

Stuff

by Jim Brady

History has seen various ways of treating the holiday season to avoid offending someone, which I think is a lost cause from the get go. Nevertheless, I have personally merged Thanksgiving/Christmas/Winter Solstice/It's Really Dark Outside Early into one event to simply my life.

The downside of deceiving myself into thinking life is now simpler is that life, or more precisely commerce, goes on anyway. No matter what I do, the mailbox is packed with the year's end onslaught of catalogues. It's been crammed with catalogues from Orvis, Cabela's, and LL Beans since mid-October. I could buy everything from cheese to teddy bears to sleeping bags with free shipping. When December finally came into view, I thought I was out of the woods. But no, here comes another round, like the second wave of a tsunami. Apparently the people sending this superfluous flood of paper think I have cash to spare, and I haven't even received my January credit card statement.

What really puzzles me about this relentless year-end push to get me to buy stuff I don't need is that I don't even know what much of it does or why a reasonable person would buy it. Must I buy an entire block of Vermont cheddar with overnight shipping; if its aged for two years can it tolerate two more days of ground shipping? Do my dogs need monogrammed dog beds? Should I boost the economy by purchasing a \$200 chef's knife and I'm not a chef? These are complex questions outside of my knowledge base. But then, I don't text and drive because I don't know how to text. I am extremely grateful that Molly (she does text) doesn't buy anything really weird so I don't have to unwrap it and stare at it, opened mouthed, in inaudible appreciation.

Because my areas of expertise are narrow, I've tried to restrict my evaluation of some new (to me, at least) "must have" products to things I should know something about. The following are real products somewhat related to fishing that were not selected at random from a real catalog. I've included some actual advertising text to 'clarify' the situation.

I am grateful for not finding the following under my imitation fir tree:

1. Spawn sac netting. I didn't know sex required netting. And I have a doctorate in a biological science. I read somewhere knowledge doubles every ten years but I'm out in the cold on this one. Guess I've aged out.
2. Technical long sleeve T shirts. "Sublimated Pro look design." While I don't understand how an undergarment gets technical (is it a basketball foul or do you need a degree in mechanical engineering to order the right size?), the process of sublimation is unclear. It is either a chemical (a solid material vaporizing directly to a gas bypassing the liquid state) or a psychological phenomena (some inability to face up to something). Either way, you need professional help. I can help with the chemical part. I'm not expensive either.
3. Gulp alive recharge. "Add Recharge to your Gulp to increase effectiveness." I don't even know what this means.
4. Electric fish scaler with motor. It's heartening to see something electric has a motor. Otherwise, it sounds like a lot of work.

5. Rejuvenade. Something you add to a live well to perk up those not so perky captive bass. On my first pass, I thought it was a hair restorer for men forty and older. On second thought, some kind of off-label remedy for erectile dysfunction.
6. Fat & Sassy worm bed system. I store my San Juan worms in a plastic box. I am really behind the times.
7. Clip on bells. "Handy clip on bells alert you to a bite." The latest generation of strike indicators. They look a bit heavy for a four weight line. More like a fourteen weight.
8. Line butter conditioner. Engineered to "maximize performance and castability of all kinds of lines," with the possible exceptions of double tapers, weight forwards, sink tips and anything else used on a fly rod. Possible application to erectile dysfunction.
9. Floating minnow dipper. As opposed to a sinking minnow dipper? I don't do minnows anyway.
10. "Fly Tying Made Clear and Simple." Yeah, right.
11. Bug Flote. Don't those damned things float well enough on their own? I'm not spending my limited fishing time chasing insects down just so I can anoint them with floatant.
12. Bait motels. Come on, I have one mortgage already. If you think I'm going to take out another loan just so fathead minnows and night crawlers have a roof over their heads forget it. Go jump in the lake or dig a hole in the ground already.

Unfortunately, this is an abbreviated list, but you get the idea. There is simply a lot of stuff on the market that I don't know what to do with. As it is, I carry enough fly boxes to interfere with my casting stroke, spare reels to match the backup rod in the truck (underneath the spare waders) and enough tippet material to open my own shop. I am already a *de facto* walking fly shop. Any more stuff and I could open a business...

There's an idea. I could start a portable fly shop and sell stuff people don't need right on the stream to people that don't need it. I have to look at this more closely. There's a kind of sweet entrepreneurial ring to it. Maybe someone can design my website for free. In exchange for a piece of the action, that is.

Any takers?