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Christmas Greetings
from

The Bird's Nest West
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We barely had time to put our Christmas decorations away in 1987 before we moved for five months to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where Tom had a sabbatical grant and where living in student housing made us feel like graduate students all over again! The kids, who had barely given up yearning for beloved Mount Rainier, spent so much time in Ann Arbor feeling homesick for Monmouth that they now fully appreciate all the good things about living in a small town like Monmouth. We did enjoy many things about Michigan, however. We took Scottish Contra dancing lessons every week and called ourselves the "Tangle-foot Family". Richard loved all the snow in Michigan. Julia, who made a lot of Michigan friends, also received her First Communion there in May. We all were glad to be so close to the many museums in the Ann Arbor area. Tom put his time to good use and wrote a draft of a book about his African epic.

Nor did our travels end with our return to Monmouth in May. We only had time to repack and head East, not just to the East Coast, but to Europe, where our travels began in Rome on June 16th and did not end until we left London on August 4th. In between we visited Tom's cousins near Naples, traveled through southern France, Paris, and Brittany, and drove up to Scotland to see Anne's cousins. Somehow Tom also found time to pursue the main reason for the trip--a book on oral cultures with our Welsh friend Viv Edwards.

We did not finally settle down in Monmouth again until late August, after brief visits to our families in New Jersey and Maine, including Anne's 20th Waldoboro High reunion, where there were lots of dear, friendly faces and not all that many changes. Anne kept saying all year that once she got back home she would clean out the cedar closet and have an identity crisis. With several essay contracts and a Brownie troop to keep her busy, she hasn't had time for either project. Meanwhile, Tom has gotten back into the routine at the college, where he is now President of the Illinois Classical Conference and trying to balance teaching with work on several books. As a first grader, Richard (6) is learning to read words and piano music at the same time. He is determined to follow in the footsteps of his sisters, who play piano quite well. Julia (8), now in third grade, has acquired her own pet guinea pig, named Choc, a British contraction for chocolate. Marie (11), a sixth grader, plays her dad's old trombone in the Junior High School band and is teaching herself guitar. Her guinea pig, Butterscotch, is still a center of her life. The girls help with dishes most nights and Richard is starting to lend a reluctant hand at tablesetting. They all love to get involved in gardening, cooking, and, especially, reading!

Our dog Chatouille, now 12, is still with us. So is our cat Knish (14) but her sister Bagel died in Monmouth last January while we were in Ann Arbor. Sometimes we feel as if we are now running a home for geriatric pets.

Tom's brother Eddie, a dealer in Atlantic City, acquired a share in a condo as well as pet of his own this year, a cat named White Rum. Doris, dividing her time between teaching in Hoboken High and running her video store in Jersey City, visited Mexico this summer. Toni is trying to juggle part-time school, a job and raising two very active little girls, Chris (7) and Theresa (5) who have given up dancing and gymnastics but manage to keep quite busy with school and Girl Scouts. In January Mary Beth and Billy had a baby boy, Roy Anthony who is teaching Tracy (3) how to be a big sister.

In Maine, Carl has finally obtained a patent for his super-duper wood chipper. Jack has raised his horizons by moving his sailboat from the lake to the ocean, while little Tim (14) has become a car fanatic at a young age (It's in the genes.) and keeps his mother Debbie quite busy. Because of our travels we missed Anne's father's strawberries this year, but not his potatoes. Both he and Anne's mother, charter members of the little Tim fan club, enjoy their frequent opportunities to babysit and babywatch. Somehow Anne's mother also finds herself taking extension courses on herbs and astronomy. Perhaps she hopes the stars can improve her herb crops?

Richard's first grade teacher, a dyed-in the wool Democrat, was relieved that there was one little boy in her class who knew who Mike Dukakis was. Our two strongest images of the year are probably Richard running around the second level of the Colosseum in Rome and Richard carrying a Dukakis sign in Chicago's candlelight parade the weekend before the election.

Omnia mutantur; mutantur nihil

Anne, Tom, Marie, Julia and Richard
SHERIK-EWICK

Tom
Marie
Julia
Richard
Anne