



THE GAIIO FAMILY

2014 Letter



Christopher awarded top instructor



Capilano Suspension Bridge Park with Alexander

THE YEAR IN A NUTSHELL

We've decided to save trees. Let us share the joyous season digitally through our 2014 e-letter.

Happy New Year to all!

It has been a difficult and exhausting year and that is my excuse for the late Christmas mail. By now you will all have had time to digest a wonderful Christmas meal with friends and family and can find some time to relax during this somewhat hectic season and join me on the journey that 2014 brought me.

In January Alexander and I jumped on a plane for a 5 day trip to Australia. (Always thankful to get a seat when you fly standby) It was fantastic. We visited Sydney and Brisbane. I had to keep up with Alexander and think I did a great job. Highlights included the Opera House and the famous Sydney Harbour. We toured an animal refuge where we got up close and friendly with Kangaroos and Koalas and then had to include a day at the beach on the

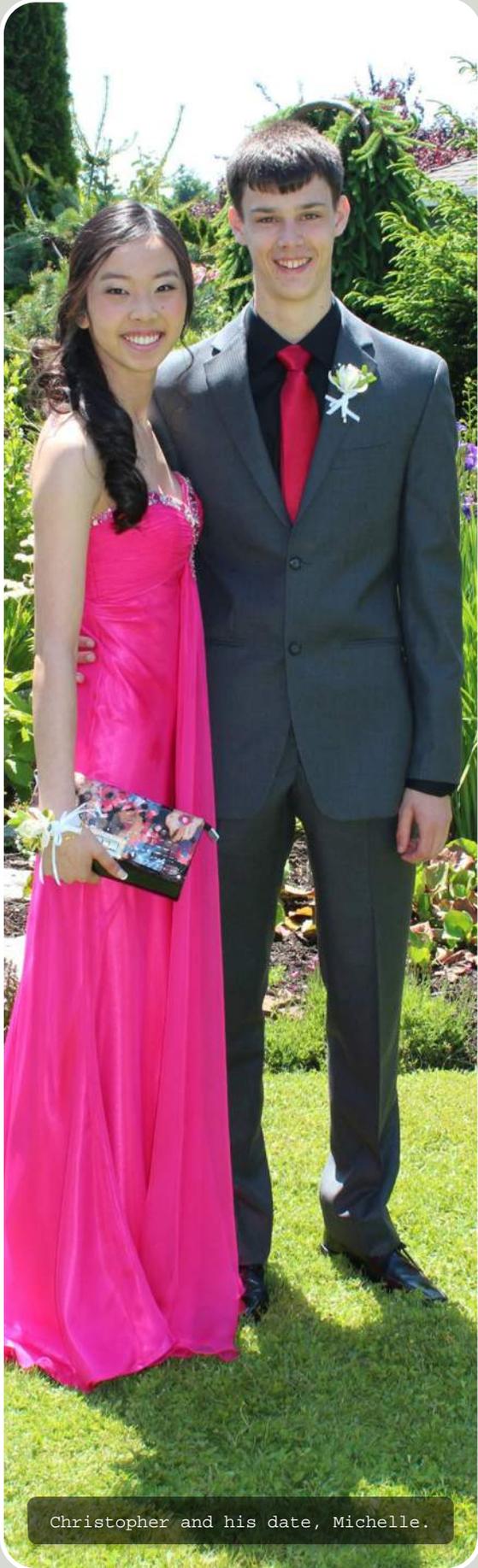
beautiful Gold Coast. We kept our itinerary very full; made me feel like a spring chicken.

Christopher and his Biathlon team qualified for Nationals in March and competed in Nova Scotia.

Work has been stressful and I have found it very sad at times. After 27 years in the Intensive Care Unit I changed jobs to a busy surgical floor where the patients prognosis is a little more optimistic. I now discharge patients home instead of sending them to the morgue. It has been a new learning curve... and oh so very busy. I have been participating in a study for the past two years that explores if shift workers are more prone to Breast Cancer. It required lots of journalling, logging, and sleeping counselling. In the beginning and end a mammogram was required and I am so thankful for that. In the spring I had



Sydney Opera House, Australia with Alexander



Christopher and his date, Michelle.



Top of Cobá Ruin in Mexico



Bryce Canyon, UT

many tests, ultrasounds and a biopsy for some suspicious calcifications found in my right breast. Waiting for the results was gruelling. I convinced Paulo that we should go away for a while rather than sit by the telephone and stress. We flew to Las Vegas and rented a car to do an amazing tour of beautiful canyons and national parks of Southern Utah and Northern Arizona. Words cannot describe the natural beauty we experienced. The spring flowers were in bloom and the semi-desert was green with lush colour and vitality. I took so many pictures that my memory card was full in four days. I cannot decide on my second favourite between Zion or Bryce Canyons. Arches National Park was breathtaking, too. We were unable to get to Mesa Verde in Southern Colorado because of snow! My absolute highlight was Antelope Canyon in Northeastern Arizona: a magnificent slot canyon all created by the forces of nature, in this case, water. On April 28th, on our way to the Grand Canyon, we had a terrible head on motor vehicle collision where both cars involved were totalled. We were shaken up— I more so than Paulo. I had a helicopter ride strapped to a spinal board to a trauma centre. I was thoroughly examined and although crushed and bruised all up my left side. I walked away with a broken left

hand. Two days later on return to Canada I learned that I had Breast Cancer. I knew right then and there that God has a plan for me. He let us survive the accident so that I could fight hard during the next months of treatment.

