



Vol. 1 Issue 2

April 2009



One of the most exciting events after Donald's appearance on *America's Got Talent* was a mini-concert for PBS which took place on March 15. PBS reports that the studio audience was filled in a matter of minutes after the concert was announced. The concert featured multiple genres that demonstrated Donald's musical and stylistic versatility, and the exposure will give Donald the opportunity to appeal to a bigger audience. None of this would have been possible without Judy, who convinced Diane Bliss of PBS to consider Donald. Her steadfast enthusiasm has also given her opportunities to write about Donald in the newsletters published by her workplace and her church, both of which reach thousands of readers.

**Star Braswellians**

Canadian Braswellian Ann, who is also a member of the Promotional Team, is always thinking of ways to promote Donald outside of the United States. Ann's efforts paid off when Canoe 100.9 FM, a radio station based in Haliburton County, Ontario, responded positively to her letters and began playing Donald's music regularly on Sunday mornings, which marks Donald's international radio debut. The station is available online at <http://www.canoefm.com/index.php>. Ann continues to write to major figures in the music and entertainment industry about Donald's talents.



**In this Issue:**

I would like to thank all the Braswellians who have contributed comments, photos and reviews for this edition. Thanks also to everyone for your warm and enthusiastic response to the inaugural edition of the *Braswellian Star*. To Cherie, Julia and Serena: a heartfelt thanks for your input and suggestions in making the *Braswellian Star* a success.

Doreen, Editor  
 Editor@DonaldBraswellFanclub.org

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## Comments for the *Braswellian Star*

[Donald] said he sent a link to the website and the newsletter to someone in the [entertainment] industry...That person told Donald, "Do you know what you have here?! There is no fan club like this out there for ANYONE!"

~Cherie

WOW! Fantastic work [by] everyone involved with this newsletter.

~Barb

The Editor invites you to write to the *Braswellian Star* with your comments, questions and/or suggestions. Selected letters will be published and answered in future editions of the newsletter. Please send your comments to: [Editor@DonaldBraswellFanClub.org](mailto:Editor@DonaldBraswellFanClub.org).

Fabulous job with the newsletter! It looks so professional and contains so much information.

~ Cindy

The "Star" is a fabulous tribute to our shining star! I was elated to receive it...Many thanks to all...you guys ROCK!

~Laure

## San Antonio Debut Concert: November 2, 2008

Shortly after the end of *America's Got Talent*, Donald performed in Las Vegas with the other finalists. There, Simon Cowell persuaded him to sing "Unchained Melody", which has since become one of his signature pieces. His first solo, concert-length performance came two weeks later, in his hometown of San Antonio. The concert also featured his mother, Jane, and his sister, Adrienne. Although the concert was mainly attended by the locals who were already familiar with Donald's talent, it was also the event that solidified the rapidly-strengthening friendship of the Braswellians from various parts of the country.

"Cherie has all the yellow roses –" *Who's Cherie? Why yellow roses?*  
"We're all planning to meet at the Crockett –" *Where?* "Serena is putting together the Book for Donald –" *What Book? Who's Serena? What are you talking about??*

I joined the Fan Club roughly a week before the San Antonio concert, just happy to have found some people with whom I can talk about Donald all day. The Braswellians who were going to the concert were busily planning the weekend's events. I had planned to travel the three hours to San Antonio, attend the concert (alone) and go home to my normal life. Needless to say, that was not the case.

From the moment I arrived in San Antonio, I felt as if I were attending a family reunion. In the lobby of the Crockett Hotel – which has since become the Braswellians' second home in San Antonio – we carried on a conversation as naturally as if we had just seen each other the day before.



Donald surprises us with his theatricality in "Unchained Melody".

Photo by Dawn (VA)

Cherie – who will eventually become the Fan Club President – passed out the yellow roses that would identify us as Braswellians. When we arrived at the theater, we met with some other fans and just happened to bump into Donald's wife Julie and their three little girls. Serena – our soon-to-be Vice President – offered Julie the Book that she had put together with the Braswellians' stories about how our lives had been changed by Donald and the group. To our surprise, she told us to personally give it to Donald, as she knew that he would like to receive it directly from us. But we didn't have time to let the surprise sink in, because pretty soon Donald walked on stage and instantaneously we were in heaven.

