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LA CONCHA

Newsletter of American Pilgrims on the Camino

August 2010

Dear Fellow Pilgrims...

It's high season on the Camino de Santiago, and many European vacationers will go to the Camino, drawn by the Holy Year. In Santiago, festivities will be bringing in cultural tourists by the thousands for special concerts and the like.

If you are in Spain or have been there for your Camino, I hope you took the advice of Xacobeo 2010 and the Pilgrim Office to explore alternatives to the Camino Francés, such as the Vía de la Plata, or the Primitivo, or the Portugués. If, however, tradition has called you to the Camino Francés, *Buen Camino!* Your experience is what counts.

Regardless of your route, I hope you took full advantage of all that American Pilgrims has to offer. Our credential is free for the asking and is approved by the Pilgrim Office. Our web site –

www.americanpilgrims.com

– is a virtual resource library. If we don't have the information you are looking for, we probably link to it. We can connect you with experienced pilgrims for insights and advice.

And when you get back, we encourage you to share your experience in pictures, words, or art through our quarterly newsletter, *La Concha*, or at our next Annual Gathering at Mission Santa Barbara in March 2011.

Along the way, perhaps you noticed something that needed attention in an albergue or on the Camino itself. American Pilgrims' Grant Program allows us to give back, providing money for worthy projects in Europe, including albergue expansion and repairs.

Our grants also fund things here at home. If you want to get a local group together to talk about forming a chapter, apply for a grant. If you are selected, we'll provide the seed money for your activity.

American Pilgrims is here to support the Camino, but we are also here to support you. Thank you for being a part of American Pilgrims on the Camino.

i Ultraia!

Jim Eychaner, Chair



*Fireworks celebration in Santiago's
Obradoiro Plaza,
Feast of St. James - 2010
Photo courtesy of Xacobeo America*

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Puget Sound Chapter Observes St. James Day

On Saturday, July 24, the Puget Sound Chapter held its second annual St. James Day walk and potluck in Seattle. Over 30 pilgrims from the northwest area gathered together at St. Mark's Cathedral and walked to St. James Cathedral, following a way marked with yellow arrows. The pilgrims attended a late afternoon Mass, and the group was recognized by the priest as he spoke about James the Greater and his life.

A highlight was seeing the relic of St. James ensconced in a beautiful 15th century wooden bust of St. James. A few pilgrims remarked that they didn't realize they hadn't needed to walk across Spain to see the bones of St. James, as there was one right here in our very own town! Following the Mass, pilgrims gathered together at St. Mark's for a potluck and to share their Camino experiences. The Puget Sound Chapter plans to hold their third annual St. James Day walk on Saturday, July 23, 2011.

*Rebecca Andrews & Martha Crites
Co-Coordination,
American Pilgrims on the Camino
Puget Sound Chapter*



*Rebecca Andrews marks
the way.
Photo by Jim Green,
Seattle WA*



*Jess Liboon and Dave Clemens
lead the way.
Photo by Rebecca Andrews
Seattle WA*



*Tim Cashman and Jim Limardi
observe a fine Camino tradition:
stopping for coffee.
Photo by Rebecca Andrews
Seattle WA*

Save the Date!

Hospitalero Training

October 15-17, 2010

Seattle WA

Watch our website for details.



XACOBEO 2010
Galicia

Xacobeo Brings Cathedral to New York City!

Long-time friend of American Pilgrims and representative of the S.A. de Xestión do Plan Xacobeo in Galicia José Suárez Otero has been instrumental in bringing an intriguing program to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. A series of lectures, beginning October 1, 2010, examines medieval art and mores along the Camino as well as the destination itself, the Romanesque Cathedral of Santiago.

On November 14, the series culminates in the day-long program, *Sunday at The Met: Celebrating the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela*. José and others will make a virtual presentation that revisits and reconstructs the magnificent Romanesque structure. The program also includes related talks, such as *Digging in a Medieval Cathedral*, and a musical feast including pieces from the famed

Codex Calixtinus. For more information about all the events, visit the Met's calendar pages at: [Celebrating the Cathedral](#) and [Sunday at the Met](#).

This is a unique opportunity to learn more about the cathedral we all carry in our hearts, listen to some hauntingly beautiful music, show our support for the Xacobeo ([xacobeo](#)), and ... *to be a part of it, New York, New York!* ♦



José Suárez knows all about digging in a medieval cathedral.



*Emilio carves a sign for the wall of "America's House," an albergue addition proudly supported by grant funding from American Pilgrims at Fuenterrabía on the Vía de la Plata.
Photo by Kate Lopez, Santa Fe NM*

Thanks to the Spanish People

*By Randy Bernard
Norwalk CA*

I have been asked what the Spanish people must think about having 100,000 pilgrims walking through their country every year. It seems to me that ninety percent are happy to see us. Many of them may be descended from pilgrims who never returned to their home country. Many Spaniards dream of walking the Camino themselves some day. They take it as a compliment that people from all over the world come to visit their beautiful country. It also contributes to the economy, helping to keep some small villages alive. Sometimes older people will stop you and give you a blessing or ask you to pray for them in Santiago.

