

LA CONCHA

american pilgrims on the camino magazine

Re-Igniting the Spark:

How We Keep the Spirit of the Camino Alive
in Strange and Wonderful Ways

Inside:

A Recap of the 2022 Gathering
Hospitaleros Return to Service!

Our 2022 Grant Recipients

Shell Ceremonies Send off New Pilgrims

SUMMER 2022

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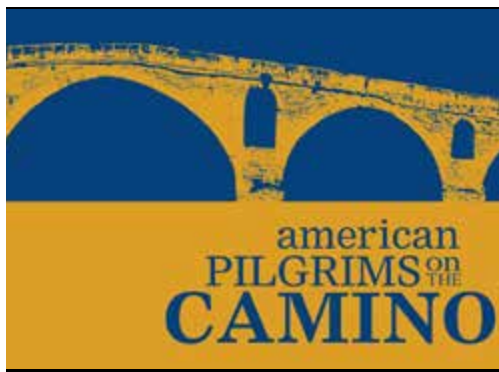
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COVER Photo: First Hike at Black Mountain Pilgrim Gathering 2022. Photo by Francine Mastini.

Black Mountain Gathering Cross Ceremony (at right). Photo by Francine Mastini.

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

LA CONCHA

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Dear Fellow Pilgrims,

As I write this, I and a few other members of Team *La Concha* are riding the dual wakes of having completed transformative pilgrimages and of being diagnosed with COVID-19 in the hours before or during our scheduled return home. In quarantine we find ourselves charting a constellation of emotions which can only be seen in the night of the human heart—fatigue, disappointment, frustration, anxiety, hope, weariness, boredom . . . and what can only be called pilgrim presence.

If pilgrimage is a transformative experience, the transformation should continue long after the backpack has been unpacked and placed in the closet. Becoming pilgrims conditions us to lean into discomfort—physical, spiritual, emotional, and psychological. It teaches us to accept our own feebleness, to wonder at differences, and to accept the mutability of our own existence, step by labored step. It also helps us become better sufferers, more compassionate to ourselves and to others, and to give and receive small graces, that we may become better healers by the by.

Though Team *La Concha* developed the theme for this issue one year ago, this quarantine is one of a number of experiences this past year which has served as a rekindling spark in my pilgrim's journey. In this issue of *La Concha*, you will read of other such sparks that can serve to ignite the pilgrim spirit in us all. You will read accounts of illness and recovery, of pilgrimages in place, and of pilgrim accounts of how favorite poems, totems, and talismans have helped keep the spirit of the Way alive. This issue also includes great news on the sparks we are able to create together at all levels of the organization, from the shell ceremonies that are taking place in our amazing chapters around the country, to a detail of the awards granted through the 2022 grant cycle, to highlights from the 2022 Gathering and a return of our hospitaleros to the field of service.

Wherever this issue of *La Concha* finds you, may it find you protecting that spark and nursing it into a flame.

In peace,



Megan Muthupandiyam, Editor in Chief



Steve Lytch,
Chair of the
American Pilgrims on the
Camino Board of
Directors.

Recently, I attended the spring potluck supper and shell ceremony of my local chapter of American Pilgrims. One veteran peregrina told the aspiring pilgrims that she is a forward-looking person, who doesn't look back, but she said if there were one series of days she would relive exactly as they happened, it would be from her pilgrimage on the Camino Francés.

What we experience on the Camino smolders in us like a fire smooored for the night until it's revived to banish the chill. When our memories of the Camino are stirred, they're like sparks that rekindle something bright and warm and life-giving.

A typical vacation is a pleasant interlude. You step outside of your daily routine, get refreshed and inspired, then plunge back into life as you left it. By the time you've caught up on all the things that didn't get done while you were away, you sometimes wonder if the trip was worth it. Photos or souvenirs remind you that life can be more than the daily grind, but they merely bring back memories. They don't help you relive the experience. The Camino is different. The Camino offers not escape, but transformation.

The mission of American Pilgrims on the Camino is to foster the enduring tradition of the Camino, which is another way of saying, "to tend the spark." When I'm hiking with my local chapter, I'm back in touch with that part of me that was uncovered en route to Santiago. When I engage with our Facebook community, I relive the excitement of preparing for that first Camino and inwardly cheer those who post their progress along the way. Returning from the Gathering, I'm bolstered by the community of pilgrims and re-equipped to engage all of life as a pilgrimage.

On behalf of the board of directors, I want to thank all the volunteers who help reignite that spark: the chapter coordinators, Facebook moderators, hospitalero trainers, *La Concha* editors, Gathering planners, and all those who tend to the details of making our community thrive. May all that they do help rekindle the spark in each one of you.

Buen Camino,

Steve

Steve Lytch

Chair, Board of Directors



|| GRANTS REPORT ||

Thank You for Your Role in Our Work!

*by Ruben Mendoza, on behalf of the Grants Committee
Katy, TX*

Feeling the urge to give back something to the Camino is something so many of us understand. And as a member of American Pilgrims, you are already doing it! Through memberships and donations, we are able to make significant contributions towards organizations that take care of us on the Camino. We direct these grants towards infrastructure improvements.

The first one was made in 2008 to construct an addition to the Albergue Parroquial Santa María in Fuenterrroble de Salvatierra on the Vía de la Plata. As the years have unfolded, American Pilgrims on the Camino has provided significant support for over 130 projects, with grants valued in excess of \$500,000. The 16 grants approved by the board of directors in 2022 provided \$78,400 in funding to a variety of non-profit associations and albergues to improve the physical infrastructure of Caminos in Spain. An expert team of 12 volunteers reviewed qualified applications to determine the most needed and well-planned projects and incorporated these into the Grants team's recommendations to the board.

The Caminos supported by these grants include the Camino Francés, Camino Del Norte, Vía de la Plata, Vía Bayona, Camino Mozárabe, Camino Olvidado, Vía Serrana, Vía del Estrecho, and Vía Augusta. Projects funded this year included repairs for sewer lines and toilets, replacing boilers and heating systems, rebuilding a fence at the entrance to an albergue, replacing essential equipment for a welcome center, purchasing mattresses, renovation and new construction work, replacing damaged waymarking, upgrading equipment in dormitories and a kitchen, outfitting and equipping a new albergue, and installation of solar panels.

As you walk a Camino in 2022 or in the years to come, we suggest stopping at any of the following associations or albergues along the various routes. The 2022 grantees are: Albergue de la Santa Cruz in Sahagún; Albergue San Martín in Miraz; Terra Nova Pilgrim House in Santiago; La Federación Española de Asociaciones del Camino de Santiago; Casa de Peregrinos de Emaús in Burgos; Albergue en Castrillo de las Piedras, Valderrey (León); Albergue de Peregrinos Andrés Terrazas, Vía de Bayona; Asociación Jacobea de Almería-Granada; Camino Mozárabe-Albergues del Camino Mozárabe; and Albergues Riello and La Magdalena along the Camino Olvidado. Additional 2022 grantees include: Asociación de Amigos del Camino de Santiago de Zaragoza in Cádiz; Albergue de Peregrinos de Briviesca-Bureba, Vía Bayona; Albergue de la Asociación Astorga, Camino Francés; Albergue Centro Jacobeo Betania in Pamplona; Asociación de Amigos del Camino de Santiago Mozárabe Sanabrés in Zamora; and Hospital de Peregrinos Estella on the Camino Francés.

Each of the 12 reviewers is a member of American Pilgrims and the team includes former board members, hospitaleros, chapter coordinators, Gathering presenters, and other active members. With deep appreciation and boundless gratitude, we are thankful to each of you who evaluated this year's grant applications, participated in the grants-making process, and donated funds to support another year of American Pilgrims' robust grants program. Reviewers for the 2022 grants cycle were Annette Argall, Dawn Bratsch-Prince, George Greenia, Herbert Medina, Carlos Mentley, Cynthia Slagter, Lynn Talbot, Rosa Torres Tumazos, Tom Berg, Miriam Martinez, Maryjane Dunn, and Cheryl Grasmoe.

American Pilgrims 2022 Grants Recipients

This year your American Pilgrims Grants Committee and volunteer reviewers recommended the board approve awarding 16 grants to nonprofits supporting the Camino. The total amount we anticipate giving back to support the Camino's infrastructure this year is \$78,400.

Here are some ways we'll be making an impact through your membership dues and generous donations . . .

\$6,000 for repairing sewage lines for toilets.



ALBERGUE DE LA SANTA CRUZ
Camino Francés



\$3,000 for replacement of fence at albergue entrance.



CONFRATERNITY OF ST JAMES
Albergue San Martín
Camino del Norte



\$1,600 for the acquisition of essential equipment for Welcome Center.



TERRA NOVA
The Pilgrim House of Santiago
Múltiple Caminos



\$3,200 for repair of toilets and purchase of beds and mattresses.



LA FEDERACION ESPAÑOLA DE ASOCIACIONES DEL CAMINO DE SANTIAGO
Múltiple Caminos



\$5,200 for replacement of boiler and acquisition of hand sanitizer stations.



CASA DE PEREGRINOS DE EMAUS
Burgos
Camino Francés



\$6,000 for renovation and new construction work.



ASOCIACION AMIGOS LEOPOLDO PANERO
Albergue Cuadrilla de las Piedras.
Valderrey, León
Vía de la Plata



\$4,500 for replacement of damaged signage panels on the Vía Bayona.



ASOCIACION DE AMIGOS DEL CAMINO DE SANTIAGO DE MIRANDA DE EBRO
Albergue de Peregrinos Andrés Terreros
Vía de Bayona



GRANTS REPORT

\$4,600 for the outfitting and equipping of a new albergue.



