

It's been a good year. Busy, but very good. You've probably seen the return address label – will tell you about that once you read about the rest of the year.

Over last year's Christmas holiday, Becky and I took a whirlwind tour of Panama. A few days in Bocas del Toro (Caribbean side), Christmas in a cloud forest (Boquete), a few days in the rain forest area (Darien). There, we visited an Emberá indigenous village where the people live in their traditional ways (with some western trappings – tee shirts, super-soakers, etc. See photo upper right.) A transit of the canal took a day, then New Year's Eve was on the Taboga Island on the Pacific side of Panama (that's us returning from the island, oval insert right side of photo). Great trip – but 12 days isn't enough to see everything.

A new project at work has kept me quite busy. We (LLNL) have signed up to become one of a small handful of international laboratories to help enforce the Chemical Weapons Convention. In order to become a designated laboratory, we must participate, and score highly, in proficiency tests. These are timed tests that involve analyzing dilute solutions that may contain scheduled compounds and/or their degradation/reaction products. We have participated in two so far this year. On both tests, we correctly identified all the spiked compounds. Yea us! Anyway, the first test ended just a day or two before a planned sailing trip ...

This year's sailing trip took a group of us (12 people on two boats) to the British Virgin Islands. Having worked many long hours in the two weeks previous to this trip, I slept a lot, only to wake up in the middle of the nights worrying about the proficiency test (that was over, and I couldn't change anything anyway). As always, it was good to get out sailing. Also did a fair amount of snorkeling and some SCUBA diving.

The meetings to discuss the results of the proficiency tests are held in The Hague, Netherlands. So I "had" to go. Becky cashed in some frequent flyer miles and joined me, and we spend a total of ~10 days touring the area. Amsterdam is a fun town; lots to see and do. It's a great place to bike – mostly flat, and good bike paths. Some of the bike paths even have stoplights! (see oval photo to the left). We were geeks – brought our own helmets; the only others we saw with helmets were a few kids and bicycle racers. Then a week in The Hague (work for me, Becky played tourist). The windmills of Kinkerdiijk were wonderful – just as picturesque as you'd imagine. The following weekend we went inland – to the town of Hoenderloo, outside of de Hoge Veluwe national park, at a small inn called Herberg "de Boer'n Kinkel" (say that three times fast!)

Becky & I bought a "R with a V". A room (many, actually) with a view. It's up a hill in Dublin, CA, with an awesome view of Mt. Diablo and the Dublin/San Ramon valley (lower right photo). It's a new house, with all the features/amenities that one could want. Even the laundry room has a view of Mt. Diablo! We move in on January 11, 2002. Come visit, if you are in the area (7477 Hansen Dr., Dublin, CA 94568; 925-361-9254).

'til next year,
H.