



1 Avoca Cres
Pascoe Vale
Victoria, 3044
Australia
8th December 2019

Hello Everyone,

You can't miss Christmas, with the tinsel and Christmas carols front and centre in all the shopping centres and the relentless commercial push that now seems to pervade all major dates. 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 and cope with a few more challenges than usual, so let's get into it without further ado!

"Hotel Erickson" had its usual share of guests this year.

- A summertime stay in February by racewalker Perseus (from Sweden).
- 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 seem to have worked out some sort of non-violent mutual disdain.
- A trip down from Darwin by Tim's brother Terry and his wife Diana in November. This led to quite a few trips by the brothers as they revisited some of their younger-day haunts, much changed now of course, and visited their eldest brother Mike in country Victoria.
- A stay by our USA racewalking friends Paul and Ginnie DeMeester in early December.
- Another stay (current) by Perseus, back for summer racewalk training
- The usual overnight stays by 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 had a very quiet year ourselves, with few trips. There were various reasons for this so read on.

Tim continues to enjoy his retirement (11 years now) and is still actively involved in both the racewalking and ultra distance scene but his trips away from home were few. He went to Canberra in March to help with a long distance event and went to Canberra in June as team manager for the Victorian racewalking team at the big annual Queen's Birthday Carnival there. Apart from that, it was pottering on the home front. He has also been doing his usual bits and pieces helping with PC and Internet and website related issues for others, but always on a voluntary basis. He continues to train and still does the occasional race, including the summer track season with Coburg Harriers.

This year has been especially tough for Lois. She finished off a 6 months regime of chemotherapy treatment in February, only to have the cancer reappear 6 months later. Rather than go onto a third round of chemo, the oncologist decided it would be better if he could place her in one of the immunotherapy trials currently taking place. After a couple of months of tests and filling in forms, she was eventually accepted for such a trial in late September and started treatment in mid October. Two months down the track, she is on an ongoing regime which consists of a daily immunotherapy tablet and a 3 weekly infusion of a second immunotherapy drug. The first weeks were very testing for her, with various side effects, including soaring blood pressure and tiredness. With the doses now tuned a little, Lois is more comfortable but still gets easily tired and has to pace herself through the day.

Through all this, she has tried to continue on with life as much as possible. In March, she and friend Jenny R. flew to Canberra for the Pre-Raphaelite Exhibition and in June she spent a few days in southern NSW with Jenny K, then she accompanied Tim to Canberra for his walking trip in June.

Although now retired for a couple of years, 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, President and treasurer on the parish kindergarten committee, and regular morning coffees with her friends from the local gym.

David is now into his seventh year working with the State Revenue Office, the Victorian government's main taxation agency. His job description has changed to more of an IT testing role and he is kept busy with various projects that eat into his free time. He and youngest brother Matt still live 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, starting in February with a house shift within the Queenscliff area. Tim was on hand and he and Chris did most of the moving between them, utilising a hire van. As Chris has Olly and Annie every second week, there were plenty of occasions when we had to help out, dropping the grandkids off at school or picking them up, preparing dinner and such like. We did get to know the road between Pascoe Vale and Queenscliff rather well!

Chris had applied to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) in 2017 and 2018 but missed out on the final cut on each occasion. This year that all changed as he was accepted into the recruitment program, with his course starting in June and extending for nearly 6 months. Initially this meant commuting from Queenscliff to Craigieburn, north of Melbourne (nearly 2 hours in the car) for a training block of 4 days on and 4 days off. When this started, our Queenscliff commitment ramped up, with one or other of us spent a fair bit of time over the next few months on the local Queenscliff front.

In September Chris moved to Melbourne and is currently staying with us while he looks for a suitable house to rent in the northern suburbs, not a simple process in a tight rental market. Luckily Rachel was also moving to Melbourne at that time, so Olly and Annie are now going to Westgarth Primary School and split their time, week about, between our house and Rachel's abode in Westgarth. It has been wonderful for us to spend so much time with them and Chris.

It has also made it much easier for Chris to do his MFB training course at Craigieburn as it is only a 20 minute drive north from our place.

Chris graduated as a fully qualified fireman in early December and has been posted to the Tullamarine Fire Station. It is an exciting time for him. At the moment, there are some great videos from the MFB Graduation – hopefully they will still be there when you read this letter.

Ceremony: <https://livestream.com/cfavic/events/8890319>
Practical Display 1: <https://livestream.com/cfavic/events/8890321>
Practical Display 2: <https://livestream.com/cfavic/events/8890322>

Paul continues with his role within the Australian Labor Party, but has moved up from his position as National Assistant Secretary to the even more demanding role of National Secretary. He remains based in Canberra but travels frequently throughout Australia, and only recently returned from a quick trip to Europe. He also managed to catch up with Tim's brother Terry and his family in Darwin when there on party business. When his work sees him in Melbourne, he stays with us, something to which we look forward.

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! He does like to travel when he can and, in April/May, he successfully negotiated his way through a 5 week trip to Central and South America.

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

If you want to see our most recent photos and you have internet access, point your web browser at link <http://coburg24hr.org/erickson/2019.shtml>.

To all our friends, local and remote, we wish you a Christmas filled with peace and joy and hope that 2020 will be a year where the world moves closer together in unity, tolerance and mutual love and acceptance.

Tim and Lois