

R F N I

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Brett Turned 40 with a Big Birthday Bash at Casa de Sorem in Menifee.



By Alan Sorem



Carinda and I were talking one day, and she thought it would be a wonderful plan to surprise Brett and get Bryce, Bridget, and Kieran out to California for Brett's birthday. So, we started to work on the plan. Calls were made, plane tickets bought, and just like that the plan came together.

I picked Bryce, Bridget, and Kieran up at LAX on Friday and we drove to Brett and Carinda's house. Bryce called Brett from in front of his house and said I have 10 minutes let's have a birthday shot. Brett said great Bryce then knocked on Brett's door. Brett said wait someone is at my front door ha ha.... Brett opened the door and was completely surprised. A wonderful moment between brothers. Thanks, Carinda for the great idea.



SURPRISE

It was a great party with Brett and Kendall cooking brisket in the afternoon and then hamburgers in the evening. Lots of Brett's friends, the Riel clan, and small kids running all over the house and back yard. It kind of reminded me of the Riel parties back in the day with all the cousins playing soccer or football against the adults.

As tradition goes with Brett, on his birthday he has to complete one skate trick for each year of his life. Fortunately and as many of you may know Brett's has a skate park in his backyard. Therefore, with all watching in awe he performed 40 tricks in a row (never missing one, at least that's how this story goes).



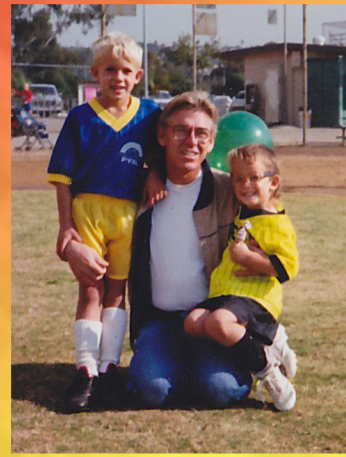


The kids, not to be outdone by their aged uncle, also had some fun on the skate ramps using the car toys and other props to show Brett how real tricks are done. There was also a soccer game on the grass where the kids played against the adults. While the score keeping was sporadic, I do think the kids won.

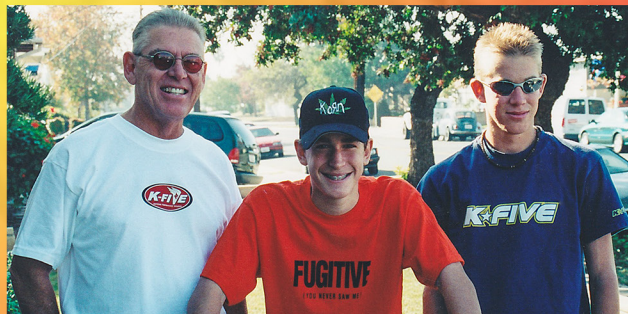
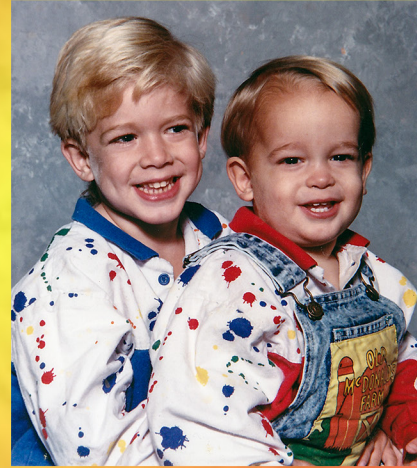


It was a wonderful weekend, and I am sure Brett will remember fondly all who showed up for his big 40 party. Thanks to all who made the long (and short) journey to attend the party. Also thanks to Birdy for taking all the wonderful pictures that accompany this article!





40
THE
ULTIMATE
F-WORD



Family Foursome Does Hilton Head Island



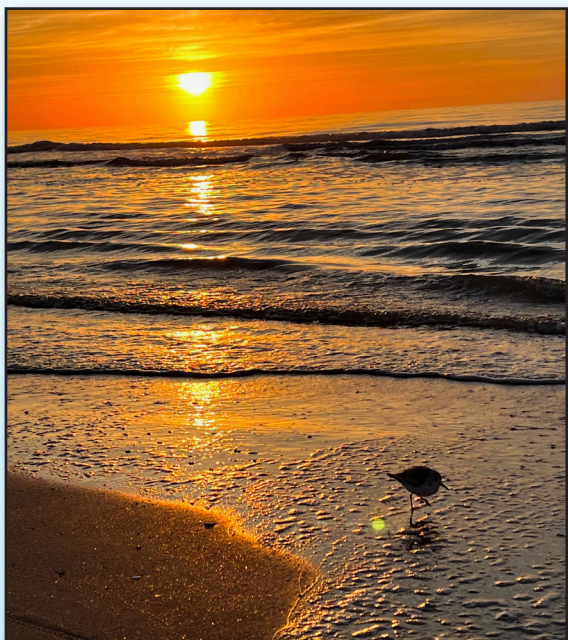
What's the East Coast version of the Monterey Peninsula? It's Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, just north of Savannah, Georgia and rich in colonial and Civil War history, as well as huge swaths of nature preserves, bike paths, enormous luxury homes, and world class golf courses...

