



## 2012 Memories of Annie and Germar

Legal preamble: As of April 2012, Germi is an officially registered prevaricator, so believe what you wish and read at your own risk!

Poof! 2013 is almost here. We are not sure where the time went, but it sure was fun. And that is not a lie.

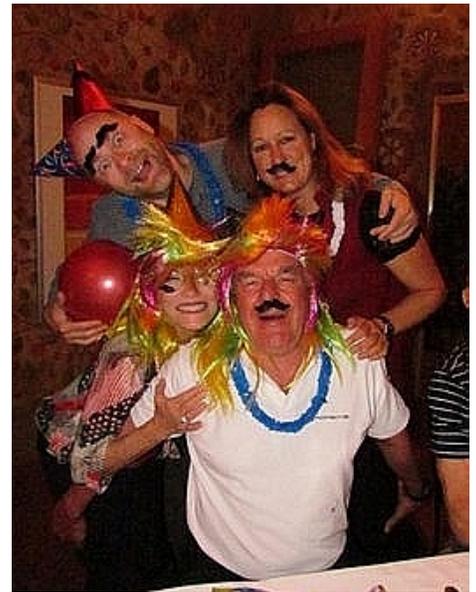


Believe it or not, Germi had never been to the Grand Canyon! Once Annie's dad departed back to the east coast after our 2011 Christmas, we stuffed Italian wine in our backpacks and zipped to the South Rim. We greeted the new year from the bottom of the canyon sitting in a rock-in-chair. < At midnight, the rangers dropped "Sammy the Scorpion" from the flagpole at Phantom Ranch to mark the start of 2012. (Think Times Square!)

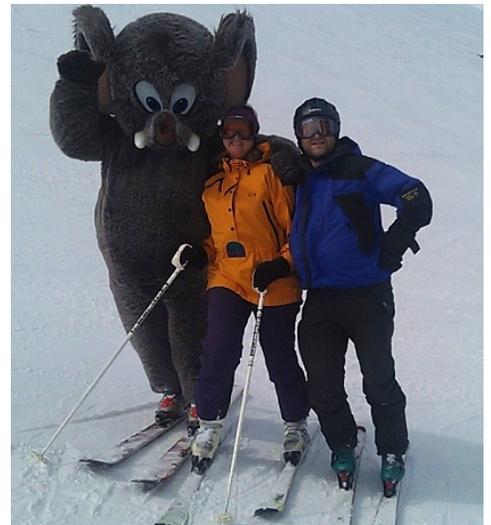
January continued as a party. We debuted fun do's for Nic & Barbie's birthday celebration in Anza Borrego. >> We celebrated in Stratford for Dave's 50<sup>th</sup> with flapper girls and gangsters, > visited Pine Bush where Annie grew up (she helped build that < house!)



and had a blast with Annie's brothers, Mike and Timmy <<. It was the first time that Germar visited the place where his Love hatched. Back in San Diego, we celebrated Dave and Ginny's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



√ In-between the start of Annie's German class, February brought us to the KOFA wildlife refuge. The jagged peaks looked unreal and were probably made by Hollywood for a space movie √. March brought us into the San Gabriel mountains to help the Forest Service count big horn sheep. It was a big operation, involving a helicopter in the air and us on the ground. On another weekend we drove up to Mammoth to ski with Betsy & John. One of Annie's dreams came true as she skied with Woolly the Mammoth. >





And then the dreaded phone call came. Germa's mom passed as Spring sprung. The budding trees, chirping birds and melting snow took mom away and left only beautiful memories behind. "Hanne" was a wonderful loving mom, dedicated teacher, enthusiastic skier, and ardent traveler. < Germa inherited a few traits from her and will keep her in his heart forever. He flew to Germany the next day, and Annie followed a few days later for the funeral. Mom loved flowers and mountains all her life. She found her last resting place under a mound of bouquets and wreaths with the beautiful mountains of Garmisch glowing in the background and the crystal blue heavens above. >



