

HALTON'S PEOPLE

Everyone's favorite here once a year



Santa Claus: the child rewarded

By MAGGIE HANNAH
Herald staff writer

Over the past year The Herald has tried to talk to people whose jobs, hobbies or community involvement makes them an interesting and special part of Halton Hills. Usually these "Halton's People" are of interest to our grown-up readers, but in view of the season, this seemed the time to talk to the man who is so very important to our young readers.

Even if Santa Claus doesn't live in our town, we certainly know him here, and most little people would agree that he's one of our very special people.

In case you're worried, boys and girls, we talked to him late in the fall before he got too busy to sit and chat.

Santa was going over his books in his office when we arrived. Seated behind his big wooden desk with his boots off, his shirt sleeves rolled up and his glasses sliding down his nose, he looked very much like someone's elderly grandfather.

"First I check last year's list to see where there are new children," he said, explaining the papers before him. "Then I go through my files to see who has moved and where they moved to. If it weren't for Mrs. Claus and my three secretaries, who keep all the records up to date for me, I'd never find all my boys and girls.

"I work out my route so I can

start at one end and just keep going until I'm done. If I had to backtrack, I'd miss someone or waste time. I can't do that or I'd never get around it all."

Santa said he leaves it to his elves to organize the toy production. They have been at it so long, they know exactly how to go about their job without any directions from him.

"Bill, Bob and Paul have been here forever," Santa chuckled. "Bill looks after the games, books and educational materials, Bob is in charge of mechanical toys and anything that needs a motor or battery to make it work; Paul looks after stuffed toys and dolls. They each have their own staff and everyone knows them."

"They go to the trade shows in the spring to see what the manufacturers will be selling next Christmas and then they come back here to set up our own machines so we can make the same things. If anyone else tried to copy their toys, the companies would sue them. But they know my head elves and they co-operate because of what we do. We couldn't afford to buy toys for all the children we visit, so we have to make our own."

Santa also has many home helpers, people who will make special items he needs that are one of a kind.

"I'll never forget the letter I got from Edna Jane in Hamilton," he said. "She was eight and she badly wanted a doll

cradle just like the one her Aunt Clarise had in her attic. I was just new at being Santa then and I had no idea how I could help her. But Paul knew. He went to see Aunt Clarise. She showed him the cradle and then he went to one of our home helpers who was good at carpentry. He told him what the cradle looked like and the man made us one in a couple of weeks."

Most of his home helpers are senior citizens and housewives.

He also gets many requests for pets, but isn't always sure what to do about them.

"I love animals almost as much as I love my boys and girls," he said. "Sometimes children don't understand, however, that there just isn't room for a puppy in their apartment or a pony in grandma's backyard. I hate to disappoint the children, but it would hurt them even more to get a pet and then have to give it up. That's why I always ask their parents before I bring them their pet. Sometimes their parents say they can't have a St. Bernard but there is room for a Cocker Spaniel. Other times we completely change the animal and bring them gerbils or fish instead."

SANTA LETTERS

Since the Herald sends Santa so many letters each year we asked how he manages to keep track of each child's request.

"As I read them, I sort them

out alphabetically," he said. "Then my secretaries write down what each child wants beside his or her name in my big book."

Santa said he visits many countries in the world, but most of the children he will see on Monday are in Canada, the United States and Great Britain. He will already have visited Holland, Belgium, Germany, France and Scandinavia by the time he stops in Halton Hills.

"I have many names," Santa said. "In Holland they call me Sinter Klaus. In Russia, I'm Grandfather Frost. In Germany, I'm St. Nicholas. I visit most European countries on December 5. That helps a little bit to get me around to see all my boys and girls. But I still have to return to those countries December 24 after I visit Canada, the United States and Britain to see any children from these countries who are visiting somewhere else. They are used to seeing me on Christmas Eve and I can't disappoint them just because they're always visiting someone."

Santa said he has been in his job for many, many years, but there was a time when he had another job.

"I won't tell you where I'm from or what I did before I became 'Santa Claus,'" he smiled. "That all happened so long ago it isn't important any more. I'm not the first Santa,

you know. There were several others before I was asked to take it over. The Santa before me had a bad fall and had to quit right in the middle of his Christmas trip.

"My grandchildren were staying with us for the holiday, so Santa stopped at our house to fill their stockings," he said. "My wife woke me up in the middle of the night because she thought she heard something down by the fireplace. When I got downstairs to look, there he was, lying on his back in the middle of the floor with the toys all scattered around.

"We had set a green garbage bag beside the tree before we went to bed so it would be handy to stick the torn wrapping paper in when everyone got up the next morning. It seems he stepped on it and slipped. I felt terrible. He was too sore to finish his trip and he was very worried about how he'd get the gifts to the rest of the boys and girls. He asked me if I'd do it for him.

