



CLAUSNET GAZETTE

News from the Santa Claus Network

DECEMBER 24, 2016

In this issue...

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Michael Rielly

An interview with Carol
Myers, founder of the
St. Nicholas Center

ClausNet Featured
Members for 2016

Santa's Wisdom

Santa Claus Hall of
Fame Class of 2016

And much more!

Merry Christmas!

The Birth of Jesus 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!

Thank you for being a part of this unique and special community. The ClausNet Santa Claus Network has grown from an idea into the largest community for Santas, Mrs. Clauses, Reindeer Handlers, Elves, and Helpers in the world!

The special magic and feeling you get when you are online with ClausNet is the direct result of all its members! Without each and every one of you, ClausNet would not be possible.

An online community this large needs a lot of people to help ensure that the quality and integrity of our community is upheld. Thank you to all our moderators and contributors and to all the members who continue to support our community through generous donations. Your kindness and generosity is enormously appreciated!!

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

May God bless you and your families!

Michael Rielly

About ClausNet

Launched in 2007, The ClausNet Santa Claus Network is the world's largest community for men and women actors dedicated to the traditions and faithful portrayal of Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus, Elves! On ClausNet you will find members from every Santa organization in the world, coming together to build a community of friendship, trust, and, fellowship.

As descendants of St. Nicholas, the Gift Giver of Myra, one of our greatest responsibilities is to preserve and pass on to future generations the rich history and traditions in the portrayal of Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus. Together we build unity and common bond for men and women dedicated to the faithful portrayal of Santa Claus (St. Nicholas, Father Christmas, Père Noël, Kris Kringle, Pai Natal, Sinterklas, Baba Noel, Grandfather Frost, Babbo Natale, Joulupukki...), Mrs. Claus, and all others who devote their time to bringing the magic of Christmas to children of all ages throughout the world!

ClausNet is not an Organization or Group. There are no dues, fees, or elections. ClausNet is the largest social network and online resource for Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus, Elves, Reindeer Handlers, and Santa helpers for the purposes of sharing stories, advice, news, and information.

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



The Story of Good King Wenceslas

by Michael Rielly



As traditional Christmas carols go, the song Good King Wenceslas is unusual in a number of ways. The song has been used throughout popular culture in countless Christmas related films and television programs. Yet the lyrics make no reference to Christmas. In fact, the song has no connection to Christmas whatsoever. The story told in the carol actually takes place the day after Christmas on December 26, the Feast of St. Stephen.

Written in 1853 by the Rev. John Mason Neale (1818-1866), the lyrics to Good King Wenceslas were inspired by the life history of Wenceslaus I (907–935). Wenceslas (also known as “Václav the Good”) was the Duke of Bohemia (now the Czech Republic) from 921 until his assassination in 935. Following his death, Wenceslaus was canonized as a saint due to his martyr's death, as well as several purported miracles that occurred after his death. Revered for his kindness to the poor, Wenceslaus is the patron saint of the Czech people and the Czech Republic.

Good King Wenceslas tells the story of a King and his page on a journey as they brave the harsh winter weather. One night on the Feast Day of St. Stephen, they observe a poor man collecting wood. Wenceslaus asks his page to find out where the poor man lives and to gather meat, drink, and firewood so that they can bring it to the poor man's home.

During the journey, the page is about to give up the struggle against the cold weather. Wenceslaus tells his page to follow in his footsteps. Miraculously, as the servant steps into the king's footprints, he feels the warmth of the king's generosity emanating in the snow and is able to go on.

Although there is no mention of Christmas in this traditional Christmas carol, its message of kindness, generosity, and giving to those less fortunate than ourselves, is what makes it so fitting. May we always strive to emulate the Good King's example; not only on Christmas, but every day.

Good King Wenceslas

by Rev. John Mason Neale, 1853

Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the feast of Stephen
When the snow lay round about
Deep and crisp and even
Brightly shone the moon that night
Though the frost was cruel
When a poor man came in sight
Gath'ring winter fuel

"Hither, page, and stand by me
If thou know'st it, telling
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"
"Sire, he lives a good league hence
Underneath the mountain
Right against the forest fence
By Saint Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me flesh and bring me wine
Bring me pine logs hither
Thou and I will see him dine
When we bear him thither."
Page and monarch forth they went
Forth they went together
Through the rude wind's wild lament
And the bitter weather

"Sire, the night is darker now
And the wind blows stronger
Fails my heart, I know not how,
I can go no longer."

"Mark my footsteps, my good page
Tread thou in them boldly
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly."

In his master's steps he trod
Where the snow lay dinted
Heat was in the very sod
Which the Saint had printed
Therefore, Christian men, be sure
Wealth or rank possessing
Ye who now will bless the poor
Shall yourselves find blessing.



2016 Featured ClausNet Members of the Month!

Each month we profile one member of the ClausNet community. Featured Members are chosen totally at random by ClausNet staff. Once selected as the Featured Member of the Month, we interview the candidate and publish the interview on ClausNet.com. Here are the Featured Members of the Month for 2016.



