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Hello Everyone

Another year has flown by and as usual, we are writing our Christmas letter in the shadow of Christmas day. Thankfully the hectic rush is finally starting to slow and we now sit back, contemplate the year, think of our many friends and family and prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, the true reason for this Christmas holiday period. Yes, another big year for us all so let's get into it without further ado!

Lois continues to work with the Broadmeadows Community Legal Service but is now down to 3 days per week, a work balance that she enjoys. She also continues her various other roles as Church Warden, kindergarten president, etc, and is on a number of different committees of various types. Unfortunately the kinder has taken a lot more of her time this year than she would have otherwise wished due to a series of issues, all due to what we might call the human factor! She has been a regular attendee at the Curves Gym this year and recently clocked up her 150th session, a very impressive milestone.

Tim has been retired for 3 years now but had a stint back with AXA this year to upgrade some of the software products that he used to look after. As it was only 3 days per week, it did not interfere too much with his retirement lifestyle and the money enabled us to pass on some largess to the boys and to get some work done on the house. What with multiple websites to administer, a few coaching commitments, lots of training and walking administration and some athletics officiating, he continues to enjoyably fill his spare hours. Also a keen gardener, the family plot has been the recipient of much activity over the past few years and our wet winter and spring have ensured that it looks a treat for Christmas.

Tim and the Carrucan genealogical group came to the end of a major work activity this year when, in June, they published a comprehensive family history. Tim is a great grandson of Patrick Carrucan who, along with his brother and sister, migrated to Australia from County Clare, Ireland, in the 1850's and settled in Eltham, some 15km north of Melbourne (see <http://www.carrucan.org.au/>). The extended Carrucan family worldwide has now grown to over 5000 and the writing of this book had kept the group busy for the past few years. The book has sold well and has generated lots of very positive feedback. I think they are now pondering what to do next!

David is still working with Fosters in their wine and beer department and is based in their corporate headquarters in Southbank, Melbourne CBD. This means he can ride his bike to work and the world of online eCommerce has benefited greatly from his various cycling related purchases during the year. He continues to work towards his Accountancy degree and the end is now in sight – one semester to go and he will have finished it. He still rents two doors down from us and his garden is the recipient of various regular cleanup activities by Tim. Clubber the boxer dog is as excitable as ever and has occasional sleepovers with his grandparents! David had his head down in his study books for most of the year but took some time off in September to travel to Sri Lanka for the wedding of one of his friends. It was his first overseas holiday since he was a little toddler and he enjoyed the experience.

Chris continues his walking career at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra (more of that later) and he and Rachel became the proud parents of Oliver Patrick Semmens Erickson in August. It is a very exciting time for the family as it is our first grand child and the first nephew for the other boys. Oliver has been the centre of almost continuous adulation since his arrival and, now nearly 5 months old, he is a cheerful and very healthy young fellow.

Paul has had a busy year with lots of activity. He went to NSW in March to help with the re-election campaign of the NSW Labor Party deputy leader Carmel Tebbutt. It was an election where a massive negative swing was expected to force them from Government and all stops were pulled to try to retain certain key seats and people. Paul's campaign saw Carmel re-elected after what was an exhausting few weeks. He was then off to America in May for a 3-4 week trip to study the inner workings of the Democratic Party. This fitted in well with a wedding invitation for one of his friends who was returning to South Sudan in June to be married. Paul duly changed his

travel plans and returned to Australia via a week in Africa. He was in Juba a week before full independence was granted and it was a heady time by the sounds of things. He returned home only to become violently sick and spend 3 days in hospital with that they thought might be yellow fever. It turned out to be severe foot poisoning so he bounced back once the body responded. He then returned to his Labor Party job as an electoral officer but has recently taken up a new position with the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) as a campaign manager. It will be a demanding and time consuming job but one that will address many of the issues which we as a nation will have to answer in the next few years – issues like the casualisation of the work force.

Matt has spent another year working on his music and using his paid employment to pay the bills! He plays in a number of different bands and Lois and I recently spent an enjoyable evening seeing him in action with 'Oh Deanna'. He has decided to return to study next year and get his Diploma of Education so that he can teach music in schools. We both think this is a very good idea and that it will be one year's hard work that is well worthwhile.

Lois's mum, Win, is now 97 years of age and still in the care of the nursing home. She has an incredibly strong constitution which keeps her going, despite dementia and Parkinson's disease.

The year has seen its usual plethora of travel opportunities and catchups. In January, old friends Kath and Laurie came over from England and we travelled with them to north east Victoria. In February, it was to Hobart to see Chris race in the Australian roadwalk championships. In March, Chris and Tim travelled to Slovakia for a big walk meet. In April, we had Jill and Serena from England staying with us when they came over for a big ultra distance walk. At Easter, it was off to Darwin for Tim's sister-in-law Diana's sixtieth birthday. In June it was off to Canberra for the annual Lake Burley Griffin walking carnival. Then it was back to Canberra again in August for more racewalking (yes, Lois does mention occasionally that all our holidays seem to be related to racewalking!). And there have been a few impromptu trips to Canberra since then to check on Oliver's progress. And of course, Hotel Erickson continues to get its regular guests who come and go throughout the year.

Since we have mentioned Chris's walking on a couple of occasions, a quick summary. This year, he has continued his improvement with more PBs, the big ones being in his pet event, the 50km. In March in Slovakia, he took a minute off his best time with 3:54:53 but, alas, it was not good enough to get him in the team for the 2011 World Champs - he was one of 4 Aussie walkers with A qualifying performances but was the fourth and they can only name a maximum of three in any team. So he had a quiet year at home and missed his first overseas team in 6 years. But given that the champs were on in August just after Oliver was born, it was problematic whether he could have gone anyway. Will he make the Olympics? Well, he took a further 3 minutes off his PB in the 50km trial a week ago, recording 3:51:57, and is the 4th fastest of 5 walkers with A qualifiers. So once again, he has missed out by one spot. In all other athletics events, we have one qualifier if we are lucky but the walks are just so strong. But all is not lost as the 20km trials are in February and he is confident of picking up a spot there. So fingers crossed. In any case, he will be off overseas next year as the World Cup is in Russia in May and he is already pre-selected for that team. We will travel to London if he makes the Olympics but otherwise no.

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/2011.shtml>

To all our friends, local and remote, we wish you a Christmas filled with peace and joy and hope that 2012 will be a year where the world moves closer together in unity, tolerance and mutual love and acceptance.

Kind regards

Tim and Lois

