

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2025. With the COVID pandemic pretty much behind us, we were finally able to go on a tour of “family and friends” in 2024, though the “tour” started right here in WA the last week of December when our friends Sash and Shashi were married on the South Perth foreshore looking across at the magnificent view of Perth. The only thing more beautiful than the setting was Sash... well, Shashi too...

The New Year started with a bang when Meredith, Andrew, Beth, Milli and Oliver Mandile visited from Melbourne. That’s the first time we’ve all been together since before COVID-19. Not surprisingly, we had a great time. Meredith and I go back more than a quarter century, both of us starting our Western Australia teaching positions in the Kimberley in 1998. We’ve been best of mates ever since. For that matter, we are Godparents for their son Ollie. Little known fact: Meredith’s breakdance exploits as a young woman in Melbourne inspired our Aussie Olympian "Raygun" to become world famous!

A bit later, Bronwyn and Geoff flew over from NSW for the Rugby Sevens tournament in Perth, and Sarah and Neil visited from Brisbane later in the year. Yes, it’s always good catching up with our faraway friends. You can see from the photos that we spend weekends with our local collection of good mates and *hanai* family across the Perth metro area.

Pandemic or no pandemic, we aren’t getting any younger, so we reckon it’s best to flap our wings as long as possible. That said, we met *hanai* sister Val in Singapore in late March for a cruise aboard the *Diamond Princess*. Non-Aussies often find it surprising to learn that Singapore is almost our sister city. Flight time between Perth and The Lion City is about the same as it is to Sydney. Val had never been there before, so we spent several days exploring before our voyage. Our cruise itinerary included Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand before returning to Singapore – great food and wonderful people.

Keeping with this ‘flapping our wings’ idea, we thought it was time to return to our point of origin and visit the rellies in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. That was a consequential decision considering the cost of health insurance to travel to America. Hey, I just had my 11th birthday last week. Yeah, you’re smiling, but it’s a fact! We go by ‘dog years’ now so 21 November was my 11th BD. One of my misguided American friends pointed out that you’re supposed to multiply dog years by seven, but as usual, people in the northern hemisphere are rather hemisphere-centric. For those of us south of the equator, everything is upside down. We DIVIDE, not multiple, so my 77 years becomes 11. Hey, it’s just not that complicated! Besides, retired or not, I’m still a teacher, ya know!

After a sleepover in New Zealand, the first stop on our journey was the Big Island of Hawaii. We met up with our travel group of Aussies. There were seven of us from Perth plus Val in Hilo, so naturally, we called ourselves “*The Hawaiian Eight*”. Humm, *EIGHT*... what a good title for a novel! We spent almost two weeks enjoying our shared adventures with our mates and seeing the beauty of the Big Island. We caught up with many old buddies and former students... fantastic! Steve, Jen, Peter and Sandra visited other islands before heading home, but Karn, Bill and I headed across the USA Mainland to visit rellies in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. We didn’t allow all the election ballyhoo to interfere with a fantastic reunion.



FRIENDS AROUND TOWN
 TOP: Steve, Dan and Neil
 2nd DOWN: Sash loves the Hawaiian *nene* goose; wedding hugs last December.
 3rd DOWN: Lunch at the Glades with, Richo, Astrid and the kangaroos.
 NEXT TO BOTTOM: With Martin and Betty at a Rotary function.
 BOTTOM: With Shashi & Sash.



TOP: The Mandiles visited from Melbourne in January.
 2nd DOWN: Godson Ollie, Milli and Beth with Karn in Fremantle.
 3rd DOWN: My longtime buddy Meredith (a/k/a Megadeath!).
 4th DOWN: The Mandiles, Bill and us... Yes, *TURTLE* shirts!
 BOTTOM LEFT: Geoff & Bron
 BOTTOM RIGHT: Sara, Karn & Dan and January swimmers Steve and Dan.



April SE Asia cruise on the Diamond Princess
 TOP: Singapore with Marian Bay Sands and the Art-Science Museum behind us and at dinner with Val.
 BOTTOM: Dan with a turtle in Malaysia (did you read *TURTLES* yet?) and in Thai Pedicabs in Thailand.



PIX 1 and 2: Sister Kathy, Mark and Terri with Chloe.
 PIX 3 and 4: In PA, Carolyn and daughter Holly with Bill and the scarecrow (Bill has the beard); sister Kathy and Dan.
 PIC 5: Maryellen and Karn.
 PIC 6: Cousins Greg and Steve Churach.
 BOTTOM: Old mates Ian and Angie Midson, who met up with us in London.



We saw most of Karn's family and many Churachs and Ozoroskis within driving range. We are so thankful for many long-time friends who went out of their way to drive or fly to catch up with us. Karn's sister Maryellen had a Sunday tea, and all her kids dropped by to see us. Likewise, my sister, Kathy, in PA, nephew Mark, Pam, niece Terri, and her family in NJ hosted a couple of weekend get-togethers. Tom, Lori and Zoe drove from Virginia, and Thomas flew in from Cleveland. I can't fit more photos here, but you can see what we have posted on our website (<https://www.churach.com/dan-karn>).



LUCKY US – Friends visited from all over!

TOP: Maria from Kona, HI; Carolyn Castiglioni drove to Philly from Hampton Beach, NH, and Sandra with us in Kona.
 BOTTOM: Kathy Halbig visited from Albuquerque, Carolyn Malinowski flew to HI from Texas and Leon (one of my best science sources for my technothrillers) and Kenny live in Hilo.

Mahalo to Ian Midson for putting that file together. Speaking of Ian, we finished our journey flying off to London for a few days. Ian and Angie met us in London, and we had a rip-roaring good time! It was great seeing our Hilo/Wiltshire mates once more. What a way to end a whirlwind 25,000+ mile around-the-world trip!

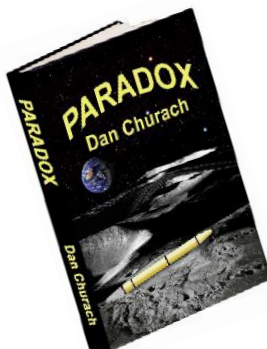
We remain at 12 Collinson Way, Leeming, WA, 6149, AUSTRALIA, but we have a new home email address for the first time in some twenty years. Make a note—we are now at dkchurach@aussiebroadband.com.au. As always, message us or—better yet—come on down under for a visit...



Pic 1 and 2: "The Hawaii Eight" in Kona at Puuhonua and on our 51st anniversary at the Kona Inn on the Big Island.
 Pic 3: Karn and sister Maryellen and family in New Jersey.
 BOTTOM: With my sister and brother-in-law Kathy and Tom and their kids and grandkids.



Dan writing? Well, of course, I'm writing. My eleventh novel, *PARADOX*, was published in June. I keep giving the occasional talk now and then and have started novel number twelve. Nah, I have no title yet, but stay tuned... You'll hear about it in 2025...



Check out my books:
www.churach.com



TOP: Bomber, Rocky and Bicky in January. Bomb and Rock turned 15 in April, but sadly, Rocky left us in May. Aloha O'e, Rocky...
 BOTTOM: Karn, Dan and Bicky wishing you a Merry Christmas.