

MMXV in Review

The Bird's Nest West

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2015 was a particularly memorable year for the Sienkewicz family with a wedding and the birth of two granddaughters woven into our usual busy life. Anne and Tom began 2015 with a trip to New Orleans for a Classics conference, where Tom had the pleasure of hearing one of his student read a paper. It is rewarding to see the next generation moving into action. We are not the reveling types, so much of the lure of NOLA was lost on us, but we enjoyed the exotic cuisine. In March Tom led a student trip to Roman Spain sites in Barcelona, Tarragona, Cordoba, and Merida as well as the newly-reopened National Archaeological Museum in Madrid. No sooner was he back from that trip than he and Anne flew off to Boulder, Colorado, for a meeting of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South (CAMWS) for which, as Secretary-Treasurer, he was responsible for making the meeting run smoothly. Fortunately, there were no major crises. Another of Tom's students read a paper here and we also enjoyed Boulder, which is also a great place for good and unusual food. The biggest excitement of the trip, however, was in returning home to welcome into the world a new granddaughter, Dorothy Ophelia Martinez, born to Julia and Victor on March 30 in Davenport, Iowa. We were able to spend a lot of quality time with newborn Dorothy because Julia spent her maternity leave from Duquesne with us in Monmouth, where Victor was teaching that semester.

In April Tom reluctantly left the new granddaughter for another Classics convention, this one in Atlantic City, where he was able to visit with brother Eddie over a good Italian meal, to savor the delights of the Boardwalk, and even to accidentally dip his feet in the Atlantic.

The month of May was spent, as usual, in the garden, but also preparing for son Richard's wedding to Jessica Zaiken on May 24 in St. Paul. We were thrilled that so many friends and relatives were able to travel to Minnesota to celebrate with us. Tom's siblings, MaryBeth, Eddie and Toni, all made the trek from the East Coast, as did Anne's brother Jack and his wife Debbie from Maine. Our friends Viv Edwards and Chris Morris even flew all the way from England! There isn't space here to mention everyone who came, but we certainly appreciated one and all. The wedding itself was unforgettable. We are proud that Richard walked both his parents down the aisle. He and Jessica made the mistake of inviting her high school Latin teacher and Tom to read whatever they wanted at the wedding. So, as a result, this wedding included a bilingual reading of Catullus' Marriage Poem (#61) with everyone in attendance shouting *O Hymenaeus Hymen, O Hymen Hymenaeus* to the Roman god of marriage after every verse!

While so many loved ones were in St. Paul we also arranged for a special Blessing Ceremony for Dorothy at the Cathedral of St. Paul. The ceremony was officiated by Tom's grade school friend, Deacon Robert Giovenco. Dorothy Ophelia wore the same family baptismal gown her grandfather Tom, his siblings, our children and many cousins wore. The baptism followed a week later in Rockford at the church of St Anthony of Padua, with Victor's mother and other dear family and friends.

Soon after the wedding our third granddaughter, Phoebe Cecilia Bond, was born to Marie and Kyle on June 18 in McHenry, Illinois. We have been fortunate to see all three darling grandchildren on the day of their birth. Our oldest granddaughter, Sylvia, is a very loving big sister and gives little Phoebe frequent hugs and kisses. We gave Sylvia some special attention shortly after Phoebe's birth by taking her on a commuter train

to the University of Chicago for a performance of *The Secret Garden*. She was as much excited about the trains and the skyscrapers as she was about the play, and we had a great time. Sylvia leads a busy life with dance, gymnastics, art and science classes in addition to her regular Montessori school. Sylvia turned five the day after Thanksgiving and tells us that it is very difficult being five. She says she would rather be four again. Ah, youth!

In June Tom drove out to Connecticut for yet another Classics meeting. At this one he gave a paper on the Latin book he co-authored a number of years ago. He was glad to be able to visit with sister Toni on the way out and with Aunt Gloria Liguori on the way back. Since we are members of the Quad City Botanical Center, we have a pass to most botanical gardens in the US, so Tom also visited the gardens in Queens and the Bronx on this trip.

In early July, Anne and Tom left Monmouth for points east. First we stopped in Chicago to meet the parents and brother of Jad Frehya, the Syrian student for whom we are host parents. The Frehyas are wonderful people. We are sad to think that they are facing such hardships in Syria right now. Tom and Anne then drove to New Jersey via the Botanical Gardens in Cleveland (which we think are the best we have seen anywhere). There we visited with another international student we parented in Monmouth many years ago. Nyi Htoon, originally from Burma, now lives in Secaucus with his parents. Nyi was recently married so we were delighted to meet his new wife, Dr. Min Maw, and spend time with him and his parents.

From New Jersey we headed up the coast to Boston for a flight to Amsterdam. Why, you may ask? Because daughter Julia had agreed to participate in a week-long conference there, and we agreed to come along to care for Dorothy Ophelia. We would probably not have visited Amsterdam on our own, but we had a great time touring museums with Dorothy on Tom's shoulder. Some of Julia's sessions were in Utrecht and Haarlem, cities we much preferred to crowded Amsterdam with its terror bicyclists and trams. Tom was especially pleased to see the subterranean Roman remains in Utrecht, but he had a visceral reaction to the religious history of the Netherlands, and found visiting a "hidden" Catholic church in Amsterdam to be especially moving. Anne had to drag him away kicking and screaming from the Flower Market in Amsterdam.

Upon return from Holland we naturally headed north from Boston to Maine for our annual two-week stay. The highlight of this visit was introducing Anne's family to little Dorothy. She went straight to her great grandfather, as if she had always known him. Anne's brother Carl takes great care of the patriarch, while continuing his work at Rockport Marine. Since Dad can now read only large-print books with comfort, we tried unsuccessfully to introduce him to a Kindle, but after one book he abandoned modern technology. Another highlight was enjoying dinner in Jack and Debbie's beautiful new home on Hatchet Cove. We also visited for the first time the Coastal Maine Botanical Center in Boothbay. We plan to make that wonderful place a regular part of our future stays in Maine.

No sooner did we return to Monmouth than Anne left with Julia for Pittsburgh and two months as a "granny nanny" for Dorothy Ophelia. During the first week, Victor and Julia moved their books and furniture into a new home, he left for a teaching position in Arkansas, and Julia started classes. Anne stayed until Julia could arrange appropriate child care. She even rode along to Toronto, where Julia attended a conference, coped with terrible traffic, and returned via a stop at Niagara Falls. Tom survived, but just barely, in Anne's absence. He did manage to can gallons of tomato sauce and to freeze many eggplant, peppers and other produce.

At this point we are hoping for a relatively quiet holiday season peppered with visits from children and grandchildren. Tom is looking forward next semester to probably his last sabbatical before retirement (but no definite plans for that, yet). His intention is to center his sabbatical around a pilgrimage walk along the Camino de Santiago de Compostela (c.500 miles from the French Pyrenees to northwestern Spain!). More on that next year. Meanwhile, happy 2016.