



Merry Christmas 2008

We hope that every one of you is having a warm and peaceful Christmas. Here are some pictures from our lives:

My oldest son, Gabriel, went to Nordstrom's and bought me a white down jacket for my birthday (December). He took Dominic with him, so that he would have help in navigating the world of women's fashion. They looked here and there, equally disconsolate at finding nothing and at finding themselves in Nordstrom's. Then Gabriel saw a cream-colored jacket and started staring at it. After about a minute he told Dominic, "OK, this is what I'm getting for mom." He did, and I had a great birthday! (That is Gabriel in the picture.)



The next picture is of Val and Gabriel and some friends in the backyard. They are using a homemade slingshot to shoot water balloons over our roof, over the street, over the neighbors' roofs and into the blackberry bushes next to the Safeway parking lot. Gabriel and one of their friends (arms over heads) are holding the rubbery ends of the slingshot strings. Each string is about 10 feet long. The guy on the ground (red hat)



is holding the back of the slingshot as hard and low as he can, after loading it with a water balloon. Val is out in front with his hand shielding his eyes, calling out coordinates (a little to the left, no, to the right).

So, this is what happens: the young man with the red hat releases the sling shot. There is an expectant silence. All the men (who are regressing happily to 6th-graders at this point), watch the water balloon rise in the sky. They begin yelling to give it encouragement. Then it begins to descend and they try to track how far out into the blackberry bushes it will go. It disappears from sight and they all start cheering. This is what young people are up to nowadays. There's hope for the future!

Here is Val in his football gear.





Another one of Val: relaxing in front of the TV, eating some chili out of a saucepan (guy style). He and his saucepan are the center of attention. His attention only mildly diverted, Val continues to watch TV.

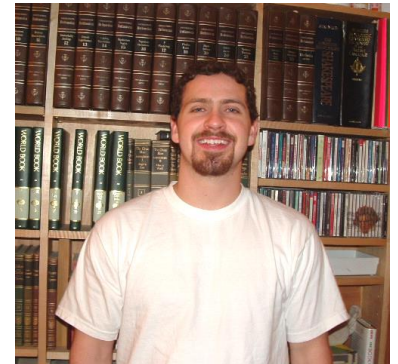
Here is Fiona animatedly expressing herself. Five years ago, when Fiona was only twenty, she would



have been mortified to have such a picture of her sent out in a letter. She would have said, "It makes me look so stupid!" Nowadays she laughs at it. See how grown up she is? And how grown up we all are? Now that we are grown up, we never think we look stupid! And who would be so unkind as to break the news to us?



Gabriel again, making the most of the snow.



The last picture is of Dominic, holding our oldest dog. The Christmas tree is behind him, the couch is comfy, it's warm inside and there's about 10 inches of snow outside. Seriously! It's been snowing for more than 3 days in Bellevue, and some of the nights have been down to 17 degrees F. Aren't you jealous? Be merry, snow or no snow! It's the season of brotherly love.

