

# Ho, Ho, Ho!

Playing Santa Not All It's Cracked Up To Be

By ROBERT L. WILLIAMS

Everyone, and this includes the Pope and your maiden Aunt Fultida, should at one time in life have the opportunity to play Santa Claus for a passel of kids.

My turn came and went, and if I have anything to say about it, it won't come again until after I have been committed to the funny farm or until the Pope is a Southern Baptist.

I did it for a class of kindergarten students at a school in this area. Next time, if I have a choice I'll play Santa for a school of barracudas. It would be much safer.

The first rugged part was getting to the school. Did you ever try to drive a compact car with a bad clutch and non-adjustable seats while you were dressed in a bulky red outfit and while you had everything but your nose covered with a cotton beard? Every time I tried to turn the steering wheel I wound up with my hand caught inside either the outfit or the beard.

I had some very interesting looks from kids in cars that passed me, from a policeman who wasn't at all certain that I had not started my Christmas spirits a little early, and from one lady of sorts who offered to exchange gifts with me later in her room.

The first kid who climbed up on my lap after I entered the classroom finished me for the day. And for the decade.

He was one of those perfectly beautiful boys you see in TV commercials and old movies. He was blond, blue-eyed, and angelic in every way.

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" I said with great originality. Why does Santa have to say "Ho! Ho! Ho!" anyhow? Does any body ever laugh in that fashion? Why not let him laugh the way people really laugh? Or why not let him say something different once in a while, like "Paw Paw" or "Hummingbird" or "Anchovies"?

But I said "Ho! Ho! Ho!" and added, "And what would you like Old Santa to bring you for Christmas?" I expected him to ask for a laser ray gun, a computer, or a baseball glove.

Instead, he looked up at me with those great big blue eyes with tears in them and said, "I want you to have my daddy come back home to live with me and mommy. He left us at Thanksgiving and I want him back for Christmas."



His eyes weren't the only ones with tears in them. Helplessly, I couldn't find a single "Ho! Ho!" that would have been of any comfort to him. I looked helplessly at teachers who in turn looked at the ceiling or at the floor.

Finally, thinking of my own son, I said, "Young man, Santa can't always get adults to do what he wants them to do, but here is what I can do. In your class there is a boy who will invite you to come home with him after school - every day, if you wish. And he has a daddy he will share with you. His daddy would love to have another boy around the house, and he wants one exactly like you. So you can have a part-time daddy until your own daddy comes home."

The rest of the day was only a blur. I vaguely recall the kids who had their list of toys and games, most of which I had never heard of. I nodded and Ho-Hoed and laid my finger aside of my nose and did all the other

things Santa is expected to do.

There was one kid who had to be Dennis the Menace in person. He climbed up on my lap and immediately grabbed a handful of beard to test. He swung like Tarzan on the cotton, which might have been all right except that there was a real beard under the cotton and he had two fists full of that, too.

With his heels he battered my shins and kneecaps mercilessly. I managed to slide him to one of my legs while with the other one I imprisoned his flailing feet. With my hands I managed to extricate his fingers from my beard, and for the rest of his visit I held his hands safely in mine.

"Ho! Ho!" I said. "Santa likes to see little boys sit very, very still. He also likes for them not to hurt him any more than is absolutely necessary. You see, Old Santa doesn't like to bleed all over his outfit."

A zillion kids came and went. Finally they started to laugh and one said, "Santa's beard is all red."

He was right. The teachers' aides had chosen to let the boys and girls who were waiting have suckers and peppermint candy sticks. The result was that every kid had sticky red hands and my cotton beard was also sticky and red.

So was the outfit where they had clutched and they climbed their way onto my lap.

Mercifully, the last one came and went, and Old Santa, weary and wounded and half-ripped out of his costume, was preparing to head back to the North Pole where this sort of thing did not happen, where icebergs and polar bears were the only problems to deal with.

But one teacher was too quick.

"And now, boys and girls," she said, "would you like for Santa to sing us some special Christmas songs?"

They cheered and clapped in malicious glee. I tried to protest that my mouth was full of cotton and that I was fiercely hot in the costume and that my kneecaps needed a transfusion and that I had an urgent appointment with my proctologist. But my mouth was so full of cotton that all I succeeded in saying was "Myffgmp, grffhptz."

The next thing I knew I was trying to sing "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "I'm Dreaming of a Fat Wombat" and also of a Cute

Bandicoot and a Dark Aardvark. One kid wanted me to sing some song about Ragalugs the Unhappy Christmas Bunny.

I had never heard of the song or the rabbit, unless it was one I met at the Bunny Club in Atlanta years ago, but I sang something that I hoped would get me off the hook.

"That's not right," the kid screamed. "The words didn't make any sense."

"I was singing in German," I said. "I thought I was in Germany. Where am I? In Bulgaria? Santa must run. Fast! See Santa run. See Santa run fast. See Santa run as fast as his fat little legs will carry him. And watch Santa burn rubber all over the parking lot as he gets the heck out of here!"

