



## Christmas 1999

Dear Friends and Family,

Merry Christmas 1999!

This will probably be our last Christmas letter. I know that will be good news for most. In line with technology, I am thinking about buying a CD disk writer and sending out CDs next year. I figure I can have Power Point slides shows with embedded sound and video clips and thereby deliver blow-by-blow documentation of the Braden's Millenium Year. This should no doubt give everyone at least 20-30 hours of entertainment.

For me, work is still okay and schoolwork is still something to be endured. I finally finished my classes so Bonnie will just be typing my dissertation and not my term papers.



Bonnie continues to work for The Academy, which is the group of senior people who get together under the FSU banner for classes and other activities. She loves her job. Bonnie keeps them young and would probably work free if the truth were known. Actually, for what she is paid, free is really not that far off. She's only had a couple of offers from older gentlemen to accompany them on trips to Las Vegas but is expecting to get more.

Robert is at the point where he has to make a decision about college. Of course, since we are Florida residents and he is eligible for a Florida Merit Scholarship, he is looking out-of-state. This is part of a plan to keep me working 'til I'm 95. Other than school, he is still practicing tennis and occasionally helping out in toilet-papering friends' houses, downloading and playing computer games, and pretending not to be interested in girls - which appears to be a winning strategy-his youth group leader refers to him as "the magnet."



Anne is hanging in there at FSU. This year she is living at her sorority and trying not to let schoolwork infringe too greatly on her social life. We still get to see her a lot, as when she (1) needs money, (2) has to have her wash done, (3) requires last minute help with a paper, (4) wants Bonnie to get her some things at the store, or (5) borrows a car to maintain her lifestyle.

Sandra and Steve continue with their jobs in peddling Tyson chicken and Arrow Electronics computer parts, respectively. They both work out of their home and you know what that means, right? - a tax advantage you say? Well, yes, but Sandra is expecting in March so they must have taken their work breaks together or something like that.

Karen is now employed with Florida's Department of Children and Families, helping foster children. Notice the use of the word "employed" which, for state jobs, does not equate to the phrase "works for" because we all know no one who is a state employee really works.

This has been a pressure-filled year at the house. The kids were putting on a lot a pressure about our vehicle fleet that they found embarrassing to drive. We found-under protest-a good home for Anne's '69 VW. Hey, the thing was a genuine antique that ran most of the time. That left our '90 Dodge Caravan with dents courtesy of Bonnie, Anne, and Robert; and a headliner that sags only three or four inches. It only has 159,000 miles so it's good for a lot more years. Also, there is the '92 Saturn, still in almost mint condition except for a few dings and upholstery rips. Well, the short story is that we did go out and buy a SUV, and I hope the kids will let me drive it some day. I do get to provide the fuel money and think it should really be called a SUG (Sucks Up Gas).

Second childhood stuff: In a moment of weakness, we bought a Jet Ski. Actually, they are now called personal watercraft since someone hired a PR firm to upscale the name to match the price. We've managed to get out to the nearby lake and have fun with it with but minor embarrassing moments as when I tried unsuccessfully for 15 minutes to get the thing started before a helpful soul came by and observed that the fuel valve should probably be in the "ON" position.



Of course, this is football country, and we are all proud of our 'Noles. Both Anne and I entered the student lottery for Sugar Bowl tickets and somehow we each got one of the 1,600 student tickets issued. The next problem was what to do with two tickets when we needed at least four and probably seven. Okay, we confess that we copped out and played Greed, taking the money by selling our tickets for enough for everyone to go to the Outback Bowl in Tampa where Purdue is playing.



I'm back again coaching Rec League soccer. Robert still manages to leave large parts of his flesh on the field each Saturday, which I think is part of showing off for his girl friends. They like guys who limp.

Well, we hope you've had a good year and we send our best wishes for a great holiday season and a truly happy 2000.

Jay, Bonnie, Robert, Anne, Sandra & Steve, Karen and Beau the (spoiled) cat

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