

# Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Last year I did not write a Christmas letter. I felt that the year had been too hard, and I felt worry for 2016. Well, my fears that I felt on New Years Eve of 2016 came true. This has been a very hard year. I now count the days until 2017 begins, hoping for a better year.

2016 has been a year where breathing has sometimes been very hard, where tears have clouded my vision, and the pains of life has just stopped me in my paths at times. It has been a year of loss. But only those that love much, will lose much, and the pains I have felt are the backside of love.



I sit in my father's lap, Elisabeth in middle and my mother has Susanne in her lap



Gunnel Elisabeth Berge, born 6 Jan 1932, left us 26 Feb 2016



My mom keeps living in our memories and in Heaven

In the spring of 2016 my mom left us, after 4 hard years fighting a bone cancer. She left as a positive fighter, even though she was losing every battle in her body. We were all by her bed the last day of her life. My mom became 84 years old, and she lived a very good, exciting life with lots of experiences and a family that loves her more than anything. No need to say how much I miss her and

as I write this, tears begin to flow again, and as I go throw photos, the loss is still so intense. Finally, my body broke down in colds and flues. My otherwise so strong immunity had been damaged by the emotional battle.

Nemo with his girls



My father hold Garry and Terry



My chickens are always my comfort when I am stressed or sad. Unfortunately a neighbour killed many of my Antwerpse baardkrielen. Not only did I lose my little loved ones, but also 6 years of breeding. In the summer my chickens got Infectious Bronchitis virus that resulted in that all my layer hens stopped laying and many of my newly hatched chicks died. Well oh well, new chicks hatch, and a plan was made to build a new chicken house, where they can have more place indoors for the cold times of the years, and some additional light for the winter times. In October the Chicken Palace was put up, thereafter painted, and perches and nesting boxes constructed. I am noe very happy with my Chicken Palace, and my chickens likewise.







Berge Veterinary Consulting BVBA has been doing well this year. I have had a mixed bag of tasks ranging from statistical analysis of rabbit trials to field trials in lambs in Israel to teaching calf health all over Europe ranging from Turkey to Norway to Russia. My work gives me a lot of pleasure. However, when 8 hours after I left the airport in Brussels to go to Russia a terrorist bomb exploded, it brought new challenges and worries in travel. We tell ourselves that we are not going to let terrorist scare us, but when I was not sure if I wanted to go to a concert with my Marc a few weeks later and we left before the second *bis* number, and when I did not want to bring a little hen on the train into Brussels to give to my friend Ewout, I realized that I had been affected.



A small village in Russia. My work gets me to where tourists never go.



Terry and I working on antimicrobial reduction in pigs

My Marc has challenges with his job. He has a principal that is continually lowering the standards and the requirements on the students, and Marc is no longer to teach the way he has done for decades. He is now looking for new jobs, and just trying to survive until something new comes up. We try to focus on what is good: our vegetable and fruit garden, biking, family, vacation etc. The summer brought us back to our favorite place in the French Alps, Col de Vars, from where we can climb some of the most fantastic mountains. My new favorite is Faugniera in Italy, followed by Col d'Angel, and Col de la Bonnette.



Then in August, it is time for us to revisit the big country out west, because my fantastic friend Jeanine had plans for me. Jeanine's boyfriend Larry lives in Las Vegas, and we spent some time discovering the area around Las Vegas, including scorching hot weather. We headed to Bishop, on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada in California to do some good riding for four days. Marc was excited to find that Melissa Etheridge gave a free concert in Las Vegas, and then we headed to San Diego to see another one of her concerts, and thereby his summer was made. Jeanine and I did Hoodoo 500, a 520 mile race with over 11,000 meters of climbing in St George, Utah. Larry and Marc were crewing. We had a very good race and we went out hard. The first day was raining quiet some, but since we were racing relay, we could dry up and heat up a bit between our pulls that usually lasted 30 minutes. Through the cold night, we found ourselves competing against the best 4 man relay team, and on the second day of the race, we were in the lead overall, and won the race with 29 hours and 47 minutes. We went home very happy about this overall win of the race, new course records and breaking 30 hours.







Really close to a million dollars!



But, we do not really need any million dollars, we have it so good.

Then in September, Jeanine had again tricked me into some fun. She had organized a bike trip for a group of people from California. We spent 5 days biking in Riccioni, Italy, using a fantastic bike hotel (Hotel Dory) that organized bike rides every day. Mavis Irwin joined on this Italy trip and then went with me to Belgium for some time.



A few wonderful hours with Stuart and Mich!



My 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday was celebrated without too many festivities. My loving Marc filled our house with more smurfs and at least 100 balloons. My father joined us for a few days. The day after my birthday my uncle Tord Berge left us, another victim by the vicious opponent cancer. My sister Elisabeth with Julia and Karin came a few days for the traditional autumn trip, and as usual, so much fun together. And, after I had been in Umeå to speak about raw milk at a Artisanal Food production symposium, I got a day with Susanne, Isak, Saga and Jakob in Stockholm, and a surprise birthday dinner for me, when suddenly my father, and my sister Elisabeth with family came





The rest of the autumn has been a lot of business and trips. All very good trips, but I am now looking forward to a month without travelling. I have soo much I want to do.... photo albums, hobbies, letters, books to read etc. I always run short of time, every day. I guess that is a good sign that I am blessed with a rich life. I thank Jesus every day for all the blessings that he bestows on me. Even when someone that I love is taken away, I thank Jesus for letting me have had that person or animal in my life for a little or long while. And when sorrow or loss overtakes me, it gives me comfort to know that my Eternal Father has plans and power that expands way beyond this world in political and natural turmoil.



Christmas 2015!

God Bless you as you celebrate this Christmas and in the Year to Come and Forever!

Cat, Marc, Sara and feathered family