

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE: Christmas Gift Ideas

By Stephen Somerville

The world's leading scientists are all caught up making important discoveries, or un-locking the mysteries surrounding many of man's major diseases.

But all these things pale in comparison to the real issue that these people should have been trying to solve; man's inability to shop for Christmas presents.

And it is that time of year, once again.

I believe that there is something in a man's gene pool that does not allow them to begin purchasing any presents until at least 4 p.m. on December 23.

My situation is magnified, as I need to shop for birthday gifts during the holiday season.

My wife's birthday is the day after Christmas and my son's birthday is the day after that.

When I was first courting Julie she made sure to inform me that Christmas and my birthday are two separate and distinct events.

I guess she felt short changed in the gift department growing up. Great, now I get to deal with the guilt!

I thought our son being born so close to Christmas would solve part of my Christmas buying dilemma; the argument being that Ryan is my annual and ever loving gift to Julie. I don't know why, but this did not sit very well with her.

For the first couple of years of our marriage, I would rely on my mother-in-law's advice for purchasing some of the gifts, until Julie found out about it. She then forbid me to talk to her mom from mid-November until December 27 every year.

I have also relied on the good graces of others - sometimes complete and utter strangers in the shopping mall.

I have also relied on people at my work. A number of years ago, one of the ladies in the office was dressed very well one day, so I asked her what designer label she was wearing. She prepared a list for me (just the outerwear, thank you) of the clothes that she had on, then I went to the exact same store and purchased it. Not bad - I only had to return two of the three items!

In past years I had implored my wife to provide me with a list of things that she would deem suitable. No dice. She would always say, "Whatever you purchase will be fine with me" - which evidently was not the case as she took back most of the things I purchased for her.

I guess she thought I should have ESP - and magically figure out what she wants.

But three years ago something extraordinary happened. As Henry Kissinger once said, "Peace is at hand". Without me asking or prompting her in any fashion whatsoever, Julie provided me with her Christmas wish list.

I guess enough years of receiving hockey sticks, blenders, Leaf tickets and pitching wedges had now tipped the balance in my favor.

In the spirit of the holiday season I offer up some suggestions to the procrastinating shopper.

People always seem to appreciate books, a year-long subscription to a magazine or movie passes.

Speaking of books, a nice gift might be, "Long Walk To Freedom" which is the autobiography of the late South African President Nelson Mandela.

While not as personal, gift cards at his/her favorite store or within the local shopping mall can work.

Gifts do not have to be expensive. As they say, it is the thought that counts.

Providing a gift that has a personal touch is always special.

These "personal" gifts could be providing someone with a photograph of a special event that you undertook together. Placing the picture in a lovely frame is a nice touch.

What about food?

One of the ladies in our office loves baking and every year she makes a couple of homemade pies for her close friends. After the pies are baked, she freezes them and puts them in a nice gift box.

As difficult as it has been to purchase Christmas presents for my wife over the years, it has been that easy and quick to purchase a Christmas present for my mother-in-law.

The Petro Canada kiosk at the bottom of Orchard Heights and Yonge Street is open on Christmas day and usually has beef jerky on sale - two for a dollar.

Merry Christmas everyone!

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