

*There is a time for crying
and there is a time for laughter
There is a time for complaining
And dancing has its time
(Ecclesiastes 3:4)*

Annual report 2023

Dear relatives, friends and acquaintances

I realize that I began my 2016 annual report with the same words from Ecclesiastes 3:4. This year I am using a different Bible translation. Last year we were able to attend Elisabeth and Michael's wedding celebration. We celebrated two big birthdays. We had to say goodbye to people we love. Everything has its time.

On June 3, 2023, the invited guests met for Elisabeth and Michael's wedding celebration at 1:45 p.m. at the Bürkliplatz boat station in Zurich. In the reserved ship, guests had to go to the upper floor of the ship. In one hall the chairs were set up in concert style. A wedding orator led us through a celebratory hour. The bridesmaid played the guitar and a colleague played the accordion. Elisabeth's friend talked about Elisabeth, Michael's friend talked about Michael. Elisabeth and Michael made their own wedding vows. Through the officiant we learned unknown details about Elisabeth and Michael's first meeting. It was a special hour for me. Thank you Elisabeth and Michael that your celebration was accompanied by a wedding orator.

After the ceremonial hour there was an aperitif on the ship. The Üetlibergbahn took us to the Üetliberg, where we had a sumptuous dinner at the Hotel Kulm. The wedding cake is particularly worth mentioning. It was decorated with paper cutouts from Elisabeth and Michael's lives. The majority of guests stayed overnight at the hotel. After breakfast we drove home individually.

Walter and I celebrated my birthday and our wedding anniversary at Flüeli-Ranft. To my surprise and great joy, "Happy Birthday" was played on the barrel organ during dessert.

In April we had to say goodbye to Jürg's godfather Paul. I met Susanne and Paul and their children Marlene and Daniel in Wiesen. This acquaintance turned into a friendship. I celebrated New Year's Eve in Busswil two or three times as a single person. After the marriage, the family visited us and stayed overnight in Araschgen. Paul became Jürg's godfather. We saw each other at least once a year, usually on Jürg's birthday. After Jürg's confirmation we continued the visits. For the last three years or so, I have emailed Paul on Saturdays. He answers with a lot of humor. Unfortunately, a tumor was found at the level of the chest during this time. Paul suffered from great pain and had to swallow a lot of medication. He was able to spend the last few weeks in his home. For him, leaving our earth was a relief.

From August 2022 to July 2023 I visited Olga, my father's cousin, once a month in Sils im Domleschg. First we walked for about an hour, then had tea at Olga's house. I got to know Sils and heard unknown stories from the Bianchi relatives. When I registered for the July visit, I found out that Olga was doing very poorly. I drove to Sils. Olga and I consciously said goodbye. Just four days later, her earthly life came to an end. The word cancer, when used to describe a person's illness, causes fear in me. That's how it was when Walter and I found out that Hamster had been affected by this disease. We had to come to terms with this fact and



Paul Stahl



Olga Roth - Bianchi

accept it willy-nilly. The fact that Hamster, who always had a saying ready, who was full of joy for life and optimism, who signed with the bridesmaid after Walter and I at the registry office on April 18, 1980, and who became Elisabeth's godfather a year later, now had to undergo chemotherapy pained Walter and me. At Elisabeth's wedding, hamsters seemed to be doing well. His wife Vreni also thought so. Hamster and Vreni, Walter and I drove together to Zurich after breakfast at the hotel. When we said goodbye we had no idea that we had seen Hamster for the last time. In August we received notification of the end of his life.

In October, the funeral service for Erich, a colleague of Walter's high school diploma class, took place. Walter's Matura class met regularly after graduating from high school in 1959. In 2009, spouses and partners were also allowed to take part in these meetings for the first time. At the first meeting in Bergamo I talked to Erich about questions of faith. This gave me a special relationship with Erich. We also had a great time at the following meetings. In 2021 I met his wife. Now Erich and Ingrid will no longer attend any class reunions.

