

Miss manners

Holiday etiquette important in quest for seasonal bliss



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The holiday season is officially in full swing, and you, my faithful readers, are probably thinking about all of the fun activities associated with them. Soaking up the seasonal spirit is on everyone's mind.

OK, who am I trying to kid? You're all thinking about finals. There will be a point when the finals come to an end, though, and other things will take their places, ready to suck the life out of you again.

Bliss. As educated college students, you should be fully aware that it is never too late to plan ahead. Today, let's concentrate on helping you plan for one of the most important aspects of the very social holiday season. I'm talking, my friends, about etiquette.

Etiquette is defined by the Webster's New World Dictionary as: "the forms, manners, and ceremonies established by convention as acceptable or required in social relations, in a profession, or in official life."

Because we may not all understand what the hell the phrase "official life" means, or the rest of the technical mumbo-jumbo horse poeey we've just read, I'll try to keep this as elementary as possible. (I don't want you to pull your delicate brain muscles when you may need to use them in the near future.)

Being the well-informed person that I am, I know there are some people out there who really need a lesson in tact. Therefore, I've decided to prepare a guide to potentially embarrassing situations you may encounter while being social.

The College Student's Social Etiquette Manual is now in your hands. Follow it closely.

(By the way, every one of you should cut this out and tape it to your bedroom walls. It may take more than one reading for all of this to sink in.)

Situation No. 1: The holiday party.

You're invited to your cousins' house to celebrate that loved-by-all dessert: the fruitcake. The invitation states that you should RSVP with them three days prior to the occasion, and to bring your favorite "frosty beverage" if you plan to attend.

Using your best logical thinking, you decide that RSVP stands for "redecorate (by) slinging various produces" and proceed to make over the outside of their house in eggplant and spaghetti squash. Since your favorite drink is Metamucil, you mix up a big punchbowl of it and bring it over.

Result: Your big bowl o' fiber drink goes untouched, and you end up getting arrested for the veggie-flinging. You are never invited to another fruitcake celebration again.

Avoid this embarrassing situation by making sure to do two things: call your cousins *before-hand* to get permission to sling squash, and spend your hard-earned money on a 5-gallon bottle of Bacardi 151. You'll be the life of the party.

Situation No. 2: A night at the theater.

A small group of friends decides to have an evening of live-action holiday culture and attend a play. They want to go out to dinner before the show and announce they are planning to dress up. They would like you to join them.

You put on your finest pair of

coveralls and your ski mask (to combat the winter chill, of course) and douse yourself in Designer Impostors Hai Karate cologne. You leave your money at home, figuring you shouldn't worry about paying for anything, seeing as how *they* invited you and all.

Upon arriving at the show, you decide to check out the set for yourself, and you promptly walk across it. Being environmentally conscious, you've declared a boycott on tissues and sniffle your way through the entire production. You also decide to boycott staying awake during the show and applauding at the end.

Result: Your friends are pissed that they had to spot you (and your liquor habit) at the restaurant and refuse to give you a ride to the theater. You end up taking the bus again. Standing outside after the show, they point at you and say things like, "This wino freak is trying to steal my wallet, officer!" in their loudest voices. You are arrested.

This is another nasty hang that can be avoided by remembering two basic rules: Take one maxed-out credit card with you (you'll at least *appear* to have been prepared to pay your own way), and wait to get drunk until *after* the show. Use the leftover Bacardi 151 from the fruitcake party. It's all good.

Situation No. 3: The holiday religious service.

In true holiday tradition, you decide to attend the annual special church service with your family. They remind you to bring "church clothes" with you when you come home.

You make a special trip to Fringe and Tassel and rent a pope costume, complete with miter hat and bald cap. Figuring that you want to be an active part of the service, and that candles will be used, you pack

your flame-thrower. You toss your ensemble in the car and head for home.

You show up to church after everyone else because you want to "make an entrance." Flame thrower in hand, you run down the aisle to light the candles.

Result: Because you're overly-giddy, you end up setting the decorative greenery on fire. The congregation is evacuated, and all are asked to fill out police reports. You are arrested. Your parents post bail and, because of your disturbed behavior (and the alcohol they can smell on your breath), send you to detox. You get no presents.

Once again, two simple rules must be followed to prevent this embarrassing situation: Leave the candle-lighting to the designated parties (a.k.a. not you), and wait to get drunk until *after* the service. Once again, the 151 is a safe bet.

