



www.americanpilgrims.com

# LA CONCHA

Newsletter of American Pilgrims on the Camino

Winter 2013

## Gathering 2013-Santa Barbara CA



*Old Mission Santa Barbara  
Annette Argall, Baltimore MD*

## In this issue

---

Chair's Message	2
Gathering 2013	3 - 5
Chapter News	6 - 7
Camino Signs	10-11
Book Review: <i>Pilgrimage to the End of the World</i>	13
New Members	19
<i>Member Writings &amp; Photos Throughout</i>	

---

It is only the  
curious who have  
something to find.  
—Nickel Creek

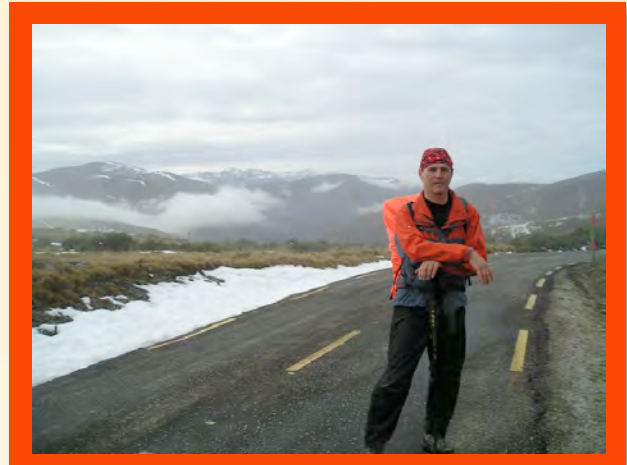
*Dear Fellow Pilgrims,*

I have the best day job. I get to do something I love, for which my university pays me. I teach Spanish language and culture to young adults, and as an added bonus, I teach a seminar in our Honors International Program. The theme of this semester's seminar is the Art of Pilgrimage.

I just had the chance to lead my Honors students on a weekend trip to New York City. The trip was to help prepare the students, some of whom had never been on an airplane before, for the kind of travelling they will do when they embark on their semester or year of overseas study. It was a dress rehearsal of sorts.

The weekend we went to New York was also the weekend of the big Northeastern snowstorm. Santiago must have been smiling on us, because we got into the city just before the airports started to close. From that point on, the students started to learn basic elements of smart independent travel. They stayed at a hostel. They ate at inexpensive diners, delis, and dives. They visited world-class museums. They sought out local entertainment. They became familiar and comfortable with the bus and metro systems. They walked – a lot – all over the city, in Friday's sleet and Saturday's snow and Sunday's freezing sunshine. And they loved it. So did I.

Early Sunday, we visited the 9/11 Memorial as a group and then went our separate ways. My agenda was to visit The Cloisters, an incredible museum of



*Carlos near Manjarín.*

medieval art on a bluff overlooking the Hudson River. But before descending to the subway, I found myself stepping into the beautiful neo-Gothic Trinity Church that I was walking past (pilgrim habits!). The choir was practicing, and I felt my spirit lifted after the somber emotion of Ground Zero. After a long subway ride, I lost myself in the chapels and cloisters and art of the museum, reveled in a long walk, and enjoyed a perfect midday comida in a Spanish restaurant. For those hours, I was practically back on the Camino. And yet, something important was missing: someone with whom to share it.

In a few short weeks, sharing pilgrimage experiences will take center stage at the Old Mission in Santa Barbara. American Pilgrims from across the country and the world will gather to share stories, information, good food and wine, and the spirit of the Camino that forms us into a community. I, for one, can hardly wait. I anticipate eagerly the chance to speak with each of you, and to hear your stories about that perfect day on your Camino. ♦

*i!ltreia!*

*Carlos Mentley*  
*Chair*



*Old Mission Santa Barbara*  
*Carolyn Affleck, Sechelt BC Canada*

# Gathering 2013—Hidden Life of the Camino

By Mona Spargo, 2013 Gathering Chair, Anchorage AK

In just a couple of weeks pilgrims from across the country will come together in Santa Barbara, California for the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering of Pilgrims. We will be back at Old Mission Santa Barbara with its rich history, tradition, and culture. The Gathering is a time to share your passion for the Camino, walking, and pilgrimage in the company of like-minded individuals.

The theme this year is *Hidden Life of the Camino*. I had a definite idea in mind when we decided on this year's theme – natural history was definitely what was hidden when one walks the trail. The intervening months have revealed to me just how narrow my perspective was. Presenters have come forward to offer sessions about cathedrals, missions, towns, and history, but also future events and psychological realms unexplored.

A few weeks ago, as I was researching for the Gathering, I suddenly jumped up from the computer and ran through my small house, scattering dogs and a cat as I went. I interrupted my husband as I exclaimed about something I had discovered about one of the towns along the Camino Francés. I ended with, "It's true that if you don't look, so much is hidden." A trite observation maybe, but eye-opening, at least for me.

Those who gather in Santa Barbara will have their eyes opened to the Camino in new ways. You will have the opportunity to learn about packing, first-aid, how to take care of your body, the geology of the area, the birds that you see and hear, little-known and visited missions, a pilgrimage route in California, and how to deal with your inner demons and angels. The weekend's

presentations will encourage you to examine other things in life and give you fresh eyes to view the commonplace, things you didn't know were hidden.

I wish that everyone who walks or is going to walk one of the many roads that lead to Santiago could have the opportunity to come to the Gathering. Having attended my first one last year, I still cannot believe that I am not alone in my preoccupation with this pilgrimage. The Gathering is a great way to connect with other pilgrims, and I think the walking is just the beginning of knowing the Camino.

To register for the Gathering, please visit [www.americanpilgrims.com/events/events\\_national.html](http://www.americanpilgrims.com/events/events_national.html). Write to [registration@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:registration@americanpilgrims.com) if you have specific questions about the Gathering. ♦



Cares Gorge Asturias

Mona Spargo, Anchorage AK

## Other Events in Santa Barbara

Friday is **5x5 Open Mike Night**. Using 5 slides or props, storytellers have 5 minutes to beguile listeners. But take note if you go over that limit you'll "get the hook" from the hard-hearted emcee!

**Camino Cabaret** is onstage on Saturday night. Evocative of evenings at the albergue, when pilgrims share tales, song, and camaraderie, this is your chance to show us your talents. Share a pilgrim song, poem, short story, or skit.

