

Dear Friends and Family,
December 2017

What ? We're already approaching the end of 2017 ? Incredible !!!

Seems like yesterday we were in Carroz for the Christmas holidays, again without snow for the 3rd consecutive year. We celebrated Xmas at our home with Jacques' family. His elder brother's kids were with their mother which made it possible to fit the rest of the family in our living room...

In Carroz we did no skiing because of the lack of snow, went for some hiking instead. Loïse had a friend stay for a couple of days and had a great time chasing boys on the skating rink. Snow did fall on Friday the 13th of January. We had celebrated Kimberly's 22nd birthday at their home and went to Carroz afterwards. We had to drive at less than 50 km per hour on the highway and going up the mountain was a terrible drive... Luckily it was in the middle of the night with hardly any people on the road. At one time we thought a car would slide into us, it was coming down side ways.... Right at that moment Loïse, who had been sleeping, opened up her eyes...

On the 8th of January my niece gave birth to my parent's first great-grand-son :
Brandon, a cute little boy in good health.

End of January Jacques and I went to Spain for a couple days as we've been doing for 3 years now. Got things sorted out, went for some sight seeing and had nice weather ! We rented out our apartment in the mountains in February and I went to the Netherlands with Bastian and Loïse for a small week. So we got to see Brandon and had a lovely time.

Back in France we met with our former au pair Anna-Karina from Denmark. We hadn't seen each other for 10 years, she now has 4 children ! We skied together for a day, it was great fun.

Half March my friend Roel came from the Netherlands with his wife and two of his daughters, they stayed a couple of days in Carroz and we skied together. So much fun we are still seeing each other while highschool is ages away !

We had our bi-annual 'Surprise Dinner' with Jacques brother, his partner and two other couples. We figured out from the 'mystery invitation' that it was going to be a Japanese meal, so here we were all dressed up as Geishas and Samurais ! They had decorated their living room in Japanese style and we had a great Japanese meal ! Must say the white make-up didn't make us look pretty.... We looked more like ghosts !!!

End of March Jacques had to be in Grasse in the south of France for business, I went with him and we stayed for a couple of days. Didn't have good weather at all but had a good time, we don't know this area very well. Met up with the son of one of our friends who's studying near Nice.

Beginning of April my parents arrived with my brother and his girl-friend Augie with their VW camper bus. We celebrated Loïse's Sweet Sixteen birthday, weather was great so we could have the meal outside. Her godfather and wife came too. My father asked if he could say a word, I translated it and everybody burst out in tears because I did... My father succeeded as usual, making people cry with his speeches !

We had a wonderful time. I took my parents to Louhans to visit an ancient hospice (end 1600), a former hospital and pharmacy, very interesting. We then went on to the Beaujolais area where we met up with my brother and Augie. We stayed in a marvelous bed & breakfast surrounded by vineyards. We had stayed there before with friends, it's a friend's brother's property. We had nice weather and the next day we cruised through the area, beautiful views and sights and wine tasting. My parents loved it. Had never thought we could do this.

In the meantime Loïse went to Berlin on a school trip. Upon her return Spring break started and she left for Lourdes with Church school where she helped pushing wheelchairs. It was a great spiritual experience, she really enjoyed it.

Jacques and I invited Jacques' mother to visit Rome where she had been on honeymoon 61 years (!) ago. She had once mentioned she so much wanted to return there. Bastian came with us. We walked almost 40 km in 4 days ! Even Jacques' mother (84) walked at least 37 of it ! A lot of tourists though, luckily I had taken tickets for the Vatican museum on the Internet, but to enter the St Peter we had to queue for several hours, almost started fighting with some persons who thought we had skipped the line ! Not quite the appropriate place for it....!

We met with the daughter of our friends who live in Singapore now, she was doing a job training in Rome for her hotel school. It was fun to see her there and to hear her experiences.

The 30th of April we held our 'Itinerant Lunch' for the 3rd time which consists of starting with the aperitif at one friends' house, going by foot to another friend's home for the starters, and so on. Weather was great, the main course was at our home and we had it at the swimming pool, quite unusual this time of the year. We went to 6 different homes and the entire meal lasted from 12 to 8 'o clock pm....!

