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MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

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Dear

We have taken the opportunity of having this annual general letter taken overseas by friends of ours, Peter Stevens is off to Frankfurt (Germany) for the Culinary Olympics and he is taking our Continental letters, and Trevor Frost is off to Brighton in England to a wedding of one of his relations, so he has taken our U.K. letters. I am now looking for someone who is planning a trip to the U.S. and also to India to take the others. So, we now wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year. May peace reign throughout the world.

This general letter saves a lot of time, aches from writers cramp and mental exhaustion. Keeping in contact with friends throughout the world is terrific and looking forward to the time when we can meet again, maybe in Australia.

Our winter this year was quite mild, didn't see much sun but now that we are in our Spring season the blossom has been beautiful and the trees are springing back to life in all their greenery.

Firstly, our children have all been on the go, as most are, so we will itemise a little of what they have been up to. Lets start with our eldest son John Jnr. (30) and his wife Merrilyn and, all of one year old on 29th September, our lovely Grand Daughter "Danielle" who is running her little legs off. We had a party for her at John's home and what a time she had. She has so many toys, a large Teddy Bear arrived from my mother in Western Australia, it was bigger than she is. John and Merrilyn are still hard working at running the Reception Rooms, it's a game where relatives and friends have to be most understanding of the demand on their social life. Consequently we do not have too much time together unless we attend a function there, which is always a good night. Excellent food and a good band, we went there on the 10th September and danced our legs off.

Suzanne (28) and husband Ross, who are also hard workers are fit and well. Sue is still a Sales Representative for Union Carbide. They have been married for three years, they were married in the Church inside the grounds of Porchester Castle near Portsmouth in England in September 1985. Ross feels this could be his year, with an enterprising streak he has gone out into business on his own. He has worked in the carpet industry over the past three years, so with his charm and personality he should do well - we wish him luck. With us at the wedding in England in 1985 were our two youngest children, Jeanette who was chief bridesmaid and Robert who drove the bridesmaids to the Church.

Ross and Sue have rented out their lovely cosy home in Glen Waverley here in Melbourne and bought another which is on a large block 60' x 200'. They are thinking eventually of building units. They both have done a wonderful job in renovating this house in Boronia. Its amazing what a little "Tender Love and Care" can do.

Jeanette (26) arrived home on the 1st June, after working in the Caribbean in the Duty Free Shops on Passenger Ships. She has worked in these shops on the Q.E. 11, 'Black Watch' around the Canary Island and Spain and on 'Festivale' and 'Jubilee' sailing out of Miami. She decided she has had enough and after signing off flew to London and up to Glasgow in Scotland for six weeks. On the way home she stayed in Hong Kong for four days where she mixed sightseeing and shopping. A friend of hers from the Caribbean days is staying with us for a while. He is a Scotsman and has migrated to Australia. Jeanette has gone back to her job as a computer/word processing operator with the State Government, not as glamorous after her three years of seeing the world. Because of the State elections she has been working from 7.30 a.m. to 7.30 p.m. six days a week, she earns good money but says she will need a holiday after it. She leaves on 14th October for Honolulu. It is cheaper to go there than holiday in Australia. \$749 return, of course her accommodation in Honolulu is extra.

She is having three weeks there, with one week being spent on the cruise liner "Monterey" travelling around the Hawaiian Islands. Its great she has seen so much before thinking of getting married - maybe this is her last big trip.

Robert (23) turns 24 on the 26th October and will probably be in Boston or New York, so I guess he will celebrate his birthday with friends. He is our youngest and came home from Europe in July 1987, after the continent. On his return he got a job immediately with "Kraft" foods as a maintenance fitter and worked six days a week to save money. He has always said he wanted to go to America and on the 3rd June 1988 he flew off with Continental Airlines. He said, "See you in March 1989 Mum". He has been having a wonderful time due to the hospitality of so many friends. How can we thank them all for what they have done for Robert. He has been introduced to the sons, daughters, friends and relations of the people we know and from them he says "Dad - the Yanks and the Canadians are very friendly and they love the Aussies and my Australian Accent. What memories he will have for the rest of his life of this wonderful trip.

He has had contacts in nearly every place he has visited. I know more about America now than I ever did, but I can tell you it took some time in working out his trip - I am sure he appreciates it. "God Bless America" I couldn't mention all the people who have been so great to him, so if your name is not in print in this letter don't be offended - as you are all in our thoughts.

