



Tacoma, WA - Friday, November 19, 2004

< Back to Regular Story Page

## Legal carols: This year's must-have allegedly funny gag gift

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Last updated: November 19th, 2004 06:45 AM (PST)

If you think the holiday shopping season starts the day after Thanksgiving, the National Retail Federation has some news for you: The average American has already completed 25 percent of Christmas, Hanukkah or Kwanzaa shopping.

Do you feel behind now?

Those of us who live in the Western United States shop for the holidays even earlier than the rest of the country, according to the national survey. Consider this:

- Nearly 10 percent of us in the West have half our shopping done.
- Nearly 7 percent have it all wrapped up.

For you kids reading out there, here's the bad news: Clothes rank No. 1 on your parents' shopping list. The good news? Toys rank No. 2, according to the survey.

What's No. 3? Sixty percent of American holiday shoppers plan to buy books, CDs, DVDs, videos or video games this year.

That's music to the ears of Lawrence Savell, a singing attorney with Chadbourne & Parke LLP in New York.

Savell e-mailed me after he read my column last week about the invention of Tacoma entrepreneur Mike Walters. Walters just released U-Flag, a tube containing three flags that you can throw like football penalty flags in a variety of home and work disputes.

In the offbeat holiday gift category, Savell has his own entries: two CDs of "allegedly amusing law-related holiday songs." As a follow-up to his first CD, "The Lawyer's Holiday Humor Album," Savell has just issued a sequel, "Legal Holidayze."

You can find the CD at [www.lawtunes.com](http://www.lawtunes.com) and listen to samples such as "Rainmaker Reindeer," "North Pole Bar Exam" and "A Million Christmas Trees."

Creative stuff, but I'd suggest Savell keep his day job.

"My albums are dedicated to the proposition that lawyers' zealous representation of clients and furtherance of the public good can be only enhanced by a healthy willingness of lawyers to poke fun at themselves appropriately on occasion," Savell wrote.

"They also hopefully contribute to the effort to make people think a little differently about lawyers, and show that attorneys are not necessarily humorless, boring or incapable of self-deprecation (success on at least the last item is guaranteed)."

Maybe someone ought to send copies of Savell's CDs to Burgess Fitzer and the Luvera law firm, the two teams of barristers duking it out in an expensive court battle with the Tacoma taxpayers and the family of the late Police Chief David Brame caught in the middle. Then again, those firms probably would think Savell's song, "Billin' on Christmas Eve," was strategic legal advice set to music.

Is holiday shopping a taxing experience? Not in Portland, according to the unsubtle, neener-neener-neener reminder e-mail broadcast this week to Washingtonians by the Portland Oregon Visitors Association.

"How to appear 8.8 percent more generous this holiday season," the message blares. "In Portland, the shopping is always tax-free. What you do with the savings is up to you."

Click on the link and get a Web page listing "Big Deal" hotels ready to host your weekend shopping trip to the Rose City.

If you spend the predicted national average of \$702.03 on holiday gifts this year, you can save \$61.77 in sales tax by buying those gifts in Portland. Of course, the cheapest hotel room on the Big Deal list goes for \$79 a night – not including the 12.5 percent lodging tax.

**Hospitality in Tacoma: Needs Improvement:** On Sunday I described the Tacoma Regional Convention and Visitor Bureau's plan to train Tacoma taxicab drivers on how to better show their customers a good time. But that's only a part of the story.

The CVB will offer the customer service training for all front-line workers in Tacoma's hospitality industry, said Anne-Marie Jesse, visitor services manager.

Come spring, hotel desk clerks and restaurant servers can learn how to make conversation, remember names, suggest local sites to see, improve their attitude, give clear directions and listen more effectively, Jesse said.

Even when pressed, Jesse declined to give Tacoma's hospitality industry a letter grade. But with more and more tourists and conventioners expected to stop in Tacoma next year, "you can never have too much training," she said.

**Or too much money:** Columbia Bank has sold its Broadway Plaza properties for \$8.3 million to a group of local investors that also has bought some property from the bank in Longview.

Mark W. Nelson, executive vice president and chief banking officer, said the bank made "an investment decision to sell the property. ... It was just a good time and a good price."

The buyers, K&R Investments LLC, will continue to lease space in the building at Broadway and South 11th Street to Columbia Bank and other current tenants.

**Newspapers love leaks, museums don't:** Two weeks ago, newspapers around the country, including ours, carried a laudatory Associated Press profile of A. Zahner Co.

The 107-year-old Kansas City company is the same one that built and installed the diamond-shaped metal panels encircling the iconic cone at our Museum of Glass: International Center for Contemporary Art. But the article didn't mention that the MoG's roof still leaks some three years after construction.

"Yes, we still have some issues with the cone roof," Laurie Haag, museum deputy director, said this week. Zahner representatives "have been amazingly diligent and are cooperating 100 percent" to help find and fix the leak, but no one can figure out how the water keeps running through the roof, Haag said.

Why not? Because the roof leaks so infrequently.

"We've been monitoring it mostly and evaluating it from different perspectives. We've had engineers evaluate it," Haag said.

"All we know is something's not right – but we're not sure what."

Funny. Some art strikes me the same way.

Originally published: November 19th, 2004 12:01 AM (PST)



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