By Carol & Jeff Benesch

Margaret and Bud had 8 days of timeshare credit for the wonderful beachfront Hilton Ocean Oaks Resort, and we were invited along! So, on Saturday, February 3rd, this fabulous four-some boarded an American Airlines jet to Savannah/Hilton Head Airport and started our epic week+ in one of South Carolina's premier coastal wetlands and vacation destinations.

With a 12 miles-long white sand beach and mild, mostly rain-free weather, we took advantage of the many recreation activities within both our resort, and the nearby island offerings. It was still restaurant week in HH when we arrived, so the first few nights we took full advantage of the Fixed Price Menu offerings at several of the better restaurants on the island. Bud was determined to eat fish or seafood since it was local and fresh, so most of our meals contained shrimp, crab, flounder, scallops, and mahi, or some combination of the above. And our choice of dessert at each restaurant was a constant source of humor, and experimentation! It was NOT a dieter's paradise. Can you say, "Chocolate Fondue"? In summary, we ate very well, and often!

We learned that Hilton Head Island was still an undeveloped coastal wetland when at the beginning of the Civil War, it became home to thousands of Union troops. It was the headquarters of a large garrison that was used to blockade the southern ports and harbors, eventually starving the Confederacy of needed supplies, food and equipment. It was only after the Civil War, that the island became home to hundreds of freed slaves who lived off of farming, fishing and oystering. The rich history of these early settlers is part of the lore of Hilton Head Island, and the "Gullah" community is honored and recognized still in food, culture and many island names.



We found a large pickleball complex and enjoyed a couple of hours of quality competition! We rented bikes and made almost daily rides either on the beach, or along forested bike paths. We saw many alligators sunning along the banks of freshwater ponds and creeks, along with numerous large terrapins. And since there was an abundance of reeds and marshes, our sights included numerous birds including large blue herons, egrets, an osprey or 2, pelicans, sand pipers by the hundreds, and many, many cormorants, which must be the island bird. Carol and Margaret took numerous beach walks to capture the glorious sunrises and sunsets, and we all marveled at the shells, crabs, and jellyfish that the tides brought up on the beach every day. We discovered early on that riding a bike nearest the water line was the firmest sand and allowed for a comfortable ride on our beach cruisers up and down the island coast. Bike rentals were everywhere, and many of our fellow tourists were on bikes as well. During the busier summer season, the island must be REALLY CROWDED with bike riders as we were there during the off season.



We had brunch at a diner one day, and also enjoyed an ice cream social at the resort. The resort staff also provided a “turtle talk” one afternoon, which went into great detail about the loggerhead turtles that make the local beach their nesting/egg depository during the breeding season. We also went on a narrated bike ride with a guide and learned more about the local flora and fauna.



One nice day midweek, we rented kayaks and toured Broad Creek, a large saltwater river and bay that sometimes has lots of dolphins leaping about. But no dolphins on our day. We did spend a couple of hours, however, kayaking up and down the river with Alton, our guide, and through thick marshlands and oyster beds. Many thousands of oysters were visible, and it must be one of the largest sources of the area’s seafood industry. After our strenuous paddle, we went on a long bike ride, and supped at Aunt Chiladas, a Mexican restaurant. After all, San Diegans can’t go more than a few days without our tacos, burritos, and fajitas.

We made it into Savannah on Wednesday for a day-long tour of the historic district and environs along the riverfront. We used a popular tour company with on and off bus service but stayed on for the whole 90-minute narrated version with a very knowledgeable driver/guide. Old Savannah was founded by one exceptional entrepreneur, James Oglethorpe, whose vision, and planning is still very evident today. His guiding principles in the early 18th century were: No Catholics, No lawyers, and no slavery.



Surprisingly, despite an economy dependent on cotton, slavery was not allowed within the city until the 1750's. Of course, Catholics and lawyers were also allowed mid-century, and the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist is a beautiful ornate church modeled after the great churches of Europe. Carol and Margaret lit a candle for mom there. They also visited the Massie School Museum, the first school in the city where they viewed the original classroom and many other fascinating exhibits.

Savannah was the first planned city of America, and Georgia's oldest, with broad streets laid out with perfect East/West and North/South facing avenues. A public square or park was placed in the center of each quadrant, a total of 24 originally, and 22 still survive today. The Girls Scouts were founded in Savannah, and the home of founder Juliette Gordon Low is a tourist attraction in the district. The modern-day City Hall just outside the district is a large gold domed edifice which was reflecting the setting sun in spectacular fashion as we ended our bus tour.



Thursday brought more, great 70-degree weather, and our first extended visit to Sea Pines, the Island's largest residential community and home to Hilton Head's most photographed symbol, the Harbor Town lighthouse. More museum than working light house, we enjoyed walking the 114 steps to several levels of historical photos, descriptions, and relics. The view from the top platform was spectacular, and included both the planned harbor community, but also the famous Harbor Pointe Golf Course.

