

John and Louisa Shields
19128 Roman Way
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Christmas 1993

Dear Friends...

The years keep passing by, but the mass-produced Christmas letter as a communications medium doesn't get any better. It *is* communication, however, and at the season of the year when we particularly remember our friendships and good times past.

1993 was not a particularly salubrious year for the Shields family. At year's end 1992, Louisa had just commenced a third regimen of chemotherapy (carbo-platinum) because her blood tests indicated the presence of a high level of cancer antibodies, although no CT scans or x-rays revealed anything. These were discontinued in February after three courses because they were causing more damage than they were doing good—in particular, to her kidneys—although her "numbers" did recede.

In April, the Severn Companies, for whom I had served for several years as media director, downsized by half, and I was one left by the wayside (the oldest member, by far, of the staff of chiefly computer engineers, integrators, and programmers). With my 69th birthday impending, there were those who said "it's time, John," but old writers never retire—they just fall over on their keyboards (with apologies to General MacArthur). Since we continue to have abnormally high medical expenses, notwithstanding Medicare and the maximum supplemental insurance we could obtain, it has occasioned considerable inconvenience and some readjustment of our lifestyle, although nothing cataclysmic.

By early June, Louisa had been diagnosed as having a major blockage of her small bowel, and she was forbidden solid food. From that time to this she has existed on a liquid diet with, of course, her hyperalimentation (nightly intravenous feeding) continuing seven nights a week. As she puts it "I'd kill for a sub sandwich with hot peppers, or anything that crunches," but this will have to wait for a short while. In September, elevated blood numbers again dictated a fourth regimen of chemotherapy, this time with taxol, the so-called wonder drug made from yew trees of the Pacific Northwest. This was continued for four months, in the course of which Louisa lost her hair for a second time (the first had occurred in 1985 after her first cancer surgery), and is once again a bewigged person. We're waiting to see what color it comes back—no matter what transpires, she's got to be color-coordinated (the Neiman-Marcus legacy). The taxol did not reduce her numbers, so they have just this month discontinued it.

Continuing this seeming soap opera, she is tentatively scheduled for major and rather complex surgery sometime in January at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. Her surgeon will be the hospital's chief of surgery, nationally-known for his expertise at this type of challenge, Dr. John Cameron. We await it with some trepidation, although it holds out hope that the blockage can be bypassed surgically with the result that she might return to a much more normal life, particularly the possibility that she no longer will need the intravenous feeding which has been a part of her life since early 1987. Meanwhile she has been hospitalized (in addition to that for the chemotherapy) twice this year, once for three weeks last January, and again for ten days or so in August. We view the surgery, despite its risks, as possible light at the end of the tunnel.

Meanwhile, the Shields family offspring have continued their busy and successful ways. Diane and Craig, and sons Zachary (9) and Tristan (5) continue to reside in Houston at 4723 Brownfields Drive, zip 77066. Craig continues in the truck maintenance and parts industry, and Diane continues as night supervisor at Tomball Hospital, a few miles north of Houston. They were

home with us for a visit last June. Since Louisa has not driven for half a year or more, and has become uncomfortable doing so, we gave her black Firebird to Craig and Diane this past November. It is a handsome car with low mileage and in excellent condition, so we hope they have many happy miles in it.

Middle child Richard continues his high-profile career. He has been the development executive on a number of major projects over the past year, is expanding Jacksonville's Gator Bowl to accommodate the new NFL pro football franchise in that city, and is managing the design and construction of a new arena for the NHL pro hockey team, the Sabers, in Buffalo. He was recently promoted to the office of Corporate Senior Vice President of Stein and Company, one of the ten leading commercial real estate developers in the U.S., and continues to live in Highland Park, IL 60035 at 200 Laurel Avenue, on Lake Michigan some miles north of Chicago. His family enjoys travel, and they have spent time this year in the Caribbean and in other U.S. areas, as well as having made several trips home to Maryland with Wes (8) and Louisa (6).

David continues his writing and publishing ways. He became a full professor this past summer on The Citadel faculty, continues work on a new book, and has been nationally active in projects which buttress his reputation as one of the nation's two leading Early American scholars. He recently received a generous 3-year research grant from The Citadel Foundation, and Luci continues her successful career with J. C. Bradford Company as Charleston's first woman stockbroker. David and Luci, with 3-year-old Marcus Alexander, have made frequent visits home, most recently at Thanksgiving, when Louisa prepared a magnificent feast for 12 of us. They continue to reside at 49 South Hampton Drive, Charleston, SC 29407, although it appears that they will purchase a new home in 1994.

Despite the above recitation of dire-sounding medical news, our lifestyle remains a very busy, upbeat, and open one. We have frequent house guests, and Louisa continues active in miniaturist organizations, and has built and exhibited numerous doll-houses and room boxes of some complexity. For Christmas this year, she made David an exquisite replica of the Wayside Inn (in Massachusetts) because much of his recent research has to do with the influence of the coffee house and tavern society on the formulation of an American identity during the British colonial period. She celebrated her 65th birthday several weeks ago on December 1, and continues volunteer work one day a week mending books at our very large Gaithersburg regional library. Not satisfied that her first cookbook was a "best seller," she is working on a second one, and continues to concoct some of the most marvelous food an aging retiree could ever expect, even though she cannot eat a bite of it herself. She feels good most of the time, and stays unbelievably busy for a person with her afflictions.

