

## The Robbins Christmas Letter 2006

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Dear Friends,

Christmas has been sneaking up on us bit by bit over the years, but Christmas 2006 has taken us completely by surprise! We are grateful for the cards and newsletters we have received from you – thanks for those – and for the opportunity to catch up with your news. Thank you too for those who have indicated that this missive is awaited! Even if such statements are 'la politesse' we appreciate it, and the statements have encouraged us to at least start this epistle prior to Christmas!



I guess it's a sign of age [speak for yourself – Ed] [I was – sub-Ed] but we honestly do not know where this year has gone! How often we find ourselves lamenting thus with our friends who generally agree and thus, we assume, are similarly challenged [except for you, of course, dear reader – Ed]. On the subject of age [careful! – Ed] ... We mark each birthday quietly together, but to push the boat out a little for the milestone

birthdays (every 5 years). This year was Larry's 55<sup>th</sup> [yes, hard to believe innit? – Ed] so Jane organised an 'at home' – with some close friends invited for lunch and drinks. It was fully catered [lovely – they even took away the washing up! – Ed] and the weather was delightful. Photo: Mine host awaits the guests!

Ever one for a bargain, Larry discovered that at 55 he could sign up for a 'Seniors Card' which, at \$60 for 5 years, gives discounts with various firms etc. We went to the pictures on Christmas Eve, using the card for the first time. It worked well and we saved \$6 [6 months' subscription saved already! – Ed] but Larry is in a bit of a frump at the moment because the girl at the ticket desk didn't even look at the card, just accepted that L was entitled to seniors' discount!



Well, this year Larry went on a big trip, but Jane eschewed the opportunity saying "I don't have a great desire to go in a boat around Cape Horn, and I have even less desire to see the Horn through a galley window!" [It's a porthole or scuttle – Ed] [Whatever! – sub Ed] Yes, Larry did the trip that we

mentioned last year. He was invited to join 7 other guys [All the other partners were similarly sensible! – Ed] who flew to Chile to join a chartered yacht which took them



down the Straits of Magellan, Beagle Channel and round the Horn. ([www.pelagic.co.uk](http://www.pelagic.co.uk)) Two of the party landed at the Horn and got the passports stamped, bringing back a souvenir stone from the beach. The stone is now mounted on a piece of wood from the wreck of a small missionary ship MV LOGOS which was wrecked in the Beagle Channel in 1988. Larry had visited the ship in Auckland in 1977/8 so was interested to board and explore the wreck (Photo above).

Chile was an interesting place to visit and the trip, which took 12 days, was deemed 'well worthwhile', though it has not wakened any nascent desire to go off deep-water yachting!

We went away together to the South Island in July [this is mid-winter in NZ – Ed]. Larry married a friend's daughter on a beautiful secluded beach in the Abel Tasman National Park [we stayed in a wonderful lodge courtesy of our hosts – Ed]. The weather was excellent though we had to wade ashore from the water taxi and the water was COLD (and the beach icy!).



Jane on the beach at Abel Tasman National Park on a beautiful crisp winter's evening.



Nelson Lakes July 2006

Afterwards we drove south, visiting a number of tourist spots on the way. We enjoyed a hot spa under the crystal clear winter sky at Hanmer Springs, and got to see the whales at Kaikoura. For the second time the weather [which Larry described as 'calm - Ed] lead to the cancellation of the boat trip so we scooted down to the airport and flew out. We managed to spot a sperm whale and a small humpback, watching the sperm whale as it dived.



Larry would probably describe driving a tank as one of the trip's highlights. Jane spotted an ad in a tourist paper advertising the opportunity to drive a Centurion tank in Christchurch. So, because we could, he did! Fortunately it was

in the back of beyond and the gun was disabled so it was quite safe really! Jane's highlights were watching yellow eyed penguins landing on a beach at the end of their day, and visiting the Cadbury chocolate factory in Dunedin.

We ended up in Queenstown with a jet boat trip (it was VERY cold around our faces!) and a more leisurely trip aboard SS EARNSLAW where we had almost [Long story! - Ed] got engaged in 1992. We saw some snow en route, but although the S.Island had been thrown into meteorological chaos a couple of weeks earlier, our travel plans worked efficiently.

In August we went to Sydney, Australia, for the wedding of a former museum receptionist and had a most enjoyable long-weekend there. Naturally we visited the Maritime Museum and enjoyed a boat trip down the Parramatta River.

Larry is the Hon Nat Sec of the International Sailors Society NZ and took the opportunity to visit the ISS Centres in Lyttelton (Christchurch), Dunedin and Bluff on the way round. We were very well received by the folk in each centre. ISSNZ co-ordinates the work of, and represents, the 6 independent societies in NZ. Each is quite small but they all do very important welfare work

with visiting seafarers, providing a safe environment, the opportunity to phone home or check emails and the like. Jane is the Hon Sec of the Auckland Society and Larry the Hon Treasurer. [www.iss.org.nz](http://www.iss.org.nz)

Jane has kept very busy on the computer project with the Auckland University of Technology, though there have been some frustrations along the way which she has survived! Larry has had a similarly busy and successful time at the museum ([www.nzmaritime.org](http://www.nzmaritime.org)) with a number of projects coming to fruition towards the end of the year. We both clock up 7 years with our respective organisations at the start of 2007.

Jane at the Antarctic Centre



Jane has continued to operate the sound system at church throughout the year but Larry has surrendered most of his positions there to concentrate on his other activities. He is, though, on the committee set up to look for a new pastor (our minister for the past 6 years is, sadly, moving on) which looks like keeping him busy in the first few months of 2007. He also leads the team who conduct the services at the local hospital about 5 times a year. Larry is now a trustee for the PumpHouse

([www.pumphouse.co.nz](http://www.pumphouse.co.nz)) a small theatre and gallery in the historic pumphouse on Lake Pupuke which used to supply drinking water to the North Shore.

Larry undertook 24 weddings and 6 baby namings this year, events which he enjoys and already has 10 similar events booked for the New Year. He is still busy with the various websites but does not quite find enough time to do them properly. Fortunately his 'clients' are very understanding and not too demanding. He was elected to the ICMM Executive at the Congress last year and is the ICMM webmaster and newsletter editor. [www.icmmonline.org](http://www.icmmonline.org)

Sadly, 2006 was not all joy. We lost a good friend, John Candy, to cancer at a young age and will miss him - though like all of our friends, we saw him too infrequently.



And plans for 2007? Jane has applied for a new position within the same project at the university. We are planning a trip to Malta in October for the ICMM Congress. We hope to have time to visit family in UK briefly either on the way there or back. We both hope that 2007 will not be quite as

stupidly busy as 2006 and that we won't be making the same lament next year as we opened with!

This comes with our love and best wishes to you all for a safe and happy Christmas and a wonderful start to 2007

Jane Larry