

# HAPPY HOLIDAYS

December, 1985

Dear Friends,

Once again we send our holiday greetings to you. I just went back and re-read most of our Christmas letters. My, our lives have changed in almost 20 years! Fifteen years ago our letters talked of babies taking their first steps. This year we have a daughter in college and 2 more in secondary school.

Mardie, 13, is now in the 8th grade at O. Henry Junior High (yes, *the* O. Henry). She is enrolled in a number of honors courses (she and her dad have nightly sessions on algebra) and is doing very well with her music. She ranked as first chair viola in the upcoming region orchestra concert which will be in January and was on the first honor roll for the first 6 weeks. She had quite an adventure this summer--after the family reunion she and her cousin Kamala went home to N. Carolina with their Winter grandparents. Mardie was a bit reluctant, but she flew back home by herself and made it just fine. She finished with her braces in October (still has a retainer)--hooray!!!

Sarah, 16, is a junior at Austin High and is beginning to have to think about S.A.T. scores and college choices. She is no longer in the school orchestra, but has gotten involved with gymnastics. Last week she came in beaming for she had just learned to do a back flip on the trampoline. We took her to see Mary Lou Retton and Peter Vidmar and other Olympic gymnasts when they were here in Austin. She is also taking mostly honors courses, so has a heavy homework load. She really enjoys the outdoors and would rather swim at Barton Springs and work on her tan than do schoolwork, but she is a first honor roll student nonetheless. She took driver education this summer and would dearly love to have her own car.

Beth, 18, has had the most changes in her life this year. She graduated with honors from Austin High in June (4 hours after she got her braces off) and then spent a month touring Europe with the Austin Chamber Music Center during late June and July. In September, as a National Merit Scholar, she entered Oberlin College and Conservatory in Oberlin, Ohio (35 miles west of Cleveland). Oberlin was her first choice and so far it seems to have been a good one. She is working very hard toward a double degree in viola performance and English and hopes someday to play in a good symphony orchestra. Last spring Beth and I took a trip to Oberlin and to Indiana University in Bloomington to check out their programs. She decided, and we agreed, that Oberlin seemed to have the program and the teacher most suited to her needs. She'll be home on Dec. 20 and we are all looking forward to her arrival.

It is hard to believe, but Mel has been a professor at UT for 20 years now! We were all so pleased, when, in October, he received 1 of only 7 UT Presidential Associates Teaching Awards--and were even more pleased when we found out that there was a \$5,000 check with it. Playing tennis several times a week keeps him in shape. He continues to be the resident Macintosh computer expert and has quite a library of software. He keeps our 1966 VW and 1969 Plymouth in good running condition--they don't make them like they used to. He enjoyed, as did Sarah and I, visiting family in Vicksburg this summer on our way home from the reunion. He went to San Diego for his professional meeting 5 days after I got home from my trip. We've had visits in the past month or 2 from several of his students from a number of years ago--keep in touch.

I've had a busy year. I'm still running 3 1/2 miles a day and writing a weekly neighborhood news column for the paper. It seems I spent most of the year helping to get Beth launched--planning several trips to colleges, making emergency runs to the post office to mail applications, etc. I also organized our family reunion which was held at Petit Jean State Park near Morrilton, Arkansas. It was a wonderful gathering, as usual, with more than 30 family members attending. We had the chance to meet my brother Robert's future wife, Julia McClintock, and her 6 year old son Darin. They will be married by our minister cousin Elton Brown in Vail on Dec. 27th. This fall I was able to take a fantastic 2 week trip--first to Boston, Providence and Wrentham for the celebration of our Great-Aunt Elsie's 100th birthday. There were more than 60 relatives who gathered from all over the country--"big" Mardie surprised us all and came all the way from Scotland. The celebration coincided with Beth's 18th birthday and her fall break, so she came for the festivities, too. Her best friend Pria came up from Yale and later in the week Beth went down there for a few days. I stayed in New England for a week and then flew to Hendersonville to celebrate with Mom, Dad, Nancy (they had been at the party the weekend before) Robert and Sandy our parents' 45th wedding anniversary. It was an extraordinary time! Mel and the girls did just fine( Ed. note--survived--Mel) in my absence.

We look forward to hearing from you in this joyous season. We wish for you and yours a happy and healthy 1986 and pray that somehow, some way, peace will come to this troubled earth of ours.

MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND A VERY  
HAPPY NEW YEAR

*The Oakes  
Family*



*Mardie*



*Sarah*



*Beth*

*Pat + Mel*

