

# MMXXII in Review

## The Bird's Nest West

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2022 brought us many special memories.

Julia and her family spent much of January in Monmouth as they prepared to move to Rome, where Julia was to be a fellow at the American Academy for the spring semester. Despite the events of Jan. 6<sup>th</sup> in DC, that day remained for us the traditional celebration of Epiphany, complete with gifts left under the Christmas tree by the Three Kings and with a French *galette des rois* ("Three Kings' Cake"). (See [www.tomsienkewicz.com/Recipes/](http://www.tomsienkewicz.com/Recipes/) for more about the galette and our other favorite recipes.)

During her stay, Julia mentioned to Tom a program called Sponsor Circles ([www.sponsorcircles.org](http://www.sponsorcircles.org)), designed to encourage US citizens to sponsor refugees in their communities. At the time, the focus was on the many Afghans displaced by the US departure from their country. Tom raised the idea of sponsoring an Afghan family with the pastor of the local Catholic church. With his encouragement, Tom arranged an informational meeting which attracted quite a few interested people. By the beginning of February, our Maple City Sponsor Circle was officially formed. The support of the Monmouth community was remarkable. We had no difficulty raising the funds necessary to support a family of five. The local Lutheran Church offered to let the family live in its unused parsonage rent-free. Unfortunately, just as our Sponsor Circle was getting off the ground, the number of Afghan refugees entering the US decreased significantly. For three months we waited patiently for an assignment. By the middle of May it was clear that sponsorship of an Afghan family was unlikely, and Sponsor Circles were now being invited to consider Ukrainians. In early June we agreed to sponsor a childless Ukrainian couple, who had fled the Crimea in 2014 for Kyiv and then fled Kyiv for Poland in February. In mid-July Tom and Anne met the couple at O'Hare and drove them to Monmouth. They have settled in quite comfortably. Our Sponsor Circle has helped them obtain social services, work permits, social security cards, and ESL lessons. We hope that they will soon be able to support themselves in the US. In September we agreed to sponsor another Ukrainian family, this one with three children. This family arrived in O'Hare in mid-November. We've been busy helping them settle in. Although the family is Baptist, they decided to send the children to the local Catholic school. So far they are very happy with their decision. So little Monmouth Illinois has been doing its bit to respond to the Ukrainian refugee crisis.

Being part of a Sponsor Circle did not limit our travels and other activities. In April we flew to Rome to visit Julia and her family. Our visit was timed so that Tom and Julia could attend Papal Masses on both Palm Sunday and Easter in St. Peter's Square. Both ceremonies were spectacular and unforgettable. While Anne spent most of her time with Dorothy, Tom took every opportunity to explore the Eternal City. One of the secular highlights of this trip was a tour of Monte Testaccio (an artificial hill composed almost entirely of ancient pottery shards) given by Victor for a group of fellows at the American Academy. Tom also recommends a visit to the Temple of Hadrian, which until recently was occupied by the Roman Chamber of Commerce but which is now a museum open to the public with an incredible film about the Campus Martius where the temple is located.

We decided to have our kitchen repainted while we were in Rome, but this required removing thirty years of accumulation from the many storage cabinets in our kitchen. It was quite an undertaking, but we are happy with the end result—a brighter and less cluttered kitchen!



Before we left for Rome, Tom tilled the garden and planted potatoes, onions and leeks. By mid-May he had the whole garden planted, only to see a violent hailstorm damage the roofs of many houses in Monmouth and devastate the fragile plants in the garden. Many seedlings were replaced, but some were remarkably resilient. In the end, we wound up with bumper crops of peppers, tomatoes, and eggplants.

In late May we headed to the East Coast. Our first stop was Virginia, where Julia had come with Dorothy (7) from Rome to give an invited lecture at the 2022 Mt. Vernon Symposium, an event originally planned for 2020 and postponed by COVID. Julia did academic things while Dorothy and her grandparents enjoyed visiting Mt Vernon, the National Arboretum and the National Gallery of Art.

From Virginia, Tom and Anne headed north to attend Tom's 50<sup>th</sup> Holy Cross reunion. Since our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary fell during the reunion, we arranged to renew our vows at a Mass said by Tom's HC roommate, Ed Vodoklys SJ. Also attending the special private event were some of Tom's college friends, including Joel Gagnon (Tom's best man), Bob Ruggieri and his wife Lori (Bob and Tom were high school as well as college classmates), John Dowd and his wife Virginia, Michael Warshaw and his wife Mary Jane, and Fr. Bob Slesinski. After the reunion we spent a few days at our cabin in Jefferson, Maine, before heading back to Monmouth.

This whirlwind East Coast tour gave us opportunities to connect with various friends and relations, including: Robert Giovenco and his wife Antoinette in Richmond; Dan Lally and his wife Zorina in DC (Dan and Tom went from K-12 together and had not seen each other since 1968); Tom's brother Eddie in Atlantic City; Tom's friend Richard Michalowski and his wife Janet in North Jersey (Rich went to high school with Tom and is our son's godfather); Tom's Aunt Gloria, her daughter Laura, and her granddaughter Sara in North Jersey; Anne Nelson, Tom's former Monmouth colleague in Worcester; as well as Anne's brother Carl and high-school friends Linda Cunningham and Debbie DeGroff (and her husband George Semaan), as well as Tom's college friend Paul Sullivan in Maine.

After that long journey we spent several relatively quiet summer weeks in Monmouth interrupted only by a long Independence Day Weekend trip to St. Paul MN to help Richard and his wife Jessica plant a late vegetable garden. Our annual August sojourn in Jefferson, Maine, was made special this year because of the party planned by our children to celebrate our wedding anniversary. Unfortunately, lingering fears about COVID prevented some from coming, but we were still able to share our day with friends and relations from Maine, as well as several who traveled considerable distance, including: Barbara Esposito (Tom's cousin from Arizona); Bob and Lori Ruggieri from New Jersey; Nyi Htoon (a Burmese student we "adopted" in Monmouth) and his wife Min Ma, also from New Jersey; and Judy Hallett (one of Tom's Classics colleagues), her husband and their son from Maryland. Thanks to all who attended and also to those who sent greetings.

Throughout the year we also had special visits with Marie and her daughters Sylvia (12) and Phoebe (7). Sometimes they came to Monmouth, sometimes we stayed at a hotel near their house with a nice pool, and there was even one nice day trip to the Peoria Zoo. We were also pleased to attend Phoebe's dance recital in June. In addition to all her mothering duties Marie works as a DVM in Chicagoland.

Our 2022 travel log continued with a second trip across the Pond in October, this time to spend two weeks with Anne's college friend Viv Edwards and her husband Chris Morriss in Reading. Anne and Viv spent the two weeks in constant chatter and reminiscing, while Tom and Chris enjoyed almost daily swims. Tom also made excursions to Oxford and London to meet colleagues and to visit places the British Museum and Library and the Ashmolean. In November we traveled to Virginia and saw, with Tom's sisters MaryBeth and Toni and his niece Tracy, a special exhibition of landscape paintings Julia curated at Roanoke College. We had planned to celebrate Thanksgiving at Julia's with Anne's brother Jack, his wife Debbie, their son Tim, and his daughter Livia, but they did not join us because we tested positive for COVID (but remained asymptomatic).

Tom is still professionally active. This year he wrote several book reviews and saw the publication of *Ovid in China* (co-edited with Jinyu Liu of DePauw University). He also gardens and swims c.3 miles per week. Anne focuses her attention on writing letters, harvesting produce, cooking, and copyediting for family authors.

**BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY 2023 FROM TOM AND ANNE SIENKEWICZ**

