

opinion

innocent bystander



Let's take Christmas out of commercialism

By Arthur Hoppe

The Christmas season on which our beleaguered economy so desperately depends is now officially open. Time magazine reports the nation's merchants are happily predicting a 10 per cent increase in retail sales.

In fact, this could be our biggest Christmas ever.

Of course, nowhere in its seven-page cover story on the Christmas season does Time mention Christ. And we're obviously in for the usual complaints from bleeding-heart idealists about the "over commercialism of Christ's birthday."

These do-gooders overlook three facts: (1) such complaints have never done any good in the past; (2) unless we give each other billions of dollars worth of useless junk every Dec. 25, the country will go to the bow-wows; and (3) the odds are 36 to 1 that it isn't Christ's birthday anyway.

This last gives hope for a compromise that should millify all factions: Instead of trying to take commercialism out of Christmas, let's simply take Christmas out of commercialism.

After all, no one seems to know the exact date of Christ's birth. No one appears to have thought about it until 200 A.D. And since then it's been variously celebrated on Jan. 6, Dec. 25 and Jan. 10, to name a few. So there's no reason we can't celebrate it any other day we want to.

Once we have removed Christmas from Dec. 25, we can call that day "Xmas," giving no offense to purists and considerable delight to sign painters and headline writers. Best of all, Xmas would be completely ecumenical and you wouldn't have to worry about sending religious cards to friends of the Zoroastrian persuasion.

We would continue, of course, to have Xmas trees, Xmas presents, Xmas carols (but only about decking halls and partridges in pear trees), and Xmas office orgies. But we would feel no fault that they had no spiritual significance.

And Xmas would naturally be preceded by National Buy Till It Hurts Month, just as it is today. So the economy would be saved.

The only problem is what to do with Christmas. Most people I talked to said they had no strong feeling about

what day it should fall on as long as it was a Monday so they would have a three-day weekend.

One lady said she'd always wanted it observed in January so she could take advantage of the white sales, but she forgot we're not giving Christmas presents any more. And one patriot suggested July 4, "seeing this is our Bicentennial year."

But I liked best the young lady who said, "Let's make it a surprise birthday because surprise parties are best." That would be nice. Then you could look up at the start whenever you wanted to and say, "Happy birthday, dear friend."

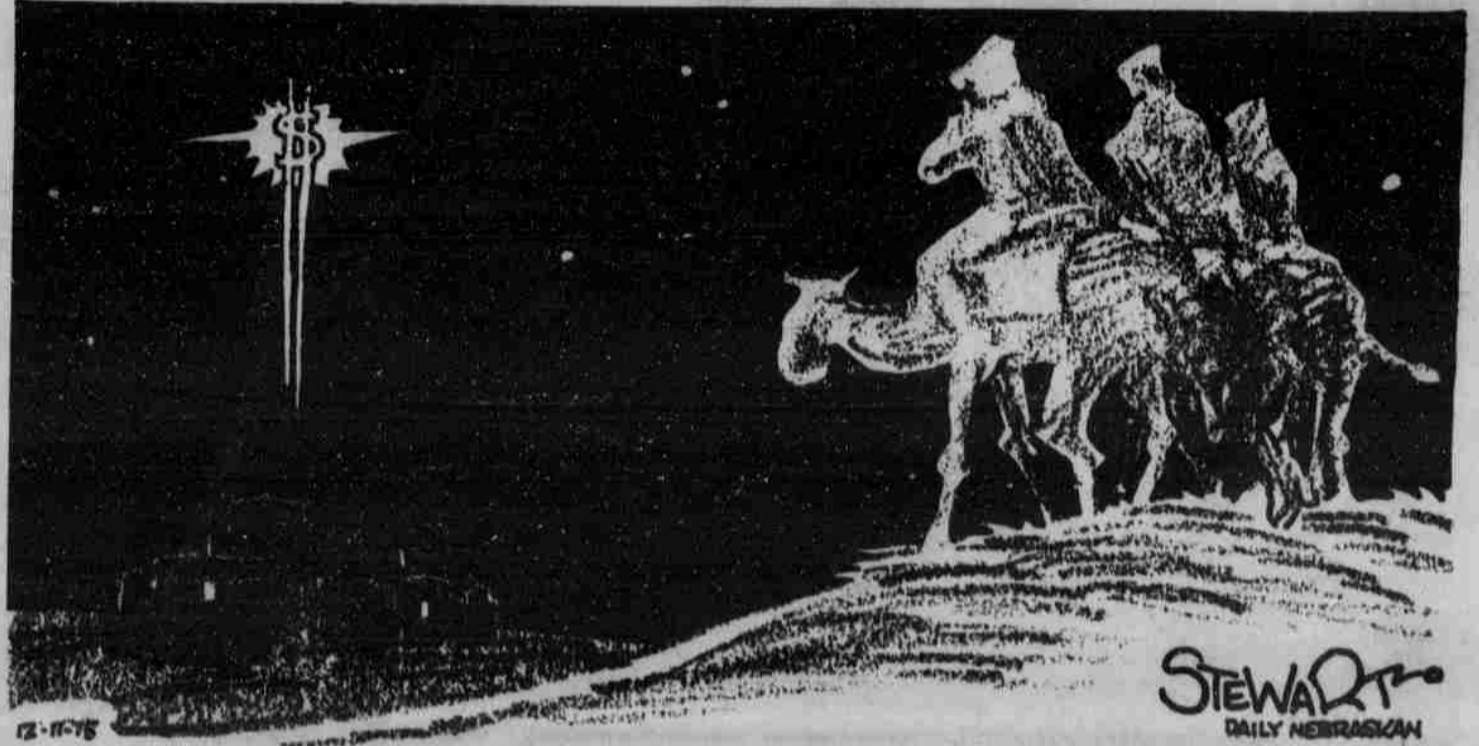
Heck, there may even be some Christians somewhere who might want to celebrate the occasion every day of the year.

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