



# Red Suit Gazette

Unlock the World of Santa

The Brotherhood of the Direct Descendents of Santa

Volume 3, Issue 1 March 2010



## Prayers answered, Christmas miracles shared

### SENIORS, KIDS AND THE RED SUIT

By LOU KNEZEVICH

In recent years I have been performing my Santa role at a luncheon for a group of inner city seniors. This event always brings home the fact of how many adults, especially seniors are all but forgotten during the holiday season.

I love being a part of this event because the seniors act like kids and embrace the spirit of Christmas without hesitation. In fact



DOVER PUBLICATIONS

the “Kids” and I have quite a few laughs as we greet each other with a hug or a handshake as I compliment a hairdo or a gent’s dapper appearance. Each year

I look forward to one tiny 94-year-old lady with a mischievous twinkle in her eye who tells me “Santa you get better looking every year!” She certainly knows how to

get on Santa’s nice list.

I’ve been the luncheon Santa for about six years and every mid November an e-mail from Brittany pops up in my inbox and I know it is her request for my appearance at the Senior Luncheon. Brittany is the chairperson for this event, which is a part of an Outreach Program for the Episcopal Church. There is no hesitation on my part ever accepting her invitation. In her role Brittany has done a superb job through the years of providing meals, gifts

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## Gatlinburg checklist

Packing the Sleigh, Checking it twice

### LAST MINUTE CHECKS BEFORE CELEBRATE SANTA

By KRIS KRINGLE

You have about one week before the activities begin in Tennessee.

What do you need to do to make sure you are ready to have a good time? Read on, and I will share some thoughts ideas, and checklists which should make your trip more enjoyable.



Of course you are going to pack enough Santa clothes. Aren’t you? This includes both casual and comfortable clothes, along with the Santa Suit you plan to wear for the parade.

It can get very cold in March in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains, especially this winter with the continuing snows and blustery winds. Bring some warm clothes, and at least a warm jacket. And spring-like temperatures are not unknown in March, so be prepared.

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and staple goods for about 40 seniors for whom this event may be the only Christmas they will have. She receives no financial aid but she is provided the use of a neighborhood meeting place with a kitchen and dining room facilities.

When I first started doing this event I mentioned the circumstances to my co-workers. They grasped the need of the seniors and they were eager to be a part of the luncheon. The group quickly organized themselves and soon there were volunteers to provide the food, serve it and then clean up. Their generosity came right from the heart and their faces glowed knowing they had provided a luncheon for needy seniors. Sadly, their generosity came to an end due to the housing crisis causing job losses and our department closing its doors. Little did I know that with the support gone it would be particularly rough for Brittany to continue the luncheon this year.

I had not given this year's luncheon much thought, except to mark my calendar and make sure I knew what I would do for them in my role as Santa.

Soon after Thanksgiving I received an e-mail from Brittany asking for assistance in procuring the food for the Senior Luncheon. I would have called upon some of my former co-workers but their whereabouts were unknown.

I prayed for a solution to feed the senior's and make the event a happy one. Things were looking grim and Brittany needed a miracle.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

### Santa Lou Knezevich

A week prior to the luncheon I received an e-mail from Brent, a young man who was one of my former co-workers and had previously provided meals for the seniors. I had not heard from Brent in more than two years and he wanted to know if I still performed for the luncheon? He also asked if I could forward Brittany's e-mail address. I replied with Brittany's information and asked him if there was any way he could work some of his magic to feed the seniors. He didn't reply. Within a few days Brittany did.

Brent had called her and told her that he would provide the food and servers for the entire luncheon. A miracle had happened! I could sense the elation in Brittany's words from having her prayers answered when all seemed lost. Faith had brought a miracle to the seniors.

I just stared at her e-mail as I felt the tears roll down my cheeks. I looked upward giving thanks to God and the

Spirit of Christmas which reaches out to young and old alike.

The Senior Luncheon was a big success. Brent had a connection with a famous local restaurant which provided an abundance of food for all. Even Santa and Mrs. Claus enjoyed some of the best turkey and fixings we ever ate.

On the way out Brent stopped me and asked where I would be appearing. I told him I had very few public events as most of my events are private home visits or corporate events. When I asked "Why?" he told me of the events and circumstances in the life of one of his employees.

The employee is a woman is married with two children. During the year their home burned to the ground after being struck by lightning. Compounding matters she had recently been diagnosed with lung cancer, the second type of cancer she was facing. He knew she wanted the children to see Santa but long lines at the mall prevented it and the season was draw-

ing to a close. I asked Brent to email me the particulars and I would get back to him quickly.

After receiving his e-mail I contacted the young woman. She wished that her children Robert, age 5, and Ginger, age 3-1/2 could see Santa. I didn't have a spare moment which would work for them except the evening of December 22. I told her not to worry that the Claus' would be making a visit to their house. She couldn't believe Santa and Mrs. Claus would come to their house and she was thrilled for the sake of her children.

