

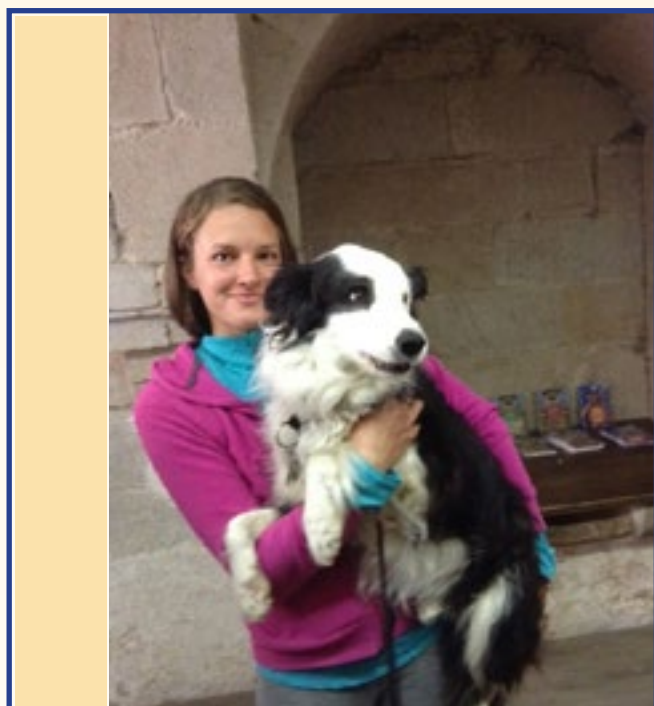


www.americanpilgrims.org

LA CONCHA

Newsletter of American Pilgrims on the Camino

March 2016



Pilgrim Dog

by Jean Mitchell-Lanham, Pacifica CA

I can honestly say that I have never met a dog on the Camino that I didn't like. That's a lot more than I can say for some people that I have met on the three Caminos that I have done. With that said, I would like to relate a true story about a dog that did the Camino with her mistress. This story happened when I had the honor and privilege to serve as a volunteer in the Pilgrim's Office in Santiago last October.

A young woman approached my counter in the Pilgrims' Office in Santiago. She spoke very good English and was from either Germany or Poland. I don't recall which. Standing next to her was this beautiful black-and-white Border Collie whom I will never forget. She had the softest eyes that just dripped with love. I don't recall the young woman's name, only the dog's. It was Madeleine. They had been walking for several months.

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Photos Throughout!

The happy couple, Madeleine and her owner

As I started to examine the woman's credencial, she asked if her dog could have a compostela, too. I couldn't find the words to console her when I told her that was not possible. Only human pilgrims get them. She started to tear up, and so did I. I started to think very hard and I don't know why, but St. Francis of Assisi popped into my head. Yeah, he's the patron saint of animals and is said to have done the Camino in 1215, and 2015 was the 800th anniversary of his Camino. I asked myself, "What would St. Francis have done in this situation?" And then it came to me.

I looked at the young woman and said again, "I can't give your dog a compostela, but you can dedicate it to anyone or anything you like. We put a Latin phrase at the bottom of the compostela that says something like "dedicated to" and the name or object of dedication. Needless to say, she was ecstatic, and so was I. ♦

Message From the Chair

Dear Friends,

The 2016 Gathering quickly approaches and promises to again deliver exceptional sessions and ample opportunities for pilgrim reunions and new friendships. One might ask, why is gathering pilgrims together still core to our mission in the days of social media and 34 chapters of American Pilgrims spread across the country? Any pilgrim will tell you that an opportunity to share Camino stories and experiences and to listen to those of others is precious and can't be duplicated in posts and tweets. And, while we now have chapters in 18 states with some of the larger states having multiple chapters, many of our members who reside in 49 states (come on, South Dakota!) do not have chapters to connect them regularly with other pilgrims. The Gathering gives everyone an opportunity to come together with others who have experienced, or soon will experience, the Camino. There's a reason that many of us return year after year. Watch for stories and photos in the next *La Concha* and plan to join in the fun next year if you are



No matter where she travels, there is always a backpack!

not able to come this time!

In 2015, American Pilgrims issued nearly 7,000 credentials. A pilgrim who arrives in the Pilgrims' Office in Santiago to receive a compostela must present a proper credential. Unfortunately, an increasing number of pilgrims have presented forms of credentials that were not issued or approved by the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. Recently, the Dean of the Cathedral issued a warning that unapproved credentials may be rejected in 2016 and compostelas denied. We are happy to report that American Pilgrims on the Camino is one of the organizations

that has the approval of the Cathedral to continue to issue credentials. ♦

Hasta verte en Belleville!

Cheryl Grasmoe

Board Chair

New Membership Category- Lifetime Member

For many of us, when we experience the Camino, it becomes a "forever" feature of our lives. Perhaps that is why members have been asking about the possibility of having a life membership in American Pilgrims on the Camino. Individual life memberships are now available for \$500. Since the first of the year, several have joined as life members. Thank you to them. When your membership comes up for renewal the next time, consider making American Pilgrims a forever part of your Camino experience. ♦



*Interior: Casa Parroquial,
Fuenterroble de Salvatierra.
photo by Genette Foster, Pasadena CA*



Xacobeo News

With more than a quarter million pilgrims passing through Galicia en route to Santiago last year, the Galician government's network of 70 albergues, that collectively can shelter more than 3,200 pilgrims each night, has never been more important. The Xacobeo is taking steps to increase albergue capacity, with two new albergues slated to open this year. A house

in A Fonsagrada on the Camino Primitivo is being rehabbed as an albergue, and during Holy Week, a small albergue will open at Xinzo de Limia, located on the Vía de la Plata between Verín and Ourense. Although two out of every three pilgrims now arrive on the Camino Francés, more pilgrims are discovering the beauty of the lesser-traveled routes and a need for accommodation. ♦

Thanks to Ann Howley, Mona Spargo, and Carlos Mentley

At the end of December, three individuals completed their service on the board of directors, leaving behind an impressive list of contributions to American Pilgrims on the Camino.

During his tenure on the board, Carlos Mentley ably served as board chair for several years, chaired two Gatherings, made highly rated presentations at Gatherings and represented American Pilgrims at a number of international conferences.

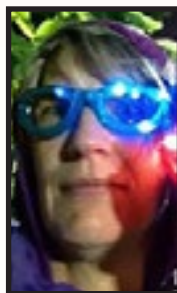
Our treasurer and board member of six years, Ann Howley, leaves a legacy of sound financial management achieved through the hundreds of hours that she devoted to establishing and maintaining an accurate and efficient system of financial controls and record-keeping, as well as

a willingness to help out wherever else there was a need. She and Carlos are our primary voices in administering the American Pilgrims Facebook group.