The 6th of May we left with our friends (with whom we have been going on weekends since our wedding) for

1

Bordeaux. Jacques and I had been there in 2012 but it was great to go back. Lovely weather, stayed in a beautiful 'hotel house', rented bikes, had a guided tour of the city and visited the 'Cité du Vin', a new interactive wine museum. Although I don't drink any wine I found it very interesting, especially when I found out that it's in fact the Dutch who have made the Bordeaux wine good and famous !!!

Loïse is preparing her religious confirmation and went on a weekend again with church school which she enjoyed also this time. She succeeded her theoretical driver's exam the 10th of May and had 24 driving lessons over the summer, she can now practice her driving with us until she is 18.

Half May we celebrated Jacques' nephew - and my godchild - 's departure with his wife and their two little girls to La Réunion. Her fathers' side of the family is from there and they've decided to emigrate to this French island east of Africa. They got settled and seem to enjoy their new lives. Jacques's mother went to see them with her youngest grand-daughter in October. A 12 hours flight at her age but all went well.

The 20th of May we had our yearly family dinner with Jacques' mothers' side of the family, just before our departure for a 6 weeks stay at Koh Samui, Thailand. Bastian had to do a job training for his tourism studies and a second cousin of Jacques is working there in an agency who takes care of rental villas. They agreed to have Bastian work with them. We decided to go with him for this longer Thai experience. Bastian didn't say anything about it at first but then suddenly he realized and said 'but you're going to be with me all the time overthere ???', we reassured him saying we would be away several days so now and then from the house to visit some other places and islands...

The great news was Kimberly and Jeremy had decided to come for their two weeks summer holidays, so we were all together for some time!

We had to take Loïse out of school a few weeks early. We left with Jacques' second cousin Laurent (Kimberly's godfather) who has a house overthere, he stayed for about two and a half weeks.

Bastian had a great experience, it was hard work but relaxing at the same time in this beautiful exotic place. I didn't feel very comfortable knowing he was on the back of a motorcycle, especially when I found out he didn't always wear a helmet...

Loïse had wanted to try fitness and we (Jacques too, and even me !!!) went several times a week, a very simple place, no aircon, old machines, but we had fun sharing this with Loïse. The first time I thought I was going to faint because of the heat...! Ate out almost every night, such a wonderful and cheap food. Went shopping a lot and discovered great beaches.

We visited another island, Koh Tao, it's a very small island with especially diving tourism. Incredible how young all tourists were, we must have been the eldest on the island...! We went on a snorkeling boat trip. I was the only one of the group who saw a shark, at a few meters distance...quite a shock ! All these young tourists on the boat were jealous, I had become a heroin ! At the hotel we stayed at we met a young French girl who had taken her grandmother (!) on a trip to Thailand. We spent some time with them on the island and invited them to stay with us in the house on Koh Samui. They arrived a couple of days later, the poor grandmother was exhausted ! Kimberly and Jeremy had arrived that day too, unfortunately we couldn't be very good hosts because as soon as they arrived we took Loïse to the hospital as we suspected an appendicitis. She went through all kinds of exams, they didn't diagnostic an appendicitis but kept her for the night to be sure. The Bangkok Hospital at Koh Samui is like a 5-stars hotel, the price too... Fortunately our Gold Mastercard insurance payed everything but we had to wait for their payment transfer to the hospital before we could leave it... It was all quite stressful but Loïse was OK which was of course the most important.

After all these emotions we went with Kimberly and Jeremy to the mainland to an area where a dam created an enormous lake and where the jungle is protected, Kao Sok. We stayed overnight on the lake, a small longtail boat brought us there. We were only the 5 of us at this place, it was an incredible experience! We did some kayaking and the kids played Uno with the young Thai staff. The next morning we heard monkeys scream in the jungle and saw magnificent big birds.

Beginning of July we went back to France, leaving Bastian for a couple more days to finish his job training. Kimberly and Jeremy went on to Singapore and visited with our friends who have lived there for 3 years now. 'Kim & Jerry' loved their stay there. From there on they went to the Netherlands where they met up with Bastian at Amsterdam Airport and Loïse at my parents' home to go to my niece's wedding in the north of the Netherlands.

