

# BURNHAMISH

ONE NEWSLETTER TO RULE THEM ALL HOLIDAY 2003

**W**e would like to extend our best wishes for an environmentally conscious, socially responsible, low stress, non-addictive, gender neutral celebration of the winter solstice holiday, practiced within the most enjoyable traditions of the religious persuasion of your choice, or secular practices of your choice, with respect for the religious/ secular persuasions and/or traditions of others, or their choice not to practice religious or secular traditions at all.

Whew. This issue marks the return of the annual "Holiday" *Burnhamish*, which has either been greatly anticipated, or dread, depending on your perspective. It occurred to me the week before Thanksgiving that it would be good idea to start thinking about The Christmas Card <cue portentous music>. I decided to try *Burnhamish* again, just to see if I could do it with a severe deadline. If you are reading this before Christmas, I was successful. It also means I didn't break the color laser printer at work.

## Pro Creativity

I'm all for creativity. As a test engineer, I don't so much create as try to destroy. Sometimes I don't even try hard, it just happens anyway. Take some of my garden implements. Please. Before I break any more of them. One leaf rake, one long-handled spade, two snow shovels, one bypass lopper, and counting...

But, I do create nice things when I try. Carolyn is pretty crafty too, and this past May 24th, Carolyn and I successfully created a little person we like to call *Shae*. Her name is a form of *Seaghdha*, a male Gaelic name meaning "Admirable." Because of our families' deep Scottish and Irish roots, we felt a need to honor our ancestors' history and culture. Okay, it was the only name we could both agree upon.



Shae Gits Burnham  
at six months

Carolyn spent the better part of the first half of 2003 doing the actual creating, and she didn't skimp on the ingredients. Especially the hair. Shae had quite a head of hair. Lauren had a lot of hair when she emerged from the womb, too. John still has all his hair. Carolyn has styled her hair away from her forehead for the first time since she was 13. Buffy is chewing the hair off her legs for some reason. We seem to have a few hair issues. I've digressed again, haven't I? Sorry.

Carolyn planned Shae's birth to make her maternity leave coincide with summer vacation. Grandma and Grandpa Gentry and Grandma Burnham helped make the first month with two children at home easier for Carolyn (while I thoughtlessly went back to work). It's amazing how much gets done at home when I'm *not* home. Hm.

## The Peter Principle?

Well, it happened. I got promoted. I am now a *Senior Test Engineer*. Six years after my last promotion, it happened again. Where did I go wrong? Was I paying too much attention to detail? Did I negotiate too effectively? Did I foster an atmosphere of teamwork, of all things? However I got here, I won't knock it.

It remains to be seen whether I have reached my highest level of competency. The work I actually do hasn't changed that much, but it seems like I have a little more control over people and processes. Of course, my performance will



Photographic evidence that Lauren may lean more to the right- her right, not yours- than her parents. Shae thinks that's pretty darn funny.

be perceived differently in light of my new title, but I will still sit in the same kind of cubicle as everyone else.

Carolyn, on the other hand, doesn't get promoted, she just moves to a bigger television market (she is already at the top position for what she does at her company). She can't get demoted, because there is no position below hers. I mean, she can't become her own assistant, can she? Raises, on the other hand, are always welcome.

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## Readme

For our newer friends and neighbors, I would like to bring you up to speed on what this is exactly that you are reading.

In 1989, I started a personal newsletter called *Burnhamish*, for the sole purpose of occupying my idle time (I had not exactly found a job straight out of college). This evolved into an annual "holiday" publication I sent, in lieu of a greeting card, between 1990 and 2000. It returns this year after a two-year hiatus. For the curious (or merely bored), all the past issues can be found at:

## Check One More off the List

While the fact that John was significantly promoted to Senior Test Engineer in July is noteworthy, it enabled us to achieve another milestone: the minivan acquisition. That's right, we caved. On our past trips to Grandma's, we barely fit ourselves and our stuff into a compact SUV and a roof carrier, and that was travelling with only one child; we figured we were doomed once No. 2 came along and started accumulating her own stuff. I once vowed never to buy one; I now embrace the minivan. After a couple of five-hour-plus trips to see relatives, we are now thinking of embracing an in-car DVD player. For the kids. No, really.

## Milestones

At the time of this writing (and not long before you are reading this), Shae has sprung a tooth, ingested a Cheerio with no assistance, and added "da" to her vocabulary, which previously consisted only of "ga" and a gurgling sound. She also claps her hands with deft precision, and has rolled from her back to her tummy and back again, unaided. What is most impressive, however, is Shae's overall durability, especially when it comes to Lauren's somewhat over-enthusiastic affection. Lauren really loves her little sister. A lot. I hope Shae survives intact.

Speaking of Lauren, she said goodbye forever to diapers in April, taking on the challenge of using the "potty chair". In September, Lauren completed the Infant and Preschool Aquatics Program (basically, she learned not to be afraid of being momentarily underwater). On October 14, she declared, "I'm too big for the potty [chair]". Thank you, God. And, just in time for the holiday season, she has memorized the entire *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* soundtrack. By default, so has her father. Have a holly, jolly Christmas!

To find out all the juicy stuff we couldn't fit into two pages:



## THE LORD OF THE SWINGS

Last year we moved into a house that sits right next to the neighborhood park, complete with an old-fashioned park district-grade swingset and slide. This is a terrific place for the kids to play and still be close to home. So naturally, we felt compelled to build a playset in our backyard. We just want them to play a little bit closer to home until they can properly wield pepper spray or mace.

I chronicled this process with photographs and witty commentary at [www.burnhamish.com/gallery/playset\\_progress](http://www.burnhamish.com/gallery/playset_progress). The project took shape over fifteen non-contiguous days in July, and was completed just in time for Lauren's third birthday party in August. Three- and four-year-olds really know how to break in a playset. I honestly didn't think it would take me a month from start to finish (the box said 12 to 15 hours), but if you don't count two long weekends spent Up North in July, it really only took me a couple of weekends

and most of my weekday free time inbetween. Not bad for a pasty skinny guy in his 30's. <ahem> Upper 30's.

The most tedious was perhaps cutting the wood. I managed with a selection of small power saws, but a 12 inch radial arm saw <grunt, grunt> would have made my life a little easier. Someday, someday...



Not Lord of the Swings- more like "Mr. Slice"

The most physically exhausting was, however, the grading of the area under the playset. I could have spent a little money and rented something capable of moving large quantities of dirt from here 'way over there, but I need the exercise. Really.

Next summer I plan to add monkey bars and maybe a trapeze to replace Shae's baby swing. I think

I will also stain it, and add some cedar shingles to the roofed section. But why stop there? There's space under the tower for a little picnic table, or a sandbox. How about a mini porta-potty?

Maybe not (ew).

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