



The Meaning of the Holidays
by
Brian Campbell



I am not a politically correct person, something that I have been quite proud of in recent years. There was a time when I tried to fit in, follow the pack, stay below the radar, but that time has come and gone. As Popeye would say it “I Y’am what I Y’am” and people just have to get used to it. That doesn’t mean that I go around trying to offend people. For the most part I still prefer to get along with those around me and try to make friends with those I meet. However, I also don’t pussyfoot around people either, and if I have an opinion on a subject, you will hear about it, whether you agree with me or not. In fact, I sometimes prefer it if you don’t agree with me. I love a good debate.

I bear no allegiance to any political party and will happily tell you what I think is good and bad about each and every one of them, for as long as you are willing to listen. That doesn’t mean that I don’t vote. On the contrary, I make it a point to vote in every single election. However, I’m not sure that I have ever voted for the same political party two elections in a row. I have been accused of having no loyalty; to which I respond that I have yet to find a political party that has deserved my loyalty. I have met several politicians that I respect and trust, but not a political party. Sometimes I would like to gather the trustworthy people from each party and get them to work together. Then, I think, our country will get on the right track. In my humble opinion, that is.

I am not a fan of professional sports, although I will cheer for Winnipeg if it looks as if they have a chance of having a winning season. It’s been known to happen. In fact, I may be a bit of an anomaly; a heterosexual man who prefers theatre to professional sports. I don’t dislike sports; I just prefer amateur sports like the Canada Games and the Olympics to the professional variety. I enjoy watching my grandkids play on their sports teams and I can talk sports as well as any man.

When December rolls around, my non-politically correct nature always rears its head and, as I often do when there are several sides to take, I take my own side and often stand alone. For instance, I grew up celebrating Christmas, so my house contains a Christmas Tree, not a Holiday Tree, and my common December greeting is Merry Christmas. However, I am not upset or insulted by someone saying Happy Holidays or Seasons Greetings. And if you want to decorate a Holiday Tree in your living room, be my guest. To each their own. I am even cool with giving and receiving a Happy Chanukah, Blessed Kwanzaa, or even Happy Festivus, if the occasion calls for it.

The way I see it, we are a multicultural country, with many different beliefs, religions and traditions, and we should learn to accept and acknowledge all of them. December is the perfect month to recognize our diversity, as so many traditional holidays fall at this time. For example, for Muslims, Mawlid, the Prophet’s Birthday, fell on December 1st this year. Jewish people will be celebrating Chanukah between December 13th and 22nd. For Christians, Advent began on December 3rd and ends with Christmas Day on the 25th. For those who recognize it, the Winter

Solstice is on December 21st, what many call the official first day of winter. As a born and raised Manitoban, I disagree with that opinion, but that is the subject of another rant.

African Americans and Canadians celebrate Kwanzaa from December 26th to January 1st. Many Buddhists will celebrate Bodhi Day or Rohatsu, the Day of Enlightenment, on December 8th and in the USA and Canada, Hindus celebrate Pancha Ganapati from December 21st to 25th. Non-conformists may choose to celebrate Festivus, an alternative 'holiday' originated by the TV series Seinfeld and celebrated on December 23rd.

Some may prefer the pagan celebration of Yule, which runs from mid-December to early January. I can't argue with a tradition that involves sitting in front of a warm fire on a cold winter's night. Snowbirds will be celebrating vacation season by heading to warmer climates (If this is you, please consider taking me along). And let us not forget New Year's Eve whether you celebrate it on December 31st or sometime in January.

And that is merely scratching the surface. There are, no doubt, many more occasions I have missed, and I apologize if I have missed yours. But here is the point I am trying to make. All of these celebrations are dedicated to one end; peace and goodwill to all. That is what we should be focused on this December, not whose holiday is more important.

So this year, I want to set aside my non-politically correct persona and say from my family to yours, no matter what you call your holiday, and no matter how you celebrate it, have a very happy and healthy holiday season.

