

# WILL THE REAL SANTA PLEASE STAND UP

## International Man of Festivity

Other names for Santa Claus across the globe include Father Christmas (England), Père Noël (France), Sheng Dan Lao Ren (China), Babbo Natale (Italy), Papá Noel (Spain), Black Peter (Morocco), Santa no ojisan (Japan), Jultomten (Sweden), Sinterklaas (Dutch), Kerstman (Netherlands), das Christkind (Austria), and Grandfather Frost (Russia).

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## The Amalgamated Order of the *Real* Bearded Santas

Yes, Virginia, there is an international organization of Santa Clauses. What started as a modest luncheon among ten Santas nearly 16 years ago has grown into an affiliation of almost 800 members in countries including the United States, Canada, Norway, England, and Australia – the Amalgamated Order of Real Bearded Santas (AORBS). The original goal of the group was to create gatherings to share job opportunities and auditions all of the Santas might not have known about as well as to exchange advice on how to be a better Santa Claus. But today, the group has expanded to include seminars on how Santa should deal with timely topics, including the H1N1 virus and the Iraq war, and to raise money for various charitable organizations. AORBS holds several meetings each year across the country, including a symposium in Philadelphia, a January Caribbean cruise, and a Christmas in July in Branson (their largest gathering). And the group is still finding ways of expanding. Over the next year, AORBS plans on including the addition of other Santa-related entities into the organization and endorsing Santas to establish a data bank for vendors to find a Claus in their area. The group has even begun accepting “liner-bearded” Santas into an auxiliary branch of the group. “A real beard used to be a requirement for membership,” says Santa Nicholas of **InviteSanta.com** and current President of AORBS, “but that has since changed. Some Santas are police officers or fire fighters and can’t have the beard in their day-to-day life. Santa doesn’t come from the beard, it comes from the heart.”

*For more information on the Amalgamated Order of Real Bearded Santas, visit [www.aorbsinc.com](http://www.aorbsinc.com).*

*\*Denotes members of AORBS.*



## *Santa Verne Johnson\**

**Years Active:**

We went through the family archives and found a photo of me playing Santa in 1956 for a family party. But professionally I have been playing Santa for nearly ten years.

**Where You Can Find Him:**

The Millcreek Mall – where he sees between 300 to 400 children a day.

**Most Memorable Santa Job:**

I was working in Raleigh, North Carolina, when a young woman came up to me with a baby that was about a week old. She told me about how her husband was recently stationed in Iraq and asked if I could take a picture with the child. I held the baby out directly in front of me and looked into the camera as if I were telling her husband “Here is your Christmas gift.”

**About His Famous Sleigh:**

I used to own a rental company on the Peninsula. I had all these 4-wheel and pedal contraptions, including one that was battery operated. I took plywood and contoured a sleigh out of it and decked it out to get the children’s attention. The only time I use it is for my mall entrance, where I throw soft toys from it into the crowd. It has a top speed of 16 mph...but that’s actually 16,000 because Rudolph and the gang are pulling it.



# Auntie Anne's Has Santa's Back

A little protection for old Saint Nick, courtesy of a Pennsylvania pretzel maker

Three years ago, Auntie Anne's Pretzels – a primarily mall-located soft-pretzel maker based in Lancaster, Pennsylvania – conducted an online “Santa We Got Your Back” survey to reveal the true plight of mall Santas nationwide. Over 300 members of the Amalgamated Order of Real Bearded Santas were polled, and the results clearly showed one thing – being Santa is no easy task. Even the big guy needs a little help in the field. That is why Auntie Anne's introduced the Santa Survival Kit. The company distributed the kits as a one-time offer to malls across the nation in 2006. While the kits have been discontinued, consider picking up a couple of its items before your visit to Santa to make his day a little jollier. (See list below)



## What the Survey Found

◇ More than 50% of Santas **get their boots stepped** on by children one to ten times a day. ◇ Over 35% of Santas get one to four **headaches** during the holiday season. ◇ During the holiday season, 41% of Santas **work 180 hours**. ◇ Almost 90% of mall Santas **have their beard pulled** each day to see if it is real. ◇ Nearly 30% of mall Santas have **more than 100 children** sit on their lap every day. ◇ More than 60% of Santas are **sneezed or coughed** on up to ten times a day. ◇ Over 34% of mall Santas have been **wet** on by a child. ◇ Mall Santas stay **hydrated** by drinking five to ten glasses of water a day. ◇ When children come to visit Santa at the mall, 75% believe they have been **good all year**. ◇ Only half of the Santas believe children are **telling the truth** when they say they've been good. ◇ The majority of Santas believe **girls are shyer** than boys.



