

## Humor Me

By Ronald P. Culberson

December 2008

(Originally appeared in the *Herndon Observer*)

### “Understanding the Holiday Yech Factor”

My cable went out again. It's the seventeenth time this year. I won't mention the name of the cable company but it rhymes with “box.” While waiting for my system to reboot, the technician said, “So, are you ready for Christmas?” Seeing that it was only December 2<sup>nd</sup> and I am not typically ready for Christmas until around December 24<sup>th</sup>, I said, “Not really.”

She said, “Yeah, Christmas was fun when we were kids, but now...yech.”

I couldn't agree more – which, by the way, is an odd statement since agreement seems pretty much like an either/or concept rather than a matter of degree. If I agree more, does that mean we're linked by some sort of higher philosophical congruence? And what if we agree to disagree? Now, my head hurts.

Anyway, the cable technician got me thinking about the phases we go through in life. Such as:

Phase 1: You believe in Santa Claus.

Phase 2: You don't believe in Santa Claus.

Phase 3: You dress up as Santa Claus.

Phase 4: You look like Santa Claus.

As I pulled on my Santa hat, I realized that my yech factor has set in. Call it cynicism, disillusionment, or just fuddyduddyness, my inner child seems to have soured. I am acutely aware that the very things that thrilled me as a child now make me want to deck the guy who sells the holly. For instance...

**Gifts.** As a child, I was so excited about gifts, I couldn't wait. For five days leading up to Christmas, I was allowed to open one small gift per day. One year, I ripped open what I was *sure* was a can of Silly String only to find a half used can of *Sure* deodorant. It was my mom's little joke on her impatient son. No wonder my therapist's number is on speed dial.

Today, I don't want gifts. I hate feigning excitement when I open gifts I don't need. Forget the sweaters that swallow my slight yet chiseled frame, the jeans that cut off the circulation in my femoral artery, and anything made of fleece. Yech. I have more fleece than Old Navy, and every time I put it on, I create enough static electricity to run a small African country.

**Decorations.** As a child, my father drove me an hour up the windy roads of Whitetop Mountain to get our Christmas tree. A banjo-picking guy from *Deliverance* only charged us \$5 to cut down any tree on his property. It was quite a bargain and well worth the drive. I threw up every year. Later, I'd sit at home with my Pepto-Bismol laced eggnog, basking in the glow of the tree lights and listening to Andy Williams sing "The Christmas Song." Life was queasy, but good.

Today, my family has seventy-five boxes of decorations. It takes an hour just to bring them up from the basement and another six months to put them up. Yech. They look nice but as a neat freak, it's impossible to clean when you have garland, lights, pine cones, reindeer, angels and Yankee candles spread all over the mantel. And every time the front door closes, I can actually hear the pine needles from our "fresh" tree tinkle on the carpet. I've burned out three vacuum cleaners cleaning them up. Triple yech.

**Relatives.** As a child, I couldn't wait to see my relatives, especially after my brother and sisters left home. Mostly because they brought me gifts, but also because they broke the monotony of my solitude. However, with so many people in such a small house, I was usually banished to the kid table and fed Vienna Sausages instead of turkey and dressing. Maybe that's why I like Spam.

Today, when relatives visit, it's like an infestation of locust. Everywhere I turn, someone is buzzing about. They move furniture, eat all my favorite food, and relocate my utensils where I can't find them until their next visit. Plus there's always a flare up of that old dysfunction that years of therapy failed to remove. Like when Aunt Minnie says, "You look like you gained some weight." Yech.

Even though my childhood had a yech factor too, I seem to have lost my resilience as an adult. It doesn't take much to put me over the mistletoe edge. But, regardless of how I feel, I'll put on a good face. Therapy has at least taught me how to fake sincerity. I'll wear my big fleece sweater, squeeze into my tight jeans, ignore the fifty-seven thousand pine needles, and perhaps even eat a delicious piece of fruitcake with the rest of you. Yech.

Until next time, just humor me.

*© 2008 Ron Culberson. This information may be copied and shared as long as the following information is included:*

*Ron Culberson, MSW, CSP, CPAE is a speaker, humorist, and author of four books including *Do it Well. Make it Fun. The Key to Success in Life, Death, and Almost Everything in Between*. His mission is to change the workplace culture so that organizations are more productive and staff are more content. He shows people how to have more FUN while preserving the integrity of the work they do and the lives they lead. For more information, visit [www.RonCulberson.com](http://www.RonCulberson.com).*