

editorial opinion

Tinkering Around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Want to tinker with trivia?

Here we are again, on the brink of another holiday. Between recuperating from last Thanksgiving, buying presents for relatives and only sees during the holiday season and wondering where you stored the tree ornaments last year, there absolutely must be time for yet another Tinkering Around Trivia Contest.

It's one of the few holiday contests that is honest enough to promise its winners absolutely nothing but the satisfaction of knowing that they know just as much as the columnist and could probably have thrown together an equally effective trivia quiz.

(Ha. You ought to try it sometime. I dare you.)

The Tinkering Around with Trivia contest also gives its losers the satisfaction of smugly recognizing that they have escaped stuffing their heads with the superfluous of trivia and have room upstairs for the important things in life, (like remembering where you stored last year's Christmas ornaments.)

SO, AFTER, establishing beyond the slightest doubt the importance of this little venture into esoterica and assorted nonsense, I'll explain the rules to the first timers while readers who participated in the trivia contest last Labor Day holiday can be on their way searching for pencils and a dictionary. (You can't find me. I cheat on newspaper contests, too.)

OK, gang. It's simple. All you need is good memory for old books, old movies and assorted odds and ends of history. You're free to ask your aunt the movie buff, use the aforementioned dictionary or take a wild guess. Since this is the season to be generous, the questions will be worth more

than one point each and there will be the traditional Tinkering Around Extra Trivial Bonus Questions (TAETBQ) to boost your score. (Scoring is as follows: 1-20 points: Tsk Tsk Tsk. You probably have better things to do than sit up and watch late movies. (lucky dog). And I'll be willing to be you remember where you hid all of your Christmas presents since your memory banks haven't been cluttered with the flotsam and jetsam of trivia.

21-40: That's not bad. You remember where your presents are hidden the day before you need them. And you still get time to take in an old movie or remember an old song.

41-60: Almost an expert at this quiz. 61-80: Excellent. Your mind is so cluttered with trivia I'm sure that at one time in life you must have kept socks in your refrigerator and butter in the bureau. A true aficionado of the little things in life.

Now that has been established, we'll pause a moment and wait for the readers who are still looking for their pencils, paper and dictionary. (This is a pause. This is not a test. This is a real pause.)

Welcome back, gang. Here we go. NAME two movies in which Bing Crosby sang "White Christmas," give yourself one point per movie. TAETBQ: For five extra points, name the director of one of the down on the non-play of one of the movies. Normally, I'd ask for both movies, but, well, it's Christmas.

TAETBQ: For five extra extra points, name the director of one of the versions. (Normally, I'd ask for both movies, but...)

NAME the first science fiction movie ever made. It's worth 20 points

because it's an obscure flick. (Please, I will not accept "The Devil and Miss Jones" or any of the Johnny Wadd movies as an answer. I'll grant that you could debate their science fiction, though, if that makes you feel any better.)

WHILE WE'RE STILL thinking about movies, who played Kris Kringle in Miracle on 34th Street. It's worth three points because it's been on television lately. (What do you mean, you hope Santa leaves coal in my shoes?) WHO wrote "Night and Day." That's worth five points. TAETBQ: Stand up and sing Night and Day, (with feeling and in a clear voice. Shake those roof-tops. Tickle those icicles with your tender notes, kids.) It's worth an extra five points.

For those of you who rather recite poetry than sing for five points name the man who wrote "The Night Before Christmas."

Just to prove I'm not a Scrooge, I'll kick in an extra five points. Remember in "A Christmas Carol," old Ebenezer has just seen the Marley? Well, he blames it on something more to earth rather than admit he's seen a ghost. What excuse did he use? (Hint: This would have made a great trivia question after Thanksgiving dinner.)

Now, if you think that I'm going to give you the answers today—you're wrong. It's a holiday and I'm going to give myself a present by saving the answers for next week. That way, I know ahead of time what this column encompasses.

(Yes, it's fair. It's my column and it's my trivia contest.) Happy holidays, folks.