Individuals as well as groups are encouraged to participate.

When the glow has died down and others are heading to bed you can grab some popcorn and watch one of the many lesser-known **movies** starring the Camino. There will be a variety on tap.



## The Spiritual Camino

Have you stopped and pondered your life since completing your pilgrimage? The interactive session, *Dimensions of the Hidden Camino: Angels and Demons, Blessings and Challenges*, explores the spiritual and psychological dimensions of the journey and the return. We will explore blessings and challenges along the way, as well as in coming home.

This interactive and thought-provoking session will be led by Martha E. Stortz Ph.D., Professor for Religion and Vocation at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, and retired teacher Rennie Archibald. Martha has explored many aspects of pilgrimage in her work and on her [blog](#) where she draws on sources as diverse as Martin Luther, Ignatius of Loyola, and Paulo Coelho. Rennie is the co-coordinator of the NorCal Chapter and has hosted chapter meetings to help returning pilgrims address the process of post-Camino re-entry. ♦



*Garden at Mission Santa Barbara  
Annette Argall, Baltimore MD*



*Oranges at Mission Santa Barbara  
Carolyn Affleck, Sechelt BC Canada*

## Of Walks and Rocks

Did you know that Spain has the most dinosaur prints of any place on earth?

Learn more about this and many fascinating aspects of how geology influences the placement of the Camino route, where cities and villages are situated, and the ease or difficulty of your walking terrain.

Geologists Paul Dworjan and Bruce Perry invite you to explore the rocky road of the Camino in their geology session, *Of Walks and Rocks*. These guys know their stuff. Paul is Manager of Geosciences and Remediation Services for an international consulting firm. Bruce teaches geology at California State University Long Beach and spent time in northern Spain as a graduate student.

In addition, the session will introduce you to some of the particularly unique and interesting geological features in northern Spain, such as glaciers, faults, and fossils. If you are interested in karst topography, truncated spurs, and Punta Aitzgorri – even if you have no idea what that means – be sure to catch this session. ♦



*In the prints of dinosaurs  
Charles Lindemuth  
Anchorage AK*

## Cíaramella

The musicians of Cíaramella, who first enchanted pilgrims at the 2011 Gathering, return this year with a few new faces but the same lovely music. Praised for performing intricate fifteenth-century counterpoint "with the ease of jazz musicians improvising on a theme," Cíaramella brings to life medieval and early Renaissance music through instruments that include the shawm, sackbut and recorder, plus voice.

Directed by Adam and Rotem Gilbert, from the Early Music Program at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music, the ensemble is based in Los Angeles and performs at major festivals throughout the United States, Italy, and Germany.

For more information on the group visit [www.cíaramella.org](http://www.cíaramella.org) ♦



*Cíaramella—Jason Yoshida, Aki Nishiguchi, Rotem Gilbert, Adam Gilbert, front: Jose Gurria-Cardenas  
Photo provided by Rotem Gilbert*

## My Camino as Haiku

Brad Harper, Toano VA

My feet understand  
My staff pulling me forward  
I belong, right here



Am I chasing you?  
Or is it you, looking down  
Smiling, at my joy

## Shell Ceremony

Are you embarking on your first Camino this year? We encourage new pilgrim Gathering participants to join in the Shell Ceremony, Saturday afternoon in the Serra Chapel. Led by Rev. Mario Prietto, S.J., Our Lady of Sorrows, Santa Barbara, the program will include traditional Spanish and English blessings conferred upon pilgrims-to-be who will then receive their scallop shells. Pilgrims returning during the past year will also be recognized.

On your Gathering Registration, you were asked if you planned to start your first Camino in 2013. If you answered "yes," you will be included in the Shell Ceremony and listed on the program. If you have already registered, but did not indicate your Camino intentions, please notify [gatherings@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:gatherings@americanpilgrims.com) so that we might give you a proper sendoff. ♦





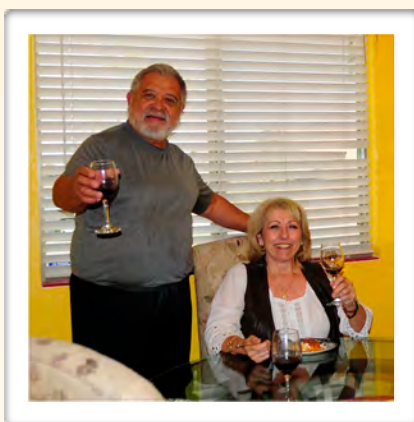
## Chapter News

The spirit of the Camino stays with us well beyond our return, and many of us miss the Camino camaraderie. Recognizing this, American Pilgrim members throughout the country have already formed twelve chapters, the two newest being the Old Pueblo Chapter in Tucson and the Colorado Front Range Chapter in the greater Denver/Boulder area. If you would like to get together with fellow pilgrims during the year for a variety of adventures, visit our [Local Chapters](#) web page to see if there's a chapter near you. If there isn't and you would like to explore the possibility of forming one, contact our Chapter Liaison at [chapters@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:chapters@americanpilgrims.com) ♦

### Old Pueblo

We're official! Our exploratory meeting was held on December 2, 2012 to determine if there was interest in forming a local Chapter in Tucson. Forty three veteran/prospective pilgrims attended. Many volunteered to lead hikes, mentor new pilgrims, and share their Camino experiences.

Our chapter paperwork is complete, and we have our first meeting scheduled for February 24<sup>th</sup>. We have some exciting events in the planning stages and are so proud to be able to call ourselves the Old Pueblo Chapter of American Pilgrims on the Camino! ♦



*Robert & Arlene  
Old Pueblo Chapter*

*Arlene Mourier & Robert Velasco – Co-Coordinators*

### Valley of the Sun

We continue our Second Saturday Hikes, and on Jan 12 six brave hikers came out to Thunderbird Conservation Park and did the 4 1/2 mile loop in unseasonably cold weather. We've added a 4th Sunday hike, but the first one was rained out! In January, 16 pilgrims gathered at Aleida's house to meet and hear Heather Knight (Portland Chapter Co-Coordinator) talk about her recent Portuguese Camino and answer questions about the Camino Francés. ♦

*Laura Prato & Aleida Howard – Co-Coordinators*

### Western North Carolina

With an explosion of local interest, we've held five events at our local REI and will continue to do so monthly, limiting our audience to 50 to preserve the sense of community. We've given presentations to seven schools, churches and retirement homes. We have a weekly *tertulia* with typically around 20 participants, followed by hikes. All this speaks to the breadth of our activities. For eloquent testimony, see

[www.bustedhalo.com/blogs/finding-community](http://www.bustedhalo.com/blogs/finding-community). ♦

*Chris Slater & Gary Ross-Reynolds – Co-Coordinators.*



*Chris Slater, Camino  
Presentation at REI*



*Laura, Heather Knight, and Aleida*

## More Chapter News

### Northern California

In January, 16 of us met to discuss the post-Camino stresses experienced by pilgrims. It was powerful, emotional, and cathartic. We leave a bit of ourselves on the Camino, but we bring a little of the Camino home with us.

