

Blaise Jonathan Thompson

Chapter 0

Context

Family tree.

Parents.

Pregnancy.

Chapter 1989

1989.1 Death of Tiki

Thompson family Cat.

Died in August—I was just a few months old.

Born in 1966—23 years old.

Chapter 1990

Chapter 1991

1991.1 Roy Nielsen's Death

My maternal grandfather. Died December 11th 1991 on the volleyball court.

Christmas 1991

Dear Friends,

Thanksgiving Day is past but we're glad that gratitude is always in order, and at this Advent time we're thankful for thoughts and memories of you.

We're fine and continue to be active at Lakeside helping, encouraging & serving many dear Asian immigrants.

Some of the highlights for 1991 were: -

January Roy had open-heart surgery (5 by-passes) and has made a very good recovery.

June Had 5 great days in the French Quarter in New Orleans with Nancy, David and Blaise (2 1/2 years)

July-August Traveled in England, Wales, Scotland and Norway. Celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary in Bergen, Norway. The coast steamer voyage up the Norwegian coast (1,250 miles) to the Russian border was restful and most enjoyable.

October Oakland had a devastating fire which was about a mile away from our home.

Hope these few lines find you well & happy. May your holidays be full of many good things and much love.

Affectionately,
Betty and Roy

Figure 1991.1: 1991 Christmas Letter from Betty and Roy Nielsen (my maternal grandparents). Written and sent out just before Roy's death.

January 11, 1992

Dear

Forgive me for not writing to each of you personally, but time and energy forces me to communicate to you in this way.

It is with sadness that I inform you that Roy passed away very suddenly on December 11. After attending a Bible Study at church, we went out for dinner. On arriving home, around 7:30 P.M. Roy went to play volleyball, which he usually did on Wednesday nights. About 9 o'clock, I received a phone call from the Fire Dept. telling me he had had a heart attack and they were taking him to the nearest hospital. His teammates later told me they were + talking on the floor between games and some of them said they were tired and suggested they go home, but Roy said, "No, Let's play another game!" The next second, his head fell forward and he was gone.

The shock has been great but the good Lord + many friends have given me much strength + comfort.

We had a Memorial Service at Church on Dec. 16 and it was very precious to see so many friends + neighbors + people of all races come to honor him.

I have many treasured memories of each one of you and thank you for your friendship. Please come + visit me if you're ever in the Bay Area.

Fondly,

Betty Nielsen

Figure 1991.2: Letter written by Betty Nielsen (my maternal grandmother) regarding Roy Nielsen's death. Written January 11th, 1992.

Chapter 1992

Chapter 1993

Chapter 1994



Figure 1994.1: Photo of Blaise taken around Christmas time.

Chapter 1995

1995.1 Beginning of 1st Grade

1995.2 Getting Purky

Born September 26th, 1995.

First pet that I remember feeling was “mine”.

I gave her the name Purky. Played with her constantly—really considered her my friend.

Chapter 1996

1996.1 End of 1st Grade

1996.2 Beginning of 2nd Grade

Chapter 1997

1997.1 End of 2nd Grade



Figure 1997.1: A mystery photo of Blaise. Believed by Nancy to be taken in 2nd grade.

1997.2 Beginning of 3rd Grade

Chapter 1998

1998.1 End of 3rd Grade

Chapter 1999

1999.1 End of 4th Grade

1999.2 Ani's Death

Beloved childhood dog.

Born 1978.

Adopted March 30 1984 from Iowa City Animal Shelter.

Died Mid March 1999.

