

## B

Section

## LIFE

Religion 8B

Rainbow  
ice rarest  
of all  
diamonds

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK—Any diamond is rare and unusual. The Diamond Information Center says that all the diamonds in the world—engagement rings included—would fill only a single double-decker bus.

That makes colored diamonds the needles in an already small haystack.

The Mineralogy Department at London's Natural History Museum, currently staging the exhibit "Diamonds: The World's Most Dazzling Exhibition," estimates that one in every 500 to 10,000 gem-quality diamonds are colored.

As one can imagine, such rarity makes some colored diamonds very valuable.

"Colored diamonds are not for 'regular' people," says Sally Morrison, director of the DIC, an organization that promotes the diamond industry. "They tend to be very expensive. The price depends on supply. The rarest is red—I've seen two of those in my life."

Red diamonds, including the 5.11-carat Moussaieff Red on display in London, are worth \$1 million or more per carat, according to Morrison.

For Harvey Lieberman, the rough diamond buyer at jeweler Louis Glick whose job includes selecting rough diamonds and overseeing cutting, has been blown over by a few pieces of ice.

"Over the years, I've come across an intense blue diamond that really knocked my socks off. Everyone has their own aesthetic. I also like a gorgeous bubble gum pink diamond," he says. "Also, within the last year I did a beautiful orange stone. I made a pear shape and I have done a heart shape on another. The pear was over 3 carats. Those are the pieces that I'll remember forever."

Anyone who has shopped for a diamond has probably heard about the 4Cs—color, cut, clarity and carat. The same factors should be considered when purchasing a colored diamond, but more weight should be given to color and cut, he says.

Cutting colored diamonds is different from clear ones, Lieberman explains, because the ultimate goal is maximizing the color. "If the stone is cut with the same angles as white stone, you would end up diminishing the color. You have to balance color—you want even distribution, too—with brilliance. With a white stone you're most interested in brilliance."

All diamonds do indeed form the same way: as crystalized carbon. But, according to John King, laboratory projects officer at the Gemological Institute of America, colored diamonds usually are altered at the atomic level. An impurity in the lattice structure of the diamond creates the color: for example, if nitrogen is the invader, the diamond turns yellow, and boron would make a diamond blue.

Heat and pressure in the ground can affect a diamond's color, and so could a diamond's position in the earth, King says. A diamond formed next to a natural source of radiation would turn green, he explains.

Some colors can be traced to individual mines, others to specific regions, the DIC's Morrison says. Pinks and blues have been found in Australia and Africa, red diamonds in Brazil and the 195 carats of natural green diamonds Nicole Kidman wore around her neck to the Oscars in 2004 came from the Jwaneng mine in Botswana and was crafted by Bulgari.

Please see RAINBOW/2B

## 'Tis the season to be jolly...

But what is the real reason behind all the cheer?

By Cherie F. Hodges  
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Christmas is coming, but do you really care? So many people say the message is missing and Christmas is commercial and it's just for kids.

And though some parents decry the mythology of Christmas, they go along with it for the sake of their children.

According to scholars, centuries ago, Christians co-opted a pagan celebration of the winter solstice to commemorate the birth of Jesus, despite the uncertainty of the time of that event. During the last century, a different group of ambitious crusaders co-opted this now-holy day for their own ends.

Where the early Christians acted for piety, the new crusaders - advertisers - acted for avarice.

The article stated that Americans routinely spend \$1,000 a year on gifts. Meaning many will start the new year in debt.

If there was ever a question about how far removed Christmas seems to be getting from religion, some churches aren't holding services on Sunday, which is Christ's birth day.

According to an article in the Cincinnati Inquirer, "This is the first time Christmas falls on a Sunday since 1994. Some church leaders acknowledge a nod to Santa, admit-

ting they canceled early Sunday morning services to give their smallest members more time with their presents."

Many of Charlotte's large churches like University Park Baptist and Greater Salem will be open for Christmas services. UPBC will hold all four regularly-scheduled worship services.

Some critics had accused megachurches of bowing to pressure of secularism. But some parents just know their kids aren't going to want to leave new toys and clothes behind to go to church.

"It's going to be hard to get to church Sunday morning," said Stacy Pierce, a Charlotte parent who was shopping for her

Please see TIS THE/2B



PHOTO/WADE NASH

## Benefit raises over \$25,000 for center

By Bonita Buford  
SPECIAL TO THE POST

There's a groundswell of support for the Afro-American Cultural Center.



