

# Shelley Merrill

## How does she do it?

This busy mom of three ran the Portland marathon, finished three quilts, documented the landmarks for all her kids, potty trained the twins, got her motorcycle license and boaters license, all in the past year.





*interview by Linda Blair*  
*photos by Karl Maasdam, taken at Sunrise Tree Farm*  
*in Philomath, Oregon. See Sunrise Tree Farm's ad on page 16.*

*Shelley with Cameron, one; twins Cressey*  
*and Keylin, three; and husband Cressey.*



# How does she do it?

## Work

### **Are you a stay-at-home mom or do you work full-time?**

I work full-time at Oral Surgery Associates for Dr. Schlegel as a surgical assistant. He is very family oriented and flexible with family issues. He has been a wonderful employer for the last 12 years—I am very, very lucky.

## Family

### **This issue we are featuring birth stories. What was it like to be pregnant with and give birth to twins?**

I lost two pregnancies so I wasn't sure I could have children. Then, at age 35 we naturally conceived boy/girl twins. At 33 weeks gestation my water broke. The twins spent 12 days in the NICU at Emmanuel Legacy hospital in Portland. The twins pulled through and are happy, healthy, wild kids today. I had amazing prenatal care from Dr. Morcos at the Corvallis Clinic with all of my children, and Emmanuel Legacy was wonderful, too. The babies were unable to nurse so I pumped milk for them every three to four hours around the clock. I produced more milk than I could possibly use—the most I produced at one pumping was 31 ounces. I donated breast milk to Linda Blair's new baby Ava while Linda was going through breast cancer treatment. *(Linda is MOM Magazine's Business Development Manager.)*

### **How do you balance motherhood and children's school activities and dinner and life and...?**

Balance is the hardest thing to find. It is the most elusive thing that I strive for every day and can't do. I try to accomplish my grown-up activities throughout the daytime. My work is my "time for me." Evenings are all kid-time until they go to bed. I have recently tried to freeze some dinners ahead of time since my husband (who does all of the cooking) is back in school teaching. Once the kids are in bed its clean-up time and

then crash. I feel like I'm running a race every day. It's a big job just to keep up with the daily activities. Being a mom is not easy. It's hard to find time for anything more than the basics.

### **Do you and your husband have "couple time"?**

We don't do couple time really, maybe once a year.

### **What activities does your family enjoy together?**

Our big family outing is to go swimming together.

### **Do you spend one-on-one time with each child?**

Not as much as I would like, but I do make a point to spend time focusing on each child every night for a little while.

### **How does your husband (or other support system) help with the family workload?**

We are two ships that pass in the night. I work days and he works evenings and weekends. He watches our children every day until 3 p.m. and then Susie Schwartz, expert mom and daycare goddess for 30 years, watches them until 5 p.m. My husband then works until 2 a.m. and does it all again the next day. He is amazing. He is a great dad and does all of the shopping, lawn-care and finances. I care for the children in the evenings and on weekends. During our twin pregnancy he started an addition to our home- a big project for sure. When the babies came at 33 weeks it put a rush on our construction. He completed the remodel when our third child arrived. He is very handy and was a contractor during his college years. Cameron and I lived in the new addition "maternity ward" for the first two months while the rest was being finished. He was very busy.

