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by Andrea Leonard

Christmas gifts are "love gifts"

If your Christmas card notes were all written, the envelopes addressed, stamped, stuffed, sealed, sorted by zip codes, and ready to mail by December 10th, you are surely a better organized person than I am. Furthermore, if you have been doing Christmas shopping all year long, and if the only present-purchases yet to be made are those last-minute love gifts without which the season wouldn't seem quite complete, you're not only better organized, you are a paragon of virtue. I am 'way behind you. Nevertheless, I have a few ideas squirreled away in a mental storage compartment, and I hope they will help me catch up between now and December 25th.

In case your condition is as disorganized as mine, perhaps a few of my ideas will trigger some of your own and help you survive one more Christmas holiday without a collapse. This year I have promised myself to restrict impulse buying to items I can find at fund-raising bazaars sponsored by local churches and other groups, to museum and hospital gift shops, to thrift outlets operated by deserving charities, and to such things as I can pick up at a minimum of expense that will bring a maximum of pleasure or convenience to the recipient. Doesn't that sound worthy? Let me give some examples . . .

For the young bride who recently joined the family, I've typed up on 3" x 5" cards a few dozen tried-and-true recipes for dishes I know her spouse is especially fond of, and some household hints she can't help finding useful. These, in a neat little recipe file box, equipped with an index, will please her.

My favorite nature-lover will appreciate membership in the Audubon Society. (Price: \$25 a year for an individual and \$32 for a family. Address: National Audubon Society, P.O. Box 2667, Boulder, Colo. 80321.) Membership covers six issues of the national magazine, enrollment in both state and local organizations, and opportunities to attend area programs and participate in trips. When subscribing, request that the membership be extended to the appropriate local chapters.

At several historical society museums, commemorative cup plates are available; these are limited editions; they increase in value over time; and the little plates are cherished by collectors. Cup plates come in clear as well as colored glass. In addition, display holders are available for hanging in



Three year old Sutton Hinckley is pictured looking over the handmade Christmas ornaments during the "Holly Fair" last Saturday at St. Mary's Church in West Barnstable. (Photo by Pat Germani)

windows. More than one of these will find their way to the heaps of presents under Christmas trees of friends and family.

And then there's the person who has trouble finding himself: the one always asking directions. Free or inexpensive local maps are available at chambers of commerce, town halls, and the county offices in Barnstable. A packet of maps for the "lost" one will compiled, in my case, for a person who already seems to "have everything" except a sense of

direction. To make this gift more elaborate, gather the maps and present them in a handsome leather case.

An energy audit may be purchased from the electric company for a modest fee; a survey report, prepaid as a gift to the recipient, could be worth many times its small investment. Try to ascertain, though, whether such an audit has already been conducted.

Gift certificates from the telephone company may be applied toward telephone equipment and special services now being offered at telephone stores. As changes come with divestiture, we may come to look upon telephones as "presentable" in new and different ways.

Thrift shops abound on Cape Cod. These outlets are rich sources of supply for those who like to browse. While not every visit will uncover a treasure, a remarkable quantity of high quality goods changes hands at thrift shops. When you do strike pay-dirt here, you usually unearth real bargains.

A collection of books and pamphlets, some free, some modestly priced, can be acquired for small change from municipal offices, museums, tourist attractions, libraries, park headquarters, insurance offices, travel agencies, banks, news stands, and at both new and second-hand bookstores. An accordion file, properly indexed, may be used to organize a wide assortment of local information which will prove an invaluable resource to anyone who has recently moved into your community.

And this idea, while not original, doesn't cost a dime! Parents love it. Grandparents are thrilled with it. Spinster aunts are grateful for it. Help the children in the family put together booklets they make themselves in which they offer services that the recipients may draw upon. For example, one booklet may contain ten coupons from four different families of children, all cousins. Craig may offer three mowings to three different lawns: Aunt Mabel's, Grandmother's, and Great Aunt Helen's. Corky may babysit her little sister twice,

return library books for her grandmother for a month, and do Sunday night supper dishes every other week next July and August.

There is no limit to the number who can play this game; the more the merrier. Adults can participate as well as children; their offers of services to elderly relatives might include shopping trips, lunch at a restaurant, dinner with the family, afternoon rides, or transportation to and from religious or social functions.

As milestones in history bring anniversaries of the steps forward our nation has taken in growth and progress, the significant roles Cape Cod and its people have played continue to generate books and pamphlets about the Cape. These books make ideal gifts for anyone building a personal library. New books or old ones about the Cape are welcome gifts.

These ideas for giving may suggest to you others, new ways you can personalize rather than commercialize your Christmas presents. Choosing an item especially complementary to activities nearest and dearest to a recipient's heart demonstrates the attention you pay him. Packets of seeds to the flower lover or vegetable grower; a potted herb to one who enjoys cooking; fruit cake for afternoon tea to the gracious hostess; a subscription to the home town newspaper to college-bound youth; all are appropriate choices.

Christmas gifts are love gifts carrying from the heart of the donor to the heart of the receiver messages of tenderness and caring and appreciation. Including touches that can come only through understanding and thoughtfulness enhances each gift with its own unique attribute because it was chosen with one unique person in mind. And that's what makes it a love gift.