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LA CONCHA

Newsletter of American Pilgrims on the Camino
June 2017

The Gift

by Elaine Hopkins, London UK



This is a story about not booking ahead. Last year, I had this mad idea about walking from my home in London, England to Santiago. I would set off in mid-March, walk to the English coast, catch a ferry, and start walking down through France.

As I go, every time I stop, my hosts tell me that I'm the first pilgrim of the season. I like that; it makes me feel like a trail-blazer. I'm in a "go with the flow" mode, so I'm not booking ahead. I have a couple of narrow escapes because France is a Catholic country that has all these religious holidays I know nothing about. Then I realize that Easter is coming up, so I do book ahead. I set off on Easter Monday, confident that I have a bed at the end of my 20 kilometres because I've spoken to Monsieur on the phone and he's said "Oui" (yes). However, when I arrive, Madame says "Non."

I sit down with my guidebook and discover that, in 20 kilometres' time, there's a town with four hotels. What could possibly go wrong? Hotel one is closed; hotel two is closed; hotel three is closed; hotel four - which is the station hotel - is closed. At this point, I'm beginning to think that Brexit might be a good idea. Hotels in England would not be closed on

Easter Monday. I go to the centre of town. It's dead. But I have my father's mantra running through my head, and my father's mantra is: *There is always something you can do.*

I sit down with my guidebook again. There's a B&B run by an English couple a mere five kilometres away. Perfect. I phone to make sure. The English lady tells me that pilgrims are not welcome in her establishment. Well, that's one in the eye for national solidarity. By this time, it's getting later and darker and colder. To make matters worse, the hobos are bringing their dogs in from the surrounding countryside. They're eyeing me as competition for the available accommodation. It's a stark choice between the church porch and the public toilets. But there's always something you can do, right?

And I know there's something I can do because right at the bottom of my rucksack there's a scrappy piece of paper with the details of French families who welcome pilgrims into their home. Yet, you're meant to have booked ahead, and I haven't done so. I come over all English and decide that I can't possibly ask people to put me up at such short notice. What I can do is ask for details of a taxi company, so I phone Madame. We get off on the wrong foot. She's expecting a call from

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her daughter. I'm obviously not her daughter - not with a French accent like mine.

Things go from bad to worse. She says irritably, "Why on earth are you asking me about taxis?" I blurt out: "Because I'm a pilgrim and I need a bed for the night." Madame says in a tone of absolute astonishment, "Don't you want to stay with us?" I come over even more English and respond, "I couldn't possibly ask you to do that for me." Madame says: "Well, we do have to get up at 6:00 tomorrow morning, so perhaps it isn't convenient for you." "No, no; it's wonderfully convenient. I'd love to stay with you."

Continued on page 3.

Message From the Chair

Greetings from your Board Chair!

American Pilgrims had a busy Spring. In March, we celebrated our 20th annual Gathering of Pilgrims. It was held at the Calvin Center, a beautiful natural setting in Hampton, Georgia. The theme was “Camino Community: Past, Present and Future.” We danced the flamenco—not as well as the professional dancers who wowed us with lessons and their own dances—but well enough to be great fun. We learned about pilgrimage as peace-building, the evolution of Camino hospitality, labyrinth walking, and the magnificent music of the Camino. There were sessions devoted to answering questions from new pilgrims and to sharing practicalities. Chapter Coordinators even gathered for a one-day pre-Gathering workshop to share experiences and get to know each other.

Special guests came from Spain: Rafael Sanchez from the Xacobeo and Lanzada Calatayud from the tourist authority of A Coruña. We learned about the Xacobeo’s investments in Camino infrastructure in Galicia and about the promotion the historic city of A Coruña as a starting point for the Camino Inglés. On that front, in a major development, the Cathedral of Santiago has agreed to issue a Compostela for those starting in A Coruña even though it does not meet the 100-kilometer requirement.

Best of all, the Gathering was a chance to reunite with old friends and make new ones. We shared, laughed, and relived our Camino experiences.

Thanks to Yosmar Martinez for coordinating this year’s Gathering. We are working hard on planning the program for 2018, and we are already scouting potential sites for the 2019 Gathering!



*Jeff relaxing at the Gathering
photo by Joan DeFeis*

Spring is also a busy time for issuing credentials. We average over 1,000 credentials per month in March, April and May. There is no charge for credentials, but donations are certainly appreciated and are used to support all American Pilgrims activities.

In a final big Spring program, all applications for grants are now in hand. The review process has begun. Recipients will be announced in August. There is a note about the Grants Program and an article from Marion Dooley, an FCJ Sister, in this issue. She is with the organization Camino Companions which received an American Pilgrim grant in 2015.

Enjoy this issue of *La Concha*. Buen Camino to all this year’s walkers. ♦

Jeff Styx
Board Chair

**-SAVE THE DATE-
21ST ANNUAL GATHERING
OF PILGRIMS**

making
**Meaning from
Memories**

April 12-15, 2018
Franciscan Renewal Center • Scottsdale AZ

The Gift continued from page 1.

Madame tells me to wait in the church porch. Forty-five minutes later, a car pulls up, and I see this couple in their eighties get out. I feel ashamed and embarrassed at my own incompetence. I don't know why I'm bothered because Madame and Monsieur are dancing in delight. They bundle me into the car; they bundle me up in a blanket. Within seconds, we're talking about the Camino. It's as though we've known each other all our lives. At their house, they start stripping the bed, running me a bath, and piling the table with fine, French food.

