

GREEN GIFTS

Becoming an "enviro" and saving money. By Lee Pitts

It may be tighter than a new gate but my friend John is even cheaper. He's so tight, when he winks his kneecaps jerk. He has George Washingtons in his wallet that haven't seen the light of day since the Carter administration. His daughter is engaged to be married but there's no date yet because John has to pay for the wedding and he's waiting for the price of rice to go back down. Needless to say, I idolize the man.

Recently I was complaining to John about all the holidays that men are expected to acknowledge. "There's my wife's birthday, Christmas, Valentine's Day and our anniversary all in the space of four months and I'm not only expected to remember the dates but to give expensive and unique gifts for each one. I swear, these holidays take my money faster than a broken vending machine. And then it's tax time."

"I don't have those problems since I became an environmentalist," said John.

"What are you talking about?"

"I became a greenie when I went to the Hallmark store to buy my wife a Valentine's card. I was shocked to see how expensive they were so I just sent her an e-mail instead and explained that by doing so I was saving trees. Needless to say, she was quite impressed with my newly discovered environmental awareness. Likewise, I explained that she'd be receiving no roses this year because I didn't want any flowers killed in her name. She was so impressed she kissed me for the first time in months."

"I tried that angle once but my sobbing wife said the least I could have done was buy her a potted plant or a tree to plant in our backyard."

"And take the chance of introducing a foreign or invasive species into our ecosystem?" asked a horrified John.

"I wish I'd have thought of that," I said in awe and admiration. "But what about birthdays? Surely you buy your wife a piece of jewelry or a box of candy then?"

"Lee, you just don't understand the deep

commitment I have as an environmentalist. By purchasing a piece of jewelry for my wife I would be contributing to the continued scarring of the earth by mining companies. We must stop this raping of the earth. If I can help by not buying an expensive bauble for my wife for her birthday, then it's the least I can do. As for the candy, what would you have me do...fill up our landfills with frivolous excess packaging?"

WE MUST STOP THIS RAPING OF THE EARTH. IF I CAN HELP BY NOT BUYING AN EXPENSIVE BAUBLE FOR MY WIFE FOR HER BIRTHDAY, THEN IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO.

"John, you're a genius," I said with reverence.

"Well, with all this gift giving we must ask ourselves, what are we celebrating, capitalism and the destruction of Mother Earth? No, it's the sentiment that counts."

"But surely you gave your wife something for Christmas. Clothes or perfume perhaps?"

"And have the scent of expensive perfume remind you that they may have been tested on animals? As for clothes, they probably contain synthetic materials that came from petrochemicals. What kind of a statement would I be making then?"

"Yeah, I get it. And that way you don't have to remember what size she wears."

"The fact that I may not know if my wife is a size six or a size 12, or that I never remember a special holiday until after all the stores are closed has nothing to do with my newfound environmentalism. It's simply that I prefer gifts that are sustainable."

"But what's left?" I asked. "Balloon bouquets?"

"Heavens no! And have an endangered species choke on the silver husk of a balloon that won't decompose? No, I've discovered the greenest gift of all: CASH. It's always the right size, never goes out of style, has a small carbon footprint with minimal impact on the environment, and after you give it to your wife on the special holiday, you can always borrow it right back the very next day. It's called recycling."

And whoever said being an environmentalist was all that tough? ■

Lee Pitts' books can be found on page 2.