



2012 Xmas News from Herrliberg, Switzerland.

December 1. This morning Aksel opened the first door on his advent calendar. Instead of the Lego calendars we have had for the last couple of years, this time I bought Conrad's electronic calendar - 24 small electronic experiments, I hope he'll have good fun with that.

On December 15, we're hosting the julefrokost. We haven't really started the preparations, so I foresee a few busy days over the next two weeks.

For **Christmas 2011** we stayed at home. My mums place was being refurbished, including the guestrooms we usually stay in, so we decided to stay in Switzerland.



Conrad advent calendar

traditionally finished with a race for all the kids, in groups divided by age and skill. Aksel is not usually the competitive kind, but Friday morning in the car on the way to Flums, he announced, very matter-of-factly, that he was going to win the silver medal!

Well, Friday afternoon in restaurant Tannenboden, we all sat and listened to the winners being called up and given their medals. My heart dropped when we heard the silver being given to someone else, but it was quickly followed by the announcement of

Aksel having won the gold!!

Aksel's response was "well, I told you so" ...



Christmas 2011

Sportferien. As usual, the kids have two weeks Sportferien (winter holidays) in February. Like the last couple of years, Aksel went to Skischule Flumserberg for skiing and snowboarding. The end of a week is



New sofa, April 2012

In March, we went to Brauns Möbelhaus in Singen in Germany to buy a **new sofa**. The old one was way overdue for replacement. On the first visit, mostly to get some inspiration, I joked that maybe we should get a leather couch in "signalrot", i.e. bright red. I guess the idea stuck, because that is exactly what we ended up with. Braun took care of everything up front - VAT, import papers, customs fees etc. They must have a pretty significant export volume to Switzerland.



Kestrel (extracted from video shot at max zoom)

Kestrels moving in next door. In late April, a couple of mating kestrels decided that the tall tree next door was just the right place to nest. Kestrels make a loud, high-pitched shrieking noise, and can be a bit noisy, but when a third kestrel decided to "gate crash" the mating rituals, it got a lot worse. For two days up until nine o'clock at night, we had two male kestrels fighting over the single female. We do live very close to nature, but this was almost a bit too much. However, kestrels are incredibly beautiful, especially when you can just sit on your balcony and watch them.



Tiger. Whilst on the topic of animals, Tiger, "our" wild cat, got some competition during May and June. Another male cat was making a move on Tiger's territory, and initially had him running, even chased him out of his barn across the road. Tiger was a right mess, ghastly wounds, lumps of fur missing and looking thin, tired and miserable. When I noticed the new cat also beginning to feel comfortable in our garden, I decided we had to help Tiger. I started chasing the new-comer away whenever he turned up, and after a couple of weeks, it seemed to slowly

2

begin to have an effect. Since October, Tiger has been back to his old self, he has retaken "his" garden

and he is now in December ready for winter with a thick rich fur.

Paxos. In July, we went to Greece to spend two weeks on Paxos and Anti-Paxos in the Ionian Sea, about an hours ferry ride south of Corfu. We went together with Katerina, Aksel's godmother. Nadine and I drove the 300km from Thessaloniki to Igoumenitsa on the west coast, where we met up with Katerina and boarded the ferry "Kyrka" for the 3.5 hours journey to Paxos via Corfu.



On the ferry from Igoumenitsa to Corfu

In the first week, we stayed on Anti-Paxos in a small country villa, up on a hill, about 40min walk from the beach. This is probably as far from the touristy paths as you can get. No paved roads, and the only three tavernas all closed at five. There is not even a ferry service from Paxos, the bigger island. To travel to Anti-Paxos, you hire one of the local boats to bring you over, it takes about 20 minutes.



From Vrika Beach on Anti-Paxos

Scops Owl. On Anti-Paxos, every evening after sunset, we kept hearing these lonely, monotonous bird calls. Well, initially we had

no idea what they were, but they were regular as clockwork, one from the north, then one (apparently) responding from the south. One evening I tried mimicking the calls, which made the northern sound stop immediately. 20-30 seconds later I saw a large shadow flying towards the balcony, then land on a telephone pole maybe 30m away. An owl! A bit of internet research revealed that the Scops Owl is part of Paxos culture/history.

The second week we spent on the bigger island **Paxos**, in a beautiful villa with a pool and a large outdoor area, altogether very nice place.



Aksel on Anti-Paxos

Paxos attracts lots of British, Italian and French tourists, which had had a noticeable impact on the local gastronomical offerings. Finding anything resembling a proper pita with gyros was plainly impossible. Instead prices were high and there was a seemingly endless selection of restaurants and tavernas serving hamburgers and full english breakfasts :-)

On the return journey however, we stopped in Metsovo in the mountains, about halfway to Thessaloniki. We sat down at a random restaurant and had three excellent pitas with gyros and three drinks for only €9 ... next year, I'm planning to stay in Metsovo.



