



The Weissler Holiday Gazette

Agoura Hills, California

December 1997

You know, time goes much too quickly. Case in point: it is time for another Holiday Gazette! Seems as if it was only a few months ago that the last edition hit the presses (well, little color printer) and we find ourselves wondering what we can tell people about 1997. (The memory is going too.) But with a little thought, not to mention a beer or two, a few things come to mind...

Whistle While You Work...

Another year, and yes, we still work at the RAND Corporation. Yet another department reorganization for no apparent good reason kept things amusing for awhile. No real functional changes, though. Liza still manages the computer networks and systems, this year with a larger staff; her work took her to Washington D.C. on several occasions (which had the side benefit of giving her opportunities to visit with the extended Deichmeister family in nearby Virginia, and attend a number of concerts at the Kennedy Center with cousin Chris). Robert is involved in several large database projects and continues to run a simulation laboratory. Nice as that ocean view may be, though, if some good opportunities arose for us in southeast Arizona, or we finally won the lottery that we've been lusting after, we'd likely be out of there in no time.

Milestones & Other News

She hates to admit it, but **Liza's 20-year High School Reunion** (San Pedro High School class of 1977, rah rah rah!) rolled around this year. Despite a little initial trepidation, she attended and had a good time trying to remember people. Some people hadn't changed at all...unfortunately. Of course, everyone probably said that.

We both remained active birders this year, but **Robert** took his interest to a new level through his involvement with the **Los Angeles County Breeding Bird Atlas**. The breeding bird atlas is a five-year volunteer effort to establish which species are breeding in each atlas block in a grid that overlays the county. After completing the third year of atlasing, Robert has found this such a rewarding experience that he is already preparing to cover new areas of the county next Spring.

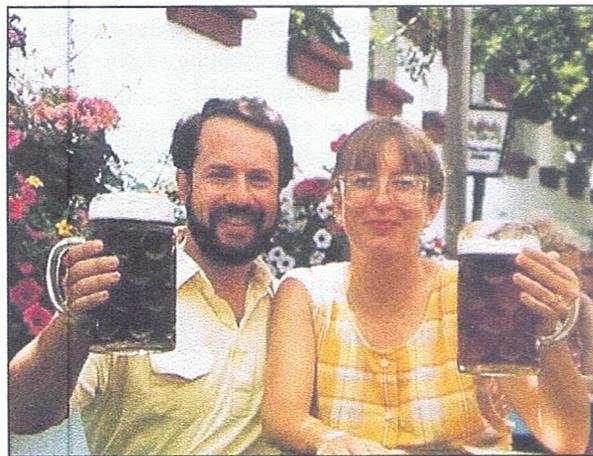
While Robert watched birds, **Liza** more often than not was **on her bicycle**. Robert joined her when birding was in a lull. Most of Liza's effort revolved around the

August Carpenter/Phinney Bike Camp in Colorado, for which Robert endured many pre-work training rides to keep her company. (See **Travels** for more information on the CPBC!) And it looks as if she will finally hit the elusive 3000-mile mark for the year, too.

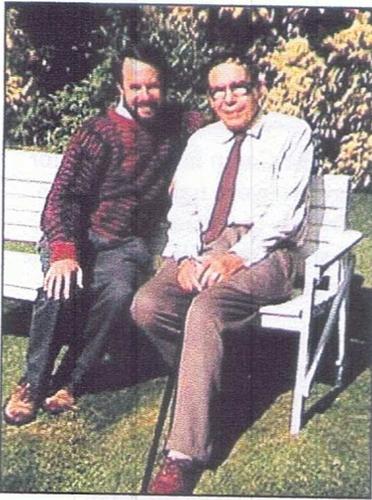
We both continue to sing with the **Mansfield Chamber Singers** based in Beverly Hills, California (Robert is a baritone, Liza an alto). In 1998, in addition to our usual two concert seasons, MCS will join with another group in the summer and make its first European tour, performing in Germany, the Czech Republic, and Austria. We can't wait! The tour is only about ten days, and we plan to stay an extra week or so (vacation time permitting) in order to visit some of our relatives and friends.

