

Red Suit Roundtable

ROUNDUP

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

ISSUE 3

NORTH POLE NEWS

PALM TREE LUNCHEON MAY 6TH, 2007

Tampa, FL By Santa Bob Elkin Everyone had a great time as the Florida Santas hosted our first annual luncheon at the beautiful Radisson Bay Harbor Hotel on Tampa Bay. We had a total of 37 Santa's, Mrs, and elves in attendance. A total of 29 came to the informal dinner at the Golden Corral on Saturday night. A big thank you goes out to our planning committee, including Santa Jim Williams, Santa Vic & Fran Sitmer, Santa Don & Jean Chapman, Santa David and Carol Smith, and Santa Dick and Sharon Rehm.

Elf Cathy Barnette, Executive Director of Santa-America, who was our special guest, spoke to the group regarding the exciting developments within Santa-America. She shared with us goals and plans for the future. Santa Jim Williams gave a brief presentation on the current AORBS membership requirements, including background checks. Santa Dave Smith talked about the 2006 Branson convention and the upcoming convention in 2008. Santa Don Chapman shared information on Performers of the U.S. Liability Insurance. Santa Dick Rehm spoke about Santa Tim's

upcoming IUSC workshop in Tampa on September 15th and Mrs. Claus, Fran Sitmer, offered the ladies some information on the new MSN Group, "Mrs. Claus' Kitchen."

Santa Jim Benedict of Lakeland won the very spirited HO HO HO contest, but only after a couple of rounds. We really had some good HO HO HO's! I tried to hold a "Call of the Reindeer" contest, but I guess we need some practice. Maybe next year?

Santa Dave and Ann Speer of Melbourne lost their luggage on the way back from Cancun to Tampa. However, they won the best fun contest of the day, and won the most informative Santa book I have seen. It is "Flight of the Reindeer." They won the book by winning the "Reindeer Trivia Quiz" which was so generously donated to us by Kyle, the "Tall Elf," of Rocky Hill Reindeer fame. This quiz was really a lot of fun. We had six teams tied and had to use some "tie-breaker" questions to end up with only one winner. Example questions: In what year was Santa's Flight Map found in Norway? What year did Santa first use Rudolph to lead his sleigh? The International Dateline gives Santa how many hours of darkness to deliver the children their gifts? Santa Dave won with an answer to the last question that was judged close

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Palm Tree, Florida Luncheon May 6th, 2007

The luncheon attendees enjoyed good food, good fellowship, and some good old Florida sunshine. (Resulted in a few sunburned bald spots) *Don't forget that sunscreen!*



A Word From the Editor

The time was right. I spent weeks collecting what I needed, making a new pair of pants for the occasion, and adding trimmings as appropriate. Patsy had suggested Santa lead the hikers into Damascus, Va. for the annual Trail Days Festival parade. The town loved the idea.

So Santa made his first May visit to Damascus to join the festivities.

I was decked out in my new summer hiking pants complete with accents, high-topped, bright red Converse tennis walking shoes, my Santa walking stick, a red day pack stuffed to overflowing with toys and furry animals, and most important of all, a small, portable, red umbrella. No, it wasn't going to rain, as the day was bright and sunny. The umbrella was to ward off stray water from the heavily armed hikers and spectators in case I got caught in the cross fire. Also, for the few daring enough to fire on Santa - with Christmas and redemption months away.

A huge crowd lined both sides of the street. Children, watched over carefully by their parents or guardians, sat excitedly atop cars, trucks and shoulders. Children and water and a warm sunny day made for lots of laughter and squeals of 'squirt me!', 'squirt me!'

Seeing the startled faces of some as they turned to fire, only to be facing Santa, and a quick 'hi Santa,' a wave, and then their aim moved on as the hikers came into range, brought smiles from Santa, children and spectators alike. I managed to stay almost completely dry throughout the entire parade!

Many were surprised to see Santa in May, but most seemed glad I was there. I talked with numerous children following the parade, handing out lots of bells, stuffed animals and smiles all around. Many of the hikers had to have their photo taken with Santa. Several were sure they had hiked parts of the Appalachia Trail with me, even though I have only hiked the length of the town and small sections on Whitetop and Mt. Rogers.

A year ago, Santa would not have thought of being there. Thanks to AORBS, Patsy, and what I have already learned from many of you, I am out there every day now. The smiles and greetings I receive everywhere I go, reinforce my desire to continue to grow and be the best

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cont'd from 'Editor's Column'

Santa Claus I can possibly be.

