

Christmas Is For Adults; The Kiddies Are Too Smart

NEW YORK (NEA)—It is the consensus of those who know—child psychologists, toy buyers, Santa costumers and Santas themselves—that Christmas today is for the grown-ups. The kiddies are too smart.

Point one, they say, is that it's a moot question whether daddy comes into the toy department to buy something for the youngsters, or because he loves to see and toy with the toys himself.

The fact of the matter is, says Bill McDuffy, the toy buyer for Gimbels in New York, during the four-week buying spree before Christmas, some 30,000 parents a day traipse through the department (including papa who is supposed to be working), looking, fingering or all-out playing at the counters. Only 5,000 of them actually buy anything.

The kiddies, of course, come in on Saturdays, but by then the folks are worn out and already armed with an idea of what they (the old folks) want to play with on Christmas morning.

And to whom are their toy catalogues sent, McDuffy further lays on. To whom, indeed, but adults.

And who will dispute the Christmas morning fact that it is dear old dad on his hands and knees playing with the new electric train he bought, while Junior plays with

the crate in which it came?

In point of further fact, a noted child-parent counseling team says, it's natural for Junior to prefer playing with the toy crates than the toys.

The team—Willard and Marguerite Beecher, authors of "Parents on the Run"—say that to children nowadays, Christmas means only more and higher-priced presents than they receive during the rest of the year.

The original meaning and spirit of Christmas is fast fading to the younger folk, the Beechers maintain, along with the old family "togetherness and the original do-it-yourself Christmas."

Mrs. Beecher recalls—as will other sympathetic grown-ups—that as a girl the Yule season was a high point of the year. The entire family had a hand in the preparations. They all went out to chop down the tree. They all decorated it, they all helped whip the house into shape, and the festive spirit prevailed.

Now, the Beechers say, Christmas is no treat for the kids, just a chore. The parties are welcomed as are the special Christmas TV programs and dates to the holiday dances, but as for fooling around with "that Santa bit, that's for the kids" (meaning parents).

And the parents love it. Even

with the morning after's mess, and the bills, they stop at nothing to recapture the Yuletide spirit—and their youth.

The further proof is the estimated 14 billion dollars the adults will spend from the beginning of December on. That figure was arrived at by subtracting November's estimated retail figure from December's; the only means anybody has of really figuring out the vast expenditure made by adult Americans at Christmas.

Of course, stores are moving up the buying season to middle August and sometimes even July. Decorations are brought out after Labor Day, Christmas cards have always enjoyed buy-it-cheaper-now summer sales.

An association of retail merchants says that as far as the stores are concerned, "the Christmas season really starts on December 26." And a brief thumb-through on the classified book in your city gives any number of available customers whose whole business is concerned with renting or selling Santa Claus costumes—at any time of the year.

Further support for the Christmas-is-for-the-folks theory comes from Santa himself—at least the chief Santa of a major New York department store. (He's really only a helper, Dad.)

The ropes around his throne, Santa says, are there to keep the parents back, not the kids. And for every child on his knee, there are three adults in line.

"The poor children just don't have a chance," Santa says. "The parents that bring him to me are the real kids; just a little bigger."

West Foresters Name New Aides

SPOKANE (AP)—Hugh J. Hodgins, Vancouver, B.C., was elected president of the Western Forestry and Conservation Assn. Friday.

An official of Crown Zellerbach Canada Ltd., he succeeds Arthur M. Roberts, McCall, Idaho. Delegates attending the closing session of the association golden anniversary conference chose George S. Long Jr., Weyerhaeuser Co., Tacoma, as secretary.

Space Agency Drops Project

WASHINGTON (UPI)—The Federal Space Agency today scrapped its Vega rocket in order to make powerful boosters available for pushing other projects—perhaps including a new attempt to launch a moon satellite. In discarding the Vega, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration will be able to divert six Atlas intercontinental ballistic missile boosters to other programs.

These programs include development of the Centaur and Atlas-Agena rockets.

It was speculated that perhaps one of the six Atlas engines would be used in a new moon shot. In cancelling its Vega contract with the Convair Division of General Electric Co., NASA will lose about 17 million dollars. The total cost of the Vega project would have been 65 million dollars.

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