Thank you, Spain, for your hospitality! ♦

2010 Spiritual Retreat

*By Mary Wallis
Cochrane AB, Canada*

A wonderful group of 13 pilgrims attended the 2010 Spiritual Retreat at the San Pedro Center in Winter Park FL this year, after an equally wonderful Gathering. The Retreat was entitled *Keeping Our Feet on the Ground: The Pilgrim's Life on the Camino Today*. In keeping with the theme of the Gathering, *The Camino Today*, our Retreat focused on how to find and nurture our pilgrims' purpose in a world that - even though it's the Camino (in fact, because it IS the Camino) - is definitely not always about us and can sometimes challenge us with distractions and new ideas.

Over two days, we indulged our pilgrims' love of sharing our stories and questions. We kept written journals of our reflections, and we experimented with meditative practices to help us stay anchored in our intentions as pilgrims. We drew pictures. We talked about labyrinths and pursued ideas that came up during the Gathering. We talked about equanimity, receptiveness, suffering, joy, vulnerability, and wisdom. We told stories full of surprises and small miracles. Our discussions were lively and friendly and controversial; our breaks were fun and relaxing (many thanks to the hospitaleros who left us some great food and beverages). Even the rain, though it kept us inside now and then, was a lovely chorus during our time together.

Thank you to all who attended and contributed to such a rich and productive time. ♦



*Retreat participants Henny de Knecht
and Sherry Hines
Photo by Mary Wallis*



*Retreat participants Bill Cornelius
and Tom Friesen
Photo by Mary Wallis*

GPS Guide to the Camino Francés

One of our Canadian friends, Denis Houde, has a project to create a GPS guide to the Camino Francés. Denis, whom some of you may have met at this year's Gathering in Florida, is looking for pilgrims who are planning to walk all or part of the Camino Francés this year and who might be willing to test the system for him. He is willing to supply the equipment - the iPhone (with GPS), maps, and electronic guide. If you are interested, please contact Denis directly at denishoude@hotmail.com. ♦

The 2011 Gathering of Pilgrims Voices of The Camino: Past & Present



*Mission Santa Barbara
Photo by Carolyn Affleck
Sechelt BC, Canada*

Santa Barbara Mission
Santa Barbara, California

- ◆ Hospitalero Training
- ◆ Annual Gathering of Pilgrims
- ◆ Spiritual Retreat

Save the Date!
March 22 - 29, 2011

Watch for details on our website in the fall.
If you wish to make a presentation, please send your
proposal to gatherings@americanpilgrims.com.

A Pilgrim's Response

*By Jean McCoy
Winnemucca NV*

"Gee, tell me all about your trip! Did you just have the greatest time? How many miles did you walk anyway?"

Every time I'm hit with these questions from well-meaning people, I react as if from shock and stutter my way through. How do you explain yourself to non-pilgrims?

Many times I seem to emphasize the difficulties. "Well, my first day I fell in a river, walked 17 miles only to find the floor in the sports arena had no mattresses or room for even one more sleeping bag." How can I explain that a French angel pulled me out of the mud and helped me wash off?

You can say the words, but how do you explain the fear, relief and joy that comes all in a few minutes and that makes the pilgrimage so life affirming? Or the sadness when you know you can walk no further, combined with apprehension as you realize there are no buses or trains in this small village? What will the next days bring when all has gone awry, but is combined with the happiness of having walked through the nature reserve to Almadén de la Plata, as you sit on a wall outside

the albergue, observing the most beautiful dark blue sky you've ever seen?

How to explain the intensity of emotions that come when you decide you must quit walking for now, but the satisfaction that comes of working in an albergue tending to others and their needs? The hard work becomes an afterthought when a pilgrim plays the guitar and sings for you, or thanks you for helping him through a difficult time. How do you explain the comradeship and laughter shared with your fellow hospitaleros at the end of a long, taxing day?

Then, unexpectedly, comes the chance to walk a different Camino, El Camino del Norte, not alone as before, but with two lovely sisters from Switzerland. Again all the emotions are present: fear and apprehension of being able to keep up, happiness at having three weeks to walk. Later, the satisfaction of having accomplished just that, a three-week walk of beautiful days with good company, wild lilies and daisies and blisters and rain.

How do you express that on the Camino you're fully alive, living with the joy of having your basic needs taken care of, just that and nothing more? That you have the satisfaction of pushing yourself to the limit? That every day is a new adventure with its ups and downs? How do you explain all that in ten words or less? ◆

The Spanish Game of *Ranas*

By Kathy Kennerly
Ft Worth TX

When we were kids, my mother warned us not to play with frogs. Probably yours did, too. One of the old wives' tales of the day was that playing with frogs could lead to all kinds of really bad things.

