

Kasey
KERBER

Stupid gifts:

They really are better to give than receive

There are a lot of great gifts out there for Christmas. And there are also a lot of stupid ones. Take a wild guess which ones I'm going to discuss today

Yes, stupid gifts. It's almost a time-honored tradition to receive one each year. It's also a tradition to search frantically for the gift's UPC code or tag, not find it and

break down in tears in front of the family that thinks you've gone mad.

The ultimate revenge comes in giving these same people gifts that they too will like less than Aunt Edilen's fruitcake (or is it really stale meat loaf?).

For those weird people who have completely forgotten the meaning of gift-giving and have reverted back to ties this year, I offer you "Kasey's Guide to Gifts — 1996 Edition."

First off, you'll need a gift or two for Dad, who probably gave you a package or two of socks.

I recommend you stop by ShopKo and purchase a "Milk Can Popcorn Tin." This decorative tin (upon which appears an expressionless cow) is shaped like an actual milk can and your dad might be fooled into thinking it's an antique.

And if ol' Dad is into fishing, buy him a game for your Super Nintendo system that you'll in all likelihood get

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to take back for a better one. It's "Bass Masters Classic Pro Edition," with which Dad can do something he's never done before — catch a fish.

Next, there's Mom, who probably surpassed Dad's lack of good gift-giving style with a few packages of underwear (of which Dad then took a picture).

I recommend a "Native American Barbie" Hallmark ornament for the tree. Not only will she be hanging a Mattel version of Pocahontas on a tree limb — she'll also be making your Christmas tree more politically correct.

Then, there are the siblings. This year you can surprise them with any of a wide variety of lame gifts, as children's gifts seem to be getting lamer each year.

For the little brother of the family, how about a "Crayola Favorite Colors" light set. True, it's nothing more than a regular string of colored Christmas lights, but he will never know because it's packaged in a big

Crayola box.

For your little sister: Barbie gifts! The only question is — which stupid Barbie gift?

There's the "Barbie Answering Machine Phone," the "Barbie & Ken Star Trek Dolls" and "Dr. Barbie" (who looks extremely professional in a miniskirt).

And if you have the bucks, go to Target and purchase the ultimate stupid Barbie gift: the "My Size Dancing Barbie." This is a mega-sized Barbie with which you can dance. You can also wear her dress (if you can fit into a girls' size 4 to 10). Yet for \$109.19, you might be better off sticking to the "Barbie Minivan" — in fashionable white and pink design.

For the older child of the family, go to Target and spend \$49 for the "Electronic Baseball Dart Game." This stadium-shaped dart board has its own announcer and crowd noise. Gee, makes me wish baseball season was here again.

But don't forget Fido. Or Taffy.

Yes the dog or cat of the family needs a stupid gift too — even if they took pity and didn't give you one.

Head over to PetSmart and buy your pet some cool clothing that it will absolutely refuse to wear. Some real crowd pleasers include antlers, Santa caps and Santa outfits. But if none of these stupid gifts is good enough for your pet — I highly recommend the \$19.99 "Hollywood Jacket." It is a black satin jacket with a leopard print collar.

If none of these gift ideas work for you, and you also happen to be on a limited budget, there's always the dollar store. Just follow a few guidelines while shopping there:

- 1) No buying jewelry for a significant other.
- 2) No buying food items made by a company called "Edibles."
- 3) And no asking for a receipt — "just in case...."

Otherwise, happy gift hunting! I know there are a lot of decent gifts out there — but you can look past them all and find the bad ones.

It just takes a sharp eye and a sharp pair of scissors to cut the receipt off with.

See you in January — when I'll probably be the miserable owner of a "Land Before Time IV" video.

(I didn't even know they made the last three!)

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GUEST VIEW

Enemy of the people

Internet means the end of life as we know it

Editor's note: This guest column was written by Dennis Schwartz of The Independent Florida Alligator at the University of Florida and was taken from the U-Wire.

Don't believe the hype. The Internet is a junk heap.

Mark my words, if you keep using the Internet the way you do, you're going to suffer. In 20 years, maybe even 10, you'll see everyday people complaining of back pain from spending their time at home crouching over computer keyboards.

You'll see everybody walking around in a slouch. Human beings will lose the upright posture that distinguishes us from the apes. The hands of human beings, home of the hallmark opposable thumb, will become cramped, brittle and arthritic from spending their time typing on little tiny keys instead of being used for the old-fashioned activities that the Internet replaced.

And everybody's eyesight is going to be terrible after staring at dim glowing screens.

Yes, my friends, the Internet is no friend of ours.

Think of all the time you save using the Internet, says Joe Webfoot. No way. Sure, it can be a good research tool — for now. But if the popularity of cyber never-neverland grows any more, your subscription to the Net is not going to remain a

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valuable cheat-sheet for old-fashioned library research — it'll be a research standard. That means deadlines will shrink up because the information is available too quickly. The pace of living is going to speed up, and the collective human blood pressure is going to skyrocket as we try to keep up.

Maybe I'm just bitter because I paid 20 bucks to UF for an address and nobody sends me mail.

But the 20 bucks raises some interesting questions. What is the Alachua Freenet if you have to pay to get on? It seemed like a good idea at the time. It was almost ideal — visions of little kids in classrooms

lined with crayon drawings of animals on construction paper, expanding their little minds with small doses of the Internet.

You know, like the way the world looks in those IBM commercials. It looked like it could work. This is the kind of business tactic used by your friendly neighborhood crack dealer. Now, we've got a subculture of cyber addicts going on the Sally Jesse Raphael show to tell everybody how they met their girlfriends and boyfriends on the Net. Something sinister is lurking in the shadows of the Web — something powerful, cold-blooded and hairy, like a spider with a doctorate in computer science.

It lures us in with the promise of friendship and knowledge, and the next thing you know, you're sending enormous checks to some company to get your fix every month.

Where does the money go? I bet there's practically no overhead involved. Somebody's turning a profit on this. But even if there isn't, there is some fat cat sitting in a chair somewhere, smoking our hard-earned cash in Havanas.

The problem I'm talking about is the cheapification of knowledge. It used to be that knowledge meant something. To be learned was to be respected. Now that everybody's got access to the Internet, practically everything you'd ever want to know is sitting there at your fingertips.

Now I don't want you to get me wrong here: I'm not an intellectual elitist. I'm all for free knowledge. What we've got on the Internet isn't knowledge, it's bits and pieces of 1's and 0's strung together in a monolithic Tower of Babel.

What do you think will happen once we get everybody in the world plugged into a service that could pay their bills for them, buy their clothes and food for them, contact their loved ones and entertain them endlessly with games and movies? Not a global community. It would be a global opium den, with everybody scarfing junk-food information and not lifting a finger to do anything.