

Wayland Town Crier: December 20, 2007

All I want for Christmas ...

Sarah Banse

The holiday season is officially upon us. This year it began the day after Halloween. Retailers ignore Thanksgiving because buying the bird is a no-brainer. No need to parade the pilgrim hats, the turkey will be bought by all who can. Instead we go straight from pumpkins to wreaths.

It is not hard to imagine a day when the "back-to-school" supplies will be coupled with Christmas decorations. My children have started to feel the frenzy. I write while my young Jedi dictates:

Dear Santa,

Hi, how are you? I've been good but my brother thinks I should get coal. I would like a Boba Fett action figure, V-Wing fighter, Bespin Battle pack, and an Obi-Wan Kenobi Force Action Light Saber (my six other light sabers are broken).

Love,

Hugh

My 6-year-old wishes for chess sets, Pokemon paraphernalia, sea monkeys and board games. The older kids? iPods, iPods, iPods.

I want to write to Santa myself.

Dear Santa,

All I want for Christmas is a dumpster.

Your Faithful Friend, Sarah

Perhaps the fat man will oblige me and help me dump the Halloween candy before we haul in the Christmas booty. Let's face it, the trappings from

Christmas alone could fill a dumpster. Plastic encasing that takes a Ginsu Miracle Knife to get through, ties enslaving toys to their packaging mock parents in their inability to untwist them as their little ones hyperventilate in anticipation of getting at the prize, wrapping paper, tissue paper, Christmas cards, shipping boxes, gift boxes, hundreds of unwanted catalogues, and don't forget packing peanuts. All of it, an environmental nightmare.

Don't get me wrong. I want a dumpster all year round, I'm only asking for one at Christmas because I think I might have a shot at getting it. The accumulating detritus of daily life with six people and a giant dog in a two-story cape is relentless. My bulletin boards are filled with school notices, birthday party invitations (the dates come and gone), doctor, dentist and orthodontist appointments, precious pictures drawn in preschool and kindergarten. The kids' cubbies are filled with unwanted goodie bags that they couldn't bring themselves to throw away, mismatched mittens, special rocks and sticks found along the trail or at the beach, school projects from posters on Cicero to medieval castles, scarecrows and spiders. That's the organized clutter. The kitchen has a full cupboard dedicated to food containers with no matching tops.

We make weekly trips to the dump, filling the back of my suburban with trash and recycling. There always seems to be a little leftover and the garage becomes a holding pen and dumping ground. The basement is filled with evidence of my previous purges. If I only had a dumpster, I'd fill it with single socks, bags of headless Barbies, limbless action figures, game pieces, plastic McDonald's Happy Meal toys, crushed crayons, uncapped markers, and hardened Play-Doh.

Each year I contribute toys and clothes to the church rummage sale. I stay on top of it as best as I can and yet the house swells with unwanted, unused or broken stuff.

I drive around the ever developing and renovated suburbs coveting my neighbor's garbage receptacles. I am not alone. I have shared my wish with many of my girlfriends. They laugh but they all do the same thing, their eyes get a little shiny, and they start to think about their own homes and they get that if only look on their face.

It is the simple pleasures that sustain us. Men, I know you have been told that you can never go wrong with cashmere or gold, but if you truly want to make your wife happy, get her the dumpster she has always wanted.

Sarah Banse is a writer and mother of four. She has been a Wayland resident for 10 years.