



2011 Memories and Wishing you a wunderbares 2012

2011 has been full of laughter and joy because of you! "Leben ist gut!" has become one of Annie's favorite German phrases (in addition to "Knackarsch"). You may recall that we finished our last year's letter on Christmas Eve when we were emptying a bottle of Spätburgunder in Garmisch, Germi's hometown. On New Year's Eve, we hiked up to Kreuzalm overlooking Garmisch, like in the previous year. (To reduce the chance of having to visit the emergency room again, we opted for snow shoes rather than skis this year.) From our vantage point we enjoyed the most spectacular fireworks Annie had ever witnessed. In contrast to Americans, Bavarians think that it is an excellent idea shooting rockets while being drunk. Garmisch was "on fire" wherever we looked. ^



A few more days of skiing, and then we were California-bound again. Death Valley welcomed us back for Nic and Barbie's birthday celebration in January. While there, we mountain biked Titus Canyon even though it was closed due to snow at the higher elevations. < The rangers caught us, mumbled words like "misdemeanor", "deportation," etc., and finally let us ride on. Titus Canyon turned out to be spectacular and much more diverse than a jail cell. :o)

Annie's year started with an article published in [CalSurveyor](#) (California Land Surveyor's Association's (CLSA) magazine) entitled 'Subdividing California'. The emails and phone calls from her fellow professionals up and down the state made her realize how intimate surveyors are

with old maps! She thought she was the only weirdo. :o)

Germe has more high school friends living in San Francisco than Annie does! We visited Tinka and her kids during one of Annie's CLSA Board meeting weekends and went to Ano Nuevo Beach. > This time, we obeyed the park rules and didn't try to tickle the Elephant Seals frolicking on the beach.



When Annie bought her Alpine house in 2000, she knew she had a 30-year fixer upper in her future. Well, fixing-up time came again when we noticed that the upstairs bathroom was leaking to the downstairs. Many winter weekends were spent riding our bikes to hardware, plumbing, and tile stores. We think we found every pothole in San Diego. In between construction chores we visited with Kelly, an old roommate of Annie's, in Indian Canyons, near Palm Springs. Wow, what a desert surprise!! <

Annie's sister, Bernadette zipped through SoCal in April. After visiting a few wineries, she shared a few childhood secrets, leaving Germe bamboozled. Annie had to finish the stories after Bernie's departure. >





Easter weekend found us in the Sierras in a snow skills and crevasse rescue class to get Germi ready for our adventure to come. He enjoyed sliding down the snow and self arresting with the ice axe. All he ever knew was sliding down the snow on skies.



Bathroom construction was fully underway. A Bavarian wedding was a perfect excuse to escape the dust. Raimund, the son of Germi's cousin, married Silvia on 14 May. < The celebration commenced with breakfast. Still jet-lagged, we were looking forward to a huge cup of coffee to start off the festivities, Well...we are not sure what we were thinking. Gabi (Raimund's mom) looked at us perplexed when we asked for coffee. All they had to offer was beer, pretzels and white



sausage! After breakfast we all walked through town to the church ^ behind a Bavarian band. Annie lost her high heels in the cobblestones many times. The day was a déjà vu of last year's wedding when Raimund's sister Elisabeth married: 12+ hours of being merry, dancing on beer benches, singing songs of prostitutes in Munich, falling off beer benches, lederhosen, dirndl, more beer, more wine, skits, and more food. Germi thought that the only American gal attending the wedding blended right in.



Finally, we attempted to get back on Germi's before-Annie-Memorial-Weekend-schedule: windsurfing at Lake Isabella. Well, the wind was OK for a wee bit, but then the weather turned and it started snowing in the mountains. We decided to give Annie's truck a workout and venture into the snow. > We found excellent mountain biking territory for Annie's enjoyment for years to come.



June found us in Guadalupe Valley, Mexico, at Guateque, an amateur wine maker festival taking place in a dusty farm field. It was Germi's first real Baja experience and he certainly enjoyed the culture. We helped pour Viognier, which our friends Nic, Barbie, Danny, and Barbara had produced. > It was a huge hit. We were the only gringos, but luckily understood "mas vino por favor".



July was upon us and Germi moved his permanent residence to higher ground: Annie's house in Alpine. Re-construction was still in full swing. Another dust escape was needed and we headed to the Sierras for the 4th. < Temple Crag was our goal but we were defeated at "Contact Crack" when Germi cracked a rib on contact. We will summit that sucker next time!





Germi signed up to be an honorary surveyor when he backpacked with CLSA folks to the Initial Point in the San Bernardino mountains. > It is the reference point for surveying Southern California. It must be noted that the Seabees and the German Army beat the Marines to camp.



Another line item had to be added to the construction. Evidently our cat Pico completely stressed out and quit eating causing "feline hepatic lipidosis." The only viable treatment was force-feeding. Well, we tried this for one day and learned that claws of a very sick cat still work amazingly well. So we spent a small fortune to have a feeding tube installed, which was advertised as the only treatment with a 90% chance of full recovery. Squirting food down the tube four times per day consumed Annie's life. We apologize for being remiss in communication! August started with emotions reeling. Pico started eating on his own 5 August, but not enough to sustain life. Our European adventure was just around the corner, yet Pico still needed Annie. We were so happy and relieved when Gina, a veterinarian technician and our neighbor's sister, was able to take care of Pico while we were enjoying the Alps. Thank you Gina!! Last minute packing was done and we were Alps-bound.



