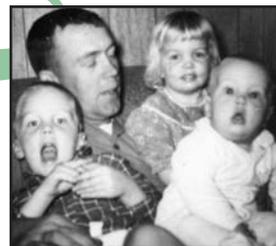


# Actiongram

December 2017

## My Christmas Message



Guest Columnist  
Diane Johnson  
executive director  
(photo taken Feb '66)

One of the great benefits that the president of LPC has is they “get” to write a column each month. It’s always something that every president just thanks me for over and over for. Well, maybe that’s stretching it. So this month my gift to Prez Cindy is to give her a hall pass. So that means I “get” to write something. But I’m reaching back into the Actiongram vault and repeating a column I wrote several years ago. It’s truly an example of the more things change, the more they say the same.

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The ball is in my court to write a message. That’s OK, because in my sleepless nights my mind wanders and last night it wandered into thoughts of chaos that this time of year offers.

I’m sure you’ve heard people complain about the commercialization of Christmas, that it’s a tragedy to see December decor in the stores in July and how the day after the for-

gotten holiday of Thanksgiving has turned into a day of “risk-your-life” if you like to hit the sales at 4 am. What would the news be like on the Friday after Thanksgiving if they can’t show the Best Buy store in Seattle OVER and OVER with throngs of people tackling each other?

Hummmm... who is to blame? Toy companies, jewelry stores or The Today Show and the Rockefeller Center tree?

Well, personally I love Christmas and everything that goes with it...snow that I hardly ever get to see in Texas, holiday music starting on November 1 and the familiar saying “Let’s get together more often” to those that I only see once a year at a Christmas party. OK, I’ll make a better effort in the new year.

So in my fog of falling back to sleep, I started thinking about all of the lessons that we learn at Christmas and wonder if I could write a book stealing the name from the bestselling book by Robert Fulghum,

“All I Ever Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten”. It says:

“Share everything. Play fair. Don’t hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don’t take things that aren’t yours. Say you’re sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life. Learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some. Take a nap every afternoon. When you go out into the world, watch for traffic, hold hands, and stick together.”

In thinking about these simple lessons, I compared them to some things I’ve learned in my life during this season.

Like the time when I was about eight years old and I peeked in the shopping bags and found out I was getting a Chrissy doll. I never did that again and I felt such remorse when I faked my surprise that night.

Then when I was around college age, for some reason, my brothers

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Photo credit: Miranda Reiman



Each month watch for a winning photo from the Best of the Bunch competition held at AMS.

and father convinced me to pick out all of the gifts they were to give to my mom. That year I discovered that opening gifts and the surprise of not knowing what others are getting is as fun as opening my own. I guess I've learned I really like surprises.

I learned it's alright to cry during the dinner prayer on Christmas Eve the first time without Grandma or the very first time our family wasn't together.

One year I volunteered to serve the homeless at a holiday dinner. There I learned more lessons that I can list here. One thing that everyone should learn is how to volunteer and give time to others.

I've learned that you need to use your best china, best glassware and best linens all year--not only at Christmas. Special occasions happen every day. Why wait?

I've learned from others that it is hard to have family in the military, especially right now. I can only imagine, but I always pray for them and want all of them to come home too.

*"Think of what a better world it would be if we all — the whole world — had cookies and milk about 3 o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankets for a nap. Or if we had a basic policy in our nation and other nations to always put things back where we found them and clean up our own messes. And it is still*

*true, no matter how old you are, when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together."*

For the rest of this year I'm going to see what else I can learn. From my past I won't peek anymore, but I will look for more surprises in life. I'm going to look for more special occasions and see how much I can learn from others. Then I'm going to start bringing a blanket to work and take a nap at 3 o'clock.

Make this Christmas yours. Stay safe and believe. And don't forget what you have and are yet to learn. •



## My Second Christmas Message

*I wish I could take credit for this...but it's an e-mail sent my way. Enjoy ~diane*

I hate this time of year. Not for its crass commercialism and forced frivolity, but because it's the season when the food police come out with their wagging fingers and annual tips on how to get through the holidays without gaining 10 pounds. You can't pick up a magazine without finding a list of holiday eating do's and don'ts. Eliminate second helpings, high-calorie sauces and cookies made with butter, they say. Fill up on vegetable sticks, they say. Good grief! Is your favorite childhood memory of Christmas a carrot stick?

I don't think so.

Isn't mine, either!! A carrot was something you left for Rudolph. I have my own list of Tips for holiday eating. I assure you, if you follow them, you'll be fat and happy. So what if you don't make it to New Year's? Your pants won't fit anymore, anyway.

