

MERRY CHRISTMAS, 2008

We hope you, our VERY DEAR FRIENDS, have had a good year. As we prepare for Christmas and the end of 2008, we count our many blessings, the greatest of which are our many personal friendships. What more do we need to enrich our lives during our declining years?

On November 25, we moved to Cokesbury Village, a Methodist retirement community only 3 miles from our old home. Our new address is: 726 Loveville Road, Apt. 904, Hockessin, DE 19707-1513. Our phone and E-mail remain the same. The title to the Auburn Heights property was transferred to the State of Delaware on that date. Tom had lived there in the 1897 home his grandparents built for 84 years, and Ruth for 23 years. We have a nice 3-bedroom cottage complete with 2-car garage, and are settling into our new environment.

While travel has not been on our schedule for the past year, we have nonetheless had boundless activity. Most of this has been centered around the *Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve*, the non-profit group of members and volunteers who support Auburn Heights and carry on activities on the property and at off-site events. Now nearly 12 years since the "Steam Team" was inaugurated, the *Friends* have come of age, and the 15-member Board of Directors, the active volunteer committees, and our Executive Director are meeting the many challenges of a growing organization. Catherine Coin became our second paid and first full-time executive in January, succeeding Bob Reilly, who got us off to an excellent start during his two-year tenure. All members of the *Friends* will work closely with Delaware's Division of Parks and Recreation, represented at Auburn Heights by Dan Citron, who is moving his office to the big house this month. As caretaker, Howard McKean, an employee of the Division, is living on the third floor.

The State graciously gave us a window of time to remove the personal effects we want in our new home. For a few months, we will be going back frequently to sort and bring the necessities we can't do without. Tom will be there several times a week to continue his participation in *Friends'* activities, and to assist the new owners with maintenance details.

It will seem strange not to be decorating Auburn Heights for Christmas this year. Tom has seen it done or been involved in the doing almost every year since 1924, and many of Ruth's 100 or so Byers Carolers will not appear as they have since the 1980's. Even though the 72 windows will not have their electric candles in 2008, the spirit of Christmas is with us, we are very grateful, and we bestow our sincere good wishes on you, our friends.

Ruth and Tom Marshall

