

Christmas Gift Guide

Markham has them

Gifts with a difference

By EILEEN ATKINSON

*'Twas a month before Christmas
And through Markham town
The shoppers were bustling about with a frown.
They needed ideas, no help was in sight,
'Nothing's new,' they cried out,
But that's not quite right.
Here we are now to give your mind rest,
We found unique gifts and these are the best...*

Surprisingly, some of the most unique and welcome Christmas presents come in the form of gift certificates. Any one of the following will be well received by the woman of the house and combinations could add up to her 'dream day'.

'Buy' her a clean house with a gift certificate from a local maid service. For \$40 to \$50 a cleaning team will dust, vacuum and clean the kitchen and bathrooms.

A certificate from an esthetician will cost you \$12 for a manicure, \$18 for a pedicure or \$25 for a facial.

Call her favorite restaurant and ask them to type you an invitation for dinner for two on their letterhead.

Add movie or theatre tickets to all or any of the above and you'll see some smiles on Christmas Day.

If you are really splurging this year, a certificate for one of the packaged 'get-away' weekends that most downtown hotels offer will provide an enjoyable mid-winter break.

A gift that will last longer - and maybe make the recipient last longer too - is a fitness centre membership. The Markham Fitness and Racquet Club on Laidlaw Blvd. charges \$300-a-year, which includes the use of the gym, pool, sauna and whirlpool and you can attend unlimited numbers of aqua-fit or dancersize classes.

Markham Centennial Fitness Centre on McCowan Rd., North of Hwy. 7, is a little less expensive, but there is currently a six-week waiting list.

Contours, on Woodbine Ave. at Denison, offers 10 classes for \$50 or a two-month membership for \$95 with unlimited access.

GIFT OF WINE

Gifts of wine will be popular this year. A visit to the rare wine store on Cooper St. in Toronto (Queen's Quay, just East of Yonge St.) can keep you browsing for hours. Add a clay wine cooler (Eatons, \$8.99) for an interesting gift.

The trivia craze continues with the new Baby Boomer edition of Trivial Pursuit. Questions run from World War 11 to Watergate and it's TOUGH! Available in most book and hobby stores and all department stores, the price varies from \$25 to \$30. Card sets are available if you already have the basic game.

I.Q. 2000 is the popular trivia game for children. Eatons and Consumers Distributing have it at \$14.88.

Another big seller, Poleconomy, is being billed as 'the board game for the 80's'. It's a financial game played with credit cards, for all ages, \$19.95.

Radio Shack has a new space-age toy, the Armatron, which is a small version of the electronic arm at the Science Centre. The arm is guided by a control panel and can pick up items and move them around. It sells for \$45.

ADULT TOYS

The adult toys, VCR's (Video cassette recorders) have come down in price this year. J.G. Barss, store manager for Eatons, Markville, said the cheapest one in the store last year was \$1,200. Now they are selling the most popular units, by Toshiba, Panasonic and Fisher, from \$569 to \$999.

A 'best-buy' at Eatons right now is the Texas Instruments home computer at \$99.99. A year ago this model sold for \$499. Texas Instruments is changing the keyboard on this computer, so current models are being cleared. Mr. Barss said all the software and accessories will still be

available and no problems are anticipated with supplies for owners of these models.

Cordless phones are becoming increasingly popular and affordable. The Phone Centre in Hillcrest Mall has one at \$129. You can call anywhere in the world from the handset as long as you are within 600 ft. of the base transmitter.

The transmitter is included and plugs into ordinary household phone jacks. Consumers Distributing lists three models in their catalogue, from \$99.99 with a 200 ft. range to \$199.99 with a 700 ft. range.

CAMERAS TOO

For camera buffs, there are lots of inexpensive gift ideas. Most photographers would welcome a minitripod (\$20), a handipod, (\$10), a cable release (\$7) or a cleaning kit (\$6).

Stocking stuffers could include a blower brush for cleaning lenses (\$2), a wide fabric carrying strap (\$5) or an aerosol can of air to blow dust away (\$6).

Books remain a steady favorite for gift-givers. Mary Lymburner of Green Gables Books in Markham recommends Debrett's Illustrated Guide to the Canadian Establishment, edited by Peter C. Newman, at \$45, and Intrepid's Last Case, by Sir William Stevenson, \$22.50.

