

Web Blog SUNwalk 2008 engl. XXII

7/6 – 7/16/2008

Olney, MD – Philadelphia, PA

7/6/2008

Olney, MD – Cooksville, MD

A deer stands next to the busy road, thin, stiff like a board, a bright contrast in front of the dim forest. It stares at me – above the cars that flow between us. After a while the stiffness is melting. It disappears in the dark forest, lithesome and light. A red arrow, the cardinal swishes across the road and follows the deer.

Two groundhogs are also living next to this road. One of them throws a glance at me. It makes some chewing movements with its furry cheeks. It disappears in a sewage channel. The other one crawls through the shrubbery, fast and softly. Finally I only see some stalks moving.

Brookville, MD – a small town with some pretty historic brick buildings – they are old, quite old for US standards: early 19th century. Brookville had the honor to become the US capital for one day – on 8/26/1814. President James Madison and his folks arrived here after the English troops have burnt down the Capitol and the White House. The local postmaster, Caleb Bentley, welcomes the President and his crew and offers them shelter.

There is a huge plane tree, standing next to a house between Brookville and Sunshine, MD. The mighty trunk survived all the cuts that the tree had to go through. It grows and grows and lasts. I am leaning towards this tree. I feel the silent life of this majestic being, of this rough bark. I feel the strong presence of this tree friend, and I am longing for the presence, the closeness of a human friend. The tree is standing there. It stands – above all human things.

“Sunshine” is a road crossing with two stores, a church, and a house. The lady in the store is lighting up when I ask her: “Isn’t it nice to work in Sunshine? Sunshine is always here even if it rains.”

“Martin!” A man stops his car and shouts to me across the street. First I think it’s Rob Keiser, one of my cousins. But then I realize I don’t know this person. It’s John Schoenenberger and his daughter Jessica. John and his wife Susan have seen me some days before on the road. They write me and invite me to stay with them in Cooksville on my way to Baltimore. They wait later, at the road crossing near where they live. They welcome me and spoil me like an old friend. John works as a photographer. Susan has written the book “Don’t Forget Us!” Her great-grandparents, Jeanette and Karl Ladenburger from Bonfeld, Germany, were deported by the Nazis to Riga and killed in 1941. Susan is so moved during a visit to the Holocaust Memorial museum in Washington and by the movie “Schindler’s List” that she starts a 5 year search for the story of her ancestors. In the last letter that Karl and Jeanette write to their children who could escape to the USA, Karl writes: “Don’t forget us!” With her book Susan can fulfill this wish. It’s an amazing story how Susan can bring light into the forgotten fate of Jeanette and Karl; how she is guided, how many synchronicities happen, and how she meets family members she didn’t know before. Susan did also everything that a commemorative plaque was placed in Bonfeld in order to remind future generations of the dark times the Jews of this town went through.

7/7 – 7/8/2008

Cooksville, MD – Baltimore, MD

I approach Baltimore on an old road. A floor can be composed of several layers, put on top of each other during various generations. The Russian word “pol” has the meaning of “floor” and of “generation” at the same time. In a similar way this first federal road has been named differently in various periods: National Road, Cumberland Road, Fredericks Road, and Route 144. In the early 19th century this road was the first main connection between Baltimore and the west. At that time a big house could have been built with the 20 \$ that Mike and his wife Sylvia from Bavaria give me, together with a bottle of cold mineral water...

Victoria Goodman and Lory Paddy wait for me on the road across the tourist office in the small historical town of Ellicott City. They tell me, somebody has stopped by and announced my arrival. They welcome me to Ellicott City and give me a red T-shirt with flowers and a Goldfinch cuddly toy that warbles a pretty bird song when I push its back. They teach me that there was the first railway station of the USA here in town, and that there is history everywhere at this place. The generous hospitality continues when the waiter Brandon brings me a cold drink to the sidewalk where I park James. He also declares that my lunch is “on the house” when I want to pay my bill later.

In the evening I arrive in Baltimore – another 4 miles on Charles Street towards north before I get to the Highfield House Condominiums, 4000 N Charles Street. The architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe built them in 1964. My friend and former boss at Harvard and his wife, Bob and Cynthia Lawrence, live here on the 11th floor.

Memories come up: In 1972 I did an externship in surgery as a medical student at the Ravenswood Hospital in Chicago. On the last day, when I said good-bye to one of the surgeons in the operating room, he took me aside. “Sit down, Martin. You may have noticed that this is a bad hospital. If you have a chance to return to the USA as a medical doctor, apply to one of these twelve institutions!” He tears a page out of his notepad. He writes down the names of the following medical centers: “Harvard Medical School, Stanford University School of Medicine, National Institute of Health, Yale School of Medicine, University of Chicago, Columbia University Medical Center, Mayo Clinic, Montefiore Medical Center, Johns Hopkins University, University of California San Francisco, Duke University, University of Michigan Ann Harbor.” I save this piece of paper carefully. Six years later I return to the USA and visit six of the institutions that are on this short list.

