

A happy and healthy New Year 2015!

Dear friends,

at the end of (almost) every year I (try to) write down what has happened to the Freytag family over the last 12 months. This year, I was able to finish that report in German in time for Christmas, but I failed to translate it into English in time – I apologize. I always need some quietness and focus to write down my thoughts on what has happened to us since January of this year. Before I begin I wish you all a happy new year - stay healthy and happy (as I turned 60 this year it seems to become more and more important to stay healthy...). My hope is that we see each other sometime during 2015. I also hope that you had a peaceful Christmas time/holiday season with your family and/or friends. Susanne and I were lucky that our kids still like to come for Christmas to celebrate at our home, to bake cookies, to sing, and to play the piano! A truly special season!



Yvonne in Chile, Atacama Desert, Jan. 2014

Last year Yvonne did not spend Christmas with us as she toured Chile, Bolivia, and Argentina for four weeks. This year however, she joined Susanne and myself together with Tatjana (with her boyfriend Alex) and Benjamin for Christmas. At the beginning of this year she moved into her own apartment in the northern part of Berlin close to the main train station and within biking distance to the Technical University of Berlin (she owns her own racing bike!). There she studies Computational Science in a master program to become a

“data scientist”. She is now in her third semester and will probably finish her studies by the end of next year – we shall see. She enjoys her studies in mathematics, computation, and biophysics/bioinformatics. Additionally, she enjoyed her part time job at a consulting company (Daddy doesn’t support her enough to finance her many hobbies) over the last six months; beginning next month she will start a more research oriented job at the Konrad-Zuse-Zentrum, the high performance computing center in Berlin. Beyond her studies she enjoys playing Lacrosse (which she started at Leyland High School, San Jose, when she spent a year there). Furthermore, she spends time (and money) on Crossfit, a popular (personalized) fitness program with a personal trainer. With all these sports activities she has turned into a “muscle woman”. Besides traveling to different German cities to play Lacrosse she also traveled to Milano, Stockholm, and to Aachen where she visits her brother Benjamin (Susanne and I did not make it for a visit to Aachen this year – shame on us!).

Tatjana finished her MA in business administration at the University of Bayreuth, Bavaria, by submitting her thesis by the end of April. Since then she has looked around to find a job in Berlin which is not that easy for a “newcomer” as the competition in the

business area is high, i.e. smaller number of jobs than applicants. After searching intensively she successfully applied at a consulting company where she will start a “new life” by the middle of next January. Her first assignment will bring her to Munich, our previous home town. She looks forward to these new challenges in Bavaria. As Tatjana finished her studies there was little time for travelling. However, she and her boyfriend Alex visited Poland by driving along the coastline of the Baltic Sea and visiting several Polish cities. Both came back very excited and with new impressions about our Polish neighbors – not only because of much cheaper prices, but also because of the warm welcome by our neighbors and the wonderful impression they had of the two cities Stettin and Gdansk which were both completely destroyed during the Second World War and completely rebuilt after that.



Tatjana and Alex in Poland, Baltic Sea



Benjamin hiking in the Alps

Benjamin studies at Aachen and has the longest way to come home for a visit. Thus, we see him less often than his two sisters. However, we skype and phone quite often; therefore we know a lot about his activities as well. This Christmas he arrived at Kleinmachnow by December 21, he just left us yesterday since he decided to celebrate New Year’s Eve with his student friends (and his girlfriend) in Aachen. He is now in his 5th semester to become a medical doctor – and he is still very excited about his study. In Aachen he lives together with two girls. Benjamin also enjoys some sports – he loves to climb (free climbing) – mostly indoors. He exercises one to two days every week together with three other student friends – so far he only tried once to climb outdoors, an experience that really got him excited. As you

may guess, Susanne and I get a bit nervous thinking about his climbing activities since this sports comes with some risks. As is, we both must trust Benjamin’s judgment and abilities when it comes to making decisions during his climbing activities. However, at the beginning of December Susanne and I were shocked when Benjamin told us that he had a bike accident: a passenger open the car door when he drove by with high speed (the worst imaginable situation!). Fortunately, the door only hit his back wheel still causing him to fall down. Many of such accidents cause severe injuries or even death, Benjamin was more than lucky: except for a deep cut in his right middle finger (and a broken bike) nothing else happened to him – a big relief for us – despite not wearing a helmet. This accident convinced him to carry one from now on! Last March Benjamin spent one

month at a hospital in Lille, France, to learn about the practical side of his future job. During the summer he took part in an internship at Mittenwald, a town near Garmisch-Patenkirchen next to the German Alps. In his spare time he spent every minute going hiking or biking in the mountains – a wonderful experience which he shared with a (female) student friend whose family owned a house in that town. He showed us his many photos as convincing witnesses of his wonderful summer time.

