

I've been **thinking...**



Hanukkah, Oxygen Masks, and Christmas December 2012

I've been thinking about Hanukkah, oxygen masks, and the Christmas presents I am duty bound to muster for my kids and grandkids. Thank God dad asked for pajamas.

Today I'm flying from Las Vegas to Seattle. About the only thing I liked about Sin City was the fountain show at Bellagio, the Elvis Christmas songs that popped up here and there, and a pretty good keynote address by Bill Clinton. Just thinking of shopping makes me wonder if the cabin isn't losing its pressure.

I was elated when they upgraded me to 1B—legroom, nearest seat to the head—only to discover the equipment was a Bombardier not a 757. I was reminded that all planes are not created equal. Turns out, 1B is the farthest seat from the head. I had to turn sideways to navigate the aisle to the back of the plane only to find the head occupied. So tell me, where is the appropriate place to wait one's turn?

Don't you feel intrusive just standing there? I bet the people seated nearby are creeped out. My advice: don't attempt to read their Kindles. Looking out over 86 passengers, I had an epiphany: The inventors of Pringles got their inspiration at 30,000 feet in one of these little aluminum tubes in which passengers are stacked in spooning position.

When the other passenger came out of the head, we danced back and forth, not knowing how to pass. Some people haven't figured out that you are thinner when you turn sideways (most of the time). Passing in aisles does seem less awkward when a man is not involved.

Finally, back in 1B, I'm staring at a sign that reads, "Fasten seatbelts while seated." I wonder if anyone has attempted the task while standing?

Back on task, I reach for *Sky Mall*[®] magazine, which felt like a hit of oxygen. Certainly, the gifts I need are in here. I'm pretty sure the previous passenger forgot to take this copy, as it was all dog-eared. I tried to imagine which of the four or five items on the earmarked pages were interesting to my predecessor.

Sky Mall is an equal-opportunity catalogue. It contains plenty of Hanukkah ideas as well as Christmas suggestions.

I heard about a Jewish mother giving her son directions to her new apartment for a Hanukkah dinner. "By the front door is a panel. With your

elbow push 5C. Get on the elevator, and with your elbow push 5. When you get to C, push the doorbell with your elbow."

"Got it, Mom." he said. "But why do I have use my elbow?"

She replied, "You're coming empty-handed?"

One of my favorite gifts in *Sky Mall* is the "Hanukkah Tree Topper," a good-sized Star of David to crown your evergreen. It's a "patented design," which the ad says is "a must for interfaith marriages." But there aren't any interfaith marriages among my kids—yet.

A friend tells me her family does Hanukkah with the traditional eight gifts, one per day of celebration. Yikes. Do they realize I'm buying for seven kids and 9.5 grandchildren?

Another friend told me about her nine-year-old receiving an invitation to a Hanukkah party, which showed a Menorah with its eight candles for the eight days and the one in the middle to light the others. The little girl thought it was a birthday party for some kid named Hanukkah and was ready to help blow out the candles. She was schooled, went, behaved, and loved it.

Christmas, of course, is a birthday celebrating the arrival of Jesus about 1,800 years before the jolly gift-giving "Saint Nick" came into our imaginations. Sometimes I think that if Elvis impressionists multiply at the current rate, it won't be long the King will outnumber Santa on our planet.

Truthfully, I'm more into Jesus, who not incidentally was Jewish and celebrated Hanukkah, than I am Mr. Claus. When I read Jesus's words, I find myself listening, though I wish I followed them more carefully than I do. The bracelet with the words Jesus taught his disciples to pray seems to be a perennial item in the *Sky Mall* magazine. "A simple twist gives this bracelet one surface, flowing from inside to outside and back again, inscribed all around with the Lord's Prayer." I imagine if a once-a-year guy were to lean on it as crib notes during the Our Father, he would still find it difficult to keep up with the Mass. My kids have the prayer down. I think I'll pass on the bracelet.

Sky Mall's socks with Dorothy's red slippers printed on them would work for stocking stuffers (ha, ha). My kids are too old, and their kids are too young.

How about *A Christmas Story* lamp, under the shade of which is a curvaceous leg in fishnet stockings? Haven't you always wondered where you could get one for your den? *Sky Mall!* I'm picturing seven of these in the living room on Christmas Eve, one for each family to take home. Parting with the chorus line could be such sweet sorrow.

Red-rubber freezer trays that make ice cubes that spell BOB caught my eye. Darn. I don't have a Bob on my gift list.

An automated cat feeder with a circular tray divided into pie shapes has been a *Sky Mall* staple. The feeder rotates each day while owners are on vacation to dispense the next dose of Friskies®. For you hospital people, think Pyxis® old carousel drawers.

In the end, *Sky Mall* was not helpful, though it did make the flight go faster.

I'm thinking of you who read me each month. Whatever your role—patient advocate, healthcare provider, technology developer, information manager—I honor you for giving so much to ensure the safety of patients and caregivers everywhere. Can't order that in an airline catalogue.

Having said that, even though *Sky Mall's* cover says, "Free Copy. Take it. We'll replace it," I don't think it's fair to the next guy. What if a United cleanup crew doesn't replace it until a few flights down line? Some poor passenger must go without. I mean, it would have been embarrassing to ask the guy in 1C for his *Sky Mall*, a rag that's up there with *National Inquirer*, which none of us admits we read.

Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas and good luck on your shopping.



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BTW. In the event I'm fortunate enough to sit next to you on a flight when cabin pressure is lost and oxygen masks start falling, please remember to put yours on first and then assist me with mine.

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