

*Christmas, 1997*  
**The Sienkewicz Family**  
The Bird's Nest West  
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Anne and Tom first saw the nesting birds mosaic which adorns our Christmas card on their first trip to Rome in 1974. Tom photographed it and Anne worked it into a needle point project. When Julia visited the same church this summer, and sent them a postcard of the same scene, it seemed like a sign from heaven. Besides, the empty birds' nest seems an appropriate theme for the Sienkewicz family this Christmas.

Julia graduated from Monmouth High School in late May. Within several days she had an unexpected invitation to spend the summer in Italy as a nanny. She didn't hesitate too long before she accepted. This made for an even more complicated summer than usual.

We had planned a camping trip to Colorado again this June with our friends the Tylers, but Anne was offered a job as the executive assistant at the Warren County United Way beginning July 1st. Since she had been looking for a job all year with no success, it was not really possible to turn this one down, even though the timing was disastrous for our summer plans. In the end, Anne accepted the job and decided to forego the trip to Colorado in favor of ten days in Maine with her parents, grandmother, and Marie. Meanwhile Tom drove Julia and Richard out to Colorado in a rented Ford Escort, since our van had a major breakdown two days before we were scheduled to leave. The car was snug, but there is something to be said for using a rental car on a long haul like that. They spent most of the trip camping in Rocky Mountain National Park, with the specific intention of hiking to the top of Flattop Mountain. They had hiked most of the way up that mountain in 1994, but had to turn back due to inclement weather. This time they were determined to reach the top, which they did, despite a mild case of altitude sickness for Richard, who gained some notoriety among the Park Rangers as they worried whether he would make it back down on his own. (He did.) Then the Sienkewicz and Tylers drove to Denver to rendezvous with Tom's sister MaryBeth and her family, who were on their way to a dude ranch in western Colorado and had invited Julia to come along. So, leaving Julia in the hands of her aunt, Tom and Richard drove back to Illinois to meet Anne at the airport on her way back from Maine, packed the now repaired van, and headed east.

Their first stop was New Jersey where Tom helped his Uncle Jerome dispose of the contents of the house his grandparents bought almost fifty years before. Uncle Jerome had had a stroke last December and could no longer cope in such a large house. Marie came down from Maine to help. So did Julia (back from Colorado), Richard, and Tom's Gallo nieces. They organized a huge moving sale for early July. Tom now has a mild abhorrence for the accumulation of earthly possessions and never wants to see another knick-knack.

No sooner was the sale over, than Tom had to get Julia to Italy. No simple task, since the passport duly ordered in early June had not arrived. Tom and Julia wound up spending a nightmare of a morning at the passport office in Rockefeller Plaza in an eventually successful effort to obtain an emergency passport the day before she was supposed to leave. The only bright side of the day was the opportunity to visit the Guggenheim Museum, which Tom had never seen and which Julia, a

budding architect, found incredibly inspiring. Getting Julia to the plane after that was a breeze and the next day Tom drove Marie and Richard up to Maine for the summer.

Marie, who has become a vegetarian, spent most of the summer working in the Waldoboro Family Practice Office, where her Uncle Jack is a partner. She still plans to become a veterinarian, but has settled in as a Classics major at Bowdoin, where she is now a junior. She is planning to spend the spring semester in Athens. She continues to sing in the college choir, takes piano lessons, and plays the piano for Mass at the Newman Center. Her crazy father got her another cat for her birthday this summer. Fortunately the little creature, named, Patrizia, has finagled her way into the lives and hearts of Anne's parents in Waldoboro and by all accounts is a wonderful feline companion to Marie's other cat Micia.

Julia had such a wonderful time in Italy that she clearly didn't want to leave. Somehow she managed to get herself back to the United States in time to matriculate at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts, in September. She seems to be enjoying MHC, which will probably never be the same again. She is taking too many courses, including art history, Greek, advanced calculus, and canoeing, and is involved in a variety of extra-curricular activities. Anne and Aunt Frances spent one wonderful Family weekend with her in October and were take by surprise by Marie who made the trip from Maine just for the occasion. Julia has made many friends, among whom she is fortunate to number her roommate Indira. Julia and Indira share as pets two turtles given to them by Julia's Aunt MaryBeth. For Thanksgiving M.B. and her family also took Marie and Julia to Plymouth where they had an authentic Pilgrim feast.

Meanwhile Richard relishes the position of an only child and the full attention of his parents. (If you believe that one, we have a bridge in Brooklyn we can sell you.) His big thrill of the summer was going to a Yankee game for his birthday. Although the Yankees managed to lose the game, Richard did not seem to mind, and even his father enjoyed the outing, especially because they took a ferry from Weehawken, N.J., to Yankee stadium. The trip around Manhattan and up the East and Harlem rivers was spectacular. There is no better way to go to a baseball game! Richard is now a sophomore in high school, and, brace yourselves, has already taken drivers' ed, although he can't get his license until next August (thank God!). He is taking both biology and chemistry and really seems to enjoy his advanced algebra class. He is naturally in the school band, where he plays the french horn, and in the municipal orchestra, where he plays trombone. Next fall the band leader wants him to switch to trumpet. He continues with piano and takes lessons to nurture his deep bass singing voice, which he uses in the local Junior Ecumenical Choir. All his other waking moments he seems to spend in front of a video screen.

Anne seems to have adjusted to the routines of her job, which she may have gotten by mentioning her willingness to stand up before a crowd of people and sing Frere Jacques. While she hasn't yet been asked to sing, she did march down Broadway in a United Way chain gang during Monmouth's annual Prime Beef Festival in September. She still writes book reviews and translations in her increasingly spare time.

Meanwhile Tom putters on at the college. He had another annotated bibliography published this year, this on theories of myth. The *Festschrift* he edited for a retired Monmouth faculty member was also published in May. You can read it in electronic form on Tom's new web site (<http://www.monm.edu/academic/classics>).

Our nest is getting emptier by the year so if you get the urge to visit the Midwest, please look us up. We suddenly have lots of empty beds.