

December 18, 2018

Dear friends and family,

So I have to admit that Suzanne and I started feeling our age a bit in 2018. It started to hit us when we became the parents of two college graduates. Luke graduated from Washington University in St. Louis in May, and Thomas finished his degree at Stanford in June, so we managed to kick two kids off of the family payroll in one season.

We celebrated both graduations with a trip to Yosemite, where Thomas subjected us to three spectacular days of forced marches through the wilderness. We trekked 15 miles up to Cloud's Rest to look down upon Half Dome the first day; we gingerly walked off our soreness with an 18-mile jaunt on the Panoramic Trail on the second; and we stumbled to the finish with a 10-miler to North Dome. The views and family time were definitely worth the ongoing, post-trip physical therapy!



Zac, Suzanne, Luke, Matt, and Thomas at Cloud's Rest, Yosemite National Park.

Inspired by his parents' mountain-climbing skills, Thomas returned for the summer to Stanford's Sierra Camp (an alumni camp near Lake Tahoe), where he led other unsuspecting parents on hikes through "Desolation Wilderness" and equally inviting places. He hiked to about 60 mountain lakes and solidified a love of back country camping that's inspired him to put biodegradable toilet paper at the top of his Christmas list. In October, Thomas returned to Palo Alto, where he started a job at WikiHow, a website that offers illustrated, how-to advice on topics ranging from [How to Defecate when Camping Back Country](#) to [How to Be Random](#) (hint: make non-sequiturs, use unusual words and phrases, give yourselves titles, and recite oddly specific facts and color names).

But enough about the flugelhorn of Viscountess Suzanne.

Luke spent the early part of the summer in the “Desolation Wilderness” of Davidson, North Carolina. He escaped to the beach with neighbors, took a road trip to New Orleans, and then migrated to Washington, D.C., where he lives near Dupont Circle and works as a researcher and writer at E.A.B. (Educational Advisory Board), a consulting company for higher education institutions. Fortunately for Luke, Davidson College is not yet a client, so Suzanne cannot indiscriminately fire off research requests for Luke’s input.

Driving took a front seat at the Churchill house this year. Zac learned to drive his Dad’s old manual transmission Jetta so that he could (1) drive himself to North Meck High School his senior year, and (2) lord the fact that he knows how to drive a stick shift car over Luke and Thomas. Lord Zac is currently balancing high school sports (soccer and indoor track), a job as a host/server assistant at a local restaurant, and the heap of college application essays that are due January 1st. It should be a joyful holiday season!

Suzanne also joined in the driving diversion by collaborating with Britt Stadig, an artist and book binder from Nashville, on a pop-up version of “Dinosaurs Drive Fire Trucks,” the classic children’s book Suzanne and the boys wrote for Zac when he was in kindergarten. The one-of-a-kind book was displayed with 27 other book creations in [20 Collaborations](#), an exhibition at the Nashville Public Library. We road-tripped to Music City with friends to celebrate the opening, visit some honky-tonk bars, and enjoy the thriving foodie scene.

Fun fact: Southern sea otters have flaps of skin under their forelegs that act as pockets. When diving, they use these pouches to store rocks and food.

Reunions were also high on the agenda. We lured Wintsch family members to Davidson — Elizabeth (Suzanne’s sister), Peter, & Noah Shoudy in January, Jonathan (her brother) in August, and Fred (her father) and Ruth for Thanksgiving. We spent a weekend in New York City celebrating our friend Robert’s 50th birthday (there’s that age thing again) and joined the Churchill family for a music- and seafood-filled family reunion at my Dad and Maggie’s cottage in Mattapoisett. I’m sure all would concede that the bocce tournament victory by the Marquis de Matt and Count Cal (the second son of my father’s first-born) was the highlight of the event. Everyone went beluga!

We capped off our reunion tour with trips to D.C., to see Luke’s new digs and some old friends and family, and to California for my 25th Stanford Law School reunion in October (geesh – some of those people looked old), with the added benefit of another visit with Thomas.

We hope that we’ll have reunions with more of you in the upcoming year, and we wish you dioxazine violet skies ahead and a happy and healthy 2019.

Lots of love,

Matt, Suzanne, Thomas, Luke, and Zac