



Merry Christmas 2009

We don't have many pictures this year. Maybe that means that we have not done very much in 2009.

The one of Val wrestling (he's the one all in red) is self-explanatory. Val is getting really good at wrestling, a fact that I am proud of and take absolutely no credit for. When he has a match I act like a different person than the one that I really am. I jump up and down and start yelling. "Go, Val! Don't give up! That's it! Yes! That's the stuff!" When



Val rolls his opponent over and is on top and pinning his opponent, I absolutely lose control. My yelling reaches the point where I can't yell very much anymore. "Yes! Yes! Go Val! Keep it up!" Then his opponent switches and Val is getting pinned. My heart plummets. Val needs my encouragement. If he's going to reverse this guy and have a hope of pinning him, I have to shout the right things. I search in my mind for the right words and come up with the tried and true. "Go Val!", I shout! "Don't give up!" Poor Val, I'm shouting at him, all his friends are shouting

encouragement, his teammates are shouting pointers, and most important, his coach is shouting directions at him. He seems to be able to ignore everything and only pay attention to his own agenda, which is to pin his opponent.



By the time I walk out of that match I am unsteady on my legs, drained of emotion, and peaceful. I've just vicariously participated in the most adrenaline-pumping activity I have experienced in the last year, now that I'm a senior citizen. And it's a very good

thing, because if my knees were any more unsteady I'd probably have to just stop and sit down, wherever I happened to be.

The picture of Fiona was an accident, I didn't mean to catch her with her eyes closed. I told her to close her eyes until I got the camera ready, and then I snapped the picture without remembering to tell her she could open her eyes again. But her look kind of accentuates her effort, which was to catch every last bit of cool air and wring every bit of experience out of it. I took this picture during an intense hot spell we had in the Seattle area last summer. It got up to 107 degrees F. one afternoon, and the living room in our split-level house was so warm that the leather on the chairs was hot to the touch. You had to brace yourself to sit down. The kitchen counter was cool, so Fiona draped her arms on it. You can see the rose in the foreground, blown already. It had been brought in fresh from the yard earlier in the day. That's the way that we all felt—full blown, dehydrating and hot.



Here is a picture of Gabriel constructing a drink. He buses tables and is a part-time bartender, while going to school part-time. He has to know what's in almost any drink that a customer might ask for. He has books of recipes for different kinds of drinks. I've never heard of most of them. The ones that I have heard of, that people used to drink when I was young (Singapore Sling, Harvey Wallbanger, for example), most people don't drink nowadays. They drink more "modern" drinks. Fashion even affects alcohol.

Whatever it was that Gabriel practiced making, it must have passed the test, because he looks fairly happy with the results.

As always, we hope you have equal measures of peace and giddiness this holiday season. -- Cynthia and Dominic