The fear would send little sisters squealing and running from the slimy, green things, and boys were assured of warts.

Well, that's all different now, and especially in Spain. There, people are actually encouraged to play with frogs, but frogs of a different kind. In Spain the game of *Ranas* (Frogs) can be found in bars all around the country. It is a game of skill and daring! And rumor is that wagering is occasionally involved.

Earlier this summer while serving as hospitaleras in Ponferrada, Ann Howley and I walked up the hill to the scenic village of Otero. Here we found the only bar in town and stopped for a while to enjoy a Coke Lite and a game of *Ranas*.

The game of *Ranas* long ago migrated to Europe from Central and South America. History tells us of a game called *Sapos* (Toads) in which gold coins were tossed into the mouths of frogs in the sacred Inca Lake Titicaca.

Current day *Ranas* is played by tossing metal tokens (*fichas*) from a throw line, approximately 10 feet from the *Rana* table. The goal is to toss a token into the upturned, open mouth of the frog in the middle of the table top.

Surrounding the frog are other openings where tokens may fall, but for fewer points. When well-placed, the tokens drop below to a partitioned drawer. Each partitioned cubby has a value assigned to it. When a player has tossed 10 tokens, a tally is made of all those tokens reaching the drawer below. Players take turns and keep score until a winner emerges with the highest token count.

I played *Ranas* in this same bar last year while serving in Ponferrada. For me it is now an annual tradition. It was

Ann's first go at this challenging game. Yes, Ann won with the highest token count. Was it beginner's luck, or is there skill involved in playing with frogs? ♦



The rana waits patiently to swallow the fichas.

Photo by Ann Howley
Culver City CA

Camino Signs

There is no end to the variety of yellow arrows on the Camino. Whether their maker is well-known or unknown, they have the same purpose: to guide pilgrims.



From Santa Cilia on the Camino Aragonés
Photo by Marlena Lambert
Salt Lake City UT



Camino signs can be confusing.
Photo by Philip Jackson
San Antonio TX



At Calzada de Bejar on the Vía de al Plata
Photo by Martha López
Sacramento CA

The Prodigal Statue

By Cherie Pagett
Alexandria VA

Santiago de Compostela, Spain, July 25, 1968. I am in the cathedral plaza, mesmerized by spectacular fireworks commemorating St. James -- Santiago, Spain's patron saint. So moved am I by the medieval atmosphere, I am certain fate leads me to the back corner of a dusty shop to discover a finely carved granite statue of St. James the pilgrim. Complete with walking staff, barely discernible water gourd, hand raised in blessing, pilgrim's cloak, and scallop shell on his broad-brimmed hat, the 12" statue's high cheek bones, defined beard, and closed eyes speak to me of a thousand years of pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago. He weighs eight pounds, but I schlep him back to the States. After 14 months in Spain, removed from the chaos of U.S. current events, I plunge into the presidential campaign -- too little, too late! For no reason, I give the Santiago statue to my boyfriend.

Thirty years pass before I am again in Santiago. It's been twelve months since we spread the ashes of my 17-year-old Spanish godson on the Camino. Recalling the exquisite statue, the minute, silver flecks that made him sparkle like the stars, I search in vain for a replacement, then make off-hand mention of my disappointment to my husband.

Christmas, 1998. My husband hands me the last, my "special" gift. For its size, the box is surprisingly heavy, and I almost drop it. I guess aloud: A magnum of champagne, bars of silver -- or gold? The bubble wrap seems endless; I'm stymied. A sweet moment of realization: I am at once stunned and deeply touched. Darkened by time, yet unmistakable, it is my beloved Santiago. My husband has tracked down my old boyfriend who, miracle of miracles, having kept the statue all these years, was willing to return it. I weep as my husband beams. ♦



The Prodigal Santiago
Photo by Cherie Pagett

My Camino as Haiku

My Camino as Haiku is a regular feature of *La Concha*. Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry of three unrhymed lines. The first, second, and third lines have five, seven, and five syllables, respectively. We encourage you to apply the format to your Camino experience. As you see from the haiku in this issue, you are not restricted to English.

By Kathy Kennerly
Fort Worth TX

Queso manchego
Los vinos tempranillos
Bocas contentas

Footsteps add quickly
Our Camino to create
Lifetime memories

Two American Sisters on the Camino Portugués

By Lynn Liptak
Wayne NJ

On June 11, 2010, my sister and I, both in our 60's, began the Camino Portugués in Porto. As our guiding Bible verse, we selected 2 Corinthians 5:7 "We walk by faith, not by sight." We dedicated the pilgrimage to our late mother and planned to light a candle for her in the Cathedral in Santiago de Compostela.