Jelly Belly, by Dennis Lee, is a book of poetry for children (\$9.95) and Red is Best, by Kathy Stinson has a mother speaking to her child about color (\$4.95).

For a humorous touch, Mary suggests Bald is Beautiful by Toronto writer Peter Taylor at \$6.95.

Late night readers would appreciate the Itty Bitty Book Light, which clips right on the page and doesn't disturb your bed-mate (most lighting and dept. stores, \$29.99).

LINGERIE

If you prefer to disturb your bed-mate, better put a Nuance lingerie set on your list. It includes bra, pants, garter belt and stockings in your choice of black, red, white or natural (Eatons, \$39.99).

If Santa has a sense of humor, you may be getting up in the morning and brushing your teeth with an electric toothbrush which plays your choice of 'Oh, What a Beautiful Morning' or 'Strangers in the Night' (Mad Co., 128 Avenue Rd., Toronto, \$12).

For the person who has everything, make up a gourmet basket. White Rose Nurseries on Highway 7 sells a large variety of wicker bowls and baskets at low prices. Fill one with his or her favorite treats - smoked oysters, cockles from England, special cheeses, imported jams, gourmet tea and coffee sachets, etc.

Is there a cat-lover on your list? Cats are in style this year and Eatons has beautiful porcelain or earthenware ones at \$21.99 to \$34.99.

Women's sweaters should have some glitter on them this year, either sequins or metallic trim.

One of the most popular fragrances for men right now is Polo, by Ralph Lauren.

ORNAMENTS

Christmas tree ornaments are getting more beautiful each year and also more expensive, so the trend to buy one a year for that certain friend or relative is continuing. Some are dated and personalized but they needn't be. Any lovely hanging will be enjoyed and appreciated for many years to come.

For a priceless gift, have that old family photograph enlarged and framed. Markham Photo Centre charges \$6 to make a new negative and \$8.50 for an 8 x 10 copy. The charge to mat and frame it is about \$30.

If the print is damaged, have it restored. Several local studios have specialized in this art and are able to re-touch and enhance even badly damaged prints. Prices vary according to the work needed. Gift certificates are also available for this service.

KID'S MARKET

In the children's market, Cabbage Patch

dolls have stolen the show this year. The homely little figures, with outstretched arms come with one-of-a-kind faces and their own names and adoption papers. Major shopping centres have had clerks dressed as doctors and nurses to register the 'adoptions' upon purchase.

Care Bears ran a close second - plush bears with their 'feelings' showing on their chests - but demand has out-stripped supply and neither are currently available.

Two Toronto stores received new shipments of these toys recently. Word spread and the line-ups began in the early morning. When the doors opened there were near riots as mothers jumped over shopping carts and elbowed each other aside to get at the toys. Both were sold out almost immediately.

The Glo-Worm is becoming a favorite and so far is still available for \$12.99 at most dept. and toy stores. Glo-Worm is a stuffed toy that glows when he's squeezed.

G.I. Joe and his line of accessories remain best sellers.

SNOW RACER

A new entry this year is the Snow Racer by Noma. It's similar to a toboggan but rides on three skis, one front and two rear. The Snow Racer has a steering wheel and brake and is designed to hold up to 500 lbs. Pro Hardware in Markham Shopping Centre and K-Mart, Hillcrest Mall have them (\$35 - \$40).

If you still have blanks beside some names on your gift list and you're out of ideas or money, or both, write out a gift certificate of your own, promising to take that person to a favorite spot, to wash their car all summer, to cook a favorite meal, to teach them a skill, etc. Use your imagination - the best gifts are not always the most expensive ones.

Centre piece a festive touch

A centre piece can add a festive touch to any table.

If you have a rather pretty plant you'd like to spotlight, you might decorate the pot with green or red tape to give it a holiday feeling.

A fruit bowl piled high with your prettiest ornaments makes a striking centre piece for your table.

A two-tier candy server could be filled with either tiny ornaments or decorative candies, then finished off with a big bow on top.

If you'd like a truly distinctive centre piece, check with your local florist.

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