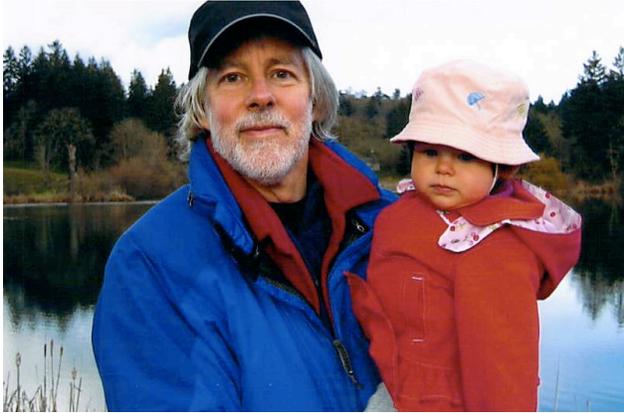


## 2008 Holiday Greetings from Laurel and Brian



Christmas shouldn't be an occasion for fear and trembling, but it is for us. When it comes time to write these Holiday Greetings, anyway.

Every year Brian says to Laurel, "Give me some ideas about what to say." And she replies, "We haven't done anything new. There's nothing fresh to tell people. We live such unexciting lives!"

True enough. And our Christmas letter anxieties are exacerbated by procrastination (not only do we fail to do much that's new, but we put off repeating the old stuff).

So by the time we get around to writing this, some marvelously interesting cards have arrived in the mail, each detailing impressive accomplishments, travels, charitable activities, and such that make whatever we've done during the year seem ever so mundane.

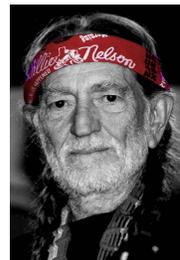
Well, as the adage goes, *write what you know about...* if it's fear, trembling, and mundanity, so be it.

In many ways this has been our year of "It's too scary, so don't look!"

When a brokerage account statement arrives and one of us starts to open it, the other screams "No, not now! Wait until we've each drunk a quadruple mood elevating latte. Or better, a bottle of wine."

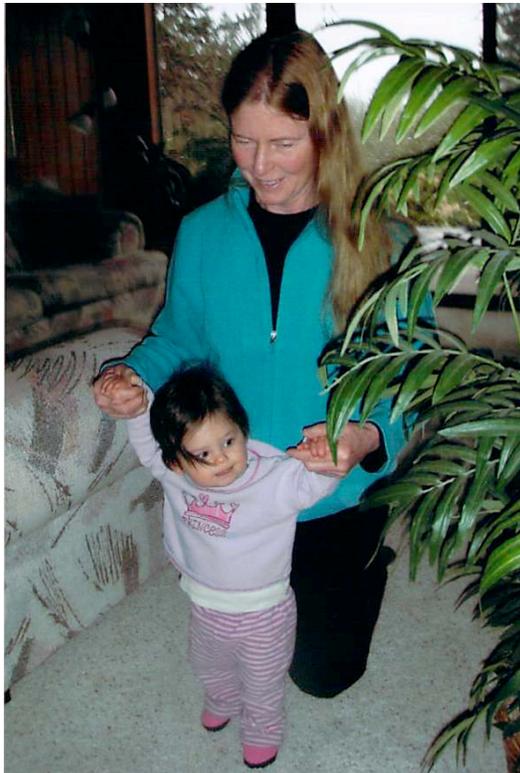
When Brian turned sixty and Laurel asked him if he wanted a party, he said: "Absolutely not! Why would I want to invite people to remind me that I'm just two years away from Social Security eligibility?"

...And looking more like Willie Nelson every day."



When things weren't looking so good for Obama after the Republican Convention, we'd avert our eyes from poll results that pointed to a Sarah Palin vice-presidency (Oh, the unimaginable *horror!*)

But as you can tell from the photos, looking at our granddaughter -- shown here during her first visit to green, chilly Oregon -- was a joy for us. (That's Celeste, Brian's daughter, holding flower girl Evelyn.)



--over--

Our lives have a Golden Pond'ish quality. Meaning, we keep on doing what we enjoy, returning to the same favorite activities year after year. And also un-favorite activities, which comes with the Golden Pond territory.

Our ten acres in rural south Salem continue to give us a lot of satisfaction. Plus, frustration. A condo in the city starts to look *darn* appealing after you've had to replace your well pump, repair your septic system, and deal with clogged-up sprinkler heads caused by all the crud that came through the pipes after the new pump was installed.

So goes the circle of life: deal with problem, then cope with another problem, which often is caused by the problem you just dealt with (the tile floor downstairs is nicer than the old indoor carpet; it'd be even nicer if we'd known more about proper grout sealing before we wasted all those hours on our hands and knees).

Then there's the weather to complain about. This year we've been worrying about how mild and almost rain-free it's been in our corner of Oregon, dependent on well water as we are. Half of those worries are now gone. Still not much precipitation, but "mild" is a word far from our minds.

Snow. Ice. Won't be above freezing for a week or so. Driving with chains is a lot more enjoyable when skiing is the purpose rather than trying to simply make it out of our driveway.

But there are plenty of pluses in our lives that outweigh the negatives.

Brian blogs (see [www.brianhines.com](http://www.brianhines.com)) and does Tai Chi. Laurel walks Humane Society dogs and Pilates away. We take dance lessons. We visit our central Oregon cabin. We adore our Wonder Pet, Serena. We enjoy our friends and relatives. We seem to be winning the fight against a proposed subdivision in our neighborhood, though it still isn't over.

Then there's the love of Brian's life that led him to a profound philosophical realization: material things really *can* bring happiness. If you get a one-piece aluminum MacBook laptop with an illuminated keyboard, at least.

The only thing more boring than hearing about someone's psychedelic drug experiences back in the 60s (just got an idea for next year's unexciting Holiday Letter) is why they think a Mac is better than a PC. Luckily for you there isn't much room left on this page.

So let's leave it at this: having spent many years in the Windows dark side after being an early Apple adopter, Brian can say with absolute confidence that a Mac is to a PC as "Love Story" is to "Fatal Attraction." One doesn't have to say *I'm sorry* because it rarely does anything wrong, while the other is always ready to trash your precious files like a boiled pet rabbit.

We'll end with another truth. Granddaughters, laptops, and other here-and-now joys are so much more real than fears and worries.

May your 2009, and ours, be a year of looking life in the eye -- however it may appear -- and saying, "Glad to see you, friend." (Wrinkles and brokerage account statements excepted, of course.)