

Christmas Gifts

By Reg P. Wydeven
January 6, 2007

Santa was certainly good to our house this year. My son got the 'Diego Animal Rescue Center' and my daughter got 'Baby Alive'. 'Baby Alive' is possibly the best marketing idea in history. You take her out of the package and the first thing she says is "I'm hungry." So my daughter feeds her 'Baby Alive' brand baby food with her 'Baby Alive' spoon. One minute later she proclaims, "I made a stinky," so my daughter puts on a new 'Baby Alive' brand diaper.

The genius of the marketing campaign really sinks in after the 37th time 'Baby Alive' declares that she is hungry and the whole cycle begins again. After 'Baby Alive' says "I love you Mommy" to my daughter, it's pretty hard to refuse to buy more 'Baby Alive' brand baby food and diapers. While 'Baby Alive' may be endearing, at least one mom thinks that Mattel's talking 'Little Mermaid Shimmering Lights Ariel' doll isn't quite so cute.

Stephanie Herrera of San Jose, California, filed a complaint against the toymaker after her daughter's Ariel doll apparently called her a slut. The Little Mermaid doll is supposed to say the phrases, "You're a wonderful friend," "Your sparkles are so beautiful," and "Life is the bubbles," and she hums a song.

Herrera heard the potty talk after her 3-year-old daughter, Juliana, pressed the doll's button quickly to hear the song. Instead of humming, Herrera claims Ariel called her daughter a slut and Juliana even repeated the phrase. Mattel has asked Herrera to return the doll, and offered her a voucher for a toy of equal value. The company has no plans to recall the doll since Herrera has filed the only complaint.

My wife found a brand new designer purse waiting for her under our Christmas tree. It's the kind of bag you see a lot of celebrities carry, typically purchased from fancy boutiques, like Kitson in Beverly Hills. While Kitson certainly catered to many upscale holiday shoppers, the store feels it should have had more shoppers.

Kitson sued the magazine Us Weekly for failing to mention the shop while covering the spending habits of celebrity shoppers and their haunts. According to the suit, Us intentionally omitted any mention of the store in its issues because of a legal feud, and the lack of publicity is costing the store \$10,000 a week.

Us had previously labeled Kitson "L.A.'s hippest hot spot," but according to the lawsuit, the magazine now refuses to mention the store when publishing pictures of stars shopping there. Kitson alleges Us went so far as to crop a photo so that one of Kitson's blue shopping bags, "generally known to readers, did not display the name Kitson on it."

The suit also said that in an August issue, a photo showed California first lady Maria Shriver and her daughter leaving Kitson but the store was left out of the credit, while in the same issue, the caption of a photograph of Nicole Kidman indicated she was leaving rival retailer Fred Segal.

Mark Neschis of Wenner Media LLC, the New York company that owns Us, declared that, "The lawsuit is frivolous and completely without merit. We will vigorously defend it."

I got a Frank Sinatra CD/DVD boxed set and 4 Star Wars books, so I must have been very good last year.