

Festive Greetings?, it seems like we just sent out our Christmas cards a few months ago. I mean, heck, I was a wee bit late last year but c'mon... Well, it is half-past Remembrance Day and the malls have been playing Christmas music for 3 months now so I guess it's time to start the annual family letter.

The girls are moving on up to the post secondary side of life. Nicole is now in her second year of Psychology and contemplating Applied Criminology. No, that isn't a euphemism for Political Science.

She put aside her VV boutique red vest for 6 weeks to tour Vietnam with her friend, Linh (a trip they'd been planning since 2 weeks after they met in grade 5). Linh took her places well off the beaten track (considering Vietnam isn't exactly a #1 tourist destination, that's saying something) so Nic, being a pasty white Canuck, had to get used to attracting crowds just walking down the street. It didn't take long before the scenery and friendliness of the people overcame her self-consciousness.

Rachael, on being given the option of working for a year and paying nominal rent or going to school, is now in her first year at UVic working on a degree in History. She did put some thought into this as the UVic program includes the possibility of spending the third year on an exchange study in England. In the meantime, she is hard at work being a social butterfly and keeping tabs on all the Twilight Vampire Twinkle movies. (I love it when she rolls her eyes, like just now...)

This July Mark got to see if he could out-run a polar bear. It wasn't quite a full Northwest Passage but he did spend a week cruising a few miles off the Arctic coast taking mud samples and getting gobsmacked by the splendour of it all (i.e. polar ice, sea, wild life: not the splendour of mud samples--he's not that much of a geek).

He also went to Paris in the fall and brought a chaperon. I spent the days looking at the sights, getting lost and sucking up at least two cafe au laits every afternoon watching the crowds go by. All the chairs at the cafes face out to the street for better people watching: une cafe creme, un sandwich jambon and the entire population of Paris accompanied by every type dog imaginable--what more could you ask of life?

Okay, I could have asked for more but my French is pretty limited; any straying from the script was rewarded with a cold fish stare from the waiter and a muttered "incroyable" in a way I suspected was not complimentary...I stopped trying after I ended up with a glass of tap water and creme d'menthe when I'd asked for an iced tea. Maybe my translation was a bit off the mark but when that passing bus boy lobbed a maraschino cherry into the glass, that was just a bit much.

The trip started out with some sadness, however, when we got a message in the middle of the first night that my Uncle Lionel had died. Mark had to go to his conference the next day which gave me time on my own to wander and ponder and light a candle at Notre Dame Cathedral.

I'm still working at HUB, helping people find room for the junk in their lives--Fergus comes in to help too: he loves showing the lockers and most folk get a kick out of watching him lead the way.

So there you have it, the short version of Little House in Esquimalt. Life is good: the girls are well, I'm staying just this side of sanity and Mark is on his way to being a grumpy old man. What more could we ask for?

I hope all is well at your house and any surprises the new year holds for you involve sun, love and happiness. Merry Christmas ya'll...