

Hi there

This is the late 1996 Christmas letter - in fact it is in danger of becoming the early 1997 letter and won't get to you before Christmas (according to she who must be obeyed) and I shall have to sustain myself on your collective sighs of relief and beams of happiness as you finally get it and realise Christmas is again normal and complete. But I waste valuable space with these inanities. So to the business of the year

This has been the year of change - Cheryl says I say that every year but as you will see many aspects did change this year - fortunately most were positive. In fact I shall simply ignore the negatives and save some space (as it is if you get the aerogramme version of this you may get two).

The children have both had good years. Ryan started at his new school with some trepidation and had a shaky start but got into the swing of it by second term and now thoroughly enjoys it. He has progressed well academically but could probably do more with a bit more effort - and will have to get his head down more conscientiously as he moves up the grades. He has taken up rowing as a sport. For those not familiar with the sport it involves getting 5 or so kids to drive a canoe-type object along a stretch of water which can be clearly identified by the groups of soggy parents standing in the mud on the side yelling encouragement or abuse. Rowing can only be done when it is raining and it also has to start at 07:00 in the morning on a Saturday otherwise there is a danger that the parents might get used to being at home at weekends. It is the first sport that Ryan has really enjoyed so we are giving every support. During winter he is playing hockey which is far less taxing on the parents. The school is very computer-literate and Ryan now has his own laptop (Pentium yet!) which he takes in from time to time. Next year they will start using them formally for exercises and will e-mail them to their teachers who will e-mail back the results. He has teamed up with a good bunch of boys and enjoys their company.

Lauren missed being top of her class by 1 point out of 700 which was disappointing for her. She has done very well in all her subjects and now does equally well with academic and creative subjects. Of course, Ryan and I insist it is because she has him to learn from! She has done a couple of ads this year and earned some solid cash for her bank account. She is busy in a play at the local shopping centre on Saturdays for a few weeks and has then informed us she will cut her hair. We are desperately trying to get her into the Collegiate at Ryans school and at last it is looking positive.

Cheryl has had a very busy year. Her new partnership has grown dramatically although the timeshare rental is still the core business. They now take on contract work for RCI (timeshare managers) and also have grown the secretarial practice. They now employ a full-time secretary as well as part timers every now and then and are coming close to having to take a decision about further growth but are working very hard right now. At the moment it is still home-based with an office at our house with three people in it and her partner at her house. She has had to cope with all the growth as well as manage the household and all this while I swanned off around the world half the year. Perhaps next year will be a year for consolidation. Cheryl has also been an active Lion and became Secretary of our club but has learned that I was actually quite a tolerant President (?) and has not enjoyed it quite so much.

And so to the area of greatest change. I started the year as Nat Sales and Mktg Mgr for SA for Documentation Associates. I took over international co-ordination of marketing from Jan (as I think I mentioned in last years letter) and as a result had to visit each of our global operations. This included a visit to Houston in Feb, Brisbane in May and London in June with side visits to Melbourne, Sydney and Vienna tagged on to those trips. By end of April we had marketing representation in all countries so I hosted the first Intl Mktg Mtg in Vienna as a part of my trip to London. In August we changed our name to DA Consulting Group and I led that change from a marketing perspective from South Africa, including logo designs and image changes etc. It was really exciting and very, very busy. In addition to these activities we opened branches in Durban and Pretoria and I had the task of selling the initial projects into those territories and opening the offices etc. It was a really exhausting time but exciting as well as I had a fairly free hand and equally free budget!

With a view to going for a listing on NASDAQ in 1997 several management changes were made at senior level and the MD of SA was promoted to President of Europe, Middle East and Africa based in London and I was offered the position of VP for Africa and Middle East. I naturally jumped at that and took over on 1 Sept. I hopped over to Houston for another marketing meeting in Sept as I still have the Intl Mktg role until sometime in 1997, and then went back again in December for my first VP meeting. So my life has been incredibly exciting and very rewarding (and the money helps as well!) and I now have the job of taking us from a R13-m 90-strong company to R25-m 170 strong in the next twelve months. I guess there will be a few challenges along the way!

I have really enjoyed the opportunity to visit the various countries but will be pleased to have the pace slow a little next year. Along with the local travelling I was away from home most weeks. Our plans next year include a holiday for the family to US in August and as I have a VP meeting in Cambridge,

UK in June Cheryl may join me for that. During my visit to Brisbane I was really thrilled to be able to have dinner with very good friends, Richard and Renee Pobitzer and their daughter Natalie. It was as though we had only been apart for a few weeks.

South Africa continues to suffer from high crime levels and insufficient overseas investment. The life is still good if you lead a low-risk life as we do but there is always the chance that you could be the next unsuspecting victim of a violent crime. Inflation has not been too rampant (at somewhere around 10% official but 20% practical) and it should be possible to stay for a few more years while we see what happens. One of the factors affecting our long term stay will be the decision of Ryan and Lauren regarding University - they are likely to go overseas and we may relocate then. In the meantime we have a great life and count ourselves amongst the fortunate to be able to still enjoy this country.

I guess the only sad note for us during the year was the loss of a very dear friend Hilton (Hilly) Kay who died of a very sudden and unexpected heart attack.

*All our love
to - Cheryl, Ryan & Holly.*

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Insluitings word nie toegelaat nie
Enclosures are not permitted

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Verseel eers die twee sykklappe, dan hierdie een

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FROM/VAN
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Second fold - Tweede vou

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