I had a partial mastectomy in May 13th for a triple negative tumour, aggressive in nature but found early. My lymph nodes were clear. My recovery was not smooth but a nurse can handle anything. I was still doing dressing changes when Christopher had his Graduation Ceremony. He looked very handsome indeed. With both arms compromised I kept busy doing puzzles and rekindling my passion for stamp collecting. (If you have some sitting in a box or on envelopes and think they need a new home, consider me!) I have spent many hours with them and I find it very rewarding.

Both boys had summer jobs away from home with Cadets, Christopher taught survival - which is his passion and Alexander worked with Sea Cadets again — both on Vancouver Island. It was probably best that they were not here to see me endure the Chemo therapy. It was brutal, but you just have to do it. Drugs for pain and nausea were very beneficial . I am truly blessed with an amazing circle of friends who were so supportive through my



MOMENTS



Description

[TOP]Convocation Ceremony with Oma.

[CENTRE] Niagara Falls, ON.

[BOTTOM]Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award Presentation with Her Royal Highness The Prince Edward, Countess of Wessex, GCVO.

battle. I could make lists of people but I don't have enough paper and would feel so bad if I left even one of them out and that is possible with my Chemo Brain these days. I will mention only one, my dear friend, nursing classmate and matron of honour at our wedding Tanya who drove 10 hours one way (20 hours of driving) from Prince George to be my Chemo Buddy for 3 of the 4 times. She is one of many angels in my life. I was kept so busy with appointments

MEMORIES



[TOP] Kangaroos at Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary.
 [MIDDLE] The Chemo Gym.
 [BOTTOM] Alexander with Bike Share Toronto.

that when all was said and done I knew we would need a vacation. Our summer visitors came from far and wide. My cousin Stephanie Bamburg and her two daughters Magdalena and Carla came to visit on their way back to Germany from Shanghai, where they had been living for several years. While here we had a cousin barbecue and many of the Vancouver clan came. My sister Marian came from Florida in August and we did an impressive hike while I was receiving Chemo.

It is very difficult to explain the fear that a cancer diagnosis brings and until you have it you won't know what that really is like. I am taking the bull by the horns and refuse to let this take me down. My Oncologist offered another study for me to partake in. This one involves exercise. This proposal of the study states that people who go through Chemo and Radiation end up with a weakened heart. If we train the heart to stay healthy the recovery and life expectancy should not be different from someone pre diagnosis. So needless to say three times a week I have been working out in a gym with other breast cancer survivors. It is affectionately called the "Chemo Gym" and has been amazing. The support and friendship I have made from my new group of friends has really helped with the journey. There are times when the last thing I would have wanted to do was go to a gym and work out but knowing you are not alone and others feel the same as you has been so empowering. I hate to admit this— but my heart is stronger because of my weight training and treadmill workouts than before my diagnosis. This study will go on for a year.

At the end of August, Alexander moved to Toronto to study at Ryerson University. He is studying Urban and Regional Planning and lives on campus and has a great roommate. He is really enjoying the program. It is too bad that he is >3000 kilometres away from home. Christopher is at Kwantlen University here

locally and is studying engineering. He hopes to specialize in Mechatronics in the future.

In September I finished my last Chemo, what a relief. I lost my hair and eye lashes but for some reason not all my eyebrows. I probably had too many to start with.

Christopher received his Gold Duke of Edinburgh award presented to him by Prince Edwards' wife Sophie Rhys-Jones, Countess of Wessex. We had an opportunity to chat with her at a personal level and she was very engaging.

In November my daily (20) radiation treatments began. They have caused me to be very exhausted. The radiation itself continues to for two weeks after the treatment is over and my burns finally healed mid December. I am always tired.

In celebration of the completion of my treatment we went away as a family to an all inclusive resort in Playa del Carmen, Mexico for one week. We returned early on Christmas Eve. While away we all had time to relax. The biggest decision was: pool or beach? We did a one day tour where I did some things I would not have normally done. Zip lining and rappelling. Both were a new challenge for me but, if I can beat Cancer, I can do anything! We visited the archaeological site of Cobá and we all climbed the ruin. Rio Secreto, an underground river was another tour we took which was fantastic.

Paulo chooses not to work. He is my executive chef and dishwasher. He has a partial pension and does a few odd jobs for friends such as fence repair and gardening. Today I am on long term disability. My plan is to return to work in the spring if I get over this exhaustion. My hair, which is actually a fuzzy scalp, is growing a platinum colour, it is too short for curls at this time. I promise that next year will be a little less eventful than this. All the best for a healthy and prosperous 2015!!

-Christine et al





National Biathlon



Vancouver City Tour with Lisa Wilson & the Bambergs



Arches National Park, UT



Antelope Canyon, AZ



[Back] Magdalena, Gary, Matthias, Carol, Carl, Nicholas, John, Christine H, Lisa, Steve

Cousin Gathering

[Front] Carla, Stephanie, Christine G, Karen, Paulo, Mary