

Annual Report 2014

*Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,
the fruit of the womb a reward.
(Psalm 127.3)*

Dear relatives, friends and acquaintances

The days are getting shorter, the nights longer. The year is coming to an end. I now begin (end of October) to tell you about something over the past year.

This year I watched in fine weather in the living room, at what time the first rays of sunlight shone on the peaks of Alvier Faulfirst and Margelkopf. On the longest day it was at 5:30. On October 14, the Faulfirst shone at 8 o'clock in the sunlight. One hour later, I watched from the kitchen window, behind which peaks of the Three-Sisters-range the sun rose. From December 21 to June 21 the sun walked every day to North East. When the longest day is over, she emigrates to South East. Fascinated and amazed I see this everyday event. From mid-November to mid-February, the sun shines not at all in the kitchen. Every now and then I succeeded at this time to watch the sunrise from the bedroom.

With a little ceremony Jürg got the diploma as a Technopolygraph on January 31. Our son comes to Buchs one to two times a month for a dinner. The conversations with him are always interesting. After his vacation he shows us pictures on the computer. He enjoys photographing dilapidated from the inside. The other day he brought proofs of panoramic photos from metro stations in Berlin.

On June 28, Walter and I became grandparents for the second time. The sister of Marc is called Stella. When I held her in my arms, it seems to me like "déjà vu". Stella has Anni's nose. At the moment she exercises turning. I suppose she can sit up to Christmas.

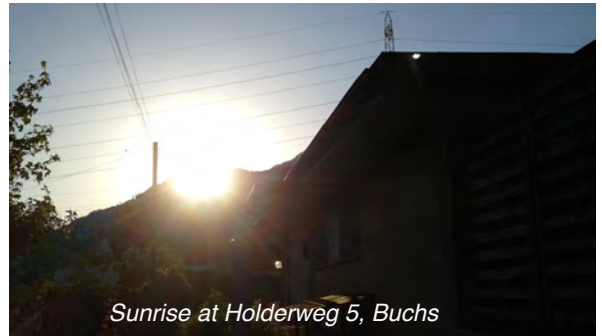
Marc began to go alone with 13 months. Now he runs over hill and dale. Nevertheless, it is convenient to be carried. When Marc is in front of me and stretches his arms out to me, I'll take him. When he wraps his arms around my neck, I am filled with infinite joy and gratitude.

By good weather we were on Sennis for three days and two nights together with Anni and her family. Once a week I go to Zurich. Thank Anni and Sasha, that we may witness the development of our grandchildren!

Elizabeth has pulled up stakes in Switzerland. On July 17, she flew with her boyfriend to Vietnam. Andrea was sent by his company to Ho Chi Minh City. Elizabeth hopes to find a job there. This seems to be very difficult. Now she learns Vietnamese. We regularly receive her newsletter. In August, she and Andrea came to a wedding in Switzerland. They will spend Christmas at home.

Late May to mid June, Walter and I went to Germany with our VW bus. The detailed route and some details you can read in Walter's annual report. I enjoyed the Mecklenburg Lake District for the first time. On Rügen I could admire the famous white chalk cliffs. Of the cities visited I liked Lübeck and Quedlinburg best.

You all know that this summer the really nice days were rare. Walter and I walked on one of these beautiful days in July on the Alvier. At the end of September we were with many other hikers on the Margelkopf. The Silvretta High Alpine road we drove in



Sunrise at Holderweg 5, Buchs



Jürg gets the diploma



Elisabeth travels to Vietnam

bright sunshine. The walk around the Silvrettasee and the reservoir Kops we recommend all readers of this report.

Vanessa is still visiting us during vacations and weekends. Till August, she asked each time for Jimmy. She has not forgotten Jürg's friend who kept the secrets entrusted to him.

Since the timetable has changed in December 2013 every half hour a train departs in the direction of Rorschach and direction Chur. For trips with Vanessa, this is ideal. Since December the transitional period in Sargans from the Rhine Valley Express for the IC to Zurich and vice versa, is only three minutes. I often come panting in the IC. I am not happy with this change.

