

December, 2012
oakes@utexas.edu
www.patandmeloakes.com

Dear Family and Friends,

A cold front has finally arrived—no rain, but cooler temperatures—so it is beginning to feel like Christmas. We are well into Advent—and Christmas will be here soon. We have had a healthy year with walking (Pat) & tennis (Mel). As we have been saying for the past ten years, we don't know how we ever had time to work. We continue to enjoy our genealogical research—Pat was delighted to connect with Griffin relatives in New Brunswick, and Mel finished his dad's memoir and continues to expand the UT Physics Department history he has written. We are looking forward to celebrating our 50th wedding anniversary in May. We will have a small party here with friends on the 18th and get together with our family in the summer for a longer celebration,

We've been blessed with visitors and travels throughout the year. In early February we had a wonderful weekend in Dallas with Mel's brother Donald and his wife Bettye, our nephew Stuart and partner Jay—all in town to visit with niece Jennifer Oakes Ables and her husband Gabe. Jennifer is the costume shop manager (and occasional designer) for the Dallas Theater Center and Jennifer gave us a marvelous backstage tour of the fabulous facility plus we all enjoyed seeing the musical of "Giant." Later that month, Beth and Eugene came with the kids while she worked a gig with Austin Chamber Music Center. Pria, her "bestest" friend since the 4th grade, came from New Jersey with her two boys and we all had a terrific time—although we missed Pria's husband Firoz. It was great to have Phil and Susan Grant stop by from California for brunch one day. In March, Mardie came for a long weekend so that we could see her glowing pregnant self. Just after she left, niece Allison (Hatch) and Jim Edgecomb and their 2 children came for a few days. We also enjoyed seeing Mary Sinclair and Dick Jackson who were visiting from Canada.

In April, the physics department had a wonderful party for recent retirees (Mel has been retired for 8 years—no rush!) and a number of Mel's former graduate students came for the dinner. It was so good to see folks from years ago. We had several of them over for lunch later that weekend and had a great time catching up. We were devastated to learn that Dillon McDaniel, one of Mel's first graduate students, who came to lunch that day, died of a heart attack that night after he got back to Albuquerque.

In May, we went for a week to San Francisco to get acquainted with our new grandson, Durham Oakes Deifell, born on May 6. In June, Mel and I, Beth and her family, and Sarah and Joe converged on San Francisco to spend more time with Durham—and Mardie and Tony, of course. We had a wonderful time and got to see Eugene's siblings who were in Oakland helping their mother Rose prepare for her move to Phoenix, AZ, to be closer to her daughters. When we got home, we were delighted to have a visit from another of Mel's early graduate students, King Hay Tsui who was in town from Brazil. In July, Pat made an emergency trip back to SF as Mardie developed a kidney stone in the midst of hiring a nanny (Zoila is a treasure and Pat learned all about nanny sharing), getting ready to move, and going back to work. All is well now!

In August, we spent a wonderful week in Iowa City with the Oakes/Buck family. It was so much fun to take Emily and Ethan fishing. Grampa Mel had the kids cleaning fish like pros. In late September, we went to England for 2 wonderful weeks—spending most of our time in Bristol and environs with old friends from FSU days—Don and Ann Kimber. We also got to visit an old friend from Miami, Meredith Williams Parker, and her husband Graham in Salcombe on the English Channel.

In November, we learned more than we ever thought possible about F1 racing as cousins Jim Pearce (Boston) and his daughter Nicole (Dallas) came for the races. It was a very exciting time for Austin with thousands of visitors coming to town. Jim and Nicole are huge fans and saw and met all of the drivers. The afternoon they left, we had a visit from cousin Alan Koziol and his girlfriend Melissa Powell up from Houston. Both groups were able to stop by and see Aunt Doris.

We have both spent a great deal of time assisting Pat's 91-year-old Aunt Doris who lives here in Austin. She fractured her leg the day before Durham was born, recuperated at a skilled nursing facility for almost 3 months, was home in her apartment for 2 months and, while we were in England, had to have emergency abdominal laparoscopic surgery for a perforated ulcer. It has been difficult for her to get back to full strength since then, so we moved her to a lovely nursing home just a little over 6 miles from our home.

The Oakes/Buck family has had a very busy 2012. The Maia Quartet (Beth was a founding member) ended after 22 years. It has been a big change, but Beth is thoroughly enjoying her new position at the University of Iowa as coordinator of chamber music and the quartet residency program. Among her duties, she invites professional quartets to come to UI to play concerts and work with students--she is finding it challenging and rewarding. She is also teaching a lot and is continuing to play with other groups (along with dabbling in violin playing). Eugene received a promotion and continues his work in facilities for the College of Arts and Sciences. The biggest event for

the family was a move to a new house--in the same neighborhood and within walking distance of the kids' school. Emily (who turned 12 on 12/12/12--how cool is that!) is in the 6th grade, plays the violin wonderfully, participates in orchestra and chamber music and is an excellent student and avid reader. Ethan (10 this coming February and a 4th grader) is also an excellent student, plays the piano fabulously, and is really into baseball (Go, Trojans!). They all love their beagle Ginger. We love Skyping with them and hearing them play their instruments. A great joy has been watching Beth, Emily, and Ethan playing trios together.

In Arlington, VA, Sarah and her husband, Joe, have enjoyed a fun and busy 2012. The highlights included ringing in the New Year with us in Austin, a trip to San Francisco in June to meet their new nephew, Durham, and a vacation to Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, where they narrowly missed encountering a grizzly bear on the trail (they disagree about whether this would have been a good thing). Sarah also started taking guitar lessons over the summer. She is enjoying learning to play although it is hard to find time to practice during the school year. Joe's law firm is merging with a much larger firm, so he will be starting 2013 in a new job. He is excited about the new opportunities this will bring.

Mardie and Tony are having a wonderful time with Durham who is seven months old and learning new tricks every day. According to Mardie, he's "equal parts contemplative and giggly" which has been a very fun combination for them. Neither Tony nor Mardie were ever morning people, but Durham wakes up smiling and ready to laugh at the slightest provocation, so now early mornings are a treat. Mardie continues to enjoy her work with Hello Housing despite a very challenging funding environment and Tony is working hard to raise money to grow his venture, AwesomeBox, an online social giving platform. It is wonderful to have grandchildren in the era of video Skype given how far away they are and how quickly they are changing.

We celebrate the joy of this Christmas season as we hear from so many of you. We send you our best wishes for a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year.



The Oakes family in San Francisco in June—back row—Rose Buck (Eugene's mom), Eugene and Beth, Joe and Sarah, Tony holding Durham, and Mardie; front—Emily, Pat, Mel, and Ethan