Travels

About 75 miles southeast of Tucson, down a desert highway, alongside the cottonwood-lined San Pedro River with the purple Huachuca mountains rising in the distance, lies "our" bed and breakfast, the Casa de San Pedro. We rang in the New Year at the Casa and returned again in March, May, and November. Robert additionally paid a visit in August (during the monsoon season!) to help out at the Southwest Wings Birding Festival. Two of our visits were actually work weekends; in March, while Robert served as hydraulic engineer, laying big pipes to drain a little bog, Liza and a few other ladies carried, rolled, and cajoled 12 tons of river rock into drainage ditches along one side of the property, and helped build a crushed-granite path. In November, we helped plant trees and native grasses (who said they looked like weeds?) to stabilize and



Robert & Liza enjoying fine German beer at Schloß Kaltenberg, Germany, July 1997.



Robert with Ulrich Weissler,
Bournemouth, England, July 1997.

Bournemouth, the garden city by the English Channel. We enjoyed the opportunity to share last year's Kenya/Tanzania trip with Ulrich while hearing stories of the East Africa he knew from the last decade prior to independence. The ambiance of the Rhinefield House (estate, actually) and the surrounding woods, plus the soft breezes along the seaside Durley Chine provided pleasant and memorable moments to chat. After an all-too-brief couple of days, we made our way to the continent – by plane instead of through the Channel Tunnel for lack of time.

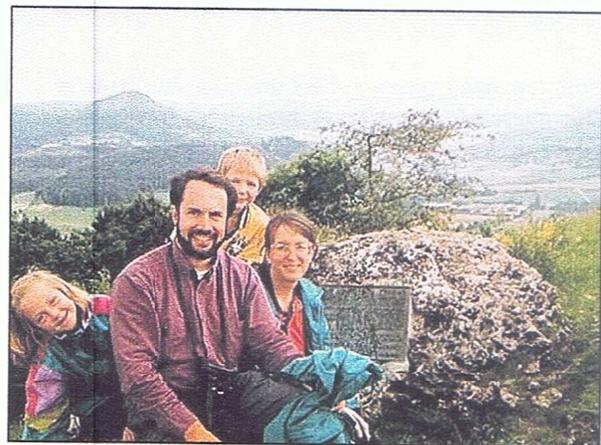
We were greeted in Frankfurt by Hans-Dieter and Ilse Lux who whisked us out of the cavernous international terminal and down the autobahn to their home in Viernheim, near Mannheim. They treated us to an invigorating walk along the Philosopher's Walk overlooking the Neckar River and old Heidelberg; then crossing the river, we strolled through the old city and rode a convenient tram up to the imposing, red sandstone castle with its breathtaking views. From Heidelberg we drove along the river; around every turn, it seemed, appeared another fortification equipped with a bustling café, good desserts and stunning views. The Luxes and their son Christian also shared interesting insights about Germany from a German perspective. Each part of Germany is subtly but palpably different from the next, and the average tourist is likely oblivious. The Rhein corridor near Mannheim seems a lower key business climate than the intense skyscrapers of Frankfurt, but no less industrious. However, like most of Germany there were many old towns squeezed between the modern cities with their old world charm intact, for example the summer residence of Schwetzingen and the 2000-year-old Roman ruins of Ladenburg.

revegetate the edges of the Casa's very large evaporative (waste water) pond. Whew! We should work this hard on our own house!

In July, we took our "big" trip of the year, crossing the Atlantic and doing our version of a whirlwind European vacation. We flew first to England to visit Ulrich Weissler in

After several days in the fine company of the Luxes, it was time to move on, leaving Viernheim and taking the train past Stuttgart to Göppingen. There we were met by Torsten Ried, husband of Robert's cousin Bettina, for the short drive to their home in Weilheim/Teck. This was Robert's first opportunity to meet Bettina, as both she and Torsten lived in Brazil until the last several years. Their two children Martin and Katja were utterly charming. They joined us on a hike up the grassy slopes of the Limburg, an ancient volcanic plug. From the top we were afforded a 360° view of the pastoral Swabian countryside. Little did we know how much history was tucked away in this neck of the woods. Before she was Queen Mary (as in the ocean liner, and Queen Elizabeth II's grandmother), Princess Mary of Teck was born and raised here. And in the neighboring town was the Hauff Museum with a surprisingly large collection of fossils of Ichthyosaurs, Ammonites and other prehistoric creatures of the Jurassic epoch. That we were in the area called the *Swabian Jura* is perhaps a clue to the origin of the word "Jurassic" too. We hit it off splendidly with Torsten and Bettina, sharing wine and conversation long into the evening. Our time with them was the briefest of all, but we made the most of it and look forward to another hopefully more leisurely opportunity to visit with them soon.

