

Red Suit Roundtable

ROUNDUP

Southeast Regional Division of A.O.R.B.S.

ISSUE 2

NORTH POLE NEWS

A Word From the Editor

I am writing this to keep my mind off my anxiety.

Surgery, though relatively minor, looms just 48 hours in the future. Having never gone under the surgeon's knife, I am a bit anxious.

But then I think about the children; 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 horrors daily in wars around the world, and children without any hope of a future. I see their faces and war-ravaged bodies daily in the pictures which flash across my window-on-the-world at work. Images which most rarely, if ever, are seen in your morning paper over coffee. How could I ever forget what a blessed and comfortable life has been given to me.

The children are the reason we are here.

We have all witnessed the light in their eyes as the magic and wonder of Christmas fills their hearts. Many of us who have worn the suit long enough to watch the children grow up, have also witnessed the light as it begins to dull and fade from the eyes of many. The affairs of the world takes its toll; especially on the children.

I had a most precious child (around the age of 4) climb on my knee this past Christmas and ask me a question I have never been asked before. She looked up at me with these bright, beautiful, dancing eyes and said in this tiny angelic voice, "what does Santa Claus want for Christmas?" I almost broke down. But I must have beamed, because this child's face began to glow even brighter as I reacted to her question and gave her my answer.

What does Santa Claus want for Christmas? What Santa Claus has always wanted; a safe world where children can play, learn and grow without fear. A safe world where the glow is not dulled by the brutality of thoughtlessness and inaction, war, strife, selfishness and greed. A safe world where all the children can share in the wondrous magic of life without fear or need. A garden in which all can savor the wondrous magic of life.

It is what we all work for, is it not? We carry Christmas with us every day of the year, encouraging others to do the same. When our time on this world is finished, what we leave

Santas from many parts of Alabama were in attendance on Sunday, March, 18, 2007 for the luncheon at the William Penn in Calera. Considering we put this together in only 4 weeks we had a great turnout. Santa Gary Casey and Santa Chuck Bridwell traveled from Atlanta Ga. to join us. There were 14 Santas and 9 beautiful Mrs Clauses present.

Some brought their wares including Elf attire, Mrs.Claus bonnets, clothing, belts and buckles, Santa suits and toy bags. I was amazing to see how many things are available right here in Alabama to support our profession.

Each Santa told a little about himself, sharing experiences and stories ranging from the tender innocence of a child's love to bringing a huge smile to a 90-year-young matriarch.

For those in attendance who were not AORBS members, we had a brief program detailing the organization. Included was an update on all the changes taking place, along with a letter from Santa John Scheuch, South-Central Regional Director. Santa Gary Casey, AORBS Southeast Regional Director and an advisor to Santa-

America, detailed the Santa-America program and all that Cathy Barnette, Executive Director of Santa-America, is doing including a trip to Washington DC to lobby for financial support.

We discussed organizing an Alabama chapter of AORBS. Tentative plans were put in place and a second meeting is planned for sometime in August or September. I will be getting more information out to soon. If you have any conflicts for the meeting, please notify me so we can schedule it to include all members possible. I welcome any volunteer help. If volunteers don't come forth, I will need to call on some of you.

We gathered outside for a group picture which was a hoot! We offer our thanks to Elf Stephanie who took lots of photos of the entire event, and the group. Thanks also to those who also emailed your photos to add to the collection. We offer a very special thanks to Santa John Steele for bringing his RV, "Santa's home away from the North Pole," and its beautiful paint job, which we used as our group photo backdrop. Take a close look at the artwork!

I will have 8 X 10 copies of the group available

Check out the Paint Job on this RV!!

The RV with this beautiful painting of Santa, sleigh & reindeer belongs to Santa John Steele. This was a great day of fun and fellowship with Santa's gathered from all over Alabama.



behind for the Santas who follow is an age-old spirit of love, kindness and giving without want of return, to be nourished and maintained and passed on.

Santa Ed Murphy, one of the original 10 Founders of AORBS, recently passed from this world. He will be missed greatly by those who knew him, and all who encountered him, I have no doubt. Our prayers and thoughts go to his family, friends and all the children who knew this Santa.

