

2013 Holiday Greetings from Laurel and Brian

Don't worry. This isn't one of *those* Christmas letters. You know, the kind that make you feel like your life sucks compared to the oh-so-exciting, productive, happy year those other people describe.



Relax. We didn't go on any amazing vacations. Our dog died. Brian turned 65 and is on Medicare. Laurel's feet hurt so much we stopped dancing.

And here's a photo of our new down-sized home.

OK, that isn't true. (The rest is.)

It's just a woodsy "fort" we came across when granddaughter Evelyn and her parents, Patrick and Celeste, spent time with us this summer in central Oregon.

During their visit Brian made an award-winning video of a family tubing expedition down a beautiful stretch of the Metolius river.

(Award: Best Use of Senior Citizen Knees in a GoPro Camera Video Production.)
Behold it at <http://tinyurl.com/wegotubing>

Brian has kept up his longboard land paddling. Here he is at an alternative transportation event where some Salem streets were closed off to cars. The dude rocks! That's a Longboard Larry Walkabout with O-tang wheels and a carbon fiber Kahuna Creations Big Stick. As if anyone who reads this cares.

Well, maybe *this* will impress you: along with Paul Krugman, Brian has become a newspaper columnist. Only a few minor differences separate them. Such as writing for the nation's premier daily, the New York Times, versus writing for Salem's alternative paper, Salem Weekly.

Which actually comes out every two weeks. But since it is an alternative publication, most readers are too stoned to notice.

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Here's Serena, Laurel, and ZuZu back in February. They're with the Governor's partner, Cylvia Hayes, and her dog.

Yeah, *partner*. The Oregon First Lady isn't married. Moralistic conservatives here go crazy when she is called the "First Lady," which is why we're doing it.

At a Humane Society fundraiser we'd bid on and won a lunch with the First Lady, plus a tour for us and eight friends of ours of the Governor's Mansion here in Salem.

A highlight of the tour was when ZuZu peed on the rug in the basement. Fortunately, this is the least historic area of the mansion. Another highlight was when Hayes' cat somehow got out of the room where it was supposed to be put away.

ZuZu being an avid feline hater, dreams of next day newspaper headlines danced through our heads: "First Cat Killed in Governor's Mansion during Humane Society Tour."



Sadly, our beloved Serena left us recently. She had to be "put to sleep" after becoming a 14-year old dog with too many health problems. Pooping uncontrollably in the house, for one. Staring into space and forgetting what she was doing, for two. Weak hind legs that sometimes made it impossible for her to stand up by herself, for three.

We still have a mini-Serena. Had "portraits" of her and ZuZu made by a woman in Portland who creates amazingly realistic felt sculptures from photographs of pets.

Animals continue to be a big part of Laurel's home and volunteer life. Dealing with moles in the garden is a major nuisance; walking dogs at

the Willamette Humane Society is a major satisfaction, even in the rain and cold. Laurel also is organizing the showing of a film about the cruelties inflicted on animals by the wrongly-named federal Wildlife Services department. Unnecessary killing isn't a service to anybody.

Life is precious. Serena's death reminded us of that. As does the ending of Mary Oliver's wonderful poem, *The Summer Day*: "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

Great question. May we all answer it happily in 2014.