

December, 1996

Dear Friends,

As Mel and I got off the plane after spending Thanksgiving in Washington, D.C., I had this clear sense of gears stripping--can it be time for Christmas again already? I know that it must be here, however, for the sounds of the "Magnificat" in Latin and Spanish carols being sung are ringing through the halls at school. Why, you ask, were we in Washington, D.C., for Thanksgiving? We just had the most wonderful time with our daughter Sarah and son-in-law John in their home which they moved into in June. John is working for the American Petroleum Institute in downtown D.C. and Sarah is teaching high school chemistry at Flint Hill School, a private school located just ten minutes from where they live in Arlington. Not only did we get to spend time with John and Sarah, but also with Beth who is now based at Peabody Conservatory in nearby Baltimore with the MAIA QUARTET. In addition, Mardie came up from her job in Houston and brought her boyfriend who lives and works in D.C. also. And my parents drove up in their new car from North Carolina and joined in the festivities. It was so much fun!

It has been a wonderful year of family get-togethers in one configuration or another. The MAIA QUARTET was here performing for ten days in January, so that meant a great visit with Beth. In April, Mom and Dad, Nancy, and Mel and I met in New York to hear the MAIA QUARTET perform in Alice Tully Hall. It was so exciting I could hardly stand it! In May, my "baby" sister Sandra graduated from Elon College 29 years late. Nancy, Robert and I and Mom and Dad had promised her that when she graduated we would all come--and we did. It was a wonderful weekend in Burlington, N.C. We all got to meet Sandy and Chip's daughter Jennifer's fiancé Randy Starkey and Nancy and Doug's daughter Kamala's fiancé Jay Johnson who came to celebrate, too. In July many of us met again in Burlington for Jennifer and Randy's wedding which was lovely. I got to make the wedding cake which was a real treat. Her cousin Allison, Nancy and Doug's youngest daughter, was the maid of honor.

A very special family get-together took place as we adjourned from the wedding to Hendersonville where we (the folks, Pat, Nancy, and Sandy met Robert in Hendersonville to celebrate Dad's 80th birthday. We had planned to do this some time ago (before wedding plans) and ended up cheating by a few days so that Nancy and I could combine trips to North Carolina. The six of us had a great time looking at old movies and pictures, eating out, meeting friends of the folks and generally enjoying each other's company--which we really do.

The next occasion was Kamala and Jay's wedding which was just 3 weeks after Jennifer and Randy's. Mel and I went up to upstate New York early and spent a fabulous week wandering around the Finger Lakes and staying in charming bed and breakfasts. We arrived in Cortland several days early in time for me to--you guessed it--to make another wedding cake. Have pans, will travel. In fact, I will be making another cake for Allison and Jim in Cortland on the 7th of June next summer--they have just announced their engagement. Quite a number of the New England relatives were able to make it to that wedding, so we really had an off-year family reunion. Beth, Sarah and John were able to make that event.

It has been a busy year for our girls. Mardie graduated from Rice in May with a degree in architecture. The catalytic converter in her car caught fire (just as we were driving up) the night before she graduated which made for a serious transportation problem. When she came home at the end of May we helped her buy her dream car--a used Ford pickup (incidentally we

bought 3 cars in 4 days in late May--1 new one for us, and helped Mardie and Beth-the first Beth has ever had). Mardie had gotten an internship with the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation in January and was thrilled to be offered a full-time job as a project manager in June. She is living rent-free (takes care of the dogs) in a tiny garage apartment behind a mansion in River Oaks, a posh section of Houston. She drives her black pickup truck to the Fifth Ward to work every day where she is helping to revitalize an urban slum by building new homes for poor people at prices they can afford. It is very exciting work for her. She really enjoys the variety--dealing with land titles, environmental concerns, working with contractors and house plans, etc. This past week she spend a day searching for extra-extra-large work gloves so that when the volunteers from the Houston Rockets ball team come to help with a project in the Fifth Ward, they will not get their hands hurt! She returned from a 10 day trip to Italy last month thanks to an invitation from her boyfriend Arnaud's parents who were living there this fall. They had a wonderful trip and got to see quite a bit.

Sarah and John are very much enjoying being in the Washington area. They are meeting new friends and trying to decide where to buy a house, etc. They are wonderful hosts and may be inundated with out-of-town guests if they are not careful.

Beth has had a very interesting year. Right after their wonderful concert in New York, their cellist resigned with very little notice. We are pleased to report however, that Amos Yang is the new cellist as of last week. They spent the fall auditioning several fine players and Amos really seems to fit the bill. We met him while we were at Sarah and John's this past week. The quartet members are adjunct faculty at Peabody and they are concertizing around the country. They have just returned from Aspen and will be going to Japan in February. They will be here at the end of February and in Hendersonville in April. They are well on their way and making a living--fabulous!

Pat and Mel

