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Two-hemisphere bulletin

Here's a two-hemisphere bulletin! I have returned to New Zealand early for family reasons, and left Mani seeing out the season in Switzerland. So, let's focus on the summer I left, rather than on the still-cold season I have returned to.

But you can't say I wasn't warned about the weather. We rarely hear anything about NZ on the news - so imagine the impact when your storms made the radio news, and newspapers. People rushed to make sure we knew!

It was school holidays at that stage, so our little community swim-bath was full of leaping kids - and Mani and I preferred to head for the lake for our cool-off dips. Bodensee was quite full, and around 22 degrees. It's wonderfully clean lake water: Germany, Austria and Switzerland did a major cooperative effort a few years ago to stop the run-off and other pollutants - with the result that some people now complain that it's too clean and doesn't have enough nutrients to keep the fish population up. I'm not sure about the biological logic of that - I'd suspect over-fishing rather than under-feeding... But anyway, the lake is full of small fry, so that looks promising. In August, *two* monstrous catfish were caught in the Alten Rhein: one a 2-metre long 47 kilogram specimen, and the next week, a 50 kilo creature, 60 centimetres longer. They must have lived there for years: it seems a little sad.

At Altenrhein there's a well-manicured *Schwimmbad* area, with a walkway out into the lake and a new swimming platform. We like the more 'au naturel' shore down on the Austrian side of the river-mouth, and sometimes bike down to swim from there. Mani was reminiscing about how during the war there were fierce stone-throwing battles against the Austrian boys across the river, and diving expe-

ditions in the lake to retrieve shell cases and other tradeable debris.

On the reminiscing front - we went to a celebration of 100 years of Toblerone chocolate! The Toblers come from just up the road from the Zusts, and the first of a number of centennial events was in a local winery, with the local brass band and dignitaries, and a pig on a spit. Anyway, in boasting about the district's famous sons, the local MP singled out not just the Tobler family, but also the Zusts, for their development of the Zust car. Mani's and brother Hans's chests puffed with pride. At the height of its manufacture in Italy (eventually it got caught up into the development of Fiat), they were making not just cars but also trucks and taxis. I'd heard the story before about how one of their cars was second in the 1908 Great Race from New York to Paris. Some Zusts are still around as vintage vehicles - one taxi carried members of the Bundesrat (federal parliament) in the Lucerne Yodelfest parade.

Highlight of the month: Tosca at the Bregenz Festival. Bregenz, just around the lake in Austria, has an Arts Festival each year, and the Opera changes every 2 years. It's on a lake-stage, and always famous for the set design. This was the second year of the Tosca production, so we were familiar with the overall design: we'd seen it from the Zeppelin last year, and seen snippets of it in the coverage of the filming of the new James Bond movie, which uses the set as one of its locations.

The evening at the opera is one of our "gang" traditions. There were 10 of us this year, and as always we took our own champagne and glasses for a pre-show picnic. Then the weather changed - thunder, lightning, rain - we rushed to huddle under the roof of the drinks pavilion. By the time the show was

due to start, the weather had moved over us, and then hovered over the mountains in Austria and Germany so the sky was often illuminated with lightning flashes during the whole evening. Starry sky above us, lightning through black clouds on our horizon - all added to the drama!

Weather caught the festivities for 1 August too, but the marquee held together and sheltered our singing and laughter, and another shelter protected the pig slowly revolving on its spit.



Freundschaft Laube ready for inauguration

And then - I needed to come home. But - the traditions carry on without me: Mani hosted the annual *Holdermues* feast, tucked into our renovated outdoor room which at its official opening party was christened the *Freundschaft Laube*. He's looking forward to the *blutwurst* season (several meals required before he leaves) and to seeing Jack (Gibo) Herzog who sailed with him to New Zealand more than 50 years ago and now lives in Canada. Gibo's visiting family in early October, so there will be many reminiscences to be had! Then there'll be the trips to enjoy the changing colours of the trees... and so the Swiss season will pass. I'll see him soon.