

MY VOICE

The commercialized holiday season

MARISSA LANICH
staff writer

It's the most wonderful time of the year... the happiest season of all. However, from where I've stood during the holidays over the past several years, it hasn't looked like it to me.

Although the holidays were never a large part of my life growing up, I hate to speak negatively of the holiday season. I particularly enjoy the holidays, and I've had wonderful experiences celebrating over the years with the families of my friends and significant others. But even these great experiences can't negate the greed and negativity that I see every holiday season at work.

For the last several years I have held positions in customer service that have allowed me to see people at their worst during the holidays.

Last holiday season, I worked

at the Millcreek Mall - the craziest place to be during this time of year. While I anticipated a busy, stressful season, I didn't realize how volatile the holiday shoppers would be.

Witnessing the crazed customers on Black Friday, nearly trampling others to find good sales left me wondering where the holiday spirit was. Observing shoppers who made their reluctance and resentment apparent while buying gifts for others made me wonder if Christmas cheer exists anymore.

This holiday season, I am working in customer service at

a grocery chain. While this has been a considerably better experience, I have still found that the holidays bring out the worst in customers. For every pleasant shopper, I encounter

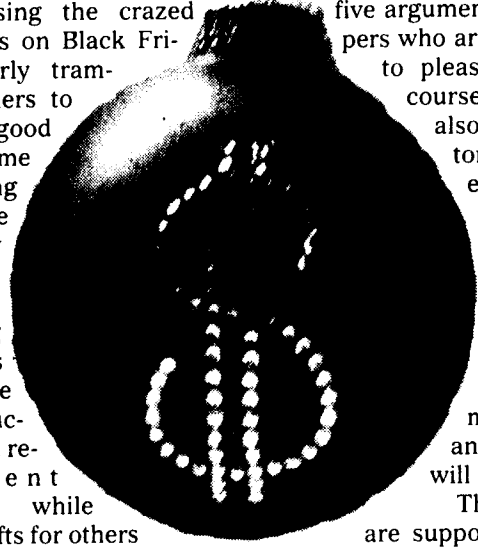
five argumentative shoppers who are impossible to please. And of course, there are also the customers who enjoy venting about their holiday stress and anger, spreading their Scrooge-like misery to anyone who will listen.

The holidays are supposed to be a time of togetherness and generosity. Although most might agree with this statement, it seems as if this togetherness

and generosity has become a chore for many rather than the enjoyable experience it is meant to be.

While this time of year certainly can be busy and stressful, it's essential to keep things in perspective. We are lucky to be able to put food on our tables for the holidays, let alone buy gifts for family and friends. Many others are not so fortunate. Though holiday planning and shopping may feel overwhelming, impatience and rudeness are not beneficial for anyone and certainly will not make the experience any more enjoyable.

This is known as the most wonderful time of the year because of the cheer and the goodwill that has long been associated with it. Keeping this in mind and treating others with respect and kindness during the holiday season will make it a much more enjoyable experience for everyone.



MY VOICE

The Final rush

BRANDON BOYD
staff writer

In this last edition of the Behrend Beacon for the semester, you will likely read various articles focusing on the many joys of the holiday season. However, before we leave to celebrate, we have to suffer through a painful time for students. That time unfortunately involves tests. Lots of them. Important, too. Finals cause students to go through a self-named cleverly rhymed three step process: worry, hurry, and scurry.

No student wants to hear about finals; trust me, I know. That being said, they can't be ignored. Well, actually they can be, but then you won't have the opportunity to read this paper for free.

The first stage that students go through is worry. Teachers always tell students not to stress about finals, but it's like what occurs during a fire: someone yells to stay calm, yet nobody ever does. Stress tends to spread like the bubonic plague throughout students, one person freaks and a whole group of people follow. Hours upon hours are spent with notes, books, and just about everything else students tend to avoid throughout the school year. However, worrying doesn't have to happen. I'm not suggesting that a student doesn't study; what kind of journalist would do that? However, taking breaks, eating well, sleeping well, and staying confident will reduce worrying and help you to achieve success.

