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RED & BLACK ... Carols & Chinese Food?

I guess you can now relax and enjoy the rest of the year, having gotten Chanukah and Thanksgiving off your plate at virtually the same time.



DISCLAIMER: We are real people. We are not claiming to be experts in any given field, but rather are becoming experts of our own lives.

Very funny. The holiday season, or "silly season" as I call it, is still very much upon us and there's plenty to do, although I've managed to get the house decorated so at least that's off my "to do" list.

It always makes me laugh that a nice Jewish girl dresses her hallway bear in a Santa outfit.

I'm sorry, but Santas, reindeer and snowmen aren't religious. They're seasonal. It's fun and festive and makes the house feel more warm and cozy.

Christmas carols are seasonal as well. In fact, you cannot escape them and they seem to be non-stop, which drives me crazy. Although I laugh when I think about their "Jewish connection."

What are you talking about?

The fact that some of the most beloved Christmas carols were written by Jews. Songs like "Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow" and "Silver Bells." Even "The Christmas Song" was written by a Jew.

Leave it to you to make that connection. But you're right. And probably the most famous of them all - "White Christmas" - had music and lyrics by Irving Berlin. I love that song, and the movie with Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye, which is a holiday classic.

I am online and found a great list. Did you know that even "Rudolf The Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "Santa Baby" were written by Jews? But, I guess it is not surprising since many of the great songwriters were Jewish. So it makes sense that they also wrote songs for the holidays.

True. After all, Irving Berlin also wrote "Easter Parade," which, by the way, is another one of my favorite movies. But since he's probably one of the greatest American songwriters, it wouldn't surprise me if he had a song for every holiday. But they are not religious songs.

Except, maybe, for "God Bless America." But, you are right ... for the most part, Christmas carols are not religious. They are about the spirit of the holiday and the season.

Exactly. They are not commercial. No lyrics about "shopping until you're dropping" or "buy yourself a merry little Christmas."

Well, technically they were all commercial in the sense they were written by professional songwriters. But I understand your point.

I wonder what they would write about today, especially if they saw my Sunday *Houston Chronicle* with its two-inch stack of store flyers advertising holiday specials or my mailbox with its daily delivery of catalogs. Not to mention all the emails!

Forget "dreaming of a white Christmas" ... sounds like you are dreaming of an advertisement-less Christmas. That will never happen. This is the most critical time of the year for retailers. Gentile and Jewish.

No kidding. Chanukah may fall around the same time of year, but it is a fairly minor holiday. And although there is some gift giving, it is not nearly on the scale of gifts to be found under the Christmas tree or in stockings by the fireplace.

Which is exactly what is wrong with the holiday ... it has lost its meaning. It is supposed to be about people. And celebration. And memories.

Says the woman who celebrates Christmas by going away to a spa?!

But, I am not celebrating Christmas ... I am seeking peace and quiet from all the craziness. And, from the traffic. Remember, I live near the Galleria. The shopping starts the day after Thanksgiving and thanks to sales, exchanges and returns, the frenzy carries straight through to the end of the year.

All I know is that it's a time of year that the girls always

enjoy. But for the right reasons. Like last year when Sawyer came up with the idea to make gift bags for children at Memorial Hermann Hospital. I couldn't have been more proud of her. She realized that no matter what faith you are, it's a particularly miserable time to be in the hospital.

I remember being in the hospital one Christmas. I was only about five, and a gentleman dressed as Santa was delivering gifts to each of us. When he came to my bed, I refused the gift telling him I was Jewish and did not celebrate Christmas.

That must have surprised him. What did he say?

He leaned over, pulled his fake white beard away from his face, and whispered in my ear, "It's ok, so am I."

No doubt it was one of the doctors on staff. Leave it to you to find a Jewish Santa.

Obviously, it is one of my favorite holiday memories as it has stayed with me all these years. But, for me, it is the spirit of the holiday. He was doing for others. And, allowing some other "Santa" to be home with his family.

Careful, you're beginning to sound warm and fuzzy. Which is what the holidays are about.

That and Chinese food.

At least I know where you are going with that comment. I've got to tell you that is one of the funniest YouTube videos you have ever sent me. I laughed out loud when Elena Kagan, at her Supreme Court confirmation hearing, was asked where she was at Christmas and she replied - "You know, like all Jews, I was probably at a Chinese restaurant."

Not only was that a very quick and hilarious reply, but probably true.

Except for us. It's part of our New Year's Eve tradition. We place a huge Chinese take-out order, watch some movies and then try to stay awake until midnight.



Tina "Red" Pennington and Mandy "Black" Williams are sisters and co-authors of "What I Learned About Life When My Husband Got Fired!" The informative, entertaining book discusses values, priorities, relationships, financial literacy and much more.

Dec. 20 - Texas Department of Criminal Justice (Chaplaincy Dept.)

UPCOMING APPEARANCES

For an up-to-date listing of all upcoming public appearances, please go to "Future Appearances" at www.redandblackbooks.com.

We all have our holiday traditions. I have brought in the New Year with Diana and John, Pam and Phil for as long as I can remember.

The holidays are about time with family and friends, and being grateful for all you have. And I think we should close out this year by thanking all our readers for their support, and wishing them a belated Happy Chanukah and all the best for a happy and healthy 2014.

Well, in the words of Irving Berlin, I am going to wish everyone "Happy Holidays." Funny thing is that song was introduced in the movie, "Holiday Inn," and was actually sung on New Year's Eve.

You and your facts, but that's my absolute favorite holiday movie.

And, everyone lived happily ever after ... Happy Holidays.