1999.3 Piano Recital

PROGRAM FOR
 Students of Barbara Rivadeneira in a
 SPRING PIANO RECITAL
 Sunday May 23, 1999--4:30 PM

Rhythm Machine	Blaise Thompson	L. F. Olson
Minuet in F Major Badinage	Tiffany Hemann	L. Mozart C. Gurlitt
Mississippi Rag Musette	Natalie Lancial	Wells Le Couppey
Spanish Dance Allegro in G Major	Joseph Park	Palmer Haydn
Frenzy	Kristen Blake	Alexander
Variations on a Russian Folk Song	Jaclyn Lancial	Kabalevsky
Minuet in E Major Gigue: The Chase	Yun-Na Wu	Haydn Duncombe
Sonatina in A Minor	Mary Louis	Kabalevsky
Tarantella Op. 46, No. 7	Emily Villhauer	Heller
Nocturne Op. 9, No. 2	Betty Louis	Chopin
Suite de Danzas Criollas Scherzando The Entertainer	Maria Liu	Ginastera Joplin

Figure 1999.1: Piano Recital.

1999.4 Beginning of 5th Grade

1999.5 Getting Vehrzheen

Born June 13, 1999. Vehrzheen's father (I'm Chip 1488385) was the son of her mother (Doc's Charging Cricket 1465980). Both the father and mother were owned by the CL Peterson's who lived in Davenport (1103 Garfield Ct) and were selling the puppies for \$100.00 each. We brought her to our home in Iowa City on Sept 4.

She was Nancy's dog.

1999.6 Winter Break

Memorable because it's the end of the millennium. Sit next to the Iowa River and watch fireworks launched in City Park with parents, dogs.

Chapter 2000

2000.1 End of 5th Grade

2000.2 Beginning of 6th Grade

2000.3 Purky's Death

November 4th 2000.

Possible foul play in Happy Hollow Park.

Took her to the vet (was she still alive?)

Was in bowling league when my parents gave me the news (is this correct?)

Chapter 2001

2001

2001.1 End of 6th Grade

Chapter 2002

2002

2002.1 End of 7th Grade

Chapter 2003

2003.1 End of 8th Grade

2003.2 Vadaszno's Death

Purchased December 1, 1987 From Mr and Mrs Anderson. 3211 56th Des Moines IA. Father- Rebel Rouser Crimson Beau AKC SC609762. Mother- Rebel Rouser Maverick Ruby AKC SD390115. Had triple pelvic osteotomy Aug 30, 1988.

Died July 30th 2003.

2003.3 Beginning of Freshman Year

Chapter 2004

2004.1 End of Freshman Year

2004.2 Beginning of Sophomore Year

2004.3 Getting Untzag

Sept 13, 2004. Came from farm house in West Branch.