Mr. & Mrs. Claus arrived at the appointed hour. Robert, the 5-year-old opened the door. He jumped and hollered; "Santa! Santa! It's Santa!" The younger child, Ginger, took a while to warm up to me (She had been afraid of Santa). My reward came at the end of the evening when she gave me the biggest hug and a kiss goodbye.

There was something magical about the whole evening. In attendance were a few aunts, along with Grandma and Grandpa. The love and joy of this evening and the Spirit of Christmas surrounded everyone.

I have had some amazing experiences in the "Red Suit." Sometimes I know what I have done, said or witnessed was of a power far greater than I can comprehend ... and these two events

By Lou Knezevich  
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**GATLINBURG** from pg. 1

What about the formal ball? You could wear your finest Santa Suit or a nice coat and tie.

Casual clothes should be comfortable, yet presentable. You never know when you might be singled out for an interview with the media. Do you have any idea what you would, or might say? If you are not prepared, you may say something that you really did not want to. Rehearse some ideas, thoughts and questions in your head. Know them well enough to bring to your memory if approached.

You will also need (All) of your hair and beard products. Make sure you have everything. And enough to last a week. What if you happen to get snowed in? Remember you want to look your best at all times. This is certainly one of those times. If the media is not photographing you, others there for the St. Patrick Day celebrations certainly will be. No one knows how many spectators there may be, but keep in mind that Gatlinburg is the gateway to the Great Smoky Mountains, the most visited national park in America. There are over 9 million visitors to the area each year. Someone, somewhere, sometime during your stay, will be taking your photograph.

There are a few things you will want bring with you in large quantities. Handouts. If you have business cards, this would be the perfect place to share and 'network.' The more cards you share, offer the possibility of more opportunities being presented to you. You never know what is around the corner. Or who you may meet. Always be prepared. You may want to bring larger handouts to pass out to the general pub-

**YOU SHOULD KNOW**

**Celebrate Santa 2010**  
<http://celebratesanta.com>  
<http://celebratesanta.blogspot.com>

**This online visual map is to a very useful and helpful online map of the entire parkway leading into Gatlinburg, from I-40 to downtown Gatlinburg.**

**Link to parkway map:**  
[thegreatsmokeymountainsparkway.com/\\_map/sevierville/sevierville\\_parkway.htm](http://thegreatsmokeymountainsparkway.com/_map/sevierville/sevierville_parkway.htm)

**Great Smoky Mountains:**  
<http://www.nps.gov/grsm>  
<http://www.smokymountains.org>  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Smoky\\_Mountains](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Smoky_Mountains)



lic. Never pass up the opportunity to promote yourself. Have you decided what you will be doing while you are in Pigeon Forge?

Take a look at the classes being offered. Then there is the sales area on the main convention floor. That should take you about an hour unless you stop and visit with everyone there. I also plan on getting out and meeting a lot of folks not normally associated with Santa. This should create some fun especially if you have a good casual Santa look.

Check out the website for Celebrate Santa. Check out everything they offer. Establish a plan so that you can

get the most from this visit. If you just show up and go with the flow, you will surely miss a lot. Don't forget the parade. March as a group. You



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Santa Al Horton

can join the Brotherhood and march with their banner or join the North Georgia group and march with them. Or with whichever group/region of the country or world you desire. Get a group together and make your own banner to march behind. Bring a State Flag to carry. Make it a group event. I have always been one to be in a group. I like having fun with new and old friends.

I do plan on attended one or two classes offered.

Now, what is the next thing you need to think about for this trip? How about a few hints. You are going on a vacation. You are going to learn something new to enhance your Santa persona. You are going to impress other Santas. You are going to meet others and hopefully learn something they do that you might want to do. You might be going to learn where to go to be a Santa or earn more money. Does this bring to mind anything important that you might want to keep and review later?

I suggest you carry three things with you. First a camera to assist you in remembering everyone, second a pocket recorder to record those important moments. And finally, you need a paper and pencil so that you can write down those important thoughts and ideas. That may sound kind of trivial to you, but to me it is important. I have received more ideas from those I speak to than you can imagine. These past 5 years I have learned more than the first 25 years I have been doing this. I credit this to meeting more Santas the past few years. Now for the very last item; Ensure you pack an open mind and a strong drive to get the most out of this trip. If you don't, you will have no one to blame but yourself. The old adage 'you get out of something only what you put into it, holds true.'

As for a post script for the article, if you have been to my Santa class, then you should know to save your receipts. Keep all documents and receipts from this trip for the tax man for next year. Study up.

Hope to see you soon.

**Kris Kringle**  
**Santa Al Horton**  
**FunWithSanta@gmail.com**

# Your crowning glory

Keeping that beard and hair looking like Christmas every day

By DEBORAH BEESON

Santa is 'the guardian of childhood dreams,' and each of you are a guardian of Santa.

One of the most persuasive attributes you have as a real bearded Santa is your beard. You need to take care of that white beard as it has elevated your credibility.

My name is Deborah Beeson. I have been a hairdresser for 19 years and a Santa hairdresser for the past 8½ years.

Your beard is the coveted identifier!

