

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 turtule, 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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