

126 Bultje St
DUBBO 2830

6th December, 1991

Phyl & Ross.

Dear Family & Friends,

We think this is the 27th annual Gleeson letter, so anyone who has a complete set has the basis for a great soapie; we warn you that we hold the copyright and Lucy would probably like to get her big break by being the star. It's good to be here presenting the 28th, with lots of highs and lows in another action packed episode.

The aforementioned Lucy is currently in Europe, on a major drama excursion to a youth Drama Festival in Vienna. Also of course to Paris, London and Stratford on Avon before flying home via Singapore. Drama has dominated her last year at school, and she's applied for all the Drama schools, but is mindful that they like people to be a bit older so she'll probably find something to do in Canberra in '92. She and Jen will both be home for Christmas so we can hear all about the trip first hand.

The only one of the cast not to make it home this year for Christmas will be Margie, who will be attending Don's sister's 21st birthday party. To compensate, Marg and Rebecca made a lightning visit to Dubbo in October for a couple of days. It was lovely to see them; Marg is utterly exhausted by the demands of a restaurant in recession and drought-stricken Albury, but resigned to the fact that they probably won't sell for a while yet. Rebecca is a bright and sweet-natured little girl, with an expanding vocabulary.

The purpose of Marg's visit, and another by Michael at the same time, was to check up on Bill, who had had a fall and subsequently spent a few days in hospital. He's now walking with a stick, and confining his activities to some reading and cricket-watching, with an occasional exercise session in the pool at Lourdes Hospital. Gwynn has added all the Gardening, Driving and Financial Management to her already impressive list of accomplishments. She's taken up Aquarobics so that she can be fit for all the above, and really enjoys her weekly workout. In her spare time, she is researching a story she wants to write about her grandmother, Charlotte Whitten, taking a load of wool from Lowestoft, near Wallabadah, to Maitland by bullock dray. We believe that she travelled with the youngest of her 13 children. Any Whitten historians out there who can offer more information?

Our other storyteller, Lib, has had the great news recently that she has won a major Australia Council Grant for 1992. This will mean that she can spend more time writing and less seeking speaking and lecturing engagements, although she will come to Dubbo for the School of Distance Education in April. She has two picture books due for release in February, and there's another in the pipeline. "Dodger" has done very well, winning the Children's Peace Literature Award for 1991. Lib has also been very involved in the fight for 'Nutcote', a battle which appears to have been won.

Euan had a couple of interesting trips this year. One to Central Australia, where he worked on the Aboriginal settlement at Utopia for three weeks, the other to New Zealand to visit his parents, Rona and Norm, in September. He took the girls; a great adventure for them, particularly their first experience of snow. They enjoyed meeting with their New Zealand family again, especially Jessie, who hasn't been there since she was a baby. They had an exciting return home; the plane had to turn around half way across the Tasman and go back to New Zealand, an exercise guaranteed to traumatise Lib and Gwynn who are not known for their confidence in aeroplanes.

Jill and Paul are going off overseas in April, to the United States for a five week holiday, inspired by a visit this year from American friends whom they first met in Perugia in 1977. This will be a short break in their busy routine of work, School and National Trust affairs. Next year they will have Brendan doing the HSC, so Paul's mother Kath will be out to keep house in their absence. Brendan has had a full year back at Dubbo High. He was one of the stars of the Combined High Schools' musical "Godspell", and has recently rediscovered cricket after a four year break, playing Indoor and Davidson Shield for the school and scoring 73 last Saturday in the local 2nd Grade. Patrick did as well as we all thought he would in the HSC and was Dux of the School. He's had a wonderful

first year at A.N.U. where he is doing Arts/Law and living in Burgmann College.

In Lucy's absence, Jen has been catching up on reading and sleep, both of which suffered in the build-up to Lucy's departure. Jen has not had a good year with her osteo-arthritis, and is beginning to think that a knee replacement may be the best solution, although she is considered young for the operation. She's had a very literary year, attending lots of literary functions and meeting such luminaries of Australian writing as Tom Keneally, David Foster, Tim Winton and Drusilla Modjeska. She loved listening to David Marr at lunch talking about the writing of Patrick White's biography, and Tim Bowden at dinner in Bowral. She also chaired the ACT Committee of the Australian Feminist Book Fortnight. Tuggeranong Town Centre library is now the third busiest in the ACT, and is certainly the most beautifully situated. Visitors are always given Jen's guided tour.

