



December 22, 2017
Volume II Issue II

News and Muse

Editor: Mario Tirelli
mtirelli@hotmail.ca

Message from the President



'Tis the season of wall-to-wall cooking and eating. When all our family can't come together at the same time, we find ourselves having a fish festival on Christmas Eve, stuffed duck and accoutrement on Christmas day, and brunch on Boxing Day. As a recovering *foodaholic*, I need to remember the saying, "It isn't what you do

from Christmas to New Year's that matters, but what you do from New Year's to Christmas that counts!"

I hope we all find some time over this festive season to reflect on the wondrous optimism of rebirth, in all senses; to consider our blessings in a world that can be chaotic and anxiety-ridden; to be with little ones who are still so full of wonder; to do a little something special for someone who has less than we; to remember the sweet memories we shared with those we've lost; and mostly, to experience countless moments of absolute joy and peace with those we love.

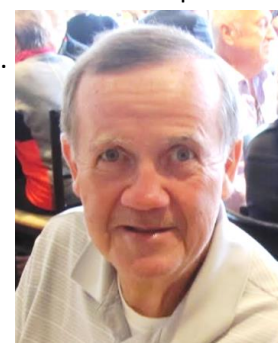
Someone once asked me, "If you had to use only one word to describe what you would want for your children, what would it be?" I said I would want them to be **happy**. To be happy, you need your health, you need enough money for your needs – not your wants, and you need love in your life. So, to all of you, I wish great happiness during this holy and joyful season.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
Maria

The following is an interview with Kevin Marciniak who decided to take on the Camino pilgrimage in Spain. He graciously agreed to share his experience with us.

Q: *What motivated you to take on the challenge of the Camino?*

Kevin: I had been wanting to do it for a long time, over 20 years. Originally, I was supposed to do the pilgrimage with some friends, but that didn't work out. On a golf trip to Myrtle Beach last year, I spoke with Bill Kalushny, who had completed the Camino the previous summer. He offered suggestions of what to expect and how to prepare. His encouragement gave me the confidence to try and complete the Camino. The motivation was a combination of the physical task and to see if there was a spiritual dimension to the walk. Getting ready for the physical was easy. I had been going to the gym and working out for a year. I added long distance walks to my routine. Walking to and from the Thursday "Romeo"



(cont'd on page 6)

Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas.

Calvin Coolidge



ACRA Memorial Mass

ACRA held its Annual Memorial Mass on Sunday, November 12, 2017, at Holy Cross Parish in Ville Emard. Fr. Tucci celebrated the mass in honour of ACRA members and friends who are deceased; special mention was given to Leo Fernandes and James Hanlin, members who passed away in the last year. Prayers and intentions were also offered for those spouses and other family members who were lost this year.

Fr. Tucci was effusive in his welcome of the ACRA group of 65 members and friends. He mentioned his high regard for the work done by school administrators and, in his homily, paid tribute to the educators and administrators who played a crucial role in encouraging and guiding his life toward his vocation.

After the mass, the group enjoyed a hot and cold brunch at the Holy Cross Residence, next door to the church. Thank you to Bob Dobie and his volunteers for all their efforts in helping ACRA organize the delicious brunch!



Mario's Musings

"Don't give up when you still have something to give because nothing is really over until the moment you stop trying."

"Life stops when you stop dreaming. Hope ends when you stop believing. Love ends when you stop caring. Friendship ends when you stop sharing."

"Anyone can make you smile, many people can make you cry, but it takes someone special to make you smile with tears in your eyes."

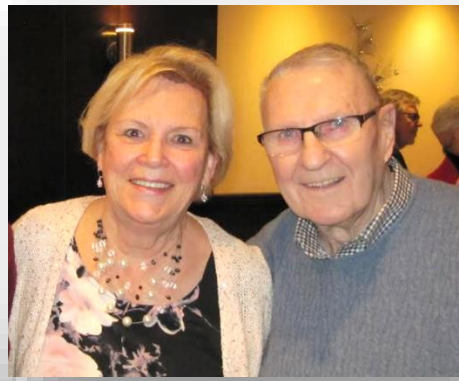
Briefs from the Board

- ◆ The Board held its meeting on Wednesday, November 22.
- ◆ This year's Registration Process is complete. There are 201 ACRA members and associate members. We have lost 7 members (2 deceased and 5 who chose not to renew) and have gained 3 new members.
- ◆ As has been the custom in past years, ACRA offered a donation to Holy Cross, the parish where the Memorial Mass was held. Fr. Tucci asked that it be given to the Holy Cross Fund rather than the parish, so that the donation can go directly to the people of the parish.
- ◆ The location for the 2018 ACRA Golf Tournament has been determined: Les Iles de Boucherville.
- ◆ Discussion began on the Spring Event to be held toward the end of April or beginning of May. If you have any suggestions for this activity, email your suggestions to Joe, our Social Convener, at acrajoe@gmail.com.
- ◆ Next meeting: Thursday, January 11, 2018



One day a little girl was sitting and watching her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that her mother had several strands of white hair sticking out in contrast on her brunette head. She looked at her mother and inquisitively asked, "Why are some of your hairs white, Mom?"

