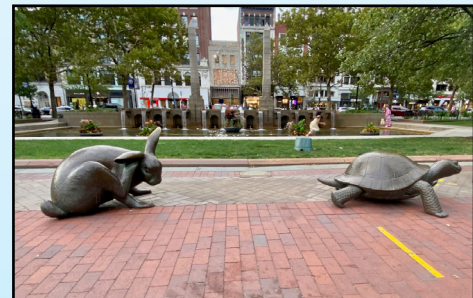


Jeff and Carol joined members of their Camping Group for a long-delayed Autumn in New England trip. On September 20th, we flew to Boston where we spent 3 glorious days walking, boating and ducking around the city. By ducking, I mean we took a very fun Duck Tour on an amphibious vehicle viewing many of the historically significant sites around the city. Pictures within this article show many of the most memorable moments of Benesch's in Boston

Dinner in Boston's Chinatown produced a delicious Hot Pot meal. Dozens of magnificent churches line Boston's streets, some of which are the oldest in the country.



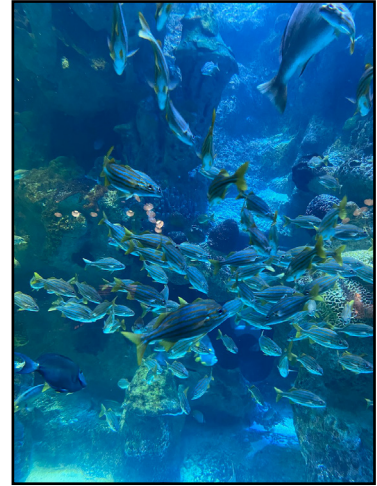
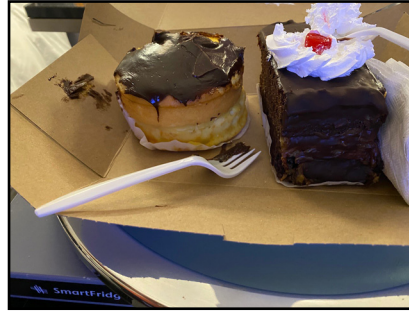
Our Duck Tour was narrated by an expert historian and guide, a long-time Boston institution, who talked as much about himself as he did the history of the city. The tortoise and the hare statues in Copley Square indicate the finish of the Boston Marathon.



We spent a half day on a whale watching boat where we saw a few Humpback Whales, a first for us. Truly magnificent creatures.

The trip also featured the Boston harbor area and wonderful views of the tall buildings that are packed into central Boston. Since it left from the pier housing the Boston Aquarium, we spent a few hours there as well, and the huge tank in the middle of that attraction was a reef filled wonderment of fish, turtles, rays, sharks, huge sea bass, large schools of reef fish, eels, groupers, and much more. The cute penguins were being fed and that was fun to see. We really enjoyed that aquarium. Just a few blocks from the wharf sits historic Faneuil Hall, and the adjoining Quincy Marketplace. While not everything was re-opened yet after Covid closings, we still sampled many of the sweet treats made at Carol Ann's Bake Shop. And not just because of the name.

Lastly, George Washington on horseback was just one of the magnificent viewings in Boston Common and adjoining Boston Public Gardens. What a wonderful huge green space right in the middle of downtown Boston and just one block from our great hotel in Boston's Theater District, the Godfrey Hotel. Highly recommended if you venture to Boston. And we walked by a whole wintry scene close to our hotel, where they were filming the movie "Spirited" (with Will Farrell and Ryan Reynolds) which is a Christmas Carol update. Snow indeed.



On to Cape Cod: 4 days with 10 friends all sharing a scenic house on a lake, it was really right out of a movie. Very near the Kennedy Compound in Hyannis Port, we had a blast canoeing on our “pond”, watching the moon rise through the trees, hiking on the Cape Cod National Sea Shore, walking on shell strewn beaches with hundreds of Horseshoe Crab shells (they molt each year and discard their ecto-skeletons), viewing too many lighthouses to count, and most hilariously, sharing a home cooked (almost) lobster dinner featuring 2 ½ pound lobsters.