His first week away was spent in Honolulu where he stayed at the Waikiki Village, right on the beach. He toured the Island, visited Pearl Harbour and the "Arizona", Polynesian Centre, Diamond Head, Waimea Falls, went sailing out past Diamond Head, etc. Pam McCarthy's aunt lives in Honolulu, Shiela Shinkler, and she kindly took Robert for dinner twice.

In Vancouver he was met by Sheryl and Alex Kwai, whom we met in Pompei (Italy). They showed him the sights, Grouse Mountain, Lynn Canyon, Capilano, Cypress Mountain Bowl, Queen Elizabeth Gardens and visiting their relatives and friends. He visited other contacts there before spending a day on Vancouver Island at Victoria which he said was great. From Vancouver he went for a fifteen hour bus trip to Calgary where he was looked after by the Vaney's, (ex Bombay ties). He went to the top of the Calgary Tower and the ski jumps that was used for the Olympics, he also took a tour to Banff and Lake Louise, the scenery breath taking.

Then by plane from Calgary to San Francisco and was well looked after by Chris and Doreen Brown who have five sons, Robert met four of them and Tim the youngest was on a weeks vacation and took Robert to every major sight and Night Club in San Francisco, he loved his time with the Browns. He saw the Golden Gate Bridge and Park, had a Bay cruise, visited China Town, Fishermens Wharf, Pier 39, Alcatraz, Cliff House, Lombard St. Sausilto etc.

A five hour bus trip took him to Reno and then on to Carson City where the Nickersons met him. Gary and Barbara were in Australia last year and stayed a few days with us. Robert and their son David got on well together, visiting Lake Tahoe, a Night Club in Reno etc. They also extended a wonderful invitation to Robert to spend a week with them and the family on a 50 foot house boat on Lake Powell in Utah for the last week in July.

Robert wanted to go to Yosemite National Park for two days but he enjoyed it so much there he stayed for ten days. He said what a highlight it was seeing Half Dome, El Capitan, Glacier Point, Bridal Veil Falls was all very spectacular. He and three others rafted down the Merced River for two days and camped in the Sunnyside walk for \$2 a night, cooking on camp fires.

He was exhausted when he was picked up at the bus station in west Hollywood by Gracie Lerno, a school friend of Joans, who she hasn't seen for over thirty years. Joan and Pam McCarthy were in Los Angeles in 1984 and didn't know then that Gracie lived there. Gracie and Joan were great pals at Cathedral School in Bombay in their teens, as most know Joan lived in Bombay for 18 years. Her father, who was English, died in India in 1973 and it was very emotional when we visited his grave in Bhopal, Central India in 1985, Joan last saw her father in 1956.

The sights in Los Angeles are too numerous to mention. Robert stayed with the Donohoo's in Orange County, visited the Queen Mary at Long Beach on which I travelled from New York to Southampton many years ago. He visited a relation of Joans in Laguna Beach, Shirley De Burgh, who took him to San Juan Capistrano. He said the San Diego Zoo is certainly the best he has ever been to, but while there, he was taken by a friend to Tijuana, just over the border in Mexico, left his baggage in the car while they went sight seeing and on returning found the car had been broken into and his baggage gone. This upset him very much, it was reported to the San Diego police but was never recovered. He replaced the bare essentials in Los Angeles and is now very conscious that he must keep his baggage in a very safe place.

From Los Angeles he travelled to Bullfrog on Lake Powell in Utah via Las Vegas and then went on to spend a night and a day at the Zion National Park. He said his week on the house boat, travelling the full length of the lake was fantastic. (What a week) loved the water skiing, swimming, company etc.

After the week, he travelled with Sandy and Lou, via Monument Valley to the Grand Canyon. What a marvelous place and to top it off he took a fifty minute excursion by plane for fifty dollars, flying over this wonder, said he even piloted the plane at one stage and got a certificate to prove it.

Sandy and Lou dropped him in Flagstaff where he caught a bus to Denver and was looked after there by Al and Betty Corollo, also John and Dawn Nicholson. One day was spent in the American Rocky Mountains with them, another at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. As the distance to Kansas City was long he decided to fly for \$129 which wasn't much more than the bus, spent four days in Kansas City, then a bus to St. Louis where he stayed with the Wilhelmi Family. Jeanette, our daughter worked with Maria Wilhelmi on the Ship in the Caribbean. Robert said everyone was wonderful to him in St. Louis and he had a lot of fun.