Back in San Diego, we led a few hikes in Anza Borrego for the Anza Borrego Foundation. April was the grand finale with a hike up Coyote Mountain and the [Peg Leg Smith Liars contest](#) thereafter. Hans Finsterbolder, a Bavarian cowherder, entranced the crowd as he told of the email he received from Nigeria explaining that he was the heir of Peg Leg Smith's gold. Hans only needed to wire 1000 Euros to Nigeria to claim his inheritance, which he did. A few days later, Hans received a letter with a map where to find the gold. He hopped on a huge "metal flying machine" (Living in a narrow alpine valley, Hans had never seen a plane before!), and with the help



of the map, he soon found the treasure. It was enormous! The tale ends with Hans giving the gold to the European Central Bank so that they could bail out Greece and save the world from economic collapse. Hans went back to his simple life as a cowherder in the Bavarian Alps and to his favorite cow, Elsa. Of course, Hans won first prize for the tale, gave his first press conference, ^ and is now a registered prevaricator. >

Rather than being deported for hanging out "under the radar" at Annie's fire lookout, Germa trained and is now an official lookout also. The sunrises, thunderstorms and sunsets will now continue to show their splendor as we are perched on [Tahquitz Peak](#) without deportation fears. Come visit us next season!

May brought us to Annie counting down German classes and diligently working with surveyors up and down the state as the Chairman for Monument Conservation. Germa was measuring the full moon to test instruments he was helping to develop for NASA.



In June, we crossed the border to Mexico and headed to Valle de Guadalupe. We joined



Nic, Barbie, Barbara and Danny, the token gringo winemakers at Guataque, > an amateur winemaker festival. The only respectable way to finish off a delightful reprieve was to spend the next day in Ray and Patti's wine cellar of Lechuzza Winery. < Barrel tasting for all!!





It became obvious in June that Germar would have to work 24 hour days, plus the nights, for the next few months to prepare for a NASA campaign in August/September. Annie demanded a 4<sup>th</sup> of July backpack to prevent Germar from popping. Steve, Sabrina, Chuck and us zipped up to King's Canyon to venture off into one of the premier treasures of the Sierras – Rae Lakes. > Of course, the Bavarian had to jump in almost every lake along the way, including the ones at 11,000 ft with snow on their shores!



Annie still is not sure why Germar moved to San Diego from skiing and windsurfing territory. Germar was ecstatic when his old buddy Andi visited in July. It happened that Annie's pal Kelly visited also. The guys windsurfed ALL weekend and Germi was glad that Kelly could entertain Annie as they biked 100 miles.



Germi's preparations for the NASA campaign culminated at the end of August when the [OSPRey system](#) was shipped to Hawaii. The system will eventually be used to validate measurements of NASA's ocean color satellites. The instruments were set up on the roof platform of the Mauna Loa Observatory at 3,400 meters (11,150 ft) MSL. < Years of hard work finally came to fruition: the instruments were successfully calibrated using the Sun and the Moon.

Of course, if Germar was off to Hawaii, Annie was off to the Sierras. With 5 peeps – Kathy, Heather, Dana, John, Jeff, she escaped the Labor Day craziness into the Evolution Peaks area. Kathy reached her highest on the flank of Mt. Wallace and was super proud!

With the stress of deadlines gone, it was finally vacation time – exploring Tuscany by bicycle. The end of September found us on another big metal flying machine heading to Florence. Upon arrival, we stood in the taxi line for 1.5 hours because of rain. (When it rains, Italians leave their scooters home thus clogging streets with cars, and even taxis get stuck.) While queuing up, we chatted with a nice gentleman. After a while it became obvious that he makes his own wine. After more time it became obvious that he makes A LOT of wine. It turned out that we were conversing with Barone Francesco [Ricasoli](#). He is the heir of the oldest winery in Tuscany and his grand-grand-dad formulated the blend of Chianti! From that moment we knew we had arrived in the land of culture.

