

5 December 2007

Hello Everyone

Another year has flown by and it is time for that annual dreaded event in the Erickson household – the Christmas letter. I must admit that my letter writing skills are not often exercised in these days of email and quick conversational bytes and my handwriting skills are even less exercised. Alas, my mother's beautiful copperplate writing remains a beloved memory but one that my increasing scrawl will never emulate.

First, the big news. Lois is now working as Community Lawyer with Broadmeadows Community Legal Service. This is currently occupying her 3 days per week and she is using the remaining two days each week to wind down at the Victorian Law Foundation where she has been working as a Projects/Educational officer. This is the culmination of a lot of hard work over many years for Lois (and a huge personal achievement) and we are all now looking forward to first class representation and advice in our various dealings with the Law! She still finds the time and energy to continue her ongoing involvement with the Anglican Church in Melbourne, being on the St Linus Kindergarten Committee, continuing as a St Linus/St Matthews Church Warden and being part of a number of Diocesan committees.

Tim has completed his second year with Coles Ltd., one of Australia's largest retailers. Coles has just been sold to Westfarmers, another Australian retailer, so the future may be quite interesting when it comes to integrating I.T. areas or such like. It is too early to tell at this stage. Tim recently negotiated his way down to 4 days per week instead of 5 – taking that first tentative step towards the rocking chair, blanket and hot cocoa. Chris has moved to the AIS in Canberra (more below) so Tim's direct coaching involvement has ceased but regular phone conversations still take place almost every day! Tim is doing a bit of walk coaching with his club, Coburg Harriers, and still carries the can as Secretary of the Victorian Racewalking Club and the Australian Centurions as well as general dog's body on various fronts. The hip operation last year has been most successful and has given him a new lease of life and even some 'social' training and competing!

David has just been offered a new job at the Anglers' Arms pub on the banks of the Maribyrnong River. He has been duty manager at Diamond Creek Hotel this year, quite a drive or ride on his motor bike. The Anglers' Arms is much closer to town and in a very pleasant location. The nature of pub life means working lots of odd hours and weekends so it's a demanding role but he enjoys the challenge and is going well. He was back home with us for most of this year between house sharing but has recently moved out again into a new house share with school friends. We had his boxer dog, Clubber, with us during the year (much to the disgust of the cats, Moggie and Ishmael) but she has now moved to her new abode. It was great for us to have him back home for a while and now the house is a lot emptier with just Tim, Lois and Matt in residence. Clubber will return for the odd 'dog-sitting' stint when David is working extended shifts.

Chris's racewalking continues to be his main focus. To shore up a spot in the 2007 World Champs, he had to travel to Europe in March to compete in a big international 50 km walk in Dudince in Slovakia. Tim made the 2 week trip with him and, after spending a week with friends in England, they travelled to Slovakia for the big walk. Unfortunately wintery conditions and strong winds ruined any chances of a fast time and, although Chris walked well to finish 4<sup>th</sup>, he did not get the requisite time and we all thought he had missed out on a trip to 'Worlds'. He then made the tough decision to pack up and head to Canberra on a sporting scholarship to the Australian Institute of Sport. The other top walkers are all resident there and he realised that to progress to the next level, he needed to train with them rather than in isolation in Melbourne. We supported him in this move as we all realised it was the correct thing to do. Then in June, he was a surprise selection for the 50 km event at the 2007 IAAF World Champs, to be held in Osaka in Japan in late August. He had to survive an appeal from one of the other walkers but eventually things went his way and he was confirmed for Japan. Then, just to illustrate what a topsy turvy world it has been for Chris, he came down with a leg injury 2 months before the big race and was not really able to do more than the occasional training session from then on. He was nearly withdrawn from the team on 2 separate occasions as his injury failed to respond to treatment and it was only after a series of cortisone injections that he was able to compete. He eventually finished 24<sup>th</sup> out of 31 finishers and 58 starters in very hot conditions – a good performance given the circumstances but a frustrating, none the less. Now he is back in full training, injury-free, and looking to 2008 where there are World Cup (Russia) and Olympic (China) berths on offer. He and Rachel are now renting in Canberra rather than living in at the AIS Halls of Residence and he does a bit of part time work at a Canberra Gym/Sports Club to help fill the coffers.

Paul continues to work for the Victorian Labor Party and is a Ministerial Assistant to Peter Batchelor, the State Minister for just about everything (Energy and Resources, Community Development, Leader Government Business Legislative Assembly) and he enjoys a lifestyle that moves along at a rather frantic pace. This year saw an Australian Federal election and Paul and Ali duly threw themselves into the fray, working evenings and weekends to work towards a Labor victory at the Federal level. Last month the votes were counted and it was a resounding win for Labor who now hold government in every State and Territory as well as Federally. I know that for Paul and Ali, the celebrations were long and hard but then it was a case of back to work on the Monday. They have now moved to a better apartment in Ascot Vale and have a bit more room to stretch out. Paul is considering embarking on a Master's degree in Economics

next year, if he can find time! He is working full time on the ministerial staff of a State government minister, a very demanding position in its own right. He is now known as the family 'suit'.

Matt has had what can only be described as a rather enjoyable and laid back year off from his studies (and why not!). He decided after finishing his Music Diploma at the end of last year that he would have 2007 off before returning to do the extra 2 years of study to convert it into a Degree. With his place for 2008 confirmed, he has spent the year doing some part time music teaching (both for a local music school and privately from home) and generally using the rest of his time for whatever came along. He has his own music studio/teaching area in one of the front rooms and has indeed made good use of his year off. Now it will be back to the books next year and onwards, ever onwards! Matt is now the only one of the boys left at home and makes the most of it! He is the only one of the boys who still plays in a band – the Gnomes of Zurich! (Chris had to part with his band when he moved to Canberra – one of the tough decisions that he had to make.) The Gnomes get a reasonable number of gigs around the traps and are probably 'funk' rather than rock 'n roll. They are all very talented musicians, so their music is varied and quite interesting.

Lois and Tim travelled to Osaka in August to support Chris when he was competing in the World Champs. Although Chris was away for 4 weeks, we restricted ourselves to a 10 day trip and stayed in Osaka separately from the team. It was hot and humid and crowded with people, so was certainly a very different sort of holiday adventure. Next year who knows.....perhaps Beijing?

Lois, along with her brother Neil and her sister Bev, continue to support their mum, Win, who is now 93 years of age and still in the the care of the nursing home. She has good days and not-so-good days but she continues to battle on.

So it has been our usual big year. Whatever happened to a slower pace of life?

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/2007.html>

To all our friends, local and remote, we wish you a Christmas filled with peace and joy and hope that 2008 will be a year where the world moves closer together in unity, tolerance and mutual love and acceptance.

Kind regards

Tim and Lois