

play tennis. But I can walk, and I was eager to experience, however indirectly, Tolstoy's long hike, an experience he described in an 1886 letter to his friend and confidant V. G. Chertkov, as "one of the

vigorous man in his fifties, incredibly famous in his own country and, increasingly, worldwide. He was married to a beautiful and adoring woman nearly twenty years his junior, the father of a large and

Yasnaya Polyana

The Ant Brotherhood was revealed to us, but not the chief secret—the secret he said he had written on a green stick.

(Tolstoy's journal)

Everything speaks of late summer—horses grazing well into the middle distance, nuzzling their companion shadows on the trampled earth; the sky a transported blue, a few slow clouds, suspended from childhood.

Yasnaya Polyana—Tolstoy's ancestral home. He moves easily toward us in the photograph, loosely gripping, not leaning on, his cane. Taking his afternoon walk in these fields he played in as a boy.

As he passes, two horses raise their heads, fasten on something beyond the borders of the scene, appearing for all the world to meet our gaze. So they are captured in the instant of the shutter's release. As with the old

man, Russia's Homer, who peers out at the camera's location, but now into a world no closer to heaven than his own. His soul in torment at the end and he torn from all he had loved, had called home.

I think of the green stick his brother Nicolay had buried at the edge of a nearby wood, on which he said he had written the secret of universal love and the banishment of evil from the world. "I believe such truths exist," the aging

Tolstoy wrote, and in that spot among birches bordering a woodland path, at his request, he is buried.

—Jim Bishop

best memories of my life."

Tolstoy made three such treks during the last half of the 1880s. In the early 1880s, his family had begun to spend the winters in Moscow so the boys could continue their education and the girls could make their entry into society. Tolstoy was then a

merry clutch of children, comfortably wealthy, and suicidally depressed.

Tolstoy's sixth decade coincided with a period he called in *A Confession* "my internal perestroika," a period of increasing disillusionment with Orthodoxy, the Russian state, his vocation as