

Wrapping Up 2015

A year full of fun, laughter, friends and challenges warmed our hearts.

Every New Year requires a winter wonderland, > thus a visit with Pean, Jim, Haley & Averi in Colorado filled our snowy days with beautiful



memories. We were soon back in So Cal without snow, but that made it easier to count eagles for the USFS on a barge at Silverwood Lake. Also, Bernadette stopped in from chilly Buffalo. Enduring chemo hell, & putting life in perspective, she needed a dip in the < Pacific Ocean. And then we were off to the desert for an emotional & spoiled weekend. Cancer sucks!

February was upon us, and Annie decided that Germar needed to kiss a baby whale. San Ignacio Lagoon in Baja was the perfect place for that. Baja is a magical place filled with boojam trees, friendly faces and wintering gray whales. Baja is a place that makes you realize that the less you have, the less you want - you are a richer person. We soon

bumped into San Diego friends for dinner and then went to camp to be serenaded to sleep by whales V, much to a Bavarian's surprise.

Next stop...Dee & Larry's wedding in AZ. We hold Dee entirely responsible for our first kiss 75 months prior to her wedding. While in the neighborhood, we stopped by Tombstone V and enjoyed the finale of spring flowers in Saguaro National Park.



March brought us to Joshua Tree NP with Kelly & Jodi. We hiked across the park in a day. > Our toes were screaming after 37 miles, but it was a splendid trek full of Joshua trees, crustal evolution of the North American plate and mining history.



Bernadette had another spurt of sunshine in Scottsdale, AZ so Annie zipped over for her dose of sisterly love. Bernadette was delighted with the red rock grandeur of the Verde Canyon Railroad, the Sinagua architecture of Montezuma's Castle, and V Arcosanti, an urban laboratory. It was a short but treasured weekend.



We enjoyed a lot of April on two wheels & a windsurfer. While Germar was dodging tree stumps in Lake Isabella on his windsurfer, Annie biked the Kern up, up & up. We also sandwiched fire tower refresher training with biking Palomar Mtn. Surfing Lake Hodges & biking Rancho Santa Fe complement each other well...especially since John & Betsy are on a great bike route. Finally we enjoyed the Alpine Challenge ride with Michelle & Raul. San Diego weather is full of surprises. Once we got to the top of Mt. Laguna, we were all thrown into a truck to bring us down to a bonfire in Pine Valley to defrost. We were a truck full of "b-icicles"!!

May started with Vintage Alpine...always a super birthday party for Annie. We also started the A-16 PCT Challenge. Our goal was to hike three 16 miles sections of the PCT. We hiked from Mill Creek Summit to Soledad Canyon Rd. > (26 miles) then to Aqua Dulce (9 miles) with 2/3 of our goal complete. Our hiking



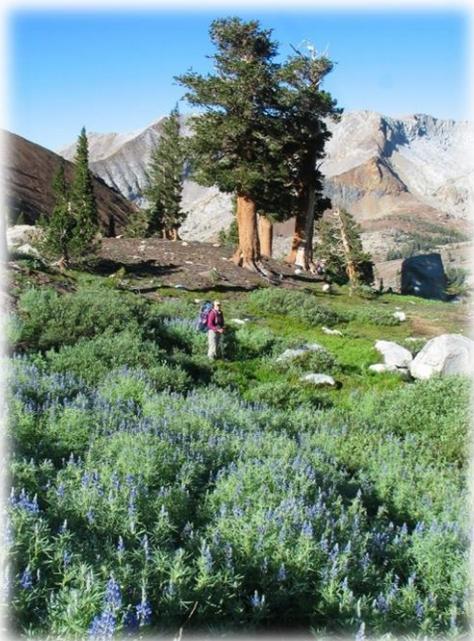
legs needed a rest, so we headed to our

annual Santa Ynez bike from winery < to winery bike trip to pick up wine. We were then in wine mode, so we headed south to Valle de Guadalupe for Ray's release party at Lechuza. Wow...what a feast for the eyes, tummy and pallet!



June found us backpacking up the northeast flank of San Gorgonio. We hold the Aspen Grove trail close to our hearts, because the next

week, the mountain was on fire. The Lake Fire burned the Aspen Grove, and 31,000+ acres inclusive of the krumholz forest perched below the summit. It was imperative to turn our frowns upside down, thus we soon headed south again to "Guatèque" in Valle de Guadalupe. It is the annual amateur wine maker festival in the valley. Barbara, Danny, Barbie & Nic are the favorite gringos displaying their beautiful Viognier. Of course, a few wineries ^ needed our seal of approval on the way. Jeanne & Cookie joined in the festivities this year.



