

December 23, 2007

### **All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth**

This song was written by Donald Yetter Gardner in 1944 while teaching music at public schools in Smithtown, New York. He asked the class what they wanted for Christmas and noticed that almost all of the children had at least one front tooth missing as they answered in a lisp. Gardner wrote the song in 30 minutes. In a 1995 interview, he said, "I was amazed at the way that silly little song was picked up by the whole country."

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All\\_I\\_Want\\_for\\_Christmas\\_Is\\_My\\_Two\\_Front\\_Teeth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_I_Want_for_Christmas_Is_My_Two_Front_Teeth)

As the decades progressed, Christmas requests have become more sophisticated, and more expensive. For example, back in 1961, I told my Nana that I wanted the "Sonar Sub Hunt". The object of this game, a large, square plastic platform with one periscope on each corner, was to look into the periscope, find the enemy submarine and shoot it with a trigger next to the periscope. On TV it was the coolest thing around. And I wanted it so badly. I figured I had a good chance of getting it too, because as the first grandson most of my requests were granted. Besides, Santa would bring it to me (I half-played the Santa game back then, just in case).

"You're not getting that", sternly stated my Dad, "It's too expensive and Nana can't afford it". It cost ten dollars, which in today's terms would be about \$75.

"Ask for something else", chimed in my Mom. "How about a book-of-the-month"? Ugh!

"Com'on, Dad. Nana said it would be alright", I began to tell Dad. A book-of-the-month? It wasn't worth the effort to even address it to Mom.

“Look, it’s a dumb game and you’ll be tired of it right after you get it”, explained Dad. “You’re not getting it”. That was it; when Dad spoke, his word was final.

Of course Nana didn’t have to listen to Dad and when I saw the Sonar Sub Hunt under the tree on Christmas morning I almost peed in my pants. I got it! I can’t believe it but Nana bought it for me! I started to play with it immediately, and was finished after ten minutes. What a stupid game it was. Fortunately I had a great family and lived a comfortable life afterwards.

Today gifts have become more elaborate, expensive and more difficult to obtain. Nintendo’s Wii (\$400 list price, \$1200+ for the really determined) is essentially sold out. TMX Elmo, Pleo Dinosaur, Fisher Price Digital Camera and Webkinz are also very popular, and much less expensive. Even the old standbys, iPod, PlayStation, Xbox and Nintendo DS Lite make great gifts. For the slightly older, the iPhone, HD TVs, jewelry, new cars (with red bows on them) and surprise vacations are wonderful gifts. Sixty years ago many of these gifts were confined to the wealthy and were only a dream of the average person. We now live in an age of abundance, many of these gifts are affordable to millions of people throughout the world and subsequently many businesses rely dearly on the holiday spirit to keep their books in the black. In stark contrast, there is still rampant poverty throughout the world where basic necessities, like food, shelter and medicine, are hard to accrue.

Thus the dichotomy of abundance for the masses versus destitution for over half of the world’s population is a cogent reminder of how unevenly the wealth has been spread around. It’s also a reminder that sixty years ago, China, Russia, Brazil and India were part of the impoverishment that dominated even more of the world. Thanks to their adoption of capitalism and individualism, these countries have begun their journey for abundance and have substantially increased the percentage of citizens who are no longer desperately poor. They still have a long way to go and many other countries have an even longer trip to make.

The true spirit of Christmas is embodied in one word: hope. At the time, Jesus gave hope to millions that they did not have to live under the tyranny of the pharaoh. He was the quintessential champion of entrepreneurialism and individualism and created an option for those without any. My

Christmas wish is for the spirits of individualism and entrepreneurialism to be spread around the world, creating options of respectable living conditions, wealth, abundance and hope for billions of people. Imagine the benefits of tomorrow's children receiving a Sonar Sub Hunt, tiring of it, and spending the rest of their lives in relative comfort as I did. It's already happening and will continue as capitalism is embraced around the world.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year