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W

ould you believe – that tiresome pandemic still has some life in it. After 200 days free of “no new cases” in Canberra, it’s here again. But with “close to 100% double-vaxxed”, our lockdown has again been lifted, and retail therapy is raging again … long may freedom prevail!

O

h dear – another successive year with no new grandchild births – I must stop expecting to announce new bambini each Christmas. The short story is that our immediate families are all doing OK, despite the ravages of lockdown, lost opportunities, home schooling, and having seen the death of a number of our friends and acquaintances this year.

K

**aren and Wade, Jack and Zoe** are enjoying life at Berkeley Vale. Cattle-dog **Patchy** has matured into a loved and lively accompaniment to the family. We’re told that cattle-dogs can live up to 15 years – That would be until Jack turns 22!

Nana and Pa have exploited windows of opportunity between Covid-19 lockdowns, to slip through and visit the family. Our Sunday evenings Skype meetings are a better-than-nothing substitute for in-person visits. We look forward to the family visiting Canberra after Christmas, then Nana and Pa to mind children at their home while Mum and Dad are back at work.

**Karen** has landed a beaut job in “onboarding” new staff for the Central Coast Health, which includes two hospitals and eight community health centres. She enjoys the work ethos and working conditions there, in contrast with her previous private-sector work. The job is consistent with her qualifications and experience, and with good prospects. A sad aspect of her work is placing new health workers to replace several hundred who have been dismissed because they refuse to be vaccinated.

Karen has completed some remarkable wild-country social runs around Kosciusko, Blue Mountains and Royal National Park, drawing on her remarkable fitness derived from local running around the lakes where she lives. Don’t tell anyone … Karen has started twice-weekly kick-boxing classes, and has developed some special skills. Should be handy when it’s “time to kick ass” in her team at work! And it’s one way to maintain the respect of your kids.

**Wade** still works as Executive Chef in a nursing home, keeping residents and staff going. Pandemics, storm, tempest and aged care royal commissions come and go, but people still need to eat, and all within a very limited budget! Wade’s elite golfing aspirations have been somewhat curtailed by the focus on family activities and home-improvement projects. He has developed special skills in home-schooling the family during the various pandemic lock-downs.

**Zoe** (turning 7 on 31 December) has completed Grade-1, appreciating the social value of being back at school after periods of home-schooling. Zoe is into swimming and dancing. She’s demonstrated her Karate moves for us over Skype – pretty impressive!

**Jack** (9) is moving ahead at school, in swimming (when permitted) and Karate, where he is now proud to take a leadership role with the “little kids”. He enjoys the company of his friends both in-person and on-line.

A

**drian and Alycia** have been in their straw-bale house at Phillip Island for ten years now – What a milestone! We have clear memories of receiving the coveted Certificate of Occupancy, having spent so many months of chainsaw, carving knife work and clay in the construction. And then five weeks later the birth of Lily!

Alycia teaches Humanities at high school, and Adrian teaches Horticulture at TAFE on and around the Island.



**Lily** turned 10 last month. She survived the lockdowns and home schooling, doing well at school, piano and recreational activities. Her big camping trip with Dad, and getting started with Scouts should bring some interesting challenges!

**Rohan** (5), vigorous, sociable and articulate, relating well to his older and younger sisters and a Ninja fan. Can’t wait to start at school next year. With a new cubby house, and abundant gardening opportunities, he’ll have plenty to do over the holidays.

**Iona** (3), enjoys swimming and communing with mates. She’s an enthusiastic helper, a budding horticulturist, and a competent camper.

**Nana and Pa** were delighted see the families and attend Lily’s No. 10 birthday in November, in a brief window of opportunity with the concurrence of three Premiers, to slip through and avoid stranding in a Wodonga refugee camp for Canberra residents unable to get home 😪 This serendipitous timing allowed us to share in the 100th birthday party of our friend Ted Holmes – something we would not expect to experience often!

*<- A few of us went for a walk in the forest!*



C

**hris and Claire** have continued development of their Millwood Estate in the Upper Yarra area near Melbourne. Their “back paddock” accommodates five alpacas, three horses and a host of recreational and entrepreneurial activities .

Successive Covid-19 lockdowns and vaccination requirements have been a dreadful impediment to their events and entertainment business, and the future is far from clear. Despite this, they’ve produced some wonderful training workshops and video products over the last year, with high hopes for better times.

Their dome construction business has yielded some remarkable outcomes, which we follow with interest. Renting their house at Warburton was an interesting exercise – the AirBnB phenomenon has certainly developed in the last few years!



**Eloura (10)** has completed her fourth grade at the Little Yarra Steiner School, and periods of home schooling during the difficult periods of lockdown. She is a delight to be with, a blessing for her family, school and friends.

**Jasmin (almost 8)** has benefitted greatly from school life, even in its fractured form over these last couple of years. I wonder where her acrobatic and performance skills come from?

**Orlando (4)** is really expressing himself now as an individual. He loves participating with family in live performances and video productions.

**Indira (2)** loves the lively environment of her highly social family, and is coming on with her speech and mobility. But sadly, she has missed out on much of the social contact afforded only by groups of her peers. We’re certainly looking forward to an improved “post-lockdown” quality of life now.



*(In this picture, one of us was having difficulty joining the family, and needed a separate chair)*

J

**eanne** has been “keeping the show on the road” relief-teaching at Harrison School, filling-in for teachers who have been sent into quarantine or unwilling to subject themselves to the virological rigors of the classroom and playground. Not so nice working all day in a mask.  
Having mastered the dark art of texting, and driven by a compulsion to share important messages and pictures with friends, Jeanne has become something of a “texting demon”.

Canberra now requires checking-in via the prescribed mobile phone app, and we are (mostly willingly) accepting ever more deprivations of personal liberty in favour of personal and public safety!

Jeanne has embraced courses including Jungian Psychology and Art Therapy in “on-line”, which now seems the way of the world. We’ve adapted our Jung Society meetings to share by Zoom with remote participants, and arranged for remote speakers to come into our meetings “on the big screen”. This has been rather successful, as we’ve engaged a global audience and included people confined at home during lockdowns or for personal caution. As President of the Canberra Jung Society, Jeanne has expended our social network and maintained the Jung Soc. activities on schedule through these last years. She enjoys staging joyful suppers for the Jung Soc meetings, and morning teas such as for church baptisms and the “Welcome Back” at our first in-house church service after a long absence.

We celebrated Jeanne’s birthday in October, but won’t say how old she is 😈

R

**obert** remans engaged in foreign affairs, social and church activities, social justice enterprises and links with “interesting” people. Our “Environment, Meditation and Healing Garden” is now ten years old, under the auspices of the Canberra Interfaith Forum. We continue to develop the site, and conduct interfaith gatherings there. We featured in the Canberra Times when Jewel Beetles were discovered in our Bursaria bushes! We regard lawn-mowing, watering, weeding and spreading mulch there as a meditation and chance to meet extraordinary people.   
Perhaps Robert’s greatest achievements was the construction of possum houses, luring the little darlings out of our garage into their new homes, and making the garage possum-proof.

As with the Jung Society meetings, our General Semantics seminars have engaged people interstate and overseas in a way not possible when we met only in-house.

No more Covid variants, thanks – We’re happy to wait for the next 100-year pandemic, free of lockdowns!

*(A plumper, link-infested version of this self-indulgent note is available on our website)*

Wishing you a wonderful Christmas,  
and a most healthy and happy New Year 2022!

Shalom, from Jeanne and Robert James  
and our extended family.