Each of us carry into the future the ideals of this organization, the seed of which he and nine others planted over lunch not so very many years ago. As this organization grows, we must be ready to face the challenges and strive always (*as Santa Tim emphasizes*) to be the world leaders by setting the industry standard.

By the time you read this, my hernia surgery should be several days behind me and find me at the computer checking mail, software updates, working on Santa's PR projects and getting ready for a parade near the end of May. Or maybe just taking a nap and enjoying a few days off. Remember - the deadline for the next issue is Thursday, May 31! Send to: AORBSSEnews@earthdancer.org OR bill@earthdancer.org

We have so little to give, but what marvelous gifts the children give to us.

UPDATE: As of 4/14 Santa Bill is doing well though a little sore. He plans to take it easy for a couple of weeks before driving back to work. So I know he'd like to hear from some of you in the brotherhood. Let's continue to keep him in our thoughts & prayers. Oh yea... send him your biographies so he'll have something to do!!

YOU NEED TO KNOW...

Santa Timothy Connaghan
<http://www.santahollywood.com/>

International University of Santa Claus
<http://www.realsantas.com/iusc.htm>

Amalgamated Order of Real Bearded Santas
<http://www.aorbsantas.com/>

Santa-America.org
<http://www.santa-america.org/>

Red Suit Roundtable
<http://www.RedSuitRoundtable.com>

AORBS Convention
<http://www.discoversanta.com>

Mrs. Claus' Kitchen is now open!

A discussion group has been formed in conjunction with Santas Across the Globe and AORBS, specifically for the ladies that make the guys in the red suits look so good!

The discussion group is called "Mrs. Claus' Kitchen", and is linked from the SATG MSN website, or direct your browser to:
<http://groups.msn.com/MrsClausKitchen>

The group will provide a forum for discussing the formation of a formal organization for the ladies, as well as providing a place to chat about costuming, working with children, running a small business, cookie recipes, and more! Santas, please make sure the ladies that are your main support crew and cheering section get the word about this, whether they actually perform as your "Mrs. Claus" or not.

Mrs. Christy Claus (*Christine Seelye-King*) from Atlanta, Georgia will be heading up the group. She can be reached at:
ingstaste@comcast.net.

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for \$10. We took a photo with only Santa's and one with Santa's and Mrs. Claus together. For those who placed your order when you were here, please contact me with your choice of the two. You can email me and I will get them in the mail. If I don't hear from you, I will print my choice. Anyone who did not order a photo and would like one, please let me know.

Santa Jac Grimes is preparing a workshop to be held in Birmingham, AL., June, 9 for advanced marketing and promoting Santa. For more information go to <<http://home.triad.rr.com/santatriad/page12.html>> or email Santa Jac at Santa@santaJac.com.

What a jolly good time we all had and we are grateful to everyone who came by and thanked us for the gathering. It was truly a wonderful day. Following the event, Bobbie and I finally got to bed around 11:30. Bobbie had done the menu planning, food preparation and most of the decorating. Thanks to the elves, my stepdaughter Kip, her son Eli, and my daughter Stephanie, for helping with the final food details, serving us so graciously and recording the day through pictures. Their contribution made it possible for Bobbie and I to spend our time with everyone who attended. I have truly been blessed with Bobbie and my family.

For all of the Santa's that couldn't be there, for whatever the reason, you definitely were missed.

Keep the Spirit of Christmas alive all year!!

Santa Steve, email: Unameit556@bellsouth.net
Sleigh-(205) 903-2680,
Toyshop-(205) 685-0558

If you are aware of Santa-America.org and have just been putting it off, please contact them today.

**Santa
America**

If you are not aware of this organization, take a few minutes to check them out and see if it is suited to you.

Santa-America, founded in 2003, has a very special mission: "to bring love, hope and joy to special children and their families suffering from post-traumatic stress or in hospice or long term pediatric care. Over 200 volunteer Santas, Mrs. Claus and elves all over the USA visit children 12 months out of the year to share the miracle of Santa...unconditional love, hope and joy wrapped in a big Santa hug!

For additional information, please contact Santa-America at (251) 626-6609
www.santa-america.org.



