

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!! -2022

Merry Christmas!! This letter is why you need those 4.0 granny glasses (1/4 meter focal length). Although to actually squeeze a year like this into a single page would no doubt need a much, much higher magnification. But it is a Merry Christmas, for example, as I started this letter I got a phone call from Margaret at the nursing home, she'll be home by Christmas!! (Saturday, that's cutting it close) About every 2 years she goes into the hospital, they put her in their giant juice machine (just like the movie "Willy Wonka"). They remove a bunch of water, then she gets really weak, goes into a nursing home for a few days/weeks, exercise, exercise. And then magic occurs... and voila!

So, to begin, we love you all. Sadly, a lot of good friends passed away this year, mostly from old age. They say some turtles are ageless, they never actually age. So will somebody please isolate that gene real soon! And, in case I can't think, see, move, or hear by then, thank you science guys in advance, I hereby volunteer. If you have ever wondered, actuarial tables suggest, without aging, people would still only live to an average age of only 128. Why? i.e. because people just can't help from doing the dangerous, foolish, but cool stuff!! :) Yahoo!! I'd gladly take that trip to Mars, hunt great white sharks with a spear gun, climb Mt. Everest, try that gene cure for aging, or crash that experimental bamboo glider into the ground. I actually did that one once, insane but fun... but wouldn't you?

Our granddaughters are officially all grown, Jamie Kimble is working on her PhD in mathematics, published her first paper. Sarah started college at Indiana University and has appeared in several plays. Daughter Jennifer and her husband have spent a lot of time on the road going to see her performances. :) And Alex has graduated and taken an IT job with a major big box store... and bought a house!

Son John is still working for St. Gobains as an environmental engineer, and spends a lot of his time on his custom built river boat taking people fishing on the rivers of Minnesota (when they aren't frozen). And daughter Jennifer has taken on a job for a local church. Her husband Wayne is doing lawyer stuff. And John's wife is busy doing civil engineering. So, all seems right with the universe.

But then there was Thanksgiving... As I told Marge, all I want is two weeks notice whether it's on or off. Never found out, first it was on, then it was off, then it was on, oops, then it was was on/off, soooo, I had bought and made lots of dressing (I love dressing), thawed a turkey, made a full Thanksgiving dinner for 6, turkey, dressing, casserole, rolls, soda, you know... stuff (ing). Margaret's sister came out but none of the kids. John, Michelle, and Alex drove by on their way to Jamie's but they couldn't stay. And Margaret surprised me by going into the hospital the Saturday after Thanksgiving. So, since I found out at the last minute, I went ahead and cooked the Covid turkey, you know that twenty pounder from 2021 that went straight into the freezer, that one, figuring that I might be the only one eating it anyway. And with Marge gone, surprise, surprise, lots of frozen bird. Now, don't panic, I feed the raccoons every night. So probably, one these days, if they're patient, the winter ice melts, and if they actually will eat it, I'll thaw out portions of that old cooked bird and give it to them as a treat. I ate everything else!! ...and only gained 0 pounds. And since that makes absolutely no sense whatsoever to the average human being, (like the movie "Serenity" I had that node moved back during the intergalactic wars). Let me explain. Sometime, long, long ago when I was teaching Robotics and Automated Manufacturing at ITT Tech, my pancreatic duct got blocked by a stone (like a gall stone or a kidney stone) and so as a consequence, I have to take pills to digest my food.. i.e. And no pills, no weight gain!! Yea!!... and all the dressing you can eat... but not really digest... uh.. well, you can't have everything!

