

1990
Christmas Greetings
from
The Bird's Nest West
1103 East Second Avenue
Monmouth, Illinois 61462
(309) 734-3543

We entered the 1990's running a geriatric home for pets. While Knish our 16-year-old calico cat shows little signs of age, Chatouille, our beagle of 14 years, is now deaf and will be on digitals for the rest of her life. When we left for Maine in June, we feared that either Knish or Tooley would die in our absence. Instead we lost Butterscotch, Marie's beloved guinea pig. Julia's pig, Choc, fortunately did not follow suit.

Since then, however, there has been a mushrooming of animal life in the Sienkewicz household. First of all, in June we adopted a little calico kitten in New Jersey and carried her first to Maine and then to Monmouth. We named her "Mais, non, Minou" or Minou for short, and her presence has energized Knish. We haven't yet trained Minou to stay away from our finch cage, which is now brimming with about twenty birds, including several recent broods. We also transported back from New Jersey Toni's cockatiel named Joe, who has had to find a new home because of Theresa's allergies. Joe now lives in Marie's room, together with a new guinea pig named Marguerite, whom Marie rescued in a family way from a petstore in September and who gave birth to three pups in late October. Marie plans to keep one and sell the other two. Anyone want a guinea pig?

Despite all this animal business we have found time for other activities. Marie, who became a teenager (!) in July, devotes a lot of her time to her piano and to her trombone. She played several solos and also was a member of a brass quartet which played at the opening of the Monmouth College theatre. This summer she also participated in a marine biology program in Maine. Julia (10) began the French horn this spring and has progressed well enough to play this Christmas with Marie in the community orchestra. Both girls are learning Latin with Tom and manage time for Girl Scouts. Anne is still Julia's troop leader and is teaching French to Julia and Richard (8), who is such a devoted Cub Scout that he even spent some of his summer in Maine at day camp, where he became an avid archer. He has also begun to move along well on the piano and continually makes his parents wish he had been born when they were ten years younger!

In addition to scouts, Anne has found several new ways to keep busy. Last spring she studied elementary Greek at the college and plans to continue taking a few credits every semester. She has been reading the New Testament with Tom and will move on to Plato next semester. She has also written a children's book entitled *The Rise of the Killer Loon or My Family's Summer in Maine* which is now looking for a publisher.

Meanwhile, Tom is looking forward any day to receiving copies of two books, one entitled *Oral Cultures Past and Present: Rappin' and Homer* and the other a bibliography of Classical epic. He is also busy planning a sabbatical next year and threatens to drag his family to North Carolina, Washington, D.C., California or Europe. Only time will tell.

Our families continue to flourish. In New Jersey Tom's brother Eddie continues to take people's money on the blackjack tables in Atlantic City while sister Doris studies calculus in order to get certified in math. She did find time this summer to chop her own chinks in the Berlin wall. Tom's life is filled between her girls, Chris (9) and Theresa (7) and her work as a medical technologist. Instead of coming to Maine this summer, they went to see the artists on Cape Cod. MaryBeth is currently recuperating from a thyroid operation. Any excuse to seek some rest from her lively duo, Tracy (4) and Roy (2), who keep both M.B. and husband Billy running from dawn to dusk.

The Watermen in Maine have had a mixed year of sorrow and joy. The family lost their great-aunt Bea in February but celebrated the christening of Nicholas Francis, son of Anne's brother Jack, in July. Timothy (2) is learning how to be a big brother and his parents, Jack and Debbie, are learning that one plus one is more like four than two. Jack takes solace in his drums and in taking Debbie out to dinner (without the boys). Anne's brother Carl bought himself an old four-wheel drive fire engine, which he plans to overhaul as a transport for his chippie. Nothing surprises Anne's parents, who spend lots of time admiring their growing brood of grandkiddies or driving down to their favorite haunts like Pemaquid Point. Sometimes they even combine their pleasures by taking a grandchild or two with them.

Our family news is not as exciting as the reunification of Germany, the invasion of Kuwait or the resignation of Maggie Thatcher, but, perhaps we help put it all in perspective.

Anne
Tom
Marie
Julia
Richard

Anne, Tom, Marie, Julia and Richard
Sienkewicz