

**(Christmas Season 1989.** I sent out a letter to friends on December 20<sup>th</sup> about our family of eight children and how we were all doing. Full of positive spirits, but THEN that Christmas Eve and Day was something else. *Here is a capsule of BEFORE and AFTER Christmas 1989.*)

Hi, hope the season finds you in good health and spirits.

We find that as we approach 50, it is both harder and easier to have five children living at home. It is easier in that we are much more experienced parents than we were 20 years ago with our first three little ones at home. We are more patient (and perhaps permissive) since we have learned that kids have different personalities, and there is not a whole lot we are going to do that will change it.

Trying to keep them out of major trouble and get an education seems to be about the extent of our influence.

Judy does as much sewing as she ever did and still wins her share of ribbons at the fair each year with her entries. M.D. still runs 4-6 times a week, In good weather, he and the kids bike a lot and he can still out-bike all of them, so he at least takes a 35 pound passenger in the child seat, for ballast.

(Here I talked about each of the eight kids from age 26 to age 4)

**Bryan (15)** wants to drive everywhere with his learner's permit and wants a Bronco when he is 16. Bryan has had a bout with his Asthma problems since mid October, but he is getting a little better now, and has missed 5 weeks of school.

**Allison (11)** Dances, paints, and spends a lot of time on the phone talking to girlfriends, and an occasional boy.

**Martin (9)** is the loud one of the family at this time. He builds forts in the woods, loves to shoot his B-B guns, teases his younger brothers constantly and wonders why he gets sent to his room a lot.

**Warren (6)** is a real sweetheart, but being sandwiched between Martin and Owen (another bulldozer), resorts to name calling and fighting back as a survival tool.

**Owen (4)** born on Christmas day, is another rough, tough little guy. He weighs as much and is almost as tall as Warren.

Yes, there is nothing that is less pleasant than having a cold, raw winter day with all five kids cooped up inside the house. That is a recipe for chaos and disaster.

We also have a poodle (Sally), a cat (Cinnamon) and two parrots (Sam and Max), and a tank full of gerbils outside. We just got rid of another dog, a full grown turkey and several chickens.

However, when we reach 65 and most of the kids are off and on their own, we are sure we will wonder what to do with all our time.

But it's Christmas. The house is electric with excitement and expectations of the holidays.

A day doesn't go by that a new decoration doesn't appear to add to a hall, room or outside of the house. We are the most decorated house in our neighborhood, and the kids still want to do more. Ah.....Christmas....if we can just make it through to January.

Happy Holidays. May your days be merry and bright !

**(BUT THEN, this message to office on the 26th)**

*“Well, it has been a tough weekend at the Smith household....at least for me and several of my brood.*

*It started Saturday night with Bryan having a lot of congestion, coughing and a little fever. Sunday morning he was better so we didn't go to the doctor. By Sunday afternoon, he was feeling worse, more fever and I was having a bit of fever myself. I took the family out to dinner Christmas Eve and Bryan stayed home because he felt too bad. Dee stayed with him. At 6:15 they beeped us at Quincy's saying Bryan was having an Asthma attack. Bryan successfully treated himself before we could get home and he was OK from the Asthma, but between the Adrenalin Shot and the fever, he was having uncontrollable shivering. We got him covered up, and warmed up to finally stop it. By now, my fever was up and I was not feeling good at all.*

*At about 9PM, while I was busy in the storage room putting the Santa stuff together, Judy called me, his fever was up to nearly 103 degrees, and we had to give him a partial sponge bath to get it down. I finally got to bed about midnight. Judy stayed in the room with Bryan and said he got*

*sick to his stomach about 3 AM and 5 AM and was up with him a lot of the night.*

*By Christmas morning, the 4, 6 and 8 year olds were up at 6:30 AM like live wires....and I got up with them, since Judy was upstairs with Bryan and we were going to let them sleep until 8 AM. Still feeling groggy with fever, a beginning cough and sinus congestion, I took a shower, shaved and put on a fresh suit, feeling that if I looked better, I might feel better.*

*I went down to the garage to get an empty box to use for Christmas paper and found the garage flooded. We have a little wash sink in there, and it had frozen...then thawed and water was squirting everywhere. In our garage, that is level with the downstairs, when water gets in it, it seeps under the walls into a downstairs bedroom, storage room and hall. So I managed to get the water shut off to that sink (thank goodness I had installed separate cut-offs for it) and got out my water vac and in my nice suit, started getting the water up out of the garage before it did any damage to the bedroom. Finally got it up about 8:30 AM. So I am not feeling good at all right now, but everyone is ready for Christmas, so we start. The confusion and noise level at our house on Christmas Day is unbelievable, but no different than past years, so we just try to be a part of it as much as possible. Bryan came down and lay on the couch in the living room during all the Christmas activities. He felt really bad, and I was not feeling any too good myself.*

*By 3 PM, Bryan was doing a little better, but I was worse. Fever was higher and I was really getting congested and the cough was worse. I had a little bit of dinner and kept stuffing down all the Tylenol and other medications I could get. My fever never got over 101, but I felt my eyelids burning like it was higher. By 7 PM, all the older boys had left to go home and the house was relatively quiet. I had installed all the batteries in the toys that the kids insisted on, hooked up the little stereo for Martin and a host of other "help-me" projects that occur on Christmas day. I told Judy, that I was feeling blown out and was going on to bed about 7:45 and just as I did, I got the shakes from being cooler and moving to the bedroom, I got under the electric blanket, on high, and waited them out. I had finally quit shaking, and was about to relax in bed a little bit by 8:45, when Judy burst into the room, shouting that another pipe had busted and water was coming out of our new bathroom. I had to get out of bed, get on my insulated pants and coat and go outside under the porch of the addition.*

*The hot water pipe had been frozen for 4 days, and had finally thawed and was running out of the floor (ceiling) of the area. Also, fortunately, I had installed another set of cut-off valves in this addition, so by getting into the access door, which was dripping cold water all over me, I was able to get it shut off. Back inside, with more chills from the fever and out of the wet clothes. I stayed in bed from 10PM until this morning. Well, things could be worse, I could have had to shut all the water off to the house and we'd be camping out now. And my fever is almost gone this morning, but the cough and congestion is worse and I have a splitting headache this morning. Oh yes....*

*Dee called me at 7:10 AM, woke me up to say he had caught the same thing Bryan and I had and wanted to know what to take to make it better. I told him the sad news that you take Tylenol, stay warm and drink liquids and wait it out."*

Folks....I am taking a sick leave day today. There is no need coming in with this hacking cough and giving the flu or whatever, to some of you, although I got to say that with the kids, still hyper from Christmas, I believe the quiet of my office would be nicer than the level of energy going on here and the....."Dad, come see about (whomever), he broke my toy!" They don't care whether you are sick or not, to them that's the most important thing in the world....at the moment. So be assured, I will be in to work as soon as I am able to make it.

Well, sorry for such a long explanation, but just saying "I have been sick this weekend and won't be in to work today" did not seem like adequate information under the circumstances.