

## **Web Blog SunWalk2008 engl. XXI**

6/17 - 7/5/2008

Fairfax, VA - Washington D.C. - Olney, MD

6/17/2008

Fairfax, VA - Washington, D.C.

Where all these cars go? On four to five lanes they pass me, they strive towards a center, restlessly, from all sides. The capital sucks all of them up, absorbs them, like a huge sponge. I am careful not get washed away by this continuous pull towards the center. In Arlington it becomes easier - there are biker lanes in the parks along the Potomac River. Now I become an obstruction to a new kind of stream - hundreds, no thousands of bikers pass me. They swarm around me - coming from work, biking home, or enjoying their daily training rides.

The evening immerses the trees of the Roosevelt Island into mild, warm colours. There is a clarity around these tree crowns like on oil paintings of Alexandre Calame or Robert Zuend.

Then I experience a moving moment: The peak of the Washington Monument, the large, tall, sand-colored obelisk near the west end of the National Mall appears above the foliage of the trees - shining in the orange evening light. I cross the Potomac River on the Lincoln Memorial Bridge and approach the mighty Lincoln Memorial. For a moment I feel lonely and melancholic. I wish I could share this moment of arrival after my long walk through the continent with a beloved soul, with some friends; but there is not much time to enjoy the sadness: A young man, running and gasping, is following me. He asks me why I walk here. Garrett Draper has started his mystery tour in the South. School is over. A long vacation has begun. Garrett takes off, not knowing where he will end up. He is walking and hitchhiking. He is traveling light - he carries two items with him: a guitar and a blanket that somebody gave him so that he stays warm during a cold night.

Somebody has offered him a ride; but Garrett leaves him soon again. His benefactor tells people lies at the gasoline stations in order to get some free gas.

Garrett has clear, blue eyes, a brown beard and moustach. His curly Rasta hair is well kept. He also tells me that he felt lonely arriving here in the capital. Then he saw me, with James; and he was curious to find out my story, and he followed me.

Together we climb the flight of stairs, up to Abraham Lincoln, the pensive sandstone giant sitting on his chair and looking towards the Capitol, near the place where Martin Luther King gave his "I have a dream" speech on 8/23/1963. We walk around the "Reflecting Pool", around the "Rainbow Pool". Out of the tail of our eyes we see the "White House" - all the streets around it are blocked - the squatter is returning from a trip to Europe.

In the meantime it's getting dark. I invite Garrett to share a hotel room with me for the night because he has no idea where to stay. So we are looking for a hotel - this is more difficult than I have expected. There is a Marriott Hotel that has an empty room, but it's very expensive, far beyond my budget. We continue our search. The next hotel is a Holiday Inn, cheaper, but sold out. The lady at the reception tells us that all the hotels in this area are booked out. The reservation service is looking for a hotel room for us - the next available one is about six miles away, and almost as expensive like the Marriott. Another two hours of walking? We give up and return to the Marriott Hotel.

Before we sleep, Garrett plays some songs for me on his guitar, among them one that he has composed himself. He has developed a special technique - he plucks and presses the strings, and slaps the rhythm, with one hand. In the morning Garrett insists to invite me for breakfast. Afterwards we say good-bye. I look for an affordable hotel where I can stay during my Washington time. Garrett continues his mystery tour - he doesn't get far during the next days: We meet again in the Martin Luther King Library two days later.

6/18 - 6/24/2008

Washington D.C.

I end up in a wonderful, little room, in the Windsor Inn at the 16th Street. The house is old. It has many stairs, niches, corners, and angles. There are good paintings and reproductions on the wall, animals, plants, and landscapes. The lamps are crystal chandeliers. In the morning the guests gather around an oval table in the breakfast room. They sit on leather chairs and eat together like a big family. To get into my room - number 313 - it needs some skills and patience. "You must jiggle a bit with the key. The lock is sometimes blocked," Tom at the reception tells me. Behind the door there is a long dim hallway. The walls are also decorated with paintings of animals and flowers, in the style of Maria Sibylla Merian. At the end

of the hallway there is a tiny pentagonal room. The windows face a little alley with fire escapes. There is just enough space for a bed and a small chest of drawers. There is no room for a chair and a table. It's very quiet here. I am feeling very well in this oasis in the middle of an anthill town, in this eye of the capital tornado. It reminds me of the quiet den I enjoyed in the Austrian hospice in Jerusalem where I could stay after my walk from Basel to Bethlehem, where I felt so well too - a simple, plain room, almost no furniture, a candle, a flower, silence - a way of living I like, a monastery cell where the bustling activity of a busy town doesn't enter.

