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Pascoe Vale
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Australia
5th December 2018

Hello Everyone,

There are no excuses for forgetting about Christmas, with the tinsel and Christmas carols front and centre in all the shopping centres. As the pressure builds, the inevitable questions intrude into our otherwise quiet and orderly lives. Who is coming on the big day? Do we have all the presents sorted? Have we missed anything?

But really, these are the incidentals. The real joys of Christmas are much more significant. As always, Christmas gives us a chance to think of our friends and family and shout out our Christmas hello. It is also our chance to prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, the true reason for this Christmas holiday period.

It has been a quieter year for us here at 1 Avoca Crescent as we enjoy our retirement, but we can still chat a bit about what has been happening. So let's get into it without further ado!

“Hotel Erickson” had its usual share of guests this year.

- Summertime stays by racewalkers Perseus (from Sweden) and Natalie (from England).
- A two week stay by our friend Peter Ryan who was here in June and got to experience a little of our Australian winter. He now knows that Melbourne and Canberra do indeed get cold sometimes.
- Lots of stays by Chris and the grandkids (and plenty of very welcome babysitting of the grandchildren by us).
- Quite a few stays by Paul, when his work with the Labor Party necessitated a spell in Melbourne. We also had a number of stints (including one right now) looking after his cat Milo. Thankfully our cats and Milo finally seem to have worked out some sort of non-violent mutual disdain.
- A trip down from Darwin by Tim's brother Terry in October. This led to quite a few trips by the brothers as they revisited many of their younger-day haunts, much changed now of course.
- The usual overnight stays by many of our other friends on their various trips to Melbourne.

We are also lucky in that David and Matt live locally and are regular dinner guests.

So overall our large house continues to get its fair share of usage!

We also had our usual share of trips this year but Lois continues to insist that there always seems to be a racewalking theme lurking somewhere in the background! I'll let you all judge for yourselves!

Tim kicked off the year in early January with 2 weeks helping out at a racewalking camp at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra. Then a shared drive to and from Adelaide the following month to take in the annual Australian racewalk championships. This was followed by a roadtrip to Canberra in March for Tim who was supporting one of the long distance runners in an event there. Then Tim and Chris travelled to the Gold Coast in April to watch the Commonwealth Games roadwalks. Then Tim headed off to China in early May as the Australian team coach for the IAAF Race Walking World Team Championships. We then capped off a busy first half of the year with our annual trip to Canberra in June for the interstate racewalking carnival that is always held on the Queen's Birthday weekend.

The second half of the year has been quiet by comparison but there is always next year!

Although now retired for a little over 18 months, Lois remains registered as a private practitioner and does bits and pieces of legal work to keep herself current. Of course, her other regular commitments continue, with her ongoing involvement at St Linus' Church, her role as the church rep and treasurer on the parish kindergarten committee, and with her regular morning workouts and post-workout coffees with her friends at the local gym.

The second half of the year has been filled with medical related things for Lois. In July and August, she had cataract operations for first one eye and then the other. All went well, with no issues, but it meant about 2 months with limited vision before she could finally order new spectacles and see the world in all its splendour once again.

No sooner was that all done and dusted than she started to have various aches and pains and discomforts and started on what turned out to be a battery of testing procedures over the next two months. A PET scan in early November finally confirmed the worst. After 3 years in remission, her cancer had returned, but not spread to any other part of her body.

On Monday 12th November, she started the first of what will be six months of 3-weekly chemotherapy infusions. As is often the case, the large initial dose bowled her over completely and the next week was very tough. Thank goodness, her body started to fight back and she is now feeling much better. We wait to see whether the scenario will be the same for subsequent infusions, in which case the oncologist may vary the frequency of doses in order to reduce side effects.

So it will be a quiet summer for us, but hopefully a clean bill of health at the end.

Tim is now 10 years and counting as a retiree. He has wound back a little this year on his many activities and enjoys his gardening, reading, training, computing and generally doing the one hundred and one little things that continue to make up his week.

David is now into his sixth year working with the State Revenue Office, the Victorian government's main taxation agency. He took some time off work mid year and travelled to France and Switzerland for a 40th birthday. Apart from that, it's been head to the grindstone. He and youngest brother Matt continue living in their share house in Brunswick. It is a vibrant inner city environment which we are sure the 'boys' enjoy.

It has been a big year for Chris's family, with Annie joining her older brother Olly at Queenscliff Primary School. As it is a small country school, they are both in a shared Prep/Grade 1 class, a wonderful experience for them. We are lucky enough to see them most weeks, either down there or up here at our place for sleepovers that are ongoing highlights for us. We really enjoyed seeing them both in the school production of *The Wizard of Oz*. They even had some lines! Chris continues in his job as a recreational officer with Deakin University in Geelong and has a busy time juggling family and work responsibilities.

Paul continues in his role as National Assistant Secretary of the Australian Labor Party, based in Canberra. His busy lifestyle continues apace, with interstate trips a necessary and regular part of his job. In particular, he spent a fair bit of time in March in Melbourne (Batman by-election) and in June/July in northern Tasmania (Braddon by-election), helping ensure Labor victories. Anyone familiar with Australian politics will know the turbulent period we are experiencing, and the Labor Party is hoping to capitalise on this and win the 2019 Federal Election. It will be a busy period for Paul, so when he stays with us over the Christmas period, he will be looking for a welcome break before the political heat returns.

Matt's various musical endeavours continue to keep him on his toes - playing in a number of bands, doing lots of touring, lots of studio work and teaching music in a number of local primary schools. It is fair to say that life as a full time musician is very busy! We have been able to join the predominantly young pub crowds on a number of occasions to enjoy the music.

So in summary, we have survived and celebrated another year full of friends and family and work and recreation and challenge.

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/2018.shtml>.

To all our friends, local and remote, we wish you a Christmas filled with peace and joy and hope that 2019 will be a year where the world moves closer together in unity, tolerance and mutual love and acceptance.

Tim and Lois