The girls made it onto the 18th green (no one was playing the hole) for pictures at the flag. This was as close to a golf game that we got the entire 8 days. 15 famous golf courses around Hilton Head, and NO GOLF. Oh well, next time. Sea Pines, like the 17-mile drive in Monterrey, was full of spectacular homes, ocean views, expensive shops and tree lined golf and tennis clubs. True to the developer's promise, however, no building is taller than the trees, and the streets are lined with bike and pedestrian walkways. We saw more of the famous American alligator in Sea Pines, but never too close.





Our last full day in South Carolina was our first and only day of substantial rain, so we had to suffer our way through the local outlet stores for a day of shopping and introspection. The ladies shopped, while Bud and Jeff quietly introspected. Our trip ended on Saturday the way it started with a trip to the airport and the flight home! Many thanks to Margaret and Bud for sharing their wonderful Hilton resort with us!





Meet Blake Nikolaus Riel

By Ed Riel

It is time to meet Blake Nikolaus Riel. He is the oldest grandchild of Ed, the second great-grandchild of Frank and Edith; therefore, next in line in this series of RFNL interviews of their Great Grand Generation.

Blake and his family of Kevin and Nicole, with sisters Quinn & Coral and their dog Skip moved into their new home in West El Cajon a little over a year ago. This is Blake's fourth residence in his first 9 trips around the sun, finally this house looks to be permanent. And it is a fine home with Blake having his own bedroom, where for this interview, he talked to me very comfortably, in a kid size, rattan rocking chair

that once belonged to his dad (Kevin) when he, himself was of a similar age; it was a present from Jan's mother.



Blake has a bunk bed with no lower bed creating a small boy-cave, which is especially useful at Halloween, which, to Blake, challenges even Christmas as his favorite holiday. In the corner of the room is his electric guitar, which will get more use as his young ability to make deafening music matures. For now, he plays on a synthesizer keyboard and with sound mixing equipment to create base line beats to which he is writing rap verses for. Besides music, he has always liked drawing, and on a regular basis will express himself by producing little cartoons for the amusement of his family.

Besides schools up in Claremont (East LA), Blake has gone to OB Elementary and now La Jolla Country Day (where his dad works). In comparing the two, Blake noted that the lunches at LJCDs

were unbeatable, and the after-class extended day care is truly great; but it was at OB that he met his two best friends, Auden, and Christian.

Besides Rap music, Blake enjoys scary video games. His favorite foods are tacos (Note the picture of him helping prepare for Taco Tuesday) and dumplings (not on the same plate). What he likes best about his younger, by 4 years, sister Quinn, is that she wrestles with him (much to the detriment of Kevin and Nicole's living room sofa). What he appreciates most about his youngest three-year-old sister Coral is that she is very funny and even crazy-wild at times.

Besides the Riel side of the family, Blake is close to Jan's Brother, Uncle Wayne and Auntie Carol and their daughter who he knows as Auntie Shannon. Auntie Shannon has a home in Maui to which Blake's family has vacationed several times. Blake also has a close relationship with Nicole's mother, Karleen, known as Kar-Kar to Blake and sisters. The whole family has taken several trips to Chicago to visit with her and she also comes out to San Diego as often as she can.

You don't have to be around Blake for more than a few minutes to see the abundant energy driving this kids' future. And what a future he will have!!!



Liam Keith Gets an Award

By Listy Gillingham

Nothing makes a grandparent prouder than getting an invitation to come to school to see your special grandson being recognized for doing something amazing among his peers. This was the 4th awards assembly for the school this year, and Liam was selected this month for being a leader who puts “First Things First” while being at school.

The awards notes that winners were selected for the following reasons. “I prioritize and do the most important things first. I say NO to less important things so I can say YES to the most important things. I set goals and make a plan, to achieve my goals. I am organized, use my time wisely, and take care of my things.” These are part of the Habits of Mind that the school promotes in their character education program.



Knowing Liam both at home and at school, they certainly could not have described him better as he is always quick to clean up a project or help anyone who needs assistance at home. He was also called up for a group picture after the assembly to thank all students who help the school by being on the safety patrol. It's hard to believe he's a 5th grader and will be off to middle school next year. Congratulations Liam!



FAMILY SHORTS



Birdy has a new Jaguar SUV and just loves how it purrs as it snarls down the road.

Lyle and Birdy had to drive all the way to LA just to find the purrrrrfect match to what they were looking for. So don't be surprised if you see Birdy zooming by you on the freeway. Just look for the silver flash and a big growl as it goes by.

David Lane celebrated his **42th birthday** with family and friends along with a really nice cake!



Jessica took Ben to his first Broadway show, via a train packed with sushi! They went to see Harry Potter and the cursed child playing at the Lyric Theater. What a great trip and a wonderful Mother and Son bonding trip!