

2022 Holiday Greetings from Laurel and Brian

The checkout person at Trader Joe's often asks, "Got anything exciting planned after this?" Brian typically responds with "More grocery shopping. Then a dog walk. At my age, that's plenty of excitement."

So if you're one of those people who hates to get Christmas letters filled with news about a family's trip to Hawaii, how their child was admitted to Harvard Law School, and how much the mom is enjoying skydiving lessons — relax. You're about to learn how we made progress on age-proofing our home.

Which has been on our minds lately because, no big shock, we're getting older! OK, not old enough to be president of the United States like Biden, or House Majority Leader like Pelosi, but pretty damn old. Early 70s old, defining "early" rather liberally.

When Brian would go in for his annual Medicare wellness exam, he'd be asked if he was afraid of falling. *Not really*, he'd reply, *since I clean out our gutters by walking along the edge of our roof with a backpack leaf blower*. That would earn a response of *maybe you should be afraid of falling*.

Good point, so this year we had a leaf filter installed on our gutters. That made Laurel happy. It also made Brian happy, since now he doesn't have to worry about falling off the roof, becoming paralyzed, and having Laurel put a recording next to his ear that endlessly said "You're a freaking fool for cleaning the gutters that way." A point she'd made more delicately, oh, about a thousand times before.

Another exciting addition to our life (take your heart medicine before reading further if you're prone to palpitations) was replacing two bridges across the creek that runs through our property with much stronger ones. Meaning, ones that weren't cobbled together by Brian many years ago from a few boards. The handyman who built the bridges made them so they don't even bend when you walk across them.

And we installed railings along the stairs and walkway that lead from our carport to our front door. So we made considerable progress on the Senior Citizen Falling Front. Of course, given how life works, this pretty much guarantees that one of us will fall and break something in a totally unexpected place, like the Trader Joe's checkout lane. Only good news if this happens is that we could say "I'm going to the E.R." after being asked about exciting plans after shopping.

Moving to dog news, Mooka is getting weirder. Yeah, admittedly all dogs are weird to start with, but our Husky mix is developing some extra quirks as she moves into canine middle age. Like, not wanting to eat the chew stick she gets after her dinner unless one of us chases her around the living room, pretending to want to take the chew stick away. Mooka does come when called, though. Except when she channels her inner cat and decides that's too much trouble for her right now.

Returning to the theme of excitement, that's a low priority for us. If you're young, this won't make much sense. If you're near our age, likely you'll understand. We're happy doing simple things for as long as we're able to do them. Hopefully that will be for quite a while. But since the future is uncertain, who knows? Finding pleasure in small things, everyday things, routine things — that feels right for us at this stage of our lives.

And we try to remember that, as a modern-day Stoic philosopher said, everybody is living a dream life. Because no matter the challenges in someone's life, someone else has it harder and would view your life as a dream life. Be happy now. It's all we have. May 2023 treat you well. If you trip over a bad experience, fall as gracefully as possible.