

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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