Her mother replied, "Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one of my hairs turns white." The little girl thought about this revelation for a while and then said, "Momma, how come ALL of grandma's hairs are white?"



ACRA Christmas Luncheon

In the charming town of Brossard, over 75 ACRA members and friends gathered at Casa Grecque for our annual Christmas Luncheon to benefit St. Gabriel's Food Bank. Members were invited to make generous contributions to the Food Bank, in lieu of paying for their meals (covered by ACRA). With some lovely background Christmas music provided by Frank Di Perna, members and friends mingled and chatted in our private dining room wonderfully decorated for the occasion.

Our President, Maria Di Perna, warmly greeted everyone with a special Christmas message from the heart. Her message was received with much appreciation and genuine delight. Maria invited Frank Baldassare to begin our luncheon with his message of grace.

As everyone was enjoying the good food and fine company, Santa Claus paid another surprise visit. Clad in his usual festive outfit, slightly larger than last year, Santa greeted members and friends with a hearty "Ho, ho, ho"! Our very own Santa Claus then proceeded to share some interesting requests he had received from our members over the years. All was received with much laughter, to the great joy of Santa!





SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
<h2>ACRA Calendar of Events</h2> <p>Thursday, February 8, 2018, 11:30 am – St. Valentine Lunch Thursday, March 15, 2018, 11:30 am - St Patrick Lunch Late April/Early May (TBD) - Spring Activity Thursday, June 7, 2018, 6:00 pm – ACRA Annual Dinner Wednesday, July 4, 2018 - ACRA Golf Tournament</p>						



St. Gabe's Food Bank Christmas Baskets

On a bright and cold afternoon and evening, over two dozen ACRA members helped with the delivery of Christmas baskets from St. Gabriel's Food Bank to almost 300 families in the Point St. Charles area. Kevin "Cannonball" Quinn rented a truck and made numerous trips to homes in the vicinity. The other ACRA volunteers helped move the almost 900 boxes of food to the trucks that were making the deliveries. Our President, Maria Di Perna, brought Subway sandwiches, courtesy of ACRA, for all who were volunteering. Some other members also provided food.

Special thanks are extended to Jerry Dunn, for coordinating the entire collection of the food and donations for the baskets. Jerry works on this project for months before the actual delivery day. Kevin Quinn and John Ryan continue to annually rent trucks and make deliveries during the week before Christmas. Thank you, Kevin and John.

As Sister Diana said, once all the baskets are delivered then "we'll all have a Merry Christmas". Yes, once again, ACRA members were instrumental in ensuring that the Christmas baskets were delivered on time.



(cont'd from page 1)

lunches provided a way to get used to walking 25 kilometres in a day. There was no way to prepare for the spiritual aspect. Only by doing the walk would I know the impact, if any, of the spiritual component.

Q: How were the first few days of the Camino?

Kevin: The first two days involved crossing the Pyrenees. This meant climbing from St. Jean Pied-de-Port, France (elevation 200 m) to an elevation of 1430 m and then down to Roncesvalles, Spain (elevation 950 m). This proved to be very difficult for me and most pilgrims. All my training didn't seem to make it any easier! However, with all the pilgrims struggling, we encouraged each other and everyone was able to make it. It was during this walking and climbing that I started to question whether I should be doing this. The first stop was at Orisson (a refuge where about 80 of us spent the night). This was our first experience with an albergue (hostel strictly for pilgrims). At meal time all the pilgrims introduced ourselves and explained our reasons for doing the Camino. The meal cost 10€ and the bunk bed cost 10€. The climb to the mountain peak and down to the monastery at Roncesvalles was more difficult than the first day. Here, at the first of many pilgrim masses, I began to sense a spiritual dimension to the Camino. In the midst of other like-minded pilgrims, I found myself reflecting on my life, its purpose, and my future. This really surprised me!

Q: Can you describe a typical Camino day for us?

Kevin: Each day began by getting up at 6 am, washing up, dressing appropriately for the day, having coffee and a croissant, and leaving the albergue by 7 am. I would walk for an hour or two depending on where the village with a breakfast stop was. After this short break, I walked until about 2:30 and then stopped at an albergue for the night. It was important to look for a place to sleep early enough as the places filled up pretty quickly and you didn't want to walk an extra five or six km to the next hostel with a vacancy. Once in the albergue, we showered, washed our clothes, rested a bit, and then walked around the town, village, or city to have supper. After supper, I usually attended a pilgrim mass, if there was one. I was in bed by 9:45 each night. Albergues closed and locked their doors at 10 pm; no entry after that!

