

Colli Chronicles

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Another year older...

Yes, it was the big four-zero this year for Marco and Julia. Luckily I have my Palm PDA to supplement my brain and remind me of everything we've done.

Holiday time

Long, long ago, in January 2003, we travelled 5 hours north of Sydney to South West Rocks, near Kempsey, for our annual holiday. We rented a (very basic) unit, not far from the beach. Luckily, despite the fact we were planning to self-cater, the only cooking pot they provided was a 6" saucepan, so we had to eat out every night. As you can imagine, Julia was devastated by this.



The place has a very interesting history, and one of the landmarks is the ruins of a prison built specifically to house prisoners building a sea-wall (which was never finished, because it kept getting washed away by the surf). The prison is a ruin because the government sold the lead roof-tiles and all the iron-work to raise money after WWII. During the war, the prison was used to house German internees, and SW Rocks still has a strong German influence in the area.

Everyone in Oz is aware that you can't go anywhere without bumping into someone you know, so it wasn't entirely unexpected to be sitting on the beach and re-

alising the family next to us was another Samuel Gilbert family; or when we spotted one of the teachers in the local shops. Alexander's behaviour improved enormously at that point!

SW Rocks is on an enclosed bay, so there was a calm beach as well as a surf beach. The children had great fun with their boogie boards (which they received for Christmas.). The kids usually prefer the calm water, but this time even Francesca ventured into the rough waves!



Back to School

Francesca was in Year 6 this year; her final year in primary school. Our baby's growing up!

The year started with band camp, held over 2 days, not far from home. 120 children playing musical instruments, games, quizzes, horse riding, etc - you have to admire the teachers!

This was followed by the Year 6 trip to Canberra for four days as part of their Government studies this year. Again, we're not sure who came back more tired - the kids or the teachers!

What with basketball, band, vocal ensemble, debating, enrichment days, Maths Olympiads, plus Maths, English and Science competitions, we're not quite sure when they fit in "normal" schoolwork!

Highlights 2003

- ☺ Francesca passes Grade 3 piano and Grade 1 flute with Honours.
- ☺ Julia's volunteering becomes ridiculous; now P&C Treasurer!
- ☺ Marco is manager of Under 7 Red soccer team.
- ☺ Marco becomes manager of Honeybees under 12 Girls' basketball team (despite experiences with aforementioned soccer team!)
- ☺ Alexander tries out for school Training Band. Much dread in the family because he's best at the euphonium and trombone (he wanted to play the clarinet.) Earplugs all round for Christmas...

Football Fever



Alexander continues to play soccer in the winter. This year he played for the Under 7 Red team (which was basically the top team in the Under 7s.) He and all the team improved a great deal, winning most of their matches. Alexander definitely doesn't have the personality of a defender, and he ended up being their top goal-scorer. Didn't see Arsene in the crowd talent-spotting, though!

Basketball...

Both children are keen basketballers at the moment. They play for teams at our local sports stadium, a couple of kilometres up the road.

Francesca was also picked to play for the Under 12 Girls

Division 1 team at representative level. That means that from February '04 she will be having 2 practices a week and a match on Sundays. Oh well, Sundays were going to be a write-off anyway! (see below...)

As mentioned, Alexander has also started playing; he's in the Under 9s modified rules competition (called "biddyball"). Again, he's really hot on the shooting and scoring; not so hot on defending! It's definitely a boy-thing to try shooting 10m away from the basket!

Julia is thinking of asking if she can rent a living space at the stadium next year to save on petrol costs!



The Hills are alive...

As ever, the children both continued with the school's Vocal Ensemble. This year's highlight was the annual concert, sung in the Sydney Town Hall, where Francesca had a short solo. She sang really beautifully, and for the whole of the next week we had teachers and parents commenting about it (even people who weren't there!)

End of School Year

We have the usual round of functions to attend during December. First up is morning tea at school for all parent volunteers (the "V" word again!).

Then there's the annual Presentation Assembly at the Hills Centre. Francesca and Alexander both received Honour Awards; so far their records are intact!

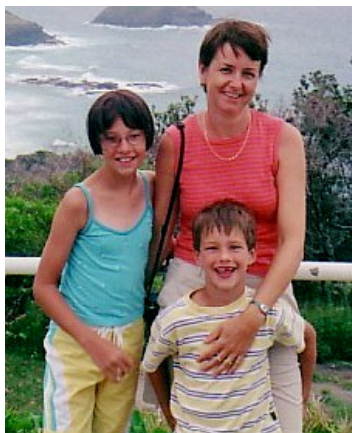
Francesca's award is the "Shore Trophy for Outstanding Achievement". It's the first year it's been awarded, so she's the inaugural recipient. What an honour!



The school also puts on a number of functions for the Year 6 children who are leaving. A Year 6 farewell dinner, organised by the parents (just for a change!), a picnic/pool party during the last week, and on the final day of school there is a special farewell assembly which finishes at 11:00am, so they get to come home early.

Off to High School

As mentioned before, Francesca's off to secondary school next year. We were thrilled when she was accepted into Hornsby Girls' High School, a selective school (and our first choice.) She is really excited about going.



Julia and Francesca went to the open days at the beginning of the year for three of the selective schools, plus the local high school. Hornsby was the one that both really liked. Julia admits to bias, because it reminded her very much of her own school.

Hornsby is about 15km away, so Francesca will be travelling by bus and train every day. It'll be interesting if she joins the band because they

have to be at school by 7.30am! Luckily, it's "on the way" to Marco's work, so he can drop her off sometimes.

The only drawback is the uniform, which is a mushy beige colour...oh well, you can't have everything.

Back to Work

Marco has been at Citect for nearly 2 years now, and recently he was promoted to NSW Regional Manager, following his boss' resignation.

The down-side of this is that the company expects him to study for an MBA. He's enrolled in a course starting next January, so next year is going to be an extremely busy one for him.

Family Sundays are probably going to be non-existent for the next couple of years. We'll have to put up lots of photos of Marco around the house to remind us what he looks like!

What next?

Well, we're off to the Snowy Mountains (which hopefully aren't!) in January for a week. We're looking forward to swimming, cycling, walking and other activities, and Julia's looking forward to NOT COOKING!

Have a fabulous Christmas, and stay tuned for the 2004 update, coming to you next year...



Oh dear! Alexander got the trombone.