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Writing this at the motor camp at Opunake, Mani stretched out on the deck chair, cicadas in the trees, Louis Armstrong on the iPod... life doesn't get much better! We've been swimming this morning - or rather, leaping about in and getting knocked over by boisterous waves. I put on an extra kilo in minutes with the load of black sand that found its way into my togs! A wonderful beach, closed in by rocks eroded from headlands that tell their geological history in dramatic changes of colour and texture.

It's bad timing of course: We're in Taranaki while the Taranaki Swiss Club prepares to be in Wellington to defend the Cowbell, so we can't be part of Wellington's valiant effort. February on the road is something we've been looking forward to. *Feierabend*, our house-bus, had been prepared, and a client declared that the Board wanted to do its strategic planning in New Plymouth - so that decided the itinerary: up the West Coast, around the mountain to New Plymouth, through to the Bay of Plenty, then around the East Cape and home down the East Coast.

We've packed the library, the chess, the sketchpads, pencils and paints, and latest endeavour - the bone-carving tools. In January we both did a six-day course with Owen Mapp, who is one of New Zealand's bone-carving artists recognised around the world. What a fascinating tutor! His own workshop is piled with exotic materials like a 40,000 year old mammoth tusk, and artefacts from indigenous societies, and his generosity with his knowledge and stories was as great as his passing on of skills. We developed muscles in our fore-arms that I didn't know I had, and calluses on our thumbs and fingertips from the small handtools we carve with, and patience! The patience might be the greatest part. I read the writings of one of the great Japanese netsuke carvers - he sands his pieces (about 6 cms cubed) for twelve hours!

Personally, I've always been a

believer in establishing the minimal amount of effort needed to get a result. When "In Search of Excellence" was the most-read management book, I wanted to write "In Search of Good Enough"... on the basis that excellence is often a waste of effort, when good enough would suffice. Of course my philosophy does allow that sometimes only excellence IS good enough, and then you can use the effort you've saved on other things to make that perfect. So, imagine me confronted with the idea that getting a proper finish on a tiny carving could mean 12 hours with increasingly fine grades of sandpaper. Jung tells us that the work of our mature years is to develop our "shadow" side - the other part of our self from the one that's normally in the sunshine. I think maybe my lesson for this phase of my life is patience!

And yes - I promised a little something in this bulletin about Mani's recent notoriety. If you read the Dominion Post you might have seen the stories and pictures. Ah well, we can look



back on it now with some amusement. What happened was that a nearby fellow-resident in Kapiti Village took exception to Mani using his cold-smoker. This all started last year, but instead of talking to us, she complained to the manager. Of course if she'd talked to us we could have found a way to smoke when she was

out (though how she could even smell the manuka smoke from her place, let alone think she was smelling something cooking when the smoke temperature is 18-20°C is beyond us...). Anyway, the manager investigated, declared there was no problem and we should keep smoking, and then off we went to Switzerland. We came back to find the whole thing escalated into a formal dispute; the complainant hadn't liked the manager's decision and so complained about Metlife-care's handling of the situation - and there were we in the centre of the situation. Well, if you saw the final story in the DomPost you'd know that the adjudicator found that everything was fine, and told the complainants not to be so silly. Last week Mani smoked salami and mostbröckli, and very fine it is too.

But don't you find that good things will always emerge? There've been several come out of this saga. We've met people in the Village we didn't know before, who hastened to phone us and say we could put the smoker in *their* back yard. We've made a nice friendship with a young woman from up the road who's taking smoking lessons from Mani - and providing very fine venison into the bargain. And we've started a long over-due conversation around the Village about how people should handle things when residents step on each other's toes. Still, it's the same the world over - in Altenrhein where we all live quite close to each other, there are rules and conventions and understandings about how we avoid annoying the neighbours (no-one would dream of mowing the lawns during siesta time!) - and yet still some people seem to prefer to complain than to have a direct conversation and solve a problem. Perhaps we should establish a World Cup for Grumbling and let them get on with it, while the rest of us enjoy life!

Speaking of which - there's a chess game to be had. More travel stories next bulletin.