

## Claus Cram 2023

### Notes taken and shared by Josh Carlile

#### What to do and how to do it

**Speaker: Ed Taylor** 75-80% of bookings are yet to come. Most will happen in November and December. So, if you are not booked yet, don't worry. Many "high profile" bookings happen late.

1. **TV-** Though some things are being filmed now, there are still others that will be filming closer to the season.
2. **Brand ambassadorships-** Santa Ed was able to add over \$10,000 on average per year because of his brand ambassadorships with different companies.
3. **Community Events-** Parades, tree lighting, and other community events. A fun thing that Santa Ed will do is to quiet the crowd. Shhh...Do you hear that? ...Do you hear that?... Why, it's the Christmas Spirit. It's here in (say where you are)". The crowd eats this up and begins to roar with merriment.
4. **Mini Sessions with Photographers** -Mini sessions are short 15-20 minute sessions where the photographs will often tell a story. These can be done on location such as the beach, in parks, tree farms, other outdoor venues or in studio. These are designed to capture the interaction between Santa and child/ family. Some Santas only do these types of sessions and make very good money doing them.
5. **Personal Appearances-** Home parties, HOA parties, Corporate parties, pre-schools, nursing homes are all examples of personal appearances. Each with their own unique rewards and sequence of events.

6. **“Long Format Virtual Visits”**-12-25 minutes in length. Santa gets to interact with the children/families through video dialogue. Often bringing up personal information such as the name of pets, teachers, favorite subjects and other things that the client has detailed for Santa to use.
7. **Video Messages**- These messages are often used to make “big announcements” such as “You’re going to Disney World” or “ You are all getting a raise” or other things the client wants Santa to announce in a big way.
8. **Marketing Videos for Social Media, YouTube, and others**- Often done with brand ambassadorships, but not exclusively, These are videos the client has Santa do to market their services, goods, brands, etc.
9. **Special Needs Adults and Children, Make a Wish, Santa America, Hospitals and Hospice**- These are all events that are very rewarding to the Santa who does them. They can be done pro-bono, but are also often times paid as well. More on this later.
10. **Churches, Shelters and even Jails**- Are all places that Santa can visit.

So how do you do it? By being **authentic!** Authentic in your looks, your voice, and your demeanor.

## **Using Music to Enhance Your Santa Portrayal**

### **Speaker: Clyde Clevenger**

Singing songs is something anyone can do. You do not have to be a good singer to get the client involved in making merry through song. Kids don’t care if you can’t sing. They are happy because Santa Claus is there with them in the moment.

Clyde put Night Before Christmas in song form and sings that.

Singing songs helps fill time, especially at longer events. Everyone knows some Christmas songs.

The **3 most requested** songs are: Jingle Bells, Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, and Santa Claus is Coming to Town. So, if you are going to sing you should know those for sure.

“Corny” songs are fun and loved by everyone. It allows you, and them, to be a little silly. Which can really set the mood for a lighthearted time. Really engage the family to sing with you. Maybe ask “Which one of you is the best singer” everyone will say so and so is and you can ask them to start everyone off.

Older folks really like and request “Holly Jolly Christmas”

Consider ending your visit getting everyone to join you in singing “We Wish You a Merry Christmas” while you exit.

Choose songs that fit your voice and style. You will perform better when you do.

Many song books are available to choose from. **The Definitive Christmas Collection by Hal Leonard** is one that Santa Clyde uses.

## **Santa’s Reindeer: Unveiling the Enchanted Enigma**

**Speaker: Doc Mark Smyers**

All Reindeer are one species. There is a myth that male reindeer lose their antlers. Not all male reindeer lose will lose their antlers. So Santa’s reindeer can be male as well as female. Male reindeer are larger than females, and so it is a good idea for Santa’s team to include males as well to help pull his sleigh.

Females also grow antlers. Reindeer grow the largest antlers of all deer. Researchers are now studying antlers to see if they can learn how to help people regrow limbs, just as antlers regrow.

Nonbreeding males will dig in the snow to help females and young find good. The males who rut do not do this, they are too busy fighting for breeding rights. Most reindeer are not breeders.

