

INSIDE AURORA: Less is More

By Scott Johnston

It's now coming up to mid-November, so you know what that means? Yes, Christmas is just around the corner.

I know, you've only recently managed to offload the last of the Halloween candy left over from the rainy, wet and unusually child-free October 31, and still have a poppy on your jacket, but there's no time to rest between the seasons.

In fact, you're probably already running behind on your annual Christmas to-do list.

After all, there's only six weeks left to decorate the house, buy presents, wrap packages, send cards (or e-mails), coordinate and/or attend a bunch of holiday parties, children's school plays and other activities, spend too much time with relatives you don't see most of the rest of the year, bake, cook and overeat, do some volunteer work, and generally run around in a frazzle not having enough time to do everything.

Oh, and most importantly, you have to take time to relax and enjoy it all.

As if that's likely to happen.

Because, if you're like me, there's enough going on in your life already just dealing with family activities, your job, housework, errands and appointments, and everything else that seems to occupy our lives 24/7. And being occupied 24/7 means there's 0/7 left to fit in all the seasonal stuff.

That's not much time.

Even if you manage to find a bit of elbow room in your schedule, that six weeks, which may sound like a lot of time, really isn't. So, if you do want to get in all of your traditional holiday activities, don't wait.

This is because it's a well-known scientific fact that time accelerates this time of year.

One minute you're thinking 'It's only a month till Christmas - I'll have to get those decorations up outside when I get a chance?', and the next thing you know, it's December 24th, and you're out in your driveway in a howling snowstorm, staring at a pile of entangled Christmas lights that you just randomly stuffed into the box when you took them down the previous year, and which are now entwined into a Gordian knot of such complexity that it would require several merit badge-seeking Cub Scouts at least a week to disentangle.

One small plus is that we won't be afforded the opportunity to forget that the season is upon us, or even procrastinate, when we're being bombarded with all manner of seasonal sensory reminders over the next month and a half. Newspaper ads, fliers, commercials, store displays, TV specials, and you know the non-stop all-Christmas carol radio stations will start ramping up soon. So, brace yourself for the onslaught.

But there is a way to help survive the chaos of the season, and even get into the spirit. That's by reducing your expectations, cutting back your to-do list, and taking things on in manageable chunks.

After all, it is a time for reflection and enjoyment, so you don't have to do everything, even those things you do every year.

Just choose a few annual traditions, and enjoy doing them in a sane timeframe.

And if that means you don't install all those neon reindeer on your roof this year, or your third cousins twice removed won't be getting cards, or you only bake one type of Christmas cookie instead of the usual eighteen, so be it.

Trust me, you'll appreciate doing less a lot more.

Who knows, doing away with or scaling back a previous practice or two each year to give yourself some time to enjoy the season may even become your new holiday tradition.

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