I ask if I'm the first pilgrim, and they confirm that I am. About ten minutes later, a thought strikes me. I ask if I'm their first pilgrim of the season or their first pilgrim ever. They look at me. In that moment, they're not 80—they're eight. Their eyes have that bright, shiny look that usually only children under eight have. "You're our first pilgrim ever... and we've been praying that you would come." And I understand something that I've never even thought of before. It's this: Sometimes, we are as much a gift to other people as they are to us. ♦

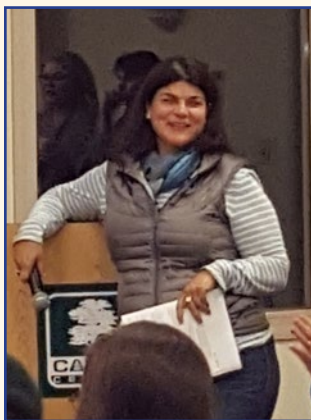
Clean Camino Competition Results

American Pilgrims on the Camino is proud to launch its Clean Camino logo in hopes of bringing awareness to the issue of litter along the Camino. Congratulations to Terry Kristensen and Kevin Metz who submitted the slogan. Special thanks to Kevin for the artwork. Together, let's all work to maintain a pristine Camino. ♦



2017 Gathering

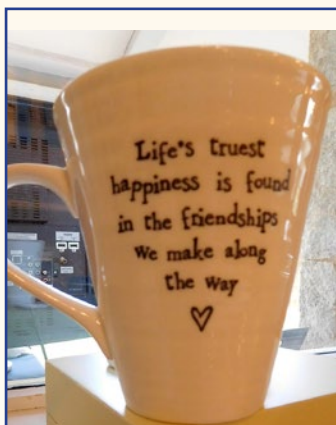
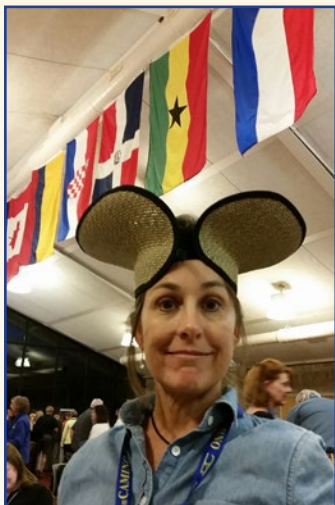
The Camino Community: Past, Present and Future



*Yosmar Martinez
2017 Gathering Chair*



photos by Joan DeFeis, Paco Martinez-Alvarez, and Peg Hall



2017 Gathering

Thursday March 23 - Sunday March 26, 2017 • Calvin Center, Hampton GA

Giving Back in Santiago

by Mark Holbert, Tampa FL

Ever since my first Camino in 2015, the fellowship of peregrinos has pulled at my heartstrings. I knew that I wanted to somehow give back a fraction of the kindness to others that I had received along my journey. .

Thus, while finishing graduate school in Applied Linguistics this spring and seeking to transition into my newly married life in the States, volunteering along the Camino was my first inclination. I was not able to participate in formal hospitalero training due to my teaching obligations. But our helpful American Pilgrims folks suggested independent albergues. Nevertheless, after exploring hospitalero needs along the Camino, I still did not find a good fit. So, I decided to do something a little less conventional.

That is when I recalled the Pilgrim House in Santiago, which helps arriving pilgrims year-round. It



*Peg Hall and another pilgrim visit the Pilgrim House where Gale Sherry is "holding up" their new sign..
photo by Russell Hall*

is a place of respite and reflection in transition. Why volunteer at the end as opposed to along the way? I am not even sure myself, other than to say that Santiago beckons my spirit, and I somehow felt at home there.

Perhaps I can describe the Pilgrim House and its unique ministry, then leave you to your own conclusions. As one arrives, one is greeted by a welcoming space with a warm kitchenette, computers/ wifi, scheduled meditation services and prayer space,

book trading, laundry and of course meeting fellow pilgrims! Oh, add to that printing whatever one might need for transition back to the "real world."

While I may not create any earth shattering change this May/June while I am there, I can be present and contribute in small ways, like listening. Of course, I couldn't resist the opportunity to walk once again being so close, so a new short Camino (Portugués) and then Finisterre are on the docket as well! ♦



Encounters #2

by Janet Meskin, Los Angeles CA

In a dream God asked King Solomon,

"What shall I give you?"

Replied Solomon

"A listening heart..."

1 Kings 3

Buen Camino Buen Camino echoes echo

Walking walking wishes walking prayers

Denise who carries the ashes of her son

We sprinkle his memory on this flower on that wild
flower

Sue flowering into her dying with irreversible cancer -

Blisters blistering determination for feet footing the
goal

Jan walks to leave her cancer on the camino with
prayer wishes written on a shell

May still grieving the sudden loss of her husband
walks the journey for him

And Fernando's father's picture sits on his backpack
as a photo pilgrim walking pilgrim

Ian an oil engineer working in Iraq walks for
orphaned children

Children abandoned abandoned by fathers non-
Iraqi fathers...

Dona Dona legally blind asks my assistance through
the

Drizzling canopy shadows in the woods

She's a walking angel blessing of simple gift giving
trusting trust

To my untrusting nature

Folk man Santi shuffles 2 feet 2 canes invites me for
tea

Now disabled lone lonely memories of pro-skiing
yesteryears photo

Tucked safely in in wallet pocket

Pockets my pockets hold chapstick, euros, iPhone,
Hales, tissue, guidebook

Simple Simona who has walked the camino 3 times
becomes one of my spiritual

Voices of encouragement to the inner voice of doubt

David's pilgrim shelter sheltering us from pouring rain
had the heart of all hearts

Of the zen gods

Encounters chance encountered conversations with
locals just sitting on a bench

Just waiting for a bus, sit sitting watching swallows
circle evening skies

Strolling rolling along quiet hamlet farms a farmer
man without teeth or tooth gives

Me flowers in his rumpled overalls counting possible
possibilities of this maiden's kiss

Two peasant women probably dressed in the dresses
they don everyday day

Beg for money...

Yet another will willingly wish me Buen Camino like in
day days long ago

A church attendant solicits newcomers - insisting I
see his beautiful church

I oblige because I've made a vow vow to be open
open when the call calls

A pilgrim from Scotland wishes me pleasant surprises
and fulfillment

As a hurried hare hurries to finish the race

Only to be followed by a pilgrim having left Santiago
to return to the place

Where he started the start of his camino in St. Jean

Buen Camino Buen Camino echoes echo ♦

Fixing Your Feet, Injury Prevention & Treatments for Athletes

by John Vonhof

reviewed by Jerald Stroebele, Anchorage AK

There is not a single word about the Camino de Santiago in this book.

Almost every word in this book is of great importance to a peregrino or peregrina who walks or is planning to walk the Camino. What is the Camino? For many it is spiritual. For many it is also cultural. For all it is all about walking. (Cyclists excepted - skip the book.)

The title page defines athletes: "People Who Push the Limits of Their Feet – Runners, Walkers, Hikers, Adventure Racers, Climbers, Soldiers, Dancers, and More." The peregrino beginning the Camino may not think of himself or herself as an athlete, but the closer to Santiago one walks, he or she is surely likely to have become one.

"Almost every word in this book is of great importance to a peregrino or peregrina..."

