

THE *KIMBER* CHRONICLES

VOLUME XVII | DECEMBER 2021

AND just like that, we are at the end of 2021. Christmas has come and gone. This is the year of the delayed 2020 Summer Olympic Games, the vaccination rollouts all over the world, and Squid Game. We thought 2020 was the climax when it comes to the pandemic as vaccines became readily available – then the pesky Omicron variant arrived. The year has been a potpourri of deep crevices and satisfying highs – it takes a lot but also gives generously. If you're interested in knowing more, here are the highlights and lowlights of my year.

LOSING your mother is a game changer. That's what a friend said on Facebook and somehow it stayed with me. She gave me her message of condolences when I said goodbye to Mama in March this year. Through the sibling WhatsApp group, I was informed that Mama had a stroke when she went to the loo. The doctor told us that there was a significant bleeding in her brain. He suggested that a surgery might just prolong the inevitable – Mama might not be able to communicate with us after her surgery as the bleeding affected the part of the brain related to comprehension. So, as siblings, we agreed not to resuscitate Mama when the time came – a pragmatic decision not to prolong her suffering. Of course, we would've loved to have her around with us much longer, but we wanted to be kind to her. Mama was already very frustrated that she couldn't see clearly nor move around freely before she had the ultimate stroke. It was a torture for somebody with an active, brilliant mind – not to be able to enjoy life to the fullest. It would be an even cruel punishment if we had chosen to keep her around and imprison her in her own body. I called Mama in the last moments that she was here on earth physically – my sister held the phone to her. Through tears, I could only express my love and gratitude, my sorrow and regrets for not



being there with her, and to tell her that she was free to go ... A tear drop rolled down her cheek. My older brother called her as well on the phone as he couldn't make the trip from Bandung to Jakarta. Her blood pressure steadily dropped afterwards. She left us on 23 March 2021.

THE price of chasing my dream to live in Australia continues to be charged – even when I thought I had paid enough. I didn't get to say goodbye to Papa when he left in 2011. His condition deteriorated so rapidly before I could make the arrangement to return to Indonesia. I was there when my eldest sister passed away in 2015, but I couldn't be with Mama due to COVID travel restrictions. I also couldn't fly back to Indonesia to support my second sister when she had her bypass surgery earlier in December, due to the same travel restrictions. I continue to pay for my decision to migrate even to this day. It is unimaginably expensive. Of course, I don't regret leading such a blessed life here in Adelaide, Australia – but I would've paused and considered all of the implications and not so blasé about this significant step.

GRIEF is like an old acquaintance now. Having experienced a series of losses, I know when it would hit me unexpectedly as I drive home from work, walk Indy around the block, or when a song or a thought remind me of the dearly departed. This year, I also said goodbye to an old friend and a spiritual mentor, Graham Taylor on 7 September 2021. He had been battling cancer for a while, so while his eventual journey to meet his Heavenly Father was expected, it was still very sorrowful. Graham was very instrumental in forming my faith that is anchored in God, that not everything is logical, neatly ordered, nor explainable. Some things are meant to be believed when no logical answers can be found. Graham didn't scoff or rebuke me when I asked unusual, nonsensical questions that were posed through moments



of unplanned contemplations. When I met him in the early 1990's, I couldn't have guessed we'd become good friends – that I would love him and his wife Cynthia as my spiritual parents – and that I would even accompany Graham on one of his mission trips to Central and East Java at the end of the last millennium.

YOU are mistaken if I think that 2021 is merely a year of grief and losses for me. It is also a year of achievements and blessings. God has a personal, sweet way to let me know that even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, He is still right there to comfort me. As I close 2021, I will also remember the year when I co-published five papers in good quality journals – one of them in an A* journal. I will also remember the year as the year when I was promoted as a *Senior Research Fellow* at the University of South Australia. After a failed premature application for promotion in 2018, I finally managed to score the promotion this year. I used to be a über-ambitious yuppie in my younger days (*dare I also say, arrogant*), but I realise that life is so much more than running faster in a rat race. During an Early Career Researcher Development Programme that I joined in 2018, there was something one of the panel members said that struck a chord with me. I can't remember what he said specifically, but Professor Craig Williams shared his experience in navigating through academia: he would advance in his own time, when he is ready. He would still prioritise his family and his children's Saturday sport activities, rather than sacrificing them for his career. This philosophy sits well with me. As somebody who was considered a Wunderkind and a rising star when I started my career, I realised that the sheen did come off when the new generations came knocking on your door – and you realise that you are no longer the younger, more ambitious version of yourself. So, I am thankful for the promotion – somehow it tastes sweeter as I allow myself to sip and savour from the cup – rather than chugging it down and already thinking of the next milestone to reach.

YANI is doing well also – she is enjoying more responsibilities at work and working five days a week on alternate weeks. As I'm typing this



newsletter, Yani is resting in the living room. She had her COVID19 booster jab yesterday and I know from experience that the next day and the one after were the hardest on the system. I had mine on the 23rd of December, and I was still fatigued on Christmas. Today we celebrate our 12th wedding anniversary – it feels surreal that we have led our lives together that long. We still frustrate each other a lot – *haha* – but the differences that used to be the key points of contention have morphed into things that highlight our complementarity. I'm a more sociable and less uptight version of myself thanks to her – and I'd like to think that she is a better planner and organiser than she was, due to my influence. We continue to sharpen each other. Thanks to the Great State Voucher initiative from the South Australian government, we also had mini daytrips and holidays here in South Australia this year. We had an overnight trip to Auburn and Clare Valley in August 2021, then an overnight trip to the Fleurieu Peninsula earlier in December 2021. We also joined a perfume making workshop in the Barossa Valley in June as well as a sail through the Port River on the STV "One & All" in October 2021. So, yes, 2021 has a lot of sweet moments for us!

INDY is still around – still being mistaken for a puppy when I walk him around the neighbourhood although he will be 14 years old in May 2022. In human terms, that would be 91 years old. He sleeps a lot now – but he still enjoys his daily walk and is still as loveable as ever. The events that happened in 2020 and 2021 have taught me that I should really enjoy each moment as it comes, without worrying about what could or would happen in the future.

APART from the momentous things that I shared earlier in this newsletter, life goes on sweetly. I still sleep with my CPAP machine, and the hypertension pills that my GP prescribe for me have allowed me to enjoy my days better. I'm still on a quest to lower my body weight – doing my daily walks with Indy, and trying to exercise each day (the operative word is '*trying*'). It's the snacking that I'm struggling with, courtesy of my parents' genes. *Haha!*

AS I wrap up my 2021 newsletter, I thought I'd share a couple of Bible verses that I heard from a sermon yesterday. *"Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered – how fleeting my life is. You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand. My entire lifetime is just a moment to you; at best, each of us is but a breath. We are merely moving shadows, and all our busy rushing ends in nothing. We heap up wealth, not knowing who will spend it. And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in you."* (Psalm 39:4-7, NLT). Who knows what 2022 will bring? After Omicron, perhaps Pi, Rho, Sigma, or Tau? Through the COVID19 naming convention for its variants, I am also reminded that I should put my hope in the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End (Revelations 1:8). I pray that you would also put your hope on Him. God bless.



*Our last family picture in July 2019 when we celebrated Mama's 79th birthday.
I'm eternally grateful that we were allowed to celebrate her life before the pandemic and before Mama was called home in March 2021.*

May God keep you and your family safe, healthy, and blessed in MMXXII!