

A merry bunch of S's

by RUSTLE SHAND

S is for Santa, and more.

'Tis the season to play Santa, according to your own dictates. Everybody is different in their approach to buying gifts for loved ones. We all know that. Some seem imbued with the qualities of Scrooge. Others are so ebullient, they might be the jolly old elf, himself.

I call it the S Syndrome. S for Santa who may be savvy, sanguine, salient or sophisticated.

The savvy or practical shopper is the remarkable one who has completed the Christmas list by Thanksgiving.

The sanguine Santa, on the other hand, cheerfully and carefully begins gift shopping the day after Thanksgiving. Traditionally caught in the tinsel array of holiday gift suggestions, he withdraws his money from his special Christmas savings fund and begins making rounds of all the gift counters.

The salient Santa waits until the last minute, usually making rounds on Christmas Eve. Striking, status gifts are his forte. He gets into the holiday mood in an expensive way, ho-ho-hoing extravagantly.



Three-quarter carat diamond in each ear. About \$5,000. Bongiorno, Somerset Mall, Troy. (Photo/Dick Kelley)

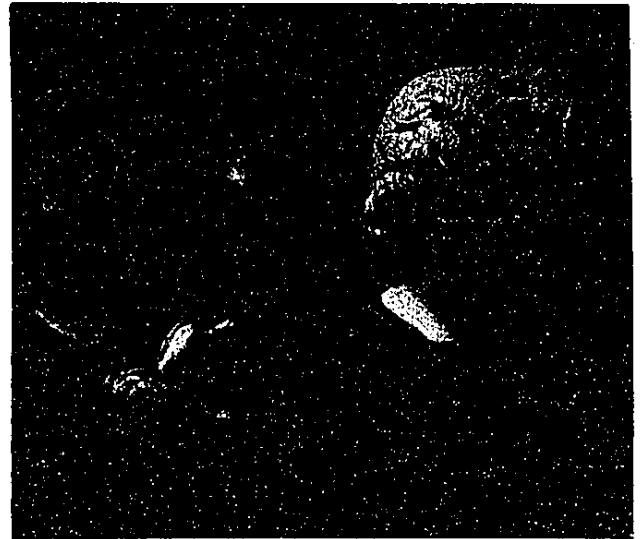
He wants glamour, hang the cost. After all, Christmas comes but once a year. So let's go all out, says he, heading for the fashionable shops, intent on making everybody's wish come true.

A mad dash to the furrier for the latest fancy. A pair of diamond earrings. A large bottle of Chanel No. 5. A huge box of the most expensive chocolates are among the items he gathers.

For Dad, who thinks he has everything, there is something new and outrageously expensive such as an \$8,000 gold piece. Surely, Mom would love a white mink cape and some new diamond earrings. Suzy is old enough for important jewelry and he finds her a collector's piece. Johnny, while he might not appreciate it just yet, is treated to the ultimate in prep school luxury, a set of 14 carat gold blazer buttons.

And not to be forgotten is the sycophant. A special category for this shopper began to expand about 10 years ago. Called gift certificates, those who find them in their stocking have many advantages.

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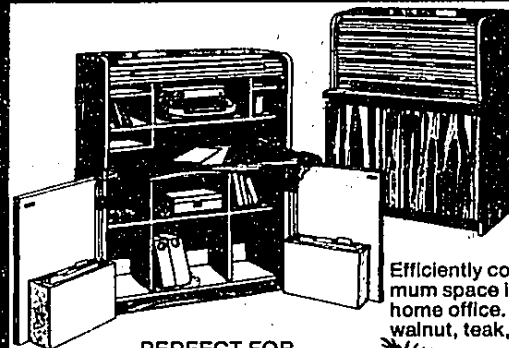
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