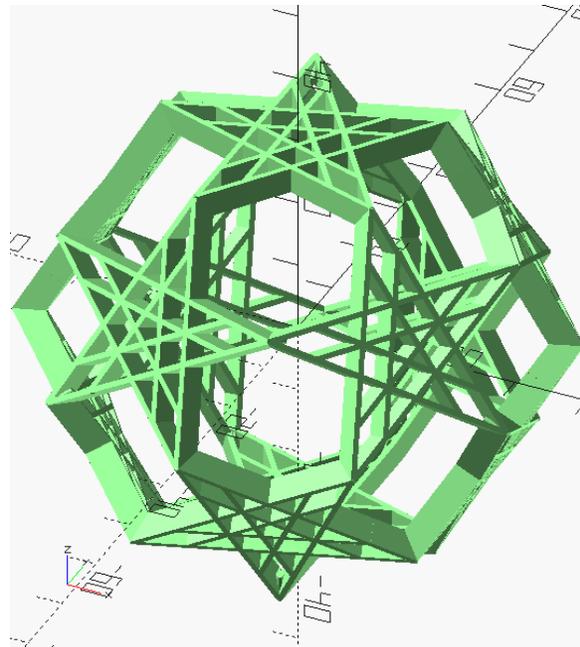
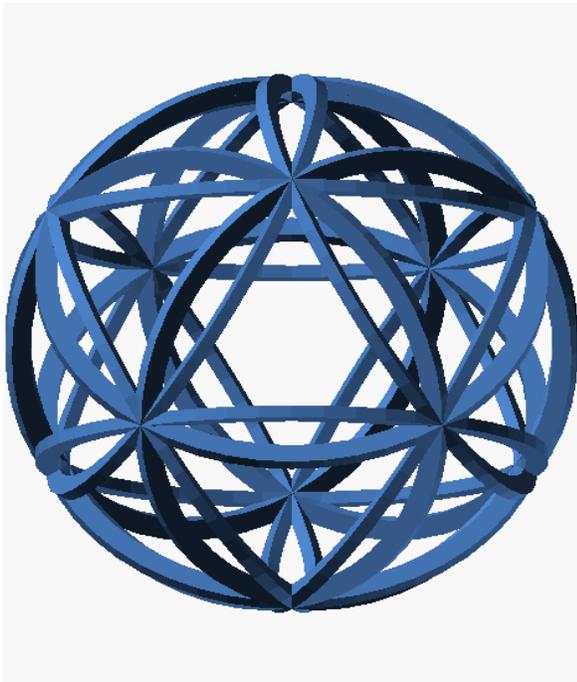
During the summer, I built 3 bookshelves, and about 100 3D printer projects. And I bought a lawn tractor and a tiller from Home Depot over the internet, because the old ones ~failed (boy, oh, boy, those are big boxes ..& "with some assembly required." Woof! The box disassembly alone was amazing.). So I didn't mow the grass all summer, wow, sent the old mower in to be repaired 4 times, and they never fixed it four times! Why? Hmm. And no gardening was done either, same story with our tiller, although we did harvest a few zillion tomatoes from in among the thistles. Should you ask, I contacted another repair shop. They never called me back after failing to pick up the mower, hmm, I sense a pattern! Meanwhile, the owner of the original repair shop retired. Oops. Huh?! So, I've got an awfully nice Simplicity mower, if it would run, and a new Cub Cadet mower which is only slightly heavier and has slightly more horsepower, And that's good. I can still lift it over logs but it can cut down small trees. The grass was over a foot high when I got to it in early November. Some areas though will have to rely on this winter to knock the grass and weeds down enough for me to mow. For example, I had planted some small apple trees that just disappeared into the lawn. Pretty sure they're still alive, and with some with fencing, but they really need some love.

Spent a large amount of time doing 3D printing this summer but hit a big snag more recently. I changed out the hot end so that I could print with higher temperature materials like nylon or PET. Sadly, It then did not work with the old lower temperature PLA, poly-lactic acid, so I have about 20 spools of useless filament strewn around the living room, though I found I could use Overture PLA+ filament (They put something special in their brew, smells like sugar.). And then more recently, the filament oozed out of the hot end and caked up all over the print head in one

big black gooey but glass like blob. Looking back, I accidentally used PLA instead of PLA+, oops! And so, with Marge gone far too long, 4 weeks, and winter madness and boredom setting in, I took the opportunity to tear the printer apart (and of course to also tempt the fates and the insurance companies to send Margaret home. Oh my gosh what a gooey, sticky, smelly mess. But the fates part worked!! :)) So here we are. You may have wondered what happened to last year's letter, and the one before that.. But pretty much like this year, writer's block and bouts of depression. So what changed? And I would answer... Old age: cause... Raccoons,! and an occasional Possum: the perfect cure for depression and writers block. But I digress.

It all started when I was about 5-6 years old. I wanted to stay at my grandparent's farm for a few more days. And my logic was impeccable "for a six year old." I heard my dad say he had to get home, so if I hid out for a couple of hours, maybe they would just leave me behind. There was a shed made of straw bales and logs, with a sheet metal roof, that held miscellaneous machines, The walls had holes, so I crawled into one, and there, much to my surprise, was a mother raccoon nursing her offspring. So I stayed and watched, she didn't attack or growl, and eventually of course I had to leave. I don't remember what my mom yelled, but she was the far bigger force of nature.

My dad always fed them on our farm and my mom would lock up the coon hunter's dogs until the sheriff arrived. So last year, i.e. much more recently, a very pregnant raccoon came looking for food on our porch. And I thought back to my youth and tossed her some food. To my surprise, she came forward and took it. It became a ritual, she would come up, extend her hands, and I would give her a piece of bread, even an occasional handshake. Last summer she had 4 kids and for a while, she came up the hill with all four kids, and one of them insisted on always climbing our screen door and making faces at me, what a little monster. The screen door is now shot of course, and he weighs about 25 pounds this year. So I throw out some food. Eventually, just the kids came up the hill and now they're fully grown. But always running in front is the "screen door kid," while mom comes up later, usually just too far past my bedtime. &Recently, it's been too cold. But they show a lot of optimism. The president of the coon hunters club lives just one farm down the road. And I'm pretty sure they also know what it means to be hunted. They get pretty skittish in summer, and the dwindling number of animals suggests that hunting during the summer is probably way too effective. They learn fast though, that's the good news. Even showing a pinch of charity once in a while. And they do a lot of the same things we do, but without the same fanfare, motives, language usage or tools/toys, etc. So my recommendation, save the wildlife and have a very Merry Christmas. Oh, FYI, be sure to read the health warnings about raccoons and 3D printers if you decide to feed them, it ain't pretty :) :))



Above are two 3D printable Christmas ornaments designed using Openscad software.

["www.gunstar1.com/Christmas/C22.pdf"](http://www.gunstar1.com/Christmas/C22.pdf)

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