

Dear

6th December 2004

We have experienced a year of highs and lows. The high points were the whole family getting together in the South Island, holidays in Australia and America with good friends and visits from overseas friends. The singular low point was the passing of Jan's father just four months before his 100th birthday.

We started the year at midnight on New Year's Eve, sipping champagne at the back of our property with friends from church, watching fireworks on the beach. From this happy time, came a plan to holiday together in Northern Queensland at Bargara, on the coast out from Bundaberg in mid year.

Richard and Cherie and Larissa and Marcus were due furlough this year and commenced by visiting Cherie's parents in Hong Kong. Following this, they arrived in Christchurch a couple of weeks before Easter, and picked up a Campervan.



We linked up with them after driving down from Auckland, and we spent some time together with Paul who is still working in Christchurch. They toured around while we drove to Invercargill to stay with Lyndell where they eventually joined us. Jan and I flew home while Richard and Cherie continued touring the South Island, concluding with the Warbirds over Wanaka Airshow at Easter. They eventually came to us in Warkworth in early May.

As part of the final requirements for his Air Transport Pilots Licence (ATPL), Richard needed to accumulate 100 hours of night flying. This couldn't be done in PNG where there are no navigation aids, so he did this based from Ardmore airfield, south of Auckland. He and Reg did several long stints of flying in the dark around the North Island between Rotorua and Whangarei until just before dawn – an unusual father-and-son activity, but on some clear moonlit nights, very attractive – and Reg got to do some of the driving! They flew home to Goroka in PNG in May, and are now stationed close to the Indonesian border in the highlands at Telefomin where there are absolutely no electronic communications – something we find hard.

Our present plans are to visit in 2005, and have "A PNG Christmas in March".

In July, we spent a couple of weeks in northern Queensland, part of which was with the three couples from church where one of the common links was a warped sense of humour. We have never laughed so much so often for so long.



While we were away, we received a call from Jan's older brother to say their father had gone into hospital 'for tests' but everyone was assuring us there was no need to come home early, and the test results were due after we returned. A few hours before we were scheduled to fly home from Brisbane, we received the shattering news that Dad had passed away – we missed seeing him by a mere 12 hours – a source of great distress. Despite missing his 100 birthday by four months, his service was a wonderful triumph and testimony to decades of faithful quiet service to his Lord. When Jan and Reg saw him in his casket, he had a contented smirk on his face that he had at last achieved his greatest life objective. The common theme of those who paid tribute, was that he was a "Christian Gentleman". Lyndell and Paul came home for this special occasion

Although August is usually wet and cold, it was fine and warm on a Sunday afternoon when some of the young people from the church were baptized in our (hot) spa pool. The 100 or so attendees fully occupied the house and cottage, and the road outside looked like a car mart.

Reg spent several hours on conference calls from home to USA in October as part of a team negotiating with a large American telecommunication company for the USA company to purchase a minority share in the software company which is part of the Comworth Group. As a result of their involvement, Reg and Jan went to USA in November to attend the USA company's North American conference (4000 representatives in just the North American division alone). We spent a week before the conference touring the National Parks of Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon and Zion. Altogether breathtaking, and each quite unique. The size, scale and timeless nature of these magnificent natural features, causes an individual to feel totally insignificant in God's scheme of things.



Bryce Canyon

Previously when Reg has attended conferences in Las Vegas at this time, the weather has been hot and dry. On this occasion, Las Vegas was under water when we arrived, and while the weather all around was wet and cold as we traveled, we were fortunate in having perfect weather everywhere we went, including a delightful snow fall in Bryce Canyon. Pity we weren't better dressed for it!



Despite a reluctance to return to the dazzle of Las Vegas lights, Jan soon sorted out how the 'Strip' worked, and in the evenings took Reg to her discoveries of the day. We concluded our trip with a quick visit to San Diego, and a short walk into Tijuana in Mexico - a strange contrast with absolutely no security or officialdom at the border compared to the overbearing and highly frustrating security and personal body searching involved in flying in and around USA..

While we were away, a disturbing email from PNG reported Richard being held up by gun and knifepoint in broad daylight while walking in Mt Hagen. They took everything that he had except the clothes he stood up in, including his prescription glasses,. Police activity in investigating was zero, but it is generally believed locals know who did it, and there is some hope that peer pressure amongst the locals and the high standing of MAF staff in the community, will eventually see the return of at least the glasses. I always said the most dangerous part of flying, was the walk or drive, to or from the airport.



Lyndell has completed her year in Invercargill and is moving to warmer Nelson in the new year. Paul continues to commute from Christchurch to his 100acre property for three day weekends on the West Coast. He is now on his fourth Subaru – the previous ones all expiring in interesting and unusual ways – the latest in a confrontation with a wandering cow in the middle of the night. (Cows – nil, Subaru - ½)



We continue with our usual activities – Jan with embroidery, gardening club and organising morning teas at the church for new lady arrivals. Reg composes correspondence from the seat of the ride-on lawnmower, sorts legal issues for the church and friends, and invests much time as Chairman of the church Board of Managers. Now that he has reached 'OAP' (Old Age Pensioner) status, there will be more changes next year as he reduces his time at Comworth still further. Perhaps more time to develop the family website (www.west.co.nz) where future newsletters and photos can be published.)

This letter was commenced on the day of the 100th anniversary of Jan's father's birthday. It's completion was delayed by a computer meltdown. If this arrives after Christmas, our apologies because our thought for Christmas was to share that in a single gift, God gave everything He had so that we would have everything we need.

May Jesus be the joy of your Christmas celebration – even if the message is late.

Love from

Jan and Reg

at the Hoover Dam >>>>>



