

# Greetings!

It's that busy time of year again--time to do the Christmas shopping, decorate the tree and house, hang the roping and lights outside, send the Christmas cards, make the Bailey's, and CLEAN CLEAN CLEAN to make the house suitable for guests. Yet, it's still somehow magical. As I sit here furiously typing this letter to get it done in time for Christmas, it's really beginning to look a lot like an "old-fashioned" Christmas outside. There's a gentle, fluffy snow falling outside, covering the winter ugliness. The lake, not yet frozen, laps in the background. I sip on hot spiced tea, listening to carols playing in the background. (I wish! Actually, it's foggy out and I'm sitting alone at the hospital, with only a view of a construction site. My beverage is a warm, flat, diet coke, and laboring moms scream in the background.)

It's also exciting to see Christmas through a child's eyes. Kalyna and Nicholas (aka Destructor), my beloved niece and nephew, have given me this opportunity. Christmas, in their eyes, has the potential to be better than even a *birthday*. They've made a long trip out into the country to get a tree, helped to set it up and decorate it ("it's so beau-teeefull!"), and stared at it in awe as the lights shine and ornaments glitter. They've been modifying their behavior ("Santa is watching"), have both received letters from Santa, and have sat on Santa's knee and expressed their deepest Christmas desires (Well, Kalyna has. She caught a glimpse of *real* TV at someone's house, and in that brief moment developed a deep-seated desire to own a "Bubble Baby Bubble Bath" and a "Party Barbie". Nikko keeps silent on the subject, but displays a generalized anticipation. Besides, Santa, like our priest, absolutely terrifies him at close range, causing him to wail loudly and uncontrollably.). They've been singing Christmas carols (mostly "Jingle Bells") and watching Christmas videos (the Grinch, Charlie Brown, and various odd cartoons). And they've been counting down the days to Santa's arrival with their chocolate Advent calendars. It's just SOOOO exciting!

Which are not, unfortunately, words I'd use to describe this year's political goings-on. (Warning: annual political message.) Thrilled as I was that the people finally came to their senses and broke the contract with America; realized that Clinton was better, overall, than the alternative; and sent out the message that the environment DOES matter after all; too often it just seemed like the same-old same-old. Meanwhile, corporate America (and its toadies in Congress) continues to behave in such a manner as to make Victorian England seem the height of enlightened employment and social welfare policies. Why not reopen the orphanages and workhouses? The poor, especially the children, do clutter the golden American landscape. They should have picked themselves better parents; better their number should be naturally diminished. Even an unrepentant Scrooge would blush at this suggestion!

My family is doing well this year--generally in good health and no major setbacks. Andy, one of my younger cousins got married this year, adding another Laurie to the family (referred to as "the other Laurie"). Aunt Susie is particularly excited, with visions of grandchildren dancing in her head. Her expenditures on Mentos and Smarties will skyrocket! Bill and Laurie (aka the progenitors of my niece and nephew, Kalyna and Nikko) have survived another year of child-raising, though not without a few adventures. Kalyna, although mischievous as ever, has limited herself largely to spending her time as the observer and victim of Nikko's many adventures. They spend a good bit of time fighting, mostly over possession of toys. (And my mother always told us Bill and I were the only kids who ever did so. I never should have believed her!) It surprises me all the more that they're anticipating a sibling sometime in April.

Nikko's had a really big year. He's now almost two, and has been walking well for quite a while. The stumbling and falling are down quite a bit, although "scarface" is still a pretty good description. He's yet to master the art of jumping; he wiggles his body upwards, but his feet just don't want to follow. (This white boy really can't jump!) His sense of adventure has not served him well; getting locked into a dark bathroom on Thanksgiving is quite scary when you're two. He's developed a love for small electrical appliances, especially those which make a lot of noise, like his Mom's Dirt Devil. Hairdryers are also lots of fun, but have a nasty tendency to burn holes in the rug. Light switches are fun to turn on and off repeatedly, and complex electronic systems are fun to fiddle with--he didn't really mean to reprogram the entire alarm system! (No wonder the doors to the computer room are tied shut with bungee cords!) What's most amazing is that, through most of it, he remains the smiliest child you've ever met, a regular little Mr. Sunshine.

Kalyna is no little Miss Sunshine; she's the observer and manipulator, a kind of mini-Machiavelli. You can just see the

little wheels turning in her head as she puzzles things out. She remains shy and quiet by nature, a good cover. She has gone far this year. After spending the summer in a bible school (and learning all the words to "Jesus is the Rock of my Salvation"), she's gone on to Preschool and is quite enjoying it. She's learned her letters, numbers and colors, is staying within the lines, and making lots and lots of craft projects for her Mom's and Baba's refrigerators. She's also learning Spanish a few words at a time from Miss Leslie. So far we've got half the colors down cold. This will be a very useful skill someday, when she's travelling with her Aunt in the jungles of Central America, and someone asks her what color her outfit is. Needless to say, I'm encouraging her in these studies.

Kalyna's intractable bond with Baba remains, and, now that she's a big girl of four, she gets to spend the night there even more often. Baba's coloring and jigsaw puzzle skills have definitely improved, as has her knowledge of contemporary Disneyana. (She must have seen the Lion King at least fifty times by now!) The whole family had a lovely time at Kalyna's birthday party--costumes (it was late October) and buggy rides with Pokey the Pony. Kalyna got to dress as a princess/ballerina. (Next year she plans to be a Polynesian hula dancer, thanks to the lovely outfit, replete with bra, feathers and shells, which her Aunt brought back for her from Rapa Nui. Kalyna especially likes the bra.) Nikko was a hatless cowboy (the aversion remains), Alexandra reprised her role as a flower girl, and Andrijko was a Roman Centurion. There were fairies, puppies, cowboys, and even Joseph and his amazing Technicolor dreamcoat. I came as the family photographer, and played the role well ("Look up now and smile...don't move!"). A good time was had by all...how can you not, when there's cake and ice cream involved?

My year was not nearly as exciting as most, except for a few small trips. I spent most of it working. We've had personnel problems in the group--in June, Kiran left HFH after all these years to work for the DMC. We replaced her in August with Tami Dairiki, a new Hutzel grad. We were quite lucky to get her, and she's fit in quite well, always cheerful, never complaining, and getting along well with patients and staff (then again, after a residency at Hutzel, the Soviet Gulag would seem a piece of cake). Sue cut back her hours, and is now part-time. Then, in September, tragedy struck--Kwabena suffered a large acute dissecting aortic aneurysm. Suffice it to say that through the grace of the gods, quick action and a good cardiothoracic surgeon, he survived. The road back is a long one, and he's progressing well in his cardiac rehab. We hope to see him back at HFH soon, but as yet are not sure when. Everyone he knows (Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Jew, Buddhist, Taoist, agnostic and animist) is praying in her own way for his safe and healthy return.