Santa Bob

January

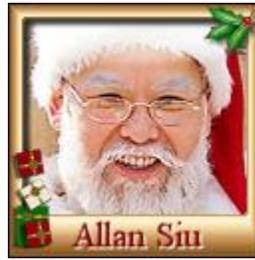
Santa Bob of Tulsa
Tulsa, OK USA



Nick Hudson

February

Nick Hudson
Butler, MO USA



Allan Siu

March

Allan Siu
Dallas, TX USA



Katy Claus

April

Katy Sigmon
Hickory, NC USA



Florida Kris Kringle

May

Florida Kris Kringle
Boynton Beach, FL USA



Mz.SantaClaus

June

Mz.SantaClaus
Murrells Inlet, SC USA



Santa Goodspine

July

SantaGoodspine
East Providence, RI USA



Coudy Santa

August

Coudy Santa
Coudersport, PA USA



Niceville Santa

September

Niceville Santa
Niceville, FL USA



Tampa Santa

October

Tampa Santa
Tampa, FL USA



Elf Bramble

November

Elf Bramble
Mount Savage, MD USA



Carol Myers

December

Carol Myers
Holland, MI USA



On my Soap Box

by Santa Lou Knezevich

I was looking at my calendar and saw my reminder about getting a Flu Shot.

Every year I mark my Calendar for October 1st to visit my local pharmacy for a Flu Shot. It's my own particular quirk to make the date October 1st rather than some scientific reason. I have heard there is close to a two week period after the shot is administered; for it to be fully effective, so it's my head start on the season too.

The CDC (Center for Disease Control) has a website; www.cdc.gov with loads of information and interesting articles about a variety of medical issues. Flu Season activity can begin as early as October and continue to occur as late as May. Flu is a respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus which produces fever and/or feeling feverish/chills, coughing, sore throat, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue and other symptoms.

“People with flu can spread it to others up to about 6 feet away. Most experts think that flu viruses are spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth or nose.”

“To avoid this, people should stay away from sick people and stay home if sick. It also is important to wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub. Linens, eating utensils, and dishes belonging to those who are sick should not be shared without washing thoroughly first. Eating utensils can be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap plus you do not need to clean separately. Further, frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected at home, work and school, especially if someone is ill.”

“The Flu Is Contagious and most healthy adults may be able to infect other people beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick. Children may pass the virus for longer than 7 days. Symptoms start 1 to 4 days after the virus enters the body. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Some people can be infected with the flu virus but have no symptoms. During this time, those persons may still spread the virus to others.”

I think it's safe to say we Santas are very susceptible to the Flu, pneumonia, whooping cough and other illnesses. Santas during the season on the average, see more children per day than most of the rest of the general population. I encourage all Santas to take care of your health now, before seeing children and adults.

Oh yes, don't forget about shingles. I have seen the pain and rashes caused by this disease when my Mother had it. Most pharmacies or your physician can administer the vaccine if you give them a heads-up to obtain the dosage. If you are putting this one off and you're susceptible to getting Shingles, you better think about your decision. I have been fortunate to be healthy through the past few seasons. I attribute much to my ritual of immediately spraying my costumes with Lysol and hanging the jacket and pants to dry.

I also use Fabreeze to freshen things up but my secret to eliminate odors is Vodka. You read that right! Apparently this is attributed to Russia's, Moscow Ballet Company. The claim is their costumes are sprayed after each performance with a mixture of Vodka and water to eliminate odors. It's said, “The cheaper the vodka the better it works.” I haven't verified the origins of this story, I only know it works. Oh yes, don't forget gloves and changing them often.

Take good care of your costume it's a major part of character portrayal.

*Santa Lou Knezevich is the creator of the Legendary Santas Mentoring Program
Contact Santa Lou at: LegendarySantasMentoringProg@gmail.com*



In Memory



In 2016 we saw the passing of a few of our fellow members, friends, and loved ones. We remember them this Christmas in our thoughts and prayers.

Arthur Bahl

Hudson, MA USA
1951 – 2016

Passed, February 10, 2016

o

Lorraine Martin

North Smithfield, RI USA
1956 – 2016

Passed, March 30, 2016

o

Jay Long

Nitro, VA USA
1938 – 2016

Passed, June 8, 2016

o

Lucky Royse

Glendale, AZ USA
1952 – 2016

Passed, July 6, 2016

o

Charlie Nuckols

Richmond, VA USA
1929 – 2016

Passed, July 21, 2016

o

Tom Hartsfield

St. George, UT USA
1938 – 2016

Passed, December 15, 2016

The Final Sleigh Ride

by Santa Philip D. Gurganus



He could not remember a time when the reindeer flew with such strength and speed
He could not recall a moment in which his suit shown so bright
He felt an energy he had not felt in many a year
The moon was getting brighter as he rode on into the night

A misty fog swirled and danced around the hooves of the deer
The clouds parted before them as they made their way
He looked around and saw nothing but stars for as far as he could see
Just he and the reindeer and a shiny golden sleigh

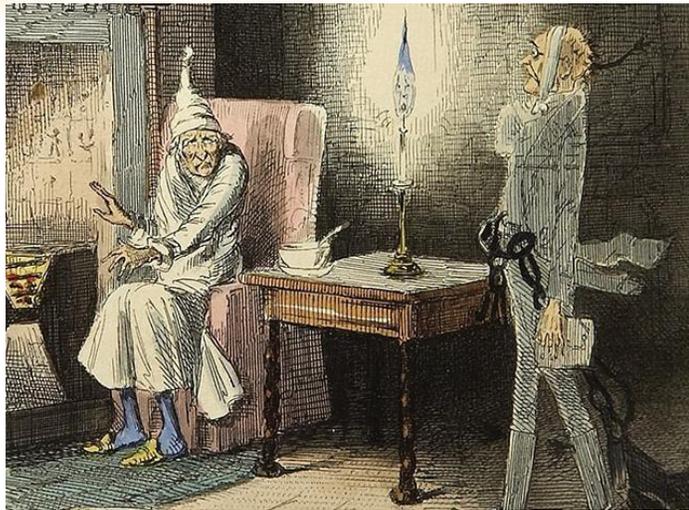
He had no concept of how long they had traveled or what path they flew
He could not say when he first noticed the gate
As he approached, he was astounded by its size and splendor
He had never in his lifetime seen anything so beautiful and ornate

