



Christmas 2004



Dear Friends and Family,
Merry Christmas 2004

Hurricane Charlie - Hurricane Frances - Hurricane Ivan - Hurricane Jeanne. Maybe Florida needs some new bumper stickers. How about, "Florida - an entire state of waterfront property?" Or perhaps, "Florida - Category V weather, Category AAA fun!" Well, there is also, "Florida - Even with its hurricanes it's better than where you are." Thankfully we were mostly only windblown and wet - minor damage. I've found a technology that really has my interest. I read that they now have a Global Positioning System (GPS) chip that can be installed in a cell phone so parents can track the location of their kids. Now it's a matter of figuring out how to have one of those chips somehow implanted in Bonnie so that when she steps into Home Depot an alarm goes off on the computer and her credit cards are automatically disabled. Figure full retirement at least five years earlier with that in place. In the meantime I'm continuing with Stetson, and have added Director of the Stetson University Virtual School to my duties.



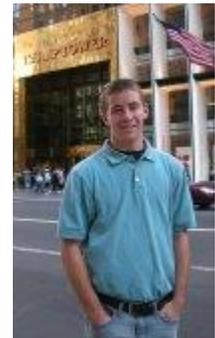
Bonnie continues to enjoy volunteering at Anne's school—she gets to be the Good Cop while Anne is the Bad Cop—making slime with the class and doing all the fun times that doesn't require discipline or learning. And, yes, there was another tennis league. Last season on a winning team—this year they make her a Captain and she went from 1st place to 2nd and no individual trophy. Might say something about her skill on the court or her skill in selecting the right players. Don't you always notice that losing teams always say, "...but we had a good time playing."



Anne has completed her first full year of teaching kindergarten, and is into her second. Although she still longs for the glitz and glamour of Ann Taylor and those personal calls from Casual Corner about up-coming sales, she will be the first to tell you she is glad she traded her business attire for polo shirts with the Yates Elementary logo on it. Her kindergarten class is substantially better this year. Most of the kids have an attention span longer than Bonnie, though that's not saying much. And most speak English. She is also tutoring a third grader to supplement her massive income as a teacher and to attempt to afford her shopping sprees. We've observed the tutoring, and it appears that tutoring means working with a student by feeding her treats for an hour. Not necessarily a full mind, but surely a full stomach. Sign us up for Anne's classes.



Robert's work as an intern with Christian Campus Fellowship at Georgia Tech this year includes lots of small group work. "What's a Small Group," we asked. A small group, we learn, is a three or more students and an intern with a common interest who hang out together, not necessarily all the time, but for get-togethers maybe weekly. Oh, that's interesting," we say. "What small groups do you lead?" It turns out he has seven small groups: Monday night Novice Racquetball, Tuesday evening Felinni's Pizza Group, Wednesday afternoon Video Gamers, Thursday morning Early Risers (meets at 11:30 AM), Friday night Movie Buffs, Saturday afternoon Television Couch Potato Sports Watchers, and Sunday evening Buffet Busters. Hmmm, what an enormous and demanding work load. He also teaches two Bible Studies and maintains his alleged intramural sports prowess.



Sandra continues teaching preschool at the church. Sandra has applied for a Kindergarten position at our church. That must mean she has graduated from pre-school to Kindergarten. WOW! Quite a change from corporate world. Scrapbooking and photography continue to occupy her two or three seconds of free time a day. She has become quite a juggler of carpools, schedules, church, children's choir, and teaching. Only pulls her hair out a couple times a week. Of course she and Anne are addicted to reality shows. What's next, an Amazing Race appearance?



Savanah and Seth attend in their own classes at the same time. As you might expect, the two grandchildren are being spoiled about as bad as possible by Mimi and PaPa B. In an attempt to further ensure our future well being, we put two computers in our office, and are starting them off with kiddie computer games. In about fifteen months or so they should work their ways up to managing our stock portfolio by day trading.

After Sandra has spent the last four years struggling to get Savanah to bed at night, Steve has figured out the secret. He accomplishes this feat by being the only father to lie motionless on the bed for 15 minutes. Amazing! The Nanny would be proud!! When Steve is around Seth and Savanah, forget being able to talk to them or hold them—they are definitely Daddy's little angels.

The mortgage business has slowed down a bit, but that only delights everyone else (but Steve) because he now will be able to come on vacation with us over the holidays. If you watched the Bucs game about three weeks ago, you might have been able to catch a glimpse of him. He managed to obtain a press pass for the Bucs game, being caught up in the moment, he had to call us every 30 minutes with a up-date on his location and who he was with. He even called us from the Press Box. (The only question we ask this year is, "So who would watch the Bucs, even for free?")

Karen continues with Lakeland Regional Hospital as a Social Worker. Unfortunately, the local hurricane summary: "...mostly only windblown and wet - minor damage" did not apply to Karen's house.



She had trees down, erosion, and other hits on the pocketbook. Plus some other major house repairs left over from the previous owner. Not that much fun. Karen is now thinking about going back to school for some online learning – at least no property concerns in a virtual school. Presently Karen to considering relocating to Naples, but after a trip down there last week, she is still trying to recover from sticker shock from the cost of houses.

Both my Mom (here in the area) and Bonnie's Mom Claire (in Ormand Beach) are well, and we are glad for the times we can get together with them.

Despite our ups and downs (mostly ups) we always remember that God has blessed our family with too numerous blessings to count. He continues to amaze us with the miracles of every day life. And for that we say, Thank You.

Blessings:

The Braden Family: Jay, Bonnie, kids and cats

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