

The Bell Chronicles

Christmas 2006

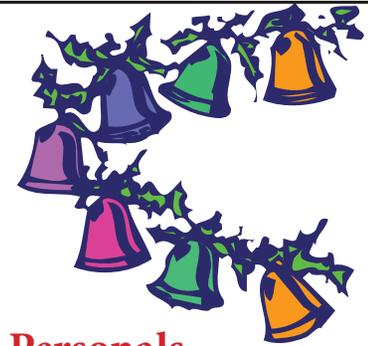
Tyler, Texas

The Christmas Story

Joseph went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.



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Personal Notes

From Dana

I have been doing much the same kind of things as last year, working, studying graphic design subjects, and designing web pages.

In addition to web pages, I am now able to host other web sites. That is, if someone wants a web site, they can come to me for the space and resources they might need. Of course, I could also design the site for them, and maintain it. The cost of doing that has plummeted in the past 5 years.

I started another blog (web log or journal) in October and have been able to post something almost every day until about a week ago. If I wrote everything I had on my mind I'd be jobless and homeless. But, I really do enjoy writing, photographing, publishing, hence this newsletter. Last year's all about us newsletter got boring pretty quick, so I've included a lot more about our families.

I always have more interests than I have time for and now work is becoming the same way. This year I've had more different things to do than I really have time for. At this point, I'm doing a lot less printing and a lot more development, research, and organization.

The newest addition to our cool gadgets is a cell phone. We purchased a "go phone" to have with us for our trip to Mississippi. It is from Cingular and allows you to prepay for cell phone usage. I haven't found much use for it since we returned.

From Toni

I have been volunteering at the Humane Society. I help with the cats grooming and entertain them with the different toys. They are so cozy and kept so comfortable there. It is enjoyable to see them interact and just enjoy a big hug or a few kisses.

Dana & I learned how to play rook, rat a tat cat, and Texas Hold'em. We enjoy going to the movies and eating at the different restaurants. The one we like to make a visit to is Braum's. We like to go to the garage sales. I like to look at the unique things for crafts or the different kinds of frames. Dana and I look for the different bells too. We hung a squirrel feeder and a bird feeder. We have several squirrels that like to visit. One of the squirrels is a black squirrel. Of course all the cats stay in the house.

The First Christmas Card

The back cover contains a reproduction of the first known mass-produced Christmas card. London resident, Henry Cole, sent 1000 of these cards in 1843. Notice the From and To spaces at the top and bottom of the card, respectively.

Recipes

CHEESE CAKE

2 Pgs. of Cream Cheese
1/2 cup of Sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
2 eggs
8" pie crust

Mix Cream Cheese, Sugar, Vanilla, then add eggs. Pour into crust and cook @ 350° for 30 minutes or until the middle of the pie is firm

CAT TREAT

1 cup whole wheat flour
2 tablespoons wheat germ
1/4 cup soy flour
1/3 cup dry milk
1 teaspoon catnip
1/3 cup milk
2 tablespoons Butter
1 Egg
1 tablespoon Unsulfured molasses

1. Mix dry ingredients. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. Roll on a greased cookie sheet.
2. Cut into bite sized pieces and bake at 350° F for 20 minutes.
3. Let cool. Store in air tight container.

A HAPPY HOME RECIPE

4 cups of love
2 cups of loyalty
3 cups of forgiveness
1 cup of friendship
5 spoons of hope
2 spoons of tenderness
4 quarts of faith
1 barrel of laughter

Take love and loyalty, mix it thoroughly with faith. Blend it with tenderness, kindness and understanding. Add friendship and hope, sprinkle abundantly with laughter. Bake it with sunshine. Serve daily with generous helpings. Adjust to suit taste

It's about Jesus

Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Christ, and may have been established by the Catholic church in the 4th century. Although some aspects of Christmas may have roots in pagan philosophy, Christmas is still primarily a recognition of the miracle of Christ's coming. In our gift-giving tradition, the philosophy is that Christ was a gift to us. In reality, the truth of Christ and the gospel is more than giving gifts. Christ came for another reason. Christ came to call the world to belief in Him and offer himself up to bring us salvation.

There are endless sentimental stories about Christmas and the goodness of others and God. Much of today's Christmas stories have to do with family gatherings, and caring for others. Having someone that cares is comforting to most anyone. Sentimental things will always be a part of life, but Jesus doesn't want to be just a sentimental thought. He doesn't limit himself to any season of the year. His love is strong enough to overcome the most difficult problems and the hardest of times throughout the year.

Our relationship in Christ can't be just a seasonal thing. In order to live a life that is pleasing to God, and ultimately pleasing to ourselves, we must live it daily. We must make a decision each day, not to live better, but to live as Christ leads us.

It wouldn't be such a bad thing if the grinch did steal Christmas. We really can live without Christmas, but we can't really live without Jesus. And we certainly don't need to die without Him. My prayer is that during this Christmas you find a relationship with Him and meaning in your life. Jesus is more than a reason for the season.

