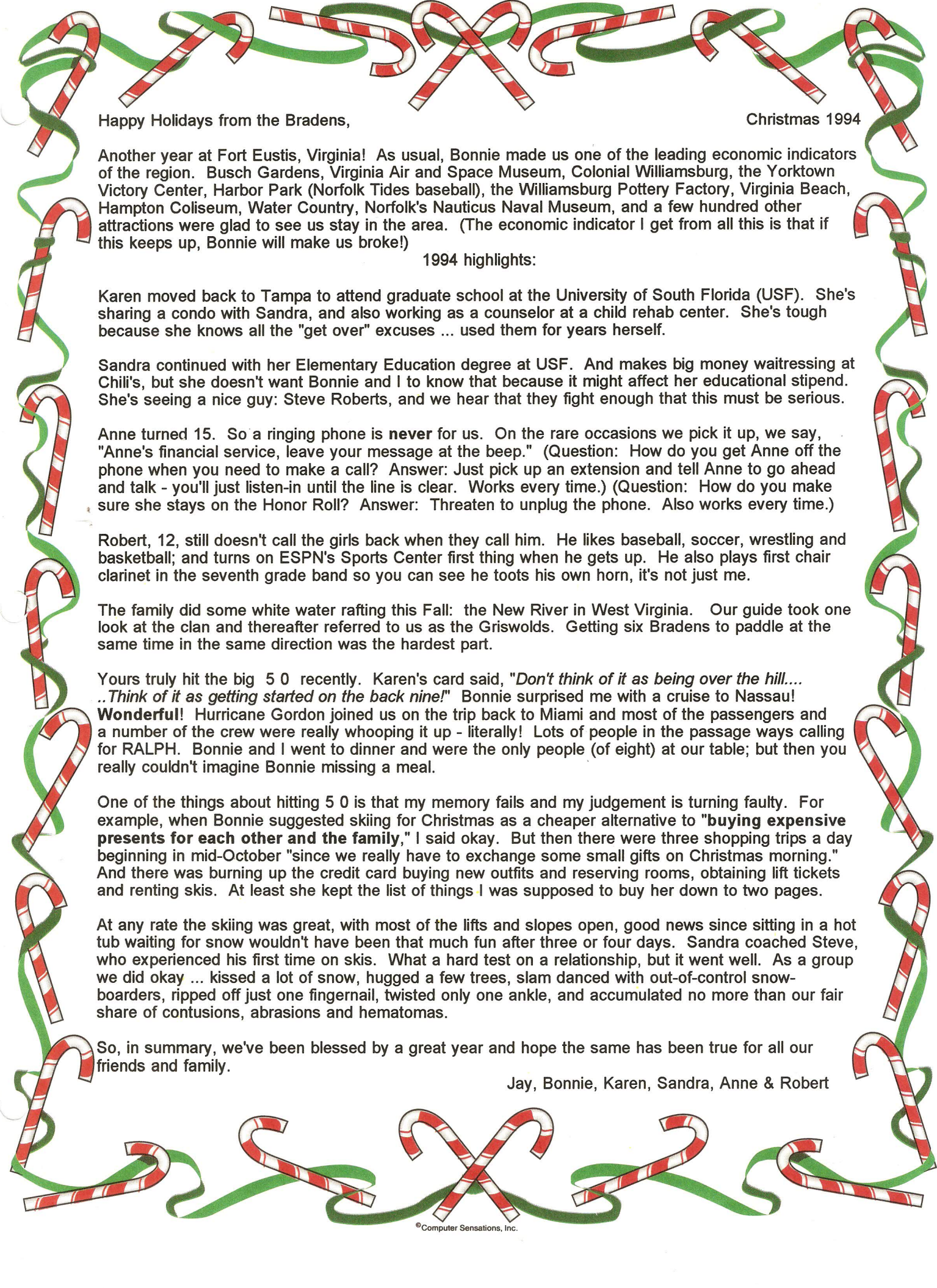




Happy Holidays from the Bradens,

Christmas 1994

Another year at Fort Eustis, Virginia! As usual, Bonnie made us one of the leading economic indicators of the region. Busch Gardens, Virginia Air and Space Museum, Colonial Williamsburg, the Yorktown Victory Center, Harbor Park (Norfolk Tides baseball), the Williamsburg Pottery Factory, Virginia Beach, Hampton Coliseum, Water Country, Norfolk's Nauticus Naval Museum, and a few hundred other attractions were glad to see us stay in the area. (The economic indicator I get from all this is that if this keeps up, Bonnie will make us broke!)

1994 highlights:

Karen moved back to Tampa to attend graduate school at the University of South Florida (USF). She's sharing a condo with Sandra, and also working as a counselor at a child rehab center. She's tough because she knows all the "get over" excuses ... used them for years herself.

Sandra continued with her Elementary Education degree at USF. And makes big money waitressing at Chili's, but she doesn't want Bonnie and I to know that because it might affect her educational stipend. She's seeing a nice guy: Steve Roberts, and we hear that they fight enough that this must be serious.

Anne turned 15. So a ringing phone is **never** for us. On the rare occasions we pick it up, we say, "Anne's financial service, leave your message at the beep." (Question: How do you get Anne off the phone when you need to make a call? Answer: Just pick up an extension and tell Anne to go ahead and talk - you'll just listen-in until the line is clear. Works every time.) (Question: How do you make sure she stays on the Honor Roll? Answer: Threaten to unplug the phone. Also works every time.)

Robert, 12, still doesn't call the girls back when they call him. He likes baseball, soccer, wrestling and basketball; and turns on ESPN's Sports Center first thing when he gets up. He also plays first chair clarinet in the seventh grade band so you can see he toots his own horn, it's not just me.

The family did some white water rafting this Fall: the New River in West Virginia. Our guide took one look at the clan and thereafter referred to us as the Griswolds. Getting six Bradens to paddle at the same time in the same direction was the hardest part.

Yours truly hit the big 50 recently. Karen's card said, "*Don't think of it as being over the hill... ..Think of it as getting started on the back nine!*" Bonnie surprised me with a cruise to Nassau!

**Wonderful!** Hurricane Gordon joined us on the trip back to Miami and most of the passengers and a number of the crew were really whooping it up - literally! Lots of people in the passage ways calling for RALPH. Bonnie and I went to dinner and were the only people (of eight) at our table; but then you really couldn't imagine Bonnie missing a meal.

One of the things about hitting 50 is that my memory fails and my judgement is turning faulty. For example, when Bonnie suggested skiing for Christmas as a cheaper alternative to **"buying expensive presents for each other and the family,"** I said okay. But then there were three shopping trips a day beginning in mid-October "since we really have to exchange some small gifts on Christmas morning." And there was burning up the credit card buying new outfits and reserving rooms, obtaining lift tickets and renting skis. At least she kept the list of things I was supposed to buy her down to two pages.

At any rate the skiing was great, with most of the lifts and slopes open, good news since sitting in a hot tub waiting for snow wouldn't have been that much fun after three or four days. Sandra coached Steve, who experienced his first time on skis. What a hard test on a relationship, but it went well. As a group we did okay ... kissed a lot of snow, hugged a few trees, slam danced with out-of-control snow-boarders, ripped off just one fingernail, twisted only one ankle, and accumulated no more than our fair share of contusions, abrasions and hematomas.

So, in summary, we've been blessed by a great year and hope the same has been true for all our friends and family.

Jay, Bonnie, Karen, Sandra, Anne & Robert