

# ClausNet

The Santa Claus Network

December ClausNet Gazette

December 24, 2010

An interview with  
Santa's Grand-daughter

**WORLD EXCLUSIVE:**  
Santa Claus' 2010  
"State of the Pole" Address

Why December 25<sup>th</sup>?

How St. Nicholas  
Became Santa Claus

Santa's Names  
around the World



**CLOSED  
CHRISTMAS  
DAY**

Santa Is Away On  
Important Business  
OPEN AS USUAL  
TOMORROW

**2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Christmas Eve Edition**



# 2nd Annual Christmas Eve Edition



## CLAUSNET GAZETTE

News From The Santa Claus Network



*December 24, 2010*

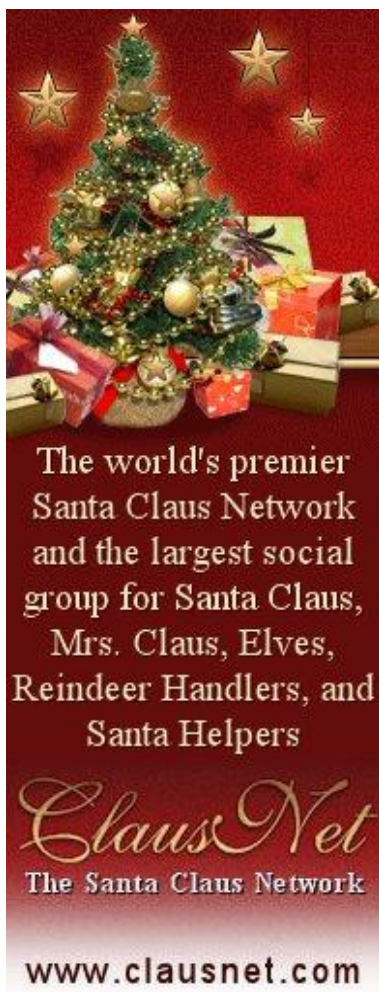
# Merry Christmas

## The Christmas Story

**Luke 2:1-20**

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen which were just as they had been told.





**Welcome to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Christmas Eve Edition!**

## CLAUSNET GAZETTE

News From The Santa Claus Network

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On our cover; Santa leaving his home at Santa's Village in Scotts Valley, CA on Christmas Eve 1960



### Welcome to ClausNet

ClausNet is the world's premier Santa Claus Network and the largest Santa, Mrs. Claus, and helpers social group anywhere! Here you will find members from every Santa organization in the world, coming together to build a community of friendship, trust, and fellowship.

Together we build unity and common bond for men and women dedicated to the faithful portrayal of Santa Claus (Father Christmas, Père Noël, Kris Kringle, Sinterklas, Baba Noel, Grandfather Frost, Joulupukki...), Mrs. Claus, and all others who devote their time to bringing the magic of Christmas to children and adults throughout the world!

ClausNet.com is the largest resource and social network for Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus, Elves, Reindeer Handlers, and Santa helpers for the purposes of sharing stories, advice, news, and information.

Most importantly, ClausNet is bringing people together to build friendships that help spread happiness to the true believers of Santa Claus -- the child inside all of us.



## An interview with Santa's Grand-daughter

Our special guest for this Christmas Eve edition of the ClausNet Gazette is none other than the grand-daughter of Santa Claus himself...Mrs. Jane Holland! Her Grandfather is none other than the legendary Santa Claus, the late Charles W. Howard. (Howard of course is known as the Dean of Santa Clauses from Albion, New York.)

We had the opportunity to speak with Jane and here is what she had to say...

**ClausNet:** Thank you so much for speaking with us! With the long and colorful history of your Grandfather, Charles W. Howard, what parts of his history stand out for you the most?

**Jane Holland:** Certainly his work with the Macys Thanksgiving Day Parade as well as his school to train Santas. His suits he designed and Christmas Park as well as the first world's largest apple pie and cake also come to mind.

**ClausNet:** Your Grandfather became world famous for his portrayal of Santa. What was he like as a grandpa and family man?

**Jane Holland:** He was a loving, giving man. Always thinking of ways to make sure we had fun. He was a very hard worker and a dedicated father and husband.

**ClausNet:** Though your Grandpa received most of the attention for being Santa, your Grandmother Ruth played an important role as well. What was some of the things she did?

**Jane Holland:** My Grandmother was instrumental in the sewing of costumes and suits and also entertaining. She was wonderful about having a meal ready whenever people dropped in. Since the Park was right next door to the house she was always very busy. She was the organizer of keeping my Grandfather ready for all of his appearances and activities. She also frequently played Mrs. Santa. She canned, gardened, cooked, and did all the household chores while also raising two children. She was to be admired.

**ClausNet:** What was Christmas like in your house growing up?

**Jane Holland:** Christmas was such an exciting and wonderful time for us. We would gather at my Grandparents house for two days and just loved staying over. The video of our times together are precious. It always was a wonderful family time with a lot of fun. My Grandparents made it very special for us. We always had unusual toys to play with and were encouraged to use our imaginations. Even though Grandpa was very tired he got such joy out of seeing us explore new things.