ASOCIACION DE AMIGOS DEL CAMINO DE SANTIAGO DE ZARAGOZA

Cádiz

american PILGRIMS CAMINO

\$2,800 for acquisition of furnishings.



ASOCIACION AMIGOS DEL CAMINO DE SANTIAGO BRIVIESCA BUREBA Albergue de Peregrinos de Briviesca

Via Boyona

american PILGRIMS CAMINO

\$6,000 for the replacement of boiler for heating system.



ASOCIACION DE AMIGOS DEL CAMINO DE SANTIAGO DE ASTORGA Y COMARCA Albergue de la Asociación Astorga

Camino Francés

american PILGRIMS CAMINO

\$6,000 for repairing bathrooms.



CENTRO JACOBEO DIOCESANO BETANIA Albergue Centro Jacobeo

Camino Francés

american PILGRIMS CAMINO

\$6,000 for the installation of solar panels.



ASOCIACION DE AMIGOS DEL CAMINO DE SANTIAGO MOZARABE SANABRES Zamora

Camino Mozarabe-Sanabres

american PILGRIMS CAMINO

\$6,000 for improving accessibility to bathrooms.



ASOCIACION AMIGOS DEL CAMINO DE SANTIAGO ESTELLA Hospital de Peregrinos Estella

Camino Francés

american PILGRIMS CAMINO

\$6,000 for augmenting signage on the Camino Olvidado.



ASOCIACION LEONESA DEL CAMINO OLVIDADO A SANTIAGO La Magdalena

Camino Olvidado

american PILGRIMS CAMINO

|| ANNUAL GATHERING ||

Rekindling the Spirit: Reflections on the 2022 Gathering of Pilgrims

Reflecting on the 2022 Gathering of Pilgrims, there are several things that stand out to me as the chair. First of all, the number of volunteers who came forward both in advance of and during the Gathering to lend a hand was crucial to the event's resounding success and reinforced the concept that many hands make light work. Second, I'm proud of how the team built on the successes of the 2021 Celebration in South Bend by incorporating improvements in the Gathering, and I'm looking forward to carrying forward the lessons from this Gathering to next year's event in Lake Tahoe. Third, I'll not soon forget the quality of our presenters and entertainers . . . I thought they all really knocked it out of the park. It's been a long time since I've laughed as hard as I did during Celeste's performance of "Crying on the Camino". . . simply stunning talent! And the walk to our "Cruz de Ferro" as the bagpipes played had such an impact. . . the stones placed there are making their way to the actual Cruz de Ferro, too. Finally, I'm grateful for the generosity of our entire pilgrim community in supporting the mission of American Pilgrims on the Camino through your membership dues, donations during registration, the silent auction, the raffle, and volunteerism. Thank you all for your engagement, and I look forward to seeing you at a future Gathering.

Thanks, Dave Donselar
2022 Gathering Chair



1. Hospitaleros gather at the 2022 Gathering.
Photo by Meg Muthupandian.



2. Tracy Pawelski's El Camino Spirit nail art.
Photo by Francine Mastini.



3. Hospitaleros Tracy Pawelski and Angela Amos celebrating at the Gathering. Photo by Francine Mastini.



4. Our very own pilgrims ensemble warms up the crowd for a fun evening. Photo by Francine Mastini.

5. The Gathering offered a profound time for our amazing chapter leadership to gather in a spirit of community, service, gratitude, and simplicity. Photographer unknown.



ANNUAL GATHERING



6. Raleigh coordinator John Saxon provides Celtic ambiance to a morning walk to Cruz de Ferro. Photo by Francine Mastini.

7. A reflection at the Cruz de Ferro. Photo by Francine Mastini.

8. Contemplation at the Cruz de Ferro. Photo by Francine Mastini.

9. Volunteers will carry the stones attendees brought to the Cruz de Ferro in Spain over the next few months. Photographer unknown.

10. John Holenko provides entertainment on the opening evening of the Gathering. Photo by Francine Mastini.

11. Celeste Mancinelli, easily the funniest woman on the Camino, leaves pilgrims in stitches (the good kind) with her one-woman show. Photographer unknown.

12. Through song and fellowship, the Gathering continues to kindle the flame of our Camino spirit. Photo by Dave Donselar.

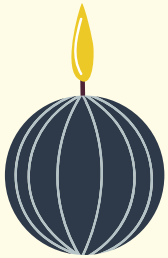


|| ANNUAL REPORT ||

A Snapshot of our Success

As many of us are turning our thoughts toward long-delayed pilgrimages along the Camino de Santiago, I would like to bring you up to date on the work of your board of directors. The board is eleven peregrinas and peregrinos who meet four times per year and devote many hours to make sure that American Pilgrims on the Camino is fulfilling our mission to foster the enduring tradition of the Camino by supporting its infrastructure, gathering pilgrims together, and providing information and encouragement to past and future pilgrims.

Our budget for the year is \$238,175. Your membership dues and donations make possible all that we do. On behalf of my fellow board members, I want to thank you for your financial contributions, as well as for the many hours of volunteer time that is given generously in the spirit of the Camino.



SUPPORTING THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE CAMINO

This year, we resumed **HOSPITALERO TRAINING** with the first of four training events that will take place this year. Over 20 additional American Pilgrims are now qualified to serve at donativo albergues run by our partners in Spain, Portugal, and France.

At its spring meeting, the board awarded 16 grants totaling \$78,400 to associations and partners in Spain to improve albergues, enhance trails, and provide places of respite for pilgrims. For more information on the grant awards, please see our accompanying article in this Summer 2022 issue of *La Concha*.



The Ribadiso welcome program resumes this year. Throughout the summer, 20 of our members will provide a warm welcome to pilgrims staying at the albergue operated by the Galician government that is located toward the end of the Camino Francés.

GATHERING PILGRIMS TOGETHER

We just completed our 25th Gathering of Pilgrims in Black Mountain, NC. Three hundred people enjoyed a weekend of entertainment, enlightenment, inspiration, and rich conversation. Next year's Gathering will take place April 13-16, 2023, at Zephyr Point Conference Center on Lake Tahoe in Nevada. For a sampling of recorded events from the Gathering, check out the **AMERICAN PILGRIMS YOUTUBE CHANNEL**.



There are **57 CHAPTERS OF AMERICAN PILGRIMS** across the country. Each one plans and carries out activities that enhance engagement with the pilgrim community. American Pilgrims provides training and support to chapter coordinators, including a team of coaches and a resource library, insurance to cover chapter events, and technical resources, such as a chapters page on the web site.

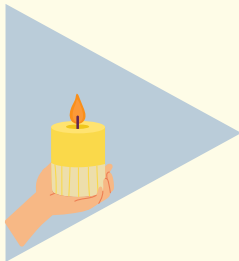
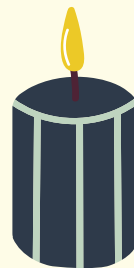
Once a month, American Pilgrims' national events feature speakers from around the world who are brought on to share their expertise and passion on pilgrimage-related topics, ranging from a history of the Knights Templar to a survey of the Caminos of the United Kingdom. Interested in seeing some of our past conversations? You can find them on the **AMERICAN PILGRIMS YOUTUBE CHANNEL**.



|| ANNUAL REPORT ||

PROVIDING INFORMATION TO PILGRIMS

Your external relations team keeps us in touch with partner associations around the world, so you can stay up to date on developments and trends that affect the Camino.



Our Facebook community includes over 28,400 members. It's a welcoming community where you can ask questions and share information, experiences, and feelings about pilgrimage and the Camino de Santiago. To connect with our Facebook group, go to [HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/AMERICANPILGRIMS](https://www.facebook.com/americanpilgrims).

Our quarterly magazine is a forum for sharing events that chapters are holding around the country, national news, and for exploring Camino-related themes through stories, poetry, artwork, reviews, and news. Past issues can be found on our [LA CONCHA WEBPAGE](#).



The American Pilgrims on the Camino YouTube channel is home to our Open House, National Events, Gathering, and select chapter and other related presentations and conversations. We currently have 271 subscribers. Subscribe to our [YOUTUBE CHANNEL](#) and click to be notified when new events are posted!

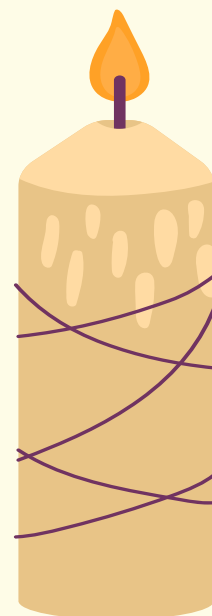
Our [WEBSITE](#) is a rich source of information about the Camino as well as a way to stay in touch with American Pilgrims. From there you can renew your membership, make a donation, or order a credential.



American Pilgrims on the Camino is the only organization in the United States authorized by the Cathedral in Santiago to issue [CREDENTIALS TO PILGRIMS](#). We issue them free of charge.

This year we sent out 3,934 credentials.

As of June 6, there were 1,252 members of American Pilgrims, including 208 Lifetime Members.



|| HOSPITALERO CORNER ||

A Day in the Life of a Hospitalero

by Rick Baldwin
Winter Park, FL

May 24, 2022

Dear Fellow American Pilgrims:

Here's "a day in the life" of a volunteer hospitalero at Albergue San Martin in Miraz, Spain, where I'm currently serving with fellow American Pilgrims on the Camino hospitaleros Betsy Smith, Tina Harris, and Jim Baldwin. Next week fellow American Pilgrims hospitaleros Kristina Renteria, her brother Jose, Diane Bauman, and Sue Labarre will follow us in service.

On Thursday morning we went to the store in Friol to buy groceries and other supplies. We had lunch there and returned to the albergue by 1:00 p.m. to welcome our next group of pilgrim guests. It was fun to get out because there was a street market underway in Friol, with all sorts of familiar wares.

