



Reflections on 4th of July Parade with Santa & Mrs. Claus (2023).

I have often heard throughout the Christmas community that Santa should only appear around the Christmas season. My experience is, “that is not true.” Oh, the tales I have to share about my unexpected appearances at non-Christmas events! You see, there's a certain magic that fills the air when Santa Claus makes his grand entrance at a 4th of July parade or a Christmas in July celebration. Some may argue otherwise, but I've experienced firsthand the joy and wonder that comes from surprising people with a visit from jolly old Santa in the middle of summer. Allow me to regale you with the story of one such memorable event!

My lovely Mrs. Claus and I have a tradition of attending 4th of July parades with the Crown Point Corvette Club, a cherished group we've been part of for quite some time. To make our presence known, we transformed our 1973 orange Stingray into a festive spectacle resembling Rudolph himself. Antlers adorned the top, while a big, shiny red nose graced the front of the car. And let's not forget the Santa license plate, proudly announcing my arrival. Inside the Vette, we went all out, adorning the dashboard with multi-colored lighted garlands and suspending a lantern with poinsettias from the rearview mirror.



On the day of the parade, our Corvette club gathered at the high school parking lot, ready to join the procession. We were assigned number 27 in the lineup, just shy of the lucky number 25, which always brings me good fortune. With around 15 Vettes participating, we decided to take our place at the tail end. As we waited under the scorching sun, seeking refuge in a shaded area near the high school band practicing, the magic began to unfold. Band members, in groups, made their way over to snap pictures with Santa, while parents brought their little ones over to meet me as well.



Among the crowd, there was a young lady who had brought her 5 or 6-year-old daughter to see her grandparents before the parade commenced. Now, those grandparents happen to be part of our Corvette Club and dear friends of mine. Naturally, I approached the grandma and inquired about her granddaughter's name. Imagine the young girl's astonishment when I revealed that Santa himself knew her name, even at a 4th of July Parade! I praised her for being such a good and proud little girl, and, of course, we had to capture the moment with a photograph alongside Mrs. Claus.



As the parade was about to kick off, we hopped into our Corvette Rudolph and joined the lineup. Mrs. Claus and I had agreed to take turns walking and driving. She would begin by walking the first half, while I would bring up the rear on foot for the latter portion.



The turnout for the parade was simply astounding. Crown Point, an old and bustling town dating back to 1834, boasts a picturesque main square, complete with a historic courthouse. It's perhaps best known for its association with the notorious John Dillinger, as the courthouse was the site of his trial, and the nearby jail witnessed his daring escape. The parade route would pass right by these landmarks, serving as a grand finale.



With Mrs. Claus leading the way on foot, and Santa driving the vibrant Rudolph, the joy on the children's faces as they waved enthusiastically was truly priceless. Despite the blaring Christmas music emanating from the car, their excited voices pierced through, exclaiming, *"Santa, Santa, it's Santa!"* Some even proclaimed, *"Look, it's an American Santa!"*

Indeed, I was decked in star-spangled overalls, layered over a long-sleeved red shirt with a fur collar, and adorned with white gloves. My hat was a splendid American star Santa hat, complete with a bell on the end, not a mere pom. And atop my hat, I proudly wore a Rudolph hat brooch. As for my footwear, I sported Santa fur boots, each adorned with brass sleigh bells. And in my hand, I carried a 3-inch American flag mounted on a candy cane striped pole.



But let me not forget to mention the radiant presence of Mrs. Claus herself. She is far from the traditional portrayal of Mrs. Claus that one might imagine. Oh no, she is much more than a cookie-baking companion. You see, my Mrs. Claus is the CEO, the Christmas Executive Officer, of the North Pole. She runs the show, taking care of the countless details that enable me to perform my duties with utmost joy. She is an embodiment of beauty and intelligence, her spirit illuminating any room she enters. For this occasion, she donned a lovely light blue summer dress, complemented by a holly and berry brooch. And atop her head, she wore a Christmas garland headpiece, which accentuated her shimmering silver-white hair. Truly, Mrs. Claus is my sparkle, my partner in all things Christmas.

As the parade moved down Main Street, from the high school towards the main square, the crowds swelled in size. Crown Point's rich history and bustling atmosphere attracted countless spectators. The shock and excitement on the children's faces at seeing Santa and Mrs. Claus in a 4th of July parade were truly indescribable. Mrs. Claus gracefully weaved through the crowd, greeting children and handing out cards and literature prepared in advance. By the midway point, it was time for us to switch roles. Mrs. Claus took the wheel of Rudolph, while I stepped onto the pavement to engage with the eager onlookers.

