

Greetings to all friends and family. This has been a difficult year for me. The end of a relationship, medical issues (I'm okay), problems with the house. I'm tired, struggling to feel the holiday spirit. That said, melancholy is a time-honored Christmas theme just the same as cheer and joy. Elvis Presley recorded "Blue Christmas" in 1957. My favorite Christmas Song—"Christmas Time Is Here"—brings forth nostalgic feelings from the full palette; bitter, sweet, uncomfortable, homey...

To be quite honest, I don't want to write a holiday letter this year. Cynically, the yearly letter-writing tradition is braggadocious. Uncynically, this is an opportunity to practice gratitude for all the wonderful gifts life continues to bestow. Times of hardship can also be gifts, to the extent that they deepen my appreciation for the simple things in life that are so easy to take for granted.

In late January Claire & Ralph visited me in Madison—their first time in my new house. We enjoyed hockey and other winter activities. Claire & Ralph helped me shop for a new bed-frame for the guest bedroom. On our way to buy a very expensive frame, we decided to stop by Habitat ReStore and found a wonderful frame for \$75! I've since bragged to many visitors about my \$75 bed.

In February Uncle Jim visited, his first time visiting Madison since I've lived here. Jim recently retired, and was nice enough to include me in his cross-country road trip. It was special to see Jim, and he was so helpful—fixing the rocking chair and installing a larger toilet paper holder.

This year I was able to start vegetables from seed and enjoyed a healthy garden harvest, with much to share. I'm pleased to report that the retaining wall along the north side of the property is done, although there is still the matter of the pavers, and the fence, and much more fun to be had with landscaping.

In October my parents and I enjoyed a trip to Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Wonderful to be able to find the time to take vacations together as a family.



Work continues to be fun. I now manage a team of five focused on electronics for instrumentation. Here's a picture of most of us with the Machine Shop and Glass Shop. Sebastian wore his Halloween costume.

Thank you all for being a part of my life this year. Please—stay in touch.

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