**We wish you a
Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Life**



Bell Family News

We just returned from Mississippi where my brother Greg was married to Karen Blackledge in a December wedding. Both of them had three children, mostly all grown. He had three girls. She had three boys. Several people noted the similarity with the Brady Brunch.



While in Mississippi, I stayed and visited with my sister, Delores and her husband, Reggie.



Greg and Karen Bell

We spent a lot of time looking at old pictures of ourselves and relatives. Many of the pictures were decades old. While I was there, I scanned a picture of Mother that Delores has hanging on her wall. She says

she was a teenager in this picture. Delores and Reggie have a nice cabinet building business in Purvis.

A year ago, I didn't know how to get in touch with Greg or Delores. Somehow last year's newsletter got into their hands. Delores called and Dotti emailed. I also got to see Delores' two girls, Dotti and Tosha and their children.



Dotti is my oldest niece and she lives near Delores in the Hattiesburg area and has two children, Benjamin and Brianna. I took a few pictures of them, but haven't processed them yet. I also got to see Tosha for a short time before I left on Sunday. She has one boy, Logan.



Makala, Amanda, Karen, Alexis, Alisha

Greg's three girls, Alisha, Amanda and Alexis also live close to him in Laurel. I got to see them and some of their children briefly during the rehearsal and wedding. Makala, Alisha's oldest was the lively one at the wedding reception and dance.

Earlier in the year I also made



Marsha

contact with Marsha, my “little” sister, who lives in Sioux City, Iowa. After I got hold of Delores and Greg, I wondered if I could get in touch with Marsha, so I wrote to an address I found and she responded. I’ve since enjoyed emailing and instant messaging with her through the year. I haven’t seen her in

over 20 years. Maybe she or I can make a trip before next year. She is married and had three children. She works as a cosmetologist.

Soon after, Aunt Pat gave her some information about the Bell family history. Pat is the Bell family genealogist. Anyway, that got me interested. I guess I’ve always wanted to be in the know about anything. Now I’ve always got my eyes open to learn more about our ancestors. I have a long way to go, but am enjoying whatever I discover.

Delores shared some notes she had on my mother’s side of the family, and I understand there is more genealogy information there. Maybe I can have some of it ready to share with you next year.

On Toni’s Side...

Most every year we have Thanksgiving and Christmas with Amie, Toni’s sister. That’s where we were Thanksgiving this year too. Amie and her four children, Heidi, Joey, Jesse and Jeffrey all live in Tyler. Amie works as a nurse in Tyler. Heidi is married to Tony and they have one girl, Faith, and are expecting a boy in 2007.

Joey and Jesse are still in school. Joey is working and also raises and breeds Gottiline bulldogs. Jesse plays basketball and is active with other school activities.

The rest of Toni’s brothers and sisters are still living up north in PA.



Dotti, Benjamin and Brianna

Farkle

We learned a new game over Thanksgiving holiday, Farkel. It must be a new game to Tyler, Texas. The day after we were in a restaurant and overheard a family talking about their farkel games. But when I went to a store to get a set of dice for the game, the cashier said she’s played it since she was a child, 30 years ago.

It is a simple game of dice with some similarities with Yahtzee, or with poker hands. The game we played was with 5 dice, though all of the other versions I read about are with 6. As in most any game, there are local or family variations to the game. Well, anyway, these are the rules for my variation of the game, based mostly on internet research.

Rules

At the beginning of each turn, the player throws all six dice. After each throw the player must set aside each die that is to be counted. To continue, all of the die not set aside may be thrown again to add to the score. At each throw, the player must add to his score or pass. If the player passes, he gets to keep the points scored unless they are stolen. If the player rolls without scoring, the player loses all points accumulated for that turn. This is called farkel. After all 6 dice have been thrown and counted, the player can start over with the 6 dice and continue to add to his score as long as he scores with each roll. A player must be “on the board” before any of his points count. In order to get “on the board” the player must score at least 500 points in a turn. Once a player is on the board, they can start counting whatever points they roll. If a player has scored points, the next player has the option of trying to steal his points or starting fresh. In order to steal a players points he must take the remaining uncounted dice, roll and get a score with one of them. If he doesn’t steal the points, he loses his turn. A player must be “on the board” before he call steal. Some variations don’t allow stealing.

Scoring

The points of each throw are counted separately. If you set aside a triple of 1’s, then rolled a single 1, you don’t get to score it as a 4 of a kind. The last 1 only counts 100. You must count at least 1 die to continue rolling. You don’t have to set aside all points scored. If you roll two 1’s and two 5’s, you only have to set aside one of the die before rolling again, and can try for a triple or better with the rest of the die.

Basic Scoring

- 1 = 100
- 5 = 50
- triple 1’s = 1000
- triple of any other die is 100 times the die
- triple 2’s = 200
- ...
- triple 6’s = 600

Extra Scoring

Each time you score more than three of a die, the value is doubled. Some variations don’t use doubling.

