



So What Happened to Two Years?

YOU MAY ASK, do we keep a journal of things to put in our newsletter? The answer is No — we rely on Sarah’s memory and trips through our photo database. These alone justify producing the newsletter — just flipping through our photos brings back the joy and fun and silliness and significance of the time that’s gone by.

To be honest, the last two years have been really busy and have zipped past in something of a blur. Even though Sarah has been at home in Australia most of the time, she’s suffering from If-this-is-[month]-it-must-be-X syndrome. Now in December we’re facing . . . Summer Vacation! Of course, Crissie’s (aka Christmas) important, but there’s also the long school holiday from early December through January.



So, let the stream of consciousness begin! In **JANUARY 2009** Cosplay enters our life as a reasonably innocent obsession of the under-16 set. A combination of costume party, comic convention, and role-play, Cosplay has Gwen, Richie and friends making their own anime-based costumes and attending conventions for spontaneous improvs based on their favorite comics. In **late JANUARY** Richie enters what we would call Middle School, transitioning from Australia’s public school system to the private system. Which highlights the major downside of life in Australia: the private school system is OK, about as good as a middling public school in the US, but the public schools system is like something out of *Lord of the Flies*. It’s a problem.

MARCH 2009 sees Bill being volunteered to participate in “Shave for a Cure” sponsored by the Australian Leukaemia Foundation. Picture above illustrates the outcome (Think of it as the “chemotherapy” look). In **APRIL 2009**, we take in the obligatory Aussie tourist sites Sydney and Uluru (aka Ayer’s Rock, but more PC) and associated formations Kata Tjuta and Kings Canyon. Sydney is Sydney, of course, and there’s ample reason why it’s Bill’s favorite Australian city, but Uluru is something else entirely. It’s much more than



Crissie
Dinkum

PANORAMALAND



SANTIAGO from San Cristóbal, Chile



YARWUN 2 Alumina Refinery, Gladstone, Queensland, Australia



THE SOUTH RIM OF THE GRAND CANYON, Arizona, USA



KING'S CANYON, Northern Territory, Australia



METEOR CRATER, Arizona, USA



BACKYARD, Brisbane, Australia

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a giant red rock in the middle of nowhere – and we got some idea of how big it was when we walked around it. It was the Times Square of this ancient land for the 50,000 years prior to the European invasion. Geographically stunning and haunted by hundreds of generations of nomadic ghosts, we were awestruck.

In **MAY 2009** Bill and Sarah indulge themselves of the most touristy of attractions in all of Brisbane: the Story Bridge Climb. Story Bridge is a not-especially-huge but nevertheless interesting span over the Brisbane River, and allows the hale and hearty to climb to the top and down again. Goofy protective gear required.

AUGUST 2009 is whale watching season – but if you've ever done whale watching off San Francisco, you have no idea. For one thing, it's summer and the trip on a fast catamaran is worth it even without whales. Second, the humpbacks are close, numerous, and playful: you can almost reach out and touch them. They also seem to be enjoying the trip as much as the humans, showing off with fantastic breaching, fluke-flapping, and synchronized rolls. The same month sees Bill participate in a charity fun run, the Bridge to Brisbane, which costs him the painless use of his calves for at least three weeks thereafter.

Life rushes by, and by **DECEMBER 2009** sees Sarah and Bill decked out as faux cowboys for a Bechtel function. It was fun, if silly. However, Christmas and into **JANUARY 2010** are big-time fun: true Home Leave, themed around a visit to the US Southwest to places never seen or not seen for 40 or more years: Roswell, Carlsbad, and Lincoln, NM; Meteor Crater and the obligatory Grand Canyon in Arizona; Hoover Dam on the Arizona-Nevada border;



Richland WA; and Highway 1, Hearst Castle, Universal Studios, Yosemite, and Legoland in California. Not to mention, family. While on this trip, Richie (then 13) passes Gwen (then 15) in height, for which she has still not forgiven him.