Taking snappy photos



Don't be afraid to get close to your subject, especially if it is a child. A common pitfall is including things in a photograph that don't say anything about the picture and aren't important. In a photograph like the one above, all you really need to tell the story is the child's face, his hands and the balloon in his mouth. (Staff photo by Cynthia Abbott)

Guest Columnist
Catch holidays in the act

Cynthia Abbott is a part-time photographer for Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

By CYNTHIA ABBOTT
If I had a copy of every blurred, ruined or otherwise botched holiday picture I've taken or seen, it would be an easy job to wallpaper the dark room... three times over.

By following a few simple guidelines, and using your imagination, maybe this year the smile on your face when you get your Christmas pictures back from the processor will match the Christmas morning grin of your children.

Be unobtrusive. The days of telling your subject to look at the camera and smile are, thank heavens, far behind us. To accustom people to you and your camera, just walk around with it hanging around your neck for a while.

The holiday season, with all the parties and gift openings and such, are loaded with good, spontaneous picture possibilities. If you let the action follow its natural progression without interrupting your chances of getting a better picture get a better picture.

Take your time. Be prepared to wait for that special moment. Try not to take a picture just to get something, because that's exactly what you'll get—something. Nothing special at all. The expression of delight on your child's face at finding the new puppy under the tree will be relegated

strictly to your memories. And it could have been on film.

WHILE you're waiting for the peak of the action, compose the picture in your head. Pick your background by walking around and looking through your viewfinder. Every stationary object has three front sides. When you find the least obtrusive background, or the one that actually adds to the picture, shoot it that way.

That's why we professionals are always climbing on chairs or some fool thing. At the same time, get rid of the non-essentials in the picture. What you see is what you'll get, so try to be aware of everything in your viewfinder. Every picture tells your story, so be fussy and take the time to get what you want.

Make Mother Goose jealous this year.

Blurred and tipped pictures are the two most common mistakes I see. Believe it or not, being a photographer is a thinking person's job. Concentrate on holding the camera straight and steady, and squeezing, not punching, the shutter button. Motion blur, which is what you'll get if you don't, is terrific if your child is running around the tree at breakneck speed.

Take your time while focusing the picture. If your camera has a manual focus ring, and for example, your subject is a closeup of a face, focus on the

eyes. You should be able to see every eyelash clearly, provided you haven't imbued too much rum punch.

If your camera isn't the manual focus type, know where the best range is. Most cameras of this type will move by going out of focus if you move in closer than three feet.

MECHANICAL problems account for a substantial amount of the botched pictures. Make sure the film is feeding properly. In 35mm cameras, the rewind knob (usually located on the top of the camera to your left, if you hold it normally) will move counter-clockwise every time you advance the film. If it's loaded correctly.

And check the batteries. They, as well as flash attachments, need to be replaced once a year with even the minimal amount of use, so do it now and avoid the holiday rush.

Buying film is not a problem if you check the expiration date before you pay for it. With color film, the date should be around a year from the current date. And don't be afraid to use up the film. It will be the cheapest thing you'll buy for your camera.

If you don't use the film, keep it in the refrigerator, but hold the mayo.

If you don't shoot a picture when you see it, you'll never get another chance.

And after all, just how often do you catch Santa right in the act?



By W.W. EDGAR

The Stroller
Snow:
Pretty and deadly

As we sat around the lunch table the other day, the conversation turned to heavy snowfalls. Outside, seven inches of snow lay on the ground, and the weatherman was predicting eight inches more during the night.

"Even if the weatherman is right—and I don't hope he will be—it won't be the heaviest snow we've had around," said one of the diners. Then he added that he well remembered a 19-inch snowfall in the '50s that really tied up the entire western suburbs.

This recollection caused another diner to ask, "What about the one only several years ago? That was supposed to be 19 inches, too."

ALL THE WHILE, The Stroller sat there listening to these old timers tell of the tough winters and the heavy snowfalls of the past.

None of their experiences could equal the snowfall that almost cost The Stroller his life. And if it hadn't been for some man who also was braving a storm, he could have frozen to death.

It so happened our entire family had a penchant for perfect attendance in every organization to which anyone belonged. One reason was that an uncle had run up a record of 20 years without a miss. With that goal, none of us dared to miss.

On this Sunday morning back in the Pennsylvania Dutch country, the snow was heavy against the back door, and drifts lay deep through the yard to the road steps. But there was no thought of ignoring the challenge to a Sunday school attendance record which had reached six years and could not be broken.

