

# This season, remember the little guy

## Holidays leave some in the cold.

Another year is nearing its end. Over the next few weeks we'll all go out and maybe indulge in our chemical(s) of choice. Heads a-pounding, we'll wake up and it will be 1999. It's that time of year when everyone gets along. Call it the spirit of Christmas

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or whatever, its pretty nice. Even Christmas itself is kind of neat. I'm not a Christian, but I've sort of bastardized the holiday and given it my own meaning. It's a time when I like to see my family being happy for no other reason than everyone's home. I'm not going to take a cheap shot at the commercialization of the holidays. It's there, but it is harmless. If you are generous or foolish enough to indulge in

an advertising-induced shopping spree, so be it.

You're an adult, and it's your money. At least you're doing something for someone else.

This coming time of year seems to inspire both financial and emotional generosity. Whether we toss a few extra bucks to a bum, donate time or money to charity or are just a bit less surly than usual, the best in us is brought to the surface.

Still though, I wonder what happens to a lot of the faceless people out there — the nutty people walking the street talking to themselves. Maybe they splurge on a couple of Big Macs and sit in a lonely apartment somewhere and watch the New Year's festivities on TV.

Big Macs and the holidays; as unlikely as it sounds, that brings back the memory of a sad story. I was at high school in one of those blow-off classes that I needed to graduate. My teacher was an odd little man, with physical problems that made him look kind of funny to a class full of cruel kids.

The class, which was supposed to be earth science, turned into an exercise in group verbal abuse directed toward a weak target. I feel bad about the whole experience.

On the day before a holiday vacation

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(Thanksgiving, I think) our teacher casually asked us what our plans were. He got a typical range of responses, like going to see family or travel. I don't recall whether anyone asked him what he was doing, or if he decided to tell us.

"I'll probably buy a few Big Macs and sit at home and watch TV," he said. Looking back on it now, he was probably hoping that out of his class of tormentors, someone would have the human decency to invite him over (to my knowledge, no one did.) The classroom got a little quiet after that, hearing him state something that was probably one of the most depressing things we had heard in our young lives. Then I'm sure a couple of us laughed. For me at least, laughing would have

been in character. Hell, he was a little guy. He couldn't have eaten that much turkey or pie.

He seemed scary and strange to all of us in the class, but he was just a lonely person who wasn't as fortunate as the rest of us. His presence at the dinner table would have been no more disturbing than seeing Grandpa go on his holiday drinking spree. But I didn't have the courage or compassion to show a little kindness to someone down on their luck. That's exactly the opposite of what the holidays should be all about.

So beneath what we perceive as other's strangeness, we're all pretty much the same. A bunch of scared, ignorant people trying to get by in a relatively hostile world.

Most of us are lucky enough to have family and friends that love us. This makes the whole "life" thing a little bit easier and maybe it's even what makes it worthwhile. But some don't have those vital ties that make the holidays special. It's not too hard to reach out to these people, even if it is only once a year. Happy holidays to all the Mr. C's out there.

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# Let's get quizzical

## Just in case you don't have enough work.

Well, now that the Christmas holiday and finals are fast approaching us, why don't we look back at some of the events that made the month in which we hold Thanksgiving, appear as more of a holiday

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stress builder so the red and green season seems more appealing.

To help us do that, here is sort of a "test" (don't worry it's not cumulative), to see what your answers would be to some of the most riveting questions of the past month. YOU HAVE 15 minutes, multiple choice pass your papers in when you are done.

What's been your biggest nightmare of the month? a) Using new DNA evidence, Kenneth Starr will pursue the adultery case against Thomas Jefferson; as a result the Louisiana Purchase will be nullified, and we'll have to give back 13 states to France and face an Aaron Burr presidency. b) Minnesota, one of the most beautiful, good-government, Eddie Bauer states, will elect a onetime professional wrestler as governor. c) You walk into the new Belks expecting to find the urban excitement of, if not Paris or New York, maybe Seattle or even Dallas, and find yourself transported to, no offense, Winston.

In 1802, a member of the Virginia media accused President Thomas Jefferson of taking one of his slaves as his mistress and fathering her children. What was Jefferson's response? a) "It depends on what you mean by 'fathering.'" b) "I have not had sexual relations with that woman, Miss Hemings." c) "Can't we all just get along?" d) He kept his mouth shut and went on being president, which was easy to do because he didn't have to contend with a fourth branch of government, the special prosecutor.

Now that he has quit public life, what job would best suit Newt Gingrich? a) Pitchman for a hair restoration company. b) Marriage counselor. c) Used car salesman. d) Motivational speaker for athletic teams that win too much.

What's been your second-biggest nightmare of the month? a) The president will have a creepy affair with a woman his daughter's age in the Oval Office, lie about it to his family and political supporters, and see his approval ratings soar as each atrocity is revealed. b) You'll be on a plane next to Dr. Kevorkian, express exasperation over tardy beverage service by saying, "I've had it," and the doc will reach for his kit. c) Outgoing New York Sen. Al D'Amato will land the title role in a new sitcom about a crusty deli owner, "Putzhead!" d) Your favorite NFL team will ruin Thanksgiving by losing a game over a coin toss because the referee is hearing-impaired or short-term-memory-challenged.

