

Dear friends,

As you might know, my view upon exercise is that you should save your body. This will make it last longer. Not all people agree upon that, as you will find below. And for myself, I am not at all a fundamentalist with respect to training. I actually visit a gym regularly. The Emrén gym! There, we offer activities like: pulling the aircraft out of the hangar, cutting firewood, pumping air into the hydrofor, clearing away snow, and much more. And we offer the exercise for free also.

Step counter

At Ingegerd's job, they decided to encourage physical training among the staff. So they had a competition between the teams. Each person got a step counter, and then the number of steps walked by the team members during a few months were added and recorded. It was also stated that other kinds of training should be considered. So a table was given telling the equivalent number of steps for activities like bicycling, training at a gym etc. One day, Ingegerd was cleaning the house, and after two hours of hard work, she was totally exhausted. So when she sat down to rest, she looked upon the step counter, and was terribly upset. The stupid thing had recorded four (4) steps during the two hours. This work was at least as hard as being at a gym, so from the table, she found a reasonable number of steps. Then she started shaking the step counter until it had reached the desired number. I think she forgot to take into account the extra training received by shaking the step counter. Anyway, her team turned out to be the second best one, and won a prize.

A not so silent night

Talking about training, I went by train through Europe during a couple of weeks this fall. The first part was uneventful. Nothing to note except that the train was of a terribly ugly kind. They look like someone ordered 200 m of train. So at the factory they have something like a sausage coming out of an orifice. At the length of 200 m, they simply chop it off, seal the ends, wrap it and deliver it to the customer.



You know how a helicopter works? It simply is so ugly that the earth does not want to touch it. So it is flying by being repelled by earth. The same principle applies to the Öresund trains. The stations do not want the train there destroying the view. So the station repels the train. In this way, energy is conserved, as non is required for acceleration.

From Copenhagen I went by night train to Munich. We were six persons in the compartment, one Australian guy, two Danes and two Austrians. By chance, they all had one common goal: they went to Munich to celebrate the October Festival. As I have understood, the purpose of this event is to drink as much beer as possible, and the people in the compartment had already started training. They also brought numerous cans of beer into the compartment. Aided by beer everyone soon became brothers. Friendly talks and jokes made the travel very nice, and when they noticed that I did not like beer, one of them went to the restaurant car to get some wine for me.

We spent the evening talking and playing cards. At about 11 PM, no more beer remained, and they made a new trip to the restaurant to get more. That was when they found girls in the neighbour compartment. Soon we were nine in our compartment. The girls too were from different countries: Russia, Poland and Belgium. The night went on with beer, playing card and chatting. The Russian girl showed an increasing interest in one of the Austrian boys and was flirting more intensely with each passing hour. At 3 AM, it was agreed upon that we had to go to bed, to be reasonably fresh when the train would arrive to Munich at 8 AM. The Australian guy was the one most drunk, and unfortunately, he had one of the beds just below the roof. After several failures, he was able to get up there, but not before he had kicked an almost full bottle of beer into my lap. When I got it away, it was close to empty. Anyway, we went to bed. Then, the Russian girl wanted to sleep with the boy

from Austria. Well...I guess that sleeping was not her first priority. He did not at all want that, as his girlfriend would meet him at the station. There started a struggle with the girl trying to kiss him and enter his bed, while he made more or less successful attempts to avoid exactly that. The struggle lasted for about half an hour before she finally gave it up and returned to her compartment.

When the train arrived at Munich a few hours later, I found that the entire front of my trousers were still soaking wet, and I smelled from beer during the entire day. With many cheers, the company was split at the station. The Austrian boy was rejoined with his girlfriend, and both looked happy, although he was perhaps not as refreshed as desirable. I had just time to grab a pizza slice and some orange juice before my train left for Budapest.

The rest of the trip to Romania went on without any trouble. Eventually, my trousers dried and stopped smelling. The trains in that country are reasonably comfortable, although very slow. The only thing to know is that the toilets should be used only in emergencies. Considering the state of the floor, "bathroom" would be an adequate description. After a very interesting conference in the city Cluj Napoca and a wonderful wedding in Rimnicu Valcea, my journey by train continued to Spain where I met Ingegerd and Gunhild, who were there for horse riding. The adventures during this trip were numerous, but have to be told another time.

Mooses and apples

Our trees were giving more apples than ever this year, but not all of them turned out to be for us. By the end of September, the branches were filled with beautiful red apples, and I started planning for taking care of them. Then, one morning when I looked out through the window, I could see three mooses having a feast in the garden. The animals were really impressive, one male with a big crown, and two females. Those animals love apples because, as you might know, there is a considerable concentration of alcohol in that fruit. Now, mooses do not eat just one or two. And not just the apples either. They eat the tree as well. I think this is their version of peanuts or salt sticks with the drink. When I saw them, they had already eaten 50 – 100 apples, and half the trees as well. I tried stepping out shouting and waving my arms. Now, as you know, persuading drunk people is not easy. And the same applies to drunk mooses. They turned towards me, looking like: You should shut up, and not go here making trouble during our nice party. Bringing the cooking book, showing the recipe of moose steak did not impress them either.

Now, they were three, and much bigger than me, so what could I do? I found the solution, went indoors, and returned with a piece firework that I had stored for celebration of the new year to come. I set it off, and very suddenly, they decided that the party was over, and ran away into the forest. Probably, they told their friends that our house is haunted, as all the apples they left, still were there when it was time to collect.

Marshal

We participated in the Malta Air Rally this year too. As we went with the Hemsjö Choir to northern Sweden to give concerts during early summer, we decided to make Luleå our starting point for the rally. So we used our plane for the journey there. Other members of the choir went by regular flight, or train or even their own cars.

