

December 2006
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Dear Friends and Family,

It has been a bittersweet year. My ninety-year-old father died on Oct. 29. We have all marveled that Dad lived almost two years after Mom's death. He was so pleased to have celebrated his 90th at the end of July. We had a big party, and lots of family members were able to attend. He had been in ICU for 5 weeks in March and April, so we really felt that every good day after that was a bonus—and he did have good days. His memorial service was in early November. The four of “us kids” are hoping to make a trip to Wrentham, MA, the old family home place, sometime in the next few months so that we can inter the folks' ashes together. Over Christmas, Mel and I will be driving a borrowed van to Columbus, NC, via Vicksburg, to meet Nancy and Doug, Robert, Sandy, and our foster sister Jean to clear out the folks' apartment and say goodbye to our good friends at Tryon Estates where Mom and Dad lived for 9 years.

In addition to my 6 trips to North Carolina this year, Mel and I had some wonderful trips together. We babysat several times for the grandchildren in Iowa, we visited Chicago for the first time and enjoyed exploring that wonderful city, and we took a great 3 day trip to Little Rock, AK, to see the Clinton Presidential Library (we went with a group of LBJ Library docents as a part of a 25th year celebration of that program). We had two marvelous trips to Vicksburg—one in March to prepare for the reunion organized by Mel and his brothers Floyd and Donald—and the next in May when 67 Oakes relations showed up for the first ever Oakes-Dose family reunion! We were delighted that Sarah and Mardie were able to be there and see their relatives.

In June, our immediate family enjoyed a lovely, lively week at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park. With seven adults (Pat and Mel, Beth and Eugene, Sarah, Mardie and Tony) and two children (Emily, 5, and Ethan, 3,) everyone had time to rest and time to play! Mel and I stayed in Colorado an additional week and visited with friends from our church in Austin, cousin Sheila and her husband John Wood in Boulder, and Beth Huttig Rebman, an old friend of mine from Miami who now lives in Colorado Springs.

July was mostly spent at home, but we had lots of company. Our dear friends from Guatemala, Jorge and Miriam Antillon, came for 5 days—and, the day they left, Beth and the kids arrived for 12 days. Beth was working at the Austin Chamber Music Festival with the Maia Quartet and we took care of the kids. Sarah was also in town.

Our most exotic trip for the year was to Trinidad and Tobago for the wedding of good friend Amit Sarma (brother of Beth's best friend since the 4th grade--Pria) to Gillian Jacob who is from there. The 5 days were filled with wonderful activities—snorkeling, watching scarlet ibises land at sunset in a remote swamp, enjoying a day on a party boat, meeting an amazing group of young people, walking on the beach, eating new and delicious food. The wedding was beautiful—and Mel and I were quite proud of the fact that we survived quite well in spite of being the oldest ones there! In the middle of October Mel and I spent a marvelous week leaf-peeping in upstate New York with Nancy and Doug. We got a bonus while we were in the Adirondacks—a gorgeous early snowfall. We also spent a wonderful Thanksgiving week with Sarah in D.C.

The Oakes/Buck family has had a busy productive year. **Beth** and the Maia Quartet are doing much more traveling and performing. There are tours to Japan and the Mediterranean planned for the spring and summer—plus a tour of the mid-west. She thinks she has found a new bow, which will complement her viola very well. Eugene continues with his administrative work at the University of Iowa and has taken on the job of Webmeister for the Maia Quartet's Web page (check out <http://www.uiowa.edu/~c025188/>). He plans a trip to Hawaii in January—a reward from Beth to him for being such a supportive husband and father while Beth is doing so much traveling. Emily is enjoying kindergarten, violin lessons, and gymnastics. Ethan is having a great time in pre-school, loves gymnastics and dressing up in his pirate costume from Halloween.

Sarah is enjoying her second year at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes' School in the D.C. area. She had a great summer traveling to Colorado, NJ, Mississippi, Austin, NC, and Iowa City. The trip to Austin was for an AP Chemistry professional development class where she got many new ideas for her AP class. The icing on the cake was getting to stay at home with family and visit with friends she hadn't seen in a long time. The best part of the summer, however, was getting to spend time with Emily and Ethan on four different visits. She and Beth had a lovely visit with Grampa in September.

Mardie and Tony are still enjoying living in the Mission in San Francisco. Mardie's year has been largely consumed starting her non-profit housing organization. Her first project involves buying and renovating 70 homes in the bay area for individuals with developmental disabilities currently living in an institution. They have bought 26 homes so far and will be starting construction the first of the year, which promises to keep her busy. We are so proud that she was selected as an Echoing Green Fellow (www.echoinggreen.org) for her work as a social entrepreneur. Tony spent much of the year giving birth to his book, *Seeing Beyond Sight: Photographs by Blind Teenagers*, (www.seeingbeyondsight.com). The book will be released in bookstores this spring. He has continued to work as chief strategist for KaBOOM!, a nonprofit which brings together communities and corporate partners to build playgrounds. KaBOOM! is focusing on "bringing play back to the Gulf Coast" in areas hit by Katrina, which has been rewarding to be a part of.

This year **Mel** continued his part-time employment with the University, running seminars, advising, overseeing laboratories, and administering scholarships. He will fully retire in January and is looking forward to more tennis, woodworking, genealogy, reading, traveling, and giving occasional lectures. While we were in D.C., he made sure that we did some genealogical research in the Library of Congress. We have the library cards to prove it! Check out the wonderful Web site that he has created with all kinds of family photos (old and new) at <http://web.mac.com/patandmel>.

I have stayed very busy—will have been gone from home 116 days this year. No wonder I don't know what is in my kitchen! I walk 5 days a week with my wonderful neighbors, docent at the LBJ Library once a week, volunteer at the St. Andrew's library (my old school), and work hard chairing a LWV study on middle and high schools in our school district. Our Austin Great-Grown-Up spelling bee team (the Church Ladies) won for the third year in a row. Sister Nancy helped me study this year while we were driving 35 miles back and forth to be with Dad while he was in ICU. I drove and she called out words.

This season of Advent leading up to Christmas is a season of hope and expectation. We hope and pray for Peace on Earth and Good Will to all. We wish you and yours a very merry Christmas and a very happy New Year. Happy holidays to everyone.