After the concert, Shelly, who sat next to me, told me that she enjoyed my reaction almost as much as the concert itself. As Donald introduced each song, I often found myself gasping (quite loudly, I might add) because it was a song that I loved and I was so thrilled to hear him interpret it. When he did the more dramatic pieces, like “Music of the Night” or “Unchained Melody”, he brought out the Juilliard-trained opera performer in him and transformed the show from concert to theater. What I loved the most (and still do) about Donald’s talent was the fact that he could go straight from pop or soul (“Unchained Melody” at that time, “A Change Is Gonna Come” in more recent performances) to an operatic piece without breaking a sweat. One of the last songs Donald did at that concert was “Sogno” (meaning both

“The Dream” and “I Dream”), originally by Andrea Bocelli. I’ve always felt that to be one of the most beautiful songs ever written, and to hear Donald sing it was just divine – it took me right to the warm and peaceful hills of Tuscany.

I had brought a small photo for Donald to sign, just in case I was lucky enough to have him pass me on the way out. That photo is now next to a personalized autographed CD, as well as pictures that I have taken with Donald and the Braswellians. Thanks to the Braswellians and Donald’s generosity with his time and his fans, that first concert was the first of many happy memories, and will be for years to come.

*Doreen (TX)  
[front row in photo below]*

It was Friday October 31, 2008 when the Braswellians met for the first time in San Antonio at the Crockett Hotel. Before that time all we did was communicate online. We wore our yellow roses to identify ourselves. Who knew then that meeting all of them would have lead to a lasting friendship? It is hard to believe that it has only been 5 months since that time and yet we feel that we have known each other forever. That weekend, we shared breakfast, lunch, dinner, a few (maybe more than a few) Bushwhackers and a lot of laughs and tears. We owe it all to Donald and Julie. The excitement and anticipation of the November 2<sup>nd</sup> concert was drawing near we could hardly contain ourselves. The many months of AGT and all our calling was finally over; we were going to be seeing Donald live and in person. We all called Ticketmaster separately, but to our surprise, we were all sitting in the same row. Coincidence or divine intervention?

When he came on that stage to a standing ovation, we looked around to see Braswellians with tears in their eyes, and we knew then that this was going to be bigger than we ever thought possible. Donald put on the best show I had ever seen. He was magic! As Piers had said on AGT, he has that something special that people like and he was right about that! (The only time he was right.) It was such an extra treat to hear his mother’s beautiful voice and his sister’s also. How lucky were we to have been in that audience? How surprised were we Braswellians when he introduced us? We had no idea he even knew about us!

After many standing ovations, the show was coming to a close but we could have sat there forever hearing that beautiful voice. I was lucky enough to present him with yellow roses after his final bow (the first of many). After the show, he spent hours signing autographs while the Braswellians spoke with his family members (all very special people). The Braswellians were last in line, and that tradition has continued. I was told that I had to present Donald with the Book made up of all letters from Braswellians who were inspired by him. I remember my stomach doing flip flops most of the evening. He was so gracious and kind with his time and continues to be. After that concert, most of the Braswellians went to a wonderful dinner and do I have to say it again, Bushwhackers! We all left San Antonio on Monday morning not knowing if we would ever see each other again, with lots of tears saying goodbye. We had no idea at that time what lay ahead. Here we are 6 months later! Thank you Donald and Julie we are now one large happy family!

*Serena (VA)  
[Far right in photo]*



**The Braswellians’ first ever group photo with Donald, taken by Dawn after the San Antonio concert.**

Donald made his international concert debut in Ajijic, a small community in the state of Jalisco in central Mexico. The San Antonio Three Tenors (Donald, Tim Burt and William Chapman) and Soprano Jillian Cox gave a classical-style concert featuring operatic arias and classical crossover. Fan Club members Julia and Cherie were in the audience, and according to the *Guadalajara Reporter*, it was the first time that a performer in Ajijic had fans fly in from the United States for the sole purpose of attending a concert.

When I first heard that Donald Braswell was scheduled to appear with the San Antonio Three Tenors in Mexico, in a place called Ajijic (pronounced ah-hee-HEEK), I originally had no plans to attend, but my fellow Braswellian and Co-Owner, Cherie, talked me into it, and I am SO glad she did!