Garmisch was our first stop. We visited Mom for her 85th birthday. She is one tough Bavarian, bed-ridden but still keeping tabs on Germi in a very special way. The next day, seven trains and 12 hours later, we arrived in the fairytale landscape surrounding Chamonix, the mountaineering capital of France. < Wow...it takes a lot to not trip and fall while admiring sunlit glaciers and geranium-laden buildings in one glance. We backpacked out of Chamonix on 20 August with ice cream cones in our hands, Mont Blanc in the background, and sausage, wine, cheese and a baguette in our backpacks. We were finally on the "Walker's Haute Route."



saw the epitome of alpine flora in the wild.

Up and over passes with never-ending views of glaciers, down to villages garnished in geraniums. The enchantment filled our hearts. An instant friendship sparked with Peter and Regine of Frankfurt >, at Cabane du Mont Fort. We spent many "wunderbar" moments with them, adding an extra-special dimension to our adventure. They were at the right place at the right time...our 33rd anniversary! We enjoyed the dramatic decadence of the Cabane de Moiry mountain hut while looking at the Moiry icefall through floor-to-ceiling windows. The next day, we came across a field of Edelweiss! < It was the first time we ever



Cute sheep, cows with bells, glaciers >, passes, chamois, ibex, hamlets nestled on hillsides, more glaciers, geranium filled villages, houses perched on rock pedestals, more glaciers, perfect weather, and finally, on the 11th day, 96 miles and 32,000'+ of elevation gain later, the Matterhorn captured our senses. < The weather was turning, the clouds were dancing around the sentinel and we were tearing up, knowing that this was the last day on the trail.





We still had Mt Blanc ahead of us to keep the excitement in the air. From Zermatt, the village at the foot of the Matterhorn, we took a train back to Chamonix. We crossed the Trient Gorge ascending to breath-taking heights where waterfalls were crashing down. Majestic crags and cozy villages ultimately gave way again to the grandiose glacier of Mont Blanc.

As forecasted, the weather turned, and we were forced to postpone climbing Mont Blanc to another time. Instead, we went up and over Mont Blanc to Courmayeur, Italy, via 6 cable cars! > OMG...It was mind boggling. Simply being at the summit of Aiguille du Midi made us jitter wanting to play on the glacier as we watched climbers descending the mountain. It did make us sad, but the mountain is always in charge. Bongiorno Courmayeur! The village was a delight.



We arrived just in time for the annual farmer's market featuring wine and cheese from the region. While in Italy, hiking to a mountaintop, we watched in disbelief, a cow finishing a can of beer. < The next day we traveled to Geneva, the stunning finale of a wonderful adventure. A dip in Lake Geneva, splendid swans, and a crepe sent us westerly to California heavy hearted, but anxious to see our furballs at home. We came home to a fattened-up Pico, and within a few days he told us that he was done with tube-feeding: he tore it out himself. We now have an expensive miniature polar bear running around the house again with Sierra.

The end of the year was filled with various timelines for Germar. Earlier in the year, he was invited to attend the 20th year anniversary symposium of the Network for the Detection of Atmospheric Composition Change (NDACC). (The network is composed of high-quality, remote-sensing research stations for observing and understanding the physical and chemical state of the atmosphere. The UV monitoring network that Germi is overseeing contributes data to the NDACC). The meeting took place on Réunion Island, a small island belonging to France and located east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. It is the land furthest away from San Diego on planet Earth. Getting there involved a 22-hour butt-torture. Annie decided to hop along. We enjoyed Paris during a 10-hour layover on our way to Réunion, walked along the Seine, through the Louvre, > climbed the Arc de Triomphe, and finally admired the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame. While Germar was presenting the latest results of the UV monitoring network at the symposium, Annie was wandering around the island, visiting sea turtles and enjoying Creole delicacies.



Before our departure, we managed to climb the highest mountain of the Indian Ocean, the Piton des Neiges < and we snorkeled amongst the most beautiful tropical fish in the coral reef.

In November, we celebrated our 36th anniversary with a trip to the wine-growing region of the Santa Barbara county. The first day, we mountain biked the highest mountain of the county (hiking the last two hours through snow). The next day, we biked from winery to winery through vineyards exploding in fall colors. It was very romantic. >





Germi was also invited to prepare an essay on Ozone and UV Radiation for the "Arctic Report Card," issued annually by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The 2011 edition of the "Report Card" was released on 1 December, is available at <http://www.arctic.noaa.gov/reportcard/>, and provides concise environmental information on the state of the Arctic, relative to historical time series records. It was the first time that ozone and UV Radiation was featured in this resource. 2011 was also the first year that an "ozone hole" was observed over the Arctic. Check it out and click the URL!

Additionally, in December, Germi attended the annual fall meeting of the American Geophysical Union in San Francisco. He presented a talk on the radiometers he is currently helping to develop with Biospherical Instruments. The instruments will ultimately be used for the calibration and validation of NASA satellites.

It is Christmas again, and the circle comes to a close. We are spending the holiday in Alpine, with Annie's dad visiting. He has been spoiled with wine tasting, the Nutcracker ballet, a quaint Bavarian get together (so he would not forget who Germi was), peddling his butt around Coronado in a surrey, a Borrego Springs sculpture tour where he was making new friends > , a San Jacinto aerial tram ride to the snow and 'Some Lovers' at the Old Globe in Balboa Park. Once every ten years or so, it is fun being a tourist.



We just finished a dry "Silvaner" from Franconia and are diligently attempting to get this letter out before the New Year. The reminiscing brings so many smiles upon our hearts. You have filled our lives with so much happiness, laughter, goofy and serious moments, extra special moments and love. We wish you a fun filled, love filled 2012 and we look forward to a fun 2012 with you!

*Bunches of hugs,
Annie and Germar*



*and Sierra and Pico
(the handsome furball &
the miniature polar bear)*