Shampoo your beard daily. The hairs hold dirt, odors and perspiration, liquids dripped from various drinks and a vast array of crumbs. There is a 75 percent chance that you will find a chocolate chip in there too. Use a mild shampoo and work your beard and mustache in circles. This will help to clean the skin under the beard. Shampoo the beard and mustache thoroughly. Rinse well.

Condition the beard and mustache. Soap curds can remain behind even after rinsing away the shampoo. This can cause the skin to dry and become itchy and flakey. A conditioner will help to rinse soap curds from the hair and skin under the beard. Apply as directed and rinse thoroughly.

Towel-dry your beard as soon as you get out of the



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Deborah and Denzil Beeson.**

shower. Do not scrub or ruffle the beard as this can irritate the face and cause tangles or damage to the beard. Dry your beard quickly but gently. Moisture is drawn out of the skin as water evaporates which can result in unwanted dry skin. For this reason, I recommend using a leave-in conditioner that is good for both the hair and skin.

A wild unruly beard takes no effort at all, and can leave a first and permanent impression of your being a scruffy old man.

You will need a wide tooth comb to help keep your beard tangle free. A pair of good sharp scissors are a must if you are going to trim your beard and mustache at home. Always trim your beard when it is dry. Wet hair stretches and your beard and it will appear longer. For the Santa who trims his own beard and mustache it is imperative to have someone else check to see that you are getting everything even. This is also a good idea for any area that you

## YOU SHOULD KNOW

DEBORAH BEESON WILL BE A PRESENTING TWO SEMINAR SESSIONS AT THE 2010 CELEBRATE SANTA CONVENTION ENTITLED "CURL UP AND DYE WITH MRS. CLAUS."

STARTING WITH STAGE MAKEUP AT THE AGE OF 12 AND BEGINNING CHARACTER TRANSFORMATIONS BY 14, DEBORAH BEESON STARTED OFF ON TRACK TO BECOMING A MASTER COSMETOLOGIST. LICENSED FOR 19 YEARS AND CURRENTLY WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY, DEBORAH IS READY TO SHARE HER EXPERTISE TO HELP YOU MAKE FANTASIES COME TO LIFE! SANTA'S HYGIENE AND GROOMING, BEARD AND MUSTACHE TRIMMING, PREPARATION AND PROCESSES OF HAIR WHITENING INCLUDING PROVEN PRODUCTS AND BEAUTIFUL CURLS ARE AMONG THE TOPICS THAT WILL BE COVERED. IN 2002 DEBORAH BECAME A SANTA HAIRDRESSER FOR HER HUSBAND. AS BOTH A HAIRDRESSER AND A MRS. CLAUS, SHE OFFERS A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE AS A PRESENTER.

might shave. When you shave you use one hand and have to cross over to reach the opposite side which can throw off your symmetry. This detail is as impor-

See HAIR CARE pg. 5

**HAIR CARE** from pg. 4

tant as the hem of a coat being even.

I know I am not the only one who has seen Santa swagger like a peacock. Your beard makes people take notice. What they notice is up to you. The wholesome image of Santa is clouded when you look like a frizzled chicken!

Using a leave-in conditioner will help add softness to your beard. My pick of the most versatile and must have product for the real bearded Santa is Paul Mitchell's 'The Conditioner.' The benefits of using a leave-in conditioner are numerous. Not only is it good for the hair it can also be used on the skin. For those of you that shave your cheeks and or necks try 'The Conditioner' instead of shaving cream for a close smooth shave. Used as a lotion it won't clog the pores. Be sure to rub it in to the skin beneath the beard hair to help prevent dryness. Use only the balls of your fingertips for this, never your fingernails. Being light blue in color, 'The Conditioner' will not yellow your white beard.

Santa's beard is as unique as the man himself. World wide Santa wears many outfits, answers to many different names and arrives on different dates. The core identifier is the beard. You are so much more than a white beard, however; but, your beard is the calling card you wear all year.

The only true gift you can give as Santa is yourself. More than anything - your Santa has to come from the heart.

**DEBORAH BEESON**  
clauscutter@gmail.com



# Merry Christmas



Every Day of the Year





# Westward home

*Marketing, moving and  
Merlin from Las Vegas  
with Al 'Santa' Horton*

KRIS KRINGLE, AKA, SANTA AL HORTON, A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR, RECENTLY DEPARTED ATLANTA, AND FINDS HIMSELF IN PAHRUMP, NV. HIS WORDS OF WISDOM AND STORIES TO DELIGHT THE EAR, WILL CONTINUE TO APPEAR ON THESE PAGES.



PHOTO BY BILL MCKEE

Santa Al Horton's pickup truck in the Holly & Shamrock Parade in Gatlinburg, Tenn., on March 17. Loretta Knezevich is seen waving from the passenger seat window.

