



**SPIRIT OF
CHRISTMAS PRESENTS**

This year more than any other I have had people scowl (or e-scowl) at me for saying *Happy Holidays* instead of *Merry Christmas*. (My heart-sister Terry, who has a wicked sense of humor, decided to respond to this by wishing people a pensive Advent!) But here's the thing – I love holidays, and I love to celebrate, and since I have so many friends with some form of *s.a.d.* it doesn't surprise me at all that so many holidays cluster around this time of year when people need to be cheered.

For many years, our traditional New Years was a small group of friends who gathered for dinner. One of the entrees we always made was Szechuan Pizza (I have a great Italian Place and a really good Szechuan place right next door to each other, and only about 1 minute away.) We would order Crispy Beef and Pizza, bring them home, spread one on the other and viola! (You often see pizzas like this now, but this was around 1980) This led me to look up traditional festival foods. Desserts happened throughout, and occasionally a **Man From U.N.C.L.E.** marathon.

After food we would drag out our calendars for the new year and boxes of rubber stamps and coloured pencils and water markers. We started by just marking the regular celebrations – birthdays, anniversaries, etc. But over the years, we began to collect dates and information on LOTS of holidays. We started by looking for celebrations around our special days – (I first learned about Obon because it falls around my birthday.) Sometimes we would throw glitter at each other, leading in a roundabout way to how I learned about Holi.

Soon we had learned about so many we ended up with months where we hardly had room for drawing and stamps. December filled up first.

I have had Santa on top of my tree. I have had Father Christmas, Raven with the sun, a bunny angel, a dozen National Audubon sparrows, a trout angel, the Snow Queen, krampus, and once Darth Vader with blinking light saber.

So to those people who keep telling me it's rude to say Happy Holidays – I'm only being polite and hopeful. I hope you have *many* wonderful holidays. Don't worry – I will say Merry Christmas when we get to your holiday. And Happy Sol Invictus when we get to mine.

In the meantime, let's eat candy out of our socks, and out of wooden shoes, and hug each other often and hard. Let's light candles that we don't have to light because our power is back on. Let's wear awesome earrings and pin our hair up with mistletoe sprigs. Let's stand Edward Scissorhands in the middle of the wrapping mess and pretend he's helping. Let's hang glass icicles around the Gondorian flag. Let's warm up chocolate protein shakes in the microwave with sugar-free marshmallows floating in them. Okay, maybe that's just my thing. But do your thing, and laugh much and know I love you.

And if you have holidays to share, share them with ME!

Happy Everything!

Photo 2012 by Jim Mueller, Words by Tay Mueller Edward Scissorhands ©1990 Tim Burton Figure by McFarlane Toys