The author is a paramedic, orthopedic technician and emergency room technician. He has been a runner and fast packer for 34 years. He accompanies adventure racers around the world and treats their feet during their grueling ultramarathons across mountains, jungles and deserts. The author brings to the reader his experience with long distance running and hiking. His book has many first-person narratives of how runners took care of their feet – or didn't. It is also full of medical descriptions of feet (in both lay

Fixing Your Feet, Injury Prevention and Treatments for Athletes

by John Vonhof

Wilderness Press; 6th edition 2016

392 pages

and medical terms), problems of feet, and methods to prepare, care for, and cure sore feet. When I had just read to page 15 "The Little Toe Triangle," I realized this book was about fixing MY feet.

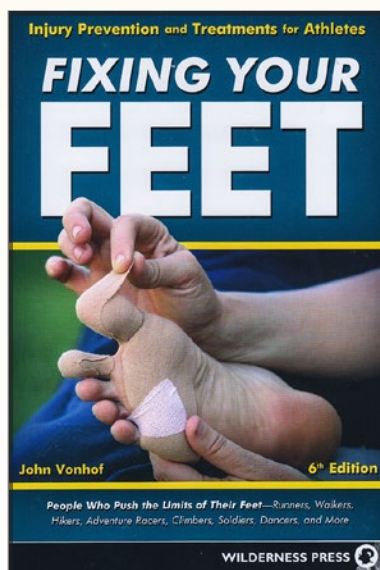
But there is more to this book than just feet. There are many discussions and recommendations about footwear. By page 167, reading the chapter "Lacing Options," I picked up my boot and changed the lacing pattern. Who knew there are toe strengthening exercises? See page 298.

The book describes the incredible variety of products to care for feet and tells you where to find them – starting at your local stores but also providing numerous web sites. It is well illustrated with photos and drawings.

When I read a book, I do not mutilate it with underlines, yellow highlights or folded over corners.

My copy now has 30 folded over corners for "must reread" sections. This new 6th edition has a new chapter describing the latest medical understanding of how blisters are formed – or prevented.

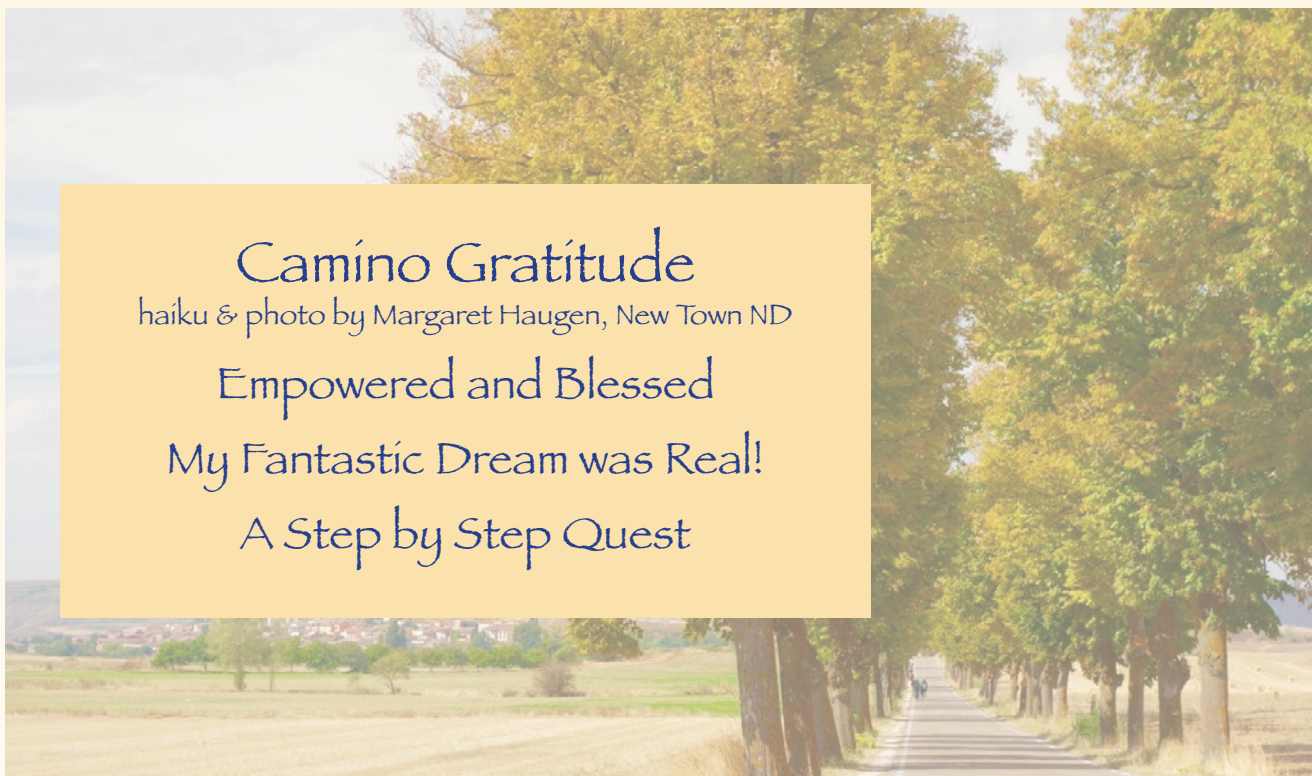
Read this book. If you only have time for a little reading, read Chapter 9, "Blister Prevention: The New Paradigm." ♦



Camino Gratitude

haiku & photo by Margaret Haugen, New Town ND

Empowered and Blessed
My Fantastic Dream was Real!
A Step by Step Quest



The First Lesson

by Joyce DeToni-Hill, Colorado Springs CO

My first act of pilgrim surrender was two weeks before I stepped on to the plane at the Denver airport. Last April I took my last training walk up Pikes Peak. I was three miles up on the mountain with a full pack when my cell phone beeped an emergency weather advisory – a winter storm was heading my way. I scrambled down the mountain, grabbed some groceries and drove into the driveway in perfect time.

In my hurry to get the groceries into the house, I left my backpack in the car, confident I could retrieve it in the morning. In my rush, I forgot to lock the car door, and during the evening the neighborhood “spring thieves” snatched it out of my car.

The next morning it was clear what had happened, as the thieves left my poles behind in the dark. I felt a pure rage I did not know I was capable of. It took me three years to assemble that pack as I received gift monies and purchased equipment, item by item, weighing each piece at REI, replacing heavier items with lighter ones.

