



VOLUME 1
ISSUE 1

A Word From the Editor

From Santa's Garden, Welcome to the premier issue of the Jingle Press, a publication of the Amalgamated Order of Real Bearded Santas. This is your newsletter, designed to share stories, knowledge, educational opportunities and joy. We ask only one thing of all our members. Don't be just a reader, be a participant, sharing your stories, profiles, knowledge and magic.

In this issue we introduce columnists, Santa Jac Grimes, Al 'Santa' Horton and Santa Lou Knezevich. I think you will enjoy their writings and welcome their willingness to share some of the knowledge they have garnered over the years. I know there are many talented writers in our organization. Please don't hesitate to share your work and your ideas. Submissions are welcomed and encouraged.

Now you know the where and when for the 2008 convention. We need volunteers. To make our convention in Overland Park a huge success it will take lots of volunteers, hard work and time. Whatever your particular talents are, let us know. By getting organized now, with lots of volunteers, everyone can enjoy the week in Kansas with not too much required from anyone. As with being Santa Claus, this will require a lot of work, and will be a lot of fun. Don't hesitate, Christmas will be here soon and much work needs to be done before then. Please contact Santa Nicholas Trolli, Sr., TODAY! externalvp@aorbsantas.com

Up to this point, Santas Bob Elkins from Tampa and Santa John Degel have been handling public relations and publicity, doing an excellent job according to Santa Nicholas. If you have expertise in these areas don't hesitate to join in. The insurance program has been approved by the board. Detailed information will be available to all members soon.

Planting Seeds

During a recent phone conversation with Santa
cont'd

Jingle Press

By Santa Bill McKee Editor, *Jingle Press*

Mark your calendar. Pack the sleigh. Get ready to head to Overland Park, Kansas. Santa Claus is coming to town!

This is it. For Christmas in July in Overland Park, Kansas, July 8-13, 2008. Walk, drive, or fly to the largest gathering of Santas (ever) which will be converging on Kansas. There will be Elves, helpers, relatives, friends, and Santa's in training. Only 358 days to go.

The Overland Park Convention Center will be our base of operations as the North Pole drops in on the midwest for a week of food, fun, and Christmas Magic.

What does it mean to Overland Park for our organization to hold the "Discover Santa 2008 International Conference" there next year? Gerald L. Cook, President, Overland Park Convention & Visitors Bureau probably put it best when he said: "When Santa comes to town, it means everything! Not only does the AORBS perfectly align with our convention center and hotel resources, but Santa is all about putting a little love in your heart! Santa is about hope, raising spirits, giving and placing a smile upon your face. And each of these are qualities all of us should be mindful to practice each and every day, not just on certain days in December."

As you know, before making their decision, several members of the board spent many long hours and days looking at and touring cities. These tours included elves, a horse-drawn sleigh ride, a blizzard of snow, a Winter Wonderland-decorated conference room and visits to the American Jazz Museum and the Liberty Memorial. There were cookies and cookies and more cookies. Santa Timothy Connaghan said, "everywhere we went, from morning 'til night, whether it was down for breakfast, to a meeting, out to lunch or touring the cities, there were cookies."

An impromptu tour by Santa Tim Mack led to a closer look at Overland Park. "I was on my way through, going to Santa Claus, Indiana for a summer job," said Santa Mack. "With less than 24-hours notice that I was coming, the people of Overland Park had little time to prepare, but boy did they roll out the red carpet," he said. "I was extremely impressed with the folks at the convention center and what they had to show me. The center was beautiful, with hotels close by and mostly on the same level," Mack said. "And I want the members to understand that this is coming from a guy who was sold on Branson with little need to look elsewhere," he said.

After his report to the board they decided to take a second look at Overland Park.

Arriving in Overland Park, a red Durango transported them to the convention center, where they were greeted in royal North Pole style. Upon entering the convention center they discovered elves, a quartet singing carols, life-size Nutcracker statues, 5-foot snowflakes, Santas and much, much more. "Then we sat down to an elaborate banquet, featuring prime rib or a turkey Christmas Dinner, topped off with a hot cookie and ice cream desert," said Santa Nicholas Trolli, "Their idea of cookies and milk!" Employees and city officials wore red Santa hats and vests. There was a glistening ice sculpture, along with blowing snow and lots of Christmas trees. And cookies. The three-day stay in Overland Park also included a Royals game (the Royals won!), a welcoming greeting by local AORBS members and a gingerbread house at one of the hotels. And cookies.