Susanne and I enjoyed a year that was much quieter than the one before. Still, we visited many places together, some I visited by myself (business trips). In February we went skiing in Lofer (near Salzburg, Austria), where we rented a small house from relatives, surrounded by meadows and trees. While Spring already „showed up“ in the valley, we had a wonderful time skiing up in the mountains at the Loferer Alm with lots of powder



snow and lots of sunshine (we shall go there again this coming February). We also spent much time sitting in the sun at the house reading, and touring around to the neighboring towns in Germany and Austria – a wonderful start for 2014. In March I flew to California (Los Angeles and the Bay Area) to visit colleagues and to give talks about our (my students and my) research work. I still had enough time to see friends and to visit a few places as a tourist, for example the Getty Museum north

of LA, a wonderful place. At the beginning April Susanne and I visited Trento, Italy, for a week. There, I participated as a thesis reviewer in a thesis defense and gave two research talks. During the weekend we visited Padua, Lake Garda and several valleys of the Alps (unfortunately it was too early for hiking!). In Mai I celebrated my 60th birthday with my family and some relatives (later in August I had another celebration with my friends in Berlin). We started the celebration with a tour thru the Eastern part of Berlin in a historic street car. During the ride my aunt from Switzerland who grew up in Berlin, pointed out many sites along the way that are related to our family – going back to 1900, when my great grandfather started his missionary career in Berlin before spend much time in South Africa. We continued the celebration at our house in Kleinmachnow until the early morning.



In July, I was invited talk to Dresden for a talk (about 3 hours drive from us). I convinced Susanne to join me for four day to visit the wonderful town of Dresden and to see „Saxonian Switzerland“, a hilly area East of Dresden with funny mountain formations (the picture is not taken by me – it should show you the “funny” mountain formations).

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At the end of July we started our summer vacation with a rented mobile home. For two weeks we traveled north to Norway by taking the ferry from Germany to Denmark (Puttgarden - Rödby), passing Copenhagen to Sweden via the Belt bridge and reaching Norway south of Oslo. We quickly passed the capital taking roads that were less touristy (compared to 2008 when we traveled Nor-

way the first time) and thus less well maintained. Nature was wonderful as we drove lonely roads and hiked on paths without too many people. We hit different kind of weather from sunshine and hot temperatures up to snow and cold rain. We had no problems as we were prepared for any kind of weather. Although we drove a lot we took time for hikes and sightseeing along the roads – time was not important to us. We made it up north to the Atlantic Highway – about 150 km south of Trondheim – before we had to turn around to go back to Berlin, this time by ferry from Kristiansand to Hirtshals, Denmark.



Another traveling highlight for me was my trip to Canton (Hangzhou), China, at the end of August/beginning of September to attend this year's VLDB conference. Unfortunately, I had very little time to enjoy the city since my flight back to Berlin rescheduled and I had to leave Canton earlier as planned. Besides this international trip I also visited Holland (Eindhoven) and Denmark (Aarhus) for two thesis defenses.

Besides travelling Susanne and I enjoy additional activities as well. We still visit concerts by the Berlin Philharmonics regularly (season tickets) which are always a treat! Together, Susanne and I also take dancing lessons both in Salsa and ballroom dancing. On her own Susanne enjoys line dancing with friends (some kind of group dancing). I still play badminton with friends (now in my 20th year!). However, this year I struggled with some injuries, so I had to stop playing for some weeks. Susanne is still active giving French lessons at the local elementary school and working as a tutor helping student to improve their French. She also attends French and Italian language lessons on her own to improve her skills in both languages.

Before this year end, I shall send out this family report to you. I hope it does not contain too many mistakes – if it does, please forgive me. All the best,

Christoph & Susanne (Tatjana, Yvonne & Benjamin)