

If only in your dreams

Last week I received an automated message from Rocky Mountain Power on my home phone. The message asked me to refrain from lighting Christmas lights in order to conserve power and avoid disruptions of service.

I had spent a good part of the Thanksgiving weekend stringing lights along the roof, wrapping an evergreen tree in LED bulbs and assembling a pre-lit Christmas tree. The irony of the situation was a fitting introduction for a season marked by contrasts and dissonance.

This is the season where many celebrate the birth of a man who said, “sell that thou hast, and give to the poor” (Matthew 19:21). It is also the season where the implicit message of countless advertisements is “take all you have, and some you don’t have, and spend it at Wal-Mart, Target and Amazon.com.”

In this season of peace on earth and goodwill toward others, many begin planning holiday strategies for coercing their fellow citizens to display the proper spirit of the season. Chris Buttars, the Republican Senator from West Jordan, drafted a resolution for the 2009 Legislature to prompt retailers to say “Merry Christmas” rather than “Happy Holidays.” This month, the Granite School District sent a memo to school principals reminding them that it was perfectly fine to introduce Christmas into the classroom.

Each year, reporters watch to see which community will be the first to deal with a lawsuit over some Nativity Scene. I understand the 2009 winner was Green Bay

Wisconsin. I guess that diversion is more fun than watching quarterback Bret Favre lead the Vikings to victory over his former team.

Yet, legal and political conflicts can’t compare to the battles that will take place in countless households this holiday season. As F. Scott Fitzgerald observed in the

short story, *Babylon Revisited*, “Family quarrels are bitter things. They don’t go by any rules.”

At Christmas gatherings this season, somebody’s favorite relative will decide that the gathering of many family members in close quarters is the perfect opportunity to promote the wisdom of Glen Beck and Sean Hannity.

The belief is that if he talks long enough and loud enough he can convince the family that President Obama is a communist and the country is descending into socialism.

You have to pity the family where some seldom-seen uncle thinks the dinner table is the perfect place to debate the LDS Church’s recent endorsement of two Salt Lake City gay-rights measures. Nonetheless, this is bound to happen.

I am certain that dozens of kind and well-meaning grandmothers will urge a vegan grandchild to try just one small piece of turkey. After all, Christmas comes just once a year.

You may have your own examples of irritations that disrupt an otherwise happy occasion. This holiday season I wish you peace in the kitchen and good will at the dinner table.

Top of Utah Voices



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■ Commentary