While on the board, Mona Spargo served as secretary, chair of the nominations committee, 2013 Gathering chair, and chair of the communications committee. She was also generous with her considerable creative skills in producing logos, posters, programs and *La Concha* layouts and graphics. The commitment of Carlos, Ann and Mona to American Pilgrims and to the Camino is unmatched. We are grateful that each one has offered to continue to serve the association in the future. ♦



Ann



Mona



Carlos

The Gathering, La Concha, and Storytelling

by *Martha Crites, Seattle WA*

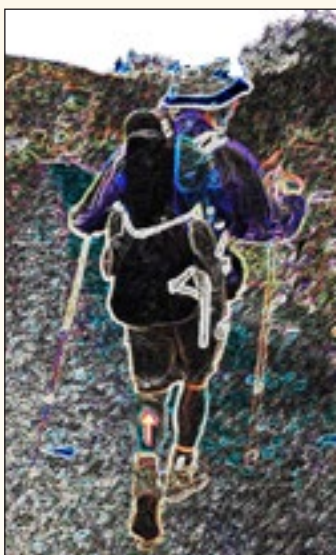
The 19th Annual Gathering is just around the corner, at Our Lady of the Snows in Bellevue, Illinois on April 7-10, 2016. Registration is open until March 20th. Even if you are not able to come this year, we want you to be involved. One thing you can do is give a listen to The Camino Podcast of our Keynote Speaker, Brian Bouldrey, being interviewed by Dave Whitson: <https://soundcloud.com/user-939742370/episode12-the-power-of-stories>. The theme this year is Telling the Way Within and we hope everyone, from new pilgrims to serial pilgrims, has a chance to tell their Camino story. If you are not able to be at the Gathering for your storytelling, think about weaving it into a story for a future issue of *La Concha*. See you soon. ♦

photo by Janet Schwind, Indianapolis IN

Paul From Montreal

by Kevin Wrede, Portland OR

We joined Paul for breakfast in a round room at Albergue A Reboleira in the little town of Fonfría, population 40. Dinner the night before was served in a circular building a short walk down the hill across the busy LU-633 highway. (If one indulged in a little too much tinto at the communal meal, one best carefully look both ways when returning to one's bunk.) So there Paul was, tucking into his French omelette. We sat next to him at a large, round, wooden table in the center of the room waiting for our breakfast as he munched away, tapping at his tablet. He was emailing his wife, on this, his sixth Camino. A tall, fit, bearded fellow who carried a ukelele on his pack, Paul had an irrepressible enthusiasm for this adventure as he sang the praises of The Way. He raved joyfully in his lyrical French-Canadian accent about the draw of nature's beauty and the rich cultural treasures strung like pearls on this 800 kilometer string. Of particular note was his appreciation for the stunning and massive ages-old Benedictine Monastery of San Xulián in Samos, where he had stayed before.



Paul heading out for adventure.

After omelettes, we bid Paul farewell and headed out, predicting we'd see him in Samos at the monastery. Not long after leaving town, from behind we heard the faint strains of someone singing Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World." That's right, it was Paul. Soon we had all joined in. How could we not? Paul's stride was long and quick, and as he pulled away we could see that he sported the famed Yellow Arrow of the Camino painted on his left calf. At Triacastela we ran into him again, taking a break in front of a bar. "See you in Samos!" we chorused. After several kilometers of walking along LU-633, Paul caught up with us, walked a bit with us and passed us. Later in the distance we could see he had stopped on a bridge for quite a while. Was something wrong? When we arrived there, he excitedly told us how he had just seen an eagle fly low over the little river below and how he was hoping to catch another glimpse. That was Paul, who would take off like a shot on the trail but then stop and linger to pick up and admire the beauty of an ordinary chestnut. ♦

The Camino

by J.P. Monro, Portland ME

A step here
on concrete poured last year,
A foot there
on rocks scoured last decade,
A mile here
on a Roman road millennia old,
A league there
on a ley line the Celts laid down.
A stop here
on hay bales, to sun our feet;
boots, socks, packs, and poles
lying in the thatch.

A stop there
in a grove by a fountain
we doff our hats, revel in shade, journal the
day
so far
from where we started
on foot,
in mind
of something else
now long gone. ♦

A Place to Lay Your Head

by Richard Williamsen, Modesta CA

My wife, Nancy, and I walked the traditional route of the Camino this past summer. We began walking from St. Jean Pied de Port on the afternoon of June 24, 2015, and arrived bright-eyed and bushy-tailed at the cathedral in Santiago on July 26, 2015, at 8:45 AM! And like most pilgrims had a wonderful time - even if our feet hurt for a long time.

On July 17, 2015, we stopped for the day in Foncebadón and stayed at the albergue Domus Dei. The hostess wanted to make sure that we took a picture of the albergue and the plaque they installed for American Pilgrims on the Camino. They extend their deepest thanks for the financial support in the albergue's rehabilitation. The funds were used to put a new roof on the albergue. Without the grant from American Pilgrims on the Camino they would have been "out of business." So, perhaps this is a plug for cash donations to the Association that does good work on the Camino!

For those who have not stayed the night in Foncebadón, yes it is rugged and our impression, (at the time) was that this was the most primitive accommodation. In reflection, I think it was because we arrived exhausted! And they could use some more money to upgrade the bathrooms. It may sound as if I am complaining, but I am basing my comments on comparisons of other public albergues. On the bright side, our hostess and host were wonderful and the extended Camino family was cheerful and a delight to be with. We woke refreshed, ready for another day of adventure on the Camino. ♦



Richard and Nancy in front of the albergue Domus Dei.



Plaque at albergue Domus Dei honoring the contributions of American Pilgrims on the Camino through our grant program.

*America's House, APOC:
Casa Parroquial,
Fuenterroble de Salvatierra
photo by Genette Foster, Pasadena CA*





Ross Dearden, a Camino friend, Calzadilla de Hermanillos

The Camino is Difficult - Good

by Randy Durrum, Beavercreek OH

"500 miles? On foot? Sounds kind of hard."

If you have tried to persuade someone (or yourself) to walk the Camino, you are familiar with these words. But the difficulty of walking the Camino is one of the best reasons to go. Through overcoming adversity, you will grow mentally and emotionally stronger.

On the Camino you will have no car. We love them, but normal perceptions of time and distance are altered by an automobile. What takes six memorable hours on foot might take 20 stressful minutes by car. While modern life, of course, depends on rapid transportation, roads are engineered to discourage any possibility of walking. You encounter other people only when dodging their massive vehicles.

As people around the world have come to enjoy the "slow food" movement, Camino pilgrims subscribe to the "slow travel" movement and live more mindfully. Moving slowly rewards you with intimate perceptions of your surroundings impossible to realize while driving. Nature and architecture are awe-inspiring when they are more than just a blur out the window. People you meet on the Camino turn out to be compassionate human beings, not raging monsters behind a windshield.

And who needs GPS when your environment is flooded with all those yellow arrows?

Besides a car, you will relinquish many of your western comforts. All that you own you will wear or put into a pack. Your next bed is somewhere hours down the road. On arrival, the toilet may be outside, and you will share it with strangers. Sleeping soundly is not guaranteed because of the inevitable snoring.

But these "deprivations" are the first things that you immediately adjust to. A pilgrim learns that relying on modern conveniences and hiding inside a fearful comfort zone discourage a happy, connected life. By minimizing materialistic comforts you more easily find happiness by creating friendships. At a fairly austere albergue I shared a group meal with people from six European countries and the US, all at one table. We didn't always find a common language, but we shared a great communal experience.