When my devastation set in, I cried out to the universe by way of the American Pilgrims’ chapter

Facebook and my personal Facebook account. To my comfort and surprise, 200 people replied within 4 hours. I received supportive words, cards, even an extra Brierley and new socks. Two days later at church, my congregants quietly slipped money into my pockets with words like “a contribution from a Templar,” and “the Camino calls.” On Monday, the postman delivered checks from family members who expressed that since they had been “with” me for two years of training, my Camino became theirs also. I “had” to go for “them!”

On Tuesday, as I handed over \$800 in small bills to my local REI team member, I began to weep. Each bill represented people who I did not know really cared about me and the journey before me. Each had a story of why they needed to share in this experience. As the puzzled cashier looked at me, I said through the tears, “These are all gifts!” She replied, “God is Good!”

My first lesson of surrender was realizing that when I allowed myself to be transparent, Love stepped in to fill the vulnerable places. I experienced the lesson many more times on the Camino. ♦

American Pilgrims Grants Program

One of the ways that we as American Pilgrims accomplish our mission to foster the enduring tradition of the Camino is by making grants to support Camino infrastructure. Since 2009, these grants have totaled in excess of \$150,000 and helped more than 20 non-profits in Spain, France and Portugal. This year's grant applications are currently being reviewed by a committee of volunteers. The recipients will be announced in August.

The Camino Companions is a non-profit organization that received a grant in 2015. Their request was for help "to create a space of tranquility at the end of the Camino." In the article below, Sr. Marion, who is an FCJ Sister, explores why reflecting in tranquility at the end of a pilgrimage is such a profound and valuable exercise. ♦

To Know the Place for the First Time

by Marion Dooley, Santiago Spain and Bunclody Ireland

There is a relentless restlessness in the hearts of people: a restlessness that drives us onward, outward and potentially deeper. It propels us beyond the known, beyond our comfort zones to look for meaning, purpose and a sense of what is real, what is of value, what is lasting.

St. Augustine, a great seeker of goodness, truth and beauty experienced intensely this restlessness in his own life. "You made us for Yourself, O Lord and our hearts are restless till they rest in you" was his conclusion after years of searching in places that left him disenchanted. We are people of extraordinary desires. Our restlessness springs from the deep desire for MORE in our lives, for what will fill the gaping gap within us, for what will satisfy. We yearn and long and so, so often, contentment eludes us. We get momentary glimpses and tastes as to what this 'MORE' might be; but generally, it escapes our understanding as the busyness of life takes over.

It seems that built into our DNA also is a desire to explore: life, loss, death, the self, relationships to others – The Other, to the earth, to the cosmos, interrelatedness, the impact of choice, of roads taken and not taken. This combined restlessness and the urge to explore life can lead to unexpected places and the undertaking of unforeseen experiences.

One such place is the Camino. Like all pilgrimages, however, if the outer journey is not accompanied by a corresponding inner journey the pilgrimage may well feel empty and the pilgrim may

return home in a less contented state than when the pilgrimage began.

I was reminded of this last year in Santiago, when a Canadian woman at the end of a three-hour session reflecting on her Camino experience said, "How I wish I had done reflection like this before I began my Camino. It would have changed everything. All my energy went into making sure I had the right boots and clothes but I totally neglected the needs of my heart and spirit."

Neglecting the *heart and spirit* may be more painful than attending to their needs. It takes great courage to face one's own vulnerability, brokenness, pain, loss, diminishing opportunities, strained and estranged relationships. The avoidance of pain may well lead to the prolongation of suffering. "Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path." (Brené Brown)

Having the courage to embrace our vulnerability is the beginning of transformation, of moving from darkness into light. I love the wisdom and down-to-earthiness of Rumi, the 13th century Sufi Mystic who advocates embracing all our feelings – the many feelings that move temporarily into our homes as guests, because through them our hearts and lives are prepared for something MORE, something better.

Continued next page.

*Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still treat each guest honourably.
He may be clearing you out for some new delight.*
- The Guest House

Musician Eric Clapton suggests we all have our own understanding of what a pilgrimage is about. "I think everybody has their own way of looking at their lives as some kind of pilgrimage. Some people will see their role as a pilgrim in terms of setting up a fine family, or establishing a business inheritance. Everyone's got their own definition. Mine, I suppose, is to know myself." Being on pilgrimage, walking the Camino in a mindful manner, facilitates knowing our true selves, accepting and embracing all that we are, and helps us realize we are not called to perfection: we are called to be fully human. Having flaws or cracks are signs of someone who has lived

life's journey. These cracks need to be cherished, not discarded. The cracks are our beauty! It is through our cracks that we see the light. In western cultures, we tend to see brokenness as something to be hidden and discarded. Perhaps we need to learn the Japanese art of Kintsukuroi which reminds us that a bowl or any object (or person) becomes more beautiful by having been broken; the true life and beauty of the bowl begins the moment it is broken.

*Forget your perfect offering
there is a crack in everything
that's how the light gets in.*

- Leonard Cohen

Sometimes we need to leave home, to allow our restlessness to reflect our own vulnerability, fragility and beauty to us, and to see that same vulnerability, fragility and beauty reflected in the lives of our fellow pilgrims. ♦



We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

- T.S Eliot's Four Quartets



The Road to REI

by Hany Farag, San Francisco CA

I was aware of REI, the flagship U.S. outdoor equipment store, for a long time. However, I didn't become a card-carrying member until I joined American Pilgrims on the Camino and prepared for my first Camino. The store conducts workshops and creates video clips to promote new equipment. To ease the information overload, I concentrated every store visit on one item only. I also checked the comparable solutions that early pilgrims used.

During my first REI visit, a flashlight fitted on headband caught my attention. I always keep a small flashlight from One Dollar Store in my hand luggage, yet this headlamp has many functions. While fiddling with the gizmo, a warm voice behind me said:

"Do you have any questions?" Without thinking, I asked the price.

"Forty-five dollars." The figure created an immediate WOW in my head.

"And you get dividends."

"In this world?"

The salesman took my question seriously and emphasized: "Yes, you get 10% at the end of the year."

On another REI visit I focused on drinking water, a vital element on the Camino. Early pilgrims carried a leather pouch to fill with natural water from springs

and wells. A cloth bag was used to remove sediment from water in rivers and creeks. Now modern backpacks integrate a plastic bag with a hose and mouthpiece so we can drink water while walking. To fit our modern sophistication, this water bag is called a "dehydration bladder."

