

Red Suit Gazette

Unlock the World of Santa



The Brotherhood of the Direct Descendents of Santa

Volume 1 Issue 1
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“Wanna’ take a ride?”

*(With due credit to Art Bell,
Coast-to-Coast AM, for the title.)*

Art Bell offers his varied listeners to, and participants in his popular radio show, “journeys” thru insights and possibilities. To some, it opened their eyes to realities before unknown.

Becoming Santa, and learning to portray this ancient Spirit, is a life-long journey. It is a road fraught with many pitfalls, diversions and enticing misdirections, which could feed egos instead of hearts.

It should be undertaken with great caution, but also great abandon.

The one guiding beacon on the path must always be the children’s Sacred Spirits. Santa is the guardian of childhood dreams.

Welcome all to the premier edition of the Red Suit Gazette. This publication is offered to promote education, knowledge, wisdom, stories and sharing among all in the world of Santa Claus.

On these pages you will find some of the writers familiar to many of you already. Through their stories and columns, knowledge is shared, offering insight and guidance.

In this first issue, we begin our journey into the Heart of Santa Claus, by offering up some familiar writings, as a foundation on which to expand our understanding.

Wanna’ take a ride?

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Santa’s Sleigh Ride
Dover Publications ‘Old-Fashioned Christmas Illustrations.’

From the Heart of Santa Claus

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By Bill McKee
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Forty years ago a man who had a Dream was taken from this world by an assassins bullet as he stood on a balcony in Memphis Tennessee. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a man of peace, and Love. His Dream was for the children and their futures.

Dr. King knew that obtaining basic human and civil rights for black America was only the first step on a long, elusive, dangerous road to that Dream. His struggles

to expose racism and to ultimately reach Washington’s elite was bitter, bloody and deadly. In the end, civil rights legislation was enacted and a healing process began.

Dr. King did not stop there, but continued the struggle for the poor and downtrodden, working to bring justice and peace worldwide.

Not a dreamer, but a visionary, Dr. King had been granted passage to the mountain top from where he could see

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“Mirror, Mirror”



By Lou Knezevich

“Mirror, mirror on the wall; what Santa takes the best picture of them all?” Now of course you all replied, “I do!”

I was going through my “Things to Do List” when I saw my notation about taking photographs. We Santa’s are one of the most photographed personalities in the world but for some of us, being photographed doesn’t come easily.

Taking good Santa photographs is the ability to master a few simple techniques. Another benefit is that you may be able to expand your Santa season and develop an additional revenue stream. If you are photogenic you can find professional photographers who will hire you or you may wish to exchange your services for professional photographs. Another benefit is starting your season early as most photographers like to do their Christmas photo shoots in November and a few of these may just buy you that new costume you’ve been eyeing.

Judging by the many bland photos and “Deer-in-the-headlights” stares I see posted on the internet, I think we better start with some tips on how to smile. In fact Santas, we need to practice how to smile a lot, and how to encourage a memorable photograph.

The first thing you must master is how to relax. When you’re tense or

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a brighter world. This was not some mythical place, but a reality when children of all races, creeds, colors and nationalities would play and share and grow together. A world without fear. A world devoid of war, hate, hunger and bitter rivalries. A world where resources are not hoarded by the rich and powerful, abandoning the rest to survive any way they can.

Today, that Dream seems even more distant and more impossible to reach than ever. As America struggles with the duality and duplicity of justice for all, and torture for some, and little-to-nothing for many in desperate need, justice seems just another word that has lost meaning. And the children, seemingly have been forgotten altogether.

From my late childhood through my teen years, I was required to do one thing, without exception. Any time Dr. King appeared on tv, or spoke on the radio, my father made absolutely sure I had nothing else to do but sit and watch, listen and learn.

Growing up in a mostly white, rural farm community in the south, my life was far removed from what I witnessed on tv. From the dogs and water hoses and violence in Alabama, where many were beaten by police, to the steps of the Washington Monument, I watched as Dr. King led so very, very many people towards a brighter future. I certainly didn’t understand all that I watched and heard, but I took it all in. I will never forget my father, his kind, wise words full of determination and intent to make sure I paid attention, as he said to me many times; “What this man says is important!”

A couple of years ago, as Christmas neared, there was this precious, feather-light, radiant little girl who climbed onto my knee. She looked up at me bravely with these wide, excited eyes, and in this almost-whispering, angelic voice, asked; “What does Santa Claus want for Christmas?”

What does Santa Claus want for Christmas? My smile must have stretched from ear-to-ear as I began to tell her what I want for Christmas, what I have Always wanted. It is the only thing I ask for. It is the only thing Santa Claus could ever need.

