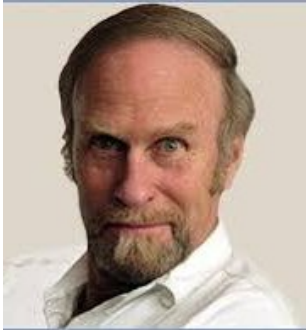


Christmas Over: A Moment of Contemplation



Frosty Wooldridge

It seemed like a minute ago, December 1st, I erected our Christmas tree, decorated it with bulbs and strung lights across our front door with a wreath to welcome all our friends.

The night before Christmas, our two boys visited with their girlfriends for dinner and gift sharing. We sat by the fireplace as the tree sparkled in the corner. We snapped pictures, talked about the year and, in an instant, they left our house as they headed toward their own lives.

On the radio, the old crooners like Dean Martin, Elvis Presley, Big Crosby and Andy Williams sang to us from 50 years ago. Doris Day and Reba McIntyre sang to us. Ironically, the newest singers on the scene, the Pentatonix, an acapella group led by Scott Hoying (the son of one of my best friends of 35 years, Rick Hoying), became the top selling Christmas album for the past three years.



One of the things that bothers me about Christmas: it's no longer celebrated as the birth of Christ, but in fact, a consumer bonanza that finds people fighting over endless junk

in stores to bring home to their kids and spouses who already own everything they need or want. It's an orgy of consumption. Instead of Christmas, we need to call it, "Inane Consumption of Junk Season." Most of the toys will reach the junk toybox by the end of the day.

As I sit here on Christmas day, I feel sad about what's happened to Christmas in America. I feel sad at the change our national ethos. It's devolving into a two-headed political dragon with no interest in solving our national problems. I really feel sad that the anger against our nation swells up in the minds of our own citizens, especially our younger generations. They refute our Constitution, economy and flag.

I see paradox and irony every day in the news with war, racial conflict, ethnic conflict and religious conflict. It's almost too depressing to watch the national-international news every night with Nora at CBS, David at ABC or Lester at NBC. You would think that the horrible things they report about could and would be solved by our national leaders. But instead, our national leaders quibble, lie and obfuscate

everything in their favor as they accomplish virtually nothing. They refuse to solve the problems facing our nation, year after year, after year.

At the same time, I sit around our fireplace missing my own mother and father. Their memories remain fresh in my mind with their pictures in my office where I work daily. I greet them, thank them and appreciate them. I'm also sad that my wife Sandi has lost her mom and dad. I miss their energy in the world. I miss my youngest brother who died at 50 of a heart attack, and my third brother of a stroke at 55.

As my life path carried me around the world, I miss some of the friends that have come and gone out of my orbit. One in particular, Gary, wow, the adventures we shared. And Paul, the sports we played. And one old girlfriend of 29 years, Pam, gone out of my life. Only memories remain.

Essentially, Christmas causes huge expectation, and in many ways, magnifies our spiritual, emotional and mental state of mind. As it approaches, we gather with friends and family to celebrate the "rebirth" of our lives with the metaphor of that Christ-child. Just about every culture celebrates in different ways—this "thing" called living.

Some 4,000 religions on Earth via its 7.6 billion human beings, try to figure out the meaning of life. Hope, faith, belief! All of them seem to fit every ethnic group's need for comfort, meaning and validation.

While I attend church every Sunday, I find my greatest comfort in applying what I learned in a pew-seat by engaging Nature, her creatures, her trees, her rivers, her flowers, her lakes and her oceans. I worship her blue skies, her gray skies and her rainy or snowy skies. I carry tremendous reverence for her seasons, her flowers and her mountains. Also, her deserts!

In this grand scheme of life, I feel the "awe and wonder" of

living. We're here for a very short time of 70 to 80 years, and, as always, I cherish each moment, each season and every breath. Because I will not ever come this way again, at least not in this frail bag of bones and skin.

As the New Year approaches, I gather my will to live with joy, with gusto, with enthusiasm and with heart. I hope you will, too.

As the Starship Enterprise Captain Jean Luc Picard said, "Someone once told me that "time" was a predator that stalks us all our lives. I rather believe that time is a companion who goes with us on the journey and reminds us to cherish every moment, because it will never come again. What we leave behind is not as important as how we've lived." [The video of the quote.](#)

Vaya con Dios....

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