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THE INGWELL SAGA - CHAPTER 23 CHRISTMAS 1991 ??

Once again Christmas provides an opportunity to update you on happenings in the Ingwell household where we are all doing fine. It is just that in addition to the Yeastvite, Sanatogen, and Phylosan, which has featured on our shopping list for the last year we have added Grecian 2000 and Tonic wine (pronounced Gin!) and reading glasses are going into the budget for 1992. But nevermind, life begins at 40 we have always said.

We have lived here now for 7 years and have fully settled into the house extension that was completed one year ago. It provided us with a master bedroom/bathroom and a small study on the ground floor. The outside of the house has changed also and developers have moved into our area in a big way - the picturesque field at the bottom of the garden is now a building site with plans for 400 houses. The only advantages are that we become fully civilised with mains drainage instead of a septic tank. Also the noise has driven the wild deer away so the runner beans will flourish next year instead of being eaten by them for breakfast.

We have visited our Chalet home in France 3 times this year and we are getting to know the local area and its features. During the February half term we skied in the Pyrennees and used our own place as a base. We had to drive into the mountains (for about an hour and a half) to find the big resorts so we decided to stay B & B on 2 of the nights because that way we did not have to return to Labenne/Biarritz at the end of every day. Bridget and her mother also visited Labenne in May, and then Brid and I went together in October; we had a good time but I would not recommend the weather at that time of the year.

Much of our life in 1991 has centered around exam results and education choices. I think both children were pleased with their results and so were we:

Daniel passed three 'A' Levels with grades B,C,D for Economics, English and French. That did not give him a high enough points score for his first choice which was to study "Accounting and Law" at Southampton University and so he entered the UCCA Clearing Scheme. Then began the hassle, because none of the available courses appealed to him. Eventually he found a degree course in "European Finance and Accounting" at Leeds Polytechnic which fitted the bill. Unfortunately he had not applied to any Polytechnics in the first round and so had to start from scratch. The form-filling was hell but it proved worthwhile when he got a place on the course and a room in the Carnegie Hall of Residence. Carnegie is old and poorly maintained with stone staircases and iron railings but it is beautifully situated in the centre of parkland with swimming pool/gymnasium, athletics track and rugby/soccer pitches on-site. Leeds Poly is only a local bus ride away from Bridget's mother which is great; whenever Dan needs a good meal he turns up on her doorstep and she loves it!

Charlotte was equally successfull in her exams and went through the same dilemma of decision making - where to go and what subjects to take? She passed 7 subjects at Grade B and 2 at Grade C so there was a confusion of choice when it came to subjects, and to complicate the issue many of her friends were moving to either Windsor or Henley Colleges. Eventually she selected English, Economics and Geography and opted to stay in the 6th-form of her school at Ranelagh. After one complete term she is sure that she made the right choice and has added a new range of friends to her circle and has already played a starring role in the 6th form play. Next week is the end-of-term ball and we are privileged to see her in a dress and shoes instead of the more usual jeans, T-shirt and 'Doc Martins'. At the moment I am teaching her to drive, using the VW Passat that we have had since Germany days. Early in the summer we added a Vauxhall Cavalier to the family liabilities so the Passat now gets all the grotty jobs. Actually after 45 lessons, Charlotte is doing quite well and has only tried to kill me the once!

Life for Bridget at Birch Hill school is busy and hectic as ever. The headmaster (a founder member of the school) who has been in post for 15 years is leaving at the end of 91. There are lots of farewell functions planned - some starring the children, some the staff and all of them rehearsed in secret! It is an administrative nightmare and something like a camping holiday -smashing when it is all over with lovely memories to look back on. Bridget gets rid of classroom frustrations these days by taking it out on a tennis ball. She is playing at a local club where the courts are floodlit and so can play all winter - frost permitting.

Work for me at EASAMS is merely satisfactory. The defence industry is depressed although we have bucked the trend with 2 successfull major overseas contracts. So, unlike our competitors, we have avoided redundancies so far, and although I fancy a change this is no time to take risks where employment is concerned. I have reached the stage where boring old considerations like pension rights begin to matter!

Christmas planning has been somewhat awkward this year because Bridget is on the waiting list for the dreaded hysterectomy and was forecast to come to the top of the list in mid-Dec. However, we have just been given a date of 13 Jan so at least we can now start making Christmas arrangements in earnest. Sam (my Dad) and Joan (Brids Mum) are both coming to stay with us for a week or so and Dan will be down for the holiday although I dare say we will not see too much of him.

It would be lovely to see you in the New Year as soon as Bridget is firing on 4 cylinders again, but in the meanwhile

We Wish You a Happy Christmas