



Christmas 2009

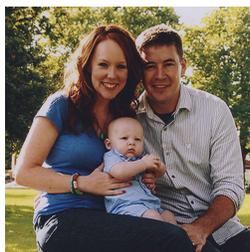


Dear Family and Friends,

Christmas came early for me this year, when Bonnie proudly handed me a nicely wrapped gift bag. “What’s this,” I said. Bonnie replied that she’d seen me go out every day checking the mailbox and come back disappointed so she took matters into her own hands. With that I opened the bag to find Viagra, Cialis, and various packages of erotic body lotions. Bonnie was so pleased. “Just what you were looking for” she said. I had to explain, “No, Bonnie, I was looking for my Stimulus Package, not a Stimulants Package.”

In a related area, we thought having season passes to DisneyWorld would provide us with all the wild rides we could handle, but a year’s worth of watching economic indicators provided more excitement than we ever dreamed. Unfortunately, the ride that was mostly downhill!! Now that has me sucking down Prilosec like they are candy mints.

The triplets: Braden, Skyler and Daylin, turned three in November. As part of their birthday celebration, Bonnie and I got to assemble their new swing set. According to the manual this is a 10-hour project, but since the triplets were there to help us, Karen, Bonnie and I were able to compress the work into just 15 hours. And we learned throughout the year that evidently three kids catch cold at triple the rate of others. Then, as they are taught, they practice sharing, so the germs migrate across siblings, keeping the home into a continuous Krankenhaus. Yes, Karen’s van drives itself to the local Urgent Care clinic.



In June we traveled to merry old England to visit newest grandson Benjamin, born on May 27th. The visit was great. We can tell he is brilliant (runs on my side of the family), and he was a joy to be with. Oh, yeah, Robert and Natalie happened to be there and were doing fine with their campus ministry *Canvas* with University of Birmingham students. As a post script, they currently need some prayer help as the owners of the great facility they are renting are in financial straights and are looking to sell it. That would be a problem.

Sydney, Seth, and Savannah, continue to do great. Sydney and Seth attend the same school that Sandra teaches at, and Savannah attends a very good charter school where Sandra enjoys volunteering (in her spare time). Seth decided to change sports and try baseball—where he excelled. Savannah has a real artistic flair and is quite an author—amusing her teacher and classmates. Steve continues to build his insurance business while keeping his trailer park running and, as if that weren’t enough, he now coaches Savannah’s and Seth’s basketball teams. As I said before, I have an interest in that trailer park because with one more downturn that park could become my retirement community.



We had another family get-together this summer, this time at Port St. Lucie, Florida, home of one of the Club Med vacation spots. My Mom “Nanny” again treated for most of the cost, and we had a great time proving that it is possible to eat so much ice cream that you get full of it. No, it is not possible to eat yourself sick, but there were a lot of people trying. The resort staff members were extremely nice, and conducted many activities where the Braden Clan got to exhibit its dominance in pitch-and-putt golf, archery, kickball, volleyball (of course), water polo, and buffet surfing.



Bonnie, Sandra, and Anne are about to make their annual “Girls Gone Wild” trip to the Big Apple. They will come back with all kinds of stories, but mostly about eating Junior’s Cheesecake so take heed and buy the stock now. It WILL go up sharply in the next day or so.



This school year Anne changed jobs. After six years as a Kindergarten teacher, she was selected for training to be a Reading Coach. The primary role of reading coaches is to provide support to classroom teachers for classroom reading instruction. Not that American kids need such help, as most spell almost as well as the cows in the *Chick-fil-A* commercials.

In October Bonnie and I snuck away again for our “annual” cruise. We just about have to sneak away since the kids and grandkids get indignant that we have the nerve to vacation without them. Anyway, we had a super nice time spoiling ourselves, snorkeling in three different counties, and taking in some awesome Mayan ruins.

Of all our trips this year, the one I wasn’t looking forward to was the fall visit to the local Social Security office. Now that was a trip - of another kind. This appointment was occasioned by yours truly turning 65. Let’s just say that spending two hours waiting for a seven minute session with a counselor was interesting in terms of watching the clientele. So in one year I went from Club Med to Club Medicare. And just to reinforce the pain of turning older than dirt, Bonnie arranged a Paintball outing to celebrate so we all had a great time but walked around with bruises for about a week after.



Speaking of Medicare. We needed some for the cat. He got himself sick but thanks to a great vet and the local clinic is now well. If we measured the cost to get him well in terms of vacations; the varmint’s hospital charges cost us 1 ½ cruises. Yikes! Did we mention we left a sick cat to go on our cruise and we arrived home to find Anne (who hates needles) giving an IV to Mosby? This is the lady who nearly fainted looking at some stitches Robert picked up after colliding with a baseball a few years ago.

Breaking News: The Braden remodel-the-kitchen project that was declared finished last year is finally complete. You see, we had what one might call mission creep. That’s when Bonnie decides that a kitchen project includes the front hallway and three bathrooms. The truth is that she probably had this scheme all along but just broke it to me slowly to minimize the chances of my busting a blood vessel. Oh, did I mention the above area needed a new coat of paint? Where is it written that you change room colors more than once in your lifetime?

Yes, I still work for Stetson University, a nice job. Bonnie and I continue to play volleyball once a week, and Sandra and Anne join us most Monday nights. I still play racquetball about three times a week, and Bonnie is faithfully at the gym two or three mornings a week. She also plays in the church tennis league and still volunteers regularly with the Deaf Ministry. We are also continuing our twice-a-month volleyball sessions at a nearby home for girls called Steppin’ Stone Farm. And did I mention that we have six grandchildren in the area?

May you continue to grow in God’s grace, mercy, and love.
We are so thankful for all our blessings.

The Braden Family: Jay, Bonnie, kids, grandkids, and (expensive) kat
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