

MMXVIII in Review

The Bird's Nest West

1103 East Second Avenue, Monmouth, Illinois 61462
309-734-3543 ("home"); 309-696-4128 (Tom's cell); 309-657-4938 (Anne's cell)
awsienkewicz@gmail.com / tjsienkewicz@gmail.com
www.tomsienkewicz.com

2018 marked Tom's first full year of retirement from the classroom, but he has definitely not yet left the profession. He is still the Secretary-Treasurer of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South (camws.org), and plans and manages annual meetings for 450+ Classics folks. This year's Albuquerque meeting, with c.700 attendees, was the second largest on record. In April Tom and Anne drove all the way from Illinois to New Mexico amid snow, rain and often hair-raising traffic. They both enjoyed this meeting, with throngs of friends, former students, and colleagues. In September, another CAMWS trip took Anne and Tom to Lincoln, Nebraska, to plan the April, 2019 meeting. On their way home they detoured north to St Paul to visit Richard and Jessica, tour their flourishing garden and taste its produce. Yet a third CAMWS meeting, in Winston-Salem NC, in September led them to visit Old Salem NC and to spend a few days in Salem VA with Julia and her family.

Tom also maintains an active speaking schedule. This year he lectured on topics like the Camino and Classical mythology, both in political cartoons and in poetry by Edgar Lee Masters (of *Spoon River Anthology* fame), at Grand Valley State University and Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI, at Purdue University in Indianapolis, at Ripon College in WI (via Skype!), at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, at professional meetings in Winston-Salem, NC, in Albuquerque, NM (twice), and in Vilnius, Lithuania (more on that anon). In the fall Tom also arranged and helped set up at Monmouth College an exhibit of Native American artifacts from western Illinois.

Friends say we are almost never home. This is true. We intend to travel as much as we can, as long as our health and stamina hold out. Tom had to skip one meeting in Boston in early January, due to a major blizzard, but in March he took a group of Monmouth College students to Rome. Bad weather cancelled their flight through Munich and threatened the trip, but the college purchased new tickets through Istanbul, and they arrived only a few hours later than planned. As usual, Rome had its own surprises. The biggest one occurred as Tom led the group along the Via dei Fori Imperiali towards Trajan's Column. In amazement he saw tourists wandering around the base of the column! In his many visits to Rome, this area has never been open, so the group quickly detoured to visit the column up close and then followed the tourists through a tunnel under the Via dei Fori Imperiali, only to find themselves suddenly in the Forum of Julius Caesar, another area Tom had never before been able to enter! The path led down along the old Argiletum into the Forum Romanum itself, so the group visited the Forum a day earlier than planned, via an unexpected route. Later in the week they took the train down to Naples and Pompeii for another surprise: free admission to the scavi for the women, because of International Women's Day (March 8th). To commemorate the occasion Tom made sure to photograph the Monmouth women in front of the statue of Eumachia, Pompeii's great benefactress. No such surprises marked their attendance at a Papal Audience.

The trip to Rome was extra special for Tom because his brother Eddie came along on his first visit to Italy. It was a joy to see Eddie relish the experience, especially the food. On the students' last, free, day in Rome, Tom took him to meet some of their Italian cousins in Angri, near Naples. Eddie spent most of that visit hovering near the stove, watching the cooks and thus endearing himself to the relatives, who told him to come again but to learn Italian first.



A trip to Carilisle, PA, for an Eta Sigma Phi Convention gave us an excuse to visit Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater and then to celebrate Dorothy's 3rd birthday and Easter with Julia and Dorothy in Virginia.

At the end of April, right after celebrating his birthday with Marie and her daughters Sylvia and Phoebe in Monmouth, Tom began an unforgettable odyssey to Central Europe. Initially he planned to present a paper ("Greco-Roman Themes in International Editorial Cartoons of the 21st Century") at a conference on Art and the State in Vilnius, Lithuania, but things soon ballooned into much more. Flying from Chicago to Vilnius necessitated a stop in Warsaw--an excuse to spend time in Poland, first Warsaw (somewhat bleak and depressing due to its World War II history), then Krakow (more enjoyable, especially its churches), then the summer house of Henryk Sienkiewicz (author of *Quo Vadis*) in Obelgorek, then a pilgrimage to the shrine of Jazna Gora Monastery and the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, then another, more penitential pilgrimage to Auschwitz, and, finally the pretty town of Wadowice, birthplace of Karol Józef Wojtyła (John Paul II). The climax of his trip was Belarus, which Tom visited, at the urging of his Canadian cousin Donald Brechun, to see the little hamlet of Rusaky, where Tom's paternal grandfather was born. Following a whirlwind tour of Minsk, capital of Belarus, Tom joined Donald and Jan Brechun (another second cousin, from Gdansk, Poland) for an incredible auto trip through beautiful countryside to the town of Udelo, near Rusaky, where many second cousins welcomed them with open arms. The most memorable event for Tom was attending Mass in the 18th-century Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, where his grandfather had probably been baptized and worshipped more than a century ago. Tom is now reading Sienkiewicz' massive trilogy, which he hopes to finish by the end of 2018.

