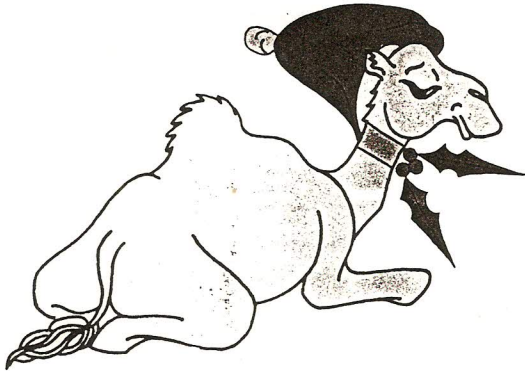


23 December 1990



Merry Christmas from the land of wild camel herds, crazy drivers, and 58 cents per gallon gas.

In mid-July when U.S. Central Command conducted an exercise in Northern Florida using a scenario of an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, little did I dream that I'd be living it beginning just a month later. But here I am on an all-expense paid tour of the Arabian Peninsula: sun, fun and sand. Well, two out of three, anyway.

Since King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud is the Custodian and Protector of the Two Holy Mosques, I guess that makes us the Defenders of the Protector of the... you get the idea.

While I'm on vacation, Bonnie is holding down the fort at home. Things are looking up. Understand there hasn't been a major car breakdown/repair bill in the last two weeks. That's a record going back over four months now.

In addition to DESERT SHIELD, the Bradens have had an eventful year. Karen began this Fall as a Junior at Florida State University, and Sandra returned as a Senior at Bloomingdale High School. Anne and Robert continued at Buckhorn Elementary School where they are in the fifth and third grades, respectively. Bonnie continued puberty.

Karen is now home for the holidays, and has mapped out a vigorous holiday schedule for herself, involving 17 hours of sleep each day. She's resting up for something.

For those unfamiliar with my duties here, my job involves "Theater Wartime Construction Management"; fancy words for the development of the infrastructure (ammunition supply points, heliports, supply routes, base camps, tactical petroleum terminals, airfield expansions, maintenance areas, aircraft hangers, helicopter refueling and re-arming areas, medical facilities, water wells, pipelines) essential not only to beddown 400,000 U.S. Forces, but to place them in a posture capable of accomplishing their combat missions. My current estimate is that the construction cost will be somewhere around \$1.8 billion, the majority of which will be paid for by the Saudis and the Japanese.

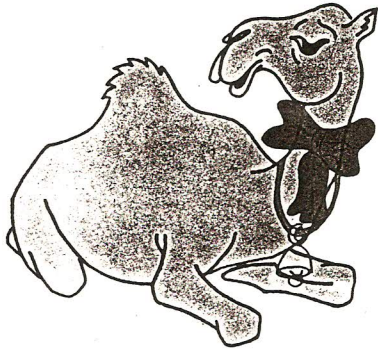
Not sure where all this is leading, but not wanting to take any chances, I invited Uncle Herman to come over and help. He carried the base plate (45 lbs) of an 81mm mortar through the mountains of Italy with the 85th Infantry Division during World War II and we can always use that type fitness and spirit. He declined, however, citing lack of beer in Saudi Arabia. I think he has a good point. Actually our plan is to keep our Marines dry for about one more month and then leak a rumor that there's free beer in Kuwait...and stand back.

We're pretty much into a routine now. We get up and check the weather. Someone announces, "Looks like it's going to be a sunny day, no need for wet weather gear." A good prediction starts the day off right. Of course it hasn't rained a drop since we arrived.

*And then we have some activity to get our heart rate up to about 300 beats per minute. We do that by driving a car in Riyadh. The Saudis are the most polite and well-mannered people in the world...until they get behind the wheel of a vehicle. You know we receive Danger Pay here. That's for attempting to occupy the same roadways as our Arab friends. A left turn from the far right lane is not uncommon. You know that when driving *don't* look at other drivers, because if*

you look then you know where they are so you have to yield right of way (Think about that).

On the serious side, we **are** thankful for our blessings. I know you are all supporting and praying for our service personnel here and around the world. Please also remember the real troopers: people like Bonnie who get 100% of the family load dumped on them while their "warriors" sail/fly off into the sunset.



Still back to the home front: we're fortunate that Bonnie's Mom is still at Daytona Beach, so she is nearby for aid and comfort. My Mom and Dad provide the same, but from a greater distance. We're glad they can be with Bonnie and the kids over Christmas. I know they'll enjoy looking in on Karen, watching her sleep. And many, many thanks to everyone who has checked in with Bonnie and kept her morale up. You are really appreciated.

The kids are staying busy: Sandra with soccer, Anne with Girl Scouts and tennis, and Robert with sports and fishing. Plus a whole lot of other things which keep Bonnie in the car about 800 miles a week. Bonnie's project this year is fighting City Hall to get a park in our neighborhood. This has involved dealing with a red tape bureaucracy that makes even the military look good. There have been the Town Meetings to sell the plan, and overcome opposition. And numerous phone calls to various officials. I'm glad she's doing this because most of her other projects result in 22 boxes of junk that end up in the garage.

I'm asked if I need anything over here. Actually not. I could use some pictures for my wallet, but Bonnie is unwillingly to take just a few for me. Meanwhile I am using substitute pictures from the lingerie section of the Sears Catalog.

Note by the date that this is almost a world's record for my Christmas letter. Unfortunately each will probably take 20 days in the mail. Regardless, I hope it finds you well and I wish you the best for the holiday season.