



M. SAVERESE

Dear Helen.

I hope you had a very  
merry Christmas.

May

your Christmas be

the merriest--

Your New Year

the happiest!

Faithfully,

Patti

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**May the peace and joy that is Christmas be yours  
--this year and always.**

It has snowed almost daily here in Syracuse for the past several weeks. Right now, in fact, as I listen to the jazz piano of George Winston, playing *December* an afternoon snowfall is collecting itself into graceful designs on the frozen pond that sits outside my window. What a lovely setting for rethinking the Christmas story and its promise of love and hope and peace. What a lovely time to remember you and to wish you those precious possibilities.

As usual, I am trying to accomplish more things each day than can be fit into twenty-four hours; for this reason, I hope you'll forgive me for composing bits and snatches of our news into this note. During the beginning of this year, I was occupied and preoccupied with a job search that ended in mid-March when I decided to accept an offer from Syracuse University to become associate professor of writing and English and associate director of the university's relatively new writing program. Syracuse's program is--in a word or two--exciting and demanding. After four months here, I like it very much. I like the people who are my colleagues and the work I do. I find that my days are long and complex as I labor to settle into my new condominium home and to acquire the local knowledge at SU.

This has been a complicated time for all of us--not just for me: as you may or may not know, Richard moved to New York two years ago to become Superintendent of Schools in Huntington. We divorced formally this past spring. Richard likes his new work and new setting very much, and, not surprisingly, Huntington's schools are very happy with him. He is singing in a men's chorus, getting into Manhattan to take advantage of the music he loves so much, and is enjoying both old and new friends.

Heidi graduated from Michigan in April. Indulge me for a minute if I play proud parent and sing her praises. She graduated with high distinction and with a number of specific honors, among them Honors in Political Science. After being accepted here in several of the law schools she thought she would like to attend, she decided to study law in Germany (Tubingen). The semester she spent in Freiburg during her junior year was not enough to satisfy her desire to attend school in Germany. I am particularly excited at the moment because I will be leaving in three days to join her for two weeks. After living for a few days in Heidi's dorm, we will travel a bit and spend Christmas with Inge, Martin, and Andreas Schmidt--friends in Hemsbach.

In April, during his exam week, Andrew learned that Michigan had joined the American Collegiate Consortium, the organization sponsoring the first year-long exchanges of Soviet and American undergraduates. Andrew had begun to study Russian at Michigan in his freshman year, continued that study at Middlebury's intensive Russian language school during the summer between his freshman and sophomore years (1988), and was again a student of Russian at Michigan last year. He is majoring in Russian and East European Studies. At Middlebury, he met and befriended several of the first Soviet undergraduates who came to this country to study. Thrilled to think that he might be able to be among the first undergraduates to study in a Soviet university, Andrew applied, was accepted, and is now spending his junior year at the Institute for History and Archives in Moscow. He loves it. Although he does experience some homesickness, he is already sad, thinking about May when he will have to leave friends whom he has come to care

about very much. Richard is currently as excited as I am. He going to Moscow for Christmas. I plan to go to visit Andrew for my spring break in March, and Richard hopes to visit Heidi in the spring.

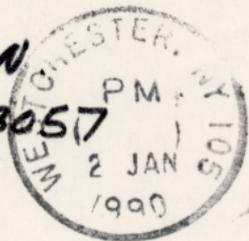
Each day as I read about and watch the history that is unfolding in eastern Europe, I am stunned by it. Richard and I were in Berlin shortly after the wall was built. Now, as it is dismantled, Heidi and Andrew are living on each side of it. My father and Richard's mother, both of whom are well and living very active lives, are also watching this history unfold against an even more extensive background of personal history. Our conversations with one another inevitably become commentaries on the unfolding news in eastern Europe.

Binky and Carolyn's daughter, Krista, is a sophomore at Syracuse this year which is so nice for both of us. We are getting to know one another better than we could when we had so many hundreds of miles between us. Because her brother David graduated from Syracuse two years ago and because he is a loyal alum, he often comes to visit from Manhattan where he is working. Furthermore, because my brother is a Syracuse alum and because Krista is here, he and Carolyn also visit me more frequently than they were able to do when we were in Michigan. I am sad that I am not able to see Judy and Ted and Catherine and Elizabeth more frequently. Judy's mother has been quite ill for some time, and Judy can not leave her, and my hectic schedule last year and this year has limited the time I had for travel. Recently, we all had a day-long rendezvous at Richard's mother's in Connecticut. I mark the time between our visit by my amazement at the sight of Catherine and Elizabeth, my littlest nieces (thirteen and eleven). They are growing up. The summer before last, when we were together at Lake George, Elizabeth, Catherine, and I jumped into the water and swam along the lake shore for a mile-long adventure. Equipped with goggles that allowed us to study the lake floor, we became detective biologists. I am afraid that I won't get a second lesson in Adirondack lake-floor biology before they are too grown up for such stuff.

As I reread this record of the events that have occupied us during 1989, I know that you have read between the lines and understood some of the complexity of my feelings now, having moved to a new place, having helped my family move also, thinking often and always about my mother whom I miss much. Losses, new beginnings.... All the things that are.

I miss my friends, more dramatically this year, for obvious reasons. I look forward to learning what is doing in your corner of the world?

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