



Baja
Santa Claus

The Story of Baja Santa Claus



As the holiday season nears, I'd like to recall once again a story from Lots of Love by our much-missed late Reverend Gary Wilburn: "It was Christmas time. Mom and Dad assured their chronically ill toddler that she would get to meet Santa. For weeks the little girl spoke of nothing else. Mom prayed for a Santa that would live up to her daughter's expectations. Finally, on one of the little girl's better days, Mom decided that this was the day. To avoid lengthy lines, they arrived just as the mall was opening and Santa was settling into his big chair.

When the little girl saw him, she squealed, "Santa Claus!" and darted past a few assistant elves toward Santa. The slightly startled Santa greeted her with a big smile and swept her into his ample lap. She snuggled in and stroked his beard, and uttered in joyful awe, "Santa!" For several minutes, Santa and the Little girl talked

like two old friends, oblivious to the small crowd gathered to share in the magic of the moment. The toddler's mother stood nearby, her eyes filled with tears of joy. Just then, a man edged over to her and to her surprise, she noticed that his eyes were as moist as hers. "Is that your little girl?" he asked quietly. The woman nodded. With a catch in his voice and a quiet pride, the man said "Santa is my son."

I have to wipe away a tear thinking of how much my dad must be enjoying the smiles of the children of La Mision, delighting as I do when they light up with the joy of a visit from Santa. As a young man in the 1940's, my dad got a job as a Santa Claus at Macy's Department Store in New Rochelle, New York. A spirit came over him that transcends all religions. After work he roamed the streets as Santa. Somehow he was guided to play "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" on an accordion, despite the fact that he had never played a musical instrument before. He brought joy to children and ministered to the sick. He wandered into the home of a paraplegic Irishman, eliciting warmth in his eyes and gratitude from the family who patted him on the back and offered a shot of whisky. "Thanks, but I don't drink," Santa replied. Their faces were puzzled: this couldn't be one of their friends. Who was this lone soul behind the long white beard?



Santa Leon's present to Robin Aura Kanegis
All year around my dad carried "Little Turtles of Happiness" in his pocket and gave them away. He'd draw their little rubber heads and legs into their shells, and talk about how sometimes we want to just hide in our shells, away from the pain of the world. Then he'd nuzzle two turtles together and out would pop their little heads! "The power of love brings us out of our shells," he would explain. My father's name was Leon, which is NOEL spelled backwards.

When I was 4 ½ years old, my mom passed away from cancer. My dad was so heartbroken that he lost the Santa spirit. Years later, after I graduated from college I bought him a Santa suit for his birthday. As he opened the surprise gift, he gasped: "My clothes. I haven't worn my clothes in 30 years!" He began doing Santa again to delight the children at the Friends Meeting.



Baja Santa
(Arthur Kanegis)

One Christmas to cheer up a friend in the hospital, I borrowed my dad's suit...

My friend was heartened by my visit, and afterwards I went to the children's ward with a bag of toys. The kids looked miserable – burned faces, legs hoisted up in traction, an arm in a sling. All of a sudden they spotted me and the misery vanished. "Santa," they yelled.

As the kid in the sling one-handedly played with his spinning gizmo, I knew that this was bigger than me, bigger than a man in a red suit. When you don the magic robes, you suddenly become what all religions preach: one! *"All who are filled with the spirit of giving are the real Santa Claus."*

As the happy kids played I began to leave. "Would you like to visit the other wards, Santa?" the nurse asked. "Well, I don't know," I said, a little unsure, embarrassed.

"Adults aren't going to want some guy in a Santa suit bothering them." But she convinced me to give it a try. In the first room, an elderly woman gripped my hand. "Santa," she said with a pained smile, "I'm so glad you came. I just found out that I'm dying." Choking up, I couldn't speak so I just looked serenely in her face, and held her hand for what felt like an eternity. A look of peace came over her eyes while I had the joy of being the carrier of that universal spirit, I became Santa like my papa Noel.

Santa Fe: I had the thrill of giving away an entire toy-store full of toys.

Minneapolis: One year later Molly asked me to fly home with her in my Santa Suit. The whole plane was excited as people asked me to present their gifts to loved ones and the pilot announced on the intercom the progress of the reindeer dashing across the sky.

When Molly arrived in her hometown with Santa in tow, her nieces and nephews were delighted. We went to visit her mother in a nursing home, and brought along my bag of stuffed animals to give away. Some of the elders smiled, some laughed, some hugged their toys and cried. A nurse was amazed that patients, who had been non-responsive for years, came back to life as Santa triggered memories

from their childhood. Although my dad passed away in 2003 at age 86, I can almost hear him saying: "Santa is my son!"

