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17th December 2014

Hello Everyone,

It's hard to believe that a year has passed since we put fingers to keyboard in December last year and penned our Christmas 2013 letter. As usual, it is a last ditch effort with the shadow of Christmas fast upon us – only a week to go!

Finally we find time to step 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 fluctuated up and down this year as “Hotel Erickson” got its usual bashing, with many comings and goings. Matt continues to live back at home with us but is soon moving out to housesit for friends and is then threatening to depart more permanently once again and rent. We have enjoyed having him with us for the last few years so will miss him once he moves out. Young walker Jesse Osborne, who joined us last year, continued his stay with us until the World Junior Track and Field Championships in July in America. He has now moved back home to Queensland to continue his career from his own home base. We have had our usual huge number of visitors who have stayed with us for varying periods of time. In particular, we were very pleased to have quite a few of our Darwin family down at various times – Eric and Nichola and Tom and Sue. And, although he did not need to stay with us, we were excited to welcome our cousin Stefan Eriksson from Sweden in November, when he was in Melbourne on a work related trip. All I can say is that it is lucky we have a large house as it does get more than its fair share of usage!

Lois and Tim have had quite a few trips this year. Tim started the year with a 2 week walking camp in Falls Creek in the Victorian high country – this is an annual camp he helps organise and run each year. Then in February, we were off to Hobart to watch Chris walk in the Australian roadwalk champs. Then to Shanghai in May for 9 days to wave the flag for Chris who was racing in the World Champs. Lois does sometimes say that her only trips are in conjunction with walking fixtures but Tim knows she is only joking!

But it was not all walk related. We were off to Darwin in July to help celebrate the wedding of Sue Erickson (Tim's niece) and Tom McCrie. We had a very enjoyable week staying with Tim's brother Terry and family before we returned to our busy lives in Melbourne. Then Lois was off to Alice Springs for a work conference in August, visiting Uluru and other key destinations. We then we met up in Adelaide and spent a very enjoyable week driving via the Flinders Ranges to Broken Hill and Bourke and thence back home to Melbourne. Tim has always wanted to see this part of Australia and we can now both lay claim to having been “back o' Bourke”. Finally, we made a 7 day trip to Kuala Lumpur earlier this month so that Tim could do a big 12 Hour walking race over there. We did manage to do a bit of sightseeing between walking commitments but it did seem to be the usual walking related holiday. Hmmm...

Lois has now completed her seventh year working at Broadmeadows Community Legal Service and it remains as busy and as challenging as ever. She has managed to reduce her work commitment to 3 days per week, two at the head office and one doing outreach work at Broadford, about an hour's drive north of Melbourne, but it does sometimes blow out into extra days to catch up on outstanding work. Church and parish kindergarten responsibilities manage to occupy much of her remaining 'spare' time. The kinder this year seems to have taken up even more time than usual with BBQs and other fund raising activities and the ever challenging task of building and keeping a workable committee of parents over the year. And then she has additional work on the Archdiocesan Early Childhood Central Council and the North Western Regional Council.

Much more relaxing is her time spent 'grand-parenting' Oliver and Annika and their weekly sleepovers here are ongoing highlights for us. Our large rambling house and our many knick knacks make for interesting exploration

for the both of them. Lois continues to do her 3 mornings per week with her group of "Curvette" friends at the Essendon 'Curves' gym. The Curvettes also have regular outings and social functions which Lois always enjoys.

Tim is 6 years down and counting as a retiree. His usual comment - how did I ever find time to work? He continues to wear usual administrative hats as Secretary of the Australian Centurions and Secretary of the Victorian Race Walking Club and coordinator of the annual Coburg 24 Hour Carnival and continues to act as an Athletics Victoria official, officiating at various Track and Field meets over each summer. But he has managed to cut back on a number of other administrative and coaching commitments. This has given him some additional time to get back into the garden, an activity he has always enjoyed.

To say that Tim has an active retirement is indeed an understatement. Apart from the above activities, he continues to enjoy as much bushwalking as he can and continues to test himself out in both short distance racewalking events and ultra long distance walks. He has managed to maintain the same times in his shorter distance events for the last 8 years or so but he is not sure when the bubble is finally going to burst! On the long distance front, he has done a number of 12 Hour walks this year (with varying results) and completed his year with a win in an International 12 Hour walk in Malaysia a couple of weeks ago. Luckily it was held overnight but it was still hot and humid. For his efforts, he won 1500 Malaysian Ringats (around \$600), more than he ever won in his heyday as an international athlete!

