



**W**HEN DICK AND DELLA SCHROEDER WALK THE LAST 125 KILOMETERS OF THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO IN NORTHERN SPAIN, THEY MEET AN INTERNATIONAL CAST OF CHARACTERS FOLLOWING FOOTSTEPS FIRST LAID DOWN MORE THAN 1,000 YEARS AGO.

DELLA, 77, IS A RETIRED EPISCOPAL PRIEST STILL WORKING AS AN INTERIM RECTOR AT A CHURCH IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA. DICK, 82 YEARS OLD, IS A RETIRED NEWSPAPER EDITOR, STILL HAILE AND VIGOROUS—CERTAINLY IN HIS OWN EYES. IN HIKING THE WAY OF ST. JAMES, DELLA SEEKS A VAGUELY DEFINED “PURIFICATION.” DICK IS MORE INTERESTED IN THE STOPS ALONG THE PATH FOR GALICIAN FOOD—OLIVES, *JAMÓN*, ROASTED *PIMIENTOS*, OCTOPUS—STRONG COFFEE, COLD BEER AND THE CHANCE TO SPEAK SPANISH.

FAR FROM AN OCCASION OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING OR OF LIFE-CHANGING EPIPHANIES—AS IT WAS OFTEN TOUTED TO THEM BY RETURNED ENTHUSIASTS—THE PILGRIMAGE FOR DICK AND DELLA TURNS OUT TO BE A DAILY DEMONSTRATION OF THE PLEASURES AND PAINS OF THE HUMAN JOURNEY.

“EVERYTHING THAT STOOD OUT FOR HIM,” DICK REFLECTS ON THE FIFTH DAY OF THEIR EIGHT-DAY TREK, “ALL THE HIGH POINTS THAT WOULD POPULATE HIS MEMORIES OF THIS EXPERIENCE, HAVE BEEN MUNDANE. OF THE WORLD AND OF THE FLESH. DECIDEDLY UNSPIRITUAL.”

IN FACT, HE MUSES, “SO FAR THIS WAY OF ST. JAMES HAS BEEN MORE LIKE THE ROUTE OF THE SEVEN SINS.”

AND YET, HE TOO COMES AWAY WITH INSIGHT FROM THE REPETITIVE GREETING AMONG PILGRIMS: “*¡BUEN CAMINO! ¡ULTREIA! ONWARD.*”

**D**AVID OLLIER WEBER WRITES AND GROWS OLIVES ON A SMALL FARM IN CALIFORNIA'S MOTHER LODE. HIS WIFE IS AN EPISCOPAL PRIEST. THEY WALKED THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO BEFORE THE DISRUPTIONS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.



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