

# MMXIX in Review

## The Bird's Nest West

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We are happy to report that retirement continues to be a pleasant mixture of daily routine, time with grandchildren, academic pursuits, and, especially, travel. Tom's day usually consists of swimming every morning at the local Y, managing the affairs of CAMWS (the classical association for which he serves as secretary-treasurer until July 2020), gardening in season and various scholarly projects, including editing *Ovid in China*, a volume of essays on a history of the Roman poet in China. In February he was pleased to give at Monmouth College the 34th Bernice L. Fox Classics Lecture entitled "*Hercules Politicus* in Art: The Mythic Hero as Political Role Model from Alexander the Great to Vladimir Putin." Tom established this lecture series in 1984 to honor his predecessor at the college and it was coming full circle for him to finally give the lecture himself. Meanwhile, Anne spends her days writing letters to children and grandchildren, editing her father's war correspondence with his parents, and maintaining hearth and home. Until recently much of her time was devoted to care for our elderly cat, Minima, who died in October. No more pets for us. Their losses are too painful.

Travel we certainly did in 2019. At the New Year, Tom traveled to San Diego for a professional conference and found time to cross the border into Mexico for a great meal with former student and now Roman historian Joe O'Neill. In February Tom and Anne traveled on Amtrak's Southwest Chief from Galesburg IL to Albuquerque NM, where Tom read a paper on the poet Edgar Lee Master's use of Classical mythology. We enjoyed the ride and the chance to experience, for once, travel in a sleeping car and meals in a dining car. The former was cramped but the latter pleasant. (We are not happy with Amtrak for discontinuing their dining car experience. *O tempora, O mores!*) In April we were in Lincoln, Nebraska, for the annual CAMWS meeting which Tom organizes. Easter was spent with Julia and her family in Salem, Virginia, when we ticked off another place on our bucket list by visiting Natural Bridge with granddaughter Dorothy (now 4 ½!).

Our travel highlight, however, was a family trip in June to visit Tom's Italian relatives in Anagni (just south of Pompeii). Joining us were Richard and his wife Jessica, Julia, her husband Victor, and Dorothy, as well as Tom's cousin Barbara Liguori Esposito, who had never been to Italy before. We spent a few days showing Barbara around Rome before traveling down to the cousins, who treated us royally with memorable meals. It is wonderful that the family has been able to maintain its ties across the Atlantic even though it has been more than a century since Tom's maternal grandfather left Italy for the United States and never went back. After the family reunion, we spent a few days in Florence with our friends Janet Smith and her husband Giovanni, who took us to visit the incredible new Roman Ship Museum in Pisa (a must see!). Then we went on to England, where Anne visited with Viv Edwards and her husband Chris in Reading while Tom commuted into London for a conference where he gave a paper on 18th-century Chinese porcelains depicting scenes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

This year we managed not just one but three trips to our camp on Lake Damariscotta in Jefferson, Maine, first in late April, then in high summer, and again in late October! Julia and Dorothy were there in the summer and much



frollic time was spent splashing in the lake as Dorothy learned to swim like a fish. If you are ever so inclined, visit us sometime in Jefferson. We are always there at the end of July and in early August. Our spring trip included attending the MA graduation of Tom's student, Emma Vanderpool, from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. On the way home from the April trip to Maine we stopped in upper New York State to visit with Tom's college friend, Joel Gagnon, whose wife Sally died last December. During our summer visit we were blessed to have another college friend, Paul Sullivan S.J., come to Jefferson, where he said Mass in Sally's memory at the camp. In attendance were also Anne's brother Jack and his wife Debbie. Tom, Jack and Paul also participated in a moving pilgrimage walk in Monroe, Maine, where the French Jesuit Sebastian Rale, missionary to the Abenakis, was martyred by the British in 1724. In October we enjoyed the spectacular fall foliage, visited the Damariscotta Pumpkinfest, and endured a four-day power-outage following a powerful Nor'easter. On the way back to Illinois from this trip we visited Women's Suffrage sites in Seneca Falls, NY—another place well worth a visit, also because it was the model for Bedford Falls in "It's a Wonderful Life", the great Jimmy Stewart Christmas film of 1949. (Anne and Tom managed to see that film in November on a big screen at the beautiful Orpheum Theatre in Galesburg—a great throw-back experience. There wasn't a dry eye in the audience.)

The fall trip to Maine was actually the culmination of a complicated itinerary which took us from Illinois down to Birmingham, AL (where we visited the Civil Rights Institute), then up to Virginia for a few days with Julia and Dorothy, then down to Charleston SC (where Tom had a professional meeting and where we highly recommend the bike taxis and a visit to Angel Oak) plus nice visits with Tom's sisters Mary Beth in North Carolina and Toni in New Jersey. That trip also included stops to visit three monumental statues: Superman in Metropolis, IL, Athena at the Parthenon in Nashville, TN, and Vulcan in Birmingham.

In September we co-hosted with Rick Sayre and Mary Phillips a gathering of more than 25 fellow retirees from Monmouth College. The gathering was MCed by mascot Scottie the Pig.

We didn't get enough pumpkins in Maine, however, and decided to drive up to Minnesota just after Halloween to visit the Jack-o-Lantern Spectacular at the Minnesota Zoo with Richard and Jessica. That event is spectacular indeed with 5000 incredibly-carved pumpkins glowing in the dark. Highly recommended.

For Anne's birthday in November we took a short train trip up to Chicago to attend a fascinating open rehearsal of the Chicago Symphony conducted by Riccardo Muti. The rehearsal was almost better than an actual performance because we could appreciate the interaction between the orchestra and the conductor, who is a rip. Following the morning rehearsal we spent the rest of the day at the Art Institute (across the street from Symphony Hall).

Since Marie and her family live in Mundelein, Illinois, we manage to see them regularly throughout the year. Either we drive to Chicagoland or she drives to Monmouth. Both of her daughters, Sylvia (9!) and Phoebe (4 ½), are fascinated with cats and keep their mother busy with various extra-curricular activities like dance and singing. Grandparenthood is wonderful.

Please also permit the proud parents to boast that Julia's book entitled *Epic Landscapes. Benjamin Henry Latrobe and the Art of Watercolor* was published this fall by the University of Delaware Press.

We hope that you have a wonderful holiday season and wish you all the best in the new decade.

**Happy 2020 from Anne and Tom Sienkewicz**