We recently held our third annual chapter meeting and second annual pilgrims blessing for those heading to Spain in 2013. Of the 75 attendees, 45 were blessed as future pilgrims. Various activities and an epic potluck filled the afternoon. Did we mention the wine? It's the Northern California Chapter so there is always wine! ♦



*Great turnout for annual chapter meeting.*

*Rennie Archibald & Bob Holm – Co-Coordinaors*

### Portlandia

We're on the move! During the first quarter pilgrims hiked the Columbia Slough and a steep five miles of Forest Park. Heather Knight, chapter co-coordinator and seasoned



*Forest Park hike*

pilgrim, presented Camino walking how-to's before an audience of 50 at Next Adventure. A March 9 potluck dinner will welcome home Robin and John Pigott from their winter Camino and others who have recently returned from Spain. ♦

*Kathy Kennerly & Heather Knight  
Co-Coordinaors*

## Canadian Chapter Activities

*By Tom Friesen, London ON Canada*

The Canadian Company of Pilgrims has about 10 local chapters, in existence for the past 5 to 15 years. Their meeting places vary from universities, churches, community centres, or private homes depending on the intercession of members who can acquire an appropriate venue.

Most chapters have a spring information meeting and an autumn welcome back for returning pilgrims and commissioning of those planning a Camino. My local group celebrates St. James' Day, our most popular event, by hiking trails, enjoying Spanish soup (caldo gallego and sopa de ajo) for lunch, then following yellow arrows to a church service, a lily garden where refreshments await, and a return to our start where we feast on Spanish-influenced food and wine.

Local chapter activities vary with the location, facilities used to meet, talents and interests of the

leaders and participants, as well as local resources. Many of the leaders in my London group meet for Friday morning coffee.

Additional topics and activities incorporated by various chapters include speakers on food of Spain, less-travelled routes, relevant books or guides, new Camino authors or videos/movies, spiritual retreats, art shows, labyrinth walks, panel discussions, information for new pilgrims, life after the Camino for returnees, and serving dinner to the local community. We also raise funds to support specific albergues. Attendees are asked to identify themselves and the routes they've experienced. The point of these meetings is to allow past and future pilgrims to connect on a local level, sharing experiences, knowledge, and contact info in anticipation of future meetings.

For the location of some of the chapters please visit [www.santiago.ca](http://www.santiago.ca), the website of the Canadian Company of Pilgrims. If you're travelling in Canada, do drop in. ♦

# Roncesvalles—Lament for the Old Albergue

By Chris Slater, Asheville NC

It slumbers quietly, silent and uninhabited now except for an occasional overflow from its sparkling successor. Exhausted after centuries of shelter for the pilgrim, it can finally relax. Who knows what secrets lie embedded in those massive walls, what scenes they have witnessed through the ages, what anguish, what joy?

Though the fortress-like exterior with its frugal slit windows still yields to the vast cavern with its serried ranks of *literas* stretching into the gloom, the bubbles of excitement are gone. No novices share the highlights of their memorable first day. The soaring arched roof no longer absorbs the nocturnal noises of a hundred pilgrims, digesting them, mingling them, then reflecting them down between and around the bunks, like the murmuring and lowing of a field of contented cows.

Nor does the novice, mistakenly selecting an inner bunk, wonder how to undress unseen by the prying eyes on all sides, then lie gazing at the chandeliers like projections of the *Vía Láctea*. Pilgrims no longer awake at dawn, serenaded by the gentle music of the Dutch hospitaleros, easing them into consciousness and the realization that another endurance test lies ahead. The racks no longer groan with the weight of discarded goods,

result of the first stark lesson of reduction to the essence. Outside, no more does the sodden underwear flap hopelessly on the line, infiltrated by the perpetual mists, like sad remnants of a bygone age.

Has it passed from our lives, condemned to be a relic of a disappearing past? Or will there be a revolt at the gentrification of the Camino, the extra space, the extra toilets, the abundant charging points for the plethora of electronic devices, to send us back to value the old, the simple, the traditional, the bedrock of the Camino? Roncesvalles. Orreaga. Roncevaux. Rouncivale, to Chaucer. Bearing the weight of history and intrigue. Was it the Moors who sent Roland packing, as every French schoolchild learns in the *chanson*? Or the Basques, unwilling to have their homeland used as a battleground by strangers? The shrouds of mystery seem as appropriate as the fickle weather, blowing to and fro as if at the whim of an unseen force.

The tour buses mingle uneasily with the pilgrims, their cosseted tourists uncomprehending of the unwashed, footsore pilgrims exhausted from their ordeal up the mountain. That, mercifully, is unlikely to change.



*Old albergue slumbers in the mist.*

## Amigos Welcome Service

From our American Pilgrims perspective, we are encouraged by the enthusiastic response to our first opportunity to provide support and volunteers for the 2013 Amigos Welcome Service in Santiago de Compostela. We sent 40 information/application packets to interested members, including five couples. Other members may have obtained packets directly from the Pilgrims' Office. By the submission deadline, 21 applications had been received from members of American

Pilgrims on the Camino. Over the next few weeks, applicants will learn who among us will join other volunteers from Great Britain, Ireland, and The Netherlands as this year's blue-shirted ¡Amigos! If you obtain your Compostela from May through mid-October, you'll be properly welcomed and might decide to apply for one of next year's slots. For additional information, contact [amigos@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:amigos@americanpilgrims.com). ♦





# My Camino

*By Monica Rooney Riestra, Redding CA*

As I welcomed the year 2010, I was not prepared for what was coming or how my life would be forever changed.

