

Gabbing About Gifting

It's Time to Cruise Through the Holidays To Find the Perfect Presents for Friends & Family

Boy, oh boy, does Tom Cruise know how to work the press. He may only come out of hiding when he has a movie to plug (in this case, *The Last Samurai*), but when he hits the talk show circuit, he sure hits it.

And so it happens that I'm flicking through the usual gossip magazine shows when I catch Tom midinterview with the topic in hand: Christmas present buying. Apparently, when asked, Tom says his love, Penélope Cruz, likes "notes" or "letters" as gifts, not necessarily material things.

All well and good, I say, since she probably has enough cash to get herself whatever she wants. The rest of us, well, material things are nice too.

Speaking for myself, I'd like a gift certificate from Henri Bendel, Barneys, or Manolo Blahnik, thank you very much. For fashionistas or shopaholics, such things are doubly good gifts; you enjoy the guilt-free shopping time alone plus the excitement of the fashion splurge as well



magazine, titled "50 Indulgences." It was up to me to actually find out what one of those private jets available from Neiman Marcus cost (about \$3.5 million — and this was some years ago) and how much it was to reopen Aspen Mountain for a private day of skiing with an extreme world champ the day after the lifts officially close (about \$70,000 — again, some time ago).

Of course, there were a few almost attainable gifts such as the fur hot-water-bottle holder (a snip at \$225). It was a dreamy if materialistic exercise.

And then I turned on the news and realized that the best gift a celebrity can give is of his or her time, such as Bruce

Willis and the foster child care system and Oprah and African causes.

This year, someone at our Thanksgiving table said how much they preferred this holiday to Christmas since no gifts were involved. Everyone had simply to be grateful for the company and the meal.

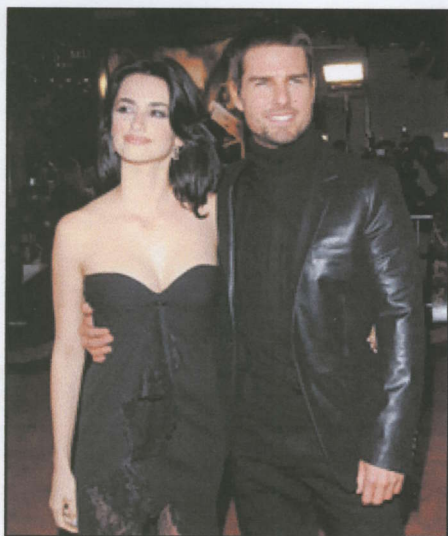
This rang true; after all, who doesn't surpass their gift budget and live through the New Year to regret it? One year my friends and family had a Christmas/Hanukkah gathering where no one was allowed to spend more than \$10 per person.

This was enjoyable, as creative gift solutions emerged that I'll remember for years: wine stoppers, gardening

gloves, books, magazine subscriptions (well, three for \$30, which took care of 3 people), and so on.

More creative gifts are "vouchers" that make us realize that we can all do special things for each other. Backrubs, yard sweeping, breakfast in bed, and those ubiquitous "I get to pick the movie" vouchers (for her) and "I get total control of the TV remote tonight" for him (of course) are a great standby.

I wonder if Tom Cruise will get one of those. ■



Cruz & Cruise in Hollywood: Taking notes for the holidays

as getting to enjoy your personal fashion picks forever.

No that surprises are not good (Karen, thank you for that gorgeous contemporary menorah), but you can't go wrong with a gift certificate — the bottom line is, you end up with something you really like.

At the top of the expensive surprise gift pile ranks his and hers Ferraris. This is the stuff of rock-star and fashion model Christmases.

In fact, it reminds me of an article I once researched for a women's