

Christmas And Lazer Gun Zaps



Bill Faver

This is a toy and it follows the line of several hot items of Christmases past. That it emphasizes and encourages the too familiar television way of solving problems by zapping your opponent is unfortunate. This seems particularly so at Christmas-time when the usual emphasis is toward peace and good will.

There are some alternatives to zap guns and violence for Christmas. There are even some gifts emphasizing the natural environment, beauty, and peacefulness that would show a different set of values to the boys and girls who receive them.

One is a "Kid's Gift Package" from Duncraft (Penacook, NH 03303) which sells for \$24 and includes a Field Guide to the Birds Coloring Book, a Peterson First Guide to Birds, a window pane feeder and 5 lbs. of sunflower seed, and the famous Audubon Bird Call. Children from five and up may enjoy such a gift for a lifetime as they begin to learn about the fascinating feathered friends around them.

"Audible Audubon" is available from the National Audubon Society and from Duncraft. The mini-phonograph fits in one hand and plays 5-inch "bird cards" with the calls, commentary, and a color picture of each bird. The player and 20 cards cost \$39.95. Additional card sets with 10 birds are \$6.95 each.

Books make fine gifts for boys and girls. Many fine nature-oriented books are available from most any book store. The Peterson Field Guide series covers topics from Birds and Butterflies to Seashores and Snakes. In paperback, cost is about \$12 to \$15, depending on the title. Other guides and stories on a wide range of subjects are available. Look also at recordings and cassettes and videotapes of nature subjects.

Why not consider an aquarium with some inexpensive fish as a starter? It's a lot of trouble to keep clean and it will teach responsibility as well as give some youngster an opportunity to catch and learn about our native species of sea critters. Most discount stores, department stores, pet shops, and some drugstores carry aquarium supplies.

Cameras and camera accessories make good gifts for boys and girls. Such a gift may start another life-long hobby or begin a serious career of creativity. Prices range from very

inexpensive to outrageous but there's a range in there most any of us can reach. Look at photography books and guides from the books to the art books.

Think about Christmas values this year and decide whether you want Christmas to be zap guns and violence or peacefulness and good will. If you opt for some alternatives to zap guns, those and others are there for you. Happy shopping!

Parents Get Real Thrill At Christmas



Etta Smith

I think my parents had as much fun at Christmas sometimes as their children did.

My mother says the best times of her life were when her children were small, and especially at Christmas.

She and Dad were just as anxious for us to open our presents after Santa's visit as we were, and it reached the point where Santa started visiting earlier in the evening every year.

Of course if we just happened to get up on Christmas Eve and the presents were there, they'd say "Why not let them open them?"

My sister and brothers and I knew we could always pull that one off so we began developing insomnia about that time every year.

I remember one particular

Christmas Eve when I was about eight years old and Mom instructed us to go to bed. We went, but couldn't go to sleep knowing Santa was about to come.

So, she came and got all of us kids in one bed and tried telling us a bedtime story. I was smart enough to

know the quicker I fell asleep, the quicker Santa would get there. But my brothers couldn't be tied down with a team of mules.

As I pretended to be asleep, I heard Mom tell the other kids, "If you'd go to sleep like Etta, he'd come sooner."

About that time we heard him in the living room. "Ho Ho Ho, merry Christmas," he shouted.

The other kids were laughing and wriggling with joy, but I still continued to listen. There was something funny about this, I thought.

His voice sounded very familiar. After he left we were allowed to go open our presents. Mom and Dad knew there would be no sleeping that night for us.

And it was always sort of funny

how Santa would bring my brothers presents that my dad enjoyed playing with. If he liked train sets, that's what the boys got. And he loved football, so over the years my brothers acquired a collection of footballs.

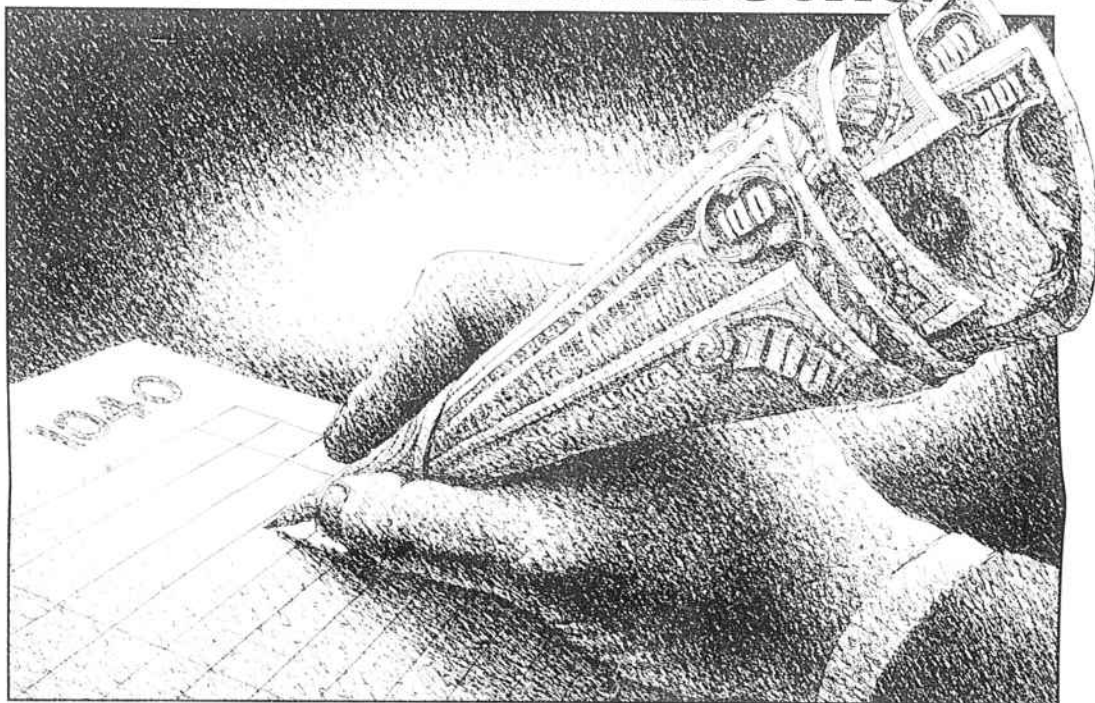
I remember one year, my brother James got a pool table for Christmas. And I remember him asking my mother weeks later if she'd ask Dad to let him play on it awhile.

Mom and Dad really did get as much enjoyment from all this as we did, even though I didn't realize until I was grown just how much.

One thing was certain—the cookies my sister and I used to bake for Santa always were eaten and the toys he brought always were played with.

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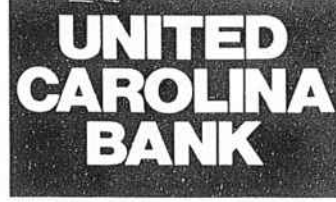
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