Ajijic is a lovely rustic town about 30 minutes from Guadalajara which has a sizeable American/Canadian community. It is situated on the banks of Lake Chapala, and our very comfortable and well maintained lakeside hotel was owned and run by a Canadian family.

The concert was put on by Ajijic's Music Appreciation Society, and the audience was made up of many resident Americans in addition to the cultured and affluent Mexicans who regularly attend the various activities arranged there by the Music Society.

It was held in a small auditorium that probably seated about 600, and it certainly appeared to be a full house. Cherie and I were lucky enough to be seated in the front row. In addition to the Three Tenors, there was a 26-year old Soprano who made a tremendous impression on the audience with her poise and talent.

Donald and the other two Tenors sang a variety of songs together, and they each sang some solos. The program included several popular and easily recognizable pieces including "La donna è mobile", "Pecchè", "Nessun dorma", "Con te partirò"

("Time To Say Goodbye"), "Sogno" and many others. Donald sang "Rosa" as one of his solos, and his performance was flawless, an exact repetition of the way he sang it at his debut concert in San Antonio.

During the intermission, Cherie and I were introduced to a reporter from the Guadalajara local paper, and she had not heard of Donald Braswell before, but she was very interested in the history of his appearances on *America's Got Talent* and was quite fascinated to learn that as members of his fan club we had come all the way from the USA to see him perform with his colleagues. After the concert was over she took a photograph of us with Donald and later wrote a brief article about the concert which appeared in the *Guadalajara Reporter*. The article stated that this was the very first time that fans had actually come all the way from the USA in support of an artist appearing at one of their Music Appreciation Society events.

The San Antonio Three Tenors have created a program of popular opera songs combined with a fair amount of joking and fooling around on stage which creates a very comfortable atmosphere, unlike any other operatic concert I have ever attended. Donald revealed his great sense of humor as he and his colleagues teased each other on stage with a routine that was at times almost "slapstick" and involved a certain amount of pushing and shoving! At one point he had to evict the lady pianist who was accompanying them when she was unaware of a last minute change in schedule which required recorded music to accompany him rather than a live pianist. It was fun to see him so light-hearted and relaxed after the rigid and structured environment of *America's Got Talent* where the stress he and the other contestants were under was so evident.

From the applause at the end of the concert it was obvious that everyone there had enjoyed the performance immensely and I'm sure that the name of "Donald Braswell" will not soon be forgotten by those present; I know he made many new fans that night in Mexico.



Donald with Cherie (left) and Julia (right). Photo from the *Guadalajara Reporter*.

Julia (NV)

## Holiday Events and the Locals' Perspective

During the Holiday Season of 2008, Donald participated in several smaller-scale events. Nevertheless, there has always been at least one Braswellian in attendance. These events include local concerts in his hometown, a Christmas show with Trinity Broadcasting Network's *Praise the Lord*, as well as a CD-signing session in Comfort, TX.

At the *Praise the Lord* concert, Jackie, a Braswellian from California, brought Donald a hand-made quilt that included messages from several Braswellians. Donald described it as "one of the most beautiful things I have received as a gift for my family from anyone ever" and talked about it at several of these events.

### Christmas in Comfort (November 29, 2008)

Living about 25 miles north of San Antonio I am fortunate to be able to attend local functions that Donald is at. "Christmas in Comfort" was one of these events. Comfort is a small Texas hill country town north of San Antonio. When I walked up to Donald's Aunt Nancy's store there he was sitting on the front porch visiting with

fans and signing autographs as he sold his CDs. I did not walk right up to the table as I just wanted to watch and take it all in. I noticed immediately that Donald made each and every fan feel very special and important to him. He is very personable and always has a big, warm smile on his face. It was obvious that he had no intention of rushing anyone or of not giving them his undivided attention. When the line had diminished I walked up to the table. I was wearing my yellow rose, the symbol of what a Braswellian is about. As soon as Donald saw the

yellow rose, he jumped up with a big smile on his face and came running right over to me. I then received the biggest, warmest hug I ever had. We visited for over three hours during which I realized that you are immediately considered a "friend" from your first meeting with Donald. He has a way of making you feel so

comfortable, like you have been friends with him for years. He is gracious, caring, humble and so very genuine. I have since had my path cross Donald's many times. He always recognizes me and other Braswellians that he has previously met. I cannot think of another performer who treats his fans in such a personable manner. I feel very honored and special to be a "Braswellian" and to have had many opportunities to meet and visit with Donald.