One month after the first of the year, my dear father passed away following lung cancer surgery. Just nine months later, following a routine mammogram, I was diagnosed with stage II invasive carcinoma. I was 42.

Although I lived in Northern California with my husband and two children, I was born and raised in Galicia (northwest Spain.) My mom, still living there, was having a hard time due to the loss of my dad, so I decided not to tell her about my diagnosis. I planned that once my treatment was complete, I would fly to Spain to tell her in person that her youngest daughter was a breast cancer survivor. Unfortunately, I never had the chance. She passed away on August 12, 2011, having suffered a massive heart attack.



*Pilgrims in Galicia*

After returning to the States, I didn't want to be strong anymore, I just felt sorry for myself and my circumstances. I was not only mourning the deaths of my parents, I was also mourning the death of my old self.

During a follow-up appointment, my oncologist mentioned that, having watched *The Way*, he was very interested in walking the Camino to Santiago, close to the town where I was raised. I promised that if I made this special pilgrimage he could join me.



*First day, leaving O Cebreiro. Debbie and Michael Figueroa, Marsha Rebstock, Connor Rooney, Monica Rooney, and Teresa Rooney*

Six months later I walked the last 115 km with my son, my sister-in-law, a friend, and my oncologist and his wife. This same path walked by pilgrims for thousands of years challenged my body, lifted my spirit, and restored my soul. Not only a release of grief and my triumph over disease, the Camino turned out to be a very special way to share my culture and heritage with loved ones.

As a result of the gifts I received along the Camino, I have created Adiante Travel [www.adiantetravel.com](http://www.adiantetravel.com). My hope is to give back to the Camino through my dedication to facilitating this special journey for future pilgrims. ♦



*Newborn calf near Triacastela*

## Camino Signs

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



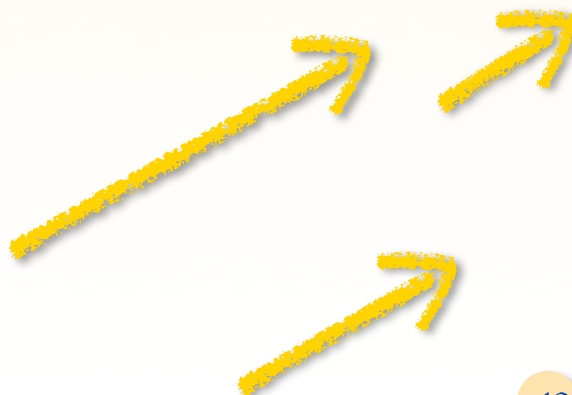
*His usual siesta spot.  
Bianca DiValerio, Chicago IL*



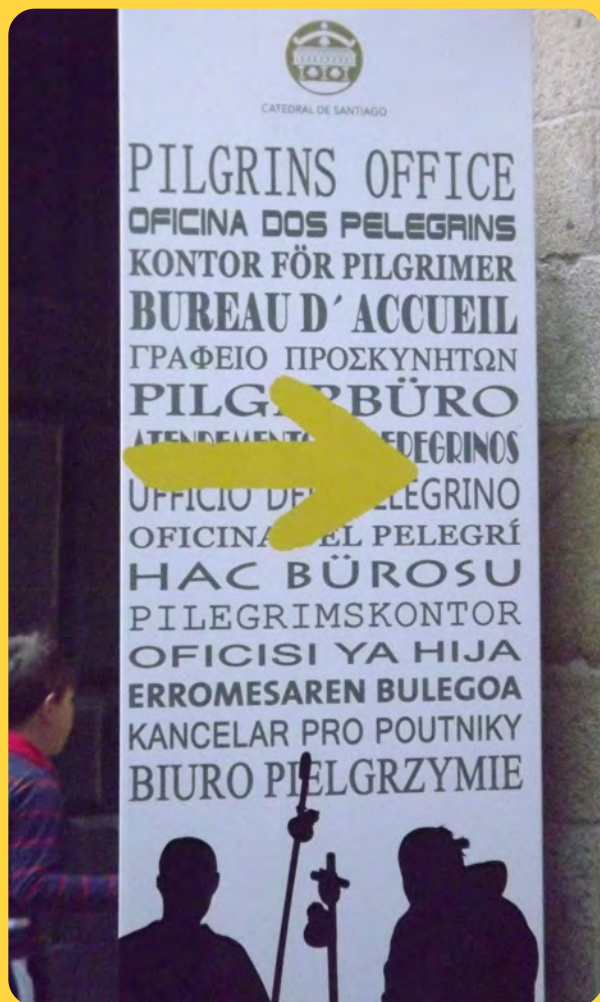
*Burgos overpass  
E.O. Pederson, Fairfax VA  
© 2013 E.O. Pederson - All Rights Reserved*



*Cross of St. James points the way - Palas do Rei  
Mike Dunican, Lake Stevens WA*







*Pilgrins [sic] Office, Santiago de Compostela*  
E.O. Pederson, Fairfax VA  
© 2013 E.O. Pederson - All Rights Reserved



*Bright yellow!*  
Aleida Howard, Phoenix AZ



*"... 'Cause I'm having a good time,"*  
—Freddie Mercury  
E.O. Pederson, Fairfax VA  
© 2013 E.O. Pederson - All Rights Reserved



*Good advice!*  
Marla Keese, Newbury Park CA



## Mí Camino a Santiago

By Nancy Wright, Oakland CA

Hice el peregrinaje de Santiago de Compostela con mi esposo en el otoño de 2012. Antes de salir, alguien me dijo, "Se comienza de turista y se termina de peregrino." Ahora entiendo porque. Empezamos en el pueblo de Sarria en Galicia, el cual es el punto de partida para los peregrinos que quieren obtener la Compostela al llegar a Santiago.

El primer día nos embarcamos con mucho entusiasmo a las ocho de la mañana. Había mucha gente en el sendero que empezaron más temprano que nosotros. Querían llegar a su siguiente escala temprano porque los albergues más cómodos se llenan antes de la tarde. En el Camino abundan paradas para café, comida y necesidades. También es necesario marcar la credencial con un sello tres veces al día para probar que se cubrieron los 100 kilómetros mínimos para obtener la Compostela. La conversación en las paradas gira acerca de los problemas de las botas de excursión, los pies y las ampollas.