After dinner, we opened the little Iglesia Santiago de Miraz for our pilgrims and for those staying up the street. Jim Baldwin presented the history of the church, and the pilgrims privately lit candles and said prayers.

Afterwards, back at the albergue, we celebrated Jim's 70th birthday! During the celebration, all sang the familiar birthday tune in different languages. There was one pilgrim each from France, Canada, Germany, Uruguay, and Spain. Despite the different countries of origin and languages, conversation was lively, and feelings of national embrace were strong. In his birthday wisdom speech, after blowing out the candles on his cake, Jim told the group "keep walking, keep talking, and take time, each day, to fully embrace the peaceful unity that our countries enjoy today."

The weather for the day ranged from 48° F to 71° F in the late afternoon—and the ambient sounds were only those of the birds chirping, the breezes in the trees, and the whispers to the two neighbor cats discussing their next meal. There were no honking horns, no trucks passing, and no blaring TVs. It was like heaven! It was a wonderful afternoon and evening spent together.

Buen Camino,

Rick



Birthday celebration for Jim Baldwin. Photo provided by the author.

|| HOSPITALERO CORNER ||

So, Tell Me About Being an Hospitalero

by Daniel De Kay
Sebastopol, CA

"I was moved beyond words by the outpouring of charity, a love tempered with humor, and an ability to organize and maintain places that sometimes sheltered 70 pilgrims. In our fallen world, this is a kind of redemption: meeting people who, in ministering to your body and your spirit, make you want to be more like them."

Wow, what's it like to have that kind of effect on someone? What does an hospitalero (the feminine word is hospitalera) do? How does one become an hospitalero/a? Where does the word hospitalero even come from?

In the 11th and 12th centuries, religious orders and groups like the Knights Templar began offering pilgrims to Santiago a place to rest, to recover from illness or injury, and perhaps a place to die. These refuges became known as "*hospitals*" (think of the *Hospital de los Reyes Católicos* in Santiago, now known as the Parador, flanking the Plaza de Obradoiro), and pilgrims were cared for without charge. This is the origin of the concepts of hospitality, hospitable, and hostel, and an hospitalero is one who looks after the hostel and those within its walls.

What does an hospitalero do? Essentially, whatever it takes to create a place where pilgrims can rest and renew themselves in body, mind, and spirit. This includes keeping the albergue (Spanish for hostel) clean and well-maintained. It might also include providing a meal for pilgrims or directing a pilgrim to the nearest pharmacy or clinic. It definitely involves being a good listener when someone needs to talk and maybe even helping with a spiritual ceremony of some kind. Certainly it's the daily act of welcoming pilgrims and helping them find their bed, a shower, and a place to wash their clothes.

Who can become an hospitalero, and how? Anyone with a genuine interest in providing for pilgrims can become an hospitalero. I can't stress enough how important it is to have experienced being a pilgrim, for only then do we understand the needs of a pilgrim. There are many avenues, from showing up somewhere and "just doing it" to taking an approved training course. The Spanish Federation of Associations of Friends of the Camino, an organization American Pilgrims has worked with for eighteen years, requires volunteer hospitaleros to complete two-and-a-half days of training. We offer this course multiple times per year, and have trained more than 650 hospitaleros since 2006. Once trained, our members are qualified to serve voluntarily in one of 17 *donativo* albergues with which the Federation works. Each volunteer has a foundation of philosophy, knowledge and skill to help provide that space for renewal of body, mind and spirit.

"Serving as an hospitalera was as challenging as being a pilgrim," one hospitalera stated in reflection following their service. "For me personally, I needed to lean into the spirituality I was hoping to deepen. I needed to stretch and dig deep to uphold pilgrims when they were coming apart. The inner journey of service put me as in touch with my God as walking into the unknown every day. I am grateful for having had the privilege of serving in this way."

Service as an hospitalero is not for everyone. It includes long days of hard work, but it can also be tremendously rewarding. For many of us it's a time of spiritual and personal growth. It's a place where humanity, making its way towards the tomb of St. James, briefly rests with us and touches our souls.

For more information on what it's like to be an hospitalero and American Pilgrims' upcoming hospitalero training sessions, go to [HTTPS://AMERICANPILGRIMS.ORG/HOSPITALERO-TRAINING](https://americanpilgrims.org/hospitalero-training).



Chapter News

CHAPTER NEWS

The Spark is Alive

*by Linnea Hendrickson, co-coordinator of the Albuquerque Chapter
Albuquerque, NM*

It has been a challenge to keep the spark of the Camino alive during these two long years of isolation. It was therefore a joyous occasion when the Albuquerque Chapter held its first potluck gathering in two years this past April. One couple planning to walk the Norte in the fall asked if any members had previously walked that route.

Fortunately, we have a list of where people in our chapter have walked, so I emailed the four previous and two future walkers. Within 24 hours, all four past pilgrims responded, offering to share their knowledge and experiences. The promptness and generosity of their replies brought tears to my eyes. One included a photo of his hand-written list of albergues that noted his favorites. The spark of the Camino is alive!

Shortly after the gathering, I went to lunch with a small group of women from my exercise class and discovered that a woman I'd never met before was

about to start the Camino from St. Jean Pied de Port. She seemed well-prepared but had doubts about her backpack. I offered to look at it, saying that on the Camino I'd often been a "backpack doctor" helping other pilgrims with their poorly adjusted packs. Conveniently, her beautiful new pack was in her car nearby. When she put it on, I saw that it was too tall for her. Because I couldn't see any way to fix it, I invited her home to look at my packs—including an old one barely used because I'd gotten a smaller one. She tried on my new and old packs, and they fit her perfectly! "Oh, this feels so much better!" she remarked. I sent her off with my old pack. When she arrived in Pamplona some time later, she wrote, "The pack is perfect!"

Even if I haven't yet made it back to the Camino, my heart is glad that my old pack is traveling the Way again. The spark of the Camino is alive after all.



Shells prepared for a chapter's shell ceremony.
Photo by David Jennings.



CHAPTER NEWS Shell Ceremonies



1. Alamo Chapter Shell Ceremony and Hike, April 23, 2022. Two departing pilgrims received shells that day; 12 more received shells at Camino-101 class on March 19. Photo by Mary Forman.

2. Boston Chapter coordinators Joe Curro (far left) and Ivan Leis (far right) congratulate new pilgrims. May 22, 2022, Houghton's Pond, Milton, MA. Photo by Savannah Curro.

3. This was Colorado Front Range Chapter's first in-person Shell Ceremony since the pandemic started in 2020 and Gene McCullough died unexpectedly—and it was our 9th formal Shell Ceremony! But Gene was with us in spirit! Photo by Christine Petty.

4. The Pilgrims from the Colorado Front Range Chapter who received shells at our Annual Formal Shell Ceremony, February 26, 2022. along with Chapter coordinators Kris Ashton and Christine Petty. Photo by Ann Sieben.

5. Los Angeles County Chapter Shell Ceremony, March 2022. Photo by Geoffrey Davies.

6. Los Angeles County Chapter Shell Ceremony, April 2022. Photo by Geoffrey Davies.

7. July, 2021 picnic lunch on the beach, following the Blessing of the Shells ceremony, members of Lake Tahoe Chapter, Incline Village, NV. Photo by David Jennings.

8. Shell blessing ceremony by Father Jorge Herrera, July 2021 at St. Francis of Assisi Church, Incline Village, NV, with members of Lake Tahoe Chapter. Photo by David Jennings.

9. Another image of the shell blessing ceremony by Father Jorge Herrera, July 2021 at St. Francis of Assisi Church, Incline Village, NV with members of Lake Tahoe Chapter. Photo by David Jennings.



