

2009 Holiday Greetings from Laurel and Brian

Ah...another year, another string of disasters for the Hines family.

Now, the horrors we're about to recount may not seem all that terrible to you. But that's because you're not us. Disasters are in the eye of the beholder. Here's the photographic evidence.



This is how a *very* expensive hole in the ground started off. It's a marvel: 440 feet deep, 10 inches wide. The only thing it doesn't do well, so to speak, is produce water.

We did, though, contribute to the economic recovery of the well drilling industry last spring, when we had the not-so-brilliant notion to take a stab on improving upon the water that our crappy old well produces.

We're still hoping, even after extracting thirty feet of silt from the not-yet-functioning addition to our underground landscape. Some people say that a boat is a hole in the water into which you throw money. Our well is pretty much the same thing, except the hole is on terra firma.



Then we had to deal with Brian's assisted suicide attempt (legal in Oregon, by the way). That's how Laurel views the Suzuki Burgman 650 scooter he got in June.

Brian sees it differently, of course -- just a way to thumb his nose at turning 60 last year. Nothing wrong with an innocent mid-life end-of-life crisis. Unless it ends your life, of course.

But doesn't it make sense for older people to be the ones doing quasi-dangerous activities, since they have the least years to lose if something goes awry? And so far he hasn't run the risk of parking his white Japanese maxi-scooter where it might bump into one of the black chromed-up Harleys parked in front of the downtown Salem Starbucks (*Japanese* and *scooter* typically aren't a Harley rider's favorite words).



Moving on to Disaster III, here's Brian, his granddaughter Evelyn, and daughter Celeste in Maui. The greenish flat substance on the right is the Pacific Ocean. To get to Maui you have to buy an expensive plane ticket that lets you fly over a lot of it.

When you arrive, most people enjoy the ocean. Unless you're a independent two year old on your first trip to Maui, invited by Grandpa Brian and Grandma Laurel who were *so* looking forward to introducing their one and only grandchild to the joys of playing in Napili Bay.

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Well, at least Evelyn liked being in the pool with her dad (they've got to enter a father-daughter look-alike contest before Patrick goes gray or loses his hair).

Just not in the ocean, where Brian had envisioned teaching her to become a budding boogie boarder. That was one more disappointment in our litany of 2009 sigh-inducing events.

Yet on the bright side...

Laurel got to experience what it would have been like to be a mom when she took care of Lily, her niece's baby, when we visited Indiana in October. Except, Laurel got to give her back after a while (that's the joy of elder parenting, no "keepsies").



Serena, the family pet, had a good year. We took her to the Oregon coast, where she licked her lips remembering how close she came to catching a cat who made the mistake of venturing onto the beach next to a dog-friendly motel.

Serena also helped us deal with an infestation of invasive California ground squirrels. We were able to trap and relocate some of them, while our resident canine critter catcher dealt with others in her own fashion.



Brian got an air rifle and temporarily forsook his vegetarian Prius-driving latte-sipping persona when the squirrels started burrowing under our foundation.

And even more amazing: Laurel learned to Facebook! Sort of. Just recently. A little bit. Log on and become a Facebook friend of hers.

Blogger Brian has kept up his HinesSight and Church of the Churchless blogs. He also uploads You Tube videos occasionally. A couple of videos about why Apple computers are better than PC's have garnered about 18,000 views.

His favorite comment from a viewer: *I didn't know they let old geezers put stuff on You Tube.* Yeah, jerk, they do. And you're only as old as you feel. Which is a nice positive sentiment to end with.

Best wishes on staying **young** in 2010.