- 4 of a kind = three of a kind times 2
- 4 1’s = 2000
- 4 2’s = 400
- ...
- 4 6’s = 1200

- 5 of a kind = four of a kind times 2
- 6 of a kind = five of a kind times 2
- That would mean 6 of a kind 1’s = 8000

Big Scores

- Three pair = 1500
- Two triplets = 2500
- Small straight (5 in a row) = 1000
- Large straight (6 in a row) = 1500
- To make it complete, you could also add in a value for a full house (triple of one value and a double of another)
- Winning

The group can decide what the winning total is, usually 10,000 points. After a player scores the winning total, each player left has one last turn. The highest score is the winner.



Tips for Cat Owners

- Taking pills: Crush the pill into a fine powder or put it in some butter.
- Traveling: Insure that the cats are in a carrier, make sure the car doesn't get too warm, have a litter pan available in the crate, offer up food and water at different intervals.
- Cat Grooming: Cats shed their fur in the winter and summer. There are different types of grooming combs or brushes that can be used. I like the one which is shaped like a hand or a small plastic brush.

You don't have to spend a fortune to have something for your cats and kittens to play with. Entertain them with these easy to find/make toys.

- Save the plastic rings off the milk jugs.
- Fold up a piece of printer paper into a little bow tie about 3" long, tie a string around the middle of it, and dangle it or pull it across the floors.
- Put a brown-paper grocery bag down for her, or a small box on its side.
- Crumble up a ball of newspaper and toss it around for her.
- Toss down whatever part of the paper you don't read when you're reading the paper, she'll joyously play "tunnels."
- Stuff an old sock with dead nylons, sew it up with very strong threads and let her have it (put some catnip in it, or rub catnip over it).



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Photos

<http://www.pbase.com/dbell154/>



One of our family hobbies is collecting bells. When we are on trips we try to pick up a bell from where we visited. We also keep an eye open for bells when we are garage saling. We usually don't spend over a couple dollars for each.



Oriental Bell

During the summer, Dana & I went to Forney and visited all the different antique shops. Forney may be the antique capital of north Texas. We picked up some really neat looking bells for our collection. It's amazing how many different shapes, scenes, and styles that are done with the bells.

The Louisiana bell had an alligator glued to it. Of course, we have bells

for many places we've never been to. It seems like a lot of people like to purchase bells too.



Antique Bell

One of the neatest bells we picked up in Forney was an Oriental bell. The bell hangs from a stand, and the clapper, the thing that hits the side of the bell, was on the outside of the bell, also hanging from the stand.

At one store, we bought a shelf with several bells in it for \$10, and one of the bells was an antique.

Bell collecting is fun, although we'll never have the Guinness record for it. The record is several thousands of bells.



Souvenir Bells

CAT NEWS...

We have the same cats that we had last year. They got a new cat condo and take turns to see who is going to be on the top. When they are ready to eat they love to sing us their cat songs. They all love the water bed. They eat throughout the day and even enjoy a bedtime snack just before we tuck ourselves in. They get Iams cat food, but it's light, so they don't get very heavy. I said a little about them last year, but this year I'll let them speak for themselves...



Becky

I am the baby so I get a lot of special attention from Dana and Toni. I like to run around the house to see what Bonnie and the other cats are doing. I am definitely a lap cat, and am now the bed kitty. I often sleep in the bed with Dana and Toni, either between them or at the foot of the bed. Bonnie and Tabitha are usually nearby too.



Midnight

I am the quiet one. You might hear a whimper out of me sometimes, but you have to listen closely, cause I don't speak too loud. I'm the one-eye bandit but that doesn't slow me down.

I like to eat, so if you don't watch me, I can get overweight pretty quick. I'm getting up there in age, though nobody knows just how old I am.



Bonnie

I like to go to the window and yelp at the birds, and I talk a lot in the mornings before I eat. I am the polydactyl with an extra toe on each paw and I use it too, much like you use your thumb. They've accused me of being a druggie. I like to chew anything with glue, envelopes, post-in notes and crafts. I'm also one of the more athletic ones, but also being one of the two babies, I have a lot of energy.



Tabitha

I like to steal peoples and the other cats food. For a cat, I've got good manual dexterity. I can use my paw and slide someone else's bowl out from under them. I am Dana and Toni's couch kitty when they are watching television. I do have a mean younger sister, though. Olivia tries to pick on me when she can. That's why you'll usually find me on top of the furniture, away from Olivia.



Kellie

I meow and go and wake Dana & Toni up in the mornings. I like to hang out on windowsills. I don't like to be crowded.

I was raised in the wild and they took me and Casey in. I don't particularly like to be around people, but will cuddle with most any kitty in the house.



Samantha

I have Dana and Toni in my hands. With my pitiful meow, I get their attention pretty easily. I am the slowest when it comes to eating. I like to cuddle with the rest of them, especially Kellie and Olivia.

I'm not much of a groomer, like the others, so occasionally Dana will have to hold me and get the knots out.



Olivia

I'm the beautiful one. I meow a lot around the house. I have a pretty pitiful meow, just like my fraternal twin, Samantha. I love to hang out with Kelly on the bed or one of our cat blankets.

I don't like to be touched, though Dana insists he pets me when I'm having my bedtime snack, and I guess it's not that bad.