

POETS' PAGE

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CHRISTMAS RISKS

by Emery L. Campbell
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(1999 National Senior Poet Laureate)

The state of Virginia recently adopted new fire codes that prohibit certain apartment dwellers from possessing a freshly cut Christmas tree. The rationale is that in buildings without sprinkler systems dried-out Christmas trees can become lethal. A fir so easily becomes a fire.

Naturally the new codes, when publicized this week, triggered widespread hysteria and protests. Some fire officials responded by saying they wouldn't enforce the ban. That would be tragic, because in addition to building roads and schools and waging the occasional war in a distant land, the government's obligation is to protect citizens from freak accidents. These new laws should be the catalyst for a sweeping crackdown on all hazards that make Christmas notorious as the season of misery and death.

Here is a list, compiled after hours of careful risk analysis, of all the things that must be banned at once:

1. Eggnog. Hideously fattening; leads to coronary artery disease. When "spiked" it incites the drinker to turn to more dangerous holiday beverages, like mulled wine, hard cider and schnapps.
2. Decorations. Broken glass ornaments can lead to fatal bleeding in hemophiliacs. Strings of lights offer unusual electrocution opportunities. Extravagant outdoor lighting displays can cause automobile pileups on the street and/or blindness. Live animals in a manger might bite children.
3. Carols. Hypothermia risk. Certain high notes are hard to hit, causing embarrassment, stress and other harbingers of early death. Religious themes of carols could prove offensive to some listeners and inadvertently trigger a clash of civilizations.
4. Sledding. Involves a kinetic event that would more properly be described as skidding. Close analysis will reveal that sleds not only have poor traction but are expressly designed to have minimal grip on slick surfaces. Should be every bit as illegal as dangling a baby from a balcony.
5. Hearths. The ultimate fire hazard. People often use them for open fires, complete with exploding embers that can land on furniture, on heavily gelled hair, or even on a small furry pet that could suddenly go *FOOF!* and turn into a yowling fireball of doom.
6. Menorahs. Still more open fire. Why not just pass around blowtorches and cans of gasoline?
7. Artificial Christmas trees. Fairfax County fire marshal Mike Reilly, defending the ban on cut trees, said Tuesday: "I've just put up a nine-foot artificial tree. I don't think it's a major inconvenience." As you see, plastic Christmas trees are growing to enormous size these days, and anyone who stands under a nine-foot colossus runs the risk of being crushed.

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POETS' PAGE



More News

and excerpts from e-mail . . .

After Super Storm Sandy, followed by a nor'easter, hit the East Coast in November, we e-mailed all our poets near the Atlantic to see how they fared. All survived.

ROGER FINCH, Cape Neddick, Maine: *During Hurricane Sandy, we had a house-guest here whom we knew when we were living in Tokyo, Japan. She lives in London now. . . . Our lights flickered a few times, as we prepared to eat a cold meal, but there was no power outage of any length. Our English friend rather enjoyed all the excitement and we joked that we had arranged this pageant just for her enjoyment . . . Regards to all of you,*

CAROL LEAVITT ALTIERI, Madison, Connecticut
I only lost many branches and limbs in our sanctuary and the internet, cable, phone and electricity for two days. My heart was palpitating and my brain burning as I remained in our house but I planned to move to the basement if any windows broke or if a tree fell on the house.

JANE GALLAGHER, Glen Burnie, Maryland
The rain was like going through a car wash and never coming out. The wind never rested. My heart goes out for all those affected. . . My first writing since winning the (Maryland) Senior Poet Laureate award is a card for the returning troops, titled "Standing Tall". I plan to continue greeting our troops, and let them know my appreciation for their service through my words.

JEAN CALKINS, Waynesville, North Carolina
We are inland, near the TN border, so Sandy was kind to us--just a day of rain, which we needed anyway. Did a lot of praying for those who lost so much. . . Pleased to have won a 3rd in FL State poetry competition, but really shocked at IN State Fed. of Poets who gave me not only a 1st, but 5 HMs! Have a wonderful holiday season!

MORE LITER--ETCETER--ATA

HENRY GREENFIELD's new novel *Desperate Conspiracy* is available at greenfie@hotmail.com (Autographed) or Amazon.com and its Kindle Store. Explore the Middle East in a memorable action/adventure story. \$15.00; 20 percent discount for repeat customers.

MICHAEL WELLS: Come read my Paper.li newspaper *Stickpoet's Poetica*... From around the internet: poetry, writing, cultural news and stories. Now you need only one source. Copy and paste this invitational link in your browser's address bar and then click go/search: .
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CHRISTMAS RISKS *continued*

8. Presents. Small gifts are a choking hazard. Large ones cause hernias. Coal in the stocking of a person who has been bad poses a severe fire risk. CDs have wrapping that requires the use of knives or scissors that can lead to finger loss. Shopping causes excessive debt, anxiety, and compensatory high-risk behavior like smoking, heavy drinking, or attempted gift returns. Improper goodie-buying, such as when a well-meaning male acquires for his spouse a Dustbuster, a twenty-piece socket wrench set, or a jumbo can of Dr. Scholl's Foot Deodorant Spray, is an open invitation to domestic violence.

9. Mistletoe. The number of unwanted pregnancies resulting from the placement of mistletoe on the ceiling or over doorways has never been properly calculated, but it is surely substantial. Also, tongues are a choking hazard.

10. Shopping mall Santas. A strange man wearing a disguise who asks small children to sit in his lap. *You make the call.*

11. Reindeer. Lyme disease vectors. And finally,

12. Elves. Ideology and political allegiance unknown. **Possible terror risk.**

CYCLAMENS & SWORDS

To read the December edition that contains poems by Helen Bar-Lev and Maude Larke, as well as rules for its next contest, visit

<http://www.cyclamensandswords.com/>

Attention Traditional Poets!!

BRAND NEW CONTEST

\$1000 Award

NO ENTRY FEE

Thanks to 2012 White Buffalo Native American Poet Laureate Neal "Badger Bob White" Whitman of Pacific Grove for info on this new classical poetry contest which requires meter and some rhyme.

Details at:

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