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**The Spirit of Christmas
by
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“‘Tis the season to be jolly and hide from thugs behind the holly,” seems to be the theme of this year’s Christmas season. Instead of the spirit of brotherly love, peace on earth and goodwill toward men, there are elements from the dark side working overtime to bring misery and mayhem into the lives of Christmas shoppers this year.

How would you like to be in line at your local Walmart or Best Buy waiting to get in and buy one of the newly released Sony PlayStation 3 Video Game systems and all of a sudden several hoodlums come along and rob you at gunpoint. It’s happened this year. Maybe you don’t have to worry about hoodlums coming along, maybe you’re standing in front of your worst enemy and don’t even know it until the doors open and he whips your legs out from under you and dashes through the door ahead of you.

For years people have been saying that Video Games breeds violence in those who use them but never have they said it’s just as violent to purchase them. There must be a modicum of truth in all that hype because Sony’s Play Station 3 system, better known as the PS3 in hip jargon, has created more cuts, bruises, broken noses, and even one death so far from crazed fans trying to acquire one of these prized Christmas presents. Not even the Cabbage Patch Kids dolls of the 80’s created as much fighting and furor as this year’s phenomenon.

In San Francisco hundreds of people were in line several days ahead of the announced PS3 sale date and by the sale date several hundred more had joined the mob expanding it to approximately 1,000. Like a herd of hungry, thirsty, range driven cattle smelling water on the other side of the doors, the crowd began milling about, pushing, shoving and working themselves up into a stampede frenzy when police arrived to sing soothing songs and settle them down. Then a store representative came out and guaranteed the first 750 in line would receive a PS3 which quieted the nerves of 2/3 of those queued up but the tail of the line became unruly. Then the management said there would be enough for all and peace reigned supreme until they found out later the store really didn’t have that many systems.

In Wisconsin a crowd of 60 (remember it’s colder in Wisconsin,) or so were lined up at a local Wal Mart to buy a PS3 before the doors opened. An assistant manager (let’s remember to focus on the first 3 letters of his title later,) sat out 10 chairs, which was the matching number of PS3s available for sale, and said those who occupied the chairs when the doors opened would get the prize. That was tantamount to tossing a live chicken into a pit of ravenous wolves and pushing, shoving,

hitting, gnashing of teeth, tripping and eye gouging became the activity of the moment. One man running toward his goal slammed, or was slammed, face first into a light pole and had to be rushed to the hospital. Police were called in, peace restored and, I'm assuming, the 10 PS3s went to happy homes, but maybe not.

In New Hanover County, NC one young man, suspected of stealing a PS3 from a student's dorm room at UNC Wilmington, was being served an arrest warrant when things went bad and he and his German Shepherd were shot to death by a Sheriff's Deputy. Throughout the United States other tales of violence and stupidity have been reported and it makes one wonder, "What's going on in the minds of the people who would act this way?"

All these reports prompt a couple of questions in my mind. First... Didn't Sony have Christmas, 2006 marked on their calendars? Did they forget it was coming and didn't give the order to produce an adequate supply of these machines of wonder ahead of time? Think about it... 10 PS3s at one store? Well, I guess stupidity breeds stupidity. Did the Marketing VP say, "Hey, to really increase interest this year, let's only produce 10,000 units for the 20 million fans out there... make them really hungry?"

Secondly... how can something that costs \$400 generate so much interest among so many people? Are we a crazy breed or what? Third... are all these people buying, or stealing, the expensive PS3s to give to make some little kid's Christmas morning bright? Nah!

I checked several video chat rooms on the web and the chit-chat going on is telling each other what to take with you when you sit in line to protect yourself from hoodlums that come along, and how to camp out in line with the proper equipment to keep warm and eat properly. The sites also show that a great many people are exposing themselves to danger so they can buy one of these games for \$400 and sell it on E-Bay for much, much more. Checking out E-Bay today I found the average going price for these systems is \$800 per, and one individual has bundled a package consisting of a PS3 system, a Nintendo Wii system, and Elmo/BarbieWow dolls for an asking price of \$8,500 plus \$350 S&H. Sounds like a big case of greed rather than need to me.

Folks, we all know the real reason for the season so let's not allow the antics of these mis-led few ruin the holiday for the rest of us. We'll just have to go overboard this year in showing the love, peace and good will inside of us that we received as a gift over 2,000 years ago.

Make it your gift to each person with whom you come into contact.

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