

December, 2002

Dear Friends,

Another year has flown by and it is time to wish you Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year. It is amazing how fast time flies at this stage of our lives.

This year will be remembered by me as the year of the knee. By late December, I realized that my knee was not getting better, but was getting worse. I taught the rest of the year using a cane. My students were very helpful, bless their hearts. In March, Mel stayed at home while I gallivanted off to Iowa for Easter to see Beth, Eugene, and Emily. Sarah came and visited then, too, so we had a great time. By April, we both realized that I would have a very difficult time teaching for another year, so I decided to retire because of the long recuperation time after a knee replacement. I enjoyed teaching so much that it was very hard to come to that decision. May was a whirlwind of trying to get papers graded, getting my desk and classroom cleaned out, and trying to get through retirement festivities without crying.

Early in June we had the great joy of going to Boston to see Mardie graduate with her MBA from Harvard Business School. In spite of the fact that it rained (hard!) that day, everyone had a wonderful time. Deron was there also, and we all enjoyed being together. Mardie went directly from Harvard to a job at Boston Community Capital in Roxbury, a suburb of Boston, where she is working on revitalizing an old neighborhood. While we were in the area we visited the Boston area cousins and also spent several days at Old Sturbridge Village, often featured on the New Yankee Workshop. We were home for a week and then we went off to Interlochen in Michigan for a week to babysit for Emily while Beth with the rest of the Maia Quartet worked at the Interlochen Music Festival. It was while we were there that it became very apparent that a knee replacement was going to be necessary. Despite this, we still had a wonderful time playing with Emily and enjoying Beth's company.

As soon as we got back from Michigan we saw the orthopedic surgeon and set the date--July.29. I came through the surgery just fine, but the recuperation has been difficult, to say the least! There has been lots of pain (knee and back) plus other complications caused by the drugs I was given--and then there was the reality of retirement. I was unable to eat much for several months so I ended up losing almost 20 pounds, thus proving once again that behind every cloud there is a silver lining. There is no way I could have made it without Sarah, who came and stayed for more than a week after I got out of the rehab hospital, and Mel who has been such a stalwart support. Sarah cooked and cleaned and chauffeured me everywhere, which was such a help. Sarah had a week or so after leaving here to get ready for her teaching year which she is enjoying very much. I spend almost 2 hours a day on exercises to strengthen the new knee. Finally, after 4 months I am beginning to feel like a human again. A real boost for me was visiting my parents in mid-October at their retirement community in North Carolina. We all had a wonderful time (sister Sandra came over for a few days) and Dad and I did our physical therapy together as he had spinal stenosis surgery 8 days after my knee surgery. I am so lucky at my age to be able to go home and be spoiled by my parents! While in North Carolina it was wonderful to see several old friends from Miami.

We just returned from Iowa City after a heart-warming--and bone-chilling--Thanksgiving with Beth, Eugene, and Emily (who is absolutely adorable, funny, and smart and is just turning 2). My Miami upbringing makes it impossible for me to imagine living where it is so cold. Beth, the rest of the quartet (including their new cellist), and Eugene and Emily recently had a great 10 days in Hawaii where the quartet had a week's residency. They all traveled well including Beth who is expecting a baby boy in late February. We missed talking to Mardie on Thanksgiving as she and Deron

were attending a friend's wedding in Udaipur, India, with several days more in Bombay. They had a wonderful time, but we are really glad they are home safely.

We are staying busy, of course. Mel is still teaching at UT and enjoying it, but is beginning to think about retirement. He is still playing tennis twice a week with a group that started about 20 years ago. I have started volunteering at a public school near here one morning a week, volunteering in the library one morning a week at St. Andrew's (where I taught for 16 years), and being a volunteer docent at the LBJ Library one afternoon a week. I am enjoying sleeping later and not being so tired all the time. We are both involved with book clubs through our church. Mel has done some marvelous woodworking this year, mostly for Emily--a fabulous easel, a beautiful set of maple blocks, and an adorable doll cradle (similar to the big one he built for her 2 years ago), and a beautiful mahogany table for his study. I am in the process of quilting a quilt for Mardie which I hope to finish in my lifetime!! The Winter/Brown family reunion will be at Coolfont Resort and Spa in Berkeley Springs, WV, from July 27--Aug. 3. If you are going to be in the area, let us know.

We always look forward to hearing from you folks at Christmas. E-mail means we stay in touch with some of you more than the annual Christmas card. We'd love to have your e-mail address if you are sharing it. Ours is **oakes@mail.utexas.edu**.

Once again, we pray for peace as we enter another year. The world situation has us more worried than usual, so we will pray and work harder than ever for Peace on Earth and Good Will Toward Everyone.