A Camino friend, Nancy, called the pilgrimage "Day Camp for Grownups." That is, pilgrims leave home to make strong, but temporary social connections and learn useful skills. I agree, although "Boot Camp" is accurate, too. The Camino may be uncomfortable at times, but you will become a smarter, more compassionate person. ♦



A shop in Santa Catalina de Somoza

A pilgrim dinner at Albergue A Pedra in Sarria



An 80th Birthday Pilgrimage

by Margaret Brown, Red Bud IL

In September to October 2015 I walked the Camino Primitivo planning to be in Santiago for my birthday on October 13, 2015. All went well until just before O Cádavo where in pouring rain and high winds I slipped on a wet stone and felt some pain. I kept walking though. It started to ache so I stopped for coffee, and when I got up again – Yipes! — I could not put my foot on the ground. I took a taxi to O Cádavo where I stayed for several days and was very well cared for by a wonderful hospitalera. Then, I took a taxi to Lugo where I was finally able to get a cane so I could move around. Next, I went to the bus station where a helpful pilgrim called albergues in Santiago to find a place for me! I was in Santiago for a couple of days and went to the cathedral square on the 12th to stay at the Parador (a birthday gift from my son and daughter-in-law). I went to the Pilgrims' Office and Dave Correa (who wrote in the last La Concha) helped me and was very kind.

On the 13th I was able to go to Mass at the Cathedral – first an English Mass where we all introduced ourselves and I said it was my 80th birthday and got best wishes from all and then to the Pilgrim Mass. So I made it! It was not quite as I wanted, but it was a great birthday. ♦



*Vía de la Plata approaching Salamanca,
visible in the distance.*

photo by Genette Foster, Pasadena CA



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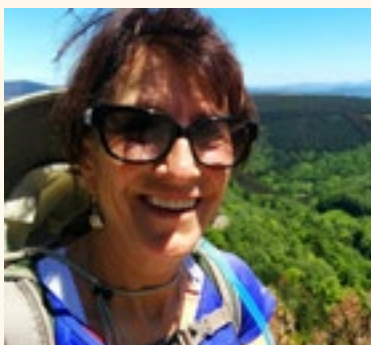
*by Sara Kay Smith, Burlington WI
who writes that she went for a glorious
walk in September 2015*

Welcome to Carmen, Scott and Jessica

In January, three individuals began their service on the board of directors, bringing an impressive list of skills to American Pilgrims on the Camino

Carmen Marriott

Carmen Marriott was nominated to the board of American Pilgrims on the Camino in November 2015. A Veteran of the Northern Route, the Camino Ingles and the Camino Primitivo, she joined the board to help further the mission of the organization. She brings a diverse skill set to the board, including her language skills and a legal background.



“Walking the Camino has provided me with a calmness and serenity that balanced my hectic work life; I will never be the same.” She hopes that by working with the organization, past and many future pilgrims can experience the Camino in the way they want, while respecting traditions and the earth we walk on.

Carmen is an instructor and consultant in hazardous waste management, a devotee of yoga, and an avid reader and gardener. During her travels, she became a blogger, finding that a great way to remember her journey while sharing the experience with others. Finally, Carmen volunteers with various community organizations in Tucson, Arizona.

Scott Pate

As the newest board member, Scott Pate states he’s thrilled and honored to be part of such a great group and organization.

As a scientist, (consulting geologist by trade), he explains, “I would like to say my role as a chapter coordinator in Atlanta and now as a chapter liaison

on the board, was a well-planned, expertly coordinated example of cause and effect, but the truth of the matter is, I simply love the Camino and find it to be the place we are at our very best in each and every moment.”

Scott completed his first Camino Francés from St. Jean Pied de Port in 2014, and repeated it in 2015. And, he’ll be heading for Lisbon in April to complete the Camino Portugués. In addition to supporting the overall mission of American Pilgrims on the Camino, one of his goals is to bring more knowledge and support for the less-traveled Caminos.



Jessica Swan

Though it had been pulling at her heartstrings for more than seven years, Jessica walked the Camino Francés in May and June 2015, and upon her return home, she applied to the board of directors to maintain her connection to that magical experience and to enable others to have the same.

“The Camino is a beautiful microcosm of life—an experience that must be lived to be believed. I really feel that it begins when it ends, and I want my service on the board to be regular reminder to me and to others of its power.”

She is a high school Spanish teacher and certified Bikram yoga instructor. When she is not teaching, she enjoys reading and walking her dogs. ♦





Camino Portugués, submitted by Walter Pruett, Encinitas CA photo by Laurel Nielsen

Walking the Camino in the Age of Wi-Fi

by Douglas Challenger, Pelham MA

I first walked the Camino in 2007, at the dawn of Facebook and smartphone use. Since then I have been back three times, in 2011, 2013, and 2015, leading walk/study abroad trips on the Camino with students from my university.

Between 2013 and 2015, a major change occurred along the Camino that took me by surprise. Almost every albergue now has Wi-Fi, and almost every pilgrim, a smart phone. The old computers that you used to put Euros in to get a few minutes online were sitting unused, collecting dust in the corners like dinosaurs fading into extinction.

Instead of a room full of pilgrims chattering, singing or playing cards with each other, the common areas of pilgrim hostels were, in the words of MIT professor and social media critic Sherry Turkle, full of people “alone together.” Her studies raise the question, “As we expect more from technology, do we expect less from each other?” My observations along the Camino in 2015 lead me to answer “yes.”

More often than not, the time preceding or following dinner in an albergue was not as social as in years past before the Wi-Fi revolution. Instead, they were scenes of lone pilgrims sitting side by side,

buried in the screens of their phones, fingers texting, posting photos on Facebook, and occasionally talking with someone back home while interacting very little with other pilgrims in the same room.

Increasingly, the first question pilgrims ask these days upon arriving at an albergue is, “Do you have Wi-Fi?” At the Dutch refuge in Villamayor de Monjardín, which has intentionally decided to not offer Wi-Fi as an amenity, a hospitalero told me sadly that many pilgrims leave once they hear that fact.

The beauty of the Camino for me has been that you could escape technology and leave the world back home that it keeps you tethered to for a while, and in its place, immerse yourself in solitude and reflection, the kindness of strangers and fellowship with your fellow travelers. It is undeniable that these technologies and the social media world they open up provoke in us an addictive response. But, to the degree that we allow ourselves to be transformed into device people, hopelessly hooked on our smartphones and continuously occupied e-mailing, texting, Facebook-liking, Skyping, watching YouTube videos, and blogging, that kind of retreat will be increasingly in jeopardy. ♦

Chapter News

American Pilgrims membership continues to grow throughout our 34 chapters around the country. The American Pilgrims website shows where Chapters are located, and you can find a listing of activities in local chapters. If there isn't a chapter near you and you would like to explore the possibility of forming one, contact our Chapter Liaison at chapters@americanpilgrims.org ♦

Jacksonville Chapter



Jacksonville Chapter members at Memorial Park prior to the start of the first hike of 2016. The eight-mile hike took pilgrims and pilgrims-to-be through the beautiful neighborhood of Riverside, downtown Jacksonville, and San Marco, finishing up at a local café serving café con leche.



Six members of the Jacksonville Chapter, (from left) Al, Lynette, Wanda, Joann, Deborah and Miriam, ventured out in Clay County FL, under threats of heavy rains and cool temperatures for a pre-Super Bowl hike Feb. 7. The determined group enjoyed breakfast and shared camino stories.

Co-coordinators David Dufresne & Miriam Gallet

Orlando Chapter



Orlando Chapter members in training.

A group of 22 of the Orlando Chapter's heartiest pilgrims, and pilgrims-in-training, trekked the Wekiva Trail 7.5 miles from the trailhead at Altamonte Spring – all the way to Lake Mary. As happens all along the Camino itself, we broke into small walking groups, got better acquainted with each other, and enjoyed a warm winter Saturday morning in Central Florida.

Here are some of the events that have already been held this year.

