

# Sensory Delights

## Get Real

by

Brooke Bessesen



### Choosing sides in this ever-present Christmas dichotomy

Mix six cups kindness with three cups tension. Add a half teaspoon expectation and a pinch of resentment for flavor. Bubble in pressure cooker for 25 days. It's a calamitous recipe!

However, as the city once again dons her spectacular sequined gown, I am filled with a deeply satisfying sense of goodwill. I can't help myself... I love the holidays!

This annual celebration

is not exclusively religious. At the heart of it is our humanity. Christmas is about sharing time with people we love. It's about nurturing children and families and strangers in need. It's about gratitude and generosity. It's about hope.

Oh, don't think me a Pollyanna. I've seen the dark side of December. My Holiday Spirit lost its innocence long ago, mugged in the alley behind Stress

Street. It almost died but after intense rehabilitation the residual scars are barely noticeable.

Commitments bombard us from every angle until our minds are tattered. A final, frantic night of wrapping and we're like that fried egg commercial. "This is your brain on Christmas."

And, unfortunately, there's no escaping our obligations.

But if we just stop - and breathe - we can still feel the magic, the wonderment of the Season that enchanted us as children. Sometimes we are even momentarily transported back to that carefree epoch of Christmas past...

I remember wool-wrapped shoppers tiptoeing across doilies of freshly fallen snow.

I remember my first taste of eggnog. And racing my toboggan down snowy hills until my fingers were too cold to unzip my parka.

I remember the sweet,

heady scent of warm mulled wine from my mother's crystal glass. And caroling with family friends past cozy fire lit windows. And my big brother pointing out Rudolph's red nose twinkling in the sky on Christmas Eve.

I remember the Life-Saver Storybook that was always in my stocking. And unwrapping outrageously cool toys... maybe a Lite Brite, a Smurf or a Slinky. Perhaps a mood ring or a set of Click Clacks (sadly, time would reveal the surprising fact that slamming two glass balls together is dangerous.)

Ah, yes, those were the days. Or were they?

Swept away by nostalgia, snuggling into the folds of reminiscence, I suddenly recall that Christmas as a child was not entirely devoid of disappointment.

Take my annual meeting with Mr. Claus. Here's a guy who runs a global empire that services millions of homes every year.

Sure, he's got elves working production, but he handles The List and distribution on his own, not to mention personal appearances. Santa is obviously over-worked. And it's no secret... he's old.

So it always bothered me that he didn't take notes during our pre-holiday conference. If he'd had some secretarial assistance, I doubt he would have forgotten the horse I requested seven years in a row!

And what scientist discovered the freakish connection between *Phoradendron flavescens* and mandatory kissing? Mistletoe was the bane of my 6th grade holiday party.

Alas, Christmas is an endless dichotomy.

There is no better example of the contrast than the sight of people shoving one another to grab the last box of cards with PEACE scribed on them.

Sales shopping is undeniably the most hazardous holiday activity. Anyone who's gone in the pit knows that the violence is in direct proportion to the discount - 75% off is downright deadly. (I understand Monday Night Football takes a close second.)

Ultimately, we each are destined to choose which side of Christmas we want to reflect. The joy? Or the frustration?

I'll not deny the high road is challenging; some Scrooge is always trying to bring you down. But my Holiday Spirit possesses a concealed weapons license now - it packs a positive attitude - and never travels Stress Street after dark.

Just remember, Christmas isn't about buying the biggest present. It's about being present. It's about laughter and sentiment and church choirs reaching notes so exquisite they give you goosebumps. It's about tradition.

Of course everyone enjoys the twinkle of a tinsel-hung tree, giving (and getting) gifts and savoring the aromas of a hearty feast. But if these things were stolen from us by say, a Grinch... would we still sing aloud like the Whos in Who-ville?

I like to think we would.

I wish you the gentle gifts of health and happiness.

Merry Christmas!

### GOODFENCES @ 2005

BY BILL GOODYKOONTZ & STEVE TANSLEY



### NEELY'S DINER

by Crawford



Scottsdale resident Brooke Bessesen is the author and illustrator of the children's book "Look Who Lives in the Desert!", a humorous-but-educational look at desert wildlife. It's available at all book retailers, including Gridleys of Fountain Hills.