



Christmas 2011



Dear Family and Friends,

I started this year with the resolution to lose 20 pounds, but Bonnie said NO the idea. Well, she liked the idea but not my strategy. My plan was to gain 450 pounds, go on and win the television show called *Biggest Loser* by shedding 470 pounds, thus meeting my goal and getting paid for it. Hey, this is a tough economy.

More on Bonnie, whom you know is pretty easy going, except for most of the time when she gets these wild ideas in her head. Then Bonnie becomes Banzai Bonnie. This year she went . . . ORGANIC!!! Whoever thought to put that word on butter, milk, and lettuce, and all other stuff that is, well, organic, was a genius; at least when it came to getting Bonnie to buy something at twice what it should have cost.

The word this past year has been Apps. It wasn't long ago that I didn't even have this word in my vocabulary. And I thought I could sneak through this part of the 21st century without FaceBook, an iPad, Tweets, and . . . Apps. And then I heard there was an App for excuses. So when I'm having snacks at the local pub after racquetball and Bonnie texts: "**Where R U**" I'll be able to quickly search my Apps and come back with something like, "Stopped at the library and have spent nearly an hour looking for just the right book for you."

Grandkids Braden, Skyler and Daylin, were joined this year at Limona Chapel Pre-School by Sydney. Now when they are collectively delivered or picked up for school they are referred to as the "quads."

Sandra moved job locations . . . again. Her employment status with her last school was temporary because she joined it after school started. So it turned out that permanent teachers claimed her position for this school year and she found herself on waivers. In a very, very tight job market, she managed to get not one but three offers, and is now teaching third grade at nearby Walden Lake Elementary. Of course that meant that Bonnie and Anne were again in the business of setting up yet another new classroom. Plus, having never taught third grade, Sandra has been having the privilege of writing a year's worth of new lesson plans.

Anne's third year as a Hillsborough School District Reading Coach just has her serving one school. That must not have kept her busy enough because she enrolled in a master's program at Stetson and spent most of her Saturdays for a year being one of the students in the Educational Leadership program. Her graduation reception was the 22nd of this month. Whew – and CONGRATULATIONS!

This year's family get-together in early August was another ship—this one out of Tampa for five days to who cares where. The key was not to forget to bring your spandex pants.

Bonnie, Karen, Sandra, and Anne made the annual "Girls Gone Wild" trip to the Big Apple. They had their usual great time, but noted that the hotel room was expensive (Duh!). I had recommended they pack a couple of tarps in their carry-ons and spend each night sleeping free with the Occupy Wall Street gang – but they never listen to me.

Here's one for the "I must be getting really old category:

I read that teens send over 3,000 texts a month. That's over 100 a day! OMG! UG2BK
(Oh my God! You got to be kidding)

Robert, Natalie are now in the States having completed four successful years in campus ministry. And Benjamin (two) has new brother, Everett, born October 12. Robert has been hired as a project manager for a local bank, the family just bought a car, and they closed on a new home on December 22. How's that for a few stressful things to keep you occupied? Hey Rob! Having fun punching a clock? Don't worry; you'll only have to do it for the next 40 years.

Racquetball: The good news is that I am still healthy enough to play about three times a week. The bad news is that I played like a cripple in my opening match in this year's State's Senior Games and was sent home after just three matches. "Next year!" say the losers.

Seth and Savannah are now into winter soccer. Actually, Steve and I co-coached a church league soccer program last spring – two teams; one with Seth and one with Savannah. The teams did well and we had the record for giving away the most candy prizes during practices.

I'm still with Stetson. Completed ten years in August. Starting to get the hang of it.

Bonnie and I continued to play volleyball once a week through late summer, but have backed off a bit since school has started and Bonnie's days got full with spoiling grandkids. Bonnie remains faithful in her trips to the gym; and she still plays in the church tennis league, though she went into mourning because she had her first losing season. I told her it comes with the territory: Bucs, Rays. We also continued our twice-a-month volleyball sessions at a nearby home for girls called Steppin' Stone Farm.

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 and kat



BradenClan@aol.com www.BradenClan.com

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