Appropriate Camino footwear is a topic of wide research and REI helped here too. Modern shoes incorporate protection, flexibility, and weatherproofing with durable cushioning. Your Camino shoe size should be 1/2 size larger to accommodate swollen feet. Early pilgrims used to wear a simple sandal with a strap. Since St. James used to walk with Jesus from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, we can assume that swollen feet were not an issue.

We have to live in accordance with our own times, yet without overshadowing the main sponsor of the Camino. St. James left Jerusalem heading to the Iberian Peninsula equipped mainly with the power of his faith. When he stood in Padrón his message was quite simple; it can even fit into a 140 character Twitter message. He preached God's unconditional love and forgiveness. For those who accepted the message, he scooped water in the now famous seashell and baptized them. He further requested them to go and inform others – which could be translated in our modern language as a "Retweet." ♦



Between O'Cebreiro & Triacastela. photo by Peg Hall

Lifetime Service Awards

From time to time, American Pilgrims on the Camino confers a Lifetime Service Award to recognize a member for outstanding volunteer service. At the 2017 Gathering, two individuals who have significantly contributed many years of service to the growth and excellence of the organization were so honored.

As the room rose in a standing ovation, Rosann and Gene McCullough of Denver, Colorado came forward to receive their awards. Model representatives of our organization and exemplary American volunteers abroad, Rosann and Gene have volunteered as hospitaleros for many years at Albergue Gaucelmo in Rabanal and in the Pilgrim Office in Santiago.

Here in the U.S., Rosann managed our program of issuing credentials for many years from its beginning until the end of 2014, processing each request individually. As requests grew from a few dozen to more than 5,000 per year, Rosann developed improved processes to deal effectively with the growing workload.

Gene was one of the organizers of the Colorado Chapter, and has continued to serve as co-coordinator. He and Rosann have opened their home for chapter events, have organized many activities of this vibrant chapter, and have offered many informational sessions for prospective pilgrims. Gene also created a Shell Ceremony now used by other chapters around the country.

Gene serves as our webmaster, often spending up to 30 hours each week to maintain and improve the



Gene & Rosann McCullough receiving their Lifetime Service Awards. photo by Joan DeFeis

American Pilgrims website. Due to his efforts, creativity and expertise, we have one of the best Camino websites in the world. The wealth of essential information on our website is the result of his hundreds of hours of research, updating, and organizing.

Rosann's and Gene's efforts and decades of commitment have enriched the lives of thousands of pilgrims. We are all grateful. ♦



Gene crunching the numbers. photo by Joan DeFeis

Chapter Snapshot

The Year of the Chapter is certainly living up to its designation as the 41 chapters of American Pilgrims on the Camino actively educate and energize individuals across the country. In Colorado, the chapter is learning everything about bedbugs while in Alaska they are cooking up pulpo with a culinary chef instructor. Northern California is talking technology on the Camino and providing basic Spanish classes, and those enthusiasts in the Texas Gulf Coast Chapter meet at a local wine room. Here is a snapshot of the activities during the second quarter of 2017 from a sampling of 18 of our chapters who engaged in an astounding 110 activities:

Hikes: 62

Speaker Events: 19

Camino Coffees: 6

Shell Ceremonies: 11

Tuesday Tertulias: 13

Meals/Potlucks: 3

Movie Nights: 1

Wine Tasting: 1

Our chapters are working to foster the enduring tradition of the Camino by gathering pilgrims, providing information, and supporting the Camino. If you are interested in getting involved or forming your own chapter, visit <http://www.americanpilgrims.org/local-chapters>.



Albuquerque



Boston City



Chicago



Colorado Front Range



Kansas City



Northern California



Northern New England



Old Pueblo



Raleigh Area



Sacramento



Santa Barbara



Southern California



Texas Gulf Coast



Valley of the Sun



Western North Carolina

American Pilgrims Work-Behind the Scenes

Who is behind the curtain fulfilling the mission of American Pilgrims? Many very dedicated volunteers.

Unlike many large membership organizations, American Pilgrims on the Camino has no staff. It's run by volunteers. Volunteers run the chapters, the Gatherings, the *La Concha* newsletter, the hospitalero training, the grants program, and the governance committee. In addition, they manage the finances, the website, and the Facebook group.

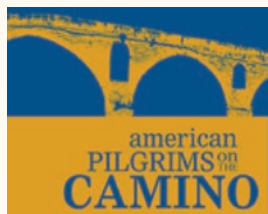
Volunteers once fulfilled all of the credential requests until the number climbed to over 5,000 per year, and nobody's dining room table was big enough. They also used to monitor all of the Facebook group posts until the number of group participants exceeded 14,000, and nobody's daily schedule permitted that many hours on Facebook. Now, we contract these administrative tasks.

However, American Pilgrims essentially runs on volunteer engagement. Each of the 41 chapters has

two coordinators. Annually, they manage hundreds of events for thousands of participants. The activities for these participants are summarized on the chapters page.

The eleven members of the national Board of Directors are volunteers. They each serve up to two 3-year terms and meet four times during the year. They come together from across the country—California, Texas, Georgia, Arizona, Minnesota, Tennessee and Florida. Between meetings, the board members work together on the phone and through email on all of our programs.

If you have the time and would like to be involved in Camino-related work, volunteering with American Pilgrims could be a satisfying opportunity. Service on the board and in the chapters are just two of the ways to do so. Watch for an announcement about board positions later this summer, and write to us at chapters@americanpilgrims.org if you would like to become involved in chapter leadership. ♦



Fostering the enduring tradition of the Camino

Haiku Camino

by Julie Terray, Brunswick ME

Sacred winds beckon
Leaning towards revelation
Walking our way home.

Camino Francés • September, 2015

Blessings and Miracles

by Candice Smith, Brookfield CT

Milagros are religious charms used for healing purposes in Latin America and nearby regions.

When our friend Valeska heard that we were walking the Camino Francés she gave us the greatest honor. Valeska was waiting for a kidney transplant, and she asked if we would place her milagro at the altar of St. James at the end of our pilgrimage. She had received the milagro at a chapel in Santa Fe, and by tradition it was to be delivered to another holy place.

