

Commentary... Holiday cheer and other challenges

By Katy Yoder
Correspondent

The holidays, regardless of your religious persuasion, can be hard on the heart.

While shopping, there's the need to evoke your inner-warrior to defend your chosen gifts and get them to the goal — I mean cash register. And the challenge of waiting in line to mail gifts, get something to eat and, of course, the ever-frustrating pursuit of a parking place is enough to turn even the meekest shopper into a lunatic.

Hopefully, it'll all be worth it when you see the joy on the faces of the recipients of all your hard work.

There are still tasks to accomplish. The tree's not up, the lights aren't lit and the driveway's hardly passable after the last big dump of snow. But somehow I know on that special morning, it'll all be done. Until then, there's the challenge of coping with it all.

I know I'm in trouble when the alarm goes off warning me I'm over-doing it. My boob barometer used to be a good indicator too, but after two lumpectomies, the girls have given up and tend to stay just as diminished as ever. But there's the butt barometer showing me in no uncertain terms that I'm eating too much. My pants start fitting a tad too snug and then

unexplainably shrink in the wash. I stop making eye contact with certain pairs of pants ... best to just ignore them and avoid the cruel truth.

Even with my new eating regime — no meat and very little dairy (sometimes it sneaks in there when I'm not looking!) I can still emotionally eat with the best of them. Sometimes, its memories of those who will no longer join us at the Christmas Eve table — either out of free will or a one-way ticket to Heaven. They are missed and thoughts about the good times and the bad bubble up like champagne. Speaking of booze, I'm trying to limit my alcohol intake to minimize a repeat performance of breast cancer, but sometimes those hot toddies and luscious glasses of red wine are hard to resist.

The countdown continues toward the big day, and it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Who did I forget? What the heck should I get those family members that I hardly know anymore? What do you get a "tween-ager?" Then there's the reality that when it's all bought and paid for, that dreaded credit card bill will show up in January, making for an anemic wedding anniversary on January 5.

When I feel the blues coming on, I do what I can

to remember the very basic reality: I'm still here! I get to see my husband, daughter, mother and sisters. One of my favorite things is watching our dog open his presents. He reminds me of the days when Amy was a little wee-one and she couldn't contain her enthusiasm for what lay ahead. Alfie's the same way. He lurks around the tree, eyeing the gifts that smell like chew-toys. He knows it's only a matter of time before he gets to tear into the wrapping paper and start gnawing on his new toy. I can hear the squeaking already!

Another coping mechanism that works well is to talk to friends about how I'm really feeling. Surprise, surprise! I realize I'm not alone in my struggles. We're all in this together. I'm hopeful that we can all give each other a bit of a break during the rampage. I'll even try to forgive the crazy drivers who take my life in their hands when they pass me on an icy blind corner. Actually, no, I can't forgive you and if you take out anyone else but yourself when you careen off the road, I hope you get the karma you deserve. Oops! Here comes my inner Holiday Raging Bull again. I'm a work in progress. Maybe a month in silent meditation would do me some good.

I'll ask for that next Christmas!

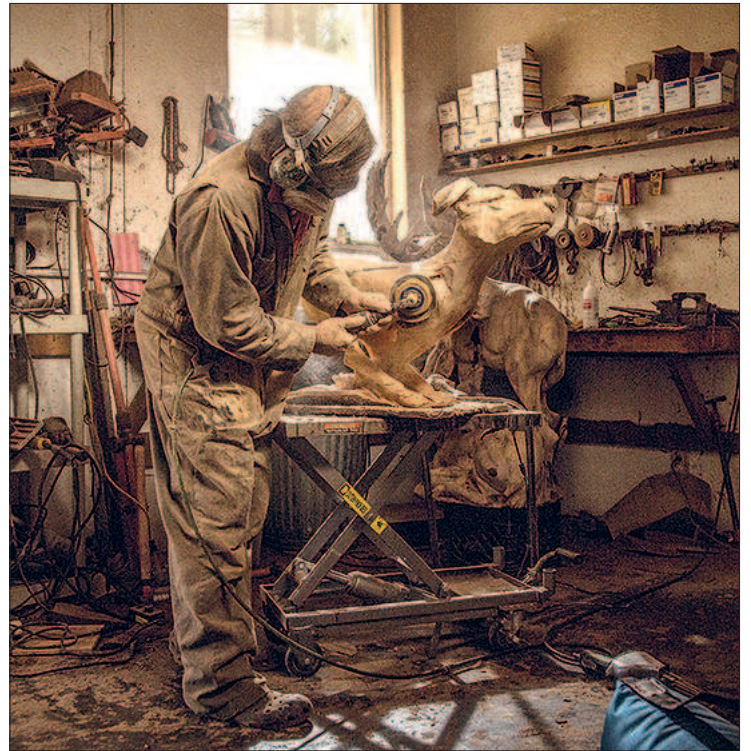


PHOTO PROVIDED

Skip Armstrong at work on BendBroadband's mascot.

Sisters artist tapped for cable ad campaign

When the "local dog," BendBroadband, got to work on a new advertising campaign, they tapped a "local dog" to represent the company.

"We have had a series of BendBroadband campaigns that have featured local people who excel at their craft," said spokesperson Krista Ledbetter.

For the current campaign, that local is J. Chester "Skip" Armstrong. The noted wood-carver sculpted the BendBroadband dog mascot.

"It just seemed like a

natural fit," Ledbetter said.

The planning and precision required in Armstrong's work was, she said, "a fitting analogue for BendBroadband."

She said that representatives from the local cable provider visited Armstrong's workspace in Sisters.

"We went out to his place in September and I was just blown away," she said.

The company commissioned Armstrong to carve their mascot, which will be taken out to events and promotions across Central Oregon.

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