

Need elephants or earrings boxed?

Student 'Y' wraps it up in MSC

By PHYLIS WEST

Some students are wrapping up the season with some unusual gift ideas.

A golf club wrapped like a coffin in black paper with a wreath attached is just one way students are asking the Student "Y" to prepare their holiday gifts, explained Melva Ball, secretary for the association.

For a quarter century, the "Y" Association's gift wrapping sessions have been putting some spirit into dead week, said Logan Weston, director of the YMCA.

Members can get their gifts wrapped free, while others pay up to 50 cents, depending on how difficult the items are to wrap.

"The hardest gift to wrap was a skateboard," Ball said. "They gave us no box to wrap it in. But when you folded the paper just the right way, you couldn't really tell."

A pair of diamond earrings was not only the most expensive gift they wrapped but also the smallest. There wasn't a box included either, she added.

"I don't know why we get the most difficult gifts to wrap," said Ball, laughing. "We're only amateurs."

Ball has been involved in the "Y" gift wrapping sessions for about five years. She first learned how to wrap gifts by watching a few students.

"After a while you get bored with the same techniques, and you think of some added touches," she said.

"A little piece of candy, about so big," said George Stearns, a freshman gift wrapper, as he curled his index finger tightly inside his thumb, "was the most unusual thing I've wrapped so far."

No sooner than he had said that, a girl walked in with 15 toy elephants of all sizes, shapes and colors that she had bought all over town. She wanted them gift wrapped.

But books are the most commonly

wrapped gifts.

"We're usually asked to wrap all kinds of books," Stearns said. "People give the bigger books which are really nice." He added that "Aggieland" yearbooks and Superman

and Batman books are "sure fire hits."

Stearns learned to wrap gifts from his mother. "Now I do all of the gifts at home," he said with a smile.

The "Y" will be wrapping gifts

until Dec. 16 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the MSC student activity room (216).

Weston said he likes having the wrapping sessions in the MSC where all the students are.

"It's more convenient here, especially in that it's closer to the mail boxes than when we were in the YMCA building," he said. "Students have been gift wrapping in the MSC for five years."



Mental patients assist Santa

United Press International
DES MOINES, Iowa — Don't tell the kids, but that's not Santa Claus they're talking to on the phone. It's a resident of the Iowa Mental Health Institute at Clarinda.

This is the eighth straight year patients are operating Santa's Answering Service. The program was developed not only to give children a place to call and talk to Santa, but also to get patients involved in Christmas.

More than 500 patients have taken part in the program since it was started. This year, about 100 to 125 of the 300 patients at the hospital are expected to participate.

"We get calls from all over Iowa plus 12 to 15 states in the Midwest," said Candy Nardini, information and planning officer at the institution. "We average about 1,500 calls each year."

"The kids get so excited when they talk. Sometimes they forget what to say, or they can't remember their names or where they live. A lot of times, you can hear Mommy in the background coaching them. It's really an enjoyable experience."

The answering service starts Thursday and will operate from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily until Dec. 24. Nardini said patients are cautioned during the orientation session never to promise a child anything.

Some play Santa Claus, some Mrs. Claus and others are elves who provide sound effects — like ringing bells and pounding hammers — to

create the atmosphere of a polar workshop.

"We usually have Mrs. Claus answer so the women can get involved," Mrs. Nardini said. "Many times she asks the children if they can hear the elves working in the shop, and then those patients will ring their bells or hit a block of wood with hammers. It really adds something."

Santa Claus delights kids; some want proof he is real

When Glen West walked in the MSC banquet room instead of climbing down the chimney, the children weren't disappointed. He was the highlight of Thursday's Christmas party for children of Texas A&M University faculty and students.

A professional Santa Claus since he was a high school senior in New Orleans, West waited patiently for the children to scramble for their places in the long line to tell him their wishes.

West played a convincing role with his naturally rosy cheeks, round face and wide smile. But his costume has to be just right too, he said.

"The first time I got dressed up to see if I looked all right, it took me 45 minutes to get my pillow just right," he said. "Now it takes only 15 minutes for me to get dressed."

Doubting West as the real Santa, one girl asked if he was in California a few minutes ago. When he said he was in Washington also, the little girl exclaimed, "You really are Santa."

"There's something about little kids who don't believe," West said. "They try to mess you up. You have to convince them you really are Santa Claus."

On the other hand, some children

believe in him so much they follow him when he tried to leave.

West recalls once that a child asked him where his reindeer were. After telling him they were on the roof, the child proceeded to follow West to the third floor.

"Starting to climb the fire escape, I told the boy I was going on the roof now with my reindeer," West related. "Then the child just turned around."

There's something mystic about people dressed like Santa, West said, laughing.

While West, probably the only professional Santa to graduate from A&M last Saturday, may leave his

books behind him, he said he won't let his costume gather dust next Christmas.

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