

December 13, 2022

Dear Friends and Family,

Finally starting the 'Year 22 Letter' after posting our Christmas cards.  
Another great year with magic moments has gone by.

Started the new year with my niece Bo, my sister Iris' daughter, having her first child, a little boy named Nanuk, which means polar bear in Inuit's language.  
Celebrated Kimberly's 27<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January with her godmother and godfather.

A couple of days before that evening Jacques had started not feeling well at all and I made him do a covid test which was negative. The next day we took the plane to Malaga to go to our Spanish apartment that was finally liberated after a 5 years rent (due to covid we had let the people stay longer as we initially planned). Lots of things to do to get the apartment 'in shape' again. Went back and forth to the shops and sometimes even returned only after 10 pm at the apartment as they close very late and we had so much to do.

Jacques was really feeling ill and a couple of days later we heard Kimberly was having covid (her 2<sup>nd</sup> time) so we thought he was having it after all... Before taking our flight back we were obliged to get tested in Spain. I had started to feel ill also that day, a week after Jacques, but luckily we both tested negative so we could go home.

In Saint Julien we decided to get tested again because Jacques and I really felt bad with a lot of coughing and Kimberly had to go for her 'end of covid test', so the three of us went, but we turned out to be negative. Jacques and I must have had a bad flu, we didn't feel well for 4 weeks, quite a thing...

Fortunately we were not feeling too bad to attend Jacques' younger brother Nicolas' second wedding with his partner since 12 years, Marine. A small Winter Wedding on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January with friends only, in the townhall of Viry, where they live. The party was held at the farm castle of Le Mouret in Switzerland, the village the swiss part of the family comes from. I had asked the guests to take a letter from the alphabet (there were 26 of us, so each person a different one) and to do 'something' with this letter referring to Nicolas, Marine or the couple. Everybody did a good job, it was very various and we had good laughs. The newly wed really enjoyed it. Had a great time.

The wedding preparations for Kimberly and Jeremy's started to get more and more serious and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February, Jeremy's parents, Monique and Greg, and I went to their home to write the wedding invitations. As there were 3 different ones (with townhall our without, with the dinner party or without, ...) it was quite a hassle and also they had to be folded in the right way, my daughter being in decoration she is very precise on this....

We started and I had my stack, Greg folding for Monique's stack and Kimberly doing hers. Greg had to leave after a while so Monique started folding hers. After a while I looked up and saw her doing the wrong thing... When Kimberly left for the bathroom I discretely explained to her and we tried to gently open up the envelopes to make the change...😊

This was only one (and a very minor) of the many things that went wrong, caused stress or changed our view on certain relationships, unfortunately. Surprising for an event that should only be joy and happiness...

Some of the wedding announcements we brought directly to the guests and when I gave it to one of Jacques' cousins and his wife they said, "if we can help, just tell us, anything we can do...." Suddenly I remembered Jeremy wanted to build big wooden letters "LOVE" with lights but it was hard for him to get started, lack of time, no experience, and so I asked the cousin : "You are handy with wood aren't you ?" And he said "yes, I have all the machines, what can I do ?" I explained and he got very enthusiastic. He works in a swimming pool business that closes during winter time so he had a lot of time to spend. The next week Kim and Jerry met with him and they went to buy the wood together. Titou worked hard, and the 2 meters high letters were made in no time. Jeremy put the led lights on them and it looked marvelous !



The 18<sup>th</sup> of February Mamie and I went to have lunch with Kimberly at the shop she works at. I had promised Kimberly a necklace with earrings to wear on her wedding day and she had seen one she liked. It was marvelous to find out she showed me the one I had already seen before and really liked ! She tried it on and it looked perfect. A nice 3-generations-moment shared.

That same day we celebrated Jacques' 59<sup>th</sup> as on his birthday the 20<sup>th</sup> of February not everybody could be there. We also held the 'Wedding Wine Tasting' that night. They tried about 6 different wines that Jacques selected. Some were out right away, and in the end unfortunately nobody was anonymous for one of them.

Later on Kimberly and Jeremy found thé one thanks to Titou who made the LOVE letters. They'd had a drink at his home and they really appreciated the wine he served. Also the name was fun 'Sang mêlé' meaning 'Mixed blood'.

Bastian left with his friend for a vacation in Albania where Roberts' family comes from. Robert has an old Mercedes he had gotten fixed over there, less expensive, and they were getting it to bring it home.

Jacques and I went back to Spain to get more done at the apartment and while Jacques was watching an important rugby game France-Scotland in a pub, Bastian called they'd had an accident, they hit the crash barrier in a turn, luckily no injury but the Mercedes had to be fixed again...

Albania was a great experience for Bastian, staying at Robert's family and getting acquainted with the Albanian way of life.

Work was to be done at the vineyard. Difficult when it's cold.... We got help from friends and thermos bottles of hot tea helped us through it ☺.



Kimberly had done me the tremendous honor by asking me to sing for their entrance at the wedding ceremony. They choose 'Can't help falling in love'. The hardest part for me was going to keep my nerves and emotions down... I decided to contact a girl Jacques had been in class with and who is a music teacher at high school. She used to give me piano and singing lessons ages ago. She felt delighted to help me and so I took singing lessons with her to be able to get out some tones at the wedding ☺. She was great and I made progress. She then proposed to play the piano for me at the wedding, I could kiss her !!!

The bride- and groom-to-be wanted to do a surprise dance at their wedding and needed to take lessons but both dance schools in and around Saint Julien had closed definitely due to covid. A friend of ours who has a restaurant in Saint Julien (where by the way Jacques and I met almost 38 years ago...☺) is a good dancer and I remembered she had given us lessons years ago in the basement of the restaurant, so, while having lunch there one day, I asked her if she would agree to give dance lessons to Kim and Jerry. Teta (her real name is Marie-Antoinette but everybody calls her Teta) answered she had a friend who's a real dancing teacher and who would come every fortnight to dance with her, so the young couple could ask him. Kimberly and Jeremy took an appointment and met him at the restaurant for several weeks for the lessons. However, he was not only very expensive but also too perfectionist and getting into too complicated dance styles.



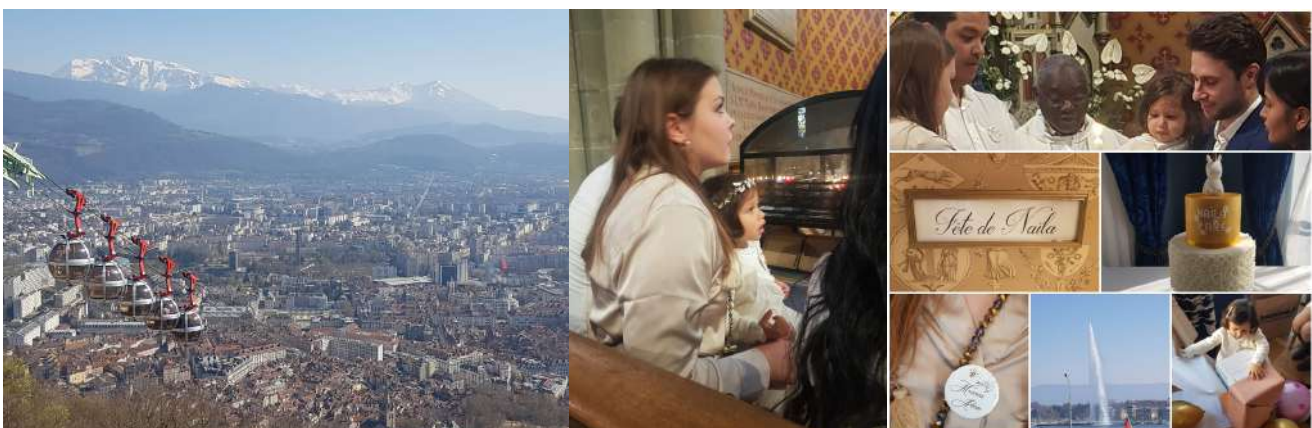
Jeremy not being a dancer at all it was way too difficult, but when they tried to explain it to the teacher he didn't want to take it in account. Our friend, who had been watching several times, also told him, but he didn't want to listen and they got in a fight over it.... It finally turned out that Teta and her dance-teacher-friend-since-20-years really got mad at each other and decided to break their friendship... Teta took over, she really did a good job, she made the future bride and groom gain confidence and at the wedding they performed the most beautiful choreography full of emotion.