El segundo día, empecé a recordar, comenzando con mi memoria más distante, cada etapa de mi

vida. Así yo anduve, kilómetro tras kilómetro, durante tres días. Recordé mis primeros diez años en Pensilvania, los años en México, y así hasta la universidad. Recordé mi primer matrimonio y mis niños jóvenes. Me pasó por la mente cada edad y experiencia, ayudándome a comprender lo bueno y lo malo.

Mis pensamientos no me impedían apreciar la gente o el terreno. Un día, andamos bajo los castaños viejos. Por todas partes, las castañas caían en la senda.

La recta final es la llegada en Santiago de Compostela. Comienza con la vista del *Monte de Gozo* (Hill of Joy), donde, si no llueve, los peregrinos pueden ver la catedral de Santiago por primera vez. Aunque estaba neblinosa, todavía significaba que casi llegábamos. El día de nuestra llegada el gran incienso, el botafumeiro, voló. ¡Fue una vista maravillosa!

Aunque ya tengo mi Compostela, mi peregrinaje continua. Como dicen, el Camino de Santiago comienza en Compostela. ♦

**Editor's Note:** Nancy submitted this essay as a project in her Advanced Spanish Conversation class at the San Francisco Commonwealth Club. When she was young, Nancy's family spent two years in Mexico City where she learned to speak Spanish. Although the language has remained a constant throughout her life, like most of us, she later came upon roads taken and not. Now retired, her pilgrimage on the Camino has led her to an accounting of the decisions she made along the way, and to looking back up the various roads not taken throughout her life.

*Footsteps in the mud on a cold foggy morning in the Pyrenees. My mother had a tough time climbing on our first Camino day, so we decided to spend the night in Orisson. We walked out into the mist at daybreak and continued our climb. The fog lifted and fell throughout our climb; and just before the France/Spain border, it cleared enough to reveal my favorite photo of 2012. I call it "The Footsteps that Came Before Us". It speaks to me of the struggle, heart, and triumph of that day. Despite the challenging walk, we were invigorated to see the Spanish border directly to our right. ♦*

*Bianca DiValerio, Chicago IL*



# Pilgrimage to the End of the World The Road to Santiago de Compostela

Reviewed by Bill Edwards, Mattituck NY

This lovely little book has been in print for nine years, something of a record for Camino titles. Its author Conrad Rudolph is the Professor of Medieval Art History at the University of California (Riverside), an academic who writes in a style more lyrical than academic. The work is based on his 1000-mile walk from Le Puy to Santiago in 1996.

## ***Pilgrimage to the End of the World: The Road to Santiago de Compostela***

By Conrad Rudolph

University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Of the work's three sections, the portion which makes it particularly worthwhile is the first fifty pages covering the author's word-painting of the pilgrimage in the Middle Ages followed by his lyrical evocation of the feeling of the Camino as he walked it in 1996, when the number of peregrinos was but a tenth of today's crowds. "The feeling is of a certain distance over which you have little control. You are a stranger in a strange land, a pilgrim, one who seemingly has little to do with the life of the places he or she passes through. And yet you have a purpose. A pilgrim is not a tourist. You have a deeper experience precisely because you are not an observer in the traditional sense of the word. Something changes. You are not exactly the same person you were before . . . This is why the pilgrimage must be done on foot, never on bicycle; why you must stay in *refugios*, not in hotels, and

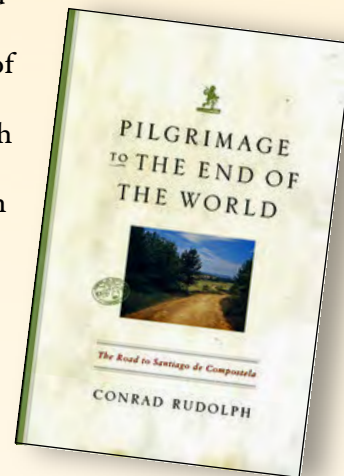
why the journey should be long and hard."

Rudolph's portrait of pilgrimage as a process of self-discovery is both articulate and moving; it expresses better than I ever could why for so many *peregrinos* the Meseta is the best part of the Camino.

The second portion of the book consists of a series of short essays, each an extended caption to a monochrome photograph of a Camino scene meaningful to the author. Entitled "Views of the Journey," the black-and-white photos challenge our eyes spoiled by too many full color photos in books, magazines and websites.

The final section of the book "Doing the Pilgrimage" is a brief practical guide now outdated by the passage of years since Rudolph's 1996 Camino and the book's 2004 publication. (For instance, the recommended guides are mostly out of print.)

Taken all-in-all, I find this book well worth the few dollars it cost me if only for the elegantly evocative prose describing the meaning and the *feeling* of being a pilgrim. ♦



*Caminante, no hay camino, se hace el camino al andar. — Walker, there is no Way; the Way is made by walking.*

From *Proverbios y Cantares XXIX*, Antonio Machado

# It's Only Me

By Dina Gamboni, San Francisco CA

I walked the Vía de la Plata in 2009 while pilgrims were still not a daily sight, and a small, young-looking woman like myself walking alone was rarer still.

The old ladies I'd pass on the outskirts of towns would always commend me for being *valiente* -- "so brave!" -- and marvel, astonished, that I was walking *solita*, "all alone." There were dangers in the woods! *Lobos!* Wolves, they warned, "the kind with 4 legs and the kind with 2!"

These women also warned me about the mighty *jabali*, but my limited Spanish meant I had no idea what a *jabali* was, and none of my dictionaries provided a translation. So I just nodded and smiled and assured them I'd be careful.

But I was soon to find out for myself what they were talking about, no translation required.

One day, as I was walking along a gorgeous, solitary, damp forest path, sunlight filtering through the leaves, minding my own business and ambling on at a pleasant clip, I heard off to my right, a shake of leaves, and... a very, very loud... SNUFFLE!

"*Cchwoink waoink cchbwank!!!!*" it insisted. "*Cchwoinkkkkkkkccchhh!!*"

Before I could even consciously acknowledge danger, my body had jumped into action, springing into a fencer's lunge, with a pole in each hand, pointing in the direction of the sound.

As I caught my breath, the scene unfolded as if I were watching myself from above, the movie scene unfolding beneath me. And there I was, the heroine, face to face, with the legendary *jabali* -- a wild boar.

I was panting, chest moving wildly up and down, still in my fencer's lunge, trembling, the sticks pointed at its large black snout. I stared into its ugly face. It stared back.