Donald with Linda in Comfort.

Linda (TX)

### Boerne Chamber Luncheon (December 11, 2008)

The stage had a Christmas tree on the left side and a podium on the right. Donald started out by singing "Oh Holy Night". He sounded amazing, and later some people said it brought them to tears. Next he sang "Away in a Manger" without the mike as his voice was so strong he didn't need it.

Next was "Core 'ngrato", an operatic aria. When he stopped singing, the music continued on, and then he finally told us, "That was the end of the song." Everyone kind of chuckled. He said that is what often happens with opera. There are mistakes, and since it is not in English, no one knows what is going on. The performers look at each other, wondering, "Am I supposed to sing, or are you?" Everyone was having a good laugh, and Donald was laughing the most.



Kit helping Donald sell CDs at the Boerne Chamber Luncheon.

As the concert ended, he started to make his way to the back. As he went past, I told him I must give him the obligatory yellow rose and how much I loved the concert. Someone asked me about the yellow rose so I told the story. Donald was within a few feet and added that the Braswellians have gone to all of his events.

It was a fantastic day. So much fun, so entertaining and just like talking to a friend. Donald is one great man. I would admire him even if he had no talent for singing at all. Add that amazing talent and we get a superstar. I think Julie Braswell would have enjoyed seeing all the local people lavishing praise on her husband. She should be proud of her part in promoting his career.

*Kit (TX)*

### An Evening with Donald Braswell: a Christmas Concert in Spring Creek (December 18, 2008)

Donald was his usual self. He appeared happy and in control. He was very relaxed and much at ease with the audience; my daughter Teri and I felt it was his best performance. He again acknowledged us Braswellians and talked about the beautiful quilt and then wished he had brought it to show everyone.

When I am with Susanne and Serena we can't seem to get our act together. At the *Praise the Lord* concert, if you recall, we were standing when everyone else was down. At this concert, after standing and applauding Donald, we sat down while the rest of the audience remained standing. Just can't seem to get it right!

After the conclusion of the concert we Braswellians waited in the foyer where he was greeting other audience members. It was then the Braswellians' turn. Donald was his usual gracious self. He didn't hurry us through hugs, kisses and pictures. I loved every minute of our time together and hope everyone enjoyed it as much as I did.

*Dolores (CA)*  
[Center of photo]



Donald with the Braswellians on December 18.

### San Antonio Metropolitan Ministries (SAMMinistries) Charity Concert (January 25, 2009)

Donald has shown us many times that he has a heart of gold. Those who have had the opportunity to meet him agree that, aside from being a talented musician, he is also a generous and humble man who never fails to think of others. The SAMM Charity Concert, titled "Love Can Build a Bridge", proved just that. Despite a 102-degree fever, Donald gave a flawless performance at a concert whose proceeds went to help the homeless of San Antonio.

The night before, there were plans for the Braswellians to have dinner with Donald and his family. Coincidentally, it was also one of the coldest nights of the winter, and with Donald being ill, we all felt it best to cancel the dinner. Nevertheless, Fan Club President Cherie had prepared a heartfelt speech that she meant to give at the dinner. Now, for the first time, this tribute to the Braswellians is being published.

## A Tribute to the Braswellians

This is such an important occasion for us all, a blending of two great families (Braswell and Braswellian) and I can't think of a better event than the Love Can Build A Bridge concert. I want to tell you a little about my philosophy of life. To quote a few songs, I believe that "love is what makes the world go round" and that "there's just too little of." It is the single most important element of our being, and is something every living thing is capable of, yet there are people in this world who live and die never receiving it. I believe the most important role we have is to spread love around. The power of love and the human spirit can accomplish anything and can solve the world's problems.

People have the capacity to love in countless ways. (Braswellians discovered a new one when they found Donald.) During AGT, you wrapped your arms around him and his family and then formed the club to support him. Yes, we fell in love with that big lug and soon after, his family. But something else magical happened. We fell in love with each other. You wrapped your arms around each other and held each other up. We laughed together and cried together. We discovered when two or more Braswellians are in a room, it hums with energy and love. When we all focus our energy on Donald, I imagine a *Star Trek*—like scene, where a beam of light shoots from the top of his head up through the ceiling and into the stars.