In the meantime I had started a scrap photo album of all the preparations going on. I thought it was a good thing as we would look at the photos of the wedding again but usually not at the pictures of the preparations, which are great moments to remember. I would disappear hours days and evenings in my 'scrap room' to work on it...., 2 years of preparations, I was going crazy.... I 'covered' about everything, until one week before the wedding, for several reasons : things were ready and were going to be put in place, I would not have time to work on it anymore, and last but not least : the album was completely full !



In March I had booked a 2 stars restaurant 'Alibert' I had seen a documentary about on tv, as a late present for Jacques' birthday. On our way we visited the student town of Grenoble, known for the 1968 Olympic mes, going up the mountain with cable car eggs, and at night we had a wonderful dinner full of different tastes and a multitude of surprises.

The 26<sup>th</sup> of March, Naïla, the daughter of Jacques' second cousin son, who-married-a-girl-from-India-in-2014, was baptized and they asked Loïse to be her Godmother. We were all invited to attend the ceremony and were offered a lunch in a 5 star hotel in Geneva overlooking the lake. A wonderful moment.



Bastian had given notice at his job at our friend's cabins. He looked for a new position as soon as he quit. In a month's time he had two job interviews and while he was visiting my parents in March he heard he was hired at a big Swiss events business in Geneva. He went to get a bottle so he could toast to it with his Opa and Oma, a nice sweet moment. Only 10 days later, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March Bastian started his new job and is enjoying it a lot. He sometimes goes on events abroad with 2 colleagues (40 and 60) whose names are 'Anne' and 'Marie' ☺.

I followed Bastian in visiting my parents end of March.

The daughter of a neighbor living just opposite of us in Saint Julien, has been living in The Hague for several years and was soon going to go back to France, I thought it was fun to meet up with her in the Netherland. My friend Paula came also to The Hague and Sophie showed us the interesting places to see in this political capital of my country. Paula and I visited the 'Panorama Mesdag' we'd heard about when we were in school. It is a cylindrical painting more than 14 meters high and about 40 meters in diameter, housed in a purpose-built museum. From an observation gallery in the center the perspective creates the illusion that the viewer is on a high sand dune overlooking the sea, beaches and a village in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It used to be an important touristic attraction at that time. It is now one of the few and also oldest surviving panorama.

My niece Marije, my other sister, Marjolein,'s daughter, gave birth on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April to her 4<sup>th</sup> child, Shania. She now has two boys followed by two daughters. A cute quartet. My parents now have 5 great-grand-children.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of April, a Saturday this year, I finally got to celebrate my 55<sup>th</sup> birthday, + 2 of course ☺.... The theme was '55 years and only one regret' : the fact I hadn't taught the French how to pronounce my name... Most guests came dressed as 'Anne Marie' , wearing blond wigs, Jeremy's parents had put on the Dutch traditional costume, a couple wore the official Dutch orange soccer shirts printed especially for the occasion, Kimberly, Bastian and Loïse had gone into my dressing and wore some old clothes of mine, .... ☺

Friends had prepared a great show : presenting me, with blond wigs, in different situations on the music of 'Desperate Housewives', it was hilarious, it was such a good laugh.

I had rented a foodtruck making 'pizza cones' which was a big success ! A great birthday party we'd been waiting for for 2 years.







Loïse turned 21 on the 12th of April. Had a family dinner with her godfather and his wife, Mamie, and a good friend. Sandra was there too, she came for my birthday party (always there for the good things ! 😊 ) and spent a week with us.

Kimberly and Jeremy took the same flight as Sandra back to Amsterdam and celebrated Easter with my parents, brother and Augie.

Had a family dinner on Easter Monday, I hid chocolate eggs just as when they were kids, well, made it a bit more difficult to find... Weather was beautiful, we could eat outside and played pétanque together.



End of April weather turned bad unfortunately for the bachelor/ette party weekend but the bride-and-groom-to-be had a great time. It started out with the boys and girls meeting at Kim and Jerry's place, making a total mess of their apartment. Loïse had made a piñata in a particular shape (...), it was quite some work and she had even gotten help from Kevin's mother....(!), it looked great ☺ and when Kimberly hit it the confetti spread out all over, and the girls put them everywhere... still now the couple is finding confetti in the most incredible places in their apartment... The girls dressed up Kimberly for the occasion and her hairdresser friend gave her a weird hairstyle.

Kimberly's friends had booked a pole dance class for all of them. Kimberly did a very good job, she really enjoyed it. The girls made her do a pledge game in a mall and they had good laughs. They stayed overnight in an hotel and the next day they went to a beautiful Moroccan spa and hammam where Kimberly was given a massage.

Jeremy was dressed up as a sheep, his whole life people called him 'sheep' because of his curly hair... The boys came to our place where he had to dig a hole and burry a box containing all sorts of things, to be dugged up next year. Of course it was said that he was digging a hole for his mother-in-law...

They then went playing paintball and also did a special soccer game : they were in an individual plastic bubble with just their legs coming out...

Jeremy also had to do a pledge game, amongst others he had to sell condoms to people in a shopping mall.... A fun weekend for all of them !





In May it was our turn to organize a surprise weekend for friends. They used to be surprise evenings but they have turned into weekends since two years, always an excuse to extend the fun ! We took them to the Saline Royale in the Jura, the 'ideal industrial site' build in 1775 where we celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in 2018. As beautiful as always.



Jacques and I returned once more to Spain for a week to finish and finally enjoy the apartment. Jacques worked on his wedding speech, writing and training himself to speak and pronounce well, Bastian had told him to put a pen in his mouth to learn to articulate... I worked on the songs and animations we were going to do.

When we were in Spain in February I had found jute & lace ribbons there for the wedding tables decoration, at a suitable price compared to France, at what we call 'Chinese shops', shops held by Chinese people, selling anything and everything you can imagine.

We had travelled with just a small bag pack as the low-cost airline now charges a lot of money for luggage. We had to leave some clothes at the apartment because one of our backpacks was, yes you guessed right, filled completely with ribbons.... They weren't enough (of course !) so in May we were sent back by Kimberly to get more of them, and we had to find other Chinese shops as the others were sold out...

The wedding decorations were found, I can almost say, all over Europe, coming from the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and all kind of places in France. Bought new, bought secondhand, found, given, borrowed, homemade, ... ☺ They had even ordered beautiful jute & lace bow ties for the best men from Rumania that arrived... one day after the wedding...

For the vineyard Jacques bought a small secondhand tractor to treat the vine, he's very proud of it ☺. He also ordered cabins that look like sea containers but are less heavy and less expensive. One to put away working tools, the other to be our 'vine bar' ☺...

He wanted to put them up when they arrived, in March, but was kindly asked by his daughter to wait àfter the wedding as they were having their official pictures taken at the 'golden hour' in the vineyard....





