



Upfront

These photos bring you inside our home. The decorations are pretty, to my eye. Stopping to look at them for a moment many times each day and night is simple, unabashed joy. The fruit of our decorating labor provides more than a month's worth of little rewards. The process itself creates a repeatable ritual that strengthens a family and reinforces its bonds.

I don't do much beyond the "heavy" work. I buy the wreaths and tree from men beneath a temporary tent. I carry them awkwardly from the truck bed through the front door. I rig the wreaths with wire – a tedious task that I walk away from several times before finishing, lest my patience and thumbpads suffer beyond repair. I hang these evergreen rings from our iron balcony railing, naively hoping they align on the first try. I right the tree in its stand, agonizing over its persistent tilt. I carry boxes of ornaments and nativities and artificial snow up the precarious garden level steps. I stack the boxes on the parlor floor and stealthily retreat.

Gabby, while lamenting a lack of helping hands, wraps the tree in lights and loads its branches with heirlooms and tchotchkes and homemade crafts. She's a whirlwind of uncompromising efficiency. She can't abide a job that's half-done.

Jenna has a designer's eye and a huge heart. She fills the scene in from its edges, imagining things into being, working feverishly into the wee of more than a few nights.

Sofia focuses our less-visual senses. She bakes. And makes candy. Quietly, without ceremony. Dishing up the kind of edible, unspoken love I easily understand.

This is how it is now, at our house, as it was last year and – knock on Douglas fir bark – will be next. It makes me happy. I hope the pictures convey a hint of the feelings that the stories behind them evoke in me.

Scott A. Laurer



*Wishing you joy,
fulfillment and peace this
holiday season and beyond!*

*We're excited about new
things to come in 2024 and to
sharing them with you.*



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