I told her of a world in which every child has a safe playground in which to play and learn and grow. I described a world in which no child goes hungry, or without a

warm, safe, comfortable place to nestle, and dream dreams of wonder every night of the year. A world where no child goes without Love.

Listening to Dr. King, and witnessing the events of history, opened a doorway for me. I began to see realities that my safe life had veiled. I began to question the world around me, constantly seeking answers. And I learned I did not always need to know the answer.

I slowly came to know the Heart of Santa Claus living in my heart, as I began to understand Love, real love for all mankind, and the Sacredness of life and children everywhere.

Dr. King’s Dream was not some pipe dream, some idealistic prattle, an idle thought. It was, and IS, a vision of a possible future. Dr. King understood with a clarity of vision (transcending time and space) what few comprehend, or even imagine. He understood Love.

He also knew, and profoundly understood something else. He knew it all too well. He knew that for the Dream to be manifest into reality, it requires dedication and endless struggles, here and now; what he called “the fierce urgency of now.”

A devout Southern Baptist who lived his life’s commitment, Dr. King soared beyond boundaries, transcending all creeds, races, classes and nations, to an understanding of the brotherhood of all mankind.

Exactly one year before he was assassinated, he gave what I consider to be one of his most profound sermons. Dr. King knew he must finally speak out about the war. He understood profoundly the real harm done to all sides of any war, especially to the children.



There is one absolute fact known about war. In war (any war) justified, unjust, right, wrong, legal, illegal, clandestine or whatever war you choose, there is one absolute truth.

The ones who always suffer the most and the greatest harm, in all ways, are the children.

His sermon, titled “Beyond Vietnam,

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trying too hard, it's not going to look natural. Let's start with this exercise. Open your mouth slightly; relaxing, slowly breathe in and out about six times. Do it again but as you breathe in and out part your lips wider and wider showing your teeth until you have a wide smile. You will, with a bit of practice, hold that smile and eventually it will come very naturally. You'll also find your facial muscles will have a certain kind of "feeling" when you are giving your best smile. If you're a mall Santa, at a photo shoot or a house visit, you'll need to call upon that "feeling" to continually take a great photo. You can start practicing and perfecting your smile whenever you look into the mirror or put one next to your computer and smile back at that handsome Santa.

There may be a correctable reason why you don't smile. My own example is; for years I did not smile due to poor teeth. I had a few gaps and I was embarrassed by my appearance. I then had some dental work done which corrected my poorly appearing teeth. I began to smile and now I have no fear of showing my teeth. If you need dental work it will be worth your investment not only for your Santa portrayal but for your personal life too.

Now that you have that heavenly smile you may need to mind your eye blinking. Blinking results in those closed eye shots that aren't very flattering. I try to block out the photographers "one, two, three!" Invariably my eyes want to close on the count of three so I have to fight that instinct. I get around this by telling myself not to blink and to hold the pose. I don't look directly into the camera lens unless the photographer requests me too. I try to profile my face looking at the child or a slight turn in their direction or to either side of the camera shutter. Don't be afraid to encourage the child to pose as the photographer instructs. Remember; the photograph highlights the child and a good photographer is going to wait for the right moment so you will need to hold a "pose" and a "smile" for long periods of time.

To be a popular subject and in demand by professional photographers you will

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A Time to Break Silence," brought to him much criticism and hatred for his words. What he spoke that day, daring tell us many difficult truths, truths we still fear, also showed us a path to the Dream.

The path requires but one thing.
Love.

Near the end of the sermon, Dr. King offered us a profound definition of Love, and it's transformational, world-altering power. He spoke:

"This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class, and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all mankind. This oft misunderstood, this oft misinterpreted concept, so readily dismissed by the Nietzsches of the world as a weak and cowardly force, has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man. When I speak of love I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response. I am not speaking of that force which is just emotional bosh. I am speaking of that force which all of the great reli-

gions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality."

"This Hindu-Muslim-Christian-Jewish-Buddhist belief about ultimate reality is beautifully summed up in the first epistle of Saint John: "Let us love one another, for love is God. And every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and his love is perfected in us." Let us hope that this spirit will become the order of the day."

*Excerpt from sermon delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 4 April 1967 at a meeting of Clergy and Laity Concerned at Riverside Church in New York City

Next issue, the Journey continues

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Kris Kringle's Wisdom



By Al Horton

It's another Saturday morning when I awaken to my sister pounding on my door. "Wake up Santa, I'm taking you to breakfast." I shower, primp the old whiskers, and dress in my usual red plaid shirt, red hat and large black belt.

At breakfast, several children are tugging at their mother's sleeve and pointing at me. They are trying to whisper, but the entire restaurant/diner can hear them; "Look

mommy, it's Santa!"

