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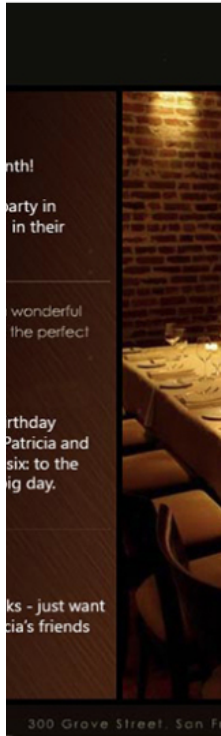
## Bill Jennings's Photoblog



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## A Poem for My Beautiful Wife

Posted by [Bill Jennings](#) ((Bay Area Northern Calif), [United States](#)) on 25 April 2009 in [Lifestyle & Culture](#) and [Portfolio](#).

*Photos by Guapas*

[top: Invitation to Tricia's Friends for her Surprise Party]

[middle: 40th Birthday Cake]

[bottom: Tricia's best friend Maureen (left), and Tricia (right) after the cake and wine at the party]

I was very impressed by the process that Ross Williams used for commissioning the poem below. We exchanged emails on what the goal of the poem was (the occasion, the message to convey, etc) - and also some personalized info (freeform, not form letter) about Patricia and the family (and the event, etc). About a week later, I received this "draft" from him - which was used unchanged. Only after I had read the poem, and no changes were needed, he then asked to be paid (with no surprises on the price): and that was painlessly done using Paypal, even though he was in the United Kingdom. If you want a special present for someone, I would highly recommend [Ross's Commission A Poem](#). If you do contact him, please tell him that you heard this from me, and I highly recommended him to you.

The best blog post I saw yesterday on AM3 was Roman's [...no cargo...](#) - I have a soft spot for monochrome photos while I'm learning how to see them myself, especially those with the thought provoking text that accompanies the photo. Well done Roman!

This is a long, sentimental post with details from my wife's 40th birthday party held last August 2008 - you may not want to read it all unless you have some time on your hands. I'm posting the details so I can remember them in the future myself. Tomorrow is short and sweet - and I will post one of my favorite photos from the first weeks I had a DSLR. *Visit tomorrow - won't be as long, and it will be about photography!*

### To My Dear Wife, Patricia, on your Fortieth Birthday

A poem for my beautiful wife  
 Seemed apt to mark this time;  
 For forty years you've lived your life  
 Like a perfectly formed rhyme:  
 Like the opera's final scene,  
 Or a beautifully crafted sonnet,  
 Like on a cloud you float so serene;  
 And I'm so joyful to be on it.

At times I am quietly astounded  
 At how you strike the perfect balance;  
 Of being so humble and grounded,  
 With all your many talents:  
 Like your cooking - such perfection!  
 Whether it's tortilla or tapas;  
 You charm our circle's every section,  
 From our family to the Guapas!

You seem to have immunity  
 From life's more petty ways,  
 You're at the centre of the community;  
 And we all hope that's the way it stays.  
 Outside and in you are so beautiful,  
 To me there's no-one who'd compare;  
 You combine being resolutely dutiful  
 With your South American flair!

For your dear daughters and sons  
 And any needs they have sought,  
 They come to you as you are the one  
 With your unconditional support;  
 And surely there can be no goal  
 That a parent can achieve higher,  
 Than being their children's heart and soul  
 And someone to whom they can aspire.

You are never quick to censure,  
 And ensure things don't unravel;

You're the heart of each adventure  
 And every road that we have travelled;  
 Our finest journey started that day  
 When at St Josephs we were married;  
 Since then in each and every way,  
 All my dreams you have carried.

Did you wonder when we wed,  
 As the two of us did tether;  
 If an imperceptible thread  
 Had always joined us two together?  
 Had it drawn each other forth,  
 Unbeknown and unsuspected;  
 From the south and from the north,  
 Had we forever been connected?

