

Christmas 1998

Dear Friends and Family,

The year 1998 has turned out to be quite different from what we had envisioned at its start. Jan and I began it in January with an enjoyable cruise to six ports in New Zealand and three ports in Australia. But then out of the blue I was asked to serve as Executive Director of a Congressionally created body with the awkward title of Commission on Structural Alternatives for the Federal Courts of Appeals, chaired by retired Supreme Court Justice Byron White. This work has occupied me virtually full time ever since. The end is in sight, however, as the Commission will submit its final report to Congress on December 18. The work has been fascinating, and I think the report will be a constructive contribution to improving the court system. But it did prevent our doing some things we would otherwise have done.

Much of my year was spent shuttling back and forth between Charlottesville and Washington, using every available means of transportation - plane, train, bus, and private auto. However, the work did take Jan and me on some good trips to Atlanta, Dallas, New York, Chicago, Seattle, San Francisco, and Toronto. In the meantime, Jan carried on with her usual activities - tennis, garden club, church work, and helping to keep me functioning. Along the way we squeezed in a weekend in New Mexico, visiting Anasazi Indian ruins.

Our grandchildren are holding steady at the number six (the oldest is six); each of our children has a boy and a girl - Barrie and Bob in Atlanta, Anna and John in Dallas, and Mary Lewis and Dan here in Charlottesville. All are well and thriving.

The year was sadly marred in October by the sudden death of my cousin, Dr. Sam Kirkpatrick, at the age of 47, an ophthalmologist in Selma, leaving his wife and three children. Jan and I and all three of our children were in Selma for the funeral. It was attended by a huge, overflow crowd, impressive evidence of the regard in which Sam was held.

Early in the coming year, my second novel, *Unforgotten*, is scheduled for publication, so it is likely that Jan and I will be on the road for some book signings. We hope that this will give us the opportunity to have visits with some of you.

We plan to spend Christmas with Anna and family in Dallas and then have a visit with Barrie and family in Atlanta. We hope all of you have a grand Yuletide, and we send best wishes for a good and healthful 1999.

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