CHAPTER NEWS Shell Ceremonies



10. Memphis Chapter's first Shell Ceremony. Members walked a labyrinth to shells in the center. Photo by Laura McArtor.

11. Okies on Camino Shell Ceremony, April 2022. Photo by Richard Comeau.

12. Participants in the Old Pueblo Chapter Shell Ceremony in April 2022. Photo by Sharon Fields.

13. Orange County Chapter Shell Ceremony. Photo by Geoffrey Davies.

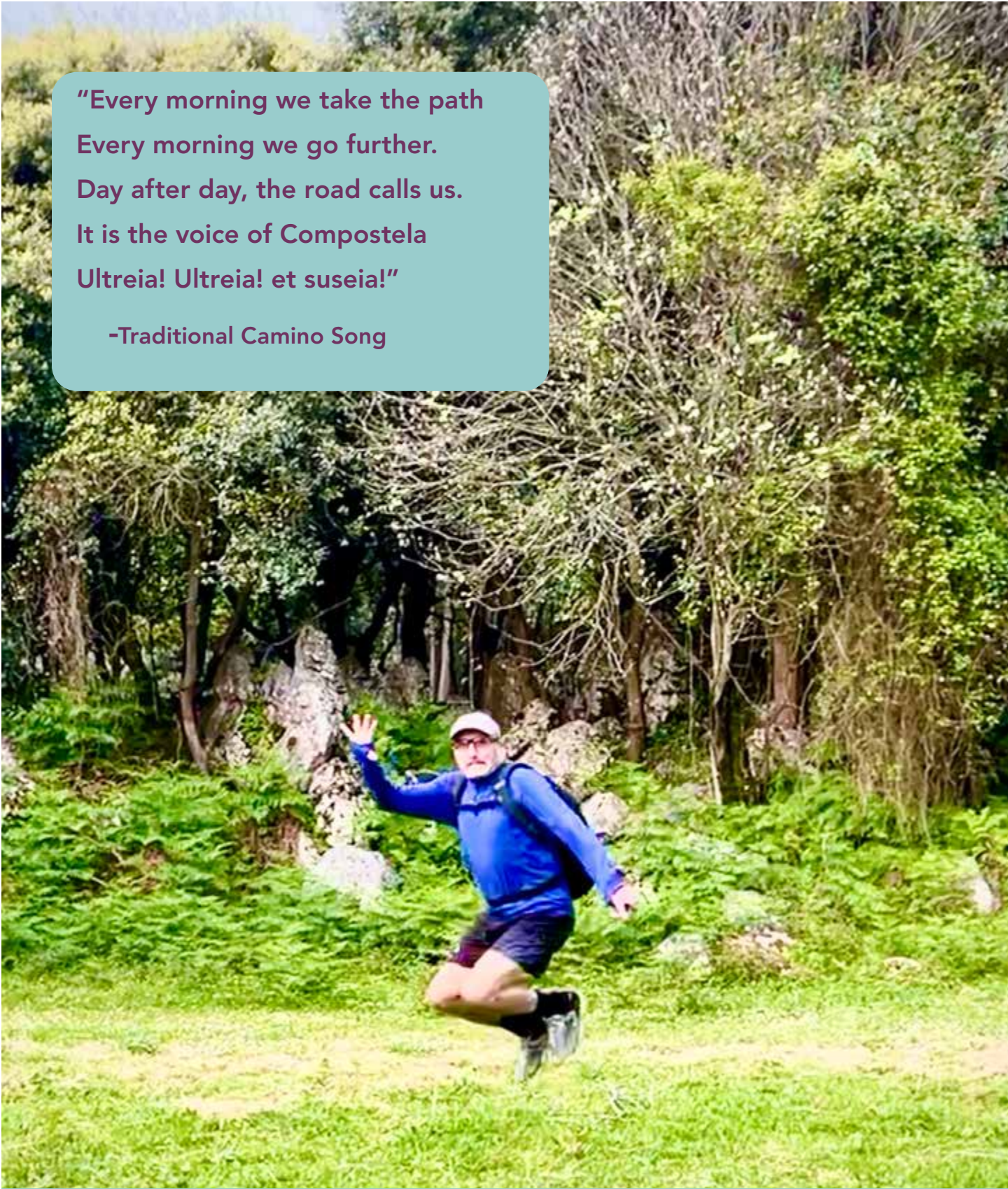
14. Orange County Chapter Shell Ceremony. Photo by Geoffrey Davies.

15. Southern Oregon Coordinator Terri Stefanson reads the Shell Ceremony blessing to seven pilgrims who will walk the spring of 2022. Photo by David Drury.

16. Southern Oregon Coordinator Terri Stefanson presents the conch to Dawn Castellanos during the April Shell Ceremony. Photo by David Drury.

17. When Southern Oregon Coordinator Terri Stefanson is done bestowing the conch on other members during the April 2022 Shell Ceremony, she gets one of her own from co-Coordinator David Drury, as she is walking the Portuguese from Lisbon this Spring. Photo by Asifa Kanji.

18. Ventura County Chapter shell recipients. Photo by Geoffrey Davies.



"Every morning we take the path
Every morning we go further.
Day after day, the road calls us.
It is the voice of Compostela
Ultreia! Ultreia! et suseia!"

-Traditional Camino Song

Re-Igniting the Spark

A New Kind of Camino for Me

by Michelle Perram
Dayton, OH

I had a great time at the Gathering. I particularly enjoyed the talk about the Vézelay Route in France. I enjoyed it so much that when my husband told me he has a meeting in Paris I started making plans to extend my stay to include a walk from Châteauroux to Limoges before I return home. After all, if I'm on that side of the Atlantic I'm practically in the same neighborhood.

I was very excited. And then something happened.

A few weeks ago my husband and I made plans to have dinner and catch a movie on a Wednesday night downtown. We agreed to meet at the restaurant. I decided to park near the cinema and walk the eight to nine blocks to get there. I was about two blocks from where I parked, enjoying the late afternoon sun, taking in the views, when I fell HARD! Really, I'm pretty sure I flew. My first thought when I hit the sidewalk was, *I hope I can still walk the Camino*. My second thought was, *Is someone coming to help me?*

I managed to get up and hobble to the restaurant. It's amazing what adrenaline can allow the human body to do. But that was the last walking I'll be doing for a while. The next day I went to the emergency room where I learned I have two fractures in my right knee and one in my left wrist. The orthopedic doctor said no Camino in July. Maybe by September, but not July. And my knee should be non-weight-bearing for four to six weeks.

So this is a new kind of Camino for me. Instead of striding along with my trekking poles, I have settled into a sort of tap with my crutch, balance on my toe, and hop. I have a lot of stationary time to ponder this very different Camino. I try to channel days on the Camino Francés when I was tired and sore to remind myself that I will walk again.

Buen Camino, my fellow pilgrims!

SECTION COVER PAGE: Fred Brill captured at the perfect moment on the Camino del Norte. Photo by Mimi Melodia, Berkeley, CA.

A Special Gift from the Camino

by Lynn Liptak
Wayne, NJ

Since walking my first Camino in 2010 with my sister, Lauri, we have received many gifts from the Camino. We have walked 14 Caminos, and each has enhanced our lives in special ways. Time with my sister who lives in California (I live in New Jersey) has been one of the most important gifts. We talked, planned, and shared joy and losses during our time together on the Camino. We met many people from around the world and recorded in our journals lessons learned, laughter shared. We always visit our "Spanish family," people met over 50 years ago when I spent my junior year abroad.

Each year, as our spring Camino time approached, I would put on my pack and walk many miles, up and down hills, to be physically ready for the challenges the various Caminos brought, particularly the Camino Primitivo. During the pandemic we were unable to walk on the Camino, but, unexpectedly, that is when I received my greatest gift of all from the Camino: life itself.

Diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer, I was told that this aggressive cancer is generally not treated in individuals over 70 years of age because they are unable to tolerate the treatment. Without treatment I was looking at weeks, maybe months, but clearly not years of life. They said, however, they thought it was worth trying treatment with me, then 73 years of age, because I was otherwise in such good physical condition. Certainly my Camino training was a large part of that. The next 13 months brought chemotherapy, surgery, radiation, and more chemotherapy. I tolerated it all.

My sister Lauri and I will now return to the Camino, walking the Camino Inglés from A Coruna before volunteering for two weeks in the Ribadiso albergue. Thank you, Camino, for not only enriching my life, but giving me life itself.



RE-IGNITING THE SPARK



A view of Santa Catalina Island. Photo by Karin Kiser.



Credencial for the Catalina Camino (cover & interior). Photo by Karin Kiser.

Catalina Camino

by Karin Kiser
San Diego, CA

When one door closes, another door opens. Unable to travel to Spain during the global events of 2020 and 2021, I started a solo Camino-from-home, spending as much time outdoors as possible, taking long walks in the neighborhood and exploring remote areas of town. It became an unexpected exercise in reflection and prioritization, as I directed less of my attention toward the outside world and focused more on the inner one. I slowed down, tied up loose ends and projects, walked three to four hours a day, connected with the people around me, and created space for the new.

And then I remembered Catalina. I had trained for my first Camino in the hills of Santa Catalina Island off the coast of southern California more than a decade ago. Those hills were calling me back. During the height of global uncertainty last year, I spent several months on the island and became reac-

quainted with the charm of the tiny town of Avalon and the beauty of the unspoiled interior. Much like a winter Camino, on most days not a single hiker was in sight.

Months later, upon returning to the mainland, the idea of a Catalina Camino came to me. Why not create a Camino closer to home, offering a similar sense of adventure and travel without having to get on a plane or share accommodations? So, I created a series of day-hikes to explore the trails of Santa Catalina Island and train for a future Camino in Spain. The Catalina Camino covers a total of 150 miles in eight stages, the equivalent of walking from Astorga to Santiago. There's even a stamp for each stage, just like on the Camino de Santiago. It has been a wonderful way for me and my southern California pilgrim friends to keep the spirit of the Camino alive until we return to Spain.

It Will Happen!

*by Martin Metras
Woodstock, IL*

In 2019 I decided to walk the Camino for the third time. I was 73 years old and figured I could still do it. Then COVID-19, and . . . well here it is 2022, and I've experienced another setback. My heart has become weak.

I have walked the Camino after a bypass and a couple of heart attacks, so I know I can do it after having a Left Ventricular Assist Device, or LVAD, placed in my heart. The pump requires me to carry a controller and two batteries around with me for the rest of my life. Hmmm. How will I walk the Camino again? I have not found anyone who tried walking with an LVAD. Could I be the first?

I need to carry an extra 20-30 pounds. . .
. . . but then again, I could get a cart!
And then there is the challenge of charging the batteries in the albergues . . .
. . . I could just pull the "Poor Marty Card" and make sure I get an outlet!

Oh, but I'll need the dressing changed every two to three days. I guess I need to take someone to go along! And I can't forget that the plane trip from Chicago is long and requires me to have the batteries charged until I get to St. Jean Pied de Port . . .

I guess I'll coordinate a layover so that I can stop and recharge.

I want to walk the Camino one more time. I have had my LVAD for two months now and am doing fine. My body is slowly recovering from the operation. I figure I will be fine by May 2023! I am planning as I type here.



Me and a friend!
Photo by Martin Metras.

Opening Doors

*by Fred Brill
Berkeley, CA*

When my wife, Mimi, and I began walking the Camino del Norte, we felt no need to reignite the spark. We just wanted to go for a long walk.

The pilgrims from the Middle Ages walked the Camino to reduce the punishment of their sins. God knows I and my wife, a Jew and an atheist, respectively, are far from perfect, but as public school educators, we spent our careers creating meaningful learning and life opportunities for the students we served.