Initially I want to land in Boston and visit Harvard Medical School at first; but a wild blizzard makes the landing there impossible. Therefore I start with the University of Chicago. Then I visit the NIH, later the centers in New York City. Boston becomes my last destination – already then. I call John Stoeckle, the director of Primary Care at the MGH (Massachusetts General Hospital). “Hi, Doctor Stoeckle. My name is Martin Vosseler, I am an internist from Basel, Switzerland. I am interested in Primary Care.” “Good for you. Where are you?” “At the Sonesta Hotel.” “I’ll pick you up in half an hour.” There are not yet many cars on the road, after the blizzard 1978

which blocked Boston for almost a week; but physicians with a special permission are allowed to drive again. John arrives. I join him in his car. A thorough interview starts and lasts during the whole drive to Stoeckle's home in a Boston suburb. "How is the health care system in Switzerland? What do you know about the health care system in the USA? What do you think about it? What would you organize differently in Switzerland, in the USA? How is the curriculum for a family doctor in Switzerland? Which priorities would you choose as a Primary Care teacher? How could we improve the doctor – patient relationship? What would you do in order to make Primary Care more attractive? ..." Cold sweat – I try to find an answer to every question. When we arrive at John's house he turns towards me: "You are accepted." After dinner he writes down a list with the people I had to meet the next day. One of them is Bob Lawrence, chief of the Division of Primary Care and Family Medicine at Harvard Medical School.

I meet Bob in an office at the Beth Israel Hospital. From the first moment on I experience feelings of friendship for this man. He is tall. He has full, blond hair, clear eyes. Bob is a good listener. He connects with people, fully present and focused. He speaks slowly and clearly. He has a fine sense of humor. He becomes a good mentor and friend. He follows my development from a promising researcher to a psychologically interested practitioner with much understanding and support. He, his wife Cynthia and their children welcome me like a member of the family. During my Boston time I celebrate Christmas with them.

And now we meet and go directly to the swimming pool behind the house – what a joy after this hot and dusty day. We stand in the cold water and catch up sharing about our life paths, until we shiver. It's hard to believe that Bob is already over 70 – he is one of my friends who come over time and age. After his Harvard time Bob has worked for a while for the Rockefeller Foundation. Then he was offered a position as a Dean at Johns Hopkins University. He founded the "Center for a Livable Future" at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. He and his staff are working for a healthy planet – main emphasis today is the preservation of fertile soil as an important precondition for a healthy life. Bob is also involved in PSR/IPPNW and especially with the Physicians for Human Rights. Both of us came from Primary Care – both of us are now working for the environment, as the number one priority issue. It is reassuring: Bob's center and professorship are well supported by private donors. His successor will continue his legacy as "Robert Lawrence Professor".

The following day I visit Bob in the Center for a Livable Future at Johns Hopkins. I can participate in a workshop that Bob teaches to students – how a public health project can be approached and designed. During a team meeting at the Center I learn a lot about the current activities – recycling program for the hospital, promotion of walking and biking for teachers, students and hospital staff, hearings about toxic chemicals in agriculture and support for organic farming. In both groups I can present the SunWalk2008.

In the evening we cook and eat something. Cynthia is in their vacation home on a Maine island near Rockland. The evening sun is filling the big rooms with warm light – Mies van der Rohe has created a living space that reminds me of the simplicity and beauty of Japanese architecture.

On my way between Johns Hopkins and Bob's home an old African American man asks me about my walk. "Wow, from Los Angeles? Oh, yes, if the mind is determined to do something like that the body follows."

Around the corner from Bob's apartment there is the barber shop of Ted and Nisio. I met both of them a week before at Linda and Arthur's house in Olney. Once in a while they come to Olney on a free Monday to give Arthur a haircut. They also reduced my "luggage" cutting my hair...

7/9/ - 7/16/2008

Baltimore, MD – Philadelphia, PA

It's time that my journey comes slowly to a closure. Martin and James show symptoms of decay – a part of a molar tooth is breaking off, and one of James' pulling poles has a bending fatigue fracture – no surprise after 3200 miles. I have no pain; therefore I wait with my tooth for my dentist in Basel, Thomas Engelberger; but I make a splint fixation with a piece of a hazel stick and rubber tape.

The police is turning my walk into an obstacle race. In Havre de Grace – shortly before a long bridge across the Susquehanna River - I pass an idling police car. The red and blue lights are blinking. The police officer sits in the car and waits. I greet the trooper and continue my walk. "Hey!" I hear the officer's voice. I go back. "To you want to cross the bridge on foot?" "Sure."

