



Nam "Possum" Duong



Worshipful Brother Alan Branford

"We'll all be rooned," said Hanrahan, / In accents most forlorn – The Australian bush poet John O'Brien published "Said Hanrahan" in 1921, but the poem is again being quoted in reference to the current Australian Budget. Savage funding cuts to public broadcasting have even affected this classic epistle. Faced with the dilemma: either publish in black-and-white or report only last year's news, your correspondent opted for the former. To see the missive in full colour, the reader is referred to my website, www.alanbranford.net

Cross-cultural Christmas – We were visited last Christmas by Minh, a very dear friend of Nam. Minh and Nam had studied engineering together in Ho Chi Minh City and also at the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok, Thailand. It was rather fun introducing our Christmas traditions to someone from a very different culture. We also did a lot of touring around Adelaide and its surrounds, including a drive down to Deep Creek Conservation Park. Minh and Nam eagerly set off on a bushwalk along a section of the Heysen trail. Having done that walk many times, but not for some time, I pleaded old age and drove the car to meet them at the other end of the hike. Sitting watching the glorious south coast scenery better suited my disposition than slogging up and down hills and gullies, although the intrepid adventurers enjoyed themselves.

"I love a sunburnt country, / A land of sweeping plains, / Of ragged mountain ranges, / Of droughts and flooding rains. / I love her far horizons, / I love her jewel-sea, / Her beauty and her terror – / The wide brown land for me!" (Dorothea Mackellar) – On Australia Day 2014, we adopted Nam as one of our own little diggers (or did he adopt us?). Nam's mother and niece travelled down from Vietnam, and the two families gathered at Glenelg for Nam's Citizenship Ceremony. My sister, Judith, had made him a bow-tie in the pattern of the Australian flag, which caused quite a lot of comments at the official celebration. As soon as office hours permitted after the ceremony, Nam had registered to vote and acquired an Aussie passport!



"You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them." (Desmond Tutu)



Up at the crack o' dawn, and first at the Citizenship Ceremony

Einstein on the Beach – Nam and I again subscribed to the State Opera and enjoyed *La Traviata* and *Otello*. A special offering this year was the complete *Portrait Trilogy* by Philip Glass, which includes his five-hour *Einstein on the Beach*. Nam regarded this as torture: culture hurts, you know! I also subscribed to Opera Australia in Melbourne and had two weekends holiday in Melbourne during the year with Neil and Kerry Teague seeing two operas each time – and fitting in the occasional dinner out!

Kid Creole and the Coconuts – The opening night act for the annual Adelaide Festival of Arts was a free concert in Elder Park by Kid Creole and the Coconuts. My mate Jeff Hogan from Newcastle in New South Wales is a big fan of the “Kid” – and an even bigger fan of the “Coconuts”! So Jeff flew over to Adelaide and coaxed me into going. The show was an absolute hoot: the whole company are an amazingly polished outfit. To my amazement, Jeff had managed to establish email contact with Eva, the longest serving of the “Coconuts” and known affectionately as “Mama Coconut”. So after the show we hung around like some teenage groupies and met up with “Mama Coconut”!



