



Dedicated to helping LGBT people build and strengthen their families.

Wii-My Virtual Reality

I introduce myself to a fifty-seven-year-old woman who is fretting over the trials of caring for her aging parent: "I tell Daddy to let me pay for a man to come plow out his driveway. I say, 'Daddy, I'd rather pay someone than worry about you falling.' I also tell him, 'Daddy you must use tissues instead of your handkerchief.' It's just not sanitary. I leave boxes of tissues all around his house, but does Daddy use them? Not on your life."

My new companion is swaddled in a hat, scarf, long down coat and a large plastic garbage bag, but hiding under her arctic disguise, I imagine Bette Davis, dressed as Baby Jane with large pink ribbons and bows, long blond banana curls and a ruffled pinafore. I expect that any moment she will burst into song. "I've written a letter to Daddy..." Baby Jane and I stand in front of a Kmart at 3:00 am on December 15, during the worst sleet and snow storm we've had so far this season. Inside Kmart is a new shipment of Nintendo Wiis.

I don't advocate electronic nannies. I ration television time like sugar in a depression. The only children's games Mona has played on our computer are those she finds on the Internet, and game time, like television time, is also restricted. And I'm appalled by the idea of a portable DVD player for the car! When I was a little boy and went on long car trips with my parents, I held a handkerchief out of the car window and pretended that it was a princess with long flowing hair blowing in the wind. Imagine how a DVD player in my parent's car might have perverted my development.

But what are parents if not inconsistent? Several weeks before Christmas, Mona asked for a Wii and, like a presidential hopeful, I flip-flopped! Maybe it was the challenge? Wiis are very hard to come by, especially so close to Christmas. I became Don Quixote and the Wii my electronic windmill.

I learned the delivery nights of all our local Wii-carrying stores, befriended store informants, read online ads at 2:00 am and hardcopy adds the night before they were folded into the following-day's newspapers. Regardless, unforeseen twists of fate kept the elusive Wii just beyond my grasp.

I was determined not to settle for PlayStation or Xbox. 'Twas the weekend before the weekend before Christmas, and my contacts informed me that this might be my last big chance.

I pull into the Kmart parking lot at midnight. From midnight until 3:00 am, I turn my car and heat and defrost and wipers on and off, and I read by a dim camp lantern. Alas, no portable DVD player to help pass the time.

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At 3:00 am, Baby Jane drives into the parking lot, and I leave my car to secure my coveted spot of first in line. We talk about her daddy and we pace. Soon, another adventurer joins us. Baby Jane returns to her car and retrieves a jar of homemade chocolate chip cookies.

We take nourishment as the bitter winds and sleet threaten to undermine our fortitude. But Don Quixote would not be deterred, and neither will I. Holding out the jar of cookies, Baby Jane becomes the beautiful Dulcinea (aka Aldonza), and adventurer # 3 becomes the faithful sidekick Sancho Panza. Of course, if asked, I'm willing to alternate roles.

At 5:00 am, the Kmart night manager slips papers through a narrow space between the two front doors. Now there are six of us. My slip of paper says # 1. The night manager mouths through the glass that the last time they had Wiis, the line was much longer: "The weather must have kept folks away." But not us! At 5:30 am the manager takes pity, lets us in the store vestibule and tells us that she has a total of seven Wiis. Eureka ! By 6:30, I'm home and in bed – Mona's new Wii hidden in our basement.

A few nights ago, on *Bill Moyers Journal* , a political analyst posed that today's capitalism no longer fills consumers' needs, but manipulates consumers into needing. Ever-changing technology needs markets. Who better to target than kids and their parents? Mona's pleas certainly brought this father and defender of the vanishing art of daydreaming and champion of imagination and fan of *Bill Moyers Journal* to mount my proverbial white horse and ride off into Kmart's parking lot. Someday, out of gratitude, my daughter will lovingly leave boxes of tissues around my house and hire some beefy trucker to plow out my driveway.

Until then, I'll lecture Mona about the importance of being a critical consumer and to beware of marketing, while we box or bowl or dance in the virtual land of Wii .