What impact would impeachment have on Clinton's career? a) His approval ratings would go through the roof and he'd have an airport named after him. b) He'd have to find some place other than the White House for his sexual trysts, although he could come back as a Gore campaign contributor and use the Lincoln bedroom. c) It could unleash his reckless side and lead to some extremely stupid behavior since he'd be under less public scrutiny. d) He'd be well positioned for a gig on "Hollywood Squares."

What's Ken Starr biggest contribution to American society? a) Establishing government as part of the entertainment industry. b) Providing cover for newspapers to use off-color material. c) Taking our minds off boring stuff like government and campaign financing. d) Think about it, Without him we may never have known the artist formerly known as Linda Tripp.

ANSWERS: C, D, A, B, C, D  
If you scored five out of six or higher, congratulations you have actually been paying attention to important news events during the previous holiday season!

Now remember, this test does not measure your intelligence so if you scored less than five, do not despair there will more chances for all of the intellectuals who have had their egos hurt by actually not getting an "A" on something for the first time in their life.

So please have a safe and happy Christmas season, remember to ask for a ridiculous amount of gifts and intend not to buy anyone anything in return, make everyone happy wear lots of red and green and make sure to leave milk, cookies and a carrot for the damned reindeer. (because you know santa and those animals really eat that food). With no further delay ... Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night.



# Holidays bring a very "deer" lesson

## Animal sighting gives a timely reminder.

Every year, I look forward to Thanksgiving break, and I could sense that many of our students were also excited about it! For some, it was a time to look forward to being home with their families and for others it was simply a

made our mealtime a very personal and poignant one as we compared notes on our lives.

While each of our responses were different, there were some common themes which emerged focusing on the things that we were grateful for, such as: 1.) being able to celebrate this occasion with our special friends and family members; 2.) our good health; and 3.) just being alive! I also added my own in-depth perspective of how grateful I am for where I find myself now in my life in comparison to last year — thanks to the support, encouragement and unconditional love I have received from both my family and friends.

When I left Paul's home to return to campus, I was in a very mindful mood. As I drove by the gatehouse, I had to slow down as something quickly jumped out of the woods in front of my car as it ran across the street. At first I thought it was a dog, but as I looked at it more closely it was a deer! I have never seen deer on our campus property, so it caught me off guard. Naturally, I took this as a "sign," so I went straight to a Native American reference book in my library and opened it up to the chapter on deer.

As I read more about what deer represent in Native American spiritual circles, what I found out was that they are one of forty-four animals identified in the sacred animal kingdom. Each animal (like the deer) provides us with

different teachings. Thus, their presence in our lives also brings certain "medicine" — or healing of our body, mind, and spirit.

Their "medicine" also provides us with lessons which we can apply to how best to use our own personal power, strength and understanding. The section on the symbolism of the deer was one which resonated with me. The narrative focused on the healing power of unconditional love ("deer medicine"), gentleness and compassion.

As I reflected on this Native American insight and the auspicious events which took place for me on this particular Thanksgiving day, it made me realize once again how precious my life is and the things I am thankful for here and now in my life.

Heaven knows that we all encounter different experiences in our lives wherein we doubt and question our ability to be "gentle" and "compassionate."

Two years ago, I was in a very difficult space in my life after having lost custody of my daughter. Yet I was fortunate then to have supportive and dear friends and family who helped me move forward in my own healing process.

This recent deer sighting was a significant and timely affirmation for is derived from in successfully applying the principles of my own "deer medicine" to my life. Thus, I view these

Thanksgiving events as a very special holiday gift given to me by my friends and a deer!

In fact, as we enter into this busy holiday season, you may also want to consider how to express your gratitude or "deer medicine" to those around you. It's probably one of the most precious and magical gifts you can give to the people whom you care about and love this season. One, it doesn't cost much to do, nor does it take too much time out of our busy schedules to convey it, but it will certainly add something special to your day and theirs!

Just think about how it makes you feel when, out of the blue, someone sends you a note, drops by or calls you to tell you how much they appreciate you!

When I reflect on how simple this is to do, maybe we shouldn't wait for another year to come and go to remind ourselves about what we are grateful for.

I think the key here lies in extending our gratitude to each other every day of the year and especially during this holiday. 'Tis the season! Do it now! Make that call, send that e-mail note, write that letter, give your professor a standing ovation in class, or, if that person is here, go by their office or room and tell them.

And by the way, if a deer happens to cross your path today, be sure you tell him or her how "deer" they are to you — just a friendly reminder! Happy holidays!

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time to relax or catch up on their sleep! We certainly noticed the difference beginning last Monday, when our normal activity at the Benson University Center was if anything but a low hum by mid-week.

Since my family is in California and Hawaii, I am usually "homeless" for Thanksgiving, but I do get invitations to join my friends and their families for a Thanksgiving meal. This year, I joined my friend Paul and his family and friends for Thanksgiving. And, as we were gathered around the dinner table, our thoughtful host asked us to reflect on the question, "what things are we thankful for?" — all of which put us all into a highly reflective mode. It also