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(P7B)

Monday, November 24, 1980



**C.J. Risak**

## Holiday pitch arrives here before Santa

"It's here!" my friend, I.M. Idle, blurted as I opened my apartment door.  
He rushed into the room and headed straight for the TV. I peered into the apartment hallway, half-expecting something to be following him.

"I don't see anything," I said.  
It was apparent something was wrong — he was frantically switching television channels. His normal pattern was to examine the contents of the refrigerator before turning on the tube.  
"No, no, it's here, it's arrived!" he said again as he settled on a station.

"What is?"  
"This," he replied proudly, pointing to the TV.  
"This amazing device chops and chips, slices and dices, minces and mangles," the announcer said excitedly. "101 uses. Order yours today and you'll receive, at no extra cost, the cap snaffler. No more problems with stubborn bottle tops or jars that refuse to open. The cap snaffler opens it quickly and easily."  
"And that's not all..."  
I looked at I.M., waiting for an explanation.  
"It's Christmas!" he yelled.

ONE WEEK after Halloween — that's when they slowly started slipping them in. The political advertisements were just ending when they started appearing. Christmas advertising.

It didn't take long to confirm I.M.'s proclamation that the holiday shopping season had indeed arrived. All the discount stores — Kmart, Meijer's Thrifty Acres — were rolling in the Christmas items to replace the unsold Halloween merchandise.

The idea struck me again later that day as I watched another TV Christmas commercial. The realization that seven weeks from now I would be seeing the same ads for the unimpeachable time depressed me.

A few companies really cash in on the season. I thought while watching. Viewers are bombarded by their commercials advertising products which I don't either need or use.

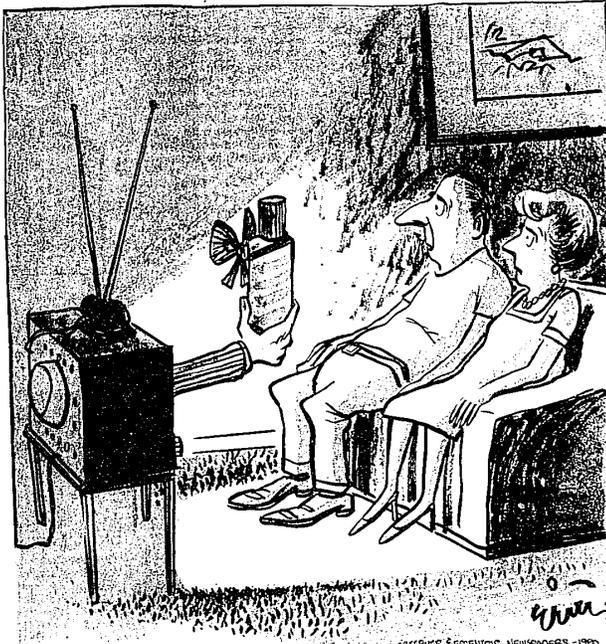
Remember Mood Rings? Hot shaving lotion dispensers, too, had their holiday moment. So did Vegomatics, Home Winemaker Kits, and Pocket Fishermen.

Ronco Teleproducts Inc. is a big seller of some of the more unique products devised by man.

**RONCO'S AUTO CUP.** Has this ever happened to you (man pictured spills a half gallon of coffee on his suit while driving)? It will never happen with Ronco's Auto Cup. Turn it upside down, it won't spill. Handy handle makes it easy to carry anywhere — boating, golfing, skiing, anywhere.  
"The perfect gift."

Ronco will be marketing 14 products this Christmas, said the company spokeswoman who would identify herself only as "Dorey." The woman was very suspicious and asked more questions than she would answer. Apparently, she feared I might be a competitor wanting to steal one of Ronco's gift ideas.

## Buy it now!



Among the "perfect gifts" Ronco will be marketing this year, other than the Auto Cup, is the Miracle Broom, Miracle Sander, Roller Measure, Cellulose, Battery Tester, Ornamental Ice and the Egg Scrambler.

Sorry, but the Bottle and Jar Cutter, and the Studsetter aren't scheduled for release, she told me. Any remaining on store shelves are leftovers from previous seasons.

"We manufacture and distribute products sold during the Christmas season," Dorey said. The slogan reminded me of a chubby guy in a red suit who used to give away presents at Christmas.

