

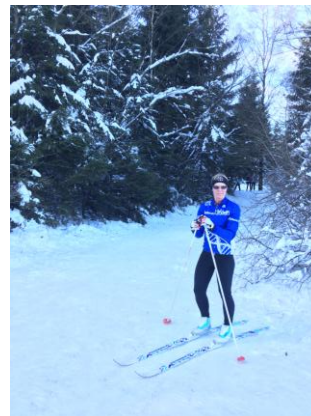
Christmas greetings 2017 and New Year's Letter 2018

As usual my Christmas letter becomes delayed until the days between Christmas and New Year. Not that I am too busy with Christmas celebration, but definitely always busy. This year 2017, has not been an exception to the 'always keeping busy' tempo of my life. Another good year with mixtures of highs and lows as is to be expected from life on earth. This year has been a good year for my consulting business with my good 'old faithful' clients and some new. I always enjoy when people move on to new companies, and they contact me from their new companies for new projects. There has been a lot of travelling. This is both exciting, professionally stimulating and tiring. After airports, planes, and long days of farm visits and presentation I come home and just need to sit a while with my chickens or some gardening.

My dad is still going full speed ahead at 84 years of age. He wanted to see Cuba on a cruise, and his 3 daughters came along on that trip in January! Instead of down scaling he now has one house, one apartment and one summer house. We sisters try to take a smiling distance to all his projects and trips, but fear that one day it will be too much.



Cuba cruise for the Berge klan



Skiing in the Belgian Ardennen

Marc had some bad luck in the spring and broke his talus in his foot. This resulted in two weeks without weight bearing, but thereafter many nice bike trips, as he was on medical leave, because he could not stand and walk well, but he could bike! His school continues to be an educational disaster for the students and most teachers are seeking new jobs. The good news that we heard before Christmas is that the principal is leaving. However, it is likely not going to get much better, like everywhere, the educational levels are sinking with scary speed. At schools everywhere, we hear the same story that kids should not be expected to work hard, learn, get homework, or fail if they do not perform. That is not a fun situation for a teacher like Marc that could push his students hard, and they enjoyed the hard pace and discipline. Marc has lost interest in school, and only goes there to get his pay check. Sad for my man and for future generations.



Jeanine spends 10 days with us in Sweden



A day at San Diego Zoo after working with Ascus

Marc and I had spent 10 exploring the Pyrenees. Unfortunately several days with rain storms, but we made the best of the situation, and mixed biking, walking, hiking and relaxing.



Cirque de Gavarnie



Col de Tourmalet



Isak and I try to imitate Saga's syncro swim



Saga's konfirmation



Anne Noone and I in Pennsylvania, double trouble



A couple of days with Ed and Dawn Shank and their family, on the Family Cow Dairy



Always a joy to hang out with Stuart and Mich



Dad always helpful with all my projects!

My chickens are all in great shape and laying lots of eggs of all colours. The hatching was hard this year, and it resulted that in that I persevered into the autumn to get the chicks I want, so I had some chicks hatch now around Christmas time. They get to spend their days in the garage, until they are feathered enough to cope with outside temperatures. They become very hand tame this way. Nemo went through some bad cold last winter, and after that has had chronic otitis. I never thought I would treat roosters for otitis, but I have become quiet an expert. Nemo managed to win me a really nice system camera. GAIA, the Belgian animal welfare organization had a selfie competition, and I sent in a photo of me and Nemo in his usual position. He likes to sit there. See below.



The men in my life...



Do I have to choose?

I probably forget to mention a lot of things, but I guess that is a good sign of that my year has been a good one. Marc's and my biggest challenge is that someone is stealing hours in our days, and days in our months. I guess that is a good sign too. I never have time to sit down to just read a book, and my photo album projects are again a few years behind. It is difficult to be disciplined and work at times. There are so many other fun projects and thoughts interfering with my good intentions to write etc. But, finally this year, I have put together a calf book that I am hoping to get published next year.

Next year I intend to get more done, have more fun, have more time for friends and family, have more time for my chickens, more time for biking and running, more time for hobbies, more time for just being. Our life is good. The world around us becomes more and more unsettled and out of balance and it is important to have a good perspective and hope. Thank you God for my little vacation from eternity down here on planet earth! Thank you for my Marc, home and my animals. Thank you for my dad, my sisters and their families. Thank you for all great friends. Thank you for all colleagues. Thank you for all great adventures, farms I get to visit and places that I get to see. Thank you for health. Thank you for life.



Just another working day in Belgium



Why do I always have to convince people that I work hard?

Hugs,

Cat.