

Christmas 2003

The Sienkewicz Family

The Bird's Nest West

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Even by Sienkewicz standards, 2003 saw an impressive flurry of travel. In January Tom led a small group of Monmouth College people to Tuscany, including visits to Florence, Pisa and Siena. The students on the trip were determined to climb the Leaning Tower, so Tom finally got to do that after all these years when the tower has been closed to visitors. (He says that it is worth the climb.) Julia also returned to Italy this summer with her Aunt MaryBeth and family. Their trip included an excursion south to visit our Italian relatives near Pompeii, whom Julia had not seen in three years and whom MaryBeth's family had never met. By all reports the food and the company were excellent. Meanwhile Richard managed to earn an all-expense-paid two-week trip to Japan from Lawrence University for volunteering to be the roommate of a Japanese exchange student.

Tom flew to Buffalo for a Classics meeting in June and was thrilled to fly over Niagara Falls, which are really spectacular from the air. Tom and Anne also took a short trip to Ontario over the Independence Day Weekend. They stayed on Wolfe Island at the very end of Lake Ontario and beginning of the St. Lawrence River.

Richard was the only one who did not make it to Maine this summer (although he did visit his grandparents during spring break last March.) The rest of us were not all in Maine at the same time, either. Julia, in fact, went to Maine right from her trip to Italy. She arrived at New York's Kennedy Airport about 4:30 P.M. on Saturday, August 14th, yes, right at the start of the big black out! Since her flight to Boston had been cancelled she rented a car at the airport only to realize that there was only about a gallon of gas in the tank and none of the gas stations were working without electricity. So she wound up sleeping in the car somewhere in the Bronx until the power came back on.

In October we all managed to gather in Chicago to attend Simon and Garfunkel's "Back Together" concert at the United Center. There are not many performing artists who can cross generations the way Simon and Garfunkel do, but all five members of the Sienkewicz family are their avid fans. Our friend Viv Edwards of Reading, England, was visiting us at the time so she got to come along with us and eat at our favorite restaurant in Chicago's Greektown ("The Parthenon").

All this activity, of course, was worked around our already complicated lives. Anne continues to work for the Western Illinois Chapter of the American Red Cross and worries constantly that she cannot wave a magic wand to help all who call for help. Some of Tom's Classics students at Monmouth graduated this year, with one

starting a masters program at Wisconsin, but another good batch matriculated this year. He is currently working on a transitional reader for Vergil's *Aeneid*.

Richard is now a senior at Lawrence and may pick up a music minor this year in addition to his East Asian Studies major. His post-graduation plans are uncertain at this writing. He may go to graduate school or law school or teach in Japan for a couple of years. Watch this space. Marie is in her third year of veterinary school at the University of Illinois and is beginning to see some light at the end of the tunnel. She got some lab experience this summer as a result of a research grant to study bacteria in cows. Julia finished her masters in art history at the University of Illinois in May and is now moving ahead with her doctoral studies. Her specialty is nineteenth century American art and architecture. Her masters paper was on Thomas Cole.

Marie and Julia are still sharing their little house in Champaign, Illinois, with a menagerie including Julia's red-eared slider turtle, Piglet, who promises soon to grow out of her 45-gallon tank (Anyone want a turtle?), two parakeets, two cats, and two dogs, both refugees from the U of I vet school. "Red Bone" is a Red Bone hound and "Blanche" is a walker coon hound mix. Their beloved "Ellie Mae" died on Valentine's Day. We lost Minou, our calico cat of fifteen years, in March.

2003 was a good year in the garden. We had a bumper crop of tomatoes and eggplant as well as plenty of sweet and hot peppers. We are still dealing with the overabundance of brussel sprouts we grew this year. Our pear tree produced its first fruit this year—some consolation for the loss of the apricot tree which Tom planted in the front yard shortly after we bought our house eighteen years ago and which had produced many crops of delicious fruit over the years.

We are looking forward to a houseful this Christmas. Tom's sisters Toni and MaryBeth are coming with their families to spend the holidays with us. Aunt Frances will be here, too. All the cousins are looking forward to a wild reunion.

We are not looking forward to all the hype for the impending Iowa caucuses just across the river from us here in western Illinois and we do not see much hope for a better political horizon in the near future. Tom has a "Re-elect Gore in 2004" bumper sticker on his cherished 1973 Buick Electra but we would all settle for almost ABB ("Anybody But Bush")!

All of us send you our heartfelt wishes for a happy holiday season and for good health and happiness in 2004. We can only hope that the new year will bring our troops back from Iraq and home where they belong.

Anne, Tom, Marie, Julia and Richard SIENKEWICZ

P.S. Please note that our family e-mail has changed. The new address is birdnestwest@frontiernet.net.