**45%** of Santas see camera flash spots more than 25 times per day.

## THE SANTA SURVIVAL KIT



**Tissues (for every runny nose and sneeze Santa may encounter)**

- Beard-grooming kit
- Throat lozenges
- Battery-operated fan
- Roll of mints
- Mrs. Claus peppermint foot lotion
- A pretzel from Auntie Anne's (naturally)

- Boot-polish kit
- Hand sanitizer
- Official reindeer pooper-scooper
- Cherry lip balm
- Chilled bottle of water
- Disinfectant wipes



**Backup red light bulb for Rudolph's nose**



## *Santa Carlos & Marlene Shambaugh*

**Years Active:** (Carlos) My wife and I have been doing this together for 18 years.

**Where You Can Find Them:** For hire throughout the tri-state region, but they have made yearly appearances at various locations, including the Warner Theatre and the Watson-Curtze Mansion.

**On His Calling to Don the Robes:** I had a cousin whose granddaughter always called me Santa Claus – I’ve had a beard for 35 years. My wife and I got to thinking – if we could trick one girl while we were wearing street clothes, what could we do if I were in a real Santa suit?

**It’s Not All Ho, Ho, Hos:** This is the type of job you wouldn’t do if you didn’t enjoy it. I’ve gotten requests from children that are just heartbreaking. If some people knew the burdens they were putting on the shoulders of children

that make them come to Santa for help...it could change things.

**Working as a Husband and Wife Team:** We love doing everything together, so it is best that we work together. And it is great to have someone with me in case there is a problem. Mrs. Claus is a grandmotherly figure who can help soothe children. Once a boy told his mother after meeting us that he wasn’t sure if that was the real Santa, but he was absolutely positive that was the real Mrs. Claus. Plus, when someone asks us if we are really husband and wife, we can honestly say we are.

**On His Plans for December 26:** The day after Christmas I usually cut off about half of my beard. Then we just go about our usual lives. Actually, the children in this area think this is our summer home.



## *Santa Beary Clark*

**Years Active:** Four to five years.

**Where You Can Find Him:** At different events for area churches and inner city organizations as well as hospitals and nursing homes.

**Most Memorable Job:** I was working for the United States Post Office, and I decided to deliver in my Santa suit. On my list was a woman I knew. She was in her 80s and had been admitted to Hamot Medical Center for the holidays. It was a package from her children and grandchildren. She lit up like a Christmas tree as she opened it, and it changed my perspective on my whole day.

**Claus and Clown:** For the last nine years, I have been a member of Erie Clowns. We go around to different events dressed as clowns and do things like paint faces and help raise donations from the public for charitable causes.

**Joy to the World:** I love seeing people smile and bringing them joy. There are so many difficulties in the world today that to be able to bring someone's spirits up is a good feeling.



**Years Active:**

Seven, and I've enjoyed every minute.

**Four Santas for the Price of One:** I want to do more than entertain the children, I want to educate them about Santa Claus. I dress as Bishop Nicholas, Father Christmas, and Santa Claus, and I also have a Santa business suit.

**Where You Can Find Him:** The Erie Club, Lighting Up the Park in Perry Square, and as a Hospice Santa through the Visiting Nurses' Association

**About Being the "Praying Santa":** Before I became Santa, I was a minister, and it seems like every year I have a moment that really reminds me I am the Lord's servant. One year, I had a little boy sit on my lap. He was born with a bad heart and was on a heart monitor and defibrillator. I asked his mother if I could pray for him. They came back

several weeks later, and the doctors had said his heart was perfectly normal. I also once had a little girl's leukemia go into remission.

**Meeting Another Famous Elf Master:** I met Mr. Keebler once. He was eating at an Applebee's while his family was vacationing at Splash Lagoon. He told me the only thing I have over him is that I don't have to live in a tree with my elves.

**Is There a Santa Rivalry? :** There is an instant camaraderie between Santas. We need to be cooperative, not competitive. I'm more concerned about whether a job is being done by a real Santa than just by someone slapping on a suit. Being Santa is a special role. It isn't the suit or where you work or visit that makes you a Santa – it is what's in your heart.

*Santa  
Rich  
Sagan\**



*Santa  
James  
Hudson\**

**Years Active:** This is my sixth season as a serious Santa, but I had done a few jobs here and there prior to that.

**Where You Can Find Him:** Mostly home visits and appearances for nonprofit and charitable organizations throughout Hudson, Ohio, and the greater Cleveland area.

**Most Memorable Santa Job:** Last year we were out doing the Santa Home Delivery – parents give us presents to personally deliver to their children. It was a cold, rainy, sleety day, and as I was making my deliveries I noticed this little girl standing alone at the end of her driveway. She was not on our list, but I knew I was not going to drive by that little girl. We gave her cookies and a few items we could find in the truck, then came back days later with more for her. From then I knew that the truck always had to have gifts in it for children not on the list. No child is getting passed by when I'm in the suit.

