Christmas Rush Raises Problem For Big Stores

Preparations for Handling Shoppers Begun in January.

Christmas is a headache for managers of big department stores. Not only must the demand for presents be anticipated months in advance, but more help must be hired, and the entire store reorganized.

A big store faces a monumental task when it prepares for Christmas. It is a task that begins right after New Year's and ends on Christmas eve the following year.

Every department store has similar problems to meet, but the larger stores have to make plans on a scale that will accommodate an enormous expansion of business. One large New York department store, for example, has as much floor space as a fair sized farm—45 acres. During the Christmas rush it has sold almost a million dollars' worth of goods.

Actual planning gets under way immediately after Christmas when executives study errors that were made and draw up plans to avoid the same mistakes next year. Sales volumes of various departments are examined, and "bottlenecks" are removed as far as possible by enlarging some departments and rearranging others.

Spring finds the store placing orders for the following year. Christmas cards are bought in April. Contracts for 2,000,000 Christmas boxes which are let in July are followed shortly by orders for many tons of holiday wrappings.

Extremely important is the job of forecasting sales of goods. Certain staple lines can be predicted with considerable efficiency, but novelty goods have to wait almost until the following December.

August finds employment beginning its upward trend. The store is normally staffed with 11,000 people, but 10,000 more are needed to handle the holiday rush. Thousands of applicants must be interviewed for these jobs that range from the man who cleans gum off the floor to red-cheeked Santa Clauses. Each employee must first pass a rigid physical examination before he is finally accepted and given instruction in his special tasks.

The greatest problem of all is presented by the toy department, which expands from a staff of about 50 people to more than 1,500 workers. Display cases and tables holding 12,000 different toys must be arranged and organized, to permit customers to buy their gifts with a minimum of confusion and effort.

The 10,000 additional workers not only have to be trained, but they also have to be fed. Cafeteria schedules are rearranged and set with clockwork precision to provide for the heavy seasonal load.

Ordinarily 14 doctors, 18 nurses and four dentists are sufficient to take care of any accidents occurring in the store. This staff is assisted by eight additional doctors during the holiday rush. Wheel chairs strategically placed throughout the store are ready to give instant service for any customer or clerk who is overcome by the work or crush of the crowd.

No detail can be overlooked to make the entire store function smoothly as a unit. For every clerk there are two other workers handling stock, wrapping presents, taking orders and doing some of the multitudinous tasks that are needed to run a big store.

For example, can you speak only French, or Spanish, or Italian? The store has 700 interpreters capable of speaking at least one foreign language who stand ready to accommodate you.

Of course the planning is not perfect. Problems will arise and inconvenient situations will exist. But you can be sure that every effort will be made to straighten them out before a single showcase is moved into position for next year's Christmas shopping season.

Select Children's Books Carefully, Teacher Urges

Books given to children at Christmas are a valuable element in the development of the child, according to Mrs. Mary S. Venable of the University of Tennessee Nursery school.

Factors to be considered in the selection of children's books, says Mrs. Venable, are: suitability to the child's age and development; choice of words contained in the story; amount of action; number of illustrations; and degree of repetition. She also says that there should be some humorous stories in a child's collection.

Early Christmas Tree

Christmas tree decorations in 1604 are reported in an early note: "At Christmas they set up fir trees in the parlors of Strasbourg, and hang thereon roses cut out of many-colored papers, apples, wafers, gold foil, sweets and so on."

Christmas Cakes

Christmas cakes, iced cookies and other goodies are survivals of the old custom of giving confectionery gifts to the senators of Rome.

The Courageous Trooper

By CLIFFORD SINGLER

BILL was seven, going on eight. So was the Angel Child. There the resemblance ceased. The Angel Child had the privilege of seeing Bill's father and mother every day. Not only that. The Angel Child was loved and caressed by these utterly adorable beings in a way that made Bill just sick with envy.

Bill knew the members of The Same James Company very well, for they had played Kans' City, where Bill lived with Granny and Aunt Ethel to a week full of very appreciative audiences. He knew the play, too. Lines and lines of it by heart. The week that The Same James Company played Kans' City he was permitted to stay up every night until the lights "out in front" were extinguished, and Dad and Mother had come racing home to him.

The fact that The Same James Company had played Kans' City in November meant that at Christmas it would be moving eastward.

Strangely enough, Bill's father and mother, far away as they chanced to be, were the first to realize what was the matter with Bill.