This issue we begin to profile the members of AORBS in the Southeast. This will be a regular feature in the newsletter as we attempt to introduce each and every Santa to each other. Look for an email soon detailing how this will be accomplished.

With sadness we mark the passing of Santa Harry Frazier, the second of our original 10 Santas to pass this year. It is up to each of us to always strive to learn, lead and teach others, so that Santa Claus will continue to live in the hearts of children everywhere, forever.

Believe In Father Christmas,
Santa McKee, *Editor*

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cont'd from 'North Pole News'

enough. To find the answers to these questions and more, order one of these great books from Kyle at Rocky Hill Reindeer. I did and have already shared some of these "facts" with kids who were really impressed!

We had presentations from Santa Vic Sitmer on their travel business, "Traveling Clauses," custom carved walking sticks by Santa Nick Kuykendall (all the way from Tennessee), and custom made Santa belts and bells from Santa Jim Benedict. There were stories and ideas shared by Santa Hal Kemp, Avon Park, Santa George Caso of Ellenton, and several other stories and ideas from other Santa's.

Photo Elf David Wright, <http://www.digitalimageproduction.com>, distributed a packet of samples and information on his services to the group. Elf David shot our group photos and printed them out for the Santa's to take home with them!

The committee had collected a total of 32 nice prizes, which were given away as part of a 50/50 raffle to benefit Santa-America. Most everyone won something, even though there were a couple of double winners. We had to "cut-off" Santa Jim and Louise Chason of Salt Springs; they just had too many winning tickets!

Santa George's Mrs., Donna Caso, won half the 50/50 cash, and Executive Director Cathy Barnette, accepted Santa-America's half.

I wish I had the talent and the space to write about all the friendships and all the warmth shared during this first annual luncheon, but it seems we all experience these things whenever and for whatever reason Santa's and Mrs. gather together.

Our next opportunity to share and be together will be Santa Tim's IUSC workshop, Saturday,

September 15th.

We will have an informal dinner the night before and possibly the evening after. Details will be forthcoming. Go to: <http://www.schoolforsantas.com> and get registered. Earn your Bachelors Degree or your Masters Degree from IUSC!

I am reminded of this post following Branson; a mom asked her son while strolling through the lobby at the Radisson, "What do you think about seeing all these Santa's in one place and at one time?" the 5 year old thought a moment and then replied, "well Mom, it must be Santa Claus Heaven"

We should make every effort to attend all the events we can, to share every chance we are afforded, to continue to learn, continue to improve our own Santa's authenticity, to help our fellow Santa's and our AORBS and Santa-America groups.

Will I see you in September? Santa Bob
Elkin santa@santatb.com 727-491-0533

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>

HO! HO! HO! I have been a real-bearded Santa for four years. Last year was my first paying year.

The logo for Santa America features the word "Santa" in a large, red, cursive font, with "America" in a smaller, green, cursive font below it. A small white dove with a green olive branch is positioned above the letter 'A' in "Santa".

During this initial meeting with Elf Gary, I also heard about SantaAmerica and Santa Earnest. I gave Santa Earnest a call, discussed their mission, and wanted to join. I was told to volunteer at my closest hospice for training. I did. I have been a volunteer for United Hospice for over a year now. It is unbelievable how helping others will prepare you to be a wonderful Santa. Your listening skills, your approach to strangers, your loving arms, and your sense of caring all grow. I love my two jobs! Hospice and Santa. Yes, it will break your heart many times, but it will renew your Spirit every time. E-mail Santa-America and give a helping hand. www.Santa-America.org God bless you all. **Santa Chuck**

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



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

FuzzyTBear@bellsouth.net





Things to do List

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

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.

ABC's of the Santa Biz

From the Desk of Gary Casey

In this issue we introduce a new feature in the Red Suit Roundtable newsletter. Meet the Santas, as we begin to 'profile' the members of AORBS in the Southeast. For this first offering, we introduce ourselves to you, our readers, so you know who is writing and compiling your newsletter. Look for an email in the near future detailing how we hope to accomplish publishing the profile of each member in our region. Members will be asked to submit, in their own words, their stories for inclusion in upcoming editions. With the number of Santas to include, this will be an ongoing project.