Reindeer have no upper front teeth. They use their front lower teeth to move food to the back of the mouth where their teeth are used to grind their food. So what do they eat? Lichen. Lichen is a complex life form made up of primarily fungus and secondarily algae. It grows in all climates. This is often called “Reindeer Moss” or “Reindeer Lichen”. They can also be fed graham crackers and molasses. And they can be fed chocolate chip cookies. They cannot be fed carrots or spinach.

Reindeer eyes are very unique. Being both nocturnal and diurnal due to the long summer days and dark winter nights. In the summer their eyes are golden in color, and blue in the dark winter. Their eyes can absorb UV radiation light and this is being studied as well to help humans prevent eye damage.

They also have no circadian rhythm. Which is the cycle that most animals have that produce in response to dark and light. This response usually releases melatonin to aid in sleep. However, Reindeer do not produce this hormone. They simply sleep when they need to and wake when they are rested.

Reindeer feet are also unique in that during the summer months their pads spread out to be able to walk better on wetter spongy soil. In the winter, the pads shrink to allow for walking on snow and ice.

There is a massive die off underway in reindeer believed to be caused by climate change and the reindeer being unable to dig to get to the lichen, leading to starvation.

They have a double coat of fur. Their thick woolly undercoat insulates them from the cold, and they shed it in summer. A topcoat of hollow hairs allows for floating when they are in water. They have tendons in the foot which “click”.

Reindeer noses do have a reddish hue to them. This is due to blood vessels being close to the surface to warm the air that they are breathing in to protect their lungs. Also inflammation due to parasites may “help” Rudolph’s nose be redder than average.

How you use all of this information in your visits is up to you. You don’t want to destroy the “magic” with all of the facts, However, you can incorporate some facts into the legends and magic of Santa’s Reindeer. You can also incorporate the following props for your visits: Reindeer antlers, often can be purchased from reindeer farms. They can be pricey. Reindeer antler buttons are another option and a unique item. Reindeer pictures can be kept in a wallet or small photo album. “Trading cards” can be purchased or made and gifted or sold. Reindeer whip can be brought. Be sure the kids know that you do not hit the reindeer with it, but rather crack it above their heads to signal what direction you want them to go in. You can get Reindeer Moss and show it off as their food. Keep “fairy dust” or other “magic” in a potion bottle that helps them to fly. A good book for those believers on the cusp of no longer believing is **“Flight of the Reindeer” by Robert Sullivan**

**Being Mrs. Claus**

**Speaker: Bev. Buckley**

As Mrs. Claus, Bev has taken a very active role in the Santa business with her husband Santa John. Doing much of the marketing, record keeping, and setting appointments. This is an area that many Mrs. Claus can assist in. Working with a Mrs. Claus is ideal in many situations, as she can assist Santa in his work. Often times children can be a bit timid and shy with Santa, so having Mrs. Claus tends to get the children feeling comfortable and helps them open up and relax.

Be sure to throw a spot light on Mrs. C when you can. She can sometimes get lost in the background. It is a good idea to have Mrs. C be the 1<sup>st</sup> one to interact with. She can hand out small items such as stickers. She can also introduce herself and get the child's name and then take them to Santa and make an introduction using the child's name to Santa.

Working as a team is essential when both Santa and Mrs. Claus are doing an event together. Be sure to have a "back story". This may be as simple or elaborate as you would like it to be. It can be entirely fictional, or based on your real life experiences. Work out in advance what it is the two of you would like to do. Whether it is in song, story reading, visiting; having a sequence of events for the both of you is a good idea.

Mrs. Claus is not just an addition to the Santa. She in her own right, may make solo appearances as well. In fact, this is on the increase in popularity as solo working Mrs. Claus portrayal artists put themselves out for hire.

There is no authoritative "Canon" for Mrs. C Her name, appearance, and attire are up to the artist to set. Here is what we do know about her. She is Santa's wife and biggest supporter. And like all wives, she is his solid go to number one for all things.