Chapter 2005

2005

2005.1 End of Sophomore Year

2005.2 Beginning of Junior Year

Chapter 2006

2006

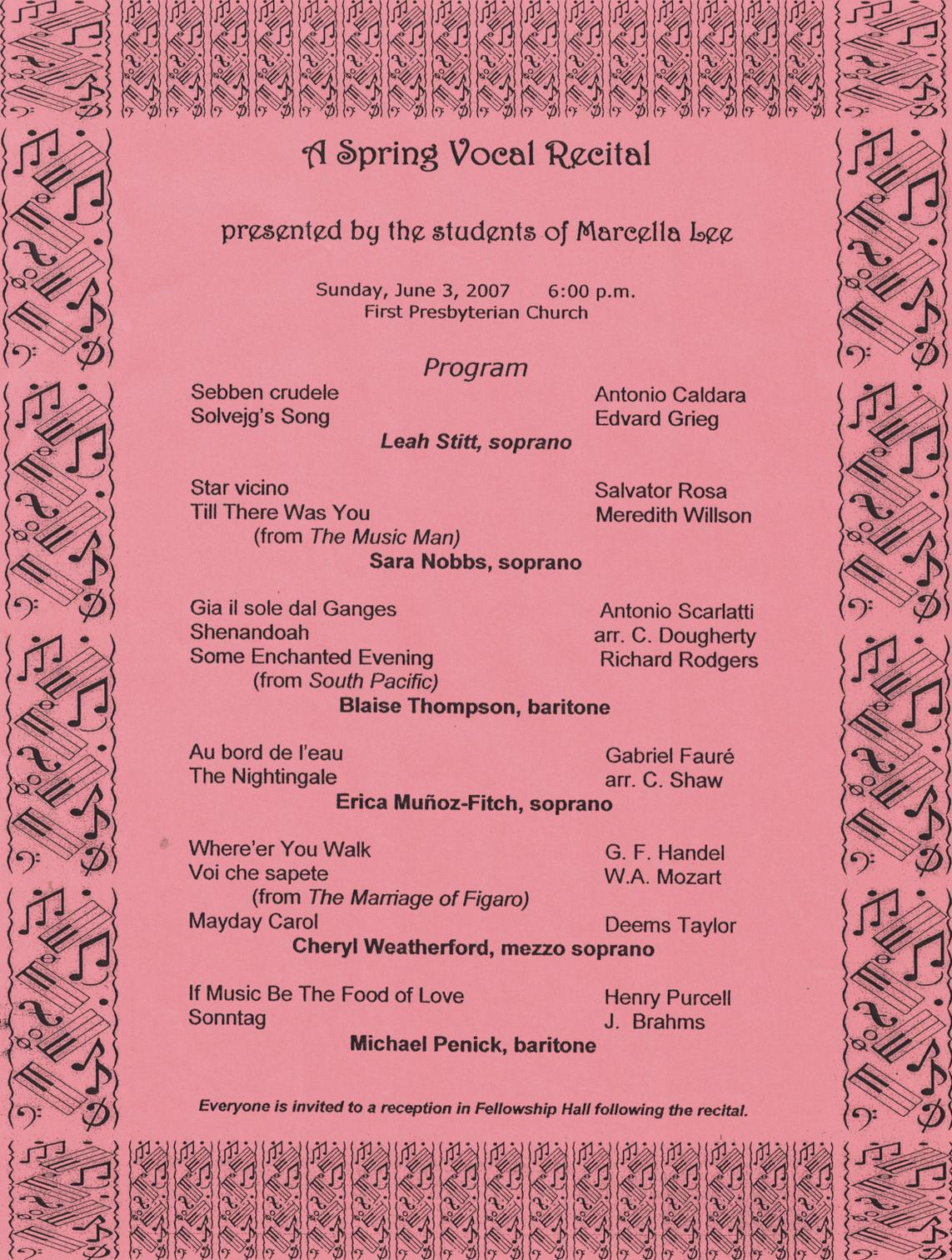
2006.1 End of Junior Year

2006.2 Beginning of Senior Year

Chapter 2007

2007.1 End of Senior Year

2007.2 Vocal Recital



A Spring Vocal Recital

presented by the students of Marcella Lee

Sunday, June 3, 2007 6:00 p.m.
First Presbyterian Church

Program

<p>Sebben crudele Solvejg's Song</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Leah Stitt, soprano</p>	<p>Antonio Caldara Edvard Grieg</p>
<p>Star vicino Till There Was You (from <i>The Music Man</i>)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sara Nobbs, soprano</p>	<p>Salvator Rosa Meredith Willson</p>
<p>Gia il sole dal Ganges Shenandoah Some Enchanted Evening (from <i>South Pacific</i>)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Blaise Thompson, baritone</p>	<p>Antonio Scarlatti arr. C. Dougherty Richard Rodgers</p>
<p>Au bord de l'eau The Nightingale</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Erica Muñoz-Fitch, soprano</p>	<p>Gabriel Fauré arr. C. Shaw</p>
<p>Where'er You Walk Voi che sapete (from <i>The Marriage of Figaro</i>) Mayday Carol</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cheryl Weatherford, mezzo soprano</p>	<p>G. F. Handel W.A. Mozart Deems Taylor</p>
<p>If Music Be The Food of Love Sonntag</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Michael Penick, baritone</p>	<p>Henry Purcell J. Brahms</p>

Everyone is invited to a reception in Fellowship Hall following the recital.

Figure 2007.1: Vocal recital.

