

# Burnhamish

Mini-edition

Holiday 2009

## Restaurant serves man steak done medium rare

*He was hoping it would be more "medium"*

I'll bet we were all hoping for something a little different in 2009. As a family with two working parents, we have relied on daycare since Lauren and Shae were three months old. For several years, we have been wishing to be able to see the kids off on the school bus in the morning, be home when it dropped them off at the end of the day, and not have to rely on before- and after-care at a daycare center. In February, we got that wish when we acquired a full-time housekeeper. Coincidentally, Carolyn's employer also eliminated her position. Carolyn seamlessly made the transition from powerful career woman to stay-at-home mom, as I bravely took on the role of sole bread winner. I remain employed to this day, thanks to measures taken by my employer to reduce expenses but maintain employment levels. Thanks to the bailout of GM and Chrysler, and to the Cash-for-Clunkers program, I can look forward to continued employment for the foreseeable future, despite my dream of becoming a frustrated cartoonist.

Lauren and Shae continue to get older, taller, and smarter. Lauren (9) continues in Girl Scouts, recently crossing the bridge from Brownies to Juniors, and Shae (6) has joined Daisies. Lauren also joined 4H, but I don't know when she will have to start raising a hog to compete at the state fair. Shae has joined Lauren on the ice, taking up skating lessons at the Detroit Skating Club.

We continue to progress musically. I am still playing trombone with the Clarkston Community Band, and Lauren started learning the recorder at school and handbells at Central United Methodist Church. If Carolyn picks up her flute again, we could form a really weird band. Shae is only in first grade, and has not yet decided to be our drummer.

Our household income was significantly reduced when Carolyn became



John Burnham discovered that although the steak he ordered did have had a gray-brown exterior, it had a fully red warm center. He was expecting a hot and red center, surrounded by pink.

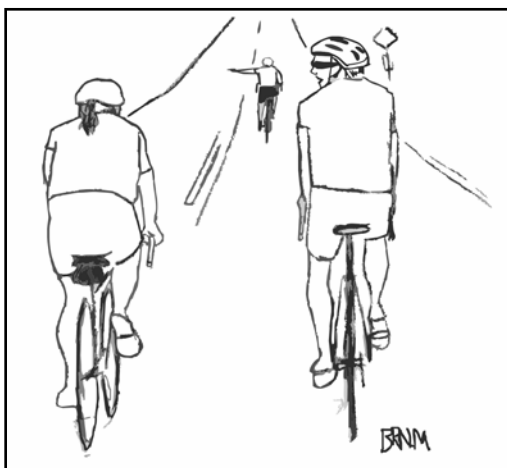
a stay-at-home mom, so we built a vegetable garden to help get our salads through the summer. The most successful crops were lettuce and tomatoes, with several good bell peppers in there somewhere. Elsewhere in the yard we grew basil, oregano, parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme. To keep the soil fertile, we will rotate the crops next year, planting corn, soybeans, and cotton. Carolyn also baked cookies, focaccia, dinner rolls, focaccia, Italian bread, focaccia, baguettes, focaccia, more cookies, pizza, and focaccia. She made just about everything she could from tomatoes, including salsa, soup, and sandwiches. Did I mention focaccia? I've gained 10 pounds since October.

I found out in late 2008 that I still knew how to ride a bicycle. Motivated by a sense of environmental stewardship and physical well-being, I tried bicycle commuting one day a week, twenty miles to work (Yes, twenty miles is a really, really long ride to work. I had an ulterior motive, to be revealed in the next paragraph. You can skip ahead if you like, but do you really want to be a cheater? No, you don't, because cheating is wrong, and what do you really learn by cheating?). So, I rode every Friday until the snow stuck in November, and resumed again when the snow melted last March. Since Carolyn was now home full time, seeing the kids to and from school, I was able to eventually ride three days per week. If I lived 10 miles closer, I probably would have ridden every day, unless there was something I absolutely needed a car for during the workday.

Why would I want to put almost 120 miles on my bike every week? I wanted to ride across Iowa. In July. I have always wanted to ride across Iowa in the hottest part of the summer (and who hasn't?), and Carolyn's unemployment made it all possible!

I rode almost 490 miles over seven days in the *Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa*, or "RAGBRAI." While I was out there, Carolyn and the girls vacationed with the Gentry families in Illinois. I spent my waking hours riding, eating A LOT, and drinking coffee and lots of water. Of course, I did that before RAGBRAI.

I only have a square inch of space left, so I'll let you get back to the rest of your mail. Happy Holidays!



*Think we should let him know he's had his left turn signal on for the last mile?*