April, May and June things were getting even more hectic as you can imagine. Measures were taken at the Fort, the chairs they were going to sit on through the ceremony were found in our attic, we practiced with Jeremy's parents, Bastian, Loïse and Kevin a song and little dance Monique and Greg wanted to perform during the 'Vin d'Honneur', giving comical moments. Make-up tests had place, even a nailpolish test...(!)  
I invited the young couple over for dinner with my band so that we could explain what was expected from them. Kimberly went numerous times to the dentist as her broken tooth was finally being replaced by a permanent implant but it took very long to make it look good. Kimberly and Jeremy went for Jeremy's costume and the Wedding cake, which they finally found both in Annecy where his parents have a market stall on Saturdays.



They then went with his best men to look for their costume, having good laughs in the fitting room. The future bride and groom accompanied Bastian to find his costume and shoes. Kimberly went several times for hairstyle tryouts at her best friend's, being hairdresser and bridesmaid.  
I took Kayla, Kevin's 7 year old daughter, to choose a fancy dress to wear at the wedding as her birthday present.  
I had planned to make it a nice girly shopping day but after only 100 meters in the shopping mall she said it was such a long walk... so I decided to show her dresses I liked at the first shop available which turned out to be H&M, let her try them on and get away with it...☺  
She loved her dress that she could 'turn around with' and chose herself the flower crown for her hair. She looked very pretty.



I myself had a hard time finding something that suited me. I'd tried something in Spain which I could order on Internet in the right size. I kept on looking for something else, ordering several dresses I could send back.

We held a totally unexpected 'dress rehearsal'. A friend of mine who I call 'my personal shopper' had come to mark with pins Jacques trousers for the seamstress (who had been very hard to find...stress....), so he was wearing his costume, I was putting on all the dresses I'd received to show the girls and they did approve the outfit I'd found in Spain, Loïse had to try on her dress for alterations too, and when Bastian walked in with his friend Robert, Kimberly made Bastian put on his suit too. So here we were, the 4 of us all dressed up. Kimberly was reassured to see what we were going to look like on her wedding.

At the same time Mamie arrived to have dinner with us and under loud applause Kimberly and Jeremy announced they had given Mamie the honor to be their ring bearer. It was a hilarious and emotional moment.



Kimberly's godmother Sylvie made a magnificent video that was projected at the wedding dinner, retracing Kim and Jerry's childhood and their life together. I had to get all the photo albums out and went through a big amount of videos. A lot of work but it was worth it.

On Ascension day we were requisitioned, as well as Bastian, Loïse and Jeremy's parents to 'work' for the wedding, at our place, starting at 9 am, finishing at 7 pm...(!) just stopping for lunch that Monique, Jeremy's mother, and I prepared together. A lot of fun, irritations, and good laughs. This was the first of which I call the 'Wedding SOS Days', two more followed. We had wonderful weather each time, great lunches and excellent souvenirs of Bastian ironing all the table ribbons, the fathers-in-law tying flip-flops together (for the guests to wear when getting tired of their high heels or dressy shoes), sticking labels on water and beer bottles, and soooooo many other things. The 3<sup>rd</sup> day Kevin also came and he was quite a good help, very good at manual things.





We invited Saint Julien's mayor for dinner so she could get acquainted with the future bride and groom. I had asked the mayor to do this wedding especially, as I know her from when I worked for the laboratory. I used to work with her, she had a graphic agency at that time and she designed our wedding announcement in 1993 and then the three birth announcements in the same style.

She was supposed to go on vacation on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July but decided to postpone to be able to do this wedding. So it was like a circle coming round, this woman marrying Kimberly for whom she'd designed her birth announcement.

At the dinner she said, "I do have some bad news... there will be works going on in front of the Townhall because we're going to make the steps wheelchair accessible.... So there will be fences and you'll have to go around in the back to access through the basement...."

Waaah !!!! Gone the nice arrival of Daddy in his Corvette bringing the bride and gone the great photos on the stoop in front of the Townhall...

OK, devastated is a too big of a word, but the Mayor didn't miss our confused reaction, Kimberly was about to choke... she then said "Well, let me see, maybe I can do something about it..., it was planned for March but because of Covid they postponed, so maybe they can postpone it a bit more... I'll have to get in touch with the head of the works....."

Everything turned out fine, the old steps were still there on D-day and we could approach the building and have the pictures taken in due form.

But we did have to do with a stressed and upset Mayor during the ceremony (guess 'why' we'll never know). She did do a pleasant, but brief, speech about knowing our family, Kimberly and her birth announcement, but had forgotten one page of the legal announcements, which she informed us about, but which meant that, amongst others, she didn't announce the names of the witnesses which is supposed to be a nice and formal part of the ceremony. And after the bride, groom and witnesses signed the register she handed a present from the community to the couple : a pretty case with a nice pen. They should've signed with this pen, so as to keep it as a souvenir... instead the mayor had made them sign with an ordinary bic pen....

What did I say, a wedding with twists and turns.... well, that's normal !

After the Townhall we were going to go the Fort for the ceremony and party, so everything was being tidied up there. Nicolas had been working hard and the last week efforts were multiplied.

I didn't want to know anything about the weather forecast, too scared it would be bad.

Early in the week it was raining and cold. Some bushes had to be cut and I was supposed to go with José, our 'handy-man', to explain what he had to do. He's, let's say, a 'handy-man you have to check on', if not, things might not be as you want them to be... . I didn't want to wait another day as sooo many things had to be done at the latest moment so here we were out in the pouring rain.

I had been watching him closely and stopping him from cutting too much, just as the future bride had told me 😊 . Then my phone rang and I looked away for only 4 (!!! , yes really, only 4 !!!) seconds and when I looked up again the 'most important bush', on top of the stairs where they gave their first kiss 12 years ago and which they were going to go up, had become very, very tiny...





For the ceremony people had to be seated and Kimberly wanted 'nice yellow' bales of straw, to be covered with fabric she found on the market where Jeremy's parents work. Nicolas uses straw for the horses but the bales he buys are way too big to sit on, the smaller ones cost a lot more money... He then proposed bales of hay, but Kim thought those didn't look that good... There's been talking, searching, looking for straw bales for months.... Someone Nicolas works with promised to get the right ones, but at the latest moment he couldn't get enough of them and it turned out to be a mix of straw and hay bales either way.... Waaah !!! Obviously it looked good anyway and on top of that certainly nobody noticed !

The hired master of ceremony had been given us headaches, and Kim and Jerry, and so did we, got so upset with her that they decided to find all the floral decoration themselves at another place just 2 weeks before the wedding....

The master of ceremony asked some people to give a speech, persons Jeremy and Kimberly had listed, each on their side. She sent the email with this special request only 12 (!) days before D-day... How can you ask such a thing to people so closely involved in organizing only a few days in advance, people need time have to think, write, practice....

Luckily long beforehand Jeremy had already asked me to have Opa and Oma record a speech as a surprise for Kimberly. As my parents sadly couldn't be there for the wedding, my father's age not allowing him the trip and attending this tiring event, it was a sweet way for them to be part of it and 'being there' for Kimberly. So they wrote a speech and my brother Lennart and his partner Augie went to record them. Quite a thing...😊

We then had to find a way to have it go through the loudspeakers, great advances in high-tech made it easy ! I translated it in French and had my dutch friend Miranda who's-lived-in France-for-30-years read it during the ceremony so the french people could understand.

Bastian and Loïse surprised us by giving a speech jointly, which was addressed, not to their sister or the couple, but to their cherished brother-in-law. A very emotional moment, Loïse could hardly say her words right and Jeremy needed the tissues that were placed right behind the couple's seats...