My garden has done well this year, relatively speaking. Last winter, one of the coldest and most snowless on record, wreaked havoc in the perennial beds. Lots of perennials just didn't come back, especially the younger and less well-rooted ones. Large gaps were created. These were filled with divisions and trophies of our annual trek to Arrowhead Alpines in Fowlerville. The roses suffered major fallout, and most of the fruit trees didn't bloom or bear much. The plants I was most concerned about, the magnolias, rhododendrons and azaleas, did great! I added a few new beds (much to the chagrin of my lawn service, who consider my yard to be an obstacle course as it is) and another vegetable garden (meant to be eventually fenced, so as to keep out the bunnies--I dream of once more being able to grow basil, lettuce, beans and zinnias). As for the tomatoes--don't even ask. Despite buying nothing but resistant varieties, they still all wilted and dried up, although perhaps at a slightly slower rate. On the bright side, I don't have to worry about the frost getting them--they're already dead and gone by mid-August.

When I was in Santiago, getting ready to leave with my group for Easter Island, one of the newer members asked me what had caused me to develop an interest in archaeology. I had to think about it a bit before I realized that the roots of this interest had been planted back in grade school. At Morse Elementary school in Troy, Michigan, it was the custom of the teachers to read aloud to the students for half an hour each day after lunch. I'm not sure if it was to stimulate our intellect or calm us down after recess, but I enjoyed it very much. It was here that I was first introduced to Stuart Little, Charlotte and Wilbur, Charlie and Willie Wonka. Most memorable of all, however, was a book that Mr. Beckwith read to us in sixth grade, which I now know to be Gods, Graves and Scholars. I still remember listening excitedly as he read to us the stories of Heinrich Schliemann uncovering Troy (and its gold), of Carter rediscovering the burial place of Tutankhamen (and, of course, of the curse of the mummy), and of Schliemann's discovery of the ancient Mycenaean megaliths (and gold). It was here that my interest was piqued, leading me in future times to seek out Catal Hoyuk in Turkey; to sail down the Nile in a felucca, seeking out Egypt's ancient monuments in Kom Ombo, Luxor, Karnak and Giza; to revel in the ruins of ancient Rome; to explore the volcanic ruins of Pompeii; to seek out megaliths in the north of England; to visit Mayan temples in Guatemala (Tikal), Honduras (Copan), and Mexico (Chichen Itza); to explore the Jesuit citadels in Argentina and the earthquake-ravaged city of Antigua in Guatemala; and to visit the old kozak bastions of Hotyn and Kam'yanets-Podilsk.

I find it amazing, when I sit and think about it, how much the teachers of my youth have influenced me throughout life, perhaps more so than those of my college and later years. One of the most influential was Mr. David Fillmore, who

taught social studies when I was in high school, not just to me, but to every Petrusha who spent any time in the Troy school system. From him I gained much of my appreciation for the humanities, and a love of western civilization. (Although, I must admit, I still can't stomach much of the Baroque, which he truly and passionately loved. ) We kept in touch throughout the years, through postcards and Christmas greetings; I think he liked the fact that he had managed to civilize at least one scientist in his time. We had a reunion of sorts a few years ago, when he came to my annual Christmas party and got to visit with quite a few of his former students. In late November, out of the blue, I received a phone call from his son Matt; Dave had suddenly and unexpectedly died. I went to his memorial service, and realized how many people he had influenced and how many would truly miss him, not the least of which were his many students. Goodbye, Dave, I'll never forget you, nor will anyone you ever taught.

## *ITALIA* (or Val and Luba's Excellent Adventure )

I've often told people that the only reason I work is so that I can afford to travel. That remains very true. Although I didn't get around as much as I'd have liked this year, I did get out a bit. No conferences this year (No time!), but a few nice adventures.

Val and I finally made it to Italy this year. First we kicked the idea around a bit, then we discussed **when** we could go at great length ( a prime concern with Val because of work), and for how long (a prime concern for me--it's just not worth it to travel that far for a mere week's vacation). Val finally gave in on two weeks (with her returning two days sooner than me), and we booked our flights and off we went. Mind you, despite all this cogitation, we spent only perhaps a week on the phone planning the actual trip (with Val's hundred hour work week, it's hard to fit in such things. You'd think she was an OB/GYN with her hours!).

In the mean time, Val's friends at work had prepared her for our Italy trip with the following items:

- 1) a set of "learn Italian in your car" tapes
- 2) an Italian dictionary or two
- 3) several guidebooks
- 4) many DIRE warnings, and a palpable fear of Naples and the south
- 5) a thirty-city long must-see list ("as long as you're in Italy, you really must see...")
- 6) lots of advice

Val got some use from all these gifts. She gave me the tapes so I could improve my nonexistent Italian (I only learned about twenty or thirty words, but I got the pronunciation down pat. Christobel turned out to be right--if you speak Spanish with an Italian accent, you can get by pretty well.) Val carried the dictionary and guides with her, and took the warnings and advice to heart. Val, with additional instructions from helpful old ladies at the shops, she learned how to carry her purse defensively. She also developed an intractable, deep-seated fear of travelling in the South (so much for seeing the ruins of Pompeii). As for the must-see list, reality took care of that, and we ended up seeing only, though in depth, Rome, Assisi, Ravenna, Florence, and several medieval walled towns of Tuscany.

**ROME** is probably the most civilised city on earth. It's full of lovely walks, beautiful vistas, incredible museums, sidewalk cafes and gelati stands. The people are reasonably friendly, the drivers insane, and the weather quite pleasant. Our hotel (Mario's) was centrally located, just down the street from the Vittorio Emmanuel monument. We did a lot of walking the days that we were there. First off, we walked to the Spanish steps and spent a pleasant Sunday afternoon exploring. The azaleas were in full bloom, and every student in Italy seemed to have congregated there. After Michigan rain and snow, it was nice to enjoy the pleasant spring breezes. Val window-shopped in the ritzy designer stores, and I checked out the monuments and structures recognizable to me still from Gardner's Art Through the Ages (freshman Art History). As it grew darker, we strolled back to the center of town, where we saw Vittorio Emmanuel and Trajan's forum and column nicely lit up. I introduced Val to gelati that night--it was a match made in heaven, and the two remained inseparable the rest of the trip.