I smile and wave. Then jaunting over to the table, I produce one of my fleece bears from my pocket, asking if they have been good. When they gleefully smile and announce that they have, I laugh with a 'Ho, Ho, Ho' and hand them a bear. I ask them to keep it a secret, but I am out looking for who is naughty and nice.

This event happens daily. I enjoy the children's smiles and the sparkles in their eyes as they assure their parents that they will be nice.

Some may wonder why I dress this way and why I bother with the bears and comments. I could just as easily hide like most celebrities and down play or even ignore the fans, but to hurt a child like that would only confirm to the adults they need to tell them that there is no such thing as Santa.

WHAT!!!! No such thing as Santa!!! Who would bring the gifts, who would the children tell their

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need to come up with poses not usually done by other Santa's. Before I start a photo shoot I discuss with the photographer what is expected of me, where I should be on the set and any special circumstances concerning their clients. I also go over any special poses, props or "Signals" to each other for "Special shots." I have listed below some examples of "Special shots" but I encourage you to invest in some preparation time which goes a long way producing great photos.

"Santa's got a Secret"

I sit the child on my right knee. After some conversation and photos I ask the child if I can tell them a secret. Their head faces the camera or I'll maneuver them so their face and mine are towards the camera but I don't look at the camera. I cup my hand near their left ear and say, "I want you to smile the biggest smile ever when I tell you this secret." "Are you ready?" "You are going to have one of the best Christmases you ever had." or "Look at the camera and smile real big when I tell you this secret." "Be sure to look under the tree on Christmas morning for some neat surprises." This gives the photographer some time to snap away and to catch some great poses.

"Tell me Your Secret"

This is a variation of the "Santa Secret" except I ask the child to whisper in my ear the one most important gift they want for Christmas. I usually have a hand signal for the photographer so they know what I'm trying to do. I've gotten some of the best pictures this way and I can hear the oohs and ahs of the parents when the shutter snaps.

Often there are children who are very affectionate to Santa and allow opportunity to pose some very friendly pictures. I pose these children in a number of ways. Some I wrap my arms around (I make sure my hands are proper and showing) the child and ask them or pose their hands over my coat sleeve. This pose also allows me to have my head next to the child's almost cheek to

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secrets to, what would happen to the trust in this world?

I want everyone to experience the thrill of a child when they are excited being around Santa. I have had parents come up to me after a chance visit, and gift of the fleece bear, telling me that just a few months earlier their child wouldn't go near Santa, and now look at them. I enjoy being in the non-threatening position of bringing happiness to others.

If you need one bit of advice, I recommend you be yourself and the children will let you know if you are non-threatening, and what you can and cannot do. Don't force anything, not even your laugh. Let it bellow out naturally. Be jolly all the time and don't worry about the ridicule.

When I am around adults, they usually ask the most questions and don't hold back any punches. They don't see how I can enjoy life so much when there are such troubles all around us. The stress of just making a living is tough. To that I just say; "Life is only as tough as you let it be. If you don't let it get you down and learn to enjoy the little things around you, life will be simpler and happier." There is usually no response to that.

This past year, I visited a Jewish family who had a Christmas party for their Christian friends. Both Jews and Gentiles received gifts from Santa. Now remembering when to say Happy Hanukah and when to say Merry Christmas worried me until I saw the children. They were so content that Santa was handing out gifts, I made a game of it. The children were happy, and I never thought twice about saying or doing the wrong thing again.

July is rapidly approaching. This is the time of year Santa could be out volunteering with activities. Look for some organization that assist with hospital care of children, or special camps for special needs children, or the local businesses who might want to do some community work and don't know how. Have them donate some simple toys (e.g. stuffed animals, games, etc) and then take them to the local homeless shelter, orphanage, or just to a hospital where there are a lot of children, and hand them out.

Now some of you have figured out there is another reason I dress the way I do, talk with the children and hand out the bears, and volunteer for any Christmas in July activity. That is the way to get yourself

noticed and start booking for the next season.

I highly recommend you get an agent if you want steady work or get out there and hustle yourself. Or, you can do what I do. Not everyone can do it, but it is rewarding.

TIP OF THE MONTH

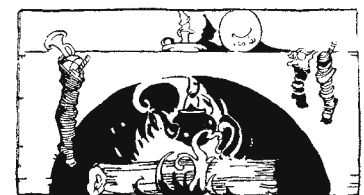
Don't wear jewelry, carry a cell phone, or anything else not magical, but if you do and are caught, be very witty and up front. I had one such occurrence during a private party. I had mistakenly left my watch on. Though it was well hidden, it did slip out once and a child questioned me about it. Instead of hiding it, I told them that it was a special communicator with my elves watching the sleigh. From then on I remembered to take it off.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

If you really want to be on top of the Santa ladder, learn other languages. The more you can speak with a child the better you are. I once visited a party for an orphanage in London. One child questioned why I was a yank. Thank goodness, a few of my British friends had taught me some Welsh, Gaelic and worked on my different United Kingdom accents. Not only did I surprise that young lad, but he brought a new child who was French over to me. I quickly depleted my French phrases and turned the child over to a helper who was actually French. That worked out well. For the rest of the two hours, I could do no wrong.