We were also surprised by Jeremy's father giving a speech, he is quite timid but did a wonderful job.

The foreign guests received translations in English they could read, thanks to Sarah, an English friend (who-we-met-on-the-Ferry-to-Iceland-and-who-lived just-behind-us).

Jacques did his speech in French and English (thanks again to Sarah) , we had good laughs.

Kimberly and I went up to Carroz and spent a night a couple of weeks before the wedding. We went to some shops for decorations in the town down the mountain and to get some of the decorations (yes, more !) we have up at the apartment. But it was also an enjoyable rest, just mom and daughter before jumping in the craziness of the last preparations. Had dinner outside on the terrace but had to go inside quickly, a lot of mosquitos..., bites not welcome when wearing a wedding dress !

We went back and forth 4 times to the bridal shop in Lausanne, Switzerland. Kimberly had been calling several times if the ordered dress was there yet, we were getting a bit anxious, but the lady didn't seem stressed at all. She finally received it and so we went for the fitting before touch up. Daddy came with us this time when she would put it on for the first time since that memorable day in August 2021. Would she still like her choice...?

Daddy shed a tear seeing his daughter coming out of the fitting room in THE dress and we all did a couple of minutes later : Jeremy had instructed me, kindly ☺, to discretely buy a rose and to put a note he wrote with it, which I had to give to his bride-to-be... The lady of the shop just couldn't believe it, she said in 25 years she'd never seen this happen, she enjoyed this moment as much as we did.

We had to go back 3 times for fitting after touch up and finally Kim could go home with the dress. The last time was only 3 days before the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July, Sandra who'd arrived the Sunday before came with us and we had a fun special moment together.



Ria and Gé, friends-of-my-parents, a little over our age, and-now-our-friends-too, arrived early also, delivering the Dutch cheese we ordered for the cheese buffet. I don't remember how many kilos but it was rather a lot, most of it got finished !

Gé's mission was to wash and polish the 3 vintage cars and he got help from Gary, our Australian friend. They did a good job together, the cars looked beautiful !

My brother and partner arrived with a lot of things from the Netherlands in his mini van. They drove the 1000 km with a white, decorated Dutch bike hanging on the back off the van. Sandra had been wanting to give (an old) decorated bike, as a hint to Kimberly's second country. She found a secondhand one and my mother proposed to help decorate it. Both of them had been collecting secondhand white artificial flowers, baskets, buying ledlights and white spray paint, for weeks. Sandra found a whole bag of lace decorations that could be put on the rims, 346 pieces for a total of 1 Euro...

Sandra could put the bike in the train from Amsterdam to Utrecht but then had to bike to my parents' home, a 45 minutes ride, which wasn't easy on that old wreck. Sandra came three times to IJsselstein to pimp up the 'wedding bike'. My mom and she had a lot of fun, and for my mother it was nice she could participate at preparing something for the wedding. The bike looked great and it was a wonderful surprise for Kimberly and Jeremy when they discovered it.





Nicolas informed his clients they couldn't use the horse carrière for a week because of his niece's wedding.

The company that set up the crystal transparent tent arrived on Monday, they were 11 persons working on it and got it up that same day with the wooden floor laid down. Very impressive.

That whole week we'd been putting things in place but most had to be done the day before. The bales could not be put in place in advance as it rained again on Thursday night, luckily it didn't rain after that. The weather was very very hot, which was hard on everyone. But everything better than rain !

Friends from abroad had started to arrive.

Fiorella came all the way from Peru. Trisha, Kimberly's former nanny from the States and her son arrived by car from Amsterdam where they'd landed. They visited my parents on their way which was a charming moment for the 4 of them.

They were of good help on that 'Day - 1' !

Monique prepared lunch every day during the week and on Friday the 1<sup>st</sup> of July we were 20 persons having lunch at the Fort. A delightful moment in spite of the stress and tiredness. That day I saw Kevin suddenly running around and screaming "Loïse you got it, Loïse you got it !!!" He was trying to find Loïse, wanting to tell her he found out she succeeded her final exams, by the way forgetting to look for himself...! He succeeded too so more good things to celebrate !

In the afternoon my mission was to drive around the area to get the video projector and screen as well as the photo booth machine which took me a couple of hours as it wasn't next door, I was glad to be away from the stress for a moment ! 😊





On Friday night Kimberly's former nanny from Denmark arrived with her husband, leaving 4 kids at home 😊, as well as my Dutch friends that were invited.

Sandra had been cooking the whole day, helped by my French friend Régine, so that we could offer a meal to all the foreign guests coming from far.

My friend Paula had broken her wrist by playing senior soccer 2 weeks before the wedding and got a complication in the week before, she then decided not to come, of which she informed me, crying on the phone, on Thursday. She didn't sleep the whole night through, tossing and turning, regretting her decision. The next morning she'd decided to take the risk and to come anyway, but the friends she was coming with by car had already left and not seen her desperate phone calls...

She then decided to come by night train, arriving on Saturday morning. So an even more difficult trip, changing trains in Switzerland, another night without sleeping. The other dutch friends went to get her at Geneva train station, completely exhausted, but she was so happy she could be there and so were we.

D-day arrived. The last decorations were put up by a friend and colleague of Kimberly that Saturday morning. We were so thankful she could do it, working in the same branch as Kimberly she has a good eye, so Kimberly was confident she would do it the right way 😊.

I got my hair done at home by a now retired hairdresser from Saint Julien, she used to put up my hair in chignons for contracts with my band and is quite an expert. I had asked if she would do my hair on this special day. She said she was honored I'd asked her.

I then took off for the Fort where the bride and bridesmaids' hair were done by Kimberly's witness-bridesmaid, 'my personal shopper friend who has a beauty salon did our make-up. I helped Kimberly in her dress. Jeremy's was helped by his mother, up in the hay barn. A real country wedding !

The big moment arrived, we were not supposed to be watching, but the family and friends present were all trying to get a glimpse when Jeremy discovered his beautiful bride before taking off for the townhall.

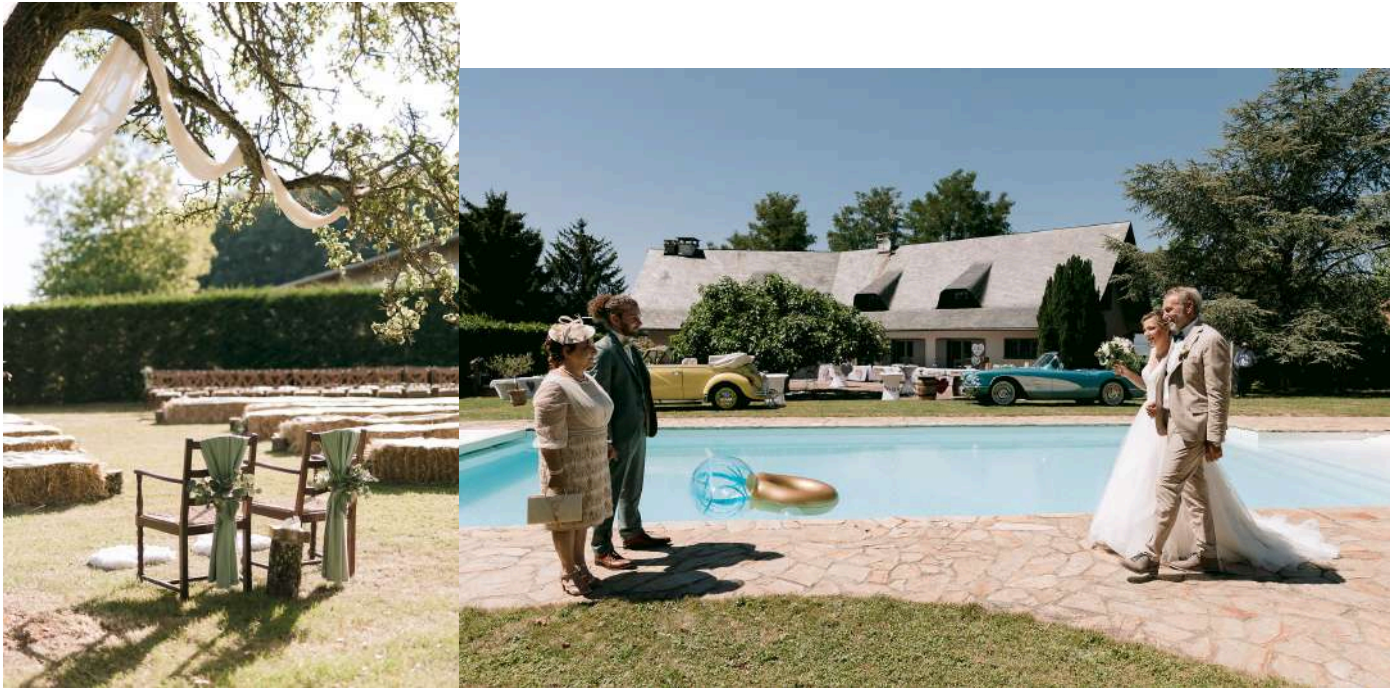
My brother filmed everything so my parents could watch all of it on air-streaming. They sat on their couch the whole day with their I-pad enjoying these special moments ! Great technology !