He stepped from the sleigh and with reins in hand, he walked up to the gate
The instant he touched it his heart overflowed and tears of joy filled his eyes
The gate was made of silver and pearl, and the path was covered in gold
He had reached the end of his journey, the land of cloudless skies

He stood in silence as the gate slowly opened, hesitating before he entered
He felt a gentle hand take the reins and lead the reindeer away
He set down his big red bag and left it outside the gate, never to be used again
Taking off his big boots he placed them with the bag, they too outside shall stay

He entered inside and was met by friends and loved ones who had passed before
The Angels replaced his red suit with a beautiful robe of white
They sang as he made his way among them, in awe of such splendor
As the crowd began to part, he was nearly blinded by the light

As his eyes began to focus, he felt a hand take his to welcome and to lead him
He turned and looked into eyes more kind and loving than any he had ever seen
As that hand held his in a firm warm grip, he felt the scars in the man's hands
A gentle voice whispered "Welcome my son, come, it's time to open your gifts."



"A Christmas Carol", 1843 - Illustration by John Leech

Christmas? Bah! Humbug!

by Michael Rielly

Most people are familiar with the phrase “Bah! Humbug!” made famous by the miserly character Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens.

Many people mistake Scrooge’s use of the term “humbug” as an expression of his disgust or displeasure towards Christmas. But the word actually has a different meaning and provides a key understanding into Scrooge’s actual feeling towards Christmas.

The word “humbug” dates back to the mid-1700s, long before Dickens penned *A Christmas Carol* in 1843.

There are many theories on its exact origin, but they all point back to a meaning of deception. According to the Online Etymology Dictionary Etymonline, “humbug” was often used to describe fraud or hoax.

humbug (n.) 1751, student slang, "trick, jest, hoax, imposition, deception," of unknown origin. Also appearing as a verb at the same time, "deceive by false pretext" (trans.). A vogue word of the early 1750s; its origin was a subject of much whimsical speculation even then. "[A]s with other and more recent words of similar introduction, the facts as to its origin appear to have been lost, even before the word became common enough to excite attention" [OED]. Meaning "spirit of deception or imposition; hollowness, sham" is from 1825.

Christmas joy made no sense to Scrooge. As far as he was concerned, the poor had no reason to be happy. So when Scrooge exclaims, “Bah! Humbug!” he is pointing out what he believes to be hypocrisy. Scrooge believed that those who speak of the love and charity of the Christmas season are pretentious and insincere in their beliefs, deceiving themselves and others. For Scrooge, Christmas was a true “humbug”; a time for fake joy and celebration with no real substance or purpose.

A Christmas Carol is not the only literary use of the term “humbug” by Dickens. The word can be found in his novels, *The Pickwick Papers* (1837) and *David Copperfield* (1850). In L. Frank Baum’s *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), the word is used often. In the book, the Wizard describes himself as just “a humbug.”

Perhaps the best example of “humbuggery” is the celebrated showman and entertainer, Phineas Taylor (P.T.) Barnum. Barnum proudly described himself as the “Prince of Humbugs”. Barnum was a master of humbug, a point he makes in his book *Humbugs of the World* (1866):

"[A]s generally understood, 'humbug' consists in putting on glittering appearances -- outside show -- novel expedients, by which to suddenly arrest public attention, and attract the public eye and ear".

Barnum always maintained that his customers were not “suckers” but rather willing participants in his lighthearted pranks and hoaxes. “The people like to be humbugged”, he once said.

So the next time you wish someone a "Merry Christmas" and some Scrooge replies with: “Bah! Humbug!” just smile and say: Christmas is no hoax!



Carol Myers, Featured ClausNet Member - December 2016

by Michael Rielly

Each month, our Featured Member section profiles a ClausNet member. Members are chosen totally at random by myself and the staff. Once selected as Featured Member of the Month, we interview the candidate and post the interview here. This is a great way to get to know your fellow ClausNet members!



Carol Myers, Founder of the St. Nicholas Center, Holland, Michigan

It's always a great pleasure for me to announce our Featured Member each month, but especially in the month of December. I am happy to announce that our special guest for this Christmas Eve Edition of the ClausNet Gazette is Carol Myers, Founder of the St. Nicholas Center. I've had the pleasure of meeting Carol in person on several occasions. Carol is an expert in all things St. Nicholas. Her vast knowledge of St. Nicholas, history, and Christmas traditions is, to say the least, impressive. We caught up with Carol a few days ago and here is what she had to say...



Why is St. Nicholas Important?

St. Nicholas, lover of the poor and patron saint of children, is a model of how Christians are meant to live. As priest and bishop, Nicholas put Jesus Christ at the center of his life and ministry. His concern for children and others in need or danger expressed a love for God which points toward Jesus, the source of true caring and compassion. Embracing St. Nicholas customs can help recover the true center of Christmas—the birth of Jesus.

