



Santa Claus is coming to town

Santa has been having a tough time trying to comply with a new law that would make flying without the necessary permits illegal. For years the jolly old elf has been getting on with what he does best, delivering gifts to all the good children of the world, but recent legislation has threatened to clip his wings, so to speak.

Government departments across the globe have been up in arms with the recent influx of unmanned aircraft, commonly known as drones. This technology has made it possible for warmongers to ply their trade from the comforts of their own homes, often on a completely different continent. In an attempt to ensure the safety of the innocent, governments have agreed to legislate the terms under which all flying objects are subjected. This includes Santa and his magical flying sleigh.

Although all flying machines have been categorized, magic sleighs were overlooked and it left Santa with a bit of a headache trying to get the required permission because the system wouldn't allow it.

Santa sent a delegation of elves

to various government departments around the globe to present his case. In typical bureaucratic form, the public servants

or video evidence of Santa making his annual trip. "Already avoiding the cameras on every



found it difficult to appreciate the urgent nature of the application. The delegation really had to pull out all the stops to make them realize that Christmas Eve was a deadline that could not be missed.

Santa was really pleased with the result of the trip and said, in spite of the drama, he was in favour of this type of legislation. Most importantly to combat the needless warmongering, but also to reign in unscrupulous paparazzi who, for years, have been trying to get photo

street corner has been a challenge," said Santa, "but add drones with their HD cameras and it becomes almost impossible to deliver so many presents undetected. Also, " he continued, "there are more children on Earth and it seems that even the naughty ones are becoming better behaved. This means more presents and longer delivery times."

Thankfully, with all the i's dotted and t's crossed, Santa will once again be taking flight on Christmas Eve. A tradition, this reporter, hopes never ends.

The Mystery of Santa's missing cookies



This year's number one best selling book, "The Mystery of Santa's Missing Cookies", is written by Elf Inspector Brün Óláff and outlines the one case the great detective was never able to solve.

Inspector Óláff, who was dispatched on that fateful Christmas Eve to investigate what seemed like a routine case, describes the events which had the North Pole PD scratching their heads ever since.

"One of the Prep Elves reported

that the Harrison household had a code three which meant that there was crockery but missing vital ingredients. Code fours were commonplace, but we hardly ever have code threes" says the detective in his book. Code four, for those of us unfamiliar with police lingo, is when there is no sign of milk, cookies or any other snacks to sustain Santa during his delivery. "Usually code four would indicate that the parents have forgotten or misplaced the milk and cookies. We often find the goodies still standing in the kitchen and, in some extreme

cases, even in the fridge. Parents are tired at the end of the year and sometimes do strange things. In the most bizarre case we found the milk, cookies and even a personal note for Santa on the bed stand right next to an exhausted mommy's bed" explains a Prep Elf. Prep elves are the elves that go in ahead of Santa to make sure the big guy isn't held up by any unexpected delays, mostly security alarms.

But the Harrison case, as it became known, was one of the great mysteries according to Inspector Óláff. On inspection of the scene, he noticed that the plate was still on the table, but not as precisely placed as we've come to expect from Mrs. Harrison. Over the years she proved to be a very meticulous person. Even the new family pet Sparky's pillow was always perfectly aligned in the basket that was neatly square against the wall. "The off centre plate was our biggest clue" said the inspector, "but we simply couldn't figure

out what it meant."

Another clue was the glass in which the milk was poured had been toppled over and the milk all but gone. A splash or two remained to prove that the Harrison's definitely left snacks out for Santa, but it had mysteriously vanished. The final clue was a few cookie crumbs that led in the direction of Sparky's basket, but the trail went cold after that and the detectives were unable to follow it any further.

The final baffling piece of the puzzle came later when Mr. Harrison sent Inspector Óláff a photo showing how they left Sparky to stand guard over the milk and cookies. In the final chapter of his book Inspector Óláff concludes "we've had the greatest minds pondering how someone was able to get past the young guard dog and nab Santa's treats, but sometimes things happen that even the best detectives can't explain."

Santa saves bunny, enjoys a coke

Santa has come to the rescue of an unlikely little creature that got himself stuck in a bathtub. A cute little bunny rabbit somehow got himself into an awful pickle when he accidentally entered a house being visited by Santa. The bunny, probably en route to family for the festive season, must have gotten thirsty after such a long journey and stopped by the house of little Graham Wells. Graham had been a particularly good boy that year and Santa was delivering a brand new shiny bicycle when he heard a ruckus coming from the nearby bathroom.

