

Mr. Ben Stein delivered the following commentary, "Confessions for the Holidays," on December 18, 2005, on the CBS Sunday Morning news program:

Here at this happy time of year, a few confessions from my beating heart. I have no freaking clue who Nick and Jessica are. I see them on the cover of People and Us constantly when I'm buying my dog biscuits. I still don't know. I often ask the checkers at the grocery stores who they are. They don't know who Nick and Jessica are, either. Who are they? Will it change my life if I know who they are and why they've broken up? Why are they so darned important?

I don't know who Lindsay Lohan is either, and I don't care at all about Tom Cruise's baby.

Am I going to be called before a Senate committee and asked if I'm a subversive? Maybe. But I just have no clue who Nick and Jessica are. Is this what it means to be no longer young? Hm, not so bad.

Next confession: I am a Jew and every single one of my ancestors was Jewish, and it does not bother me even a little bit when people call those beautifully lit-up, bejeweled trees Christmas trees. I don't feel threatened. I don't feel discriminated against. That's what they are – Christmas trees. It doesn't bother me a bit when people say "Merry Christmas" to me. I don't think they're slighting me or getting ready to put me in a ghetto. In fact, I kind of like it. It shows that we're all brothers and sisters celebrating this happy time of year.

It doesn't bother me one bit that there's a manger scene on display at a key intersection at my beach house in Malibu.

If people want a creche, fine. The menorah a few hundred yards away is fine, too. I do not like getting pushed around for being a Jew, and I don't think Christians like getting pushed around for being Christians. I think people who believe in God are sick and tired of getting pushed around, period. I have no idea where the concept came from that America is an explicitly atheist country. I can't find it in the Constitution and I don't like it being shoved down my throat. Or maybe I can put it another way. Where did the idea come from that we should worship Nick and Jessica and aren't allowed to worship God as we understand him? I guess that's a sign that I'm getting old, too. But there are a lot of us who are wondering where Nick and Jessica came from and where the America we used to know went to.