Understanding St. Nicholas as the original and true holiday gift-giver also helps shift focus to giving rather than getting, compassion rather than consumption, need rather than greed. This can help restore balance to increasingly materialistic and stress-filled Advent and Christmas seasons.

St. Nicholas is beloved throughout the world and continues to be revered in Christian tradition, especially as protector and patron of children in the West and as Wonderworker in the East.

The St. Nicholas Center aims to bring Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians together in common purpose—to help people understand and appreciate the original St. Nicholas, the only real Santa Claus.

www.stnicholascenter.org

ClausNet: *What is the St. Nicholas Center and how did it get started?*

Carol: The St. Nicholas Center is a mostly virtual center, with a comprehensive website (www.stnicholascenter.org) providing information and freely available resources so families, churches, and schools can understand and celebrate bishop Saint Nicholas. We also have display and activity kits that churches and organizations may borrow, a small online shop, and our big traveling exhibit.

St. Nicholas Center got started after I became friends with Jim Rosenthal, one of the world’s foremost St. Nicholas enthusiasts. He is originally from Chicago and served for many years in London as director of communications for the Anglican Communion. He took me to significant St. Nicholas sites: Bari, Italy; Demre (Myra), Turkey; Saint-Nicolas-de-Port, France; and Sint Niklaas, Belgium. In 2002 he challenged me to build a St. Nicholas website and that was the start of it all. No one would have ever guessed how it has grown and developed.

ClausNet: *How many visitors do you get to the site?*

Carol: We have over a million visitors each year, coming from at least 154 countries.

ClausNet: *What is in the collection? Where do you put all this stuff?*

Carol: Everything you can imagine! Statues, cards, prints, postcards, labels, stamps, candy boxes, molds, puppets, marionettes, puzzles, games, stationery, calendars, dishes, icons, ornaments of every conceivable kind, jewelry, coins, medals, spoons, all kinds of figures, bookmarks, commercial display items, decorations, music boxes, party goods, sacks, shoes, French feves, mugs, tiles, needlework, thimbles, and more.

Some things are in my office, some are other places around the house, some are stored with the traveling exhibit, and the rest sadly reside in the basement.





ClausNet: *Tell us about the St. Nicholas Traveling Exhibit.*

Carol: Our museum-quality traveling exhibit tells the St. Nicholas story—the life of Nicholas, his stories and legends, faith traditions, international customs, and how he became Santa Claus. There is an introductory video and hands-on-activities for children.

The St. Nicholas Traveling Exhibit has been installed in Cedar Rapids, Iowa; St. Paul, Minnesota; Clinton, Massachusetts; and twice in Chicago, Illinois. The exhibit is large and heavy, requiring a moving van and professional installation.



St. Nicholas Traveling Exhibit at the St. James Episcopal Cathedral & Diocesan Center, Chicago, Illinois



ClausNet: *Many of our readers are Santas and Mrs. Clauses, what do you think they would be surprised to learn about Nicholas?*

Carol: Many people in the US do not realize that St. Nicholas is so well-known and beloved in other countries. He is the primary gift-giver in a number of European countries, particularly where he hasn't been overshadowed by our American Santa Claus. He comes on December 6th, his feast day. There are strong movements in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, and Switzerland to defend St. Nicholas as the traditional gift-giver over against the imported Santa Claus.

ClausNet: *There are many stories about St. Nicholas. Do you have a favorite?*

Carol: My favorite St. Nicholas story is how he provided grain during a famine so the people wouldn't starve.

ClausNet: *Do you have a favorite Christmas memory growing up?*

Carol: I grew up on a small farm and my sister and I believed that the animals could talk at midnight on Christmas Eve. We always were going to stay awake so we could go out to the barn and listen to the animals talk. However, we always fell asleep, so we never did find out. Just thinking about it was magical.

ClausNet: *What were some of your favorite toys growing up?*

Carol: I'd say my Hoyer dolls and my mother's doll house. Her father had made it and it was at my grandmother's. She fixed it up for me and added a lot of wonderful things and I played with it many, many hours. Once my father took me in to a Scottish Rite Christmas party—we were near the end of the line to get a Christmas gift from Santa. When I got to him, he was all out of toys for girls. I was thrilled when I got a wonderful pick-up truck with real rubber tires and a gate that came down.

ClausNet: *Other than St. Nicholas memorabilia, do you have any hobbies or special interests?*

Carol: I have an international doll collection started by my grandmother in the 1940s; I'm fond of stuffed sheep as they recall the Good Shepherd; I am a cat person; and I've worked to end hunger since the 1970s and have just finished six years on the board of Bread for the World, a collective Christian voice to influence US government policy to end hunger here and around the world.



