



Christmas 2006



Dear Friends and Family,



We seemed to have made it through another Florida Hurricane Season but you should be aware that we had some significant damage. Not to the home, thankfully, but to our bank account . . . as annual Florida homeowner insurance rates are now equal to the price of your home. On the other hand, I'm considering a move to Utah. Isn't polygamy legal there? You see, I now have two other women in my life, Ai Ling and Miriam. The former is the pedicure lady and the latter is the message therapy lady. I have proposed to both. I thought a pedicure was for women, but gave in when Bonnie explained that a session consisted of five minutes of nail trimming and 25 minutes of foot and lower leg message. And Miriam has a way of taking care of racquetball hurts that defies explanation. Bonnie is still great with lots of life in her. I read recently that the average woman speaks 20,000 words a day compared to the average man at 13,000. I guess there is a colony of female mimes and mutes out there who are grateful that Bonnie is helping keep them from pulling down the average.

My Stetson University Virtual School duties resulted in brief travels this year again to Boston and West Virginia. February will find Bonnie and me in San Francisco for a conference involving international schools. Bonnie has been planning my conference "duties" that appear to be Napa Valley, San Francisco seafood, the Alcatraz tour, and similar adventures. I hope I can find some time to talk to potential clients.

Bonnie is still working out with Pilates, and now it's also "Body Combat." Hey, I did body combat for nearly thirty years and never had quite the excitement for it that she has. Bonnie leaves the house dressed like Sylvester Stallone in Rambo and returns looking like Sylvester Stallone in the 15th round of Rocky VI. But she says she likes it. And she likes Christmas even more. I guess that's not news. But you might be interested to know, and this is the truth so help me, that she has had her cell phone ringer playing Jingle Bells since September.

Anne has completed her third full year of teaching kindergarten, and is into her fourth. This year all her kids speak English as their first language, their parents are truly involved with the education of their children, and Moms and Dads come in regularly to help Anne with the class. Not only that, but all of the kids have come to school emotionally and academically prepared. Okay, now we are done with that fairy tale we can get to the truth. Although Anne has been accused of running her class like an Army Drill Sergeant, she continues to be the most sought-after teacher in Kindergarten as evidenced by other teachers who put their kids in Anne's class. Besides her full-time job, she also tutors and waitresses—all this to support her shopping habit. She still can't wrap her brain around the fact that teachers shop at Wal-Mart not Ann Taylor.

Eight Things that Hurricanes Teach You

1. **An oak tree on the ground looks four times bigger than it did standing up.**
2. **When house hunting, look for closets with lots of leg room.**
3. **AA, C and D are the only alphabet we need (think batteries).**
4. **Chainsaw-wielding-men are nothing to be afraid of.**
5. **You can't spell "priceless" without I-C-E.**
6. **Gasoline is a value at any price.**
7. **Candlelight is better than botox — it takes years off your appearance.**
8. **No matter how hard the wind blows, roadside campaign signs will survive.**

(Thanks to the Orlando Sentinel)

Ask how Anne's condo is doing. Fine, if you think Bonnie's second home should be there doing various projects. There is one task that does require some special help, however. Her dryer is not vented properly and that could cost \$600 or so for a professional to come fix. But somehow I don't think that's a critical task at this point because she is still doing her wash at our house, bringing it over in four or five baskets and then taking a nap while elves or something wash and dry and fold the clothes. Single living is hard!

Robert continues with Campus Ministry with Georgia Tech and it just so happens that his girlfriend, Natalie, transferred from Georgia Southern to Georgia Tech. Since Natalie has spent holidays with us and gone on vacations with us, I guess we haven't scared her off. Robert is in the process of raising his support with Global Scope with the objective of moving to Birmingham, England for three years to establish a Campus Ministry, so beware of any letters coming from Robert Braden. Right now he is limping a little, since hurting his knee playing soccer or was that flag football or Ultimate Frisbee or whatever is on the intramural sports list. Of course, he says that playing all these sports is just another means of religious outreach.

How many grandchildren do we have. Two? Nope, five!!!! Karen had three healthy babies on November 8th. What a life-changing experience – changing, changing, changing. And then there is feeding, feeding, feeding – just in time to start the cycle anew. Bonnie and I and Sandra and Anne and my Mom were there at the hospital and for the first week home. I remember back when Bonnie and I brought Karen home from the hospital and it was a 24-7 effort that the two of us barely survived. Multiply that by three babies!!

Sandra gave up teaching preschool at the church to become a full time home Mom. Steve and Sandra must have had too much time on their hands; as a result, Sandra is due in February. Their favorite activity is trying to retrain Seth and Savanah after they have spent a weekend with their grandparents. Steve's business is doing very well—they are even considering a mini-van. Sandra and Steve managed to go on a business trip to Chicago in October. Sandra said it was freezing, but with the no humidity it was good hair day everyday.

Bonnie and I still play volleyball twice a week. Sandra was playing with us once a week but had to give it up when someone accused her of smuggling out a volleyball. I still play racquetball three times a week and can most often beat the guys in the wheel chairs. Bonnie – per my request – bought me the biggest racquetball bag she could find. I have observed all the star tennis players have bags so big they can't get them through the door. The bag doesn't make my game any better but the intimidation factor is there.

My Mom here in Valrico, and Bonnie's Mom in Ormond Beach are doing well, though we had a bit of a scare with some pneumonia with Bonnie's Mom, Claire.

We always remember that God has blessed our family with too many blessings to count. He continues to amaze us with the miracles of every day life. For that we are so thankful.

The Braden Family: Jay, Bonnie, kids, and kat

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