

'Tis the Season

Bringing on the holidays

by Marty Davis

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elcome to the "holidays," every last damn one of them. The time is here. 'Tis the season. Bring it on.

Ah, but 'tis the season for what? So many viewpoints, so many perspectives, each one guaranteed to annoy someone else.

'Tis the season for gift giving and shopping? No, comes the chorus, 'tis the season for rampant overcommercialization and mass consumerism. Buy, buy, buy. Destroy resources, rack up debt, ruin your children forever.

'Tis the season for the celebration of once traditional Christmas festivities and events? No, fa, la, la, that's not inclusive and marginalizes other groups and communities.

'Tis the season for parties, dinners and friends? Ho ho no, that's not healthy. Americans eat too much, are obese and throughout the holidays should only eat three ounces of lean turkey breast and five green beans. No wait, that's three ounces of tofurkey and five organic green beans, beans not harvested by oppressed immigrant laborers.

'Tis the season for outdoor time and frolicking activities? Yeah right, Americans hate exercise and it's too cold outside.

So what is "the season" for anyone?

At *Just Out* we're declaring it the "Season of Memories," a time to share and remember old, comfortable memories, make new ones and listen attentively to those cherished by others. Memories belong to all of us. They don't have to be bought, wrapped or given away. They don't come from the mall, they don't break or get stolen, and no batteries are required.

This year, in lieu of the now traditional newspaper "gift guide," we are focusing on memories, friends, family and community. We've asked our friends to share their favorite memories with you, and we've included a sample platter of events and activities that can help you build new memories to cherish for seasons to come.

We're also no fools here at *Just Out*. This is an advertiser-supported newspaper, and many of our fine merchants and business owners depend on holiday shoppers to keep their doors open and their business viable. So trust me, we definitely want you to shop. With our encouragement to shop come these suggestions for how to maximize happiness and value for all.

Shop local, shop your neighborhoods. In my North Portland neighborhood, small businesses are popping up everywhere. It's quite a delight to have shops within walking distance. For years, our area was dominated by a gun and ammunition shop that featured a window display of alarming weaponry. Its annual holiday décor consisted of hanging out a dusty pink T-shirt that read, "Shoot a commie for mommie." It was a colorful holiday tradition. People flocked from miles around.

Now we have Orleans Candle, the Little Red Bike Shop—shopping does require lunch, after all—and Trixie's, a delightful neighborhood beauty spa. A pedicure for the holidays.

What's in your neighborhood? Are you close to Alberta, Mississippi, Hawthorne, Clinton Street, St. Johns, Moreland, Sellwood, Woodstock, Nob Hill or Multnomah Village? Shopping these Portland neighborhoods cuts fuel costs, preserves your home value by keeping neighborhoods vital and helps you meet and grow friendships with your neighbors.

Downtown Portland is a great shopping experience, and while Vancouver, Wash., probably would rather not be called a Portland



Hobo's is decorated traditionally for the season.

neighborhood, it's close enough to be thought of as one. If you haven't recently crossed the river to downtown and uptown Vancouver, you are in for a delightful surprise. There are great antique shops and boutiques and, again, many places for lunch and exploration.

Do you wish your holiday plans called for travel, but it's not in the budget this year? Use your imagination. Visit the Pearl. Within minutes you'll wonder exactly which city you're now in. There's something new on every block, and you'll definitely have a sense of faraway places.

Worried about overeating and lack of exercise? Kaiser Permanente billboards and commercials starting to get to you? Walk and shop. Park or deposit yourself at one end of Alberta and walk the 30 blocks to the other end. Visit shops where you'll be greeted with hot cider and a cookie, then keep walking that cookie off. Patronize shop owners who actually know their store and their products and are truly pleased to have your business. There's also a good

possibility that they are selling you a product of love, something they designed, made or produced themselves. And, on a special note, many small shops come with a dog or cat to greet joyously, or disdainfully ignore all visitors.

We are now living in the age of dot-com shopping. You can shop 24/7 and not leave home. You can purchase gift cards and make it quick, simple, tidy and sterile. You can order from giant online retailers like Amazon.com, or you can visit the handful of remaining independent bookstores that we have left in the Portland area. Each choice has merit. Just don't forget that you do have choices and that you don't have to drive to the mall. Shop green. Shop local.

My favorite shopping day would be a visit to Saturday Market and St. Johns Booksellers and dinner with friends at Hobo's, where they have the most elegant holiday decorations in town. Followed, of course, by a walk along the Esplanade.

We value you as readers and friends and hope that in some way you'll enjoy a holiday memory. Share it with us soon. jo