2007.3 Beginning of First Year

Chapter 2008

2008

Chapter 2009

2009

Chapter 2010

2010

Chapter 2011

2011

Chapter 2012

2012

Chapter 2013

2013

Chapter 2014

2014.1 Untzag's Death

Oct 21, 2014 9:45 pm struck by car on Governor.

We never got to recover her body.

2014.2 Year in Review

Winter Solstice Greetings - 2014

Hello to all my friends and family. I hope that you are feeling peaceful, cozy, and happy in these winter months.

For a long time I've wanted to start a tradition of sending out yearly letters. In this, the 25th year of my life, I've finally gotten around to doing it. I'm inspired by my mother, who has been sending out letters since the 80s. It's a wonderful way to keep in contact, and it serves as a great personal record. It may seem anachronistic now that we have email and social media, but keeping it a physical letter just feels good. Please let me know if your address changes (email is probably best) so I can send you letters in future years.



I'm now a fourth year Analytical Chemistry graduate student at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. I do research in the lab of John Wright. We do ultrafast, multidimensional spectroscopy of solar materials. I'm involved in many projects, but mainly I'm working on BiVO_4 and PbSe quantum dots. I'll continue this research for another one to two years. After that? I'm not too sure yet. Grad school has been very fun for me, I really enjoy working in this field and the people that I interact with are all fantastic. John in particular is a great mentor personally and scientifically.

As a vacation this year mom and I went out to California by car, primarily to visit bay area relatives. It was an all-around stellar experience. Driving from Wisconsin to California takes a long time, but the geography is stunningly beautiful. Highlights included clouds in Nebraska, Big Trees, Yosemite, and the Bonneville salt flats. The bay area itself was also beautiful, of course. It's crazy to realize that I haven't been out to see that side of the family since Grandma Betty's funeral in 2005. Will have to make a concerted effort to go out west more often. Perhaps I'll have to swallow my pride and get on a plane.

Our family cat, Untzag, died unexpectedly in October of this year. She was run over by a car. Vehrzhenn, the family dog, is geriatric and probably not long for this world. 2015 will probably be the first year in my life without a family dog or cat. Ridgeback, my turtle, is still going strong.

Madison continues to be a great city for me. I take advantage of it less than I should. I'm going out to eat and grab drinks more in recent months. The folk community here is very active, and I was able to dance weekly for most of the year. I've been taking a break from contradance over the last several months, but plan to dance again come January. I was able to see Yelle and Of Montreal in the same month this fall. Both were absolutely fantastic live.

Have a great new year.

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Figure 2014.1: My 2014 yearly letter to family and friends.

Chapter 2015

2015.1 Year in Review

Winter Solstice Greetings - 2015

Hello to all my friends and family. I hope that you are feeling peaceful, cozy, and happy in these unusually warm winter months.

Following time honored Thompson tradition I'm already slipping behind in my holiday greeting card schedule. I'm writing this the day *after* winter solstice. Madison is unusually warm for the time of year. Outside it is very foggy and a large amount of rain is expected later. Previous snow-fall has long since melted.

I'm now well into my 5th year of graduate school. As of early December I've become the senior experimentalist on the femtosecond materials project. Older graduate students in the group are still around but are focusing exclusively on finishing their dissertations. Projects that I have been working on are finally being published. Writing papers is frustrating but enjoyable once done. Currently we are caught up to data collected ~ 1.5 years ago, so there is much to do. I'm hopeful that 2016 can be a breakout year where we really can use these tools we've created to say something useful about solar materials.



The picture above is me tubing on a Wright Group boating trip on lake Mendota. I was able to hold on for quite some time but did end up being thrown trying to do some tricks.



I didn't take any large vacations this year. The family did spend some time at Towanda lake in northern Wisconsin. It was fun to return to a common childhood vacation location. While there we spread the ashes of Vehrzhéen. It was a fitting goodbye - I'll never forget how much fun Vehrzhéen and I had on that lake when we were young. The picture on the left was taken by me on the day we scattered her ashes.