The AORBS board is very busy, holding bi-weekly meetings, attempting to nail down policies, by-laws and the code of conduct, so we have an effective operation and something all Santas can be proud of. We are spending many hours in conference calls ironing out the details. We ask your patience, as this is no simple matter to complete.

The policies, once finalized by the board, should be announced with the publication of the premier issue of the new AORBS Newsletter, sometime around the middle of July.

Also, and I know many of you are anxiously awaiting this announcement, the selection of the location for the convention should be finalized by the middle of July. The details will be announced and published, getting the information to all members as quickly as possible. We are very excited about the 2008 convention and look for a large contingent of Santas, Mrs. Clauses and Elves to attend.

Now for the less jolly news.

The Southeast has taken a hit, losing 100 dues paying members. I am issuing a call for all AORBS Southeast Santas to locate and encourage other members of the brotherhood to take a close look at our organization and join. I would like to see us add 150 dues paying members in the near future. *Until next issue.*

"Keep the Home Fires Burning"

Gary Casey, RBS, BSC, MSC
aka. Santa Gary 8

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Workshop 770-729-8336 Fax 770-729-0309
Director AORBS: SouthEast AORBS Director
Membership & Dues: <http://aorbsantas.com>
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Next Roundup February 9/10, 2008
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SantasAcrossTheGlobe

WEB: <http://www.santaatlanta.com/>

Advisor: [http://www.santa-america.org./](http://www.santa-america.org/)

Director: [http://www.aorbsantas.com/
applicationdues.html](http://www.aorbsantas.com/applicationdues.html)

The National Beard Registry #1246



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

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Profiles:

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Get to know your fellow Santas. Make new friends & contacts.



Name: William Bryan McKee II aka: Santa McKee, "Trail Town Santa"

Age: 56 *Home:* Born and raised in Southwest Virginia, near Bristol VA-TN, in the heart of the Appalachian Region, where West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina meet Virginia. *Web:* <http://www.TheSantaClaus.com> (*Official Santa for Damascus, Va., 'Trail Town USA'*) and known far and wide as 'The Friendliest Town on the Appalachian Trail.' The town, truly, is much like the fictitious 'Mayberry.' *email:* Santa@TheSantaClaus.com, Bill@Earthdancer.org

Bored with school, I dropped out of college, joined the Air Force and lived 3 years serving in West Germany. I fell in love with Europe and would love to go back and take Patsy with me. The end of my enlistment coincided with the end of the Vietnam war. I returned home to spend some time and GI Bill money. An opening for a staff photographer at the local newspaper gave me entrance to, what has become, a 26-year career as a photojournalist turned photo editor and editor.

One of my most memorable assignments, and greatest thrills, was being buckled in the back seat of an FA-18, traveling just under the speed of sound, upside down, clipping the cloud tops, just under the speed of sound. I was riding with one of the Navy's finest Top Gun pilots, Capt. (at the time) Ken Switzer, in Blue Angel No. 7. Our take-off set the stage for an hour filled with incredible memories, as he literally stood the jet on its tail and climbed, straight up, to 10,000 feet. Being a pilot, I even got to take the stick and play a short while, straining my way through a couple of 7+ G turns!

Photographing presidents and paupers, seeing through my lens the best and worst life has to offer, has helped open my eyes. It has taught me much and enriched my life in many uncountable ways. It has been a non-stop sleigh ride which seems only just beginning.

cont'd



Kris Kringle aka Al Horton

Father Christmas was my first attempt at the Christmas spirit. I was stationed in England in the military. My wife had just given birth to our second child and I was very excited to make life wonderful for my children.

I purchased a suit from the Sears catalog. When I received it in the mail, the beard and wig were awful. So I went to a local costume shop, explained what I wanted, and out they came with these luxury wigs and beards of Father Christmas. For those who don't know about Father Christmas, his hair was long and his beard was longer. I purchased my wig and beard and though it would be fun to portray Father Christmas. I became a regular for the official celebrations in two different towns in England. I also made visits to almost all of the American children within a 20-mile radius. I also had the privilege of being Father Christmas for England's only disabled orphanage, having the local Chief of Police in tow as my good fairy. During this time I went through 3 different suits, and even made an elf outfit for my young daughter to wear whenever she wished to help me in my rounds. After 5 years I left England with this wonderful experience.

I never made a dime for myself, but raised lots of money for many charities. Those were my thoughts and actions when I returned to the US. In only 2 years my calendar was full each holiday season. The beginning of my third year in the states I started booking in July, and was totally booked by Halloween. I was still not accepting money. Any checks given to me, I asked them to make it out to the local abused women's shelter, or another charity helping children.