ONLY THE white-bearded fellow wasn't interested in making a profit. To Ronco and other similar companies, Christmas means making money. Lots of it.

"K-tel started in a guy's house in Winnipeg, Canada," said Bill McMahon, national sales manager for K-tel International. K-tel got its start selling the same type of merchandise Ronco sells — low-priced Christmas gifts. The company now restricts its business to record album sales.

"Last year, we did \$170 million worth of business," McMahon said, adding that the company has now spread into 19 countries. One-third of its profits came from the U.S. last year, and 70 percent of those were between July 1 and Christmas.

Television promotion of their albums has always been a key to K-tel's success. This year the ads started earlier than ever, with Christmas commercials hitting the airwaves on Oct. 20 in parts of the country.

"We used to start in the middle of November," McMahon said. Last year, the company decided to make the promotion date earlier.

"And you know," McMahon said, "we found we got a great deal of sales."

This holiday season, the company will market seven albums, ranging from new wave rock to country. Most are combinations of greatest hits from several artists.

Without doubt, each will be aired right up until Christmas.

"SO WHAT DO you think?" I asked I.M. as we viewed the tube. An album cover displaying the "Greatest of County Western" was the K-tel product currently being peddled.  
"About what?" he responded, emerging from a semiconscious state.

"About this stuff," I said, waving my arm toward the TV screen. "We've got 'junk food' and 'trash sports,' like 'Superstars' and 'Battle of the NFL Cheerleaders.' We also have 'gimmick gifts.' If you can't think of anything else, spend \$9.95 for one of these."

"Whadda mean, 'gimmick gifts?'" I.M. said with renewed interest. "I've been on both the giving and receiving end of these things, and I think they're pretty good."

"Yeah?" I shot back. "Do you still use any of 'em?"

"Sure," he answered sarcastically. "How many bottles can you turn into glasses? How much ornamental ice can you use? How many times do you want to hear the 'Top 40 Hits of 1976?'"

"Then what good are they?" I inquired.

"They save you a helluva headache in finding the right gift when you're Christmas shopping," he mumbled, his attention once again riveted on the screen in front of him.



**Sherry Kahan**

## Partying raised Pilgrims' hackles

By SHERRY KAHAN

Imagine this. You are a Pilgrim. You have crossed a stormy ocean in a small boat called the Mayflower with others of your ilk. You survive a winter with little food. You invent Thanksgiving.

After five years of struggle, you begin to think you've successfully escaped the sinful bawdiness of old England. You are building up the kind of strict religious community you wanted.

Then from a point several miles away comes the sound of music, definitely not hymns. People are laughing and drinking. They are even prancing around the maypole in the tradition of their homeland. A colony of hippies has moved next door.

The place was Ma-re Mount, called Merry Mount by historians. Its leader was Thomas Morton, an Englishman of good family who trained for the law and could read Latin.

In the year 1625 the phrase "alternative culture" was a long way in the future. But it was clear that this man marched to a different drummer.

AFTER HIS arrival, the group of non-Pilgrims with whom he was associated had a falling out. Some of the partners left.

Morton then started an early American revolution by urging the servants who had been left behind to leave their few remaining masters and throw in with him.

In his book "Saints and Strangers," George Willison pointed out that a number of indentured servants in those days had been taken by Englishmen and sold as virtual slaves in Virginia. Having heard about this, the servants needed little persuasion to join Morton.

The party began.  
In his diary, Pilgrim governor William Bradford unloaded his feelings about this social event of the year. The spelling is his.

"After this, they fell to great licentiousness, and led a dissolute life, powering out their selves into all profaneness. And Morton became lord of mischief, and maintained (as it were) a school of Atheism. And after they had got some good into their hands, and got much by trading with the Indians, they spent it as vainly, in quaffing and drinking both wine and strong waters in great excess..."

"They also set up a May-pole, drinking and dancing about together, inviting the Indian women for their concerts, dancing and frisking together (like so many fairies, or furies rather,) and worse practices."

Bradford also was pretty uncomfortable with Morton's nootry, saying he composed "sundry rimes and verses, some tending to lasciviousness."

THE PILGRIMS were worried their own members might join in the quaffing and worse practices. Their own indentured servants might leave.

They were also nervous about Morton's success in the beaver trade. He hired Indians to help him and was cutting into the Pilgrims' beaver take. They counted on selling the skins in England to obtain supplies they needed to sustain them.