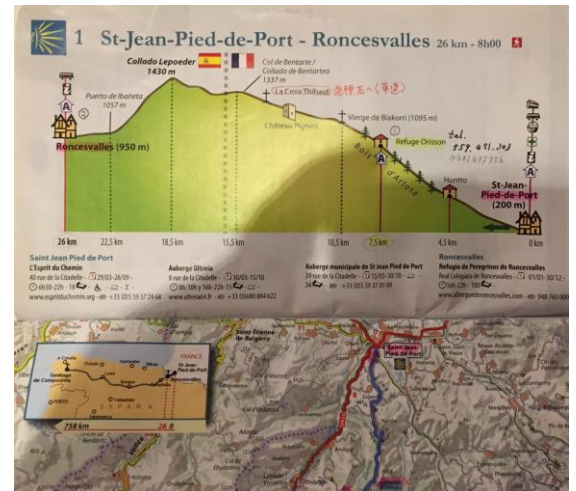
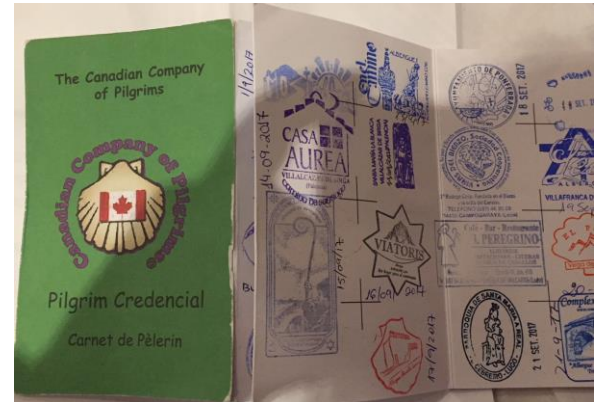
Q: How were the meals at night?

Kevin: If I was in a large town or city (Pomplona, Logrono, Burgos, Leon, Sarria) the meals were very good and the walks around town were quite interesting. In the small towns, the meals were hit or miss.

Q: You mentioned that you walked for 5 or 6 hours each day. How many days did it take you to complete the Camino and how was the weather?

Kevin: It took 37 days to complete. The great thing was that there was no rain during all that time. If it rained, it was during the night! The weather certainly helped!

(cont'd)



Q: Can you tell us about some of the other pilgrims you met?

Kevin: Yes. I met so many helpful people from all over the world. We were there with a common purpose and we helped each other. On the fourth day, we were near a river. I slipped and fell in. I managed to crawl out but I was wet from head to toe. This young girl helped me and offered to carry my backpack. She walked with me to make sure I was alright. The first two weeks, I walked mostly with this retired teacher from Japan. I was able to meet and befriend many pilgrims, including one from Mont St. Hilaire!

Q: Were there parts of the walk that you enjoyed more than others?

Kevin: Yes. The section from Burgos to Leon to Astorga is called the meseta. It's mainly flat and desert like. I enjoyed walking alone and this is where my training paid off. The last section from Triacastela to Santiago was a bit crowded as this was the 100 km minimum that pilgrims have to walk to earn their Certificate from the Cathedral. I enjoyed this part because I met new pilgrims and saw some I had walked with earlier.

Q: The last day must have been special.

Kevin: Yes! The last day was extra special. The trails were crowded with excited pilgrims eager to finish and get to the Cathedral. Everyone wanted to reach the finish line and complete the journey.

Q: When you did reach the finish line, how did you feel?

Kevin: Reaching the plaza was a bit anticlimactic. I felt a

sense of relief that I had actually completed the 800 km. There was no fanfare. I had walked the last 10 km alone. At the finish line, I looked around and joined groups of pilgrims I had met along the way. We congratulated each other. Some were tearful! I felt a sense of pride as I thought about my earlier doubts. I was thankful that I had persevered.

Q: You told me you spent three days after the Camino touring the city and attending pilgrim masses in the Cathedral. Can you describe that experience?

Kevin: Having completed the Camino, I was able to enjoy the city and especially the pilgrim masses in the Cathedral. The atmosphere during the masses was very spiritual and something I had never experienced. Being in a church with 1000 people, nearly all of whom experiencing something ethereal, was an emotional event. Each mass was highlighted by the swinging of the "butafumeiro", a huge incense container that swung from ground to ceiling. During the three days, and especially during the masses, I was able to reflect on my life and consider what is really important in life.

Q: Any last comments about your experience?

Kevin: I would like to thank everyone who supported me and pledged a donation to St. Gabriel's. Their pledges and encouragement were extremely important to me. They helped me stay the course during the difficult moments. They motivated me to keep going. I couldn't let everyone down, I had to complete the Camino!





The ACRA Board of Directors wishes each of you, your family, your friends, and all your loved ones

A Very Merry Christmas

and the best of health, happiness and peace in 2018.

Happy New Year!

Norma Lambert

Alex

John

Bye-bye

Patricia

Elizabeth

Patricia

Maria Dillen

Maria Dillen