



Christmas 2015



Dear Family and Friends,

I hope you have a Merry Christmas and that you had a good 2015. I do miss Bonnie more than words can express, but am so thankful for all my blessings. As a family, we did have a number of really good trips and adventures this year at the beach, at resorts, and at theme parks. Good family times recorded on BradenClan.

The major event this year was Bonnie Jane Zwerner, born April 17th in New Orleans to Anne and Rusty. She is a healthy, happy baby. Anne gave up her teaching duties with the arrival of Bonnie Jane so she gave up the *fun* of trying to bring up kids who were wayyyy below grade level. Rusty also had a good year, graduating on December 19th with a Masters of Divinity degree. At the beginning of the 2015 he was selected to be Associate Pastor for a church in Walker, Louisiana, working weekends at Victory Baptist Church. Even better, Rusty was recently selected to be the full-time Senior Pastor for that church, a duty he will soon assume. So now Rusty will be able to put the congregation to sleep on a regular basis. (I tried a mail-in "NO" vote to try to get them back to Tampa but my vote somehow didn't count.)

Robert continues with Charter Bank. Notice that I don't say that he works for a bank, because working and banking don't seem to go together. How can going in at 10, taking two hours for lunch, and being home by 4 be called work? He has now purchased a second rental that is leased out to college students – congrats on your emerging new slumlord career. Natalie - of course - has a full time job with the three boys: Benjamin (6), Everett (4), and Charlie (22 months); but does work part time with the students of nearby Point University and is again PTA President of Benjamin's school. I'd say both organizations are pretty lucky, though Natalie doesn't meet what I thought was the criteria to be a PTA President.

Sandra continued with her profession, teaching Language Arts to third graders at a nearby elementary school. She really enjoys the *excitement* of getting kids to be able to write a three paragraph story. Husband Steve continues with his insurance business and continues to manage a 65 home trailer park, something that keeps him in close contact with various county inspectors, whose job is to find ways to write him up. (Did I already use the word "slumlord?") Their three children, Savannah (15), Seth (13), and Sydney (8) are doing well in school and keep busy with extra-curricular activities.

Still at it for Book #2. Set a goal of 5,000 words a month and have now done so for 15 months. First draft maybe in March. Not in it for the money, just an interesting exercise. That's what people say when their books don't sell. But I won't need to do any Christmas shopping next year - just gift the book to everyone. Signed copies for family and special friends!!!

My two-days-a-week golf game has improved dramatically - not. But I like the guys and look forward to playing. And my racquetball game has probably not improved, but I'm still pretty decent for my age. There is something to be said for being able to beat players one-third your age, and I just kick the crutches out from under players that are my age.

Important stuff: My wonderful collection of University of Florida Gator jokes has grown to 200! As I said before, when you are retired, you can find lots of ways to waste your time.

Have been watching the Presidential political debates and doing pretty good so far - have managed to not throw a shoe through my TV screen - yet.

That's it for this year. May you continue to grow in God's grace, mercy, and love.

The Braden Family:
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Jay, kids, grandkids, and (spoiled) kat
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Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV):

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV):

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."