We had gotten home a few days earlier to get over our jetlag (yes, we're getting older !!!) before the wedding of our best friends Marie & Fred's son Maxime with Renée, a young woman from South Africa. We had to split up the family to be able to attend the two weddings, such a pity we couldn't do both. Maxime and Renée had asked

2

us ways before to drive the bride with Jacques' Corvette and my band to play at their wedding.

In these few days before the wedding my American sister Carla came with her husband and son Brennan, who joined them from China where he's teaching, to visit us for a short stay. It was great to see them again. I'm so grateful we're still in touch with each other.

Brennan stayed a bit longer and to 'earn his living with us' he cleaned and polished our three vintage cars we were going to use for the wedding. We called him 'Beef', from the 'Back to the Future' movies !

The 8th of July was a beautiful hot (too hot...) day. Jacques drove the bride, me in my Beate and a friend in our 2CH drove the bridesmaids. The civil ceremony was held in front of the town hall in the village where Fred is mayor, and he married his son like his father-in-law married his daughter and himself in 1988 !

Their daughter surprised the bride and groom by singing the South African national hymn in the 5 official languages (she had come to ask me the pronunciation of the Afrikaner!). It was a very emotional moment.

We then walked to the church where Marie's uncle married the couple. Laura sang again, 'Amazing grace' this time, tears were flowing.... A beautiful ceremony.

The wedding dinner was held in the communal building of the village. They had had a container come over from South Africa for the table decorations (!). Amongst others there were small 'Big Five' animals that Renée's parents had sprayed the wedding theme color (silver) before sending, but they had gotten quite sticky... of course that didn't matter ! The venue looked so sharp !

There were more emotional moments. Renée's father sang and played Neil Young's 'Heart of gold' with my band and said he had the time of his life ! It was a great international wedding with people who had come from all over the world. Some of them stayed the whole week and were there when my band played again in the village, this time for the French national celebration on the 14th of July. A great ambiance ! We

made Renée's father play again but now it was unexpectedly for him and almost the whole village was out there, he did a great job though and the crowd was screaming ! The kids had a fun time in the Netherlands. Kimberly helped my niece decorate their venue while she was completely jet lagged after a long flight, they had arrived with at 7 in the morning... The kids all looked sharp in their wedding outfits, Bastian was very handsome in the costume we had had made in Thailand as he needed some costumes for his tourism studies. It was great my parents could attend the wedding of their first grandchild.

Half July Loïse went again on a Church school trip, this time to Assise in Italy, she came back delighted, a great experience with other young people from different countries in a beautiful town.

End of July we took off to Sardinia, Italy, with Loïse. A couple of friends celebrated their 50th and their 20th wedding anniversary. She is from Sardinia. Their daughter had always been in class with Loïse and a lot of other people were there with their sons and daughters Loïse knows from school so it was fun for her. They held two great celebration evenings, there were about 70 French people who had come. Sardinia is a beautiful island. We went to different beaches, enjoyed the sun and the waves and the good Italian food.

Went back home on the 1st of August. At night I had to sing for the Swiss national day, always a nice contract. By the way, Kimberly received her Swiss nationality beginning of the year, quite quickly after submitting her file.

Jacques had always wanted a small fishing boat but the difficult thing is to have a spot on the lake. He heard through a friend's friend that someone was selling a little boat *with* its mooring ! He bought it with our friend Patrick and beginning of August we found a date to take the kids to discover the 'yacht' ! Eum, it's an old tiny boat that goes not more than 4 km per hour.... We picknicked on the lakeside and discovered how nice it is on Geneva lakeside, people bathing and having barbecues in the parks !

On the 6th of August I celebrated 25 years with my band ! They all came with their wives and children and we had a great time at the pool. We had a cake made especially for the occasion and the six of us cut it like newly weds cutting their wedding cake , it was written 'Extérieur Nuit 25 years' !

On the 12th of August we had our annual dinner with friends Jacques was in school with. It was our turn to organize and we surprised them by taking off with the 3 vintage cars. Stopped on the way to the restaurant to have a Champaign aperitif on a pick nick area and then went up the mountain to have an 'inside' barbeque in a small Scandinavian cottage called 'Kota'. We had been here with my parents. None of the friends had been there before so they were quite surprised. Had a lovely evening.