- o Canaveral National Seashore nature walk
- o REI Jacksonville 'Camino 101' presentation
- o Professor Casey Blanton, Co-Coordinator of the Orlando Chapter, presented an illustrated lecture on *The Culture of the Camino Francés*

Buen Camino to all! ♦

Co-coordinators: Richard Baldwin & Casey Blanton

Northern California Chapter

A Walk in the Redwoods

Rennie and Maggie Archibald organized a hike at Redwood Park in the Oakland Hills on December 12th, 2015. Mother Nature gave us a break between the storms during our much anticipated El Niño winter. We had early morning fog, typical of the Bay Area, which cleared to blue skies and sunshine. But then again, a little rain could never stop the hearty souls of those who love to hike.



Most hikers in the group brought trekking poles, and a friend had an extra pair for me to try. After walking nearly eight miles with steep inclines and muddy trails, I am sold on using trekking poles! We also learned about the Blue Desert SmarTube Hydration System. This clever invention fits in regular water bottles and allows the convenience of sipping while hiking, without having to remove your water bottle from your backpack. Another savvy peregrina recommended making a color copy of your passport and laminating it. Why? To show while checking into albergues so you don't have to dig out (or wear out) your passport. Pilgrims really do look out for each other.

When it comes to picnicking, pilgrims love to share. Rennie offered homemade empanadas and others shared fruit and veggies. I shared a secret I'd been carrying - Le Secret de Compostelle, a sheep milk cheese from the Basque region of Spain. After lunch, we enjoyed walking the easy Stream Trail with its majestic redwoods, ferns, mushrooms, and a swarm of ladybugs!

It's Getting Wild in Santa Cruz!

At Wilder Ranch State Park, that is. On January 30, 2016, nine pilgrims gathered for a coastal hike on a trail recommended by Cathy Seitchik Diaz and Dave Stewart. There were a few #PilgrimStrong moments when we had to change course to avoid mud, or trudge right through it. Once again, trekking poles to the rescue! A good time was had by all.

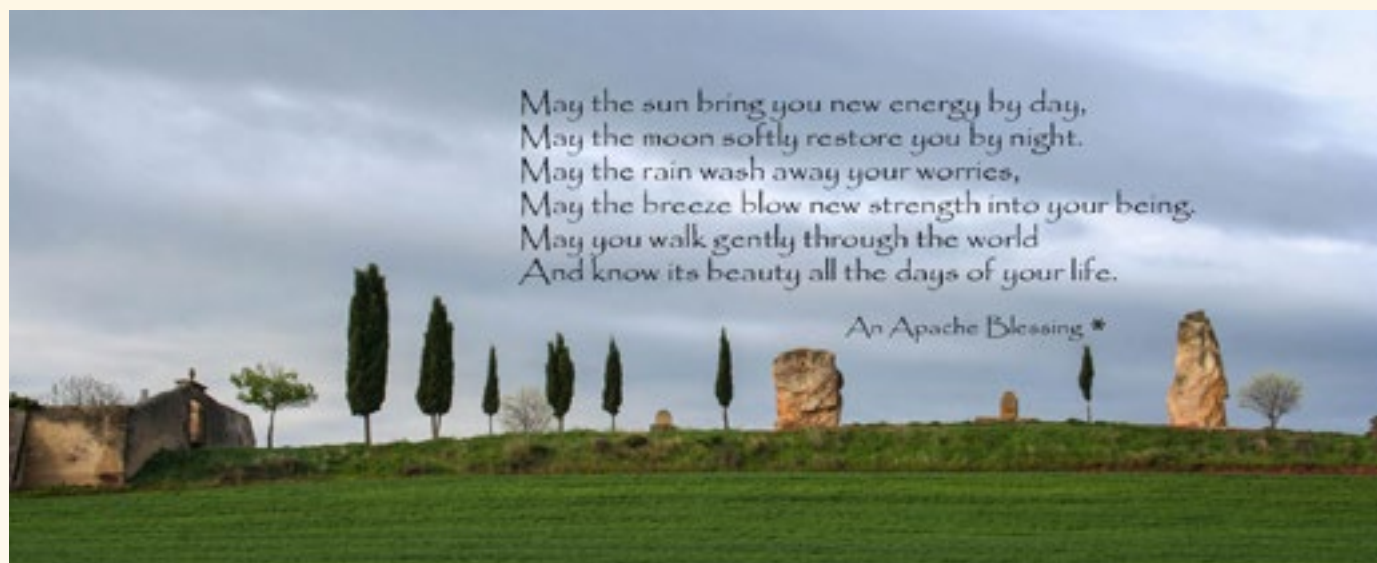


Lake Merritt Oakland Monthly Walks

The first Saturday walk, held rain or shine, attracts newbies and Camino veterans alike. Simeon Allison writes, "It was great to meet up with everybody once again. I came down from Chico where we now officially have an American Pilgrims Chapter. What a wonderful walk yesterday with beautiful people." ♦



*Written by Laurie Ferris, Oakland CA
Co-coordinators: Rennie Archibald, Lin Galea, & Cybele Peregrina*



A Blessing From a Friend

by Rick McAllister, St. Augustine FL

I walked the Camino Francés in the Spring of 2014 and am returning this Spring for another journey. On my previous one, a very good friend of mine gave a “blessing,” which I have superimposed on my photo, above. I took the photo on the Camino Francés, just before the town of Cirauqui.

The blessing is said to be an old Apache one. I carried it in my backpack and tried to live up to the verse every day. Regardless of a pilgrim’s reason for making the journey, I suspect these words ring true for all of us. ♦

“In his face there came to be a brooding peace that is seen most often in the faces of the very sorrowful or the very wise. But still he wandered through the streets of the town, always silent and alone.”

~Carson McCullers



*On a trip down the Rhine we visited many cathedrals which displayed the famous scallop shell. This statue and shell were in the German town of Speyer.
photo by John Silliman, Portland OR*

Come, come whoever you are...

by Brad Harper, Toana VA

I was serving in the Pilgrims' Office along with other volunteers from various countries. One of the other Americans was named Tom. One day he pointed to a man with his brand-new compostela as a man he had met last year. I forget the name, but not the story. Let's call him Bernard.

Somewhere around sixty years of age, Bernard had a stroke in his hometown of Strasbourg, France, profoundly affecting his left side. After two years of intensive physical therapy, Bernard decided to walk the Camino from Strasbourg to Santiago, about 1,000 miles, to ask God for a miracle. Tom said that every morning male pilgrims would dress Bernard, and then he would set forth. Bernard carried a stick in his right hand and walked by placing the stick forward, stepping up to it with his right foot, then dragging the left foot forward, about 18 inches per step. He had walked all summer the year before and made it to the border with Spain when he stopped for the winter.

Tom said that through an interpreter he had talked with Bernard a long evening and learned his story. I commented that Bernard was a remarkable

man, but that he wasn't cured. Tom smiled and answered that somewhere along the Way, Bernard decided that walking the Camino was the miracle he had been praying for all along.

When I was young(er) I thought that if you could choose only one virtue, intelligence was definitely the way to go. Smart people seemed to have it made. Now I know that sheer, dogged persistence can trump intelligence, good looks, or even good connections. The best thing about persistence is it is completely your choice.

Beauty, smarts, or educational opportunities are often beyond your ability to influence. Persistence is your gift, from yourself, to yourself. Be generous.