I'm continuing to enjoy Madison. I have started contradancing again. I have gotten more serious about weight lifting and fitness as a hobby and have really enjoyed the facilities provided by the University. I continue to enjoy living downtown in the hustle and bustle of city life but I may be outgrowing my apartment with stuff. May move this fall if I can find a nice place.

Have a fantastic 2016.

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Figure 2015.1: My 2015 yearly letter to family and friends.

Chapter 2016

2016.1 Claire & Ralph's Wedding

Flew from Chicago to San Francisco Monday 2016-06-20.

Was able to stay with Jim and Tracey in Berkeley for a while.

Headed to Napa Wednesday 2016-06-23. Stayed with Claire's parents. Beautiful vineyard and mountain views from their backyard.

Married June 24th, 2016.



Figure 2016.1: The view from Claire's parents' backyard on the morning of 2016-06-23. Note the two hot air balloons and the vines full of green grapes.



Figure 2016.2: Blaise and Claire immediately after Claire and Ralph's wedding.



Figure 2016.3: The two wedding cakes that Claire baked for her own wedding.



Figure 2016.4: One of Ralph's best friends at the grill.

2016.2 Year in Review

Winter Solstice Greetings

2016

Hello to all my friends and family. I hope that you are feeling peaceful, cozy, and happy in these winter months. It's snowing hard outside as I write this letter to you.

I'm now in the middle of my 6th year of graduate school. I'm still enjoying my time in the Wright group—I hope to be here for a while yet. The past year of graduate school has been frustrating in some ways. Lots of progress has been made, but I haven't reached the key checkpoints that I hoped to reach. I'm looking forward to being a teaching assistant for a graduate-level electronics and instrumentation course next semester.



This summer was busy for me. In mid May three college friends (Kate, Nina, and Claire) joined me here in the Midwest. We spent a few days exploring Chicago—river tour, museums, food, even a local contradance. Pictured above is us outside of Shedd Aquarium. We then drove to Madison and spent a few days in Wisconsin. Exploring the House on the Rock with Benji was a highlight of the trip for me.



I was honored to stand as a member of Claire's wedding party on June 24th. The wedding took place near Claire's parents in beautiful Napa Valley, California. It was a great wedding and I really enjoyed catching up with the Parker, Eckert and Till families. It was also great to briefly see the Niensens—Jim and Tracey were kind enough to loan me a car during my time in California.

After returning home from California I had just 24 hours before flying to Amsterdam for an academic conference. Coherent Multidimensional Spectroscopy (CMDS) is a small biennial conference in my narrow subfield. My advisor—John C. Wright—was a founding member of the conference and still sits as chair of the organizing committee. This year

the conference was held in beautiful historic Groningen, the Netherlands. The first molecular photon echo was resolved in Groningen (DOI: 10.1103/PhysRevLett.74.674). At the conference I presented a poster on my work to make CMDS instrumentation more reproducible and robust. Afterwards I spent five days exploring Europe, traveling to Brussels and Amsterdam. Pictured above and left is me in the famous Grote Markt. I didn't really plan anything about my trip, just stepped out of the hotel and started walking. Everywhere I went was filled with great food, people, and artwork. Very enjoyable—but I was ready to return to Wisconsin after five days.

This year I've enjoyed learning more about philosophy, rationality, and psychology. Daniel Kahneman's book *Thinking, Fast and Slow* has changed the way I think about human cognition. I'm trying to incorporate these ideas more into my personal behavior.

Have a fantastic 2017. Stay in touch.

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Figure 2016.5: My 2016 yearly letter to family and friends.

Chapter 2017

2017.1 Vacation with Tyler

2017.2 Solar Eclipse

2017.3 Arcata

2017.4 Year in Review

Winter Solstice Greetings

2017

Hello to all my friends and family. I hope that you are feeling peaceful, cozy, and happy in these winter months. As I write this letter, the ice fishing season has begun in Madison. Brave individuals have taken to the lake near my apartment to test their luck.

I'm now in the middle of my 7th year of graduate school. Time flies, and I'm begrudgingly trying to wrap up this phase of my life. Not sure what comes next.