None of our pre-trip planning fully prepared us for the kindness and helpfulness of the Portuguese and Spanish people, the wonderful camaraderie with other pilgrims, the beauty and history of the Camino itself, and its spiritual blessings.

Leaving Barcelos on our second day on the Camino, we erroneously followed two fading yellow arrows and ended up way off the Camino. Hopelessly lost, we rang the bell at a private home to ask directions and showed our map to the woman who emerged with her infant grandson. She drove us several miles back to rejoin the Camino and declined our offer of 5 Euros for gas. *Obrigadas*, Portuguese for thank you, served us over and over again.

Of the many pilgrims we met, we particularly enjoyed the group of seven Korean school children, aged

13-16, and their two teachers. While sitting at a café by the Umia River, we waved excitedly as we saw them crossing the bridge into Caldas de Reis. They joined us for lunch, giving

each of us a lovely handkerchief hand-made by students at their school. My sister's ability to say a few words in Korean ignited a relationship that included shared albergue space and ended in sad good-byes in Santiago.

In late spring, the flowers spilling over stone walls contributed to the Camino's incredible

scenery. We rested briefly at the Fonte das Tres Bicas before continuing on the path leading up to the high point of the Camino, Alta de Portela Grande, with its beautiful views of the Lima River Valley to the south and the Coura River Valley to the north. Following Pilgrim tradition, we



Two sisters, Lauri Burnham-Massey (l) and Lynn Liptak (r), enjoy a rest at Redondela.

placed stones by the Cruz dos Franceses, where Napoleon's troops met a setback.

For us, the spiritual experience was most intense on the Monte Santiaguino in Padrón, Spain. We climbed the many stone stairs to the mountain where it is believed that St. James preached Christianity in Spain. We were the only people there, and we sat quietly for some time. As much as there is to see and do on the Camino, the times when you can just be are perhaps the most important of all. ♦



Korean children cross the Umia River at Caldas de Reis
Photo by Lynn Liptak

San Francisco Bay Area Hospitalero Training

By Daniel De Kay
Occidental CA

American Pilgrims' Hospitalero Training program continues to grow. As of July 25 (St. James Day), we welcome seven more members to our family of hospitalero volunteers. These newly trained volunteers are graduates of the most recent hospitalero cursillo, held at the spectacular Tourist Club of San Francisco, located on the slopes of Marin County's picturesque Mt. Tamalpais. The graduates include Jennifer de Jung, Bridgit Highfill, Virginia MacDonald, Zita Macy, Crystal Muñoz, Ramon Nazareno, and Susanne Rather.

Participants and trainers together created an albergue-like atmosphere and experienced their own three day mini-Camino. They shared the preparation of meals, told stories, discovered the history and philosophy of hospitality on the Camino, and learned much about an hospitalero's daily routine and practical approaches to problem-solving when overseeing an albergue.

At the end of the training, participants were joined by several Bay Area pilgrims for an afternoon of sun, stories and snacks on one of the Tourist Club's private porches, overlooking the

peaceful forest of Muir Woods National Monument.

Congratulations to all who participated. Special thanks to Crystal Muñoz for connecting us with the Tourist Club, and to trainers Jeanette and Francisco Chacon for this very successful training course.

The next hospitalero training cursillo will take place in the Seattle area on the weekend of October 15-17. Details to follow soon! ♦



*Ramon Nazareno prepares to serve his fellow trainees.
Photo by Jennifer de Jung
Reno NV*

Xacobeo America Reaches Millions with the Message of the Camino

We can proudly say that the goals of Xacobeo America were more than met. Our spokeswoman, well-known Hispanic TV news personality Marian de la Fuente, recently shared the Camino with millions of people through more than 150 personal appearances and interviews on national networks such as Univision and Telemundo, local TV shows, radio programs, and at university gatherings in South America. We realized few people knew of the Camino or the Xacobeo. Through the airing of the documentary, *Marian de la Fuente on the Camino de Santiago*, a large audience experienced the lure and magic of the Camino.

This July 25, Marian inspired others to make a pilgrimage to Santiago as we aired the festivities of the feast of St. James. She had the privilege of interviewing one of the guests of honor, Paulo Coelho.

Enjoy video clips and photos, including the fireworks, on our website www.xacobeoamerica.com. Sharpen your Spanish by watching Camino TV programs (including Marian's documentary) on the Spanish PBS network www.vmetv.com/xacobeo. *Nuestros Caminos a Santiago* is also an excellent video found on this site.

As we wind down our work here in this Año Xacobeo, we want the American Pilgrims to know what a pleasure it has been to get to know you and, through you, to better appreciate our Camino and yours. For our shared reflections, visit our website at www.xacobeoamerica.com/en. Under videos you will find all of the interviews from the Gathering sprinkled throughout the several pages of interviews. Until we meet again - ¡Buen Camino!



