



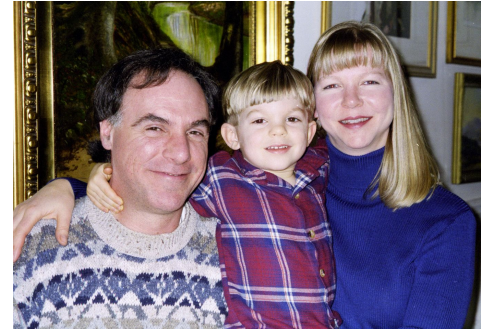
Happy Holidays from the Beinlichs!

Well, that special season has rolled around again—when the air fills with the sound of cash registers, er, I mean sleigh bells, and the Beinlichs let their friends and family know what we've been up to this year.

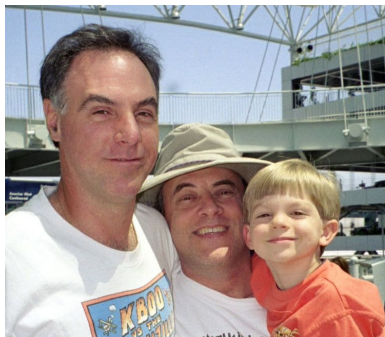
First and most importantly, we'd like to send along our sincere wishes for a joyful and restful holiday season. We hope this letter finds you and your loved ones happy and healthy.

For us, 2003 was a year of milestones. Let's start with Sharon, whose 40th birthday party in March was a complete surprise to her. She couldn't believe that Brian and Mason could do all that planning without her suspecting anything!

In addition to doing all that's involved in being Mason's Mom, she still found time to help the Northwest Earth Institute develop their latest discussion course, "Healthy Child, Healthy Planet." Sharon helped select and review the course's many readings. During the fall, a group of our neighbors and friends "test-drove" the course. This effort aligns with Sharon's desire to do volunteer work that helps to honor children in our society.



Brian had a similar birthday milestone this year, and Sharon kept the surprise karma flowing. Although his 50th birthday party wasn't a surprise, some of the guests certainly were! Sharon managed to get Brian's Mom, his brother Bill, and Bill's wife Barbara all here from Florida! And if that wasn't enough, Mitch Simons came from Arizona to be with us. There were plenty of other surprises—Barry Lyon's presence surprised both Mason and Brian, and Stanley Brown stunned everyone—including Sharon!—when he arrived! Many friends contributed to the "roast" that followed.



One particularly memorable moment was when Mason, microphone in hand, led the group in singing "Happy Birthday." It was a true "video moment." After the party Mom, Mitch, and Barry stayed on for a few days, giving us time for a more relaxed visit.



Brian spent the rest of the year dividing his time between his software consulting business and working on our farm. He found that balancing the time-dependent demands of both the farm and his consulting projects was a considerable challenge, one that he will need to work harder on in the coming year. He also stayed active in the community organizations he's been involved with for several years (AGO, OCVA, and the local CPO). For fun, he still does live sound and studio assistance for Fez Fatale, who released their third CD this year.

Mason (now 4) had a busy year, too, as you might expect. The year started off on a high note, when Mason got to see his favorite musical artist, Raffi, in concert. Raffi is a family favorite, and a very talented artist who has devoted his life to child honoring and other children's causes. He deserves your consideration when contemplating gifts for the children in your life.



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Mason had his own milestone this year, too—he started preschool at Calvary Lutheran in Hillsboro. He's in a class with 11 boys and 5 girls, and seems to be adjusting well to his new routine. He spent his year going on nature walks, in zoo classes and play groups with Abby, Turner, Sammy, cousin Sean, and others, visiting Oaks Amusement Park with Dylan, and endless birthday and other parties. Mason gets plenty of social activity!



Abby, Cathy, and Lindsey



Turner and Jenny



Dylan and Mason

It seems that we spend just about every other moment of the year on our farm. Both the frustration and the joy of our "farming" effort (it was really more like "gardening" this year) is that something is always happening, no matter what the time of year. Planning the garden in January. Ordering seeds and planting them in February. Transplanting in March and again in June. Planting new fruit trees. Pruning the old ones. Designing the drip irrigation system.



Mingus (now 13) surveys the garden

But it's not all work... soon the harvest begins! Cherries in June, berries and beans in July, plums, cucumbers and strawberries in August, pears, white grapes, eggplant, tomatoes, and chili peppers in September, basil, red grapes, pumpkin, and squash in October, apples in November. Harvesting, canning, roasting, drying, cooking, and eating... the summer and fall were some of the busiest times we've ever experienced. This year we understand what the Thanksgiving celebration is really about.

Speaking of Thanksgiving, this year we spent it in Utah with Sharon's grandparents, her father, and her two brothers. It was a genuine Stockwell gathering!

So now as Nature and the garden slumber, we turn our thoughts to friends, community, family, and the Earth. We try to contemplate the quiet that the season brings. We wish for a world filled with more peace and less war, a world where children are honored more and material goods less, where people understand that everything depends on Nature's ability to provide food and resources. We wish health and strength; and not just contentment, but *joy* for you, those you love, and those less fortunate. And we wish you a most peaceful and joyous holiday season and a new year full of positive change.

Love,
Brian, Sharon, Mason, and Mingus

Brian Sharon Mason

