

December 2000

Seasons greetings from us all!

This year's photo documents one of the highlights of our year: a family vacation to Italy. In celebration of my father's 60th birthday, my parents rented a farmhouse in Tuscany and invited the whole family to join them. Before we left, Luke informed me that Italy was close to heaven--a voice on the radio told him. Whatever voice he heard proved prophetic, for the trip was heavenly. We enjoyed fine weather, gorgeous views, fantastic medieval villages, haunting Etruscan tombs, museums and cathedrals galore, and best of all, sumptuous food and wine. Luke and Thomas were delightful travel companions, who surprised us by appreciating not only the pizza, pasta, and Pinocchio theme park, but also the scenery and art. They actually made museum-going more fun, because they forced us to look closely at the sea of Annunciation scenes to find elements that might ignite their imaginations, and in the process, stimulated our own appreciation. We were sure that we had fed their developing minds a rich trove of experiences that they would remember for years to come. But when I asked them this morning what they liked best about Italy, Thomas said, "I liked that street-sweeper", and Luke said, "I liked the prison." So much for opening up the vistas of their minds!

I also interviewed them about their current passions. Here's a selective summary:

Luke's favorite song is "Lord of the Dance" (his class is performing it at the school's holiday pageant), and he loves to dance to Luscious Jackson (inspired by a hip-hop performance at Davidson College, he has learned to put on some serious moves). He prefers the guitar, his favorite book is "Richard Scarry," and his favorite toy is "that snow plow" he wants for Christmas. He likes to swim, go bowling, and ride bikes. When he grows up, he's going to drive a street sweeper and Mommy gets to ride next to him.

Thomas's greatest hits are "When the Saints Go Marchin' In," "Flying Purple People Eater," and "all the rock-n-roll songs." He wants to play the trumpet. His favorite books are the Hanukkah story about the goblins and "all my science books." His favorite toy is "those boxes that came from the toilet" (clarification: they did not come out of a toilet; they contained a new toilet we had to buy last week). He likes to collect shells and rocks and to study all kinds of creatures. When he grows up, after he's done with his scientist job, he will drive a garbage truck, and Daddy can ride in the front seat with him.

After four years, the boys said goodbye to their beloved nanny (whom they still visit regularly) and enrolled in a full-day Montessori school, which they also love. The school has expanded their social and intellectual horizons, as well as fostered an interest in "practical life skills." They are eager helpers in folding laundry, loading the dishwasher, and sponging the walls and furniture. Picking up toys doesn't seem to have the same allure.

Matt continues to work in a Charlotte law firm and to look forward to the days when the planned light rail will ease his commute. He's joined the board of the Davidson Lands Conservancy, a non-profit group dedicated to preserving open spaces--parks, forests, and waterfront--within the town limits. He shares his son's interests in blocks, books, and board games, and remains a rabid--I mean--avid Duke basketball fan.

I'm on sabbatical for the entire academic year, and I'm happy to report that I love my job more than ever! I had auspicious goals for the year: revising my dissertation into a book; co-editing a volume of essays; starting an article on a NEW topic; spending more time with the boys; being a more patient, creative mother and a romantic, attentive wife; cooking healthy meals; getting in shape; working in the yard; fixing up the house; reading voluminously; drawing; practicing Yoga--to name just a few. Current tally: I'm spending a lot more time with the kids, though not always patiently; I've read lots of good novels; and I've revised the introduction to my dissertation 37.5 times.

Hope you have better luck meeting your New Year's Resolutions. Better yet, forget about self-improvement and lose yourself in a good book!

Best wishes for the new year,

Suzanne, Matt, Luke, and Thomas Churchill

Keep in touch!

P.O. Box 2143, 230 South St., Davidson, NC 28036
(704) 896-3993; mchurchill@rbh.com; suchurchill@davidson.edu