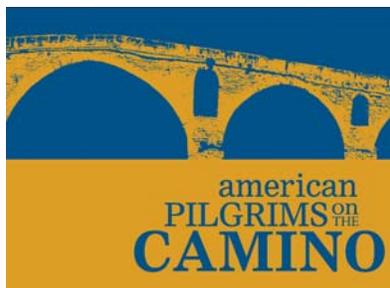


AMERICAN PILGRIMS ON THE CAMINO-NEWSLETTER, MARCH 2008



Dear Companions of the Camino:

As I write this, I have just returned from our Gathering in Santa Barbara this month. You will have already received materials about it, so I do not need to add any comments to all of that. However, I do want to say a couple of things.

First, we once again had on display the wonderful exhibit that was shown in Williamsburg last year: “Sacred Steps.” The curators from William and Mary, with George Greenia’s inexhaustible energy and “high-standards” guidance, did an extraordinary job in organizing it. This is a collection of photographs and paintings and sketches all reflecting different aspects of the experience of being a pilgrim on the Camino. What a wonderful opportunity to show it on the other coast! Once again, we had our Spanish guests from Galicia—Jose Suarez Otero and other members of the Xunta—joining us for the reception at that exhibit, as demonstration of their full support of one of our projects, as they have pledged to support others of our endeavors.

Second, the Board again had time Saturday evening to review with the membership of American Pilgrims on the Camino and with other supporters and participants at the Annual Gathering recent decisions and investments of the Board. That conversation is an invaluable source of ideas and energy for the Board as it plans and carries out what will support the Camino de Santiago.

One of the changes that we discussed at that review was the discontinuation of the Journal, as announced in the last newsletter. The Board is exploring thoroughly how to shift some of what the Journal was able to provide to our website, which we intend to continue to develop, with the impeccable and gifted assistance of Gene McCullough, our webmaster. Gene has already brought the website to wonderful new levels and continues to improve and adjust and tinker and fix. With such an extraordinary resource already in hand, and with so many options for the sharing of information and talented contributors, we believe that what had been provided by the Journal can only be enhanced and more widely disseminated if we select from what is the best provided to us and offer those items on the website. That way our ability to tell our stories to each other, to research and share our discoveries about Camino history and lore, to pool knowledge and advice, will not be lost but transferred into an accessible medium.

Finally, you will be relieved to hear that the new restrictions on credentials has been somewhat exaggerated. The Santiago Archdiocese does want to exercise more control over the issuing of credentials, but that will apply to those issued in Spain, where apparently a too casual and exuberant and whimsical an approach had been taken. The various national entities— confraternities or associations like ours—can still offer a credential which will be recognized as qualifying for the reception of the Compostela certificate at the end of the pilgrimage.

Buen Camino! And for those of you walking soon—abraze el santo por mí!

Michael Wyatt
Board Chair

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COMMUNICATIONS

Call for volunteers. The Communications Committee is seeking three volunteers to add to our web site editorial team. The editorial team collects and reviews website contributions and makes recommendations to the Communications Committee for action. Experience in publishing, editing, copywriting, journalism, or a related activity, paid or volunteer, would be handy but is not required. Members of the team could expect to work in a virtual environment, primarily via e-mail and telephone. If interested, please contact Jim Eychaner, e-mail James.Eychaner@gmail.com

Call for submissions. Members are encouraged to submit materials for publication either on our web site or in our newsletter. If you have a personal account of interest, an article, essay, photo, drawing, or other item that you wish to share -- directly related to the Camino, of course -- contact newsletter@americanpilgrims.com.

CAMINO SUPPORT

At the 2007 Gathering in Williamsburg we reviewed together the opportunities for practical and tangible support of pilgrims in Spain.

The options ranged from just making sporadic donations to full ownership of a refugio. The consensus was that we should start with small steps; providing hospitaleros systematically to a single refugio seemed to be the preferred choice without any real thoughts on which Camino we should look at. Those who were there will recall perhaps that representatives from the Xacobeo and the Xunta de Galicia were also at this Gathering and were interested in exploring some common activity.

Fast forward to the Gathering '08 in Santa Barbara. Also in attendance at this Gathering were representatives of the Xacobeo and the Xunta de Galicia. They had some good news to announce.

We are now in the situation where we have not just one opportunity, but three, of fulfilling our common desire to do something on the ground in Spain.

Camino del Norte

At the Santa Barbara Gathering, the representatives of the Xunta and the Xacobeo announced that they had a refugio ready to roll and wanted American Pilgrims to provide as many hospitaleros as were willing to go. Look on the map for Mondonedo where this refugio sits.

