

Dear Friends

With one deep breath to take us into 2009 the holidays have started and we are having a lovely time at home: rainy days in front of the fireplace, watching the entire 'Band of Brothers' at night... Last December Niels and I flew out to South Africa and our yearly update remained unwritten - so we indeed have a lot of catching up to do. Since 2007 Niels has upgraded from Sophomore to Senior status at UC Berkeley, Dieter has advanced from Junior to High School graduate and entered College, and Pierre-Henri started High School in August. Pierre has moved from Verisign and BitTorrent to Arcot and beyond - so only I have been fairly 'in situ' at Stanford, though also changing to a fulltime position and projects closer to my field of interest.

2008 was very much focused on Dieter's senior year, SAT exams, college applications, prom and graduation - and the very intense schedule of his Main Street Singers which not only fitted in 46 performances in December alone, but also had a 3 week European tour with Director Mark Shaull in April, performing in Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, France and Holland. Various of their performances can be watched on YouTube - look for Los Altos MSS. AP exams were followed by the senior prom (including the stretched limo and after-party in Santa Cruz!), and then it was time for graduation of the class of 2008: a festive cape and gown event with fitting celebration afterwards at Yoshi's in San Francisco. Summer Dieter spent as lab assistant at Stanford Med School, and much too soon it was time to pack up for college. Dieter's choice fell on UC San Diego, 900km away, where he is studying Econ and Math. It was hard not to shed some tears seeing him off - and great to have him back for Christmas!

Niels had another year in typical high gear at Cal: his 2007 summer internship at Yahoo was followed by ongoing research at Yahoo Research labs close to Berkeley campus. He also continued his Astronomy research with the Filippenko group at Lick Observatory, and was elected as Industrial Relations Officer for the Engineering Honors Society. Apart from his Electronic Engineering majors he is required to take various subjects from the School of Sciences, after being elected to graduate with an honors degree next June. After mind-splitting decisions for his 2008 summer internship, Pixar picked him - and we delightedly joined the group for their pre-show of Wall-E in the Animation Studios' theatre. Niels further took the group of interns camping in Yosemite's Bridalveil wilderness area. Pierre-Henri and I joined in for a breathtaking week-end of waterfalls, boulders, sunrises and campfires. For his senior (final) year he has taken up a research position in the Computer Graphics group of prof James O'Brien, and was also chosen for a TA (Teaching Assistant) position in CG. He found that he actually loves lecturing on top of his research, which was good motivation to enroll for a PhD in CG next year. Applications had to be in by mid December, preceded by the GRE's in November (required entry exams for all grad students). So finals were met with great relief last week - and we are all anxious to know where he will pitch his PhD tent next year! Of course he would love to be close to snowboarding slopes - or at least space for more skydiving!

Pierre-Henri has changed most in the last year, growing at least an inch per month! Taller than his mom he is a promising clarinet player, under guidance of an inspiring young Russian clarinetist, Roman Fukshansky, himself playing with both San Francisco and Berkeley Symphonies. Pierre-Henri is still a keen swimmer, and plans to join his High school swim team in the next season. He loves Science and entered another award-winning Expo project - and loves to speak his mind at Socratic seminars and in argumentative essays. His peaceful nature (his brothers may differ...) is counteracted by active involvement in 'airsoft' shooting tournaments with friends in the Los Altos Hills and Santa Cruz mountains.

Now for the Dad: Pierre had some tumultuous career times at Verisign after 'Mergers and Acquisitions' took over the excellent team that he was building up since 2005, and the channels he managed to develop to China. His following position at BitTorrent soon had all warning lights flashing, which led to him to move on to a Directors position at Arcot Systems. The recent recession-turned-depression however hit the financial sector hardest, with his group directly in the line of fire of the Venture Capitalists. He is now proceeding with his own business plan and will pursue this in the near future. Close encounters with predators and scavengers in the Silicon Valley business arena was indeed an eye-opener. Networking with partners and friends, and his involvement with ACG (Association for Corporate Growth) strengthened his ties in the VC and start-up world, and keeps him inspired for the future.

And finally myself: after 2 years at Stanford Medical School I am managing the SEM core at CSIF, and building ties with various groups from engineering and biological sciences, often involving biomaterials and nanotechnology. I have a small group of students and private companies that I consult, teach, train and guide in their electron microscopy needs - and was delighted to become more involved in a biofilm group at Microbiology where my heart still lies, and also be part of some recent publications and presentations. The ongoing challenge for intellectual involvement is paying off, and I frequently think of my dad's advice, quoting the words of Anton Rupert: 'first be Adaptable, and then become Indispensable'. I may just be getting there...

This year we were again treated by delightful visits from various friends. Summer brought the Weimers from Wisconsin, this time including TJ, Tate and Sharon, so we were all very happy to reconnect - the first time since Stellenbosch 2004! Bernard and Ria Prior's visits have become a yearly highlight, always bringing fond memories of home, and intriguing plans for the future. At Thanksgiving we were again overwhelmed by the hospitality of Herman and Mari Hugo, sharing turkey, gammon, wine and friends. Mandhi's visit from Switzerland also introduced us to her fiancé Paul - on their way to setting up a guesthouse in France, where we hope to visit them soon. We even welcomed 4 babies into our new circle of friends - the joys of late-starters! We were very happy to welcome old SA friends in the US: Pierre already visited the Loubsters in their new home in Detroit, and we hope to see the Johnsons soon in Florida. I entered a new decade in October, and was treated by a surprise party by my family, and a most amazing gift from Niels: a Z3 to make me feel really special - and 'stay forever young'...

Then of course, we experienced our first presidential election in the USA. Though just a few months away from citizenship we could not vote yet - that did not prevent Pierre from recruiting other voters, and persuading swing-voters by telephone. Our interest in Proposition 8, banning same-sex marriage, had more personal involvement with the recent marriage of our friend Edward, and the new friends we met in San Francisco.

We found time for only two ski trips (our favorite activity!): Badger Pass was great, and the ski slopes at Heavenly an absolute highlight. We plan to spend a few days at Kirkwood next week.

Many thanks for your emails and newsletters, the sharing of good and hard times, and the ongoing 'keeping in touch'. We miss you all, and keep you in our hearts and in our thoughts.

We hope you have a wonderful Christmas season, and Joy and Peace in 2009!

With much love
The Jouberts



