

Dear Friends,

We send you our greetings for a joyous Christmas season. This past year has been such a contrast to the previous year. A year ago we were just back from my mother's memorial service and all of us were trying to cope with her loss. Instead, Mom continues to act in our lives and be a real presence for us.

Mel and I have had a wonderful time traveling in 2005. In late December, 2004, we were in North Carolina with Dad and with Mardie and Tony and Tony's family in Black Mountain. We had a terrific time getting to know the family and making plans for the wedding. In early January, 2005, we enjoyed visiting with Sarah in D.C. In March, we had a great week with the Oakes/Buck family in Iowa City.

In early April, Mel and I went to San Francisco to continue working on wedding plans. It was great to see where Mardie and Tony live in the Mission District and to start learning our way around the Bay Area. In late April, I went to NC to visit Dad and brother Robert overlapped with me for several days. We had a good time visiting with Dad and his many friends at Tryon Estates.

In May, Mel and I had a marvelous 16 day trip to see our dear friends, Don and Ann Kimber in Bristol, England. We decided not to drive this time as Don and Ann had offered to do the driving for us. We have known Don since FSU days in 1959-60 and this was our 4th visit in 45 years. We visited Bristol, of course, Chester, Warwick Castle, Chatsworth, Castle Combe, and many other gloriously scenic sights. After 9 days with Don and Ann, we took the train back to London and spent 5 wonderful days there exploring that great city. While in London we also visited church friends from Austin—Allison and Chris Cole/Stutz and their daughters and Eunice Paul and Dean and Lydia Tapley.

We were home less than a week before I went to Iowa for a week to help with babysitting while the Maia Quartet was auditioning for a new second violinist. I had a marvelous time with Emily and Ethan.

In late July and early August, it was time for the Winter/Brown family reunion held at Coolfont in Berkeley Springs, WVA. There were 61 of us over the week—not everyone at the same time, but we were at about 50 the whole week. Twelve of the 14 living cousins in my generation were there as were three senior members of the family—Dad, Aunt Peg, and Aunt Doris (who flew with us as she lives in San Antonio). Fourteen of us went with Dad, as a celebration of his 89th birthday, to the Udvar-Hazy Air and Space Museum on the grounds of Dulles Airport. There we saw the Pan American plane that Dad worked on in Miami. It is a marvelous museum, which contains the Concorde, the Gossamer Albatross, a Challenger spacecraft, and many other aviation wonders. It was a great joy to have Joan and Jey Deifell, Tony's parents, come by for two nights and a day. They got to meet the whole family there since not everyone was able to come to the wedding—which was our next trip!

Wedding Camp was the weekend of August 19-21 at the Headlands Center for the Arts near Sausalito. Mardie and Tony did an absolutely amazing job of putting together a memorable, fun, inspiring weekend. Nineteen Oakes-related family members were there—and Emily got to be a flower girl. People were encouraged to wear vintage clothing, so Emily looked just right in the Mary Poppins costume I made for her last Halloween! The weekend included not only a beautiful wedding ceremony co-officiated by Tony's dad, but kite-flying, roller skating, and a concert by the Weepies. See our Web page for photos.

In early October, Mel and I and my sister Nancy and her husband Doug went on an amazing 3½ week Elderhostel tour to New Zealand and Australia. The trip took place because of Mom. While Nancy was taking one of her turns staying with Mom last year, she asked Mom if there had been some place where she and Dad did not get to in their many travels. Mom thought a minute and said, "Australia. We went to New Zealand but did not have time for Australia—I always wanted to go to the Sydney Opera House." Nancy told Mom she would go for her—and the trip just grew! Our tour not only included a backstage tour of the opera house and a performance (Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet"), but wading in the Tasman Sea, sailing a boat in Auckland Harbor, cruising on Milford Sound, exploring Sydney (I got picked up by a lifeguard on Bondi Beach—literally), feeding kangaroos, seeing Uluru (Ayers Rock) at sunset, hiking in the outback, snorkeling on the Great Barrier Reef, eating breakfast with incredible birds, etc. It was our first tour, and we were not sure if we would like it, but we will certainly do Elderhostel again!

Beth, the last founding member of the Maia Quartet, is totally enjoying the new configuration of the group. It was difficult to have to search for two new violinists, but they are working out very well. They are

touring and performing more now that the children of the quartet members are bigger. Emily, 5 this month, loves preschool and is playing violin and doing gymnastics and art. Ethan, 3 in February, loves his new child-care center and is talking up a storm. Eugene is fabulous father, and a huge support to Beth as she travels more. He'll be taking a trip to California for fun this December. He also maintains their Web page, geneandbeth.com. Beth and Eugene both enjoy Iowa City and the University of Iowa.

Sarah started a full-time teaching position at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School in Alexandria, VA. It is a private, Episcopal high school. She is teaching three chemistry classes and one AP chemistry class. She has been enjoying all her students, especially her very motivated AP class. The commute between Bethesda and Alexandria is not nearly as bad as she expected. She actually finds it somewhat relaxing to drive along the river to and from work. She is on the dreaded "Beltway" for only a few meters to cross the Potomac. Sarah is also tutoring and working at an Italian food specialty shop on Sundays to earn a little money to put away for future traveling. She misses the flexibility and travel opportunities of part-time teaching but is enjoying the positive feedback that comes from teaching her own class for a full year.

Mardie is starting a new non-profit corporation developing housing in the Bay Area for people with special needs. Her first project will be to build 75 homes for people being relocated from an institutional setting. They will be in scattered sites integrated into the community. The majority of the clients have significant physical disabilities, creating many design challenges which will draw on Mardie's architecture training. Tony is the chief strategist for KaBoom, a non-profit organization which builds playgrounds, organizing community residents to help with the "builds." He is also spending a great deal of time finishing up his book, *SOUND SHADOWS*, which will be published by Chronicle Books next summer. The book is about his experiences teaching blind and partially sighted children photography.

As you can no doubt tell, Mel and I are enjoying retirement. I stay busy with the League of Women Voters education committee which I chair, I volunteer at St. Andrew's in the library, tutor and do some editing there, I write the personals column for the church newsletter and participate in the women's book club at church, walk about an hour a day 5 days a week with wonderful friends in the neighborhood, I enjoy making costumes for Emily and Ethan to play dress-ups with, and I work on spelling! Our combined Congregational/Presbyterian team won the Great Grown-Up Spelling Bee again this year. It benefits the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas—fun! I am enjoying my fourth year as a docent at the LBJ Library.

Mel is enjoying working ¼ time at UT—goes in and comes home when he wants to. He is working with several seminar groups, doing advising, and writing lots of letters of recommendation. He continues to create wonderful woodworking projects, to play tennis several times a week—and has developed a new interest in genealogy. He is having a wonderful time tracking down all sorts of cousins and surprising them by calling out of the blue. He is a whiz at technology and has outfitted us with a camera hooked up to our computer so that we can talk with the Oakes/Buck family and see the grandkids. He used technology to create a book that we started 5 years ago when Emily was born. It is called *GRAMPA MAKES A CRADLE*—and there are two hardbound copies in existence. We have one and Beth and family have the other. I took photos of when Mel was building Emily's cradle and then wrote the text. You can download it from our Web site.

So many tragedies have struck this Earth this past year. Our prayers go out for those who have died or been displaced from their homes by war, disease, storms, and earthquakes. May the Prince of Peace fill our hearts with hope and the will to keep working for peace wherever we can. We continue to be grateful for good health and dear friends and wonderful family. As ever,

Mel, Emily, Pat and Ethan, Mardie's wedding, San Francisco

