

15 December 2005

Hello Everyone

Another year has flown by and it is time to sit down and put pen to paper and let you know what we have all been up to.

First things first – we are all well and have survived the many challenges that the year has thrown up.

Lois has completed her law degree and will tackle a practical training graduate diploma next year. She has already fielded a number of enquiries from friends bent on launching into a life of crime and seeking a promise of pro bono legal representation, once she staggers off the end of the treadmill. No further enquiries are needed. She has continued her involvement with the parish church and kindergarten, as well as remaining family cook. She has also done lots of voluntary work this year with the Broadmeadows Legal Service, the Sunshine Magistrates' Court, the Victorian Law Foundation and with PILCH (Public Interest Legal Clearing House) and is currently doing a small amount of paid work at the Victorian Law Foundation. It all goes to increase her experience in her new field and she has enjoyed the many different facets of the law encountered thus far.

Tim fell on his feet this year and was finally retrenched from AXA where he has sweated for the last 18 years. In November, he was one of a number of senior technical staff who were laid off. This was greeted with great joy as he has not enjoyed working there for a number of years now and the package offered was a very generous one. He has already negotiated a new IT job (identical IT role) with Coles Myer, one of our very large retail companies. He will still be based in the city and will start in early January. So he is now enjoying a 7 week break, his first long break since joining AXA. Apart from the work side of things, he continues with his heavy involvement in walking. He still maintains all his sporting websites, acts as Secretary for two very busy athletics clubs, is on the Athletics Australia Walking Committee and officiates at many athletics meetings throughout the year. He also finds time to pursue his passion in researching and writing about sport and self published his first book this year. Called 'Once Were Walkers', it contains biographies of the many Victorian racewalkers who have represented Australia over the last 100 years. He also looks after Chris's training and acts as his coach. This has meant a few interstate trips with Chris during the year to the various National titles – a bit of a junket and an enjoyable one at that.

David still lives in Oak Park, sharing the same house with a couple of his former schoolmates. In his employment, he has moved from the hotel in Coburg to a much larger hotel in Epping and he has a more senior role there. It still involves mainly evening and night work but he is one of the senior staff there now. His hours of work mean that we do not see too much of him at family gatherings but he is very good and pops in to say hello fairly frequently. He has now bought a motor bike (a big yellow job) and enjoys it in preference to his car in the nicer weather. Dave is a safe rider but we keep our fingers crossed for him for obvious reasons. It is hard to believe that he will turn 26 next year – gosh, where have all the years gone!

Chris is still at home and pursuing his racewalking as his major activity. Competitively he has had a great year, coming second in the Australian 30 km and 50 km racewalk titles (with big Pbs in both) and winning all 5 Victorian titles on offer this year. This is a big achievement which has only been done a couple of times before in the 120 year history of Athletics Victoria and he was rewarded with the prestigious Athletics Victoria Competition Number of '1', in which he now races. His 50 km performance (4 hours 3 mins) has guaranteed his selection in the Australian Commonwealth Games team. He is the second fastest Australian and ranks 5th in the Commonwealth over the 50 km distance. With his rate of improvement, he is definitely in the medal hunt next year at the Games and, being in Melbourne, it will be a huge affair for him and all his many friends and relatives. He has also been granted a scholarship with the Victorian Institute of Sport, based in Melbourne. This gives him unlimited access to their facilities, medical and training staff as well as financial support for training and competition interstate. This now takes a bit of pressure off the 'Erickson Institute of Sport'. He has just returned from 2 weeks of altitude training at Thredbo Alpine Village in NSW and it is fair to say that he is as fit as a Mallee bull (old Aussie saying). He continues with his part time work at the Coburg Leisure Centre, doing about 20 hours per week either as a Pool attendant or on the reception desk. It is a great life if you can get it! His rock band continues to play the local scene but does not get as much work as the boys would like. Although they often play at the top of the bill, there are just so many bands around and gigs are hard to find. So it remains a recreational activity which is probably just as well, given his athletic endeavours.

Paul completed his Bachelor of Arts (major in Politics) this year at Melbourne Uni and he has decided to return next year to complete an Honours year. He also worked part time as an Electoral Officer for the Victorian Lower House member for Richmond (an inner Melbourne seat) and is heavily involved in the Labor Party and in the political world in general. Luckily he is sensible, making sure he keeps his priorities straight and has done extremely well in his Uni studies throughout his degree. He was heavily involved in the process to terminate the old Melb. Uni. Student Union (it had been embroiled in controversy and shady dealings which led to criminal charges for fraud etc) and then worked with the Uni to forge a new Student Union constitution and set up a new body to replace the old one. This has now all

come to nothing with the Federal Govt passing controversial legislation which will effectively kill the student unions at all universities by starving them of money. To his credit, he has accepted this philosophically, knowing that there is little he can do about it. He has been elected to the University of Melbourne Council as student rep. and this will give him an outlet next year for his creative side! The greatest advantage seems to be a free car-parking site on campus – nearly as rare as Tasmanian tigers. He also continues to live with schoolmates in Flemington but the house they rent is pretty decrepit and we may see him back at home next year if it gets condemned!

Matt, like Chris, continues to live at home and has just completed the first year of a degree in Musical Performance and Composition at Victoria University in Sunbury. He is enjoying it immensely and has thrown himself into the many activities involved therein. He has to drive to Sunbury each day for Uni so we bought him his own car – much to his delight! His rock band continues to play the local traps and gets good reviews and regular work. It also complements his course with some practical work. Matt's dreadlocks are even bigger now and, when he puts on his beanie, he gets some big stares from the little kids who probably think 'wow, that boy has a huge head!'. Matt is supplementing his meagre income with some guitar teaching and has a small number of students whom he sees weekly.

Lois' mother Win has needed special attention this year. To her credit, she had lived in her house in Fawkner and looked after herself right up to the age of 90 years but this year was the breaking point. Her forgetfulness combined with a general deterioration in health meant that the family had to sort out a better long term arrangement. After a stay in hospital, she has now moved to a very pleasant nursing home in Preston. After a period of initial adjustment, Win has now settled in well and is enjoying the extra companionship and friendship of the residents and staff. Lois, Neil and Bev took on the burden of negotiating this move and it was indeed a busy and fraught time for them all. Thank goodness it has all worked out for the best.

So it has been our usual big year. Whatever happened to growing old gracefully?

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/2005.html>

To all our friends, local and remote, we wish you a Christmas filled with peace and joy and hope that 2007 will be a year filled with bags of goodies!

Kind regards

Tim and Lois