

Christmas, 1994

We have just had the warmest November on record - and today a warm 60° & pouring rain, even thunder and lightning make it seem more like April than Christmas. But that time of year has come to "visit" and touch base with friends far and near. My year in 1994 has been uncharacteristically uneventful - in comparison to past years. Can you believe that stability in my life seems finally to have set in?

I spent January into Feb. rewriting my U.C. Speech class syllabus, most of the handouts & both mid-term & final tests. Without warning at the end of last Nov. we were handed a new edition of our speech text - and it was drastically changed. That meant I had to analytically read most of the book and restructure the class and materials to it. While first drafts & corrections were hand written on yellow pads & the old handouts -- thank heaven for word processors. I could just snap in a disc, recall the handout and make adjustments without total retyping. It was still a major chore. I have taught my UC Evening College class since Jan. 1966 - 29 years. I truly ~~truly~~ enjoy teaching the class and often wondered what it would take to get me to stop. Now I know! The next time they spring a new textbook on me so I have to revise everything again, computer or not, I'll bid farewell and call it a career.

In Feb/March I decided to again join John Leman's Cincinnati International Chorus for their summer tour (1) because they were going to Scandinavia & I had long wanted to go there; & (2) because it looked like this would be the last tour; it was. John has had Multiple Sclerosis & toured in spite of his affliction for 7 years, but it is now getting worse. He did most of his sightseeing in a wheelchair this time tho he still stood alone conducting chorus (sometimes orchestra) for almost 2 hours at each of five concerts. I don't see how he did it. More about the trip ~~itself later~~ on a separate sheet

I took my annual spring break vacation trek to Las Vegas to visit Fred, Robin, Joey, & Suzanne Munier. The weather was not as great as past springs, but it was fun touring the new MGM Grand, Treasure Island, and Luxor "hotels" - read 'entertainment centers.' I liked the Luxor best & look forward to returning there this coming March. ~~I~~ may all be papier-mache, plaster & poured concrete imitations, but much historical research went into creating very authentic reproductions & scale models of the original objects in Egypt. Fred retired from KMart/Builder's Square in Feb, & in June, for Joey's 11th birthday, Fred & Joey flew to Ohio for a week's visit with me in Cincinnati. We took a raft trip down the Little Miami River, saw the Union Terminal museums, Zoo, a baseball game, & spent an evening at a Kentucky riverboat cafe watching the sun set over the Ohio River and Cincinnati city skyline. That same week Susan Giles came north from Florida for the first time in 10 years, so I drove to Huntington (with Fred & Joey) to have dinner and a short but wonderful visit with her.

But the adventures with the Muniers were not over. I now have to tell you a family story. --- In 1904, my mother's father, Granddaddy Brown, purchased his 63 acre farm 1 mile east of Verona, Ohio in the NW corner of Montgomery County (Dayton) Ohio. Between 1904 & 1910-14 Granddaddy built a new large 8 room house with basement for his large family. Some of the windows, etc. from the "old house" were put in the new one -- and then the old house was torn down. As children, Fred and I spent many a summer on the farm, Fred more than I. In 1944, Granddaddy sold the farm - & Fred (age 13) begged his daddy to buy it. Uncle Earl had neither the extra money nor, as a ^{real} 'city boy', the inclination to buy a farm, so the Heffelfingers across the road bought it. In Feb. 1944, exactly 50 years later, Fred retired AND Mary & son Carroll Heffelfinger died in the house! Is that Irony?! So the house & farm was put up for auction in August. In

July the Heffelfinger sisters graciously allowed me to do a complete photographic documentation of the house; (they had changed it very little). In Aug, while I was in Norway, the Munier Family drove to Ohio from Las Vegas, stayed at my house, and bid on the farm. They Lost. We all, then, spent the next 3 months trying to buy the house, barn & 5 surrounding acres from the man who won the outrageous bid. The man, unfortunately, is greedy with a heart of stone & tried to fleece Fred, asking more than twice the appraised value of the place & refusing to even negotiate. He could care less about "family tradition" and sentimentality. So now it looks like we have lost it again. So close, but yet so far.

My job sewing on historical clothing at the Cincinnati Historical Society museum has ended. It was truly enjoyable work from June to Dec.'93; but I must tell you that when I went to work for Sylvia, the library staff upstairs was taking bets in an office pool on how long I would last with her. Nobody can stand working with the woman for very long. I took off for my UC course restructuring & came back in Feb, at reduced hours (down to 10 from 15). After spring break, it was even less. In June, when I went to show Fred & Joey the 19th century dress & cloak I had donated to the museum 5 years ago, I discovered she had 'stored' the box on the concrete floor! The clothes drew moisture & were damaged. True to form, she denied everything, but I had Fred as a witness - so then she just wanted to let them sit - and do nothing. I demanded the return of my donation so I could get the pieces repaired - as much as possible. Unfortunately, some of the damage is permanent. Needless to say, that ended my working relationship and I was happy to be away from her.

For a while, in April, I tried to work out a way (while I was so close in Sweden and Denmark) to take another week beyond the tour and go back to Tallinn, Estonia. Since I could not get a traveling companion, I finally gave it up and put the money into a new living room bay window (it is gorgeous and completely 'opens up' the room), & 5 other Andersen double hung w/storms windows. I can't believe how warm and air tight my house is now.