In May, my left leg hurt from hip to heel. I often swallowed painkillers. I found it difficult to walk without hiking poles. During the first therapy session in June, my therapist recommended that I have my left hip x-rayed. Five weeks later I received an artificial hip joint at Grabs Hospital. I spent six days in the hospital. For six weeks I had to use crutches and was not allowed to bend down. I was supposed to spend the five weeks at home lying down and walking. I was only allowed to sit while eating and in exceptional cases. Walter was a househusband and carer. He fulfilled his task very well. Because of the operation we spent the summer in Buchs. I'm grateful that everything went well and is over.

Due to my operation, childcare was canceled from the beginning of the summer holidays until the end of the autumn holidays. I didn't see Marc and Stella during this time. Anni removed my wound clips at the end of July because the family doctor was away. Jürg and Sascha visited me in the hospital before they went on vacation to Tuscany. Elisabeth and Ladina visited us in Buchs in the summer. When I was allowed to sit again, we were invited to dinner in Zurich.

In October we were able to celebrate two birthdays. My half-cousin Vreni, who lives in Thierachern, invited her brother and family, as well as her girlfriend and friends from Chur, to lunch in Chur. There were nine of us. Vreni brought photos from her school days and confirmation. This led to interesting conversations. Thank you Vreni for the lovely lunch and afternoon.

Two weeks later, Doris and Ernst celebrated 162 years together. Doris turned 80 that day. In addition to their relatives, Doris and Ernst invited all the singers of the Grütlichörli, which Ernst leads, and their spouses and partners. This meant that I was also able to take part in the celebration. It was a big company. People chatted individually at the tables for eight people. During the meal, you could see footage of Doris and Ernst on the screen from the time they met to the baptism of their great-grandchildren. When the last picture appeared, the show started again from the beginning. The son and grandson took over the organization. Through your performance I got to know Doris and Ernst better. Walter and I would like to thank Doris and Ernst very much for inviting us to their party.



Walter Engler/Hamster on June 3, 2023



Erich Buchli



Annamaria (!) at our Anni's baptism



Ladina and Stella

Finally, I'll tell you about our travels and vacations. In March Walter and I spent five days in Lagundo. We use the train to travel there. The Railjet took us to Innsbruck, the next train on the Brenner Pass. The border between Austria and Italy is at the top of the pass. In Merano a taxi took us to Algund. As in autumn 2022, we mostly walked along the Waalwege. On the first day we explored Algund extensively. We also visited the market in Meran this year.

In April we spent my birthday on Flüeli-Ranft. In October we stayed in this beautiful area for two more days. A beautiful sea of fog over Lake Sarnen delighted us during breakfast on the first day.

On October 10th we took the train to Poschiavo. The journey with the Bernina Railway from Pontresina over the Bernina Pass to Poschiavo is unique. I can't describe it. I simply advise you to take this train ride once (if the weather is nice). We spent October 11th in Val di Campo, the most beautiful side valley in Graubünden. You can only go to Val di Campo by public transport. Nevertheless, there were a lot of people. In Val di Campo there are two deep blue, wonderful lakes. To get to Lake Saoseo, you have to be sure-footed. It's worth taking the journey. Lake Viola is easily accessible. There is plenty of pasture around this lake to sit and simply admire the beautiful nature. In the lake (at 2160 m!) children frolicked briefly in the water, some adults swam four to five strokes in the lake. The next day we walked from La Prese around Lake Puschlav. Then the Bernina Railway took us to Pontresina, the RhB over the Albula Pass to Chur, the IR13 to Buchs.

We plan to spend December 8th - 10th in Salzburg. As we have done for several years, we will attend the Advent singing there.

With the well-known refrain of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's song for the turn of the year

*By gracious powers so wonderfully sheltered
Let us confidently await what may come.
God is with us in the evening and in the morning,
and certainly every new day.*

I wish you an Advent season with lots of candlelight, a blessed Christmas and in the New Year that you will be surrounded by good powers for 366 days.