We can see the sun go down slowly, nevertheless we frighten when night falls suddenly. In retrospect, I felt so when I wanted to visit my godmother Cilli in the beginning of October and was told at the reception of the retirement home of her death. She died 51 days before her 99th birthday. Godmother Cilli was generous. In 1963 she prevented that I had to wear a plaster corset because of my bad posture. Instead of this I went for about one year (except holidays) every week to Mrs. Stutz to Zurich. She tried to improve my posture with gymnastic exercises. Since mid-2010 godmother Cilli lived in a nursing home. After her falling down stairs in January 2013, she was brought to the nursing department. It seemed to me as if Cilli's mind and soul were most of the time in an inaccessible (for me) world. She always had a smile on her face and she smiled to the nursing staff and visitors. She rarely came back into my world, recognized me and ... was already out of reach.

A month later Uncle Kurt died. He was the husband of my godmother Heidi, whose life ended in 2011 just before Christmas (my father's sister). As a little girl I was crazy about Kurt. In recent years I have had no contact with him. In the nursing home, where he lived for four years, I've never visited him.

On the last day in September Walter and I visited Aldo (one of my former teachers) and Klärli in the Fex Valley. We were greeted warmly and happily. For we could enjoy to be together with them as long as possible, Aldo drove us afterwards by car to St. Moritz to the train station. I wish both of them, that they may celebrate their diamond wedding next April.

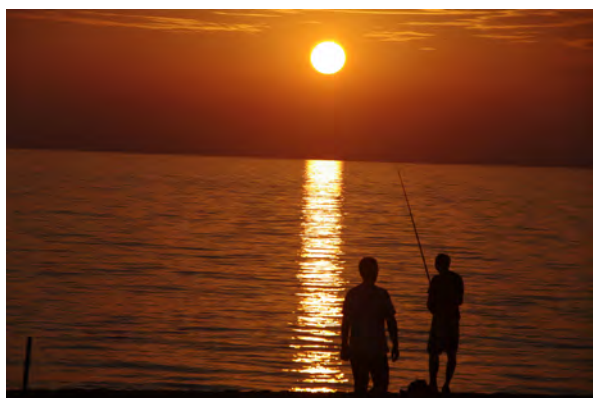
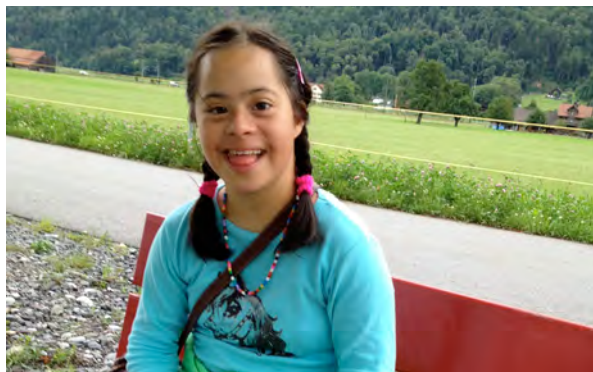
Fr. Bruno (Friar of the community of Taizé, who works in Brazil) spent a few days in Switzerland. This time I missed Bruno's liveliness and spontaneity. But it seemed that Bruno radiated a bit of God's proximity.

With Pinöggel (Walter's "scout-mother") we went twice to Dölf and Irma to Davos. We see Pinöggel regularly. Depending on the weather, she suffers more or less from shortness of breath. She should avoid physical strain. It is difficult with her adventurous spirit! Her back aches often. She always keeps her chin up. We never hear her whining.

Susie and Paul visited us in January. Susi told how her lactose intolerance affects. These symptoms sounded familiar to me. After her visit, I also switched to lactose-free products. Instantly daily morning diarrhea disappeared. Thank you Susie! In May, Walter and I visited Susie and Paul in Busswil. We know now a small piece of the Canton of Thurgau better.