We frantically began our online research to confirm the correct place in the Santiago Cathedral to leave her milagro. We sent emails to the Cathedral office but never heard anything back. Finally, a pilgrim blogged that there was a small chapel to the left of the main altar where the mass is said in English, and pilgrims could leave their prayer intentions. We now had a plan.

When we first entered the majestic Cathedral, we were overwhelmed by its beauty and size. We separated, and I headed down the lefthand aisle that appeared to go on forever. I finally spotted a Cathedral officer giving directions to pilgrims in

English. I asked him if this was the correct place to leave milagros and say prayers. He smiled at me so warmly and said, "We have been waiting for you. You must be Candice. The priest will see you in his private chamber."

I couldn't believe it! They had read our emails and took note of our arrival date in Santiago, knowing that we would attend the Pilgrim's Mass at noon. The official introduced me to the priest and told me to remind him about my friend who was waiting for a kidney transplant. I showed the priest Valeska's milagro, and he told me that milagro means miracle in Spanish. He then closed his eyes and said a silent prayer. Together, we walked back into the chapel, and he showed me a small crystal bowl underneath the altar where I could leave her milagro and prayers for a successful transplant. He told me that the pilgrims would continue to pray for her miracle.

Five days later, I was back home when my phone rang very early one morning. My pastor was calling to tell me that Valeska had received a kidney in the middle of the night and was doing extremely well. Miracles do happen on the Camino. ♦



Facebook Sharing

American Pilgrims has a robust Facebook presence that provides a forum for asking questions and sharing experiences and information about pilgrimage and the Camino. The questions and sharing pour out every day. Here are a few quotes from a day in May:


“This group has been super helpful. Many thanks. I thought I had read somewhere in here about storing your backpack maybe in Santiago with Ivar? Can someone fill me in on how this works and costs associated with it?”

- Within 4 minutes someone posted a link to “Luggage Storage in Santiago de Compostela.”

“Is it a long shot to walk from SJPP to Roncesvalles in one day?”

- Seventy-seven people replied.

“Happy Mothers Day to all my Camino friends.”

- Twenty-two  s were posted

“How far in advance does one need to make a reservation in Orrison? Can you do that the day of, in SJPP? I will be starting on June 18. Many thanks!”

- Two replies within 6 minutes.

“After walking 267 miles from Le Puy to Boudou, France, our family decided (by vote) to skip the rest of the way to St. Jean and walk from there to Santiago, and then to Finisterre.”

- Twenty-eight replied and 312 liked the post that day.

With more than 15,500 participants, the group is a vital resource for new and seasoned pilgrims alike. Enjoy! ♦



View 28 more comments

❧ If you light a lamp for somebody, it will also brighten your path. ❧

– Buddha

Walking in Watercolor: An Artist's Pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago

by Jennifer Lawson, with Patricia Lennon

reviewed by Russell J. Hall, Gainesville FL

Every so often I experience a book that makes me wish I had written it. *Walking in Watercolor* is one of them. Of course I couldn't have written this one because it is artist and author Jennifer Lawson's story. A veteran peregrino who has traveled the same roads and written about them, I still could not have produced anything remotely similar. Like most of

Walking in Watercolor: An Artist's Pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago

by Jennifer Lawson, with Patricia Lennon

SoPo Press (April 17, 2017)

90 pages

us I suspect, my eyes are ill prepared to see all the things that Lawson's do. And if a good book is one that helps you to see the world through someone else's eyes, this one succeeds literally and admirably.

The highlights of this delightful book are the appealing images that are true to their subjects and let the Camino reveal itself to you through the artist's eyes. The crisp narrative recounts the physical challenges, joys of companionship, and pleasures of discovery, but it

is the images that capture the feelings that so many of us experience, but fail to capture in words.

Recounting day by day the author's 32-day trek from St. Jean Pied de Port to Santiago, the pages are sprinkled with cultural diversions, culinary pleasures, and memorable dogs. Throughout, the author as a person is present in the story, and the last six pages—about her packing list—are telling. She gives us a good and apparently complete, but hardly technical list. Still, there she is, and in her sketches of things like boots, hiking poles, rain jacket, and art supplies, you sense that she sees them more as traveling companions than as mere “gear” in the way most of us see such things.

Any for whom the Camino holds fond memories will find this a fun and rewarding book. Viewing many of its more than 200 images makes me think I'm seeing things I failed to fully see when I was there and they were right in front of me. And the book might benefit people who are about to undertake their first journey by preparing them to see things that otherwise would remain hidden.

Not a guidebook, not really a memoir, this is a welcome touchstone and celebration of the Camino. ♦

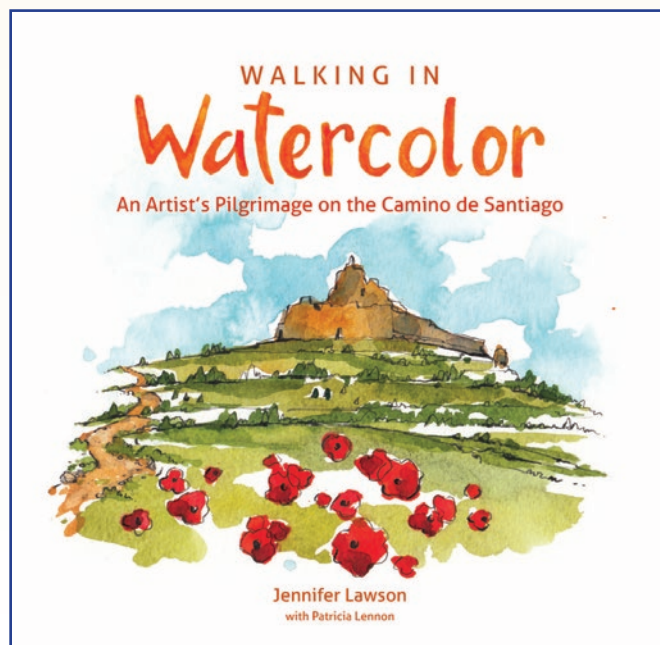


image provided by Patricia Lennon



Eve on the Camino de Santiago

poem and photo by J. Brian Murphy, Stone Harbor NJ

The startling cold is not bitter
A field of starry diamonds glitter
Illumined by the lunar glow
It meets the water's edge below

On shimmering surface is the evidence
Moonlight's rippling reveals winds presence
Its radiance obscures some of heaven's host
While the rest proclaim their celestial boast

The glow of lights from albergue emitted
The grateful pilgrims within committed

To a sacred communion, a new tradition
Warm tidings greet each new addition

The lights subdued as the weary retire
A volunteer's duty, tending the fire
A serene silence engulfs those within
Only sound without, a gentle wind

Nothing disturbs this peaceful night
No creatures stir, no birds take flight
Revealed in Holy undisturbed reverence
The Heavens radiate His omnipresence ♦

¡Buen Provecho!