Liz Angulo shows off Xacobeo 2010 Poster



*Liz Angulo
Marketing Director
Xacobeo America*

Trail of Wonder

By Marcia Shaver
Redmond WA

My friend and fellow artist, Tannis, and I walked the Camino Francés in the spring of 2008. The very act of walking so far presented the opportunity for meditation and reflection within the context of drawing each day. Spending so much time in intimate contact with the earth especially appealed to me. Growing up on family ranches in northeastern Oregon, I spent a lot of time riding the wide open range and becoming comfortable with the solitude of the landscape. The land represents enduring beauty, strength, and eternity for it withstands the changes of time. Much like our hearts and souls, the landscape carries on, despite the onslaught of outside forces, evolving while staying the same. It seems so appropriate that the symbol of the Camino is the scallop shell, linked to the goddess Venus, who represents birth and regeneration.



Hilltop Village of Cirauqui
© Marcia Shaver

As we traversed the Camino across beautiful Spain, our eyes and hearts were filled with wonder as we watched rippling green wheat fields beneath the play of clouds across the vault of heaven. Intricate shadows formed and vanished along the roadsides and spilled across courtyard walls. God's creatures paused to connect with us, and we were immersed in a community of like-minded souls



Plane Trees on the Road to Reliegos
© Marcia Shaver

from around the globe on a common journey to Santiago. The oldest pilgrim we met was in his 80's and the youngest was 5, walking with his mom. One man was blind and being guided by his friend.

The Camino is a trail of hopes and dreams, struggle and triumph, but above all miracles. It would be my fondest dream come true to inspire others to walk toward whatever they are seeking. No matter how much we prepare, once our boots touch the path and we see our first yellow arrow, all that gleaned information is for naught. Everyone walks their own Camino, totally and completely unique and different from any other. ♦

Lessons Learned on Pilgrimage

American Pilgrim Jack Podsiadlo SJ, a Jesuit priest, published *Lessons learned on pilgrimage in Spain* in *Company Magazine* in 2008 upon returning from his 2007 pilgrimage. You can read his article at www.companymagazine.org/v261/camino. Another American Pilgrim, Thomas Meredith, took the photographs that accompany the article. *La Concha* is pleased not only to print pilgrims' reflections and photographs of the Camino, but also to point to other publications where our members have published essays about their experience. ♦

Camino by Oliver Schroer

CD Review by Marlena Lambert,
Salt Lake City UT
and Beatrice Upenieks
Salt Lake City UT

Listen to *Field of Stars*, the opening track on this CD, and you will be drawn in as a moth to a flame, or perhaps more aptly, a tired pilgrim to a warm and friendly albergue.

Welcome to *Camino*, an instrumental CD by Canadian fiddler, composer, improviser, storyteller, traveler, and teacher, Oliver Schroer. Any former pilgrim will recognize the sampled sounds of footsteps and cowbells, but those who have walked routes from Le Puy or Roncesvalles will take special delight in such cuts as *Moissac Bells* and *Astorga Afternoon Bells*. Pilgrim or not, any lover of good music will be taken on a sacred journey listening to Schroer's musical memoir of his 2005 walk.

Best known for the album *Camino*, Schroer made several other albums with his band, The Stewed Tomatoes, as well as a number of solo albums. When he or his band performed, each musical piece was preceded by a scene-setting story. He played around the world, featuring his own compositions which evolved out of improvisations.

New surroundings were fodder for his work. The album *Restless Urban Primitive* included songs developed while traveling in Turkey. Later in his career he founded The Twisted String, a performance group for young string musicians. He died of leukemia in 2008, but not before his powerful concert, *Oliver's Last Concert on His Tour of This Planet*, played to a packed hall in Toronto.

For those of you volunteering as hospitaleros, *Camino* is a must-have in your albergue's music collection. If you are walking with an iPod, load this from www.oliverschroer.com before you go. (For a preview, go to [Camino album](#).) For anyone else, *Camino* will take you there while saving you the airfare! ♦

¡Buen Provecho!

Empanada Gallega de Atún

Use this as a first course or tapa served with your favorite wine. Red is preferred but albariño is also great. Ana Ferreirós, Production Chief of tdtv distrivisión.tv in A Coruña, works closely with Xacobeo America, and was eager to submit this recipe because there can be no talk of food in Galicia without including empanada gallega. Thinly sliced roasted red peppers can be added to the filling. Instead of tuna, you can use mince meat, cockles, mushrooms, octopus...

