

2018 Gregor Christmas Greetings

Last week I was watching Breakfast TV and the topic of Christmas Letters was discussed. The millennial presenters said:

“Who sends those? What are those? Oh yes, I remember, they are old school. With social media who needs to send them and who reads them?”

Well if you are reading this then you must be old like me. Because apparently if it's not in short text no one under the age of 40 will care.

I write these every year and had done so for the past 38 years, because it is a documentation of our life and when I am really old I will ask one of my future grand children to read them all back to me so I can go down memory lane.

In January we went to Italy to the Dolomites for Theo's ski meeting. What made that trip special was afterwards we specially went to Cambridge, England to see my Aunty Ruby. She had had a nasty fall and at 94 things were looking grim. Ruby was a theatre nurse and growing up she had a huge positive influence on my life and me being a theatre nurse. Happily she has made a great recovery and is about to have a big family Christmas with her daughters and grandchildren, you can't keep a good Scot down. I also had a memorable reunion with dear nursing friends from my Greys training days. Lynn, Leechie and Cathy and although we are all dressed in pink its unintended. Just great minds think alike even after 43 years.

In March Theo and I had our respective retirement parties. Although we had retired from our hospitals at the end of last year, we opted to have one later as Christmas is such a busy time. Theo's was a formal dinner at Hamilton Gardens and mine also a formal dinner at Zealong Estate. They were both wonderful evenings. Both of us felt really special and really appreciate the effort made by the organisers. They are funny things to attend because it's rather like going to your own wake. Everyone says nice things about you and say how much they are going to miss you. Maybe its like an Irish wake where everyone is really lying. Both of us choose to think that everyone was being truthful and feel warm fuzzies about it.

End of April we went to South Africa for a “Remembrance Cycle for Andrew Booyesen” Andrew was killed in a car accident 30 years ago. His brother Pietie organised a mountain bike ride. The ride was in the Eastern Cape from Cathcart to Hogsback, and Katberg via the Mitchells Pass. At the top of the pass was huge sign saying DO NOT GO DOWN THIS PASS UNLESS IN A SERIOUS FOUR WHEEL DRIVE. That said it all. The road was unbelievable but by African standards sort of acceptable.

Pietie had done an amazing job borrowing all the bikes and organising the whole trip. Not all bikes were equal and unfortunately Theo hit a rock and fractured his collarbone on the shoulder joint side. Luckily we were travelling with our own orthopaedic surgeon, our son Reinie who said it was not necessary to make a 200km emergency dash to the hospital. His shoulder was strapped, wounds scrubbed, Tramadol given and lots of whiskey toasts to his good health and the injury did not look so bad.

When he did have X-Rays done. Reinie sent them to the surgeon in Hamilton who recommended that Theo come back to New Zealand, as there was a 6-week window of being able to operate. The only problem was we still had another 5 weeks of holiday. So we compromised and went to Trennery's with Pietie, Jenny and the Hilgers. Then up to Sibon at Ingwelala with Avril and Gavin Walsh. Theo was very brave because there was lots of getting in and out of Land Rovers and tough terrain. But a good stiff Gin and tonic and painkillers have great healing properties. Despite the injury we had such fun at Ingwelala. The Diffords joined us and I have to say that Avril and Gavin are the very best of hosts and friends.

We returned early to NZ. Theo was immediately seen by the surgeon but decided not to go with surgery, which has now worked out to be the best decision. Theo is still doing his private practice but moved his theatre list to another small private hospital. After working incredibly long hours for the 6 months prior to retiring, I was so exhausted that I decided to take this year off. I bought a new sewing machine and have done a project with Fiona, read, stared into space and generally enjoyed not having any responsibilities.

Fiona and Tony sold their apartment and bought a house with a big garden. Reinie and Kath bought their first home, which unfortunately they will have to leave at the end of next year, when Reinie gets sent to a new hospital somewhere in NZ. In the meantime they love the Hawkes Bay area, which is very reminiscent of Stellenbosch.

Kelly now works for the government in the Commission for Financial Capabilities. They are rolling out a financial literacy program for school children and Kelly is in charge of the communication between the schools and various departments. She also started a small company called Luna. Luna is now aligned with Oui an organic company. She has the most amazing website and lots of followers on Facebook and Instagram. It is early days but it is gaining traction. Here is holding thumbs.

So 2018 is coming to a close. We are all in good health. On reflection I am struck by one overwhelming fact and that is the following:

Throughout the year I have had dealings with young people who have had to face unbearable challenges. All of them have risen to the challenge and faced them with humility, courage and bravery. I am in awe of them. I think about them all the time and I am inspired and humbled by them.

This year's poem is dedicated to them. It is excerpts from the Poem "A wing and Prayer" by Michelle Butler.

**Peace is said to be offered on the wings of a dove,
Prayers can bring peace along with hope, faith and love.**

**Go fight and win this battle you didn't start.
On the wings of an angel and prayers from my heart.**

Wherever you are and whatever you believe. The Gregor family wish you and your loved ones blessed holidays and that 2019 will bring you peace, health and joy.