

Christmas 2002

Dear Family and Friends,

December 2002

Tim is flying to Sydney on December 15th to spend Christmas with family and to represent us in Brisbane at the wedding of our niece, Anna Hooper. His imminent departure is good motivation for me to finish our 2002 greetings in time for him to post them in Australia.

Paul's year did not get off to a great start. He struggled through two months of severe pain caused by ruptured discs in his neck until a successful surgery in April saved us all from the trauma of it all! In September he started a landscaping project at the side of our garage. I found it rather puzzling, especially as the scale of the project grew from small to rather large. Finally the mystery was solved with the arrival on site of a hot tub. Bliss!

Family travels this year included a Spring Break week in the Florida Keys. It was a very relaxing time with perfect weather. We thoroughly appreciated the opportunity to escape the dull, gray, cold March days of Indiana.

In July, David and I traveled to Australia. The first week we spent holidaying with family at beautiful South West Rocks. During the week I enjoyed a wonderful reunion with three of my dearest friends, Kim, Bibi and Robbie...and yes, we talked a bit. Next we flew with my dad to Samoa for ten days. I had not been back to the island of my birth since the age of four so to say that this was a nostalgic visit hardly begins to cover the experience. We stayed at legendary Aggie Grey's Hotel and explored the main island of Upolu with extended family members including Michelle (my niece) and her husband Greg. They have just returned to Australia after serving as missionary teachers in the Methodist High School for eighteen months. The highlight of the week was the Fiafia ("Happy, Happy": concert) at Aggie's. I found it very moving.

David, dad and I also flew to Savaii and spent twenty-four hours circumnavigating the island in a very questionable vehicle. There are not too many cars available for hire on Savaii so we wondered just how many times this jalopy had made it around the island, and how many times the Samoan coconut thrower at the blow-holes had posed next to it for photos?

In many of the Psalms King David praises God for the wonders of creation and in *Romans 1:20* the Apostle Paul testifies that; "...since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made..." I can't help wondering how much greater their exultations might have been if they had visited Samoa, God's paradise in the Pacific Ocean. What a blessing!

Upon our return to Australia we visited my brother Warren in Canberra for a couple of days. He is the Chief Executive Officer of The National Australia Day Council and his offices are located in the Old Parliament House. We also drove down the south coast to Narooma for a quick visit. I had not been back since Paul and I honeymooned there in 1976. I spent my first three years of school at Narooma during my dad's appointment as the Methodist Minister and our family subsequently returned many times for our annual holidays. The coastal drive returning to Sydney is beautiful. David patiently endured many reminiscences stirred by the various locations and proved to be an exceptionally amiable travel companion.

Another highlight of our trip was a climb at dusk on the Sydney Harbour Bridge...a highly (no pun intended) recommended adventure. We were on the climb the very day a migrating pod of southern right whales frolicked beneath it.

Our final family trip of the year was over the Thanksgiving weekend when we visited Bruce, Kay and Matt Hooper in Carbondale, Illinois. We feasted upon traditional American dishes, including turkey, cranberries, cornbread, pumpkin pie etc but the occasion was definitely imbued with a uniquely Australian flavor! On Friday Bruce was our tour director as we criss-crossed the Mississippi and the Ohio Rivers into Kentucky, Missouri and back into Illinois...all in the space of five minutes. We enjoyed a windy lunch, (not meant to be a commentary about the food consumed...really!) in a park where the three states and two rivers meet. It is a very picturesque part of the U.S.A.

Our Fall was very busy with Alissa and David both having great High School soccer seasons. Of course, Alissa's last game as a senior was very sad...but she has accepted that it is time for her to move on. She is looking forward to graduating next June and is currently working on plans for college. Tim will graduate from Purdue in May 2004. He has no idea about what to pursue as a career. I'm sure he would welcome suggestions!

While the created order brilliantly testifies to God's "*eternal power and divine nature*" it is Jesus who best displays "*His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*" (*John 1:14*). Jesus made God's face visible, His character tangible, His compassion accessible, His rescue possible, His creation valuable, and His purposes unmistakable. The angels expressed it best when they sang; "*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.*" (*Luke 2:14*)

And so we pray that this letter finds all of you, our dear friends and family, in fine health physically, emotionally and spiritually. We are also looking forward to catching up with all your news over the next few weeks. Please visit our Family Photo Gallery at www.cyto.purdue.edu/JPR
Sincerely, Sue, Paul, Tim, Alissa and David Robinson