After their skiing holidays in March Vreni and Hamster came to Buchs for lunch. In September we were in Aadorf with them. After dinner we walked through the picturesque Farenbachschlucht.

Anni and Robert, Agatha and Berni, Claudia, Sarah (at the moment I have the impression to have not forgotten anyone) visited us.



I was at Bachmanns in Wädenswil and at the Schilds in Brienz in spring and fall. Every month I'm going to Dori (my former host mother) at Bern. Andi ensures that I stay fit. Each week we take a one- to two-hours walk. We always have good discussions.

I come to the end of my report on 2014. I wish you all a stress-free Christmas season and a peaceful Christmas.

For the new year I have selected the following blessing of Anselm Grün:

*Bless the people who are close to my heart.
Do not let them alone on their way.
Join them and send your holy angels,
so they go along their way and protect them.*

With this wish for you all, I conclude
Franca



Subway station Alexanderplatz, Berlin (Panoramic photography by Jürg)



*Our NE - SE - Panorama from the terrace for Franca's sunrise - observations
(Background: „Three-Sisters“ - range in the principality of Liechtenstein)*

We should not praise the day before the evening

Our annual report is nearly finished end of November. Always I close it with the uneasy feeling that December could possibly be good not only for pleasant surprises. December 2013 had its beautiful days in spite of my pessimism. Thanks RailJet (Austrian long-distance train) we drove to Salzburg and back on the same day and enjoyed the traditional carol singing with instrumental music, song and play in the Great Festival Hall. Then the trip to the Ore Mountains, to Annaberg-Buchholz! This is the German Christmas region. There since several hundred years originally they made utensils of wood, later toys and decorative figurines, angels, Carolers, miners, Smokers. We were in Seiffen, the center of decorative arts in the Ore Mountains, moving from shop to shop. For the return journey we crossed the watershed by train towards the Czech Republic, a rather adventurous trip with an old two-axle motor coach. Also on board was a bulky thing of candle arch, as it shines in all variants in the windows in the Ore Mountains. But finally we landed without difficulties, including the candle arch in Prague, from where we went to Switzerland in the comfortable CNL-sleeper after we had a short view on the Charles-Bridge. And, Christmas Eve, this time with grandchildren and family, again a change in the old habits. Finally, on December 30, a ride on the steamship Blümlisalp on the wintry Lake of Thun, because the traditional winter timetabled trips with SS Uri on Lake Lucerne were unfortunately given up.

And now the unpleasant surprise. Sometime in December I started feeling quite uncomfortable in the right hip... ah, the arthroses was well overdue! But then the right shoulder began to ache, and finally left the same. Finally, I began to limp out and in the end I came into or out of my bed only with difficulties, I had difficulties to dress and undress, yes, it just hurt like hell! The doctor found out that it was not osteoarthritis; painkillers helped only marginally and also the miracle-working Mr. Feder could not do much with physiotherapy. Finally, after another blood test, Dr. Schmid gave me the diagnosis: polymyalgia, an inflammatory process in the arteries, which narrow and therefore supply the muscles with too little blood. And this is what it hurts. The diagnosis was confirmed by the fact that the nightmare was gone within three hours after a big dose of cortisone. And since then the aches didn't return thanks to cortisone. Maybe someday cortisone is no longer necessary? Will see! In the meantime, I joined the elderly, chronic every-day tablets eaters. An evil grin? I also grinned once ...

The candle arch, meanwhile, has lit up a Christmas time in our living-room. Since we have decided that Christmas is over, we have replaced it by a table lamp. It includes an energy-saving lamp and, according to my theory, and according to the definition, it saves the more energy, the longer it burns. We are the shining highlight of the "Energy City" Buchs!