And they accused him of selling liquor and guns to the Indians.

So they managed to get him deported back to England.

BUT LIKE A BAD halfpenny, he returned a year later. In the meantime, in England he wrote a satire, on the Pilgrims called New England Canaan, which Willison describes as "one of the liveliest, wittiest and most informative books of the day."

He also worked to end the patents that gave the Pilgrims and Puritans the right to their land.

Once he was back in this country, the battles started all over again. But eventually the Pilgrims managed to remove Morton again.

He was tried on a charge of harming the Indians, Willison reports. The historian added, however, that "the plain truth was that he got along with them only too well."

Again he was returned to England, and did not come back until 1643. But the Pilgrims and Puritans were persistent and jailed him in Massachusetts.

When released, he went to Maine and lived out his life in poverty. Willison includes a comment from someone who saw him before he died. The word was that he had fallen so low he was "content to drink water."

Morton's opinion of the Pilgrims was that they "made a great shewe of religion, but no humanity."

## Monument rocks view of history

Every year at Thanksgiving, schoolchildren get to color in pictures of brave and heroic pilgrims with their blue wool capes blowing in the cold winter wind, taking their first tentative steps onto these shores.

The women are always dark-haired and dark-eyed — probably drawn to vaguely resemble Jennifer Jones.

The men are always strong-chinned, chiseled-cheeked and blue eyed — the surfer look before California was fully settled.

Then there's Plymouth Rock, itself. It's dark and craggy like all good historic rocks. It's also always depicted as a large beacon in the white-capped ocean.

It's a picture that was in all the school texts when I was a kid. If you gaze on it long enough, you could almost hear dainty Priscilla admonishing, "Speak for yourself, John."

You could almost wish that John had spoken sooner for himself, thus sparking schoolchildren another poem to learn and possibly keeping the rest of us from the sight of several more New England tourist traps.

Plymouth, Mass., could have preserved that illusion if it hadn't decided to turn the Rock into a tourist attraction.

TOURIST ATTRACTION or not, I'm irresistibly drawn to anything any little town wants to call historic. Sometimes it pays off, as it did the time I visited a little museum located inside an old court-house in Nova Scotia.



**Louise Okrutsky**

life, took special delight in showing off the vintage wedding dress which couldn't have been worn by a woman taller than five feet.

"Weren't they small then?" my guide cooed.  
Then, she directed my attention to the place in the ceiling which had supported the rope for the town's only hanging, which occurred shortly after the town's only murder.

"Terrible, wasn't it?" my guide said.

So it was absolutely necessary that I finally get to see this craggy, rugged rock which had once supported the delicate and dainty Priscilla and the rest of the Mayflower crew.

In the middle of the still little town of Plymouth, Mass., there stands a little gazebo near the bay where the respectful and the curious come to finally eye the Rock.

Most of them, I'm sure, come to this spot expecting to see a piece of granite resembling the logo used in the Mutual of Omaha commercials.

Next to the rock, itself, are tourist guides dressed up as Mayflower passengers might have dressed, waiting to answer questions and give directions.

THE ROCK ITSELF stands in a little cell dug out

of the earth so the visitor must look downward to see it.

There, on the bottom of this pit, held together mainly by plaster — in fact, I dare say it is mostly plaster — is what passes these days for Plymouth Rock.

No great craggy monument to will and determination. No moment of drama or poignant remembrance of those in other times who have come here for the same reasons as these, the first immigrants. Not even one old-time resident dressed in everyday clothes to point to the places made memorable to local history.

Instead, just to make sure you recognize the piece of plaster for what it is, there is the date 1620 stamped on it.

The little booklet tourists get when they visit this little chip off the old rock prudently shies away from actually saying that this is the Pilgrim's rock. Instead, it confesses that a few generations after the Pilgrims settled, a grizzled old man who claimed to remember such hallowed traditions, pointed his finger at this little rock and informed the town that, yes, this was the very rock their forebears had touched.

Just in case all of this hasn't touched you, the final note in this scenario takes place, not near the tourist site, but across the street where the John Alden Ice Cream Stand does business.

YOU CAN'T miss it. It's the only ice cream place in town that has John Alden's hat, head and shoulders resting larger than life on its roof.  
Anyone for an Aldenburger?