

13 December 2009

Hello Everyone

Another year has flown and we have been caught unprepared yet again for these seasonal activities. Thus the inevitable last minute flurry of letters, cards, presents and greetings to all our friends far and wide. Hopefully this can all be completed in time to settle down to a Christmas day of contemplation and peace.

Lois has now been working at Broadmeadows Community Legal Centre as a community lawyer for over 2 years, is now full time and continues to enjoy the challenges and rewards associated with meeting the demands of a wide array of clients with their widely varying needs and crises. She was seconded to work two days per week this year with Victorian Bushfire Legal Help giving free legal advice over the phone at Victoria Legal Aid till June and is now based one day a week at the Bushfire Legal Clinic, first at Wallan and now at Broadford, two of the country areas very hard hit by last summer's devastating Victorian bushfires. She also keeps up her ongoing long term commitments - chairperson of St Linus Kindergarten, member of the Anglican Early Childhood Council and church warden / treasurer for St Linus Anglican Church. It is indeed a busy life style but which she has maintained for many years now and on which she thrives.

Tim officially retired from the paid workforce on 19th December 2008 so is now celebrating 12 months as a retiree. It did not take him long to sort out his new lifestyle, mixing some athletics training, some regular gym work, two afternoons a week coaching, lots of walking administration work for the various athletics/walking groups with which he is involved, a bit of gardening, lots of reading and generally irritating those who have to put up with his newfound freedom. Various little projects have been completed but the promise to paint the outside of the house remains as yet unfulfilled. All things in good time!!! Perhaps this summer if it does not get too hot.

David is still working full-time at the Anglers Tavern in Maribyrnong as one of the managers and continues with his part-time study towards an Accountancy degree. He is back at home at the moment (with Clubber, his faithful but slightly demented boxer dog) between houses. He and his mates let their current house lease go in the hope of getting something a bit bigger but have found it hard to get a new lease anywhere, such is the demand for rental properties in Melbourne. So they continue to look and we continue to struggle with two house loads of furniture and possessions, plus dog!

Chris has now been at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra on a sporting scholarship for 2½ years and continues to thrive. His walking has certainly flourished in a competitive environment which boasts all our top walkers training and racing together. But more of that later. The big news is that he and Rachel have announced their wedding plans – they plan to wed on 6th March 2010 in Queenscliff, a small coastal town about 90 minutes drive from Melbourne. Rachel's parents live there and it was a logical choice of venue for Chris and Rachel. I am sure that the pace of preparations will then quicken as March quickly cycles around. Our friend, Rosemary, will come out from England for the big occasion and will be making the wedding cake as her important wedding contribution. While Rachel has been in Fiji, Chris has been sharing a house in Canberra with two of the AIS scholarship swimmers, so one of their first jobs will now be to find their own rental property.

Paul has had another year of high intensity activity, working as a ministerial adviser to the Minister for Housing and Indigenous Affairs in the Victorian State Parliament and therefore involved in facilitating at both local and State Govt levels. The huge bushfires last Summer meant that his workload went through the roof as temporary and permanent housing had to be sourced for the many people who lost their homes and much planning had to be done in the aftermath of the whole disaster. He therefore dropped his part time post-graduate studies in the first semester as he realised that he would have no hope of fitting in the required work but he was able to return to study in the second semester and continues to work towards his Master of Arts in Economics. His partner Ali moved from the Federal to the State scene during the year and is now working for the Victorian Minister for Health. Ali has also been putting the finishing touches to her science degree. Their combined lifestyles are indeed busy!

Matt has just completed his Bachelor of Music from Victoria University, majoring in Performance and Composition and chalking up High Distinctions in half his subjects. He has enjoyed the course immensely and continues to thrive as a musician, playing in two bands (Gnomes of Zurich and Oh Deanna) in various gigs around the suburban traps as well as dabbling in jazz and various other forms of music. He had talked of doing a Diploma of Education next year so that he would be able to fall back to music teaching if all else failed but he has now decided to postpone that idea and try to make a living initially in the industry – a challenging objective but one to which we are sure he will give his all.

Lois, along with her brother Neil and her sister Bev, continue to support their mum, Win, who is now 95 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.