Dough Ingredients

2 cups flour
1 mug water
½ mug milk
1 small ball of pressed yeast
1 egg, lightly beaten
Salt, to taste

Filling Ingredients

5 tins tuna in olive oil
4 onions, chopped
4 oz olive oil (approx)
Salt
Additional egg, lightly beaten

Preparation

- ♦ Using your hands, mix all dough ingredients in a bowl until you have a doughy consistency. Make a round ball, cover with a cloth, and leave for an hour to rise. Begin preheating oven after 45 minutes.
- ♦ Sauté onions over low heat in olive oil with salt to taste. When onions are soft cooked, add tuna fish and mix well. Put mixture in a bowl and set aside.
- ♦ When dough has risen, roll out half of it, making it round for a pie pan.
- ♦ Use a pastry brush or your fingers to coat bottom of pan with some olive oil, then spread rolled dough on it. Spread onion and tuna filling evenly over dough in pie pan.
- ♦ Roll remaining dough, then lay it on top of pan, pinch edges closed, and make a small hole in center to allow the pastry to breath during baking. Brush additional beaten egg over top of pastry before placing empanada in oven.
- ♦ Bake at 350F for 30/40 minutes.



An empanada fresh from
the oven at Panadería
A Troia in Santiago de
Compostela
Photo by Carlos Mentley
Donalds SC

The Camino and Our Cheese Project: to Multitask or Not?

By Russ and Peg Hall, Gainesville FL

No question about it, our Camino was about the walking. Our weeks in France and Spain in 2008 and 2009 filled us with the Camino experience and left little room for distractions.

We found ourselves torn, however. We were in the midst of four years leading up to publication of *The Summer of a Thousand Cheeses* – our book about discovery of the new American cheeses. Although determined not to turn our Camino into an extension of our research, we were in Europe, origin of the world's great cheeses and inspiration for the new American artisans. Could we stick doggedly to the trail while trying not to notice the cheeses around us?

The resolution was simple; we would not visit factories or farmsteads, nor interview shop owners or customers. We would stick to the trail, but never miss an opportunity to sample another cheese or learn more about it.

We were able to sample some great cheeses. Highlights were the Roncal we found in shops,

the fresh pungent Cabecous from farmers' markets in southern France, the hard sheep milk cheeses of the Pyrenees, and the soft cow milk Tetillas of northwestern Spain.

We discovered an apparent convergence between American and European cheesemaking. Most of our North American cheeses are made in ever-larger factories, but new artisanal cheesemakers are showing up all over, offering unique, hand-made cheeses with the signature of their *terroir*. In Europe small cheesemakers are declining in number, while cheeses found in supermarkets are increasingly made in factories. Someday the two continents may have comparable mixes of everyday and specialty cheeses.

Only two pages of *The Summer of a Thousand Cheeses* address our cheese adventures along the Camino. Our modest forays into the worlds of French and Spanish cheeses didn't distract from our Camino, and they helped us to write a more insightful book by revealing the context for ongoing changes. And we got to eat a lot of cheese. ♦



Cheese enthusiasts have many sources on the Camino.

Photos by Russ and Peg Hall



Two Facets of the Chemin de St. Jacques

By Bob Rorke, Edina MN

As my wife and I walked along the Chemin de St. Jacques from Le Puy to St. Jean Pied de Port, we thought about the lessons learned along the way. We read journals and books as we prepared. We read many lists of helpful hints. The most important one we would learn just sixty miles from St. Jean Pied de Port.

We bought good hiking boots and walked many miles with our packs. It's easy to walk 12-15 miles. It's another thing to walk that much (and more) with a 20-lb pack every day. We practiced going up hills, never fully understanding how long the hill out of Conques or Monistrol d'Allier would be.

Many lists stressed traveling as light as possible. What we were not wearing, we were going to carry. Did I need the woolen hat and gloves? Did I need the binoculars? Did we need the headlamp? Did I need a pad to sleep on? The answer in many cases is: Maybe.

I remember my sister reassuring me that everyone in France speaks English. Nothing could

be further from the truth. My last French class was more than thirty years ago. I learned (again) to always use *vous* unless I was given permission to use *tu*. I reviewed how to speak French as politely as possible.

We learned the most valuable lesson in Miramont-Sensacq, a day's walk from Aire sur l'Adour. There were four pilgrims in the communal gîte that evening; and our host, Jean, prepared a wonderful meal. He had completed the pilgrimage three times. He stressed how important it was for him to give back.

I noticed a sign on the wall in French and read it aloud in English. "There are two facets to the pilgrimage. The first is for you to complete your pilgrimage. The second is to help others complete theirs." There was information about how we could volunteer to be a host at a gîte.

Our host asked me to write the words in English. He asked the German pilgrim to translate the words into German for him. In our

small way, we were giving back to spread an important message.

Now, when I look at the American Pilgrims website, I read about hospitalero training and the toil and pleasure of helping other pilgrims complete their walk. I remember the importance of a warm welcome at the end of a long day. ♦



Bob Rorke (r) shares a meal in the gîte at Miramont-Sensacq.