Outside the class I found a small empty room and was pulling off the Santa outfit and changing into my own clothes, which I had brought in a paper bag. I was halfway through changing when I opened the bag and found that I had brought some chocolate cupcakes that were supposed to go to the church. I would only suppose that my pants and underwear were at that moment being placed on the table for the Senior Citizens banquet.

At that moment a teacher opened the door and caught me in my beard and underwear. I explained to her that Santa had to get ready for a Senior Citizens banquet. Judging from the look on her face, I don't think I made my self really clear.

When I was back safely at home, one of the teachers called and asked if I would agree to be Santa in the first grade classes the next day. I explained quickly that I was obligated for the near future and that I was sorry I could not help her.

"When can you be Santa for our students?" she asked.

"When it can be readily determined that hell has frozen over at least a foot thick," I said.

"Well!" she exclaimed indignantly. "Whatever happened to Christmas spirit?"

I don't think she'd have understood if I had explained it all to her.

## Library To Host Story Hour

By ROSE TURNER

Meet the bears at the Mauney Memorial Library preschool story time.

Beginning Thursday, January 19, 1989, at 11 a.m., the library will hold a story hour weekly preschoolers from age 3 to 5. The first few programs will focus on bears. We have the Three Bears, Bobby Bear, the Berenstain Bears, the biggest Bear, and a lot of other kinds of bears that you won't want to miss. You may even bring your very own teddy bear with you. He will enjoy the bear stories, too.

The story hour will be held in the spacious auditorium in the new addition of the library. Children may preregister now for the program. For more information call the library at 739-2371.



## KM Library Has New Books

By ROSE TURNER

Reference books are at the heart of the library. Packed inside those weighty tomes is a wealth of data and an accumulation of knowledge on all topics, from general information for the elementary school student's report to technical treatises for the advanced student and popular treatment of current interest items for the layman. The world of knowledge and ideas is available for the ready investigation of all.

The Mauney Memorial Library has recently acquired some outstanding reference materials in the fields of history and literature.

American Writers, and British Writers, are two series of books, consisting of eight volumes each, which explore in depth the major writers of the United States and Great Britain. In addition to

biographical information, the series provides a critical analysis of the major works of each author with a bibliography.

The dictionary of American Biography is an authoritative national biography in seventeen volumes. It is a scholarly work, and restricted to those persons no longer living who have made some significant contribution to American life. In addition to soldiers, statesmen, and clergymen, biographies include outstanding people in the sciences, technology and arts.

The dictionary of American History is an eight volume scholarly work covering not only the political history and the military events in our experience, but the whole of our culture, including science and technology, the arts, and general trends and popular movements. The

purpose of the dictionary is to bring together in one place the major facts and interpretations of American history so that they are readily accessible to all.

The encyclopedia of American Political History, and the encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy, are each three volume works which concentrate on a particular aspect of American history. Both works are in depths scholarly studies which make specialized information available in one source for easy reference.

The encyclopedia of American Religious Experience is a three volume work covering religion in America. Major movements and denominations are discussed as well as biographies of outstanding people in the field.

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Replacement windows and doors: cost versus value

Although installation of insulating windows and storm doors will save the homeowner money in energy costs, the resale value of the house is not increased by the total expenditure on this improvement project. According to a cost-versus-value survey conducted by Remodeling Contractor magazine, the resale value of a home equipped with new windows and doors will increase by only 75 percent the costs of installation.

REPLACEMENT WINDOWS AND DOORS Average cost of remodeling project, and the percent of this cost which the improvement adds to the resale and finance values of the home:

YEAR	REMODELING COST	RESALE VALUE	FINANCE VALUE
1987	\$10,250	75%	70%
1986	\$ 9,760	72%	65%
1985	\$ 9,750	70%	60%
1984	\$ 7,500	60%	55%

Note: REMODELING COST represents an average of estimates given by building contractors. RESALE VALUE is the percent of costs that the improvement will add to the resale value of the house, estimated by real estate experts. FINANCE VALUE is the percent of costs that the improvement will add to the appraised value, for the purposes of obtaining a loan on the property.

SOURCE: Remodeling Contractor magazine

Installation of new siding: cost versus add value

Installing new siding to your house can be a wise investment. According to a cost-versus-value study conducted by Remodeling Contractor magazine, the resale value of your house will be substantially increased with the installation of new siding (including an insulating board). Real estate experts predict that you will recapture all costs of installing the new siding when you sell your house.

MAJOR KITCHEN REMODELING Average cost of remodeling project, and the percent of this cost which the improvement adds to the resale and finance values of the home:

YEAR	REMODELING COST	RESALE VALUE	FINANCE VALUE
1987	\$18,500	90%	77%
1986	\$18,000	89%	70%
1985	\$16,500	79%	60%
1984	\$15,000	80%	60%

Note: REMODELING COST represents an average of estimates given by building contractors. RESALE VALUE is the percent of costs that the improvement will add to the resale value of the house, estimated by real estate experts. FINANCE VALUE is the percent of costs that the improvement will add to the appraised value, for the purposes of obtaining a loan on the property.

SOURCE: Remodeling Contractor magazine

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