The back-story: A couple of our group bought these big boys, 10 of them altogether, and planned on boiling them in the house lobster pot. Of course, our rental house didn't have a lobster pot. So, a few of us coming back from the market, were tasked with finding a large lobster pot to cook our dinner. If you can imagine 6 people on cell phones each calling a different store to find an in-stock lobster pot that didn't cost \$150, and stopping at Home Goods, Home Depot, Bed, Bath and Beyond, Ace Hardware and more. No one had large lobster pots in stock. It turns out that the fish market where the guys bought the lobsters had offered to cook them in the first place. (At \$40 each, that's the least they could do!) So, they ran back to the fish store and in 30 minutes, our 200+ lbs. of lobsters were cooked, and we abandoned, thankfully, our great lobster pot scavenger hunt in central Cape Cod. The meal was magnificent, and messy! And it's not easy to crack open huge old lobsters to get at the good stuff. We should have just caught and eaten a couple of the numerous local wild turkeys; it might have been easier.



After 4 days with our fun and funny camping group, we left Cape Cod for the much cooler, but no less scenic Bar Harbor Maine.

Bar Harbor and beautiful Acadia National Park: It was a long drive, and we didn't arrive at our Quimby House Inn until dark, but we really loved the whole of Mt. Desert Island. Many of the leaves on the thousands of maples, oaks, birch and aspen trees had started to change color, but we just missed the truly magnificent total leaf change of upper New England. But that didn't mean that the thousands of us "leaf peepers" that filled the town of Bar Harbor, and its many inns and hotels, and all of its restaurants, were disappointed. It turns out that a cold snap will bring the leaf colors, and Acadia National Park hadn't had a cold snap yet. The upside is that we didn't really need the parkas, gloves and scarfs that we had packed, since it was in the upper 60s the whole time we were there. Even our last night harbor boat tour was fairly warm and toasty, and really nice on a calm and star filled evening. We viewed seals, bald eagles, herons, leaping fishies hundreds of sea birds, amazing clouds and a perfect sunset on this final farewell to Bar Harbor.



Our other most noteworthy memories of Acadia National Park were Cadillac Mountain, Jordan Pond, Sand Beach and Bubbles, twin mounts which we renamed "Boobs" for obvious reasons. All three days we were in Bar Harbor, we visited the adjoining Park, which more or less surrounds the town. Cadillac Mountain is a 1500+ peak (about the same height as our Cowles Mtn.) but offers the "picture postcard" views shown in Carol's wonderful pictures. It's known as the highest point of the Eastern Seaboard, and it probably is, but nearby Vermont and New Hampshire have much higher mountains and ski resorts, but none that overlook the Easternmost shore of the US Atlantic coastline. Every viewpoint of our scenic drive around the whole of Acadia was picture worthy and memorable.

Just below Cadillac Mountain are two alpine lakes, with water so clear and pristine, it's used for the town's water supply. Jordan Pond is the smaller of the two, but still was several miles around. Much of that hiking path was on a raised wooden platform, more than a mile long, which kept

the mudflats of the lake shore off our hiking boots. At the beginning of the lake path is Jordan House, an historical building which is a converted farmhouse, and now houses a gift shop and restaurant, famous for its world-renowned popovers, delicious with butter and jam.

The view of the pond from our grassy lunch spot was equally impressive. And the bees which swarmed to the sweetness of the jam in the outside picnic area were “tame” bees, or so said the signage at the restaurant. We strategized a method of distraction which seemed to work just fine. The far end of the pond featured a bridge and beaver pond, and a more strenuous hike up the side of the “boobs”. Carol and friends took the challenge and hiked the South Bubbles trail, while the less adventurous made his way back to Jordan Pond House.

We made a couple of visits to Sand Beach, the only true sand beach of the whole park, where the currents and offshore islands cause the breakdown of shells and sea debris into a fine sand, and hence a beautiful large swimming beach. While most of the group hiked another difficult trail above the beach, Jeff made friends with a red-coated lake mink, a really cute fellow that seemed to enjoy our company, along with some tasty mussels and sea kelp. Carol did capture some of the wonderful color of the changing leaves and our visit to the Acadia Wild Botanical Gardens was an educational, restful, and colorful retreat.

The town itself was a bit touristy, but full of good fish and lobster restaurants and we made sure to visit a few of them. Along with a Riel/Benesch staple, hand-made ice cream. Again, it was amazing to see all the “no vacancy” signs on the numerous inns.

We’ll want to return to Bar Harbor one of these days, as the huge park has much more than we were able to see in 3 busy days. Maine is full of surprises and wonder and our 10-day vacation could easily have been longer.

