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Dear family and friends

Phyll & Ross & family

The year began with much excitement when Michael and Sophie and James came home from Washington after three years and then went back again - to Channel 7 and Los Angeles where Mike is head of the North American bureau. Recently I went to visit them in their home in the hills above the city - it was lovely to meet my new grandson Billy, who is placid and good. I was there for Thanksgiving so Sophie, Billy and I went to James' pre-school to see him, dressed as a pilgrim, help welcome the Indians to the meal!!! Soph cooked us all a beautiful Thanksgiving dinner the next day.

In February Lucinda graduated from the Ensemble Theatre Acting Studios. She was the best in her year and it was obvious from Hayes Gordon's congratulations as he presented her certificate that he agreed with her family that she was wonderful. Since then she's had some TV work, some theatre work at the Ensemble and appeared in a short film - we hope that 1998 sees the big break. Only 14 students graduated from an original intake of 35 so we know it was tough and we're all very proud of her.

In July I drove to Albury to have a week with Margie and Don. Rebecca was a guest Recorder player at a Conservatorium concert, then Don and I went along to the Eisteddfod to hear her the following week. She played very confidently and won 4 medals. She's also a swimmer and this summer she's in a theatre production at the Swimming Pool dancing in and out of the water. Not to be outdone, Alex is fast gaining water confidence too.

En route from Albury to Canberra I went to Young and sat out the front of our old house in Thornhill St and remembered good times - then on to John and Judy and Amanda and their visiting Japanese exchange student, Yumiko who cooked us Japanese food and showered me with presents. Amanda (2 in October) is a chatterbox who loves the Wiggles and Bananas in Pyjamas. John and Judy are flat out with their training business although concerned about the general depression in Canberra.

Marg joined John, Judy, Amanda, Libby, Euan, Jo, Jessica and Jenny in Canberra for the planting of the hands on the lawns of Parliament House - both Lib and Jen have been very involved in Reconciliation groups and the Native Title debate. They, with Jessica who is friends with one of his granddaughters, felt privileged to be part of Nugget Coombes Memorial service last month.

Jenny is still having physio and hydrotherapy but is back at work after 16 months. Towards the end of that time she was able to do some consultation work for Parramatta Library so eased herself back into the work force and back onto her round of literary events - the highlights this year were Bob Ellis, Robert Hughes and Gore Vidal.

In August I went to Sydney to mind the Tovey girls while Lib and Euan flew to Adelaide

James had a Pilgrim costume she looked like a miniature Steven Spielberg when he returned & I tried for the first & kept left out also of the party. He took me back to school & declared he wanted to be an inventor.

for the Children's Book Awards - Lib was the winner in the Book of the Year for Junior Readers with "Hannah Plus One". Since then she has won the prestigious Lady Cutler Award for Distinguished Service to Children's Literature in NSW. She and Euan both had overseas trips this year - Lib to Denmark for a conference on Public Lending Right (she flew into London on the day of Princess Diana's funeral but didn't see Mike who was busy covering the event for Channel 7) and Euan to Mexico and Sweden for his research project.

Then back to Sydney in November for Jessica's big moment - the State finals of the Multi-Cultural Perspectives Public Speaking Competition held at the Powerhouse Museum. She spoke with great poise and confidence and was runner-up in the Year 3/4 division - a terrific achievement. Amy, finishing Year 9 at Leichhardt High and Jo (Year 7 at St George Girls) are equally talented and interesting people.

A thrill for us all this year when my nephew Peter Davidson (son of my sister Joan and husband Bill) was the successful architect for the new Federation Square project in Melbourne. Peter is an old boy of Taree primary and High schools so the town also celebrated - he has been living in London for many years so it will be good to see something of him now that he has relocated to supervise the building.

Jill and Paul have had their usual busy time this year and are currently celebrating with Brendan the end of his degree. They travelled to Lismore in November for his last concert and were delighted with the professionalism of his performance and with his tribute to his Granny, Kathleen with whom he has lived for the last three years. He has been invited to join the teaching staff at Southern Cross University in 1998. Patrick has a couple of years to go in his combined B.A/B.Sc at ANU and is working hard and doing well - it will be good to have them both here for Christmas - the "big kids" (the boys and Lucy) are much loved and admired by all the others.

Paul was a big help when I recently experienced what seems almost like the obligatory break-in. I awoke to a light at the back of the house and confronted a young man who was clearly as shocked to see me as I was to see him. Fortunately he did a bunk rather than stay around to argue - I was lucky to suffer only a broken window^{lock} and a lost video^{machine}. Needless to say I now have increased security and a sad awareness of how much the world has changed. *I'll tell you about the break in when I see you no great drama really.*

Despite this it's been a great year. Dubbo High celebrated its 80th birthday in June and it was lovely to see old friends from the days when Bill was Principal - Eddie and Anne Powter, Ken Murray and lots of the children's old friends. Janet and I didn't do the Indian Pacific - perhaps in 1998 - but I went to the United States and travelled all over NSW. I saw all my children and grandchildren and lots of dear friends. I am in good health and looking forward to having the whole family here over the Christmas period; I am very fortunate.

PS - Anne Ingram presented Libby with the Lady Cutler award and mentioned that they were both descendants from a great Irish family - Anne being a granddaughter of Anne Whitten (Rowland) & Lib being a great granddaughter of Anthony. Quite a unique occasion really.
Thanks for your long letter Phyll. I'm glad you're gradually looking like a hospital washing for customers. They are mostly coming Xmas Eve Mike & Co on Boxing Day, all gay.
Heard love to all gay.