And so we headed on to Erlangen via Nürnberg for several days with Johannes and Bärbel Weissler. Once again, we were treated to several outings of interest as well as getting caught up with family news and activities. The first morning we visited a nature preserve (and on the way out of Erlangen, we spied a fledgling White Stork in a roof-top nest). After a lunch of Nürnberger Bratwürstl we headed to the Verkehrsmuseum (Transportation Museum) where we lost ourselves among the myriad models of locomotives and passenger cars. The next day the four of us headed to Vierzehnheiligen, a pilgrimage church whose commanding position overlooking the valley below and



With Katja and Martin Ried on the Limburg, July 1997.



With Bärbel and Johannes Weissler, Kloster Banz, July 1997.

imposing edifice belie the exquisite, ethereal Rococo interior of this basilica dedicated to the 14 saints depicted on several altars. Across the valley, we visited Kloster Banz and relaxed in the Biergarten with some thirst-quenching Radler, a mix of beer and soft drink. We continued on to Coburg (as in Saxe-Coburg now Windsor, thanks to King George V of England) inside whose fortress walls was an exhibition on the royal families of Europe descended from Queen Victoria. Fascinating!

Much too soon, it was time to move on again. Following a morning visit with cousin Wolfgang, who had just returned from vacationing at the Red Sea, we said our goodbyes to Johannes and Bärbel at the Erlangen train station, and made our way to Pullach (outside of Munich) to visit with friends Hans and Lisa Prugger. Their humor and friendliness was the perfect way to cap off a wonderful week in Germany. Shortly after arriving, we took part in an exhibition of civic pride, namely the dedication of a new railroad bridge; the beer flowed, people sang, and Hans' band played as the sun played "hide and seek" with the rain clouds. Liza's German finally became coherent shortly thereafter, too...the beer no doubt helped!

While in Pullach, morning walks along the Isar River started each day – at least for Robert – and we enjoyed one splendid meal after another in the Pruggers' beautiful garden. We were also treated by Lisa to a truly authentic medieval experience that puts our local Renaissance Faire to shame, namely, the Ritterturnier at Schloß Kaltenberg. Robert tried his hand at archery, we drank more beer, and the many crafts, games and period music were topped off by a re-creation of a jousting tournament. Our last afternoon, we cycled on wooded paths along the Isar to the Grosshesselohe Biergarten, where we enjoyed (of course) ample quantities of beer and a fine picnic prepared by Lisa. Robert has many

fond memories at this very Biergarten with his parents and the Pruggers some 16 years earlier.

From Pullach it was on to Switzerland for a couple nights in the Bernese Alps at Grindelwald, where we had honeymooned back in January 1984. Quite a difference seeing it in summer as opposed to winter! We were fortunate to have a beautiful, sunny day for a long hike from the top of the First Bahn back down to the valley, a descent of some 4000 feet down steep footpaths and through green alpine meadows, with only the tinkling of cowbells to break the silence. We finished the day with a steep hike up 890 steps to the Eis Grotto, a cave carved into the blue glacier ice. We were lucky to have feet left by the end of the day!