This has become one of the most remarkable groups, the way you have come together. You may not have realized how remarkable, because you have been busy reaching out to each other and promoting Donald. Most Braswellians still have never met, yet we love each other. Some of us are meeting tonight

for the first time, yet we've already loved from afar. You have never cared anything about a person's race, gender, creed, religion, non-religion, orientation, nationality, disability, etc. All that mattered was caring for people who needed it. You built a loving community where everyone feels at home, a microcosm and a beautiful example of and to the world. You showed how there are good and generous people in all walks of life. I've seen a synergy like nowhere else that makes you unstoppable in anything you put your minds to. Look at all you accomplished in a few months! You are all such amazing, talented people with integrity, strength, compassion, and all manner of sterling qualities. As we turn our attention to the promise of an exciting year in 2009, I'm so blessed to be able to call you all family.

None of us really knows why we were all drawn together or why our lives have been turned upside down. We just know we have to do it and stay open to future possibilities. Perhaps, our purpose is just to help deliver to the world a stunningly gorgeous treasure with a heart of gold and the most beautiful voice any of us have ever heard. That is certainly reason enough. But I could go on and on about all the coincidences we've had and how Donald's choice of songs has struck home for all of us. I know we have talked about feeling that there is something even bigger involved and in store here. Call it Divine, or Karma, or fate, or kismet, or serendipity, or coincidence, or a lucky break or whatever you like, but we all know it is profound. If we continue to shine a beacon of Braswell and Braswellian love on the world, maybe...just maybe...love really can build a bridge.



Cherie (CO), President  
of the Fan Club

The SAMM concert was such a great adventure for me! I love the charity, I loved working with Donald. One day we had a planning meeting – SAMM officials, Donald, church officials and me. As we were leaving, many people from the church recognized Donald from the posters and because he attended the church as a young man. They all had wonderful things to say about him and his family. He treated every single person as someone special. Seeing him work so hard to make a wonderful show even when he was so ill was amazing. Those who didn't know, could never tell. He was the complete professional. Hearing him perform his original composition "Look At Me" for the first time and knowing the meaning behind it, brought me to tears. It fit so perfectly for the purpose of helping to identify the plight of the homeless. That song and that concert will forever have a place in my heart.

Kit (TX)

[Second row, third from right in photo below]



Donald at the SAMM  
press conference.

Donald Braswell touched my soul the first time I heard him sing on *America's Got Talent*. I was hooked when he sang "You Raise Me Up" from the first note to the last. I have heard him sing many times since then and he only gets better. He has done many concerts since being on *AGT*. My first time to see him in person was the SAMMinistries Concert in San Antonio on Jan. 25, 2009.

When Donald sings it comes from his heart. He wrote a poignant song called "Look At Me" about his sadness and despair when he lost his voice. That was my favorite song at the concert, but no concert is complete without hearing "You Raise Me Up". It sends shivers down your spine.

I drove alone from El Dorado, Arkansas to San Antonio: 1,185 miles round trip just to hear Donald sing. It was worth every moment and every mile. I hope to do it again in the near future.

Donald is going to be a great star and I urge anyone to hear this wonderfully talented man every chance you get.

*Vivian (AR)  
[Front row, to Donald's left]*



Donald with the Braswellians at the SAMP concert. This concert was attended by Donald's oldest fan, Ronolda (CO), fourth from the left behind Donald.  
Photo by Regina (FL).

## PBS Concert in Detroit (March 15, 2009)

The PBS concert was put together by Diane Bliss, Executive Producer and Vice President of Detroit Public Television. The success of this concert opened up possible future opportunities for Donald to become part of the PBS family.

The Detroit PBS concert was at the center of an exciting, magical weekend, from arriving at the Detroit St. Regis Hotel on Saturday afternoon through Monday morning's breakfast with Donald. He proved to be just as nice as he is talented and handsome, a lovely, lovely man. I really don't believe in human cloning, but if I did, Donald Braswell would be the place to start.

Braswellians Cherie, Serena, Patty, Bill and I had a delicious dinner together Saturday night in the hotel's New Orleans-themed restaurant. Donald chatted while waiting for Diane Bliss, before going to another room in the restaurant with her and others. Enjoying drinks after dinner, we managed to pass the entire evening talking, laughing, and getting acquainted, all the while knowing that Donald was not far away.

