

# The Monk Chronicles

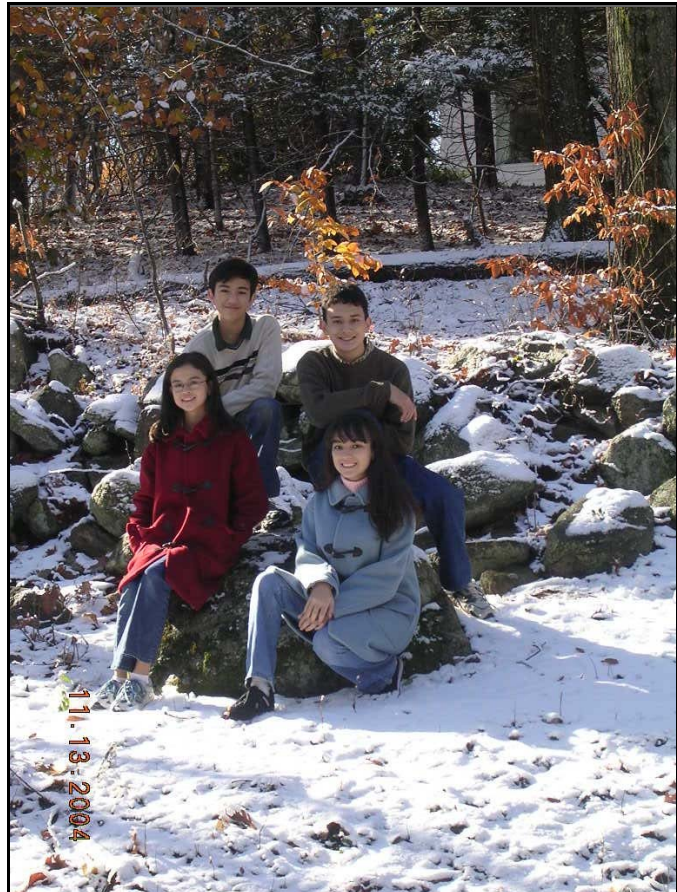
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Merry Christmas! It's that time of year again: time for us to bring you, our friends and family, up to date on what's been happening in our lives.

You may remember that last year at this time I was living in Milford, Connecticut, while Ann and the kids were still in Texas. Well, at the end of July this year, I moved from Milford to a rent house in Wilton, CT. I then went to Texas and the whole family moved up on August 6. We only stayed in that house for two months because it was too small for us. At the end of September we moved to a different house in Wilton. The house we're now living in is a little smaller than the one in Texas, but it's comfortable and in a good location. We left the house in Texas empty and on the market. It has now sold and we're busy looking for a house to buy or land to build a house.

Suzie and Andy are in high school now (Suzie is a sophomore; Andy is a freshman). They're both doing well here. In Texas, Suzie was quite independent. She wasn't shy, but preferred to do things on her own. She spent a lot of time reading and studying (even during spare time at school) but since moving here, she's completely different. She told me that she decided that with the move, she wanted to be outgoing and friendly. She now makes it a point to eat lunch with different kids at school every day and she never reads during her free time at school. She has lots of friends and is well liked. Andy, on the other hand, seems to have withdrawn some with the move. I know it's been hard on them to move at this age, but they're adjusting well.



*The Monk kids in Connecticut, 13 November, 2004.*

*Ricky (12), Andy (14), Michelle (10), Suzie (15).*

Ricky and Michelle have adjusted easily. Ricky is in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and was expecting to change schools to Junior High this year anyway, so he didn't really have much problem. Michelle is in 5<sup>th</sup> and was really outgoing in Texas. She's quieter here, but is well adjusted. She makes friends easily and has several good friends at school. A few weeks ago, she went into New York City with a friend and her mother to see Cinderella on Broadway. She loved it, of course. All four kids are doing fine in school. In fact, Suzie was on the high honors roll last term and the others were all on the honor roll. This may not sound any different from

what they were doing in Texas, but they're all taking more advanced classes here. They do, however, have to spend A LOT of time doing homework. Andy and Suzie rarely get to bed before 11:00 p.m.!

It has taken time to get the kids set up with private music lessons and all but Michelle are now situated with their new teachers who are all current or past members of the New York Symphony. We feel fortunate to have found such excellent teachers. The kids are all in orchestra at school except Michelle. Her orchestra teacher told her that she's too advanced to be part of the school orchestra and invited her to join the Advanced Orchestra that meets after school instead. That will start after the first of the new year. Suzie and Andy auditioned for All-Region Orchestra a couple of weeks ago and they both made it in. The All-Region Festival will be in early January. Then they're both going to audition for All-State in February. We didn't get here in time for the kids to audition for the local youth symphony this year, but they're planning on it for next year.

Ann loves it here. Of course, she doesn't like how expensive everything is compared to Texas, but she likes New England. The people are (as Andy says) 'just like us.' The town we live in is only about 18,000 people, but everything around is the same. The entire area is populated, but nothing is really dense. Most of the building lots are 1 acre or larger, so the area has a small-town feel. Naturally, there are trees and water everywhere. Ann is working at the elementary school as a teacher's aide for kindergarten thru second grade and special education. She loves her job.

I really like my job at the AMNH. It's basically the same job as what I was doing at TTU, but the collection is much bigger (third largest mammal collection in the world- nearly three times bigger than the one at TTU) and the emphasis is different so I end up doing different things that at TTU. I commute 1½ hours to and from work. This sounds bad, but since I ride the train, I can work, read, study, sleep, or whatever. I've gotten used to the commute. It's not something you would choose to do if there was another choice, but it's really not that bad. It IS much better than trying to raise a family in New York City.

We hope that you've had a wonderful year and that 2005 will be great for you too.

With Love,  
Ann and Richard  
Suzie, Andy, Ricky and Michelle

P.S. Our new address and phone numbers are

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