

2005 Holiday Greetings from Laurel, Brian, and Serena



This was the year that it finally hit us: *we're getting old!* True, Laurel is as mucho-matching as ever, harmoniously melding with even an art fair coffee mug, and she's become a Pilates poster girl—capable of dazzling Brian nightly with amazing rolling feats of strength and balance on her exercise ball.

But nagging health problems lead her to open a new issue of the "Wellness Letter" with zeal that formerly was reserved for clothing catalogs. The phone numbers of pharmacists, physicians, and chiropractors are burned into brain cells. Somehow room is found for additional nostrums on the already-crowded supplement shelf.

Back pain. Sciatica. Tinnitus. Allergies. Hearing loss. Laurel is living evidence of how unintelligently designed the human body can be. What's especially galling to us is that, compared to the average American couch potato, *she does everything right.*

Daily exercise? Check. Healthy organic vegetarian diet? Check. Slim and trim? Check. Regular meditation? Check. So, go figure. Maybe she needs to go contrarian: start to smoke cigarettes and drink Jack Daniels.

Brian's birthday led him to become a "Hines 57," which brought up images of squeezing the last squirts from the steadily emptying ketchup bottle of life. Here he stands in the rain on the banks of the Metolius in central Oregon, pondering his increasingly grizzled future.

Which he undoubtedly will continue to write about on his much-beloved blogs: www.thehinessight.com and www.churchofthechurchless.com. There you can find many additional details about his inner and outer life, including more than anyone likely would want to know about a man's annual prostate exam.

Brian's blogging led him to enjoy perhaps fifteen seconds of fame (max) after he was prominently featured in a "Got Blogs?" story in the Salem newspaper's Living section. Three photos. Many quotes. He was wary of going out in public the day the story appeared. He wondered how many times he'd have to reply "Yes, I *am*" to the query, "Aren't you the guy they wrote about in the newspaper?"

Answer: none.

Turning to Serena, we must sadly report that she lost her head this year. Yes, she became the Headless Dog after an incident with a tofu cleaver that Brian still feels terrible about. But she's a big hit at Halloween.

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Just kidding! She's doing great—the healthiest of any of us, actually. Her dream came true recently when she ran toward her favorite squirrel tree and the object of her desire stupidly ran down the trunk and into her mouth. Poor squirrel. Laurel felt terrible but figured the gene pool for this species now is absent some DNA that doesn't deserve to be replicated.

Below Serena you see two people whose genetic heritage *definitely* should be carried on one day, thereby earning Brian grandfatherly status in the process. Celeste (Brian's daughter) and Patrick (her husband) paid a visit to us and showed that these L.A. types are capable of making it through a pretty rugged Oregon Cascades hike (though Patrick seemed to have lost his hands somewhere along the way).

C and P are living the southern California good life. They've bought a Hollywood house where their cats go on leash walks. Patrick is manager of a new designer-fashion Paul Smith store in Melrose Heights (an LA Times story about the opening says it offers \$1,500 shawls trimmed in ostrich feathers and \$35 men's socks). And Celeste still is an executive with Oliver Peoples, a designer eyewear company. They are, to put it simply: *très chic*.

As for Brian and Laurel, we are increasingly *très anciens*. But we aspire to age as gracefully as possible. Literally. Brian continues to enjoy his thrice-weekly Tai Chi classes, the kinder and gentler replacement for his previous hard-style martial arts training. Laurel has retired completely from the world of psychotherapy. But a new profession is on the horizon.

Just today she completed the training to become a dog walker at the Salem Humane Society. There's more to it than you'd think. Disinfection. Sanitation. Unruly animal control. You can't get by with just a leash and two feet.

Daily we go on our own walks around Spring Lake. From our house it's across the creek and through the woods. The lake teaches us a lot. The water always is the same even as it appears different. Sunsets give the lake one look. Noontime, another. Night, still another. But it's still the same lake. Geese land on it. Geese take off from it. Ripples come and go. The water remains.

Everything changes. We sure are. Aches, pains, wrinkles, worries. We try to see these as life's ripples and flow with them. As if we had a choice.

Brian and Laurel

