

Happy Holidays

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Dear Family and Friends,

Advent is with us again with the thoughts of hope, peace, love and joy. We wish you all of those gifts this holiday season. We also offer prayers for this great nation of ours.

This has been a very difficult year for us. Last year at this time Pat was experiencing severe lower back pain that only got worse despite PT and pain management. She finally had major back surgery at the end of January which took care of the pain for about 2 ½ weeks when a different type of unbearable pain came. In about 10 days we found out that her right L-5 vertebra had shattered, damaging the nerve down her right hip and leg and also her lower left leg. A word to anyone contemplating back surgery—Pat always had bone density tests that were fine—but that vertebra is not covered in the usual bone density scan. This was not a good way to be diagnosed with osteoporosis! The original surgeon found us another back surgeon who was able, just a month after the first surgery, to fix her by doing a—get ready—transforaminal lumbar interbody fusion pelvic fixation.

It was a very scary and traumatic time for us. We were both suffering from PTSD when she came home from the 2nd hospital and 2nd rehab in the middle of March. She was so weak she could not even get out of bed by herself for almost two months. Thankfully, we have very good insurance and have had excellent home health care and physical therapy. Mel took over taking care of Pat which was a full-time job for months. We were blessed by a friend who organized meal delivery to us by almost 30 other friends who brought us a main meal 5 nights a week for almost 3 months—not only food for the body, but food for the spirit as we had folks coming by to visit. Beth, Sarah, and Mardie and Pat's sister Nancy each came twice to help out. Pat's brother Robert came for a few days and sister Sandy and her husband Don came in June. We have been surrounded by heartfelt prayers and good wishes.

We knew things were improving when Mel was finally able to leave Pat alone and go play tennis!! The doctors have told us that Pat should be able to walk normally within a year—the nerves will regenerate. It has been a lot of very hard work, but Pat can now walk on her own—she has something funny called gluteus medius lurch—a sort of Frankensteinian gait, but she is walking. Mel is finally getting some time to work on his wonderful Web sites. Pat is back in the kitchen and enjoying cooking again—building up stamina to stand for longer times. Mel has become an honorary girl as he holds Pat's hand while we walk with Pat's longtime walking group 3 mornings a week—up to about 40 minutes and getting stronger. Pat hasn't driven in a year, so Mel recently started taking her to the LBJ Library for her docent shifts on Thursdays. We started back to church on Easter—using a walker—and now no walker, just a cane or Mel's hand. There is no more intense pain—just discomfort—a real improvement!!!

In late October, we flew to San Francisco for the wedding of Mel's nephew Stuart to Jay (his partner of 25 years) on the anniversary of their first date. Mardie already lives there, Sarah and Joe came from D.C., Beth came from Iowa City, Stuart's sister Jennifer came from Dallas and another cousin Lisa came from Atlanta. The wedding was at the gorgeous SF City Hall—Durham (4 ½) got to skip pre-school for the occasion and was very impressed with the elegant tuxedos worn by Stuart and Jay and the distinguished robes worn by the judge. The night before the wedding, Mardie hosted a dinner for the guests (Tony had to be out of town) and the evening of the wedding all of the adults were treated by the newlyweds to a fabulous dinner at a French restaurant—delicious food and terrific company. It was so special to see all 3 of our girls at one time—they were impressed with Pat's progress.

Just before the wedding we had wonderful friends from Annecy, France, come for a visit. Yann and Colette Bouger were good friends of Pat's parents and we only met after the folks were gone. They brought with them their longtime friends, Vonette and Yves Le Quinio. We also enjoyed a visit during the F1 weekend with Jim, Nicole, Katie, and Julie Pearce from Massachusetts. We all had a good visit with Aunt Doris—now 95. Dear friends Nandita and Barada Sarma came for lunch the day after Thanksgiving. It is a joy to stay in touch!

There have been lots of tears and frustrating moments this year—but there have been good, things, too. Mel has always been Pat's hero, but this year made it clear why. He has learned whole new sets of unexpectedly necessary skills. She couldn't have gotten through this without him. We are looking forward to meeting Sarah and Joe in Sedona to see the Grand Canyon this March, a trip that was planned for last March that had to be canceled. The girls and their families are doing fine and our grandchildren are growing by leaps and bounds. Beth continues as an innovative coordinator of the U. of Iowa String Quartet Residency Program, Sarah continues to improve the teaching of chemistry at St. Stephen's & St. Agnes in Alexandria, VA, and Mardie has affiliated her Hello Housing nonprofit with MidPen Housing, a leading CA housing nonprofit. We are looking forward to having Sarah here over Christmas—Joe can't get away from work. We wish you a happy and healthy 2017!



10/28/16 Beth, Sarah, Joe, Mardie, Durham, Pat and Mel in San Francisco for Stuart and Jay's wedding.

*Peace and Goodwill to All
Pat and Mel*