Saving energy: the replacement of the old windows (2013) made problematic the uninsulated floor of the terrace (thermal bridges ==> mold?). So came the 2014 renovation of the flat roof (terrace). This is done in the meantime. However, as usual, one thing entails the other. So not only the roofers, but also the plumber (mounts, gutter) and the metal workers (railing) were at work. Now our house is (almost) restored and needs much (!!!) less energy (which has yet to prove ... I'm skeptical).

As you can see, we follow the trends. Even a TomTom carries out his work in the VW bus, which has now reached 16 years, a venerable age for cars. This little device has led us in spring through Germany to Amrum and back. With infinite patience, it helps the driver and possibly leads him back to the path of virtue, once he has flouted deliberately or by mistake an advice. Such patience can have only a machine; I would long have thrown in the towel. The worst thing that TomTom has thrown at me (with very



Seiffen in the Ore Mountains



Czech motorcoach 810 in border station Welpert



Our candle arch



Christmas in Buchs



Steamship Blümlisalp in Thun

correct, neutral voice), was: «Re-enter the route», as it was no longer following once my maneuvers.

So, again we went to the north of Germany. First, we followed Luther's footsteps, visited the Wartburg, Eisenach and Wittenberg. The latter mostly in the pouring rain, also the main attractions were in restoration and therefore packed. So we could not even locate the thumbtack holes in the door of the Schlosskirche (where Luther seems to have put the 95 thesis). The Mecklenburg Lake District has rather shown on the cool side, but we could enjoy the Hanseatic City Stralsund (the city that resisted the emperors general Wallenstein in the 30 years war), Rügen Island with Kap Arkona and the chalk cliffs. The Hanseatic City of Lübeck and Flensburg have impressed us. Finally, how could it be otherwise, crossing to Amrum and a week's stay at Franca's favorite island. On the way back we drove (with TomTom's help) to Quedlinburg, the city of the Ottos (Otto the Great, Emperor of the Roman Empire). Quedlinburg with its many half-timbered houses is worth a visit! For me, a highlight of the trip was the ride on the Harz narrow gauge railways on the Brocken! About 1000 m difference in elevation (probably a lot more, because the track goes up and down) the heavy steam locomotive (1E1 wheel arrangement, according to Swiss custom G 5/7; 700 HP, 60.5 t service weight) has to overcome from Quedlinburg to the Brocken, the highest mountain of the Harz. Maximum speed is 40 km / h; also then the locomotive has to take water occasionally. The travel speed is correspondingly slow. But a tourist wants to enjoy the forests of the Harz and not rush across them. Strangely some names of the stations: there is the «Mägdesprung» (The-Jump-of-the-Girls), the «Wire Drawing» (Drahtzug), and what makes you ponder, «Trouble» (Sorge) and «Misery» (Elend). Incidentally, they are nice holiday villages today!

2014, one hundred years after 1914, the outbreak of the First World War. On this occasion, the «Museum in the armory» in Schaffhausen has created an exhibition on the mobilizations of the Swiss army since the Napoleonic wars. Akela of the Scouts Thurgau has shown the involvement of Scouts and other youth organizations. Worth it! An exhibition of the Swiss Alpin railroads and mountain railways has led me to the castle Hünegg in Hiltterfingen on Lake Thun. The castle, built by Baron von Parpart - Bonstetten 1861-63 shows how a rich family dwelled in 1900. «It seems that the former residents came back at any moment.» Beautiful! We almost walk on tiptoe through the rooms for not to disturb the noble family.

There are not many longer hikes recorded in this year, given the wet summer. Montalin, Alvier, Margelchopf are standard walks, with Elizabeth I climbed for the first time from Rüthi SG on to the Hoher Kasten and down to Brülisau. Longer hikes went from Visperterminen to the Simplon Pass in the Valais, from Oberschan to Sennis and Berschis and from Amden-Arvenbühl to Selamatt in Toggenburg. Therefore I was more often in the water, but because the lakes also were not very warm, mostly in the outdoor pool Obere Au in Chur. For to extend the summer a little bit I drove to Marina di Bibbona in Tuscany, alone, for Franca thought that she needed no more nights in the VW bus. The back aches!