ClausNet: *Do you have a favorite Christmas Movie?*

Carol: *A Charlie Brown Christmas and How the Grinch Stole Christmas.*

ClausNet: *What is your favorite color?*

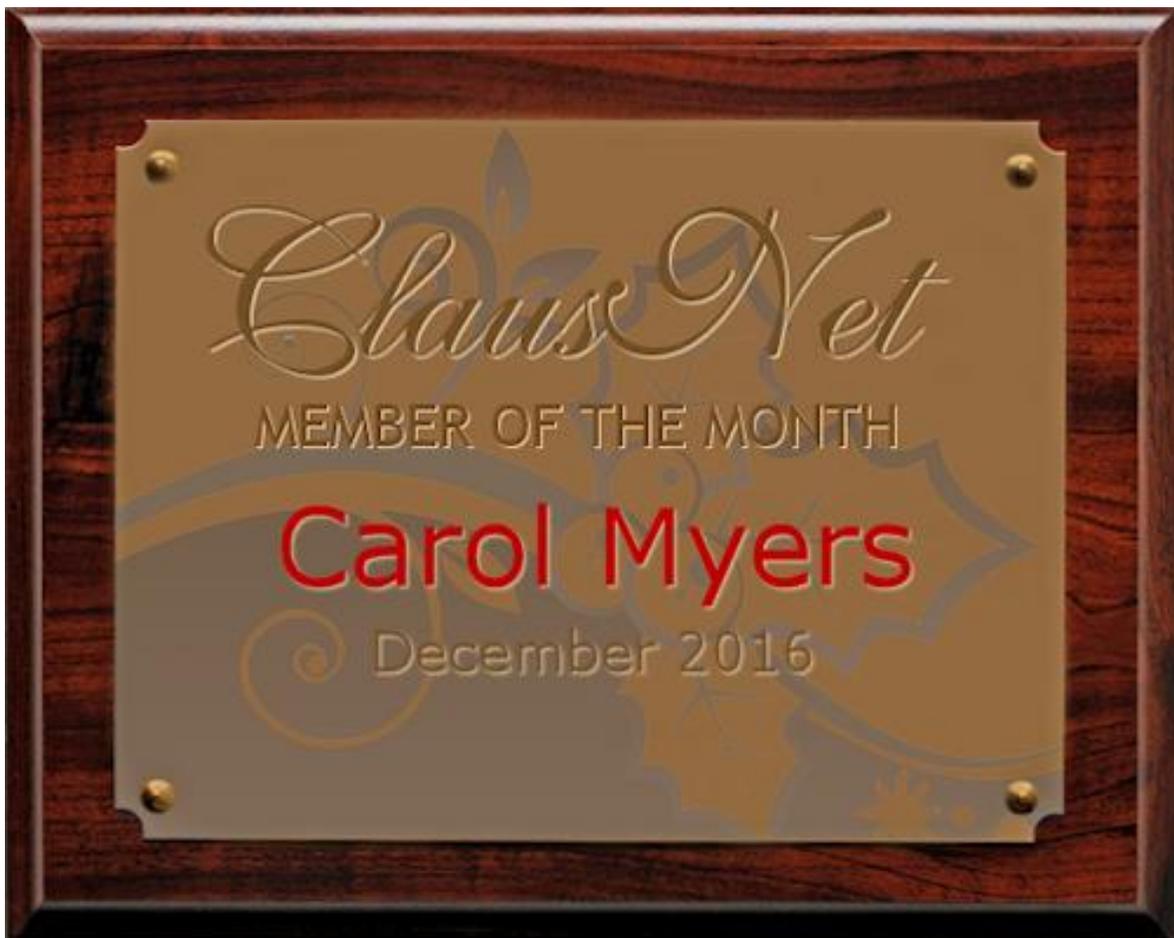
Carol: Blue.

ClausNet: *Do you have a favorite Christmas Carol, Carol?*

Carol: Oh, it is hard to have a favorite; there are so many wonderful ones! *Once in Royal David's City*, *On This Day Earth Shall Ring*, and *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*, though it is really for Advent.

ClausNet: *What can we learn from St. Nicholas?*

Carol: St. Nicholas shows us how to live---to love God and to love our neighbor. He demonstrated God's love in so many ways. He cared for those most in need: children, women, prisoners, and all who were vulnerable. His example calls us to live working for care and justice for all. He really is about compassion and caring for others.





Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus

In 1897, eight-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon wrote a letter to the editor of The Sun. A response from the New York newspaper was printed as an unsigned editorial on September 21, 1897. The work of veteran newsman Francis Pharcellus Church has since become history's most reprinted newspaper editorial, appearing in part or whole in dozens of languages in books, movies, and other editorials, and on posters and stamps.



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

VIRGINIA O'HANLON.
115 WEST NINETY-FIFTH STREET.

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

Yes, VIRGINIA, there is a Santa Claus. He exists certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no VIRGINIAS. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

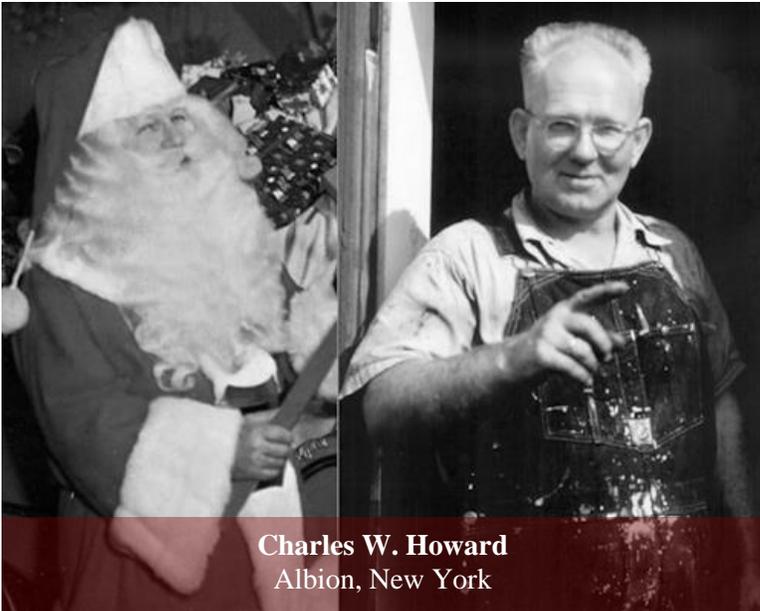
Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that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

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest man that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, VIRGINIA, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding. No Santa Claus! Thank GOD! He lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.