After landing at Luleå-Kallax airport, I was a bit lost, like you often are at an new airport. The tower cleared me to one of the parking areas, but how should I find that among the maze of taxi ways and aprons? So I was looking for a marshal, i.e. a car with a yellow beacon on the roof and a Follow Me sign. After taxiing a minute in the direction I considered correct, I noticed a car with a yellow beacon in front of me. I turned to follow that, and I had done so for some distance, when the tower called. 'Turn back and then first taxi way to the left. The car you follow is not a marshal, it is the garbage collector. If you continue behind that, you will end up at the city dump.'

The concerts were successful, and we made several excursions in the beautiful landscape. When it was time to return home, we also officially started the rally. Now, we had 5000 km to go until we would reach the destination. The first leg was to return at home, and during the first few hours, the weather was marginal, with low clouds and bad visibility. We had to go halfway across the Baltic Sea before finding a route that would be legal and safe. Five hours after take off we were back at home.

Towards Malta

We had many weather related problems before we were able to reach Italy. After a couple of unplanned nights in Germany and Austria, we were able to cross the Alps. As you may see from the picture, crossing in bad weather is a very bad idea. Clouds that look like soft cotton could hide very hard mountains. We had perfect weather, however, and the passage was breathtakingly beautiful.



First stop after crossing the Alps was Ravenna, where we could see mosaics more than 1500 years old, and in condition like they were made yesterday. The last night before Malta we spent in Reggio in southern Italy.

The day of the last flight, we arrived early at the airport, and spent a few hours preparing for departure and checking the navigation calculations. Some other participants also had chosen Reggio as last stop, so we had some nice chats before they departed one by one. We were last to go, and finally it was time to start the engine. I was just about to request taxi, when I found an error in the navigation program. So I had about five very nervous minutes before the error was corrected. That delay had consumed most of our reserve time. We were supposed to pass above a lighthouse at the island Gozo at 15:30:00. Every second in error would draw one point from our result. The estimated flight time was 95 minutes. We took off at 13:48, so now, nothing could be allowed to go wrong.

You know Murphy's law? It immediately went into action. The tower directed us away IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION! We had to fly AWAY from Malta. Finally, we were allowed to turn, and when we passed Reggio again, we were 20 minutes late. It looked really bad. Ten minutes late at Gozo and you are out of competition.

You should never give it up, so I increased to max cruising power. This cuts your heart at a fuel price of 2.5 Euros/L. I also made a route modification, shortcutting a few legs. The cabin temperature was 45 C, and we had sun from a clear sky. The ventilation did not much to improve. The best we had was our home made AC: a spray bottle filled with water. Ingegerd sprayed upon me and herself, and that kept us reasonably fresh - although soaking wet at times. One could suspect that we were aiming at a quite different kind of competition: Miss (or Mr) Wet T-shirt!

Aided by a slight tail wind, we got back to schedule, and after a final turn, we could see Gozo ahead. It looked like we would be able to pass at the second. We had about two minutes to go when our route was blocked by a cloud. I had to climb - and loose speed. GRRR!!! We were never able to even see the lighthouse. The result was satisfactory, however. We were nine seconds late over the

lighthouse, and that ranked us as #3 in that part of the competition.

Eine kleine Nachtmusik

A couple of years ago, we installed a heat pump (air to air), to keep our house warm. We got a very good deal, although the brand was earlier unknown to me. In January, it stopped working. Sometimes, the fan would not start. It just produced a smell of hot cables, but no heat that was useful to us. I did not worry much, as it was just two years old, and the warranty was valid for three years. So I went to the internet to find phone number to the dealer or producer. I did not find any. But I found a lot of information on that kind of heat pumps. About 50 % of them failed within a couple of months. And half a year after our purchase, the producer went bankrupt. We should consider ourselves lucky to have one that worked for more than two years. We realized that we would have to buy another one, but we did not want to have it replaced during winter time.

Our heat pump tended to fail preferably during cold nights. This made me worried about two things. First, the heat from the immobile fan motor could cause it to catch fire. Secondly, if it stopped, the indoor temperature was possibly adequate for camping and sleeping bags, but not for normal life.

So I had to invent some kind of alarm that would wake us up if it failed. I went to a hobby shop and got a temperature switch, that would start the alarm if the temperature dropped below normal. That was the easy part. Then, I asked for a summer or beeper that could be driven by 220 V. They did not have any. Then, I got the idea to use a radio. So I adjusted the radio to receive a station that sends music all night, and connected it to the temperature sensor.

It worked! Already the first night after installation, we almost jumped out of our beds, as loud music from bassoons suddenly filled the house. The music continued until I had been able to manually restart the heat pump. After that, we have heard such concerts numerous times. Organ concerts, horns, trumpet concerts etc. Obviously, they choose the middle of nights to broadcast the most bombastic kinds of music.

Have you heard of the new police building in Grönköping? In 1908 one decided to build a new one, as the existing was in so terribly bad condition. A committee was formed, told to design the most modern police house in the world. Ten years later, the work was finished and the committee filed the plans. It turned out that several new inventions had appeared, so they got instructions to include those too. Thus it went on until 1993. One found that once the construction work starts, the house will be outdated. So it was decided, that to keep it up to date, the plans should be constantly updated, but the construction work should never start. In this way, Grönköping could ever be proud of the most modern police house in the world. A side effect, of course is that the old house still is in use. Similarly, as new heat pumps improve all the time, we will keep our old one, thus being able to always plan for getting the best available on the market.

Finally, remember to bring spare trousers if you travel by train!

Now, God bless you, and

Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année!

God Jul och Gott Nytt År!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Fröhliche Weihnachten und ein gutes neues Jahr!

Ingegerd and Allan Emrén