"By George, Lucile," Bill's father was the first to put it into words, "that kid's beginning to be jealous of the Angel Child! Gee-WHILLIKENS, but I wish we could have him at Christmas!"

Bill's mother went to the window. "Well, we can't, so why talk about it?" Her voice sounded very much as if she had suddenly taken cold.

The matinee idol paced about the elaborately unhomelike hotel room in moody silence. "I'll send the kid a good big check anyhow—large enough for him to get everything in the world he wants for Christmas."

He was writing as he spoke. It was a sort of postscript to his letter to Bill: "Your mother just had a great little idea. Not having you here for Christmas, we have decided to adopt the Angel Child for the day in your place and have a tree for him with all the fixings. So when you are having your own tree with Grandmother and Aunt Ethel, you can think of your Mother and Dad playing around a similar one in a hotel room in Minneapolis, handing out presents to the Angel Child and wishing it were you instead."

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It was Christmas Eve and The Same James Company, opening in Minneapolis that night, had its gloomy expectations quite fulfilled in an audience only two-thirds the number which that reputedly "good show town" usually affords.

During the listlessly received first act of The Same James, the six forty-five from Kansas City was pulling into the Minneapolis station, and a manly small boy with a shabby but business-like looking grip was assuring a fatherly and solicitous porter that he had plenty of money to taxi where he wanted to go if his father and mother failed to meet him.

Of course, the second act of the comedy in which Bill's father and mother were playing is conceded by all to be the best of the play. In it the impeccable, but misjudged, friend of the family romps with the sweetly mannered child of his host and hostess, before the latter puts this Angel Child to bed with the usual appealing accompaniments of prayer to soft music and a sniffling audience.

It was this scene which Bill's mind had rehearsed on his way from the station to the theater.

The stage manager saw Bill before his rushing entrance, but, being on the other side of the wings, was quite helpless. A streak of pale blue, and Bill was in the scene. When strong muscled arms swept the little boy close to a breast whose tumult of delight was held in check only by a perfection of technique, the audience sensed a moment somehow big. Wild applause covered the little fluttering mother-cry, as the other person in the scene ran to them swiftly.

Never in the history of The Same James Company was there such a whole-souled reception of the second act! The curtain was raised and lowered so many times that Bill's father found it necessary to explain to his son that the audience wished the latter to take the curtain alone before the play proceeded.

What was done about it made a great and momentous change in many lives. The Angel Child, it appeared, was pressingly needed in New York at once in "a gorgeous and magnificent spectacle" about to be filmed—while Bill Junior was besought to finish out the season with The Same James.

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But, of course, one must not neglect to record that the Christmas tree and the party came off that same Christmas Eve as planned—with minor changes in the cast. For Bill himself was host. Bill turned to his parents with an expression of huge distaste upon his mobile little countenance.

"You can't tell me," he asservated positively, "that a trouper who can't stand a little bit of gagging and goes down with one biff on his nose, is going to make a hit in our profession!"

A Bit on the Humorous Side

Prime Condition

"You haven't looked so well for years, old man!"

"Ah, it's the exercise I get, tossing about in bed at night worrying about the business."

Curious Lad

Golfer—Dear, dear. I'm certainly not playing the game I used to play!

Caddie (disgustedly) — What game was that?

The way some secretaries type the boss' letters is a triumph of mind over mutter.

Caught Him

"MacPhersin's a cheat, and I'm not goin' to play golf with him again."

"How's that?"

"Well, how could he have lost his ball a yard from the green when it was in my pocket?"

In Duplicate

Barber—Well, my little man, how do you wish to have your hair cut?

Little Man—I'd like it cut just like my daddy's, and please don't forget to leave that little round hole on the top where his head comes through.

Asking for Trouble

The door of the ladies' hairdressing shop opened and in came a meek-looking little man.

One of the assistants approached him.

"What can I have the pleasure——" she cooed.

"Er—could you spare me a blonde hair for my shoulder?" he stammered. "I want to make my wife jealous."

Fell for Her

"Fortune knocks at least once at every man's door."

"That may be. But it was her daughter, Miss Fortune, who called on me."