SURPRISE TO ME

"It certainly came as a surprise to me, but I agreed to do it because I was to blame for his accident. My wife put him to bed and looked after him for a few days. We had a hard time to keep our grandchildren from finding out who our visitor was. They would have been even more surprised if they had known what I

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It's 'Choral by candlelight' at Christmas church services

By LORI TAYLOR
Herald Staff Writer

Choral presentations and candlelight services will highlight many of the special ceremonies planned by Halton Hills churches to mark the most important event of the Christian calendar.

Norval United Church will be having its annual Sunday School concert Friday at 7:30 p.m. On Sunday, the regular morning service will be held at 11 a.m. At 7:30 p.m., the junior, teen and senior choirs will be presenting a special candlelight service. On Christmas Eve, the teen choir will conduct a service at 10 p.m., which will include Communion.

Hillcrest United church will hold a Christmas Eve service at 8 p.m. Services Sunday will be at the usual time.

Trinity United Church in Acton will hold its regular Sunday service this week at 10 a.m. On Christmas Eve, a Service of Lessons and Carols will be held with the Junior and Senior Choirs at 7:30 followed at 11 p.m. by Communion, with the Senior Choir participating.

St. Andrew's United Church in Georgetown and Ballinafad United Church will hold Christmas Sunday services at 10 and 11:45 a.m., respectively. Christmas Eve services of carols and readings will be held at 7:30 p.m. at St. Andrew's and at 9 p.m. in Ballinafad. There will be no services Christmas Day.

BIRTHDAY PARTY

St. John's United Church in Georgetown and Glen Williams will be featuring a "Journey to Palestine" Sunday, organized by the Sunday School, from 4 to 7 p.m. in Georgetown Christmas Eve Communion at 11 p.m. in Georgetown. There will be no services Christmas Day.

Sacre Coeur Roman Catholic Church will be celebrating mass at 8 p.m. and midnight Christmas Eve, and at 11 a.m. on Christmas Day. Services on the weekend preceding Christmas will be as usual.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Acton will be celebrating a children's mass at 7 p.m. Christmas Eve, followed by a birthday party for Jesus. A mass for adults will be celebrated at 9 p.m., followed by a Midnight Mass at 12 a.m. On Christmas Day, one mass only will be celebrated at 10 a.m.

Holy Cross Catholic Church will be celebrating a children's mass at 7 p.m. and a Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. Christmas Day, mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. and noon. Services Sunday will be as usual.

Union and Norval Presbyterian Churches will be holding a Christmas Eve service, led by the youth group, at 7:30 p.m. Christmas Eve. The joint

service will be held at Union Church.

Knox Presbyterian Church in Acton will be holding a Christmas Eve candlelight service at 11 p.m. There will be no services Christmas Day. On December 30, the church will hold the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols, which is a traditional English service featuring nine special lessons read by members of the congregation, interspersed with carols.

FILM SHOWING

The Halton Hills Pentecostal Assembly will hold a special Christmas musical Sunday when gifts will be distributed to the children. The service Christmas Day will be from 11 a.m. to noon. On New Year's Eve, a Watch Night service will be held from 10 p.m. to midnight, followed by a time of fellowship. At 2 a.m., a film on Jonestown and cults, entitled "Deceived", will be shown.

The Acton Pentecostal Assembly will hold services at the regular times, with a carol service Sunday at 7 p.m.

Lutheran Emmanuel will hold a Christmas Eve service at 7 p.m. There will be no service on Christmas Day, and Sunday services will be at the usual time.

Bethel Christian Reform Church will hold a candlelight service involving all organizations of the church Sunday at 7 p.m. On Christmas Day, there will be a special service at 10 a.m.

The Christian Missionary Alliance will hold regular services December 23, and will be receiving a white gift offering in addition to a benevolent offering. On Monday, a candlelight carol service will be held at 7 p.m. There will be no services Christmas Day.

Georgetown Christian Reform Church will hold a candlelight service at 7 p.m. Sunday, and a special Christmas service at 10 a.m. on Christmas Day.

Acton Baptist Church will hold a Christmas musical Sunday at 11 a.m. On Christmas Eve, there will be a special service at 7 p.m. and a dedication service will be held on December 30.

Maple Avenue Baptist Church will hold a family service at 11 a.m. Sunday and a special family candlelight service the same day at 6:30 p.m. There will be no services Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

St. Alban's Anglican church in Glen Williams and St. Paul's Anglican church in Norval will hold services of lessons and carols at 9:45 a.m. in the Glen and at 11 a.m. in Norval Sunday. On Christmas Eve, a service will be held at 11:30 p.m. in Norval and a special Christmas Day service will be

held at 10:30 in Glen Williams.

St. Alban's Anglican Church in Acton will hold its annual candlelight Christmas carol service Sunday at 7 p.m. On Christmas Eve, there will be a Family Christmas Eve Eucharist at 7 p.m. and a candlelight Christmas Eve Eucharist at 11 p.m. On Christmas day, there will be a family eucharist at 10 a.m.