My favorite poem from the Sufi Mystic, Rumi, goes: *Come, come, whoever you are. Wanderer, . . .* (doubter), . . . *worshipper*, . . . (one who prizes the material over the spiritual), . . . *lover of leaving* (quits a difficult task before completion). *It doesn't matter. Ours is not a caravan of despair. Come, even if you have broken your vows a thousand times. Come, yet again, come, come.*

A German Pilgrim taught me a phrase: "Immer der Nase nach!" Or, "Always towards your nose!" Just keep moving towards your goal. A little bit every day adds up, even if it's only eighteen inches at a step. ♦

*Come, even if you have broken
your vows a thousand times.*

~Jallaludin Rumi



My Galician Angel

by Ann Loar Brooks, Baltimore MD

That morning
in pre-dawn mist
just beyond Villafranca del Bierzo
headlights barreled down the slick road aiming to
eradicate me

You materialized at my side

Every time
oncoming car beams
swept over our dark figures
you dashed in front of the vehicle
interposing yourself
between me
and near death
until danger passed

In time
mist gave way
to clear pine-infused air
half-light of sunrise gave way
to shimmering morning glow
loose gravel shoulder gave way
to a rocky mountain climb

You vanished

I continued on solo
up a sharply steepening ascent
under sweltering noonday sun
now at its acme

Depleted
famished
over fifteen miles from day's start
I staggered toward La Faba
population twenty-seven
home of a pristine private albergue
in a shaded grove
of silver birches

Spurred by the fear of full bunks
I hastened on
arriving at the albergue
minutes before two
and secured one
of the last vacant beds

With bunk assignment in hand
I stepped into the hostel's broad dappled
courtyard

There you stood
in the center of that verdant space

My angel

Your bright black eyes locked on mine

Your gold and black tail wagging ♦



Chasing the High

by Bruno Bruelhart, Hobbs NM

I haven't been the same since returning from Camino back in 2014.

My then-girlfriend was the first to point it out. "You've changed," she remarked one night. "Something about you just isn't the same." I nodded in agreement – at the time, I myself wasn't sure about what was different about me, but I was well aware something was amiss. Certainly, I had returned from my three-month voyage sound and in good health, Camino being a very spiritual awakening, but a part of me simply didn't come back from the trail.

"You don't seem happy anymore," she would later claim when we inevitably split apart, "as if you're always thinking about something else. Like you're looking for something you've lost." I scarcely blame her for she was entirely correct – ever since I returned, I've been searching for that spark.

It became an all-consuming passion of mine (not too dissimilar from an addiction) to try and recapture the emotions and feelings experienced along the Camino. The mountains of New Mexico, though beautiful, were a far cry from crossing the Pyrenees. Walking about my home – either alone or with companions – paled in comparison when I recalled the daily shenanigans of the Lazy Pilgrims (my group's *nom de chemin*). Although I traveled extensively in the past year, no destination, nor the journey to get there, evoked the rapturous euphoria that was Camino. Friends and family took notice that I simply wasn't the same anymore, that the spark of adventure had grown into a conflagration of indomitable proportions destined

to consume me.

Yet I hold no qualms about this consumption, for it has brought about a certain revelation: The only time I have been truly happy with Life was when I walked The Way. From the people I encountered, pilgrims or not, to the sights seen and trails traversed, the entire Way was bliss. No matter how foul the weather or how taxing the hike, it remained a glimpse of Heaven.

Camino was a profound moment of internal realization, that my Life was not supposed to be spent in front of a screen, a nameless cog in the machinations of corporate America, idling away my days in hopes of something better. No, Camino was the catalyst towards enlightenment, that to achieve happiness I had to distance myself from comfort, embrace hardship, and simply walk.

I'm searching for my soul I left behind on the Way.

Returning to Camino April 2016. ♦



*Refugio "Alba Soraya," Calzada de Béjar
photo by Genette Foster, Pasadena CA*

"I am much inclined to live from my rucksack, and let my trousers fray as they like."

~Hermann Hesse



Love, Camino Style

by Laurie Ferris, Oakland CA

As soon as I put the call out to couples via a blog post, heartwarming stories of Camino “love connections” started to trickle in. Calling all Camino couples! You know who you are. Perhaps you met on the Camino and fell in love. Maybe you were newlyweds who walked the Camino for a honeymoon, or an established couple who wanted to mix things up and test your relationship. Perhaps you walked alone and came to the conclusion that someone back home is your true love. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, so they say. Whatever the case, it seems the Camino works in mysterious ways. Is it something in the water or the Spanish wine? I think there’s something in the air.

The idea was to celebrate this unique aspect of life on the Camino during the month of February. By Valentine’s Day, I received enough stories to make a dedicated page on my website, The Camino Provides. As the stories show, love on the Camino comes in many different forms, and it is ageless.

We know that there is no guarantee one will find love on the Camino. However, when people come together from different walks of life, sharing the same space, striving towards the same goal, connections are bound to happen. The Camino seems to have an incubator effect, where strangers are thrown together and have to get along. It’s no surprise that the kindred spirits on the Camino have made lifelong friendships, strengthened their own relationship, or even found new love.

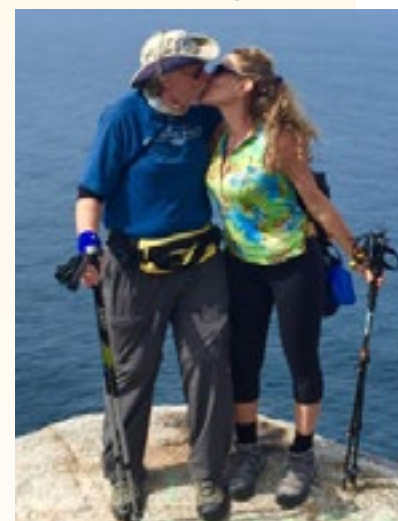
I certainly respect the premise of what happens on the Camino stays on the Camino. However, love is an amazing thing that should be celebrated. Has the Camino provided you with more than just a long walk? If you have a Camino love story to share, email laurie@thecaminoprovides.com. I will continue to add to this love page as I receive more stories and keep it as an ongoing theme.

Thanks for sharing the Camino love! ♥

*Franc Chacon and Jeanette Lansbergen
enjoying their Camino shell wedding cake*



*Jane and Dennis Blanchard at the
Cathedral in Santiago*



*Cathy Seitchik Diaz and Dave Stewart in Finisterre, sealing their Camino
with a kiss*



The Camino de Santiago Reverberates

by Anne Born, New York NY

I have a new habit in the morning. I like to grab my jacket and my keys and go to our new neighborhood Starbucks for coffee. It's a fairly unremarkable way to start my day, but the benefits are tremendous - way more than just netting a cup o' joe.

Since I leave at 7:00 a.m. or thereabouts, I make a point to tiptoe down the stairs in my apartment building so I don't wake anyone - just like I did in Santo Domingo de la Calzada. I remember carrying my boots downstairs so my fellow peregrinos could sleep even just a few minutes more. Or in Nájera, where we were so careful not to wake anyone we left our poles in the vestibule and had to go back after breakfast to get them!

Then I step out my back door and I can feel that first rush of cold morning air on my face - like Christmas Day in Foncebadón where we woke to find snow had fallen overnight. The hospitalero told us we had a real White Christmas. Or that spectacular sunrise just behind us, following our walk through Atapuerca on the way into Burgos. Or the night we went looking for dinner in Logroño after

paying our respects to La Virgen de la Soledad in the cathedral there. I remember pulling my buff out of my pocket to cover my neck and face against the cold before getting something to eat.