Orson Welles Introduces Many of Him to a Few

Orson Welles, of "Citizen Kane" fame, once gave a small town lecture. There were but few listeners and no chairman present. So he up and introduced himself in the following fashion:

"I am a director of plays," he said. "I am a producer of plays. I am an actor on the legitimate stage. I am a writer of motion pictures. I am a producer of motion pictures. I am a motion-picture actor. I write, direct, and act for the radio. I am a magician. I also paint and sketch. I am a publisher. I am a violinist and a pianist. Isn't it a shame that there are so many of me and so few of you?"

Our Telephones

In this country today, the 25 associated Bell telephone companies serve 7,128 communities having 18,841,000 telephones, while 6,350 independent companies serve 12,072 communities having 4,609,000 telephones, reports Collier's. In addition, there are more than 60,000 connecting rural lines owned by groups of farmers.

Uncle Phil Says:

We Offer the 23rd Psalm

Our language, used by an artist, can produce something as grand as anything heard at a symphony concert. An example: Lincoln's Gettysburg address.

Well-bred people are a delight, and often an object of envy.

We delight to indulgently smile over the peculiarities of the friends we love.

The only fun worth having is the kind that is still funny when you get up the next morning.

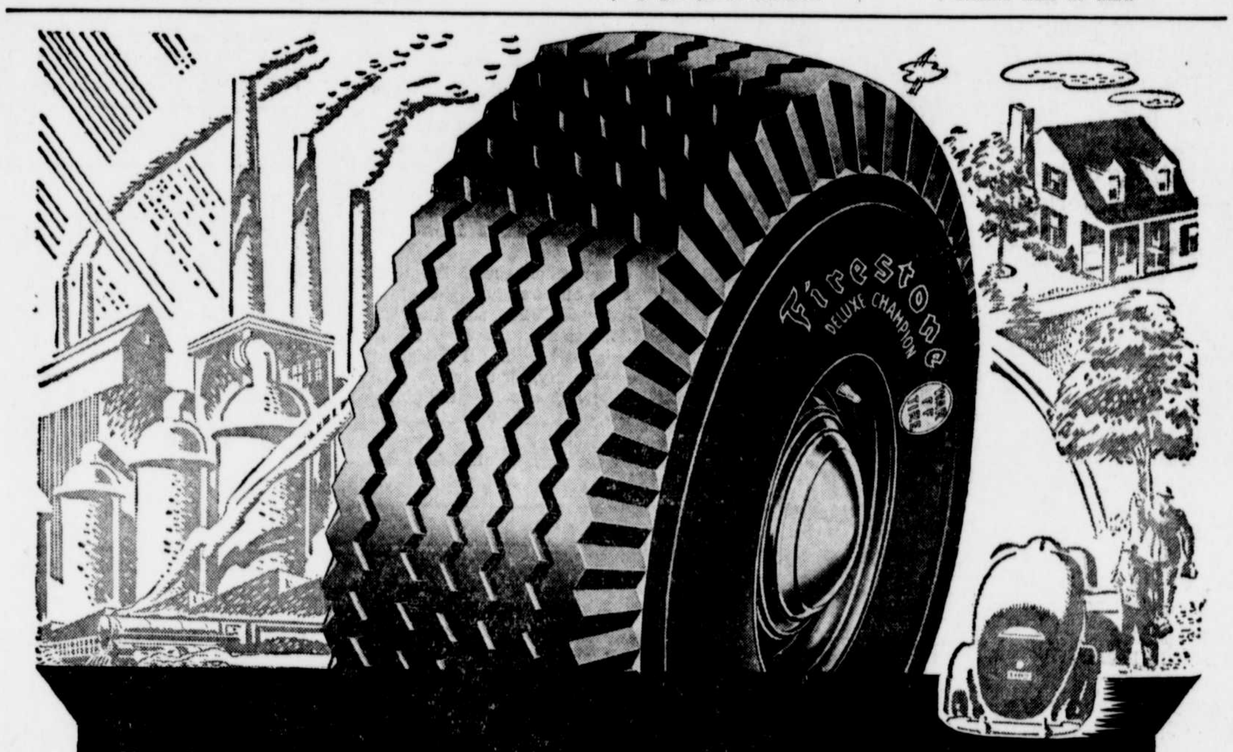
It's So Exciting, Too!

Since millions enjoy headlines more than any other part of the newspaper, why not try one that is mostly headlines?

It is often easier for a woman to hold a strong man than her own tongue.

Beauty is only skin deep, and often the look of wisdom, also.

Usually a narrow-minded man doesn't care if he is, and you can't shame him in that.



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