Santa Nicholas said, "We were chauffeured all three days. Most of the hotels we visited had 'here comes santa claus' playing and we were greeted with a bell man at every hotel." Santa Nicholas summed up the tours and the essence of the decision in favor of Overland Park when he said; "It would take a special host place to warm the hearts of Santas far from home,
cont'd

cont'd from Planting Seeds

Nicholas, as we scurried to get this issue formulated, filed, polished and published, he planted a seed.

"It is my feeling AORBS needs a mission," he said. Though he could not see my face, I smiled (as did my heart). I would like to water that seed and offer it out to be nurtured. A recent post on the message boards hinted that other Santas are also looking for a way, as an organization, to give to the greater good. They suggested we begin naming 'honorary Santas.' A good idea. But we can expand this even further by BEING Santa, as individuals, & as an organization. By offering something to our communities and the world, we would be growing into our own as an organization truly representing Santa. What that 'something' is I do not know. We should not be in a rush to find it, but follow the path of the Spirit of Christmas, always.

AORBS is a wonderful organization of dedicated, real-bearded gentlemen who share a very special gift. This seed is our opportunity to cultivate and give a gift to the world we all share. I have always been a firm believer in 'the whole is much greater than the sum of the parts.'

Santa-America is a wonderful group of Santa's and Elves, which offer untold, incalculable, joy to some very broken hearts. And I know AORBS is very proud to be associated with them. But there are so very many in dire need of so much now, both in the U.S. and around the world. We are an international organization, after all. Santa has always, and will always belong to all the people on the planet, regardless of country, culture, creed or belief system. Santa is for the children, first, foremost and always. As Santa Jac stressed in his column, this IS a Sacred Trust. Somewhere recently, I saw this; "Santa Claus - The Keeper of Childhood Dreams."

Maybe it is time for Santa to give the world a gift. A world desperately in need of healing. For the children and the children yet to be.

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We are coordinating with Santa Jim Williams of Tampa who designed the AORBS Southeast Web Site.



Short North Shopping District in Columbus, OH

cont'd from Overland Park

and Santa's International Conference needed just such a place for its 2008 conference," said Santa Nicholas, AORBS vice-president and conference director. "We began our search with over 200 cities. When we had narrowed the list down to the top five cities, we then began our visits. Each city we visited indeed gave us a warm welcome, made us feel at home, and showcased their attributes. This did not make our decision at all easy because we had made many new friends! However, a decision had to be made."

"Overland Park was the shining example of what we were in search of as a host city," continued Trolli. "They from the beginning exhibited determination and a can-do attitude that made them sparkle and shine. Fellow Santas, we have found our second home for the 2008 International Conference and it is indeed Overland Park, Kansas. I am excited to be working with such hospitable people as the Overland Park team, and I am eager to get down to work with them. Together we will make the "Discover Santa 2008 International Conference" exceptional."

One thing is for sure, the hospitality shown (not only in Overland Park, but in all the cities visited) made the scouts from the north feel very much at home. "All the cities were very gracious and wonderful," said Santa Nicholas. "We were warmly welcomed everywhere we went." Looking to future conferences, he said, "All of the cities we visited, as well as those we didn't this year, are certainly on our list as possible sites in the future."

The conference begins on July 9, 2008 with the 8th scheduled as arrival day. A dinner is planned for that evening (8th). Anyone who would like to arrive in Overland Park earlier and partake of the many places to visit and sights to see, is most welcome to do so. Arrangements for special hotel rates have been made. For those who will be flying in, the Kansas City

airport is local (but the availability of mass sleigh parking is yet to be determined). The Sheraton is the host hotel and others will be available as needed.

There will be a large parade down a city street complete with music and a band or bands, many educational opportunities and workshops, possibly a Royals game (if they are in town) with special events for the Santas at the game, and lots of socializing, sharing and fun. We are hoping to have a sponsor for a golf tournament and many other events and opportunities.

