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1 December 2004

Hello Everyone

Another year has flown by us and it is time to sit down and put pen to paper.

2004 has been a year with lots of highlights and it is difficult to know where to start. Perhaps I should start with the trips.

In late January, Lois, Tim, Chris and Paul flew to Darwin and spent 10 days staying with Terry (Tim's brother) and Diana and their family. We had a great time and toured the Kakadu National Park and Catherine Gorge and saw plenty of crocodiles from the safety of the tourist boat. Alas, Dave had to work and Matt had to go back to school, so we made sure we sent them a postcard! It was just so hot but the locals delighted in telling us it was the cool part of the year.

In late April, Chris headed over to Germany with the Australian team for the Racewalking World Championships which were held in Naumburg in Germany on 1-2 May. It was his first international race and he did extremely well, finishing 31<sup>st</sup> from 95 in the 50 km event. He then travelled around Europe for a further 6 weeks, staying with friends in Germany, Italy and England and staying with our relatives in Sweden. One of the highlights had to be his time in Sweden, when he was so well looked after by his relatives and when he had to chance to meet them all for the first time. Hopefully, it is the first of many such trips for 'the boys'. He arrived back in Melbourne at 5AM on the day of his University graduation which was scheduled to start at 11AM. What timing!

Matt finished his final year of secondary school this year and then went to Byron Bay (northern NSW) with his school friends for a post-school celebration. We can announce that he has returned unscathed and tells us he had a great time. Perhaps the fewer questions we ask the better!

Paul turned 21 in October so we offered him a holiday as a present. He chose to travel to Perth and is staying there with friends.

So the only one to miss out on the travel stakes was Dave. But we are sure that he will soon be eyeing greener climes and planning to venture forth.

From a study perspective, it has also been a year of activity and change. Lois has continued with her Law Degree and studied full time for most of the year. She has passed all her subjects with flying colours and will complete her degree next year. To say it has kept her busy is an understatement as she has continued on with her many diverse activities alongside her university commitments.

Dave had only a couple of units to complete this year to tidy up his Engineering degree and that is behind him now. Since he was only been studying part time, he extended his hours at the large hotel where he has worked for the past few years and is gradually working his way up to the more senior roles. He enjoys this sort of varied work and may well decide to continue on in that career rather than move into engineering. We are not worried – we always felt that the important thing was to complete the degree – but, once done, it is more important to work in the sort of job that you enjoy.

Chris finished his University degrees (B. Arts and B. Business) last year and, after discussions with us, has decided to forgo his full time forays into the workforce and concentrate on his athletics. After all, you have the rest of your life to work but you only get one shot at sporting excellence. His plans have paid off so far – as mentioned above, he represented Australia in the Racewalking World Cup in Germany in May. He has since continued on with his racing on the local front with further successes, culminating in a win in the Australian 50 km racewalking championship in October in Melbourne. He is now looking towards March 2006 when the Commonwealth Games are to be held in Melbourne. He is currently working part time as a lifeguard at the local swimming pools and putting his energies into his training and athletic development, so we are keeping our fingers crossed.

Paul has spread his final year of a B. Arts over two years so that he can further his involvement in his major interest – politics. He works part time as an Electoral Officer for a local Member of Parliament and is heavily involved in the Labor Party at Melbourne University. He also threw himself into the recent Federal Election but alas, Labor lost to the Liberals (read Conservatives) in a spiteful election dominated by lies and deceit. Like any budding politician, he has bounced back and continues forward in optimistic manner.

Matt has just completed his final year at secondary school and is now waiting for his results to be published so that he can sort out his University course for 2005. He is keen to pursue further explorations of his musical interests so has applied for a number of music related courses. He seems to have flown through Year 12 with no major issues and with a relatively unperturbed demeanour – similar to his brothers. Fingers crossed again!

As an aside, if you view our Christmas photos (see mention of the weblink at the end of the letter), you will see that Matt now sports an amazing head of dreadlocks. Ah well – at least he's not inhibited!

Matt's graduation from Strathmore Secondary College means that we have severed our connection to the school after 13 years. We no longer have any school children. We have two university students (assuming all goes to plan), one full time in the work force and one in the sporting field. It is a case of the light at the end of the tunnel gradually gradually shining more brightly. This year also saw a further major change in the household demographics with Dave and Paul moving out. Dave is now sharing a house with school friends in Oak Park, the next suburb north from us and only a couple of kms away. Paul is also sharing a house with one of his school friends in Kensington, a couple of suburbs south of us and about 5 kms away. But they both often pop in for a meal or a chat so they have not fully severed the ties, thank goodness. However, it makes such a huge difference to meals and cooking and washing and such like, as you might imagine.

With only Chris and Matt at home on a regular basis, we seem to have moved into another phase of life and it's great to have the extra time and energy to do the many other things that beckon. The house seems pretty big now and we may eventually decide to make a few adjustments to it over the next few years – but nothing immediate.

Lois took leave from teaching this year, after 16 years at Kangan TAFE, so that she could concentrate on full time studies. That sounds good in principle but she has continued her many involvements at Parish and diocesan level and has also done regular volunteer work at Broadmeadows Legal Centre and at PILCH in the city.

Tim continues to work at AXA amongst a steadily reducing IT workforce but so far the dice have rolled in other departments so hopefully there are a few more years of service to be provided before the axe finally falls on the remaining Australian AXA IT workforce. He continues with his heavy administrative involvement in the athletics scene, specifically walking. It is true to say that we both maintain hectic lifestyles.

We have made the move to Internet based telephone and, if it works out well, we may well decommission our landline telephone (03 93792065) and move completely to the following number – 03 90125431. You may like to note it down for future reference. It is now up and running and offers 24 hour access to us at home.

If you want to see our most recent photos and you have internet access, point your web browser at link <http://members.optusnet.com.au/~terickso/2004>

Kind regards

Tim and Lois