Loïse went into hospital on the 17th of August to have her 4 wisdom teeth taken out, Kimberly went to a dental

surgeon the next day to begin her implant treatment and gum graft as she had lost a tooth by falling when she

was younger. That night the three of us laughed until tears were running down our face : I found myself sitting at the table with two hamsters who didn't want to laugh

because it hurt too much !!!

3

It has been a long way but now, December, Kimberly finally got a new, although temporary, tooth. It will only be a couple of weeks and she'll have the final one. Must say we're lucky we are able to afford it...

The 24th of August we all went to the Netherlands to celebrate my parents' 60th wedding anniversary.

Camille, Bastian's girl-friend came too. She was supposed to stay with Bastian, Loïse and me the whole week, but unfortunately she got a letter from the nurse school that she was entering that she had to come for an introduction meeting a week before school started ! The poor girl had to take a new flight ticket to go back earlier. Luckily she could be at the celebration.

A celebration which had almost not taken place : a few days before we arrived my mother wanted to leave with their car but the door of their carport shut down again. My mother had seen this and was looking for the remote control when suddenly she heard a big bang against the car : My father who had been looking out of the window had wanted to warn my mother and ran (!) out of the house, he slipped and fell with his head against the car... His head was bleeding but he didn't break anything, no cerebral commotion, no internal hemorrhage, ... ! Incredible at almost 92 years old !!! There was an enormous bump in the door...

We went to Rotterdam where my parents were born and got married. My parents had rented a tram from 1931 just for our party and we had a 1,5 hour guided tour. It was great ! We then surprised my parents as we had booked two water (speed boat) taxis to take us to the restaurant. It took 4 persons to get my father into the boat... He was impressed by the speed. The kids were in the 2nd one and their driver went even faster, they loved it of course ! Got great pictures. At the arrival quay another surprise was waiting for my parents; this time we had a bicycle taxi come for the two of them. They went for a ride and were then taken to the restaurant, they looked like a king and queen in their carriage !

My sister-in-law Augie had proposed to make an album for my parents reflecting their 60 years of marriage. Each child and grandchild sent pictures that she put together into a beautiful memory book. She did an enormous job. I myself had to go through all my photo albums and those of the kids, most pictures were not digital so I spent hours scanning photos.... My parents were very touched. We had a nice dinner with view on the famous Rotterdam bridges. Normally my father gives a speech at this kind of occasions, he had started to write one but my mother found his words were much too old-fashioned , so she wrote a speech herself. She did a wonderful job using loads of dutch expressions with the word 'head', referring to his accident... we all had a good laugh ! Such a great moments to cherish.

Half of the family went back the next day, Camille a day later and then arrived Alexandra, Loïse's younger cousin. The two girls had a fun time biking, shopping. Loïse loved to show her cousin her second country !

Upon returning home we had a friend giving his 50th birthday party. As his name starts with a 'S' he asked the guests "to come as a 'S' ", which gives way to a lot of

imagination !!! There were several Supermen and women, but also very original costumes ! Jacques dressed up as a 'Savoyard', Savoie is the name of our area. This area used to be very poor, with no work in winter, and young boys used to leave for the cities to sweep chimneys. So Jacques was dressed as a Savoyard chimneysweeper carrying his stepladder!

I decided to go wearing 'Sabots', the French word for wooden shoes, quite appropriate seen my nationality... I had found a fabric printed with wooden shoes and while in the Netherlands my mom made me a dress. I wore a belt with wooden shoes key chains, wooden shoes earrings and of course I wore my wooden shoes. I danced wearing them the whole night long ! Did have some sore toes the next day...

My friend Sandra came for a weekend, time went to fast, it's always a joy having her here with us.

When in France my friend Roel's wife had invited Kimberly to join her in Paris for a professional decoration convention in September. She's a trend watcher and travels all over the world for new trends. Kimberly loved it, naturally !!! Sent us loads of pictures of all the incredible designs.

School started again and Bastian is now in second year of Tourism studies and will have final exams in June. Loïse is a junior this year. She continues fitness after the Thai experience, this time in a nice place with aircon and new machines ! Jacques still plays badminton and squash. Kimberly enjoys her 80% job, it might become a 100% one. Jeremy is well appreciated in his work as a freeze system and air conditioning technician.

Camille had her first nurse jobtraining and tells us horrible stories...

