

For a change of pace

Santa makes good-will rounds

By SANTA CLAUS

After centuries of working diligently at the same job, Christmas in and Christmas out, I was beginning to feel vaguely dissatisfied with the routine.

Odd habits began to manifest themselves as I struggled in vain to keep my mental state from the my little elves, reindeer and Mrs. Claus.

But the tell-tale signs showed up. I procrastinated getting the reindeer back in shape for rooftop duty—even though Mrs. Claus and a detail of elves had made jogging suits for me and my four legged crew.

One day, I told a painter elf I didn't care if the train cabooses were painted green and lilac instead of red.

He painted them green and lilac. Other elves were upset. Mrs. Claus bemoaned the loss of tradition. I didn't care.

That's when I realized I needed a change of pace. Instead of toting up on the locations of the world's roof tops, I began to take a long look at changing my career.

MRS. CLAUS WAS shocked but sympathetic. "If that's what will make you happy, my dear, then go ahead. Just remember that you'll always be needed on the North Pole," she said.

So, after intensive soul searching and discussion, I decided to become a reporter. I had heard enough interesting things from the children when I listened to their gift lists at Christmas. I figured I could write a good book from all that information. But first I needed some training. If newspaper work was good enough to get Hemingway started, well, who am I to take a different route.

And of course, the television commercials always told Mrs. Claus and me that there was such a thing as the "active life of a reporter." I certainly didn't want a sedentary career.

So I left the North Pole and journeyed until I hit Farmington. When I discovered the Observer had a temporary reporter's job open, I applied. I was given the job. I was thrilled but not surprised.

After all, I had spent the better part of my life interviewing little people about their Christmas wishes.

My first assignment was a natural. "Find out what Farmington wants for Christmas," ordered the editor.

away as if there were absolutely nothing out of the ordinary about a short figure in a red and white suit buying candy canes.

Several passers by did wave through the stores front windows. Of course, I returned the greeting.

Now, fully equipped to charm information out of anyone, I made my way to City Mgr. Robert Deadman's office.

On my way, I decided to stop in to say hello to the folks at the Cozy Cafe. They were knee to knee at the cafe around noon, that day when I walked through the doorway clutching my candy canes. Near the door, nibbling on a quiche for lunch was Grace Nymshack, of Farmington. Preferring an ice breaking candy cane, I asked her about Christmas.

"I want my family to be home for Christmas," she said of her clan which evidently had spread out when the children started to get married.

SINCE IT WAS beginning to snow, again, I decided to stay in the Village Mall and go about my assignment there.

Walking into the Art Alcove, I caught its owner Phyllis Mahlin, visit-

ing she had more money. As it turned out that day, I would hear that desire repeatedly.

Her customers wanted Rolls Royces, boats and money. I dutifully jotted down these notes while photographer Cynthia Abbat kept on working and worrying about the bad lighting.

Outside the Art Alcove, another woman wondered out loud if she could get a trip to Jamaica or Bermuda. I wished I could help her. The weather was enough to send me to Florida to see Anita Bryant in her natural setting. But I was a reporter and I wasn't in any position to help.

I had divested myself of my elves. So, I jogged on to see the city manager. I had to stop every few steps to wave hello to the boys and girls who passed by in cars. Drivers honked their horns at me. Mothers smiled at me.

But I was trying to shake off this nostalgic feeling of Santa Claushood. I had given up the North Pole and the elves.

FEELING THE NEED for some good stories, I stopped into Classic Comics and browsed. Mindful of my new mission, I stopped owner Al

Brown to ask what he wanted for Christmas.

"A plain steak," he said. No mushrooms, no onions, just a plain two inch thick slab of steak. Maybe some ketchup or A-1 sauce to liven things up a little would be a nice addition.

After noting that, I walked up to Pat Bevier who was looking at old movie posters.

"I want a good movie," she said. "The last good movie I saw was 'Gone with the Wind.'"

"Something with Al Pacino in it," she said. I would have promised her Robert Redford but several women said they wanted him for Christmas and I figured he'd be busy. This reporting business was getting too much for me. You can't promise anything.

When I finally made it down to city hall, I discovered that City Mgr. Robert Deadman wasn't there. But I did find his assistant Jerry Horner busily attacking some task.

"I want a nice girl for Christmas," he said.

Down the hall, in the Farmington

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Pat Bevier, a movie enthusiast, is caught in downtown Farmington wishing she was a star. (Staff photo)



Santa mans a typewriter at the Farmington Observer to tell how even the jolly old gent needs a change of pace once in a while. (Staff photos by Cyd Abatt)

I TOOK OFF, determined to hit the streets and remain incognito.

I wandered into the Sanders store in the Downtown Farmington Center to buy candy canes to give to the people I interviewed. (That's been part of my interviewing technique for a long time.)

It was a successful operation. Nobody recognized me. Even if they did, I noticed that those few looked



All I want for Christmas is a great big federal grant, no strings attached, of course. Farmington Hills City Manager George Majors tells Santa.

Avoid skating hazards, sharpen up for winter

It's that time of year when winter sports enthusiasts sharpen their skates and greet the prospect of a long cold spell.

But every skating season, some fail to take adequate safety precautions and serious accidents, which could have been avoided, ensue.

The American Red Cross reminds all skaters that safety on the ice depends largely on knowing where to skate and under what conditions. Here are some tips about choosing a safe time and place to skate:

- For outdoor skating, choose small bodies of water—ponds, shallow streams and small lakes. These freeze more quickly than larger bodies of water and the ice formed is usually more durable and smooth. Ice formed over moving water or where the water level changes often is likely to be unsafe however thick it becomes.

- Skate only after a prolonged period of freezing weather when a uniform layer of ice about four inches thick has had a chance to form.

- If a skater does fall through the ice, Red Cross offers the following rescue suggestions.

- For self-rescue, a person should not attempt to climb out of the water immediately. Instead, feet should be kicked to the rear as near the surface

as possible to avoid "jack-knifing" the body under the ice. By extending hands and arms forward over the unbroken ice and kicking to a nearly level position, the victim can work forward onto the surface. After reaching firm ice, the victim should roll away from the open area, in that way distributing body weight over the weak surface.

If help is nearby, the Red Cross suggests using rescue equipment such as a pole, ladder, piece of rope or plank. The rescuer should never stand, but instead lie flat on the ice, edge forward and extend the equipment, pulling the victim to safety.

If rescue equipment is not available, it may be necessary to form a human "chain." Each rescuer moves as close to the victim as safety allows, holding lightly to the ankles or skates of the person ahead. If possible, the lightest person should be closest to the victim. When the lead rescuers grasp the victim, those near the shore pull the others back.

If the victim is not breathing, mouth-to-mouth respiration should be started at once. When brought to shore breathing, the victim should be taken indoors and warmed as quickly as possible. Wet clothing should be removed, and blankets wrapped around the per-

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Hudson's the Christmas Store