Florence was besieged by about 8.293640 million tourists even though it was the off season. (We were told that there is not enough standing room in the streets for all visitors in the 'on' season.) We checked into our hostel on Via Ricasoli (yes, the same Ricasoli) near the famous Duomo (Italian for cathedral). Of course, Annie wanted to run to the Piazza della Signoria right away to admire the ready-to-crack-a-walnut hiney of Michelangelo's David and the bulging muscles of Neptune and Perseus. Finally it was time to take off on bikes. Tuscany was calling! Wine is a serious business and it was harvest time. Festivals riddled the countryside, not excepting Florence – less than 0.1 km into our adventure. >





From Florence we biked to Impruneta – featuring stuffed whole pigs grilled to perfection; Greve in Chianti where we learned of the ubiquitous Chianti Classico V black cockerel; Panzano – to enjoy a quaint villa for the night once we were soaked by downpour #1; Rad̄a in Chianti as we were thrilled to enjoy the [L'Eroica](#) enroute to Ricasoli's castle; Sienna – an iconic city frozen in the past; Monteriggioni – a fortified bastion that enticed us with a great view of a mini-duomo from our room; > Via Francigena, the ancient road from France to Rome; San Gimignano with a skyline embracing the theme "I am richer and can build a bigger tower than you", resulting in 14 out of 76 still standing out-of-proportion towers; the ancient Etruscan town of Volterra;



and finally the Mediterranean after a final climb to Massa Marittima through lush forests. At Piombino, we hopped on a ferry to Isola d'Elba. We checked into "Camping Enfola," the best camp ground ever! Our tent was perched on a 100 ft. cliff above the ocean. < Best of all, the island narrowed to 200 feet here and offered a beach to the North and one to the South, both unique and with different views.



The next day we visited the place where Napoleon was exiled after causing havoc in most of Europe. According to the legend, he escaped Elba in 1815, regained power, and was finally defeated in the Battle of Waterloo. However, when we arrived at his palace, he still greeted us in his genuine style.

> After biking around beautiful Elba – which seemed to be 1/2 owned by Swiss, we headed back to the mainland, hopped onto a train to Sienna to continue L'Eroica. While enjoying the route through Rad̄i, Germi's gears and the clouds



exploded at the same moment. Downpour #2 . We limped back to an open brick garage until we were rescued by our hero, Luca from the Bianchi Bike shop in Sienna. Leaving Sienna for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, we replaced Chianti Classico with Brunello. Up, up, up, up, and up, we finally arrived in Montalcino. We deserved a fine B&B, inclusive of a Michelin-star dinner, fancy breakfast, and a bottle of Brunello. We continued to Pienza, picnicked overlooking Val D'Oricia – the classic Tuscan landscape; rode to Montepulciano, offering century-old wine cellars underneath, inclusive of 40 foot ceilings and stately 15 foot oak casks; and we finished in stunning Cortona, one of the oldest Tuscan cities. Our Tuscan ride ended with our private duomo view, complete with bells, ^ and they were going strong! In disbelief that what we dreamed of all year was over, we took the train to Orvieto, where we dropped off our rental bikes, took another train back to Florence, stayed another night just across from the duomo, and took yet another train to Garmar's hometown, Garmisch, the next day.



Lessons of Tuscany: (1) All cities are on top of hills. We believe these locations were chosen specifically so that bicycling tourists would inadvertently guzzle wine rewarding themselves of the brutal climbs, thus adding to the prosperity of the locals. We certainly surrendered to that subtle trick! (2) Downpours occur at the most inconvenient times. (3) Duomos are found in any village with more than 5 houses and are beautifully, elaborately, lavishly, heavenly, and I-can't-believe-this-ly decorated treasures, built to extort a large amount of €€€ from hapless tourists. Side note: the Bavarian King Ludwig II perfected this concept – think of Castle Neuschwanstein – to a point that even Disney couldn't resist to build replicas of his castles. (4) Wineries, such as the humble 12<sup>th</sup>-century, castle of our airport friend Barone Ricasoli, successfully adapted concepts (1) and





(3) while avoiding (2). We happily spent €€€ to buy wine after finally reaching his hill-top estate. ◀ (5) Italians are tough. They invented the famous L'Eroica bikerace around Sienna, which is strictly for vintage road bikes more than 25 years old. Even though half of the 204 km route is on dirt roads, including an ancient cobble stone road built by the Romans, only skinny road bike tires are permitted. 5000 "punish-me" enthusiasts rode this year, and we rode a part of the course just 2 days later. Ripped tires & inner tubes evidenced the party road! The views along L'Eroica's route of vineyards, more duomos, and lavish hill-top estates were absolutely stunning and Germi was very sad when we finally had to leave the course. ▶ (6) Tuscany is a bad choice for attempting weight loss. While we certainly shed a lot of

weight during the day, biking up to 75 km, we gained everything back in the evenings feasting on wild boar, pheasant, pigeon, guinea hens, pecorino cheese (our staple), and, needless to say, lots of Chianti. (7) Tuscans take their wine seriously. You can only call a wine Brunello when its grapes are grown around Montalcino, it is made of 100% Sangiovese, and it is aged in oak casks for at least two years and another three years in the cellar. Winemakers who stray from these rules may receive a conviction of commercial fraud accompanied by an imprisonment of up to six years.



