

for him by Christmas!

Still, I couldn't help wondering if David didn't have some kind of an idea as to what he wanted. But for the time being, I changed the subject.

I wondered if David really enjoyed the Christmas season. After all, he didn't seem too anxious to get involved in the preparations for Christmas. Some people have all their shopping done by the end of November, and David had just begun to think about his shopping list.

"Oh no, don't get me wrong—I really do like Christmas. It's just that it seems to start earlier each year.

"I can remember when I was a kid, no one even thought about Christmas until Thanksgiving had passed—that's the last weekend in November.

"Then you could expect a month of getting ready, putting up the decorations, and preparing for the holiday.

"But now, you can't believe it! The shops seem to start handling Christmas items around the middle of October.

## HOLIDAY

"I mean, it's nice to have a long holiday period, and I guess that it's good for shopkeepers, 'cos they can have a good long period to display their goods.

"But I always kinda' feel that Christmas should be celebrated when it happens. I don't mean that you should have to wait until the very day that it goes on, but I do think that it takes a bit away from the holiday itself if you begin to look forward to the holidays in the middle of October.

"I just can't seem to get used to it. The last few years, I've

had the feeling around the start of November and then, all of a sudden, I feel mildly depressed by the end of the month. There's only a certain length of time that you can feel Christmassy.

"I don't know if there is a solution, so I guess the best thing to do is to just try and not think about it until you actually begin to FEEL like Christmas is near.

"Maybe that just about sums up my opinion of Christmas—it's a feeling.

"More than anything else, Christmas is a feeling of goodwill and brotherhood between people. It's a kind of time of the year when everyone says 'Hey, I don't always agree with you, but we're all human.

"It would be good if that went on all the time, but it doesn't, so I reckon we should make the best of it, and enjoy Christmas and all the good feelings of happiness and unselfishness."

All this made pretty good sense to me. The line from an old song, "Christmas comes just once each year" just about sums it up, don't you agree?

This is the time of the year when people can forget their differences and join together in a joyful and happy celebration.

It's an old question, I know, but David had more or less tried not to answer it. I couldn't help wondering what he would consider the *best* possible present for Christmas.

I knew it would be something pretty special, because David, even though he's not particularly interested in material things, has just about anything that anyone could ever imagine.

I also knew that he was reluctant to talk about it, but I

wanted to ask anyway. I was convinced that we could all get a great deal of pleasure from whatever David had in mind.

I was sure that it would be rare and of great value, and I was right. But I never dreamed of anything that was as priceless, or quite as rare as the gift that David described.

He paused for a moment, and then began.

"I guess if I could have one thing, and one thing only, regardless of cost or expense, I would want everyone, everywhere, to enjoy the happiness and contentment that I've been able to enjoy in the past year.

## FORTUNATE

"It hasn't been a matter of money," he continued, "or even of having an easy life, although I guess I've been pretty fortunate in those areas as well.

"What I mean is that I wish everyone could have a few close friends who they could trust, and have a good time with them.

"I also wish that people could get to do what they want to, and enjoy their work as much as I enjoy mine. That's part of my happiness, and I wish it could be true for everyone.

"But most of all, I guess I wish that people could sit down with each other and just solve their petty quarrels and disputes, and learn to respect each other.

"If they could just do that, what a wonderful present it would be—for everyone."

How true! It's so very simple, and yet so difficult.

And, if it could come true, it would surely be the greatest gift of all.