Mrs. Claus will be a vital part of this conference. As Santa Nicholas said, "Mrs. Claus is an important part of Santa and this Santa could not be Santa without her." He went on to say, "I know not all Santas rely on her so much, but for the majority she is as important as the suit, whether she is out front or behind the scenes. This conference is about education, camaraderie and learning from one another," said Trolli, "and Mrs. Claus is a big part of it all."

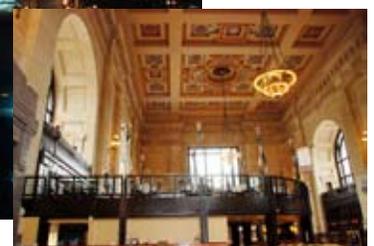
As Santa, an important conference goal will be for our organization to leave its mark on the city and surrounding area. "We will be looking to help Overland Park find ways to assist charities and the children in hospitals and special need," said Santa Nicholas, "after all, this IS why we do what we do." Further details will be published as they become available. In the mean time, volunteer! "Now the hard work begins," said Santa Nicholas, "any talent you have, we want to hear from you." Volunteers are needed in all areas. "A volunteer coordinator for the conference is needed NOW!," said Nicholas. Some of the areas of expertise required include sales, parade, class and seminar ideas, suggestions for speakers, just to name a few.

Contact Santa Nicholas Trolli, Sr., at: externalvp@aorbsantas.com

Union Station Arch in Columbus



Union Station
Kansas City, MO



YOU SHOULD KNOW

Overland Park, Kansas - <http://opkansas.org/>

Overland Park Convention and Visitors

Bureau - <http://www.opcvb.org/>

Sheraton Hotel - <http://www.starwoodhotels.com/sheraton/property/overview/index.html?propertyID=1400>

Transportation Information - <http://www.opcvb.org/visitor/transportation.html>



Busch Stadium in St. Louis, M.O.



Gerald Cook *President* Overland Park CVB last time you will see face like this he promised to grow beard and become Santa if they got to host the Convention



A bedtime surprise for Santa at the Sheraton Hotel



*and to all...
a good night.*

Kringle's Wisdom

By Santa Fuzzy

This is the time of year when you really need to be thinking about the upcoming season. If you want to be a mall Santa, then contact the organizations which find Santas to place them in malls. Let them know what you are looking for and they will place you. Usually they pick Santas early enough so that arrangements, including transportation to the area, accommodations and other necessities can be made.

On the other hand, if you are planning on striking out as a home or special occasion Santa, then you need to be doing lots of things now. Your best bet is to find an agent in your area. This could be anyone who has connections with the public and private sector, and preferably a terrific advertising capability. This will make your work easier. Even with an agent, there are many additional things you can do to increase your business during the season.

Always carry around cards with you. Leave one or more wherever you visit and always talk to whomever you can about what you have to offer and what you can and cannot do. If you are in a restaurant, suggest something like a meal with Santa for a period of time. This will give them the opportunity to generate revenue and the kids will love it! If you want to do adult parties, there are many places to search for them. Just make sure that whatever type of visit you want do, you are well versed in the activities and that you create an atmosphere which will keep the folks asking you back year after year. Few things are worse than a bad visit by Santa.

I have built some relationships over the years that are terrific. Recently moving to the East Coast, I had my contacts on the West Coast call their company offices, customer offices, or others that they know. This way I had clientele waiting when I arrived. If you don't have anyone to fall back on, try contacting several photographers and asking them if they would be interested in taking some Santa pictures at a daycare center, or other locations where folks might want a Santa to visit. Discuss your ideas with them and let them know your requirements.

Make up your own modeling cut sheet. Typically this would have your picture on the front (or a couple of terrific shots of you) with your offerings and fees on the back. Include several ways to contact you, including phone, email, etc. You will have to be prepared for the calls when they come. When you hand out the cards, if you indicate that you usually are booked for the season before the middle of November, then you might get some earlier calls.