Some questions need no answers,  
 But amuse to ask in retrospect;  
 What role has luck, fate and chances  
 In helping soul-mates to connect?  
 We continue to build our house together,  
 But know that home is our embrace;  
 And warmth and respite will forever  
 Reside within that special place.

You really are like no other,  
 And it's a privilege to have you in my life;  
 To our children such a wonderful mother,  
 And to me such an incredible wife;  
 So on this day, all those to come,  
 And those that have gone before,  
 I want you to know how much I love you,  
 And that I will forevermore.

Poem by RD Williams

**Presented at Tricia's surprise 40th Birthday at Jardinière in San Francisco in August, 2008.**

Guapas, Family, and Friends attended - and arrived a half hour in advance of Tricia and I showing up "for a quiet evening away from the kids" at one of our favorite restaurants next to the opera house in San Francisco. We had an overnight babysitter, and were staying at the Hotel Palomar (which Tricia loves, because it's so quiet {that's what you give a busy mom: a quiet night}).

The guest gathered in the wine room for the restaurant, and enjoyed champagne and appetizers while waiting for Tricia to arrive. When we entered the restaurant, the hostess (who I coached in advance), said she needed to double check the table was ready, went back into the wine room to alert the guests, and came back to lead us to our table. As we entered the wine room (upstairs, and behind a door) Tricia was truly surprised when we walked in, and the room was full of family and friends.

I had pre-selected a gourmet menu with birthday cake, with matching wine for the celebration with the event planner weeks earlier, including bringing in a bottle of Madeira from her birth year (In a week in advance, so it could properly "rest" before serving).

The entertainment for the evening started with a "roast" from everyone in the room, plus some folks that couldn't attend (out of state midweek) over the main course. Then a young opera artist to come to recite four arias between the main course, and the cheese course. For desert, I read and presented the commissioned poem above to my wife.

Forgive me for the long post today. The balance of this post is mostly for me to remember the details.

**==== Further details of the Event =====**

*In attendance for the surprise birthday party:*

Charles Bock, Tricia's Dad  
 Irma Bock, Tricia's Mom  
 Erick Bock, Tricia's Brother  
 Courtney Bock, Erick Bock's Wife and Tricia's Sister-in-Law  
 Maureen Kilkeary, Tricia's Friend and our daughter's Godmother  
 Derek, Maureen's boyfriend  
 Damon Eugene Rich, Tricia's Friend and our youngest son's Godfather  
 Merla Salongcong, Tricia's friend  
 Anna Kutz, Tricia's friend and Guapa  
 David Kardon, Anna's Boyfriend  
 Donna Davis, Tricia's friend and Phi Mu sister from UC Davis  
 Katie Eastham, Tricia's friend and Phi Mu sister from UC Davis

Marsha Park, Tricia's friend and Phi Mu little sister at UC Davis  
Curt, Marsha's Husband  
Bill Jennings, Husband (me)  
Tricia Bock Jennings, Guest of Honor and my lovely wife

**Guests arrive in advance, to insure surprise is successful, gather in wine room**

*Appetizers (all four served with champagne to guests while waiting for Tricia to arrive with Bill)*

Duck Liver Mousse with Pickled Red Onions,  
Brandade Croquettes with Lemon Aioli,  
House-Cured Coppa with Seasonal Fruit Compote,  
Truffled Mushroom Tartlette  
*Champagne: Henriot Brut Rose, Reims, France NV*

**Tricia Arrives with Bill**

*First Course (guests choose one from below):*

Duck Confit Salad with Blackberries, Hazelnuts and Mint  
Warm Bread Salad with Baby Artichokes and Marinated Bellwether Farm Crescenza Cheese  
Little Gem Lettuces with Avocado, Farm Egg and Radish, Green Peppercorn Vinaigrette

