

...M-AC World

FROM PAGE 5

lot of people end up being shaped like the cars they drive. That's why there is such a great emphasis placed on staying in shape. I have many friends shaped like a bucket seat or a Volkswagen. That's the real reason Californians are so shape conscious.

Most everyone in L.A. is an actor or is in the process of writing, directing, shooting and producing a movie. Even the news anchors are in the business of show. Sometimes the 6:00 news looks like an academy awards ceremony.

The other night a commentator on the 11:00 news anchoring in a day-glo fuschia tux, reported the disturbing incident of Santa Claus smashing the camera of a 12 year old autograph hound. It was a sad day for humanity. Apparently Santa is "fed up with demanding children," the anchor reported between his sips of Evian water. Upon hearing this I was distraught. My childhood idol is not the person I thought he was. In fact, they showed actual footage of Santa committing this heinous act against one of his devoted fans. I was shocked and appalled.

It was somewhat disillusioning to learn that Santa has shaved his beard and dyed his hair blond. He's done away with the granny glasses and now wears green contacts. He's lost about 100 lbs. (according to the news anchor, he's on the Jenny Craig weight loss program), he's had a "tummy tuck," has fired all his elves, divorced his wife and has checked himself into the Betty Ford treatment center for alcoholism. I always knew there was something fishy about him. I always suspected he couldn't have been the real reason for the season. I never really did trust him did I?! I don't think he ever did come through with a single one of his promises. All that stuff that was on T.V. and in the shopping malls about him giving you your heart's desires - it was all just propaganda and self-seeking publicity!

I remember asking for a walking, talking, flying, thinking, musically inclined, wind up doll that could do homework. Did he ever come through on that?!

NO! I wrote to him faithfully. I supplied him with moral support and would mention in my letters how good he was and how good a person I thought I had been the whole year (I knew he required it of me). I left him cookies and low fat milk, (I knew he had to watch his cholesterol level) and then I would ask for a chinchilla or a pony. No dice - it never happened. One Christmas I even went so far as to ask for peace and joy. That didn't work either.

As I sat watching the news I couldn't help but wonder who that other person is. You know the one that has to do with carols and mangers with straw in them. The one disassociated from tinsel, red suits, elves, cluttered trees, malls, fake snow, car phones, freeways and smog sunsets. The one you never read about in the papers, see on T.V. or hear on the radio. The one who never gets publicity except for that great, old book that's written about Him.

I was listening to some carolers the other night and they were singing of Him. When they finished it became so silent... silent night, holy night. A few seconds later I thought I heard angels on high sweetly singing o'er the freeways and somewhere in the distant past away in a manger no crib for a bed the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head. So now in the midst of chaos and power shopping the beckoning echoes can still be heard ever so faintly... "Oh come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant come and behold Him born the King of angels... oh come let us adore Him."

Suddenly, I realized, my Christmas plea from long ago, had finally been answered. I was filled with peace and joy, but Santa wasn't the source. I wish I had known earlier who I should have believed in. I know who to believe in now. So, I picked up the book called the Bible and started reading. I couldn't find any reference to Santa in it but I discovered who Jesus is. It was like, totally awesome. He's given me far beyond what I could ever have imagined or asked for. His gift to me is eternal life. I don't know about you but that makes my day and beats any Christmas gift I've ever received from anybody. it may not be a

white Christmas but it's a right Christmas.

Righteous, totally righteous.

NEW ORLEANS, LA.

By Michelle Thomas
Christmas. New

Orleanians take this as a synonym for party. That is, any holiday calls for celebration, and Christmas ranks up there with Mardi Gras. During the week before Christmas, there are office parties, club parties, church parties, parties at all the local hangouts and parties between friends. This year it called for extra celebration as New Orleans received snow! A couple of flurries canceled work for everyone, lengthening the holiday weekend and giving an extra day to party. The cold spell did cause a number of problems around the city, since it was followed by seventy-degree weather. Pipes everywhere broke, causing a water shortage and a bit of downfall to the cheerful season. The warm weather was a relief, especially for the eager children awaiting Santa Claus. The Santa Claus who visits Louisiana travels in an alligator drawn pirogue, making his way through the bayou. Christmas morning is always busy opening presents, followed by a big Christmas dinner. Food is the essential ingredient, strictly cajun! Essentially, Christmas in Louisiana is busy, warm, but most of all fun.

MONTREAT, N.C. -

This year Montreat Anderson College is blessed and enriched with having twenty-five International students, from fourteen different countries, as a part of the student body. The following excerpts tell something of Christmas in other countries as seen by four of these students.

"The Christmas celebration in Ethiopia is a time of feasting Christ. Everyone spends Christmas day celebrating by visiting one another and wishing each other a Happy Christmas and eating with them. That evening they congregate in church and sing, rejoice all night long praising God with psalms.

The people prepare for the celebration by buying either a goat or a sheep to feed their visitors and they all must buy new clothes according to their income. Everyone helps the poor for

the Christmas day to get whatever they need to be ready. They take about two days to get ready and rest.

When everyone is ready, they rise early and everyone goes to each house and eagerly greet and bless each other. They eat at each house especially for fellowship and brotherhood. Then in the evening after supper they congregate in the church for the worship of God for His gift to us." - Gabriel Zeray, Ethiopia.

"As a Christian society, South Africans recognize Christmas as the birthday of the Lord and Savior Christ Jesus. Christmas preparations are done early in December. They include renovating homes and making shopping.

Traditionally, the Christmas day itself is like a "Party Day", people go around the streets shouting "Happy, Happy." People cook different kinds of food and buy all sorts of drinks, both soft and hard. Doors of every home are open to everybody. You don't necessarily have to know a particular family to join a celebration with them. You can go to every house, shout "Happy", ask for food and join the party." - Andrew M. Motaung - South Africa

"In Mexico Christmas is one of the most important epochs in the whole year. The people start to prepare everything for these days one or two months earlier. We celebrate the Jesus' birthday and it's very common to find big Christmas trees and the Nativity.

The food is very important for this day in Mexico, and the women spend a lot of time cooking turkey, cakes, salads, codfish, etc.

All the streets, the stores and the "Zocalo" (downtown) have a lot of different lights.

Even when there are a lot of poor people in Mexico they spend a lot of money

on this important holiday. Mexican family is very close and it is much significance in this epoch." - Teresa Guille'n, Mexico.

"Around Christmas time all the households have candles everywhere, by the side walks on the snow, on windows, balconies ..everywhere is lighted with peaceful (usually red) candles.

The celebration starts on the 24th of December by decorating the Christmas tree and doing final preparations, having Christmas music in the background. After that we have a light "lunch" called Riisipuuro (Riceporage) having one almond-good luck for the coming year for the one who gets it. (In my family that person gets out of the pleasure of washing dishes that evening). The lunch is eaten around 1 p.m. After that everyone goes to Christmas sauna. Sauna is a big part of Finnish life-style and everyone has one. Often after sauna people go to the grave yards to light a candle by the grave of their loved ones. It is beautiful - candles, snow, peace, quietness. After the sauna we relax and play games and sing with the whole family. Around 6 p.m. we have the big Christmas meal.

After the meal Santa Claus comes around 8 p.m. and gifts are opened. Christmas day (25th) most of the people (even non-Christians) go to church early in the morning.

The rest of the day is spent with family. The second Christmas Day (26th) is usually spent visiting grandparents, family members and sometimes friends.

For me Christmas in Finland is time of peace and love - with everything being "natural" - no flashy lights - no hustle. A time with the family - family united/created by our Father, Sarika Kivela - Finland



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