

2018 Christmas End-of-Year letter



The end of the year information we sent each year to our friends at Christmas has lost its importance and has been pushed into the background by the omnipresence of social media. Therefore, we can be brief here.

2018 developed into a year of problems for us. Almost all political fears have become reality and we have to look to the future with concern, especially regarding our children. Dishonesty has become a political principle. In German there is an aphorism that "lies have short legs". Two years into this miserable presidency, we are still waiting. How much nicer would it have been to paint a positive picture of the future of our planet and trust humanity thwarting self-destruction? The parable of Noah comes to mind.

Personally, 2018 was not easy for both of us. Heidi had a lot of trouble with her pulmonary circulation and Dietmar suffered a car accident on June 26 with a total loss of the Chrysler T&C and almost total loss of the cervical and thoracic spine with persistent motor and sensory neurological deficits. In the meantime, both are doing reasonably well. As if these medical problems were not enough, another stress, a hip replacement surgery was added, but Heidi's preoperative suffering finished and the repair goes down in her personal story as a complete success.

Dealing with those problems was difficult, but we were not alone. Many of our local friends have helped us mentally and energetically, and we would like to express our gratitude especially to Tom and Ute Schuster, Sandra and Dan Simic, Judy Light, Marley and Jetze Beers, including our immediate neighbors too.

Mark, supported by Sara, orchestrated our hospital experience virtuously, precise and successful. We can truly say that we have experienced the best treatment in the world. And the fabulous friendliness of the nurses made the experience almost beautiful and worth remembering. At the rehabilitation ward Dietmar was overwhelmed by dedicated and extremely friendly nurses from many countries He felt like a king. Even the World Cup football game against Croatia could Dietmar watch in prominent company, namely with his Croatian neurosurgeon. Dr. Knego had masterfully reassembled and stabilized Dietmar's cervical and chest spine during an over 9 hours lasting operation. This multicultural kindness of doctors and nurses was impressive and very supportive, thank you all.

After discharge from the hospital, our great friend, Dr. rer. nat. Liane Mende-Müller left her Californian family for two weeks to look after convalescents here in Florida and we would like to say thousand thanks for the good culinary and spiritual care. Dietmar especially enjoyed the detailed scientific discussion with Liane at breakfast. Liane's visit was the beginning of a more normal time for us in which we could host visitors again.

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Annemarei was the first one to visit us in October to support and look after us . She is predestined as an internist and neurologist and thus began an intensive fine-tuning of Dietmar's neurological post-operative therapy and we were amazed at everything what still needs to be considered. Annemarei's findings and suggestions were professionally documented on 8 pages and were perceived by our doctors as enrichment, accepted and coordinated with Mark. Mark and Annemarei understand and respect each other very well.

Volker and Nils visited us in late October and were like an anchor for us, stopping the downtrend, thank you two. In November we had a typical Thanksgiving party with Sara's extended family. This gave us the opportunity to get to know the new family members better. Although most of them have Irish roots, socializing seemed typically American. Maybe we arrived in the US now.

Yes, and that brings us back to the first half of 2018. Dietmar's 100-year-old mother fell ill with pneumonia and was in great need of care. Dietmar flew to Hamburg in March / April to look after her. With the help of the nursing staff, Liliane and Sabine were able to care for Oma fairly painlessly. Everyone, including Jutta and Volker, helped. Anja, the Polish care taker, has supported Mama selfishnessly day and night and we thank her deeply. Dietmar could also reduce the medication in consultation with the family doctor and we got hope that she would master this hurdle of relapse.

Dietmar also found time to meet our friend Gisa to visit the concentration camp Hamburg-Neuengamme. This experience touched Dietmar very deeply and he became angry because Hamburg does not propagate such an important memorial appropriately. Finally, Dietmar decided to fly back to Florida and eventually return to Hamburg later. Heidi had planned to be in Hamburg in mid-April anyway. And then it went fast. Mama's condition worsened again and she died on April 13th in her bed. Dietmar had previously arranged and organized a sea burial in Florida. The obsequy took place in her apartment in presence of most family members. Pastor Grimm, the neighbor who knew Mama well, found the right words. Everyone appreciated this dignified conclusion.

Despite the death of Dietmar's mother, Heidi found time to meet her former students and colleagues. And there was no shortage of conversation. She particularly remembers visiting Marlies and Max on a wonderful summer day in April! The two youth friends spent a few hours at the memorial sites of the women's concentration camp Sasel and memorized their parents in the Ohlsdorf Cemetery. An lovely day ended with a huge strawberry cake.

Heidi is still active in "her" small gallery, the Cottage in Nokomis; she enjoys the art, the visitors and the many conversations.

In the short time before June accident, Anna's Hamburg school friend Galini from Braunschweig visited us with her husband and two daughters. Syrah spends half a year there to learn German. Our old Wisconsin friends Don and Diane visited us in May! The time with all these guests was great as always. A special thank you goes to our friend Ingid, who supported us in the background like all the years before, Merry Christmas and a joyful year 2019, from

Dietmar and Heidi