After the townhall the cars arrived one by one at the Fort on specially chosen music and Daddy Jacques gave his daughter away just beneath the stairs where they gave each other their first kiss almost 12 years ago...



It was after a beautiful and emotional ceremony that the newly-wed came down the same stairs and guests threw flower petals before 'attacking' the 'Vin d'Honneur'. When the 'Vin d'Honneur' was finished the guests that were invited for dinner followed the bride and groom to the horse carri re to discover the amazing decorated site and crystal tent. There were games, a great buffet and the little kids could ride a sweet little pony.





At the 'golden hour' the bride and groom left to have their pictures taken at the vineyard. This allowed us to practice for our animation....

When Kimberly was little our Australian friend Leonie had been her nanny for several months. When she left Kimberly would be saying 'Gease, gease' everyday, I didn't understand what she meant until I realized she had been watching the movie 'Grease' about 4 times a week with Leonie and wanted me to turn on the video again.... So 'Grease' being an 'important movie' for Kimberly and our whole family, I'd decided to organize an animation to that music asking people to sing 1 sentence, standing up one after another, and all guests singing the refrain together. I asked my friends whom I knew good singers to do the first sentences and people volunteered for the others. Jacques told me I was crazy, that it would never turn out good....



The introduction to our little show was as follows :

Have you ever wondered what Kimberly's last name will be from now on ?

Will she keep 'Dutoit' ? Will she take 'de Surmont' ? Both maybe ?

In the family, we had found her, rather THEM, a very good name.

Loïse had taken that very seriously and in 2015 she wrote this letter to her sister and future brother-in-law : (Kimberly had found this letter amongst some old documents and had given it to me 2 months before, I couldn't believe it, it was completely in the theme of our little show !)

"Subject : Your life

Dear Mister de Surmont and Mrs Dutoit,

Herewith I inform you that your request for the change of your family name has currently been accepted.

You have an appointment on Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2015 at my office to finalize the documents as to obtain your new name : **De Sur Mon Toit....** "

which translated literally, means 'From on my roof'.

Well, legally, it will be hard to adopt, but one thing is for sure :

if Kimberly takes Jeremy's name, her initials will be :

And here arrived a couple of Kim & Jerry's friends dressed in bathrobes with on their back written '**DSK**'. You may recall the story of the former IMF President Dominique Strauss-Kahn, called DSK, in his hotel bathrobe abusing the housekeeper...

The couple took off their bathrobes and underneath they were dressed up as John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John in the movie Grease. Then the Kareoke movie started and the singers popped up, surprising Kimberly and Jeremy. It was a success, although I must say thank goodness we had been able to practice.... Kimberly loved it ! The whole party stood up in the end to get close to the couple while singing the refrains, it was an awesome moment. I had found a 'Pink Lady' bib and a 'T – bird' bib that I had the Grease-couple put on the bride and groom in the end. In fact that Pink Lady bib had given me the idea for this whole animation quite a while ago... ☺



Dinner started when the couple made their entry into the illuminated tent.

Jeremy's parents had hired a magician who did tricks at the tables and a small show later in the evening. Two couples (a 3<sup>rd</sup> couldn't come because of Covid...) of our friends who got married also a 2<sup>nd</sup> of July did a speech.



The newly-wed 'opened the dance' as we say, with their so well performed and moving dance.

My band played and people all danced and sang along like crazy.

The cutting of the Wedding cake was a magical moment with a champagne cascade and fire works in front of it, a surprise for Jacques and me too.



Around 4H30 am most guests had left. Kimberly and Jeremy's friends stayed and they danced until early morning, all sleeping, a couple of hours, at the Fort, until it was time for the After-Wedding-Brunch. We had brunch with the close family and friends, and guests from abroad, in the shade of the trees at the Fort, it was still very hot. A lovely moment. Presents were unwrapped and wonderful wedding moments shared.

After saying goodbye to part of the people we started to tidy up as Nicolas needed the site for his clients as soon as possible. Loads of work in the stunning heat, being all very tired... In the late afternoon we forced the newly-wed to enjoy the swimming pool for a while with their friends who had stayed to help, getting a cool down that was needed. My new-son-in-law thought it was a great idea to jump in the pool carrying his new-all-dressed-mother-in-law in his arms...

All decoration was removed from the horse carrière on Sunday, but still a lot of things were put in the pony boxes that cousin Romane had cleared for the occasion.

We continued on Monday, just stopping at noon and having lunch at the Kebab restaurant with our last guests from far abroad and my brother and Augie. A sweet after-wedding moment shared together.

In the afternoon I took off with Sandra for my 'tour of the area' again to take back the hired video and photobooth material. During the whole week a lot of stuff had to be transported from the Fort to Kimberly's & Jeremy's place and to our garage.

We all felt the day had gone by too quickly, as if it had never taken place.... That's how it goes...! But we have left the great memories, beautiful pictures and a moving video done by professionals, a joy to watch !

Partying went on on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> of July as we celebrated Loïse's and Kevin's school achievement. Weather was still hot and we had homemade hamburgers outside by the swimming pool.

Had been focusing on the wedding over the year and thought we would be in Saint Julien all through the summer but it turned out to be the most hectic summer ever with a lot of super trips !

I waited the very last moment to see if I would have a contract with my band for the French National day but nothing came up, Covid was paying its toll, and so we decided to get tickets to join our friends we've been going to Greece with since 2 years, and their daughters, on the island of Amorgos, a week after the wedding. Spent a marvelous week and got a good rest from the wedding but the good feeling quickly disappeared when Jacques and I found out our boat to get to the airport in Santorini was cancelled because of the strong wind. Had to take two other boats, changing at Naxos, which could also be cancelled. Fortunately they weren't, but then our second boat was late.... We looked at others flights, even for the next day, but nothing was available...



We spoke to some Swiss people also having to take the flight to Geneva, and on the boat, while they tried to contact the airport, I could get in touch with a taxi service which I ordered for this family and us. The crew let us go off the boat as the first persons and we ran to the taxi, at the airport we passed by the people queuing for security yelling our plane was leaving and we got at the terminal 2 minutes before closing time. They were still boarding so we were OK, we made it, but it was so stressful...