In our short time in Rome, we actually go to see quite a lot of it. The next morning we explored some of the older bits of Rome--the Capitoline hill and Campodoglio, where Michelangelo's horses are not, and then down into the Fora Romana, the heart of ancient Rome. Having now more patience and a better grasp of guidebooks than I did in my (now far-distant) youth, I sussed out the main buildings, their functions, and got a better idea of what downtown Rome must have looked like 100 B.C. As the day got hotter, we went up the Palatine hill, with its lovely flowers and shade

trees, and got a great view of the ancient city down below.

At lunchtime I got to revisit my youth, in the form of a vine-covered outdoor restaurant I used to frequent in 1980, when I spent a bit of time in this city. The beer was still cold and refreshing, but no longer served in glass boots. I learned two important things:

- 1) Never take culinary advice from a British tourist
- 2) Coca-Cola really *is* more expensive than wine in Italy

You can guess what I never drank again; I forced myself to consume copious amounts of wine from there on, all in the name of economy and fluid replenishment.

Rome that evening was quite pleasant. After glimpsing the world-famous Triton fountain from a distance (some civic bureaucrat has caused it to end up in the center of a particularly busy traffic circle), we wandered about, enjoying the jugglers, fire-eaters and other performers who gathered near Bernini's majestic fountain in the Piazza Navonna; viewed the tightly locked-up Pantheon, a wonder of concrete engineering, where Val and I were enchanted by flute music; fell in love with the Trevi fountain, into which I made Val toss her coins. The Trevi fountain is a veritable monument to wretched excess, but beautiful none-the-less. The water glimmers and glistens, noisily cascading over all that unbelievably white marble. Where better to enjoy a lovely gelati or two?

Our next day was meant to be a Bernini day. I discovered to my chagrin that, just as it had been sixteen years when I visited last, Italy was still largely under restoration. We visited Sta. Maria Della Vittoria to see his Sta. Teresa Ecstasy, easily the most over-the-top piece of Baroque sculpture in existence. It was completely scaffolded off, but they'd provided a large poster of the piece. Disappointed, we went on to the Villa Borghese to see its incredible sculpture collection. The villa was set beautifully in a large park, covered entirely with scaffolding and surrounded by a rusting steel fence. After some exploration, we managed to find our way through the rubble to the entrance, paid our admission, and were allowed in. The upper floors, which had many very famous Raphael paintings, were completely closed. The main floor had quite few Canova and Bernini sculptures, many of which were being themselves restored. None-the-less, by creeping round and peeking between the bits of scaffolding, we could see quite a bit of them.

One cannot visit Rome and not go the Vatican; we did so, using my previous experiences as a guide. On the day we were to visit, we got up especially early, raced to the Vatican by taxi, and got into line a half-hour before opening (but still nowhere near the start). Once the doors were opened, we raced in, bought our tickets, and raced through straight to the opposite end of the Museums. There, at last, was my quarry--the Sistine chapel. Having read so much about it and Michelangelo when I was young, I'd always dreamed of seeing it. When I had been last time, I'd arrived at midday, and found it had all the charm of an Italian railway station--dark, packed wall-to-wall with people, including lots of unhappy youngsters and screaming children in push-carts. The noise level was dangerous to the ears, and a guard was constantly yelling "no flash" to the tourists taking unauthorized photos. This time it was so different. The colors were bright and almost garish, thanks to the recent restoration. The room was almost empty, so we were free to wander around and look at all the aspects of the frescoes. The guards not only prevented all flash photography, but silenced anyone who might be getting a bit too loud. It was a truly glorious experience, but rather un-Italian. Luck or progress?--I don't really know.

We then visited the other galleries at a leisurely pace, getting only a small glimpse of the vast amounts of art treasures (only a portion of them religious) that the Vatican owns. The sculpture collection (Greek and Roman) was imposing and breathtaking (from the amount of walking it entailed); the Pinacoteca was Val's idea of heaven--miles of top-of-the-line Renaissance and Baroque paintings. The Etruscan gallery was, as always, closed (I know of no one who has ever gotten inside). The Vatican City was as always--imposing yet tacky. St. Peter's, built in stages and largely of marble pilfered from classical Roman sites, is LARGE. Very LARGE. Not necessarily charming, and full of tacky church art. The Pieta is nice, and the Balduccino gaudily excessive, but most of the rest could just as easily have been at any parish church in the world. The Piazza was potentially impressive, but not when cordoned off into sections and filled with folding chairs. The shops were great; although one can no longer purchase pope pins, just about anything else is available. Pope JP2 has become a regular pin-up, with multi-pose calendars and posters galore.

One of the nicest places we visited while in Rome isn't actually in Rome at all--the Villa d'Este at Tivoli. A short bus ride out of Rome lies the town of Tivoli, where a rather crooked cardinal once built himself a lovely palace. This cardinal had a thing for fountains, and installed 500 of them in his gardens. They are spectacular, large and small, dramatic and subtle, lone or grouped. There are some that spray high into the sky, others that trickle in their grottoes, and then a long huge row of gargoyle-like faces that spit it forth from their mouths. My favorite was that of the representation of the roman earth mother-goddess, with her fifty breasts or so, from all of which flowed life-

giving water. As always when with a group, I felt rushed along. I tend to dawdle, and Val kept urging me ahead. I told her that I had no fear of being the last one out--we had a few French tourists in our group. I was right.

Our visit to Rome came to an end. We packed up our bags, picked up our rental car, and headed off to the North. The traffic seemed unusually light in town, the shops were all closed, and the highways out of town all jammed. Unbeknownst to us, we had managed to hit the roads on Italian Independence Day, when every citizen apparently flees Rome. Unfortunately, they all seemed to be fleeing in the same direction as we were.

**ASSISI** is a medieval walled town in Umbria, which apparently fills to the gills at the holidays. We had managed to book a room the night before, apparently the only one left in town. The autostrada out of town was not horribly fast; the state road much nicer, winding through Spoleto and the lovely countryside. Ahead of us Assisi suddenly rose up from above the plain, perched high on a hill. We followed the traffic in, a huge line of cars, then drove around in circles through the tiny cobbled streets trying to find our hotel. We eventually did, after asking directions some fifteen times (it's not the asking, it's the trying to figure out the answer that's hard). It was a lovely old place just across the square from the Basilica. We had the fanciest and most expensive room, with a balcony and a view, which once had been inhabited by Charlie Chaplin.