HOLY EUCHARIST

St. George's Anglican Church in Georgetown will celebrate the Holy Eucharist

at 8 a.m. Sunday, and at 10 a.m., will hold the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols. On Christmas Eve, the Holy Eucharist will be celebrated at 7:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. On Christmas Day, Family Eucharist will be celebrated at 10 a.m.

St. John's Anglican Church in Stewarttown will present a Sunday School concert 9:30 a.m. Sunday, and St. Stephen's in Hornby will hold a Festival of Lessons and Carols at 7:30 p.m. the same day. On Christ-

mas Eve, the Holy Eucharist will be celebrated at St. John's at 7:30 p.m. and the Midnight Eucharist at 11:30 p.m. at St. Stephen's. On Christmas Day, the Holy Eucharist will be celebrated at 10:30 a.m. at St. Stephen's.

Churchill Community Church near Acton will hold a candlelight Christmas service Sunday, an annual affair which the church refers to as Jesus' birthday party. There will be no services Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

VIEWPOINT

Exclusive: Santa Claus' own 'separate reality'

By GERRY LANDSBOROUGH
Herald Columnist

Another first for the Herald, as this week we managed to interview a most prestigious person who has sought a unique form of seclusion for most of his adult life.

From a political point of view, his position has always appeared to be tinted and tinselled and decked out with a definite balley-hoo; yet no one has publicly opposed or offered serious opposition to his long-held position.

One could say with a definite certainty that on the day of the year reserved for his platform, he is anticipated with enthusiasm and the greatest delight by millions and millions of fans and supporters throughout the world.

The gentleman in question, of course, is none other than Mr. S. Claus. We spoke with Mr. Claus at his large, private estate in the secluded north country where he resides for 364 days a year.

Known to his intimate friends as just plain "Santa", he has a personal philosophy which would appear to be badly-needed in today's world of harsh truths and even harsher realities.

PREFERS SANTA

Mr. Claus, or "Santa" as he prefers to be called, works year-round on a variety of childhood delights which he freely distributes on the evening of December 24 each year.

When asked why he continued with this obviously enormous undertaking in view of the present economic situation, he sat back in a large overstuffed chair and seemed to ponder the question before replying. He took a draw or two on an

intricately-carved pipe which seemed always close at hand and replied:

"Why, you ask?", continuing with an almost incredulous look and a definite elfish grin.

"Many years ago, so long now that it seems like centuries, I looked around the world of my fellow man and..."

It was at this point during the interview that the heavy-set man with the most remarkable full growth of the whitest whiskers and striking shoulder-length hair seemed to drift away for a few fleeting moments. His eyes a deep clear blue, which from the outset seemed to contain a sparkling merriment, clouded over as he continued.

"The world of my fellow man has always intrigued and even mystified me, but somehow I always appeared to be somewhat apart from the accepted practices of the majority."

This was followed by a most remarkable laugh, almost a "ho-ho-ho", that was quite infectious and led this reporter to wonder what the private joke was about.

"In my business practices", he said, "I was inclined to put integrity above monetary pursuits and I never could seem to keep a partner, so I eventually just continued on my own, except for my loyal staff of course."

LITTLE ELVES

"I tended to employ little elves, as I used to call them, who worked with diligence and perseverance and took a genuine delight and joy in their work. Oh, I didn't always make month-to-month deadlines, but the atmosphere we created seemed to more than compensate for those bright

young... oh, what do you people today call them?... oh, yes: efficiency experts".

The twinkle again returned to the bright blue eyes as he continued.

"You see, speed - this race to produce more and more - seems to have cut down on quality and, of course, one could reason that when things are speeded up to the extent I'm told about today, something is bound to be lost in the process", he said with a light chuckle.

Mr. Claus spoke of the realities of life: war, famine, political unrest, constant changes, and, on a more individual level, a lack of pride in one's own accomplishments. This, he remarked, was the cause of a disaster called "automation".

"This automation seems to have created a monster, a 'world of reality' that, frankly speaking, I just don't seem to belong in."

On the topic of children, "Santa" was most explicit.

"I love children," he said with such a warm smile that the vibrations seemed to just reach out and engulf you. "I hear that in today's world, they are not always wanted. Adults seem to forget that they were once children themselves and they seem to believe now that life can somehow be whole without them."

HEART OF WORLD

"You see, my dear, children are the heart of all the world. They see what we grown-ups seldom take time to notice. A child sits entranced at an ant carrying a piece of leaf; a child hears the roar of the ocean in a wave-tossed shell; a

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Gretchen Lathrop was one of the Canadian Girls in Training who participated in a candlelight Vesper service Sunday evening at Knox Presbyterian Church in Acton. As the Christmas season approaches, many of the churches are holding special services to celebrate the birth of Jesus almost 2,000 years ago. (Herald photo by Lori Taylor)