

# COMMENT

## Celebrating Christmas—without stress and exhaustion

By Ted Brown  
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A Ted Bit

I've been filling this space with words of thought, opinions and hopefully a tiny bit of wisdom—for more than a quarter century now.

Every week has its own challenges, writing something new, fresh, and hopefully entertaining for those who read it. The most annually-challenging task of the year, even after all these years, is writing the Christmas column.

I have an archive of each and every column I've written, including all my Christmas columns. Years ago, every staff writer at *The Independent & Free Press* was expected to write a column for the Christmas issue of the newspaper.

I loved it—many didn't share my enthusiasm.

I perused the archives of my columns from the past earlier this week, and found I have 25 'Christmas' columns, and more than a dozen 'leading up to Christmas columns' on file as well. My first was published Dec. 19, 1990—it's been awhile.

Sometimes I wrote about my kids—the magic of Christmas through their eyes, others reminisced about my childhood days and a few about the animals in our barn, and how they are a reminder of the Nativity story.

Other columns acknowledged the generosity of those special people around us at this time of the year, who go above and beyond to make this world a better place for those less fortunate than the rest.

After reading through them, it occurred to me that the older one grows, the world takes on different aura, and what was once in the forefront of our lives, is now a warm memory.

But in spite of our priorities, and how they change with time, Christmas is still magical, and charity and goodwill are in the forefront as they always have been. I just see Christmas in a different way now, more spiritual, rather than commercial, as it was years ago.

In the past, I drove myself to the brink of exhaustion, placing so much emphasis on preparing for the celebration of Christmas, having friends and family over, or purchasing that elusive 'per-

fect' gift, that so often, Christmas sailed by before I could take time for that moment of 'peace,' that solitude, that 'me' time, to actually reflect upon the beauty of the season.

Flipping through my diaries throughout the decades, I realized that virtually every year I'd run myself ragged, just trying to make the season 'perfect.'

Did I enjoy it? Maybe, maybe not as much as I might have.

With the advantage of age and experience, I now realize I could have enjoyed Christmas a whole lot more if I'd taken the time. I fear, in time, society may totally forget the reason we celebrate Christmas—it's still about the birth of Christ.

And whether we're Christians or not, whether we choose to celebrate Christmas as a religious celebration or social event, one thing does remain constant. That first Christmas, so many years ago, in a stable, saw a small family take refuge, a baby was born, simple shepherds visited and the angels proclaimed so eloquently: "Peace on earth, good will to all men..."

It all stems from that event.

As I'm writing this, it's Sunday night, Dec. 20. For the first week in many, I have an empty calendar ahead of me until Christmas Eve.

And miraculously, I'm 'one gift' off being finished Christmas shopping.

With this rare window of opportunity, I WILL take time to enjoy some 'peace on earth,' extend some 'goodwill to all men and women,' and even squeeze in a little bit of 'me' time in the mix.

So take a moment, no matter how young or old you might be, and just soak up some warmth of the season.

In doing so, you may savour some magic.

The Sidekick joins me in wishing each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas—and hope all will be blessed with peace and goodwill throughout the coming year.

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