We chose to walk the Camino because we like to move our bodies, meet new people, and immerse ourselves in different cultures. We're not searching for cosmic experiences. We're quite satisfied with the routines of the trail, fulfilling basic needs: food, water, sleep, laundry, and getting our passports stamped!

In San Sebastián, while climbing the steps of a grand church, the door miraculously opened: a priest rushing off to an evening appointment. We respectfully asked for his stamp, a kind of blessing perhaps. It felt like groveling for Mardi Gras beads.

We followed him back up worn concrete steps. He spent meaningful time with us. He was warm, gentle, and caring as he wished us a "Buen Camino!" Big deal, you might say.

But then, it happened again in Guernica. The church door opened as we clunked up the stairs in our hiking boots: an elderly man heading home to cook supper for other priests. We followed the wheezing octogenarian up a long stairwell. Oozing kindness and concern, he stamped our passports and shared details of his priestly work. Now retired, he seeks new ways to serve. Such intense eye contact, watery blue windows to his soul.

I won't claim these serendipitous experiences caused me to convert or Mimi to become a believer. But we have been reminded how the smallest of gestures can have a profound and lasting *Continued*



Sun setting on my wife (Mimi Melodia) and the Church of Santa Maria de la Asunción in Castro Urdiales.
Photo by Fred Brill.

impact on others.

Maybe these were just chance encounters, coincidences, but why, when I walk past church doors or other metaphorical portals, do I assume they will open for us?

The Camino is the Spark

by Harriet Ross
Indianapolis, IN

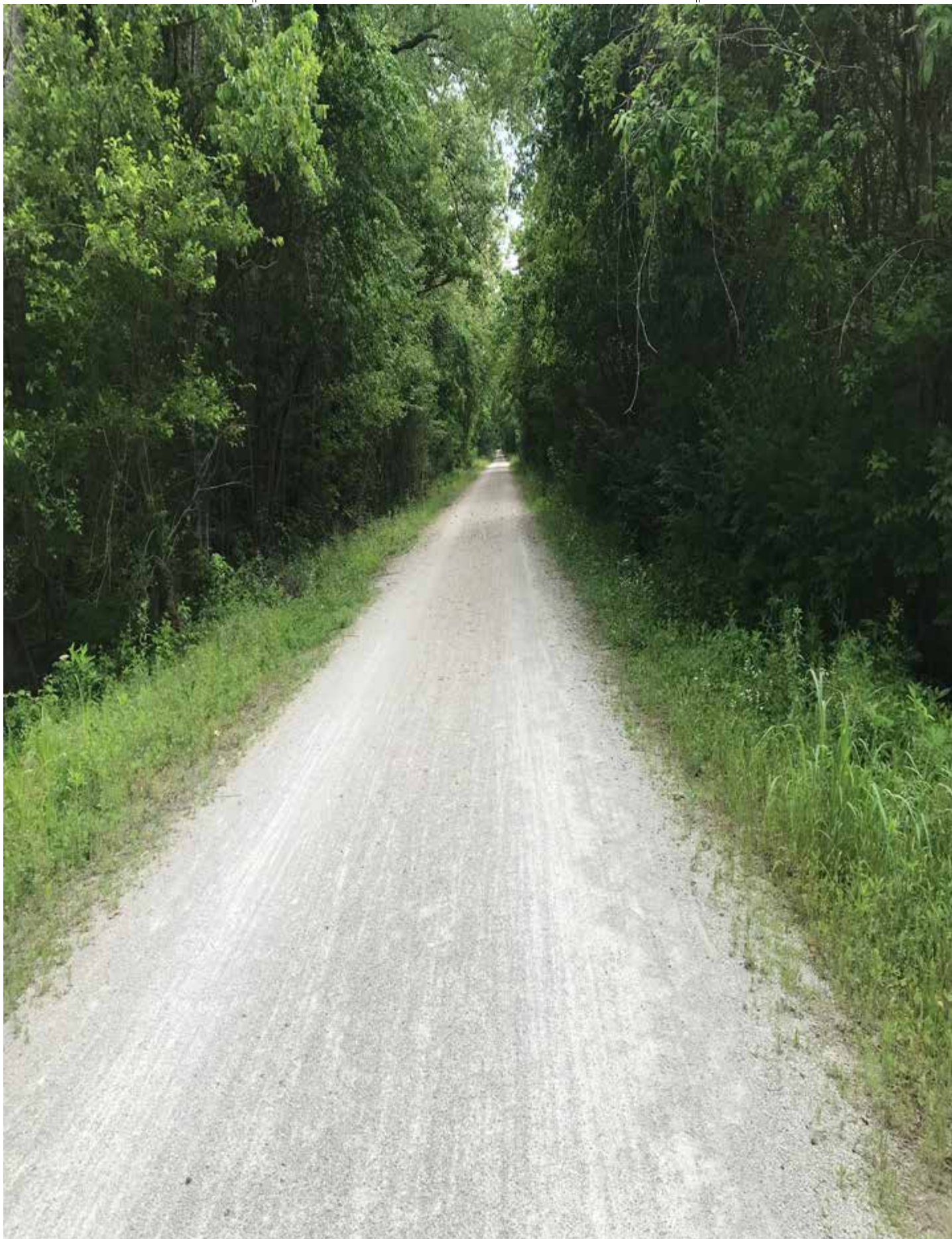
I walked the Camino Francés in the fall of 2019, the last non-winter season of pilgrimage before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Months later, I was still in that foggy state of mind, living between the worlds of the Camino and home, working to integrate my journey into my life, to keep the

Camino feeling alive, when like millions of others, I found myself locked into hibernation by our modern plague.

I decided this period would be a great opportunity to write my Camino book. I got as far as collecting all my notes from the trip, all the emails, WhatsApp messages and handwritten journal notes, but the book wasn't taking shape. I needed more perspective. I ordered Camino tomes from the internet and read them through, constantly doing whatever I could to place my mind back on the Camino.

I bought some Black Friday Camino replacement gear online and packed my backpack. "If you pack it, you can go," I thought. Oh, the power of positive thinking.

Participating in Zooms with our local *Continued*



The Katy Trail "Camino." Photo by Deborah Weltman.

Indianapolis American Pilgrims on the Camino chapter, Annie O’Neil’s group, my international Camino family, and American Pilgrims, along with Dan Mullins podcasts would joyfully rekindle the Camino spirit for bits of time. I would meditate and visions of places on the Camino would come to me. I would see myself walking happily through a village somewhere, seemingly abandoned, and for those moments I was back on my beloved Camino. With my backpack hugging my body securely and oblivious to any pain or blisters, I saw myself walking so lightly upon the earth.

And yet, the pandemic continues to rage and retreat. When will I be on the Camino again? A spark of imagination shows me leaving St. Jean Pied de Port and walking in the postcard-perfect views of the Pyrenees. I am feeling the glow of friendship as I share a communal meal in the warmth of an albergue. I can hear myself bursting into song as I walk alone on the Meseta. I can imagine myself deep in thought as I trudge through soggy Galicia until the moo of a cow or the bark of a dog brings me back to reality.

As it turns out, the memory of the Camino itself continues to ignite its own spark within me. For that I am eternally grateful.

Camino 2.0: Re-animating My Spiritual Nature

by Deborah Weltman
St. Louis, MO

My 2011 Camino was life-altering. I immediately began to look forward to my next Camino. But life happened . . . no money, no time . . . then COVID threw a monkey wrench into everyone’s plans.

I’ve used my post-Camino years well: I wrote a Camino memoir, gave talks, taught classes. I even got into a relationship—after 20 years of reflection on my past failed relationships. My fervent hope: that my new sweetheart would read my Camino memoir and be inspired to walk the Camino with me. Alas, he doesn’t feel that call. But we have a Plan B: thru-hike the Katy Trail State Park across Missouri.

Journal, June 1, 2021

Yesterday was a remarkable Memorial Day. Sweetie and I walked a segment of the Katy Trail. It’s flat, a chipped rock bed covering former railroad lines. To the south, the Missouri River can occasionally be seen peeking through the trees. Except for the MANY bicycle riders—who were courteous and announced themselves as they rode up behind us—the walk was exhilarating.

Sweetie said he’d seen dozens of bluebirds on a previous Katy hike. We saw one. Perhaps the fast-moving bike riders scared them off? We spotted frogs, hawks, “trees” of poison ivy, tons of cottonwood seed-fluff, and wild grape vines wrapped around everything. So much wildness!

Later, now walking at a slower pace, I suggested we head back to the car. I didn’t want to push myself too far. I was out-of-shape exhausted. Could I still walk 12-miles-per-day? Ten years ago on the Camino, I could. I was turning 60 then, and had been walking daily in preparation. Now, I’m 70. Yesterday I walked eight miles on the Katy. . . and was exhausted afterwards. But today, after food, a shower, and a good night’s sleep, I am recovered . . . no lasting ill effects! I hear myself thinking I’d like to walk the whole trail!