In the meantime Loïse spent a couple of days in the Netherlands with my parents. Visiting her uncle Lennart, going for a bike ride, being spoiled by her Oma etc.

I spent one day at home and then left for London to meet up with my friend Paula. In December we'd decided in a crazy mood to go to the ABBA Holograms Concert. ABBA has been important for us throughout our highschool years and we know all the songs ! ☺. Luckily the heath period just finished, they'd had 40 °C with airports and roads closed, but it was still 27 °C, which is hot for being in a metropole.

In our hotel room we found a lot of leaflets about the shows going on and when I saw there was a 'Back to the Future' Musical I told Paula I just had to go. Our budget exploded, London is soooo expensive, but the show was marvelous and so was the concert at the ABBA Arena. We met up with Leonie and Gary from Australia. Leonie and two friends of hers had bought tickets for the same day. After the concert we went to a bar just opposite the stadium, Leonie's friend saying it was written on social media you just had to go to afterwards. We were having a drink in the first room and danced and sang loudly beside our table on ABBA and other groups' music they were playing. We found out there was a dance in the second room on ABBA music but you had to pay another 10 pounds a person to get in which we didn't want to spend. After a while a waitress came and threw 5 bracelets on our table allowing us to get in the 2<sup>nd</sup> room... we think they needed some people to push up the ambiance, or did we get on her nerves singing so loud and dancing beside our table...? ☺  
Going home was another 'bad trip', this time my flight had an 4 hour delay, no information so just waiting, and walking several kilometers in the airport with my small but heavy little backpack to get food as time went by.



Two days after returning home we left by car to the Alsace area where we stayed two nights in an Airstream caravan, a present from a number of friends for my birthday. The airstream was standing on the site of a well-known 2 stars (used to be 3) restaurant and had been very luxuriously renovated. The diner was included but we were disappointed, of course the food

was good but it was not exceptional, no surprises, no beautifully dressed plates as at Aribert we had been to in March. With these older family star restaurants it seems they are 'surfing on the wave' and not taking a new look at themselves.

On the road we came upon a sign of a village called DANNEMARIE, a wink to the theme of my birthday !



From the Alsace we went to the friends we go to Greece with, living near Bourg-en-Bresse. They had organized a surprise for my birthday and we took off from their place the next morning. The invitation said 'Hunting for the Treasure of the lost Princess'.

They said we were first going for lunch in Paris...which is a 4 hours' drive... we didn't know if we had to believe them, but knowing they love to go for long drives we got scared we were really going to... It turned out we went for a two hour's drive to the source of the Seine, which is the river going through Paris. The town of Paris bought the source, so this small place is part of Paris ! A good joke.

It was very interesting, and our friends had prepared a wonderful classy pick-nick with real china dishes, cutlery and glasses.

We were then told we were going to visit a crater, so we wondered if we were going to the Auvergne where there is a lot of geological volcano history, but we stopped in Châtillon-sur-Seine where we visited a museum where is exposed a 1.64 m high Greek volute krater that was found in the tomb of a Celtic Princess named Vix in the area. These kraters where used to keep wine. Very impressive and interesting.

We stayed overnight in Troyes, a beautiful town with 16<sup>th</sup> century half-timbered houses. The next day we visited the former abbey of Fontevraud that had been transformed into a prison in 1800. They imprisoned even small children in horrible circumstances. The prison was used until the seventies. When we visited, a small renovated part of it was still used a prison, but these 36 high security prisoners were going to be transferred at the end of the summer to a modern one.





I had started to feel extremely exhausted since a couple of days, the wedding stress finally caught hold of me, and that day I lost my voice. I could hardly speak or even whisper anymore, let alone sing....which I was supposed to two days later for the Swiss national day, first contract since over a year with my band.... I waited the next day but it was impossible for me to sing so I called my band... It was too late for them to find a replacement so they had to do without and the boys sang most of my songs. I felt very bad letting them down. Back home I got a good rest and then Kimberly's Danish nanny stopped on their way from their holiday in Italy for 2 days with their 4 blond kids (12 to 7). A joy to have them, the kids enjoyed the pool until late at night. We also went to have dinner at the vineyard.

They left early on Thursday the 4<sup>th</sup> of August and Jacques and I left a few hours later for the airport with Jacques' brother Nicolas and wife Marine. We had offered them a trip to Spain for their wedding last January. Bastian's best friend is manager at the Airport Lounge for companies we were not flying with. We knew he wasn't working that day, but Jacques presented himself saying he usually stops by to say Hi to Robert... the girl at the reception desk let us in anyway 😊, so had a classy wait with free coffee and buns ! Good start ! Had a lovely 6 days stay. We were afraid it would be too hot but in fact it wasn't worse than in Saint Julien. Went to several beaches, nice restaurants and visited beautiful Andalusian villages.

Back home we found out Loïse was having Covid, again. We stayed only half a day and took off to Carroz to meet a Dutch friend of mine, Karin - who has also been an exchange student in Winfield - , and her husband, who were stopping by on their way back from vacation in Italy. Had a great catch up. Jacques hadn't seen them for ages.

End of the week I started to feel ill and the next morning did a self-test, positive... I was supposed to take a plane to the Netherlands, ahead of the rest of the family, a couple of days later for my parent's 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary weekend.... I changed my ticket to the latest moment and stayed in bed 2 days, after that I was on the couch feeling very tired.

I left on Friday after noon, luckily no one else in the family caught the virus and the others joined on Friday night. My Mom had asked a few months before if Kimberly could put on her wedding dress on the party so my parents would get to see her wearing the dress in real. Kimberly was scared to put the dress in a check-in suitcase, and managed to push it in her carry on luggage. The 6 of them were making quite some noise at the terminal, having fun all together, so when the ground stewardess looked for people she could take the cabin luggage from, as there were too many, and thus check them in, she found this little group quickly. Kimberly told her 'No way, my wedding dress in there !', the stewardess then turned to Jeremy who said 'No way, my wedding outfit is in here !'.... The stewardess then asked 'Now, who is attending this wedding ???' and decided this whole bunch could all take their luggage on board 😊.



Friends of my parents, Ria and Gé, and who attended the wedding, lent us a car and Gé and I went to the airport to get the group with his and my parent's car. They were all hungry and aching for dutch snacks and we found one that was still open in the center of the town where my parents live. The young owner was very friendly, and quite surprised with this French-Dutch speaking family. We had a nice chat and the best snacks ever. We explained why we were here. She said 'See you tomorrow' and we answered we probably couldn't and she said 'I'm sure you will be back' !

Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup> was the big day, hectic preparing at the bed-and-breakfast and taking off to town where I had booked a hairdresser for Kimberly, as a surprise, and for myself. Loïse and Kevin had the task to get the bouquet for my parents and a small wedding bouquet I had ordered as a surprise for Kimberly. We then went to get the wedding cake. My parents not having any wish for a gift, my mom, after seeing the photos of Kim and Jerry's wonderful wedding cake, said she'd never had a special wedding cake for their wedding and would love to have one. The lady did a beautiful job. I had also ordered napkins with their names and dates and we took some decoration from Kimberly and Jeremy's wedding to put on the tables.

The party was held at the castle my ancestors built in 1350 and which we visited last year the day after my parents' party. My brother got to pop the bottle of cava with a sword and then my parents cut the cake with it, helped by the newly wed. Their weddings being 65 years a part... incredible...

We had all put on our wedding outfits and had pictures taken with my parents so it looked a bit as if they had been to Kim and Jerry's wedding.

