

Merry Christmas



Dear Friends - This year has sped through time and here we are again counting our blessings or otherwise. We spent last Christmas in Hampstead, London, house-sitting for some very well to do people and looking after their dog. It was convenient since grandson Gregory is still doing his maths at Cambridge and James was doing his stats at Edinburgh. Wonderful to have Christmas dinner in an upmarket pub, dog and all. After that Maryna and I took the Eurostar to Amsterdam, stayed overnight and flew down to Cape Town in the morning. From there we stopped by my brother Hans' widow and stopped by his grave, (he passed away the previous January) then to see sister Molly in Botrivier and then on to Barrydale where we stayed over at the Karroo Hotel after passing through the beautiful Trudouw's Pass. The renovated hotel in this once forsaken little town has become quite an attraction. A fabulous dinner, a good night's sleep and on to Plettenberg Bay through Oudtshoorn, the Outeniqua Pass and George. Maryna's sister Lisbie and her brother David

Minnaar spent some time with us and we caught up with old friends. On the way back we decided to stay over in Swellendam in the old hostel near the church that was used in past centuries for the monthly ritual of Nagmaal (Holy Communion) and another great meal. The next day I went to Bonnievale to say farewell to my younger brother who passed away a few months later.

By this time I caught the granddaddy of cold or flu which left me without energy and short of breath for months. After a few days with Yvette and Wynand in Cape Town it was back to the US but staying over in Amsterdam. The day after arriving I was off to Boston for the New England Regional conference which on second thoughts I should have ducked but the welcome made up for it. In the meantime a new president was inaugurated but since he was only the better of the two worst candidates possible we did not pay much attention. I took it slowly for a month or so during which I struggled to get rid of that pesky cold but the pace soon picked up again. First for the Arkansas conference in historic Hot Springs with its many old style bath houses now beautifully renovated and then on to Sacramento CA where I was to deliver the Simon Freeze Lecture which came with a little pocket money. I am grateful to my friend Rao Surampalli for nominating me. In June it was off to Ft Lauderdale FL where I was an invited speaker. Just before that I heard the Mayor of Miami talk about the fate of Miami should the level of the ocean go up by as little as 1 m (they cannot build dikes like the Dutch since the rocks are porous) and how the onus is on us to stop this by using alternative fuels, I expected every building in Ft Lauderdale where we landed to be covered in solar panels but none in sight – not even a single one, not to mention wind mills. But what were evident were the billions of dollars of luxury yachts like the one of Steven Spielberg. I don't expect they were running on alternative fuels – only the best.

By September we were off to Milan, Italy for a week of lectures at Lake Como with my friend Dave Vaccari. What a beautiful spot and we got quite accustomed to our Appairol every evening. The lectures were held in the estate of Volta who discovered batteries (and hence we have the Volt) on the steep slopes along Lake Como. What beautiful scenery but the noise of sea planes taking tourist for a scenic ride was enough to hope one could shoot one down. **My friend Imre Takacs who specialize in mathematical models for biological processes came over from France so that we could go over my newest theories on improved biological phosphorus removal which he is incorporating in his new editions.** Then David Vaccari and his lovely wife offered to take us by car to Lugano Switzerland after visiting another of those beautiful estates along the coast of Lake Como. Crossing the border into Swiss I expected strict border control but the official just poked his head through the window making sure we were all white and off we went (talk about racial profiling). Upon arriving at our hotel just uphill from the main station, we treated our friends to lunch near the station but what a setting. From the station a funicular takes you downtown – probably no more than 500 m away but what a steep climb. We explored Lugano and then took the train to Luzerne for a trip up Mt Pilatus, up by cable car and down by cog rail (apparently first used about 100 years ago) with scenes of cows with bells on the way down. Then by boat back to the station and the same night back to Lugano. A few more days in Milan and then back to Kansas City.

Then it was time for the annual WEFTEC conference in Chicago where I find I know fewer people since so many of my compatriots have retired or expired. Maryna went along and the late night dinners can be tiring. Maryna is renovating the kitchen and that will mean some out of pocket expenses but we are looking forward to it finished early next year. Otherwise it is house cleaning, buying presents for Christmas and looking forward to our departure next week for Cape Town. The year ended with a number of trips to South Carolina and Georgia advertising our expertise. Also trips to Charlotte NC where we are involved in a major plant expansion. Then there are the constant proposals for new work where I sometimes find my name in there without knowing much about how it got there. When I look at the dates at which these projects will be on line I feel like the builders of the gothic cathedrals in Europe knowing what you started you will never see completed. Maryna had a minor operation for removing one of the glands that control calcium levels but she just got a clean bill of health. Visits to the urologist, cardiologist, dermatologists etc. also declared me to be in good health for my age – whatever that means. However a dreadful little cough will not let me be. This could have resulted from the dust from the kitchen renovation but I hope it will improve for traveling. Christmas will be at Yvette's house and the boys will be home from England (James is now doing his Ph.D. at Oxford).

A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all



Cappuccinos at Telephone Kiosk -
Hampstead



Maryna, brother & sister at Stormsrievier
near Plettenberg Bay



Overnight at Swellendam in Old Church
Square



With our Appairol at Como



With Vaccari's at Lugano - Switzerland



Halfway up Mount Pilatus – Luzerne Swiss