It wasn't until I moved to Atlanta that I started charging a fee. (I am retired from the military and from my post military job too!) I grew my beard, found a hairdresser who could make the gray go

cont'd

cont'd from Gary Casey

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



Profiles: Profiles: Profiles:

Get to know your fellow Santas. Make new friends & contacts.

cont'd Santa Bill McKee

A few years ago, I was asked to fill in for, and by, an older gentleman from Damascus, who was, for 42 years, (and always will be) Santa Claus in this area. I had never thought of portraying Santa until then. I nervously accepted, beginning this journey with some understanding of the weight of the suit, and its inherent responsibilities, before I put it on.

With his guidance and mentorship I donned his nice, crushed velvet suit, complete with synthetic beard, hair, plastic belt and shoe covers. I fell in love with Santa Claus. However there were a few problems - I could not breathe or see in this wig and beard and I hated the plastic belt and shoe covers. When I returned to work following that first Christmas, I asked permission to allow my beard and hair to grow. I also found and modified a pair of real boots and a nice leather belt so I would be ready the second year. *(I still have and wear the suit, which he gifted me following my second year.)*

My beard grows very slowly, so it was about 3 years before I could remove the wig/beard combo. Five more and it's just now getting the length I would like.

Christmas followed Christmas for a few years, as I refined my appearance and presentation, guided by this Santa. Events in 2006 sent me off on a much deeper journey and profound understanding of this powerful iconic image. Through a series of tragic and transformational experiences this Christmas past, a bright beacon was lit, guiding me forward.

Entering 2007, my head still reeling from the energy, I arrived home one evening, checked email only to think I had been spammed. Had I ever! There were a number of emails from Santas, announcing the Red Suit Roundtable. There was also an invitation to take a look at AORBS, of which I had never heard before.

Patsy and I almost didn't come to Atlanta. What a loss in our lives it would have been had we missed the opportunity to become part of this organization. The things I learned just from attending the luncheon in Atlanta, are keeping me busy daily as I prepare for Christmas 2007. I can hardly bear the thoughts of the heat in Atlanta in August, but barring any major event, I can't wait to attend the IUSC weekend by Santa Tim, and be able to meet and share with more Santas.

Of all the wisdom and the knowledge conveyed by my mentor, Santa Vernon Waters, the one that is always at the forefront is something he told me many times. It is something I have come to understand; to have a complex comprehension for. He said, "people ask me every year, are you going to play Santa Claus this year? And I tell them 'NO,' because when I am in the suit I don't 'Play Santa Claus,' 'I am Santa Claus.'

What a wonderful gift and opportunity he gave me. A sacred gift to share with everyone I meet, everywhere I go.

Santa McKee 'Trail Town Santa'
<http://www.TheSantaClaus.com>

cont'd Santa Al Horton

away, and make the snowy white beard and hair appear. It only took about six months to grow long enough to look like Santa. However, I have continued to let it grow and it looks better every year. It is also getting thicker each year. Maybe in a few more years I won't need to bleach or color my hair any more.

Having the real beard, I thought I would get a better suit than the Sears model. I now own 4 suits, each is hand made to fit. I hope to purchase more so that I can wear a different outfit every day for a week or more. I enjoy wearing red most of the time and like talking to everyone brave enough to come up to me during the off season and talk about Santa.

I had not realized how much work is involved in being a good Santa. I am always looking to improve my appearance and have memorized many facts to tell those requesting the information. I am close to having "The Night Before Christmas" memorized, complete with expressions and gestures. I want to get to the point where I can mesmerize the children when I tell it. I have several other stories I also tell, which I am trying to perfect, for both the children and adults to enjoy.

Ask either of my kids if there is a Santa and you will hear a resounding "YES!" I will be putting my daughter to the test this fall when I attend her wedding, now having the full beard and hair. *(She has seen my real beard and has pictures of me in my full regalia.)*

I would rather be Kris Kringle year round than do anything else. It brings me so much joy which I see radiating from the eyes of the children I talk with. And yes, I do talk to children year round. I tell them I am just checking my list. I even pass to them a small fleeced bear if they promise not to give me away, so I may continue to watch to see who is naughty and who is nice. Then they must promise to mind their parents as I leave them. It is a joy to watch these children trying to be good if I am still around.

