

Old friends, faded memory, and good conversations

Posted At : October 15, 2004 3:42 PM | Posted By : Steven Erat

Related Categories: ColdFusion, Outdoors, Travel, Macromedia, New England

Yesterday evening, I had the great pleasure of a visit from my old friend Bettina from Germany. Together Mercedes and I met Bettina and her husband Bernhard for dinner at the **Colonial Inn** here in **Concord**. I first met Bettina in 1994 while staying at the **Vashon Island Youth Hostel** near Seattle. I found it striking that I had forgotten the exact circumstance that we met at the hostel. The hostel offered free materials for making your own pancake breakfast, and for Bettina it was her first time so I helped out a bit. Later we continued talking while taking the ferry to Seattle, and in my own memory this is where we met.

I think recounting memories with others helps to maintain the fidelity and the breadth of those memories because for those things that you may have forgotten, someone else surely will remember, and together the **memory** is complete. I find it rather interesting to notice that when many years pass without hearing someone else's version of an past event, your own **memory becomes selective** while reinforcing or embellishing some parts, and eliminating other parts altogether.

Bettina attended a **Fairfield University** for a year in 95/96, and returned to Germany to pursue a career in journalism. For many years she worked for a newspaper, and most recently she is a magazine editor with a focus on writing human interest stories. She's very adventurous and has travelled throughout the US, as well as places like Iceland and even Papua, New Guinea.

Originally from Bremen, Germany, she and Bernhard now live in **Offenberg**, a bit south of Heidelberg. Although I had known a bit about Bernhard, I was very surprised to hear that he achieved a Ph.D. in Chemistry before changing careers to software and later working for **SAP**. The coincidence lies in that my wife Mercedes is an organic chemist herself, and I was previously a biologist and changed careers to software to work for **Macromedia**.

Our guests told us how the price of real estate in that part of Germany is equally outrageous as it is here in Massachusetts. Mercedes and I realize that we'll most likely have to buy a house in southern New Hampshire and face long commutes to the greater Boston area for work. The price of houses in **Concord** alone has risen some 50 or 60% in the last 10 years, and now the average selling price here is about \$700,000 even for something rather modest, so we really **can't afford to live in Massachusetts**. New Hampshire offers prices on new houses in \$400k range, much more open space and parks, and generally less congestion. I think that NH is much more outdoor or **environmentally oriented** state, and I certainly look forward to leaving Massachusetts where there is very little open space available to the public for walking or hiking, and most every pond or lake is posted for no swimming, no fishing, no boating. Yeah, I'll be happy to leave that behind.

Together, our common interests kept all us chatting away until very late when the **Colonial Inn** finally closed for evening. Not being from Massachusetts originally, I find a lack of old friends in the area, and its particularly enjoyable to have dinner with another couple that can discuss such a range of topics including science, politics, software, and culture. Sadly for us, Bettina and Bernhard had to return to Germany

today.