The second stage is hurry. Nobody wants to take the tests, and nobody wants to be seated in one of Behrend's many un-

comfortable chairs for nearly two unbearable hours that seem to equal the time of our entire break. Because of this, students tend towards rushing through the test, not checking over their answers and filling in random bubbles towards the end. It happens to the best of us; the holiday breaks are approaching, and everyone just wants to leave for home. This, of course, leads us to the final step.

Students end up choosing to scurry. Students run out of the testing room as quickly as possible with their head in their hands, knowing that things could have turned out better. Then, when students are all done with finals, they quickly scurry off of campus to celebrate the holiday season with their families. Of course, if they start to think about their finals at home, this may result in another stage of worrying.

This, of course, is just a simplified version of what finals actually mean for students. Finals are different for everyone. Some students devote days worth of time towards succeeding, and do. Others devote the same amount of time, yet crash and burn. Finals are like going to Las Vegas and gambling. It's all a crap-shoot. You can go in prepared, with thousands of dollars, and come out in debt up to your eyeballs. Or, preferably, you walk in with some money, and come out with more. Come finals time, I'm going to walk into the classroom like it's a casino on the Vegas Strip, with money and will be looking to buy my way out.

Unfortunately, I have a feeling these dealers will be a lot less likely to take my money.

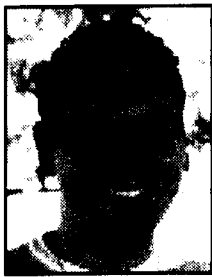


The Behrend Beacon Editorial staff wishes all our readers a very wonderful and safe holiday season.

THE EDITOR'S BLURB

Kick-start your Christmas spirit

It is widely accepted that Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year. With love filling the air as much as the snow, how can it not? That being said, as we grow older, it is easy to find Christmas less magical. With the stress of finals, loans, relationships, family, and the cluster-cuss of crap that clogs up our daily lives, it's easy to forget that Christmas is even approaching. And when it finally does arrive, it lacks any of the pizzazz that it used to have in the good old days.



NEIL JAMES
opinion editor

So how do we restore this once marvelous holiday to its former glory? To be imaginative and blunt, Christmas is like sex. The joy that you receive at the crescendo is directly related to how much you prepare and work towards it. If you simply roll out of bed on Christmas Eve without doing anything, you're not going to feel too much. However, being proactive will reward you with the unparalleled emotional orgasm that takes place on Christmas morning.

Here is a list of some ways that I get geared up for the holidays:

• **Music is key:** You want to

get in the Christmas spirit? Then load up your iPod and pop in your headphones. There is plenty of good music to be had. Trans-Siberian Orchestra's *Christmas Eve (Sarajevo)* is always a winner. Also, Re-licent K's album, *Let it snow baby... Let it reindeer*, is my new favorite.

• **Mood lighting isn't just for poontang:** Nothing sets the Yuletide mood like some Christmas lights. I prefer a classic red and green, but blue gives a very cool

vibe, as well. But whatever you do, don't attach them via Duct tape. I spent 20 minutes last year scraping residual crap off my window before the RA would let me leave for summer.

• **Give to charity:** If the spirit of Christmas is giving, what better way is there to kick-start your limp spirit then giving to charity? My personal favorite is Toys-for-Tots. Just don't be a tool and buy your toys from Dollar General. Kids aren't stupid and they can differentiate cheap crap from the good stuff. So dig into your pockets and spring for a legitimate Spider-Man action figure at Toys-R-Us.