Franca



Vreni Wegmüller and Franca



Stained glass window in Algund Church



Sea of fog over Lake Sarnen



Lago di Saoseo



Lago di Poschiavo

Looking back to 2023

Memory

*Loving Mary is always my intention;
In joys and sorrows I am her servant.*

What on earth is a Marian song doing at the top of my 2023 annual report? Finally, I was baptized and confirmed as a Reformed, really Zwinglian word-heavy. But wait, as I like to say: I am 50% from Lucerne and therefore, as a 50% from Lucerne across x generations, I am also 50% Catholic. You didn't know that? Well, me neither, it was kept under wraps for a long time. Finally, a decent Werdenberger citizen is Protestant (unless he comes from the village of Gams), so a businessman who wanted to keep his customers had to marry Protestant and raise his offspring accordingly, even if this businessman's denomination was as long as it was broad. His wife, however, wasn't, but, for better or worse, if she wanted to go to church (and she did), there was only the church with the 80 m high tower. The other church (catholic!) no longer wanted her and ultimately... the customers... so: a dry Zwinglian church service instead of a soulful mass. She suffered. It wasn't until later, perhaps even now, that I really realized that she was doing this. I didn't notice this as a child. My night prayer didn't sound very Protestant, but how was I supposed to know?

And now the Marian song? I found this in a wonderful CD that I was able to purchase by chance from Ms. Erica Brühlmann - Jecklin, one of the "Three Graubünden Women". It contains folk and folk songs, secular songs, but also a few spiritual songs, including the song of Maria, ancient, with the moving text by Joseph Mohr, 1891, a love song that brought Marian devotion closer to me.

Speaking of religious music: A week ago I was in the church in Giswil, where the dialect requiem "Totämäss" by Joël von Moos was being performed. A powerful work, scary to happy, sad, encouraging, classical choral music and folk singing by the soloists with yodeling, with, among others, the solo yodeler and singer Nadja Räss. I have never experienced such an enthusiastic audience, at a requiem and in a church! Well, this performance took place in the composer's hometown (Sachsen), so it was a "home advantage".

Not far from the Giswil church is the "Gsang" forest clearing, where the Obwald Folk Culture Festival takes place every year with the finest Swiss folk music and a guest country. This time it was Bulgaria. Opposites and yet: guests and Swiss also appear together, even though they only met a few days ago! Music connects! We were there for the eighth time, starting in 2015 with the Corona break in 2020. Always an experience!

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine

While the requiem in Giswil was for all the deceased and all those who mourned, we always had to say goodbye to loved ones in a very specific way. Walter Engler/Hamster left us, not entirely unexpectedly, but surprisingly quickly. Hamster, my old scout friend, seemingly indestructible, with whom I experienced many adventures. We traveled by bike and boat, one last time in 1986 on Ticino and Po. He was our best man, Elisabeth's godfather, yes, he and his lovely wife Vreni were simply part of us. We keep asking ourselves: "What kind of saying would Hamster have in store now?"

Recently we were in Langenthal at the abdication for Erich Buchli, a classmate from the St. Gallen commercial school class of 1959. Erich, thoughtful, serious, highly intelligent, bilingual, who whispered the words I needed in Sam Schaffner's French class, and, like me, belong to the (unofficial) club of anti-athletes.

Max Nydegger/Nidle, a member of the Zurich section of the Former Scouts of Switzerland, died at the age of 99. I remember him as a sweet, friendly man. Georg Eggenberger-Gantenbein was a 1940er like me and went to secondary school with me. He was also known as Steg-Schörsch (after his father, Steg-Häns) or, as he was apparently a very precise construction boss in the municipality of Grabs, as "Millimeter".