Anne and Tom got to Maine not just once but three times this year, first for Memorial Day Weekend (when they enjoyed a visit from Tom's student Nick Mainz and his father), then the regular summer stay (and another visit from Nick, this time with his mother), and again in late September, so Tom could see Maine's fall foliage for the first time. That time, they enjoyed visits from Tom's college friend Paul Sullivan and two more former students, Matt Katsenes and Emma Vanderpool. These visits to Maine also provided quality time with Anne's brothers, Carl and Jack, as well as with Jack's wife Debbie and sons Tim and Nick, who are all well. Alumni were also welcomed back in Monmouth, where there were visits this year from Marty Pickens, Tim Morris, Stacy Stoyanoff, David Neimann and Sylvia Zethmayr Shultz. If you weren't mentioned in that list, come visit and make sure you are in next year's letter!

Our trip to Maine for Memorial Day coincided with a major Sienkiewicz family celebration: the marriage of Tom's nephew Roy SanFilipo to Mike Christatos. The wedding was an elaborate affair at the Bowery Hotel in NYC. We especially enjoyed the time with family, the views from Battery Park and even a trip on the Staten Island ferry.

Anne and Tom spent most of the summer with Julia and her daughter Dorothy, first in Monmouth, then in Durham, NC, where Julia attended a conference, and also in Maine. In Illinois there were several opportunities for Julia and Dorothy to interact with Marie and her daughters, including a trip to see dinosaurs in the Field Museum. It was great to see Tom's sister Mary Beth and daughter Tracy, and niece Theresa and her family on the trip East. Tom spent a lot of time with Dorothy in pools in NC and in the Lake in Maine. By summer's end, she was becoming quite a little seal.

Both Anne and Tom attended their 50th high school reunions this year. Anne's Waldoboro High School reunion took place the last Sunday in July. It was great to see classmates, smooch and hug and talk up a storm! Tom's reunion at St. Peter's Prep in Jersey City was the major reason for the September trip to Maine. On their way from Illinois, they stopped at Niagara Falls, which Tom had never seen before. Definitely worth the detour! Tom really enjoyed his reunion. It was great to reconnect with classmates he hadn't seen in years, to tour the neighborhood around Prep, virtually unrecognizable from the downtown Jersey City of the '60s, but especially to spend time with his closest Prep buddies, Richard Michalowski, Bob Giovenco and Bob Ruggieri. Luckily the wives are good friends and enjoy each other's company. Oddly, Tom was the only member of the class who wore his letter sweater to the reunion. While in Jersey City Tom and Anne visited another MC alumnus, Jon Acheson, who recently opened a gallery on Pacific Ave. While in New Jersey, we stayed with Tom's sister Toni near Princeton and, after the reunion, visited brother Eddie on the Jersey Shore Boardwalk.

We celebrated Anne's birthday in November by attending a Chicago Symphony performance of Verdi's *Requiem* conducted by Riccardo Muti. Very moving. The icing on Anne's cake was an opportunity to spend the next day with Marie and her daughters at the Chicagoland Children's Museum. In early December we also took Marie and her daughters to Chicago's beautiful Auditorium Theatre for a spectacular performance of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* ballet choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon and set at the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition. Highly recommended.

2019 already promises to be filled with activity, including the Fox Classics Lecture, which Tom is giving at Monmouth College on President's Day, Monday, February 18th (www.tomsienkiewicz.com/FoxLecture34.html), a possible student trip to Roman Spain in May, and a trip to Italy in June with Richard, Jessica, Julia, Victor, Dorothy and cousin Barbara Liguori Esposito to visit the relatives in Angri, followed by a trip to Britain where Tom is giving a paper at a professional meeting while Anne visits with friends Viv Edwards and Chris Morris in Reading.

Happy 2019 from Anne and Tom Sienkewicz