"*Is it going to pounce on me? Am I going to die? OMG What do I doooooooooo?*" I was frozen in panic, trying to wave the walking poles menacingly.

The *jabali* stared back with its beady eyes and sized me up. Making its decision, it snuffled out a bored yawn, turned, and waddled away with one last look over its shoulder that seemed to say, "*Don't mess with me, lady.*"

Even though the threat was gone, I held my defensive pose, still trembling, sticks in the air, for a few minutes longer, before dumbly realizing the

movie was over and I was brandishing my poles at an empty expanse of forest. I shook myself out of my daze and shakily got back into step. Perhaps I'd scared the beast— though not as much as it had

scared me! This time I was sure to CLACK!!! my sticks down heavily with each step, singing a warning to all the *jabalis* and friends out there: "*Here I come, piggy piggy piggy! Don't be scared, Mr. Jabali, it's only me; it's only me, Mr. Jabali! ...*" ♦



*Summoned to the gate, three sheep peer through mossed-over, wooden slates. Always candid, animals are among my favorite Camino subjects. Bianca DiValerio, Chicago IL*



## A Few Differences Between Spanish in Spain and Spanish in Mexico

By Kris Ericson-Cano, Sacramento CA

My husband Vince, the son of Mexican immigrants, grew up in San Antonio, Texas, speaking both Spanish and English. I speak “un poquito” Spanish, enough to order meals, ask for remedies in the *farmacias*, and request help in finding a *flecha amarilla* along the Camino. We both enjoy discovering the differences between Mexican Spanish and Spanish in Spain, many of which are included below. ♦

ENGLISH	SPAIN	MEXICO
Hello	Hola-a-a-a-a-a	Hola
Okay	Vale	Okay, Bueno
Okay, right on	Vale	Ándale
Yes	Sí-sí-sí-sí-sí	Sí
Bacon	Beicon	Tocino
Juice	Zumo	Jugo
Draft beer	Caña	Cerveza de barril
How much does it cost?	¿Cuánto es?	¿Cuánto cuesta?
There are no vacancies.	Está completo.	Está lleno.
Let me buy you a beer.	Te invito a una cerveza.	Permíteme comprarte una cerveza.
Stop (on a stop sign)	Stop	Alto
Parking (on a sign)	Parking	Estacionamiento, aparcamiento
Car	Coche	Carro
Pork	Cerdo	Puerco
Appetizers	Aperitivos, pinchos	Antojitos
Small plates of food	Tapas	Antojitos
Computer	Ordenador	Computadora
Apartments	Piso	Multi familiares, apartamentos
Torpedo/sub sandwich	Bocadillo	Torta
Seize, hold, catch, take	Coger	A very dirty word in many regions
Be patient, one moment, chill	Un momento por favor, tranquilo	Un momento, por favor
Shrimp	Gamba	Camarón
Bus	Autobús	Camión



Greetings from the *Amigos del Camino de Santiago en Astorga y su Comarca*.

## Camino Purpose

By Ana Esteban, Wayne NJ

*"Upon reaching Monte de Gozo, the view is like looking at a Picasso painting that I could not decipher. Do I need therapy after this trip to help me unlock the meaning of this journey? Did I waste 151 km and a week of my life to be confused? What am I doing here - limping, tired and sweating looking over a city that is a puzzle to me? But come to think of it, when I started this journey I had no question to ask and no wish for Santiago to grant. Does this mean I walked without any purpose? Is the Camino telling me I have no purpose in life?"*

Journal entry

Monte de Gozo, Galicia, June 2011

The Camino changed how I look at life. It is true, life is more about the journey than the destination. To view life and nature literally step by painful step is the path to enlightenment in itself. But why did I still have doubts as to what my purpose was on that summit overlooking the city of Santiago?

Not being able to find purpose on that summit did not dim the elation I felt when the lady at the pilgrim's office handed me my compostela. In those sacred moments I did not know what came over me but it was like fireworks went off in my head and I started screaming and jumping for joy. The Camino experience enriched my life in ways that no amount of money can.

From then on I viewed life's challenges and frustrations through a pilgrim's eye. It is not how quickly you finish work but the quality of work that you finish. It is not being the first person to

finish the job but enabling everybody to finish the job is what makes it all worthwhile.

But there is a nagging voice inside me that my journey is still not complete. Perhaps because I only walked a stage? Or there is something more that I crave? Maybe I desire to be more involved in making a pilgrim's journey more worthwhile. Being an hospitalero is a noble calling. I sincerely hope that I can be an instrument on the Camino to help fellow pilgrims experience the Way to be as enriching as it was for me. And being an hospitalera is the best way to do it. Helping pilgrims with their comfort, basic needs, food and shelter will guarantee an enriching journey for both pilgrims and myself. It will also teach me humility, perseverance, tolerance, and respect of different cultures. After all we are part of one family on our way to finding our own personal Santiago. ♦



**Editor's Note:** Ana Esteban received an [American Pilgrims Hospitalero Training Scholarship](#), which allowed her to attend hospitalero training on scholarship. As part of her application for the scholarship, she was asked to write a "Camino Statement of Purpose." The edited version of her essay appears above.

## 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. ♦

- |                     |                     |                         |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| ♦ Annette Argall    | ♦ Tom Friesen       | ♦ Cherie Pagett         |
| ♦ Dick Carter       | ♦ Dina Gamboni      | ♦ E.O. Pederson         |
| ♦ Bianca DiValerio  | ♦ Brad Harper       | ♦ Monica Rooney Riestra |
| ♦ Mike Dunican      | ♦ Randy Hay         | ♦ Chris Slater          |
| ♦ Bill Edwards      | ♦ Aleida Howard     | ♦ Mona Spargo           |
| ♦ Kris Ericson-Cano | ♦ Marla Keese       | ♦ Francesc Verdu        |
| ♦ Ana Esteban       | ♦ Charles Lindemuth | ♦ Nancy Wright          |
|                     | ♦ Gene McCullough   |                         |

## With the Japanese on the Camino de Santiago

*By Francesc Verdu, Oribuela, Spain.*

In spring 2012, I had the chance to be a translator for a group of Japanese Christians who came to Spain to walk the last 112 km of the Camino from Sarria to Santiago. The group consisted of 18 Japanese and about the same number of Spaniards from throughout Spain. The Japanese ranged in age from their fifties to their eighties and included two priests, one younger and the other in his late seventies or earlier eighties.