One thing I like to do is, if I raise my prices, I make up certificates indicating the old price to all my regular clients if they bring in one or more bookings from new customers. This doesn't sound like much, but believe it or not, my old customers

rarely use the certificate, asking if they can pass it on to others. Of course. This gives me another family/booking for the season.

This past season I averaged one visit per day from 28 November through Christmas Day. Actually it was a little bit more, but not quite one and a half. I set up my visits so that I would usually have 2 visits on Fridays and 3 or 4 visits on Saturdays and Sundays. During the week (Monday through Thursday) I would average 2 visits between these 4 days. Life was grand. I would be busy, yet I had "me" time. (Which is needed from time to time by us all.)

I am already booking visits for this year. If I perform well during my appearances for a couple of charities I am doing for Christmas in July, I may have more bookings by the end of August. Life is grand.

Currently, I am putting together greeting cards which I will send to a few select groups, families, and businesses I wish to work for again. On the front of these folding greeting cards I have a photo of myself. Inside, I include the discount certificate I created and a note reminding them to book early if they would like me back this season.

Beside my phone, I keep my payment schedule. This way I can assist those who don't want me for a full hour or those who couldn't afford to have me for more than a quick drop-by and handing out gifts to the children. I also have a few notes on what Santa may need and how to treat Santa when he arrives. This will help those who plan the parties. They don't always realize that Santa is not a young hombre by any means and that parking a long way away from the door may attract attention they really don't want. Of course that depends on the area they are located.

Last but not least, I have a list to help me remember all the things that I can do during my visit. This will preclude me from missing a very important opportunity during the call. I have had several calls in the past that started out asking if I would do balloon animals. I had one who wanted me to ride a unicycle. Still others asked if I was afraid of heights because they wanted to fly me in. My favorite was being brought in by a team of horses drawing a sleigh. Good thing I know something about that.

Your business will grow each year if you only do two things. The first is to get out and promote yourself. Make every day an opportunity and this will increase your visits during the season. The second is to make sure you are the best Santa around. You don't have to do magic tricks and you don't have juggle. You do have to please the "main reason" for your visit; the children (or adults if it a company party).

TIP OF THE MONTH

Your breath is the most important item during your visit. Children have always gotten past the fake beards and Sears Santa Suits. They see in their eyes only the vision of Santa and the elves, the reindeer and all the toys. But ... And I must really say this, BUT, if your breath is bad, the whole visit will be bad. The children will not want to hug you. They won't even want to sit on your lap. I use to use the candy canes to keep my breath fresh, but all that sugar finally got to me. Now I have found

those small strips you place on your tongue are terrific. One just before I make my visit is enough. If the visit is going to be more than an hour, I try to sneak one ever hour. I also watch what I eat during the season too! Nothing spicy or will create bad breath or other situations we won't go into here.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

I have found that more and more companies are wanting Santa at their holiday party. As I entered the hall for one party, I was asked to read a naughty and nice list that someone in the company made up. After reading a few items on each side, I asked if I could appoint some elves to assist with this task. They weren't too pleased with my suggestion, but agreed. What I did then was look for the two folks who looked like they caused the most mischief and assigned them the Naughty and Nice keepers of the list. As they read the lines, they were to walk over to the person they were talking about. I would either admonish them and tell them it is not too late to be good or I would give them a big hug. At the end of the list I handed out a bag of candy to the nicest person (by popular vote) and the naughtiest person (again by popular vote) received a lump of coal. It was a gentleman who was the naughtiest, so I ended this activity by telling him, so that everyone could hear, that I had someone outside that wanted to meet him. After that laughter settled down, I turned to the nice person, who happened to be a lady, and I told her that she could meet me outside after the party and I would teach her to be naughty. This too received laughter.

The end thought for all this is to be prepared for anything. Party planners have been notorious for wanting Santa to do things at the party. If you don't feel comfortable doing them, by all means don't. But if you do feel a little froggie at the occasion, then by all means, enjoy the moment.

That's all for now. Don't forget to send your experiences, tips and questions. I will be more than happy to answer them or publish them here for others to assist with their answers. We don't have to agree but we all have some great ideas that we could share.