Had a great moment with the family, seeing some of my old aunts and uncles again and my mom's nephew and niece, 2 of her brother's children. They lost both their parents a couple of years ago.

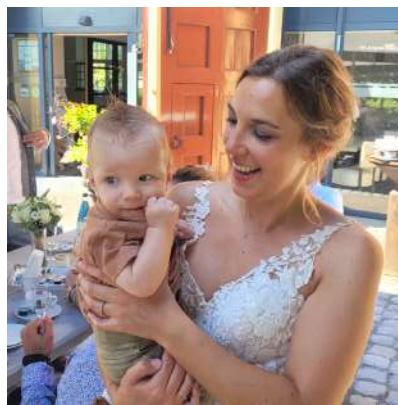
Finally got to see the youngest ones of the family, the two '22 newborns, Nanuk, son of Bo, my niece, born in January, and Shania, my niece Marije's 4<sup>th</sup>, born in April.

After lunch we visited the castle with the same guide who had given me the 750 year old beer mug to hold last year.

My sister-in-law Augie did all the photographing and made a great short video of this happy day. We're grateful she always takes on this task !

Soooo thankful we could celebrate this special event, in good health, with great weather at a great spot !





The party ended around 5 pm and we asked my brother and his girlfriend for a good place to visit. They send us to a lovely little town, went for a walk and had a drink. We got hungry, all looked at each other, and off we went, back to IJsselstein, my parents' town, to the same snackbar. The girl said 'I told you you would be back !!!'. She offered us some new snacks to taste and when we got to talk about food specialties we explained her the French 'foie gras', then she sent one of her employees to a supermarket to have us taste a liver sausage from the area she said we just had to try. So nice ! Another fun moment shared.

Next day we had lunch at my parents, and what did we have : dutch snacks...!!! All happy again, but must say after 3 days I did not want have them anymore the rest of the week.. Before going to the airport we visited Utrecht, a nice student town. It was loaded because of a race that had been going on, and with the great weather the terraces were crowded. I stayed another 5 days, quietly with my parents and the last night in Amsterdam with Sandra. We went to an exposition about 'The Culture of Gifts' in a museum, and I just had to go, as usual, for the most incredible softice cream you can only get in this tiny little shop in the center of Amsterdam.

Upon returning home Loïse and Kevin prepared for their 4 week trip to Koh-Samui, Thailand. A couple of friends were joining them later. Jacques' second cousin Laurent was over there too and they spent time with him and his Thai girlfriend and friends. A great experience.



Kimberly and Jeremy left for their 3 weeks Honeymoon on Bali, Indonesia. Had a wonderful time, visiting the rice plantations, staying in beautiful hotels, had dinner in a cave with light show. Kimberly's godfather had found a hotel residence for 100 euros a night instead of 1000... They had a house, with private swimmingpool overlooking the sea, and a butler ! He served great breakfast and they had two hours private access to the bowling and karaoke place of the residence !

About the same time I left by car to the South-West of France to join a couple of friends visiting another couple-we-had-been-staying-with-2-years-ago. Jacques and I were supposed to go together, but as Jacques was selling his vending machine business he was very busy and also the first harvest of our grapes was going to take place earlier than expected because of the hot summer....

As we had planned a trip with our car along the west coast our friends counted on us being there with our car so I decided to go anyway. The friends had to put up with me alone! I did the trip with a stay overnight somewhere half way. Stayed a couple of days at the home of the lovely couple we had stayed with 2 years ago and then took off for the 'Dune de Pilat', a very big sand dune on the ocean which we climbed. Very impressive. Arrived at the 'Ile de Ré' (Island of Ré) where we stayed 3 nights. We rented non electrical bikes. But it was very hot, and with the wind biking was tiring, I felt as if my head was in a convection oven ! ☺ Upon arrival at the hotel we jumped in the pool and it was as if you could hear 'pffssss' .... ☺. Visited the nice town of La Rochelle before going up a bit north on the coast to a village near La Baule, a chic beach resort. Here we rented electrical bikes, wow, soooo easy ! Did fun rides through salt pans, had oysters and shrimps along our way. We had great weather the whole trip ! Had a marvelous time.





The 17th of September there were 16 persons harvesting 1600 kilos of grapes in two hours. Unfortunately that day it was very cold.... Jacques took off right afterwards with 3 other persons and two vehicles packed with the grapes to take them to a wine cooperative an hour from Saint Julien where they were pressed immediately. Bastian stayed to do the catering , 'feeding' 'our crew' ☺ with a BBQ, our other kids and my self being away !



End of September we attended Loïse and Kevin's graduation in a big theater in Geneva. We already met Kevin's father but now finally got to meet his mom. Had a drink together and shared a nice moment, being proud of our kids !

The signature of the sale of Cafedistrib' took finally place on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October after a stressful period, especially the last couple of days before. Jacques is still doing a lot of paperwork and has been busy with the transfer since, but he now feels the weight is really starting to take off his shoulders. Our employee, Martial, who has been working for us since 23 years, is now working for the new owners, his takeover was a condition. The new owners are people we know well but of course everybody works in a different way, so Martial will have to get used to it.

The 10<sup>th</sup> of October we left for Spain, taking Jacques' mother with us. We booked for assistance and the flight went very well. They upgraded our rental car so a nice start of this trip. We thought we wouldn't do too many things so his mother would get a rest, and thus had planned to stay quietly at the apartment on some days, which I must say, wé also enjoy..., but at breakfast Mamie would ask : so what do we visit today ??? ... So on the road again...

We had lovely weather, Jacques and I would go to the swimming pool and we had breakfast and lunch outside. We spent two nights in Sevilla, such a beautiful town, where we visited the cathedral and royal castle. Everything went so well and Jacques' mother was sooo happy that it even made her cry. The last day she had sardines, which she's fond of, and a pint of beer (!) on the beach, great sea view and our feet in the sand. A magic moment.



Upon returning home Bastian turned 24, had a family meal just before he left for a vacation at La Rochelle, where I had been in September, visiting with a friend from high school.

Two of my best friends were having health problems, they both had surgery on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October. One of them got a mechanical heart valve, the surgery went fine but she got lung complication afterwards. She's doing OK now but it took quite a while. She is still on her way to complete recovery, getting her condition back slowly.

My other friend had an tooth implant that got infected and her jaw necrosed. She was in a diving decompression chamber for a couple of hours, 6 days a week for 2 months, to try to stop the necrosis by getting a lot of oxygen. Thank God it did. She then got a jaw prothesis. They worked with her fibula and 3D. The operation took 8 hours with 4 surgeons and two specialists. They succeeded but her recovery will take a lot of time, there have been some alerts and going back and forth to the specialist again. She cannot chew for 6 months and is waiting for a denture.

Also Jacques godchild and niece Aurelie, 38, had a severe epileptic attack and they found a brain tumor, miraculously they have been able to operate it and it turned out to be benign... So as I always say in my letters : only health is important, which we wish you more than anything . We are very thankful we're all doing fine, in spite of age advancing.... 😊

Beginning of November Loïse and Kevin decided to go to the Netherlands for a week by car. They stayed with Opa & Oma, and Sandra in Amsterdam. A great opportunity for me to give them long lists of Sinterklaas goodies and dutch groceries to take back !

I started the Sinterklaas gifts, surprises and poems already in October because I left on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November to the Netherlands. My father just turned 97 and my mother was going to have her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday. Kimberly joined me for the weekend. Had great quality time. Kimberly wanted to offer them a High Tea for their birthdays and I offered them a dinner in a Greek restaurant. When leaving for the High Tea their seat lift got stuck in the middle of the stairways... Had to guide my father down from upstairs. We asked my brother if we could do something about it and he sent explanations by WhatsApp, the last message saying 'you have to take the electrical plug out first' .... It was a challenge for his blond sister and niece to find where the plug was at....