## The Big Move West Part 3

**By Kris Kringle**

Summer is hot here in Southern Nevada. Summer actually lasts until the end of October. October is when it starts getting colder. Well, at least the locals call it cold. I don't think when the temperature averages 60 degrees with the high being in the high 70's is cold. Christmas was a little colder. I was sweating up a storm in my heavy Santa suits through most of the season. Thank goodness I have several suits and can rotate them through the cleaners. I did manage to get in a couple of snow storms but most were after the season.

I am seriously thinking about investing in a cold vest. One trick I have picked up is to bring a small ice chest with plenty of COLD bottled water and a couple of frozen ice packs. I also put in there several washcloths so I can dry myself when I start to perspire and to have something to wrap the ice packs in when I need something cold on the back of my neck. Also, keeping a wash cloth in the freezer the night before helps to keep me cool as I work.

Well there are some new developments. I mentioned that I would be looking for an agent. I have tried

several out. The ones who work with me and provide jobs and contacts I will certainly keep.

You must always keep in mind that if you use an agent, get from them in writing what they expect from you and give them in writing what you expect from them. This is something that most agents are not accustomed to. I don't charge them anything, but if they want something from me, such as time, pictures, etc., that cost me money so they will be charged unless they produce.

My usual patter when it comes to charging an agent is that the bill will be dismissed after I have made the equivalent to what I plan on charging them. They will get a bill with a due date for payment and hopefully they will abide by it. My best agent uses whatever I give them and has already found me performances exceeding what I did the entire season last year. Not a bad agent. I have had six more contact me about playing the jolly old guy himself. They like my picture and the way I sound. We will just have to wait and see what comes from them.

My mailings and e-mails have also paid off. I received a call from a new photographer who wanted to try Santa

pictures this year. She has paid me for coming to her studio to take some pictures with a young child for her advertisements. She booked me for several days and for several hours each day. From her, I received some photos on a CD I can use next year, along with the Christmas Cards I sent out this year. I am hearing from college instructors who teach photography and several other photography related industries.

I have yet to hear back from a casino, but right now I am not holding my breath since I understand they would prefer to cater to adults and not the children. I will go after the family oriented casinos next summer when I have a little more time.

I may have another job lined up following the Christmas season. I could be Merlin the Wizard for the Excalibur Casino. I have been courting them since I arrived. They are starting to like my idea of being Merlin the Wizard in their show. Imagine the jousting, sword play and just being a Wizard. I would love to add Wizard as an employment section on my resume. I also met and had some photos taken with the animal trainer for this show. He brought his white wolf to be photo-

See **MOVE WEST** pg 8

graphed with me which was awesome. This gives me another 'in' with this show.

Another project I have been working on and having lots of fun at, is in trying to collect information for my book "Santa, The Book of Knowledge."

Here is a partial list of some of the stories I have collected:

- \* The Story of Santa Claus (13 chapters)
- \* Parodies of the Night Before Christmas (26 versions and still adding more)
- \* The Ninth Reindeer
- \* Big Red (Sung to Ghost Riders In The Sky)

Putting together these stories are a lot of fun.

If anyone would like to include any stories they may have collected, write me and let me know. I will be more than happy to give you credit for the find. There is one poem that I would love to put in but the cowboy poet who wrote it and recites it does not want it included. I won't mention any names, but he is a terrific poet and his works are on the internet.

I have been working on some new information about who may have actually written "A Visit From Saint Nicholas," better know as "The Night Before Christmas." You might be interested to learn that it likely wasn't Clement Moore.

I hope to publish some of this information in the book along with some new tax tips I learned in a recent tax class. I also took some certifications test online, giving me the ability to work as a tax consultant for one of the top three tax companies in the U.S.

I am currently writing for two publications in addition to the Red Suit Gazette. I enjoy writing and it is loads of fun. I am also seeking a position with a local television station. Maybe I can be a writer, gopher, or something there. This is a very exciting time for me.

If anyone would like a copy of the works I have, I can send you a CD containing the files. I have the book



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

#### Santa Al Horton

ready in PDF file format for folks to easily view. Just send enough to pay for postage and handling plus the cost of the CD and contents. \$35 should cover everything. Once the book is published the cost will be approximately \$55. Right now the book is more than 320 pages and still growing. Also, if you include your email address, I will let you know when they are on their way. Don't forget to put your return address so I can mail it to you. I don't mind sharing with everyone. You can contact me at FunWithSanta@gmail.com.

I found I needed a background check and the local and county police here do not do that. I discovered that FORBS (Fraternal Order of Real Bearded Santas) has a very reasonable price. So, I joined and now have a background check from them. Pretty interesting if anyone needs one, I highly recommend joining and getting it done. They also sell insurance fairly reasonably once you join them.

I am still teaching and I can travel almost anywhere to teach a class. If anyone is interested in any specific subjects or would just like to have me speak, don't hesitate to contact me. I will be more than happy to share with you my thoughts and ideas. I have six eight-hour classes developed with slides. I can teach one of them but I am versed in a variety of subjects. I also have guest instructors in the form

of Lou and Loretta Knezevich. Between the 3 of us, we can cover most subjects very well. If the price is right, I will include a \*.pdf file for each student. That in itself is worth the cost.