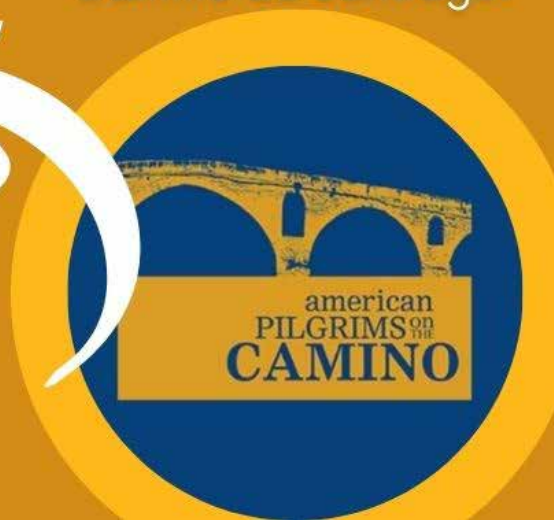
Do I feel the compulsion I felt in 2011 to walk the Camino? No. The Katy Trail is not a religious/spiritual pilgrimage walk. Although . . . the guidebook did mention that “Manitou”, an Algonquin word, translates as: “Great Spirit”. The French spelling is found in the Moniteau Bluffs on the Katy . . . and the Bluffs are considered a Native American sacred site. Maybe the Katy is a spiritual journey after all? Maybe it is a different type of spirituality? Maybe I’m being called to walk a new “Camino”?

JOIN OUR AMERICAN PILGRIMS FACEBOOK GROUP!

It's a welcoming community where you can ask questions and share information, experiences, and feelings about pilgrimage and the Camino de Santiago.



use our QR code to find us!



The Flame? No, the Pool.

by Dorothea Biernesser
Alexandria, VA

My Camino began when it ended.

When I returned from Santiago, it was to countless obstacles. I was lying awake in the night and struggling through the day, growing more stressed by the minute.

A stressful job, the death of a loved one, the conflicts around her incomplete life, the struggles of one loved one searching his way in the world, the marriage of another loved one, the improvement in health and life of some people in my life, the deterioration of others . . . it didn't matter whether the event was happy or sad, I was responding to everything with increased anxiety and anger. Gone was the peace or the forgiveness I'd felt back on the Plaza.

I read Camino memoirs. I searched for words to help me understand where I had been, and where I wanted to go. Then I saw that what I had been seeking was not a flame . . . but a refreshing pool. A place where the rushing of water drowned negative chatter. A place where water washed away obstacles. A place where I could retrieve the calm certainty that I'd felt on the Plaza.

Two passages restored my pool—only one specific to the Camino. From Fraydino, an excerpt from the Prayer of La Faba, which greets the pilgrim at the entrance of the village of O'Cebreiro:

*"Although I may have carried my pack from beginning to end
And waited for every Pilgrim in need of encouragement. . .
If on returning to my home and work
I am not able to create brotherhood
Or make happiness, peace and unity,
I have arrived nowhere . . .
If from today I do not see in every person, friend or foe,
A companion on the Camino;
If from today I cannot recognize God,
The God of Jesus of Nazareth as the one God of my life,
I have arrived nowhere."*



The second? You may have guessed it. Bruce Lee:

*"Be like water making its way through cracks.
Do not be assertive, but adjust to the object,
and you shall find a way around or through it.
If nothing within you stays rigid, outward things will disclose themselves.*

*Empty your mind, be formless. Shapeless, like water.
If you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup.
You put water into a bottle and it becomes the bottle.
You put it in a teapot, it becomes the teapot.
Now, water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend."*

Couldn't have said it better myself.

The Travels of the Silver Shell

by Rick McAllister
Augustine, FL

For my first pilgrimage on the Camino Francés, in 2014, friends and family members gave me tokens of good luck to carry. My golf buddies gave me a plastic fork to remind me to take the correct fork in the road. My sister gave me a pocket cross that she had carried for years. My motorcycle buddies gave me a small bell that is traditionally hung under your bike for safe travels. Another friend gave me a small silver angel that I pinned to the shoulder strap of my pack. The last item was a beautiful silver shell designed and made by Chris, a jewelry designer and a friend. It was around my neck from the day I left St. Augustine.

This story starts about seven days after I set off from St. Jean Pied de Port. Somewhere past Pamplona, I was walking behind a couple when the wife slipped and fell off some stones while crossing a stream. She fractured her shin bone and was in a lot of pain. I sent her husband to the next village for assistance. Meanwhile, I helped his wife, making use of my injury training in Vietnam. I got her out of the water, immobilized her leg and wrapped it with one of my clean t-shirts. I calmed her down and reassured her that she would be OK. They were from Australia, and she was distraught that she would not complete the trip that they had planned for three years. She noticed my silver shell hanging around my neck. Telling her the story, I took it off and gave it to her, telling her that its special charms would get her safely home.

Before reaching Compostela, I received an email from her telling me that she and her husband were safely back in Australia. She had given the shell to a friend from Sydney who was heading to Spain for their journey.

This little silver shell has so far made six journeys by six different pilgrims on the Camino (four on the Camino Francés, one on the Camino Portuguese,

and one on the Camino del Norte). It was returned to me this past year by the original lady from Australia. A former corporate associate walking the Camino Francés this fall will take the shell on its seventh pilgrimage.

This shell embodies the spirit of the Camino. While everyone's pilgrimage is unique, this spirit connects us all.



The silver shell. Photo taken by Rick McAllister.



Arts & Culture

Traditional Asturian dance and culture group on parade in Oviedo. Photo by Francine Mastini.

ARTS & CULTURE

Every Step Together on the Camino de Santiago

Book Review

Every Step Together on the Camino de Santiago

by Ken and Kathy Privratsky

Printed by BookBaby, Pennsauken, New Jersey, 2018

545 pages on Kindle

Reviewed by Jerald Stroebele

Anchorage, AK

After watching a Zoom presentation on “The Camino Francés in the Time of COVID” for the Anchorage Chapter of the American Pilgrims on the Camino in January, I immediately downloaded the **EBOOK VERSION OF THIS BOOK** [on my Kindle app on my iPhone]. Ken and Kathy Privratsky had walked the Camino Francés in September and October, 2021. I had walked from Pamplona to Burgos just a week or two later. So it was fun, watching their Zoom presentation, to figuratively be walking right behind them, enjoying their same sights and similar experiences. Reading their book in the next few days, with its beautiful photographs, gave me another post-Camino glow and inspires me to return to the Camino.

A retired military couple, Ken and Kathy had already visited Spain several times before walking their first Camino in 2017. Taken by the Camino Francés, they walked it two more times, from Saint-Jean Pied-de-Port to Santiago, Finisterre, and Muxia. The book title’s beginning, “Every Step Together. . .” is no exaggeration. I have walked Caminos with my wife and three of my four adult children. But not every step together. We walk at our own paces. So not only is this book a wonderful Camino memoir and an excellent detailed and beautifully illustrated guide to the Camino Francés, it is also a love story by and about this long married couple. They truly did walk every step together every day. They share their story, and the story of the Camino Francés, with both exuberance and humility.



Busco/I Search

by Cathy Hollister
Hermitage, TN

*Busco para mañana temprana
el pinzón echarse a volar.
Mi día surge en su ala.*

*Busco a mediodía las ramas verdes
que estiran y alcanzan y prosperan
a través de las tormentas.*

*Busco por la tarde la amapola
que cierra en la noche, como manos en oración
encontrando dulce descanso.*

*Busco en lo oscuro los millones de estrellas,
los ángeles brillantes que
velan mis sueños.*

*Busco todos mis días para ser digno
de mi mundo, de mi fe,
de mi andar en mi peregrinaje.*

I search in the early morning
for the finch taking flight.
My day arises on its wing.

I search at midday for the green branches
that stretch and reach and thrive
through the storms.

I search in the evening for the poppy
that closes at night like hands in prayer
finding sweet rest.

I search in the darkness for the millions of stars,
the shining angels
that watch over my dreams.

I search all of my days to be worthy
of my world, of my faith,
of my walk on my pilgrimage.

And So I Walked: Reflections on Chance, Choice, and the Camino de Santiago

Book Review

And So I Walked: Reflections on Chance, Choice, and the Camino de Santiago
by Anne Gardner.

Adelaide Books, New York and Lisbon, 2022

249 pages.

Review by Joseph A. Curro, Jr.
Arlington, MA

Many Camino narratives bring the reader from Point A to Point B, filling in the gaps with amusing or poignant anecdotes about the pilgrimage. *And So I Walked* does that, too, but it also takes us on the author's interior journey and memories.

Anne Gardner walked the Camino Francés in 2010, a year when only 1.23% of pilgrims claiming compostelas were Americans. (In 2019, this percentage neared 6%.) *The Way*, which has introduced countless pilgrims to the Camino, had not yet been released.

Indeed, the author, who was raised in a devout Irish Catholic family and was later ordained as an Episcopal priest, had never even heard of the Camino until she was in her forties and was introduced to it by an acquaintance at a cocktail party.

Along with her wife, Beth, the author is joined on her own Camino by two recent graduates of the boarding school where she worked, a young man from Kansas and a Muslim woman, as well as an evangelical fitness enthusiast, who is dubbed "the panther" for the blazing, relentless speed at which she walks.

This core of a Camino family is supplemented by new acquaintances in the ensuing weeks. These include renowned and recently departed pilgrim Gene McCullough and his wife, Rosann, who check with the author at Rabanal (and remember having processed her initial credential request!) and miraculously reappear right before the Santiago Cathedral.

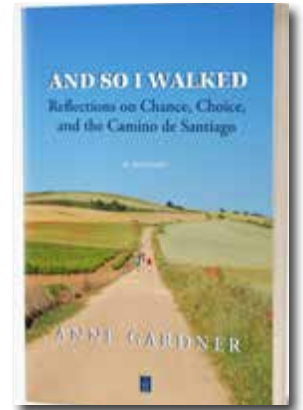
This book records a time before smartphones became ubiquitous tools of pilgrims. The author and her companions travel at their own paces, splitting up or taking transport as needed. And yet they always find one another, resorting to messages scrawled in the dirt or with a rock on a granite staircase.

And So I Walked is beautifully organized. Its sections are grouped thematically into "liturgical seasons," and its 40 chapters—each beginning with an inspirational quote—mirror the 40 days of Lent.