Santa Fuzzy
santastime@gmail.com





by Lou Knezevich

Last month I wrote about covering wristwatches, jewelry and hairy forearms. I hope some of my comments started you thinking about your own appearance and maybe you've come up with some ideas to sharpen your costuming.

No. 2 - The Great Cover-Up If you take the time to look for Gloves you will find them in all colors, shapes and fabrics. I started by doing a computer search for "White gloves" and "Band Supply" and going from there. You may need to experiment a little but I'm sure you can come up with the right style, price and fit for any occasion.

a. What is the difference between cotton, polyester and rayon?

My first purchase of gloves was from a Band, Supply Company and I purchased a dozen pairs of nylon gloves. The gloves were fine but they do have some limitations. First, like lady's nylons they snag and they get "runners."

I found this out during a house party when I noticed the biggest snag from my forefinger to the top of my hand. I had to remember to turn my hand or cover it away from the photographers. Oh yes, I did have an extra pair (I don't leave home without them) but I noticed the problem after I was in the event. Polyester is similar to nylon and also can snag. It seems to me that both of the synthetic fibers tend not to wear as well as cotton and don't brighten up as nicely after washing.

The virtue of cotton gloves is that they do not tear or snag as easily as rayon. They are not as snug a fit as rayon or polyester but I don't think that's an issue. Cotton seems to wear better than the synthetics but I have noticed they too can get a small tear rather than a long snag. Cotton seems to wash better, stay whiter and may be a more comfortable fit. Synthetic blends and cotton gloves are offered with snaps, elastic or Velcro for a better fit around the wrist. Some gloves don't have snaps or elastic and may be more comfortable for those Santa's with a wide wrist.

b. What is the best glove length; regular or long?

My preference is always the long length and I'm working my way thru the regular size pairs that I have left. The long length comes over the wrist and makes for a more finished look to your costume. These gloves will help hide your arm when you're photographing those precious moments with Santa. For Santa's who

are going to be out in the cold weather "Biker" and band suppliers offer some very adaptable leather gloves. These are called "Gauntlet" gloves which have an extended and flared wrist covering. In Medieval times the glove offered protection to the knight's wrist and lower fore arm. I found a light weight leather glove that works very well with a Santa costume. Most of the "Biker" suppliers offer black leather gloves but band supply companies offer a very neat white leather gauntlet glove.

c. I can't turn pages when reading stories with my gloves on.

Yes you can. Most band supply companies sell a glove with the palm and fingers covered with small white rubber dots. These gloves are great for turning pages, picking up kids or handing out gifts. The dots are barely visible and this is a great multipurpose glove. Before I started using this glove I had to take at least one glove off to turn the pages and squeeze the glove hand to hold that slippery book in place. The luxury of this glove is that you can walk in with it on, play your Santa role and when comes to be story time.....just turn the pages and read! I hope this has given you some insight about gloves as Santa's hands are one of the most important elements of his character. I'll be checking my list for something of interest for next issue. See you then!

Zivili (*Celebrate Life*)

Lou Knezevich _ Santalou@bellsouth.net

Reflections

On A Tragedy

EDITORS NOTE: Bill McKee is a photo technician and Virginia Tech alumnus who works for the Bristol Herald Courier and takes his role as a volunteer Santa seriously. He shares his thoughts and feelings as he witnesses the horrors of the Virginia Tech shooting while recuperating from surgery. (*This was written and published the week following the tragedy*)

Recovering from minor surgery with little to do except watch tv, eat, sleep and heal, I find myself flipping through the dial one afternoon and stumble upon "Massacre at Virginia Tech." This looks big. Not the usual media hype, but big. I can only watch long enough to learn that many are dead and several more injured in a killing spree at my alma mater. I cannot watch, for now!

Christmas will be here before I can turn around and I need to heal. I have spent most of my time since surgery thinking about Christmas and using my recovery time to 'catch up' before it arrives. When you are Santa Claus, Christmas is your constant companion and gleeful guide.

And now this. So many innocent lives lost in horrors unspeakable, just upstairs from where I photographed students' annual physics competition

just a few short years ago. Young lives, their eyes bright and dancing with the whole wide world stretched out before them. These young lives barely beyond childhood had futures and dreams.