Kringle's Wisdom



By Santa Fuzzy

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 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.

FuzzyTBear@bellsouth.net
Santa Fuzzy





Things to do List

Santa Lou's "Things To Do List"

Hello fellow Santa's.

I seem to have a never ending "Santa's Things To Do List." This became a 'list' as I began jotting down ideas, words I wanted to say and ideas for costuming. Hence the column name because most of my ideas started out on my "Things To Do List."

Each month this column will be devoted to tips, ideas and useful information to help you enhance your presentation of Santa Claus. I will include costuming ideas, using props to entertain your audience and ways to improve your physical appearance. I do not profess to have all the answers and I hope we can develop an exchange of ideas and experiences to make us all better Santas. I'm constantly researching ways to improve my image and to learn something new so I may be a more believable Santa. It is my hope some of the things I say here, or experiences I have had will help you.

HOW I BECAME SANTA

Since childhood I wanted to be Santa. I grew up in Cleveland, Ohio and share many experiences with Ralphie, the lead character in "A Christmas Story" which was filmed in Cleveland. I remember the annual Christmas shopping trip to a cold, snowy downtown area with my mother to see Santa. My nose, pressed tightly against the department store window, steamed the cold glass as I stood in awe of the toys on display. Even now the smell of a tangerine or peppermint candy brings to life those precious Christmas memories.

There was the long line, and endless anticipation, waiting to sit upon Santa's knee where I would nervously confess my secret toy desires. I just knew he was going to fulfill my wishes, never imagining my parents could barely make ends meet.

Oh yes, I coveted that Red Ryder BB gun until it was mine. Mom always told me, "You'll shoot your eye out!" As usual, she knew what she was talking about. I never told her but the little red circle I still carry under my left eye was caused by a wayward BB.

As I grew older I still carried the desire to be Santa (which I kept to myself). For one reason or another the time never seemed right. A few years ago I courageously voiced the idea to my wife and a close group of friends. I don't think they took me seriously, but as friends will do, they encouraged me anyway. Now I was

determined to be Santa. I had a head start on facial hair as I had worn a neatly trimmed beard for more than 35 years. I stopped trimming it to let it grow. Later that year I was in a store called Party City and saw some used Santa suits for sale. I went home, hemmed and hawed about it with my wife until she said the magic words, "If you buy it, you better do something with it." I assured her I would and jumped into the car, rushing off to buy my first Santa suit. I didn't have a clue what I was going to do next. I searched the internet for Santa. One of the sites which caught my eye was a Santa School in Atlanta, Georgia. It was hosted by Santa Gary Casey of SantaAtlanta.com and taught by Santa Timothy Connaghan. I signed on for the class, becoming completely immersed and fascinated with the business of Santa Claus. That same day I also joined the cast of SantaAtlanta.com. The rest, as they say, is history. I have appeared with the Radio City Music Hall Rockettes, The Tennessee Valley Railroad, North Pole Express and The Atlanta Festival of Trees. I'm also the Santa for The Atlanta Marriott Marquis, along with their Ginger Bread House and Breakfast with Santa program. I also appear at private, public and charitable events.

Now my family and friends believe. I live Santa 24/7/365! My wife, on occasion, has requested I refrain for just one day from talking about anything relating to Santa Claus. Frankly, those have been some of the hardest days of my life. I may have broken my pledge to her unintentionally and perhaps, intentionally on occasion. I'm proud to be Santa and it gives me great pleasure to be recognized or to bring a smile to someone who might have been a little down. You should also be proud to be Santa. Do everything you can to be the best ever. Details, details, details! I'm a stickler for details.

Simply putting on the red suit does not make you Santa. Do not undertake this role lightly as it is an awesome responsibility. It is a full time job, requiring you to be on your best behavior always. Your actions, in and out of the suit, will determine your credibility. I suggest you not pick your nose, give some driver the finger or commit any number of other actions. You can bet a child is watching you. If I'm in a restaurant and order a glass of wine, I request it be served in a tumbler or something other than a wine glass. Why? So children do not associate Santa with alcohol. Call me an extremist but I'm not going to intentionally degrade this image in a child's eyes.