## Message from mom

### **What have you learned as a mom?**

Unfortunately when I was growing up I

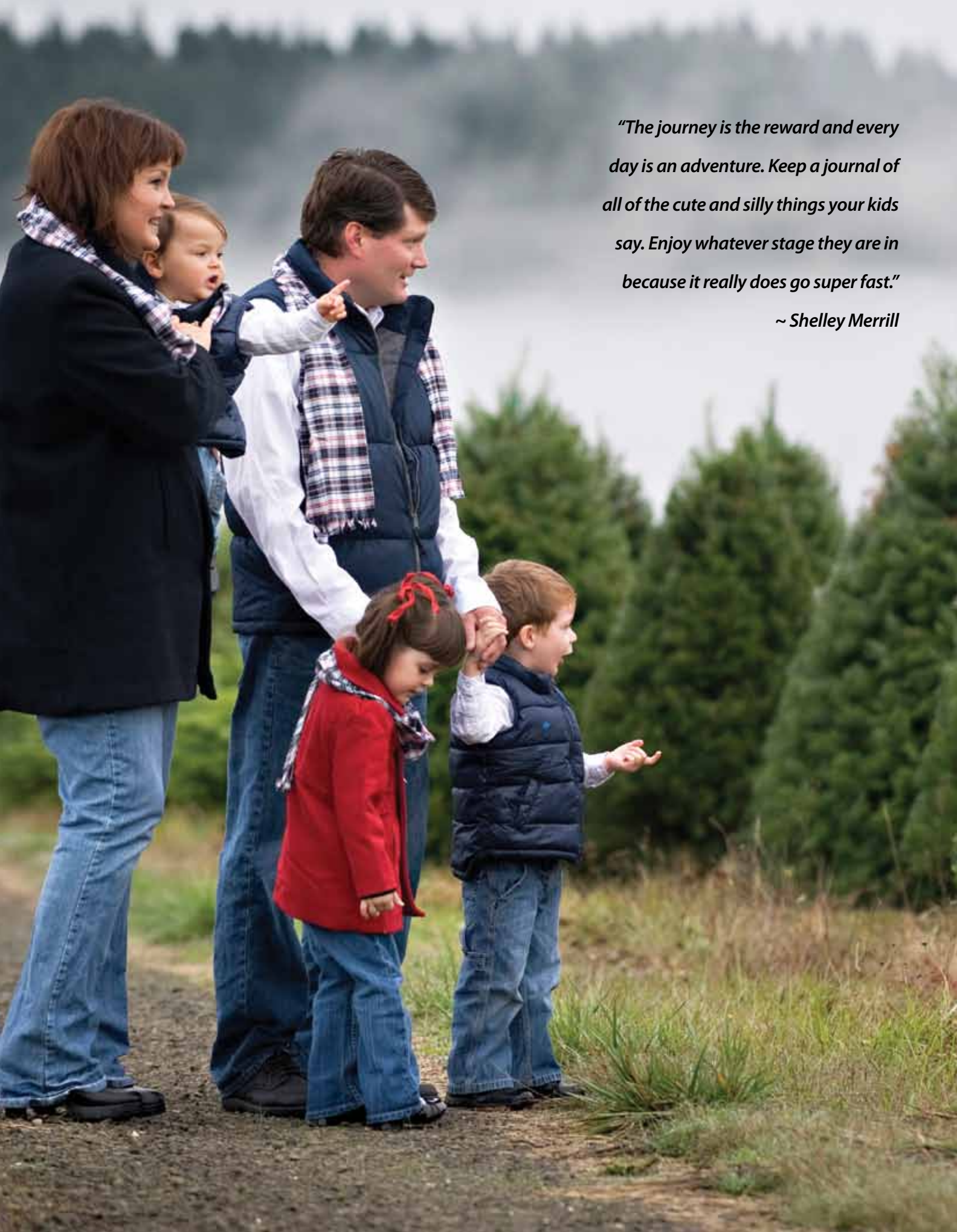
didn't pay attention to what my mom and grandmother were trying to teach me. When I became a mom of three I realized that I had so much to learn. I was surrounded by a group of mom experts and needed some help quick—that was when I started my "domestic training." Part of my new training is sewing, cooking, photography, organization, time management, cake decorating, creative design, shopping/couponing, early childhood development, and a mom's degree in boo boo remedies and common childhood illnesses. My friends, family and doctors are very good sports for tolerating all of my pestering and relentless questions.

I have a wonderful team of women who teach me how to make sense and enjoy the chaos of being a wife and mother of three. My friends are my design team. They painted my babies' rooms and sewed the bedding and drapes. They decorated while I chased my new infant and two-year-old twins. They taught me how to scrapbook, edit photos on-line, make gift/thank you cards, and party invitations. They trained with me for a marathon and taught me to make quilts and sew. They are my life coaches. I can't thank them enough for all they have taught me.

### **Any closing thoughts or message that you'd like to share with readers?**

If you have weakness in areas where friends / co-workers have strengths, partner up with them to learn new things and lean on their experience and strengths. It's okay to admit you don't know everything and good friends are always willing to help. Be kind to yourself and accept that not every day will be perfect.

The journey is the reward and every day is an adventure. Keep a journal of all of the cute and silly things your kids say. Enjoy whatever stage they are in because it really does go super fast.



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*~ Shelley Merrill*