

2010 Holiday Greetings from Laurel and Brian

Are you getting this “Christmas letter” after Christmas? Probably. Well, almost *certainly*, since we’re writing it 72 hours before the Big Day, and a 44 cent stamp isn’t going to impel the post office to deliver our message super-fast. That’s why we always put *Holiday Greetings* at the top of the page: to make it look like we meant to send our Christmas cards close to the New Year’s holiday.

Anyway, you should feel grateful that you’re getting anything at all in the mail from us. A newspaper story we read said that every year fewer people are sending paper Christmas cards. With the rise of email, Facebook, blogs, You Tube, and other ways of communicating electronically, the notion is that those who care about you already have kept up on what you’ve been doing during the year, while those who don’t care aren’t going to pay attention to your Christmas letter, so why bother?



Makes some sense. The 2010 posts in the “family” and “recreation” sections of Brian’s HinesSight blog (www.hinesblog.com) contain lots of photos and descriptions of visits with our oh-so-charming three year old granddaughter, Evelyn, and our jaunts here & there -- mostly close to *here*, but we did make a 45 minute international flight to Banff last summer.

So rather than rehash our already hashed 2010 life, we figure that what we should say in an old-fashioned Christmas letter is the *secret stuff* which doesn’t get spoken in our public Internet sharings. This is just between you and us!

(OK, plus anyone in the world who reads our Holiday Greetings after it has been posted on HinesSight -- but you’re the *first* to know our secrets.)

Like how Brian really felt after his granddaughter visited us last spring. We told everyone that he loved showing her the treehouse he helped build (photo above), plus taking her to the Enchanted Forest amusement park and Salem’s carousel. But the truth is that during the last part of her visit he felt absolutely lousy. Life barely seemed worth living. He was in a despondent funk.

Because Evelyn left her grandfather with a gift: the worst damn cold he’s had in recent memory. Of course, when you’ve started to collect Social Security checks, as Brian has, your recollections may have started fading. Regardless, a few cute little coughs and sneezes were the sum total of Evelyn’s symptoms, while Brian endured three weeks of a fever, hacking, nose-blowing, and lethargic fatigue. Still, he can hardly wait to see Evelyn again! (So long as he’s wearing a surgical mask.)

Proving there’s no hard feelings between grandfather and granddaughter even after the weeks of feeling bad, Brian was the producer, screenwriter, director, chief cameraman, and male lead actor in an instant cinematic classic, the recently released “Merry

Christmas , Evelyn -- 2010.” It’s a thrilling tale of wolves lost and found, 20-minutes long, though if you aren’t into home movies, watching the whole video may seem like an eternity. See it, if you dare, at: <http://gallery.me.com/brihines#100018>



Then there’s our trip to Banff, Canada. We like to tell people how beautiful the scenery was, what great food we ate, how we saw a grizzly bear, where we hiked, and other *it was so wonderful* slanted tales of vacation perfection.

Whereas actually: we managed to be there during one of the coldest, rainiest August weeks we’d ever experienced; the “elk” Brian photographed and exclaimed about on his blog turned out to be mule deer, after a hunter corrected his erroneous species ID; and months after our return we got a letter from a Canadian collection agency threatening nasty consequences if if we didn’t immediately pay the photo/radar speeding ticket that National Car Rental had passed on to them.

We also haven’t been totally up front about how we feel after a Marion County circuit court judge ruled in our neighborhood’s favor, stopping a 43-lot subdivision that threatened existing wells and springs. For five years we led the fight against this monstrosity of a development, putting in countless hours on all sorts of legal and administrative battles.

Yet publicly we’ve been pretty circumspect in our remarks, not wanting to gloat at the expense of the property owners who spent almost half a million dollars on what looks to be a lost cause. After all, they simply did what they felt was right, just as we all do. Here in this Holiday Letter, though....

GLOAT, GLOAT, GLOAT! We won and they lost! The owners started with 217 acres of groundwater limited farmland, and after spending \$480,000 on a hoped-for subdivision what they’ve got to show for it is almost precisely what they started with: nothing more, nada, zilch, zero. Which makes us gleefully happy. And, imperfect.

Hey, imperfections are what make life perfect. If everything and everybody were flawless, without a blemish, the world would be boring, predictable, and passionless. So we offer you our best wishes for a 2011 that’s kind of pleasant and happy, and kind of miserable and sad. (Whether we wish it or not, this is what we all will be getting.)