**Friends roast Tricia** (excerpts of roast at the bottom of this post)

**These wines and champagnes available through out the party**

*White: Hubert Lignier Saint-Romain "Sous le Chateau" Burgundy, France 2004*  
*Lighter Red: Nicolas Rossignol Volnay "Clos de Angles - Premier Cru" Burgundy, France 2002*  
*Fuller Red: Domaine de Chevalier, Graves, Bordeaux, France 1999*

*Entree (guests choose one from below):*

Blue Nose Seabass with English Peas, Seabeans and Spring Onions, Bacon Nage  
Red Wine Braised Shortrib with Horseradish Potato Purée and Herb Salad  
Hoffman Ranch Chicken with English Peas, Pickled Ramps and Smoked Bacon

**Presentation of the birthday year Madeira by the Sommelier**

*D'Oliveiras Madeira Boal Reserva (Portugal, Madeira), 1968 (birth year) [served with cheese course]*

*Chef's selection of Cheeses (all three served to guests with b'day year Madeira)*

Brillat-Savarin, Triple Cream Cow's Cheese, Normandy, France  
Molitero al Tartufo, Raw Sheep's Milk Cheese with Black Truffle, Sardegna, Italy  
Cabrales, Raw, Blue-Veined Cow, Goat and Sheep Milk Cheese, Asturias, Spain

**Bill reads commissioned poem for Patricia's 40th Birthday** {poem above}

Typeset and Offset print using archival inks and paper by [Elli Bernacchi](#)

Framed by Bev Kesterson at [Bev's Fine Art](#)

**40th Birthday Cake and a round of Happy Birthday, followed by Arias by [Shawnette Sulker](#):**

- 1) Happy Birthday (everyone)
- 2) Deh vieni, non tardar - Mozart from The Marriage of Figaro
- 3) Ch'il bel sogno di Doretta - Puccini from La Rondine
- 4) O mio babbino caro - Puccini from Gianni Schicchi
- 5) Quando m'en vo - Puccini from La Boheme

*Dessert (guests choose one from below):*

Lattice Blueberry Tart with Tahitian Vanilla Ice Cream and Grains of Paradise  
Venezuelan Chocolate Torte with Strawberries and Cocoa Nib Toffee  
Ricotta Cheesecake with Raspberry Sorbet and Toasted Hazelnuts

**Coffee and Tea**

*Casual departure for guests to return to Sacramento, Fairfield, San Jose, and San Francisco.*

----- Roast excerpts:

*Anna Kutz:*

*Tricia's 21st in Madrid, her 40th in San Francisco*

We had only been in Madrid for several days before I found myself celebrating Tricia's 21st birthday in the pleasantly seedy bars of Moncloa, a district close to the university where the bars stayed open until 7am. It was August of 1989 and everything in the city was dead due to the daytime temperatures that hovered around 110 degrees. All of the madrileños were on vacation, which we soon learned was not only customary but obligatory in the month of August in sizzling Spain. Everyone had fled to the beaches, and so the only occupants of our dormitory were ignorant American exchange students. We had the city to ourselves. The infamous "Guapas" formed that night in Madrid: me, Tricia, Maureen, Kathy, Shannon and Patty. We couldn't have guessed as we sipped our ginebra y lïmons in a dimly lit bar with sticky floors that it was to be our first official gathering as "The Guapas" and that we would carry on a friendship for years to come.

Now, nearly twenty years later, it's hard to remember all of details of the ensuing friendship after the birthday night. But what I do remember is that Tricia always seemed wiser and worldlier than the rest of us. She had a knowingness about her that made us feel like she was in control; she knew what was going on and what to do, no matter what the circumstance. At the time, I was a mere 19, just about to have my 20th birthday, and I marveled at how composed she was in practically every situation. While the rest of us were flailing with our inconsistent academic Spanish (ok, except for Kathy, who had perfect academic Spanish), there was Tricia sailing through the intensive course seeming every day more like a madrileña. Oh, how envious I was of her poise and comfort level. She even dressed the part while there I was in shorts and a Berkeley T-shirt wondering why everyone on the metro was looking at me like I was some kind of freak. Didn't I know that all young women were supposed to wear skirts and nice sleeveless blouses in the summer? Tricia was the one we turned to when we didn't know how to say something, or if there was something culturally bizarre we didn't understand. She just knew how to assess the situation with a maturity we didn't quite yet possess.