That's my story. Kris Kringle came from Father Christmas and hasn't looked back. I enjoy making visits to children's hospitals during July, and have found time to pass out stuffed Bears to children who receive little or nothing each year. I am happy to have assisted the local fire department with their children's holiday activities. I always make room to visit a local shelter for abandoned mothers with small children. Kris has a heart the size of the North Pole and I intend to make sure everyone has a pleasant experience.

One day I hope to be recognized on television, in the movies, or in other advertisements. I love it that much. Happy Holidays and may your spirit last the entire year, watch it grow as the season nears.

Al "Santa" Horton



Name: Jim Williams Santa Name: Tampa Santa
Age: 63 Location: Tampa, Florida Web Site: www.TampaSanta.com eMail: Santa@TampaSanta.com

Life Story: I am a Marine Corps Vietnam era veteran. I am a self employed graphic designer with 40+ years of experience. I have been married to Christine for more than 17 years. We have no children but two dogs, Morgan Riley and Murphy. I became Santa when a photographer friend needed Santa for pet photos. I am a hospice and Santa-America volunteer, offering visits to homes, offices, day care, hospitals, veterans, and events.

Greatest Desire: To supplement social security income while bringing love, hope and joy to those in need of such on a year round basis.

Greatest Fear: Finding out there is no desire for the previous.

My Motto: With Santa, every day is a holiday and every occasion is a celebration!

Kids will give you the best answers to their own questions, if you just listen before you respond. My wife and I were having dinner at Red Lobster when a gentleman approached the table and said "I know you probably get this all the time, but my son is having his 5th birthday on Tuesday. He saw you and asked if you were Santa. I said yes, I thought you were here to check up on how good he's been. Would you please come over to the table after I sit back down and say hello to him? He just passed a big test and we are real proud of him." I said I would be happy to.

I went over to the table and said, "Well hello Billy! It's good to see you again. You sure have grown a lot since Christmas. That's right, you'll be 5 on Tuesday won't you? And you did really good on your last test at school. Keep up the good work and I'll have a nice surprise for you next Christmas." Billy's eyes were the size of saucers and he exclaimed "How did you know all that? Do you have cable TV?" I picked up on that idea and said "Yes, I have my own secret channel so when I can't travel everywhere I can still keep track of who's naughty or nice."

See you on the North Pole Channel Ho! Ho! Ho!
Tampa Santa Jim

Profiles: Profiles: Profiles:

Get to know your fellow Santas. Make new friends & contacts.

When I'm asked why I became a Santa I reach deep into my childhood memories. I think I always wanted to be Santa Claus, but I didn't heed that inner voice until just a few years ago. It is one of the best decisions I ever made. My only regret was starting so late in life.

Each winter, as a kid growing up in Cleveland, Ohio, I would feel the effects of the "Arctic Express" as it roared down from Canada, burying us in snow and frigid temperatures. I live in Atlanta now, and I hear it has never snowed on Christmas. Not so in Cleveland! We always had snow for Christmas, and plenty of it, which added to the magic of the holiday. Snow heralded the holiday season, and this meant mother and I would soon be going 'downtown' for her to shop and for me to tell "Santa" my Christmas wishes. In those days there were no malls and transportation was limited, so our journey was by foot, bus and street car to see the "Department Store Santa." It was an all day adventure.

Whenever I see the movie "A Christmas Story" I travel back to those trips with my mother, because the movie was filmed in Cleveland, and is set in the time period I recall as if yesterday. I can still feel the cold slushy snow beneath my feet as I stood in a sea of children, all pressing our faces to the bitter cold glass of the department store window, eyeing enviously the toy display. Entering the store brought the hustle and bustle of shoppers, dressed like Eskimos to ward off winter, their arms loaded with gaily wrapped presents.

Santa was on the fifth floor. Riding the escalator upwards, floor by floor, increased my anticipation. Soon I would be waiting in line to see Santa, talking to him, telling him all I wanted. Santa was always kind, sitting majestically in his chair, a soul to be trusted, a person with magical powers. He was not like the Santa in the movie at all, although I did eventually get the Red Ryder BB Gun and I still wear a tiny red dot below my left eye as a remembrance of those words, "Kid, you'll shoot your eye out."