**ClausNet:** What is your most memorable experience of Santa while growing up?

**Jane Holland:** Just the anticipation of knowing that he was coming. In our house he was very real and we knew the REAL Santa smelled of old spice cologne. Also my cousin Susan received a doll that was purchased in the slightly damaged section of the gift shop at Christmas Park and when she asked her Father why it was damaged he said "Santa told me that he hoped you would understand that it fell out of his sled." Don't you love it!!



Above -Jane Holland, front row center, with members of ClausNet at the Charles W. Howard Day Celebration last September in Albion, New York. Jane is the grand-daughter of the legendary Santa Claus, Charles W. Howard.



Right- Jane's Grandparents, Charles and Ruth Howard at their home in Albion, New York in 1964





Phil Wenz with Jane Holland in Albion, New York

**ClausNet:** Do you have a favorite Christmas movie?  
What is your favorite Christmas song?

**Jane Holland:** Definitely "It's a Wonderful Life." It teaches all the values Grandpa believed in. I watch it every season. "O Holy Night" brings chills to me. Christ was foremost in all Grandpa did.

**ClausNet:** What keeps you busy when you are not involved with your work? Do you have a hobby? Do you work with any charities?

**Jane Holland:** I am very much a Caretaker and have spent a lot of my life being there for whoever needed help. My mother passed away in 2009 and I devoted a lot of my time to her care. I miss her dearly as she was most like Grandpa. I also remember helping my Grandmother as a teenager when she would come to live with us for 6 months out of the year in her later years. Our family has always been generous with giving to several different charities. I just gave eyeglasses to the Lions Club that Grandpa was active in.

**ClausNet:** What was Christmas Park like for you and your siblings when you were growing up?

**Jane Holland:** Wow! The Park was so much fun. Have many memories of going around with Grandpa and feeding the animals. Also loved watching the characters in Santa's toy shop move -fascinating. We were able to run free when the Park wasn't open and spent time with family there. Of course we were too young to realize it was a special treat.

**ClausNet:** The Santa Claus Oath was dedicated to you Grandfather and Santa Jim Yellig. Since the dedication ceremony in October 2008, the Oath has been signed by over 3,000 Santas worldwide. What do you think you Grandfather would think about all this?

**Jane Holland:** He would never believe it, this farmer from Albion, NY still being remembered today. My family and I are grateful to Phil Wenz for all his dedication in preserving our Grandpa's memory.

**ClausNet:** What was Charles W. Howard day like for you and your family?

**Jane Holland:** Very emotional to say the least. It truly was overwhelming to see Grandpa's life really come alive again. It was a joy and we were filled with humility and pride.

**ClausNet:** What was the last book that you read?

**Jane Holland:** "East of Eden" by Steinbeck. Need another vacation to really start another one.

**ClausNet:** Coke or Pepsi?

**Jane Holland:** Dare I say I am not a soda drinker.

**ClausNet:** Any final thoughts?

**Jane Holland:** Feels right to wish all of your readers a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year and to remember Grandpa's saying "He errs to think Santa enters thru the chimney-He enters thru the Heart" and to all a good night.



## WORLD EXCLUSIVE: Santa Claus' 2010 "State of the Pole" Address

Reported by Richard Washington

**NORTH POLE HEADQUARTERS, ARCTIC CIRCLE,**

**12/24/2010** --- *On the official Night Before the Night Before Christmas Eve, the Throne Room of Santa Claus' Royal Palace and Toy Workshop once more filled en masse with an audience packed with Elves, Helpers, and an entire Who's Who of some of History's greatest, most famous do-gooders. All had answered the customary summons to present themselves before the presence of Their Most Sovereign Majesties, King Nicholas and Queen Vivianne of the Realm of Eternity, otherwise known as Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus.*

*In accordance with tradition, it is here, within the elegantly-constructed backdrop of Santa's Throne Room, that the legendary Jolly Old Elf, in his role as King Nicholas, personally greets those Mortals who, at the end of their allotted period of lifetime upon the Earth, have proven themselves to be brave, truthful and unselfish: the required criteria necessary in order to achieve permanent inclusion as a citizen of the Realm of Eternity.*



*King Nicholas and Queen Vivianne, seated upon two magnificently-upholstered Royal Thrones, were elegantly dressed in outfits befitting their regal station. King Nicholas' attire consisted of a fantastic, 14th-Century red-and-gold Baron's costume, topped by a fabulous royal crimson cape with ermine trim. A long, fully-flowing, leoninesque white beard dominated his head; and the magnificent Royal Nicholean Crown rested comfortably upon his brow. Queen Vivianne's red-and-white gown was likewise topped by a royal crimson-and-ermine-trim cape; on her head, she wore the Consort's Crown of Eternity. In their hands, Their Majesties each wielded two priceless Royal Scepters, both festooned with diamonds and pearls.*

*Finally, King Nicholas rose from his Throne, and a hush fell across the length and breadth of the crowd, as Santa Claus began his 2010 "State of the Pole" Address:*

Greetings, fellow Believers and dear friends throughout the cosmos!

