

Dear Friends,

Another year has flown by--a year full to overflowing! This summer we realized a family dream and went to Europe. Eighteen years ago when Mel and I went to Europe we decided that someday we would take our family. This summer "someday" arrived! We combined our trip with Mel's International Plasma Physics Conference which was held in Lausanne, Switzerland. In addition to the week in Lausanne we spent almost 3 weeks in England and Scotland (we rented a car) visiting friends and "big Mardie" Winter and seeing the sights. We also spent a week in Paris, several more days visiting friends in Switzerland--and a half a day in Italy! We were gone nearly 6 weeks--everyone was ready to come home except me. It was a wonderful trip--a real delight to introduce the kids to the wonders of travel.

A major change here has been the addition of the Macintosh computer on which I am writing this letter. We all use it a great deal. Mel is far more interested in all of the functions than the rest of us, but we all do use it--especially the word processor. The University of Texas made such a deal with Apple--reduced rates for all!

Mardie is 12 now and in 7th grade. She is finding that junior high is a real challenge. She is taking 4 honors courses and has a lot of homework almost every night. She started playing the viola last year and is continuing to do very well. She made second chair in the junior high region orchestra which will perform in January. She hopes to get her braces off this summer.

Sarah is 15 and a tenth grader. Her overwhelming interest right now is in gymnastics--she practices a lot and is enjoying it very much. She still plays the cello in the school orchestra, but decided to stop taking lessons. She is taking 3 honors courses and is busy with homework every night, too. She is doing a lot of babysitting to save money for a high school band/orchestra trip to Mexico next summer.

Beth, 17, is a senior this year--hard to believe, but it is true! She got her driver's license last March which has given her some independence (slight problem, though--2 cars, 3 drivers). This summer, 2 weeks after we got home from Europe, she had major surgery on her mouth to reposition her bite. She was wired shut for 3 weeks and could eat only what she could slurp down--a real adventure. It all went very well and we hope she will be out of braces by next summer. She is a National Merit semi-finalist, is taking 4 honors courses and is very involved in her music--there just aren't enough hours in the day. She is talking of a double major in chemistry and viola performance and is applying to Oberlin, the University of Michigan, Indiana University and Rice. All of them have excellent music schools and chemistry departments. She made 3rd chair in the All State Orchestra last Feb. and is 1st chair in the String Project orchestra. She is busy earning money for a planned one month Austin Chamber Music Center trip this coming summer to Hungary, Germany, Austria, England, Wales and Scotland.

Mel stays busy with his work at UT--both teaching and doing research. He spends a great deal of time helping the kids with homework--he is so *patient!* He has learned so much about the Macintosh that he is fast becoming an expert--friends (and family) keep asking him how you do this and that--and he knows. He plays tennis several times a week although he is still missing our friend Carlos Cajas from Guatemala who was a student here. He finished his work and went home, leaving Mel without a Saturday morning tennis partner! He teaches Sunday School for Mardie's class and enjoys working with the kids.

I keep busy being sort of a household computer--keeping track of who needs to be where when! At this point in our lives it is almost a full time job! For the first time in 10 years I am not on the League of Women Voters board. I am enjoying the break, but will get more involved again after we get the kids launched. I spent a good part of the year planning our trip to Europe. Five days after we got home I hopped on a plane and went to Miami for the Coral Gables High School Class of '59 25th reunion. I had never been to one and decided this was it. It was lots of fun! I especially enjoyed seeing so many Miami friends. I rented a car and drove all over Miami. I am still jogging 3 miles a day--slower than I like right now, still writing a weekly neighborhood column for the newspaper, teaching Sunday School, and practicing the piano like crazy so that I can accompany Beth when she goes to Houston in January for her auditions for Rice and Oberlin.

Mel and I both enjoyed some time away in October when we went to Boston for his plasma physics meeting. I left several days ahead of him and went to my sister Nancy's in Cortland, N.Y. We both flew to Boston where our brother Robert came in from his musicological convention in Philadelphia, we all met Mel, stayed with our cousin Lois in Dedham and spent a hectic and happy 36 hours seeing as many relatives in Wrentham and Boston as we could. We gathered with Winter relatives to celebrate the 99th birthday of our amazing Aunt Elsie--she is a marvel! After Nancy and Bob left I had several more days to gad about in Providence and Newport with my aunts Peg and Florence. Mel and I had a great weekend in Boston and then we flew home together. We had, for the first time, left the girls by themselves. They did very well--even if my phone bill was enormous--I called *every* night. Right after our return we had company for a week--our Guatemalan friends, the Antillons--we had such a good time with them.

Our lives are so full and busy right now. Plans are being made of the 1985 Winter/Brown family reunion--it will probably be the end of June in Fontana Village, N. C. or Petit Jean State Park, near Morrilton, Ark. We are so grateful for our good health and our children. We are also grateful for our family and friends and we look forward to hearing from you this holiday season. We pray more than ever that you will have a peaceful, joyous Christmas and that 1985 will be happy and healthy.

Merry Christmas

and a very Happy New Year!

Mel, Pat, Beth
Sarah & Mardie
Oakes