Our time in Assisi was spent shopping (Val's favorite), exploring, and just generally enjoying the atmosphere. Assisi is just what you'd expect a small medieval town to look like, except lined wall-to-wall with gift shops. The high point was our two visits to the Basilica, a massive structure to a saint who took a vow of poverty and gave away all of his worldly possessions. Francis was a rich wastrel, who saw the light and became a revolutionary. Today he'd probably fighting with the Sandanistas or the Tupac Amaru. Then he rebelled against the establishment and preached his radical notions of God's love for us all, even the small fallen sparrow. The church tolerated it, because of his popularity, until he died. Then they canonized him and subverted everything he'd ever stood for.

The Basilica is magnificent. It was begun several years after Francis' death, then added on to magnificently over the years. The art is other-worldly. The painters are from my favorite periods--the pre- and early Renaissance. Here we have the heavenly colors and forms, the simple expressive faces, without the exaggeration and brashness that would mar, in my eyes, the later Baroque. It's like looking at the world with new, fresh eyes. The Giotto's (Life of Saint Francis cycle) and Cimabue's alone were worth a trip to Italy. I stared, absorbed them, stared some more, then came back and repeated the cycle. It was a religious experience, but in a non-religious sense.

**FLORENCE** is the heart and soul of Tuscany, and home to a lot of great art. It begins with the buildings. In Rome some were spectacular, and the rest ho-hum. Here the city itself was a work of art--the Duomo and Bell-tower, the Uffizi, the Pitti palace, the churches and courtyards, the Ponte Vecchio and riverside. Florence is an open-air museum.

There was quite a bit of it to see, but with my planning, we got quite a bit of it in--the Fra Angelico's at San Marco, Michelangelo's David and slave ("unfinished") sculptures at the Academy, the Giotto's at the Brancacci Chapel (I was once more truly mesmerized), the uncountable riches of the Uffizi (Boticelli, Da Vinci, et al), and the tomb of Michelangelo at Santa Croce. We also got in a bit of shopping, sight-seeing, people-watching and gustatory enjoyment. We toasted the night away with grappa as we enjoyed la dolce vita.

**TUSCANY** Val and I went on to explore the medieval walled towns of Tuscany. We spent the rest of our stay in Gargonza, a medieval walled town (hereafter referred to as MWT) which had been converted to a set of villas and modern conference center. Val and I had a lovely villa which could have easily slept five or more. There was a great room with stone walls and a fireplace large enough to roast an ox in; a small, modern, fully equipped kitchen (although we never did manage to turn the gas on to the stove); two lovely bedrooms with views of the Tuscan hills; a fully modern bath with horrible orange plastic fittings. There was also a loft which could have housed another party. We enjoyed our little house to its fullest, making meals in the morning and building a large fire at night. (It gets pretty chilly in April.) We explored our little pseudo-village fully; outside of the walls I met two paisans who showed me the workings of their little distillery, and urged me, on numerous occasions, to sample their own grappa and Vin Santo by the jelly-glass full.

We visited quite a few MWTs during our days here. We did the Piero de la Francesca (PDLF) tour as best we could, given the vagaries of opening times. A true master of the small painting, PDLF did most of his work locally, and here

the frescoes have remained. In **SANSEPOLCRO** I stood transfixed by the Resurrection and Misericordia. In **MONTERCHI** I tried to see his pregnant virgin, but the newly restored fresco was not on view. In nearby **AREZZO**, I took in the PDLF "Legend of the True Cross" frescoes; although half-covered for restoration, they were none-the-less absolutely fabulous.

**SIENA** was also a treat, a large MWT with much history, a once pivotal role in Italian history, a huge central square, and a horse race (the Palio). We missed the horse race, but experienced the rest. Like most other prominent MWTs, it was chock-a-block full of tourists, souvenir shops, and overpriced restaurants. But it had one thing that all the other towns lacked--the embalmed head of St. Catherine of Siena. In life she had been a politically well-connected nun who bossed around bishops, popes, and heads of state. When she died, her body was split into many pieces ("relics"), and scattered all over Europe. Her head is in a glass case in her church, where it can be viewed at any time. The Cathedral at Siena was truly remarkable and optically challenging. Originally planned to be some ten times larger, what was actually built is still quite huge. The facade is made of black and white marble, in stripes. The interior continues this theme, with the most amazing black-and-white patterned marble floors. Large areas are covered to protect them from the wear of foot traffic, but the remaining exposed areas amaze with their exuberant intricacy.

As an aside, something I had read about, but never fully understood, was the Catholic concept of relics. I'd heard about pieces of the True Cross, and the occasional embalmed saint, but I'd never realized how every tiny little bit of bone from each martyr, savior and saint (when available) was hoarded and venerated. Throughout Italy I saw, usually in church museums and treasuries, numerous reliquaries. These were generally highly ornate works of art, made of precious metal and glass, whose little chambers contained holy bits of bone and gristle. Sometimes, the bits of bone themselves were arranged into lovely little patterns. Val was quite unnerved when I pointed this out to her. No wonder Emperor Julian (the Apostate) was wont to refer to the early christian churches as charnel-houses.

The ultimate tourist stop in Tuscany has to be the MWT of **SAN GIMIGNANO**, the "City of the Towers". In medieval times, there was a lot of clan warfare, and anyone who was anyone would fortify his home and build a defensive tower. Most of these have come down, but enough have remained to give San Gimi its moniker. We visited twice; the first time it rained, and we saw a lot of wet gray pavement and invested in umbrellas (large *and* gaudy). We got to enjoy the Gozzoli frescoes of the life of Saint Augustine at the church of Saint Augustine. The monk in charge of the lights (and church) was a slightly homesick Bostonian, with whom we got to chat about Italy, rain and the vagaries of Italian electrical appliances. On our second visit, the sun was shining, our trip was nearing its end, and we had shopping to do. San Gimi is aesthetically pleasing, but generally artistically unimportant, so we shopped. I bought a lot of lovely non-book items, largely ceramics, but also lots of tacky knick-knacks for the folks back home (spoon rests, tea towels, coffee mugs and such).

**RAVENNA** is neither an MWT nor Tuscan. It is, however, one of those places that I've always wanted to visit, since learning of it back in high school during my Western Civilization class. When Rome fell to the barbarians, Roman culture was kept alive in one small corner of Italy, a town in the Northern marshes. Here the Roman court hid, and tried to rebuild its former glory. Grand churches and palaces were erected, but in the new Byzantine style. In Ravenna are preserved some of the greatest early Christian mosaics. I'd wanted to see them most of my life.

It was a bit of a drive from Gargonza, as we had to cross the mountains. The drive was beautiful, through a series of parks, where we could see the leaves and flowers just beginning their spring show on the mountain sides. The roads were treacherous, but Oh! the views, more Switzerland than Italy. As we descended through the clouds back down to the plain of Ravenna, all grew flat. The town was largely non-descript, and Byzantine churches were not much to look at from the outside, but the interiors..... Sunlight captured in bits of gold and stone, the glory of Christ, the Virgin, emperors and saints. It was well worth the trip to be able to be so transported.