Once again, the time has come to share with the world the State of our glorious North Pole --- and believe me, 2010 has been so whirlwind that I barely know where to begin. The year began somewhat frighteningly, when it seemed as though a horrifying cloud of volcanic ash, emerging from an unexpectedly active volcano in Greenland might force our dear friends in the Earthly village of Klampenbourg to possibly cancel our annual gathering of Kringles, the World Santa Claus Congress. Fortunately, I am happy to report to you, Mother Nature decided, in her unchanging wisdom, that she simply didn't have the heart to ruin our delegates' fun --- and, as a result, this year's Congress at Bakken not only took place as scheduled --- but at long last, after 53 years as one of Denmark's best-kept holiday secrets, the Congress finally found its way into the realms of the World Wide Web! I'm also pleased to inform you that the Congress' co-organizers, the Danish Santa Claus Guild, have likewise found their way into cyberspace, with a website that is unmistakably all their own! One thing's for sure, my friends: you can certainly expect *this* Jolly Old Elf to look in on all the merry goings-on at the World Santa Claus Congress for the foreseeable future! Ho-ho-ho!

As usual, however, it has not always been fun and games here in the Kringleverse. Only a few short months ago, tension ran rampant amongst the populace of Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Celebrate Santa was a marvelous concept on paper, but despite an epic 2-year staging, those responsible for its upkeep could not maintain the Festival financially for very long; and now, it is to be hoped that the City of Gatlinburg can attempt to collect that which is its rightful due, and have the various payments owed unto it properly taken care of. We will most certainly monitor what is obviously a continuing saga; whether or not that saga will end amicably is, for now, anyone's guess.

Regrettably, there has also been an intriguingly disturbing trend that has impacted neighborhoods in certain U.S. States and Canadian Provinces: in light of recent budgetary and economic concerns, several Santa Claus Parades are either being delayed, downsized, canceled, or simply rethought as Christmas happenings, most of them including and/or involving meet-n'-greet sessions and photo ops with dear Mrs. Claus and me. The prudence of most of these neighborhoods has to date been sensible; yet much of the time, the children are often disappointed as a result of these horrid situations. I have had to personally respond to questions from more than a few of my faithful subjects asking me, "How do you explain economics to a 3-year-old child?" A difficult dilemma, to say the least, and one not easily solved. The virtue of patience must be very carefully taught within the child, so that the little ones can fully understand situations such as the aforescribed. We'll obviously be monitoring this especially controversial trend during the next few weeks and months.

The Mortals' Realm has also had to bid farewell to three of our more significant heroes, whose contributions to our Clausian legacy will *never* be surpassed. First, in May, Will Koch, the President and CEO of Holiday World & Surfin' Safari Theme Park in Santa Claus, Indiana, apparently drowned in his own swimming pool at his residence. There are those, not just in the Koch family itself, but in the entire Town of Santa Claus, who would tell you that young Will died too soon. One would hope that Will's brother Dan will continue the traditions that have long shaped Holiday World's legacy.



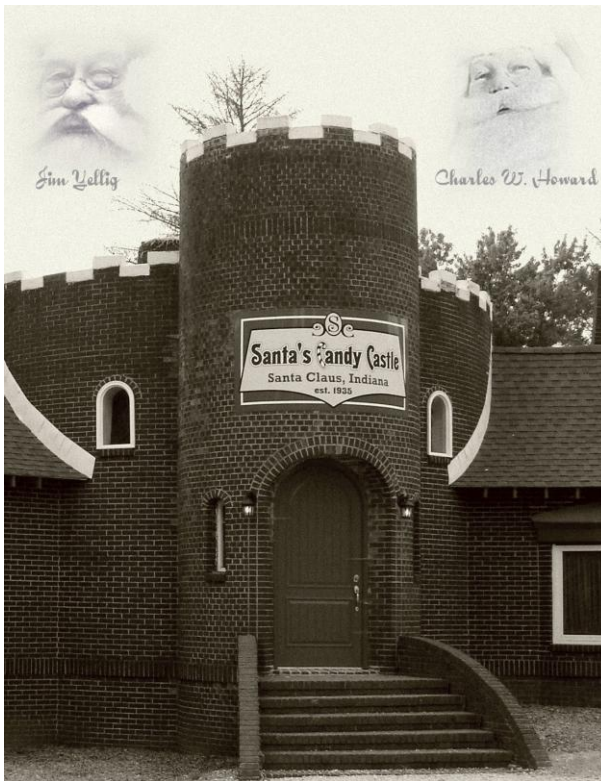
Will Koch

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Then, in August, the Mortals in Richmond, Virginia lost Retired Detective Sergeant Dalton Rotruck "Ricky" Duling, known amongst young and old as the famous "Sergeant Santa," who dedicated his life's mission to reminding Richmond's children that policemen need not necessarily be someone to be afraid of. Sgt. Santa went out of his way to make certain that every child became aware of that; how fortunate we are indeed that he succeeded.

