



December, 2015  
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Dear Family and Friends,

Another year has flown by! We wish you a joyous Christmas and a happy New Year.

The day after Christmas last year, Mel and I started our 2-day drive to Vicksburg where we met Beth, Eugene, Emily, and Ethan and Sarah and Joe and lots of other Oakes relatives. Mardie, Tony, and Durham were not able to come, but we hope to be able to do a trip like that with Durham when he is older. It was the first visit to Vicksburg for all but Beth and Sarah—both of whom had not been to see folks in a number of years. What a grand time we had! Emily (will turn 15 in mid-December) and Ethan (he'll be 13 in February) both love history and were captivated by all of the wonderful sights--especially the Vicksburg National Military Park and the stories they heard. The Oakeses are great storytellers, and it was so much fun to listen to the stories and watch the grandchildren soak them up.

Near the end of March, Mardie and Durham came for a 5 day visit. The highlight was our trip to the Johnson Space Center in Houston. I must admit that I was not sure an almost 3-year-old would enjoy the trip to Houston, but Durham loves rockets—and the 4 of us saw lots and lots of rockets. It was our first visit, too—and we enjoyed it almost as much as Durham did.

We flew to Sarah and Joe's for Sarah's birthday which was Easter Sunday. We celebrated by going to Baltimore to see a stage production of "Wicked"—fabulous! We also got to visit my wonderful 93-year-old cousin Marion Thomson (my dad was her first cousin) who lives less than a mile from Sarah and Joe's. On our last day there, the weather finally cleared and we spent a glorious morning at the Tidal Basin with throngs of folks from all over the world admiring the fabulously beautiful cherry blossoms.

In May, we flew to San Francisco for Durham's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday which was celebrated with due pomp and circumstance—lots of fun and games and a rocket theme. Durham is so funny—he thinks Mel and I are a set (actually, we are!) and he calls us Grampa and Grampa. If he sees one of us without the other, he asks, "Where is the other one?" It was a joy to see their home in Bernal Heights which took Mardie, as contractor, 18 months to go from an old rundown house into a lovely restored home.

The weekend of May 16, Nancy, Sandy, and I met in LA, greeted by our brother Robert, to attend his daughter Kelly's beautiful wedding to Derek Weil in a garden ceremony in Malibu at the Adamson House right on the beach. I got home on May 18 to celebrate our 52<sup>nd</sup> wedding anniversary.

In June, at Sarah's insistence, I started a senior exercise class at the YMCA near our house. I had thought I was in good shape, but I was not—Sarah was right! I am enjoying it so much, getting stronger—still enjoying walking in the mornings with my friends.

In July, we flew to Atlanta and then drove to Hilton Head Island (carpooling with brother Robert) for the Winter family reunion—43 of us in all. We had a wonderful week--so much fun to see our older grandchildren getting reacquainted with their 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins. There were new

young cousins to meet—Durham was so excited to see all of the children—kept wanting to know where all of his brothers were.

In October, Mel and I drove to Vicksburg again for his 61st high school reunion (it did not work out for the 60<sup>th</sup>) and also for the much larger all-county reunion. We so enjoy the time we get to spend with Donald and Bettye and Floyd and Betty—and lots of old friends. Shortly after our return, cousins Jim Pearce and his daughter Nicole stayed with us for the Formula 1 race. There was time to work in a visit with Aunt Doris, who at 94 continues to do well despite being mostly wheel-chair bound. Her memory is still good and she helps me with family history.

Mel continues to play tennis twice a week—is also the organizer of the group. He is an invaluable computer consultant for family and friends. His ancestry and history research continues apace with new discoveries every week. His latest innovation is to get together on Skype or Facetime with Ethan each week teaching him electricity and magnetism—such fun for both of them.

Our three girls and their families are doing fine—Beth innovating and coordinating chamber music at the University of Iowa, Sarah teaching high school chemistry at St. Stephen's-St. Agnes in Alexandria, VA, and Mardie directing the non-profit Hello Housing in San Francisco.

We wish you health and happiness for the coming year.

Ethan, Eugene, Beth, Tony, Mardie, Durham, Sarah, Joe, Emily, seated Pat & Mel