It is very important to remember the public has an image of Santa Claus in their mind. It is your job to bring that image to life. I believe, from the moment people first lay eyes on you, that you must be Santa. There is an old saying about the first 30 seconds of meeting which creates an impression lasting a lifetime. I remind myself each season not to forget how I felt as a child, waiting in excited anticipation

to see Santa. I strive always to make each child feel Santa Claus was there just for him or her; to make their experience with me a wonderful life-long memory.

Our goal is to be the Santa who is remembered for his believability, credibility, appearance and performance; The Santa who will be requested to come back again and again and again! Let's get started. (It doesn't take a lot of money to be the best Santa ever, even in a second-hand suit.)

ARE YOU A SKIN SHOW?

I think all of us have looked at some of our Santa pictures and noticed a hairy arm, wrist watch or we're caught without our gloves on. The famous Coke Cola Santa is the only one I know without gloves, but you'll notice it's only when he's lifting that ice cold refreshment to his lips.

Here are a few things you can do to hide watches, jewelry and bare skin.

No.1 - **Don't wear your wristwatch** when performing, even under gloves, it shows. Remember: if you're really Santa, wristwatches had not been invented yet.

No.2 - **Buy long gloves.** You can find them online at band supply companies who stock white gloves that come up over the wrist.

No.3 - **Make a sleeve to cover from the end of your glove to your upper forearm.**

I collaborated with Mrs. Claus and came up with an idea which isn't new but solved the problem. To really cover up I had Mrs. Claus make a sleeve about a foot long out of white fabric. Basically it's a fabric tube with elastic at both ends to hold it in place. I slip this on my forearms with one end up near my elbows and tucked under my jacket sleeve. I put my gloves on and slip the other end over or just at the end of my gloves. Even if your Santa suit has the elastic inner sleeve you can shorten the tube sleeve to cover any potential exposed areas.

No.4 - **Add a costume accessory.**

To "Hide" the wrist area I took it a step further. I bought some white garter lace with elastic in it. I sewed this into a circle to fit around my wrist. I sewed a sparkly trim piece about a ¼ inch or so wide around the middle of lace garter. Another light bulb went off and I sewed some large sleigh bells about one inch apart around the outside of the lace circle. I now had some pretty fancy looking wrist bells.

Now my forearms never show. Including the cost of materials, I spent under \$10.00 to solve this problem. The lace showing from under my sleeve is a very nice costume accessory for which I have received many positive compliments. As a wonderful bonus, it also looks great in photographs.

Zivili (Celebrate Life)
Lou Knezevich
lgknez@bellsouth.net

"Santa Lou - Georgia's Premier Santa" sm
(A Registered Service Mark)

Upcoming Events Calendar

Greetings to all the Florida Santas and all Santas in the Southeast Region.

As you are probably aware, circumstances beyond our control delayed the proposed late March Santa Luncheon. We are trying to set up several appointments to coincide with Santa Ernest and Elf Cathy's Santa-America schedule. Santa Ernest is planning on an "elfing" ceremony for 8-year-old Zach and, hopefully two ladies who have earned the "elf" moniker assisting Santa Dave Smith.

Our Santa Luncheon is now scheduled for 11-3 pm, Sunday May 6th. We will also have an informal get-together for dinner on Saturday, May 5th at 6:30; details will follow. We have changed the name of our Luncheon to "Luncheon with Florida Santas", to accommodate all Santas in Florida. We invite all AORBS members living in Florida and those on vacation here. "All Santas are welcome."

We hope our "Luncheon with Florida Santas" will be an information exchange based meeting. We would like each Santa and/or Mrs Claus to bring one "news item" to share with the group. It could be: a special time with a child or an adult, hardest question, most difficult answer to a child, funniest experience, most trying experience or any other Santa or Mrs Claus's experience. This "news item" could also be sharing a particular Santa "giveaway" you have used or heard about, or maybe a suit material or other items for Santa's wardrobe. Maybe someone has found a cool-suit for Florida Santas. This could also be an advertising idea or suggestion or an idea that even seasoned Santas could use to improve and/or increase their Santa business. Please circle your calendar dates and plan to attend this fun filled informal and informative get-together!