It was time to return home. We turned in the car at Florence's airport, and then spent much of the rest of the morning trying to get a flight out. The weather was quite rainy in Florence, so Alitalia (motto: "haven't left or arrived on time yet") decided to bus us to Pisa, where the weather was better. In truth, it was, but no one had thought to let anyone at Pisa know we were coming. We stood around for several hours more, hoping that a plane would be found for us, then finally left three hours late. When we arrived at Gatwick, Val had missed her connections. After spending an hour or so sorting it all out, she decided to spend the night at the airport hotel. I went into town, as I'd planned, to spend a 48 hour interlude visiting friends.

It turned out to be a nice, quick visit. Jasmina (whose english has improved considerably) and I wandered about central London that night, and had some marvelous Chinese food. That evening the whole household (less Christobel,

who was on call, but including some of Neal's friends from the Norf) watched X-Files videos. The following morning we had a large Northern breakfast, and talked about rigger and sheep trials. Christobel arrived and we got caught up on old times. Christobel, aka "Scoop" Saunders, had made the front page of the English-language Mallorcan weekly newspaper, as her windows had been blown open in the most recent IRA bombing. We visited with Paula, did some shopping (frocks for the niece), went to a flea market, and generally just hung out and watched the Thames go by. On my last morning, we stopped on the way to the airport to visit the farm on the Isle of Dogs. My little friend Tom particularly enjoys this, and we visited with the chickens, ducks, rabbits and horses. Then I had to, sadly, fly away back home.

## The UP

as Michigan's upper peninsula is known to the cognoscenti, is one of my favorite places in the world, largely because I have so many good friends there. Although I don't get to visit as often as I'd like to, I took advantage of Labor Day weekend to pop on up. I decided it was time for me to do those things and visit those places I'd been sending others to over the years. I drove on up, and actually stopped at the bridge and to see it and Fort Michilimackinac up close. It was pleasant, the fort being restored to it's original (not tourist-prettyfied) condition. I even ran into some archaeologists at work sieving dirt.

I made it up to Paradise, where I watched the sunset, invested in a large can of mosquito repellent, and spent the night. The next day I was on to Tahquamenon Falls and backwoods Luce country. My little Jeep enjoyed the four-wheel ride through Hemingway country. I drove through the land portion of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, stopping to hike out to waterfalls and overlooks and pick up rocks at Agate Beach. I got to Munising by late afternoon, and got a ride on the last boat out to see the "rocks". The coastline is quite magnificent, and Nature changes it a bit each day. There were dramatic cliffs, rockfalls, and peaceful sand beaches, with lots of variation in color due to geological layering and mineral content. The captain repeated the usual legends, and we tried to make out the details of the shapes suggested by the stories. It was quite good. I spent the night in Munising catching up on my Michigan lore.

I saw Munising waterfall in the morning (marvelous) and drove along the Lake Superior shoreline towards Marquette, enjoying all the old familiar views. I continued on up to the Keweenaw, stopping to explore Canyon Falls. I enjoyed my drive through the twin cities of Houghton and Hancock, noting all the changes, and made it safely up to Calumet, where I visited with my old (and some quite young) friends. While there, Mrs. Baron and I drove up through to Copper Harbor, stopping at the jam-monk's place on the way (since my last visit they've become official, and are now affiliated with the Greek-rite Ukrainian Catholic church of Chicago). I stopped at Bete Gris, and Mrs. Baron showed me the site of their old summer cottage. All good things come to an end, and it came time to return home. I detoured west a bit to see the Lake of the Clouds in the Porcupine Mountains, then retraced my route home. Fast, furious, fun, then back to work work work.

# CHILE

Some time last spring, I sent away a reply card to Archeological Tours of New York, requesting information on their Easter Island tour. I'd grown up with Easter Island--TV specials, National Geographic articles. It's one of those places I'd always wanted to visit, but it had been too far away and so remote. Suddenly it was possible.

So I signed up and, this past November, found myself in Santiago, Chile. It was late spring, and the city was green, lush, and all in bloom. Santiago is a city of parks and museums, with the river Mapocho running through it. It is not frenzied like New York, but civilized, cantering along at a pleasant latin pace. I spent my free day riding the funicular, visiting the animals at the zoo (llamas, guanacos, alpacas, vicunas, condors, jaguars and such), seeing the Dali exhibit and lunching at a sidewalk cafe in avant-garde Bellavista. The next morning, after doing a bit of browsing in the central pedestrian district, I met my group at the airport, and got to know some of them quite well while waiting for our much-delayed flight. The first week of our tour was in northern Chile, the dry desert part of the country, and site of its archeological riches.

Chile, though you might not guess it from looking at maps, is actually quite a small country, albeit a very long one. Santiago is located in the fertile central valley, a rich temperate agricultural region. In the south are mountains, fjords and scenery reminiscent of the American West. The North, on the other hand, is arid. It is the site of the Atacama desert, said to be the world's driest (in some areas rain has never fallen). It consists largely of mountains,

one cordillera which runs along the coast and right to it; another, the Andes, which runs inland and much higher. Between are arid valleys, some spectacular scenery, and a few rivers, mostly underground. The soil is incredibly fertile; where irrigation is possible, the harvest is bountiful.

Several distinct cultures existed here in the North in prehistoric times. Initially, in the precordillera and Altiplano, there was a culture of hunters and gatherers, which lived largely off the camilides (llama, guanaco), but also hunted birds and rodents, and inhabited rock shelters, often decorating them with hunting scenes on the walls. Later, fishing settlements developed along the coast. This culture, called the Chinchorro, developed not only fishing technology, but also complex techniques of mummification, seven thousand years ago, several millennia before the Egyptians began to practice the art. Whereas the Egyptians considered only kings and other exalted citizens worthy of mummification, the Chinchorro were more egalitarian; all were accorded this sacred rite, including infants and fetuses.

Corpses placed in the salted desert land of the Atacama preserve well naturally; the Chinchorro peoples developed complex mummification techniques to improve on nature. First, the head would be detached, and the corpse cleaned and eviscerated. The skull was opened, the brain removed, and the skull cavity filled with straw and ash. The head was then reattached to the body with a stick brace and a neck of reeds. Then, the skeleton would be reinforced with sticks, and the body bulked out with straw. The skin was replaced, as was the hair on the head. A coating of clay paste was then applied, and the face and sexual organs were carefully reformed. A layer of black (manganese) or red (iron oxide) was applied as a final coat. Many of the Chinchorro mummies have an O-shaped mouth reminiscent of Munch's "The Scream", whether by design or artifact. (Interestingly, it turns out that Munch was inspired by the expression of a natural andean mummy in a Paris museum!) These techniques were in use from 6000 to 4000 BC.