Who would have thought that the friendship between six women would span over the next two decades through first jobs, boyfriends, marriages, illnesses, kids, divorces? And now here we are celebrating Tricia's 40th in a gorgeous dinner setting that her husband has so lovingly organized for her. I've seen Tricia change over the years to become the woman she has truly wanted to be, and I feel very lucky to have been a part of her life as one of the original guapas. Here's to you, Tricia, on your 40th birthday, and to you, Bill, for bringing together Tricia's inner circle. Perhaps some day we can celebrate one of her future birthdays in our beloved Madrid.

Un abrazo muy fuerte,  
Anna

----- *Kathy Gentry, Guapa there in spirit:*

*Dear Tricia,*

I'm sorry that I can't be there in person to help celebrate your birthday. Please know that I am thinking of you and wishing you much happiness in the coming year.

What can I say about Tricia? I've known Tricia for nineteen years and first met her at the EAP office at UC Davis. Little did I know that we would become fast friends in Spain, along with the other Guapas! We had a lot of fun during our intensive language program, living in Chaminade, traveling to fun locales in Spain (including Barcelona), and just becoming friends throughout the course of the school year.

After Spain, we continued our friendship during our senior year at Davis and after we graduated. Tricia was always planning reunions for the Guapas, which I will always remember fondly. She was and still is the "hostess with the mostest." I will also never forget, during one trip to San Diego to visit Shannon, our Carvel "a-ha" moment...only fellow former East Coast residents understand the thrill of a Carvel ice cream cake.

I'd also like to say that Tricia has always been a great support system for me, through countless complaints about jobs, crazy bosses and medical issues. When treatments failed, what appeared on our doorstep? -- a huge bouquet of cookies and a lovely card from Tricia with wonderful words of encouragement. When I got pregnant, Tricia phoned me with such enthusiasm—she sounded as excited as my own mother!

She also threw me the most lovely baby shower and was able to gather all of the Guapas to help celebrate—one all the way from Texas! I know that it wasn't easy to pull together a baby shower with two young children and operating on very little sleep. She always makes everything look so effortless. Thank you again (and Bill, too!).

Tricia, I truly appreciate your friendship and support. I hope you enjoy your 40th birthday celebration and hope that we can get together soon. May this year bring you all of the happiness that you truly deserve. Blessings to you, Bill and your beautiful children!

With love,  
Kathy Gentry

----- *Marha Park*

I am forever grateful for Tricia for the way that she welcomed me into our sorority. At a time when I was struggling with being away from home she became my big sister. I received little surprise gifts from her that I still treasure to this day (like the puff-painted mason jar that I keep my cotton balls in).

My most treasured item though is the beautiful album that she made for me. It holds all my favorite phi mu memories. At the time, Tricia cross-stitched and puff painted like no one else! I am forever honored that she is my big sis.

I loved the way that Tricia always made me feel special and how being with her was like being home. There has always been something about Tricia that makes me (and everyone else), feel so at ease, happy and comfortable. I believe it is the peace within her own heart. She truly deserves every good thing that comes her way as she is such a genuine and wonderful person.