We alluded to Chris's walking above so a quick addition to our narrative on that front. Chris's year was one of high after high, only to be eventually shattered by the worst possible low. His walking year started in mid December 2008 when he won the Australian 50km championship in a 3 minute personal best, thus confirming a berth in the 2010 World Champs team (Berlin). Then it was back into training mode in Canberra before a series of 5000m track walks in

February where he did really well. This phase culminated with a win in the Victorian championship with a new track 5000m PB. Then it was off to Flagstaff in Arizona in March for 3 weeks of altitude training – Flagstaff is one of the favourite altitude training bases for endurance athletes, being around 1800m above sea level. Lots of walkers from around the world were also there so I gather it was a time of solid training but quite a social period at the same time. Then it was off to Cixi in China where Chris competed in a big IAAF 20km race, coming 12th in a 20km PB. Back to Australia for another couple of months before another PB – this time over 20 miles in the annual Queens Birthday walking carnival in Canberra. Then it was off to Spain for a couple of weeks training in the Spanish seaside resort town of La Coruna and yet another IAAF 20km event (and another 12th place). Then 3 weeks of further altitude training in St Moritz in Switzerland and Chris's preparations for the World Championship 50km were complete. It had been his best year ever and he looked set for a huge 50km walk in Berlin. Alas, this is where things went wrong. Some 10 days out from his race, he started to feel a small irritation at the base of his spine and this quickly progressed to a cyst. Attempts to treat by the team doctor were unsuccessful and 5 days before his big race, he was rushed to hospital with a high temperature and a full blown abscess. After ½ day on drips to lower his temperature, he was operated on and then spent 3 further days in hospital before he was allowed to return to team headquarters. To his credit, he was trackside during the 50km event, cheering on the other 2 Australians (who finished 6th and 7th) but completely gutted by what can only be described as a cruel blow. He is now back in training and looking to 2010. He has now put 2009 behind him and is looking to 2010. He has been selected in the Aust team to contest the 50km event at the World Racewalking Cup at altitude in Mexico in May and is focusing on that as an opportunity to finally put down the 50km performance that he knows he is capable of.

It seems that our various holidays and trips have been in some way related to either Chris or the sport of racewalking. First Tim spent several weeks in Canberra in January helping run an Australian U20 walks camp and seeing lots of Chris in his training. In June, we travelled to Canberra for the annual Racewalking Australia carnival and saw Chris race very strongly over 20 miles. Tim then spent a couple of weeks in Brisbane in late June with another walking commitment. Then in August, we embarked on a big 5 week overseas trip culminating in Berlin where Chris was to compete in the World Championships. Then in early December it was over to Hobart in Tasmania for a 4 day weekend so that Tim could watch the Australian Schools championships. Apart from that, Lois did manage to get one trip away that was not sport related – a work conference to Perth in September.

Our big European trip saw us take in a lot. The first port of call was Helsinki where we spent two days sightseeing on our own before travelling to Stockholm to see Tim's relatives. After a very pleasant 3 days there, it was off to Goteborg to see more of Tim's family. From there, we travelled down the Swedish west coast to Tim's cousin's summer holiday house where we spent a very enjoyable 3 days away from the hustle and bustle of the big cities. From there, it was an overnight train trip to Berlin where we met up with Lois' brother Neil and his wife Jill. We then spent 8 days in Berlin sharing an apartment, exploring one of Europe's finest cities, absorbing the ambience of the World Athletics Championships and catching up with a number of old friends. This included Bill and Chris who had travelled over from England especially to see us and to watch Chris's walk. Unfortunately, our activities were severely curtailed and dampened by Chris's unforeseen medical emergency but such is life. From Berlin, we travelled by train to Aachen, one of Germany's oldest and most historical cities, to meet walking friends Herbert and Cornelia. From there, it was on to Geel in Belgium to see Rudy, Caroline, Paul and Simone. Then it was off to England where we hired a car and travelled extensively during an 8 day layover. Our trips took us to the Isle of Wight to see Jill, Thame to see Rosemary, Norwich to see Kathy and Laurie, Maidstone to visit Beryl, to London to stay with Eleanor and to also catch up with Liz & Ray and Barry. Our final stopover was for 1 day in Hong Kong before coming home to Melbourne exhausted but well satisfied with what had been a huge trip. The hardest thing was knowing that we could not catch up with everyone and would have to restrict ourselves to a small subset of our many friends.

So it has been our usual big year. Whatever happened to slowing down a little?

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/2009.html>

To all our friends, local and remote, we wish you a Christmas filled with peace and joy and hope that 2010 will be a year where the world moves closer together in unity, tolerance and mutual love and acceptance.

Kind regards

Tim and Lois