I remember walking into Palas del Rei with my Russian walking partner Elaina. She was anxious to try her first taste of Pulpo, Galician octopus. Although it was 9:30 am, we found a bar where the owner was happy to prepare it for us. It quickly became our favorite dish in Galicia.

Back home in Anchorage, I was anxious to see if I could make it. I got on YouTube and watched videos of chefs dunking live octopus in boiling water three times. Really? Did I have to do all that?

I put this project aside for awhile, then one day while at our local Asian fish market I saw an octopus tentacle in the glass case. The fishmonger told me

it was precooked. I bought it and let the fun begin. Below is the recipe I developed after scouring several Spanish cookbooks. It is very easy and I now keep a tentacle in my freezer at all times. It has become a favorite pot luck dish and a great conversation starter.

A few tips: use Yukon Gold potatoes for their firmness. I made this for our local Camino pot luck and used russets that I had on hand. They crumbled, and although it was delicious, it was similar to lumpy mashed potatoes. Feel free to up the garlic and the oil. Use your good olive oil. Once you make this, you can tailor it to your own taste. ♦

Pulpo-Octopus Galician Style Tapa

From the kitchen of Judith Mack, Anchorage AK

- 1 lb pre-cooked octopus or 1 tentacle, thawed
- 3 Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled
- 3 Tbsp chopped garlic
- 1/3 C Spanish extra virgin olive oil (or more)
- Smoked paprika
- Coarse salt and pepper to taste

Directions

- Steam potatoes until tender. Cut in chunks.
- In the meantime, thinly slice the octopus at an angle. Set aside.
- Heat the olive oil and very gently cook the chopped garlic, being very careful not to burn. Pour over hot potatoes and gently toss. Salt and pepper to taste.
- Put the octopus in the bottom of your serving bowl (in Spain it is a flat wooden bowl) and pour the nicely marinated potatoes over the octopus. Gently toss, sprinkle with paprika and serve with toothpicks. Serve at room temperature.

¡Buen provecho!



Hiking Northwest Spain for the Mind and Soul

by Larry O'Heron, Rochester NY

In October 2016, I continued my Camino adventure on the Vía de La Plata for time and reflection on the many twists and turns of life.

Shortly after leaving Salamanca, I entered the Meseta. For all I've heard from those before me, I was still not prepared for the life-changing effects of Spain's high plateau. In one experience, I misunderstood the Camino arrows. Had I not rung the bell at a house, I would have wandered off into the farm fields in the completely wrong direction. The lesson learned was to be humble and ask for help.

Negotiating curve after curve in the hot sun, I thought about my choices for various situations, wondering if I had given up roots of my past or future growth. After Calzada de Valdunciel, alone on a vast stretch under the sun, I played with the English language, changing the stress on a phrase in my head.

"Everything is on the horizon, **until you get there.**"

"Until you get there, **everything is on the horizon.**"

The words are the same but not the meaning.

The first emphasizes motion. The second emphasizes location. It is usually self-evident,

but it's the combination of roots and growth that makes us who we are.

On the Camino, when the markers are unclear (go left or go straight or go right), you can't know the correct choice until you pick "your path." But making the choice does not reveal the correctness of your decision.

Only a follow-on marker shows that you made the right choice. Not seeing a marker only means that you have not gone far enough to know it's the right choice. You can't prove that you've made the right or wrong choice. You can only decide for yourself if you are on the path, and therefore only we are ultimately responsible for our choices. ♦



Banks of the Río Esla.



Pico Dueña, Cross of Christ



Asturianos Mountains Galicia

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 exist in France, Portugal, and Italy as well. ♦

The following 22 new hospitaleros attended the training before the March Gathering in Hampton, Georgia:

- Ed Baumann
- Joan Baumann
- Mila Caceres
- Karen Collins
- Iris Cortes
- Peter Dulley
- Steven Dwyer
- Lysa Erkenbrack
- Wayne Etheridge
- Peter Floistad
- Kevin Hargedon
- Susana Ikhwan
- Carol Kapteyn
- Anita Kirby
- Katherine Murphy
- Christine Petty
- Louise Ritz
- Cris Rodriguez
- Robin Simpson
- John Theroux
- PJ Wilkins
- Stacey Wittig



Upcoming Hospitalero Training*

August - Los Altos CA

October - Colorado Springs CO

* more information coming soon



Welcome, New Members!

We are pleased to welcome the following new members who joined American Pilgrims on the Camino from March 2017 through April 2017. We look forward to meeting all of you at future Gatherings and events.

