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Hello Everyone

Another year has flown by so it is time to put fingers to keyboard and ponder on the year's undertaking. Surprisingly, this task has bubbled to the top a whole 2 weeks before Christmas - unheard of in recent years!

Yes, it is time to 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. Another big year for us all so let's get into it without further ado!

Our household has been a little bigger this year with David and Matt back living with us and with young Queensland walker, Jesse Osborne, joining us after he moved to Victoria to further his burgeoning career. Alas, much as we might like to test out the various recovery steps to cope with 'Empty Nest Syndrome', our plans remain thwarted!

Our year started on a sad note in early January when Lois' mother Win passed away. At 98 years of age and having spent the last few years in failing health in a nursing home, it was not unexpected, and it was in many ways a release for her after so many years battling a variety of issues. Even so, it is still hard to say 'goodbye'.

Soon after that, Lois and Tim were off to Tasmania for a 10 day touring holiday with Tim's brother Terry and his wife, Diana. Since Tim's family had lived in Queenstown for one year as children (1958), the trip was of particular interest as we investigated the rugged west coast. We even found the house where we family lived some 55 years ago!

Once we returned from Tasmania, it was heads down and tails up and into another busy year.

One of our family highlights was a trip from Ireland to Australia by Tim's cousin Patsy Carrucan with his wife Ann. They joined their daughter Lynn in Perth before travelling together to Melbourne. This meant an opportunity for the extended Carrucan family to gather together for a series of outings and a dinner together at our place. The Carrucans migrated from Fanore, County Clare, to Melbourne in the 1850's. Tim's mother was the grand daughter of one of these hardy souls. For more about the Carrucan family, check out <http://www.carrucan.org.au/>.

Lois has now completed her sixth year working at Broadmeadows Community Legal Service and it remains as busy as ever. Church and parish kindergarten responsibilities manage to occupy much of her 'spare' time. Much more relaxing is time spent 'grand-parenting' Oliver and Annika and attempting to keep fit through 'Curves' gym. The latter might be offset a bit through post-gym coffee and monthly social gatherings with a small group of fellow 'Curvettes'.

Tim is 5 years down and counting as a retiree. His usual comment - how did I ever find time to work? He continues to wear his various administrative hats - Secretary of the Australian Centurions and the Victorian Race Walking Club, President of Racewalking Australia, chair of the Athletics Australia Walks Committee (just retired from that one earlier this month) and coordinator of the annual Coburg 24 Hour Carnival. Add to that his coaching and training and a fair bit of bushwalking and it is indeed an active retirement.

Apart from his various interstate trips for racewalking activities, he managed to get overseas on two occasions this year, first with Chris to Taicang (China) in early March when Chris was to race in the Chinese racewalking championships, and then to Hong Kong in September as manager of a small Australian racewalking team. He also dusted off his walking shoes after many years and tested himself out with a couple of ultra events - a 12 Hour track walk in Sydney in June and a 100km road walk in Wangaratta in September - and lived to tell the tale!

As you might remember from our Christmas 2012 newsletter, David completed his Bachelor of Accounting degree late last year with a view to moving from the pub industry into something with more long term stability. The great news is that he is now working for the State Revenue Office (see <http://www.sro.vic.gov.au>), the Victorian government's main taxation agency. He is based in the Melbourne CBD and enjoying his new position and its various challenges.

After several years of sharing a rental house with mates two doors down from us, David is currently between houses and back home again. It is great for us to see so much more of him but we realise that he will soon be off again as he intends to move closer to the city. David has also taken up karate and attends the Kyokushin Karate Dojo in Glenroy. It is pretty full on and he regularly comes home with the bruises to prove it! David also dragged his brother Chris into the annual Tough Mudder endurance event, held at Phillip Island in September, and that provided the chance to get even more bruises and sore spots. Ah, the things young people do!

Chris and Rachel have had another eventful year, their first full year in Melbourne since 2006. In April, they welcomed a new baby daughter - Annika Joy Semmens Erickson, born April 2013, a baby sister for Oliver (born August 2011). With the new addition to their busy household,

Chris has now been working for a little over 12 months as a full time role with one of the grants departments at Melbourne University but is currently negotiating a part-time role within Athletics Australia. If it all pans out, he is looking forward to commencing in mid January in a role which will be more aligned with his interests and his own sporting career. It was a big adjustment from the life of a full time athlete at the Australian Institute of Sport but Chris has nailed it with his best year ever as a racewalker. A win in the Chinese 50km championship in March earned him a spot in the Australian team to contest the World Championships in Moscow in August and there he came a wonderful 16th in the 50km (his best international finish in such an event) in a big PB time of 3:49:41. He finished off the year with a great 10th place finish in a big international 4 day racewalk rally in China in November. He is now looking towards Rio for his third Olympics and the signs are good.

Paul continued this year with his job at the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), working in the campaign area, including the 'Secure Jobs: Better Future' campaign, highlighting the blight of insecure work. He also had a very busy time campaigning for Labor in the lead up to the Federal election. Next year will bring more hard work for Paul as we approach a State election in November. Early this year, he moved from Burnley to Brunswick, along with Milo, the Wonder Cat. Time to relax is hard to come by!

Matt continues to pursue his musical career, playing in a variety of bands, teaching a selection of musical instruments with a number of music schools and working in a music shop. He has continued to live at home since returning to Uni for his Dip. Ed., which he completed last year. We can only assume we are looking after him too well!

So it has been another big year for the Ericksons of Pascoe Vale. 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/2013.shtml>.

To all our friends, local and remote, we wish you a Christmas filled with peace and joy and hope that 2014 will be a year where the world moves closer together in unity, tolerance and mutual love and acceptance.

Kind regards Tim and Lois