

Christmas Shopping

12-9-24

My Christmas shopping has definitely reduced in recent years. Up until recently, I always insisted that we hang stockings for whoever showed up for the Christmas celebration. I would pick up small but interesting items throughout the year and really enjoyed this. Lately, especially during Covid, and again when I was down and out with Covid for so long last summer, this got to be more of a burden than a joy, so I announced to the family that stockings were out, at least for this year.

As a general rule, I try to find or make at least one thing for everyone present. I have started already, but I don't think that this would be considered "early." Probably not. I used to have things tucked away months ahead. That can have its down side. We are currently deep cleaning and finding things that I tucked away years ago and had long since forgotten. I think I'll put them all in a basket and have people take out whatever appeals to them.

I have come up with a better solution for the two young people in my life – a shopping trip with Grandma. I will still put some small item under the tree, but I remember the boys especially, being disappointed or at least ironically amused by what they received from their grandparents. A shopping trip is my way of remaining relevant. Off we will go during the Christmas visit to pick out something that they really want. I say "they" because I include my granddaughter Elodie, currently 10, and my cousin Tavery, now 22. Being the matriarch of my birth family, I have always functionally been Tavery's grandmother. They will

both be here this year, one from each coast, together for the first time in seven years. It should be a blast! I'm planning to take them shopping for whatever item they want. Then the three of us we will go out to lunch. No parents allowed.

Christmas shopping had an influence on my decision to retire. I had surgery for a torn rotator cuff and was required to take three months off from work. I was still on sick leave as Christmas approached. It turns out shopping in early December is much more fun. Instead of dealing with crowds, the stores were virtually empty. WOW. I decided never to work during a Christmas season again and retired the following June.

We never actually celebrate Christmas on December 25th. Three of our kids had a parent other than us and we decided that celebrating on the actual day seemed more important to them than it was to us. Instead, we would gather a day or two later. This practice has continued to work. Now they can celebrate the actual Christmas with their spouses and their families if they wish or, in Casey's case, with her father and step-mother's family in the Chicago area. When the Cambridge cousins join us, this allows them to travel on Christmas day which is much more economical. Mischa and Evan generally go down to see Evan's family in Alabama. Then we can all gather in Wisconsin, those other obligations out of the way. It might seem an odd tradition, but it has worked well for us for over 40 years and will undoubtedly continue while we are still around to enjoy it.