**1. About those carrot sticks. Avoid them. Anyone who puts carrots on a holiday buffet table knows nothing of the Christmas spirit. In fact, if you see carrots, leave immediately. Go next door, where they're serving rum balls.**

**2. Drink as much eggnog as you can. And quickly. Like fine single-malt scotch, it's rare. In fact, it's even rarer than single-malt scotch. You can't find it any other time of year but now. So drink up! Who cares that it has 10,000 calories in every sip? It's not as if you're going to turn into a eggnogaholic or something. It's a treat. Enjoy it. Have one for me. Have two. It's later than you think. It's Christmas!**

**3. If something comes with gravy, use it. That's the whole point of gravy. Pour it on. Make a volcano out of your mashed potatoes. Fill it with gravy. Eat the volcano. Repeat.**

**4. As for mashed potatoes, always ask if they're made with skim milk or whole milk. If it's skim, pass. Why bother? It's like buying a sports car with an automatic transmission.**

**5. Do not have a snack before going to a party in an effort to control your eating. The whole point of going to a Christmas party is to eat other people's food for free. Lots of it. Hello? Remember college?**

**6. Under no circumstances should you exercise between now and New Year's. You can do that in January when you have nothing else to do. This is the time for long naps, which**

**you'll need after circling the buffet table while carrying a 10-pound plate of food and that vat of eggnog.**

**7. If you come across something really good at a buffet table, like frosted Christmas cookies in the shape and size of Santa, position yourself near them and don't budge. Have as many as you can before becoming the center of attention. They're like a beautiful pair of shoes. You can't leave them behind. You're not going to see them again.**

**8. Same for pies. Apple. Pumpkin. Mincemeat. Have a slice of each. Or, if you don't like mincemeat, have two apples and one pumpkin. Always have three. When else do you get to have more than one dessert? Labor Day?**

**9. Did someone mention fruitcake? Granted, it's loaded with the mandatory celebratory calories, but avoid it at all cost. I mean, have some standards, mate.**

**10. And one final tip: If you don't feel terrible when you leave the party or get up from the table, you haven't been paying attention. Reread tips. Start over. But hurry! Cookieless January is just around the corner. Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas!**



This past summer's Ag Media Summit in Utah was my first time attending thanks to a stipend provided through the Livestock Publication Council. For years I have heard about how good the Ag Media Summit is and I have to say I wasn't disappointed.

From the sessions to the networking opportunities it was well worth my time to be there. There were sessions where I felt the material was very familiar to me, but yet at the end of it I left with a few refreshers to remember.

My top two favorite sessions were the managing SEO and keywords and the advanced interviewing panel. For many small publications, website and social media management often falls

to someone like myself who doesn't have official training in the field but is yet found wading in the waters anyway. Vicki Kruger gave excellent information that I was able to take back to work and implement immediately.

The advanced interviewing session was interesting to me because I like to hear how other writers approach interviewing. The panel shared tips and tricks and the audience added to the ideas. It was great.

In all, I appreciated the experience offered to me by LPC to attend and will recommend the event to any of my ag media friends.

**Codi Vallery-Mills**  
Editor, *The Cattle Business Weekly*

*At the summer LPC board of directors meeting this program was re-named the Don Norton Professional Development Scholarship in honor of long-time friend and supporter. His name will be forever honored with this award for LPC members to improve their skills and knowledge.*

### Don Norton Professional Development Scholarship

LPC will offer up to 3 stipends of up to \$1,000 each to LPC members to help cover expenses to a professional development class, seminar or workshop, which includes Ag Media Summit or IFAJ congress.

The LPC board of directors believes that expanding knowledge and excitement in one's profession will keep dedication and commitment to that job.

Stipend criteria:

- Open to any LPC member.
- Fill out application.
- Submit the information on the conference you wish to attend.
- **Provide an estimated budget for your expenses to the event.**
- In 250-350 words describe why you should receive this stipend, your professional goals and how you will use this award for professional development.
- Write a short piece for the LPC Actiongram after you have attended the professional development event, telling how you used the stipend and how it will help you become a better ag communications professional.
- The stipend funds should be used within a year of when it is awarded. If it is not used because of an emergency, please contact the LPC executive director.

All parts of the application must be postmarked or received electronically by **December 15, 2017**. Stipend recipients will be contacted in January 2018. The stipend recipients will be selected by a group of three judges.

**Send application to: Diane Johnson, Livestock Publications Council, 200 West Exchange Ave., Fort Worth, TX 76164**  
**diane@livestockpublications.com 817-336-1130 for questions**

**THE FOLLOWING IS THE INFORMATION REQUIRED. FEEL FREE TO CREATE YOUR OWN APPLICATION**

Name:

Address:

Phone:

E-mail:

Current employer (Company name):

Your job title at work:

Number of years LPC member:

Conference you plan to attend:

LPC involvement (current and past committees, activities, elected office, etc.):

Have you ever received this stipend in prior years? yes no If yes, what year(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

Please furnish a 250- to 350-word essay on why you should receive this stipend, your professional goals and how you will use this award for professional development.

★ **JOIN US!** ★

☸  
**LPC ANNUAL LUNCHEON**  
☸

**Thursday, February 1, 2018**

11:30 am - 1 pm

Location: Regency A Ballroom at the Hyatt Hotel  
*during the National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
Cattle Industry Convention in Nashville*

Incoming NCBA President Kevin Kester has been invited to address the group plus we'll update you on all of the exciting LPC events planned for 2018.

*Thank you to this year's luncheon sponsor.*



**National Cattlemen's  
Beef Association**

**PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING!**

You **MUST** RSVP by Friday, January 26 to Diane  
[diane@livestockpublications.com](mailto:diane@livestockpublications.com) or call 817/336-1130

**No shows are highly discouraged.**

★ **LPC  
CALENDAR  
OF EVENTS  
& DEADLINES** ★

**DECEMBER 15**

Deadline for Professional  
Development Scholarship  
Applications

**FEBRUARY 15**

Forrest Bassford Student Award  
Applications due

**FEBRUARY 1**

Annual LPC Luncheon during  
NCBA Convention, Phoenix

**MARCH 1**

Membership Dues due