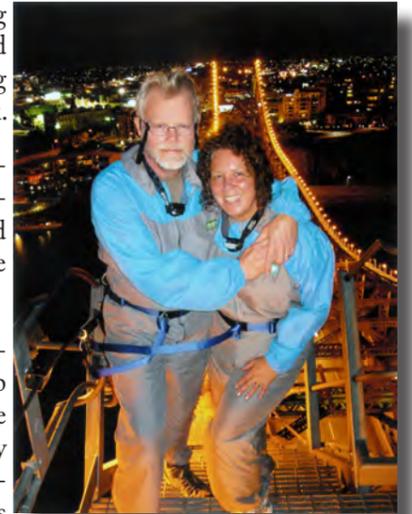
We vacation again in **APRIL 2010**, this time going to Melbourne (pronounced "Mel-b'n"), and areas along the Victorian

coast, including the famous 12 Apostles rock formation (recently reduced to 11 Apostles when one of the pillars collapsed into the sea – after having been there for 20,000 years!). we visit the prison in which famous bush ranger Ned Kelly was incarcerated and ultimately hanged (above left), and saw an exhibit of the works of Ron Mueck – truly fascinating and disturbing: anatomically correct and hyperrealistic renderings of giant people (and a few miniatures too). The most startling is a statue newborn baby approximately 20 feet long.

Both kids grow in unexpected ways this year. **MAY 2010** finds Gwen, the nonathlete, going out for field hockey (a winter sport here) with a team that finished a respectable 5th out of 9 in their league. In **JULY 2010**, Richie (just say "No" to camping) finds himself on a 2-week-long school-sponsored retreat at nearby Mt.



Binga, engaging in such character-building activities as bread-making over an open fire, teepee design, and solo overnights in shelter of his own construction. The most exciting event is abseiling down a 20 meter cliff. This by a boy who seriously, seriously doesn't like heights – and yet was able to succeed.





Also in **JULY**, a visiting fireman (firewoman in this case, being Bill's matrix manager from the US) causes us to visit the Koala Sanctuary at Lone Pine and then Bill gets a chance to tour the big Yarwun 2 Alumina refinery in Gladstone, NE Queensland (see "Panoramaworld," Page 2).

Anne Austin visits us again in **SEPTEMBER 2010**, which includes a massive fireworks demonstration on the Brisbane River called "Riverfire," (for which there is no historical justification – they do it for fun and to enhance tourism) and we all visit Sydney, which for Anne is a first-time event. Bill has to leave halfway through Anne's visit for a monthlong business trip to Chile, during which he has the opportunity to tour the Los Bronces project high in the Chilean Andes, and discovers that copper concentrators (which Bechtel is building at the site) are very big deals indeed. (below, construction of a huge



power pylon serving the site.

Bill happened to be Santiago during the last days of the rescue of 33 miners from the San José mine in the Atacama Desert near Copiapó in northern Chile. While he didn't visit the site (it was about 675 km/420 mi away), the atmosphere in the streets of Santiago was electric as the rescuers got closer and closer to freeing the first man. Chileans – while not unmindful of the procedural failures that had led to the cave-in – nevertheless took immense pride in the response to the crisis. People embraced strangers in the street and burst out in spontaneous cheers and song as the miners were brought to the surface one by one.

Back home in Brisbane, **OCTOBER 2010** is characterized by rain, rain, and more rain. The dams are at the 100%+ mark, which is kind of remarkable given that upon our arrival in Brisbane, they were in the depths of the most serious drought in 75 years.



Finally, **NOVEMBER 2010** brings Thanksgiving – not, of course, celebrated by Aussies – but provides an opportunity to invite Richie's and Gwen's friends over for a semi-traditional turkey-day dinner (note: Aussie kids do not believe that pumpkins should ever be used for desserts), along with our friend from Hong Kong days Yoko Hamaguchi, who gets her first Thanksgiving dinner in 5 years (because like other Bechtel people, she moves around a lot).

A joyful two years filled with fun and interesting events. Hope the same is true for you.