Finally, in September, in Burlington, Ontario, Canada, their Mortals honored a third icon of Christmas --- perhaps the oldest such icon in the history of our traditions. When, in 1963, Miss Billie Mae Richards sat in front of a microphone, surrounded by an unlikely cast of some of the finest names in Canadian radio, no one knew that they'd be putting together the major element of a television legend: the 1964 stop-motion animated special *Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. Long before then, Billie Mae had been a leading child star in early Canadian film, eventually becoming one of the most familiar personalities in Canadian radio. Truly, one can say that there is simply no Rudolph without Billie Mae Richards.





Top-Santa's Candy Castle in Santa Claus, Indiana  
 Middle-The Santa Claus Oath Book at Santa's Candy Castle  
 Bottom-The Santa Claus Statue in Santa Claus, Indiana

Today, before my final preparations for my Christmas Eve flight, we will, per our traditional rituals, set into motion the process to welcome Will, Dalton and Billie Mae into the Realm of Eternity. Each has met the required criteria for inclusion amongst our citizenry; I look forward to greeting all three of them in person.

As you know, the Great Santa Claus Oath, whose Eight Principles are indeed required reading by us all, was conceived by a true defender of my legacy, Mr. Phillip L. Wenz. For over 40 years, Phil has consistently and honorably protected that legacy, from the time when, at the tender age of four, he first decided that he actually wanted to *become* Santa Claus --- to today, when, as a leading Santa Claus performer, historian and archivist, he has repeatedly demonstrated that, in placing Santa's name and likeness into a positive light, he has chosen to make a difference. Accordingly, the creators of the ClausNet website have seen fit to induct Phil into the first-ever Santa Claus Hall of Fame. We here in the Realm of Eternity congratulate Phil on what clearly is a well-deserved tribute.

We also salute Phil's efforts as leader of a spectacular two-year journey for his Great Santa Claus Oath Book. The Oath, which honors the memory of two great Santa Legends --- Charles W. Howard, the world's first great Santa Claus instructor; and Raymond James (Jim) Yellig, the performer who was the living image of the entire Town of Santa Claus, Indiana --- has traveled across 5 countries and 37 major cities, has been the subject of more than 70 public events, and has been signed by over 3000 Santas, Mrs. Clauses, Elves, Helpers and others. Now, after two unique closing ceremonies --- the first, in July, at Paradise, PA's National Christmas Center; the second, in September, on the grounds of Mr. Howard's old homestead in Albion, New York --- the Book has been returned to its permanent home at Santa's Candy Castle in Santa Claus, where it will remain enshrined until November 3rd, 2035: the 100th Anniversaries, not only of the Candy Castle itself, but also of the Town's own Santa Claus Statue; the founding by Jim Yellig of answering Santa letters with the Santa Claus American Legion; and Charles W. Howard's very first season as a department store Santa .... so that future generations may remember the Oath's kindly philosophy. We reverently, profoundly and nobly pay homage to those who have signed this vital, significant document; and we offer our thanks for all their combined efforts in supporting the Santa Claus tradition.



On a personal note, if you'll all kindly indulge me, I wish to take a moment to recognize *another* significant milestone, one that is *especially* dear to me. When Alexander and Ilya Salkind and Pierre Spengler approached me 25 years ago with the idea that they wanted me to tell my story in a way that no one had ever heard it told before, at first I thought that their idea bordered along the lines of silliness.

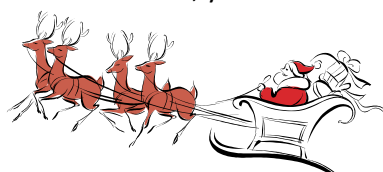
"Why," I asked them, "would I want to make *another* movie?"

"That's precisely the *whole* point," the boys told me. "We don't *want* it to be just 'another' movie. We want our audience to be immersed in the total Santa Claus experience; and more, we want to make absolutely sure that your legend is presented on the screen with the credibility that your legions of admirers have expected from you."

So it was, then, that on November 27th, 1985, *Santa Claus: The Movie* was first shared with the world. Dismissed by imagination-lacking film critics, particularly in the U.S., this wonderful, magical film has nonetheless come out on top because, as had been the case with those three films starring our dear next-door neighbor up here at the pole (that would, of course, be Kal-el, son of Jor-el of the Planet Krypton --- more legendarily known as Superman), there were those who were, and still are, unfailingly loyal to this movie's inventiveness, incredible style, and visual excitement which dazzled the eye and inspired many new dreams in a time long before computer-generated imagery ever became an almost day-to-day part of the technological DNA of film.