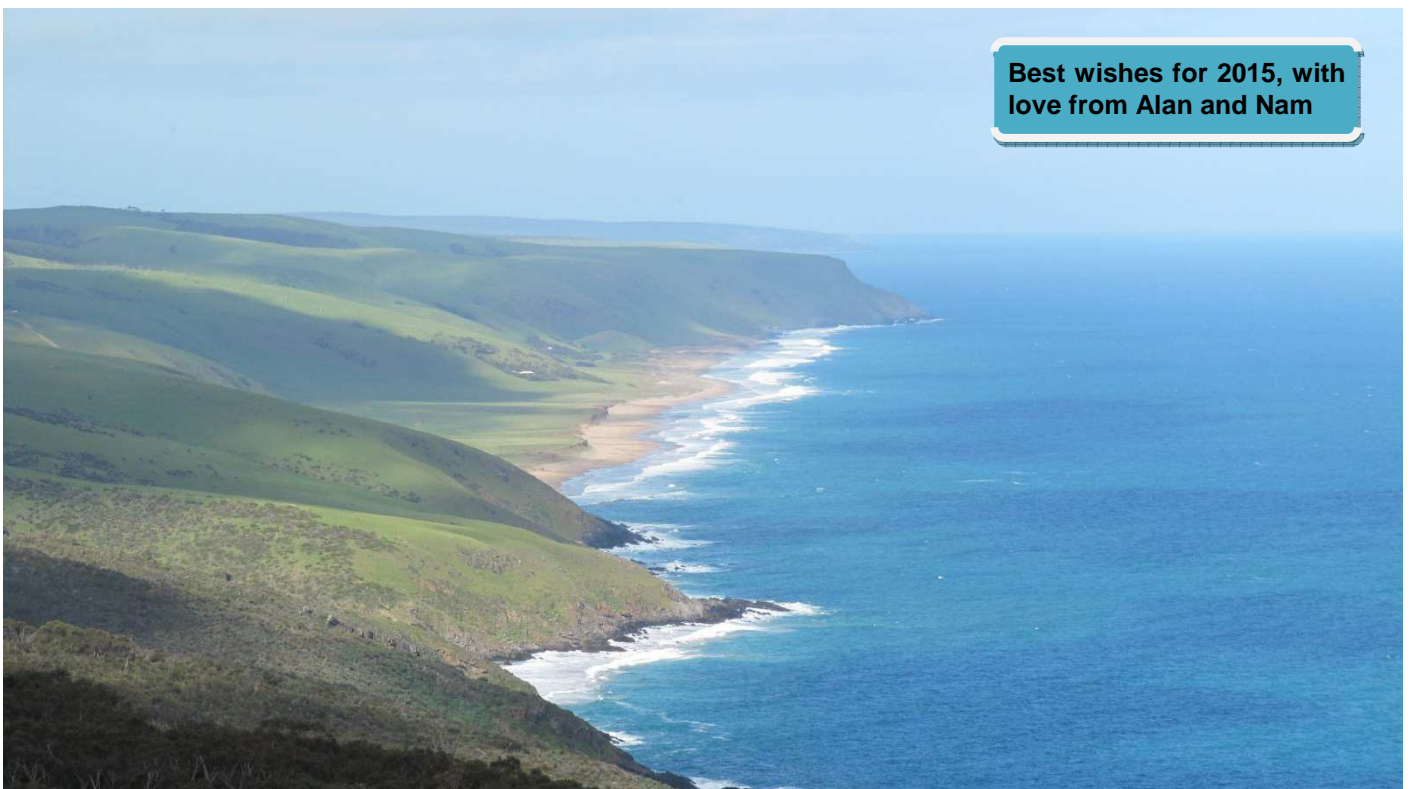
Silly head wear – now that's the true Spirit of Christmas!



Chatting with the delightful Eva “Mama Coconut”

So Mote It Be! – In November, I was installed as the Worshipful Master of Prince Alfred Collegians’ Lodge, No. 51, The Grand Lodge of Antient, Free and Accepted Masons of South Australia and Northern Territory. No longer Brother Branford, but *Worshipful* Brother Branford, installed in the Chair of King Solomon! The Ceremony was spectacular – grand, ancient ritual and pageantry – and of course if I told you any more I’d have to kill you. ☺ As I reported last year, I am also a Companion of the Holy Royal Arch of Jerusalem through which I was recently conferred the degree of Excellent Master Mason. But to keep things in perspective, in my Royal Arch Chapter I was elected Second Assistant Sojourner (don’t ask), which makes it obvious that I still have a long journey in Freemasonry ahead of me, despite now being Worshipful!

A Humble Factory Worker – I have now completed thirty-one years at Flinders University. I was startled to learn that two former students, having gone on to professional careers, have now retired! Sigh! But big moves are afoot: the School of Computer Science, Engineering and Technology is moving over the New Year to a purpose built building on the site of the former Mitsubishi car factory a few kilometres from the main campus. The Tonsley precinct will house educational facilities, private companies and services. I must confess that, despite the hassle of moving, I’m rather looking forward to the new environment. Roll on 2015!



From Deep Creek Conservation Park towards Victor Harbor (photograph by Nam Duong)