J. Taylor

Fifty guests braved icy roads to gather at Charlotte attorney Johnny Taylor's home on Dec. 15 to kick off a silent campaign to support the AACC.

Afro-American Cultural Center

Board member DeAlva Glenn, approached Taylor several months ago asking if he would help raise money for the Center.

Taylor embarrassed Glenn at the fund raiser by recalling she'd set a

goal of only \$5,000 before adjusting the benchmark to \$25,000.

"When I approached Johnny," Glenn said, "he agreed to do this - no questions asked. Johnny is a visionary. (In one night) we've raised \$22,000."

"I just don't think small," Taylor said. "The goal was \$25,000, so I'm going to give \$2,000 (more) and I'm challenging the rest of the community to support the center."

This first of several Silent Campaigns was a gift from the heart of many. After Taylor announced the goal had been reached, Grammy-award winning singer, Regina Belle—a friend of Taylor's—joined the guests and sang several selections, including Nat King Cole's "The Christmas

Song (Merry Christmas To You)." Her encore was a soulful "Happy Birthday" to a guest who spent his birthday supporting the Center.

In thanking Taylor for his support, AACC Chair David Taylor (no relation) reminded the guests that "...we're in a time of evolution, an exciting time. The center is in good financial condition and your contributions will insure that we have great programming. It takes all of us."

Glenn summed up the cause: "There's momentum in the community. We are getting ready for a new facility with fantastic programming. It's all about letting people know what the Afro-American Cultural Center is doing."

## GIVING TO THE KIDS



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Power 98 radio personality No Limit Larry poses with one of the many children the station solicited toys for. Saturday, the children were treated to a Christmas party at Carowinds and the gifts were handed out.

Fast food  
fans passing  
on healthier  
alternatives

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CULVER CITY, Calif.—Tony Haney considers himself a fairly healthy eater—he tries to eat fruit and vegetables at home and usually orders roast chicken or teriyaki rice when he eats out.

But when he hits a fast-food joint, Haney falls under a greasy spell. On a recent trip to Wendy's, he passed up a side salad in favor of a baked potato topped with cheddar and bacon with his hamburger combo meal.

"You may walk in here feeling like you want to do something good for yourself," said Haney, an actor and screenwriter in his mid-30s, "but it's hard to resist when you smell the grease."

One option Haney no longer had: a fruit bowl of melon, pineapple and grapes.

Wendy's dropped the entree-sized bowl and a smaller fruit cup last month—they just didn't sell enough.

"We put a strong push behind it," said Wendy's spokesman Bob Bertini. "But as we got through the summer and moved to fall, the fruit was not meeting our sales expectation."

Though McDonald's has found some success with its fruit offerings, many people apparently still prefer to indulge when they eat out.

In 2004, the top three items ordered at restaurants were burgers, french fries and pizza, according to the NPD Group, a consumer marketing research firm. And while recent studies found that Americans' consumption of fruit and vegetable is on the rise, most people are eating those things at home.

Wendy's introduced the fruit items in February to provide healthier choices and counter publicity blaming fast food for Americans' expanding waistlines. The bowl cost around \$4.19, the cup around \$2.19.

Neither Wendy's nor McDonald's would release specific sales figures for their healthier offerings.

In 2002, Wendy's began improving its salad offerings, same-store sales rose 4.7 percent, an increase the company partly attributed to salad sales, Dennis Milton, an analyst at Standard & Poor's. Same-store sales for McDonald's restaurants increased 9.6 percent in 2004 and 4.4 percent last year, an increase the chain attributed in part to improved menu offerings.

Wendy's mistake might have been in its choice of fruit—melons can have a short shelf life—not the choice to offer fruit in the first place.

"Wendy's had the right idea to offer fruit, but knowing the fresh cut fruit business, melons are harder to work with than harder fruits," said Elizabeth Pivonka, a nutritionist and president of Produce for Better Health Foundation.

Bertini, the spokesman for Wendy's, said that fruit did not sell well in cold weather and that the chain may reintroduce it sometime.

Milton said healthy food has been key to the fast-food industry's growth in the past three years, particularly at McDonald's, where healthier menu items have attracted women and health-conscious eaters.

"Wendy's is more an exception than the rule," Milton said.