Via de la Plata

Thanks to our trainer extraordinaire, Daniel DeKay, who knows an opportunity when he sees one, we have the possibility of providing continuing financial support to Don Blas, the local priest (?) in Fuenteroles in Galicia. While passing through Fuenteroles last year, Daniel found Don Blas basically building the refugio himself as funds and time permitted. We are already making a donation to Don Blas, which Daniel has hand-delivered already. The Board has requested Daniel explore with Don Blas, during his upcoming visit, the ways in which we might provide more substantial and sustained financial support for him. Look for Daniel's report on this possibility in a future newsletter.

Camino Frances

We are already training future hospitaleros under the baton of Daniel DeKay. They are primarily feeding into the Camino Frances. He and his team have trained well over 100 hospitaleros.

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HOSPITALEROS VOLUNTARIOS

A BRIDGE ON THE CAMINO - Hospitalera In Logroño, September 2007

In Logroño, at the Parroquia Iglesia de Santiago El Real, the priest José Ignacio had completed the evening pilgrim blessing. All of us, peregrinos and hospitaleros, returned to the albergue attached to the church via a secret passage. It was 10 pm and after finishing the clean-up left from our earlier dinner, it would be time to get some quiet and rest. That evening the peregrinos busy in the kitchen were a group in their early twenties. As is the Camino way, they had encountered each other and formed a loosely joined group: together tonight, off on the road again tomorrow. One of the peregrinos is talking with the 84 year old hospitalera.

This hospitalera is my mom. When I walked the Camino in previous years, she followed my steps on her maps of Spain. The Camino called her as it does all of us and she wanted to partake and offer her help. We wondered if there "was room" for her. She had never walked the Camino, she was 84, she did not speak Spanish. In March we participated in the hospitalero training offered at the American Gathering of Pilgrims in Williamsburg, Virginia. Our experiences at the training and listening to others' Camino stories further affirmed our hope to volunteer.

In September, my mom and I were given our chance to be hospitaleros in Logroño. The Federacion, when they saw our application on paper, couldn't quite figure out why I was bringing along my 84-year-old mother, but once we got there we were immediately made welcome. We volunteered with a woman named Antonia who was from Barcelona. Together the three of us figured out how to provide a home for each night's "family". My mom added her own special mix to the alberque. She did her share (and then some) of the daily tasks and also offered good humour and a friendly face (especially helpful since one of her spoken languages isn't Spanish).

My mom plays the harmonica, "by ear" she is always quick to say. Most often she plays when by herself but on this particular night, one of the peregrinas persuaded her to play for her. As my mom found her notes, the young peregrinos slowly gathered round. First one more, than five more, then a guitar appeared, serenading the dishwashers and then each other. They started to teach each other songs. Late, late they sang together with joy and smiles into that Camino night. When I remember that night I think of the American Pilgrims logo of a bridge.

Henny DeKnecht

For further information regarding the next training contact Daniel De Kay at hospitalero@americanpilgrims.com

PILGRIM NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

There will be Hospitalero Training Course will be offered in London, Ontario, Canada from Friday, April 18 to Sunday, April 20, 2008. The program will begin on Friday evening with a Tapas/Paella reception and conclude on Sunday evening with a reception for the local pilgrim community.

A limit of 20 participants who must be experienced Pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago will be accepted. For further information, contact: Tom Friesen 519-439-8900 or tomfriesen@hotmail.com.

The Sacred Steps Camino art exhibit, seen at both the 2007 Gathering in Williamsburg and the 2008 Gathering in Santa Barbara is a traveling exhibit. To find where it will be going next, please check the following: <http://www.sacredstepsinspain.com/?id=1&lang=en>

THE PEOPLE OF THE CAMINO -



Father Jose Maria of San Juan de Ortega –

Our beloved hospitalero Father Jose María of San Juan de Ortega recently passed away, leaving us a huge loss in the world of the Jacobean hospitality. For 37 years he served as the padre at San Juan de Ortega, inviting pilgrims to his table. He prepared a simple garlic soup, with pilgrims sharing whatever they had in their packs. In the morning he sent them off with a hot café con leche and a benediction, leaving a lasting memory of true hospitality and the essence of the spirit of the Camino de Santiago.

The Camino and A Life Journey – a Pilgrim Passing

Two-time Camino pilgrim, John C. Volz, died on December 8, 2007, after a 4 month fight against melanoma. He and his wife, Marty, completed the Spanish Camino Frances route in 1996 by bicycle, cycling from Pamplona to Santiago. Four years later, in 2000, John & Marty started in Paris and cycled the Bordeaux route south through western France, joining the Camino Frances route in St. Jean Pied de Port and then revisiting favorite pilgrim spots all the way to Santiago.