Our socializing continued on Sunday from breakfast through dinner, and even included some Donald time in the early afternoon before he went to rehearsal. After dinner, it was off to the concert! By this time, Irene and Jeanne had joined us. We arrived an hour early and were dismayed to find that a considerable line had already formed to beat us to the front row seats! Not to worry: Diane Bliss had reserved the front row for us. This put us about four feet in front of Donald!

Having listened to Donald's CD daily and umpteen replays of his *AGT* performances, I thought I knew how he sounded, but I was totally unprepared for hearing him in person! The power of his voice takes your breath away, and I marveled at how this soft-spoken man could create such a powerful sound. The evening's songlist consisted of "Nights in White Satin", "Unchained Melody", "Vincerò, perderò", "You Raise Me Up", "Who Can I Turn To", "Pecchè", "Thankful" and "A Change is Gonna Come". Each of these songs was more awesome than



Donald with his band after the PBS concert.  
Photo by Judy.

the one that preceded it. I used to think the Righteous Brothers owned “Unchained Melody”, but Donald Braswell is obviously the new owner! When he got to “A Change is Gonna Come”, I was once again hearing him for the first time. Is there nothing this man can’t sing? If he had been allowed to sing that on AGT, no one else would have received ANY votes! At one point, they gave Donald a phone to talk to a pledging caller personally. Imagine his surprise on hearing Fan Club Founder Julia’s voice on the other end!

After the televised program concluded, he performed “Look at Me” for the studio audience; it will be included on the PBS DVD.

Of course, the concert was over too soon, but PBS’s Afterglow Party followed at the hotel where a big screen TV had broadcast the live concert for the overflow from their small studio. It was wonderful to watch Donald interacting with newly-met fans and to see the excitement in their faces as he generously shared his time with them and allowed photographs to be taken. By the time the room had emptied out, Donald joined the Braswellian party and entertained us with stories about his years living in New York. He had us in stitches with his impersonation of a Brooklyn accent;



Diane Bliss (left), Donald and the Braswellians at PBS’s Afterglow Party.

my jaw dropped as I thought, “Jersey Boys!” There are so many dimensions to his talent; I wonder how much more we’re yet to discover. After the party ended around eleven, we adjourned to a sitting area off the hotel lobby and continued the conversation into the wee hours.

We assembled Monday morning for breakfast before heading for home; calling this a family breakfast is no exaggeration of our camaraderie. Donald is so easy to be with; and Alex, our writer from England, joined us as well. Towards the end of the meal, Patty reminded us that her birthday was the next day and asked that we all sing “Happy Birthday” to her. For one reason or another, everyone was hesitant to start, but Patty was waiting, so finally, I jumped in and led off – I’m used to being told I’m off key and am past embarrassment about it. We all sang to Patty – yes, Donald included; so now I can brag that I’ve sung with Donald Braswell, my final highlight of the concert weekend. We all hugged and kissed goodbye as we parted, cherishing the memories made and looking forward to future concerts. Our adventure continues.

Judy (OH)

[To Donald’s right in above photo]

## Upcoming Events

2009 has already proven to be a success for Donald. From **May 19-22** (dates are still tentative), he will be a guest performer at the **Las Vegas Mirage** for Terry Fator, the ventriloquist/impersonist who was the winner of the 2007 season of *America’s Got Talent*. On **May 29**, he will appear in a nationally televised charity concert in **Los Angeles** with the other finalists of AGT. On **June 27**, he will launch the 2009-2010 season of the Symphony of the Hills in **Kerrville, TX** with a pops concert. Stay tuned to [www.donaldbraswellfanclub.org](http://www.donaldbraswellfanclub.org) and future editions of the *Braswellian Star* for more on these exciting events.

## Fan Club Officers and Staff

<b>Co-Owner, Club Founder</b>	Julia (NV)
<b>Co-Owner, President</b>	Cherie (CO)
<b>Vice President, Tour Director</b>	Serena (VA)
<b>Membership Director</b>	Linda (TX)
<b>Site Moderator</b>	Susanne (OH)
<b>Promotional Director</b>	Barbara (FL)
<b>Promotional Assistants</b>	Ann (ON, Canada), Chris (WI), Jane (NC), Joan (AL)
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Comments? Questions? Is there something you’d like to see on the *Braswellian Star*?

Write to the editor at:

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