July put us in the western Sierra with Michelle, Raul, Carlos, Ellie & Chuck. We backpacked up to Bullfrog Lake just below Florence Peak. The 'green' < tickled our senses and the mountain air revitalized us. Interestingly, as we were climbing Florence, we traipsed across airplane wreckage. It was a San Diego military plane from the '70's. Back in So Cal, we finished up our

PCT challenge. We hiked from Agua Dulce to Burnt Peak. Success! And then Annie stepped on a rock the wrong way, did a pirouette, fell and heard the remainder of her ACL tear. Erghhh~@#%* Thus the A-16 3Peak challenge with Kelly was delayed.

Dr. visits, MRI, ACL brace and we were back in business for Tahquitz Firetower to start August off. Nothing will keep Annie from her treasured tower. A few flat bike rides built up 'knee confidence' and Annie was determined to do the 3Peak challenge even if it took her 3 days. San Gorgonio, our 1st peak, was re-opened as the Lake Fire was finally 'out'. The knee felt great and we shared the peak with big horn! > Next stop - Mt. Baldy V. We led the hiking club, also, so we shared one of our peaks. Day 3 was San Jacinto. 3 peaks, 3 days, a happy knee and a happy duo.



Confidence had the Sierra calling for September. However, fire and smoke limited our trail options. Annie decided Germar needed another 14er and Annie needed easy, so we backpacked with Hope, Raul & Michelle to Soldier Lake and then bagged Mt Langley. >



We then zipped home to pack for Australia. But first, Tomas, Germar's best friend from childhood, and his family visited. It was a treat to hear about their American adventure as we were their last 'stop'. They endured the start of our construction. We said goodbye to the rotted deck V and are excited to enjoy our sunsets without fear of falling through in 2016.



The next day we were on a 747 to Perth. An awesome Aussie adventure was about to begin. We picked up a camper van and headed south. We ventured along the coast in search of kangaroos. Slowly, adjusting to driving on the left, our first beach was Rockingham, then on to Mandurah. We drove thru the wine store and parrots joined us for breakfast. The fun was just starting. Next stop was Lake Clifton to see the thrombolites -

the only known life form from 650 million yrs. ago that still exists today. At Preston Beach, we found kangaroos...heaps of them!! >



The west coast filled our senses with Tuart forests blanketed with Calla lilies, 2500 yr. old mangroves, the longest timber pier in the southern hemisphere, lighthouses, stunning coastline <, and hidden wineries. V



We hiked 15+ miles of the Cape to Cape trek, explored, dipped in the Indian Ocean & enjoyed more wine until we hit the most southwest corner of Oz, Cape Leeuwin. The Indian Ocean meets the Southern Ocean here putting the wild into ocean. Additionally, one day can have 4 seasons. Once here, we had to turn east whether we wanted to or not. We veered towards Pemberton, thru 250 year old karri trees - mystical & magical. So much so, we found the fire towers that guarded the treasure. Climbing 58 m up a V rebar spiral to the lookout made our hearts go pitter patter! Being above the tree canopy, we imagined doing this each time to Tahquitz or Morton firetowers. Aussies are certainly more adventuresome.



Chattering kookaburras <, thundering waves, kangaroos and Red Tingle trees V thrilled our



curiosity along the southern coast. The tremendous trees reminded us of California's giant sequoia and redwoods. Happy with the simple things in life, we continued on to the V Tree Top Walk, 40 m up. Wineries interspersed the natural wonders, inclusive of Green Pool, > and we soon meandered our way north to Fremantle, thru the Porungurups.





We hiked to the Granite Skywalk <, an "engineering marvel", before civilization popped us on the nose. We soon found ourselves in Fremantle with Germar engrossed in the United Nations Environmental Effects Assessment Panel. They assess the various effects of the ozone layer depletion. At the same time, Germar learned he was the proud owner of a VW gross polluter. He was devastatingly embarrassed, to say the least. Meeting underway, Annie enjoyed Fremantle museums, the Prison, beaches, dutiful shopping &

the other WASPS (wives and sexual partners). The group enjoyed excursions to Kings Park Garden & Rottnest Island. The quokkas > were just so cute!



With a successful meeting adjourned, we flew to Adelaide for part 3. We skedaddled south to Kangaroo Island. Our first stop was Sunset Winery >...our Kangaroo Island appetizer. We moseyed our way to Stokes Bay, welcomed by heaps of roos. We hiked thru a pile of rocks to a private beach, in time for a stunning sunset. V



Life is beautiful. Lighthouses, exploring 1800's island resupply remains, enjoying the dramatic coastline V & searching for koalas filled our days.