Norris Hall and West Ambler Johnston Hall are both well known to me. My dorm was not very far from Norris. How many times did I cross that drill field? How many times pass by or through Norris Hall on my way to or fro, scurrying here and there, with few thoughts of Christmas or massacre then?

Short stints at the keyboard help me build my strength and stamina, preparing me for my return to work. Work which will once again find me logging in to my window-on-the-world where I witness daily horrors which rarely (if ever) are seen in your morning paper over coffee or on your tv screen. Horrors of children in hospitals and hospices across the country and around the world. Children without homes, food, shelter, or any of the basic necessities of life. Children witnessing and surviving nightmares come to life daily in wars around the world, and children without any hope of a future. I see their faces and war-ravaged bodies in the pictures which flash across my eyes. The horrors burned into my memory forever. Christmas will soon be here and I need to heal.

I wake every morning, grateful for my time and my opportunities to bring smiles and joy and hope in a world seemingly gone mad. A world where violence begets violence with ever-escalating

enthusiasm, it seems. I strive daily in an attempt to lead others to carry a little of the Christmas Spirit with them each and every day. I give thanks for the wind on my face and the warmth of the sun on my skin. I give thanks because I have been given so much which offers me comforts few others around the world ever know.

And as I heal, I witness the horrors just up the road. I saw in photographs the sea of lights twinkling in the night on the field where I share so many memories. Memories from heady days filled with innocence and wonder. The senseless horrors which reverberated across the drill field and around the world Monday, stole the innocence of many children this week. Thousands scarred for life from senseless violence manifest in one person seeking attention through extreme violence that Monday morning.

Santa feels like a witness (mostly), the Elves do most of the work! Witness to a world where the children no longer have a garden in which to play and make things grow. This makes it more imperative for Santa to strive harder every day, dedicating more time and resources and energy, spreading joy and smiles and Christmas Spirit where and when I can.

Who ever said it was easy being Santa Claus. It is the easiest job in the world, and the hardest; hardest when I witness the faces of the children as they weep and feel their great sadness and sorrow.

It will be Christmas soon and I need to heal.



Profiles:

Gary Casey, AORBS Southeast Region Director

I began life in Hartford, CT in the new wing of the Hartford Hospital, December 3, 1939, just at the start of World War II. As it turned out I was the oldest of 6 children and lived in many locations over the years. I started school in a one-room school house. My mom kept me back a year because she didn't think I learned anything. That is when I moved into a real big school with a lot of people. Strange as it may seem, that one room school is still there sitting on top of the hill and is now a historical school house.

We lived in Windsor, CT, and mom and dad worked at Hamilton Standard Propeller making parts for the WWII planes. Dad's actual job was to run the baseball team program so they could play different war factories to keep up morale. Mom made spark plugs for the planes.

Over the years I played baseball under my dad's direction and ended up playing ball on the same field that dad played on when he was with the Brooklyn Dodgers during spring training camp in Clearwater FL. That was one big thrill for dad. His disappointment was that I didn't make the big leagues. I blew my elbow out before that could happen.

After graduation from high school I joined the Air Force for 4 years, 8 months and 9 days. My enlistment was extend for the Cuban missile crisis and Berlin crisis but it was reduced later. I was an Air Policeman during that time, working about 12 months on the base police side and rest of the time in SAC Security. About 45 months of my time was served in

Morocco. I had a great commander who wanted me to say in, but I had one request he could not make happen. We had the second ranked security operation in the world, being second only to Offutt AFB, SAC Headquarters. Col Frazier's reward was to take over the operation at Offutt, where I'm sure he did a great job.

After service I went to college, graduated and went into sales for the next 20 years. I married a girl I met in college and we stayed together for 23 years. We have 3 children; 2 boys and a girl. In 1988 we parted ways.

I went thru 5 years of counseling where two goals were set for me. They were, to start dating, and to try seeing things in shades of gray, instead of black and white. The result is that I make it a habit to date twice a year and I still have trouble seeing in shades of gray.

I left sales and went into courier work, driving around the Southeastern US. Atlanta is my main area of operation.

