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Although its already advent there is hardly a sign of winter yet. The small amount of snow which appeared earlier on the lower hills has long since gone and even the high peaks are largely without snow. We still don't need our winter coats when bicycling to the lab. (Is climate change really upon us?)

However the calendar is clear that it is time to try to re-establish contact and send our greetings. May we wish you and your family a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

For us the year has been one of sadness, joy and exhilaration. The sadness was the death of Pat's father. He had been in modest health since his illness last year but suddenly passed away in June at the age of 87. He was a thoroughly nice man, proud and supportive of the family and we shall all miss the friendly, interested conversations, the helpful advice and the crafty game of snooker that he still played despite his age. Grandmother is now by herself in her comfortable nursing home and she seems gradually to be adjusting to life alone after some 63 years of marriage.

The joy was the birth of two new grandchildren! Sarah Grace, our first German grand-daughter, was born in July in Düsseldorf to the evident happiness of her parents, Stephen and Constanza. There was great happiness too at the arrival of the second, Charles François, born in Paris in October, the third son of Michael and Nicola. William and James are intrigued by their new brother but the family had to adjust rapidly to the happy event when their car was stolen the day after Nicola returned from hospital. That makes six grandchildren in all, three girls and three boys scattered over Europe. The only problem for us is the usual British one of trying to adapt to being real Europeans!

All three families (the other is Paul and Rosalind with Fiona and Felicity) are thriving, with the grandchildren growing apace and increasing their experience almost by the day, with their mothers working hard at bringing them up and many other things as well when time allows, and with their fathers seemingly ever increasing their responsibilities and success at their various jobs. Everyone is making the most of their happiness and good fortune.

The exhilaration has come through the extensive travel most of it connected this year with work in one way or another. The high point was a visit to Japan where, after attending a conference, we took off on our own for a week's holiday. We travelled on all sorts of trains, visited temples, shrines, castles and gardens, stayed in Japanese bed-and-breakfasts, slept on the floor in Japanese beds, ate Japanese food and enjoyed Japanese baths. We expected it to be more of an experience than a pleasure, but it turned out cheerfully to be both. It is a remarkable land with a remarkable people whose lives and friendly demeanour show the advantages of a strong cultural heritage.

We also attended the opening of the winter Olympics in Lillehammer where, on the day before, I had been asked to give a presentation to a group of senior administrators from the participating governments in EUREKA. Although the crush was alarming at times, it was great fun to be in the crowd at such a spectacular event. The long day out, organised by the Norwegian government for the group, was interesting too with the odd experiences of being offered iced drinks in a freezing cold cave and hearing an address from a local mayor in the middle of a splendid dinner at eleven thirty at night!

Something of a different sort was acting as "referee" for a field "inter-comparison" campaign at Schauinsland, high in the Black Forest, for four weeks in the summer. Six research groups from Europe and the USA had gathered to compare the performance of the various instruments they had developed to measure the tiny concentrations of free radicals present in the atmosphere. Our job was to ensure that the comparisons were fairly made. We, since Patricia was actively involved too, also collected the data from the groups and processed it so as to facilitate the comparisons. It was great fun to be doing something scientific again and more so since it was in the company of an extremely pleasant set of scientific colleagues and their students. It hasn't finished yet since the work has to be written up and will, we hope, be presented at a conference abroad next year.

It was a good winter for skiing (what climate change?) and we were able to take a couple of holidays, one at Klosters with our friends from London, and one with Michael and his family, and also Stephen and Conny, at Flaine, as well as odd afternoons, days and weekends in the vicinity. We also managed several large walks in the few summer weekends we were at home.

We have had many other pleasant journeys too both connected with work and with the momentous events within the family: In one or two cases we have used the opportunities to look up old friends. However this is not enough and we hope that next year will be a bit less hectic so that we can pay a bit more attention to friends both locally here in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and elsewhere.

As you can guess work is going apace as the project speeds towards its finish at the end of 1995. There are additional jobs too: co-ordinating the preparation a document explaining what practical applications to environmental policy have or will come out of the project's work, and also preparing a proposal for a new project which people hope will follow the present one. This is added to the normal tasks which have included running our Symposium in April for more than 400 people. It seemed to be both enjoyable and successful, although the excursion in a hired train had to be cancelled at the last moment since snow in the morning had blocked the line to Austria (what climate change?). Patricia has done an immense amount of work editing the manuscripts and correcting the proofs of the 1300 page Symposium Proceedings which we hope will be out by the time you receive this.

Our cheerful, active and lucky world rushes on oblivious of the misery in many parts of the world. One still hears the planes taking supplies to Bosnia, and Tomi, my colleague in the Secretariat, is now contemplating going home to Croatia next year to take up his old job in the University and bring his family together again. This of course in the face of an inflation which has reduced the value of salaries enormously and the continued possibility of being drawn again into war with Serbia. Most of us are so fortunate that we neither have to, nor have had to, face such uncertainty and difficulty.

Once again, our very best wishes to you and your family. We do hope we perhaps shall see you in the coming year. However do remember: you are allowed to visit us too, you know!