Later cultures abandoned these techniques, whether for religious or practical reasons (handling the viscera may have fanned the spread of yaws, a spirochete disease). Starting around 1800 BC, a new funerary pattern developed; the corpse was rested on a side, knees slightly flexed and the body naturally preserved, free from clay except for the mask of the face. In the tombs, which were decorated with pictographs, relics, including baskets and cloth, were placed. Gourds and sweet potatoes, cultivated plants, are found, indicating agriculture. Trade became important between the altiplano and the coast, seafood and shells being traded for yams and wool. The llama, an ever-important beast, was used to transport the goods. Llama caravans are depicted in geoglyphs or carved in stone (petroglyphs) in the areas of these trade routes. The exact function of these huge structures is not known; perhaps they were signposts, the billboards of their time?

As the centuries passed, basketry, cloth-making and metallurgy improved, and regional cultures developed. Irrigation was maximized along the coast, and pukaras (fortified places) were built for protection. Exchanges of trade and culture continued with the altiplano. The Inca ruled over the North for a brief time (1400-1535 AD), until the Spanish conquest, having but a slight influence on this area.

**ARICA** was our first stop in the North. Arica occupies a very important place in Chilean history, for it is here that one of the major battles of the War of the Pacific was fought, and Peru and Bolivia defeated. Arica is now largely a resort town, with some smelly (fish processing) industries. In the past, it was economically more important, being the terminus of trade routes to Peru and Bolivia. The city is quite lovely, with the Moro (a large hill) overlooking it, metal buildings by Eiffel within, and nice streets with many shops and restaurants. The coast here has a lovely sand beach, but go down the coast a few kilometers, and the pink mountains meet the sea in sheer cliffs. Along the coast there is, thanks to the cool Humbolt current, a wide variety of bird and marine life. It is here that the famous guano mountain is located, mined over the years for fertilizer.

Turn inland, and the scene becomes more interesting. The contrast between the irrigated areas and the desert is stark. Here we first saw geoglyphs, large pictures on the sides of the mountains, meant to be viewed from a distance. There were various methods of making these designs: piling up rock, removing rock, scraping the surface of the soil, and combinations of all three. All sorts of human and zoomorphic figures were produced, but the most common were llamas. Nearby were the **TUMULOS**, an area of numerous burial sites. Some of the tombs were open, and we could see bits of bone, cloth, baskets, and maize, along with numerous pottery shards. Slightly higher was an Inca pukara, located half-way up the Azapa valley, with clear views from the sea to the hills.

The museum was small but quite good. There were numerous artifacts, from fishhooks and other tools, to a grand collection of andean weaving, basketwork and pottery. What I and my colleagues (especially Jeff) found most fascinating were

- 1) the Chinchorro mummies. These were fascinating, partially for their extreme antiquity. They



were well preserved, displayed with their artifacts; quite a few were small children.

- 2) the drug paraphernalia. Local religious practices involved the taking of various hallucinogenic compounds, which made the users see jaguars. There was a lot of ceremony involved in this, and special containers, tubes and spoons were used. The carving and artwork were superb. I suspect, however, that some of our interest had little to do with the archaeological aspects of these practices.

In the courtyard of the museum were several petroglyphs (carvings in stone) which were quite interesting. Later, at lunch, we were introduced to pisco sours and enjoyed the wines of Chile; thus it was that I failed to notice the mild tremor that shook our building. Apparently, these are quite common here, so no one took notice. Only later did we find out that there had been a major earthquake in the Nazca area of Peru, just across the border from us, and that's what we had felt. Carol, my roommate, had noticed some strange animal activity just prior (howling and such); she was not indulging in pisco sours.

**IQUIQUE** was our next stop. It is best known in Chile for its status as a duty-free zone. Shoppers flock here from all over the country to pick up cheap electronic goods and designer clothes. The town was one of the hubs of the great nitrate boom at the turn of the century, and its architecture reflects its Victorian prime. The central plaza is quite nice, with a bandstand and clocktower (where time stands still). The historic bit of town is being renovated, and the old streets have a rather Caribbean air, due to the British influence of the time. The neoclassical Municipal Theatre is quite a gem, and reminds me of the Calumet Theatre; plush, slightly faded, and with a rich history behind it.

Getting to Iquique was another matter, involving a long drive through the desert. Most traffic accidents occur here because drivers get lulled into sleep by the unending sameness of the landscape. As we left Arica, we would occasionally see green valleys, fed by underground rivers, and numerous small roadside shrines (built to the wandering souls of those who had died in these places). We passed by several sets of geoglyphs, some with modern additions, generally involving llamas. The **Giant of Atacama**, the largest representation of a human in the world (86 meters long) was another matter; a huge human figure, on a lonely hill, it looks much like one of those workers at an airport guiding the planes in (a von Daniken connection?). Mostly we just saw desert, with some reforested areas (using a tree that lives off the mists that roll in from the sea).

Iquique lies right on the coast, between the beach and nearby mountains, nestled against a giant sand dune called the Dragon. It is getting quite crowded, thanks to business spawned by the Free Trade Zone. Up the hills from Iquique lies the old mining town of **Humberstone**. It was built to house factories and workers during the great nitrate boom which ended only when the Germans found a way to artificially produce the compounds. Nitrates, needed by the world for use in fertilizers and gunpowder, were mined here, and shipped out of Iquique and other port towns. Many grew quite rich off of this trade, especially the British who ran and owned many of the mining companies. Humberstone is fascinating because it has been preserved so well, one can see how the miners lived, their church and market, and means of entertainment (basketball court, swimming pool, theatre and "working ladies" quarters).

Most amazing are **Los Pintados**, an area with more than 500 geoglyphs spread over several hills. Every few steps the vista changes and new ones come into view, There are llamas (of course), felines, humans, sea creatures and odd geometric shapes. What they mean no one has a clue, but they're exciting to look at and try to puzzle out the shapes. The museum in Iquique was interesting; it traced not only the development of cultures in the area, but had a section devoted to the mining era. The mummies (mostly natural) were quite cool, too.

**SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA** is an oasis town in the Atacama desert. We travelled there by air and pick-up truck. First we flew to Calama via Antofagasta, then travelled in several vehicles to San Pedro itself, up at an elevation of 7990 feet above sea level. San Pedro is a lovely old town, made of adobe, with a traditional church and square in its center. There was an artisan crafts market running up one street. Our hotel was wonderful, newly built with Oregon pine. Our room looked out on a patio through a huge window-wall.