Back in Garmisch, Germi attended the steering committee meeting of the Network for the Detection of Atmospheric Composition Change (NDACC). While Germi was working to save the planet, Annie was exploring the local mountains. It was "Kaiserwetter" and the fall colors had reached their peak. As part of the conference, we visited the NDACC measurement site on top of Zugspitze. Of course Germi had to check out the greenhouse gas emissions from the local fauna. ◀ After the meeting, we enjoyed the English Garden in Munich, hung out in two beer gardens - Chinesischer Turm and Seehaus, visited Germi's cousin Fritz, and admired the latest addition to his family, Nina. She is the daughter of Raimund and Silvi, whose wedding you may remember from last year's letter. Before heading back to San Diego, we hiked with Andi up Alpspitze, the landmark mountain of Garmisch. The trail is vertical at places and secured only with steel cables. ✓ After 4 years of summit ogling, Annie is finally happy. ✓





The first snow hit San Diego county in November. We were excited and headed to the Laguna Mountains, 30 minutes east of Alpine. We were in a winter wonderland that few people would expect at 32°N and so close to SD. < We were hooked and wanted more snow! So, the following weekend we hiked up San Geronimo, 2½ hours north of Alpine. At 11,500 ft (3,500 m), it is the highest mountain of Southern California. There was a blizzard at the summit, which reminded Germi of his trips to the South Pole. He was wearing two down jackets, one wind breaker, and 2 Icebreaker layers, but it was still cold facing the storm. Annie was growing icicles in her hair. The next day, we were manning the Morton Fire Lookout Tower without snow.

We spent Thanksgiving on California's Central Coast celebrating our 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Thanksgiving Day, we biked from Big Sur to Cambria along Highway 1, which many people consider one of the most scenic byways in the U.S., if not the world. > Traffic was light and we enjoyed the rugged coast



line shrouded in the morning fog, the kelp beds with playful sea otters, the waterfall at Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park, and the fighting elephant seals at Piedras Blancas. We roasted our turkey in our camp fire. The next day, we hooked our BOB trailers,

< aka "wine haulers," to our bikes and cruised through Paso Robles with the goal to restock our wine cellar. After a few glasses of grape juice, Germi decided to become a rock star. > Later that day, we met Steve, Les, and Silvie at Hoppe's Bistro (no connection to Annie) in Cayucos.



At the beginning of December, Germar attended his 2<sup>nd</sup> press conference of the year. This time a more serious one. He was part of the unveiling of the [2012 Arctic Report Card](#) to a herd of journalists at the annual meeting of the American Geophysical Union in San Francisco. It was prepared by 141 authors (including Germar, who was in charge of the chapter on ozone and UV radiation) and provides "clear, reliable and concise environmental information on the current state of the Arctic." The rapid changes in the Arctic observed this year were rather sobering. 2012 was the year with the smallest September sea ice extent ever, the lowest snow amount in June, and record melting of the Greenland ice cap: during two days in July, 97% of the ice cap surface was melting, something that has never occurred before.

Germi's birthday celebration in the Anza Borrego desert was a perfect start of the holiday season. We are now looking forward to spending time with Lidija & Mike, Jen & Allen, and Kelly & Jeff in Seattle, skiing, snowshoeing, and celebrating life. Germar becomes a sour kraut if he doesn't have snow for Christmas!

2012 was an exciting year. Much of our happiness and love comes from our family & friends - you! We want to thank you for all the joy and laughter you bring to our lives. We look forward to more adventures with you in 2013. The world is a wonderful place, and love shows up at the least expected places, such as on the ferries going to Isola d'Elba. >



Happy Holidays and a Wonderful 2013!

Annie, Germar, Sierra, and Pico

