

Stefan Boresch, 12.5.2015

Sehr geehrter Herr Bundesminister, sehr geehrter Herr Rektor, sehr geehrte Damen und Herren!
Dear Martin, dear Marci!

Having received my Ph.D. under Martin's supervision and now working here at the university in the field of biomolecular simulation, which Martin Karplus was so instrumental in establishing, I was overjoyed when I heard the news about the Nobel prize.

As an Austrian citizen, I am glad that at long last Martin Karplus is receiving long overdue recognition here in Vienna during these days, and, Martin, thank you that you are accepting the various honors.

Tonight, the focus is not on the scientist Martin Karplus, but the traveler and photographer Martin Karplus. Let me start by sharing an observation: Once something piques Martin's interest, he gives it his fullest attention and concentration. I can assure you that working with Martin, particularly when you have his fullest attention, is a quite unique experience. However, his interests are by no means restricted to the natural sciences, and the following episode was an eye-opener to me. While I was still working in Martin's lab in Strasbourg, we had a guest, a fellow Harvard student who was finishing her Ph.D. thesis in the field of contemporary French literature. I guess as a means of saying "thank you" she gave Martin the already finished chapters of her Ph.D. thesis. We are talking about approximately 150 pages. These clearly piqued Martin's interest because two weeks later she got them back, corrected and heavily annotated. In addition, Martin encouraged her to contact the authors she was writing about and her subsequent meetings with them, including Patrick Modiano, added an unplanned chapter to her thesis.

So, to me it is and was absolutely not surprising that after getting interested in photography, Martin became an expert photographer. It is true, however, that very few people knew about this "hobby".

For me, it is a bit more than 10 years that I learned that Martin was an avid photographer; curiously in connection with the preparation for the celebration of his 75th birthday. Ten years earlier we had collected money for "some nice bottles of wine". While these were appreciated, obviously, this idea was a no-go ten years later. The organizers of the 75th birthday celebration wondered about an idea for a present, and it was a relief when they learned that Martin was "quite interested" in photography. It was decided to give him a top of the line digital camera. This plan did not work without a glitch; the camera was ordered too late and so the actual present Martin received during the celebration was a toy camera ... However, the camera arrived eventually, and Martin is making good use of it.

During this birthday celebration many of the photos we'll see tonight were shown for the first time to a wider public. What I remember even from 10 years ago and what you can convince yourself today is that these photographs bring back the past; they document places and traditions that more often than not do not exist anymore, at least not in this form. Since we are talking about a period long before smart phones, ubiquitous Internet and services such as picasa, instagram etc, the photographs are in many ways unique documents. [Martin had excellent equipment, had chosen to use color film, had mastered the craft, and used photography to document his observations rather than just taking yet more pictures of the standard touristic sights.] That Martin as a historical witness, a "Zeitzeuge", has been documenting history, strikes me as appropriate.

I should also mention that these travels were nothing you could book in a travel agency, and that on occasion Martin went to places, where it was not considered wise for outsiders, to go to. A certainly most curious side effect of the extended travels through Europe in the fifties were several visits by

the FBI suspecting Martin of being a communist spy.

One cannot have worked with Martin in earnest and not have recognized that he is more than an outstanding scientist and teacher. The last major gathering of us so-called Karplusians (a term for the people Martin trained), uniting almost 200 of us last fall, was in honor of the recent Nobel prize. Personally, however, I think that so many people traveled, some very far, not only to honor the Nobel prize winner and scientist, however outstanding, but to join a celebration of a fascinating person and friend who has influenced us and been a role model to us in multiple ways. And because of this, I am immensely pleased that this exhibition is taking place, giving you the opportunity to meet in the words of Bundespräsident Fischer “einen anderen” Martin Karplus. Making the exhibition happen was not easy, and so I really want to acknowledge the support from minister Ostermayer and Rektor Engl, as well as the hard work by Anne-Marie Hermann.

Finally, I want to use this opportunity to thank you, Martin, not only for the unique training and formation I received as your PhD. student, but for your continued mentoring, guidance and support over the years.

With this, I do hope that you enjoy the exhibition, and just as you I am looking forward to what Martin will say!