“This is not possible. It’s forbidden. It’s too dangerous. There is much construction going on.” I start to haggle with him over this issue. “I crossed many bridges that were under construction; and so far nobody has stopped me.” “It’s a law here in Maryland – no pedestrians on this bridge.” “I understand you. It’s your job to reinforce the law; but I made a vow not to get into a vehicle. I will be very careful.” “There is no way that you cross the bridge on foot!” “As far as I know only the freeways are not open to pedestrians; and there is even a regulation that allows pedestrians to use the freeways if there is no other connection between A and B. I walked 3200 miles and didn’t have any problems.” “Well, you have three options: First – you try to walk across the bridge. Then you will end up in prison. Second: We organize a ride for you. Third: You cross the river at the dam bridge, on Route 1.” I don’t give up yet. “Can I speak to your supervisor?” “Sure.” He calls his boss. “He will arrive soon.” We wait. He starts to ask questions concerning my walk. How many miles per day? Where did you sleep? What did you eat? At the end I say “It was a wonderful experience. Actually I didn’t have a negative experience with people.” “Until you met me...” Both of us chuckle. The supervisor arrives. He stays tough as well. “If you had informed us in advance we could have stopped the traffic for a while; but we cannot do that on such a short notice.”

I choose the detour of about 10 miles – I don’t want to accept a ride in a police car and spoil my 100%-walk; but without that detour I wouldn’t have met Kim and Dennis Roland and her children Trevor and Kelsey in “Rising Sun”. I walked towards the rising sun for more than 6 months; and now I am there...

Kim invites me to their garden party when she hears in the store that I am looking for a camping site. She gives me directions, and I find their wonderful house on top of a hill. I put up my tent in the backyard – there is an overwhelming view over the fields and woods towards Pennsylvania. I meet the whole extended family. They feed me well. I have a lively discussion with Dennis’ cousins about energy issues. Late in the night I am traveling into dreamland, hearing the evening cries of the peacocks that also live in this garden, and the bass rhythms of the music band.

The next day I continue my walk towards Philadelphia on Route 1. After a while the highway turns into a freeway. And again: A police car approaches me - its alarm lights blinking, its horn whistling. The police officers are very

friendly; but they sentence me again to a 6-mile detour. Will I ever arrive in Boston?

The reporter Nick Pipitone and the photographer Clem Murray from the Philadelphia Inquirer shorten my long walk into Philadelphia. They follow me for several hours. They make interviews, pictures, and a film. Nick calls me again in the afternoon. He wants to walk with me for a couple of miles. He tells me why: When he came to the office the newspaper editor asked him whether he had the experience to walk with me. When Nick denied his boss sent him back to the road.

I see the street sign "Chester", the town with the container harbor. I landed there on 12/17 last year on a clear, cold winter morning. A big circle is closing on this hot summer day.

Shortly before sunset I cross the Cobb Creek, a brook that marks the city limit of Philadelphia. It's warm, but not too humid. There is a beautiful, orange evening glow in the air. Light, detached clouds are floating above the city. The sun sets in the windows of "The Left House" and of skyscrapers behind the railway tracks and the freeway. Many people enjoy taking a walk on the Locust Walk, a pedestrian road within the University of Pennsylvania campus.

I arrive in the hotel. I take a shower before a radio reporter arrives for another interview. It will take me another six days until New York City. On 7/21 I will meet Claudio Beretta in Newark. Darlyne Olsen, a friend of Virginia Holmquist, has offered us an apartment at 1 E 66th Str. facing the Central Park where we can stay during the New York time. Afterwards we will walk together to Boston. I am very much looking forward to Claudio's company.

Some good news from Massachusetts:

Massachusetts Landmark Energy Bill Signed into Law. *By Beth Daley, BGlobe, July 3, 2008.* "Governor Deval Patrick signed a landmark energy bill yesterday that does away with long-standing obstacles to building renewable power projects in Massachusetts and making homes and businesses more energy efficient. The **Green Communities Act** was hailed by environmentalists as among the most innovative efforts in the nation to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and to encourage use of clean technologies that don't contribute to global warming. The law will probably

result in utilities' designing customized plans for homeowners and businesses to cut energy costs and providing rebates to pay for measures such as installing insulating windows and more efficient boilers. Homeowners and businesses will be able to rent solar panels from utilities to avoid expensive up-front costs, and the law makes it easier for homeowners who have installed wind turbines or solar panels to sell surplus energy. Supporters said the new law could save hundreds of millions of dollars through energy efficiency, helping to hold down consumers' electric bills as energy prices are skyrocketing. 'I am here today to sign into law the best clean energy bill in America,' a jubilant Patrick said during a signing ceremony at the Museum of Science. 'Climate change is the challenge of our times, and we in Massachusetts are rising to that challenge.' Massachusetts has long been a leader in energy legislation, and it is taking part in a regional effort to reduce greenhouse gases from power plants. Patrick has set an aggressive goal to increase solar power in the state by 600 percent in four years.

My friends Rosemarie and Christoph Graf sent me these words of oneness:

TOWARDS A SINGING REALITY

Medhananada

We are
a drop
in the cosmic field
of consciousness,
but we are also
the entire field.

We can widen
our consciousness,
take the garden into us,
the town and the country ,
the planet and the galaxy...
for all is made
of the same stuff.

It is what God does.
But he does it in reality,
while we do it in imagination

– because we are
the image.

Marcello Zandona, who takes care of my home page in such a competent
and generous way, will be abroad for a vacation until 8/10. So long!

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