

✧ Christmas, 2004

Dear Family and Friends,

This is a bittersweet holiday season for us as my beautiful mother Lois died on Dec. 2 after a fourteen-month battle with cancer. She spent the last 7 weeks in hospice care in their apartment where she died, as was her wish. My 3 amazing siblings and I juggled our schedules for the 7 weeks, and one or the other of us was with the folks until the end. Nancy was especially constant and was there when she died. No one could believe that Mom lived as long as she did. We all had time to tell her how much we loved her—and she had time to organize things—like ordering Christmas gift for her granddaughters. She was so calm and full of faith and peace that she made it possible for us to let her go. We have just returned from her memorial service, which was on Dec. 10. As she wished, it was a celebration of her life. She planned the service, and it included brother Robert on the piano, son-in-law Doug Hatch and grandson-in-law Randy Starkey reading part of the service. Seven of her 9 granddaughters and 10 of her 12 great-grandchildren (the 2 youngest having been born since Mom went into hospice care) were among the many family members there. Dad is doing OK. It was so hard for him to see his wife of 64 years dying by inches. He lives in a wonderful retirement community and is surrounded by many caring friends and a wonderful staff. Mel and I are looking forward to spending Christmas with him and then going on to visit with Mardie and Tony who will be visiting with his parents about an hour away from Dad. From there we will go on to visit Sarah in D.C. for a week.

It was a good thing I retired since I was able to spend a good deal of time with the folks this past year—more than 2 months in bits and pieces. In addition to the out-of-town time, I continue to chair the local League of Women Voters study on education, write the personals column for the church newsletter, participate in our church's women's book club, docent at the LBJ Library, volunteer at St. Andrew's in the library once a week—and do some editing part-time for the St. Andrew's development office. I am still enjoying walking about an hour a day (at 7:30 a.m.) with a group of women from the neighborhood. I was on the winning team for the Great Grown-up Spelling Bee, which benefited the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas. Mel and I enjoyed a trip to Miami in August to attend my 45<sup>th</sup> high school reunion.

Mel retired from UT in August after 40 years, but was lured back 1/4 time by the Physics Department. He agreed to that as long as it did not have to be linear time. He sets his own schedule and goes in to work a three days a week—or he can take time off so that we can travel. He is still playing tennis, participating in the church's men's book club, and is doing wonderful woodworking. Mel and I had a great time at his 50<sup>th</sup> high school reunion which was in Vicksburg in late May. We are looking forward to a trip to England in the spring and a family reunion back at Coolfont from July 27 to Aug. 3.

Beth, Eugene, Emily, and Ethan are enjoying life in Iowa City--although now that the cold has set in, it does make it more challenging. Beth, with the Maia Quartet, continues to work as a faculty member at the University of Iowa. Amy Appold Kuhlmann, who along with Beth was one of the founding members of the quartet 15 years ago, has moved (her husband got a wonderful offer in his field at the University of Missouri) and the remaining 3 members are seeking a new first violinist this spring. Hannah Holman, the new cellist has just had a baby, so that makes things even more exciting. Mel and I spent 2 exhilarating, exhausting weeks in Interlochen, MI, taking care of the kids while Beth was working

with the Maia Quartet at the music festival there. Eugene was back in Iowa City unpacking and moving into their new home. Mel and I also went up for a wonderful week in mid-October (Mel's first holiday during a school year in 40 years) for the last Maia Quartet concert with Amy--they were amazing, even as Beth and Amy played and wept through the last half of the concert. Eugene continues as an administrator in the College of Liberal Arts. Emily just turned 4 this month and Ethan will be 2 in February--they are delightful children and we love being with them! Check out [geneandbeth.com](http://geneandbeth.com).

Mel and I are looking forward to seeing Sarah over the Christmas break in D.C. She has continued to substitute teach and tutor chemistry this year and has a new part-time job working for a company that analyzes food supplements for their chemical content. She had a wonderful trip to Italy in May. She visited several cities including Rome, Venice and Florence. She enjoyed Anacapri and the Ligurian coast most of all. Her Italian classes paid off and she was able to get around quite well during her month's stay. Several friends and her cousin Jessamy Brown came over and joined her for parts of the trip. She was able to go to NC and visit with my folks in mid-January when Mom was very much in need of another pair of hands around the house.

Mardie and her fiancé Tony Deifell were here for Thanksgiving from their home in San Francisco. We hadn't seen them for ages, so it was wonderful to have time together. They have had a busy year getting to know the Bay Area and are very happy to have Tony's sister, Hope, recently move just a few blocks away. A highlight of the year was attending the wedding of two HBS friends on a tiny island in Greece. They enjoyed being the photographers for the wedding. They are enjoying living in San Francisco and are very much looking forward to their wedding on August 20 at the Headlands Center for the Arts just across the Golden Gate Bridge near Sausalito. Both Mardie and Tony have been Artists in Residence at Headlands, with Mardie living there this past October working on her housing and design ideas, so the location is special to both of them.

The election was a painful disappointment for us. It is clear that neither candidate could unite the country. We pray that the winners will at last follow Christ's lead in seeking peace, championing the poor and extending his love to all people. In the spirit of love and harmony this season brings, we wish you all a blessed Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year. ✨