

December, 2013
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Dear Family and Friends,

A joyous Christmas and happy holidays to one and all! It has been an odd year for us as Pat had to have a very unexpected knee replacement. For some unknown reason in late December she developed a painful necrosis in her right knee. It took a month to get a diagnosis, then she had to stay off her leg as much as possible for 2 months to see if the bone would regenerate (it did not), a month to get in line for surgery, and then months of recuperation (about 95% now). Fortunately this replacement went much better than the replacement that she had 11 years ago on her left knee. Pat reports that Mel was amazing through all of it—did the grocery shopping, the housecleaning, took her swimming to help her get some exercise, and kept her spirits up.

In February, we went to Iowa to celebrate grandson Ethan's 10th birthday. It had been planned for some time, but at the last minute, we almost did not go since Pat had to be in a wheelchair to get through the airports and could only walk with a cane. When we told Beth that we had almost not come, she almost fainted. We had known in advance that Sarah was coming for the occasion, but we had no idea that Mardie, Tony, and baby Durham were coming, too. Ethan's birthday was celebrated in great style and we all had a wonderful visit. In early March, our Guatemalan friend Carlos Cajas came to visit for a week.

Pat's surgery was on April 30th and our 50th wedding anniversary was on May 18, so there was a very low-key celebration. Cousin Martha Koziol was in town from Massachusetts via Houston and brought us dinner from the Salt Lick, a great barbecue place about 15 miles out of Austin. It was just right—not what we had expected, but we were so glad to have the surgery behind us and family to celebrate with. The next day Martha's son Alan and his fiancée Melissa and her folks came to town from Houston, so we made an excursion out to the nursing home (only 10-15 minutes away from us) to see Aunt Doris who continues to do well. She enjoys seeing all of our visitors. At the end of May, Pat's sister Nancy came for a week, which was a wonderful diversion for Pat and a break for Mel.

In early August we met our three girls, their spouses, and our 3 grandchildren on Whidbey Island near Seattle for a wonderful week-long celebration of our 50 years of marriage. We had such a good time—eating delicious food (great cooks in the family), watching the kids play together, seeing 15-month-old Durham explore the beach for the first time, visiting the amazing Chihuly Glass Museum in Seattle, picking fresh, ripe blackberries picked from the bushes and popping them directly into our mouths, exploring Whidbey Island—beautiful, cool and no mosquitos, and hiking (yes—Pat hiked!).

We made up for lost travel time in October. Cousin Linda Ronan came to Austin for the first time early in the month, the next long weekend we rendezvoused with Oakes family members (there were 13 of us altogether) in the Dallas area and enjoyed going to the State Fair of Texas (Pat's 1st time—Mel's 2nd—his folks took him when he was just a few months old in 1936—the Texas Centennial Fair). The third long weekend we had a wonderful visit to Vicksburg where we saw lots of old friends at the All County School Reunion. We drove home and just a few days later flew to Washington, D. C., where we visited Sarah and Joe for ten days. On the weekdays while Sarah and Joe were at work, we worked on projects around their house and had old friends in the area come by to visit. A good friend gave us a tour of the National Archives facility in College Park, MD, we saw the new postal museum, the MLK and WWII memorials and a ballet at the Kennedy Center. We had several good visits with Joe's family who live in the area. We hit the fall foliage season just right, which made the visit even more special.

In mid-November we enjoyed another visit from F1 racing fan cousins Jim Pearce and daughter Nicole. The F1 races are a really big deal for Austin.

Our spread out family is doing well. Beth is in her 2nd year as Coordinator of the University of Iowa String Quartet Residency Program and loves her new job. She brings in outstanding professional string quartets for one week residencies several times a semester; the UI students not only have master classes with the players, but also have had opportunities to play and perform with them and learn how to pursue careers in chamber music. Eugene continues to work as the facilities manager for the Dean's Office. This summer, construction began on the site for the new music building after the University lost the former building to the devastating flood of 2008. It is exciting to see such "concrete" results of Eugene's and others' hard work over the past five years. Emily turns 13 on Dec. 12 and is a busy, active 7th grader. She plays the violin and plays the flute in the school band. Ethan, 10, almost 11, is in the 5th grade and has two great loves in his life right now—baseball and piano. He is also learning to play the saxophone. Beth, Emily, and Ethan put on a wonderful chamber music concert in September. The Oakes/Buck family was also delighted to celebrate important milestones with family and friends this year, including Matthew Buck's high school graduation in Hawaii, Jehan Antia's navjote in Boston and our fiftieth celebration in Seattle.

Revisions to the AP Chemistry curriculum have been Sarah's new hobby. Next year, she hopes to drop that hobby and pick up the guitar again as it is gathering dust in the guest room. In the past year, Joe joined a community choir and has enjoyed having music back in his life. They both continue to enjoy rock-climbing and are looking forward to the beginning of snowboard season. In addition to the family trip to Seattle, summer trips included seeing family in Hilton Head and few days in Savannah & Charleston. They also travelled to Rye, NH, and Huntsville, AL, to visit friends & family.

Mardie and Tony have officially reached their max this year. Tony continues to build his company (AwesomeBox) which will help groups of friends & family come together online to celebrate a couple or individual. The website will make it super easy for a host to collect photos, sentiments, toasts and will automatically produce and ship a beautiful printed box set to the lucky person/s being celebrated. Beta testing coming soon to a laptop near you! Mardie is juggling another re-invention of her organization, Hello Housing, as their primary funding source from the last 4 years dries up (federal stimulus funds for foreclosure recovery) while also playing general contractor for a gut/rehab of a 1906 Victorian home they bought in April. Luckily, the home is 3 doors down from the apartment they are renting so she can duck over there to meet subcontractors before work in the morning, etc. They really love their neighborhood (Bernal Heights) and look forward to raising Durham in this loving and supportive community. And last, but certainly not least, they are having great fun with Durham's quest for words and independence. Of late, his favorite word is "outside" so it is lucky they live in winterless climate. He spends 12 hours a day sleeping. When he's awake, he spends about 30% of his time cracking up, 20% trying to figure out how things work, 10% climbing things, 10% eating like a champ, 10% whining, 5% resisting diaper and clothing changes, 5% crying, 5% stalling at bedtime and 5% cooing "mama" and "daddy" with bright smiling eyes. We hope to visit them in San Francisco this spring.

Pat continues to stay busy working as a docent at the LBJ Library, working on the family photo archive and genealogy, helping with hospitality at the church, taking a tai chi class, and is back walking with her friends. Mel plays tennis twice a week, and is very involved in creating and adding to his Web sites relating to family, UT physics history, book clubs, and the history of our church. He is also the extended family tech consultant! We are looking forward to a family reunion this summer on Hilton Head Island—planned not by Pat but by nieces Kamala Hatch Johnson and Shanti Hatch Blatnik—passing it on to the next generation after 40 years!

We send our love and good wishes for a healthy and happy 2014.



Whibey Island, 2013—Emily, Eugene & Beth, Sarah & Joe, Mardie, Durham, & Tony, Mel & Pat w/ Ethan in front