



Dinner with Clare and Dick Wallin



Brother Alan Branford with his sponsors, Worshipful Brother Rod Clark and Right Worshipful Brother Murray Olsson



Our new home ☺ (Martindale Hall in the Clare Valley)

Wagner’s Wake and the Year of the Tiger – I am still an opera devotee (nine this year, in Adelaide and Melbourne) and I remain on the Wagner Society Committee. Rather than a chaplain or a coach, the Wagner Society has a psychoanalyst! (Appropriate really, when you think about it ...) Dr Rick Curnow, our own psychoanalyst, gave a lecture on Death and Gustav Mahler at the Annual Wake for the death of Richard Wagner on February 13th. This year, that date happened to coincide with Lunar New Year’s Eve for the Year of the Tiger, and we were treated to a traditional Vietnamese dessert, chè đậu đỏ, home-made by Nam. Nam also gave a short talk about Lunar New Year, and its significance in family life in Vietnam.

Days at The Mill Remembered – Dick and Clare Wallin and I were all in Cambridge, England, in the early 1980s. We, plus other reprobates, helped Peter and Joan Chilcott keep the cash register ringing at *The Mill* public house. We spent many an hour in each other’s company, although this was mainly either at *The Mill* or at a rugby ground – Dick was quite a formidable player. Dick and Clare passed through Adelaide in February this year, and we had a delightful day in which I showed them the sights of Adelaide and we dined at the ever hospitable Jah’z Lounge in the evening. This was only the second time we had caught up since I left England in 1983, the other time being a few days in 1997 when I stayed with them in England. There was quite a bit to catch up on!



Brother Branford reads the Lodge Warrant



Traditional cricket rivals queue early for tickets to the Ashes Test



Nam brings Lunar New Year’s Eve to Richard Wagner’s Wake

Travels with my Grandfather – In the first half of the year, Nam was seconded to the Sydney office of his company on three occasions, each time for four weeks! This arrangement was not at all to our liking, and so on most weekends Nam flew home at our expense. In April I took some leave and went to Sydney to join him. We had an excellent day trip into the Blue Mountains in a small guided tour. A young Asian lady on the tour started chatting to Nam and asked him if he was on a holiday with his grandfather. Sigh!

Alan on the Level – Thursday, August 14th, 1958, was a wintry day, and Joan Branford was in the Henley and Grange Community Hospital awaiting the birth of her first child. Her obstetrician, Dr Alan Weetman, judged that the Branford minor would wait until the 15th before embarking on his adventure of life, and so the doctor set off to his Masonic Lodge. But the baby had other ideas, and in the early evening Dr Weetman was summoned from his Lodge meeting to deliver the newest Branford. As highly trained as the theatre nurses were, they had not previously had to help the doctor out of his dress coat and to wrestle with the starched cuffs of his dress shirt. And so it was that I came to be delivered by a Freemason who attended the birth straight from a Lodge meeting, in his formal white tie and tails. Fate therefore seemed to ordain that I should one day join the Freemasons. And so it came to pass that on Tuesday, June 1st, I was made an Entered Apprentice in the Prince Alfred Collegians’ Lodge. Tuesday, December 7th, saw me pass to Fellow

Craft, and sometime during 2011, I will be raised to Master Mason. I find that the ancient ceremony, ritual and allegory fit well with my personality and my philosophy and spirituality, and so I have taken to it quite passionately. In future years I will work my way through the offices until I get to the big chair in the East!

With respect, Mr Speaker – Nam and I had a short holiday in Canberra to see the national monuments. We visited the Commonwealth Parliament House during the first sitting week following the recent historic general election. Despite all the headlines about a hung parliament, I was disappointed that there was neither noose nor gallows to be seen in the House of Representatives chamber. Indeed, most of the members seemed to be alive, and despite all the machinations over the Speakership, Harry Jenkins was still firmly ensconced in the Speaker's Chair. By good fortune, we happened to come in as Andrew Wilkie delivered his maiden speech. (Mr Wilkie, a controversial independent, had surprised all the pundits by winning a formerly Government seat in Tasmania.) The Chamber was reasonably well attended for this speech. Meanwhile, over in the Senate, some hapless Senator was droning on in a speech even she seemed not to want to listen to. It was clear that the mere handful of Senators present were taking their turn to keep the Senate quorate – they manifestly were not listening to the speech.



A light breakfast of pork knuckle at The Rocks in Sydney



Alan ready to throw Nam over the side for a bungy jump sans rope



Nam goes shopping in Leura

A Bird on the Wire – After the success of his Australian tour last year, Leonard Cohen toured Australia again this year. I had gold tickets to yet another inspirational concert by this indefatigable 76-year-old. My sister, Judith, and I went – alas poor Nam was again away on business. I did manage to drag Nam to a performance of Verdi's opera *Aida* during the year, and he did confess to having found it to be very enjoyable and emotional. I have booked him tickets for the whole State Opera season in 2011!

Citizen Nam – Earlier this year, Nam and I applied for his migration to Australia on relationship grounds. The process is long, tedious and arcane, and so we decided to engage a specialist migration lawyer to handle our case. (As an aside, I noted that nonetheless the bureaucratic tangle was no worse than most of the University's processes I have had to deal with!) We parted with a small fortune, and that was simply to apply, with no guarantee of acceptance. (Also, even when granted, this visa is temporary for two years, before it then becomes permanent – upon further payment!) As this letter was about to go to press, the lawyer called: the visa was granted on Friday 3rd December – a welcome early Christmas present!

If I Were a Carpenter – Nam has recently taken up woodwork with a passion. We now own power tools that I have never even heard of, and I am thinking of asking the local hardware warehouse to provide him with a reserved parking space. Although my masonry is speculative, his woodworking is very much operative, and I now have an excellent new computer desk, return and hutch in the study (see photograph).



Who's taken my prawn cocktail?



The Brighton Power Tool Massacre



The Professor hard at work

C2R2 – The University's courses have undergone a fundamental restructure from first principles, to take effect in 2011. (Can you guess the C2R2 acronym? – don't bother). Chaos awaits me in February – I am afraid, very afraid! ☹️ 🌩️

Best wishes for 2011, with love from Alan and Nam