

## Holiday Greetings from Laurel and Brian Hines December, 1997

Before getting into this year's holiday message, we are pleased to present a (partial) repeat of our 1996 letter:



**Yes!** Part of last year's letter was featured in a nationally syndicated comic strip! We have now enjoyed the fifteen minutes of fame to which everyone supposedly is entitled once in their lifetime. Well, in our case it is more like a few seconds of less-than-total-anonymity, since *not one* person has told us they saw the comic, much less realize that it referred to #1 daughter, Celeste. Sigh... So we have to manufacture a pitifully small amount of recognition in this fashion. Would someone who gets this letter *please* keep a copy in their purse, or wallet, and ask Brian to sign it the next time you see him? He keeps waiting to be asked for an autograph, and the pens he insists on keeping in every pocket—just in case—are starting to leak.

For those who don't read "Adam" (which seems to be almost everyone, darn it, though it appears in *The Oregonian*), the title character works at home, writing Christmas letters for people too lazy to do it themselves. A few months ago the comic featured a request: "Readers with a strange or bizarre Christmas letter may forward it to United Press Syndicate, Box such-and-such, Kansas City, MO." Strange or bizarre? **THAT'S US!**, we realized immediately. And to our great joy and relief (since portions of letters from other families had been featured for several weeks, and Brian was getting crotchety: "Ours is funnier than this crap they're publishing...damn fools...bah, humbug.") And then came the great day, Wednesday, December 10, 1997. The day Celeste's spending habits became known to the nation!

Well, you can tell the Adam comic was a highlight of our year. Which kind of tells you right off what kind of exciting life we lead. Still, we have some other things to share. Just don't expect as much humor as before; Brian is enjoying resting on his laurels (oops, we didn't mean to tell you about our sex life.)

- We have a vacation retreat now! OK, actually, 1/4 of a tiny cabin on the Metolius river, since we own it with three other families. It's a wonderful place to relax: no TV, and the phone hardly ever rings. The Metolius has to be one of Oregon's most beautiful little rivers. We hike, we read, we eat fudge from a store in Sisters, we keep the wood stove burning. It's a good life. Cross-country skiing to the Camp Sherman store, a mile away, hopefully awaits us next month.

- On the home front, we've done a little more remodeling (which would surprise you, if you remember last year's letter, and our downstairs bathroom experience). We have mirrored doors in our entryway now instead of wood doors. The only problem: each mirror reflects what is in the other, so there is a delightful, and rather disconcerting, "fun house" effect upon entering the front door. (refugees from the '60s prone to flashbacks—be warned)

- Plans are being laid for a replacement dog. Dog videos are being watched, "how to choose a puppy" books are being read, earnest discussions with dog owners about the pros and cons of various breeds are taking place. Sure, Tasha has some more good (and psychotic) years ahead of her, but Laurel is looking forward to, um—how should we put this without getting ourselves in potential legal difficulties—owning a less, ah, protective dog. The truth is that Tasha sometimes shows her love for visitors by not wanting them to leave. Turn around quickly to go out the door, and Rin-Tin-Tin on steroids might make you think twice about that ill-considered decision. "Woof! Snarl! GRRRR!" A nice sweet Yellow Lab can seem like a pretty good idea at such moments...

- Celeste has left that "major department store in Dallas", a.k.a. Neiman-Marcus, and has crossed to the other side of the marketing fence: she works for Oliver People's, purveyors of designer eyewear to the rich and famous, or anyone willing to fork over a few hundred bucks (at least) for a pair of glasses. Now she sells to Neiman-Marcus stores across the country, rather than buying *for* them. Celeste works in Los Angeles now, a city that seems to suit

her much better than Dallas. Having driven with her on the freeways of LA, we can tell you that she was born to cross six lanes of heavy traffic at 65 miles an hour, without using a turn signal, moving all the way from the left lane to the right to make an exit in less than two seconds (which seemed like an eternity, as our lives passed in front of us...).

- We were in Los Angeles to go to Disneyland, which Laurel had never visited. Her inner child blossomed! She wore Minnie Mouse ears the whole time, even in nice restaurants, jumped up and danced gleefully with Pluto during the Main Street parade, and wanted to go on the Indiana Jones ride *over and over*. Well, at least the last part is true. We went with Carol Ann, Brian's sister, and her husband, Bob. A nice bonding experience, aside from the fact that they got to stay in a top-floor suite at the Disneyland Hotel and we were several *long* blocks away in one of the first Best Westerns ever built (Cortez stayed there, we were told, when he discovered California). We actually could see the lights beaming from their luxurious accommodation as we stared out over a bleak parking lot, filled with out-of-duty tour buses.

- Brian earned his brown belt in traditional Shotokan karate. He can kick butt now! (as long as it belongs to a little kid, who doesn't have any martial arts training).

- And he is still writing...*Life is Fair* is, hopefully, on its way to being published in India, and background research on a book about Plotinus is almost complete. Coming soon:*Ageless Answers to Life's Most Important Questions*.

Out of room! Love and warm greetings,