I am still taking voice lessons just because I enjoy it; going out to my camp & farm in Indiana on summer holidays & of course doing photography. Hecuba (age 10 and partially deaf) and Tootsie (age 15 and almost blind) are "old ladies" but good company.

Hope all is well with you. May the Christmas season be filled with love & happiness for you that extends throughout the coming New Year.

A note about Bill: Since he 'dumped' me in Nov '91, he has "gone thru" 2 relationships. Judy went (tumultuously on & off) for 2 years to Sept '93 & ended mutually. ~~The next~~ month, ~~Oct.~~, Bill started dating Theresa, but this time making his friendship with me a definitely understood fact of his life. She moved in with (on?) him at Xmas last year and stayed 'til she left to attend Univ. of Dayton -- ~~at~~ at which time she just dumped Bill -- in Sept.'94. Two of his other big relationships, that I know of, ended in Sept/Oct. It's almost enough to make you believe in Astrology -- or something!

As for me, I have signed up with 2 different dating services and at least get some free dinners & interesting company. Don't know if it will be worth the money (a LOT of it) or not, yet; but I sure am getting an education and it does help keep life interesting. Nothing ventured, nothing gained!

A Scandinavian Adventure

On Thurs., Aug 4 we landed in Stockholm, Sweden & spent 5 days in the city. The first 2 days the temperature was (& had been for 6 weeks!) unusually hot - 90 -95 , but a front with rain storms blew in Sat & Sun and for the rest of the trip we had the wonderfully cool/comfortable northern weather we had packed for.

Enclosed you will find your own personal "postcard photo" from the trip, with identification & description written on the back. Also, you get a 5x7 framable copy of a Norwegian Fjord east of Bergen - my best trip photo. It is actually a companion piece to the Greek photograph I took 10 years ago & sent you one year. Most will also get a 3x5 photo of Stockholm & a Norwegian Stave Kirke (church). The Borgund Stave Kirke built in 1150, is one of only 27 left out of 750 in Norway. In the 1700's, they were for a time considered pagan in origin & most were burned. This particular stave kirke is the only one to survive in its total original state with no additions or rebuilding. Since they are made completely of wood, that's truly amazing. A few of my musician friends will get a photo of Trollhagen (Troll Hill), the home in Bergen, Norway of Edvard Grieg.

Stockholm is a city constructed on a series of islands that stand between Lake Malarin and the Baltic Sea. On Friday, we took a 2 hour boat trip around these islands. That last summer day the beaches were packed--with about $\frac{1}{2}$ the women, true to the Swedish belief in being natural, going topless. Parts of Stockholm remind one of historic Amsterdam or Tallinn, Estonia -- and other parts, modern & futuristic, could be in NYC, Pittsburgh or Cincinnati. Two museums in Stockholm are special and on the must see list. (1) The VASA - the Vasa was a ship constructed from specially chosen oak trees, royally appointed and carved, & very poorly engineered. In 1628 she set sail from her harbor berth ----- for 600 meters -- then unceremoniously tipped over and immediately sank! In 1960, the Swedes began a 30 year project to raise & recondition the wooden vessel to withstand exhibition out of the water without disintegrating. (2) Scansen is an outdoor museum of homes, farms, churches, shops, fences, etc. from prehistoric times to early 1920's, dismantled from all over Sweden, and carefully reconstructed at Scansen. My roommate, Edna, & I only had 2 hours in a fascinating place you could spend 2 days.

Saturday, we rode 50 miles north to Uppsala for our first concert in a cathedral first built in the 1100's. ^{say} It's first built because the Swedes are, perhaps, not ^{as} sentimental about keeping their historic buildings always true to their original construction as continental Europe is. ^{last} The Uppsala Cathedral has endured 2 terrible fires, many reconstructions, & had its construction update ⁱⁿ mid-20th century when the architecture of the 2 front spires was completely changed. A strange feeling of modern encompasses this apparently ancient traditional cathedral. 12th cent. relics of St. Eric rest in a chapel with a 15th cent. tryptich, and over the main altar hangs a beautiful 20th cent. sterling silver & cut rock crystal modern cross. The hall also had a 14 second reverberation rate that made singing in it with an orchestra a wild, almost impossible experience. We gave 4 other concerts on the tour; in Stockholm, Bergen, & 2 in Copenhagen.

Monday's trip by our group to Drottningholm Palace was one of the highlights of my trip. The King and Queen of Sweden are actually in residence there now, so it is sort of like a White House tour. The palace & formal gardens are grand, imitating the French and English, but much more of the buildings are made of wood. But the true jewel to me was the Drottningholm Slottsteatre (slot theater). Originally constructed in 1766, it reached its zenith under King Gustav III of "The Masked Ball" (opera) fame. After Gustav's assassination in 1792, the theater fell into oblivion for 135 years, but remained as a good storage facility. Then in 1921, a theater historian, looking for a painting, "discovered" the theater again. - A perfectly preserved jewel of a authentic 18th century