

## Editorial: Christmas commercialism has gotten out of hand

by Christina Peoples

With the holiday season fast approaching, the phrase "Christmas is so commercialized" runs through my head. And, yes, I'll agree that Christmas is commercialized because it is now the most important selling season of the year. Every holiday from Easter to the once sacred Christmas season is exploited in some way by our commercialized society to fit the purposes of certain groups.

Christmas is preyed upon by retailers who twist its traditions and spirit to suit their marketing strategies. In the middle of the summer's heat, you can sit in front of your t.v. and watch a ragged Santa driving a ramshackle sleigh pulled by so-called reindeer that resemble donkeys more than anything else. And what else would jolly old St. Nick be advertising than a Christmas in July sale down at your local furniture store. What does this kind of twisted advertising say about the meaning of Christmas? Christmas is a time for discounts on merchandise, so people can

buy more and go farther into debt. The stores are almost "giving" items away because they have made the prices so cheap for the benefit of all of us unsuspecting consumers.

No one can deny that Christmas is a time for giving, but not the kind that the retailers are promoting. God gave his Son to the world to die for our sins. Mary gave of herself and willingly bore the child who she knew would carry the weight of the world. The wise men gave Jesus gifts that were precious to them. Even our most celebrated secular figure, Santa Claus, is a representative of selfless giving in the spirit of the holidays. Children know that he works all year making toys to reward all the good little boys and girls without any reward for himself but some milk and cookies. Selfless giving is the type of giving that society should be instilling in the hearts of its children, not the giving of material goods until it hurts.

Even now retailers are exploiting Christmas to draw more customers into their stores. They have overlooked

that late November should be a time to celebrate the focus on our families and our abundance of things to be thankful for — Thanksgiving. The ghosts, goblins and witches of Halloween are barely flying off the shelves before Santa and his reindeer come flying in for Christmas. By the first week in November, malls and stores are covered in red and green with animated elves waving to passersby as they hurry to catch the next sale. Why do stores rush to deck the halls when they should be filling the horn of plenty? They are rushing Christmas to make sure that every time people enter the mall to buy something as simple as deodorant, they will be reminded that there are only 26 or so shopping days till Christmas.

The knowledge that the shopping clock is ticking away sends mothers into a panic to get the last Power Ranger doll off the shelf or to break into the savings account to buy for their husbands the gold watch that may not be there the next time they come shopping. People get in such a rush to get through the Christmas season that they forget what the true spirit of Christmas and giving is all about. Just take a glance at the Cathy cartoon in your daily newspaper to see the Christmas rush mentality in action. Cathy is always competing with her co-workers to see who mails their Christmas cards first, who gets all their shopping done in alphabetical order before Halloween, and who finds the best recipe for fruit cake from their stacks of *Good Housekeeping*.

I'm not getting on my soapbox to preach the evils of Christmas shopping. We cannot blame merchants for taking a beautiful holiday and making it commercial. Our job is to look under the gold tinsel and wrapping paper to see that Christmas' meaning is still with us.

An example of the true meaning of Christmas happens in my hometown, Roanoke Rapids, every year. In Roanoke Rapids, there are two dueling outdoor Christmas decorators. Early in November, you see the wiring and lights begin to be stapled to the houses. Next a few plastic light-up Santas and five-foot candles with Noel painted on them pop up in the yards. The week before Thanksgiving, the signs "Santa

stops here" and "Refresh and refuel with cookies and reindeer food" sprout out of the bushes. Finally, on Thanksgiving night, the dueling decorators turn on their electrical creations, and the town's power fails somewhere.

However, under all this silly display, these people have captured the meaning of the season. People all over town drive by the homes after having a hearty Thanksgiving dinner with their families. The children "ooh" and "ah" at the wondrous spectacles of lights and figures, and their faces are priceless. Even the parents who are still under the hectic strain of Christmas shopping find warmth in looking at the scene (not just from the heat of all the bulbs). By giving their Christmas scenes to the town, these people have given a little bit of themselves, which is the essence of the holiday season. And if you study the scenes closely enough, you will notice that in the center of both of them are plastic light-up nativity scenes. They don't jump out and say that Jesus is the reason for the season, but deep down the people who put the nativities in their yards know it, and they share that knowledge with the people who drive by.

This holiday season, instead of growling about how Christmas has gotten so commercialized, let's spend some time with our families recapturing the Christmas spirit that has never really left us. Give the gift of self to those you love the most and don't try to find an expensive, quickie gift. Presents are fun and are part of the spirit too, but giving of yourself is much cheaper than a Power Ranger doll, easier to find because it is in your heart, and worth so much more.

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**Only five more  
days of class  
until Christmas!**

**So let's take a deep  
breath and brace  
ourselves for exams!**

**Good luck  
from the Herald staff!**