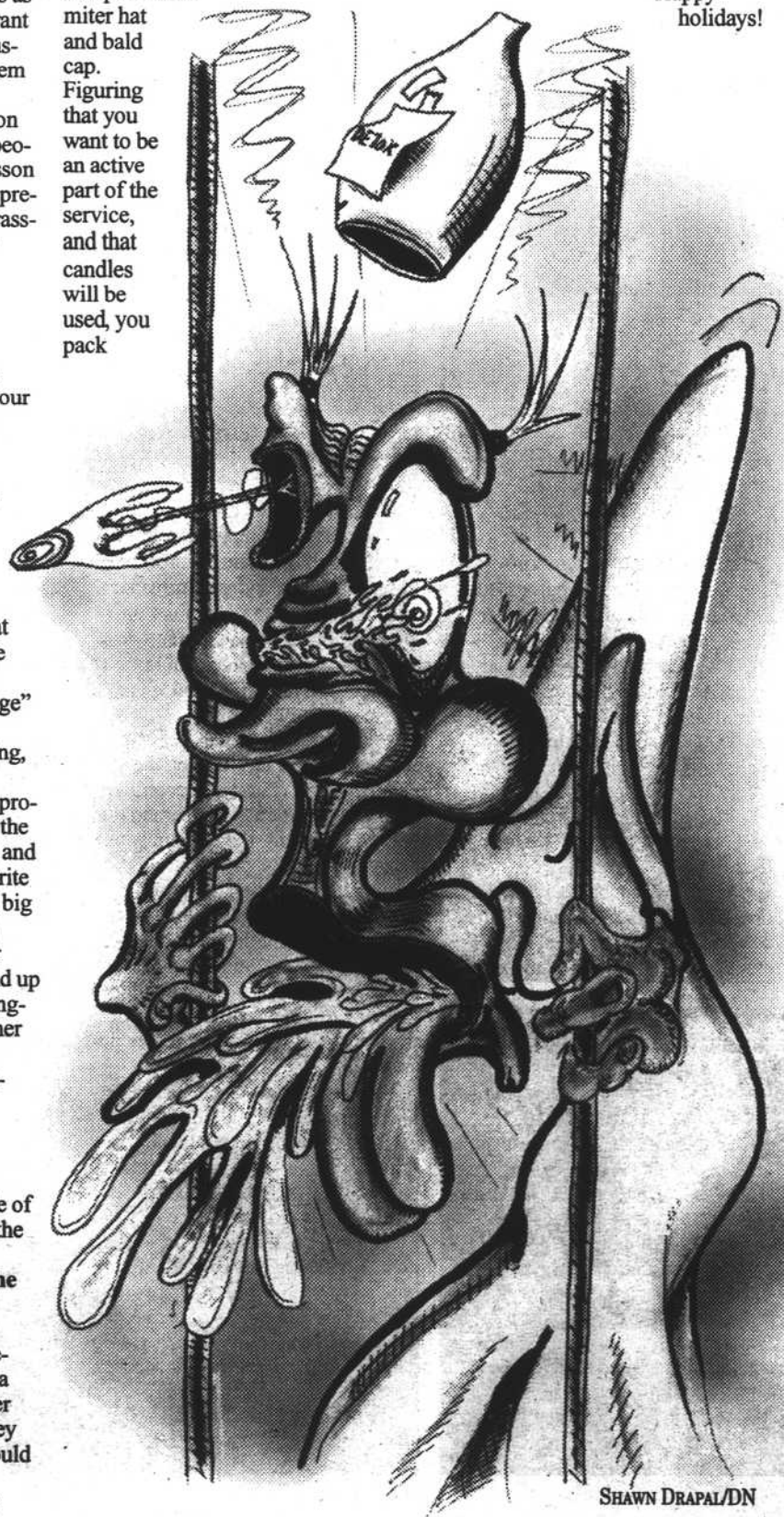
(Side note: It's OK to don the pope costume as long as you're not Catholic.)

There are many more situations in which proper etiquette should be used, but the above three should give you a good place to start. Use these readily adaptable guidelines, and you should be able to ease your way through any little embarrassment.

(Side note: I'm not going to discuss holiday shopping etiquette, because there is no such thing. When you're fightin' over Furbys at Wal-Mart, anything goes.)

So, kids, the lesson for today is this: When it comes to social holiday situations, use good judgment, keep your cool and take some quality time to get good and drunk.

Happy holidays!



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