I have never forgotten the Santa of my youth. I'll never know his name or anything about him and it doesn't matter. What matters is he was, and is, a role model to me. He was quiet spoken, gentle and

We are adding an 'advertising section' to our Newsletter publication. We will be offering both 'Display and Classified' ad spaces for sale. The next page is an Ad Rate Sheet containing ad sizes, cost, directions & deadlines for submitting ads and ad materials for the following *Red Suit Roundtable Round-up Newsletter*.

We need you Santas to help us in a couple of ways. We want you to use the classified ads to sell your used Santa gear, books, cottage industries, hobbies or just about anything that will support goodwill & commerce among our brotherhood. Also, we would like you to present our advertising page opportunity to businesses in your area who would be interested in reaching or readers. As you talk with business people,



into my eyes with the warmth of someone who cared. To this day I know I met the "Real Santa Claus."

I believe children and adults have an expectation of what the "Real Santa" should be like and I strive to make that expectation a reality every time I put on the "Red Suit."

I have had so much joy making people happy while portraying this loving figure. My son once said something which gives insight to portraying Santa. It was during a train ride on the "Polar Express" when I entered a packed Pullman car to the shouts of "Santa! Santa," along with the cheering of children and adults. He told his friends, "We'll never know what it feels like to be loved and admired like Santa." His statement is very true. Only another Santa knows "That Feeling" of bringing joy to children of all ages. That's what being a Santa is to me.

As Santa, I have performed with the New York City Music Hall Rockettes, Atlanta's Festival of Trees and The Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum's "North Pole Limited." I am the "Hotel Santa" for the Atlanta Marriott Marquis from Thanksgiving through Christmas Eve day. There I am visited in a real "Ginger Bread House" baked by the hotel chefs, plus, I have "Breakfast with Santa" with guests in

ask if they would like to receive our 'Santa Newsletter'.

This way we can add them to our mailing list and build our readership numbers. The more people who read our publication the more valuable our advertising becomes to us and also to the potential advertisers.

Good prospects for advertising and readership would be businesses that would benefit from a large S.E. exposure, children's hospitals, charity organizations, etc.

Let's get those ads in for the next pub issue!!

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.

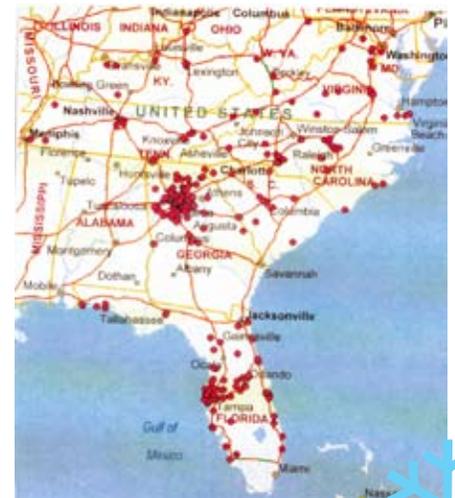
the hotel dining room. I'm an active cast member of SantaAtlanta.com plus; with a full schedule of corporate parties, home visits and photo shoots. I also donate a number of visits for charitable causes. I am a member of AORBS and I attend the annual Santa School to sharpen my skills and enjoy the camaraderie.

Most of my costumes are designed by me, and have been brought to life by the help of some creative seamstresses. I also hand craft many of the items that compliment my costume and the props. I really do have a "Things To Do" list and I'm constantly searching for new ideas and ways to be an outstanding Santa. My pet peeve is the guy who puts on the suit and doesn't groom his hair or beard, wears a crumpled up suit, doesn't smile or wear gloves and looks totally lost. You don't put on the suit and automatically become Santa. Putting on the suit is just the start to becoming Santa.

I do have a "Real" life which helps fund my Santa career. I am employed by a prominent financial corporation in the mortgage lending area, which is an 8-5 job. Most co-workers call me "Santa." Seeing the shock on the faces of visitors is always a lot of fun. I am a real bearded Santa throughout the year and wear Red almost daily. I love to be recognized as Santa and I carry candy canes to reward the good children and adults who I meet. Sometimes, to the chagrin of Mrs. Claus, I am in my role 24/7/365. I'm also fortunate as my wife assists me many times as Mrs. Claus. She was a bit reluctant to become Mrs. Claus but her motherly caring has helped children who had some reservations about seeing Santa. She has been very encouraging about my Santa endeavors and I could not have had the successes I've had without her.

