

December, 1999
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Dear Friends,

As all of the enthusiasm and concerns about the turn of the century continue to swirl around us, I cannot help but think of my wonderful great-aunt, Elise Winter George who lived to be 104. Years ago she told me how excited she and her classmates were the year she entered high school in 1899; it was going to become the year 1900 that winter. It is fun to think of the contrasts between what her turn of the century was like and compare it to the year 2000. I wonder if folks will remember us in the year 2100. I am a purist, however, and do not consider that the real thing happens until 2001. It is fun to point out that the millennium has already happened since our calendar was set up in error by several years about 1500 years ago. Regardless, it is definitely December and the sights and sounds of the holidays are everywhere. I am busy trying to get the house in order, for Beth and Eugene, Sarah and John, and Mardie and maybe Deron will be here. We are so looking forward to their visit.

It has been another busy, wonderful year for us. In March we went to Lafayette, LA, to hear Beth solo with the Acadiana Symphony Orchestra and to see Mel's brother Floyd and his wife Betty. We also took a nostalgic trip over to LSU—and even ran into an old classmate of Mel's. A good part of the first half of the year was spent in planning Beth and Eugene's wedding, which was June 26 here in Austin. It was a lovely affair with cherished family, beautiful music, and wonderful friends from far and near. After the wedding Beth and Eugene honeymooned in the Napa Valley and at Lake Tahoe. Rose, Eugene's mother, gave a wonderful party for the newlyweds in Oakland, and Mel and I flew out there the week after the wedding to be a part of the continuing celebration. Beth and Eugene are now living in Coralville, IA, a suburb of Iowa City, IA. The Maia Quartet is the faculty quartet-in-residence at the University of Iowa and Eugene is an educational administrator in the College of Liberal Arts. They are so enjoying being together and not having to travel so much. We look forward to visiting them over spring break this year. You can check out their web site and see pictures of the wedding at www.geneandbeth.com.

Sarah and John are still in Kensington, MD, and enjoying busy lives there. John is working on an MBA through the University of Maryland, which takes a large chunk out of many of their weekends, but he will finish in May, 2000. Sarah has become quite a quilter and has been taking an appliqué class. She has promised to bring some of her work when they come for Christmas. She still teaches high school chemistry at Flint Hill School in Virginia and finds it challenging and enjoyable. I am forever grateful to Sarah for introducing me to HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE, her Christmas gift to me last year. If you haven't read it---and I don't care how old you are---read it! It is so much fun, as are the two sequels which are out. I read the first book to my class last year and had them eating out of the palm of my hand—an unforgettable experience.

Mardie continues to live and work in Houston. She and Deron were both home for Thanksgiving which was a lot of fun. Mardie was featured as one of about a dozen up and coming young architects who are doing architecture in non-traditional ways in the May 1999, issue of ARCHITECTURE magazine. The article focussed on her work at the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation. She was also featured in a write-up in the Rice alumni magazine discussing her joint project with Rice architecture professor Michael Bell and their "16 Houses" exhibition which they curated. It was organized around the premise that interesting and diverse low-cost housing is a real possibility and, with some creative thought, can be comparable in price to bland repetitive housing.

This summer was the 14th family reunion we have had since 1972. We had such a great time at Kirkridge near Stroudsburg, PA. There was a core group of about 40 folks, but a total of more than 50 were there at one time or another during the week representing 14 or 15 states. We all enjoyed visiting Art's Toys, the wonderful stuffed animal factory of my cousin Matthew's wife's father (the reunions are filled with those kinds of explanations) in Easton, PA, and going rafting on the Delaware River. We cooked delicious meals, showed old family slides, caught up on family genealogy, hiked along the Appalachian Trail, had the family talent show, admired the first baby (Aliyah) of the next generation, etc.

After the reunion, Nancy and Doug, Mom and Dad, and Mel and I went to the St. Lawrence River for several days where we stayed with Nancy and Doug's friends, the Amesese—world's most hospitable hosts. It was an amazing experience to visit Boldt Castle and to see freighters moving at a stately pace right by us, as we swam in The River with my folks.

There were several visits to Vicksburg this year. Mel and I went in January for the wedding of his niece Jennifer. We hadn't been home in ages, so it was good to see folks. Mel attended a high school reunion in May (Pat couldn't go because it was the last week of school). It was a wonderful occasion to visit with his three brothers and their families. It remains a special visit since Charlie, his oldest brother, died of a heart attack this fall and the reunion was their last visit. An Air Force career enabled him to have a military ceremony at the interment of his ashes at his parents' grave in Vicksburg, MS. A longtime friend, Ch. Colonel Bill Jones led the very personal service.

Over Labor Day my siblings, Nancy, Robert, Sandy, and I went to North Carolina and spent a wonderful, long weekend celebrating our mother's 80th birthday. We had such a good time with the folks--going through old slides and scrapbooks, sitting at our old places at the table, catching up on our lives, meeting and visiting with the lovely friends they have made at Tryon Estates. They continue to amaze us. They just completed a 16-day cruise to the Amazon and the Orinoco rivers—incredible!

Mel and I continue to teach, he at UT and I at St. Andrew's. We both very much enjoy what we are doing but are beginning to talk about retirement in a few years. It sounds so funny, but maybe if I put it down on paper, it will be real. Mel plays tennis and I am still walking for exercise. Our church has decided to put a move on hold until the retirement of our pastor in April of 2001. It is a time for lots of serious decisions that are difficult to make.

At this joyous time of year we look forward to hearing from old friends. You add a wonderful dimension to our lives. We wish you a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

Love,

Mel & Pat

Pictured from l-r are Mardie,
John and Sarah, Beth and
Eugene, and Pat and Mel