Upon investigation, Santa saw a bewildered little bunny rabbit frantically trying to escape the smooth surfaces of the Wells' bathtub. Santa recalls that the poor bunny looked very frightened and exhausted. The light coming from the bathroom must have woken Mr. and Mrs. Wells because they stormed into the bathroom thinking it might be an intruder. Santa says that he usually delivers all his gifts undetected, but this time he was caught in the act. Mrs. Wells said that she was very relieved that the intruder turned out to be that jolly old elf and not a menacing criminal.

When Santa explained the situation to the Wells' they quickly rustled up some carrots for the rabbit (and a few

for the reindeer too) and a saucer with a bit of water. Santa, who was ahead of schedule, accepted the offer of milk and cookies, but, alas, the milk had turned overnight and an embarrassed Mr. Wells offered Santa an ice cold Coca-Cola instead. Santa assured them that there was nothing to be embarrassed about and that he got plenty of milk during his delivery and that the fizzy drink was a welcome change.

Before he left Mrs. Wells asked if Santa would pose for a photo so they could show little Graham that his hero had indeed come to visit. Santa happily obliged and was smiling for the camera when the little bunny hopped onto his lap leaving everyone in stitches with a lovely story to share.



Postal Strike effects North Pole

Christmas is a time for spreading joy and reconnecting with family. But it seems that this year might not live up to that promise. Millions of letters sent to Santa is laying undelivered at various post office depots around the country due to the extended postal workers strike.

As with most strikes, the workers believe they're not getting a fair deal. On the flip side, management thinks that the workers are being unreasonable and a standoff ensues. But the effect of this industrial action will be most sorely felt by the kids who typically spends hours writing the most precious letters to Santa. Some ask for something specific while others enquire about Santa's wellbeing and plans for retirement (as reported in the previous edition of The North Pole News).

The Elf of Letters informed Santa that there has been an unusually slow arrival of letters for this time of the year. Upon some investigation, it became obvious that the strike had all but stopped mail from being delivered. At first Santa advised that the EoL should simply monitor the situation and hope that it gets resolved before it's too late, but it quickly became clear that no resolution was forthcoming.

Santa then contacted the head of the



post office to raise his concerns and offer to help mediate the situation. This offer was welcomed with open arms and Santa called a meeting between union representatives and management. He explained the dire consequences caused by the strike. In a friendly, yet firm, tone, Santa said that a compromise had to be reached or the damage would be irreversible.

The workers were the first to budge, lowering their demands. Management briefly discussed the revised numbers before accepting them unconditionally. In addition, they promised special Christmas bonuses if all Santa's mail was delivered promptly. This resulted in negotiations ending in a very jovial mood and Santa being thanked profusely from both sides for brokering such a fair deal.

P.S. Latest reports show that mail is streaming in and the Elf of Letters has received staff reinforcements to help deal with the influx.

Still waiting up for Santa

Santa has paid a special visit to his biggest and oldest fans. Barry and Margaret Merino have been together for almost 60 years and still remember sitting hand in hand one Christmas Eve as a young couple on their first date.

Barry recalls the day he first laid eyes on the most beautiful girl he'd ever seen one sunny afternoon on the train ride home from school. Little did he know then that Margaret was actually new in his school, having recently moved from up country. "I was sitting in the packed train with my school case on the seat next to me. I don't like feeling crowded so always put my case there and snarled at anyone wanting to take that seat. On this particular day I was reading my favorite comic book when someone dared interrupt my concentration (reading was a bit of a challenge, even with pictures). I looked up, my snarl at the ready when this sweet angelic face stared back at me. I assumed she was new because everybody knew that I took two seats but she didn't. She asked if I'd mind moving my school case so she could sit and, as if in a trance, I put it at my feet. I can still hear the entire train gasp and then start to giggle" said Barry.

According to Margaret she knew about the boy who always took two seats and refused to be bullied into standing the long trip home. She told her classmates, who she hardly knew, that she was going to tell the so-and-so to move his case. And that's exactly what she did. "I was ready for a fight" said Margaret, "but the boy didn't even hesitate to move his belongings. In fact, he even used his school blazer to wipe the seat for me."

"It was love at first sight" remembers Barry.

"I don't remember what happened after I sat down" admits Margaret, "I was just happy I didn't have to punch him."