Whether behind the scenes or out in front, Mrs. C is an invaluable addition for any Santa Claus portrayal artist. There are a few groups for Mrs. Claus including the facebook group Mrs. Claus & Elves From Head to Toe <https://www.facebook.com/groups/823620811877960>

Additionally the Nextdoor app <https://nextdoor.com/> is a great source for local connections and <https://santastoys.com/> along with others for small items Santa and Mrs. Claus can hand out to children.

## **What to Say and How to Say it**

### **Speaker: Ed Taylor**

What you say and how you say it is largely dependent upon what your mission is as a portrayal artist. You may be wanting to have an educational approach teaching values through storytelling. You may be an entertainer with music and song. You may have different missions for different events based upon what the client wants you to be at their gathering. Whatever your mission is, the same holds true for all. Only **7%** of communication is what is said, the other **93%** is how it is said, the body language, and demeanor behind it.

**Authenticity** is most important in your portrayal as Santa Claus. Being authentically happy, jolly, kind and loving as a person will transpire naturally to your portrayal.

Don't over act- Even though some of what you may be doing is acting, especially for TV, movies, or commercials, over acting can kill the illusion of being Santa Claus, or any character for that matter.

Your words matter. Think before you speak or act. Really hear what is being said to you and choose your words and actions appropriately and thoughtfully.

Be **eloquent** in your words and deeds. Other words for this include: persuasive, expressive, articulate, fluent, and strong.

Take the time to ask questions. This helps to build and establish rapport with children and adults alike. Building rapport is essential, especially with shy and standoffish children. Give them time to answer your questions. Elaborate and add where needed and when appropriate to do so.

## **Visiting Hospitals/ Meeting With Seriously Ill Children**

**Speaker: Dan Greenleaf**

Being Santa in hospital settings can be very rewarding. They can also be very challenging for a number of reasons.

### **Opportunities:**

**Hospitals**-Pediatric Units, Family Care, Out Patient Clinics and Social Services. These can be trauma centers, cancer centers, and other hospitals treating serious illness in children. **Fundraiser Events for organizations** such as Make a Wish, Santa America, Secret Sleigh Project. **Hospice**- both facility settings and home hospice. **Home and Virtual Visits.**

### **Special Challenges:**

**Legal**- HIPPA Laws, Confidentiality, Background Checks, and Facility requirements

**Physical**- Over all health including current inoculations and vaccines including annual flu shot. Cannot have a current cough, cold, or fever.



**Precautions-** Include wearing masks, gloves, gown and potential isolation

**Restrictions-** May include not touching, posing positions for photos, dealing with medical devices and equipment.

**Emotional Challenges- How will you cope with the following?**

- Injuries/ illnesses
- Disfigurement
- Children in pain
- Burn victims
- Frightened faces and cries
- Comatose patients
- Blood, vomit, feces
- Grieving families
- Confused siblings
- Combative residents
- Requests to get well
- Frustration that nothing can be done
- Imminent death
- Inability to hug and comfort
- Incoherent babbling

All of these things and more are possible during such visits. Be prepared for anything and discuss in advance with staff what you may experience during a visit. Have an “escape” plan. Somewhere you can go when emotions over take you. Ask the staff in advance, Don’t forget, they need these places as well. It is easy to be overcome with emotion of sadness when visiting very ill children and adults alike.

See the child/person for who they are, not their illness. Look them in their eyes and be sincere. Maintain a jolly and upbeat attitude.

And remember to bring joy and comfort. That is what you are there for.

Be prepared for post visit emotions to come. Have support from your family, friends, and others that you can talk to about your experience.

Remember to be joyful, just like any other visit be sure to smile, even in a mask they can see you smile.

Respect the wishes of families. And be careful how you greet people. **Don't ask "How are you doing?"** This is not an appropriate question even though it is a common greeting.

Instead say something like. **"It is really great to see you!"**

**Don't be afraid to ask for guidance from staff**

## **Designer Beard Tips**

**Speaker: Thomas Sheerin**

If you are going to wear a designer beard invest in a good one. Human or Yak hair are best. Use a set that the moustache is not attached and is applied separately. Having an attached moustache to the beard causes too much pull on it and it will come loose if talking or at longer engagements.

