



HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE BEINLICHS! DECEMBER, 2009

Welcome to the 2009 episode of *The Continuing Adventures of the Beinlich Family*. When we left off last December, we were almost knee-deep in snow. We finally dug our way out, and were fortunate to escape much damage.

Mason is now in fifth grade at Childpeace Montessori, where he loves his school and teachers. He's also taking piano lessons, which he enjoys. (He practices at home on his grandmother's piano.) He and his cousin Sean both played piano in their school play. Members of his class visited the farm in June and planted a 150-foot row of tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and other crops. They returned in late September to harvest, and donated over 600 pounds of produce to the Oregon Food Bank.



Mason and Sean playing piano at the school play



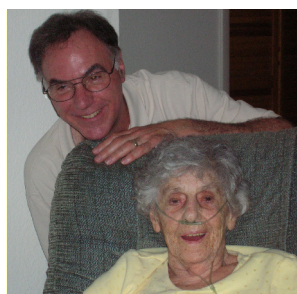
The wind-up... ♪ "We are the champions..." ♪

Mason continues his interest in sports, playing basketball in the winter and baseball, baseball, baseball. He loves pitching! He played for North Plains again last spring (and will again this spring). Their team won a pre-season tournament in April. Last fall he played with Wolf Creek Little League, with Dad helping as assistant coach. It's hard to exaggerate how much baseball consumes our lives – spring ball lasts from April 'til July, and fall ball from August 'til the end of October. Brian's help with the NP Junior Baseball Association starts in January with season planning and registration.

In March we traveled to Arizona for Sharon's brother Troy's wedding. One of our favorite moments was hanging out with the happy couple and their friends at their pre-wedding barbecue. On the way home, we stopped in Arizona to catch up with our long-time friends.



Sharon, Brian, Mason, Ouen, Michael, Susie, and Troy and Kim (the newlyweds)

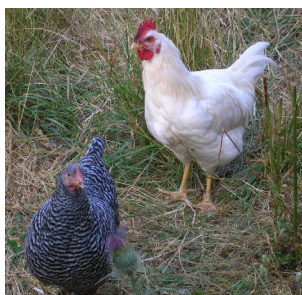


Brian and his Mom Ann

Immediately upon returning home, we took a hastily-planned trip to Florida to see Brian's Mom, whose health appeared to be failing rapidly. This adventure included a brief but pleasant visit with Mom, who at 92, is now doing much better, thanks to excellent home care being provided by Brian's brother Bill and his wife Barbara.



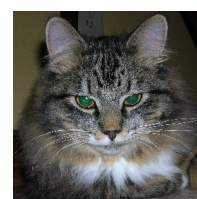
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Elvis with one of his harem

Our collection of farm animals continues to grow and change. In April we welcomed our first baby goat ("Grover") and three days later Sharon acquired 14 hens. After the school year ended we adopted one of the class's roosters, who we renamed "Elvis." Very early one morning in June, Sharon bolted awake, thinking that the goats were in distress. She ran outside to investigate, only to discover that the pitiful noise she'd heard was Elvis' first attempt at crowing! Elvis has since learned to crow just fine, and we've all learned to sleep through it! The hens began laying in August, and are providing us with fresh eggs to eat and sell.

We sadly note the passing of Mugwump, our young but beloved cat, who had an unfortunate encounter with a vehicle in August. He is very much missed. Our other two cats, Murray and Moxie, are healthy, as is "Crazy Maizy," our Golden Retriever.



The Mugster



Sharon's vegetable garden

As is customary, Sharon planted an extensive garden (about 850' of crops), which yielded the usual bounty of tomatoes, peppers, corn, squash, tomatilloes, eggplant, cucumbers, herbs, and too many other things to list! In November, Sharon spent five days in northern Arizona helping her Grandmother with some personal business. Brian and Mason really missed her – Mason was really tired of eating toasted cheese sandwiches (just kidding!).

Sharon did all this with even less help from Brian than usual. "That lazy bum!" we hear you saying. Well, not actually. For us, 2009 will always be known as "The Year We Saved Helvetia." Brian has been working practically full time with a grass-roots community group named "Save Helvetia" that formed early this year. The group has been working hard to convince County officials to back away from declaring over 5000 acres of land surrounding our farm as zones of future industrial and residential development.



"Save Helvetia" marches in the North Plains parade



Mason testifies in December

Brian was instrumental in forming this group and has served as one of their leaders, along with developing their extensive web site, SaveHelvetia.org. It has pretty much been all-consuming, with Sharon also contributing greatly. Mason has even become a citizen activist, testifying twice in front of County committees and Commissions. His testimony in December brought tears to the eyes of one of the Commissioners! (You can see video of his testimony on the Save Helvetia web site.)



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We're not finished yet, but all this effort has had an impact – the latest proposals show just about all of the area being preserved as rural land for the next 40-50 years! In addition to this impressive result, the best part has been the deep friendships we've developed with the dozens of neighbors in Helvetia who joined together in opposition to the County's development plans. You can learn the whole story on the web site. As if that weren't enough, in June Brian received an award for his years of Citizen Involvement (this was prior to Save Helvetia really getting off the ground).

Lest all work and no play make the Beinlichs a dull family, we were able to take a couple of breaks. We spent a most relaxing weekend at the beach with our Childpeace friends the Gordons, and also spent 4 wonderful days in the Mt. Hood forest with the Fez Fatale gang, singing songs around the campfire and gazing at the immense sky full of stars. Both escapes will be long and fondly remembered.



The Fez gang poses for a post-campout portrait.
L-to-R: Giovanni, Michelle, Leyla, Gemma, Jim, Sam, Pam,
Brian, Mason, Sharon, Sarah, Tim, Mark, and Derek

As our latest episode draws to a close, the endless Save Helvetia meetings are pausing for the holidays, Mason is on winter break, and we are looking forward to a couple of relaxing weeks before all the “busy-ness” resumes in January. No snow yet this year – just a cold spell that brought temperatures down to about 10° F. We hope that our letter finds you safe and warm, happy and healthy, and we send along our wishes for the happiest of holidays!

Our love to all!

Brian, Sharon, and Mason
along with Murray, Moxie, Maizy Mae, Agnes, Bernice, Grover, Elvis, and the hens



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Murray, the Great Orange Hunter



Moxie, the phantom cat



Maizy Mae

Brian, Sharon, and Mason Beinlich • PO Box 1417 • North Plains, OR 97133
E-mail: brian@beinlich.org or sharon@beinlich.org
See more and larger pictures at our web site: <http://www.beinlich.org>