bine his technology expertise with his new financial knowledge to automate and streamline the trading process, making it less labor- and paper-intensive? And why not then start his own company and sell the product to investment firms?

By this time, he had met and married Laura, a college friend of another of his sisters. With one baby at home and another on the way, the thought of giving up a stable, high-paying job prompted a rare moment of uncertainty. Ultimately, he jumped anyway. "I told myself, 'I'm never going to have an idea as good as this again," he recalls. "This is my ticket.'"

Once more, McLaughlin turned to his father, asking to live rent-free for six months in the apartment over the dental office in West Roxbury while he got his company off the ground. "I said, 'Go for it,'" the elder McLaughlin says. "You can always get another job."

Working on his own in the borrowed apartment, McLaughlin quickly designed his first program and began marketing it to investment firms. His former employers, Hellman Jordan and Tudor, were among the first to sign up. It was Laura McLaughlin who suggested the company's name: it refers to a landmark in the French village, Eze (pronounced something like "edge" without the "d"), where the McLaughlins spent their honeymoon.

The company grew quickly, fueled by competitive demand for faster and more accurate trading capability. Today, Eze Castle Software is among the leaders in its industry, with more than $21 million in annual revenues, 180 corporate clients, and offices in Stamford, Connecticut, New York City, San Francisco, and London. (McLaughlin now heads only the software business, but remains on the board at Eze Castle Integration.)

McLaughlin is keenly aware that success can turn to ashes overnight: Eze Castle Software is housed in space once occupied by an Internet company that flopped. So he hunts for bargains. He buys used chairs on eBay, and he bought a mammoth portrait of the fortieth president for his office ("I'm a huge Ronald Reagan fan," he says) when a big New York hotel changed hands and sold off all its decorations.

He also cuts costs where he can. One example: after two administrative assistants left the company, he divvied up their duties among everyone else by using a "chore wheel," like those in his children's grade-school classrooms. Now responsibility for plant-watering, supply-ordering, and dishwashing rotates among all employees, including McLaughlin and his executive team. The practice saves $100,000 annually in salaries, benefits, and the elimination of expenses such as a $100-per-month plant-watering service. Employees divide 20 percent of that savings; the rest pays for the company's social events and community-service work.

At first, employees grumbled about the chore wheel. Even colleagues at Eze Castle Integration smirked at the idea. "When Sean instituted it, we were making fun of it without considering the merits," Landry acknowledges. "But it's been successful. There's a certain sense of equality there that says, 'Regardless of your rank, you're an equal member of this group'—just like in a family."

MEANWHILE, the McLaughlins have been building their own family. Today, they are parents to Maria (9), Catherine (7), Jack (5), Bernadette (4), Charlie (2), and Lucia (1). They live in a Boston suburb during the school year, but spend weekends, holidays, and summers at their apple orchard in Harvard, Massachusetts, about 35 miles northwest of Boston.

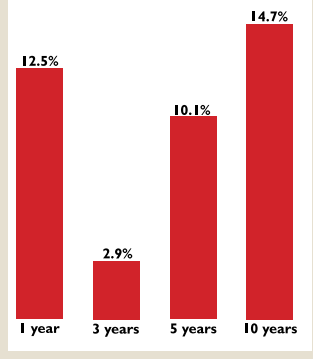
This is no idle country retreat. It's a working farm with 1,000 apple trees, a pumpkin patch, a cornfield, and a collection of chickens and sheep. Although a part-time farm hand cares for the animals on weekdays, McLaughlin does most of the other work himself, from feeding livestock on cold winter mornings to tending

Enjoying the Endowment

Harvard benefactors can, for the first time, participate directly in the superior investment returns earned on the University's endowment assets by Harvard Management Company (HMC). The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) last September issued a precedent-setting ruling that permits funds donated in charitable remainder or charitable lead trusts to benefit fully from the diversified, long-term investment strategies applied to endowment assets.

According to Anne D. McClintock, executive director of University Planned Giving, trust assets have previously been invested in bond, equity, and alternative-investment partnerships arranged by HMC. Although the returns have been fully competitive, they have trailed the results for endowment funds, which are further diversified, reflecting the larger size of the asset pool (about $1 billion in all planned-giving accounts, versus the endowment's $19.3 billion)

Under the IRS ruling, McClintock said, charitable trusts which designate the University as their ultimate beneficiary can now be invested in "trust units" whose performance will mimic the endowment returns exactly. Harvard, as a tax-exempt institution, does not need to worry about maximizing after-tax returns on its investments. But the potentially higher return from participating in the endowment may not be best for all trust beneficiaries, who receive income distributed from a trust during its life and pay tax at ordinary-income rates. Accordingly, a second new option will invest trust assets in an array of tax-efficient Vanguard mutual funds. Over time, they should yield lower returns tied to market indexes, but possibly higher after-tax income for beneficiaries. (Further details are available at www.post.harvard.edu/pgo or by calling 800-446-1277.)

Happy Returns

Annualized after-expense returns on endowment investments