

Christmas, 1993
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We began 1993 by driving down from Florence to visit our Italian cousins near Naples. Our year in Italy was full of special experiences, but most rewarding was watching the children become fluent in Italian and make Italian friends. We enjoyed major tourist sites, like Pisa and Assisi which we visited at Christmas with Aunt Frances and again at Easter with Tom's sisters Doris and Toni and nieces Chris and Theresa. Easter in Florence was also special, with its oxen-drawn cart of fireworks exploding outside the Duomo at Easter Mass. We especially liked the chance to visit quieter parts of Tuscany, like the ruined abbey of San Galgano or the town of Cerreto Guidi at Carnival time, but, without a doubt, the highlight of the year for Anne and Tom was a special visit to the Vatican to climb the scaffolding surrounding Michelangelo's "Last Judgement" in the Sistine Chapel.

We left Florence in the spring, just after the bombing, and went south to see our cousins again. We also squeezed in visits to Pompeii, to Casserta and to Paestum before we folded our tents and headed back west.

We detoured to Britain for ten days to visit our friends Viv and Chris and their family and to motor around the countryside. We highly recommend the towns of Winchester in the south and Monmouth (how could we not?) in Wales. We also took the children to the British Museum and to the National Gallery and were impressed with how much history and art they had absorbed in Italy.

Although we returned to the United States in late June, we decompressed in the East all summer before returning to Illinois in August. In Maine we acquired a puppy--a cute miniature white mongrel poodle whom we named "Allegra" and who is as cheerful as her name suggests. Much to our relief we found everything in Monmouth in good order when we returned. Our nineteen-year-old cat Knish and three year-old Minou act as if we had never left. They have been joined by a little kitten named Daphne who followed Julia home from school one day this fall. Marie's two guinea pigs and Julia's one have been joined by Richard's new responsibility, originally named Florentina, but recently rechristened Florentino. Add a cage full of super-fertile finches plus a couple of goldfish and that makes for quite a menagerie, again.

Marie (16) is now a junior in high school and is just finishing driver's education. Julia (13) is a freshman and is especially enjoying her art and Latin classes. Richard (11) is in 6th grade and got a perverse pleasure this fall in writing part of his autobiography in Italian. Fortunately, his teacher took it in stride.

Music continues to be an important part of our lives. All three children are in school band and still take piano lessons. Marie and Julia also have voice lessons once a week. The kids are also playing their horns in the community orchestra this fall. Tom will probably be pressured to join them soon.

The whole family attended the Illinois Classical Conference convention in Peoria in October to see Tom receive the Lieutenant Governor's Award for outstanding language teaching. Enrollments in Classics courses at Monmouth College are good. In fact, Tom has been teaching a record number of introductory Latin and Greek students this fall. He continues to work in a daily swim with colleagues in the college pool. The return to his ultra busy Monmouth lifestyle was not easy for him, but now he seems to have found his equilibrium, and if he gets a little misty-eyed looking at pictures of *la bella Italia*, who can blame him?

Anne has picked up where she left off with Salem Press and has four contracts to fill before Christmas, three of them concerned with Marguerite Yourcenar, the French writer who lived on Mount Desert Island in Maine. She is not teaching this year, but is grateful to have a little time to organize her thoughts and search closets for missing treasures. Just where are those bathroom curtains, anyway? Allegra provides a good excuse to go out for a long walk every morning and makes sure Anne never feels lonely or bored. One of the greatest surprises of life in Italy was how much energy and organization--coupled with brute strength--it took to keep the family functioning at survival level. Just being back in her own home has been a wonderful treat.

She was surprised to find herself speaking more French than Italian in Florence, since our close neighbor and friend, Rosie Vanni, was born near Lille and transplanted into Italy only as a young woman. Life in Italy showed us that, although plans may be thwarted and hopes disappointed, life almost always brings compensation. For example, the day we escorted the ACM students group down from Rome to Pompeii, we planned to change trains in Naples and go directly on to Pompeii, but arrived in Naples only to find the railroad on strike. However, every Italian cloud has a silver lining, for we were unexpectedly able to spend several wonderful hours at the Archeological Museum in Naples, where we saw many treasures of Pompeii in rooms closed on every preceding visit. All this, and we even got to Pompeii that day, too!