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ◆ Nirav Amin | ◆ Robert Dumas | ◆ Joey Manfre |
| ◆ Ralph Andy | ◆ Rose Edwards | ◆ Barbara Mantell |
| ◆ Ana Anzore | ◆ Joyce Eichelberger | ◆ Ellen Manus |
| ◆ Aurora Arrue | ◆ Kenneth Elkin | ◆ Jan Marsiglia |
| ◆ Bob Barret | ◆ Lisa D. Ellis | ◆ Luis Martinez |
| ◆ Ignacio Barrientos | ◆ Stephen and Jean Ettinger | ◆ Astrid Maurer-Evans |
| ◆ Lauren, Nicole, and Kristi Bartolo | ◆ Enrique and Cecilia Farias | ◆ Kent and Cheryl Mitchell |
| ◆ Randall Bateman | ◆ Edward Fernandez Vila | ◆ Jamie Moloney |
| ◆ Patty Bateman | ◆ Adrienne Ferree | ◆ Jeff and Linda Morris |
| ◆ Teresa and Scott Binder | ◆ Kelli Field-Darragh | ◆ Michael Murphy |
| ◆ Kelli and Joseph Binder | ◆ Leticia Figueroa | ◆ Thomas Murphy |
| ◆ Bridget Binder | ◆ Gwojen Fung | ◆ Alisande Osuch |
| ◆ Betty Bird | ◆ Miriam Garcia | ◆ May Ovalles |
| ◆ Ed Boatner | ◆ James Gay | ◆ David Ovalles Hutchison |
| ◆ Paul Bonnar | ◆ Halen George | ◆ Maureen Owen |
| ◆ Ginger Bonnar | ◆ Donna Giberti | ◆ Celia and Enrique Pacheco |
| ◆ Sandy Briggs | ◆ Paul and Susan Gill | ◆ Hugo Palacio |
| ◆ John Budway | ◆ Chris Gleason | ◆ Trisha Parekh |
| ◆ Lynne Burke | ◆ John Goodie | ◆ Michael Pastore |
| ◆ Luke and Lynn Bushman | ◆ Stephanie Hawley | ◆ Todd Patenaude |
| ◆ Jackson and Regina Bushman | ◆ Rebecca Hinkle | ◆ Tyler Pereira |
| ◆ Bill Buzenberg | ◆ Lee Howell | ◆ Debra Peters |
| ◆ Edward Campana | ◆ Lisa Howells | ◆ Thomas Pierce |
| ◆ Lisa Capallia | ◆ Brian Hutchison | ◆ Bruce Quick |
| ◆ Elizabeth Cappon | ◆ Joseph and Melanie Janica | ◆ Patricia Rago |
| ◆ Thomas Carmody | ◆ Mary and Joseph Janiczek | ◆ Chuck Randall |
| ◆ Jonathan and Annabelle Carnice | ◆ Tom Jefferson | ◆ Amy and Alexander Rangel |
| ◆ James Carns | ◆ Lawrence Jones | ◆ Belinda Reed |
| ◆ Ashton Chandler | ◆ Mark Kanning | ◆ Mary Reynolds |
| ◆ Gracia Coffin | ◆ John Kapustka | ◆ Amy Reynolds |
| ◆ Don Converse | ◆ Jackie Kilby | ◆ Sebastian Ribeiro |
| ◆ Beth Cook | ◆ Lori Kiser | ◆ Prentiss Riddle |
| ◆ James Cooper | ◆ Diane and Michael Koch | ◆ Kevin Rioux |
| ◆ Susan, Joseph, and Christopher Crum | ◆ Chris LaMarca | ◆ Edward Rodriguez |
| ◆ Vera Cruz | ◆ Inga Larson | ◆ Hector, Simon, and Mateo Rodriguez |
| ◆ Linda Cunningham | ◆ Carol Lindsey | ◆ Lisa Sarmiento |
| ◆ Theresa Daytner | ◆ John, Henry, Kevin, & Denice Link | ◆ Jerome Schiller |
| ◆ Livia De Leon | ◆ Heather Linnemeyer | ◆ Edward Schultheiss |
| ◆ Arthur DeBruyn | ◆ Betty Lipka | ◆ Bailey Shawver |
| ◆ Frank DiCostanzo | ◆ Brian Mahoney | ◆ Barbara Simmons |
| ◆ Linda Dozier | ◆ Mary Mance Hart | ◆ Gale Simmons |



- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| ◆ John Simpson | ◆ Philippe Vercruyssen | ◆ Linda Williams |
| ◆ Candice, Alan, and Annie Smith | ◆ Mary Wahlstrom | ◆ Edie Williams |
| ◆ Danny Smith | ◆ James and Joshua Ward | ◆ Gregory Wing |
| ◆ Philip Stearns | ◆ Tim Webster | ◆ Sue Woods |
| ◆ Stephanie Strong | ◆ Doreen Whennen | ◆ Ted and Fany Yasi |
| ◆ Cathy Van Dyke | ◆ Stephanie White | ◆ Dan Young |
| ◆ Jose Vargas | ◆ Mark Wilkinson | ◆ Christine Zenner |

Lifetime Members!

We are pleased to welcome the following lifetime members to American Pilgrims on the Camino.

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| ◆ Dana Baggett | ◆ Bruce Guthrie | ◆ Rosann McCullough |
| ◆ K Andrew Byers | ◆ Sheridan Christian Tully Sun | ◆ Bruce Robbins |
| ◆ Kaye R Callaway | ◆ Hedley | ◆ Cristino Rodriguez |
| ◆ Elaine Chapin | ◆ Diana Huntress | ◆ Michael Romo |
| ◆ Denise Davis | ◆ Guy Joaquin | ◆ Jacqueline Saxon |
| ◆ Daniel De Kay | ◆ Roni Jackson-Kerr | ◆ Julie Scott |
| ◆ Cathy Diaz | ◆ Christopher Kelle | ◆ Daniel Stalling |
| ◆ Maryjane Dunn | ◆ Sandy Lenthall | ◆ Jeff Stys |
| ◆ Ben Fisher | ◆ John Long | ◆ Lynn Talbot |
| ◆ Victoria Fry-Ruiz | ◆ Paul Louie | ◆ John Homer Theroux |
| ◆ Gwojen Fung | ◆ Zita Macy | ◆ Sarah Tucker |
| ◆ Lin Galea | ◆ Jim Martin | ◆ Anne Uglum |
| ◆ Jim Geier | ◆ Yosmar Martinez | ◆ Karen Wark |
| ◆ George Greenia | ◆ Gene McCullough | ◆ Bryan Winter |

Contributors

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| ◆ Joan DeFeis | ◆ Mark Holbert | ◆ J. Brian Murphy |
| ◆ Joyce DeToni-Hill | ◆ Elaine Hopkins | ◆ Larry O'Heron |
| ◆ Sr. Marion Dooley | ◆ Patricia Lennon | ◆ Candice Smith |
| ◆ Hany Farag | ◆ Judith Mack | ◆ Jerald Stroebele |
| ◆ Peg Hall | ◆ Paco Martinez-Alvarez | ◆ Julie Terray |
| ◆ Russell Hall | ◆ Janet Meskin | |
| ◆ Margaret Haugen | ◆ Vance Moore | |



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, August 25, 2017. We welcome your questions, comments, and submissions at newsletter@americanpilgrims.org.

¡Buen Camino!

*Peg Hall, Elaine Hopkins, Steve Lytch, Zita Macy
Mona Spargo & Jessica Swan*
June 2017 Team La Concha

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Cindy Day – Treasurer
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Zita Macy
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Peg Hall – Secretary
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Jessica & Zita
Peg, Jessica & Zita
Carmen, Cheryl & Yosmar
Scott, Carmen, & Emilio
Zita
Yosmar, Jessica, Zita, Cindy & Peg

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Gene McCullough

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