

December, 2010  
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Dear Friends and Family,

A very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of you. This must be our 45<sup>th</sup> or so Christmas letter (We've been married 47 years now and I am sure we did not send out a letter the first couple of years). It is funny to think that that long ago I probably wrote it out in longhand, painstakingly typed it on the typewriter, and then headed to the printer to get it printed—never even dreaming of the amazing technology that we have with computers now. Time flies and things change, but we still celebrate this holy season with great anticipation and joy.

We stay so busy that we have no idea how we ever had time to work at full-time jobs. Mel continues to add to his Oakes family genealogy (see our Web page address above) and has spent much of this past year working on a history of the UT Physics Department. He has contacted so many physicists and their descendants and has been unrelenting in trying to identify folks in old Physics Department pictures. Who knew he would turn into Sherlock Holmes! He is continuing to play tennis and just finished installing 3 ceiling fans in the house. I still work as a docent one afternoon a week at the LBJ Library, walk 3-4 miles with my walking buddies 5 mornings a week, go to League of Women Voters meetings, serve as a Deacon at church (plus being in charge of fun and fellowship and writing a monthly column for the church newsletter), and work on family history (labeling pictures that folks forgot to label!) and genealogy, too.

We both enjoy traveling and having company, so that has continued this year. In January we went to Iowa—not too bright you may say, but Beth, Eugene, and Emily (10 this month), and Ethan (8 in February) are there, so that is a great incentive! In March, we were delighted to have a visit from our long-time Japanese friend Hisao Toyoda who was our international student here at UT in the late 1960s. It was great to have Dan and Mary Ladd Cope drop by—they were part of our China Elderhostel group in 2007. We had a wonderful visit here with Sarah and her friend Joe Pierce and Mardie and her husband Tony in mid-March. It was so much fun to have a brunch for our friends here to catch up with Sarah and Mardie and to meet Joe and Tony.

In April, my sisters Nancy and Sandra and I traveled to LA to hear our brother Robert give a very entertaining lecture as a part of his being selected as the 108<sup>th</sup> Faculty Research Lecturer at UCLA. His lecture was wonderful (you can hear it at <http://www.oid.ucla.edu/Webcast/frl/winter>). Robert was on sabbatical, so we 4 had time to visit with his daughter Kelly, now a Loyola law student, and to do some touring of the area. Nancy and Sandy did a great job of drilling me on spelling words for the Great Grown-Up Spelling Bee. The Bee is a fund-raiser, organized by and for the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas and was about 10 days after we got home. Nancy came here for the occasion. After taking last year off, our team—The Church Ladies—placed second out of 18 teams. The Bee raised more than \$80,000 toward literacy efforts here.

The very next day cousins Marge Davies and Ellie Reppucci arrived for a visit, so the 4 of us with Mel had a great time. Aunt Doris, who lives in a retirement community about 10 minutes away, really enjoyed seeing everyone. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of May, our 47<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, Mel and I set out on an Elderhostel/Exploritas, now Road Scholar, 16 day trip to Central Europe. We learned so much as we visited Prague, Bratislava (Did you know it is less than an hour away by car from Vienna?), and Budapest.

In June, Mel and I met the rest of our immediate family at the YMCA of the Rockies where we had a great visit. The grandkids are big enough now that we could take hikes and play all kinds of games, etc. After the reunion, we followed Beth and family to Steamboat Springs where she was working at a music festival. It was fun to see another part of Colorado. We then went on to Colorado Springs where we visited Beth Huttig Rebman, a high school friend of mine, and then to Boulder where we visited Mel's cousin Sheila Wood and her husband John.

In August, Mel and I traveled to the Boston area for a memorial service for my wonderful Aunt Peg who had died while we were in Budapest. There are 14 living cousins/children and 13 of us were there—a real tribute to her. The service was held in the family church in Wrentham, MA. Wrentham is where the four of us Winter kids used to spend much of our summers with our grandparents and our cousins. The visit with so many family members was a final gift of Aunt Peg's to all of us. In addition to seeing already known relatives, we were able to visit with some cousins discovered in our genealogical pursuits. I had been in e-mail contact with them for several years, so it was really special to meet in person, to hear family stories, and to visit the old family cemeteries. We were also able to meet with a group of Mom's cousins for lunch one day—such a treat.

In October, Mel and I drove to Vicksburg for the annual All-County High School Reunion. It attracted more than 400 folks from the 3 high schools that existed in Warren County before the schools were consolidated in 1965. It was wonderful to see Mel's brothers Donald and Floyd and their wives and several of our nieces and nephews. While in Vicksburg, we also did some sleuthing in the county seat, Canton, Mississippi, records looking for information about long-gone relatives. At the end of October, we had a wonderful weekend in Houston at a B and B, a gift from our kids,

and got to see dear friends Nandita and Barada Sarma, their son Amit, daughter-in-law Gillian, their granddaughter Sonali and brand-new twins Lyla and Nathan who were just 2 weeks old.

In early November, we were delighted to have a birthday visit from Jessamy Brown, our cousin who works for the Ft. Worth Star-Telegram. We hadn't seen her in several years, so it was great to catch up. Of course, it was so good to be able to spend time with Aunt Doris, too. It is a real advantage having her here.

**Beth** and Eugene are in California as I write this taking advantage of a gig for Beth in Santa Barbara to take the kids to Disneyland. Both Beth and Eugene continue with their jobs at the University of Iowa. Emily, a 4<sup>th</sup> grader, is playing the violin and the bass and enjoying school and gymnastics. Ethan, in 2nd grade, is an avid reader, loves Harry Potter, enjoys playing the piano, is a great gymnast, and loves following sports with his dad.

With no new curriculum to write, **Sarah** is having an easier school year this year and is enjoying a little more free time. She and Joe have started rock climbing and have plans to snowboard this winter. They tried snowboarding twice at the end of last winter and liked it enough to get a season pass this winter. Over the summer, Sarah got to visit several high school friends & their families along with hosting Beth, Emily, and Ethan (and Eugene for a few days) when they visited D.C. for a week. In August, she and Joe spent a week in Alaska and went on some amazing hikes and saw lots of wildlife.

**Mardie** and Tony are still living on a houseboat in Sausalito, which they assure us is the safest place to be in an earthquake. Mardie's organization was awarded federal stimulus funding to address the foreclosure crisis in the Bay Area, which is keeping her on her toes. Tony, among other projects, continues to grow his collaborative photo project WDYDWYD? (Why Do You Do What You Do?), which was just featured in the November issue of *Wired Magazine*. They just celebrated their five-year wedding anniversary in August...time flies!

This next summer will be the 20th Winter/Brown family reunion since 1972. We will be meeting at Scenic Wolf Resort in Mars Hill, NC, near Asheville. The Winter part of the clan was there two years ago and really enjoyed it, so the Browns will be joining us there July 16-23. If you are going to be in the area, let us know and perhaps we can get together.

May our hearts be open this holy season for peace on Earth, good will to all.



Oakes Family in Colorado in June



Pat & Mel , Hrad Cesky Sternbeck in Czech Republic