Another local Santa passes away this year and I have already taken over most of his gigs. I hope to expand on what he started and make life fun year round out here. For now, I have had too much fun and need more rest.

There are several activities coming available. The first is the end of January with FORBS at Knotts Berry Farm followed by a cruise with Tim. Then there is Celebrate Santa in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. I will not be attending any of these but wish all who participate a whopping good time

Presently I am looking for additional employment. It seems that I need to have a part-time job to continue living out here. Things are fairly inexpensive and the housing market is really a buyer's market right now. There are some terrific deals. Write me and I will send you some literature to look over if you are interested.

I am looking into going back to school to take some accounting courses. It appears that my current accounting knowledge is a few years behind the power curve and I need to brush up and purchase some new software. Yep, I believe if you are not in the computer age, you are losing a lot.

Have fun and remember, if you only portray Santa during the November and/or December season, you will need to start gearing up for 2010 in a couple of months. Keep your eyes open for new and different things that you could use. It never hurts to have more than one Santa suit. Remember to always have your suits cleaned before storing.

Until next time when our twinkling eyes shall meet again. For the love of the children both young and old, keep a smile on your face and let the love flow. Give freely to all you may meet and smile as you give the a big Christmas greet.

The trip out west has been fun.

**Kris Kringle**  
**Santa Al Horton**  
**FunWithSanta@gmail.com**



# “You Have Acute Appendicitis”

By LOU KNEZEVICH

Christmas 2009 started in a painful and shocking way.

I woke up with a slight pain in my abdomen. Of course, my macho instincts knew it would go away if I lay down and sleep it off. Well, it didn't and with the urging of Mrs. Claus, who always knows best, I was off to the Urgent Care Center.

## “You have acute appendicitis”

It took the doctor but a few minutes to order some tests and give me his diagnosis of acute appendicitis. What I had worried about suddenly became a dreaded reality and there was nothing I could do about it. Arrangements were quickly made to admit me to our local hospital. While Mrs. Claus drove me there, all my thoughts were about how this would affect my Santa season. I wasn't a very happy camper.

Once at the hospital, the surgeon ordered an ultrasound confirming a dire diagnosis ... my appendix had ruptured. I had already missed a scheduled Santa event on the evening I had surgery and one the following day. Now I wondered how quickly I could be in shape for the remainder of the season. If appendicitis is diagnosed and attended to quickly the patient could be released after an overnight stay. I would not be that lucky. My hospital stay lasted six days and I followed all of the doctors' orders to the letter just to get out of there as quickly as possible.

There were some great moments with the staff, other patients and visitors. I had a roll of “I met Santa Claus” stickers with me and just about everyone I saw received a sticker. On my last day at the hospital the duty nurse gave me a chuckle when she said; “everyone in this hospital knows Santa is on this floor. I've been wait-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Santa Lou Knezevich

ing for five days to be on this shift to meet you.”

Her words gave me pause to reflect, acknowledging that I had cheered up some patients and staff. It was such a wonderful feeling to hear people say; “You made my day!”

Fortunately, I had more than a week to recuperate at home and ready myself for the schedule I had quickly approaching in November and December.

The first event following my surgery would test my recovery. Mrs Claus and I were to perform on the Polar Express. Boarding the train from trackside is a stretch when completely healthy. Footing can be tricky as the rock bed is very uneven. I was healing rapidly and I felt I could do this event without a problem however.

When we boarded Mrs. Claus turned to me with a stern look, shaking her finger and said; “Remember, don't lift children! I'll be watching you every minute so don't you dare!” I must confess that I didn't follow her orders completely, but I did ask parents for assistance and help lifting their children. Even before the surgery, holding kids while the railroad car sways and

bumps along the tracks takes some effort and stamina. I had no problems and was very careful so everything worked out well. In fact, my family instituted a new saying about me; “Lou lost his appendix but Santa Claus never lost a thing.”

The rest of my Christmas season was very busy and I made all the events as scheduled. Yes, I did get tired a few times and wished to be home resting. But, as I have said numerous times, putting on the “Red Suit” changes me and I am invigorated portraying my role.

