

Deck the halls with boughs of folly...



**ANDRÉ GENSBURGER
DEAL WITH IT**

It is a season to be festive, but the celebration is often marred by bouts of political correctness that deck the halls with boughs of folly.

As a society, we are slowly becoming conditioned to avoid offense at all costs, including the homogenization of greetings where cultural offense could, albeit highly debatably, be taken. The debate rages about wishing others a "Merry Christmas" as opposed to the less frightful "Happy (generic) Holidays."

The language of the land has replaced directness with "adaptable language," exchanging words like "handicap" with "disability," "fat" with "overweight," "illiterate" with "verbally challenged." The list goes on.

Christmas, formerly a strict-

ly Christian observance and later diluted with reindeer and that mood-enhanced, jolly, dimensionally challenged man in the fluffy velvet suit, now represents as much a commercial equivalent of piranha in a pond as it does a festive occurrence. And, with that, the standard greeting of "Merry Christmas" is more often than not replaced with "Happy Holidays" – not unlike the over-used and unappreciated "Have a nice day!"

People of different faiths, it was said, would take offense to be greeted with "Merry Christmas," enough, perhaps, to cast it aside in order to assuage their disgust. We have seen the extremes that the world has to offer with regard to acceptable terminology. The unfortunate English teacher who permitted her student to name his teddy bear Mohammed almost received extreme consequences. It seems likely that a formal Christmas greeting would have dire results.

In America, however, where freedom of speech prevails – often far too much – there should be no debate about the

merits of "Merry Christmas" other than the extent that each person demonstrates the peace of the season and goodwill toward others. We need as much goodwill as we can get.

Certainly, commercial businesses have no issue with the word "Christmas," as in "Pre-Christmas Sales" and "Post-Christmas Sales," and their customers are never heard to protest as they line up for hours, awaiting open doors.

Likewise, little children would scream in misery to hear: " 'Twas the night before Happy Holidays and all through the house ...," or "We wish you a happy holidays and a better new year."

This does not include the whole breaking and entering through the chimney thing or the mess that 12 reindeer on a rooftop can produce. Merry Christmas. Deal with it!

Merry Christmas or Happy Holidays?

Outside the Clayton Post Office, Clayton residents Jennifer Williams and Tom Shipley fell victim to the "The Question Man" mini-interview. "I'm a Montessori school teacher," Williams said, "so I am mindful of what I say. I do think that in some cases, there is a lot of over-sensitivity about what we say. I say 'Happy Holidays.'"



JENNIFER WILLIAMS with her two daughters ages 8 and 4 says "Happy Holidays."



TOM SHIPLEY believes that "It's crazy how careful we have to be about what we say."

"It's ridiculous," Shipley said. "Like the recent issue in Walnut Creek over the Easter Egg Hunt that could not be called 'Easter.' I don't know what it wound up being called, but people are way to P.C. about the whole thing. It's crazy how careful you have to be now about what you say."

Dan Anderson



"Y'know, Dad, if you want to keep living vicariously through me, I'm gonna have to start charging you."

CLAYTON COUNTS DOWN 2007 VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

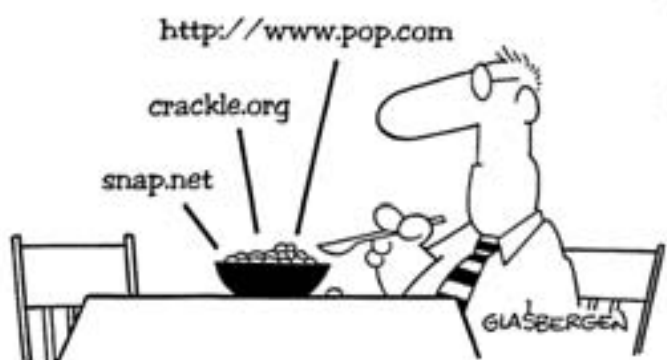
The 5th Annual "Clayton Counts Down" New Year's Eve celebration is quickly approaching. This great Clayton tradition is held at the Clayton Community Gym from 6:30pm-10pm on New Year's Eve. The FREE celebration is run by an all volunteer committee with assistance from the Mt. Diablo Region YMCA.

Volunteers are needed to ensure the success of this Clayton tradition. Volunteers are not expected to attend meetings, just provide a couple of hours that day or evening to help with set up, events such as craft activities, games, sign in, and food, take down-clean up. We need volunteers to fill time slots between 1pm and 11pm. The committee will handle the various preparations and coordinate with the volunteers. Anyone interested in volunteering should call the City Clerk at 925-673-7300, or email to ljackson@ci.clayton.ca.us.

In addition to your time at a fun FREE event, any monetary contribution is fully deductible to the extent provided by law. Please send contributions to:

Clayton Counts Down, City of Clayton,
6000 Heritage Trail, Clayton, CA 94517

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