Bus again to Memphis, booked into a hotel for \$30 for the night and the next day had a tour through Elvis Presley's home, "Graceland". The Sawyers looked after him in Nashville, we had a great night with them in Florence (Italy) in 1985. On that night Del made a drink called S.O.B. (Son of a bitch) I was not happy with one, had to have another and the next day my head ached all day. Joan will never forgive me because we were supposed to go and see the statue of "David" that day and we didn't and so we missed out on that. I will never forget Del Sawyer. Robert was picked up by Vince and Chris Kenny at the Sawyer's and taken for a tour of the Jack Daniels Whisky distillery at Lynchburg in Tennessee. From there he went to Knoxville, Clyde (Twiss family), my wife was a Twiss, to Ashville and on to Sparta to the Thadanis. They have four young children, Robert enjoyed his stay in Sparta, they took him to a place called Winston - Salem. †

So you can see that he has been getting off the beaten track to most tourists, he said the mountains of North Carolina are very spectacular. A 12 hour bus trip brought him to Cleveland then he was off to Toledo, Chicago, Detroit, London (Ontario) where he is staying with the Smiths for a few days then a week in Toronto with friends of Pam McCarthy. In Boston he is staying with the Grabowskis, a cousin of Pams. Stan and Audrey and their two children, Rachelle and Mark, stayed with us here in Melbourne for a week in January 1987.

I hope this travelogue hasn't bored you too much, but I thought you may all be interested in Robert's travels.

After Boston he is having a week in New York then on to Philadelphia then a week in Washington before travelling down the east coast to Jacksonville to stay with a cousin of a friend of mine. He plans a month in Florida, to the oldest town in the U.S., St. Augustine, on to Weirsdale (another Twiss family) Orlando, Cap Canaveral, Tampa and Miami. He wants to visit the Everglades and the Florida Keys.

In February of this year Joan and I took off with our van and travelled overnight on the Ship "Abel Tasman" to the Island of Tasmania. Joan has always wanted to go there, I was there in 1950.

We docked at Davenport, travelled to Burnie and Stanley then down the rugged west coast to a place called Strachan, we camped there for two nights and took a full day river cruise down the Franklin River, well into the wilderness, the only access is by boat. The area is heavily wooded with Huon Pine and it was in this area that the first convicts were shipped to, from England in the early eighteen hundreds. Living conditions must have been terrible, we saw headstones of people who died from 1 year old up to their mid twenties. The trip down to Hobart through Lake St. Clair was lovely. Hobart nestled on the side of Mt. Wellington is a lovely place and we thoroughly enjoyed our stay there.

Another convict settlement where we camped for a few nights was Port Arthur. The ruins of the convict settlement are well preserved and this was most interesting. These poor human beings were sent by ship in those early years from England for stealing a loaf of bread or some such crime.

"They were confined there for the term of their natural life".

We camped at various places along the east coast, Orford, St. Helens and back up in the north of the Island, eventually arrived in Launceston where we spent three days. In all we had three weeks in Tasmania. I had an unfortunate accident at Port Arthur, dislocated my shoulder and was strapped up at the Hobart Hospital and after returning to Melbourne spent three months visiting the physiotherapist, they said it will never heal completely but I am reasonably fit again.

We had planned to go to Brisbane for Expo but didn't go. Expo finishes at the end of October, Joan has to have two small operations, the first is for a ganglion on her wrist. She has a local anaesthetic for that and soon after has to have an operation for the cartilage on her left knee. For this one they have to put her out for a while after which she has to have a couple of weeks recuperation.

How wonderful to see the U.S. Space rocket "Discovery" blast off successfully. Today on the news they said they are returning to earth tomorrow. N.A.S.A. must be very happy after they experienced that awful disaster on "Challenger" in 1986 but to think of the cost, if all the money spent on these projects throughout the world was directed to solving the hunger and problems on this planet it would certainly go a long way.

There has certainly been some fatalities in the world in 1988, the airline crashes at Dallas and Hong Kong, the disaster of the plane crashing into the crowd at Ramstein in West Germany, the riots in Burma, Chile and Korea. Shooting down of the passenger liner in the Persian Gulf, floods in India, train crashes in England and France - oh for the peaceful life.

The Olympic Games from South Korea were excellent. The Russians and East Germans certainly took off the medals. The South Koreans put on a good show, the final closing scenes were excellent.

The U.S. Open tennis from Flushing Meadows was well telecast also. One thing about space satellites, we get all the world news and events as they happen. In Australia at present the Election of President of the U.S. is getting a lot of media attention.

Our love to you all, please do write when ever you have a spare moment as we would love to hear from you. Again we wish you a happy 1989, God bless and warm wishes from your Aussie friends in "Crocodile Dundee" country.

as ever
John & Joan Croft
and family