

December , 1998

Dear Friends and Family,

What a gift this year has been. On December 18th, 1997, my dad, Robert Winter, had a major heart attack as he and my mother arrived to visit my brother Robert and his family in California. It was touch and go for several days and we were all scared half to death. The best Christmas present we all got last year was talking to Dad last Christmas Day. He was still weak, but determined to be well again--and he is. To make a long story short, I went to California for 6 days in early January to help with Mom and Dad and Kelly while Robert and Julia went to New York on business. It was very reassuring to see the folks and also fun to get to see Robert's home in Pacific Palisades under construction. In late January, Nancy, Sandy, and I met in North Carolina the week after Robert flew home with Mom and Dad. We three "girls" spent 5 days helping to get the Hendersonville house packed up (Robert had packed up all of the electrical and computer stuff before he left) and helping them unpack and get settled in their new home at Tryon Estates in Columbus, NC, about 30 miles from Hendersonville. We had such a grand time even though Dad was still tiring pretty easily. We kept laughing and laughing that we were all together. I missed 8 days of school in January, but my school was very understanding about it.

The folks have continued to do great--Mom was amazing through all of this--and were in attendance at niece Shanti's wedding in June (I was there, too, and made the wedding cake). They then took an exciting 10 day trip to Iceland this fall. They will be celebrating a much less traumatic (God willing!) Christmas holiday at niece Kamala Johnson's in Atlanta with all of Nancy and Doug's family including the folks' first great-grandchild (a precious little girl) who is Nancy and Doug's first grandchild.

The day after I arrived back from helping with the move, the **Maia Quartet** arrived at nearby Lago Vista for a weekend of chamber music which Mel and I enjoyed immensely. It was great to see the group--and to hear them play, of course. Beth and the other quartet members are in Lafayette, Louisiana, this year working with the Acadiana Symphony Orchestra. They are playing principals in the orchestra and are performing chamber music in the area. In addition they are also part-time faculty as visiting associate professors at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. They are going there several times during the year and teaching and performing. Beth and Eugene Buck became engaged this summer. Eugene is the brother of Beth's good Oberlin (violin/viola) friend Nancy Buck. Eugene is an internal consultant at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia (and a pretty good trombone player). Where they will live after this academic year is over is not yet clear, but Beth assures us that wherever it is, she and Eugene will be together! It was great to have them and Eugene's mother Rose here for Thanksgiving. Beth and Eugene will be in Hawaii for the Christmas holidays for Nancy's wedding. Eugene and Nancy's brother Charles will be the minister for the service. He is a UCC minister in Hawaii.

We missed not being in Maryland with Sarah and John this year, but wedding plans took precedence. Sarah and John are still busy and happy in the D.C. area. Sarah is really enjoying her teaching this year since all of the chemistry students at the school have now been through her program and know that a great deal is being expected of them--and are performing accordingly. In addition to working full time at the American Petroleum Institute, John has gone back to graduate school in the MBA program through the University of Maryland. He won't have much time on weekends for the next 2 years, but it will be good for his job advancement. We are looking forward to seeing them for a few days at Christmas (we share them with John's family in Houston). Sarah came home for a wonderful week this summer and we had a good time gallivanting around the countryside--including a trip to Houston to see Mardie, some old friends of Sarah's and John's, and John's mother and grandmother. It was great to see his mom Marné's gallery, Art, Etc., in Sugarland. Check it out at www.artetcgallery.com.

Mardie's work at the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation in Houston continues to be a lot of fun and a great challenge at the same time. She is currently project manager of a 2.5 million dollar project which includes 24 housing units and 8 store fronts. She has been pleasantly surprised by the favorable reaction to an exhibition (16 Houses) at the DiverseWorks Artspace Gallery in Houston which she and an architecture professor at Rice are curating. They asked 16 architects throughout the country to submit designs and models for affordable housing which they did. On the opening night of the exhibit between 400 and 500 people showed up. She is currently working on grant proposals to see about having 6 of the housing designs taken to the next stage with the idea of eventually building them as a part of the housing for Fifth Ward. She and her boyfriend Deron were also home for Thanksgiving, so it was a lively full house.