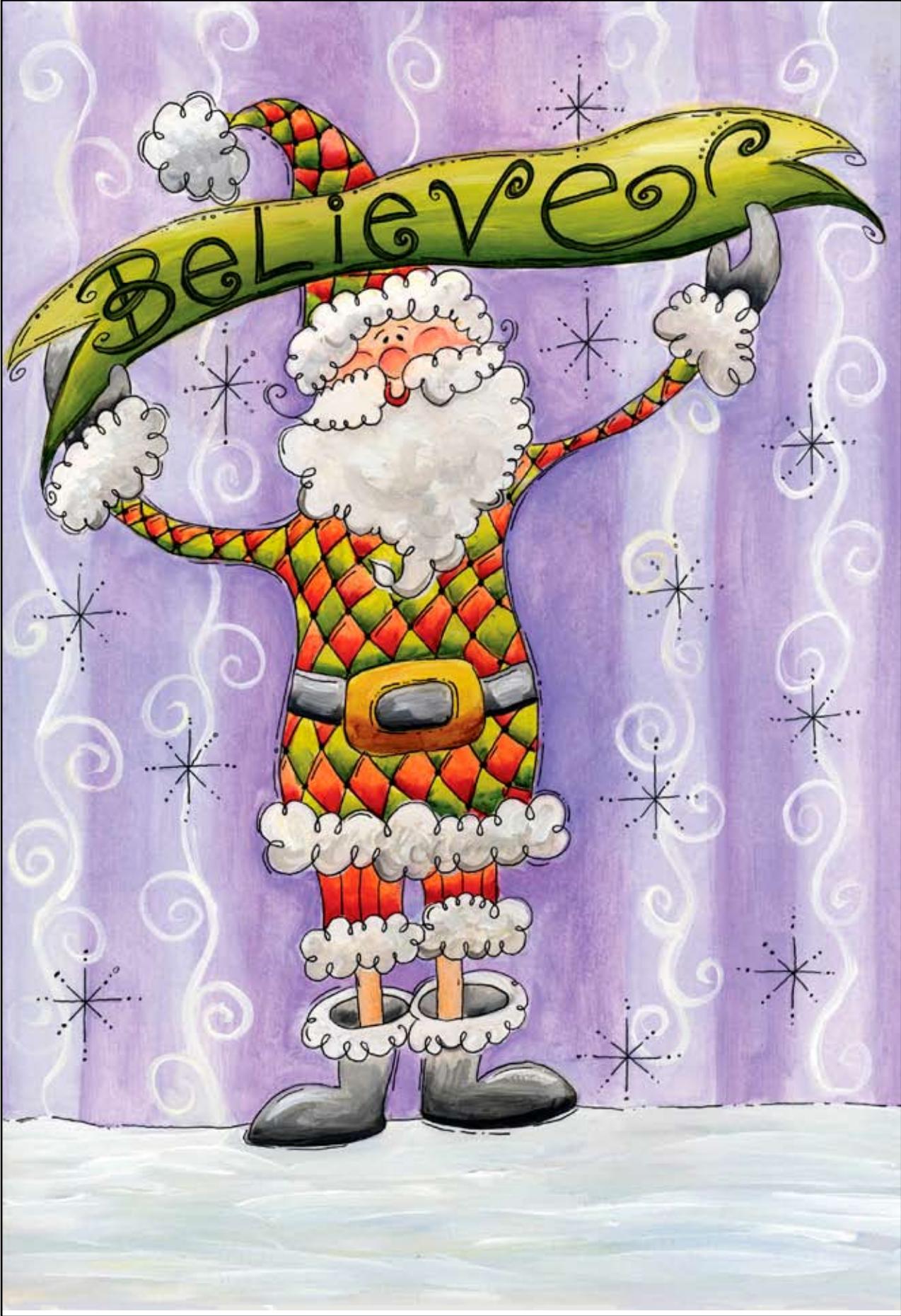
Christmas 2009 was a great year, one of my busiest and most rewarding. The Santa Suit has now been put away and the many memories of this past season parade through my mind.

I hope you, too, reflected and continue to reflect upon the many faces to which you have brought smiles and what a joy it is to be a Santa Claus. When you think of what we do you will find that we are a small community, vested in bringing to life this Santa Claus character in the imagination of all who see us. It is my hope you carry the ideals of Santa to the highest levels and that you are true to the real meaning of Santa Claus.

“It' is all about the children.”

By Lou Knezevich  
 ‘Georgia’s Premier Santa’  
 “Zivili”  
 Celebrate Life  
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<http://www.Santa-Lou.com>





# Santa out in blizzard caring for animals

By **BILL MCKEE**

Christmas was over. I had settled into the routine of my daily journey to and from Bristol to secure funds for another year.

As winter deepened, snow showers were becoming a daily part of the journey. Many nights were spent traveling home on icy and snowy roads.

One evening in February a storm was forecast to move into the area by late evening, bringing blizzard-like conditions.

Fortunately, thanks to a co-worker, I managed to get out of Bristol a little early that night.

Nothing was showing on the weather radar within 50 miles when I checked just before leaving. However, soon I became concerned about getting home after just a few short miles on the road. The snow had begun to fall so heavily as to almost be white-out conditions.

Thankfully, Rudolph was running well, with the nose glowing brightly. After about five miles of heavy snow and nasty road conditions, it cleared a bit and was not too bad for the next several miles, until I exited interstate and began the last five miles of winding country road home. It was once again snowing so hard I could barely see the top of Rudolph's ears. We made it across the river without getting the reindeer's feet wet, in blinding snow, then made the final turn to the east. The last two miles was mainly moderate snow with a relatively clear path before us.

Home, feed the reindeer, feed and fresh water for the cats and perk some coffee for a long winter's night. It seems like a good time to write, update some computer files and work on the upcoming Christmas season.

I went outside to check the snow and bird food levels in the feeders for the morning's hungry flocks.

