

Is self-defense
the best defense?

Holiday shoppers worried about getting packages or purses stolen are better off paying attention to their surroundings than buying self-defense devices. See page 5D.

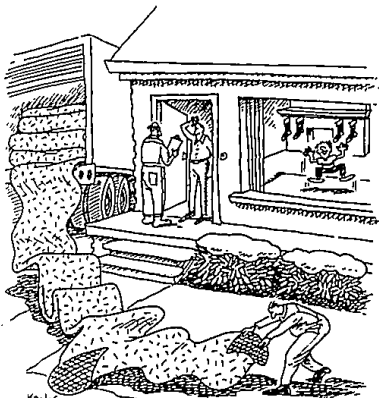
The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

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Six Little-Known Holiday Traditions

by Karlos Barney



Resourceful toddlers surprise their parents with creative use of the family VISA card.



By replacing conventional silverware with feed-bags, the Larsons eat their holiday dinner and unwrap gifts simultaneously.



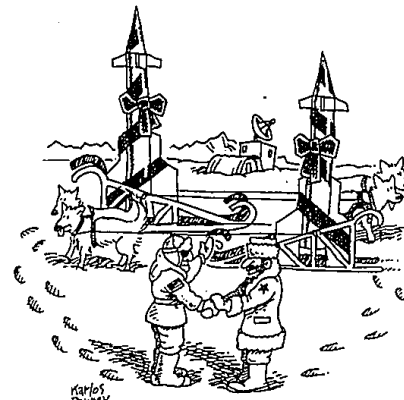
Neighbors gather on Christmas Eve to watch Waldo Reemer trim his wife's festive hairdo.



Near-sighted Juan Sanchez mistakes the family dog for the annual Christmas piñata.



Philanthropist Reginald Williams sends educational toys to needy native children in Tonga.



Christmas cheer punctuates the long Arctic night as Russian and American forces exchange holiday warheads.

Holiday travel can start family tradition

By Iris Sanderson Jones
special writer

Q. Christmas can be lonely when you don't have grandparents and cousins around to help you celebrate. I have always wanted to go away for the season but my husband thinks we should stay home with the kids and start our own traditions. What do you think?

W.C.,
Canton

A. A surprising number of people celebrate all or part of the Christmas season away from home. You can start your own tradition by going to the same place every year, or by moving around and showing your children the way different cultures celebrate the season.

Why not try it two ways by traveling for a few days before or after Christmas and spending Christmas Day at home. That would give you the best of both worlds and might lure your husband out into other places.

We have enjoyed December travel in many places. A few days at Club Med in Ixtapa, Mexico, may not seem much like Christmas to you but lots of people like to warm up before the snow sets in. And your travel agent can tell you about Club Meds that specialize in kids.

We have enjoyed the wonderful Spanish-American Christmas traditions in San Antonio, Texas, where they line the San Antonio river with luminarias (candles glowing in paper bags), celebrate Mariachi Mass at the San Jose Mission, have a public

Blessing of the Pets and celebrate the season with Pancho Claus in the Mexican market. That's Christmas, and that's fun.

I have friends who gathered grandparents, parents, kids and grandchildren together for many years on New Year's weekend at the Potawatomi Inn, in Indiana's Pokagon State Park, which is just across the Michigan border. That's fun too.

You can write the scenario any way you want it: at the Golden Lamb, a historic inn in Lebanon, Ohio, at the Grand Traverse Resort in Acme, Mich.

This year, I spent a few days early December days at the Grove Park Inn, a great stone hotel where people have vacationed for half a century in Asheville, N.C. It is on the lip of a hill, with views across tennis courts and a golf course to the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Smokies.

There is always something going on in the lobby of the Grove Park Inn during December. They call the lobby "The Great Hall" and that is exactly what it is, a high rectangular room supported by six wood-clad pillars. There are great stone fireplaces at either end.

The tiny elevators that take you to the upper floors of the main lodge are hidden inside those two massive rises of stone. The stone is so thick there is not even a hint of the heat from roaring fires that burn in the great grates whenever there is a nip in the air.

Most people don't stay in the main lodge during the winter because the heat is hard to control on a cold win-

ter day. At that time of year they walk along the hallway, past photographs of all the famous people who have stayed there, and rest their heads in the new wing. Another new wing opens next year.

During the Christmas season, the Great Hall is full of Yuletide events. I sat there one Saturday afternoon while the pianist wrapped me in the

sounds of "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas." The snow had stopped falling outside, but the great Christmas tree that dominated the room was all aglitter.

Santa had been there the afternoon before, along with a very popular Yuletide magic show. People sat on sofas or at small tables, sipping drinks from the bar or drinking the

hot tea, or the hot spiced apple cider, served every afternoon.

The Grove Park Inn was only one of many resort hotels in the area when it was built in 1913. Asheville was known before George Vanderbilt, grandson of Cornelius Vanderbilt, created the fabulous French chateau called Biltmore House on 125,000 acres near Asheville in 1895,

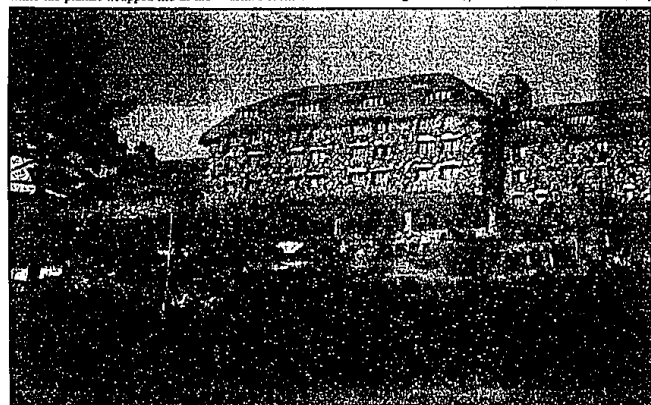
We have enjoyed December travel in many places. A few days at Club Med in Ixtapa, Mexico, may not seem much like Christmas to you but lots of people like to warm up before the snow sets in.

but there is no doubt that the great house attracted the rich and famous of the day to the valley.

None of the other historic Asheville resorts are left now. Only the Grove Park Inn, built by Dr. Edwin Wiley Grove, owner of the St. Louis pharmaceutical firm that produced Grove's Bromo-Quinine and Grove's Tasteless Chill tonic. His fireplaces were built to hold 12-foot long logs.

The building has been many things over the century, including a rest center for Navy personnel during World War Two. It was a summer-only hotel until it began year-round operation in 1984. Last year the Inn's Christmas celebrations earned it a place in the top 20 December events, listed by the Southeast Tourism Society.

The Grove Park Inn is just one example of the places you can go to celebrate the season. Pick a place that would interest your husband. Try it next year for a few days in December. It might be a tradition you could all get used to.



The central portion of the Grove Park Inn.