

Hi Everyone,

2016 began for us in India. It is ending in Germany. In the middle we spent eight and a half months in Kate's wonderful roundhouse above upper Canyon Road in Santa Fe.

In early March we ended our 2½ year odyssey centered in India with periodic expeditions to Germany, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. On the way back to Santa Fe we spent a couple weeks with relatives and friends in Woodstock, Illinois, my home town. [We covered most of our Indian experiences in the past couple Christmas letters at <http://WalkingWithAwareness.com/newsletters.htm>. You can read more about our time in India starting at our Indian index page at <http://WalkingWithAwareness.com/IndiaPictureIndex.htm>.]

Getting to Albuquerque (closest airport to Santa Fe) from Illinois, we took more time than flying from India to Chicago. Our flight was scheduled to go through Denver. It was snowed in just as we were about to leave at one in the afternoon. We flew late in the evening to Phoenix where we slept in the airport overnight. We finally arrived in Albuquerque at nine in the morning, 21 hours after our scheduled start—that's four more hours than it took us to fly from India. But Kate was waiting our arrival with a smile and a welcome home. It was great to see her. It was March 24.

Kate had earlier offered us her round-house studio for the summer. We accepted her offer. The round house is just that, a one-room, 30-foot in diameter round house made of sun-dried bricks. The roof has four skylights situated at the four points of the compass. On one side is a walled in bathroom and a kitchen enclave. Mountains surrounded us. It was perfect for us.

Through the summer Petra and Kate planted, maintained, and harvested a sizeable vegetable garden that suffered a bit in the beginning. Once we located and eliminated most of the errant rodents, the garden flourished and we ate a lot of fresh potatoes, tomatoes, beans, peas, radishes, and lettuce. An eight-foot fence kept out the deer.

Speaking of the deer, many deer, rabbits, and birds visited us through the year. And one bobcat came the day before we left. But the highlight of the summer was a bear that climbed in Kate's kitchen window and wandered around inside the house while she was gone one afternoon. Petra returned from town and spotted the bear coming out of the kitchen. She came up to the roundhouse excited, saying, "There is a bear in Katie's house!" "A what?" "A bear!" I grabbed my camera and we headed down the steps. A bear was calmly eating a bag of Doritos by Kate's patio breakfast table. We stood 50 feet away on the steps and watched. He wandered around a bit. We let him. But when



he was about to go back in through the window again, I shouted and jumped around enough so he decided not to enter. After wandering around the yard for another ten minutes, he went his way into the forest. I went into the house with a frying pan and big spoon making noise in case there was another inside. There wasn't. And surprisingly there was little mess or damage. I closed all windows while Petra called Kate to give her a heads up for when she returned. The next day a forest ranger set up a big trap for a couple weeks. The bear never returned. We didn't miss him.



On the health side, I broke my toe in November, 2015, before we returned from India. I navigated on one or two crutches for the first few months of this year until it finally got better—it was an irritation more than a pain. Then in June and July I had cataracts taken from both of my eyes. Petra had her second one taken out the next month. She had her first taken out in India last fall. All eyes are functioning wonderfully. It is amazing what we can see again. Beyond that and some minor tooth problems, health has been with us.

When we returned we had decided to see what it would be like to live without a car. We bought the Yamaha moped here. That was our principal transportation for this year. When we needed more, several friends came forward to let us use their cars for an hour, a day, or more. In fact, three or four different times, friends were gone for a week and more and they let us use their cars while they were gone. So we didn't exactly live without a car. We could borrow one from a friend when we felt we had to use one.

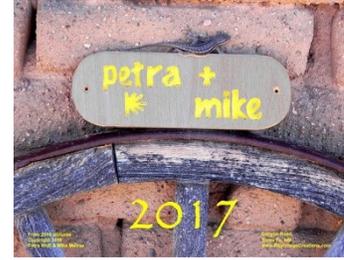
We spent a lot of good time with friends in Santa Fe and the area. It would be unwise to try to name them all because we would surely slight one or more whom we would likely forget to mention. We had great times with them all. And we lived in the same place for 8½ months—the longest we have stayed in one place in the past 2½ years. Though we are on the road again, we are beginning to favor more staying in the same place, cooking and eating our own food, and sleeping in our own bed rather than moving every few months. But it isn't bad being back at Petra's Mother's again.



During the year we walked the couple of miles into town many times. In fact, we had a ritual where one of us would walk the two miles to a favorite stop, The Teahouse, and the other would take the scooter. For the return trip we traded and the one would take the scooter back up the canyon while the other walked. We also took longer walks in the mountains around and above us. We especially liked walking in the high mountains among the yellow Aspens at 10,000 feet in the fall. But there were no more long walks between towns and states like we have done in the past.

