

## **SANTA'S HELPER OFFERS SOME GIFT SUGGESTIONS**

**December 16, 2003**

It's that time of year when we face a recurring problem – choosing Christmas gifts for friends and relatives.

At 76, I am ashamed to admit I am a relative neophyte with only the barest experience in the field. I took the coward's way out and saddled my better half with that responsibility. I have felt for years that I have been much too practical to be given that responsibility. Suppose I should spend good money on something the recipient might not appreciate or deem appropriate? It's a fault, especially at Christmas, when the thought is more important than the gift.

Before anyone gets too excited and thinks there is hope after all for the old coot, slow down. I am only making tentative advances in that direction. The progressing ages of my grandsons and their growing interest in the things men tend to enjoy has given me impetus in that direction.

Actually, I made some headway along those lines last year. My overtures seemed well-received and proved lasting. One of the boys asked me to sharpen the penknife blade on the multipurpose Leatherman tool I gave him last year. That was proof that he appreciates it, uses it and it appears to have a future. Some of the other items I gave them were expanding drinking cups, waterproof match holders, compasses, and flashlights. None were state of the art items designed for a lifetime of use. They were adequate for the boys' needs until they reach an age where updated models are appropriate. The oldest of the boys qualified for that category with an early Christmas present of a quality hunting knife to be part of his equipment for his first deer-hunting season.

When I started this article, I admit to being pretty naïve and foolishly thought because of my new found interest in choosing Christmas gifts I would enlighten others with my knowledge. I wish to state unequivocally and without further ado that I am not the man to listen to.

Full well knowing of my shortcomings in the area, I prevailed upon wise heads after committing to this article. Following is some sage advice from none other than the staff of this estimable and heretofore unparalleled publication. Needless to say, the participants shall remain anonymous.

The gist of our discussion on the subject was that universal gifts are always popular and one cannot go too far afield for all people of nearly all ages.

Books were one thing that everyone pretty much agreed are well received and a lot of miles can be gotten from them. For youngsters, a diary is an especially good gift. I wish someone had presented me with one when I was a kid and encouraged me to fill it.

Collectibles of all categories make good gifts. I remember my grandmother had a salt and peppershaker collection. It not only gave her much enjoyment, but it made it easy and pleasurable to buy for her. Many collections appreciate in value. Stamps and coins are some notable examples.

Items that have dual roles are good choices, as was pointed out by a proud grandmother who was giving a new granddaughter a fine music box. When you think about it, what better gift. The child can enjoy it for years through its music, a jewelry box perhaps and as an heirloom sure to endear her grandmother to her.

From the response, I quickly became convinced most people need little advice on what gifts will be well received and long remembered. It's the spirit that counts after all is said and done.

In that same spirit, I once again want to stick with a tradition I embraced years ago. Please, everyone, stop denigrating the poor fruitcake. If you should get one and not appreciate it, look me up. I know someone who does and will put it to good use.

Happy holidays to all.