Anne reflects on her father, who lost a leg—and his mobility—in the Normandy landing. She explores the guilt relating to her first marriage, the extreme sorrow of a friend's death by suicide, and other very personal topics from her past.

The author's emotions reach great heights at Cruz de Ferro and sink to reflective depths near her Camino's end as she listens to some pilgrims singing "*Ubi Caritas*" by candlelight.

In both the physical and emotional journeys of this book, the reader is never left behind.



Village Square

by Suzanne Doerge
Ottawa, ON

“Where are you from?” inquires the Irish.
“Canada but originally the U.S.,” I reply
stepping into the village square.

“I have a sister in Toronto,” he puts forth,
his foot patting the worn stone where my foot
lifts.

“I’m from Italy but I live in Australia,” another
pilgrim steps in, her hand grazing the lip of the
Medieval fountain.

“Really, my mother is Italian, but my father is
Greek,” he joins us, adjusting his walking stick.

Criss-crossing the early morning village
square—

always there.

You say you don’t have the time, the health,
the money to go to Spain, walk the Camino
or return to trek it again.

No bother, no worry.

In this global world today, we are all
criss-crossing the village square:
in our towns, on city buses, in our living
rooms—

potpourri of humanity.

The opportunities are where we are—
the stranger behind you in the checkout line,
the imported artwork on your mantel,
the traditions of the Indigenous on

whose land you stand,
the book in your hands—
a tapestry of threads looping over and under
ancestors, cultures, beliefs and languages.

The chance to know ourselves in the daily
criss-crossed encounter with another.

The Camino is everywhere.



Buen Camino! Tips from an American Pilgrim

Book Review

Buen Camino! Tips from an American Pilgrim

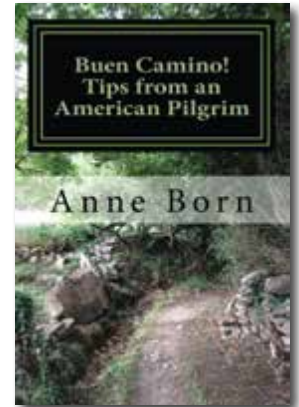
By Anne Born

The Backpack Press, Bronx, NY, and Niles, MI, 2017, 2022

128 pages

Reviewed by Sara Gradwohl

Mooresville, IN



Veterans of the Camino de Santiago often serve as advisors and mentors to family, friends, and those within a local chapter. Anne Born has distilled much of that good advice down into a slim volume in her updated book. It's not a guidebook to a specific route (although she lists several) but rather a guide for the human element of the Camino. It's written for walking pilgrims of all stripes, from those who plan everything and stay in pre-booked accommodations to those who relish experiencing life as it comes, one kilometer and albergue at a time. It's also an excellent resource for veteran walkers who haven't walked in a while as technology and resources have changed.

Hers is the story of the timid young Anne from Niles, MI, who dreamed of walking the Camino, and the older lady who experienced it 38 years later. Based on her experiences, this book weaves tips and advice with her missteps and lessons learned over her decade-plus of walking. Good advice often comes from people with bad experiences.

The key to great walking is looking after yourself, but she takes care to mention the importance of the people who look after pilgrims: hospitaleros, restaurant and bar staff, locals, and even other pilgrims. "The path will carry and sustain you, if you let it," she writes. Yes, and so do the people along the way.

She lays out a typical day from waking up in darkness and being considerate of your fellow (sleeping) pilgrims to walking, albergue etiquette, helpful apps and guides, getting lost, meals, and what not to forget to do once in Santiago.

Pilgrimage isn't just for the religious or saintly; it offers something from which everyone can learn. The days spent walking and all that's experienced alone, and in the company of others, is the real benefit. But don't forget properly fitting footwear and a backpack. We often pack our fears in our backpacks, and Anne's packing suggestions are spot-on. I found myself shouting, "Yes!" when I read her praises of bringing gallon-sized Ziploc freezer bags and a large quick-dry towel. I appreciate her suggestion to give your family a copy of your guidebook so they can follow along on your journey.

Why walk? It doesn't matter. The reasons are as unique as each person walking, and the distance and how long it takes don't matter, either. If you need permission to walk your Camino, your way, she gives it, without judgment. One such line reads, "Sometimes you know why. Sometimes you find out why."

Updated for 2022, she reminds us the Cathedral renovations are complete and the botafumiero is again swinging during Mass but omits information on the "take a number" system in the Pilgrim's Office to receive the Compostela. This information is available elsewhere.

Included in the book are recommendations for resources, apps, guidebooks, and organizations to help the new pilgrim have a logistically successful pilgrimage. What happens next is unique to each individual. She closes with an open letter to the reader, which reads as a hug of encouragement and understanding to the new pilgrim: "If this interests you, please try it." Do try it, indeed!

Pyro-pilgrim

by George Greenia
Williamsburg, VA

Some modern pilgrims are sending up smoke on the cliffs above Fisterra and locals are fuming.

Torching garments worn on a long journey may feel symbolic, a burnt offering, closure. It may also make for an evocative last photo for social media: intimate fire, setting sun, endless sea. Don't have a light? Leave a garment atop a rock or kilometer marker altar at the end of the journey. Or maybe just throw your spent boots into the sea.

Please don't.

Besides trashing a nature preserve, this form of immolation is movie-prop new.

The Camino has many enduring rituals, both ancient and modern: catching a chicken feather at Santo Domingo de la Calzada, leaving a stone at the Cruz de Ferro, hugging the Apostle in Santiago. But burning a garment to give closure to a pilgrimage? Historians wince.

Today's folk practice is entirely modern, evidence of our material bounty and wastefulness. Before the age of mechanized textile mills, producing homespun cloth was labor intensive. Garments were durable, rarely washed, worn by day, and slept in at night. New items were worn immediately on top of the old. When reduced to rags, they were sewn into coverlets or stuffed into boots.

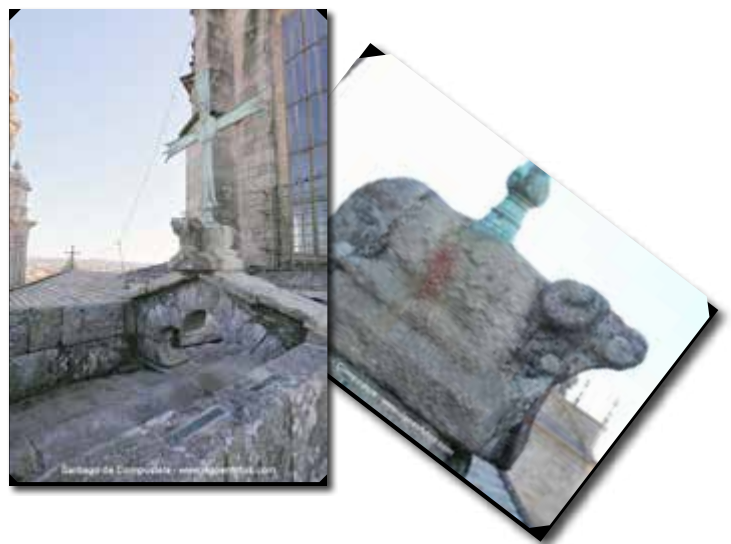
Pre-modern pilgrims had one outfit for their round trip, so burning items before heading home was ill advised.

Setting fire to excess clothing at Fisterra, a popular gesture approaching cliché, seems to date from the 1980s. For centuries, the rocky promontory featured a working lighthouse or bonfire flare on the aptly named Costa de la Muerte, the coast of death. Borrowing a flame from maritime guardians or a hillside shepherd's hut may seem somehow historical.

Trouble is, it's not.

A box chamber atop the cathedral, directly above the saint's tomb, routinely is described during rooftop tours as a site where pilgrims torched garments or at least useless rags. Called the Cruz dos Farrapos, the weathered stone compartment shows no signs of fire. One end is capped with a bronze cross atop a carved lamb, suggesting some rite of purification, perhaps incinerating clothes worn by plague victims. The story about burning worn-out clothing there may be a heritage myth, like tossing coins into the Trevi Fountain in Rome or tapping one's head on the noggin of the statue of Master Mateo inside the cathedral in Santiago.

Forego the eco-vandalism of lighting fires on the shores of Fisterra and let those worn boots come home.



Cruz de Farrapos atop the roof of the Cathedral in Santiago de Compostela, with an 11th-century lamb presiding above the presumed firebox. Source <https://www.vigoenfotos.com/es/santiago-compostela/catedral/farrapos>.

Doctor Zhivago and Salamanca

by David J. Iarwa
Brighton, MI

Time to rekindle that old fire.

I first visited the city of Salamanca, Spain, in 2018 while walking the Via de la Plata. I remember it clearly because it was a wonderful, sunny afternoon with blue sky. The weather was special because my walk so far from Seville had been a time of drenching and flooding rains in Spain. The afternoon I spent sitting in Plaza Mayor drinking my café con leche was a blessing.

I returned to Salamanca as a hospitalero in 2019. Upon completion of that assignment, I had such a sense of accomplishment because I never thought I would be able to live in a foreign country and be of service to others. The fire to return to Salamanca has called to me again, and in April I am returning to be a hospitalero at the *Albergue Casa la Calera* in Salamanca.

While doing history research the other day about the area around Salamanca, I came across information I did not expect. The giant hydroelectric dam in the movie *Doctor Zhivago* is the Aldeadávila Dam on the Douro River about fifty-five miles west of Salamanca.

Doctor Zhivago, which came out in 1965 starring Omar Sharif, won five Oscars. The story is based on the novel by Boris Pasternak and is about love and conflict during the Russian Revolution. The movie was filmed mostly in Spain along with Finland and Canada.

What, Spain? Why?