Half September we went a couple of days to a Swiss mountain resort where retired friends of us have an apartment. Went for walks, to the spa and ate a lot of Swiss cheese... Great to discover some of the Swiss mountain area.

The following weekend it was our turn to have our half-yearly 'Surprise Dinner'. We took the theme of a French movie in which the character is always dressed in yellow.

We had set the table completely in yellow and all the food was yellow! Jacques was dressed as the movie character and me in fully yellow, the friends all came dressed as the movie character with the blond wig. 4

They had printed movie dialogues on their t-shirts but referring to Jacques and me ! Such a great idea ! Must say couldn't stand anything yellow after this for a while !

The last weekend of September we and friends took a couple of friends that had both turned 50 to the Beaujolais to the same B&B we had been with my parents. This time the vineyards were colorful and although the grapes had been picked already it was a beautiful sight, even with rainy weather.

Beginning of October we went on a weekend with friends we do city trips with, Porto in Portugal was this year's destination. A great town ! Although there were quite some tourists it was relaxing, weather was nice, we visited beautiful churches and went port tasting of course ! They make a lot of things out of cork which Kimberly loves so I was able to bring back a bag and other things made of cork for her as Saint Nicolas gifts.

My parents arrived with their friends by car, and my brother and Augie by plane, to attend our annual Press Day. It was grapes again this year after a 4 years break. Couldn't have asked for better weather, we were sooo lucky ! Jacques cooked a Thai Masaman, which was well appreciated by the 70 guests. The juice tasted good and we shared a very happy moment all together. A lot of friends helped cleaning up as well as Lennart and Augie who had helped also a good deal preparing the days before. My parents insisted on taking all of us out for dinner at the 'Barbeque Kota' we had been before, they wanted Lennart and Augie to have the experience so we went on Monday, such a joyful moment.

My brother left again on Tuesday but my parents stayed for a week. I took them to visit the Unesco classified vineyards in Switzerland, they are on steep hillsides along the lake. It was breathtaking ! I myself had never been there and I was surprised. The weather was in our favor again and the autumn colors were magnificent. Ate our sandwich down at the lake. Great moments.

We celebrated Bastian's 19th birthday on the 20th so that my parents could be there, his godfather and godmother came too. Autumn break started that evening.

Loïse went once more on a Church school weekend for her Confirmation preparation and enjoyed her vacation by having some parties until we left with her for a 5 day trip to the Perigord, a beautiful area of France but an area where there's not much to do for a teenager.... On the way she saw a sign saying 'Creuse' and she said : Oh no, no way I can go back to school saying I have been in la Creuse for my holidays !!! We visited a lot of marvelous medieval villages, Jacques and I were impressed. Loïse missed out on some of them, she slept through it in the car, so tired of the partying, her parents and the visits...

She did enjoy visiting 'le Gouffre de Padirac', an astonishing cave with galleries and an underground river, a dramatic scenery ! We also went to a cave with prehistorical drawings, very striking too.

We stayed in lovely bed & breakfasts, always so nice meeting the people.

The 5th day we left Loïse with a friend who has moved to Lyon and Jacques and I stayed a couple of days in the apartment of friends right in the center of old Lyon. Could do everything by foot and we enjoyed the city-life, except at night... it was quite noisy as there were 5 pubs in the street down below. Two nights it was extremely turbulent. We realized there was a soccer game Lyon against England going on and English supporters were shouting and singing outside the pubs until 2 in the morning ! 15 members of the French riot squad were just standing there, ready to interfere if things were turning bad. On the second night we were quite fed up with it and Jacques and I did something very naughty : we shut of all the lights and threw each a bucket of water from our 4th floor on the people, we then quickly closed the windows and hid for a moment.... Felt like little kids ! We discreetly looked from behind the bedroom window and realized things had gotten more agitated, the squad had put on their helmets, ready to interpose and people were shouting even louder and kicking things around ! We decided to keep low profile, too scared they would try to find who did it, breaking the doors, etc....

On the Saturday the children all joined us at the apartment and at night we went to a beautiful one star restaurant in a renaissance building. We had promised this for Loïse's 16th birthday but had not been able to gather for it until the 4th of November.... Had a lovely dinner, the kids were impressed by the 'ballet of waiters', very classy, and great food.

