

family traditions are being replaced by mall traditions. You'll be invited down to the mall, bring your family, come see this, come do that. It really robs the family of the ability to create their own traditions and for children to participate in them."

Indeed, most malls and shopping centers hold events designed to lure shoppers. Lloyd Center in Portland schedules a tree-lighting ceremony and the crowning of Oregon's Lucia Queen of Light each year right after Thanksgiving as well as appearances by choral groups on a daily basis. And in 1985, the Meier & Frank store in Portland was the host to a grand entrance from Santa Claus — after he was escorted through downtown Portland on a convertible limousine by the Portland Police Mounted Horse Patrol.

The media also play a role in upholding and perpetuating the commercial Christmas. Magazines, for instance, frequently carry articles such as "Fifty nifty tips for Christmas promotion," "Christmas in July: time to start planning for the 'sell-iest' season," and "Deck the aisles with lots of basics" as well as shopping tips that encourage people to "get going the week before and after Thanksgiving, keep a list of everyone's sizes in your pocketbook, and take full advantage of many mail and phone-order catalogs."

Gift guides are another big item, both for newspapers and retailers. The Register-Guard, for example, will put out special sections in support of local merchant groups and three gift guides during the 1986 holiday season.

"We do it in response to a perceived need on the part of the merchants in a given area," says Michael Raz, retail advertising manager for The Register-Guard. "It's our answer to their request in helping them organize a group project. And, of course, we philosophically agree that that's a good way for folks in a geographic locale to promote."

There's been few changes in the gift guides. The Register-Guard has put out during the 19 years Raz has been with the paper, although this year wire service news from around the country was cut.

"This year we've endeavored to put more consumer type of news in them to help support the advertising message of the advertisers," Raz says.

Raz believes much of the commercialism found today during Christmas can be blamed on a changing marketplace.

"It used to be that business was a lot easier. In the boom years after the war (World War II) and with dips in the economy right up through 1979-80, you opened your doors, you stayed close to your business, you promoted a little, and everything work-

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ed well," Raz says. "With the advent of the mass merchandisers, the Bi-Marts, the Fred Meyers, the Pay Lessees, the Meier & Franks of the world, business gets tougher. The competition for the dollar is keener than it's ever been before. We continually come up with ways to meet the needs of those folks."

According to Robinson, however, the media has fallen into the commercial Christmas trap.

"I really have yet to see a serious look at the celebration by the media. I'm actually appalled. The effect on this country (by commercialism) is enormous. It distorts everything we do for about six or eight weeks. It increases depression. Child abuse goes up 200 percent. There's an incredible debt burden. And I don't see a serious examination of that at all," Robinson says.

At the forefront of much of the Christmas hype is a tool used more and more by retailers today — advertising. But 60 years ago, just as other aspects of Christmas have changed, advertising for Christmas gifts by retailers was minimal at best. The Dec. 17, 1923 edition of Time magazine only carried three ads aimed specifically at the holiday shopper. One was for a "Lees Clampable Ash Receiver;" another was for a subscription to Time that carried the heading, "Christmas is at hand. Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their friends;" and the third was for holiday gifts from A.G. Spalding and Bros.

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Today, ads for Christmas gifts can be found in all types of media. During the ABC Monday Night Football Game Dec. 1, a number of Christmas commercials aired during the broadcast. Bi-Mart ran five spots, McDonald's ran one highlighting its Christmas ornament promotion, and there were others urging consumers to buy diamond jewelry, Liberty coins and poinsettias.

But according to Robinson,

football fans aren't the only target.

"Television is certainly the most effective advertising medium, especially for children. What is happening is that the toy manufacturers are able to determine in advance what gifts we buy our children by what they manufacture, how they distribute it and how they advertise it. So actually what we're doing is fulfilling the manufacturers' expectations each Christmas, not our children's," she says.

In Seattle, meanwhile, retailers and car dealers are seeing dollar signs and are taking out ads with news that Boeing Co. employees will receive bonus checks worth \$200 million Dec. 15. Of the estimated 115,000 Boeing workers countrywide, 80,000 are in the Seattle-Everett area.

In unison, the retailers and

car dealers have taken out ads in Seattle newspapers cajoling Boeing workers to part with their bonuses. Kirkland Mazda's ad said, "Attention all Boeing employee credit union members — this is your weekend," while Performance Dodge's ad read, "Public notice to Boeing employees — Before you purchase your new car or truck, you owe it to yourself to shop us LAST!"

According to Jim Conaghan, head of economic and media analysis at the Newspaper Advertising Bureau in New York City, the Christmas season is when advertising peaks.

"If you look at the retail component of newspaper ad expenditures, naturally the November-December period is going to be the largest. That may mean November being 10 percent, December another 10 percent of the en-

tire year's distribution," Conaghan says.

According to Ongstad, Nordstrom follows much the same pattern. "I know my buyers love to run ads during the holiday season. And we do have a very heavy ad schedule. We do run more during that time of the year," she says.

To Robinson and others, the increase in advertising helps distort the Christmas season. "I think that's one of the things people resent most; that the good feelings they do have about Christmas are co-opted; that the beautiful decorations that mean a lot to people, the songs that give them great pleasure are used to manipulate them to buy things," Robinson says.

"Most of the television commercials and the sales on television remind me of the old carnival barker," says Ralph Smith, executive