John succumbed to the family disease this year and bought a restaurant. Jill and Paul and Margie and Don can't believe it! It's actually a very successful little coffee shop/restaurant in downtown Canberra called Dante, and it's continuing to hum along despite the R-word. Maybe it doesn't matter in Canberra. He and Judy both left their jobs at Network Solutions with no regrets, and have restructured things enough to give themselves time for the other things they love. They managed a few quick trips to the snow, John is in training again for the Triathlon season and Judy is still finding time to do her pottery. They're even talking about other premises in Civic which would give them more room to move next year; the rest of us are just speechless with admiration.

Those of you who are ABC watchers will have seen almost as much of Michael this year as we have, although he and Cathy will be here for a few days at Christmas before they fly off for a short holiday in Thailand. They didn't buy the house we talked of last year, and are back on the trail again after a few months when they decided they couldn't bear to look any more. Both are working out of Parliament House, and leading pretty hectic lives although Mike manages to play social cricket and touch football and the odd game of tennis. He had the scoop of the year when he secured the only interview given by Neil Pickard before he went off to London, and yes, he did use his Dubbo connection to get it. (And yes, Mr Pickard was *not* amused, although those of you ex-Dubbo teachers who remember him probably will be, as we were.)

Bill's health has precluded much travelling this year, although we went to the Annual Bindyi Club Ex-Students' lunch in Sydney and the Gleesons got together at Kincomber early in the year. The Whittens met for the Quirindi Primary School Centenary in March. Sadly, Gwynn's beloved sister, Connie died soon after this, and we returned to Quirindi for her funeral. We also lost Bill's brother-in-law Fred at the beginning of the year, and three great friends from our days at Young, Os Davis, Jack Bond and Jack Dillon. The death of Bernie Donahue, our friend and colleague from Glen Innes, who had suffered from Parkinson's Disease for some time, was another blow. We have such happy memories of our association with Bernie and his wife, Elva.

Visitors have helped to make up for our lack of mobility. It was particularly good to see Ken and Jan Reynolds, and Jan's mother, Megan, visiting from Wales, as the Reynolds' are returning to live in England in 1992. Also lovely to welcome Bill's nieces Judy and Jann and their families, Bill's sister Una, and Gwynn's brother-in-law, Jim Smith, on the last leg of a marathon trip around most of the country. And Auntie Joan made a lightning visit to deliver the Christmas pudding in person.

Lots of ex-teachers and students of Dubbo High have signalled their intentions to be here for the 75th Birthday Celebrations in October, and we expect that to be a highlight of the coming year. As always, we look forward to seeing any of you if you are passing through. (And last year's warning to knock and ring loudly to make yourself heard still holds. Apologies to Digger and Jo Martin who tried and were unsuccessful - please try again next time!)

We send our warmest wishes to all for a safe and happy holiday season.

*Rene
Bell & Gwynn
Phyl thanks for your letter re
Grandma's doings. I wrote
to Aditi re: received an interesting
letter from the Research officer
(Mrs Stewart) who lives on Darwin's prop*

*Michael was still coming to Dubbo High when
however when he discovered the little boy had grown
info & was after an when new before he left for London.*

*Margie
still
plans
holiday
at 56
in
records.*

*Euan
went
with
learn
from
library
to check
the
health
of the
at Arguing*

I'll photocopy it & send it
on after Christmas.

I know you will enjoy
Christmas - with some
family & your friends.

all for now.

Much love Esmer.

P.S. Beryl had an awful fall several
months ago. Her daughter lives on an
Araldo farm near Mullumbimby
& Beryl stepped off the Verandah
on to what she thought was
a step (it was a shadow)
& fell 3' on to a rockery!! need el
pay more. Nothing broke - just
bruising. went back to Queensland
packed in pillows. el's only now
feeling well.

85 Bankambilla