Walking up the block, I typically don't see more than the two ladies handing out religious flyers by the shopping center. I get my Starbucks coffee with milk and I think of the empty dining room that greeted me in late December 2010 in Palas de Rei where I was the only pilgrim staying at the pensión. They made breakfast for me as if I were visiting royalty, giving me oranges for my pack - and I think about their croissants when I order mine from the barista.

As I go back up the block to my apartment building, I see more folks are out now, on their way to work or coming home from parties, and we meet each other's eyes with shared "Good Mornings" and a slight nod of recognition that we are all in this together. That's when I realize that these small greetings are the South Bronx equivalent of "Buen Camino!" ♦

Camino Quips and Puns

by Victoria Fineberg, Arlington VA

I started the Camino in Roncesvalles. By not crossing the Pyrenees, I developed a Napoleon complex.

On the Camino, you form long-distance relationships.

A daily distance is a stage of the journey set by the Camino, and a leg of the journey performed by you.

On the Camino, "break a leg" is a bad omen.

Yogi Berra's advice "When you come to a fork in the road, take it," does not apply on the Camino. You'll get lost, and you'll carry the extra weight of the fork!

For some, the Camino is an 800-kilometer pub crawl.

I finished the Camino Francés in 42 days. It was the answer to life, the Universe and everything. ♦

2015 Year-end Camino Statistics

by Gene McCullough, Denver CO

Webmaster and Chief Number Shuffler - American Pilgrims on the Camino

It's the time of year for — yawn — the 2015 Camino statistics! The primary number, of course, is the total number of compostelas issued by the Pilgrims' Welcome Office during the year: 262,458. This was a 10% increase over the previous year and is in keeping with the annual increases for the past two years. For us on this side of the Atlantic, the interesting observation is that both the absolute number and the percentage of

total compostelas awarded to U.S. passport holders continue at a rather scorching pace. By year's end, 13,658 compostelas had been awarded to U.S. passport holders, which made up 5.2% of the total. The increase in both the absolute number and the percentage of total compostelas continues a trend that has been underway for the past six years. We in the U.S. thank you, Martin Sheen!

The percentage of total compostelas issued to Spaniards continued its gradual decrease with 47% of the total going to Spanish residents.

As would be expected, August is decidedly the month of the most arrivals in Santiago, followed by July and September. The odd pattern for the U.S. continued — for at least the past eight years, the months with the most compostelas issued to U.S. passport holders were June, followed by October. We have a very deep valley for compostelas in August. If you want to have the greatest probability of encountering Americans on the Camino, go in June

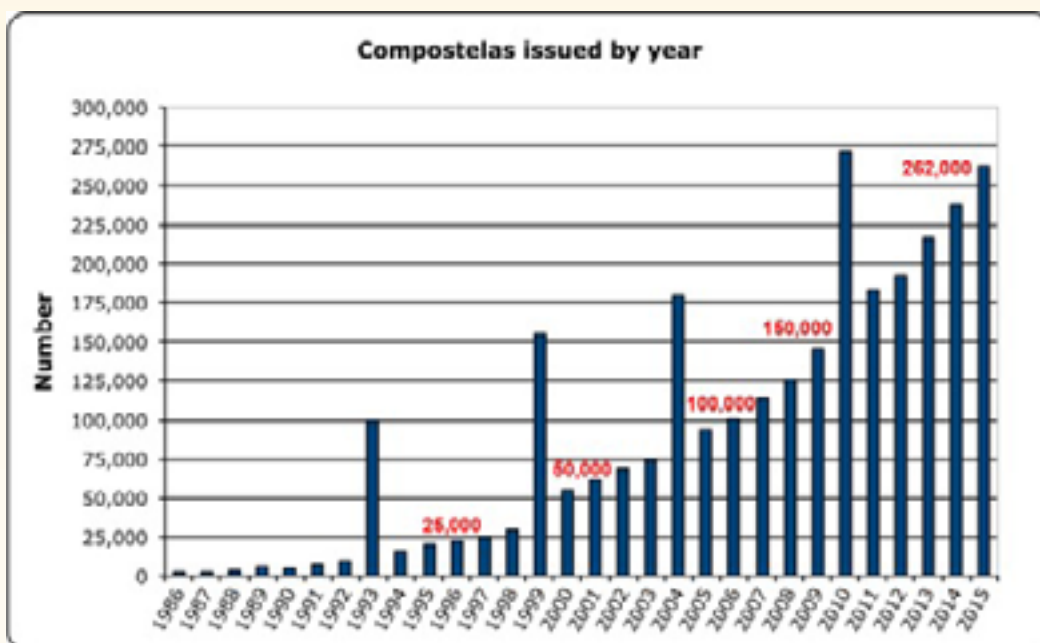
or October.

The ratio of males to females continues to be greater than 1.0, but only barely. This ratio has decreased steadily since at least 1991, when it was more than two males for every female. The trend line predicts that the ratio will pass through 1.0 in 2016 or 2017.

Finally, the number of credentials issued by American Pilgrims continues to increase, but not at the torrid pace of a few years ago. In 2015, we issued 6,420 credentials, a 10% increase over 2014.

If you're still reading this you might like to see all of this and more in graphic form. Go to the statistics page on the American Pilgrims website: www.americanpilgrims.org/statistics

These statistics were compiled from data published by the Pilgrims' Welcome Office in Santiago and from American Pilgrims' credential records. ♦



Carolina Told Me About the Spirits

by Christine Swint, Marietta GA

The spirits are everywhere, she told me.
We can hear them if we know how to listen.
When the priest said to listen for mysteries—
mysteries of the word of God,
mysteries of nature, I wonder if he meant
mysteries of wind speaking in the trees,
mysterious thoughts of moss and stone,
whispers of a thousand dandelion puffs,
of pines emerging from a field of clouds.

Crossing Roman bridges, fording pebbled
streams.
Smell of cow paddies, of sheep dung,
of wood smoke coming from stone houses in
the towns,
of rosemary and timothy growing along the
path.

Leaving a city at dawn, again I lose my way.
As if in a dream, a stranger points in silence
to the silver scallop shells that mark the path

on sidewalks, across asphalt streets.
I listen to the desire to walk alone,
to witness bright red poppies among the
ripening wheat,
where the spirits of the wind cross paths
with the spirits of the stars.

I listen to the mystery of smooth stones
the size of ostrich eggs strewn across the
path,
the steep descent from the Alto del Perdón
where cairns rise from the verge like small men
who recognize me and nod their approval
of my struggle down the slope.

Here, in the Garden of Muruzábal, beyond
the Mountain of Forgiveness, where birds
chant
their continuous mysteries, I've found my
way. ♦

Contributors

♦ Anne Born
♦ Ann Loar Brooks
♦ Margaret Brown
♦ Bruno Bruehlhart
♦ Douglas Challenger
♦ Randy Durrum
♦ Martha Crites
♦ Dale Fairbanks
♦ Laurie Ferris

♦ Victoria Fineberg
♦ Genette Foster
♦ Brad Harper
♦ Rick McAllister
♦ Gene McCullough
♦ Jean Mitchell-Lanham
♦ Peter Monro
♦ Walter Pruett
♦ Bob Scheckenback

♦ Janet Schwind
♦ John Silliman
♦ Benjamin Smith
♦ Sara K Smith
♦ Christine Swint
♦ Richard Williamsen
♦ Kevin Wrede



Field of Stars: El Camino de Santiago de Compostela

by Pilgrim and Artist: Dale Fairbanks, Gulf Breeze FL

Oil on Linen • 60" x 60"

Photography by Mark Francis

www.dalefairbanks.com

Camino Francés

April and May 2013

I took my first rain-drenched pilgrim steps on the Camino Francés in St. Jean Pied de Port, France, April 29, 2013. I was alone and terrified in the dark of that early morning but filled with joy and excitement.

