

126 Bultje St
DUBBO 2830

8 December 1995

Dear family and friends *Phyl & Ross.*

I seem to have had a busy year travelling with a big trip to the States to see Michael and his family and lots of smaller ones - to Canberra, Lismore, Sydney, Taree and Quirindi. The highlight was the six weeks in America in April/May. I travelled with Kathleen McCann, Paul's mother, whose daughter Lorraine also lives in Washington, D.C.

Michael, Sophie, James and I spent four days in New York doing the tourist things - the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building (ground floor only!), Saks Fifth Avenue (Soph and I had facials), *Miss Saigon* on Broadway and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. After New York, I went off to Amish country (Pennsylvania) with Ken and Ann McKinnon (ex-Dubbo) where we stayed at a Mennonite farm. We drove on to Gettysburg and walked over the great battlefield, then to historic Harper's Ferry at the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers. Harper's Ferry is where John Brown (of the famous song) was shot.

Back to the Gleasons in Washington, and we all took off for a few days in Charlestown, South Carolina, a city of beautiful civic buildings, untouched since the 17th century.

The piece de resistance of the whole visit was the 81st White House Correspondents' Dinner at the Washington Hilton. Bill and Hillary Clinton were guests of honour and the evening was done with great style. There were 4,000 people (Rupert was there, too!) and the food and entertainment were excellent. We sat with well-known American correspondent, Connie Hawn. I met Newt Gingrich, then just beginning his run for the Presidency, and then Mike, Soph and I were invited to accompany Connie as she tried to get closer to the President. I really didn't think they'd succeed - there were Security men everywhere - so I didn't follow, but once in front of the official party she was able to present them to him. They were ecstatic and I kicked myself!

Getting to know James was a delight. He's a happy bright little boy with a good sense of rhythm. I sang read to him and enjoyed being there as he began to talk.

On a sadder note, the year began with the death of Jim Rickwood, one of our dearest friends from early days in Dubbo. We all went to Canberra for the service and comforted Janet, who is almost like one of the family.

We were back in Canberra for the major milestone birthday of the year, which was Jen's 50th, which we celebrated with a party at the Canberra Labor Club for about 60 friends and relations. It was lovely to see some of Jen's old Glen Innes friends and Kerry Edwards and her husband, Rudi, out from Canada. Jill and Lucy made the speeches, I made the cake and the family's present was a magnificent floor-to-ceiling bookcase constructed in her Booker Bay home (and already overflowing).

Lucy has completed her second year at the Ensemble Theatre Drama School and is as enthusiastic about it as ever. She still works part-time at the Bay St Patisserie in Randwick and shares a flat in the inner city with an old friend from her Canberra days.

As I wrote last year we were preparing for John & Judy's wedding shortly before Christmas. It was a lovely happy occasion with lots of family and old school and university friends as well as new ones. They are now the proud parents of Amanda Gwynneth, born on October 6th - I drove down to join Judy's parents in welcoming her.

She has the Gleeson baby trademark of lots of hair, but apart from that seems to look like her mother. We're all looking forward to getting to know her better when they come for Christmas.

Lib and Euan and the girls will be here, too, taking time out from some major house renovations which have been in full swing since November. It has been no mean feat to fit them in - Euan has been overseas four times this year (he managed to catch up with Michael twice in Washington), and Lib is busy as ever with her writing and speaking commitments. "The Princess and the Perfect Dish" was launched in July at Luna Park and I was so pleased that among the family and friends present was the author Amy Witting, whom we knew 50 years ago as Joan Fraser, a teaching colleague at Young High School.

The Tovey girls are delightful - Amy has had her first year at Leichhardt High School - and they are all singers and swimmers and computer whizzes. They're looking forward to all the cousins at Christmas, especially with a new baby to play with.

Margie and Don will be here with Rebecca and Alex. This year Marg has had three days a week teaching at Murray High and has wound down her catering business, although Jill has plans to recall her for a project she has in mind. The children are lovely - Rebecca plays piano and loves performing; Alex has a wonderful vocabulary and can sing all of "Danny Boy" - Bill would have been impressed.

Jill's project involves using her super new kitchen as a venue for cooking classes. She and Paul had been talking about this extension for a couple of years, and now it's complete it looks like something out of Vogue Living and she's very excited about picking up some of the threads of her old cooking life without the burden of a restaurant. Both the boys have had trips to Majorca. Patrick spent most of the year there and has come home with a clearer sense of purpose, intending to re-enrol in Psychology and Philosophy at ANU. Brendan has just gone off for the Uni vacation, after a successful first year at Southern Cross University in Lismore where he is studying Contemporary Music.

I had a lovely return to Quirindi in September for the 60th Anniversary of Quirindi High School. Dorothy Riches (Elsley) came with me and Joan and Bill drove from Taree. It was good to see Pearl Tanner, Elsie Taylor, cousins Beryl and Fred and teacher Kelsey Snowdon.

It was a big thrill recently to return to Dubbo High School for the dedication of the "Gleeson Room", a newly refurbished and relocated Staff Common Room. (The "Old Lab" of the 1960s). The new Principal, Jim Carey is very conscious of the school's traditions and his wife Liz is an ex-student from a long line of ex-students.

I also lost Julius, "Michaels dog" who had lived with us since we acquired him from Mike's Latin teacher, Marj, in 1980. He was a loveable creature but lately he'd become old and crotchety and needed constant medication. I do miss him.

Next year, I plan to do some more University of the Third Age classes (I did some of Jill's Local History ones in Term 2), stay fit (I'm in one of Jill's aquarobic classes), do some more guiding for the National Trust at Dundullimal, continue to be involved in Probus, maybe travel somewhere within Australia, entertain visitors to Dubbo (all welcome) and keep up with all the kids and grandchildren.

I'd love to see any of you who are coming this way. Have a safe and happy Christmas and my best wishes for the New Year.

Do read her "change in me" lighting you would enjoy it.

all the family will be home except the USA connection Sophie's mother & Asher are going over.

*at the club on 21st Jan - during Festival of Ianney
Jill Jen & I have booked for it.*

The dog died on the Thurs & J & J's baby was born the next day so I went from grief to joy in 24 hrs!!

*Manis has been in a private hosp at Kogarah & family have been worried then one of her doctors suggested taking her off her medication & trying something else & she went home a few days later!!
enjoyed visiting you both! much love*