• **Don't wait to shop:** I'm not saying to do all of your shopping in September, but waiting

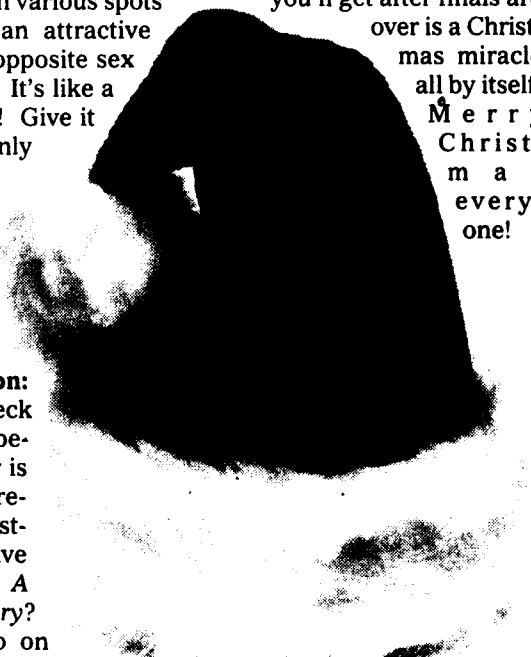
until Christmas Eve isn't a good idea either. Spread out your shopping during all of December. Not only will you be forced to think about the "giving" aspect of Christmas, but you'll also be immersed in the holiday atmosphere the moment you walk into any store. Can't get the holiday spirit on your own? Don't worry. Sears will shove it down your throat whether you want it or not.

• **Master your Mistletoe:** Sex makes everything better (except family reunions). So why not insert some sex appeal into your holiday preparation? Hang some mistletoe in various spots and hope that an attractive member of the opposite sex crosses its path. It's like a trip wire of love! Give it a try! The only thing you have to lose is any chance of them speaking to you ever again.

• **The holiday movie marathon:** You better check your TiVos, because December is the month of re-running old Christmas films. Have you ever seen *A Christmas Story*? No? Well strap on your Santa hat and

straightjackets because that's all you are going to see for the next twenty days. Yes, some of these films can get old fast, but just try to pace yourself. Enough holiday cheer will fill the airwaves to knock down a satellite. That being said there is one movie that will never get old, and that's Chevy Chase's *Christmas Vacation*. Trust me, it's a holiday staple. I've watched it every year since I was twelve and I still run the risk of wetting myself each time I watch it.

I hope this list has helped. If not, don't worry. The feeling you'll get after finals are over is a Christmas miracle all by itself. Merry Christmas to everyone!



MY VOICE

The good ol' days

Bill Downs, a correspondent who covered World War II with the likes of Edward Murrow and Walter Cronkite, was well-known for his occasional quips of wisdom.

After experiencing heavy fire in France, Belgium, and Holland, Downs found himself lying in a ditch next to Cronkite. He turned to his friend and remarked, "Just think. If we survive them, these will be the good old days."

Downs' bit of comedy, while about a much more serious subject, always pops back into my mind this time of year.

With finals quickly approaching, five or six class projects left undone, and a heap of long-term projects looming, the stress of school and student organizations always makes for a rather frantic December.

Around the beginning of winter, I think about what that quote means. To me, it says that the stresses of today may not matter as much in the long-run. Those eighteen goals that I am trying to accomplish by the end of the semester simply won't mean as much when I look

back on my college career. If we survive them, these will be the good old days.

How do we want to remember these good old days? Will we be old and wrinkled, thinking about that time we pulled three all-nighters studying for finals? Or will we remember the time we pulled the all-

nighter laying on the lawn outside of Perry, the midnight Sheetz runs, the impromptu games of field hockey in the Lawrence hallways?

To you, the engineer struggling with two advanced plastics courses and a Physics 693D class, take fifteen minutes to relax

and watch some Lonely Island videos. There's light at the end of the tunnel. To you, our Chem major friend with five comprehensive finals approaching, take a little bit of time to enjoy your existence.

Even though it seems that everything is more important right now than your enjoyment or self-amusement, just think. Someday, the days we're living now might just be the good old days.



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