25 years later, there's not a child or an adult alive who hasn't been enchanted by *Santa Claus: The Movie* and its ground-breaking parable of youthful innocence versus big-time greed, where the spirit of Christmas blossoms in its truest, most non-denominational form possible. Alexander Salkind left the Mortals' Realm in March of 1997, fearing that his filmmaking legacy would be lost to the world forever. Ilya, luckily, would, I suspect, have something to say about that. Today, he calls that something the Ilya Salkind Company. He's in his mid-60's by now, I'd guess, but thanks to the various projects he's working on, Ilya's now ready, as he himself had hoped, to pass the torch onto the next great generation of filmmakers to bear the Salkind name.

Please join me, then, in saluting Ilya Salkind and all the survivors of the cast and crew of *Santa Claus: The Movie*, without whose combined efforts there'd be fewer believers not just in me, but in the entire Realm of Forever as well. To them, let me say that, regardless of the opinions of others, your hard work and dedication were not in vain!



Now, please, let me briefly return to my earlier reference to Mother Nature. Humankind has taken for granted just how much of her resources we continue to destroy because we constantly make critical errors in judgment --- including, alas, that far more horrifying error called war. The incidents in and around the Gulf of Mexico should have reminded the Mortals that money, power and greed will, when left unchecked and uncontrolled, plunge the world into acts of chaos from whence there could be no escape. Sadly, such lessons have failed to achieve their intended purpose; and not even Santa Claus' wisdom can right that wrong in that particular manner. What, then, should one do?

I would say to you: seek out that which matters in your own secret heart. **Believe** --- for Hope, as with all else in this Life, cannot be achieved without loss; nor can Freedom be strengthened without suffering; or Victory won without sacrifice. Now and forever, the strength and the will to believe will rest on the shoulders of each and every one of you assembled here in this Throne Room tonight. How I wish I could describe in words how I've spent *all* these centuries believing in you all in return: first, as Nicholas, Bishop of Myra; then, as Father Christmas, le Pere Noel, Sinterklaas, Joulennissen, Joulupukki, Tomtenissen, Ded Moroz (Grandfather Frost) ..... of course, as Santa Claus --- and now, as Nicholas, King of the Realm of Forever --- the names, the places, the traditions are endless, which is as it should be. I hope that all we've accomplished as we bring 2010 to its close will bring us on course to maintain our faiths well into 2011 and far, far beyond.

Speaking of 2011, in closing: Where will the journey take us come New Year's Day, I wonder? We all know that Pasadena's Tournament of Roses isn't very far away, mind you, with its theme of "Building Dreams, Friendships and Memories." I know you are all looking forward to witnessing a magical adventure on that score. I'm sure that this year's Rose Parade Grand Marshal, Food Network veteran Paula Deen, is looking forward to that adventure too, as are 2011 Rose Parade Queen Evanne Elizabeth Friedman and her Princesses: Tatyane Anaid Berrios; Sarah Christine Frederickson; Jessica Michelle Montoya; Tenaya Miyoko Senzaki; Kathryn Morris Thomson and Michelle Kaye Washington. I hope right along with all of them that the next 12 months will bring a renewed prosperity and joyfulness. I expect the same, of course, from you, my beloved and noble subjects.

But now, you must all excuse me, for it's just about time for me to get out of these rather elegant Royal garments, and back into my more familiar red-velvet suit. Soon my Christmas Eve flight will begin, and I think my young admirers deserve a visit from the one *true* Santa Claus (that, of course, would be me). So, to each and every one of you here within the sound of my voice, and to you each and all throughout the cosmos far beyond, I say once more, as I have long said time and again across the eons ---

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, AND TO ALL, A GOOD NIGHT!

### **ClausNet Featured Members of the Month for the Year 2010**

<b>Santa Barry</b> - January 2010	<b>Santa Jim Morrison</b> – May 2010	<b>VetteCitySanta</b> – September 2010
<b>Big D</b> - February 2010	<b>Santa Dennis</b> – June 2010	<b>Jeff Westover</b> – October 2010
<b>Eileen Strom</b> - March 2010	<b>Santa Trever</b> – July 2010	<b>Santa-J</b> – November 2010
<b>Tim Mack</b> – April 2010	<b>Santa Pirate</b> – August 2010	<b>Tom Long</b> – December 2010



## Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street: Did You Know?

### Source-Destination Hollywood

Faith believes in things that common sense tells you not to ... that was good advice when this movie was made in 1947 and it's even better advice in today's cynicism-drenched society. Call us corny but here at Destination Hollywood we believe that even the most hard-hearted skeptics among us can't help but be touched by this heartwarming Christmas story about a disillusioned mother and daughter who are taught to believe again by Santa Claus himself. A lovely story, high-caliber stars and scene stealing supporting players combine to make a movie that has practically become required holiday viewing for generations of movie lovers. We celebrate all year-round in our Tribute to Miracle on 34th Street.

#### ***Did You Know...?***

... Darryl F. Zanuck hated this story and only agreed to make the movie if director George Seaton would agree to accept his next movie assignment without any complaint. That movie would be *The Shocking Miss Pilgrim* starring Betty Grable and Dick Haymes (and a very young and uncredited Marilyn Monroe.)