At the beginning of the year, 95-year-old Andreas "Res" Schlegel died in Chur. Res was one of the very early members of the Alvier Boy Scouts Group. Working professionally for the Chur telephone directorate, he was intensively



Amalfi (2015)



Nadja Räss



Obwald: Bulgarian women



Walter Engler/Hamster am 3. Juni 2023



Erich Buchli and Franca

involved with the Samaritan and medical services in his free time and after retirement. There was hardly a major event in the wider area where he was not in command of the medical post. He was a specialist in the Buchs dialect, which he also used as a poet. He laments the disappearance of the dialect:

*Wer het Latwäri uf em Tisch?
un Immehungg, wenn d'weisch was ,s isch?
Wer Türggaribel macht zum z'Morga
brucht ordli Schmalz, sus chasch verworga
Wer röocht Brissago anschtatt Schtumpfa?
Wer seit no Huttla zuma Lumpa?
Wer leet en Lismer aa zum Hääs?
Mag Brätala un suura Chääs? (Impossible to translate!!)*

Travel?

We haven't been on the road for a long time this year. When I look at my photo haul, we did do one thing or another. In spring we were in Algund again and saw how the fruit trees began to bloom. Many other wishes will probably remain unfulfilled forever, but since we took public transport to South Tyrol, I was able to drive on the Brenner line for the first time, one of the large Alpine transversals alongside the Gotthard and Lötschberg/Simplon, which, for the time being, still covers the pass Crossed 1371 m. Otherwise, with the exception of those to our neighbor Liechtenstein, we have not yet crossed the national border. If everything doesn't go wrong, we will still take the traditional trip to Salzburg in December for Advent singing.

So we stayed at home. I was on Lake Lucerne four times, once with the ferry Gersau - Beckenried on the trip to Franca's birthday in the Paxmontana, once at the general meeting of the steamboat friends in Seedorf, to Brunnen and back with the small circle of business graduates in St. Gallen in 1959 (Franca was also there) and finally the happy, nostalgic last scheduled steamer trip 2023 Lucerne - Flüelen and back with SS Stadt Lucerne.

We were often in central Switzerland, as a couple or I alone. As mentioned, we celebrated Franca's birthday at the Paxmontana in Flüeli-Ranft, in keeping with the day in a historic room with a musical, creaking closet. In autumn we were in Paxmontana for the second time combined with short hikes (Sachseln - Flüeli, Flüeli - St. Niklausen, Flüeli - Hohe Brücke). Then I always look forward to visits to Lungern, where the Vogler family spends an entire afternoon talking to the old coke.

We were also in Poschiavo, in winter I went alone to cross the Bernina by train and have lunch in Poschiavo, in autumn with two nights at the Altavilla in Poschiavo, a short hike in the Valle di Campo to Lago di Saoseo and Lago di Val Viola, to reminisce about the summer camp in 1957, and finally a walk around Lake Poschiavo. And: Ate Brasciadela again! (this is the local bread) After a long interruption (Covid, etc.) we visited St. Urban Kermis. Once again Zigerkrapfen and white and brown gingerbread! Nothing came of replenishing the honey supply; Mr. Irineu Bärtschi from the Lower Emmental with its fine honey no longer appears at markets.

festivals

The highlight of the celebration was the wedding of Elisabeth and Michael, with the wedding on the Lake Zurich ship MS Sântis and the party on the Üetliberg. Who exchanges rings in the middle of Lake Zurich and then looks at the sparkling lights of the big city at night? A big day, over quickly and yet unforgettable!

To our joy and surprise, we were invited to the combined birthday of Doris and Ernst Niederhauser, our Grütli-Chörli leader, a cozy afternoon with good food, lots of singing and music, chatting and funny productions. Thank you very much, Doris and Ernst, and all the best for the future!

The 1940s from Buchs met for the traditional lunch at the "Buchserhof". It's been quite a few years since we celebrated Saturday night and continued on Sunday morning!

On my birthday I first accompanied Elisabeth, Michael and Ladina on their Alvier hike, then Franca and I went to lunch at the "Aufstieg" and later we met Mosimann-Gigers after the first Alvier ascent (Ladina!) to cut the birthday cake on the Holderweg .