All pieces of a set can be purchased separately from each other.

Get a set that has the lace edging for beards, wigs, and moustaches. Lace edging can be trimmed to fit close to the piece as possible, giving a very convincing look even up close.

Clean the skin with alcohol and let dry before applying sets. Use Spirit gum and apply it to the skin. Let the 1<sup>st</sup> coat dry. Apply a second coat and let become tacky to the touch and then apply

each piece. If you are a real bearded Santa that has thin patches or need to cover up dark edges and roots, you can purchase loose hair and apply that using the spirit gum. After removing your set, clean the back of the lacing using alcohol and let dry after each use. When owning a designer set using a pick is a must. Real bearded Santas may also want to have a pick for their beards. If you are using make-up, be sure to use a sealer such as Mehron Barrier spray after applying make-up. Be aware that your designer set will get make-up on it and it can be difficult to clean. If using tape for your set Walker No Shine Tape is a good product.

### **Being Santa for Unconventional Homes**

#### **Speaker: Cody Ferguson (He, Him, His)**

In today's changing world we find ourselves where things may not always seem as they appear. This is particularly true of the LGBTQ+ community. With people feeling more comfortable coming out as transgender as it becomes more acceptable, we have been introduced to an age of using gender affirming pro-nouns. Regardless of your belief and stance on this issue, you will most likely be in a situation as Santa that this will come up in. It is a good practice when introducing yourself in general to use the pronoun that you identify with. This allows others to feel comfortable around you, and to use your preferred pro-noun when speaking to/about you. This is about being respectful of others wishes as well as your own desire to be identified as you want. It is good to stick to gender neutral words, especially when in doubt of a person's sex/gender identity. With Children this is easy to do by using words such as Kiddo, My friend, Little helper and the like. Sometimes a person may not feel comfortable outwardly showing how they identify inwardly. This may be for

several reasons. But you do not want to always just assume someones gender identity based on how they dress or name they have. There are many gender neutral names in use which can make distinguishing gender difficult as it is.

You may be faced with a multi faith house, where many winter celebrations are happening. Perhaps even simultaneously. Be respectful of your client and their belief system. You may also be faced with adoptions, additions to families, and non-traditional family dynamics. Know what the adults in the house go by to the children and use it. It may be “mom, dad, grandma, paw paw, aunt, uncle, a 1<sup>st</sup> name or nickname. By knowing the way the children address the adults in the house will help you better understand the dynamic of that family relationship and those who make up a household. Many grandparents are raising grandchildren, you may have a same sex couple rearing a family together, multi-racial, cultural, and religious. Remember that you have been invited to bring joy and excitement to an event. So work to make it a positive experience for all you work for and with. It really is as simple as treating others as you want to be treated and being loving, caring, and compassionate toward your fellow human.

## **Marketing at Crunch Time**

### **Speaker: Ed Taylor**

Though the vast majority of bookings are yet to come, now is not the time to be idle. There are some things to be doing now to market yourself to your potential cliental.

What you want to do is crucial to know. By answering this, you will identify who your target events and perspective clients are. Once you have identified who they are, you need to be found where

they are looking. This is done through several means. But having a good website with high ranking SEO's will land you near the top of google searches. If you are going to work with a booking site such as gig salad, get your profile on those sites running now. Be sure to include headshots (top of head to 3<sup>rd</sup> button, and shoulder to shoulder. Anything more or less than this is NOT a headshot).

Use short form video's and the like on your social media networks. These are the number 1 form of marketing on these platforms.

Get your reviews and testimonial in order. People want to see the "social proof" that you are good. Whether you charge a high price for your service or are pro-bono or volunteer, be worth commanding the highest price in your market.

Remember, your event planner's reputation is on the line. They do not want to look bad for booking you. They are the one you have to exceed expectations with.

Be ready and prepared with a **one sheet: This consists of a short bio, your services, photos and reviews/testimonials.** Make it a PDF that can quickly be sent out via e-mail. Be sure to follow up with inquiries quickly and timely.