This room becomes the center for a week. From here I stray to the meetings in town. Here I return in the evening. I meet Chris Flavin, the director of the Worldwatch Institute. We got to know each other in 1996 in Washington. In 1998 he was one of the speakers at the sun21 summit in Basel. Last year he welcomed us at the North Cove Harbor in N. Y. C. after our solar Atlantic crossing. Chris just published an overview about the impressive growth of renewable energy installations worldwide. 20'000 Megawatts of wind energy have been added worldwide in 2007 - only 2000 Megawatts of nuclear energy. Chris invites me to a luncheon to the National Press Club. Jim Hansen, the leading climatologist at NASA, the US space agency, speaks about the current situation in connection with climate change. Exactly 20 years ago Tim Wirth, then Senator, invited Hansen for Senate hearings about climate change. Hansen was the first official scientist who publicly acknowledged that climate change is man made. Now, 20 years later, Hansen speaks up again. After the introduction by Tim Wirth, now President of the UN Foundation, Hansen describes the drastic reduction of the arctic ice, of the glaciers worldwide, and of the Greenland ice. He points out that the level of CO<sub>2</sub> - today 385 ppm (parts per million) - has to be reduced to a level below 350 ppm in order to stop this dangerous ice melting. When I get a chance to talk to him personally I urge him to propose the urgently needed global "Marshall" plan to reach early enough the goal that he has described. I ask him also about his opinion concerning the worldwide PR campaign to build new nuclear power plans for climate protection; whether he agrees with me that every dollar invested into new nukes reduces the available resources that we need for renewable energy and energy efficiency and reduces the chances for our survival. He becomes pensive. "I am rather a nuclear agnostic," he says avoiding a clear answer.

I am delighted to see Tom Cochran again. Tom works at the NRDC (National Resources Defense Council). During the late eighties he was the initiator of a US-USSR-working group of seismologists for the surveillance of a nuclear test ban treaty. We, the committee of Swiss PSR/IPPNW, invited him to Switzerland. Thomas Schnyder connected him with his colleagues at the ETH (the Swiss equivalent of MIT). Often if I am in the bus riding to Elm I think of Tom. When we

passed the village of "Engi" he asked what this word means. "Narrow". When we came to Matt, he asked again. "Meadow." When we came to Elm, he didn't ask...

Tom is not a nuclear agnostic. Today he is working mainly against the misbelief that new nukes are a solution for climate change. Tom wants to convince governments and big corporations that it's much more efficient and less risky to invest into renewables and energy efficiency than to waste resources for a risky technology that involves also a unresolved, maybe unsolvable waste problem.

I also visit Urs Ziswiler, the Swiss ambassador in the USA. The Swiss embassy has developed an impressive traveling exhibition on climate change and climate protection. It's shown at several places in the USA, also here in Washington D. C.. Urs Ziswiler joined the diplomatic corps in 1979. He represented Switzerland in many parts of the world - among them Madagaskar, Africa (e.g. Uganda), the Middle East - he was one of the main architects of the "Geneva Initiative", a peace plan for the Middle East that was proposed by Switzerland - in former Yugoslavia and as the ambassador in Canada and in the Bahamas. I ask him also to take advantage of the high reputation of Switzerland in this country and to urge the administration here to adopt a "Marshall" plan for climate protection. We also discover common friends. Urs Ziswiler went to the same school like Peter Cunz, a friend of mine who works at the Department of Energy in Bern.

Ken Bock makes an interview with me for the Worldwatch Institute home page. We have about the same "format"; therefore I borrow from him trousers, a white shirt and a tie for the event at the National Press Club and for my visit with the Swiss Ambassador. The tie shows small Bald Eagles, the heraldic beast of the USA. It looks quite patriotic; and I like it because it reminds me of the wonderful eagles that are often circling around the Fahnenstock mountain in Elm. The wind carries them up, in spirals, higher and higher until they cannot be seen anymore by the human eye...

I hoped to meet with members of the Parliament, but that doesn't materialize. When I arrive in the office of Congressman Jim Cooper from Tennessee for my appointment there is a call for vote, and he rushes away. Instead I have a long conversation with John Spragens, Cooper's communication director; and Lisa Quigley whom I have seen already in Nashville, organises a tour for me through the Capitol, including the main hall of the House of Representatives where there is a debate about energy questions.

During the week-end the film about my SunWalk2008 is aired eight times in "Forecast Earth" of the "Weather Channels". After that I am approached quite often by people in the street who saw the film. I also receive many mails from all

over the USA, among them one of Maggie. She is convinced that her sister and I would be the perfect match...:)

During these Washington days I become a regular in Rosemary's Thyme Bistro. A lady from Russia is guiding me to the table. The waitress comes from Usbekistan. She studiies sociology and environmental sciences and is very anthusiastic about my walk. The Chef de Service and two waiters have their roots in Turkey, one in Mexico. Instaed of lobbying on Capitol Hill I enjoy here wonderful meals. At the same time I can practice my language skills; and it's unavoidable that the restaurant staff is spared completely from my renewable energy mission.

