



December 7, 2002

This letter is not only to send you greetings for Christmas and the New Year but also a tentative goodbye. After two years of failures to diagnose my symptoms properly, my doctor finally discovered in late June 2002 that I had breast cancer, spread throughout my body by that time. In August I was near death. Chemotherapy worked for a while, but then the cancer resumed its spreading. My current medication has a thirty to forty percent chance of working.

Despite these facts, it has not been a bad year. I worked all year on my book, The World's Earliest Cities, which will go to press this month. In January I went to the American Historical Association annual conference in San Francisco, and in early spring to the International

Studies Association conference in New Orleans. In June I gave several papers at the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations conference at Frenchman's Cove in Jamaica. (My review of John Ruedy's book about Islam in present-day North Africa appeared in the society's journal this fall.) I was supposed to go on from there to an Economist conference in Brazil but was turned back at Miami airport because my visa wasn't in order. Just as well, because two weeks later my cancer was discovered. In early July I went to a fascinating conference, organized out of London, on international shipping. I am still officially a delegate to the UN's annual NGO conference, but I was not able to go to New York in September. I did manage, with Lesley's help and some stylish new hats covering my bald head, to go to San Diego to a late fall conference of the American Legal History Association.

Tyra took a leave of absence from teaching flute at Interlochen to stay in a Menlo Park apartment near our home in Atherton. She brought her cat for company and this fall completed one term of U.C. Santa Cruz Extension training in graphic design. She will have earned some kind of certificate in graphic design by June, which should help her find a job in this area. (Jobs in

orchestras are sparse these days.) Lesley is still assistant to the president of Cosmos Studios in southern California (their CEO is Ann Druyan, long time collaborator and widow of Carl Sagan), and is an alternate on the newly-elected Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council, concerned with civic affairs and city planning. My grandson Nick is in his final year at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Granddaughter Blythe (a Sarah Lawrence College student) is joyously spending her junior year abroad in Florence, Italy, staying with an Italian family, learning Italian, and studying the arts and literature of Tuscany. This, after a summer helping run a restaurant in New York's Greenwich Village. Her half sister, Daniela, does film work in New York City and is engaged to a young man she met while they were both students at Princeton. I understand he is in investment banking in NYC. Blythe has had a standing offer to work as a story editor for a Hollywood producer. Nick has produced a CD of Santa Cruz music and will probably go on in music sound engineering.

My Atherton Press assistant this year has been David Nielsen, who is a member of the Pennsylvania - New Jersey bar, has a BA in literature from UC Berkeley and an MA from the University of Pennsylvania, and who has worked for about eight

years as a copy editor in book publishing companies. My previous assistant, Andrew Federle, a Stanford graduate, is now in theological school in Toronto. I have several half-finished books to complete if my cancer is willing. If not, and sooner or later anyway, I will be cremated and my ashes placed in a marble urn a few yards west of Tyrell's grave. Both burial places are high on a beautiful grassy hill overlooking a wooded valley, Half Moon Bay, and the Pacific Ocean. There will be no funeral or memorial service. To me, dying is a new adventure -- after a lifetime of world travel, one more exotic new trip.

With my best wishes for your future,

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