David is now into his second year working with 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 continues to enjoy his new position and its various challenges. He was back living with us between rental houses but moved out early in the year and is now living in Airport West, still within striking distance of home for the occasional meal! He continues with his karate but was sidelined for some time mid year with cracked ribs after a bruising encounter in a tournament. He was awarded the most courageous fighter in that particular tournament but it did come at a price!

Rachel and Chris have had another eventful year. Their rental house in Aberfeldie was going to be renovated, so they shifted down the road to Essendon in August. But they then decided to move down the coast to Ocean Grove, so another move (and a much more significant one) had to be scheduled after only a short time at Essendon. Now they have settled into their new home and are adjusting to life away from the big smoke of the city.

Chris continues to improve with his racewalking as he works towards Rio in 2016. He was off to Japan in March where he recorded a PB for 20km (1:22:19), was back home for a while before tripping off to Shanghai in early May for the IAAF World Racewalking Cup where he came 10th in the 50km event (his best ever international finish in such a big race) in a PB 3:49:31. He had a third overseas trip for the year when he went on an all expenses paid trip to compete in a big Chinese 4 day racewalk event back in Shanghai in October – and he did well in that also, although the daily race distances were a little too short for him, based on his current longer training regime. He was second in the Australian 20km championship in Hobart in February and won the Australian 50km championship in Melbourne only last weekend so it has been a wonderful year for him. He has already been selected in the Australian team for next year's World Championships in Beijing and hopefully another good performance there will cement an Olympic spot for Rio 2016. Tim tries to get out on the bike when he can with Chris but it is a bit more challenging with the move to Ocean Grove. It is a work in progress!

Olly is now 3+ years old and Annie is 20 months old and both are wonderful - well, aren't all grand children wonderful! The family stays over with us once a week and we try to catch up with them as much as we can apart from that.

This year has been one of major change for Paul who threw his hat into the ring and stood for the position of Assistant Secretary of the Australian Labor Party. After a lot of hard work, he got the necessary numbers and won a tight election. He left his position with the Australian Council of Trade Unions towards the end of last year, did some European travel, then study and research work for a member of state parliament. Having been elected to the assistant secretary position, he packed his possessions and his cat, Milo, and headed to Canberra where he now works in the rarified atmosphere of Federal politics. The job involves a lot of travel and it seems that just about every week, he is off to one or other Australian city on work related activities. We were very pleased to have him back home with us for 3-4 weeks leading up to the Victorian State election in late November. To cap things off, Labor had a convincing win and swept back onto power after 4 years in the wings as opposition party. With further State elections next year in Queensland and New South Wales, it will be a busy year for him. As an aside, Milo accompanied Paul down for his stay with us and soon took over the house, much to the chagrin of our two cats. Paul and Milo will be back for Christmas, so further fur shedding is envisaged!

Matt continues to pursue his musical career, playing in a variety of bands (including an African regee band), teaching a selection of musical instruments with a number of music schools and working in a music shop. This year he has also extended his work mix to include teaching at a couple of local primary schools. It is fair to say that life as a full time musician is challenging but he enjoys the mixed nature of the work. He had a major setback in early

June when he was involved in an accident while riding his bicycle. He came down heavily on his face, shattering his jaw in various places and doing a lot of damage. Multiple operations ensued with permanent titanium plates and pins being strategically placed to support the jaw as it gradually healed. Even now, 6 months later, he has to be careful what he eats but the worst seems to be now behind him. As mentioned above, he is about to move out into shared house rental once again. We will miss him once he is gone.

And a few more random snippets to complete the annual letter...

Tim was amongst the honours list announced on Australia Day on 26th January of this year. He was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia (OAM) for services to the sport of racewalking. Lois, Tim and Paul attended the awards ceremony in late March at Victorian Government House in Melbourne. It is a recognition of his nearly 50 years of involvement in the sport (he first started as a racewalker in 1966) and his many years as an administrator.

Tim has also decided to grow old disgracefully and, in October, became the proud owner of an MX-5 convertible sports car. It is now his vehicle of choice and even Lois has bitten the bullet and had the occasional field trip!

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/2014.shtml>.

To all our friends, local and remote, we wish you a Christmas filled with peace and joy and hope that 2015 will be a year where the world moves closer together in unity, tolerance and mutual love and acceptance.

Best regards Tim and Lois