... In November 1986, *Miracle on 34th Street* was the first colorized movie to be shown on TV.



Edmund Gwenn with and without make-up

... Even after *Miracle on 34th Street* was completed the studio boss' were underwhelmed to say they least and released it in June. Despite all of this, the movie was a hit with 1947 audiences and went on to become one of the most famous Christmas-time classics.

... First we are going to point out a mistake in the movie so that you do not believe Kris Kringle when he tells you who was Vice President under John Quincy Adam. You may believe that he is Kris Kringle but do not believe him when he answers Daniel D. Tompkins. That is not the correct answer. John C. Calhoun is the correct answer.

... We need to point out one more little inaccuracy in *Miracle on 34th Street*. The founder of Macy's department store is featured as a character in the movie. However the real R. H. Macy died in 1877.

... There have been four other versions of *Miracle on 34th Street*. First one TV adaptation in 1955 and then another in 1959. In 1973 there was a television movie and then in 1994 there was a new movie version. By then Gimbels was out of business and Macy's would not give approval to use their name so the two department store rivals became Cole's and Shopper's Express. Natalie Wood's role as little Susan Walker was played by Mara Wilson

... *Miracle on 34th Street* was turned into a Broadway musical named *Here's Love* in 1963.

... The scenes in the movie at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade were filmed at the real parade in 1946 and many of the scenes from the film were shot at the actual Macy's on 34<sup>th</sup> Street in New York City. Edmund Gwenn reprised the role again for the 1947 parade.



## The True Gift of Christmas

What started two thousand years ago with a gift from above, was given to all mankind with unconditional love.

It was given to all who would accept its mysterious beauty and joy, when a virgin mother gave birth to a little baby boy.

The little boy's life was like no other ever recorded on stone, paper or clay. He taught us many a lesson on life as he went through his days.

During his Passion he fully gave of himself to all others, as he laid down the gift of his life for the sins of his sisters and brothers.

Long ago his birth was made a day of mass and commemoration, which is celebrated by men, women, and children of every nation.

His simple birth is a reminder of what is true, pure, and believed; that it is genuinely better to give than to receive.

Centuries have come and gone; with man adding secular traditions to his birth; there are Santas, sleigh bells, candy canes and gatherings with much mirth.

Sometimes we forget what was given from above, Keep CHRIST in CHRISTMAS; THE TRUE GIFT OF GOD'S LOVE.

*Miracle continued...*

... There is a scene in Miracle on 34th Street where Santa talks to a little Dutch girl. The dialogue is not translated in the movie so you may be wondering what were Santa and the little Dutch girl saying. Leave it to us at Destination Hollywood to take a quick course in Dutch so we could tell you what they said.

**Santa:** I am happy you came!

**Child:** Ooh you ARE Sinterklaas!

**Santa:** Well yes of course

**Child:** I knew it; I knew you would understand me.

**Santa:** Of course, tell me what you would like to get from Sinterklaas

(Missing from this clip is when she answers him ) I don't want anything, I already have everything, I just want to stay with this lovely lady---

**Santa:** Do you want to sing something for me?

**Child:** Saint Nicolas Little Rascal,  
Put something in my little shoe,  
Put something in my little boot,  
Thank you little Saint Nicolas!  
Saint Nicolas Little Rascal  
Put something in my little shoe,  
Put something in my little boot,  
Thank you little Saint Nicolas!

... Finally we have to answer the question: Where do letters written to Santa Claus really go? Let us tell you about Operation Santa Claus. It began in the 1920's when postal employees chipped in their own money to answer the wishes of children who sent letters to Santa. Today anyone can contact their post office to see if they are participating in the program and pick up a letter or two and make a child's dream come true. Next Christmas we are going to watch Miracle on 34th Street and then we are going to head down to the post office and answer a Santa letter! You should too.





## Why December 25<sup>th</sup>?

By Elesha Coffman, a professor of Christian History

For the church's first three centuries, Christmas wasn't in December—or on the calendar at all.

It's very tough for us North Americans to imagine Mary and Joseph trudging to Bethlehem in anything but, as Christina Rossetti memorably described it, "the bleak mid-winter," surrounded by "snow on snow on snow." To us, Christmas and December are inseparable. But for the first three centuries of Christianity, Christmas wasn't in December—or on the calendar anywhere.

If observed at all, the celebration of Christ's birth was usually lumped in with Epiphany (January 6), one of the church's earliest established feasts. Some church leaders even opposed the idea of a birth celebration. Origen (c.185-c.254) preached that it would be wrong to honor Christ in the same way Pharaoh and Herod were honored. Birthdays were for pagan gods.

