

2006: The year that was for Riemke and Maarten

New life

This year the defining event for us has been the birth of our grandson Hendrik William Smies. He was born by caesarean section on 7 April, because he was too large to come the natural way. All this happened of course in Lacey, Washington State in the United States, where Jurjen and his wife are living.

Soon, there were photos of Hendrik on the web. We had decided that we would not want to go to Lacey immediately but that we would wait a little in order for Carolyn and Jurjen to get back on their feet and get used to the changes in their family situation. Fortunately, Carolyn recovered well from the operation.

So, we went on holiday to the western USA for four weeks at the end of May and then saw Hendrik for the first time. That was a special experience, also because we had taken Maarten's father with us to see his first great-grand-child.

In October, Carolyn, Jurjen and Hendrik came to the Netherlands for three weeks to show Hendrik to family and friends on this side of the Atlantic. By then, Hendrik was six months old and he is a delightful baby.

All under control

Maarten's leukemia remained firmly in remission. He sees his haematologist at three-monthly intervals. In February samples were taken again from his bone marrow and the analysis did not show up any malignant stemcells.

So, his treatment has been very successful. Maarten continues to take Glivec and has to live with the limited side-effects of this drug. For him the most important one is that he remains very tired and therefore he has gone on working a four-day week.

Naturally, we are very happy that the treatment has turned out so well. Glivec has been on the market now for five years (in the USA; four years in Europe) and this year it became clear that this treatment has the largest percentage of survivors after five years of all treatments of chronic myeloid leukaemia, including stemcell transplantation.

Travel

Maarten was appointed chairman of the Joint Industry Programme on Sound and Marine Life, that went from its exploratory phase to execution. It is a three-year research and development programme with a budget of some seven million dollar a year, to which a number of oil and gas companies are subscribing.

It has meant a lot of travel for Maarten. He visited the USA four times this year for meetings of the Executive Committee or the Technical Management Committee. San Diego and Anchorage were two new destinations for him. During a visit to Houston he managed to meet one of the ExxonMobil people, with whom he had worked in Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.

In addition, he had to go to Nigeria twice and for the first time was in Abuja. Another visit to Nigeria late in the year had to be cancelled because of the security situation.

11 000 km in four weeks

During our holiday in the western USA we covered 11 000 km in four weeks. We decided to fly to San Francisco rather than to Seattle, because we good get a much better fare. During the flight the stewardess discovered that Maarten's father was going to visit his great-grand-child and she promptly produced a series of KLM Nijntje bibs to honour the occasion.

From San Francisco we drove up to Lacey in two days, doing the coastal redwoods and also visiting Vancouver (in Washington State, across the Columbia River from Portland, Oregon).

We stayed for three days in Lacey enjoying Hendrik and visiting Mount St Helens and Mount Rainier. Then we drove across Washington and Idaho to Montana and then south to Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks in Wyoming. In Jackson Hole, just south of Grand Teton, we met an old friend of ours, with whom Maarten worked in Kazakstan in the middle of the 1990s.

From Jackson Hole we went west again crossing Idaho with a lunch in Arco, the first city with electricity supplied by nuclear power. We then Craters of the Moon National Park. This is another volcanic relic. We spent the night in Boise, where we had a very nice Basque dinner in the local Basque restaurant.

From there to Bend, right in the centre of Oregon, where we visited Newberry National Volcanic Monument and the high desert museum. Then south to Klamath Falls and Lavabeds National Monument just across the border in California. Lassen Volcanic National Park was at least partly accessible this year, although we still could not go across the park because of the snow.

We then went south through Nevada along the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada and decided to make a detour through Death Valley. From Death Valley we went to Kings Canyon and Sequioa and from there through Yosemite to the coast: Point Reyes National Seashore. By then it was time to head back home, but not before we had dinner with some of Carolyn's family, who live in Silicon Valley.

We hope to be able to continue as we are and wish all our friends a happy new year !

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Riemke Riemersma and Maarten Smies