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## I Love it When Linus Reminds Me What Christmas is About

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## I Love it When Linus Reminds Me What Christmas is About

By Mark Routhier  
UCF Forum columnist

Wednesday, December 19, 2013

As Linus said: “Sure, Charlie Brown, I can tell you what Christmas is all about. Lights, please: ‘And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold, I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you this day is born in the City of Bethlehem, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord...’”

I grew up with network television. Four stations: ABC, CBS, NBC and PBS. It was always one of those stations that would air the half-hour television specials: “A Charlie Brown Christmas,” “How the Grinch Stole Christmas,” “Frosty the Snowman” and “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.” It was those four shows and their regularity year after year that would finally would bring me around to donning the Christmas spirit.

I’m still that way. I need to at least see the Grinch’s heart grow three sizes and I need to hear Linus say, “Sure, Charlie Brown, I can tell you what Christmas is all about. Lights, please.” And once those moments happen, I know Christmas will come, and I know I will be in the spirit of giving — with my heart open.

Here’s the funny thing. I am usually in the spirit of giving, my heart is usually open, and I believe in peace and good will toward everyone. And strangely, it is the holidays when I start to tighten up. I start to strain against the relentless marketing, the onslaught of Christmas carols, and the barrage of gaudy yard decorations.

According to the National Retail Federation, the holidays can represent as much as 20 to 40 percent of annual sales for some retailers, and this year they are anticipating holiday sales to [rise 3.9 percent](#) over 2012 numbers, to \$602.1 billion. Yay, holiday sales! Boo,

the stress and the pressure and the crowds and the traffic and the elbows and the screaming children and angry faces and the impatience and the relentlessness and the onslaught and the barrage! At some point, we all feel like Charlie Brown screaming: “Can’t anyone tell me what Christmas is all about?” It gets so lost in the marketing.

Our American melting-pot culture seems to have replaced the Roman and Greek gods with the polytheism of celebrity. We worship fame: actors and musicians and athletes at the top of their game making millions of dollars. And even they gain importance during the holidays with the roll-outs of all the special movies, and all the special sporting events, and all the special concerts. It is just incessant. Unless you live in a cabin without electricity in the woods, how do you get away from it? Where can you find some peace?

I always celebrated Christmas with my family, and even after I married a Jew we still celebrated Christmas. In fact, she always wanted us to get a tree. There is something so calming about a well-decorated tree with the lights twinkling and the pine wafting and the presents underneath growing. Oh no! Did I just say that? Guilty. And that is why I need Charlie Brown and Frosty and Rudolph and the Grinch to always re-enlighten me, to make me understand.

So often the holiday stories are about a misfit who feels left out, who doesn’t get it, who through their special misfit powers somehow saves the day. Rudolph’s red nose. Poor guy has this awesome light-up red nose and those stupid other reindeer see fit to make fun of him, ostracize him, make him feel bad. But that little fella saves Christmas. Turns out that nose can illuminate the way through that bad weather. And now he’s rich because he patented it and takes a cut of every flying thing built with operating lights. Oh no, I brought it back to money again!

The true spirit of the holidays is in giving generously with your heart and soul. It is about having patience with the madness, taking an elbow but laughing, being cut off on the road but taking a deep breath, and hearing a child scream but smiling at him or her (they get really confused by that). It is about spreading the joy that we should feel in our hearts because we’re alive on this magnificent Earth.

How great is that? I think it's worth celebrating. And in the spirit of giving, it feels good to get something special for the people you love. But it's about more than that, and those half-hour television specials always help me relax and relearn what the holidays really offer us:

“And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice cold in the snow,  
stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so?  
It came without ribbons. It came without tags.  
It came without packages, boxes or bags.  
And he puzzled and puzzled 'till his puzzler was sore.  
Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before.  
What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store.  
What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.”

Happy holidays!

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