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Dear

I must be getting soft in my old age as it took far less nagging this year to get me to pen the annual letter (of course, it may also have been the threat of air mail postage on the overseas cards!).

It is the end of the Eighties and the beginning of the last decade of the century - kinda spooky eh. You know you're getting old when you keep saying "Remember when...." and that does seem to keep happening more and more. Cheryl and I went to a Sixties party earlier this year and that was a real adventure in the past - we even danced madly again but didn't recover quite so well the next day. We have been in Durban for just over 9 years now and seemed to have put down roots at last (I hate saying that because I'll probably have to explain next year why that didn't happen). The lifestyle here is particularly comfortable and the children have established themselves well.

The year has been a relatively uneventful one and not a great deal has changed, but there is still time yet and as you will see much could change in the next few weeks.

Cheryl has continued to grow her business and now has a very good base of clients who keep her fairly occupied. Her major ones are now ~~two~~ ³ timeshare marketing reps for whom she acts as personal assistant. The timeshare industry is growing rapidly in South Africa and there are many splendid resorts available in the different areas. Her other major client is the accountant who has also started to use some of my services in the computerisation of his clients. Cheryl's earnings are now twice what she was earning as a part-time worker and are about to become a tax problem so we will have to buy another asset or something to ward off the revenue man.

My own position has not changed much up to the last few weeks and the branch has had a very good year with one of its best growth rates ever. However a few weeks back we acquired a new Chief Executive who has fairly firm ideas on what we should be doing and how and we are again going through a major restructuring. This time it could impact on my own position and I expect to take a decision on that before end of November. You'll just have to wait until next year to find out. Other than that my Lions activities continue unabated- I am still the Treasurer and have also gotten involved with the Lions Sight Foundation and had a fleeting association with the Lions-Quest Skills for Adolescence programme.

The children are growing up fast. Ryan is at the end of his first year at Junior Primary school and has made outstanding progress particularly with maths and reading. He completed the reading syllabus some weeks ago and has since been on to Class 2 reading. He enjoys it and reads very well indeed. I am amazed at how fast they learn - there must be something to this new method of teaching. Ryan writes a weekly news page for his school work and we have now become accustomed to being featured in it and are a little more careful about our behaviour. Only this week he reported Cheryl's visit to the Chippendales (the male strip group) and the fact that her friend got a kiss from one of them. The article was circulated around the teachers (he even drew a picture of the kiss). Up till now I have never been for press censorship but... Lauren is in the midst of the frantic threes and is driving us round the bend. Hopefully it is just a phase and she will emerge as a normal child of 4. She is at playschool and goes to Pre-Primary from next year. She is very independent and very loud (probably the shrillest scream you'll ever hear) and regularly thumps her brother, with an occasional bite to ensure that he understands the laws of the jungle.

South Africa is going through a major change as you have probably read in your local press. There is no clear indication of the ultimate destination and in true political fashion anything could still happen. There does appear to be a less restrictive outlook on the part of those in power but there is now increasing concern about violence emanating from the hardliner right wing. We expect more radical changes in the months ahead. The economy is in a slump but we are told that it is because we had good times when we shouldn't (strange we seemed to have missed that joy). Interest rates are now at 21% and predicted to rise to 22% soon. The light at the end of the tunnel is the possible international softening of attitude with consequent investment in the country and all the good things that would bring.

The real note of sadness during the year was the passing away of my father just a week after I penned the last letter. He had become progressively ill with emphysema, but then fell and broke his pelvis. His body was simply not able to handle the crisis and he died on 11 December. Mum has recovered incredibly well and is making a new life for herself, having decided to stay on in the house.

It is one of those grey wet and miserable days today (naturally because it is weekend - yesterday was like midsummer) and perhaps that accounts for the sombre tone of this letter. Or perhaps nothing really exciting or challenging has happened and we have had a typical suburban lifestyle for the last twelve months. Methinks much excitement is around the corner so watch this space next year.

And so it is time to wish you a very happy and peaceful festive season and to hope that the next decade rings in only the best for you. At least we have our annual letters to look forward to and perhaps I can talk Cheryl into doing next years.