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"A different Light"

A Different Light 22 December 2018 – Virtual Awards

I always seem to get off lightly when it comes to Christmas shopping, thank god. My wife does most of the heavy lifting, leaving the only item for me to buy is for her. Now a days I tend to buy her present on line virtually. This inevitably induces anxiety as to whether the dam thing will arrive on time or not. So at the end of 2018 I am going to do another virtual shopping round and give people virtual presents in their virtual Santa sack.

A virtual pat on the back to Kristine Bartlett who won the Kiwibank New Zealand of the Year award. She changed the lives of thousands of New Zealand women and low-paid workers by successfully securing equal pay legislation for caregivers in the aged-care sector. Consequently some service providers will be now scrambling to balance their books in the new year.

A box copy set of the Netflix's series "A house of cards" for National Party Leader Simon Bridges so he can compare scenes from it to the moment when Jami-Lee Ross released a recording of them both discussing the value of Chinese candidates over Indians candidates. Maybe a copy of Caitlyn Jenner's book "The Secret's of my life" in case he is growing his hair long for a change in direction next year.

Water wings for the three instances of water torture survival this year. One was self-inflicted, one was a combination of bad planning and somewhat predictable bad weather, and the other a case of sheer idiocy. Scott Donaldson who accomplished the historical feat of crossing of the Tasman Sea in a kayak. The twelve members of a young Thai football team and their Coach, who after being trapped in a cave for several days. The Australian twit who nearly had her hand taken off, while hand-feeding sharks in crocodile infested waters.

To the writers of the Euthanasia Bill which on the surface sounds fairly sophisticated, with enough checks and balances to ensure that the person in question was making an informed and measured decision. Initially, I thought the Bill only made provisions for people with a terminal illness. However, when I sat down and read the Bill, I realised it was also for people with a grievous and irremediable medical condition. "Grievous," now there's an interesting adjective, it can be open to interpretation that include lives that are still being valued. I would like to give them an enema so they can sit and reflect.

A sports reporting award to all the journo jocks who reported on the Paralympics in a mainstream fashion e.g. M2 Men's Magazine's Gerard Seth interviewed the Paralympic medallist Cameron Leslie with enthusiasm and dignified inspiration.

A pat on the back to Shane Reti, Whangarei's MP, who is supporting an Election Access Bill. If goes through would offer resources to disabled people to stand for elections to remove any barriers in the way due to their impairment. It would also offer resources for organisations to hold educational events to encourage disabled people to vote on disabled issues in bipartisan fashion. Also his support for the legalisation of Medical Marijuana.

A one-way ticket home to our daughter, son-in-law and mokopuna who migrated to Brisbane.

A chill pill for the sweaty Customs guy who grabbed me by both arms and man handled me at the Brisbane airport.

Some fancy dress costumes for Minister Sepuloni, our Minister of Disability Issues spent a day in a wheelchair to better appreciate what it is like to be dependent on a wheelchair to get around. Then she can play dress-ups without patronising people.

"The Little Book of Calm" for Don Brash and the Canadian alt righters, Lauren Southern and Stefan Molyneux.

A tin of Kiwi shoe polish for the Hawera Mt View Lions Club, who dressed up as "Black and White Minstrels" with blackened faces and afro wigs who didn't see what was wrong with that. Really?? And an invitation to the Nelson Maori Centre to join the Lions Christmas parade next year in Whangarei.

A layed back award to my neurosurgeon who operated on my neck but didn't tell me until three weeks later I should be wearing my neck brace. For me, I am just looking forward to ditching the neck brace in the New Year and putting a full stop to 2018.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and an inclusive New Year.

Jonny Wilkinson is the CEO of Tiaho Trust - Disability - A Matter of Perception. A Whangarei based disability advocacy organisation.