Charlie and Jim: More than just Santa Claus

In this new modern era of Santa Claus where gentlemen portraying the “Jolly Old Elf” has become a 24/7/365 trend, we sometimes forget to be just ourselves every now and then. Two of the greats in the vocation of being Santa Claus had lives outside the red suit. They were more than Santa; they were Charlie and Jim first.



Charles W. Howard
Albion, New York

Charles W. Howard was a talented man who touched the lives of millions of people around the world. He is most known as being the creator and dean of the world’s first Santa Claus School and appearing in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.

But Charlie was a lot more than just his Santa persona. Throughout his life, he had a wide variety of interests that blended together to help make him a truly unique individual.

His list of endeavors includes making handmade toys at the Medina Toy Factory, creating the world’s largest apple pie, organizing county fair exhibits, creating his own Ice cream recipe, and a strong participation in community theatre.

The village of Albion, New York was Charlie’s home. He was born in Albion, married in Albion, raised a family in Albion and created magic from Albion that spread the world over. No matter where Charlie traveled, Albion was always carried in his heart and he always lovingly promoted his hometown.

Charlie’s partner in life was his wife Ruth. Together they formed a remarkable couple who supported each other in good times and rough times. Ruth was Charlie’s strength and she contributed to his successes in so many ways. It was her needle and thread that created his Santa suits. It was her devotion to their dreams that kept her husband’s creative energies flowing. Ruth also sacrificed many things. As Charlie traveled each Christmas Season, she stayed in Albion to run the household and monitor Christmas Park.

Charlie and Ruth had two children William and Gale. The Howards taught their children the values of family, honesty, and friendship. William and Gale were raised in the same farm house that had been in the Howard family for over 100 years. The community of Albion would be hard pressed to find a more loving family than the Howards.

Besides being a family man with a creative spirit, Charlie was a man who lived each day with the goal of bringing a little bit of happiness to others. He did everything from the Heart. Charlie once stated that Santa Claus enters though the heart. Well the spirit of love and kindness that he exhibited in his life enters though the heart also.



Son of Indiana, United States Navy WWI veteran, community servant, family man, a man of faith and Santa Claus. That is who Raymond “Jim” Yellig was. Today in the world of Santa Claus he is revered as one of the most beloved Kris Kringles of all time. His career is that of legend.



Raymond “Jim” Yellig
Santa Claus, Indiana

Born in the small village of Mariah Hill, just a few miles north of Santa Claus, Yellig would become the face of Santa Claus, Indiana, for 54 years.

Yellig appeared at Santa's Candy Castle and Santa Claus Town, the nation's first themed attraction, in the late 1930s. He answered children’s letters sent to the Santa Claus Post Office.

As a Legionnaire, Yellig added to his fame by appearing in American Legion parades in New York City, Miami, Los Angeles and Philadelphia.

In 1946, Yellig became the resident Santa at Santa Claus Land, the world’s first theme park. A position he held for 38 years.

Besides his Santa vocation, Yellig was a proud example of being a son of the great State of Indiana. He served his country in World War I in the United States Navy. He served as Commander of Post 242 of the American Legion in Santa Claus, Indiana where he dedicated himself in helping others in around his community and even nationally.

He was a devote Catholic and attend church at Mary Help of Christians in Mariah Hill, Indiana. But most important is he was a good and kind family man. Jim, along with is beloved wife Isabella, had two children; Raymond and Patricia. They were raised with guidance, respect, values and most importantly love.

Take time this Christmas season and enjoy your family, friends, and faith as yourself. Get caught up in the Spirit of Christmas and remember what it once was to see.





Santa Through the Eyes of a Child

by Phillip L. Wenz

I remember being almost three when I sat upon Santa's knee. He was a lot bigger than I had imagined him to be. As I sat there I started to cry, not knowing the reason why. He was nice, jolly, tender and mild, I was too young to realize all the while,

I had just met Santa through the eyes of a child.

When I got older and went to school, some of the other children told me that I was being fooled. "Santa is not real." some of my friends said, "Your parents put out the toys when you fall asleep in bed." I asked my big brother what he thought about what I heard. "Of course, Santa is real." He reassured. On Christmas morning, there was no doubt, Santa had come with presents all about.

I saw the belief in Santa through the eyes of a child.

Years later, married, with a family of my own, I experienced a part of Christmas that only a parent knows. Each of our children has a wish from Santa for Christmas Day; they want books, candy and toys for play. We tell them to be good, behave and don't fight, for Santa is watching you, all day and all night. When the big day comes and the moment arrives, my children wake me up in the morning at a quarter of five.

I saw the magic of Santa through the eyes of a child.