At the time of filming, the book had been banned in the Soviet Union, so filming in Russia was not possible. David Lean, the director, had Moscow reconstructed in Canillas, a then-accessible area outside of Madrid. During production, several places in Spain were used as a background for filming.

The movie's cottage, with its icicles and snow, built by the production company, was in the mountainous region one hundred miles northeast of Madrid at Soria. That location in Spain, usually very snowy, had the warmest winter in years. The movie used marble dust and polystyrene to serve as snow. The ice palace was created by covering everything with rolls of crumpled cellophane and then dripping bees wax on top to look like ice.

I could go on and on, but I recommend that you light a fire, break out the popcorn, and watch the classic movie. Try to find familiar sights like the Madrid-Delicias train station, RENFE trains, and winter scenes shot in 77 degree weather.

It is amazing what I have learned because of my membership in the American Pilgrims on the Camino. I read that the word "*Zhivago*" comes from the Russian word "*zhiv*" and means life. For this pilgrim, learning about and walking the Camino will always be about the adventure, about the physical effort, and most importantly about exploring life.

Returning to Spain and serving as a hospitalero gives me an opportunity to slow down and live the spirit of the Camino.

I am ready to rekindle the fire, turn down the lights, and enjoy the movie.

Heno! ¿Quién tomó las palojitas de maíz? (Translation: Hey! Who took the popcorn?)

Distraction

by Elin Babcock
Ashland, OR

The trail dried after the rain
Warming sun steamed the pavement
Reddened my exposed arms neck and face
The heat sapped my strength

Water breaks were of little help
Turning cool liquid into sweat
Dampening my back
Dripping into my socks
I bent forward walking up another incline

The winged creature was close to my next step
A Periwinkle butterfly no bigger than my thumb
Floated to the straw along the path
Danced, twirled and settled in one spot
As I walked by with my head turned toward her

A delicate ballerina she was. How colorful I thought
Forgetting the complaining feet and heat

How she appeared in front of me was startling
And I knew she was transmitting a signal
“Focus on me. I am an illusionist



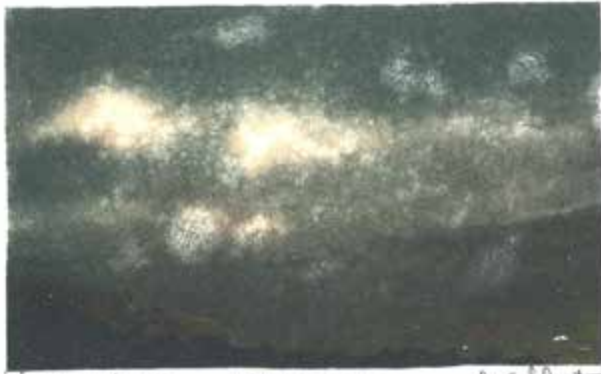
Here to distract you from your worried brain
Here to delight you with my hypnotic movements
Until you reach the crest and leafy forest.”

I had no choice.

I was mesmerized from her black antennae
To the variations of shading along the edges
Of her wings. The white marks on her head

The trail flattened and cooled
The road turned to earth and my companion
My uplifting distraction disappeared
As raindrops splattered the leafy forest floor.

Periwinkle butterfly along the estuary on the Spiritual Variant Camino. Art by Elin Babcock.



Monoprint 1/5 Tineo, Spain J. Effertz



Monoprint 2/5 Tineo, Spain J. Effertz



Monoprint 3/5 Tineo, Spain J. Effertz



Monoprint 4/5 Tineo, Spain J. Effertz

Reflections on a Walk: Composite Etchings by Joan Effertz

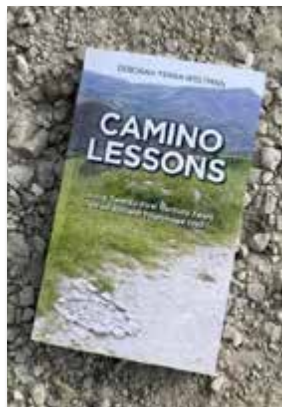
This fine art print is a five-part composite based on a single photograph I took walking out of Tineo, Spain. The original photo for this composition was taken in 2018, but this work of art was completed in May 2022. As represented from the bottom to top I have manipulated the image from realistic to become increasingly more abstract to express my spiritual reaction to walking the Camino.

I used copies of the same photo for all five instillations, but manipulated each one before printing it on an etching press.

The bottom detail is the most realistic of the five used in the composite. The top detail is the most abstract of the five. It represents my spiritual understanding and experience. The image is full of light and suffused with mist. Mountains and valleys are hinted at but are unclear, ambiguous, and open to interpretation.



Monoprint 5/5 Tineo, Spain J. Effertz



Camino Lessons: Losing Twenty-First Century Fears on an Ancient Pilgrimage Trail
by Deborah Terra Weltman
Terra Art Publishing, St. Louis, MO, 2021
289 pages

Reviewed by Amy Elizabeth Horton
Warrenton, MO

For nearly a decade, Deborah dreamed of walking the Camino “someday.” Then one wintry morning in 2011 while meditating and journaling she received a message: she needed to walk the Camino this year, when she would turn 60, or else her “life will be forfeit.” This message didn’t feel like a threat to her; rather, she felt if she didn’t heed it, she would not fulfil her purpose in life. “The fear of not going, of not having a powerful rest of my life, of forfeiting all that I had come to this life to be was a super-sized motivator,” Deborah writes.

But Deborah faced two major hurdles to realizing her Camino dream: lack of training and lack of money. To commit to her plan, she wrote the dates for her Camino on her calendar—setting a timeframe from April-May 2011 so she could celebrate her 60th birthday while on the Camino. She had only a few months to train and find the funds to make her pilgrimage possible.

She started by walking two to three miles per day. With the regular walks came small health improvements. The last few weeks before her departure, she was walking while carrying her backpack. Still, she considered her preparations to be “barely acceptable.” Humbling herself, she asked friends, family, and acquaintances for help in the form of money, gear to borrow, frequent flyer miles, ideas, and prayers. She received an overwhelmingly generous show of support.

She departed for her Camino in April 2011. Along the way she found her Camino family, struggled with her pack, battled blisters, and eventually separated from her Camino family to find needed solitude. Throughout it all, she learned valuable lessons. “I learned to trust in the kindness of friends and strangers, to trust myself, and to trust that a Higher Power is guiding my path.” She learned to live less fearfully and move past worries, to “drop that which she has no control over, accepting what is, and moving on down the path.” She has also learned that Camino lessons continue beyond the Camino. Ten years later, as she wrote her Camino Lessons, she reflects “I am no longer afraid of going after my own big dreams . . . My life path is becoming clearer: sharing my life lessons with others, writing, and teaching now call to me. My life is not forfeit!”



FINAL REFLECTION

Rekindle that Old Camino Feeling at Home

by David Drury
Medford, OR

A jolly piece of urban folklore that was circulating unsigned during the depths of COVID-19 in 2020. Whoever the original author was, thank you!

While we wait to walk the Camino once again, here are some tips to rekindle that old Camino feeling right here at home.

- Sleep in your sleeping sheet in a different room of the house every night, covered with a blanket that the dog uses. Use the worst pillow you have, or better yet, a fleece stuffed with old clothes.
- In the winter leave the window open; in the summer leave it closed.
- Shower in lukewarm water. With one hand holding the shower door shut and the other on the tap, wash your hair. Dry yourself inside the shower cubicle, avoiding the drip and not tripping over your flip-flops. Use 1/3 of a towel.
- Wash your clothes by hand in the sink using the same sliver of soap that you showered with.
- Sit outside of your front door for a few hours waiting for someone to show up and unlock it.
- Wear the same two shirts, pants, and underwear for six weeks.
- Ask someone to shine a flashlight in your eyes while you are sleeping.
- Have your family wake you up at 5 a.m. by rustling plastic bags by your ears.
- Walk to the store and buy one bread roll, one slice of chorizo, one slice of cheese, and one banana.
- Ask for that food by pointing and using sign language.
- Strike up conversations with complete strangers and pretend that you have known them your whole life. Ask if they prefer shoes or boots, and enquire about the health of their hips, knees, and feet. Try to remember where in Canada they are from.
- Carry one water bottle with you at all times and ask strangers to retrieve it for you, as you cannot quite reach it.
- Wear all the clothing that you can, then ask someone to soak you with a garden hose.
- Tap a spoon on a plate to recreate the sound of trekking poles. Continue to do this until your family threatens you with heavy blunt objects.
- Take many pictures of arrow- and shell-like objects.
- Add cow manure to your garden and sit downwind of it for two hours, preferably at lunch time.
- Go to the post office and mail some clothing back to yourself.
- Go to Starbucks and ask the barista to stamp your passport.
- Sit in the sun in such a way that only the left side of your body gets tan.
- Say “Buen Camino” to everyone you pass on the street!

|| NEXT ISSUE ||

The Autumn *La Concha* theme is
Sharing the Fire.

Submissions to our Autumn issue close on August 21, 2022, and we would love to receive your reflections!



SHARING THE FIRE. Pilgrimage is called a transformative journey for good reason. It changes us, and through that change, we can bring change into the world. For this issue we invite members to share stories of how you share the fire of your pilgrim spirit to create warmth for others, and light in the darkness. Submit your 400 or fewer word story by August 21, 2022 for consideration.

Please explore this theme for the Autumn 2022 issue by sharing images and reflections. Please limit essays to 400 words maximum.

The form for submissions can be found by following this link: [La Concha Article Online Submission Form](#)

We include as many submissions as possible in each issue. We may defer some items to future issues.

Thanks! We look forward to hearing from you.

Team *La Concha*

American Pilgrims on the Camino

www.americanpilgrims.org