I have published several family genealogical works during the past year, have done consulting work for several companies, and have adjusted to the life of a retiree very easily. Several friends have approached me about participating in some new ventures in which my writing and marketing skills would be useful, and I may find myself busier than I really wanted to be. I have always been a late riser and have been a night owl most of my life, doing some of my best writing late at night when the house is quiet. To accommodate my "years" (on May 8 I celebrated my 69th birthday), I indulge myself in a regular afternoon nap when circumstances permit, and my energy level remains high. Louisa's conditions have precluded much travel this year—indeed, our only trip was in early May to spend a week in Charleston with David and Luci. We regret our immobility somewhat, but we have done so much traveling, domestic and foreign, for pleasure and business both, in our lives that it seems somehow evened out, and we don't seriously miss it. If Louisa's surgery is successful, this situation may well change, so watch out.

We hope that your Christmas is one of joy and reunion, and that you will remember our own roles in your lives, as we remember the enjoyable times we have shared with each of you. As always, we look to the New Year with hope and expectation, and know that you share this universal emotion. Know that we share it with you at this Christmas of 1993.

LOUISA AND JOHN

John Edgar Shields
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December 27, 1993

Dear Jim:

I was somewhat mystified to receive a packet of information from a James Miller until I consulted an excellent Shields family genealogy I happen to have in my library and discovered who you were and where you came from (figuratively, at least). Indeed, it was heartwarming to realize that you were the offspring of my dear Aunt Edna and Uncle Ed. Aunt Edna always insisted that I sit at the big upright piano that sat in her living room in Penbrook and play for her which, being quite talented and quite aware of it, I always did. It was such encouragement that no doubt induced me to go into show business at a later point in my life, although musical illiteracy often plagued my footsteps in my CBS and theatrical days (while lack of confidence never did). My Aunt Edna, whenever she knew that I was going to be in the area from my normal venues of Tennessee or Maryland, would make me a cherry pie, knowing that the cherry was my favorite fruit (with the possible exception of a guy I met in the Navy in 1943). So any grandson of hers is a friend of mine.

But seriously, folks...thank you for the interesting letter and Elder family newsletter. Let me respond to a few of your comments and questions. First, for the benefit of Margaret Myers, Frederick County genealogist, I enclose a reasonably current list of my genealogical holdings. I gave copies of my 1968 Shields Family History to both Emmitsburg and Thurmont libraries (two to Emmitsburg, in fact, because some demented citizen stole the first copy). It would be nice if they had this most recent update, since it places in perspective background of the Shields settlers in that area which was unknown to me when I wrote the earlier work. I sent AJ a "master copy" of the current document, from which she obviously has had copies made and distributed. I have deliberately not copyrighted the work to encourage maximum reproduction and distribution in this wonderful era of the photocopier, but I do not myself any longer have access to facilities where I can steal high-speed double-sided xeroxing since my most recent position (media director for a high-tech systems integration company) was abolished last April and I was thrown into the ranks of unemployed senior citizenship a few weeks before my 69th birthday. May I suggest that you ask her who has the master copy for the Hollenbaugh family and how and through whom it can be reproduced. Donna is certainly at liberty to reproduce and distribute as many copies as she wishes (just as long as she doesn't change the author's name on the front). Unfortunately, I do not have an inventory of distribution copies.

I appreciated the beardless photograph you sent me. I knew it was you, and not your son, because of the facial creases, venous nose, and other signs of dissipation and debauchery visible under the magnifying glass. It will occupy an honored place in the family photographic gallery. Or in the drawer, anyway. I also appreciate the information concerning the satiric magazine and may, in a moment of fog induced by cheap scotch, bat out something for your in-law's delectation and consideration. You state that I have never written anything satirical or funny. You are quite correct, and Arthur Godfrey, for whom I wrote a bucketful of allegedly humorous material during my CBS years, would agree with

you had he not succumbed to lung cancer from using his Chesterfield sponsor's product over too many years. On the outer fringes of humor, however, I do have an occasional moment in the sun. In fact on one sun-drenched July day more than a decade ago (mad dogs and Englishmen) I dragged my portable typewriter out onto the patio and, shakers full of frozen daiquiri on a nearby table, in one quick session generated the enclosed True and Authentic History of the Shields Family (or whatever it's called). Earlier that week I had been traumatized by close contact with a family member attending the DAR convention in D.C., a Helen Hokinson type (if you remember the old *New Yorker*) with a bosomy ledge of thoracic overdevelopment on which you could sit not only a drink but an entire buffet plate. She was so full of herself and her lineage that I almost regurgitated my finger food on that same ledge. My heart full of nauseous remembrance, I sat in the heat ingesting rum and vitamin-laden citrus juices and created the abomination which I trust you will read and cherish. There are elements of truth in it, so don't throw it away.

Also in the possibly humorous genre, one summer in Tulsa, Oklahoma, when I had been providing my writing services to a major drilling company (I don't really know why my close friends always referred to me as a "literary whore") and living in the original (actually) Ramada Inn for about a month, I produced the enclosed series of limericks. It requires no skill to write these things, and I am told that my recollection of biblical facts is somewhat lacking, but it just goes to show what can happen to a person who lives too long in a hotel room by himself (besides blindness). My really funny stuff only circulates among close friends. Coax me.

I enclose this year's Christmas letter which will tell you more about the Gaithersburg Shields family than you ever wanted to know. If I can find anything else to enclose, I'll stuff it in the envelope, too. Like raunchy valentines from 1935, etc. (Actually, I collect "office graffiti," the funny stuff that appears anonymously on corporate bulletin boards, and some of it is culturally quite meritorious.)

Again, thank you for your letter and its enclosures. I hope you enjoy the litter forwarded with this one.

First cousin once-removed

JOHN