The next weekend we were invited by friends at their house, we were asked to come as 'Asterix and Obelix' characters, a world famous French comic strip about the Gauls in the Roman period. When my Mom was here we had gone to the market to put together some things to make the costumes. Could use our blond wigs from the 'Yellow Surprise Dinner again ! Jacques was dressed as the fish merchant who sells stinky fish in the comic

strip. He carried a wooden fish that we poured some Thai fish sauce on...it really smelled very bad ! I went as the bard, in the comic strip he sings and plays the lyre very badly, it was great to be allowed to sing off key for

once !!! There were all kinds of the Gaul characters as well as Romans, Vikings and Egyptians who also play roles in the comic strip. We had a lot of fun !

A week later we all left for the Netherlands again, this time to celebrate my Mom's 80th birthday.

5

Another great family moment ! In the summer my mother and I searched for a nice location and we found a place we could have the Dutch food she wanted and where we could play skittles (former bowling game) and other old Dutch games. It was great as we could move around, play games and talk with different persons, ...

I got to see some of my aunts and uncles which was a great pleasure. As Saint Nicolas had arrived in that town that day, two 'Zwarte Pieten' came, they did a dance and made everybody dance, even my father (who's never been a dancer !) moved as best and as much as he could...! Just before leaving a nice emotional moment : my niece Marije took the microphone and announced she is pregnant of her 2nd child !

The kids went home on Sunday night for school and work. Jacques went to The Hague with my brother to a Whiskey festival, they tasted 34 different whiskeys, you can imagine in which shape they were at night... Jacques left on Tuesday and I stayed a few days more so that I was there for my Mom's real birthday date. I got to meet all my Dutch school friends I'm still in touch with that week which was a lot of fun.

Beginning of December our friend from Finland held the Finnish Christmas party again, this time a double event as we also celebrated Finland's 100 years of Independence. All the guests did a little speech about Finnish traditions and our friend was very touched. We even sang (phonetical !) the Finnish national hymn !

Jacques and I went to Paris to see the 'Grease musical', a show I'd always been wanting to go to. It was great ! Good singing and dancing in a beautiful theater. We also visited the Paris Boat Show which Jacques wanted to attend. He would like to travel the world by boat, but decided we won't as we don't have sailors blood... Might go boating on rivers, if we go on sea it will be with a skipper...!

Back home it was time for our Sinterklaas celebration. I had asked Camille's twin brother to be 'Zwarte Piet', nobody knew so it was a big surprise. Camille couldn't believe her brother did it ! Great presents for everybody, Camille also did a great job writing poems. 'Kim and Jerry' made us go to their apartment where we had to do an 'escape room' kind of itinerary to find our gift : we're going to do an 'escape room' family outing again!

A wonderful Dutoit Five ++ moment all together, it took 9 hours this time to unwrap... Jacques and I just arrived from a couple of days in the south of Spain. We visited Cordoba, a beautiful town with its mosque that has been transformed into a cathedral. We went to a horse show of the Spanish Riding School combined with Flamenco dancing and saw dolmen of the megalithic period in Antequera.

We also walked the 'Camenito del Rey', the 'King's path', a path going through a magnificent canyon, hanging on a dizzying height... A very impressive experience ! It has again been a wonderful year, although there have been sad moments too : my father lost two of his sisters in one week's time. My mother lost her brother a couple months later in a very sad way; he fell down the stairs. My aunt had already lost her granddaughter who had killed herself and not long after her husband's death her son (my cousin) died from cancer. The brother of my niece Bo's boyfriend commit suicide. An aunt is struggling with cancer and our friend Patrick's Parkinson illness makes life more difficult for him every day. But he has been able so far to realize his dream : he quit his financial job and bought a ground on the mountain we see from our house. He constructed and furnished several beautiful log cabins he wants to exploit as a B&B as long as he'll be able to.... He held a house-warming party yesterday.

Makes us realize once again we shouldn't wait to live our dreams, but take the opportunities and make things possible whenever we can. We are thankful to be blessed by good health.

I'm very late in sending my wishes this year and this might arrive after Christmas, sorry. Know that we think of you often and hope you will visit, we always have time for people who want to come !!! With all our love, JAMKIMBALO ++ dutoitjam@gmail.com / 10 route d'Annemasse - 74160- St. Julien - France / +33 685052182