When talking about what the Camino meant to him, John usually offered these thoughts....

1st, the journey was physically and emotionally challenging. It caused me to find the physical and mental strength to continue my way each day.

2nd, the Camino taught me about the historical, religious, and cultural elements shading life in this part of Europe (particularly France and Spain). Plus, we had the chance to learn a little about life in the communities where we stayed each day.

But most importantly, the Camino journey forged incredible connections with the people we met along the way. Some connections are momentary, having meaning only in the stories and feelings shared at a point in time. Yet other connections are life changing. Pilgrims Ton and Mary Hunink from Holland stand out as they not only were pilgrim companions along the Way of St. James, they have become close family friends with whom we have shared a part of our personal life journeys.

We met during our first Camino in 1996, in Santo Domingo de la Calzada, at the “Hospederia Santa Teresita”, a holiday home for the elderly run by nuns that has a number of rooms reserved for pilgrims. Over dinner that night, we shared our different routes along the Camino and through life, and explored our varied reasons for making the journey to Santiago. We began riding together the next day, and arrived in Santiago two weeks later.

Since this chance meeting along the Camino in 1996, we have visited each other's homes over the years and shared in each other's joys and woes. In 2000, we planned to meet in St. Jean Pied de Port, each of us journeying our different French routes to complete the Spanish portion of the Camino together, but we met by accident three days earlier on a street in Dax, France. Ton and Mary, our wonderful pilgrim friends, were with John in spirit along his final journey, bringing a smile to his face and sharing tears.

A Tale of Two Pilgrimages

Review of *The Road to Santiago*, by Kathryn Harrison (ISBN 0-7922-3745-5) and *El Camino de Santiago: Rites of Passage*, by Wayne Chimenti (ISBN 141205638-1)

In the Spring of 2002, Wayne Chimenti, his wife Nicole, and their 12-year-old daughter Nahja walked from Roncesvalles to Santiago de Compostela. In July of 2002, Kathryn Harrison and her 12-year-old daughter Sarah walked from St.-Jean Pied-de-Port to Estella. Both Chimenti and Harrison have written about their experiences; their stories could not be more different.

It was the worst of times... Kathryn Harrison's account of her Camino is written in polished prose, as we might expect of an accomplished novelist. One of the consequences of good prose is that we the readers can clearly see the writer's ideas. In the case of this book, however, that may not be such a good thing.

Part 1 of the book begins in Paris, at Charles de Gaulle airport, where in the very first paragraph we see a mother that refuses to rein in a daughter who, oblivious to the travelers around her, walks against the flow of an automatic walkway. But maybe that is just a metaphor for the whole Camino described in these pages: a lot of energy expended getting nowhere.

The details of Kathryn and Sarah's pilgrimage are straightforward. They fly to Biarritz, take the train from Bayonne to St.-Jean, walk to Roncesvalles, to Larrasoaña, to Pamplona, to Puente la Reina, and to Estella, before abandoning the pilgrimage two days earlier than planned. We learn quite little about the Camino from the narrative; historical information is interspersed with the occasional error and with legend presented as fact.

It was the age of foolishness... What Kathryn and Sarah DO on their pilgrimage becomes for us an object lesson in what a pilgrim should NOT do: they leave home seemingly without doing any research in preparation; they pack cheap plastic ponchos that offer little protection in windy rain; Kathryn takes along an unfinished novel that she is writing; they overload their backpacks with maps and guidebooks and glossy magazines from home; they avoid contact with other pilgrims; they blithely disregard the advice of the St. Jean pilgrim information center and start the walk to Roncesvalles late in the morning. It is a comedy of errors.

Furthermore, Kathryn's thoughts and actions betray an attitude that works at cross purposes with making a pilgrimage. Underlying her utter lack of openness to new experiences and relationships during the walk seems to be a quijote-esque attitude: when reality does not measure up to expectations, it is the fault of reality, not of the expectations. And such an attitude leads to the inability—or unwillingness—to make changes to improve their experience. We the readers see no communication, no flexibility, no enjoyment, no learning: nothing.