Santa Lou, **Zivili** (*Celebrate Life*)

Lou Knezevich "Santa Lou, Georgia's Premier Santa" (sm) (A Registered Service Mark) Graduate International School of Santa Claus, Bachelor of Santa Claus Master of Santa Claus, Advanced Master-Santa Clausology, Professional Memberships: Amalgamated Order of Real bearded Santa's Santa's Across the Globe, Santa Atlanta, National Beard Registry # 1762



AORBS *and* Red Suit Roundtable 'Roundup' Newsletter

ADVERTISING RATES & AD SIZES

*Published Bi-monthly
electronically*

Five issue rate will get a
10% Discount
(Paid in advance)

1/4 Page AD = 3.75" x 5"

\$70.00

Place a FREE Classified Ad.

Your First Ad Free. *Santas* from around the globe have needs and lots of different contacts!

Old Sleigh for Sale. \$250.00

Looks good, still Runs well but high mileage. Needs good cleaning from lots of dried reindeer poop! Call K.Kringle at 111-222-3456. North Pole.

Advertise your Santa goods here & help another new Santa. Wardrobe items, cottage industries, hobbies, etc. Also, advertise for any wanted or needed items.

Classified ad is \$20.00 for this bimonthly publication. Maximum 7 lines of 8pt. text, plus bold headline as above. To place an ad email text & contact info to: bygrandesign@comcast.net > c/o Santa Scott

1/8 Page AD = 3.75" x 2.5"

\$37.50

Send payments to:

Santa Gary Casey
2235 Millwood Court
Duluth, GA 30096

(No ADS published w/o payments)

Submit display ad materials to:

Santa Scott Phillips
bygrandesign@comcast.net
or mail to:

By Grand Design Studio
4017 English Oak Drive
Atlanta, GA 30340

Publishing **DEADLINES**

Jan 31

March 31

May 31

July 31

Sept 31

1/2 Page AD = 8" x 5"

\$130.00

Send logos, art, and photo images
in 72 dpi for internet use.

Ad creative services available
based on individual requirements

Full Page AD = 8" x 10.25"

\$240.00

(outer red border)

CLASSIFIEDS

Red Suit Roundtable Video / Photos NOW available

If you didn't order a Video DVD & Photo CD of the 2007 RSRT event in Atlanta, *You can still get one* for \$30.+ \$5. SH. If you were there, you will want to remember all the fun and fellowship we had. If you *didn't go* to the event, you need to get one to see what you missed! Gary Casey /404-386-5554, *send payment to:* 2235 Mill Wood Ct., Duluth, GA 30096

FREE Classified ad. Christmas comes early!!

Your first classified ad is on us. We want to encourage participation and readership for our bi-monthly pub. So clean out your closets, put on your thinking caps and send in your classified ad. Santa gear, business ventures, hobbies, wanted items, what-have-you. You get seven lines of 8 pt. text plus a bold headline. Be sure to include your price, name, & contact info.

Santa memorabilia and collectables.

Do you have hobby of collecting Santa memorabilia and collectables? Well I do. I'm considering how we collectors can share our most prized artifacts & maybe sell/trade them with each other. If you have a rare collectable or unusual item, send description & photo and I will feature it in a column called '*Santa's Curio Corner*'. *send to:* bygrandesign@comcast.net

Itasca/Winnebago Industries RV

1982 Chevrolet Motor Home Chassis built by *Itasca/Winnebago Industries* into a 30 foot motor home. Has been stripped, added 2 foot to the ceiling for plenty of headroom. Electric toy train circles the roof and would make a great Santa vehicle.

- 49,000 miles,
- New tires, tune-up,
- New radiator hoses,
- New brakes front & rear.

It also could be a great hunting vehicle. My son lived in it for 5 years.

Contact Gary Casey at 404-386-5554
\$5000



2007 Red Suit Roundtable event Commemorative Coin

Get one of the *original* 'Inaugural Issue' *Red Suit Roundtable event* commemorative coins. These are beautiful 2 sided heavy gold metal, 5 color 'cloisonne' with thick clear protective finish. A great keepsake or wonderful gift for a friend or business acquaintance.

Packaged w/plastic sleeve in a red cardboard box.

Only \$10.00 (while they last)
+ \$5.00 Shipping & handling

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Artwork does not do justice to the beauty of the actual coin. All outlines are raised gold and a serrated gold edge perimeter.



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for YOU.**



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August 18, Saturday 8 am till

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Friday Night - Fuddrucker's,

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