

'Deck the halls with boughs of folly...



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NAVY ROTC

It's here. That time of the year when people lose all their practicality, sanity and income.

The Holiday Season. I love Christmas, New Year's and Hannukah. What other time of the year can you see people act so plastic and phony? The "Christmas Spirit" makes us act cordial to those we hate and imbues our souls with levity, forcing us to loosen the grips on our workload and our purse strings. At Christmas time, we feel that we must stuff off at work and buy gifts, cards or cookies for everyone who has ever breathed

Scott Harrah

within a one-mile radius of our humble, loving human selves. If we don't care for a co-worker or a neighbor, we feel that it is our Christian duty to at least buy them something. So instead of buying the cranky old woman next door some \$300 trinket, we send her a batch of terrible homemade cookies. We have to. After all, we have to spread "Peace on Earth and good will towards men..." (and women, too, in these liberated, nonsexist times.)

We also have to sully the tasteful veneer of our homes with every cheap, gaudy Christmas decoration imaginable. The Christmas season is the only time you'll see something as tacky as tinsel draped over anything and everything. During the rest of the year, the only people who find tinsel and glitter desirable are prime-time soap stars and drag queens.



The plight of the pines

And what about Christmas trees? Why do people insist on cutting down poor, innocent trees just so they can put them in their homes and create a fire hazard that drops dry needles all over the carpet and becomes the cat or dog's new favorite thing to urinate on? Some people are even tasteless enough to buy those cheesy artificial trees

made in Taiwan. Hell, Orientals don't even celebrate Christmas, but they sure manufacture enough plastic and aluminum trees for the Western world. And after Christmas, people put their artificial trees back in the closet, if they have a real tree, they just throw it out with the trash. What about the rights of poor, cut-down trees that have to die just for some ridiculous ritual? Don't those picked-up pines deserve a little peace and good will, too?

Then there's the umpteenth holiday "special" on TV. Why do they have to preempt all those fine, quality shows like "Dallas," "Dynasty," and "He-Haw" just so we can see such seasonal fare as "The Raggedy Ann Christmas Show," "The Paul Anka and Joey Heatherton Las Vegas Holiday Variety Hour," "The Dolly Parton Old-time Tennessee Christmas Special" and "The Joan Collins Christmas in Monte Carlo Show"?

If it wasn't Christmas, who in their right mind would sit and watch Joey Heatherton and Paul Anka singing a duet version of "Here Comes Santa Claus"?

Lies and lettuce

The season is also the only time of the year when we feel that it's necessary to lie to our children. I cried when my mother told me the shocking truth about Santa Claus. For years I'd been setting out milk and egg nog for Santa and lettuce on the front porch for his eight tiny reindeer. Then I found out that for years my father had devoured the cookies and had swilled down the old nog after I'd went off to dream with sugar plum fairies dancing in my head. And Mom had always went out to the front porch, scooped up all the lettuce for Donner and Blixen and had tossed it into the trash. Oh, the injustice of it all!

Perhaps the most irritating aspect of Christmas time is all the terribly cheap "Christmas music" we are subjected to in shopping malls and businesses. In June, we wouldn't dare pay attention to some atonal Muzak version of a bad pop

song, bet we'll listen in December to Muzak versions of "O Come All Ye Faithful" and "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" turned up extra loud in stores because merchants feel that it'll put us in the "spirit" and we'll waste even more money we can't afford on Ronco Veg-O-Matics and other items of its type.



Babs and Goodyear

My father has to own one of the largest collections of Christmas music in the state. Ever since I can remember, he has collected all the paltry Christmas albums the Goodyear and Firestone tire companies have ever made. I'm not sure if those two companies still put out Christmas albums, but when I was young Dad always brought home tire company compilations that featured all those lovely chauntesses like Ethel Merman and Barbra Streisand.

"But Barbra Streisand is Jewish!" my mother would complain when she heard that good old Babs was on Dad's new album. "How can she sing 'We Three Kings' when she doesn't even believe in the true meaning of Christmas?"

"Because Babs is into Christmas for the bucks like everyone else," I always wanted to say.

The Christmas season is the only time of the year when people suddenly decide to become good, church-going souls. Those who wouldn't dare wake up early on a Sunday morning to go hear some preacher drone on about good and evil decide that it's their duty to wear their finest red and green velvet holiday duds and go waltzing off to church to see little kids in cheap-looking angel and shepherd get-ups who put on laughable "Christmas pageants" for their adoring parents.

"Oh, doesn't little Susie look absolutely darling in those wings," the pie-eyed moms coo as their little ones stand up before the congregation and sing "Away in a Manger" in off-key tones.

See HARRAH on 18

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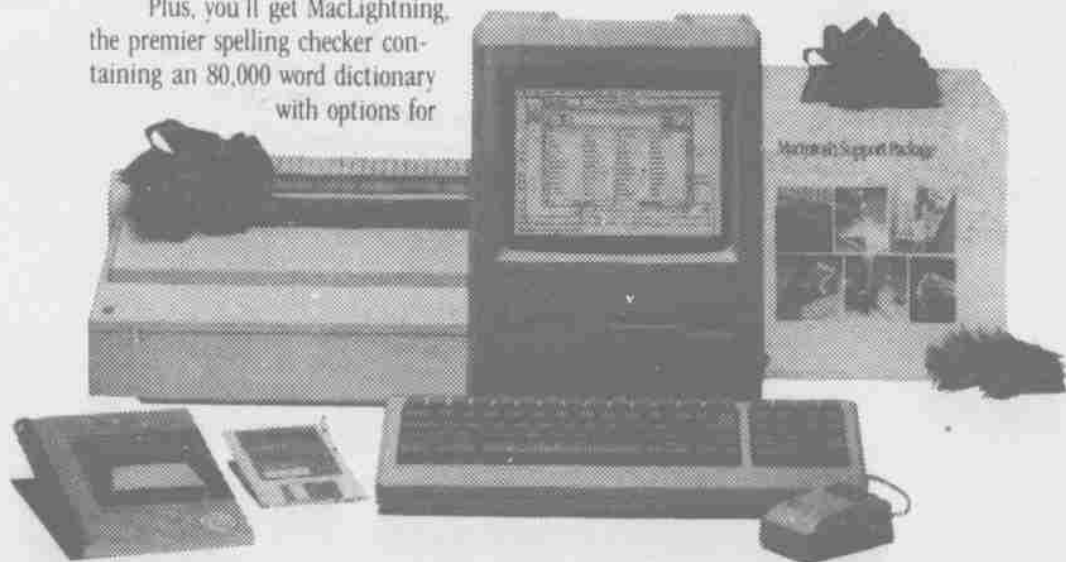
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Christmas decorations are starting to appear around town. Richard Wright/Daily Nebraskan