It was the winter of despair... If 2002 were the first time that Kathryn was walking the Camino, we might feel sympathy for her inability to adjust. But Part 3 of the book reveals that 2002 was not her first Camino. Three years before, she walked supposedly from Astorga to Santiago de Compostela. I say supposedly because of a strange gap in the narrative that the author simply glosses over. On Monday, March 22, at 9:30 a.m. Kathryn is near Santa Catalina de Somoza, a few kilometers outside Astorga. By the end of that same paragraph, what she is describing—green pastures and grazing cows—sounds a lot like Galicia. And the beginning of the very next paragraph finds her just west of Vega de Valcarce. Now this is a distance of 85 kilometers—better than three days walk—that gets covered in an instant; the author just skips over Rabanal, the Cruz de Ferro, Manjarín, Ponferrada, Villafranca del Bierzo, and offers no explanation. Maybe this should not bother me, but it does.

The rest of the account of the 1999 Camino reads almost like a preview of the mistakes made on the 2002 Camino: knowing that it is far too late on the first day to begin to walk and yet doing so anyhow; actively avoiding contact with other pilgrims; having problems with a cheap plastic poncho; being unwilling to try to communicate *even though she speaks Spanish*; and so on. I cannot even be sure if the author found her pilgrimages worthwhile, because so much of the narrative is couched in negative or ironic terms.

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At the end of the book, I am left with a palpable sense of opportunity wasted. The pilgrimage with Sarah could have been such a fulfilling experience. Claiming that the pilgrimage turned into a lesson in “discovering the grace to quit” is just a self-deception, when nearly every decision made before and during the walk has sabotaged any chance for enjoyment.

It was the best of times... Wayne Chimenti’s account of his family’s Camino is, in contrast, less sophisticated in terms of style, and there was some careless editing of the spelling of Spanish words and place names. Nevertheless his ideas come across clearly, and what we see emerge is not an intellectual analysis but rather an enthusiastic account of and reflection on a pilgrimage allowed to work its magic.

The logistics of the Chimenti pilgrimage are straightforward. Wayne, Nicole, and Nahja travel by bus from Barcelona to Pamplona, go to Roncesvalles, and then walk over the next 35 days to Santiago de Compostela. We learn quite a bit about the geography and the history of the Camino. When Wayne relates a legend, he identifies it as such (the chicken at Santo Domingo de la Calzada); other times he also offers the historical version along with the legend (Roland at Roncesvalles). He even explains what a Spanish bar is like.

It was the age of wisdom... The essence of this pilgrimage resides in the people that the Chimentis meet on the road and in how they interact with those people. From the baker who invites them into his still-not-open café at 6:30 a.m. just after they got off the bus from Barcelona, to the surprisingly inconsiderate *hospitales* in (of all places) Grañón, to the friendly chefs in the kitchen of the Santiago *parador*; including some of the resident personalities on the road—Isabel Roncal, Jan and Mari Luz, Pablito, the artist who owns the albergue in Villar de Mazarife, Tomás, Jesús Jato, father José Ignacio—and especially the other pilgrims that they meet—these people turn the walk into a life-changing experience.

The other outstanding characteristic of the Chimenti pilgrimage is the way in which they manage to accept the Camino on its own terms. Wayne is clearly from the USA: his outlooks and comparisons and reactions all bespeak his American-ness. And yet, I did not see him trying to impose his expectations on reality. In fact, he points us in the opposite direction: “Today my expectations were slapped down left and right.... Maybe it is better to just observe and deal with what is right in front of me, trusting things will work out.”

This does not mean that Wayne presents a sugar-coated version of the Camino. He calls things as he sees them, and notes, for example, the way that some pilgrims would bitterly complain about the cost of staying at a private albergue, and the progressive lack of considerateness among newer pilgrims the closer they got to Santiago. I found that I did not always agree with his conclusions, but his observations underlying them always rang true.

One of his most interesting discussions, for me, dealt with staying in the *refugios*. All through the book Wayne focused a lot of attention on the family’s *refugio* experiences. At the end he reflected: “I had felt it was important to stay in the *refugios* as part of being a pilgrim on the Camino... Now I wonder... The partiers, the rude ones and the school groups had denied us desperately needed rest... Maybe the next time I would skip the *refugios* and leave the circus aside... Then again, we made lots of good friends in the *refugios*. You wouldn’t get that close to people in separate hotel rooms... Next time, well, if there is a next time, I’ll decide moment to moment.”

We had everything before us... Wayne and Nicole Chimenti had made the decision years before to take their daughter on some significant journey when she was 12 years old, a journey that could serve as a rite of passage. Their choice was the Camino de Santiago, which provided exactly the physical challenge, trial in time, potential danger, need for perseverance, and deep tradition that they wanted: “So here we were, on this cold morning under a full moon, starting Nahja’s rite of Passage!” But Wayne was also wise enough to realize that the Camino would be a rite of passage for his wife and for himself as well. At the end of the pilgrimage, at the end of the book, he brings us back to the whole point: “We return home stronger by our trials,... We must return home, like Odysseus, to put things right. Home, ... to the everyday tasks of living; but through our journey we take on the same tasks with new perspective. We interact with new love and stronger principles. We carry the way of the pilgrim home.” What more could one ask of a pilgrimage?