Bev Karcher, editor of the local MACLED newsletter, says many of the suggestions she passes on comes from Academic Therapy, a disciplinary journal written basically for professionals, and distributed nation-wide.

The local chapter, incidentally, has just changed its name from the Farmington Chapter to the Farmington Area Chapter, because it is now drawing members from both local cities, West Bloomfield, Novi, Southfield and Clarenceville.

You say you're feeling bad because your husband or wife doesn't believe in Christmas, birthdays, anniversaries, Valentine's Day or Sweetest Day.

You say you're feeling bad because your spouse thinks every holiday is a commercial rip-off and your best friend got a mink coat just because it was Tuesday and you never even get a Christmas card or a birthday cake.

Well, bunkie, keep your chin up. Hold your head up high. Look on the bright side. Maybe your husband, wife or lover, as the case may be, put a personal ad in the newspaper and surprised you with best wishes on a special day. Here are just a few which could apply to you:

• "After two years of wedded bliss, I

still love you. So put down the newspaper and hug me.

• "To the girl who is my wife, to the girl who is my life, you're one in a million. I love you, signed 'Guess who?'"

• "Beefie Baby, meow, meow, meow. Luvya, luvya, luvya. You're the Kat's meow. Kimba."

• "Bozo, I know there's no place for me on your bulletin board. But I still have a place in your puzzle. Boo Boo Face."

• "Breaker 1-9 Caveman. Un-gah-wah. That means I love you. That's a big H-4. Belly Dancer."

• "Bunkie-From now on through senior citizen apartments. Love ya, Little Boo."

• "Roses are red, violets are blue. This isn't a Vette, but it's the best I

can do. Happy Birthday. Your lady.

• "Oer. To the sweetest honey that the bees never made. I wub ya, Chuckie."

• "Because I love you so much, I will never touch the check book again. I promise. But it's Valentine's Day and where in the devil are my roses? Your little Indian, forever."

• "Cookie Monster-Can't wait to go to a cornfield and get kissed behind the ears. Cookie."

• "Conway's Clothing Store, specializing in designer fashions, loves all women every day."

• "Are you feeling better now, bunkie? Did you recognize yourself read in any of these goodies? If you did, you've probably read your last personal ad. But happy holidays, anyway."

"Around the edge"

by Jackie Klein

Read the personals, Bunkie

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My Cup of Tea

by Loraine McClish

Consider the particular need when buying a child's gift

In the Michigan Association for Children With Learning Disabilities fall newsletter, the editors passed on some guidelines to help parents choose appropriate gifts this Christmas season.

The suggestions were aimed specifically at those who were buying for children who had learning handicaps. Though my own feelings are that most parents could benefit by them, simply because most children have needs of some kind or another.

The essence of the article was that buying suitable presents is rarely easy, and the two major considerations to keep in mind is the child's individual characteristics and needs.

If the child is overstimulated by noise, avoid toys which are primarily noise-makers, says the author.

If the child is impulsive, consider

the toy's possible use as a weapon.

If he has a short attention span, select a game which can be ended quickly or set aside when his interest wanes.

If the child is unduly upset when he loses a game, choose a game where winning is based on chance rather than skill.

AS FOR A CHILD'S needs, the following suggestions are offered: If following directions is a needed skill, consider paper-folding and paper-cutting equipment or kits. Make sure the equipment can be handled by the child.

If development is needed in the area of visual perception, select coloring books, puzzles, dot-to-dot books, construction sets, sewing cards, tools or art supplies.

If the need is to increase concentration periods, choose games which involve movement such as cards, men or blocks.

If the need is for developing reading or math concepts, consider any games in the domino or check category.

If spelling is weak, there are junior forms of scrabble and anagrams on the market.

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Farmington Observer

Steve Barnaby
Editor22120 West Nine Mile
Southfield, MI 48033
(313) 352-5400

John Reddy, General Mgr.

Arthur Langer, Advertising Director

Fred J. Wright, Circulation Mgr.

Philip H. Power
Chairman of the BoardRichard D. Agninin
President

Chief Executive Officer