

## ***2025 Holiday Greetings from Laurel and Brian***

We're at the age when, in the times before the internet and social media, distant friends, relatives, and acquaintances would get an annual Christmas card, glance at the return address, and think, "Well, they're still alive."

Mission accomplished! We're not only alive, we're feeling younger. Well, not actually, just in the sense that the older we become, our conception of "old" steadily shifts upward — which enables us to preserve the illusion of comparative youthfulness.

When we were fifty, sixty seemed old. When we were sixty, seventy seemed old. Now that we've passed that milestone, eighty seems old. So we're making time stand still. In our minds, at least. Our bodies have a different opinion.

Evelyn, our granddaughter, is just beginning her adult journey even as we creep ever closer to the end of ours. She is a freshman, or freshwoman, or freshperson at the University of Oregon in Eugene, just an hour's drive away from us.

It fills Brian with a sense of karmic satisfaction to see his daughter's child enroll at an out-of-state college (they live in California) just as Celeste did when she went to the University of Arizona after being born and raised in Oregon. Brian thinks, *Happy Out-of-State Tuition Paying, Celeste; been there and done that.*

Laurel also left Oregon this year. Twice. She journeyed to North Carolina to see old college friends she's stayed in touch with over many years, and to Indiana to see her relatives. The Indiana trip ended up being deeply meaningful for Brian, as she came home with the idea of getting a bidet for one of our bathrooms after hearing her niece extoll the virtue of this toilet upgrade.

The saying "you can't buy happiness" is absolutely false. You can, in Brian's opinion, since the bathroom he uses the most got the bidet. While he always found sitting on the toilet with an interesting magazine to be enjoyable, sitting on a warm toilet seat that also gives your butt an invigorating warm water massage, followed by warm air drying, is on a whole other level of pleasure. Not to sound too kinky.

We continue to resist the oft-heard advice that people our age should move from their non-easy-care house while they're still healthy enough to do this with some degree of ease. Our basic attitude is, you'll have to remove our cold dead hands from our ten acres, large yard, creek, and jillions (more or less) of trees we've planted and inherited when we bought our property in 1990.

Every day we walk Mooka, our Husky mix, on nature trails in our rural development that are hugely more pleasant than a city sidewalk. Such might be in our future one day, but we hope not for a long time, if ever.

Brian had a near-death experience (of sorts) when Typepad, the blogging service he'd used since 2003, announced that it was shutting down for good at the end of September, which was just five weeks away. That kicked off a frantic search for help in migrating his 8,400 blog posts to three new Wordpress blogs.

A small firm in India handled this efficiently. It was refreshing to get a message from them saying staff would be taking a week off for the Diwali holiday. More interesting than Thanksgiving, for sure. His readership remains low, owing to his Church of the Churchless blog being unpopular with religious people, his Salem Political Snark blog being unpopular with conservative people, and his HinesSight blog being unpopular with people who don't like the things he does. His attitude is, no big deal.

May we all march to the beat of our own drummer in 2026, and every year.