

The Year 2011

Dear Family and Friends

Another year has passed and ever so fast. With this letter, I shall try to recall the main events of 2011.

As indicated at the end in last year's letter, the year started with the surprise arrival of Rene's wife Marani. They stayed until the middle of January spending part of their visit at our Leisure Farm home. After returning to Singapore, they left as unannounced as they had arrived.

We spent most of the Chinese New Year holiday at Leisure Farm but returned in time for the usual Family gathering at the home of one of Shou Kwang's sister. In early April, Hugo and Karen arrived for a short visit on their way to Morocco and Portugal. We spent the weekend with them at Leisure Farm. Needless to say, they enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere on the water.

The next big event was the arrival of Daniel and Annina for my 75th birthday celebration. This being Annina's first visit to Asia, Daniel had planned a full program of exposure to the variety of local food and sites. Our program started with a classical concert at the Esplanade Concert Hall. The next day, we took off for an extended weekend at Leisure Farm.



Our culinary experience included a seafood lunch on one of the local kelongs. This photo by Annina shows Bruno (orange top) talking with Daniel (red top) while Shou Kwang (black top) arranges the food

Everybody enjoyed the relaxed living style of Leisure Farm, feeding the fish and the ready access to the swimming pool. Bicycling was also part of our regular activities. Only too soon, it was time to return to Singapore for the birthday dinner at top of the ION building on Orchard Road.



Breakfast on the balcony
at Leisure Farm

On the way back, we stopped at Raffles Marina in Tuas to say hello to a Swiss couple, Dario and Sabine Schwörer and their then 3 children (now 4) on the Pachamama of the TOPtoTOP Global Climate Expedition that is based on sustainability. <http://www.expedition.toptotop.org/> The Schwörer's were in Singapore to await the birth of their 4th child, Alegra, before sailing on to Durban for the World Climate Conference



The Pachamama
docked at the Raffles
Marina. The Boat relies
totally on wind and solar
power only

The Pachamama was an impressive, high tech catamaran equipped with the latest sustainable technology. We proceeded home to get ready for the big Birthday dinner and celebration. Unfortunately, by the time we arrived at the top of the ION building, the weather had somewhat turned against us and the visibility was less than hoped for. However, this did not dampen our spirits or the enjoyment of the good Australian food and wine.



A toast to the Birthday Boy

The next few days, Daniel took the opportunity to show Annina his old hangouts around Singapore and introduce her to the great variety of local food. Of course, we also went to the Swiss Club one evening.

Soon it was time for our trip to Bali to show Annina yet another aspect of Asia. We had arranged to first stay at our friend's Villa Purnama in Jimbaran and then to go up to Ubud where we stayed at Hugo and Karen's De Keliki Villa set in the midst of the rice fields. In Jimbaran, we tasted the full variety of Indonesian food, including the traditional beach seafood.



What a selection of different dishes!

For our trip to Ubud, we had arranged for of Hugo and Karen's driver to pick us up at the Jimbaran Villa. The trip through Denpasar and up to Ubud offered another set of interesting views.



Ready for the trip to Ubud

In Ubud we were greeted by Panti, Hugo and Karen's full time housekeeper. She took good care of us during our stay there. In Ubud we dedicated one day to visiting the various art shops and galleries as well as the home of a local artist who works and lives within walking distance of De Keliki. We also went on long walks through the rice fields.

Annina and Shou Kwang enjoying the drink in a coconut freshly plucked from the tree



The Sky Garden on top of Marina Bay Sands

Upon our return, we still had a few more days with Daniel and Annina to explore some Singapore's new attractions. The visit to the Sky Garden on top of Marina Bay Sands was a memorable experience. The view was excellent and compensated for the missed views on my birthday from the top of the ION building.



View from the Sky Garden on top of Marina Bay Sands

Too soon, it was time for Daniel and Annina to say good bye and return to New York. We agreed that we should plan for another holiday together in the coming year, this time in Sunriver for some winter fun.



Capturing the sunset on the Sky Garden

In June, we had a good reason to travel again, this time to Krabi in Thailand to celebrate Shou Kwang's 55th birthday. We decided to stay at an exclusive hotel reachable only by sea or via a mountain path called Monkey Trail.



Arriving at our hotel on a floating deck in a rough sea

We travelled in fairly rough waters and the raincoats provided were of no help. When we arrived, we found access to the hotel was via a floating deck. It was quite an effort to get onto land without falling into the water.



Celebrating yet another big birthday

Our birthday dinner was planned to take place on a special table on the beach. However, a slight drizzle made us move inside where we enjoyed an excellent meal followed by the traditional birthday cake. We enjoyed the pool and the beach for relaxation. One day we took the Monkey Trail to go the nearby town. The path was crowded with monkeys that thought they owned the path! .

On the way back, the tide was low and we could wade through the water around the mountain to get back to the hotel without fighting with the monkeys. Only too soon, it was time to pack up and return to Singapore where Shou Kwang was expected back at work.



Along the Monkey Trail. Don't expect any right of way for pedestrians



View of the hotel pool

For me, another piece of work was due in Vietnam and I made two trips back to Hanoi for the Urban Rail project. Although I did not really enjoy working with the Japanese in their factory-like office, I did go back at the specific request of the Vietnamese National Railway team that appreciated my work and my approach to the problems faced. I left Hanoi, with the task to organize a study visit to Singapore for the Vietnamese team.



Typical street scene from Hanoi with nothing but motorcycles

Other than the work in Vietnam, I did very little work in 2011 - a few days of design document review for the extension of the Skytrain system in Bangkok and a lecture at the LTA Academy on Public Transport Fares. In October, I helped organize a study visit by ETH Alumni to Singapore with a lecture at Land Transport Authority (LTA) preceded by a visit to the Land Transport Gallery. Other activities include chairing the monthly meetings of the Bayou Water Village Coordinating Committee at Leisure Farm.

The rest of the year we enjoyed our regular weekend visits to Leisure Farm with its relaxing and quiet environment away from the hustle and bustle of the big city. Like last year, we attended the Christmas Dinner organized by Leisure Farm. For New Year's Eve we had some neighbours over to help pop a bottle of Champaign. Unlike last year, no family members showed up at the last minute!

With best wishes for a happy, healthy, and successful Year 2012

Bruno Wildermuth