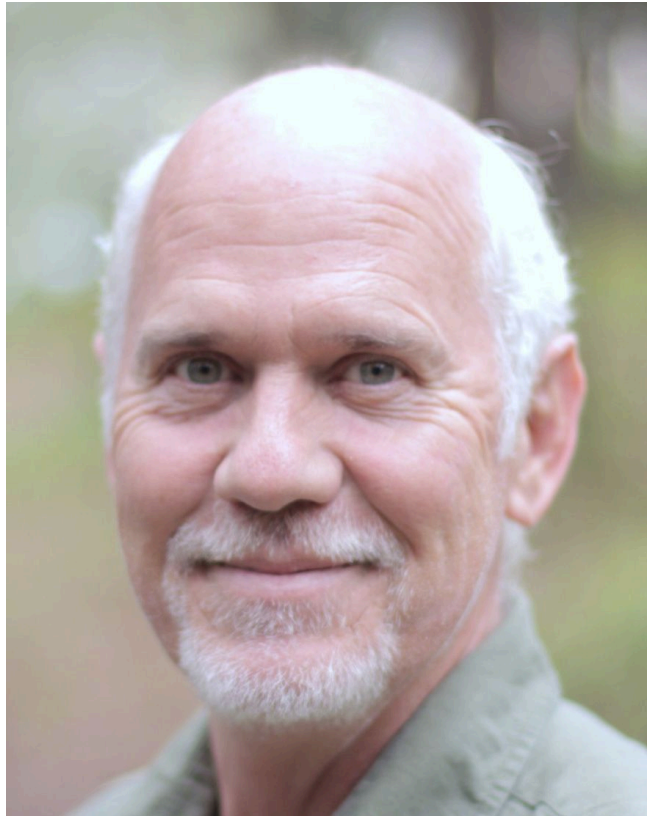


View from the Left: Scrooge, the Grinch or Gitlin?

December 12, 2022



Inspired by the column that Roger Gitlin wrote last week, I want to invite you all to play a holiday matching game. See if you can match the statement with the character that said it. Was it Scrooge, the Grinch or Gitlin?

- 1) “I don’t make merry at Christmas, and I can’t afford to make idle people merry.”
- 2) “Look, I don’t want to make waves, but this whole Christmas season is stupid, stupid, stupid.”
- 3) “Why are you asking me for a gratuity for simply doing your job?”

The first quote was part of Scrooge’s answer when told by a gentleman collecting funds that “it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time...” Scrooge responded, “If they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population.

The second quote is from the Grinch who also concluded, “I must stop Christmas from coming...but how?”

The third line is taken from Roger Gitlin's last column when he confessed to berating a food service worker for having the audacity to ask whether he wanted to leave a tip. He could have simply said no or even better no thank you, but instead decided to express his ire to this low wage service worker.

Gitlin went on to describe the few reasons he could think of why people would choose to tip; future service, fear, showing off and sense of duty. However, he forgot one very reasonable justification for leaving a tip... gratitude.

Food service workers are most often paid at the lowest minimum wage and rely on tips to scrape out a living to support themselves and their families. A gratuity is a way for a customer to say thank you for being there to provide this service.

How soon we forget as memories of the Covid shutdown fade. These are the people that we learned to call essential workers when they risked their health to show up at their low wage restaurant jobs so that we could regain some return to normalcy.

I could find some common ground with Gitlin if he was suggesting that restaurants should pay workers a living wage so that they are not so heavily dependent on tips. But Gitlin also makes the statement that "the federal government continues to aggravate entry level minimum wage employees with unreasonable minimum wage requirements."

While I am not entirely sure what this sentence means, it is clear to me that Gitlin does not support a higher minimum wage. My conclusion is that he thinks these lowly service workers should just shut up and do their job without expecting any appreciation for services rendered.

As we glide through the holiday season, we have passed Thanksgiving when we are reminded to be grateful for what we have. We are approaching Christmas which embraces the spirit of giving. This will be quickly followed by New Year's Eve when we take stock of the current year and resolve to do better next year.

Hanukkah, which begins on December 18 and ends on December 26, has a longstanding tradition of giving gifts of "gelt" or cash to celebrate the triumph of light over darkness. There are many customs and traditions of this holiday season which broadly support sharing and caring for our fellow men and women.

The stories of Scrooge and the Grinch have happy endings with the Grinch's heart growing three sizes and Scrooge buying a fat Christmas goose for Tiny Tim. Reality does not always have a happy ending like the made-up stories, but I believe that collectively we make our own future by the actions that we take every day.

It is my holiday hope that we all can find room for our own hearts to grow and that this will result in more generosity to others. Our community becomes a better place when we are nice to each other.

If you are able, make a donation to a good cause or give a tip to help people that are less fortunate. Consider the good that this will do for your own soul and the wellbeing of others.

We have hundreds of people in our community that are struggling to live without housing and food. As the cold winter weather bears down on us, please have some care for these people. Some may die without

compassionate assistance.

There is a very committed and effective organization called Del Norte Mission Possible that is doing their best to help the unhoused in our community. I encourage you to make a one-time donation or a monthly pledge of support to enable them to continue their programs.

It is quick and easy to contribute online by going to delnortemissionpossible.org.

As Scrooge and the Grinch both discovered, it is never too late to embrace the true spirit of giving that the holidays represent. In the end you will be happier for your kindness.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and prosperous New Year.

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