

BRAITHWAITE'S IN OZ

.....as told by Julie.....

The year started with a bang on New Year's Eve. THE only place in the world to be was on Sydney Harbour (pardon us if we are a little one-eyed about this) and we had ringside seats at the Waterfront Restaurant directly opposite the Opera House. These had been booked a year in advance, so we and 8 friends enjoyed the fireworks in comfort – we didn't have to join the 1,000,000+ people in the streets of Sydney. The fireworks were spectacular, the food superb and the wine free flowing – needless to say a great night was had by all.

In mid-January Jeremy's mother passed away and he had a rush trip back to England. The weather was bitterly cold, especially as he had come from our summer heat.

In late March our sister-in-law (my brother's wife) was killed in a car accident in the Blue Mountains. This really rocked our entire family and it took many months until a semblance of normality returned. This Christmas season will be particularly hard for my brother and we will all rally around to help ease his burden.

In April/May we had a trip to England together to see Jeremy's father. Dad was in excellent spirits and we had a most enjoyable visit. We caught up with Jeremy's brother Chris and his wife, Wendy, in Dorset, had a great few days in Cornwall and spent a couple of weeks enjoying the generous hospitality of Jeremy's cousin Anthony and his wife Jane in Northumberland (within short driving distance of where Jeremy's Dad is).

Back home and Jeremy started a new job. He is now working for a French-based company called Equant. The potential opportunities are enormous and he is enjoying the new challenges being presented (almost on a daily basis!!). He is now travelling frequently throughout Asia, which he very much enjoys (except for the delicacies of Hong Kong where chicken and duck dishes were served with head....YUK).

The Olympics were another highlight of the year. We were fortunate enough to have tickets for the Opening Ceremony. Without doubt, I believe this was the most spectacular and exciting event we will ever enjoy. The vibrancy, colour, energy, music etc etc etc were beyond our expectations and we came away feeling proud to be Australian.

Jeremy was in Malaysia for the Closing Ceremony, so I took myself down to Kiribilli (along with 50,000 others) to watch the closing ceremony fireworks, which were centred on the Harbour Bridge. These were absolutely brilliant and I thoroughly enjoyed them.



On a general front....

The house fixing is almost complete. It's been an intense year trying to get the house in ship shape and the garden under control. The front garden was so overgrown that we only tackled about ½ a square metre a weekend – if we looked at the whole we would have become depressed. We had the clearing finished in time to plant camellias and azaleas in early spring and, having had such a wet late spring, these have all shot and are looking healthy. We got some landscapers in to build paths and garden beds (I had laboured under the misapprehension that we could manage...thank goodness common sense prevailed as it took over ½ a day on a jackhammer to break up some hidden concrete and 3 big burly guys another ½ day to clear it way). It's all coming along nicely and in a couple of years it will be transformed.

On a car racing front, Jeremy competed in the Formula Ford NSW State Series. He had a good year (even if his pit crew was sometimes a little grumpy) and finished 6th in the state. He is quite pleased with this because the majority of competitors are 30 years younger and 30 kilos lighter than 'the old bloke'.

The high/low light of the racing calendar was Bathurst. While the driver loves the track and also likes racing in wet weather...THE PIT CREW HATES IT. I have never been in such mud and spent 4 days sloshing through mud up to the top of my Wellington boots. The final straw was when the local council dropped some gravel into the mud so the cars could get to the dummy grid. Jeremy backed out of the tent, into the gravel/mud and promptly sank to the axle!! Steve (our mechanic) and I had to push the car out of the mud, the back wheels spun up mud so we were both splattered and then Jeremy took off...unfortunately, the radiator intakes filled up with gravel and this had to be cleaned out before he could race. Guess who's hand were the only one's small enough to remove the gravel??? As I was on my hands and knees in the pouring rain, splattered with mud with my hand shoved up the intake I looked at Jeremy (sitting dryly under an umbrella and smiling sweetly) and informed him that this was going to cost him THE best dinner he's ever bought me....

After 23 years I've taken the plunge and bought a new car – a red Honda S2000 (a 2-seater convertible sports car) and the faithful Datty (Datsun 240Z) found a new home. The S2000 (known as Little Red [as in little red riding hood.... convertible...get it?]) is an absolute joy to drive and I'm enjoying whizzing around the place.

Otherwise, we are both enjoying good health and living life to the full.

As always, keep smiling.