For the past few years I've grown out my beard as the solstice approached, bleached it white, and donned the magic robes to do Santa for poor children in Mexico. The wonderful beach community of La Mision is filled with the finest elves, rivaling the North Pole. These friends and the Airline Ambassadors have donated thousands of toys for me to give away to children.

At [Facebook.com/Santa.Christmas](https://www.facebook.com/Santa.Christmas), you can see some pictures of the happy children at schools and orphanages. What thrills me about giving to these kids is that they don't have a chest full of toys – my gift may well be the only Christmas present some of them receive. Months after Christmas, I've seen kids dragging around their perros y osos, some now thread-bare.



THIS YEAR toy donations are very slow

– everyone seems to be hurting. Yet, when I had to skip one school, the children were literally crying that Santa didn't come.

Last year, when we were short of toys, I scrounged up all the extras I could find from around the house and attic, and took off for my last stop -- a little one-room school house surrounded by a dirt field in a Ursulo Galvan, a very poor little village just south of La Salina. There are only 14 kids in the tiny school, no bigger than most of our living rooms.

Little Eliza, ran up and welcomed Santa with a big kiss. Last year I learned that she was too young to be at school, but she kept running away from home – to school. Finally, tired of taking her back home, the teacher let her have a desk. This year she's official, and a student!

Our Elves had wrapped the presents, marking them boy or girl and age. Santa didn't even know what was in them. Yet, each kid got exactly the most wanted toy, almost as if by magic. Young Maria got the doll she craved, and Benjamin the paint set he'd longed for so he could pursue his dream of being an artist.

One mother told us she and the other mothers had spent three days preparing food for Santa's arrival, hoping each day that he'd arrive for this special posada. But her boy, she said, was home sick and really needed a present. I was out of the wrapped presents, so I gave her a hand carved wooden alligator that opened and closed its mouth as it rolled along.

Later when I got home and told Molly the story she said "What? You gave away my alligator? I loved that alligator." But when I told her how the mother's face just lit up with glee, she decided it had gone for a good cause.



I thank all of you who contribute toys.

Good used toys are fine - kids still love them in Mexico. So please round up all those unused toys and send them along. Or if you can pick up more toys at after-Christmas sales, please drop them off at our house in La Mision. Or mail them to: 4492 Camino de la Plaza #564, San Diego, CA 92173.

And for you -- I have three special gifts. The first is an audiobook for your kids, grandkids, and your inner child: Santa's Magical Journey.

It's a special opportunity for you to take an imaginary ride with Santa in his sled and to experience the joy of giving. The CD audiobook is going to be \$20 on Amazon, but you can get it free, right now, by going to facebook.com/santa.christmas. Simply, log in, and download my MP3 free under the "MyStore" tab. Click on the little arrow to listen to a sample, or click "buy now" to download the entire audiobook into your computer or mp3 player. My gift to you this year: the "Buy Now" price is \$00.00.

The Second Gift is a wonderful tool to learn how to get what you want out of life without

violence or intimidation. Bustout Bear, Understanding Unicorn, Listening Lynx, Loving Lion and Yin Yang Yak will dance into your life, along with five other B.U.L.L.Y.P.R.O.O.F. animal characters, bringing you powerful messages that are so fun and funny you won't forget them. To enjoy your gift, simply go to BullyProof.org and watch the videos. Click on the soundtrack on the K-8 page and hear the delightful children's puppet story. Play a game of scrolling over the animal characters to glean their powerful lessons. And download Free the stageplay of our teen rap'n roll opera, or the kid's "Quest for the Bullyproof Shields." Your kids can do the puppet play at home or in school. A fabulous puppeteer is working with us to develop the Quest into a proposal for a kids TV show and DVD. Let us know if you'd like to help!

The Third Gift is Peace on Earth. Or at least the beginning of it. It's my 5-minute award-winning short documentary that introduces a project designed to inject into the popular culture the way to give humanity the tools to actually create Peace on Earth. No longer will it just be tucked away in a Christmas song – it will become a practical, political reality. To watch this short simply go to

OneFilms.com and click on the story tab. You'll be introduced to a man who, like Santa, is a citizen of no one nation, only the world. Ever wonder what passport Santa carries as he flies around the world? A World Passport, of course, and you can order yours at worldservice.org.

Have the merriest Christmas, Solstice; Hanukkah; Kwanzaa; Ramadan and more!

Santa Claus

There's no Cause like the Santa Caus!
SantaCaus.org (No-L, Noel!)
facebook.com/santa.christmas
SantaCloz.com

Email: Santa@SantaCloz.com

Olé Mexico: 011-52-646-155-0384

Help Santa's Caus!
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Online at SantaCaus.org
Or mail in your Santa earmarked check payable to: Future Wave, a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization

Donate Toys, Funds & Gifts for Needy Families:
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