Stepping out of the Corvette, I seized my American flag, and from that very moment, the atmosphere turned absolutely electric! The crowd erupted into wild cheers and applause. The excitement on the children's faces was simply exhilarating. Pointing to individual children, I asked them if they had been good, wishing them a happy 4th of July and reminding them that I would see them again in a few months come Christmas. I made sure to emphasize the importance of good behavior and listening to their parents, and the parents couldn't help but laugh and applaud.



Children clamored for hugs, pictures, or even a simple high-five. Once I indulged one child, the floodgates opened, and they all wanted their moment with Santa. I did my best to keep moving, but it was challenging with the multitude of children vying for my attention. I traversed from one side of the road to the other, ensuring no child felt left out. At times, I would glance back and witness the disappointment on the faces of children across the street who feared they might miss their chance with Santa. So, I made it a point to cross over and bring joy to their hearts as well.



There were a few standout moments amidst the bustling crowd. I recall a special needs girl whom others had pointed out to me. I approached her, extending my hand for a shake, but she clung onto me, unwilling to let go. It was a heartfelt exchange that touched both of our souls. Then there were a group of high school girls who eagerly asked if Santa liked Taylor Swift. Without a moment's hesitation, I exclaimed, *"Of course, Santa LOVES Taylor Swift!"* Their excitement knew no bounds. And let's not forget the pair of curious boys who wondered about Mrs. Claus's whereabouts. With a mischievous twinkle in my eye, I responded, *"Why, she's driving my reindeer Corvette right behind me!"* The look of sheer astonishment on their faces was utterly priceless.



Amidst the throngs of people, I couldn't help but notice large family groups gathered on front lawns, seeking refuge from the scorching heat. One particularly sizable group seemed a bit downcast. I raised my American flag high, urging them to find their excitement and embrace the spirit of the 4th of July. The crowd erupted in a chorus of cheers, their faces lighting up with joy. I assured them that I would see them all again come Christmas, and they responded with laughter and merriment.

Among the attendees, there were those who couldn't resist quoting lines from the beloved movie Elf. *"I know him! I know him!"* they would exclaim, their voices echoing through the air.



As we neared the end of the parade, close to the courthouse square, barricades lined the street, preventing the children from running out to embrace me. I could sense their disappointment, the longing in their eyes. Throughout the parade, some children had attempted to give me little gifts—a bottle of water, miniature flags, and even candies (though I secretly wished for cookies, too). I tried to embrace as many children and people as I could on that last leg of this journey.

One lady bystander pointed to her T-shirt which was a light blue shirt with a Santa wearing 4th of July sunglasses. That brought Santa so much joy and he had to take a picture with her. She was very excited as well. Being Santa isn't always just about the children.



Yet, on that final stretch, I found myself unable to walk any farther. So, I hopped back into the Corvette, with Mrs. Claus taking the wheel, and together we cruised through the final leg of the parade.



Now, in retrospect, can Santa Claus make appearances at events throughout the year that aren't strictly Christmas-related? This Santa says, "Absolutely!" It all comes down to the heart and character of Santa and the message he conveys. Santa can become an "American Santa" during the 4th of July, or a baseball Santa in the summertime, or even a Santa at an amusement park. He can be a representative of Christmas in July, adapting to the occasion as needed, as long as he remains true to the essence of Santa Claus. After all, Santa's magic transcends seasons and festivities, spreading joy and enchantment wherever he may appear.



And as the 4th of July parade 2023 came to a close, I couldn't help but feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude and joy. The smiles on the children's faces, the laughter of the crowd, and the warm embrace of the hot summer sun—it all reminded me of the incredible privilege I have as Santa Claus. I am blessed to be able to bring happiness and hope to people, not just during the Christmas season, but throughout the year.

So, my friends, as I bid you farewell, remember that the spirit of Santa Claus resides within each and every one of us. It's not just about the presents or the reindeer or the jolly laughter—it's about spreading love, kindness, and joy to those around us reminding us of the true meaning of Christmas... Jesus Christ and His ultimate gift of grace and eternal life. Whether it's Christmas, the 4th of July, or any other day of the year, let us carry Jesus Christ in our hearts and make a difference in the lives of others.

Until we meet again, keep the magic alive and remember that Santa's love knows no bounds. Merry Christmas, happy 4th of July, and may every day be filled with the joy and wonder that Santa Claus brings. Ho ho ho!

Santa Claus