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It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness ... it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us.

PILGRIM SHARING

In Puente la Reina, the Camino follows the same street through the town, just as it did centuries ago. It is a straight line past the Church of Santiago and houses emblazoned with weathered coats of arms, ending at the pilgrims' bridge leading out of town.



Puente la Reina: Bridge by Kate G. Lopez

RECIPES TO SHARE

Lentejas con chorizo

Lentils with chorizo sausage

10 oz lentils	1 15 oz can diced tomatoes	1 tsp paprika
8 oz Spanish chorizo sausage	1 red bell pepper, chopped	olive oil
5 oz pork fat	1 carrot, chopped or slivered	salt
1 onion, finely chopped	2 cloves garlic, finely minced	
1 leek, finely chopped	1 bay leaf	

Place the lentils in water to soak four to six hours before you plan to prepare them.

Drain the lentils, and then put them in a large pot, cover them with water and cook over a low heat with a bay leaf and a couple tablespoons of olive oil. Add water occasionally—do not let the water level go down too far as the lentils cook. Do not add salt yet.

While the lentils are cooking, prepare a *sofrito*: sauté the onion, leek, pepper, garlic, and carrot in olive oil until the carrot pieces are soft. Add the tomatoes and cook for a couple minutes more. Then add the entire mixture to the lentils and cook for around an hour.

Slice the chorizo—make sure that it is Spanish, not Mexican chorizo—and the pork fat, and fry gently in a separate pan with olive oil. Remove from heat and add a teaspoon of paprika, taking care so that it does not burn, then add this mixture to the lentils. Add salt to taste and cook another half hour before serving. I usually remove the pork fat and bay leaf before serving. Serves four.

Carlos Mentley

APOC - STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES - Year ended December 31, 2007

SUPPORT AND REVENUE

SUPPORT

Membership	
Contributions	
Corporate contributions	
TOTAL SUPPORT	20400

EXPENSES

PROGRAM SERVICES

Credencial	
American Pilgrim Magazine	
Gathering /Training /Retreat	
Website	
TOTAL PROGRAMS	24419

REVENUE

Program service fees	
TOTAL REVENUE	17580

SUPPORTING SERVICES

Web Site	
SUPPORT SERVICES	8629

TOTAL SUPPORT/RE' 37980

TOTAL EXPENSES 33048

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION - Year ended December 31, 2007

<u>ASSETS</u>		<u>LIABILITIES</u>	0
Cash	21414	<u>FUNDS</u>	
Prepaid expenses	3500	Unrestricted	21701
TOTAL ASSETS	24914	Temporarily restricted	3213
		TOTAL FUNDS	24914

2007 STATISTICS
310 members
810 credenciales distributed
111 volunteer hospitaleros trained since 2004
14 trained in 2007

Note: Statements are based on unaudited financial statements of the American Pilgrims on the Camino

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DO YOU HAVE LOCAL EVENTS, RECIPES OR STORIES TO SHARE?

We would love to report on Camino related activities in your part of the country. Are you planning a hike, a book reading, a movie? Let us hear from you so we can connect you with others who share your Camino interests and live or are visiting where you are.

And, in addition to announcements and news, we would love to hear of moments on the Camino - a memory, an experience, an exchange, a discovery, a word, a food – a piece of the Camino to share with your fellow pilgrims. Perhaps a photo or a poem to share or perhaps a new found understanding of a commonly understood idea, a pilgrim's perspective. Please send all ideas to newsletter@americanpilgrims.com.

Safe travels to everyone along your caminos.

American Pilgrims on the Camino

Michael Wyatt, Chair

Mary Wallis, Nominations Committee

Cherie Pagett

Carlos Mentley, Secretary

Herbert Medina

Bill Matthews

Jennifer Howard

Nicholas Hayes, Treasurer & Camino Support

Jim Eychaner, Communications (website, newsletter)

Daniel DeKay, Hospitalero Training

mwyatt01@msn.com

mvwallis@pathcom.ca

cherie@pagetts.com

cmentley@lander.edu

hmedina64@yahoo.com

BillinFlorence@aol.com

jenahoward@aol.com

clubnick@mac.com

jim623mo@comcast.net

dandekay@sbcglobal.net