

## Holiday Greetings, 1999, from Laurel and Brian Hines



Tasha, still the party animal



Brian and Laurel: they're cycling, writing, hiking, counseling--and aging



Our home: singing the praises of the Garden Poet

Bet you can't guess what Brian gave Laurel (and, um, himself) for her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday last June—a digital camera! Well, at least it wasn't a cordless screwdriver (she's getting that for Christmas).

Oh, did we mention that Laurel turned fifty last year? And that Brian is writing this? He's so relieved that he's back to the "one's, 51 that is, while Laurel is stuck on the dreaded "oh's"—as in "Oh, No! I'm 5-0!" But if you look closely at the photo of Laurel standing on the edge of Tam McArthur rim, you won't see even a single bead of sweat.

That's the result of her daily "driveway runs." She runs up the hill to our mailbox, walks down, and repeats until she feels that the chocolate and chip calories from the night before have been expelled from her system. We're not sure what the UPS guy thinks of all this—probably that he's delivering to an Everest-expedition training camp.

Tasha, on the other hand, is taking it ever easier, as her photo shows (we caught her at her liveliest for a Christmas picture). The dog's daily medicine and supplement consumption surpasses our own, as difficult as that is to believe. Brian isn't so sure about dogs being man's best friend, but Tasha certainly is our vet's best friend, since we must have paid her enough by now to put her kids through college.

Still, even with all our pet expenses we scraped together enough cash to buy mountain bikes last summer (Brian is shown on a Camp Sherman rental; his real bike is a mucho-cooler cream-colored Raleigh M80). We've had fun zipping around on central Oregon forest trails, scaring deer and squirrels out of their wits. The least fun (for Brian, at least) was Laurel getting a flat tire on a ride around Seattle's Lake Washington. Proving that chivalry is sickly, but not dead, he rode back seven miles to get the car—against the wind—while Laurel rested on the grass. Good karma was earned that day.

Speaking of which, his book about karma and vegetarianism, *Life is Fair*, finally was published in India. 25,000 copies have been distributed around the world, and hopefully a few people will be led to consider the wisdom of continuing as carnivores. Brian is about halfway through writing *Return to the One*, the world's first (apparently) popular book about the teaching of Plotinus—a classic Greek mystical philosopher.

Not many landscapers are willing to review Plotinus manuscripts, but ours was. We were happy to have such a literary "Garden Poet" (and his team of assistant poets) transform our yard this year. We weren't so happy that it took them a couple of months longer than expected to finish the work, but artists can't be rushed, and they brought their own poets-porta-potty. Keith, the G.P., did a great job. In the photo you can see the new pond and rockwork on the back side of our house (the front is equally impressive). Brian has become a quasi-Buddhist to fit with our more Zen-garden-like surroundings. Plus, if someone asks you to describe what you believe in, it is nice to be able to say, "nothing." Which also happens to be the essence of Zen practice, so putting off household chores becomes a spiritual exercise (at least to Brian).

Laurel, by contrast, is more into "doing" these days. Still psychotherapizing, she's also the head honcho of a campaign to stop further partitioning of lots in our area (motto: "More deer! Less people!") and was the first president of a newly formed non-profit organization aimed at educating people about domestic violence. Brian's social activism is limited to writing curmudgeonly letters to the editor, which he enjoys immensely.

"The kid," Celeste, is still happily living in LA-land, marketing Oliver People designer eyewear, and reading quality literature in the evenings with her boyfriend, Patrick, while we watch Ally McBeal on TV. How wonderful to be out-sophisticated by your own daughter (but she doesn't read Plotinus).

We're healthy and happy, and looking forward to the new millennium, even though it will be our last, unless we live to be 152. Warm greetings from cool Oregon,