My good friend Tyler graduated this spring. I am happy to see him move on to better things, but sad that we are no longer living in the same place. Perhaps life will bring us together again at a later date. In celebration, Tyler and I took a short vacation together. We camped at beautiful Wyalusing State Park—Tyler's first camping experience! The midwestern summer rains caught us, but we had fun despite the weather. We also visited House on the Rock and New Glarus Brewery.

On August 21st of this year a total solar eclipse crossed much of the Continental US. My parents and I took this as an opportunity for family vacation. We visited the Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area, at the intersection of Kentucky and Tennessee. After a bit of stress, we ended up finding a nice waterside campsite (right). The very large lakes were too large for our small Alumacraft, so we did not get much fishing done. I did get lots of reading done, and the time spent away was nice. The eclipse itself was pretty magical. The family (including Karaby) put on our swimsuits and waded into the lake to watch.



In early October I traveled to beautiful Arcata to visit my good friend Claire and her husband, Ralph. Claire and Ralph have a wonderful home on a gravel road nestled among impossibly tall redwood trees. I enjoyed exploring Arcata and the nearby town of Eureka. Humboldt State, where Claire works, has interesting California architecture—one of Claire's colleagues has an office with only outdoor entrance! The local Ma-Le'l dunes (left) were interesting—very windy with alien landscape and flora. Making pasties and horchata, and enjoying Claire's famous pie, were the highlights of the trip for me.

Stay in touch—note new address.

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Figure 2017.1: My 2017 yearly letter to family and friends.

Chapter 2018

Might be neat to have chapter-level table of contents here.

2018.1 Final Semester of Graduate School

Class TA

Writing dissertation: small steps, watch YouTube video after each small writing period, try hard not to be a perfectionist—lots of things to be unhappy about

2018.2 Defense, Graduation

Only debate was if it was appropriate to pass somebody who never mentioned Chemistry in their Defense.

Afterwards: dinner and celebration.

Defense: Tyler, Kyle, Jonathan... pictures

2018.3 Visiting Tyler in NYC

2018.4 Beginning New Job

2018.5 Sam Visits Madison

2018.6 IMTS 2018

On Friday September 14th 2018, Blaise and Steve Meyers visited the International Manufacturing Technology Show (IMTS) at McCormick Place, Chicago. Steve had a connection with faculty in the Mechanical Engineering department, so both of them were able to ride in a chartered double-decker “Badger Bus” and enter the show all for free. The show was truly remarkable in scale, with over two thousand booths, and 129,415 attendees. Many companies had gigantic building-scale booths where they exhibited their large machines. Some companies even had bars and multi-story constructions with meeting rooms and offices—all contained within the booth space. Steve said that a lot of smaller companies cannot even afford to exhibit at IMTS due to the cost of renting space.



Figure 2018.1: A large booth at IMTS 2018. The company, Mazak, mainly sells metal-working machines such as lathes and milling machines. Everything is fully automated and computer controlled. The sheer size of the conference can be seen here, as this is just one booth in the huge conference hall—look down the hallway on the right-hand side.

2018.7 Thanksgiving Break

Fly to Las Vegas.

Death valley.

Drive to Roseville—stopped on 80 for chains.

Large thanksgiving meal.

Drive to Jim's house.

Backpack stolen, same place where Betty's car was jacked and Roy was robbed (check this with Nancy).

2018.8 Winter Break

This was the first Winter Break since starting my new job. Steve let me know ahead of time that he anticipates a large volume of work being submitted just before graduate students go home for break. The machine shop actually had a light season, but I was in-fact hit pretty hard with a lot of last minute projects. This is in addition to preparing for 628 next semester, so I came into break pretty stressed about my work project situation.

I drove to Iowa City on Saturday, 2018-12-22, and returned to Madison on Thursday 2018-12-27. As usual, I enjoy the three hour drive each way—an opportunity to listen to music and podcasts.

