

Winter Solstice Greetings - 2015

Hello to all my friends and family. I hope that you are feeling peaceful, cozy, and happy in these unusually warm winter months.

Following time honored Thompson tradition I'm already slipping behind in my holiday greeting card schedule. I'm writing this the day *after* winter solstice. Madison is unusually warm for the time of year. Outside it is very foggy and a large amount of rain is expected later. Previous snowfall has long since melted.

I'm now well into my 5th year of graduate school. As of early December I've become the senior experimentalist on the femtosecond materials project. Older graduate students in the group are still around but are focusing exclusively on finishing their dissertations. Projects that I have been working on are finally being published. Writing papers is frustrating but enjoyable once done. Currently we are caught up to data collected ~ 1.5 years ago, so there is much to do. I'm hopeful that 2016 can be a breakout year where we really can use these tools we've created to say something useful about solar materials.



The picture above is me tubing on a Wright Group boating trip on lake Mendota. I was able to hold on for quite some time but did end up being thrown trying to do some tricks.



I didn't take any large vacations this year. The family did spend some time at Towanda lake in northern Wisconsin. It was fun to return to a common childhood vacation location. While there we spread the ashes of Vehrzhenn. It was a fitting goodbye - I'll never forget how much fun Vehrzhenn and I had on that lake when we were young. The picture on the left was taken by me on the day we scattered her ashes.

I'm continuing to enjoy Madison. I have started contradancing again. I have gotten more serious about weight lifting and fitness as a hobby and have really enjoyed the facilities provided by the

University. I continue to enjoy living downtown in the hustle and bustle of city life but I may be outgrowing my apartment with stuff. May move this fall if I can find a nice place.

Have a fantastic 2016.

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