Mrs. Claus and I have, what we are



CHRISTMAS CARD

pretty sure, is a raccoon feasting on our bird seed and suet cakes from the feeders. The raccoon had been literally stealing the suet cakes out of the wire feeder hung out on a limb. He even carried off a couple of the wire cages, which I never found. Finally I got smart and wired the basket to the limb and wired the basket closed. Next thing I knew our bird feeder full of Sunflower seed, hung on a metal pole, would be found with the pole bent over on some mornings emptied of seed.

While I was outside, amazed at how hard it was snowing, I checked the feeder (it was bent over and nearly empty) and decided to fill it up, hoping the birds would have food the following morning. It was pitch black and snowing so hard the only light I have, a flashlight, illuminated seemingly millions of snowflakes in its beam. The wind was howling and blowing the snow nearly horizontal in blinding swirls.

I carried the empty feeder over to the porch to fill it up. Bending over, I unlatched one plastic latch on the tub

which holds the seed (the latch on the other end of the lid is broken), and removed the lid. I just about jumped out of my clothes. Momentarily startled, I found myself staring eye to eye with one of the biggest, fattest raccoons I have ever seen. He was inside the tub, hunkered down, heartily chewing on seed. In his eyes I saw fear/fight/flee and I began laughing so hard I thought I would surely wake Mrs. Claus, sleeping soundly, insulated from my laughter inside a brick house, more than 50 feet away. I stood up, watching and laughing as he quickly scampered (well ... not really scampered, as fat as he was), over the rim of the tub and scurried hastily away across the concrete porch.

He is one very smart, very fat raccoon.

Bill McKee  
editor, Red Suit Gazette  
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<http://www.theSantaClaus.com>



# I BELIEVE IN SANTA CLAUS

I remember my first Christmas adventure with Grandma. I was just a kid. I remember tearing across town on my bike to visit her. On the way, my big sister dropped the bomb: “There is no Santa Claus,” she jeered. “Even dummies know that!”

My Grandma was not the gushy kind, never had been. I fled to her that day because I knew she would be straight with me. I knew Grandma always told the truth, and I knew that the truth always went down a whole lot easier when swallowed with one of her “world-famous” cinnamon buns. I knew they were world-famous, because Grandma said so. It had to be true.

Grandma was home, and the buns were still warm. Between bites, I told her everything. She was ready for me. “No Santa Claus?” she snorted .... “Ridiculous! Don’t believe it! That rumor has been going around for years, and it makes me mad, plain mad!! Now, put on your coat, and let’s go.” “Go? Go where, Grandma?” I asked. I hadn’t even finished my second world-famous cinnamon bun.

“Where” turned out to be Kerby’s General Store, the one store in town that had a little bit of just about everything. As we walked through its doors, Grandma handed me ten dollars. That was a bundle in those days. “Take this money,” she said, “and buy something for someone who needs it. I’ll wait for you in the car.” Then she turned and walked out of Kerby’s.

I was only eight years old. I’d often gone shopping with my mother, but never had I shopped for anything all by myself. The store seemed big and crowded, full of people scrambling to finish their Christmas shopping. For a few moments I just stood there, confused, clutching that ten-dollar bill, wondering what to buy, and who on earth to buy it for. I thought of everybody I knew: my family, my friends, my neighbors, the kids at school, and the people who went to my church.

I was just about thought out, when I suddenly thought of Bobby Decker. He was a kid with bad breath and messy hair, and he sat right behind me in Mrs. Pollock’s second grade class. Bobby Decker didn’t have a coat. I knew that

because he never went out to recess during the winter. His mother always wrote a note telling the teacher that he had a cough, but all we kids knew that Bobby Decker didn’t have a cough; he didn’t have a good coat. I fingered the ten-dollar bill with growing excitement. I would buy Bobby Decker a coat! I settled on a red corduroy one that had a

hood to it. It looked real warm, and he would like that.

“Is this a Christmas present for someone?” the lady behind the counter asked kindly, as I laid my ten dollars down. “Yes, ma’am,” I replied shyly. “It’s for Bobby.”

The nice lady smiled at me, as I told her about how Bobby really needed a good winter coat. I didn’t get any change, but she put the coat in a bag, smiled again, and wished me a Merry Christmas.

That evening, Grandma helped me wrap the coat in Christmas paper and ribbons and wrote, “To Bobby, From Santa Claus” on it. As we began to wrap it, a little tag fell out of the coat, and Grandma tucked it in her Bible. Grandma said that Santa always insisted on secrecy. Then she drove me over to Bobby Decker’s house, explaining as we went that I was now and forever officially, one of Santa’s helpers.

Grandma parked down the street from Bobby’s house, and she and I crept noiselessly and hid in the bushes by his front walk. Then Grandma gave me a nudge. “All right, Santa Claus,” she whispered, “get going.” I took a deep breath, dashed for his front door, threw the present down on his step, pounded his door and flew back to the safety of the bushes and Grandma.

Together we waited breathlessly in the darkness for the front door to open. Finally it did, and there stood Bobby.

