

Camino Chronicle

Tomorrow I was scheduled to fly to Paris and train to St. Jean Pied de Port, gateway to the Camino, a five-hundred-mile trek across northern Spain ending at St. James Cathedral in Santiago de Compostela. I first became aware of that city in graduate school as the repository for the Codex Calixtinus, a collection of 12th-century motets and, incidentally, a medieval tour guide for the Camino. Pilgrims who could not afford to travel to Jerusalem or Rome would make their way on foot to Santiago de Compostela, guided by Book 5 of the Codex, which offered advice on food and lodging, warnings about brigands, reports of miracles, and the like.

Over the years, as I learned more about the Camino, I entertained the idea of walking it myself, particularly after seeing the movie “The Way,” starring Martin Sheen and written, directed and produced by his son Emilio Estevez. I never had any doubts about the physical challenge: after all, I had been hiking all my life, albeit for one week a year and carrying lunch in a knapsack, not all my necessities in an eighteen-pound pack. Two years ago, I began serious preparation for the trip, accumulating appropriate gear with advice from the Camino Forum (Which season? Which pack? Which trekking poles? Sleeping bag or no?)



In April, just as I was about to begin a five-month training program, I experienced herniated discs, initially misdiagnosed as sciatica, treated by massage, acupuncture, physiotherapy and, most efficaciously, ten sessions in a chiropractor’s decompression machine. After a two-month delay I set off on a one-hour walk with pack by the end of which I was walking slowly and limping badly. But with more training I was able to walk for two hours and then three hours. After one four-hour walk I returned home twisted and staggering but by the next day I was back to normal. I made five-hour walks

in Orillia in order to take advantage of its hilly terrain, including five hours in a down-pour to check out my raingear (yes, your feet get wet). Then, a week ago, I found myself listing badly to the right for the last hour and a half of my walk and when I failed to recover after a couple of days decided it would only be prudent to cancel my plans.

Why do I experience more gratitude than regret? Imagine that you planned to sail across the ocean: wouldn't you rather learn that your vessel was unseaworthy close to shore and not two hundred miles at sea? I feel as if I have been spared a terrible calamity, along with an appreciation of the disconnect between what I can imagine (or remember) and what my seventy-five-year-old body can actually deliver. I covered nearly four hundred miles coming to this awareness but have been spared any lasting injury. Since such lessons often come at much greater cost, I feel blessed, even as I recall Robert Frost's words at the end of his poem "Reluctance":

*Ah, when to the heart of man
Was it ever less than a treason
To go with the drift of things,
To yield with a grace to reason,
And bow and accept the end
Of a love or a season?*

The Spiritual Coach

During my musical career I experienced particular satisfaction as an accompanist, often for instrumentalists but especially for singers. I find similar satisfaction in the kitchen as a sous-chef, responsible for shopping and chopping but not the overall plan.

As Patti's business, The Spiritual Coach LLC (visit www.spiritualcoaching.ca) has taken off, she requires a regular office manager to handle details like bookkeeping, printing, publicity, Facebook (@pattithespiritualcoach) , IT, and the like, and I have volunteered for the position.



Last June Patti traveled to Montana to become trained as a Theta Healing instructor and now she offers Level 1 and Level 2 courses to would-be Theta Healing practitioners several times a year in both Florida and Ontario. Leaving administrative details to someone else means that Patti can do what she does best and still enjoy a life of semi-retirement.

When We Find Ourselves in the Place Just Right

As we complete our third move in thirteen months I recall the lyrics of “Simple Gifts,” a Shaker song that my various choirs have often performed:

*'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.*

We originally bought a large condo in Lagoon City and a small condo in North Fort Myers. When Patti got her green card and could practice her business in the States she needed an office, so we downsized in Ontario and upsized in Florida. But we ended up downsizing a bit too far. The “place just right” for us lies a mere hundred yards from our previous condo but offers three bedrooms instead of two. Renovations are still in progress (new kitchen, bathroom and powder room; new deck, fireplace and flooring) but we can already appreciate the view of Lake Simcoe from our deck.



Visitors, spared the indignity of sleeping on a blow-up mattress in our living room, have come to enjoy Lagoon City in the summertime. We invite you to join their number.

Cheers,

Art