We were soon on the mainland again heading towards Melbourne. The Great Ocean Road led the way. The rugged splendor of the coast line was jaw dropping. The awesome power of the Antarctica H₂O pummeled & sculpted the limestone cliffs as we stood in awe. ^

Beyond all expectations...we were soon camping amongst koalas! V Guys make the funniest noises & the moms jump V through the trees with babies hanging on to the thrill. Slowly, with reality looming, we meandered to Melbourne, enjoying the coastline, waterfalls, heaps of colorful birds, shipwreck history and the city itself. The hidden laneways, parklands, eclectic precincts, dynamic food and wine scene need more exploring in the future. Poof...we were back in Alpine in less than two hours...just in time for Germar's next conference.



The steering committee meeting of the Network for the Detection of Atmospheric Composition Change ended with a field trip to NASA's Armstrong Flight Research

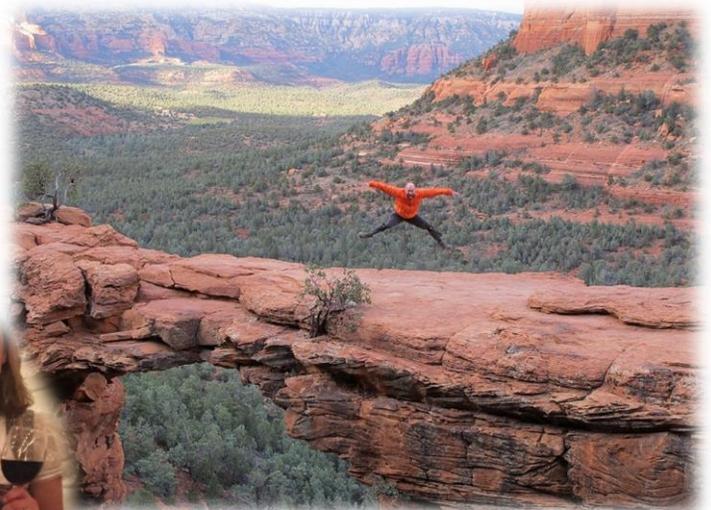
Center near Palmdale where we had the honor of touring ^ SOFIA, an astronomical observatory built into a 747. OMG, Annie had never seen so many scientists drool.

Life was back into full swing and jam packed, thus we headed to Taquitz afterwards to finish off the season.



< November brought us to Anza Borrego hanging out with geologists. The Coyote Mountains of AB are a fun, geological wonderland. (Except Annie's knee did not have fun.)

Our 84th anniversary was soon upon us. This year we packed up for Sedona, where the scenery makes your honey bunch leap. V The multi-hued red rock formations jut up from the desert floor creating a mesmerizing setting that changes hourly with the light.



December hit Germar in the noggin. The saurkraut in him was popping at the seams as he envisioned the big 5-0. Annie decided that a Bavarian Biergarten in the driveway was the best way to fix this silly problem. First V Kelly flew in



for a meeting and this was normal. Then Andi <, Germar's best friend from high school flew in for a meeting, however a surprise. It still seemed normal. The guys went mountain biking while Bavarian elves prepared the biergarten. 100 dear friends showed up in lederhosen & dirndls, the



guys arrived back home and the sauerkraut was kaput!! < Mission accomplished. The memories will endure any stage of memory loss Gernar may encounter in the next 50 years.

Big Bear was calling Gernar, 8 DEC, his actual birthday. A few bunny slope runs to test Annie's ACL brace and the meniscus folded & locked her knee while standing still. Erghhh~@#%* again! Surgery 22 DEC and off to Vancouver to embark a train > to Jasper searching for Merry Kissmoose with Jen & Alan. Wow...a winter wonderland beyond any imagination.



Snow shoeing in Jasper V was magical.



The glaciers and their caves V of the 125 sq. mi. Columbia Icefield as we drove the Icefields Parkway made us feel like pimples on this planet, especially since the icefield was here before homosapiens invaded this place.



Gernar wrapped up 2015 and unwrapped 2016 on the slopes of Lake Louise, while Annie satiated her senses with the splendid snowscapes. We tried to stay up to midnight but this < is as far as we got....it must be the 50 thing!!! We thank our lucky stars for your love and laughter as we turned memories into our treasures of 2015 and unwrap a splendid, healthy, fun-filled 2016!

Bunches of hugs!!!!
Gernar, Annie, Juniper & Sierra