The two Japanese priests celebrated daily Mass at the beautiful, small stone churches along the Camino, and one of my duties was to translate the homily from English into Spanish. Although some Japanese spoke English none of them knew Spanish at all, so I was helping everybody. The older priest, a Jesuit, spoke in English, Italian, and a few words in Spanish during his Masses, which kept me very alert during the translations. I admired his strength, his knowledge, and the depth of his faith.

Everyone walked at their own pace, sometimes alone, in small groups, or two by two. It was a different encounter each time, with people from Japan, Spain, or other countries. It was a precious time to talk to each other and share life experiences, thoughts, and ideas. The groups would gather for evening meals, and for early prayer, breakfast, and departure in the morning. It was an

awesome experience, a Camino encounter between East and West. We had many things in common and curiosity about each other's culture and customs. On the Camino we suffered pain or had difficulties, and we helped each other when someone had an injury or pain. Other times, we laughed about funny situations or misunderstandings due to language barriers, and we had admired the beauty of nature and enjoyed the silence when possible.

The last day of the journey we reached Santiago around noon. We were proud to walk the streets of Santiago to the final destination: the Cathedral of Saint James and Mass at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Pillar as a culmination to an extraordinary journey. Thank you, Saint James. We learned a great lesson. It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from, we are all children of God. ♦

*First published in expanded form on the [catholic travel network](#).*



## Camino Stats — “Here are the Numbers”

*By Gene McCullough, Denver CO*

Last year might have been declared the Year of the English-Speaking Pilgrim, or more specifically, the Year of the American Pilgrim. Compostelas issued to U.S. passport holders increased to 7,071, a whopping 89% from 2011 to 2012. Even more telling was the almost doubled number of pilgrim credentials issued by American Pilgrims on the Camino, up 92% over 2011, from 1,859 to 3,570.

Interestingly, the total number of compostelas issued during 2012 (192,426) was up only 5% over 2011. Except for the 2010 Holy Year, from 2007 onward, year-to-year increases of between 10% and 17% occurred in compostelas issued. The small 2011 to 2012 increase may have been because in 2012 Spaniards weren't walking in such large number; in fact their numbers decreased 4% from 2011. Was it because of the Spanish economy? Perhaps.

What does 2013 have in store? It is very early in the year, but there is every indication of another year of tremendous increases. The numbers of credentials issued this year for January, February and March departures are each higher than for the same months last year, and March is not close to being complete. Credential distributor Rosann McCullough and her new backup Kris Ashton are owed a huge debt of gratitude for their work with the credentials.

So, if you've waded this far through all of this minutiae, perhaps you'd like to see the full picture. You're invited to take a look at the [statistics](#) on the American Pilgrims website. ♦



## 12 Essentials

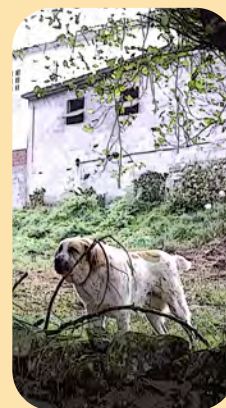
By Dick Carter, Seattle WA

Future pilgrims can learn by experience or get some pointers from a veteran. Here are some important things I recommend you carry (not listed in order of importance):

1. Backpack. One with side pockets for the most-used items. Keeping the same things in the same pockets will save hours of searching.
2. Money. How much depends on you. An average of 20 euros a day will allow for albergue stays and eating grocery store food. A 60-euro average will allow you to afford a hotel once in a while.
3. Footwear. Boots or athletic shoes, depending on the season and your own feet. Breaking in your footwear with a few 12-mile hikes before leaving home will also do wonders to condition your body.
4. Swiss army knife. Be sure to get one with the scissors attachment. If you can't take it on the plane, buy one in Spain. You'll use it every day.
5. Trekking poles. They are like having handrails and are especially good for stability and taking the weight off your knees on hills.
6. Rain gear. If it's August you may decide to take a chance and not take rain gear. Otherwise, be prepared.
7. Blister kit. In Spain, you can buy Compeed. Put it on when you feel a chafe. Don't play hero and wait until it bleeds.
8. Sleep sack. Many albergues have blankets but not sheets. Some people carry a light-weight sleeping bag or a lighter sleep sack.
9. Laundry gear. Take clothes pins, line, detergent concentrate. Safety pins may substitute for clothes pins.
10. Head lamp. This is great for packing in the dark if you're up before they turn on the lights.
11. Guide book. There are several available. Some people like to tear out pages they no longer need. A 4-ounce book can be light as a feather by the time you reach Santiago.
12. Water bottle. Never allow yourself to dehydrate. An extra bottle might be handy if you are lucky enough to reach the Irache Monastery when the wine fountain is flowing.

The list doesn't include such luxuries as a change of socks and underwear. At the beginning of each day a full water bottle and snacks or lunch have to be counted. Remember, every ounce counts! The less you carry, the less chance for foot and knee problems and the less tired you'll be. ♦  
¡Buen Camino!

While walking Santiago-Fisterra-Muxia-Santiago without a guidebook last year, I became lost several times. At one point, I came upon this fella at the end of a dead end road near Dumbria. *Gracias a todos los gallegos quienes toleraron mi español inexperto para ayudarme.* This August I plan to repeat the route. I have already purchased the Brierley guide.  
Randy Hay, Paw Paw MI





