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Celebs' gifts are not too fancy



JIMMY LAUNCE

When it comes to giving and receiving Christmas gifts, area celebrities are just like you and me. They like practical gifts sometimes, but they like fanciful gifts too.

Local radio and TV personalities, who commented on their favorite gifts, include Jimmy Launce of West Bloomfield, the ever-boyish star of his own radio show on WJR.

"I don't know if I'm eclectic or undisciplined," he said. "I'm a handyman, so I like to receive power tools. I do my own plumbing, electrical work, carpentry and yard work."

Launce said he also likes jewelry and unusual items of clothing. "A sweater that you wouldn't see on everybody else—tasteful but something that jumps out at you."

Launce likes to give his beautiful wife model Brigitte, "nonsensical things for the heck of it, to keep our marriage unpredictable. I wouldn't stop at giving her a storm window."

But he also gives Brigitte lingerie or jewelry. Launce said he never gave his wife a fur for Christmas, but did give her one in January as a surprise gift.

"I also like to give her writing—a sentimental note on occasion and Christmas, too, telling her what she means to me."

Dennis Wholey, easy-going host of "A.M. Detroit" on Channel 7, likes to establish a motif for his Christmas gift-giving. "Last year was the year of the birdhouses," he explained. "I bought 14 birdhouses from a shop in Birmingham. I cleaned them out."

Wholey, a Southfield resident who is originally from Rhode Island, said, "There are birdhouses floating all over the country now, from Michigan to Virginia, to New York to Rhode Island and California."

He said all the birdhouses have attracted birds "except I haven't checked out California. I don't know if they have birds in California. Everything is very plastic there."

Wholey picked birdhouses because "they felt kind of Christmasy, kind of nice." He is single and gave the birdhouses to friends and family.

The year before last was "the year of the sweatshirt," according to Wholey, who gave ones similar to those the Red Wings wear.

He also likes to buy prints and have them framed for gifts and to take photographs of people, get the pictures blown up and sent to

the individuals.

Wholey added, "I've been more impressed lately with gifts people make—anything from a painting to a sweater or tennis racket cover."

What does he like to receive? "If I could have my wish, I'd get a different pair of sneakers from everyone. I've got 12 pairs of sneakers now and two pairs of loafers," he said.

Marilyn Turner, weathercaster who appears on Channel 7's nightly news along with her husband, newscaster John Kelly, may be pretty, but she's definitely practical.

"I like extremely practical gifts. I don't want to be given clothes, although John will probably give me some."

"I want a filing cabinet, for instance. I handle all the bills. And I would like a power saw. We have wood to cut all around our place."

Ms. Turner doesn't want to receive clothes because she buys her own at a discount. Buying expensive clothes isn't worthwhile either, she said, because being on the air you have to change them around more often.

Turner and Kelly live in Farmington Hills, where they have fenced in three-quarters of an acre around the house. "We have dogs and they like to run," she said.

"Don't ever give me a mink coat," Ms. Turner said emphatically. She was absolutely thrilled when they got a fence. "I'd rather have a fence than a mink coat, and they're about the same price."

How does she explain her practicality? "I'm from a Canadian-German background and too damned practical."

She likes to give practical gifts too. Say, a night out at a restaurant for a couple. Maybe a snow shovel for her son who has just bought a small home.

She expects she will give John some sort of tape recording machine, which he wants, to record messages to send to relatives. And he wants a power saw, too.

Maybe they'll end up with two power saws.

—ETHEL SIMMONS



LOOK WHAT SANTA HAS IN HIS SLEEVE