

A Very Merry Christmas From Mark & Gilly

We trust that our 2010 Christmas letter finds all of our special people in great health and looking forward to a wonderful festive season. This year has been particularly busy for us.

In January, Gilly began to set up her new mobile custom picture framing business and given the inspiration she feels for great framing and art she aptly named it *Inspired Framing!* As with any new business there is lots of setting up and new learning to be done, which is, of course, still happening all the time. But with all the groundwork done she can now move towards more advertising and getting the name out there. There have been some lovely initial jobs and it is certainly a great feeling when you do your first proper job and get paid! She continues to work part time at Hall of Frame and has spent the year continuing to get to know her now co-framer and buddy, Narelle.

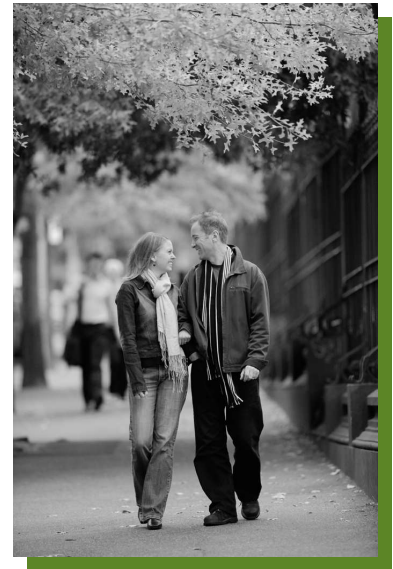
2010 also saw another momentous task, the sorting of her Mum's boxes. As you would all be aware, Gill's mum Claire needed to move into a nursing home last year and since then, her husband Henry has needed to sell his home and downsize. Claire had a great many boxes from her various international moves over the years so there was plenty to sort out, recycle and most importantly cherish. Given the monumental, and at times, very overwhelming task, she is thrilled to have gotten to the end (after about 12 months). In the process she was able to find some wonderful things including a bag full of old 8mm home films that she transferred to DVD. It was truly wonderful being able to give her sisters, Simone and Tonia, this amazing memory. She is also very thankful that she found them now as any longer and the films colours would have deteriorated forever.

Claire moved from Waverley Valley Aged Care (located in Glen Waverley) to Advent Care Yarra Valley, in Yarra Junction back in June. A conversation with an old customer of Henry's encouraged him to look at this facility that is 5 minutes away from us and, most importantly, Henry. Wonderful and caring staff and an environment that has a real soul to it. We are grateful that she is in such a great place. Claire is mostly stable now and lovely to be around, no more aggressive behaviour. However, conversations can be a little limited as her short term and long term memory are so damaged, and she gets very anxious. So all you are left with, really, is love - so that is what we do.

Gill's step-dad, Henry successfully moved into his new home in Millgrove at the end of October, which was a weight off everyone's minds. Happy in his new environment, he is keeping busy in his garden, sorting out his many boxes and spending more time with Claire – who is now much closer to him in Yarra Junction.

Gilly joined the Croydon Parish Players Choir back in January at the invitation of her friend (and choir director) Jenn Walter and has enjoyed the experience immensely. Having sung in choirs at school she wanted to pick up where she left off, so this was a perfect opportunity to do so. It also led on to Gilly landing a part in the Parish Players 2010 musical *The Music Man*. As a musical 'newbie,' she was quite nervous about being able to sing, dance and act all at the same time. However, with a little practice it all came together and a fantastic time was had. A great company, with great people and now great friends to boot.

Mark has also been involved in many new projects this year. In May, he tread the boards again at Sherbrooke Theatre Company, after his favourite director (and man who was responsible for our getting-together!) Horrie



Mark & Gill portrait, Melbourne March 2010



Faces of *The Music Man* – Jenn Walter, Meg Crompton, Cassie Taylor & Ms. Gilly!

Leek, asked him to be a part - Mark can rarely say no to Horrie!
In June, we saw our culinary and domestic lives turn upside down when we renovated our kitchen! Five weeks of nothing but basil pesto gnocchi and washing up in the laundry trough almost took its toll, but it was so very worth it in the end. We are now the proud owners of a dishwasher! That's right, Mark has retired his rubber gloves and is thoroughly enjoying the free time that a dishwasher owner gets! New timber, beautiful new granite named 'uba-tuba' (there's a reason why it rhymes with 'super-duper') and a gas cook top have transformed our house and made us say – hmmm 'what needs to be renovated now???!'

July saw Mark travel, once again, to America for work. More time spent at Project Adventure in Boston which included presenting his famous *Adventure Programming* workshop. Gilly missed being a part of it this year. His travels also took him down to Pennsylvania to spend time with our friend Tamarinde in what can only be described as a 'human oven' - an incredibly hot summer saw temperatures swelter and apartments reach boiling point. However, they seemed to survive and had a great time in the process exploring the surrounds of Chambersburg. Gilly enjoyed the many Skype sessions with them both. Mark also spent time with our good friends Rich and Elsje, who live close by to PA in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Rich, who is a die-hard Sting fan, managed to get tickets for all three of them to see the man himself in concert. Gilly was lucky enough to get sent some photos on her mobile phone from the concert – isn't technology great? Of course we'll overlook the fact that they probably weren't allowed to be taking happy snaps... don't tell Sting!!!!

Otherwise, Mark was typically busy delivering adventure programs throughout Victoria as well as Sydney, Brisbane, Tassie and many gigs in some remote parts of WA and QLD. Tons of voice-over jobs (mostly audio books), and quite a few MC gigs for weddings, conferences and trivia events. Mark's two activity books continue to sell well, and his various internet businesses also grow.

With some attractive renewable energy incentives available, Mark has been investigating the world of solar power. He has been very busy creating spreadsheets and comparing various solar systems (that's cells not planets!!!) Having settled on a rather large 4.3kw system, we are now looking forward to the installation of our panels in a few weeks and becoming a more sustainable household – indeed, we expect to be able to make money from supplying power to the grid!!

... and that, in a few short paragraphs, was 2010 for the Launching Place Collards.

At this time, we would like to take this opportunity to say how much we cherish you all in our life.

Have a wonderful Christmas filled with food, fun and most importantly, each other.

Love Mark & Gilly



Mark doing dishes in the laundry, June 2010



We welcome our new kitchen!