Now that I am older with my children all grown, each of them now has a family and a house of their own. We gather each December to celebrate our traditions with stories, stockings and cookies in the kitchen. As I sit in my rocker, getting ready to read, my youngest granddaughter crawls upon my knee. "Twas the night before Christmas." as the poem goes; I look at all my granddaughter with her face all a glow. I see something in her eyes from a long, long time ago.

I see the legacy of Santa through the eyes of a child.



Wishing you and your family a very Merry Christmas. May this joyful season greet you with health, happiness, and Belief in the Magic of Christmas!

Sincerely Yours,

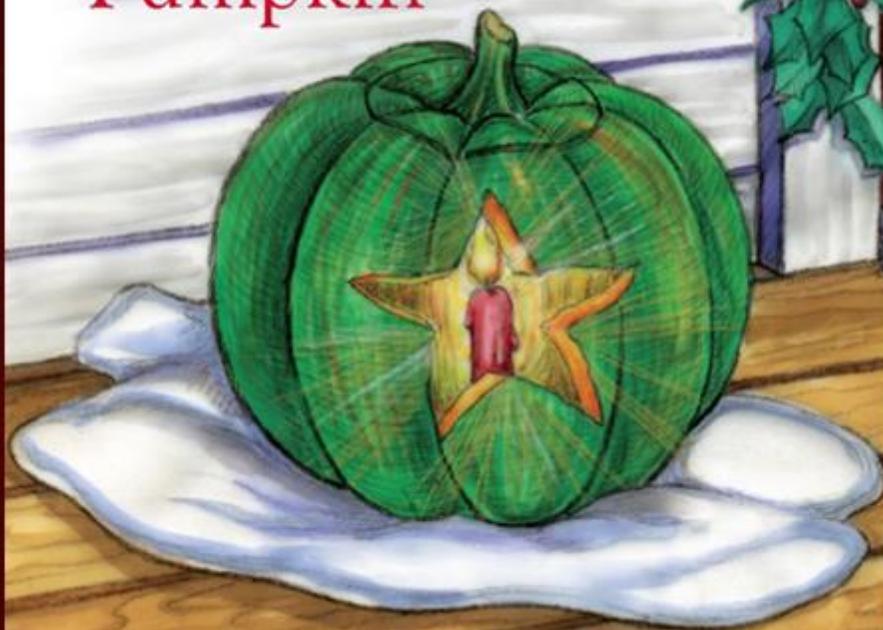
Phillip L. Wenz

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By Debbie Reece
Illustrated by Ron Head



Debbie Reece



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-- Santa Bob Murphy, Rhode Island

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-- Santa Tom Cortemeglia, Tennessee

"The Christmas Pumpkin is a great story about self-worth and the values we hold close to our hearts and bestow in our children."

-- Santa Bob McMasters, Texas

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-- Santa Rich Rice, North Carolina

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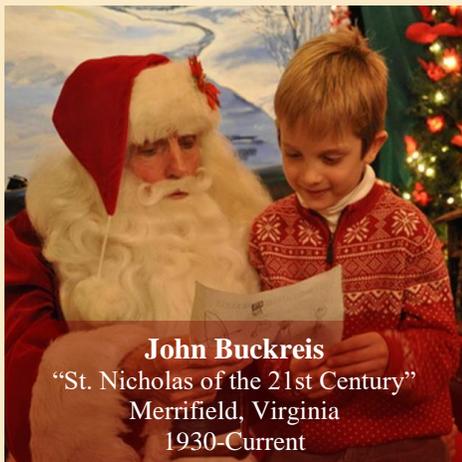
The International Santa Claus Hall of Fame

Class of 2016



Dedicated to Nicholas of Myra, the International Santa Claus Hall of Fame is an ongoing project that celebrates, studies, and preserves the historical documentation of the many men and women who have greatly contributed to the Legend of Santa Claus. Nominations for the International Santa Claus Hall of Fame came from several sources including the on-line Santa Claus communities where thousands of professional Santas, Mrs. Clauses, and helpers from around the world are members.

The following excerpts are from the International Santa Claus Hall of Fame website. To read the full articles or to learn more, please visit www.santaclausHall.com.

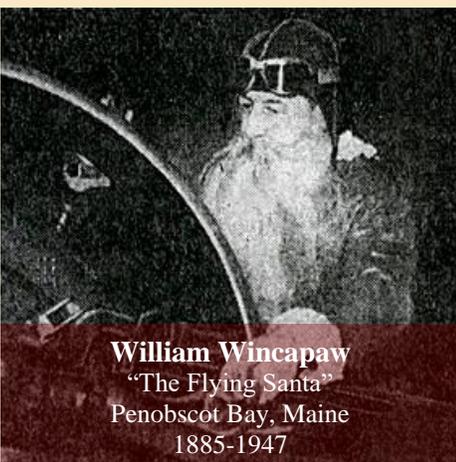


John Buckreis
"St. Nicholas of the 21st Century"
Merrifield, Virginia
1930-Current

John Buckreis, "Dr. John," has known Santa Claus his whole life. From growing up in an orphanage and foster homes in Buffalo, New York to working at various stores during the holiday season, Buckreis has helped Santa spread the true meaning of Christmas for over 70 years.

John Buckreis began his role of Santa Claus at age 14 when he fell asleep in a church and dreamt the spirit of St. Nicholas told him to be the "21st Century Santa Claus."

