

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT COMES SLOWER FOR SOME PEOPLE

12/21/99

This is a confession to all those who do not already know how hard it is for me to get into the Christmas spirit, at least not in the way most people do. I actually become depressed and have to make a conscious effort to overcome the feeling.

There are two basic reasons for this. One is the feeling of guilt I have with the embarrassment of riches we display in this country when so many others have so little. I believe it is wrong.

The other is the intensely poignant feeling I experience as I am reminded of the loved ones who no longer are here to share it with us.

It is like an intrusive medical exam or dental appointment. I am anxious to get it behind me. As a consequence, I find myself purposely avoiding all activities or thoughts that remind me of the event.

When I returned home a week ago I was confronted with just such a situation. Another string of partially installed lights was festooning the front of our house.

We have had one string of old-style colored lights in place for the past three seasons, in my opinion, more than adequate to support our commitment to the holiday spirit.

My dear wife, painfully aware of my aversion to procedures of such nature, was attempting to spare me the aggravation and hang them herself. Thoughts of caring for her convalescing all winter from a fall, or worse, spurred me into action.

I prolonged it as long as possible, but after learning of a forecast of rain or snow, the next day I began the job. The fact that I was foregoing a morning of partridge hunting did nothing to assuage my feelings of frustration.

The lights were the latest icicle creations so prevalent on the eaves and cornices of many local houses. They have become the latest rage in the escalating trend of homeowners and businesses to outdo their neighbors. I grudgingly have to admit they look well and help one to get in the spirit.

A cursory check of the balance of the lights and the descriptions of the contents on the box was going well until I read the fine print. They were made in China and we had made another involuntary contribution to the DNC. I started to sympathize with the demonstrators protesting the

World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle. I recall when they would have been made in GE or Westinghouse factories this country.

Other feelings plagued my thought processes as I erected my potential death trap scaffolding to begin my task. I thought of how ironic it was that the most godless societies in the world were profiting from our most religious of holidays. My thoughts turned as well to the thousands of America's finest young men who were killed in Korea by these same people.

I realized I, as brooding over something I could do little to overcome and my negative attitude was apt to spoil a festive occasion for others I really cared about. With that in mind, I changed my focus and finished the job in a better mood than when I started.

To make a long story short, once the waiting is over I enjoy the season along with most others. By the time you read this we will be down to the wire, but not too late to wish one and all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.