I knew instinctively, as other pilgrims have known before me,
I was walking on sacred ground.

The Spiritual Life as a Pilgrimage

by Bob Scheckenback, Commack NY

From as long as humans could walk, they walked to get closer to their gods—a journey to a place where gods and heroes are born or have wrought some great act. St. Augustine said, “Solvitur ambulando.” “It is solved by walking.” In each of us dwells a Pilgrim. It is the part of us that longs to have direct contact with the sacred. Is it possible that the daily activities of our life can be a pilgrimage?

“It’s not so much what you do, it’s how you do it.”
– Epictetus

Here are six of the more commonly agreed-upon stages of a pilgrimage (and life?):

1) The Call (The Longing): A feeling or yearning, fundamental human desire to find meaning. This can build until it becomes a distraction, and even eventually non-dismissible, a haunting.

2) The Separation (Departure): Separation from certainty, it rejects the familiar and comfortable, creating freedom. Leaving your past behind.

3) The Journey (The Pilgrim’s Way): The actual action and movement of the journey itself, the effort exerted (the pain, the sacrifice, the cost). The personal cost (sacrifice) enhances the experience and elevates the sense of community one develops along the way.

4) The Contemplation (Labyrinth): Solitude; the reflection on the fruits of the journey, and the revelation of truths. Some go directly to the center, others circle around the sacred place toward the center.

5) The Encounter: The climax of the journey (not necessarily the destination). The moment where the Pilgrim attempts to slide through that thin membrane into communion with the Holy. Those moments of clarity.

6) The Completion and Return: The Pilgrim returns home only to discover that the meaning they sought was already in the familiar parts of their own world. The physical pilgrimage helps to discover the Pilgrim nature of life; a change of perception.



Somewhere right before Atapuerca - September 27, 2014

“The geographical pilgrimage is the symbolic acting out of the inner journey. The inner journey is the interpretation of the meaning and the signs of the outer pilgrimage. One can have one without the other, but it is best to have both.” – Thomas Merton ♦

Night Traveller

by J.P. Monro, *Portland ME*

—leaving Hontanas. 6 October 2014

Until I rose in this morning's dark,
I had imagined
that with every step
across the fields outside
I'd be sight-welded
to that other
stepping in front of me,
to that other
stalking behind me,

I,
sandwiched and sun-drenched
in the visible flow,
my right cleats
in his right track,
my left
in her left,
my eyes lifted
to the same horizon,
my brain lofting
the same thoughts.

But this morning
in the moonless dark outside

I,
suddenly still,
felt the night
against the skin
and knew —
the night is mine,
mine
and me alone,
shared now
with the last lights
of the albergue and the pueblo,
and the first lights
of windmills,
with the crunch of gravel
and the clink of shell and clips
swinging on my back,

shared with the smell
of dank earth,
and wet air
pulsing against my face,
shared, too, with the great flow
of the white way overhead,
and with an old friend,
Orion,
man of the night,
so much greater than I,
balanced on my left shoulder,
where he stays
boot after boot,
mile after mile,
hour after hour,
in the darkness
that is ours
alone.

Now,
silhouettes of trees,
a fluttering of leaves,
a spattering on the face,
black branches writhing in the blue-black.
I stop behind a trunk
trying to hide from the storm,
but an eddy finds me,
drives rain to coat,
coat to cloth,
cloth to skin.

I chill,
but in me
the warmth of night endures.
I will seek it again
other mornings,
in the dark,
for I am no longer
soaked
with others. — ♦



Welcome, New Members!

We are pleased to welcome the following new members who joined American Pilgrims on the Camino from December 2015 through February 2016. We look forward to meeting all of you at future Gatherings and events.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ♦ Kari Applegate | ♦ Ron Croft | ♦ Claudia Giannini |
| ♦ Mary & Robert Ardan | ♦ Brien Crothers | ♦ Susan Gilbert |
| ♦ James & Peggy Babcock | ♦ Patrick & Lori Daisley | ♦ Barbara Gilmore |
| ♦ Vanessa Basto | ♦ Kathleen Dale | ♦ Patrice Goldberg |
| ♦ Joan Baumann | ♦ Robert Damler | ♦ Patsy Gonzalez Hamilton |
| ♦ Laurin Beckhusen | ♦ Thomas & Lynn Darbie | ♦ Sara Gradwohl |
| ♦ Francis A. (Tony) Bell | ♦ Suellen Darblay | ♦ Darlene & Randy Grant |
| ♦ Ella Benjamin | ♦ Kit Darby | ♦ Jami Gray |
| ♦ Julie Benyo | ♦ Richela Das | ♦ Kathleen Green |
| ♦ Kendra Biddick | ♦ Shari Davis | ♦ Douglas Gunwaldsen |
| ♦ Barbara Binaco | ♦ Michael & Kimberly Davis | ♦ Thomas Hall |
| ♦ Rick & Kim Black | ♦ Joan DeFeis | ♦ Jo Halverson |
| ♦ Sharon & Daniel Blickenstaff | ♦ Joan & Robert deLugo | ♦ Deborah Hammond |
| ♦ Margaret Boltes | ♦ Cathy Diaz | ♦ Joseph Handman |
| ♦ Bernie Bonar | ♦ Sydney & Mitch Dion | ♦ Lisa Hannigan |
| ♦ Ann Bone | ♦ Kelsey & Evan Dion | ♦ Theresa Harrington |
| ♦ Kimberly Boone | ♦ Rodger & Jeanette Doolittle | ♦ Anna Harris |
| ♦ David Bradley | ♦ Holly Downes | ♦ Dianne Hartenburg |
| ♦ James & Rachael Brandt | ♦ Thomas & Diane Duane | ♦ George & Beverly Hebert |
| ♦ Laura Brannon | ♦ Andrea Duncan | ♦ Dena Helms |
| ♦ Dawn Bratsch-Prince | ♦ Mary Dushel | ♦ Richard & Loraine Herron |
| ♦ Dennis & Laurie Brooke | ♦ Gary & Lynn Dwyer | ♦ Debbie Hill |
| ♦ Diggs Brown, Jr. | ♦ Kelly & Gary, Jr Dwyer | ♦ Kathryn Hogan |
| ♦ Carol Bruce | ♦ Nancy Earl | ♦ Callie Householder |
| ♦ Joanne Bucki | ♦ Kristin Edwards | ♦ Mona Hoxit |
| ♦ Kathryn Burns | ♦ Patricia Eichenlaub | ♦ Ildiko & Laura Huber |
| ♦ Laura Carey | ♦ Sharon Elder | ♦ Caroline Hudson-Hale |
| ♦ Bob Carlsen | ♦ Cynthia Elder | ♦ Andy Hunnel |
| ♦ Kathy Carpenter | ♦ Peggy Eppig | ♦ James Ingraham |
| ♦ Sandra Carrillo | ♦ Lysa ErkenBrack | ♦ Arlette Itami |
| ♦ Ethan Carton | ♦ Wayne Etheridge | ♦ James Jackson Jr |
| ♦ Marcos Casti | ♦ Jack Evans | ♦ Roni Jackson-Kerr |
| ♦ Lisa Cauble | ♦ Michael Ewbank | ♦ Amanda Jacobs |
| ♦ Mercedes Cedeno | ♦ Mary Faller | ♦ Pamela Jerdee |
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| ♦ David & Marian Courtenay | ♦ John Genovesi | ♦ Julie Kirk |
| | ♦ Barbara Gerber | ♦ Bradley & Joella Kirschner |