The next day we left Switzerland, passing Lake Geneva en route, and made our way to the French spa town of Aix-les-Bains, along the shores of the Lac du Bourget. From there, we took the opportunity to spend a day at a Time Trial stage of the Tour de France in Saint Etienne. It wasn't hard to locate the course; we followed a trio of Danish cycling fans bedecked in their national flag who were cheering their national hero and the prior year's tour winner Bjarne Riis. The excitement of this spectacle rivals that of the Super Bowl – and it goes on for the 21 stages of the tour! We soon found the barricades lining the final kilometer of the course, then the team vehicles and warm-up area. We finally settled in at the start and watched the sinuous muscles of the riders and the shining, custom racing bicycles. And then the big names of the Mercatone, Festina and Deutsche Telekom teams: Marco Pantani, Richard Virenque, and finally the eventual winner Jan Ullrich. It was a great event to experience first hand. Taking the train in and out via Lyon worked out well too, and soon we were on a TGV heading back to our hotel.

The next day it was on to Geneva, where we spent most of our last day of the trip holed up in an unexceptional hotel room watching the wonderful live television



Robert and Hans Prugger at the Grosshesselohe Biergarten outside Munich, July 1997.



Liza (second from right) and her bike camp mates atop Loveland Pass, elevation 11,990 feet, in Summit County, Colorado, August 1997.

coverage of the Tour de France stage up to Alpe d'Huez (three+ hours, no commercials!) and reflecting back on a hectic, but very fun vacation. Despite the grueling schedule, we were glad to have visited with so many friends and relatives who made this trip truly rewarding and memorable.

We had scarcely returned home from our European holiday when Liza set out (alone) for Summit County, Colorado for one week, to attend the Carpenter/Phinney Women's Bike Camp. The camps are the brainchild of Connie Carpenter (1984 Olympic gold medalist) and her husband Davis Phinney (1991 US Pro Champion and two-time Tour de France stage winner). The camp was based in Frisco (elevation 9,000 ft), about 100 miles west of Denver. Liza and 41 other hardy cyclists rode daily from Frisco *up* to one of the nearby ski resorts, Breckenridge the first day, Copper Mountain and Vail Pass (10,400 ft) the second, Montezuma (10,500 ft) the next, all the while learning and practicing particular bike-handling skills such as paelines, echelons, climbing and descending techniques, and cornering. The highlight of the week for Liza was on the fourth day of camp, when she rode up past Arapahoe Basin ski area to Loveland Pass (11,990 ft), finishing tenth out of the 20 who managed to make it. What a feeling! It was utterly exhilarating, and if hadn't been so cold and windy up top, she'd have looked for a 10-foot rock to stand on to say she'd made it to 12,000 feet. The fact that the descent was bone-chilling and terrifying due to a 30-mph crosswind couldn't even detract from the overall thrill of having made it to the top.

Robert had yet another trip to reconnect with family, this time his mother's side, with a trip with his mom Claire and his brother Rod's family to Westbury, New York on Long Island to celebrate Milt Wanerman's 80th birthday. It was great for Robert to see Milt and his wife Gertrude again. The celebration was also a great

opportunity to meet their sons' families: Rob and Linda Wanerman and their son Ritchie; Jeff and Helen Wanerman and their two children Nina and Zachary.

What will 1998 bring? We plan to start the year out with a short birding trip to the Amazon region of Ecuador, rejoining tour leaders Victor Emanuel and Peter English, with whom we had traveled to Belize in 1996. This area of Ecuador has two seasons, rainy and rainier; we'll be visiting in the rainy season, which means we should only get dumped on once a day. ☺ Liza may be visiting RAND's Washington D.C. office in February. In July, we'll be zipping through Germany, the Czech Republic, and Austria with our singing group, and if there's any way we can work it out at all, we may try sneaking into France again for a couple days to pick up another stage of the Tour de France "up close and personal". Weekends here and there throughout the year we expect to be at the Casa in SE Arizona, perhaps once in April with some of our cycling club pals to do our own "Tour of Bisbee and Tombstone".

And we're planning *now* for our year 2000 visit to Australia. Olympics (in Sydney; have to catch the cycling!), the Northern Territory, the Red Centre...anyone want to meet us there?

Und auf Deutsch...

Herzliche Grüße zu unseren Freunden und Verwandten aus Deutschland! Wir wünschen Euch eine frohe Weihnachten und ein echt gutes neues Jahr.

Keep in Touch!

As always, we can be reached via email:

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We hope that you too had a rewarding year and we wish you all the best in the New Year.