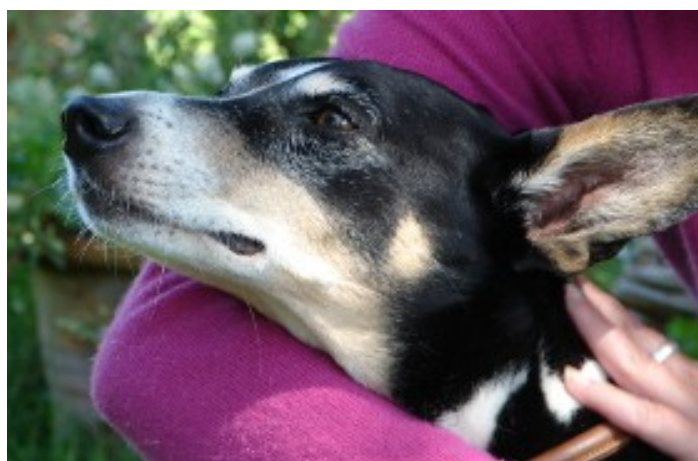
After returning from Greece, and before Aksel was due to start school, we went to **Denmark** for a short break. We flew to Hamburg with Air Berlin, rented a car and drove

to Århus. We had a really nice couple of days, even got to enjoy the hottest summer day of the year. Among other things we went to Søndervig near Ringkøbing to see the exhibition about the German bunker that was discovered after a spring storm in 2008. The bunker had been buried in the sand dunes for 63 years and was completely intact incl. furniture and soldiers' personal belongings. After that we went down to the beach to see some more bunkers and dip our toes.



A German bunker on the west coast of Jutland.

After having returned home, Aksel started 3rd grade and also started **learning the violoncello**. His teacher, Herr Steinbrüchel, had contacted us before the summer holidays to offer a couple of trial lessons. Aksel seemed interested, so we agreed to continue. So far he seems to like it, although getting him to do the daily practice can be quite stressful at times.



Jazz

Jazz. In August, our good friend Delia's dog "Jazz", fell ill with a brain

tumor, and it quickly became obvious that he would not have very long. He has always loved coming to see us and roam about in our garden, so Delia brought him quite often to see us. On a Saturday afternoon in the beginning of September he was in the garden, when he began having more pains, so Delia called the vet and asked if she could come and put him to sleep. We'll miss him.

Sometime in September, a while after we got back from Denmark, my sister sent me a copy of an old photograph of my great-grandfather, **Hans J.**

Boysen, who fell in World War I. On his shoulder epaulette there is a clearly visible number "41", so I got curious and started researching him. It took a couple of days of tracking various sources



Hans J. Boysen

on the internet, but when I finally got access to the "Preussische Verlustlisten" archive, I found his name fairly quickly. Hans J. Boysen served in the 86th Infantry Reserve Regiment and fell in Pozières during the battle of the Somme in 1916. May he rest in piece. See also: www.weltkriegsopfer.de

Business. Well, it's not exactly been one of the better years. Herbert Rohr, the salesman I hired last year, has really turned out to be an expensive disappointment. So much so that I've had to let him go. It's very unfortunate and it'll suspend the pipeline for another 6-8 months, but I had to cut my losses at some point. In January I expect to start looking for a new one.

Hostsuisse. In March I had an opportunity to acquire 120 rack servers for CHF6'000. I have long thought Switzerland would have room for a reasonable offering in the dedicated hosting area, so this opportunity was too good to miss. I decided to launch "Hostsuisse" offering classical webhosting, virtual servers and dedicated servers at a price tag able to compete with the large German hosting companies. "Hostsuisse" has not gone on-line yet, I am waiting for our upstream provider to solve some IPv6

4

issue. As usual, Holzmann's law applies - things take longer than you expect.

New TV. In late October our elderly Nokia satellite receiver finally gave up. Instead of just heading straight out for a new one, I decided to take a closer look at using MythTV, a Linux open source project.



Within a couple of hours, I had a working setup, and the next evening we were watching *Startrek Voyager* on a laptop. A couple of more days work, and it was clear that our old Bang & Olufsen TV would have to go too; connecting it to the PC running MythTV was just too cumbersome. Two weeks later I moved the satellite backend system down to the back of the garage, and we now have the MythTV frontend running on an ultra-quiet desktop PC in the livingroom, connected to our new 40" Toshiba flatscreen TV-monitor mounted on the wall. Truly amazing what you can do with Linux and a few bits of surplus hardware.

Medical update. Well, to start with I had a second kidney stone in June and most probably a third one in July. Fortunately both of them were much less of a surprise than the first one last year, but I did have a near-emergency when I ran out of drugs whilst on Anti-Paxos.

In October Nadine started complaining about stomach cramps, and went to see Dr. Dünner, our Hausarzt (GP). He diagnosed a stomach ulcer and prescribed the appropriate drugs. Things did improve for a few weeks, but then on Monday 12 November, it got a lot worse. I took Nadine to Kreisspital Männedorf, where they quite quickly diagnosed it as a gall-bladder infection. She spent the week in hospital, followed by a couple of check-ups with Dr. Dünner, and now she seems to have completely recovered.



Christmas in

Danmark. Yes, we're going to Denmark for Christmas. I had the winter tyres put on the car just yesterday, so even if the weather gods don't play along, we should have a safe journey up there. Well, that's all for now - as usual, I'll finish by wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year!