6/24 - 7/5/2008

Washington, D.C. - Olney, MD

In one of my guest rooms in Elm there is a big oil painting. It shows a handsome elder man. He has a white beard, also white hair, an impressive mane, gentle eyes, full of humour. His nose looks the same like the nose of my father. He wears a dark frock, a watch chain. It's Johann Jakob Keiser, my great grandfather. He worked as a teacher in Gelterkinden, a small town near Basel, Switzerland. He taught over 100 children at the same time, in the same room. He was married to two women, one of them died early. They had six children, one was my grandmother, one was Hans who emigrated to the USA. My father told us stories about his uncle Hans in America. During one of his visits to Switzerland he brought pop corn as a gift. Hans and his wife had a son, Harry, who became a surgeon in Chicago. It was rumoured that he made a fortune with appendectomies. He and his wife Anna Mae liked to travel. After Harry's death Anna Mae sent a Chistmas card every year - once she was standing in front of the Tadj Mahal, once next to the pyramids of Gizeh, another time on the Chinese wall. Harry and Anna Mae had a daughter, Mary Ann, and a son, Harry. My cousin Harry was a medical doctor. He did research on high blood pressure at the National Institute of Health. He was married with Linda Hallsten. They had two sons, Rudy and Robert.

In 1972 I met Harry and Linda's family in Washington D. C. for the first time, after an externship in surgery in Chicago. Rudy is seven years old at that time, a bright, shy boy. Rob is four years old, blond, blue eyes, full of beans, trustful, and communicative. During my time in Boston I stay often with them in Rockville, MD. With Harry I can discuss medical issues, with Linda everything else. She is a teacher for guided imagery and music, for Reiki healing. She is a fine musician, a woman of wide reading. She speaks several languages, and she is the best cook and gourmet I know. During these early eighties Linda opens up new dimensions for

me; and she contributed quite a lot that my career as a researcher ended quickly and without regret. More than once Linda also supported me when I suffered from lover's grief or when my emotions were shaky out of other reasons.

Today Linda lives in Olney, MD, a suburb north of Washington D.C., together with her second husband, Arthur Mardis, a former pastor of the Congregational Church. Rudy, his wife Jeanette and their Doberman Lexie live near Dulles airport. Rudy is a computer genius. Robert lives in Germantown. He works for a satellite communication firm. In his sparetime he is involved with the Jimmy Carter organisation "Habitat for Humanity". He also helps to organize fundraising walks for various charity organisations, among them those that support cancer research and cancer patients.

I leave Washington D.C. and walk towards Olney, on 16th Street. I pass beautiful town houses built during the end of the 19th century - a row of identical 5 floor houses that shine through the foliage of big, old trees - the facades are red, blue, green, and white. There is a bastion built in a tan concrete-stone conglomerate, with parks, fountains and waterfalls, with a grandiose view towards the center of the capital. The town unravels - it becomes more and more green. On the left hand side there is the Rock Creek Park. A cool breeze flows from the depth of the wood valley into the heat of the road. Before I arrive in Olney there is a new supermarket for organic food - "Roots". Sweet melon pieces are offered to the customers, orange, green, and purple. Fresh, sweet cherries are piled up. Strawberries are very fragrant and remind me of happy childhood days. When I come to the cashier I "sing" a song of praise for this wonderful store: "I walked 3000 miles to come to your store. It's the most beautiful supermarket I encountered since Los Angeles." The shopgirl takes a pencil and a piece of paper and writes down what I just said, as a quotation for the next "Roots" newsletter. She also calls the owner and tells him about my enthusiasm. He tells me that he also crossed the continent once, by bike.

I find Linda and Arthur's house in a quiet, green suburbia neighbourhood. I am enjoying their generous hospitality for several days now. All the pounds I lost on the highways are coming back now, thanks to Linda's kitchen. We celebrate a culinary high mountains hike, from one summit to the next one, from one delicious meal to the next one... Other than that I catch up with sleeping, writing, and reading; and I also do some gardening.