## Welcome, New Members!

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

- |                               |                                |                                    |                           |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ♦ Zoe Alameda                 | ♦ Bob & Cheryl Di Grazia       | ♦ Nancy Loeper                     | ♦ Dennis Riley            |
| ♦ Andrew Altobelli            | ♦ Isabella & Luca Di Grazia    | ♦ Bob & Judy Logan                 | ♦ Chad & Ian Roeber       |
| ♦ Thomas Andreotta            | ♦ Bianca DiValerio             | ♦ Thomas & Sean Logan              | ♦ Michael Romo            |
| ♦ Montserrat Armitano         | ♦ Suzanne Downer               | ♦ Deena Long                       | ♦ Sara Roser              |
| ♦ Joanne Baker                | ♦ Goulliano El Bader           | ♦ Gene Lucas                       | ♦ Harry & Tina Rudge      |
| ♦ Gloria & Chris Baldino      | ♦ Mary Esther & James Escobedo | ♦ Philippe Lussier                 | ♦ Christopher Sanders     |
| ♦ Susan G. (Trixy) Barnes     | ♦ Joni Esser                   | ♦ Monika Luz                       | ♦ Lisa Sarasohn           |
| ♦ Alanah Baron                | ♦ Lauren Fenner                | ♦ Linda Magloughlin                | ♦ Bob & Amberly Scheidt   |
| ♦ Mark F. Bartle              | ♦ Constance Fidel              | ♦ Deirdre Magner                   | ♦ Mark Schlitt            |
| ♦ Sandra Bauer                | ♦ Chuck Floyd                  | ♦ Morgan Mahoney                   | ♦ Julie Scott             |
| ♦ Sheryl & Frank Boettcher    | ♦ Genette Foster               | ♦ Mario Mazzearella                | ♦ Marc Selvaggio          |
| ♦ Walter Booty                | ♦ Daisy Marguerite Furlong     | ♦ Melissa McCarthy                 | ♦ Gail Sherman            |
| ♦ Moira Brennan               | ♦ Dina Gamboni                 | ♦ Robert McCubbin                  | ♦ Callea Sherrill         |
| ♦ Victoria Bresee             | ♦ Jeanine Gardner              | ♦ Sharon McCubbin                  | ♦ Cathleen Simpson        |
| ♦ Mike Bresnayan              | ♦ Colette Gardner              | ♦ Kathleen McGuinness              | ♦ Randy Starkweather      |
| ♦ Bronwyn Browne              | ♦ Michael Gardner Sr           | ♦ Brien & Beth McPadden            | ♦ Barbara & Mark Stefik   |
| ♦ Ray Buckles                 | ♦ Frances Gomez                | ♦ James Miller                     | ♦ William Teawell         |
| ♦ Susan & Megan Bukovsky      | ♦ Ronald Gonzalez              | ♦ Diane Milowicki                  | ♦ Mark Terhune            |
| ♦ Maria Carreon               | ♦ Ken Grant                    | ♦ William Miner                    | ♦ Sue Ann Tiller          |
| ♦ Tom Chambliss               | ♦ Reynir Gudmundsson           | ♦ Jill Momper                      | ♦ Laura Vansant           |
| ♦ Erika Chang                 | ♦ Patricia & Laurence Hall     | ♦ Lourdes Morales Gudmundsson      | ♦ Joseph Richard Walsh    |
| ♦ Patricia & Ralph Chiariello | ♦ Nancy Harlan                 | ♦ Brian L Morris                   | ♦ Karen Wark              |
| ♦ Stacie Clark                | ♦ Theresa Hayes                | ♦ Patrice, Michael & Bryce Moulton | ♦ Major & Lori Warner     |
| ♦ Kathleen Clark              | ♦ Sara Hesse-Bruhl             | ♦ Courtney Newby                   | ♦ Daniel & William Warner |
| ♦ Clifford Clement            | ♦ Anne Hultberg                | ♦ Patrick Nugent                   | ♦ Theresa Weems           |
| ♦ Marguerita Cobelens         | ♦ Kellie Hunter                | ♦ Thomas & B.J. Ontko              | ♦ Elan Weisz              |
| ♦ Edward Conaway              | ♦ Shawna Hurley                | ♦ Jennifer Padilla                 | ♦ George Wells            |
| ♦ Cathi Connelly              | ♦ Joe Iacovelli                | ♦ Donald & Margaret Paradise       | ♦ Alecia Williams         |
| ♦ Eileen & Laurence Coyle     | ♦ Michael Kemp                 | ♦ Kelly & Matt Paradise            | ♦ Polly Wolf              |
| ♦ John Coyle                  | ♦ Deanna Killeen               | ♦ William Pigg                     | ♦ Joan Woods              |
| ♦ Johnnee Cunningham          | ♦ Daniel Kutch                 | ♦ William Portas                   | ♦ Theresa Yee             |
| ♦ Robert Dallari              | ♦ Robert Lahs                  | ♦ Nancy Price                      | ♦ Raymond Zielezienski    |
| ♦ Alba Diaz                   | ♦ Frank John Latzko            | ♦ Nancy Reynolds                   | ♦ Karin Zilla             |
|                               | ♦ M.E. Lavenberg               | ♦ Gail Rice                        |                           |
|                               | ♦ Micheal Lerch                |                                    |                           |
|                               | ♦ Pilar Lindahl                |                                    |                           |



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

## Do You Have Camino Impressions to Share?

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

So, please keep telling us, in **400 words or fewer**, about *your* Camino. Consider a photo, a poem, or a new found understanding of an idea – a pilgrim's perspective. We have refined our guidelines, so please visit [Newsletter](#) on our website for suggestions and our new guidelines.

The submission deadline for the next issue is April 22, 2013. We welcome your questions, comments, and submissions at [newsletter@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:newsletter@americanpilgrims.com). You can also submit to the street address provided below.

¡Buen Camino!

*Cherie Pagett, Annette Argall,  
Zita Macy, & Mona Spargo*  
Team La Concha

## Board of Directors 2013

Carlos Mentley – Chair  
Cherie Pagett – Vice Chair  
Cheryl Grasmoe  
Bob Holm  
Herbert Medina  
Mona Spargo

Annette Argall – Secretary  
Ann Howley – Treasurer  
Bill Edwards  
Marlena Lambert  
Zita Macy

[membership@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:membership@americanpilgrims.com)  
[newsletter@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:newsletter@americanpilgrims.com)  
[grants@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:grants@americanpilgrims.com)  
[volunteer@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:volunteer@americanpilgrims.com)  
[chapters@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:chapters@americanpilgrims.com)  
[hospitaleros@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:hospitaleros@americanpilgrims.com)  
[gatherings@americanpilgrims.com](mailto:gatherings@americanpilgrims.com)

Cherie, Annette & Zita  
Cherie, Annette, Zita & Mona  
Herbert  
Marlena  
Bob  
Marlena  
Mona, Marlena & Zita

## Other Key Personnel

Credentials Distribution: Rosann McCullough

Webmaster: Gene McCullough

American Pilgrims on the Camino  
1514 Channing Avenue  
Palo Alto, CA 94303  
Fax: 650-989-4057  
[www.americanpilgrims.com](http://www.americanpilgrims.com)