Photo by Becky Rorke, Edina MN

'God of pilgrims, always give us a table to stop at where we can tell our story and sing our song.'

Father John Giuliani
The Benedictine Grange
West Redding CT

Published in 100 Graces, Mealtime Blessings, Selected by Marcia & Jack Kelly

Ultreia! Onward! Progress of the Pilgrim

Edited by Robert Lawrence France
Reviewed by Michael Burriss, Athens GA

In the inspirational and magnificent collection of quotations *Ultreia! Onward! Progress of the Pilgrim*, Dr. Robert Lawrence France has truly added a unique and vital work to the rapidly growing canon of Camino literature. Much of the literature in circulation now about the Camino is either historical works or travel narratives. This is, as far as I know, the first book composed largely of quotations.

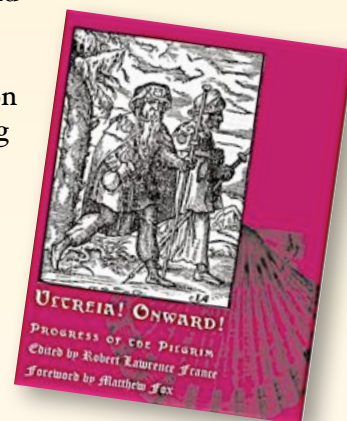
In terms of the structure of the book, Matthew Fox gives an inspirational foreword as to the relevance and importance of this book. Dr. France then provides a brief and informative history of the Camino itself, some of the reasons that propelled him to compile such a book, and an overall guide on how to read the book. Dr. France has organized the quotes as a Book of Hours. As the author states in his introduction, the book is divided into the thirteen stages of the Camino originally proposed by Amery Picaud and are further separated into the different hours of the “old Christian prayer clock” (xxi).

With this book one can truly say that good things really do come in small packages. In addition to the plethora of inspirational quotes in

the book, the size of the book itself is one of the work’s most salient elements. I don’t know how other pilgrims carry their documents such as their *credencial*, passport, etc., but I just use a sturdy Ziploc bag to keep excess moisture from getting in. This book is the perfect size to fit in a similar container and would favor a quick retrieval. This quick retrieval goes perfectly with the purpose of the book with regard to the hours during the day in which the quotations should be read.

I can vividly imagine sitting down on a rock or on the side of the path looking at the horizon before me, taking my *bocadillo* and fruit out of my pack, saying my blessing, eating the day’s provisions, and then letting some of the quotes from this book motivate me and recharge me for the rest of the day’s walk.

I think I speak for all who read this book in saying a heartfelt *gracias!* to Dr. France for the time and effort spent in compiling such an inspirational work that will undoubtedly rejuvenate and encourage pilgrims the world over to continue their Camino and keep marching onward. ♦



A blessing from above, literally.
Cloud cover on the Vía de la Plata.
What a difference it makes.
Photo by Annette Drzala
Danbury CT

Hospitaleros and Sorrow Stones

*By Rick Baldwin
Winter Park FL*

Along with my nephew Chard and two others, I have served for the past 15 days as a volunteer hospitalero in Albergue Guacelmo located in Rabanal del Camino. During our assigned fortnight, we have manned the albergue 24/7. Our duty ends tonight at midnight, and we depart first thing in the morning to head back home. I find myself sad to leave, yet feeling fulfilled.

As hospitaleros, we arise each morning at 6:00, serve breakfast, then swab, sweep, mop, and otherwise clean the whole place. A new crop arrives each afternoon around 2:00, and the work begins again. In the afternoons and evenings we check them in, doctor their feet, conduct a group stretching class, serve afternoon tea (this albergue is, after all, run by England's Confraternity of Saint James), help prepare dinners, listen to the pilgrims' stories, and herd them to bed by no later than 10:30.

I find that many pilgrims carry sorrow stones, usually small and brought from home. They generally represent a great burden in a person's life – one that they wish to lay down. The practice takes on more immediate importance here at Rabanal because the stones will be left at Cruz de Ferro, a two hour walk from our front door.

We hear many stories about the origin of these stones, one of the more poignant from a German woman of 45. She tells me she has a fine husband and a good job, but finds herself, to her great sorrow, childless. She has finally accepted that she will never bear a child and tomorrow plans to release this personal melancholy at the Cruz de Ferro. In place of her sorrow she will volunteer to tutor young children. I hold her hand as she weeps quietly. She seems ready to lay her heavy yoke aside – and I am pleased for her.

Conversations and personal stories make this a rich experience for us.

I came here to serve because my sister told me I needed more toilet scrubbing in my life, certain to

engender humility. I have surely scrubbed toilets for the past two weeks. I will hope to have become more humble. ♦



Many pilgrims leave their sorrow stones at the Cruz de Ferro

*Photo by Ed Pagett
Alexandria VA*

Contributors

A special thank you to all the writers, photographers, and artists who contributed to this edition of *La Concha*. Your talents are much appreciated.