Fifty years haven’t dimmed the thrill of those moments spent shivering, beside my Grandma, in Bobby Decker’s bushes. That night, I realized that those awful rumors about Santa Claus were just what Grandma said they were: ridiculous. Santa was alive and well, and we were on his team. I still have the Bible, with the coat tag tucked inside: \$19.95.

P.S. Always remember: If you quit believing in Santa Claus, you get underwear for Christmas!!

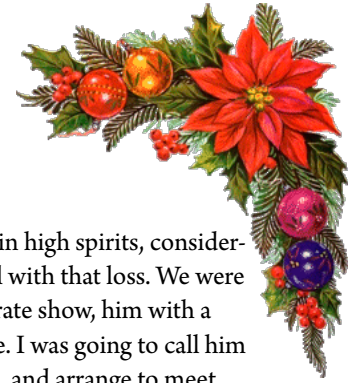
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THE SATURDAY EVENING POST  
 NORMAN ROCKWELL  
 The Saturday Evening Post.



# In Memorial



**THE FOLLOWING OBITUARIES WERE SUBMITTED BY SANTA DALE PARRIS, STAFFORD, VIRGINIA. RBS, MSC**

## **PAUL E. MOREHEAD**

PAUL E. MOREHEAD, Age 60, A retired US Navy Lt. Commander, of Chantilly, VA, passed away unexpectedly Wednesday, February 11, 2010. He is survived by his father, Charles A. Morehead, Jr.; his wife, Nancy; two daughters, Elsa Stang and Kela Schuettler; and two granddaughters, Charleigh Rose and Abigail Marie.

He was a model train enthusiast all of his life. The last five years he enjoyed spending the holidays portraying Santa for the delight of all ages. The highlight of the season was always Christmas morning breakfast with families and soldiers at Walter Reid Army Hospital.

He was active with his Kringle Kruiser as a member of the Route 66 PT Cruiser Club. Paul is survived by his father Charles A. Morehead Jr, wife Nancy, two daughters Elsa Stang and Kela Schuettler, and two grand-daughters Charleigh Rose and Abigail Marie. For those that knew and love him, it is now with heavy hearts and void from this sudden loss of our son, husband, father, Pop-Pop, friend and Santa that we not only grieve but celebrate this amazing man and his life.

## **SANTA JOE FARINA**

*I received the following information from Santa Brad Higbee in Maryland regarding the passing of Santa Joe Farina on February 13, 2010. - Santa Dale*

I am still in a bit of shock. . . I just read an e-mail about Joe's passing; when I saw the subject, and who sent it, I figured that it was about his recent stay in the hospital, and complications from Diabetes, and a request for support. I was dumbfounded to read that he had passed away. I spoke with Joe just days after they had to amputate the lower part

of one leg late last month. He was in high spirits, considering that he was just starting to deal with that loss. We were joking about putting together a pirate show, him with a peg leg, and me with a patched eye. I was going to call him this week to see how he was doing, and arrange to meet.

I had one extended Santa appearance at a grocery store for 56 hours, which I could not do myself due to prior commitments. Joe was the Santa who brought Christmas cheer to that store's employees and customers on my behalf.

I did not know Joe well, having seen him at a local magic and clown supply shop where he was the magician in residence, helping the owner when needed. I got to know him a little bit during December, as we worked together at the store; one day I was there for a few hours creating balloon art for the shoppers while he sat for photos. He and his wife also stopped by my restaurant gig on a few Thursdays when we needed to meet about the store appearances. I am saddened to not get the chance to know him

better, which was my hope after he left the hospital. I last saw him when we met in the afternoon on Christmas Eve (after I finished spending some time at the grocery store to add a little value for their contract with me since they paid in full even though snow reduced the amount of time Joe was actually there), to put a period on the season that we shared, so to speak, and chat about Santa and magic.

Joe was an accomplished magician, having performed at the Magic Castle. He was working on a book, including some sleights that he developed. I'm not sure how far along he was in that project.

His body is being cremated on Feb 15, so there will not be a viewing or a funeral. There will be a memorial service in a couple weeks to celebrate his life.

We'll miss you, Joe!!

- Santa Brad Higbee



## The Santa Claus

*“In putting on this suit  
and entering the sleigh,  
the wearer waives any  
and all rights to previous  
identity, real or implied,  
and fully accepts the  
duties and responsibilities  
of Santa Claus until  
such time that wearer  
becomes unable to do so  
either by accident or de-  
sign.”*

The “Santa Clause”  
from the movie *The Santa Clause*



## Polar Express Style Bells & more

These sand cast, solid Brass bells can be found online at Cat's Paw Web site. The bells pictured above are recent additions to Perry's inventory. For our readers who are familiar with my story 'The Bell on Christmas Eve,' this is my source of the small acorn bells which are very special to me.

I have purchased numerous bells from Perry and I can recommend his service, honesty and products very highly, without hesitation.

Contact Perry at:

Cat's Paw

<http://www.catspawdb.com/accessories.html>  
donnajo@aye.net

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### Masthead Artwork by Stephanie Suzanne Sentinella

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