That we are grandparents twice now, is written in Franca's report. The Neni (grandfather) tries (sometimes successfully) to elicit a smile of the serious Stella! Marc shares the preference of the grandfathers for Railways, however, he is interested in everything that has wheels and (mechanically) moves. Typical boy! (May we still say so... political correctness?)

Elisabeth is in Vietnam with Andrea, learning Vietnamese and photographing the highly loaded freight transport moped! Here is a selection:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/127587214@N08/sets/72157648212541775/>



Burning the winter at Burgerau



Old hotel Buchserberg (demolished in the meantime)



On the Wartburg near Eisenach



Quedlinburg



Arriving on the Brocken

Jürg reports of difficult and reasonable customers, enjoyable and laborious jobs, leads us photographically in dilapidated industrial sites and abandoned sanatoriums (melancholic and scary!) And offers surprising panoramic view of Berlin subway stations.

The visits to my «would-like-to-have-grandchildren» and their parents in Lungern make me great joy. The little children have become amiable and lovable young people who try to teach the somewhat cumbersome (and deaf) old Koks new games with great patience. Luckily, there's still the game «Haste makes waste»!

My Lungern family have helped me/us to two impressive experience: The performance of «The Birds» by Aristophanes at the Gymnasium Sarnen. The sweet birds that were so shamefully betrayed by the human crooks and even landed on the roasting spit! The folk culture festival Obwald at Giswil brings a fantastic selection of folk music formations. Actually interested me the Äplerchiuwimusic Lungärä, who had steadfastly refused until now to act on any other occasion than just the Äplerchilbi (a local celebration at Lungern). But also very impressive were the Armaillis de la Gruyère and quite unexpectedly, the two Mexican formations have fascinated me!

I visited old scout friends (partly combined with a bike tour) and my paternal and maternal relatives in and around Zofingen.

On the Buchserberg the contemporaries of 1940 met for lunch like every year at Corpus Christi, this time in the new mountain restaurant of Malbun. Nice to see the now old but still familiar faces again!

An impressive farewell was that of the cousin and namesake of Mama, Annie Hodel-Hodel of Wikon, impressive if only because I could feel as a member of a large family. Given the prominent heads of some men it seemed to me to experience my grandfather at a young age, as he may possibly have looked like 100 years ago.

Bruno, the son of Annie Hodel, has kindly invited us to an exhibition of his works in Seengen. He paints abstractly with various techniques and designs three-dimensional works of art made of stainless steel. I do not know what talents I owe myself the Hodel-descent. Unfortunately artistic creativity is not among them

And now? Some I reported, some I omitted, and, I think, I have forgotten much. To all of you, my dears, I wish a good 2015 and hope to report back in a year, if possible, of course, especially rants. And maybe there will be a meeting next year?

Walter

Some of our adventures on flickr:

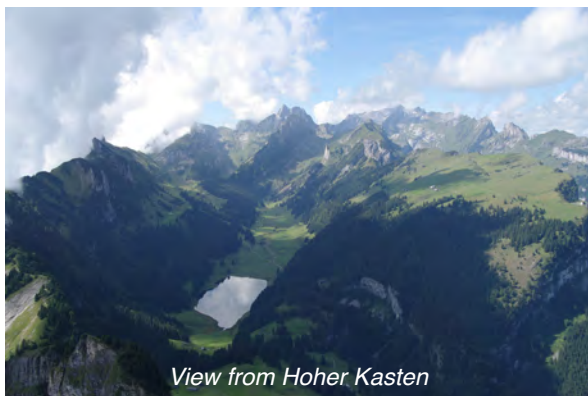
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/wgiger/sets/>



The Haltinners at Sennis



Silvretta Lake



View from Hoher Kasten



Hünegg Castle



Toggenburg High Route