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Canberra/Australia

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Dear friend —

Like any other year it is already a little late to start on the Christmas letter, and excuses are rampant. Why didn't you do it the first time your conscience reminded you?

The outdoors is certainly no reminder. Spring scents fill the air. Rhododendron, honey suckle, wysteria, roses are in blossom. Magpies are busily treating their offsprings and make a lot of noise about it. They defend their not in the least endangered species against such imagined enemies as Rustie - who couldn't care less, really - swooping down from their branch, missing the poor pooch's "standard" ears by a hair. His angry barks won't impress them, not until someone comes out from the house and throws a stone will they move.

Hectic partying is going on everywhere, the unmistakable sign of approaching holidays. We do look forward to them. It will be the first Christmas we spend in TABROC, the summer cottage at the South Coast which we built during most of the past year. There will be only three of us, as Tata is busy studying in Toronto and her holidays are not long enough to justify the long trip across the Pacific. She was here last May for the baptism ceremony, which was great fun. Lots of friends are living around us down there, mostly people from Canberra. Entertaining is casual as everybody comes to relax.

Our year has been busy. It has been like this on each posting: during the first year you widen your circle, the second year you "reap what you have sowed". In our case it means that we have to take care of the new, but also of the old friends from the years of our first tour of duty in Australia. In addition to delegations of economists, politicians, parliamentarians, scientists and artists, holiday-makers from Germany pass by in a steady stream. They have to be shown around, entertained, pampered, mothered, babied .... There is no doubt: Australia has been "discovered". And this makes us feel less isolated down-under than 20 years ago.

Still, we were quite excited when home leave came up in July. We did the southern part of Germany in a rented car, visited relatives, friends, and - starved for some real ancient sights - we deviated, meandered where we had gone straight before to discover treasures in Bavaria and around the Bodensee, we climbed up the Grand Ballon in the Vosges, stopped in Nancy, Paris and finally spent a few days in Bonn - from where on the 6th of September we set out on our venture of the year: China.

Two weeks in China are just enough to take a glimpse of what lies beyond that chasm which separates it from the world we have thus far explored .... and to stir up new questions among the few to which we believe to have found the answers. Too much to deal with in this letter.

Christian in the meantime stayed at home in Canberra to prepare for the important next step in his life: He will be a solicitor at the beginnng of 1983 - much to the relief of his parental environment.

When this letter was written, we did not know that Arthur Rubinstein's days had come to an end.

Realizing the almost unbearably hard times these last years meant to you and your children, we do feel with you and want to express our sympathy to you.

Equally saddened we were to hear about the most unfortunate end of Princess Grace who - we know - was a good friend of yours.

We paid a visit to 24 Square de l'Avenue Foch last August - sorry to have missed you in 22 - knowing only the secretary who did not know when you would return from Marbella.

Worlds seem to come to an end, but new epochs begin. It will be hard for you to face it, but we do wish you lots of luck and courage to start out ONCE AGAIN. Your many friends will help you in your first steps. Bless you!

Rosli and Wilhelm Fabricius.