My parents have been busy remodeling their basement, and have been getting rid of a bunch of stuff along the way. I'm glad that they are continuing to downsize, but I worry about starting to work hardcore on the basement when the Barn project (welding machine carriages, wood working space) does not seem to be moving forward. I worry in general about my parents, and my relationship with them. I did manage to help David with a lighting project in his new electronics bench area. He has added some shelves, and his area is coming along nicely.

On Sunday 2018-12-23 I went with Nancy to Zion, my "home church". I haven't been to Zion for years, perhaps since starting Bates? It was pretty awkward to attend—a lot of people recognized me and I had awkward interactions with people that I really do not remember. Still, I'm glad I went and I think I will try to continue attending when I am in Iowa City. Zion is a frighteningly liberal church (discussions on microaggressions, LGBT issues), so I think I'm not really being realistic by staying away on moral grounds.

For Christmas presents I gave Nancy a smart phone (Pixel 3) and a dock for her laptop. I gave David a set of small ESD-safe bits and associated driver (Whia brand), and a label-maker. All of these family gifts went over well. I also gave Darien a set of electronic Calipers, Kyle a copy of Horowitz and Hill 2nd edition, Claire the Circle of Magic series books, Ralph the same Whia brand tool set, and Tyler some metal "ice cubes". For myself I received \$1200 from my parents to offset the cost of what was stolen in Oakland, and some fountain pens.

For Christmas dinner we had choice beef for with pilaf and red cabbage. Blueberry Julius for desert. Mom's 75th birthday.

I was able to declutter quite a bit myself. I got rid of a large trash-can worth of childhood artwork, toys etc. A lot of other artwork was chosen for framing, meaning that it is going to be displayed rather than just saved for savings sake. I also went through some of the things in the attic, and condensed. All of this is in preparation for immanent destruction of my childhood bedroom.

Justin, Boyfriend and Natalia 2018-12-28.

Tyler, Claire and friends 2018-12-28.

Tyler, Jessica new years.

2018.9 Beginning This Book

At the very end of December, I finally began working in earnest on this document, which I'm currently thinking of as a "book of memories". I've been ruminating on this project for about a year now. It's probably prudent to write down my thoughts at the beginning of this hopefully life-long project—if nothing else they will serve as a funny reminder of just how much the project has changed in scope and intent. My idea is to create a document that really does contain most everything that I want to remember about my own life. I'm old enough now that I am already forgetting almost everything about my own childhood. A lot of my friends' memories, and a lot of my own, have been locked up in various social media platforms that are bound to fail (or worse, succeed—social media is terrible and I hope it dies).

In one sense, I feel like this project is an exercise in narcissism. Do I really believe that my life is special enough to warrant a whole hand-made book? Well, no—I don't believe that my life is special, extraordinary, or even particularly remarkable. And I'm not necessarily writing this book for anyone except myself. I want to have a more complete and accurate perception of my own past, and that goal alone is sufficiently motivating as I undertake this project. I may want to share this book with friends and family in the future, but right now that is not a goal.

I'm also thinking about sentimentality. I currently perceive myself to be overly sentimental—I hold on to random objects and obsess about random memories far too much. I'm thoroughly fed up with this. I am fed up with having too much stuff—physical items that clutter my environment and weigh me down. And I am fed up with being paralyzed by my perception of past transgressions and successes. So this project is also a kind of token against my sentimentality. I intend to focus my obsession with my own past into creating an ever more complete and accurate description here. Practically, this book will force me to choose a small subset of pictures and stories that actually matter—and once I collect them here I don't need to worry about keeping them organized in other places.

Hopefully moving forward I can write this book in semi-real time. Obviously the big undertaking is in organizing the past. I hope to not obsess about that. I don't plan to have any reservations about the quality of the writing here. To the extent that I have time, I can edit, cut, add etc to any section—I'm not going to treat

2018.10 Year in Review

Winter Solstice Greetings**2018**

Hello to all my friends and family. I hope that you are feeling peaceful, cozy, and happy in these winter months. It's fairly warm here in Madison, but the bay near my apartment has already frozen over. The last two weekends have been popular with ice fishers and skaters. As finals week progresses the town slowly empties.