**The True Spirit of Giving:** Last year my wife and I adopted a family along with the Hudson Chief of Police and his wife. The father had left them and the mother had been unemployed for nearly a year and a half, and they did not have a Christmas the previous year. We came to their house with a tree, a big Christmas dinner, gifts for everyone...their entire Christmas was in the back of my van. The children were thrilled to see me, and trust me when I say there was not a dry eye in that house.

**You Can't Put a Price on Kris Kringle:** A lot of my appearances are for free or for whatever payment can be made. I don't want to put a dollar figure on a child getting the opportunity to meet Santa. I'm fortunate that I don't have to rely on my Santa work for my income. I get to do it for the sheer enjoyment of it.

# The North Pole TAKES OVER The World Wide Web

Even the big guy has to keep up with today's technological advancements. Visit [www.claus.com](http://www.claus.com) for everything and anything Santa. Take an interactive tour of the North Pole, email your Christmas list, visit the reindeer stables, and find out where you stand on the naughty-or-nice list. But the coolest feature on this website takes place on Christmas Eve, when the Santa Spotter, which utilizes the Santa Scope and the Santa Monitor to see just how close St. Nick is from your house, goes live. You can even call Santa on his sleigh phone Christmas night for any last minute additions to your wish list!



“There are Santas that wear shin guards.”

—Santa Verne Johnson

“I haven't seen my face since 1970”

—Santa Charles Santi

“Being Santa is a special role.”

—Santa Rich Sagan

“Some Santas have their beards insured by Lloyd's of London.”

—Santa Rich Sagan



**1.** Exotic pets (including reindeer!)



2. A new sibling or for a sibling to permanently lose his or her voice
3. Cookbooks for mom
4. To live on the moon
5. A “real” chainsaw
6. An alien from Mars

**7.**

A ride in Santa's sleigh

8. A floor buffer
9. Boots for a horse and diapers for a monkey
10. For Santa to marry mommy

## THE 10 STRANGEST GIFT REQUESTS

**SANTA HAS RECEIVED** According to the “Santa We Got Your Back” survey.



## *Santa Charles Mary Ann Santi*

**Year Active:** (Charles) I have been doing this for ten years, and Mary Ann joined me seven years ago.

**Where You Can Find Them:** At many different area "Breakfast with Santa" programs, including Holy Rosary and the Knights of Columbus.

**Daredevil Claus:** (Charles) I was the Santa who would go down the giant slide in Perry Square into 500 gallons of Jell-O for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

**On the Benefits of Having Mrs. Claus Present:** (Mary Ann) Sometimes you will have a little one who is afraid to talk to Santa. But they will always speak with Mrs. Claus.

**On the Year-Long Commitment to the Job:** (Mary Ann) We were vacationing at Disney World a couple of years ago. We could hear kids whispering excitedly at the sight of us. Charles pulled out a photo of us in our outfits and whispered "Shh, we are on vacation."

# Santa Stats

◇ Average wage of a mall Santa - **\$11 an hour**. ◇ Average wage of a mall Santa with a real beard - **\$20 an hour**. ◇ The song “Santa Baby” was originally performed by Eartha Kitt in 1953. It has since been covered dozens of times by artists including **Madonna**, Natalie Merchant, Marilyn Monroe, Everclear, Les Paul, Kylie Minogue, and Miss Piggy. ◇ The **average height and weight** of a Santa is 5 feet 10 inches and 257 pounds, and the average age is 59. ◇ **Christmas Widow** – the term given to the wife of a Santa impersonator owing to her husband’s immensely busy schedule during the holiday season.

Sources: [www.humormatters.com](http://www.humormatters.com), [www.auntannies.com](http://www.auntannies.com), [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), [San Francisco Chronicle](http://San Francisco Chronicle)

A typical regional mall generates \$400,000 in photo-with-Santa sales.

There are more than 75 people in the United States with the name S. Claus.

## Claus on Celluloid

Our 5 favorite Santa movies



1



2



3



4



5

**1. Miracle on 34th Street** – The beloved story of a Macy’s Santa who makes everybody wonder if he is the real deal. The film still airs every year after the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.

**2. The Santa Clause** – A cute and clever family film in which Tim Allen plays a businessman who accidentally inherits the job of Santa Claus. Unfortunately followed by two mediocre sequels.

**3. Santa Claus is Comin’ to Town** – The origin story of Kris Kringle told in the whimsical Island of Misfit Toys–style of animation. Nostalgia kicks in within five seconds of seeing mailman, “S.D.” Kluger.

**4. Bad Santa** – Billy Bob Thornton brings the image of the big guy down a notch with his portrayal of a crass, drunken, and downright naughty con-artist mall Santa.

**5. Santa Claus Conquers the Martians** – Okay, we admit we have not seen this campy sci-fi schlock from 1964, but we could not pass on the title, which conjures more than visions of sugar plums.

**Honorable Mention: Elf** – More about Will Ferrell’s titular character, Buddy, than about Santa Claus, but the movie does feature him in its third act. Plus, it has quickly become a modern holiday classic.