



Christmas 2005

The Sienkewicz Family
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Christmas seems to come earlier every year. Perhaps it especially seems that way this year because we had a very long autumn, with no hard frost until after the first of November. We are not used to picking large sweet peppers in our garden at Halloween here in western Illinois. Despite the severe drought in the Midwest we had a good year in the garden with more tomatoes and peppers than we could use. Our peach tree gave us enough fruit for pies and jam, and we had lots of pears, too. Somehow the garden was invaded by giant nicotiana plants which looked and smelled nice (according to Anne), but which made the plot look even more like a jungle than it usually does. Next year, no nicotiana!

As usual we have had a complicated and busy year. Richard moved from his post-baccalaureate program at Knox College to pursue a paralegal degree in Champaign. He is now working part-time for Fed-Ex while looking for more serious employment. He still has his sights set on Japan and, eventually, a career in the diplomatic corps.

Julia is in the process of finishing her Ph.D. qualifying exams in art history at the University of Illinois. She hopes to be A.B.D. (all-but-dissertation) by next May. She spent last summer working on a research project for the Department of Interior in Washington, D.C. She did an historical study of Congressional cemetery, where illustrious people like John Phillip Sousa and J. Edgar Hoover are buried. One of the perks of her job was lodging in the gatehouse of the cemetery. Needless to say, her neighbors were quiet.

Marie received her doctorate in veterinary medicine from the University of Illinois in May. She had spent the spring semester applying for jobs in both Maine and Illinois and was even offered what she called her "dream job" in Maine, not far from her grandparents in Waldoboro, but she turned it down for a position in a small animal practice in Fox Lake, Illinois, on the Wisconsin border. She did this because she got married the week after she graduated to Kyle Bond, a native of Champaign, computer technician, and, most importantly, a cat lover. We only met Kyle on Easter Sunday but are delighted to welcome him into the family and look forward to getting to know him better. Marie and Kyle have set up house, at least for this year, with their blended family of four cats and two dogs. They can be reached at the following address: Marie Sienkewicz and Kyle Bond, 1320 Nippersink Rd., Spring Grove, Illinois 60081.

2005 was a difficult year for Anne's parents. Anne's father suffered a mild heart attack and a broken arm, while Anne's mother spent several months in a nursing home building up strength and mobility after a bad fall. Fortunately, they are now both at home and finding new ways to deal with the so-called golden years. They are fortunate to have both of their sons, Jack and Carl, nearby to assist them. Anne and Julia both made trips Downeast at various critical points to visit and help as they could, but Anne must mostly content herself with regular letters, phone calls, and the occasional fruit cake. Tom and Anne also spent their usual two weeks in Maine in early August. It was odd to be there without any children but we did have our dogs, Allegra and Sydney, to amuse us. Allegra is growing older but still has a passion for jumping off the dock to chase sticks as long as anyone is willing to throw them and longer than she really has energy to do so.

Tom continues to travel a lot for personal and professional purposes. He was in Boston in January, Albuquerque in June, and in Baltimore in November. In May he used a business trip to Philadelphia to spend some time with his brother Eddie on the Jersey shore. Eddie was recuperating from a bad leg fracture acquired on a vacation trip to the Dominican Republic. (He was out of work for several months but is now back to a normal life.) Anne accompanied Tom on one of these trips, this one to southern Spain, in March, where Tom visited an off-campus program used by Monmouth College students. His brother Eddie gave them the use of a timeshare near Malaga and they used a rental car to visit the Alhambra in Granada and the Grand Mosque in Cordoba (which they found mind boggling). They drove as far west as Gibraltar, saw snow babies on Spanish cars in the Sierra Nevadas, and even managed to find Ferdinand the bull chewing his cud under a cork tree.

Anne is still working for the Red Cross in Galesburg. 2005 was a busy year in her office, with all those natural disasters like the tsunami and Katrina. Our elderly dachshund Sydney would prefer that she stay home and serve as his lap bed and sometimes Anne would agree with him. She is now fully recuperated from her broken leg and was even caught this fall climbing up two stories on a ladder to retrieve one of our cats from the roof of our house!

We finally finished the remodeling project in our front hall, which really looks nice now. This fall a small repair job turned into a complete replacing of our roof. At least this isn't happening in high growing season.

Many of us will be glad to put 2005 behind us. Let's hope for a more peaceful and tranquil 2006.

Anne and Tom SIENKEWICZ