The high-point of the town is the **Museo Gustavo Le Paige**, which Graham Greene felt to be one of the best in the world. Father Gustavo, a Belgian priest and archaeologist, was posted here in 1955, and became fascinated by the ancient Atacama culture. He excavated tombs and collected artifacts. The local people learned of his interest, and began bringing their finds to him. Soon his small parish house was filled to overflowing; as Patricia, our expert archaeologist told us, Gustavo ended up sleeping tucked between several mummies. Eventually, the museum was built, and has kept expanding through the years. In it one can trace human development in the area from earliest times

through the Spanish era. The most interesting are the various mummies, but there are also incredible collections of tools, pottery, stone carvings, basketry, copper items, and (of course) implements for the inhalation of hallucinogens.

Outside of town is the absolutely, unbelievably incredible **Valle de la Luna** (Valley of the Moon), a wild bit of polychromic desert carved by flood and wind. It is full of strangely-shaped formations of gypsum, clay and salt and an undulating landscape that appears quite lunar. There are huge black and white dunes; near the Three Marias the landscape looks as though it was sprinkled with powdered sugar. Nearby is the **Salar de Atacama**, a huge salt lake that is largely a dry basin paved with salt.

We visited several ancient sites in the area, many of them reconstructed in whole or in part. The **Pukara of Quito**, on a promontory overlooking the Rio San Pedro, is a set of 12th century fortifications, where the Indians made their last stand against Pedro de Valdivia during the War with the Spanish. It has been largely reconstructed, although not necessarily correctly, according to Patricia. There is a great view of the entire oasis. Nearby is **Tulor**, a 2800 year old town site. It was built on the plain, and consists of a series of interconnecting circular huts that look like clay igloos with thatched roofs. There is an encircling wall that protected the village from the sand gusts of wind.

Cactus wood is used in many of the older churches in the Atacama. In San Pedro, the roof is constructed of it. In **Toconao** only the bell tower is extant, and the doors are made of cactus. The town is known for its stonecutters, but we'll remember it for the lovely weavings (we visited a weaver's home) and its pan de sal, a lovely fresh bread. The oldest church in Chile is in **Chiu Chiu**, an oasis town in the Loa valley, dating from 1611.

My favorite spot in this area was **Zapar**, a small pre-Hispanic settlement perched on rocky cliffs above an oasis. To get there we travelled along tracks through the desert to the edge of a large dune; here we descended to a lush, green river valley. We followed llama trails along the stream, crossed it, then climbed up the cliffs to the settlement. There are remnants of the stone houses, numerous artifacts, views of the mountains in back and the oasis valley below. The artifacts included llama bones, beads, pottery shards, bits of cloth and baskets, matates and ceremonial bowls. It is believed that there were once terraced gardens surrounding the settlement, and turquoise mines in the hills. Zapar was a truly wonderful place to visit.

Our evening in San Pedro was lovely. We had musicians from the area play andean and Chilean folk music as we enjoyed our pisco sours. Some even danced. Afterwards, we sat around in the evening cool and discussed religion, philosophy, and other topics of deep import. We had no luck finding the southern cross in the late evening sky.

We left the North for Santiago, where we spent a night and toured the Rapa Nui exhibit (where we noticed Paul Spong's incredible resemblance to a moai). Here we said goodbye to Dr. Patricia Vargas, who'd guided us, taught us, and took good care of us. She also taught us how to make pisco sours, and told us stories of her adventures in Rapa Nui and the North. In the process she'd become a good friend; Paul, Sam and I spent one last evening with her at her house in La Reina (in the wooded outskirts of Santiago). We met her family, and Paul was enthused by the Chilean custom of kissing hello and goodbye, even with strangers (especially when they're sweet teenage girls). I got to hear both Paul and Patricia's son play a poorly tuned piano, and watched her wee one feed candies to the dogs, as we enjoyed our home-made pisco sours. We had a lovely time, and hated to see it end. Our scenic ride back through the night streets of Santiago was all the more bittersweet.

# RAPA NUI

is the Polynesian name for Easter Island. The Dutch discovered this odd, isolated place in the Pacific ocean, thousands of miles from any other landmass, in 1722. The Polynesians had been there first; Hotu Matua, the legendary founder/king, probably arrived on Anakena beach in the fourth century AD, most likely from the Marquesas. Thor Heyerdahl's theories notwithstanding, Rapa Nui was settled from the West by polynesians in outrigger canoes. Their isolation here greatly affected their religious rituals and way of life, with unique customs arising from the faint echoes of their old land.

Rapa Nui is a triangular-shaped island, 24 km. across, with an extinct volcano at each corner. Its inhabitants once called it **Te Pito te Henua**, the navel of the world. It is 4000 km from Santiago; two flights a week land here, on their way to Papeete in Tahiti. The island is green; once it was covered with trees, but population pressure destroyed

them. Reforestation is underway; small groves of eucalyptus trees are being planted throughout the island (it's like driving through a cough drop). Much of the rest is grasslands; there are also large plains of loose volcanic rock. A large part of the island is now a national park. Most of the population lives in Hanga Roa, the only town on the island, in its northwest corner, near the airport. (The huge runway is courtesy of the US government; it was built as an emergency landing strip for the space shuttle.) The climate is lushly subtropical, with beautiful flowering hibiscus and other tropical plants growing wildly.

We stayed at the Hotel Otai, the oldest and friendliest on the island. Originally it was the Residencia Rosita, and took care of Heyerdahl's party in 1955. Rosita is still there running things. The grounds are well manicured and gorgeous; in one small niche is a reproduction moai left over from the filming of Kevin Costner's colossal (and deservedly so) flop Rapa Nui. The town is small, and seems to consist largely of a government compound and a series of gift shops and motorcycle rental shops, with restaurants mixed in. There are a few supermercados (where you can purchase premixed pisco sours and fine Chilean wines), open markets and discos.

Rapa Nui is best known throughout the world for its megalithic sculptures, the "Easter Island heads". Correctly referred to as moai, these sculptures depict human heads and torsos, and were occasionally topped by red stone pukao, thought to represent either hats or hairdos. The moai were carved as single pieces in the quarry of **Rano Raraku**, moved by various means to the coast, and placed standing on prepared ceremonial platforms called ahu. The moai are thought to represent a form of ancestor worship; they would stand overlooking the villages they were meant to protect. All of them originally had eyes, which would concentrate and transmit the chief's mana (spirit) to the village. The mana was very strong and dangerous, and would only be released at special times; otherwise, the eyes were left out. The moai generally increased in number and size at each site over time, reaching an apogee at Ahu Tongariki, where fifteen stand in a row.

