

Christmas 1991

Ah, Christmas. What a season. The Bradens' starts in July when I come home from a long day at U.S. Central Command, and learn in the course of a conversation with Bonnie that, after her luncheon with her friends at Garlic Louies, she stopped somewhere and bought herself a new outfit. "Look what you got me for Christmas! Now you don't have to buy me anything."

This occurs about monthly ••• different restaurant - different present ••• through November, when she begins enquiring if I need to know what to buy her for Christmas. And guess what happens the day after Thanksgiving? Turkey sandwiches? Well, maybe. But going out and picking up a Christmas tree is a must. And it has to be fresh because it's going to be up until just before Easter.

As for the kids - they're doing fine. Karen is at Florida state University at Tallahassee, sharing an apartment with a friend, and studying social work. One of her requirements is to serve in a social-work-type organization, so she puts in a number of hours at a local soup kitchen. I keep reminding her that students who let their grades drop end up on the other side of the serving line. Karen is also involved with inter- and extramural soccer, and is working to pay the bills ••. so her time is pretty well programmed.

Sandra is at the University of South Florida, here in Tampa, so we get to see her whenever

- (1) she needs money,
- (2) she wants to use the car, and/or
- (3) her six bags of laundry need attention.

Around final exam time, I think it dawned on her that there is a correlation between studying and grades. Such is the life of a Freshman •• and she is certainly enjoying it.

Anne, in sixth grade, has discovered mini skirts and Teen magazine. She started the Summer with horseback riding, and is now active with Student Council, Girls Scouts, violin, Odyssey of the Mind (OM), and "ringing" in the Church Bell Choir. Two weekends ago she tried her first Karaoke singing and had two nice solos. We're going to put a book on her head to keep her from growing up so fast.

Robert, fourth grade, played "winter ball" Little League, and is now involved with soccer, where he plays goalie and right wing. And he just received his Webelos badge in Cub Scouting. Latest hobby is collecting baseball cards, and he says he has over 2700 catalogued.

Bonnie, when not strewing crafts through the house, still is a substitute teacher, attends exercise classes, works with the senior citizens at church - the JOY Group (Just Older Youth), stays active with the Buckhorn Homeowners Association - where they want her to be President, co-leads Anne's Scout Troop and OM, and plays tennis in a local league. She's up every morning at 5:45 to walk with a friend, and manages to put in a number of volunteer hours at both Robert's and Anne's schools. For church, she ran the Vacation Bible School, the Halloween fun night, and the Advent Festival. She was Team Mother for Robert's baseball and is pretty much a team mother to all the kids on the street in the area. Other than that she doesn't do much. One other present she says she wants is four more hours in each day.

For me, this holiday season is much improved over last. I much prefer sand beaches, and even sand traps, to sand dunes. We are happy and blessed to be together again as a family.

And for you, our dear friends, may your lives be filled with joy and love in this greatest time of the year.

Bonnie and Jay
Karen, Sandra, Anne, and Robert