During the week-end I walk to Germantown. I can stay in the house of my nephew Robert. He has created a wonderful living space - meticulous order, furniture in good taste, and beautiful photos and paintings on the wall, mostly pictures of nature, animals, and sailboats. On 6/28 we make together the 5 mile hike to the

"Red Wiggler-Farm". Beth Vanleer, niece of my Miami friend John Vanleer, and Woody Woodruff have created an organic paradise, together with friends. In their words: "The Red Wiggler Community Farm provides meaningful jobs for adults with developmental disabilities while providing nutritious, fresh, healthy produce for CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) shareholders through the lens of environmental stewardship." Clients come here and pick up their produce packages. In seven years of hard work the farm team succeeded to make the soil fertile again. In the beginning it was completely depleted, because of monoculture with chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Then the thistles came. With their deep roots they brought up the nutrients into the nutrient-poor topsoil. Compost and green manuring were added. And today we see the lush garden beds with vegetables, among them over 20 kinds of tomatoes, with spices and flowers. The bees are humming. A big diversity of birds are nesting - also attracted by the wetlands nearby and the nesting boxes. A big barn is the center of the farm's activities. Recently a new solar house has been built. It was constructed by the students of an engineer school. Then it was shown on the National Mall as a part of a competition and exhibition on green housing. The Red Wiggler Farm could buy the solar house. And now they take the SunWalk as an occasion to celebrate its inauguration. A day before the solar installation has been connected to the electric grid. We also plant a young oak tree together. A small girl, about 2 years old, wants to give the young tree some soil. She grabs the big shovel, very determined. With some assistance it works out very well.

John Vanleer, the oceanographer from Miami, Florida, and his partner Janie have also come to this ceremony. A circle is closing: John has helped us so much before we arrived in Miami on our solar boat. He involved the Miami Mayor. He helped us to find a good docking place. He connected us with officials and media people. He joined me also at the Palos Verdes Peninsula and walked with me during the first day of my hike.

I choose the same route in order to get back to Olney. I am surprised: I recognize so many details that I saw two days before. If I had to remember and recount these details without seeing them again, I would have forgotten many of them already: The fruit stand between Olney and Laytonsville with the half ripe cherries that are touted as sweet; the big mansion on the hill - in the middle of a recently mowed meadow - above it blissful, detached clouds are floating on the azure sky; the two big villas, one next to each other, probably built by the same architect. They have the same blueprint, but some details are different: The windows have a different shape, also the columns that carry the canopy - so the wealthy owners can be proud to have a unique house; the orange blossoms of the daylilies, the light blue stars of the chicories along the road; the selfwilled pinetree branch that makes a difference - it sticks out of the neat double row of pine trees that are planted as a protection

against wind and noise, and it declines towards the road; the small private lake with the idyllic island - two red armchairs are having a mute conversation; the mean sandstone gremlins that sit on the pillars of a big entrance gate in the woods, hunched up. A passing thunderstorm changes some of the details in this identical landscape - dark, marengo-grey, and steel-blue clouds that are blown very quickly over the woods and the fields and pour out enormous amounts of water; a sparkling curtain appears for a moment when the sun breaks through again and the wind sheds the thunderstorm water from the leaves.

The more I walk the more I hear about people who walk to:

I read about George Martin, 54 - reversed names (my second name is George, reversed direction :). As a football player he was a member of the New York Giants. On 9/16/2007 he left New York City, crossing the George Washington Bridge. On 6/22/2008 he arrived in San Diego, CA. He walked 3003 miles. He needed 24 pairs of shoes; and he lost 40 pounds. He also walked for a cause: He wanted to raise awareness about the health effects - often serious respiratory disease - that people suffered from, rescue workers who were exposed to the dust in the World Trade Center ruins. He collected over 2 million \$ for their support.

Athein, 35, and Zaw Min Htwe, 27, from Burma started their walk on 3/1/2008 in Portland, Oregon. They are walking also 3000 miles to New York City. They want to arrive at the UN building on 8/8/2008, the 20th anniversary of a rally for democracy in Myanmar that Athein attended. It will also be the opening day of the Summer Olympics in China, which continues to sell arms to Burma. They want to raise awareness about the human rights violations in Burma, also in connection with the insufficient official help after the cyclone Nargis.

On 7/6/2008 I will leave Olney and continue my walk - Baltimore, Philadelphia, N. Y. C.

David Ostermeier from Knoxville sends me a poetry anthology as gift. There is a poem of D. H. Lawrence that I like very much - it expresses experiences and feelings that I had on my walk

### **Song of a man who has come through**

Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me! A fine wind is blowing the new direction of Time. If only I let it bear me, carry me, if only it carry me! ...If only I am keen and hard like the sheer tip of a wedge driven by invisible blows, the rock will split, we shall come at the wonder, we shall find the Hesperides....What is the knocking? What is the knocking at the door in the night? It is somebody wants to do us harm. No, no, it is the three strange angels. Admit them, admit them.