I have been busy enough writing this year. I polished the final edition of my new book *Do you have a Match: Bocardillos, Poppies and Pilgrims* the story of my first walk on the Camino de Santiago when I met Petra. You can preview and/or purchase it at <http://www.lulu.com/shop/mike->

[metras/do-you-have-a-match-bocadillos-poppies-and-pilgrims/paperback/product-22670703.html](http://www.lulu.com/shop/mike-metras/do-you-have-a-match-bocadillos-poppies-and-pilgrims/paperback/product-22670703.html). About a month ago we completed a 2017 calendar with pictures in and around the roundhouse. You can preview and/or purchase it at <http://www.lulu.com/shop/mike-metras/petra-mike-santa-fe-2017/calendar/product-22941283.html>. I also have been working on a book on my six months wandering in East Africa after the Army in 2017. Look for it in the middle of next year.



Late last year I put together a slide-show-video of our 2009-2010 walk to Jerusalem and set it to music. This year I made extensive changes to it. It was a challenge since the walk was so long—530 days. I settled on one slide per day for an average of five seconds a day and a break in the middle. Then we presented it to several friends at various times through the year culminating in two presentations for a pilgrims group in Albuquerque. I enjoyed being in front of an audience again.

At the end of October, my 1961 high school class had a 55<sup>th</sup> reunion. I wrote a booklet with biographies and photos of all my classmates, an enjoyable challenge. Then I attended the reunion in Woodstock. I took my first ever long train ride in the US riding from Santa Fe to Chicago to Woodstock in 26 hours. I enjoyed it. And my Cubbies won the World Series for the first time in 108 years while I was there.

The other day, on 12/12, we celebrated our 13<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. *Tempus fugit*. Time flies.

As I mentioned above, we are now in Germany. We'll celebrate Christmas with Petra's mother and wider family. On January 11, we head for India to celebrate a warm winter there. The weather will be warm but not too warm—until we are about to return when the heat will begin to be unbearable. On April 28 we will return for a wonderful spring and summer in Santa Fe. In India we will spend three weeks on the Arabian Sea in Benalim (Goa), three weeks at a yoga health center in Lonavla (near Mumbai) at Kaivalyadhama, and the rest of the time in retreat at Sadhana Mandir in Rishikesh, all places we stayed in during 2014 and 2015. We are maybe a little less nomadic (and more like snowbirds) than in the last several years.



Here are some movies we watched this year and would watch again. We liked all of them and recommend them for your enjoyment also.

- *Vitus* – The story of a genius boy and how he copes with it.
- *The Himalayas* – A five-part Michael Phelan BBC series on his travel through the Himalayas from west to east.
- *The legend of 1900* – A 1998 Italian drama film about an orphan (named 1900) living on a ship feeling that his fate is tied to the ship. 1900 cannot bring himself to leave the only home he has known.
- *Big Fish* – Big Fish is a 2003 American fantasy drama film. Edward Bloom, a former traveling salesman in the southern United States with a gift for storytelling, is now confined

to his deathbed. Will, his estranged son, attempts to mend their relationship as Bloom relates tall tales of his eventful life as a young adult.

- *Paths of the Soul* – A chronicle of ordinary Tibetan citizens undertaking a 1,200-mile walking pilgrimage to Mt. Kailash. Much more than simply a long walk down National Highway 318, this act of Buddhist devotion requires participants to prostrate themselves every few yards while trucks and cars zoom past. A joyful group.
- *India's Dying Mother* – A BBC documentary on the state of the Ganges River in India. It was well done and a pleasure to watch.
- *Eye Origins* (or was it *I Origins*) – A Scientist meets the love of his life. She dies. Through eye scans, he finds her reincarnated in India. His beliefs are altered forever. This is an intriguing plot premise well told.
- *Snowden* – The story of Edward Snowden, the whistle blower who leaked that NSA was spying on everyone in the country. It's really good. I want to watch it again. The movie tells perhaps even more than Snowden himself leaked.



We continue our daily spiritual practices learned throughout life and several of those learned during our time in India as we remind ourselves of one of the sayings we learned in India, something we knew in other words and formations before but were reacquainted with in a more direct form by Swami Anubhavananda, the Happy Swami, “We have nowhere to go and nothing to do.” So we are *now-here* in Germany living in the now.

Have a great holiday season (whichever of the 38 holy days you celebrate) and prosper in 2017.

Peace and Joy,

Petra and Mike

P.S. The first picture is at the Christmas Market in Gutersloh, Germany. The others are in Santa Fe.



*Use the Back key to return to where you came from.*