IUSC in Tampa on September 15th?!? I know it is only early April and difficult to plan months in advance, but ... we have 5 Santas planning to attend and need at least ten confirmed (paid) to book Santa Tim for September 15th. If you are planning to attend please let us know. If you are ready to confirm please send Santa Tim your reservation. Santa Tim will hold the IUSC on September 15th, either in Tampa or Ft. Lauderdale, whichever location has the most Santas to sign up. (minimum 10) Santa Tim is also offering the IUSC during the September cruise at the same price.

Santa Tim's course is exciting and informative, September is perfect to get fired up and ready for the 2007 season! Even if you have attended before, you will still learn something new!

Collect those smiles!

Santa Bob, Tampa - workshop: 727-491-0533, sleigh: 813-230-9254, www.santatb.com



ABC's of the Santa Biz

From the Desk of Santa Gary Casey

The AORBS Board of Directors has almost finished the by-laws needed to incorporate and should be finished next week.

Some new membership rules have been established for anyone wanting to become a member and for continued membership. Much of this was brought on by media attention we received through the convention, as Santas recognized around the world, and the understanding of what could happen if we are not as clean as a whistle.

We can all take a big hit if we have a person in the organization that is not on the up-and-up. We do not need that. All the people in my group, SantaAtlanta.com, get police checks yearly in August. No background check, no work.

In addition to the regular column, 'Kris Kringle's Wisdom' by "Santa" Al Horton, please welcome Santa Lou's 'Things To Do List,' by Lou Knezevich, which premieres in this issue. We have received some excellent comments on our newsletter, which Santa Bill McKee, Bristol, VA and Santa Scott Phillips, Doraville, GA have teamed up to make happen. Santa Jim Williams in Tampa is our brilliant Webmaster.

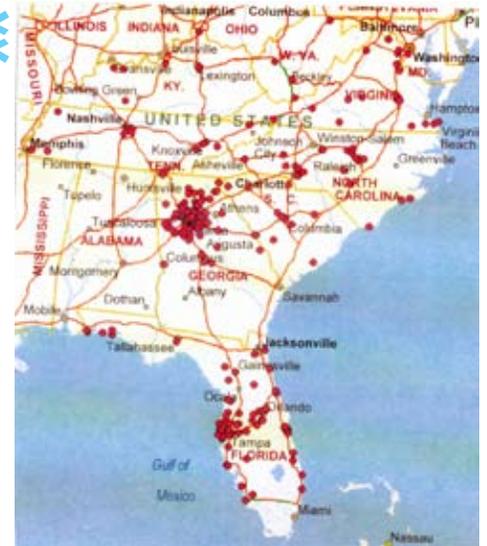
We will be looking for State Directors in the coming months that have some get up and go. We need to grow the SouthEast Region to over 400 members. There are many Santas throughout the region, we just need to get them on the team.

Publication dates for the newsletter are changing. Hopefully this will give you more time to express yourselves and what is on your mind. The odd months will be for collection information, and will be published the first week of each even month. The collection months are; January, March, May, July, and September. The deadline for submissions will be the last day of that odd numbered month. The information will be collected and edited by

Santa Bill and published by the 2nd Saturday of each even month; February, April, June, August and October. November and December are off limits due to all Santas busy schedules, but keep your notes and send them following the Christmas holidays.

In case I haven't already informed everyone, the next Red Suit Roundtable will be February 9 and 10, 2008. We are working on something really special and have a lot of fun things in the planning stages. It will be the warm-up for the Convention

On the map you will see red dots which identify the location of all the Santas in the region so far. We need to add a lot more red dots.



Thanks for being a part of the team and if you need any help please e-mail me at: GwCasey@SantaAtlanta.Com

See you in two months.

Santa Gary

"Keep the Home Fires Burning"

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Advisor to: Santa-America. Org
Membership: SantaAtlanta.com
Almagamated Order of Real Bearded Santas
Santa-America. Org
SantasAcrossTheGlobe
WEB: <http://www.santaatlanta.com/>
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The National Beard Registry #1246