- ♦ Tyler & Alaina Kleist
- ♦ Curt Kochner
- ♦ Judy Kwong
- ♦ Patricia LaFollette
- ♦ Raquel Landeros
- ♦ Mary Lange
- ♦ Liz Langeland
- ♦ Catherine & Norman Ledbetter
- ♦ Michelle & Paulette Legault
- ♦ Nicole Lievsay
- ♦ Beverley Lloyd
- ♦ Beth Lord
- ♦ Paul Louie
- ♦ Catherine Luchins
- ♦ Stephen Ludden
- ♦ Amy Luebke
- ♦ Martha Macias-Norelid
- ♦ Mary MacKenzie
- ♦ Arlene Makita-Acuna
- ♦ Sandra, Daniel & Kevin Maloney
- ♦ James Maluta
- ♦ Miriam Mangers
- ♦ Sylvia Marcantel
- ♦ Nathan & Mayako Margason
- ♦ Sigfredo Martinez
- ♦ Robert Martinez
- ♦ Francisco Martinez-Alvarez
- ♦ Shellie Matt
- ♦ Magdalena & Robert Maury
- ♦ Eric, Jill, Greta & Parer Mayer
- ♦ Gerard Mc Corry
- ♦ Heather McBride
- ♦ Judy, Joseph & Judy McCormick
- ♦ Ruth & Deborah McDonald
- ♦ Laurie McFarlin
- ♦ Richard & Marie McLaughlin
- ♦ Lori McLeese
- ♦ Vickie McPherson
- ♦ Michele Melo
- ♦ Richard Meyer
- ♦ Teresa Miller
- ♦ James Miller
- ♦ Gilbert, Gina & Jasmine Minato
- ♦ Julia Mitchell
- ♦ Kyoko Mizuno
- ♦ Susan Molina
- ♦ Michael Munro
- ♦ Nicole Murchison
- ♦ Sherry Murphy
- ♦ Milo & Martha Nitschke
- ♦ M Niver
- ♦ John & Rosalind Nygren
- ♦ Eileen O'Connor
- ♦ Lynn O'Hara
- ♦ Annie O'Neil
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- ♦ Jane & Tom Opps
- ♦ Susan Oravetz
- ♦ Nicky Pallas
- ♦ Keith Paredes
- ♦ Jude Parker
- ♦ Kathleen Parker
- ♦ Susan Peacock
- ♦ Sandra Pearson
- ♦ Christine Pearson
- ♦ Dean Pedersen
- ♦ Judith Pelayo
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- ♦ William A. Persson Jr.
- ♦ Catherine Phillips
- ♦ Janet Pinneau
- ♦ Karen Polanco
- ♦ Richard, Lori & Kristen Prinz
- ♦ Michael & Marge Putman
- ♦ Stephen Rafferty
- ♦ Yolanda Real
- ♦ Joette Reidy
- ♦ Ed Reidy
- ♦ Ron & Dolly Reinhart
- ♦ Rick & Kathy Renger
- ♦ Roberta Rich
- ♦ T W Richey
- ♦ Pauline Rindone
- ♦ Louise Ritz
- ♦ Pat Robson
- ♦ Peter & Bonny Rogers
- ♦ Valerie Rosenfeld
- ♦ Antonio Rossmann
- ♦ Jeff Rozema
- ♦ C Jane Rumbaugh
- ♦ Carol Sanborn
- ♦ Carrie & John Sandgren
- ♦ Elizabeth Sandoval
- ♦ Natasha Sarkhosh
- ♦ Susan Savelli
- ♦ Deborah Scanlon
- ♦ James Schaefer
- ♦ Robert Scheckenback
- ♦ Joseph Schofield
- ♦ Ursula Scriven
- ♦ Daniel Sedmak
- ♦ Katheryn Sentman
- ♦ Bill Shira
- ♦ Jane Silverman
- ♦ Demetrios Simopoulos
- ♦ Robin Simpson
- ♦ Ravi Singh
- ♦ Janet Smalley
- ♦ Sandra Smits
- ♦ Nina Snett
- ♦ Leila Snow
- ♦ Marianne & Ron Snyder
- ♦ Kurt & Connor Somerholter
- ♦ Kerstin & Corinna Somerholter
- ♦ Kate Staley
- ♦ Beth & Robin Steffan
- ♦ Eric Steffan
- ♦ claudia Stephens
- ♦ David Stewart
- ♦ Carrie Stinchfield
- ♦ Dianne Stuch
- ♦ Johnna Studebaker
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- ♦ PJ Wilkins Bell
- ♦ Dr. Mary Williams
- ♦ Dr. Ronald B. Williams
- ♦ Brooke Wilson
- ♦ Leonie Wolff
- ♦ Jeffrey & JoAnn Wong
- ♦ Jason Wright
- ♦ Thomas Yingst
- ♦ Kathy Jo Zezza
- ♦ Niefia Zupancic

Hospitalero Happenings

American Pilgrims continues to be a strong volunteer presence along the Camino. We work closely with the Spanish Federation of Associations of Friends of the Camino to provide hospitaleros in the eighteen donativo albergues the Federation assists. Many of our hospitalero volunteers have also served in private, municipal, and parochial albergues that are not connected with the Federation. Hospitalero opportunities also exist in France, Portugal, and Italy. ♦

Hospitalero Trainings

If you wish to be an hospitalero, the following hospitalero trainings are planned over the next several months:

- April 5-7, 2016 - Belleville IL (St. Louis MO Metro area), immediately preceding the Annual Gathering of Pilgrims at Our Lady of the Snows
- August 19-21, 2016 - Portland OR
- November 2016- dates and location to be determined

Please check the [American Pilgrims website](http://AmericanPilgrims.org) for registration details. If your chapter would like to arrange for a possible hospitalero training to take place in your area, please contact: hospitalerotraining@americanpilgrims.org. ♦



February 2016 Newly trained hospitaleros in Los Gatos CA



The mission of American Pilgrims on the Camino is to foster the enduring tradition of the Camino by supporting its infrastructure, by gathering pilgrims together, and by providing information and encouragement to past and future pilgrims.

Do You Have Camino Impressions to Share?

With every issue we are delighted anew by the quality, variety, and abundance of submissions – and especially by the fact that so many are from first-time contributors. Your enthusiasm for the Camino and for La Concha as a medium for sharing that enthusiasm keeps us going!

So, please keep telling us, in 400 words or fewer, about your Camino. Consider a photo, a poem, or a new found understanding of an idea – a pilgrim's perspective. We have refined our guidelines, so please visit

Newsletter on our website for suggestions and our new guidelines.

The submission deadline for the next issue is, May 25, 2016. We welcome your questions, comments, and submissions at newsletter@americanpilgrims.org. ¡Buen Camino!

Peg Hall, Zita Macy Mona Spargo & Jessica Swan, with help from Annie Argall, Mary Anne Duggan, and Anna Harris - Team La Concha

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