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CHRISTMAS — A Time for Joy, And a Time for Spending

(NC)—Christmas! I love it! It's wonderful, having all the family together, singing Christmas carols, attending church together, meeting people there who have come home for Christmas, plus all the good times and fellowship that come with this festive time of the year.

... and gifts!

What did you get last year? Quick now, can you remember?

If you are like me, you received the traditional things, mostly clothing (which can always be used). My kids banded together to get me a tarpaulin for my small sailboat (that I really needed), plus an assortment of "fancy" things, such as a lighter for the gas barbecue (once the liquid is used it has to be thrown away) and other nic-nac's that are nice, but not needed. I received some "fancy" additions to my tools (I'm a do-it-yourselfbuilder) which are nice, but as yet, unused.

How many things did you get that are "nice, but not needed"?

Today, it is becoming a problem, yes almost a "headache" for many, to try and find suitable gifts for their

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loved ones on the many occasions we give gifts. Today we have "mother's" day, "father's" day, birthdays, Christmas, anniversaries, etc. at which we like to give gifts. There is nothing wrong with this, but, after a while, what do you give?

When you reach my age (60), chances are you have all the necessities you really need. My wife and five children constantly are asking, "Dad, what can I get you for Christmas?" I have to answer "I don't know". I have all the clothing I need, and can use some to replace the items that wear out, but other than that, I live comfortably.

When I see the gifts that are given today, I am amazed at the ingenuity of people who invent them. But, 90% of them are "nice" to have, but in most cases, "unnecessary" to have.

But some Christmas gifts are different.

recall, years ago, an unmarried lady who gave to her two nephews a gift of \$25.00 each, in the form of mutual fund shares. She would have me order a certificate for those shares. and she would give that certificate at Christmas, and another one again at their birthdays, amounting to \$50 per year (for each of them).

What would that gift be worth, if it were continued over the years? She started the program when her nephews were five and six years old. If she continued it until they were 25 years of age, and then they continued (investing \$50 a year into mutual funds) through to age 65, if it averaged 15% per year, they would be worth over \$1.5 million at age 65.

What will your Christmas gifts be

worth (even next year)? The "fancy" (buf often unneeded) gifts are nice to receive, and the purchase of them keeps business going, and shop-keepers happy, But, 99% of them will do one thing only, and that is lose value, and ultimately become

worthless. An "investment" Christmas (or birthday) present will grow, and provide untold "gifts" in the future.

Maybe we should consider giving a little bit of "future builder" amongst the gifts we share with our family and loved ones. Start with our children, giving them \$50 a year (between Christmas and birthday) of investments, that could be worth over \$1.5 million in their future.

Spend the other halt of your gift dollars on toys and things that will give momentary pleasure, but soon lose all their values.

It's a thought!

FAUL J. ROCKEL is author of the book "Why I towest to Mutual Funds" and President of Regal Capital Planners Ltd.

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