When we got back from High Tea Kimberly and I started the job, Kimberly is quite handy at these sort of things thanks to her work, but we were anxious because my brother had said there would be a spark coming out, which it did... Kimberly succeeded in making the lift work again, such a relieve. My parents really need it to go up and down. On Sunday my niece Marije came with her husband and their 4 kids. Such a joy all these little ones running around. My Mom had a Sinterklaas present for them and it was great seeing them all excited, unwrapping and playing with it.



I did get to see almost all my dutch friends , being on and off at my parent's home which was a good balance. Amongst others I went to an exposition about Gospel music with my friends from highschool. Miranda – the dutch friend who had lived in France for 30 years but who went back – and I joined each other at this place called Frankrijk (France) in the middle of the Netherlands and where I had celebrated my birthday once with my dutch friends. Had of course our picture taken underneath the sign.

Was also able to take my parents to the hospital for my fathers' 2<sup>nd</sup> eye cataract surgery. I urged my mother to call for homecare as I'd found out my mother was giving my father his showers and putting his clothes on, this has becoming difficult for my dad. But it is hard and tiring on my mother who is quite an age too ! After some searching she finally got hold off the right person and had an appointment a week later and a nursing auxiliary coming only a couple of days after that. Couldn't have wished better !

In the meantime Jacques went back to Spain, with 4 friends this time, to take padel courses and spending a good time together. The friends stayed for 5 days and Jacques was going to stay on his own for another 5, enjoying being by himself, finishing up things in the apartment, discovering new places. But when one of the friends heard Jacques was not leaving at the same time he changed his ticket to stay with him.... Not really what Jacques had imagined 😊. They had fun anyway of course, played more padel and Jacques made him 'work' in the apartment 😊.

Back home I had just one week left to finish the Sinterklaas presents, had still a lot to do. We decided to draw names this year because the unpacking lasts too long....

Everybody prepared for 3 persons this time, except for me : I had my 3 names, and I prepared for the 3 persons Jacques drew, still too busy with business, and I prepared another 6 which are the 'bigger' presents for everybody as we do not give gifts at Christmas. So for me no change !

The 3<sup>rd</sup> of December at 1.45 pm Zwarte Piet came, Jacques' friend Yves as usual, and he was about to begin his yearly speeches (which I had asked to be short this time...! ☺ ) when there was a big knock on the door.... Everybody turned to me saying 'What did you concoct this time ?!', but I was just as surprised ! Another Zwarte Piet walked in, we didn't recognize him at first, and then saw it was Bastian's best friend Robert ! Such a nice surprise prepared by Bastian ! We had a good laugh ! Robert is from Albania and he told us they always have a traditional family meal for Saint Nicolas, the 6<sup>th</sup> of December.

Our Zwarte Pieten left and we could read the poems, admire the surprises, open the packages and eat the dutch goodies.. It still lasted until about midnight .... A wonderful family moment shared together.



Two friends of ours had had a bet about when the Euro was introduced. The friend who lost (he works for a bank !!!) had to pay a MacDonald meal to the people being present. Off we went on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December. Here we were, 6 '50+' persons, finding out you can only order at a pay point, not with a real person at the counter anymore. We succeeded after a while and were quite proud of our old selves. We stayed for 2 hours in this cold open mall space, just as we would do in a nice non-fastfood restaurant, talking and laughing.... Guess they'd never had people staying that long at a MacDonalds....

Kimberly and Jeremy went to the Alsace in the North-East part of France, near Germany, some 3H45 from Saint Julien to visit his grandmother who's in a nursing home there. She doesn't recognize Jeremy or Kimberly anymore but Jeremy wanted to go see her. As in this area there are lot of beautiful small villages with huge Christmas markets they had a wonderful weekend after all.

Word Championship Soccer had started and as France continued to be in we had some nice evenings with friends watching the game. After the quarter finals our friend Fred's son, Maxime - who lives in Dubaï and who had been going to all the games France was playing -



called, and said that if France would play the final he could get tickets. Fred and Jacques got very excited but then heard the price... Anyway they had to wait the outcome of the half-final game. France won and Maxime was on the phone again. They said it was a once in a lifetime and I said 'Jacques, this will be your late extra Sinterklaas present, your retirement present, your early Christmas present and early 60<sup>th</sup> birthday present'...! ☺ They got on the internet right away to get plane tickets, this was Wednesday evening. Fred and Marie went home at 1.15 am as it had been a big hassle to put everything together in the special application that was needed to get in the country and to go to the game.... Quite some stress...

Fred and Jacques left on Friday morning all excited. Saw them on television on Saturday and Sunday several times in interviews, singing and dancing with all the supporters. They told us it was an incredible atmosphere. I watched the game with Marie trying to see if we could get a glimpse of them in the tribunes. They sent us pictures and they were really well seated, being close to the field. As we all know, a very disappointing outcome of the game but after half time it had been very exciting and we were happy for them it was so thrilling until the end. They got to visit Doha and came home on Tuesday morning.



Bastian had been watching the game with his grandfather in the Netherlands, he went to see them for 4 days. Had a good time with his Opa and Oma, cleaning their car, making dinner for them (a 'Croziflette', the only thing he really knows how to cook...☺), going out with his friends from the supermarket he had worked for 8 years ago, enjoying dutch life. Loïse and Kevin watched the game on their phone at the Nantes airport, a town in the northern part of France. Kevin wanted to go to a boxing match and for Sinterklaas both of them got the tickets, the flights and the hotel nights. They spent a lovely weekend. The French boxer won so did better than the French soccer team ! ☺

Christmas was of a different kind this year. In order to have all the kids together we held a Christmas brunch on Saturday the 24<sup>th</sup>. At 5 pm Christmas we took off with Bastian, Kimberly, Jeremy and his parents to watch the movie Avatar 2 at the Imax theater. After the movie, it was almost 9 pm...., we went to a Kebab restaurant who's Jacques' client. When we arrived there were only Turkish and Moroccan people having dinner, and from their looks we realized they thought it was quite weird for them to see a French (Christian) family coming in at Christmas Eve...

The owner really did his best for us, grilling a good piece of meat just beside our table by himself, everything was delicious, we had great fun.

The next day we had a Christmas meal with Jacques' mother, Loïse, Bastian and Kimberly's godmother and partner. Kimberly and Jeremy celebrated Christmas with his family that day.



Left for Carroz the next day. No snow, and too warm. Such a strange atmosphere.

New Year's Eve I had a contract with my band which hadn't occurred since almost 18 months (except for Kimberly's wedding, but I only sang a few songs with them). Also there were only 4 of us, our drummer's decided to leave after 30 years of 'musical life together'. We alternated with a DJ, but that was hard. Going up and down the scene while almost falling asleep when waiting our turn again, and record music is much more rousing, especially as we were playing with a rhythm box instead of live drums...

But it was a great evening with marvelous decoration in the Roaring Twenties theme, most people dressed up following the theme. A dance club performed and they showed a video as a 'silent movie' with images from the twenties and someone dressed up as Charlie Chaplin. When watching the movie I suddenly realized my father was born in that era...



The year is round. I'm finishing this on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January... Too many pages, even more as usual, but it was a hectic year with incredible events. Just don't read, or skip or whatever ! Wishing you a 2023 (well, the 11 months that are left of it) just as great as was our 2022 !

We hope to see you (again) this year. Know you're welcome at our home.

With all our love, Jacques, Anne Marie, Kimberly & Jeremy, Bastian, Loïse & Kevin