Home

Franca's hip operation limited us for a while, the healing process and restoring mo-



Brenner Pass and frontier station



Fruittree in bloom



Ferry Gersau - Beckenried



the creaking cupboard



Birthday in Paxmontana

bility took time. So I was pretty busy being a househusband for a while. Looking back, it doesn't seem like it was that long. And in the morning I could always drive quickly to Diepoldsau to swim in the old Rhine, yes, if the weather wanted it, and the weather was quite changeable, from barely bearable heat to a cold snap that put a white cap on Alvier's head. I am becoming more sensitive to the cold and have occasionally had to shorten my swimming distance, something I would never have done until recently. I've been to Sennis once. Will we come up together again next year?

Our little garden was quite productive; There were the berries, some of which were made into jam, the pumpkins and beans were also worth it, the capun leaves were made into "quick capuns" (Capuns are a local dish in Graubünden and quite popular), there was also fennel, kohlrabi and beetroot, a little less zucchini, but lots of cherry tomatoes on the terrace into November.

My electrified mountain bike was also used from time to time, for short trips to Trübbach and Sargans, longer ones on the Buchserberg, Grabserberg and Gamsenberg, to the Weisstannental, St. Luzisteig, to Valüna and Sücca in the Samina Valley, to the storks in the Ruggeller Riet, all thanks to motor support, of course.

The fire damage in Araschgen has been repaired; I actually didn't have much to do with it, as Mr. Daniel Schwitter from Schwitter & Wieland in Churwalden managed the construction very quickly and carefully. The Canton of Graubünden's building insurance was accommodating and generous. Contact with the city of Chur, which took its time with the building permit (repairing fire damage!!), was difficult. Now I have an (almost) new house in Araschgen!

When I close my report now, it is mainly because I have more or less filled my three pages. Of course, many events and episodes come to mind afterwards... So I wish you a happy holiday and all the best in 2024!

Walter/koks

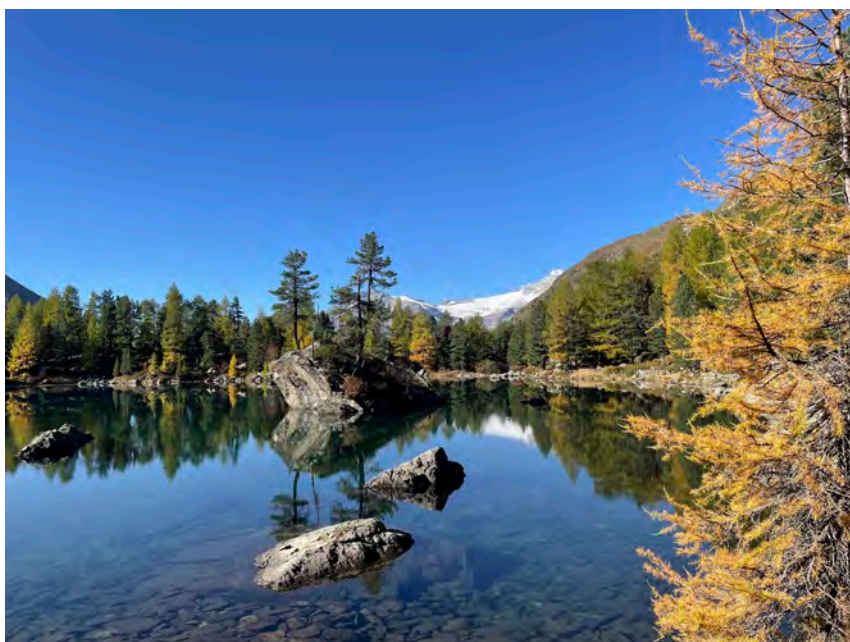
P.S. More pictures can be found at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/wgiger/albums>



July 8, 2023: The mountaineers and their destination, the Alvier



Franca with crutches



Haltinners also climb the Alvier: In the "Chimney"

Lago di Saoseo with Palü Glacier