----- *Maureen Kilkeary*

*Lessons learned from Tricia. 19 years, 4 degrees, 8 countries ...*

1. Spain – it's ok to pick up boys, but only if you find some for the other guapas.
2. Portugal – it's ok to use the fish knife for your butter, as long as you do it with a smile, then can-can down the stairs of a palace with Maureen.
3. France – it's ok to use your friend for personal gain, especially in the case of French pastries.
4. England – it's ok to drive on the left side of the road. Just remember the golden rule of stick shift driving: The driver may sing but the driver may not dance!
5. Ireland – it's ok to pick up hitchhikers, but only if they're Irish octogenarians on their way home from paying off cattle debts. It is NEVER ok to pick up your Guinness from the bar before the bartender has finished the multi-step pouring process that is distinctly Guinness
6. Germany – it's ok to yell at the train conductor, but only if you're standing on train seats and pointing to your luggage.
7. Italy – It's ok to ogle the Italians. Oh, wait, that was me. It's ok to tell your friend, "I love traveling with you, but damn, Venice is so romantic, I wish I were with a boyfriend."
8. Argentina – It's ok to let your friend horn-in on your family vacation.

Here's to many more years, lots more adventures, and NO more degrees...

----- *Patty Parker*

*Sounds like this will be an incredible celebration in Tricia's honor. I'm so sorry Michael and I can't be there. Here are a couple of memories I had. Have a wonderful time.*

Dear Tricia,

I am sad that I can't be with you to celebrate and wish you a Happy Birthday in person, but know that I'm thinking about you and sending you lots of love and good wishes. I have so many amazing memories that remind me how much fun we've had together over the years and demonstrate what a wonderful, warm and caring person you are.

I remember a time when we were in Madrid when I was sick with a bad cold. I was hanging out in my rented room at Mika's house and feeling pretty miserable. I didn't have the energy to do much of anything. I don't remember how long I was sick, but I had started to feel very homesick and sorry for myself. Then, the doorbell rang and you appeared carrying a large get well care package with soup, Kleenex, cold medicine, etc. It immediately brightened my mood. It was such a caring gesture and I knew then how lucky I was to have you in my life.

Then, there's the time after our year in Spain that we went traveling by car around England and Ireland with Maureen. Neither Maureen nor I had ever driven a car with a manual transmission before, but, at least at that time, it was almost half the price to rent a car with a manual instead of an automatic transmission, so Tricia decided that she would teach us. Hesitantly, we agreed. You were amazingly patient and encouraging despite the many stalls and lurches. I will always remember learning to drive a stick shift in a foreign country while driving on the left side of the road.

Our good times didn't end when we came back to the U.S. We've had many incredible visits and phone calls over the past 19 years. We've shared so many experiences and created a lot of special memories. It's incredible, especially since we have never lived in the same city. I know we don't see or talk often, but you are often in my thoughts. I am so incredibly thankful that you are in my life. Have a wonderful 40th Birthday.

Love,

Patty

----- *Note from Shannon Freeland Merideth*

*Hi, Bill. I've been thinking a lot about this, and wondering what I could say about Tricia that would be funny or touching.*

I don't have one particular story to share, but one of the many things that I think is so wonderful about Tricia is her generous spirit and willingness to help those in need.

Now that I've become a parent, I often send out panic-stricken emails to my mommy friends, asking for their advice and expertise when I'm at my wit's end and don't know what to do. Tricia is always one of the first ones to respond, and not only does she have well thought out, well-researched, and tried and true advice, but she manages - through cyberspace, no less - to say just the right thing to calm my nerves and help me relax.

As long as I've known Tricia she has been that way - a voice of calm and reason. She's amazingly knowledgeable about whatever she puts her mind to, and is also able to be articulate about it. She has a knack for knowing just what someone needs to hear to feel better.

Here's one specific example of Tricia's thoughtfulness: Tricia threw a "Northern California Baby Shower" for me; totally unnecessary, but at the same time, completely generous and selfless and a wonderful opportunity for me to see the Guapas one more time before having the baby. On the day of the shower she had a broken down car and a sick child at home, and still managed to be the most gracious of hostesses.

I know that the above isn't exactly "roasting" material, but feel free to use or share part or all of it if you desire. I hope you have a wonderful birthday evening, and give Tricia my love!

xoxo  
Shannon Merideth

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