Buckreis made a red suit out of bed sheets and cotton balls, and went door-to-door in a wealthy neighborhood singing Christmas songs in exchange for toys. After collecting many toys, Santa went to a poor community and left a toy at each door.

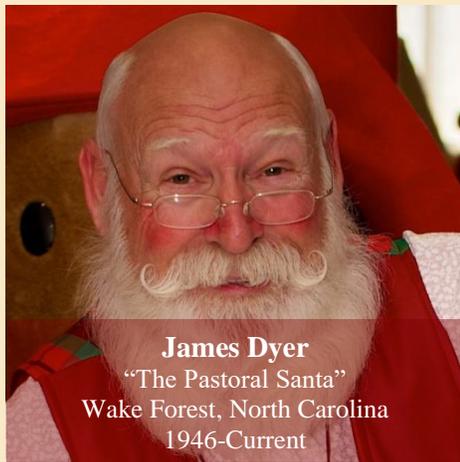


William Wincapaw
"The Flying Santa"
Penobscot Bay, Maine
1885-1947

William Wincapaw had been a pioneer in the early days of aviation and was well known around the Penobscot Bay area of Maine as a skilled and pilot. He flew mail, medicine, and supplies to remote coastal communities. He also flew sick and injured people to safety or to get medical help, often in bad weather.

Captain Wincapaw knew the lives of the lighthouse keepers and their families were hard, lonely and monotonous. So in 1929 on Christmas Day, he loaded his plane with a dozen packages of food, sundries, and other supplies and took off into the air. One-by-one, he dropped the packages to the lighthouse keepers.

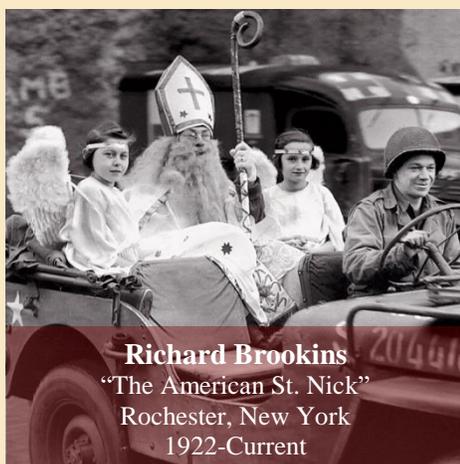
The Flying Santa flights have continued uninterrupted since 1929.



James Dyer
"The Pastoral Santa"
Wake Forest, North Carolina
1946-Current

James Dyer first donned the Red Suit in 1975. Dyer is a graduate of the Charles W Howard Santa School, The International University of Santa Claus, and has won the 2016 Keep Christ in Christmas award

He has been featured in the News & Observer, The Wake Weekly, The Biblical Recorder, 919 Magazine, and The Rolesville Buzz. He has also appeared on local and national television. Dyer grew up in a North Carolina orphanage and learned to enjoy the wonders of Christmas from a very early age. He was a career military officer and served in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot and retired as a lieutenant colonel. He became an ordained minister after retirement from the Army. His mission today is to make the reason for Christmas clear to all children around the world and celebrating Jesus's birthday.



Richard Brookins
"The American St. Nick"
Rochester, New York
1922-Current

Richard Brookins first portrayed St. Nicholas during World War II. In December of 1944, American soldiers from the 28th Infantry Division were stationed in the village of Wiltz, Luxembourg. Knowing they wouldn't be home for Christmas, Corporal Harry Stutz and Corporal Richard Brookins, decided that the next best thing would be to celebrate the holiday in Wiltz.

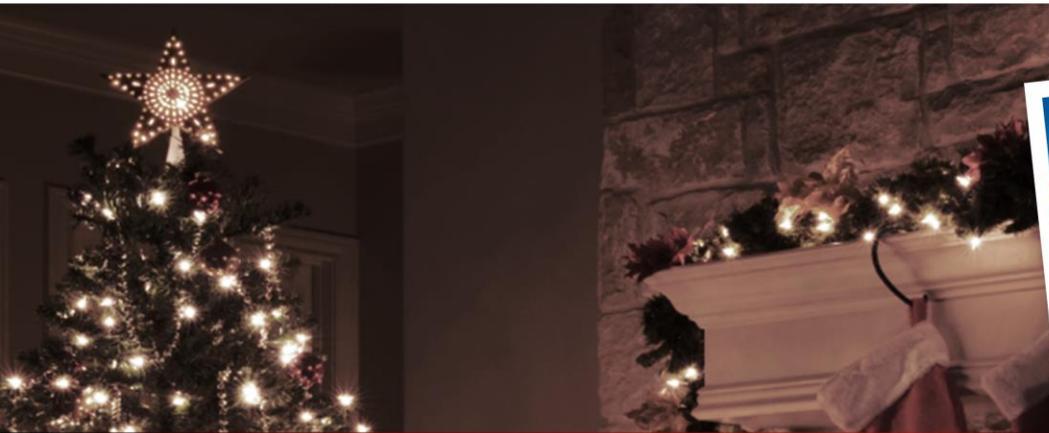
On December 5, 1944, Corporal Brookins, dressed in cleric's vestments and a bishop's miter, brought gifts and treats, donated by the American GIs, to the children of Wiltz.

Because of Brookins and the other soldiers who brought St. Nicholas Day back to the children of Wiltz, the village began a tradition that continues to this day to remember the American St. Nicholas and all the soldiers.





Merry Christmas
& HAPPY NEW YEAR



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