We don't all have the opportunity to get together very often, but we had a very brief reunion in Winston-Salem, NC, in August. We all converged there because it was the opening night of the Foothills Music Festival which Beth and 2 friends started last year. Mel and I flew to Greenville-Spartanburg, SC where we were met by Mom and Dad. We spent a day and a half seeing the folks' spacious new apartment and their new home area and then drove to Winston-Salem with them. Sarah and John drove down from D.C., surprising us all by bringing Eugene who had thought he could not get away. Mardie and Deron drove from Houston and combined their trip with seeing us and relatives from both families along the way. We had such a good time--and Beth played

brilliantly, of course. I told Beth I was not only blinded by the brilliance of her playing, but by her diamond flashing back and forth. Old friends Betsy and Rollin Russell also came over from Burlington for the concert.

A high point of our year was having a visit from Mel's brother Donald and his wife Betty. We had a wonderful time showing them the sights and visiting with Betty's niece who is a graduate student in theater at UT. An added attraction for their coming here again is Donald's daughter Jennifer who, as of August, has moved here with her fiancé. We are hoping to see lots of Oakes relatives at the wedding on January 9.

A high point of my summer was attending chamber music camp! For the past several years the Maia Quartet has performed at the Austin Chamber Music Festival. While they are here they do some teaching for the camp which is mostly children but also includes adults (1 1/2 hours per night for 2 weeks). I thought it would be fun to participate and get my rusty fingers back to the piano. I was in the "turkey" group, but we had a great time. I played in a trio--the others players were a grandmother flutist who had just had her mouth rebuilt and a young woman cellist who has only played for 3 years. We had a great time--especially when Beth was our teacher. I also got to play duet with Beth which was a great joy. If you come for a visit, we'll show you the video of our recital! Mardie even came in from Houston for the occasion. This November I was in Miami for 5 days. The National Association of Episcopal School meeting was there (this is my 13th year at St. Andrew's and I still love it!) and I was able to go early and come back late. It was wonderful to be "home" again--even though there is a lot I don't recognize any more. I got to see so many old friends--especially Dawn Davis Cram, Virginia McNaughton, Arthur Clifford, Jean Webb Walton and Evelyn Melli Terraferma. Attending church at Plymouth Congregational almost 58 years to the day of my parents' marriage at that church was really meaningful. Having not been to Miami in 14 years, all the old friends had a bit of trouble getting used to the idea that I don't sit down much because of my back, but once they caught on, it was fine. My back has improved somewhat in the past 6 months and I attribute that to a chiropractor that I am seeing--she has made a difference.

Mel continues to teach and thrive at UT. He is serving on the Women's Athletic Advisory Committee which means we get to go to lots of games. He is the chair of the Curriculum Study Committee for the Physics Department--and for a real change of pace, teaches the junior high Sunday School class at our church (which is in the process of being sold and we--the membership-- are looking for a new location--breaks my heart). At home he is working hard on outfitting his shop in the garage. He has made all sorts of improvements to his table saw and is the proud new owner of a drill press. He continues to play tennis several times a week and works miracles with our yard. We are so grateful for his continued good health. Last year he read UNDAUNTED COURAGE, the story of the Lewis and Clark expedition. He became entranced with the idea of the Columbia River and that part of the country--and after I read the book I had to agree. Our summer vacation was a trip to the northwest--our first--and it was wonderful. We landed in Seattle, rented a car, stayed in wonderful B and B's, went to Orcas Island, Victoria, B.C. (where Beth and Eugene called to tell us of their engagement), the Olympic Peninsula, Ft. Clatsop near Astoria, Oregon, where Lewis and Clark wintered, drove up the scenic Columbia River highway as far as White Salmon, went to Mt. St. Helens, and then back to Seattle. It was a wonderful, relaxing trip.

This coming summer there will be another Winter/Brown family reunion--we hope to have several babies representing the 4th generation. It will take place from July 24-31 at Kirkridge Retreat Center between Bangor and Stroudsburg, PA, about 2 hours from Philadelphia and 1 1/2 hours from NYC.

We both love to hear about what you and yours are doing and we look forward to running to the mailbox every day to see if we've got mail. Our new e-mail address is oakes@mail.utexas.edu. As we get older, we become more and more aware of all of our many blessings--and you are all part of the blessings of our lives. We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year--1999. My goodness, how can that be already!

Love,

Mel & Pat

The Beth Oakes fan club at Reynolda House in Winston-Salem, N.C., after her Foothills Music Festival performance. The front row includes Eugene Buck, Beth, our son-in-law John Modine with Sarah, and Mardie. The back row includes Pat, Lois and Bob Winter, Sandy (Pat's sister) and Chip Heckman, Mel, and Mardie's boyfriend, Deron Neblett.



