



## Christmas 2005



Dear Friends and Family,

We were glad to learn that the Florida Hurricane Season ended three weeks ago. Either the season had to end or they would have to come up with another way to list the names, having run out of first names and Greek alphabet names. I'm pulling for Redneck names ... how about Hurricane Allie Joe? Bubba? Cooter? Need to decide fast because I think the 2006 hurricane season starts in mid-January.



Bonnie has figured out another 'good deal' involving Home Depot. Savannah's school sells Home Depot gift cards and makes 4% of the card value as their share. Since the school is registered as a non-profit, the 4% is a charitable deduction. Bonnie tells me that so far this year we have \$752 in charitable deductions due to Home Depot cards she has purchased. Hmmmmm. \$752 is 4% of what?

My Stetson University Virtual School duties resulted in brief travels this year to Boston, West Virginia, Costa Rica, and the Philippines. Bonnie was able to join me for three of the trips, including Costa Rica and Manila. I wasn't aware that she could say, "How much?" in so many languages. Since many of my duties are "virtual" I have been working from home two days a week. It's nice not having to get dressed for work. Besides, Bonnie has said for years that some of my best performance is in pajamas.

Bonnie has taken to working out with Pilates - or that is what she says. She tells me Pilates has something to do with body sculpting, but I think it is the name of that Greek pool boy who has jobs in the neighborhood.

We thought we were finally going to get some return on investment on that Georgia Tech education for Robert; and this turned out to be true – though not the type ROI we planned. It turns out that he joined the vow of poverty that seems to run in the family (Dad the Army guy, Mom the volunteer, Karen the Social Worker, Sandra the Wee Care teacher, Anne the Kindergarten teacher, and now Robert the Campus Minister). Evidently he couldn't handle the thought of filling out a big income tax return from working with Scan Corp, so he returned to Georgia Tech's Christian Campus Fellowship to be one of the leaders there as the Associate Pastor. We think they actually drafted him away from the business community in order to maintain the CCF intramural sports prowess – since he has his father's enormous athletic ability. Although Jay and Bonnie's vision of being pampered in their old age by wealthy children has taken another turn for the worse, we are immensely proud of his leadership skills and the high regard they have for him throughout the organization.

### Top 10 Reasons Florida Hurricane Season Is Like Christmas

10. Decorating the house (boarding up windows)
9. Dragging out boxes that haven't been used since last season (camping gear, flashlights)
8. Last minute shopping in crowded stores
7. Regular TV shows pre-empted for "specials"
6. Family coming to stay with you
5. Family and friends from out-of-state calling
4. Buying food you don't normally buy ... and in large quantities
3. Days off from work
2. Candles

and... the number one reason the Florida Hurricane Season is like Christmas ...

1. At some point you know you're going to have a tree in your house!

(Thanks to the about.com Website)



Anne has completed her second full year of teaching kindergarten, and is into her third. She has perhaps her best class so far: most of her kids are potty trained. She even has one or two parents that are involved with the education of their children, and this year at least 30% of the students speak English as their native language. Bonnie is still the M-W-F volunteer, and my Mom comes in periodically to read to the children. Nice having GRANNY 9-1-1- in the classroom.

Not content with 8-5 challenges, Anne also purchased a condominium. Of course her condo became Jay and Bonnie's home improvement project - but maybe we should have seen that one coming: cleaning, painting, chair rail installation in the bedroom, new floor molding... Anne says she thought the expense of living alone on a teacher's pay would be tough, but that she is making it. She made that comment while doing her wash at our house with our soap, using our electricity and water, eating our food, watching our TV, and using our DSL Internet access on our AOL account. It also doesn't hurt that my Mom helps stock her refrigerator, buy her clothes, and takes her out for dinner almost weekly.



Karen evidently had enough of being in Hurricane Central in Lakeland Florida, so she moved south of Tampa. She decided to emulate her father and get a job that has a really long commute, so she lives in Fort Myers and works in Naples - at the Community Hospital there. Go figure. Yes, with gas prices as they are it does require having your paycheck sent direct deposit to Exxon Mobil, but the time in traffic can be well spent on such activities as in learning brain surgery by CD.

Sandra continues teaching preschool at the church. She runs a tag team with Bonnie, who joined her in the classroom last year. According to Bonnie, the division of labor is pretty clear: Sandra handles the big picture by standing in the hall and talking with other teachers about the state of education in the United States, and Bonnie does all the work.



When not teaching, Bonnie is with her just average Braden grandchildren. IQs in the mid-300s. Can't do anything wrong. Love chocolates from their Grandparents, despite Sandra - with weak excuses such as tooth decay, sugar highs, wrecked appetites - confiscating enough of it to compete with Willy Wonka.

We've given up on last year's goal of making Savannah and Seth into day traders and are now pushing them towards the big bucks: NASCAR!

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

Bonnie and I still play volleyball twice a week, and Sandra is now getting inheritance points for joining us on Tuesdays nights. Steve is getting Brownie points for watching Savannah and Seth while Sandra plays. I am still the racquetball league champ at Plant City, which speaks more to the level of play than to my skills.

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 cats  
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No electrons were injured or damaged in the making of this letter.