- ♦ Carolyn Affleck
- ♦ Liz Angulo
- ♦ Rebecca Andrews
- ♦ Rick Baldwin
- ♦ Randy Bernard
- ♦ Michael Burriss
- ♦ Martha Crites
- ♦ Jennifer de Jung
- ♦ Daniel De Kay
- ♦ Annette Drzala
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- ♦ Cherie Pagett
- ♦ Ed Pagett
- ♦ Becky Rorke
- ♦ Robert Rorke
- ♦ Marcia Shaver
- ♦ Beatrice Upenieks
- ♦ Mary Wallis

Association News

Farewell to Board Member Nick Hayes

In his position as Treasurer on our Board of Directors, following a long career in international business, Nick Hayes quietly helped guide American Pilgrims through some critical rebuilding years. He brought to the task insight and a unique perspective, not to mention his rapier wit and a certain *ne je sais quoi*.

With a sense of loss, we bid him *Buen Camino* as he resigns to pursue other interests that include house hunting in France. We hope to catch up with him in his new home and share a toast to American Pilgrims. *Ultréia*, Nick! We will miss you. ♦

Reminder: Grant Program Deadline Approaching

September 15, 2010 is the deadline for applications to the American Pilgrims Grant Program. Three types of grants are available. The first two are in the categories of:

- ♦ **Infrastructure improvements** on the Camino de Santiago
- ♦ **Encouragement grants** to North American groups in need of support to organize and hold regional events or to provide information about the Camino.

Last year's grants went to an albergue in Spain for an addition to the albergue and to a U.S. group producing a

documentary about the Camino.

This year American Pilgrims is inaugurating a third category, the **Michael Wyatt Hospitalero Grant**. This is a need-based grant to provide partial travel reimbursement to volunteer hospitaleros. This grant is in memory of Reverend Michael Wyatt, former Chair of the American Pilgrims Board of Directors.

If you are interested in applying for any of these grants, please visit our website at [American Pilgrims Grant Program](http://AmericanPilgrimsGrantProgram.org) for the complete guidelines and an application form, or email grants@americanpilgrims.com for more information and an application. ♦

Welcome, New Members!

We are pleased to welcome the following new members who joined American Pilgrims on the Camino between April and July 2010. We look forward to meeting you at future Gatherings and events.

- | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| ♦ Kimberly Brandel | ♦ Michael Dunican | ♦ Kathie McCarthy | ♦ Bob Rorke |
| ♦ David Brann | ♦ Keisti Gibson | ♦ Marge McCarthy | ♦ Chris Scott |
| ♦ Marta Brann | ♦ Tom Gibson | ♦ Catherine Metz | ♦ Marcia Shaver |
| ♦ Louise Garcia Byrd | ♦ Nancy Golbeck | ♦ Art Nicklaus | ♦ Lorraine Simonis |
| ♦ Lauren Carpenter | ♦ Dennis Gray | ♦ Julee Nicklaus | ♦ Cricket Sloat |
| ♦ Larry Cornett | ♦ Helen Henry | ♦ Peggy Northcraft | ♦ Jason Schmidt |
| ♦ Anne Cornett | ♦ Bob Hole | ♦ Christia Panizales | ♦ Thomas Turnage |
| ♦ Annie Cornett | ♦ Ethelind Holt | ♦ Rodolfo Panizales | ♦ Mercedes Villaman |
| ♦ Pamela Craig | ♦ Lawrence Kingsbury | ♦ Tess Panizales | ♦ Marcia (Maitreyi) Villaman-Matos |
| ♦ Leah Cueva | ♦ Sue Lautenslager | ♦ Lisa Radzak | ♦ Theresa Ward |
| ♦ Jennifer de Jung | ♦ Jack Martin | ♦ Susanne Rather | |
| ♦ Kathleen Dempsey | ♦ Bob McCarthy | ♦ Becky Rorke | |



*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 Stories or Events to Share?

We would be pleased to report on Camino-related activities in your part of the country. Tell us about your plans, and we'll try to announce them in *La Concha*.

In addition to announcements and news, please tell us in 400 words or less about a part of the Camino you would like to share with your fellow pilgrims. Consider a photo, a poem, or a new found understanding of an idea – a pilgrim's perspective. Visit [Newsletter](#) on our website for suggestions and guidelines.

Submission deadline for the next issue is October 18, 2010. We welcome your questions, comments, and submissions at newsletter@americanpilgrims.com. You can also submit to the street address provided below. ¡Buen Camino!

Your Newsletter Team -

*Cherie Pagett, Annette Argall,
Martha López, Zita Macy*

Board of Directors 2010

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Cherie Pagett, Vice Chair
Annette Argall, Secretary
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