

December, 1981



Dear Friends,

If there is any truth to the old adage, "It's amazing how time flies when you are having a good time," we are certainly having a good time! We want to take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year--before Easter sneaks up on us.

Mel was honored this spring as the first recipient of the "Outstanding Teacher in the College of Natural Sciences Award," given by the Natural Sciences Council. He received 2 lovely plaques and a check for \$1,000! His tennis is improving--he plays regularly several times a week. His interest in woodworking continues even though time is limited. He spends a lot of time consulting on math homework with our 2 oldest daughters.



I celebrated my 40th birthday in the best way possible--on the first day of the week-long Winter family reunion which my parents treated us all to at Fontana Village, N.C.--in the Smokies and just gorgeous! We drove to and from and had 2 delightful visits with Oakes family members in Vicksburg--and saw other friends and relatives en route, also. Two quotes sum up this year for me: "If a woman's place is in the home, why am I always in the car?" (on a T-shirt and a tote bag my sister made for me)--and columnist Ellen Goodman's comment, "Life at 40 is less construction and more maintainance!". We've done a lot of maintainance on the house this year--built bookcases for our bedroom, replaced rotted siding in the back and painted the house.

The tempo of our lives has increased as 14 year old Beth entered high school. She is an excellent student, but concentrates most of her "spare" time on music. She is in her high school orchestra, All-City Orchestra, made the region orchestra and plays in the UT String Project intermediate orchestra. We found out several weeks ago that Beth was selected for the All-State Symphony Orchestra--quite an honor for a freshman. In May Beth went to Washington, D.C. with her junior high school band and orchestra to compete in a national contest (they won) and to play in the park at the White House (I went along as a chaperone--not hers).



Sarah (12) entered junior high this year and is enjoying it thoroughly--especially orchestra. She is playing the cello there and also in the UT String Project intermediate orchestra. She made the junior high regional orchestra and is very pleased with that. Her other activities include piano lessons, Girl Scouts--and lots of math homework. She just missed the top honor roll.

Mardie (9) is in the 4th grade at our paired school across town (due to school desegregation). Wonderful things are happening there this year with our new dynamic principal perking things up. Mardie was selected to participate in an art enrichment project which she especially enjoys. She is also an Adventure Girl and is taking piano lessons.

As 1981 comes to a close we are still grieving over the death of my wonderful Uncle Bud (Elton Brown) in Vermont in March. We are so glad that most of the Brown clan was together at the family reunion in Ely, Minn. 2 1/2 years ago. It was a special time we will always remember.



On a brighter note, Mel and I had a spectacular week in the northeast in October--Mel at the APS meeting in NYC while I flitted around seeing sister Nancy in Cortland, N.Y. and more relatives in Boston and Providence. The fall colors were

gorgeous and Mel and I thoroughly enjoyed our weekend of high living. We saw "Sugar Babies" with Mickey Rooney and Ann Miller and "Lena Horne--The Woman and Her Music".

Looking ahead to 1982, Pat's parents will be here in February. We will all get to go to San Antonio to hear the All-State Orchestra perform. Mel and I are exploring the possibility of taking the family to Europe in June. Mel has a meeting in Sweden and the rest of us are hoping to get as far as England, Scotland, France and maybe Germany.

Have a wonderful year!

Mel & Pat, Beth, Sarah & Mardie
Oakes

Happy Holidays

