

7 Ronan Road,
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12 December 1986

Dear Richard, Renee & the girls (Pussycat's Kittens)

If your Christmas card is late this year, it is my fault! Despite several months of nagging by Cheryl it has taken this long for me to get to the task of "doing the letter". The nagging has intensified from monthly to weekly to daily and I fear we are headed for hourly so have succumbed.

If indeed, as you read this, it is 1987 I hope that you enjoyed a wonderful Christmas and will have a very happy and peaceful New Year.

It has been a very hectic year in the Austin household, beginning with the news in February of an impending addition to the family and with the resultant August anguish, more of which later. The year has been a difficult one in South Africa with the state of emergency and all that goes with it but like last year, the year appears finished almost before it has begun. It is hard to remember all the events but lets try a chronological approach and see what that comes up with.

As I have mentioned Cheryl, announced her pregnancy in February with a due date of 25 August. The timing was interesting as I had just agreed to go in as Cabinet Secretary/Treasurer of the Lions District for the 1986/87 year which begins in July. I may have mentioned in last years letter that I was going to be a Deputy Distict Governor in the Lions, but due to a late crisis I was asked to take on this job which is a very time-consuming and demanding one. Cheryl and I discussed at length whether I should still go ahead and decided that I should. One of the major factors in the decision was that the first Cabinet meeting which I had to get involved in was August 9th and the Council meeting (a more senior gathering) was on the 16th. This was some 10 days before the birth and would be over by the time Cheryl was confined.

And so we attended the Lions convention in Johannesburg in May and had a months holiday at the same time, which really was very relaxing. We began our holiday at the Wild Coast Casino in Transkei at an IBM convention - Wow do they know how to enjoy themselves. After the convention in Johannesburg we spent

another pleasant week with Cheryl's brother. I took over the Lions reins in July and on 25th July Cheryl dropped her second bombshell for the year by announcing that her gynaecologist had committed her to hospital immediately due to a complication (Placenta Praevia for the technically competent). She went in and left me with a charming but thoroughly scheming 3 1/2-year old Ryan to contend with.

The following 3 weeks would have made good Keystone Cops material as we blundered our way through feeding, dressing and transporting Ryan and his colleagues through the daily, - apparently simple - routine of breakfast, dress for school, take to school, collect from kind "Auntie" in afternoon, dinner, prepare for visit to hospital, endure yet another visit to hospital, back home to read story and finally despatch to bed, grab sole beer for the day and watch some dreadful programme on the box before crashing to restore the strength to continue.

Ryan had what I guess could be called a "freestyle" life, choosing his own clothes and diet - to the horror of Cheryl and anybody else who was in the ward at the time he was gleefully telling all. Fortunately all turned out well and Lauren Elliott was delivered on 11 August. The birth was difficult and her collar-bone was broken but she has recovered fully and is growing at a tremendous rate. Ryan thinks she is wonderful and delights in being allowed to give her the bottle and other chores.

Quite naturally Laurens arrival has overshadowed most other events of the year and that makes it difficult to recall them. Work-wise I am still with Sage Computing and have one more year to go to get my gold watch (15 years!) and although 1986 was a tough year the coming year look as if it will be a very exciting one for us. We predict good growth and increased profitability and I am now increasing the staff at last.

Cheryl continues with her part time jobs, having taken a couple of months off for Laurens birth and has succeeded in losing some incredible amount of weight through "Weighless". Next year, Ryan starts at Pre-Primary school having just turned 4 - he really is growing up very fast.

I have now run out of things to say except to wish you again a most happy and peaceful year and a renewed invitation to come and see us as soon as you can.....

It was super getting that phone call from you last Saturday, Richard. Oh how talking to you brings back memories of P.E. We all seem to be so far afield these days. Give the girls a kiss for us - how big they must be now with Natalie going to High School!

All our love,

Toy, Cheryl + Family
x x x x