Not all of Origen's contemporaries agreed that Christ's birthday shouldn't be celebrated, and some began to speculate on the date (actual records were apparently long lost). Clement of Alexandria (c.150-c.215) favored May 20 but noted that others had argued for April 18, April 19, and May 28. Hippolytus (c.170-c.236) championed January 2. November 17, November 20, and March 25 all had backers as well. A Latin treatise written around 243 pegged March 21, because that was believed to be the date on which God created the sun. Polycarp (c.69-c.155) had followed the same line of reasoning to conclude that Christ's birth and baptism most likely occurred on Wednesday, because the sun was created on the fourth day.



The eventual choice of December 25, made perhaps as early as 273, reflects a convergence of Origen's concern about pagan gods and the church's identification of God's son with the celestial sun. December 25 already hosted two other related festivals: *natalis solis invicti* (the Roman "birth of the unconquered sun"), and the birthday of Mithras, the Iranian "Sun of Righteousness" whose worship was popular with Roman soldiers. The winter solstice, another celebration of the sun, fell just a few days earlier. Seeing that pagans were already exalting deities with some parallels to the true deity, church leaders decided to commandeer the date and introduce a new festival.

Western Christians first celebrated Christmas on December 25 in 336, after Emperor Constantine had declared Christianity the empire's favored religion. Eastern churches, however, held on to January 6 as the date for Christ's birth and his baptism. Most easterners eventually adopted December 25, celebrating Christ's birth on the earlier date and his baptism on the latter, but the Armenian church celebrates his birth on January 6. Incidentally, the Western church does celebrate Epiphany on January 6, but as the arrival date of the Magi rather than as the date of Christ's baptism.

Another wrinkle was added in the sixteenth century when Pope Gregory devised a new calendar, which was unevenly adopted. The Eastern Orthodox and some Protestants retained the Julian calendar, which meant they celebrated Christmas 13 days later than their Gregorian counterparts. Most—but not all—of the Christian world now agrees on the Gregorian calendar and the December 25 date.

The pagan origins of the Christmas date, as well as pagan origins for many Christmas customs (gift-giving and merrymaking from Roman Saturnalia; greenery, lights, and charity from the Roman New Year; Yule logs and various foods from Teutonic feasts), have always fueled arguments against the holiday. "It's just paganism wrapped with a Christian bow," naysayers argue. But while kowtowing to worldliness must always be a concern for Christians, the church has generally viewed efforts to reshape culture—including holidays—positively. As a theologian asserted in 320, "We hold this day holy, not like the pagans because of the birth of the sun, but because of him who made it."

## How St. Nicholas Became Santa Claus

Ask any child what Santa looks like, and he or she can probably describe him – he's a big guy with a white beard, a red suit and hat, and a reindeer-drawn sleigh. But how did the gift-giving habits of Nicholas, a Christian saint who lived in the third century, evolve into the myth of a jolly old elf that slides down chimneys?

Two people, political cartoonist Thomas Nast and author Clement C. Moore can largely take credit for popularizing today's image of Santa as a jolly, rotund fellow who wears a fur-trimmed red suit. But the evolution from St. Nicholas to the image of today's Santa occurred over a long period.

Nicholas was born in 270 AD in what is now Turkey. His parents were wealthy, devout Christians who died when he was little. Following Jesus' advice to give to the poor, Nicholas gave away his entire inheritance to the poor and needy. He became the Bishop of Myra while still a young man, and continued to help those in need, particularly children.

Nicholas was known for his generosity. The most popular legend about St. Nicholas tells of a poor man who had three daughters but couldn't afford a dowry for them. This meant that they would remain unmarried and probably, in the absence of any other possible employment, would have to become prostitutes. Nicholas decided to help the man by going to his house at night and throwing three purses (one for each daughter) filled with gold coins through the window.

Another version of the story has him throwing the coins down the chimney, which explains the connection to Santa's preference for entering homes via the chimney.

The legend of this generous saint was brought to the New World by Dutch settlers, and the name Santa Claus would evolve from the Dutch nickname, Sinter Klaas, a shortened form of Sint Nikolaas. The saint became a part of local lore when John Pintard founded the New York Historical Society in 1804 and made St. Nicholas the patron saint of the society and New York City.

St. Nick received another boost a few years later when Washington Irving joined the society and published a work called *Knickerbockers' History of New York* on St. Nicholas Day. The work contained numerous references to a jolly St. Nicholas character.

It was Clement Clarke Moore's poem, "A Visit from St. Nicholas," (now better known as "The Night Before Christmas") that cemented St. Nicholas' image as "a jolly old elf" with a "little round belly, that shook when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly." Moore reportedly wrote the poem for his family in 1822. It was first printed in a newspaper a year later, and it then became popular and was reprinted anonymously in a number of publications.

Political cartoonist Thomas Nast helped popularize the image Moore created in the famous poem. In 1863 Nast began drawing a series of annual cartoons for *Harper's Weekly* that was based on the character in the poem and in Washington Irving's work. Nast's Santa has a beard, fur clothing, and a pipe, and was the basis for many Santas to follow. He was also the one to invent the North Pole, elves, and Mrs. Claus.