In 1995 I began having shaving problems, nicking myself all the time. I decided it was time for an electric razor, which I got for Christmas. That was a great gift, but I still ended up nicking myself. That ended my shaving days and I have not shaved since, nor do I ever plan to.

In 1996 I had my first Santa gig in an old corduroy suit I bought from a clown. He sent me on a couple of appearances and my life as Santa began.

I found a hairdresser to make my hair look beautiful. In 1997 Joyce, the hairdresser, sent

me out on a few stops, including Harry's for 8 days, which included reindeer! I asked Joyce if she was going to book me full time next year. She was not interested, wanting to stick to hairdressing, so I went out on my own.

SantaAtlanta.com was born.

Growing the business is a lot of fun for me. That fun has been enhanced by my supporting cast, Bryan, my data master, Web master and the wizard on the computer. Without him it would be impossible to do what I do with SantaAtlanta.com.

He has converted everything to e-mail, sending PDF files to everyone. This past year he set up payments on PayPal which worked out great. I can easily send out 20,000 postcards thru hotcards.com, who handles the printing and mailing for me.

Santa Tim's workshop, the International University of Santa Claus, taught by Santa Timothy Connaghan, started in 2001 and keeps Tim on the road. The Atlanta school now hosts around 130 people and is competing with about 15 other schools around the U.S. This year we would like to see 140 people for the Atlanta school for the 2-day program. This offers the attendees a chance to get together for three dinners, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, if they wish.

Did everything go smoothly in 2006? We did 355 events, plus 71 hours of charity events, making it a great year of giving and receiving. This year we will expand, adding a Salvation Army page to the web site, and collect a bag of toys from each of our customers for them. We will also be handling their events for the upcoming Christmas season.

Last year I had to hire an assistant to answer the telephone, which worked out great for me. Being hearing impaired has presented a new challenge that my assistant has handled nicely. She just e-mails the phone calls to me, error free.

2007 brings new challenges. I was appointed to the AORBS Board of Directors by Santa Tim. I also was responsible for helping organize the Red Suit Roundtable held this past February. The luncheon serves as a counterbalance to the Founders Luncheon held in California in January.

I am geared up for this upcoming season with added pleasure. The 2008 Convention planning will be fun and exciting to work on. I know it will be a blast and great for as many as possible to get together. I hope to see you there.

Ho Ho Ho
Santa Gary Casey



Santa All the Time

By Santa Jac Grimes

Are you Santa all the time? If you're reading this, it means you are probably a member of AORBS. You have a real beard and, many more of you than not, stay in character all year long. We all have stories of Santa getting caught out and about, but keep in mind that every time you're recognized as Santa, two things happen.

1. You have an opportunity to market yourself as Santa.
2. You represent all of us.

Marketing

Whether you work at a mall, free-lance parties, or only portray Santa for charity, when someone asks if you're Santa you know your efforts are successful. If they, child or adult, recognize you as Santa in June, there's a good chance they'll think about you if they need Santa during the holidays ... assuming they know where to find you.

How many of you have business cards? Let's see a show of hands. Hold them up high where I can see them. Uh Huh! If not, why not?

I've said this over and over, unless your work as Santa is totally dependent on someone else (mall, agent, employer, etc.), you need business cards. They should at the least have your photo on them and, at the best, be clever enough that

when you hand them out people will say, "Wow, that's really cool!" It's that 'wow' factor that will set you apart from other Santas.

Your card should also display your web address, along with the phone number you use to book appointments. If you do your own booking, you may want to consider having your sleigh phone listed. Your street address is optional, but a web address and phone number is critical in this modern age.

If you're Santa all the time you should also carry stickers or trading cards. This is a good way to promote Santa's image and spread good will, even if all your Santa activities are volunteer.

You represent all of us

I was making a hospice visit last September to a little girl that did not see Christmas 2006. When I returned to the office, my volunteer coordinator asked if I'd walk through the office and say hello to all the staff and nurses. Later that week, a trainer told me that when she saw me she was 4-years-old again. We have that effect on people whether we are in the Red Suit or red shorts. If you don't believe me look at the light in their eyes.

