

Santas from page A1

1991 volume set, "A Compendious Lexicon of the Hebrew Language."

Nest took his inspiration from Moore for his drawing of a rotund, bearded Santa poised atop a chimney, with his sleigh of the adjacent roof, in Harper's Weekly Christmas issue of 1890.

Going to Santa school

Several area Santas say they learned their trade at the C.W. Howard Santa School in Midland, Mich. The school, founded in 1937, runs an intensive, three-day training course that focuses on everything from eye contact to attract passersby, to the hot new toys to handling the occasional disbeliever.

"You let them tug your beard - if it's real," Lawing says. His well-groomed facial hair used to be red but is now the perfect shade of snow white. "For the older kids you explain that even if you've stopped believing that Santa is a real person, he embodies the spirit of Christmas."

Stopa says second grade is about the time most kids start questioning Santa's existence.

'You let them tug your beard - if it's real.'

"Santa" Jack Lawing
—Livonia resident

"They know about the Wright brothers and the first plane flight. They have a difficult time believing I can just sprinkle magic dust on my sleigh and make it to everyone's house in the same night."

Lawing has been a Santa Claus since the early 1970s, starting at about the same young age as Stopa, who is a young - for Santa, anyway - 36. Stopa is employed as an assembly worker at Sealant Equipment Co. in Plymouth.

Stella Padrick of Redford says she brought her grandchildren to the mall the day Santa Jack made his debut. "Oh, it was something. He came on two horse-drawn sleighs and the kids just ate it up."

Homick says he works to get parents to play along and will ask them to post the photo of

him with their child on the refrigerator, even in the summertime. He reminds kids to clean their rooms and eat their vegetables, though that last request, he said, is often in vain.

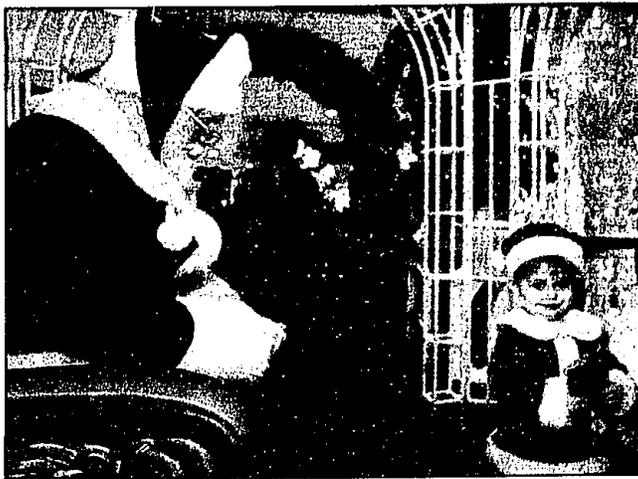
Homick says his laugh - the requisite "Ho, Ho, Ho," voiced in deep, bass tones with a tinge of mischief accenting the third "Ho" - is his best quality.

Lawing says his avocation came out of his deep affection for working with children and his love of the holiday season.

Yes, he fills plenty of "orders" for Barbie dolls and Pokémon games, Lawing says.

But the most memorable requests he's had are from two little girls. One who asked for "butterflies, and then butterfly shoes to go with them."

And another girl who asked for "pink - just pink."



Happy haul: Olivia Keils of Farmington Hills, 2, makes off with her stocking full of goodies as Santa watches her recently at Laurel Park Place.

STAFF PHOTO BY PAUL HURSCHELMAN

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Safe from page A1

After local police respond to such a situation, they in turn contact Oakland County, which Maxfield said subsequently "reports back to us."

That communication would help develop a data base, listing students and their offenses.

Maxfield said the school board had until Jan. 2, 2000, to comply with a state mandate to join the state network and county plan.

Oakland school chiefs and county law enforcement officials met in early December to confer on both.

Financial help
But, emphasized Maxfield, the Farmington board inserted two wherewithals before adopting the resolution:

1) The district "intends to honor state and federal laws regarding students' and parental privacy"; and 2) "intends to recover the full costs of implementing this act pursuant to the Headlee Amendment of the Michigan State Constitution."

"We're putting (the state) on notice," Maxfield said. "We

'We're putting (the state) on notice. We expect legislation to be passed to pay for this.'

Bob Maxfield
—Superintendent,
Farmington Public Schools

expect legislation to be passed to pay for this."

Maxfield referred to the state's track record for mandating programs (special education, for example) but not funding them.

That very issue prompted the Durant lawsuit (circa 1990); the Michigan Supreme Court eventually ruled that the state must reimburse districts for such costs.

"You can't keep having unfunded mandates," Maxfield stressed.

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