



Christmas 2023



Dear Friends and Family,

Merry Christmas 2023!

Wow! There sure have been a lot of things going on this year both internationally and domestically. Lots to pray about. But at this time of the year we can still count our blessings, which are many.

We began the year as pirates, again attending the Gasparilla Parade. We can report that somehow the citizens regained control of the town and that we enjoyed ourselves. Not sure what was the best part: having great seats, collecting a ton of beads, or the availability of private porta-potties that are not trashed by the end of the day by thousands of parade goers.

Then a good report to start the year regarding Joyce's entries in the horticulture competition of the Florida Strawberry Festival. This year she submitted three entries; two won blue ribbons and Best in their Class recognition and the other one was judged Best of Show. The Best of Show award means that her entry was better than *all* 180 or so entries in all the various classes. The only problem now is that I am worried about the structural failure on our house wall that contains all Joyce's Best of Class ribbons from her many years of competitions.

We did get away for a cruise in March. That's mandatory for anyone in Florida 'cause everyone has a seaport within a few hours from home. My all-you-can-eat dining was interrupted by a few ports of call. Also, when I was back for thirds at breakfast and getting fruit, one of the servers asked me if I knew that humans eat more bananas than monkeys. Probably right - I can't remember the last time I ate a monkey.

Through the late spring and summer months we got away with family members and created more treasured memories. Kept me busy updating the Website. See below if you get really bored. (Add <http://www.BradenClan.com> to the beginning of the various web addresses.)

Thanksgiving was again with Michael and Karri. Their home had massive damage from the late August Hurricane Idalia that left more than 6" of water in their home and ruined most furniture and appliances, not to mention requiring the replacement of most of their sheetrock walls. That they had all the repairs finished by Thanksgiving was certainly something to be thankful about.

This year Joyce and I have had some problems trying to figure out who we are - must be age.

- We are proud of our heritage and our inclusive American culture, making us xenophobes.
- We believe in hard work, fair play, and fair compensation according to each individual's merits, which today makes us anti-socialists.
- We believe our system guarantees freedom of effort - not freedom of outcome or subsidies, which must make us borderline sociopaths.
- We believe in the defense and protection of America for and by all citizens, now making us militants.
- We are proud of our flag, what it stands for and the many who died to let it fly, so we stand and salute during our National Anthem - so we must be racists.

Evidently we need some help in coming to terms with the new USA!

Joyce is doing very well, all things considered. She is still dealing with some pretty agonizing back pain that has defied treatments and some knee problems going back to a skiing accident years ago.

Nevertheless, Joyce remains active with a number of groups to include some wonderful ladies who knew her parents before she was even born and are therefore called her surrogates, the Fellowship Baptist Church choir - though she is sad that it does not sing every Sunday, it does sing for special events to include this coming Christmas Eve, the alumni of her 1962 Hillsborough High School graduating class, the Women of Grace church group, and the New Tampa Christian Women's Connection.

She also remains current with her Registered Nurse credentials and her specialty certifications in critical care, oncology and cardiology. To say that many people seek her advice is an understatement; many times she will be still awake in the early morning hours, working on recommendations for someone who has sought her assistance. Yes, her son and

daughter and close friends have said that she needs to cut back on this level of patient advocacy but Joyce is Joyce to the great benefit of many, many people.

Me? Aging gracefully is a nice way of saying you're slowly looking worse. However, I'm staying active with golf and Pickleball, plus some church activities.

- As to my twice-a-week golf game? Let's just say that during my last round I made three calls to the Crisis Hotline.
- Pickleball is good fun. Two hours a day, three days a week. The secret is to find a group where the players are not in their late twenties and hit the ball so hard and fast you don't see it whizzing by. However I've also learned to never underestimate an older woman with a paddle.

More me: One of the trips that Joyce and I made was to the Outer Banks for the Celebration of Life for Paul Dunn; Bonnie's last surviving brother. He was a fisherman greatly respected in his community and a wonderful husband and father. RIP Paul.

However I am blessed by relatively good health and a loving wife and adventures with grandchildren. What could be better?

Now wishing you the best for this Christmas and the coming years.
May you continue to grow in God's grace, mercy, and love.

The Braden Family: Jay, Joyce, kids, grandkids, and sweet puppy Cinny

BradenClan@gmail.com www.BradenClan.com



Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV): "For I know the plans I have for you..." declares the Lord

Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV): "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways ...," declares the Lord

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<http://www.bradenclan.com> . . . (add link given below)



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Paul Marshall Dunn
April 1, 1953
February 15, 2023

Prayers for Dorothy,
Shaun and Shannon