There's been considerable conversation on the Santa lists about background checks and a code of conduct for our organization. These are still in the formative stages, but they are necessary for the work. Here's why: Being Santa IS a Sacred Trust. Let me say that again. Being Santa IS a Sacred Trust.

If Chuckles the Clown bonks a rude kid on the head with a rubber chicken and gets fired from a gig, it does not affect Mr. Floppy Shoes or any other clown. If Marvello the Magician makes a pass at a kid's mom at a birthday party, it does not affect other magicians. The same cannot be said about Santa! When Santa got fired from a mall for telling kids they were fat, ripples were felt in our whole community. I don't even want to think about the creep on the motorcycle that abducted the little girl last year. These are extreme examples, but what you do in public affects me and all the other gentlemen that take on this very important work. Your behavior in public should be above reproach. I like a cold beer on a hot day as well as the next guy, but

if there's any chance I'll run into a child, it's Diet Coke. I don't mean to sound preachy but someone is always scrutinizing everything you do in public, whether you know it or not.

Tips on being Santa all year

It's the beard, brother.

You may be Santa because of what's in your heart, but you're known as Santa by what's on your face. Keep your beard and hair neatly trimmed, even if it is long, and if you need to bleach, get those roots done and condition, condition, condition!

Dress the part.

If you are going somewhere that you will run into people that have the potential to hire Santa, you should dress as Santa. Ask yourself in each situation, "What would Santa wear?" Red pants and shorts, Hawaiian shirts, a red hat, cap or beret all tell people "yes I'm him!"

Don't be shy.

When you hear a kid say "Mom that looks like Santa", don't be afraid to interact. Make sure you speak directly to the child but make sure it's OK with Mom or Dad first. If I'm asked directly if I'm him, I usually respond "What do you think?" or "What do you know about Santa?" I lead the conversation from there, but I never say I'm the one, the only Santa Claus. I let the child decide.

Educate yourself.

Being Santa year-round is not for the faint of heart. You will find yourself in situations where the questions come rapid fire. You'd better know the answers to the basic stuff and have a good feel for shooting from the hip on the not so well known. Santa Tim Connaghan's book, Behind the Red Suit, has a good section on Frequently Asked Santa questions.

And finally if you get a chance to go to Santa school, GO! I hope to see several of you in Atlanta in August. I'll be attending the IUSC to obtain my Master's of Santa Claus.

All my best for a great summer!

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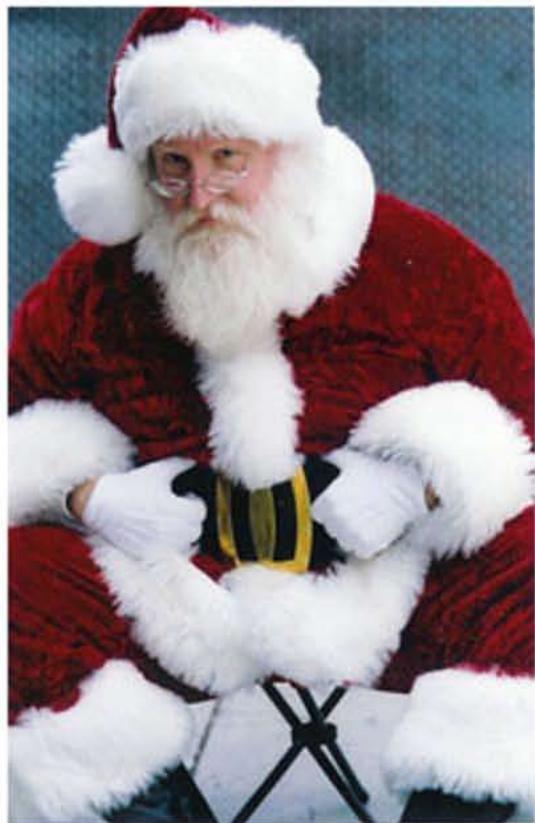
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The Workshop will be at the HYATT PLACE
8 am both mornings
- Lunch Catered -
YOUR TRIPLE HITTER
- Dinner -
Friday Night - Fuddrucker's,
Saturday Night - BUG-A-BOO Steak House
& Sunday Night - Olive Garden.



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