Our leader and teacher for this part of the trip was Jo Anne Van Tilburg, the world's leading expert on the moai of Rapa Nui. She and her disciples have carefully measured all the dimensions (55 of them) of every moai on the island (and there are over a thousand), recorded and analyzed the data, and made computer restorations of them. This will all be coming out on CD-ROM soon, for all you moai-philies. Jo Anne has worked here on the island fifteen years now, has been adopted by the islanders, and understands it and the culture well. She is also a delightful speaker, entralling us all in a Scheherazade-like fashion. She took us round the island, and made the stones speak to us. Had we had more time, I'm sure she would have made the moai walk, as they did in more ancient times.

AHU TAHAI was our very first stop, along with its neighboring ahu: **Vai Uri** and **Ko Te Riku**. Tahai has been shown to be the earliest ahu; over time it was extended and a moai placed. The moai in this location are unique--they have had their eyes glued in (to attract tourist interest) by modern Rapa Nui people. There is a ramp of sea pebbles that goes down to the sea; it was once thought to have been used in the transport of the moai, but the sea here is so rough that its function is uncertain. Nearby is a hare paenga foundation; this was a typical stone Rapa Nui clan house in the shape of and overturned boat.

AHU AKIVI is noted to be unique in most of the guidebooks because it is the only ahu where the moai look out to sea. If you think about it logically, on an island everything looks out to sea. The moai look at the villages they protect. Akivi was an inland village, so its moai watch the village and then look past it off towards the ocean. Nearby is **Ana Te Pahu**, a cave in which the Rapa Nui people used to hide from strangers and dangers. There were numerous huts constructed within; it was like an underground village.

PUA KA TIKI is the red scoria quarry in a smallish hill. The pukao, strange red structures which were placed on the heads of many of the moai, seemingly as an afterthought, were excavated here. There is no mystery as to their mode of transport; they were left as rough cylinders and rolled to their final site, where they were finished and lifted into place. What is a mystery is why a row of them, continuing down the side of the hill, remains. What made the builders stop so suddenly?

VINAPU is probably Heyerdahl's favorite site. All that remains here is a crumbling ahu; what impresses most is the fine stonework, the carefully fitted large stones. It reminds Thor of the stonework of Teotihuacan, in the Andes. The resemblance is all superficial, as here we have only stone facing, and there huge stones. Still, it makes for great theories. The toppled moai add a sad, wistful note.

RANO RARAKU is easily the most interesting place on the island. This is the old volcano where the moai were quarried, and where hundreds of them remain. They can be seen in all stages of completion: some just barely begun, others almost completely cut out of the mountain, others abandoned "in transport" along the "road of the moai". Those that remain here are by far much larger than those which were erected on the ahu; some so huge, we can't

imagine how they might possibly have been transported. The “abandoned” ones, some feel, may have purposely been erected on the slopes of the hill and flat plain below. Over the years, sediment washed down from above, and began to cover them, so that many appear just to be heads or portions of heads. This is the memory most people have of Easter Island--monolithic heads, poking up out of the ground, staring off into space. Why did the work stop so suddenly? Was it civil war, ecological disaster, or a sudden abandonment of the old gods?

**AHU TONGARIKI** So who doesn't enjoy wretched excess? This is the largest ahu with the greatest number of moai on the island. Fifteen of them, no two alike in size or shape, some with pukao and some without. They were knocked down along with all the others in the past, and then a tsunami came in the 1960s and scattered the pieces far inland. They have recently been reconstructed, and make a quite photogenic site. Nearby are some wonderful petroglyphs of fish and birds and makemake.

**ANAKENA** It is here that Hotu Matua first set foot on the island, and Heyerdahl camped during his explorations. There is a fine sand beach, palm trees, and the **Ahu Naunau**, a haberdasher's delight. Of the seven moai, those who still possess heads have on them a wide variety of pukao, no two the least bit alike. Here we camped for the afternoon, enjoying the barbecue, swimming, admiring the moai, and examining the reed ship. A crazed Spaniard, thinking himself to be following in Heyerdahl's steps, has imported some Aymara indians from Bolivia and had them build a huge reed boat. It is quite attractive. He means to sail it to Australia. Why? No one, including the Spaniard, is quite sure, but it will all be videotaped for posterity and profit.

**AHU VAIHU** Here once stood eight majestic moai; now they lay, toppled and broken. This was not some accident of time or nature, but a deliberate destruction. Not only were moai on Rapa Nui pushed over, but objects were placed in their path to ensure breakage. This was not, however, vandalism; at some point in Rapa Nui history, they had outlived their usefulness, as the beliefs and ways of worship of the people changed. The moai were adapted, used as funerary and ritual sites in a new fashion. New engravings were carved, male became female, old became new. It was a recycling of their ancestors, a change of the forms they took.

**ORONGO** is the site of the birdman cult, which displaced moai worship and was well portrayed in Rapa Nui, the movie. This ceremonial village is perched precariously between the crater and lake of **Rano Kau** and the sea cliffs. Down below are the islets of **Motu Iti** and **Motu Nui**, to which the annual competitors would swim to attempt to bring back the first egg of the sooty tern. The winner's clan leader became Birdman for that year, a ceremonial but powerful position. The birdman would inhabit the stone houses of Orongo for part of the year; murals bearing the birdman motifs were left behind. On the cliffs are fabulous petroglyphs of the birdman rituals. Down below, on the shore, is the cave of **Anna Kai Tangata**, which is painted with scenes of soaring sooty terns.

Dry as some of this may sound now, it was rivetingly fascinating at the time. Being there with the moai and the soft sea breeze makes it all so real, so mysterious, and so important. I'd go back in a minute. Ah, to watch the sun set, look out over a vast and lonely ocean, to drink pisco at the local disco and pisco sours any other time of day, to eat sweet potatoes and poi, to watch the native dance troupe again, and to pour even more money into the local economy (those wood carvers must be smiling)....what joy.

Until that time, I'll just have to slog along through this dreary Michigan winter--not much may happen, but at least we do somehow miss all the major storms. I've Peru (the Amazon, Macchu Pichu and hostage crisis) to look forward to, as well as possibly a return to Ukraine. Guess I'll survive somehow till then. Wishing you and yours the best over the holidays and in the New Year, I remain sincerely if tardily yours for yet another year. Until then, remember, in the words of a famous Japanese philosopher\*, “Life is a journey, enjoy the ride”.

Until 1997,

\* Mr. Nissan