By the early 1900s, the image of Santa in a red suit and hat was so common that the Volunteers of America began dressing men in Santa Claus suits and sending them into the streets of New York to solicit donations for the Christmas meals for the needy. Later, artists such as Norman Rockwell and companies such as Coca-Cola continued to popularize the image of Santa Claus as a bearded fellow in a red suit in both artwork and advertising. Today, Santa Claus is now a common image of Christmas who still carries on the spirit of giving that St. Nicholas started centuries ago and his likeness is known across the world.





## Santa's Names around the World



Naturally, Santa Claus is known worldwide, often under aliases and similar but not exact costuming. His job however remains the same.

In the United States and Canada, he is known as Santa Claus. He is the Jolly old elf who traverses down chimneys to bring all the little boys and girls of the world gifts and good cheer. He is legendary, immortalized in song and book and seen in shopping malls everywhere.

Most of us know he sometimes goes by Kris Kringle. This name originated in Southern Germany. Literally translated it means Christ Child. German children also refer to him as Weihnachtsmann, meaning Christmas Man.

The French of course have Pere Noel, which isn't that far from Spain's Papa Noel. Spanish speaking countries and French speaking countries all refer to the sweet jolly old elf as Father Christmas when translated.

Sinterklaas comes from the Dutch, and it is speculated that by slightly mispronouncing this name, the American "Santa Claus" came to be. This of course is just speculation, but it certainly makes sense.

Countries such as Croatia consider Santa Claus to be more of a grandfatherly figure than a father figure, and thus have given him the name of Grandfather Christmas.

Bulgaria sort of "borrowed" their version of Santa from the Russians, called him Grandfather Christmas and dressed him nearly identically.

Some countries have various versions of Santa Claus that aren't readily related to Christmas celebrations. Often celebrating the 6th of December or thereabouts, the Santa Claus as Americans know him is actually more of a Christ figure, with literal translations meaning Christ Child or Little Jesus. These entities have the same effect as the American known Santa Claus, often bringing treats or gifts.

Finland and Scandinavian countries are more partial to the "Yule Goat." The Yule Goat rides from house to house delivering all kinds of cherished gifts while in turn hoping for a nibble of porridge to keep him warm and energized for his very busy night.

Lichtenstein and Austria refer to the Santa figure as ChristKind. ChristKind is a moderate blend of a religious entity and the more traditional understanding of Santa Claus.

Italy has the entire family involved. Most recognize Babbo Natale as being Father Christmas, but the gifts are delivered by a woman who rides a broom instead of a sleigh, although she is not considered a witch. She is called La Befana and she fills the traditional Western impression of Santa Claus from upon her broomstick.

Asian countries, outlying islands, even most Middle Eastern countries have some version of Santa Claus. While he may not be quite the same figure as Americans recognize, sometimes delivering gifts as early as December 5th, the notion is all the same.

The only country that doesn't recognize Santa Claus in one fashion or another is of course Israel, where most of the population is primarily Jewish and there is no Santa Claus that related to Jewish tradition.

Traditions, dates, and even the core of Santa Claus' origination vary from country to country. Some people celebrate him as a gift giver while others celebrate him as a historical religious figure.

Of course, each individual entity is still modeled after St. Nicholas, who spent his life and his inheritance giving to those who needed and did so as anonymously as possible.

## Santa's Prayer

By Warren D. Jennings

The sleigh was all packed, the reindeer were fed,  
But Santa still knelt by the side of the bed.

"Dear Father," he prayed "Be with me tonight.  
There's much work to do and my schedule is tight.

I must jump in my sleigh and streak through the sky,  
Knowing full well that a reindeer can't fly.

I will visit each household before the first light,  
I'll cover the world and all in one night.

With sleigh bells a-ringing, I'll land on each roof,  
Amid the soft clatter of each little hoof.

To get in the house is the difficult part,  
So I'll slide down the chimney of each child's heart.

My sack will hold toys to grant all their wishes.  
The supply will be endless like the loaves and the fishes.

I will fill all the stockings and not leave a track.  
I'll eat every cookie that is left for my snack.

I can do all these things Lord, only through You,  
I just need your blessing, then it's easy to do.

All this is to honor the birth of the One,  
That was sent to redeem us, Your most Holy Son.

So to all of my friends, least Your glory I rob,  
Please Lord, remind them who gave me this job."



*May your Christmas be full of joy, magic, and wonder.*

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*



### **To all the members of ClausNet,**

Thank you for being a part of this unique and special forum. ClausNet has grown from a dream into the largest on-line community for Santas, Mrs. Clauses, Reindeer Handlers, Elves, and Helpers in the world! The special magic and feeling you get when you are on-line with ClausNet is the result of all the great members! Without each and every one of you, ClausNet would not be possible.

Thank you to all our moderators and contributors. A forum this large needs a lot of people to lend a hand to ensure that the quality and integrity of our community is upheld. Your constant and continued support is truly appreciated!

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a great New Year!

Sincerely,

Michael Rielly