

Christmas, 1995
The Bird's Nest West
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Certainly the highlight of our year was Marie's college search. None of us were really prepared for the anxiety and emotion surrounding that decision. For weeks Marie could not decide among Knox College in Galesburg, Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, and Bowdoin College in Maine. Each college had its own appeal. Knox was close to home. At Lawrence she could participate in a five-year two degree program in Biology and Music. Bowdoin held a Downeast lure and the prospect of seeing more of her grandparents. On the last night she could possibly decide, she was still waffling. In the end she chose Bowdoin, which appears to have been a good choice for her. This semester she is studying chemistry, calculus, music history and elementary Greek. (The last course was entirely her own idea. Her father agreed only on condition that she not become a Classics major.) Marie is also in the choir and orchestra and manages to get back to Waldoboro to see her grandparents once or twice a month. She has not been in Monmouth since early June, but we are all expecting her home for Christmas.

Marie's high school graduation in May was a very special occasion with not only Anne's parents in attendance but also Tom's Aunt Frances and his brother Eddie (who was visiting Monmouth for the very first time).

Shortly after the graduation ceremony and the departure of our guests, we packed up our van and headed west in a caravan with our friends the Tylers to Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. We had expected cool weather and had packed accordingly. We were not prepared psychologically, however, for the daily doses of freezing rain and even snow which we experienced at least every other night. We saw only the outline of Devil's Tower, Wyoming, in a blizzard, and caught glimpses of Mt. Rushmore between snow flakes. One mountainside campsite we had reserved in advance in South Dakota was inaccessible the first day and still covered with a foot of snow the next. Despite an uncooperative Mother Nature, we were still thrilled to see Old Faithful, Yellowstone Falls, the Cody Museum in Cody, Wyoming (which we highly recommend), and even Carhenge, a splendid piece of absurd Americana in western Nebraska. Would you believe a scale model replica of Stonehenge made out of used automobiles?

Well, our travels were not finished. We stopped back in Monmouth only long enough to repack the van and head East to New Jersey, where we had only a few days before Anne and the girls flew off to Britain, where they parted company. Anne visited her friend Viv Edwards in Reading, took a train through the newly opened Chunnel, and spent a week reacquainting herself with Paris while the girls traveled by themselves to Italy. They spent a week

week with school friends in Florence and then another week with relatives in the South. They seem to have enjoyed their fling of independence and the opportunity to renew Italian acquaintances and to brush up on the language. At the end of the trip they were reunited with Anne in Britain for a week before they all headed back to the U.S., where Tom and Richard met them in Boston.

While the girls were gone, Tom and Richard spent their period of bachelorhood with relatives in New Jersey and museum hopping in Washington, D.C., where they even saw the Enola Gay exhibit on opening day. They drove up to Maine with Aunt Frances, and Tom's nieces, Christina and Theresa and spent a pleasant week on Lake Damariscotta before heading back south in search of mother and sisters. They even squeezed in a hike along the Freedom Trail in Boston and a short trip to Cape Cod to visit friends.

The hardest part of the summer was probably leaving Marie on the East Coast while we headed back to Monmouth.

Julia is now a Junior in High School and taking on more than she can handle sometimes. In addition to piano, horn and voice lessons, she is on the scholastic bowl and speech teams, is news editor of the school newspaper and a member of the local ecumenical youth choir and community orchestra, and was assistant director of the high school fall play.

Richard, now an 8th grader, is also busy. He seems finally to have found his stride in piano and continues with trombone (band, show choir combo and jazz ensemble). He is on scholastic bowl and Odyssey of the Mind, and spends as much time as he can on the computer. He came in third in the local geography bee, too. We drew the line at joining the wrestling team.

Tom was on sabbatical last spring and spent most of his time finishing an annotated bibliography of world mythology which will be published next spring. Anne is still teaching part-time at the college, but is uncertain of future academic employment and is contemplating a mid-life identity crisis when she has the time.

Somehow we have acquired, on long term loan, a five-year old dachshund called Sydney. He is dumb but lovable. Allegra and the cats tolerate him. Tom is not so sure. Julia has a cage of parakeets with a nesting box. That is all we need. Anybody out there want a used dachshund or a baby parakeet?

We have hooked the Bird's Nest West up to the internet and our new address appears in the letterhead.

We all wish you a joyful holiday season and a happy 1996.

Anne, Tom, Marie, Julia, and Richard SIENKIEWICZ