This has been an important year for me professionally. On April 23rd I successfully defended my dissertation, earning my doctorate in analytical chemistry. See left a picture of me and my PhD adviser John Wright. I am very lucky to have worked under John for seven short years. John taught me a lot about being an independent thinker and communicator. I was blessed to have my parents and good friend Tyler attend my graduation. I "walked" with two other Wright Group friends—Kyle Czech and Jonathan Handali. The ceremony that I attended (just for masters and doctorates) was huge—I'm still amazed at UW-Madison's size.

Of course, the high of graduation is typically followed by the panic of trying to find a job. On July 23rd I began working as an instrumentation technologist for the chemistry department. This is a research support role where I work on solving technical challenges facing researchers throughout the department. I am the supervisor of a "makerspace" where students and researchers can come work on instrument construction and repair. We have specialized equipment and a large inventory of parts for purchase. I take on a large variety of different jobs—everything from fixing humble hotplates and glassware drying ovens to designing custom oscillators for mass spectrometry. The people that I work with on a daily basis are driven and kind—they have done a lot to help me overcome my lack of formal training in electrical engineering. For me right now, this is a dream job.

I've had several opportunities to travel this year. A few weeks after graduation my friend Tyler was gracious enough to invite me to his home in New York for a 1.5 week vacation. Highlights included eating at Di Fara Pizza, exploring Coney Island, and seeing The SpongeBob Musical on Broadway. It was so fun to visit Tyler and see how far he has come since his own graduation. I was also glad to visit my friend Felix at Yale during the same trip.

In July I spent nine days in Iowa City with my parents. After so long, I enjoyed spending such a long time at "home". The barn construction project is going along beautifully, and I was able to help with some humble drywall work.

Over the thanksgiving break I traveled to the west coast. I flew into Las Vegas, where my parents picked me up for a quick 24-hour Death Valley experience. We woke up early to watch the sunrise from Dante's View. I hope to return to Death Valley for a longer trip some day. Here I am standing on the floor of Badwater Basin—282 feet below sea level. After leaving, we picked up Karaby and drove straight to Roseville, where we had thanksgiving dinner with the Trumbly & Decker Family. It's so nice to connect with extended family after many years.



Wishing you and yours a happy new year. Stay in touch!

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Figure 2018.2: My 2018 yearly letter to family and friends.

Chapter 2019

2019.1 Visit from Claire & Ralph Till

Claire and Ralph arrived very late on Friday 2019-01-12. They stayed at an airbnb close to my apartment (113 South Brittingham Place).

On Saturday we met around 11:00, walked a few blocks to Come Back In, had breakfast. We then walked from Come Back In, through the capital building, and down State St to campus. I gave Claire & Ralph a tour of my new job, including the electronics and machine shops. We then went back to my apartment and rested for a while. We had dinner at Saigon Noodles, then returned home and socialized at the airbnb until bed time.

On Sunday we went to the 9 AM service at First Unitarian Society. We then had breakfast at Forever Bagels. We then toured the National Mustard Museum. We went to "I'm Board! Games & Family Fun" in Middleton, where we purchased the party game CODENAMES. We then went shopping at Woodmans, purchasing everything we needed for chicken noodle soup. We made chicken noodle soup and homemade sourdough. Around 6 PM, Kyle Sunden, Darien Morrow, and Kaitlyn Fischer came over for a game night. We all enjoyed eating soup, drinking wine and beer, and playing three games of CODENAMES and one game of Hanabi (which Kaitlyn brought).

On Claire came over to my apartment early for breakfast and a walk around the lake. Around noon, Ralph joined us. We drove to New Glarus, where we ate lunch at Tofflers Pub & Grill. We toured the New Glarus brewery (my third time). After returning to Madison, we had a quiet night at the apartment sharing photos, watching YouTube, and socializing.