

1 Avoca Cres
Pascoe Vale
Victoria, 3044
Australia

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Hello Everyone

Finally! Our Christmas letter is even later than usual this year, a sign of the continuing pace at which we live our busy lives. But we have now stopped, reviewed the year and are ready to put fingers to keyboard and pick out our family highlights.

Lois has now been working at Broadmeadows Community Legal Centre as a community lawyer for over 12 months and has increased her workload from 3 to 4 days per week. It is both challenging and rewarding work as she meets the full spectrum of clients with their widely varying needs and crises. She also keeps a foot in the door one day each week at Victoria Legal Aid but she is winding back that additional part time work now that her days at Broadmeadows have increased.

Tim finished his work contract at Coles in August and was intending to retire but AXA, his former employers, offered him a small contract with some quite interesting work so he postponed his retirement and continued on until Friday 19 December at which time he formally announced his absolute retirement from the IT workforce. He is now busy planning the many things he intends to do to fill his day! Needless to say, he had been painfully counting down the days (well, painful to the other household members anyway) to zero. In April, he went under the knife again and had a partial knee replacement to go with his hip surgery of 2006 and, after a slower than expected recovery, he is now back to his usual wide range of activities and even doing a bit of 'social' racewalking with his mates and racing the summer season track season. He is still as involved as ever with the various racewalking related organisations and going a bit of coaching on the side.

David continues to work full-time at the Anglers Tavern in Maribyrnong as one of the managers. He enjoys the work but as he doesn't intend to work in hospitality indefinitely, he has started some part time study. He has begun an Accountancy degree and feels that this will help him branch out into other fields, perhaps in tandem with his Mechanical Engineering degree. David shares a house with some friends, in nearby Strathmore, works out regularly at the gym and plays some indoor cricket. He still has his hyper-active Boxer dog, Clubber. She is occasionally 'baby-sat' by her grandparents, much to the disgust of the resident cats.

Chris has now been at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra on his sporting scholarship for 18 months. 2008 was a big year for him in many ways. He recorded an A qualifier for his pet distance, the 50 km, in Dec 2007 but, such is the quality and depth of this event in Australia, that he was one of 6 A qualifiers so missed Olympic selection. He then decided to chase the one remaining spot in the 20 km walk team and, after two B qualifiers in March (Melbourne) and April (Beijing), he did 1:22:55, an A qualifier in the World Cup in Cheboksary, Russia in May, gaining Olympic selection. After more training in Canberra and Japan he arrived in Beijing five days before his event. Alas, disaster struck when he was disqualified in the Olympic 20 km event at around the 12 km mark. Lois and Tim were trackside and felt that he was walking to the rules, but obviously 3 judges saw something that was not evident to any of us. It was his first ever DQ at any level in 14 years of competitive walking. To his credit, he took it on the chin and has bounced back well. On 14 December he won the Australian 50 km championship in Melbourne in 3:55:30, a PB by 3 minutes. Even better, it confirmed his selection to compete in the 2009 World Athletics Championship in Berlin in August 2009.

Yes, Lois and Tim will be going to Berlin and are already planning the trip. You can see a video of the 50km event at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vk_oeyJmnM&feature=PlayList&p=54B18E19D2B24D96&index=0&playnext=1. Chris and partner Rachel also announced their engagement this year, making 2008 an even more memorable year for the family.

Paul has had another year of high intensity activity. He now works as a ministerial adviser to the Minister for Housing and Indigenous Affairs in the Victorian State Parliament and is therefore involved in facilitating at both local and State Govt levels. Since his partner Ali works for the Federal Finance Minister, it is indeed a busy lifestyle. In February, they both took leave from their respective jobs and travelled to America. One of the main attractions was Super Tuesday when the Presidency is often decided. They helped in one of the Obama teams on polling day and were able to compare the two democratic systems first hand. They stayed with a series of friends across the States and generally had a great time. Paul has been studying this year as well as holding down a demanding full time role – and is working towards his Masters in Economics.

Matt went back to University this year after a year off and successfully negotiated his way through the third year of a 4 year stint towards his Music Degree. He did very well, getting all A's or B's and found it an enjoyable and satisfying challenge. He continues to play in two different bands (Gnomes of Zurich and Oh Deanna) and has a variety of gigs

around the suburban traps. He also plays in a social basketball competition and their team has won the last 2 grand finals, although Matt is probably the first to admit that he adds enthusiasm rather than raw skill to the team.

Lois and Tim travelled to Beijing with Lois's brother, Neil, to cheer for Chris in his Olympic venture. It was an absolutely fantastic trip to an amazing super-city. Luckily there was enough rain to ensure relatively clear skies and generally good conditions. We stayed in a small backpackers hostel in central Beijing, just a stone's throw from the central railway. Apart from absorbing the Olympic atmosphere, we toured the Forbidden City, walked the Great Wall, took in lots of temples and sampled lots of local restaurants. We can all advise that, apart from the dearth of good coffee outlets, it's a great place to visit!

Lois, along with her brother Neil and her sister Bev, continue to support their mum, Win, who is now 94 years of age and still in 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/2008.html>

To all our friends, local and remote, we wish you a Christmas filled with peace and joy and hope that 2009 will be a year where the world moves closer together in unity, tolerance and mutual love and acceptance.

Kind regards

Tim and Lois