

2012 Holiday Greetings from Laurel and Brian

Well, a couple of months have passed, so its time for another Christmas letter. Wait!! What?? Can't be. It's been a whole freaking *year*. That's a big problem with getting older: the less time you have left to live, the faster life seems to go by.

Fortunately, we've found a solution. Get younger. Not by discovering a Fountain of Youth (though our supplement shelf bears a passing resemblance), but by embracing youthfulness. Easy to do with the lovely youths below. They're *so* embraceable.



This is Brian's exactly forty-something daughter, Celeste, and our precisely-five granddaughter, Evelyn -- who graduated from a wonderfully named preschool: Giggles and Grass Stains. A highlight of our year was seeing Evelyn compete in an oh-so southern-California'ish dance competition. Who knew little kids could be so expert at shaking booties they barely have?

It was a lot of fun having Celeste and Evelyn visit us in Oregon (Papa Patrick couldn't make it this year.) Evelyn and Grandpa Brian read "Samurai Cat" enough times to imbibe its warrior spirit, then got out Brian's wooden swords from his martial arts days and samurai'd away in the back yard. Giggling with grass stains, of course.



Zu Zu is our new full-time live-in youthfulness inspiration. She's a two'ish year old mixed breed, a.k.a. mutt. A rescue dog, adopted from a shelter in Portland after being brought there from eastern Washington.

Little Zu Zu and Big Serena get along great, as you can see. They can almost pass as mother-daughter, leaving aside Serena's detached Shepherd aloofness and Zu Zu's endearing "let's go chase squirrels! or cats! or anything that moves!" enthusiasm.

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Laurel has continued her post-retirement career as an almost-professional dog walker at the Willamette Humane Society, “almost” denoting the fact that she is a volunteer, while “professional” reflects her ability to handle canines of almost every variety and demeanor, along with expertly collecting their poop.

Including the terrifying beasts in this photo, who obviously require careful handling. Especially around dinner time, when Zu Zu, a chowhound who has never met a speck of food, or anything even vaguely resembling food, that she hasn't voraciously leaped upon with scary chomping noises.

This event was a fundraiser “mutt strut” for dog shelters. Laurel walked Zu Zu at breakneck speed for several miles. Brian strolled Serena at her take-frequent-breaks speed for the shortest possible distance that led them back to the starting point.



Here's a youthful looking dude, a skateboarder all decked out in his blue-laced shoes, holding his blue Kahuna Creations longboard and Big Stick. Brian would envy this guy's ability to land paddle his way along four to six miles of Minto Brown Island Park trails if the dude wasn't....HIM!

Yes, he's become addicted to senior citizen skateboarding. (Google that term; see whose HinesSight blog posts pop up.) Land paddling is a great core and aerobic exercise. Brian gets a lot of “cool!” and thumbs-up reactions from fellow parkgoers -- along with averted eyes from some teen skateboarders who seem to be thinking *this is just so wrong*.

To which we youthful sixty-three and sixty-four year olds reply, *deal with it*. We enjoy being as young as we feel, and on our best days we feel younger than ever. (Getting out of bed with a stiff back, not so much.)

Learning to dance West Coast Swing halfway competently has added to our feeling that 2012 was a good ever-younger year. May we all

become more youthful in 2013. Acting like a kid is too much fun to be enjoyed only by children.

Sadly, Laurel's sister, Mardee, died this year. At too young an age. But death is like Christmas: often it comes faster than expected. *Now* is our only certainty. Enjoy it... now.