That's all for now. Don't forget to send me 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.

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MIRROR cont.



Yes, Virginia There IS A Santa Claus

cheek. We can also look at each other and I have an opportunity to show expressions such as; surprised, whimsical or questioning. Sometimes I ask the child to "Give Santa a hug" and this produces a spontaneous picture which again brings out the oohs and ahs.

Babies are a scream, well some times they really scream and there isn't much you can do to stop them. When they are cooperating there are a few poses that are sure to be Grandma's favorites. I made some gold colored "S's" which fit across the instep of my boots. If the baby is old enough to support themselves I put them between my legs so the pose is from my knees to the floor. This is one of the cutest pictures to see a baby between Santa's boots. Another pose is to hold the baby in my arms, holding it high enough so they are looking over my shoulder. The photographer is behind me and frames the shot of baby's face my Santa hat and white hair. In both of these shots my face is not seen but my costume and accessory's make no mistake about who's in the picture.

I always feel badly for the child whose parents are insistent they must take a picture with Santa. The poor child is frightened, with fear on their face and tears running down their cheeks. Of course the parents are insuring there will be no picture by threatening "Santa isn't going to bring you any toys unless you take a picture with him." Well folks, it's been my experience that this photo opportunity is not going to happen. There isn't much you can do in these situations and I never try to force a photograph when a child is traumatized. Sometimes when an upset child won't sit in my lap I can salvage a photo opportunity by asking the parents to hold the child in front of them facing the camera. As the child calms down I will quietly come up behind the parents for a "Family Picture." I try to add something "Extra" by posing with my finger across my lips, a surprised look or outstretched hands with my gloves at the shoulders of the parents. It may not be the picture the parents hoped for but it will be a lasting

Eight-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon wrote a letter to the editor of New York's Sun, and the quick response was printed as an unsigned editorial Sept. 21, 1897. The work of veteran newspaperman Francis Pharcellus Church has since become history's most reprinted newspaper editorial.

"DEAR EDITOR: I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, 'If you see it in THE SUN it's so.' Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?"

-VIRGINIA O'HANLON,
115 West Ninety-Fifth Street

"VIRGINIA, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except [what] they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.



Yes, VIRGINIA, there is a Santa Claus.

He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and

joy. Alas! how dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus. It would be as dreary as if there were no VIRGINIAS. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence.

We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished. Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies!

You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there.

Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world. You may tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond.

Is it all real?

Ah, VIRGINIA, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding. No Santa Claus! Thank God! he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood."

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MIRROR cont.

memory of a visit to Santa.

Adults love to pose with Santa and you should encourage them at every opportunity. When I pose with a lady regardless of age or even a man I have a little patter to break the ice. I'll stand right next to the person and in a hushed tone say, "I need to tell you something before we take this picture." Of course the person just can't imagine what it could be. Then I say; in my best Santa voice and pointing my fore finger at them; "There's one condition you need to know about when taking a picture with Santa." Usually this statement makes the person wonder and have a serious expression on their face. Then I say with a big smile; "You've got to act like you really like me." Maybe it's because the request is so simple plus everyone likes Santa but an immediate response is a smile, hug, laugh or kiss upon my cheek and "Flash" a great picture is snapped.

OK Santa's, "Mirror, Mirror on the wall now; who's the Santa who takes the best picture of them all?"

"All together now say; I do."

"Zivili" Celebrate Life
Santa Lou

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Legend of the Christmas Butterfly

On a cold Christmas Eve a long time ago, a small child was admiring her Christmas tree. The fragrant tree had no ornaments, yet she was thankful her poor family had been given one to celebrate the holiday. She had fashioned a small star from scraps of paper to adorn the very tip of the tree. Unbeknownst to her, a tiny chrysalis hid among the feathery branches and when the child went to sleep that night, magical things began to happen. In the warm surroundings the chrysalis awoke to reveal their bodies of crystal and wings of gold. Hundreds of butterflies emerged and fluttered with their shimmering wings landing on the branches. The child awoke to this surprising site with giggle of joy.

This reminds us that when we are thankful for what we have we will be blessed even more!

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Masthead Artwork by Stephanie Suzanne Sentinella

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