



This year many of us are scrambling to buy the first present that might fill our Christmas shopping list. Children are usually at the top of that list. Most of us struggle to find that toy that makes a child's Christmas special.

This year will be even harder based on the news we have been reading and listening to. Financial analysts have been telling us for weeks how the supply chain is broken. Try and buy anything and in most cases, you will find it is on back order. Christmas toys are no exception. I read where the toy maker, Hasbro, could not fulfill \$100 million in orders for the third quarter of this year because they could not get the materials needed to manufacture toys.

Unfortunately, children do not understand, it's on back order. An IOU makes for a lousy Christmas gift especially for a younger child. Perhaps the toy you should be shopping for is not online or at your nearest shopping mall but located in your basement or some other part of your home.

I'm talking about a box. A box, four sides, a bottom, and if you are lucky it comes with a lid.

To the average adult, a box is a box. Used to move something from A to B or to store something.

To a child a box holds the promise of anything that can be imagined.

We purchased a new washer and dryer just before Christmas. When the appliances arrived, they came in boxes. Before the boxes could be cut down and destroyed, I asked if we could have one. Our delivery man smiled and tossed the box out into the driveway. It would have been perfect, had it come with a lid. Yet not all was lost. The box was near perfect. It had a small nick on the side. A minor blemish. I carried the box into the garage and carefully put it in a safe place.

This box wasn't just a box, it was going to make a great gift for our two-year-old grandson Philip. Philip is like any other child, busy and is into everything. His favorite toy is the one that makes the most noise. His close second is anything that he is not allowed to play with. Then again, drawers filled with pots and pans, plastic containers, and boxes hold his attention for hours at a time.

If you leave a box in the middle of a room, you will attract a child. They love them. How many times have you seen children play with a box? This summer, a friend of mine told me about a new propane fridge they purchased for their cabin. She has four grandchildren who are into everything. Instead of burning the box she cut strips into the sides of the cardboard, like bars in a jail cell. She also cut a door and window into the would-be fort. Before long, the children were playing pirates and other games that entertained them for the entire summer. The box was the first thing the children played with from the moment they got to the cabin and the last before they had to go home.

Our box was just as popular. Philip and his dad came for a visit while I was working on my bike in the garage. We were having family and friends over for dinner. While I was talking to Philip's Dad,

I went over to where I had left his box. I grabbed it and tossed it onto the floor, it fell onto its side. Without a word, Philip walked into the back of the box. He turned taking in his new surroundings. He came back out running and grabbed his father's hand. "Daddy, come play with me."

I was amazed at how 5'10" and 170 lbs could bend himself into that washing machine box to play with his son. Everyone in the room could not help but smile as the two sat down at the back of the box. Pictures were taken and before long the rest of our guests were caught up in the imagination of Philip. Child and adult alike were drawing doors and windows in and out of the box. They all played together until the game was called due to supper.

If in doubt about my Christmas gift idea, you might want to consider that the box is one of 75 toys inducted into the Toy Hall of Fame. "The National Toy Hall of Fame is a USA hall of fame that recognizes the contributions of toys and games that have sustained their popularity for many years. Criteria for induction includes icon status (the toy is widely recognized, respected, and remembered); longevity (more than a passing fad); discovery (fosters learning, creativity, or discovery); and innovation (profoundly changed play or toy design)."

The box, inducted in 2005, and has stood toe to toe with some of the best of the toys created. Other toys inducted over the years: The doll, teddy bear, rubber duck, blanket, marbles, view master, rocking horse, kite, stick, paper plane, swing, bubbles, little green army men, skate board, etch-a-sketch, playing cards, easy bake oven, bicycle, slinky, silly puddy, Raggedy Anne, ball, Nintendo-Game-boy, Hot Wheels, Star Wars, Cheese, Scrabble, Jacks, Hula Hoop, Crayons, Barbie, GI Joe and many more. Toys inducted in 2021 are American Girl Dolls, Risk, and Sand.

The box is a toy that can always be counted on to entertain and spark the imagination of children of all ages. Fred Rogers, child entertainer, said it best, "It's the things we play with and the people who help us play that make a difference in our lives."

While you are out looking for that perfect child's gift this Christmas, perhaps a box should be at the top of your list. It's simple, affordable, recyclable, and is not on back order.

May your Christmas be filled with beautiful memories for the future!!!

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