It wasn't until a few days later that Barry "bumped" into Margaret in the tuck shop line. For the days following the incident,

Barry had left the seat unoccupied but it was always snatched up by someone other than the intended recipient. According to Margaret, who failed to recognise Barry, she was surprised when this strange boy started talking to her, but Barry recalls it differently.

"I walked up to her and asked if she'd go to the year end dance with me" says Barry.



"I thought he was speaking a foreign language" recalls Margaret. "I'd heard rumours of an alien invasion and I suspected he was one of them."

As fate would have it, they both ended up going to the dance alone. It took Barry much of the night to build up the courage to attempt speaking to Margaret again, but not enough to ask her for a dance. It wasn't until Margaret asked him if he could dance that they eventually hit it off.

Although they grew really fond of each other, the year end dance was followed by the final exams and Margaret couldn't accept Barry's invitations to go on their first date. Once the schools closed for the Christmas holidays, Margaret had to join her family for a trip across Europe. Barry was devastated and felt like the heavens were plotting against him ever going on

the elusive date. Margaret promised the when they returned in the new year she'd go to the movies with Barry. Unlike today, going to the movies was a big deal and Barry dreamt of being alone with Margaret and maybe, just maybe, holding her hand.

As luck would have it, Margaret's dad needed to cut the family holiday short because of a work emergency. The day they landed Margaret rushed to Barry's house, but he wasn't home. She left him a note in their letterbox informing him that she was home earlier than expected and had missed him while she was away. Barry's heart skipped a beat when he read that she had missed him because she was all he could think about since she had left. He got on his bike and peddled as fast as his legs could until he was standing, exhausted and out of breath, at her door. It was Christmas Eve and she was helping her mom in the kitchen getting ready for a big family dinner. When the door opened he thought it was a Christmas Angel standing there and wasn't sure how a young gentleman was supposed to act in a situation like this. Should he give a slight bow, kiss her hand or be reserved and politely say hello? Margaret, uninhabited by decorum, rushed forward and hugged the sweaty boy. As he stood there, frozen by surprise, he hoped that this moment would last forever.

Although it took a lot of pleading and convincing, Margaret's mom allowed her go out with Barry, but only for an hour. Barry, after dashing home to change, arrived back as sweaty as when he left. Because it was Christmas Eve, all the stores closed early and the two of them walked hand in hand to the park where Barry unpacked a picnic basket filled with yummy treats (courtesy of his mom). As they sat there, hoping to catch a glimpse of Santa, they made a promise that they would celebrate this date for the rest of their lives. Tonight, with Santa and his reindeer dashing passed them unnoticed, they celebrate their 60th date. Still hand in hand. Still hoping the moment never ends.

Inaugural Elf Olympics is a great success

There was a tangible buzz in the air as Santa opened the inaugural Elf Olympics recently held in the North Pole. Events included the classic balance, torn sack and stack race. Santa was relieved to sit this one out but was on hand to officiate with the medal ceremony.



The heat of the competition reached boiling point when a scuffle broke out between the supporters of

the two main rivals of the classic balance race. Thankfully, in the true spirit of the Elf Olympics, the supporters quickly buried the hatchet and celebrated when Floügh Dassenfäss, the debutant and under-elf, tore away from his rivals to take first place.

By all accounts the torn sack race was a nail-biter that will be recounted for weeks to come. The race favorite, Braff

Lärsonman, crossed the finish line well in front of his closest rival, but, unfortunately had to be penalized valuable seconds for having "lost" more presents than the race winner Willbridge Grässlorn.



But the event that caused to most furor was the stack race that was won by Gilda Barnhorn. What made this victory all the more spectacular and nerve wracking, was that Gilda took an early lead and was a slam dunk for first place, but stumbled and dropped all her gifts with only one lap to go. By the time she'd collected and re-stacked her pile she was back in forth place. Afterwards, an elated and exhausted Gilda said that she thought she'd blown her chances when she tripped, but got back in the race determined to finish in the top

three. Winning came as a complete surprise and was literally the cherry on top.

Santa congratulated all the contested and said that win or lose, he was proud of every single one of them. The winners all received yummy cookies in the shape of gold medals and the Elf of the Tournament, Gilda Barnhorn, got the cherry-on-top trophy which will be engraved with her name and then be competed for again next year.



CLASSIFIEDS

Thank You - Eskom for giving us so many *Silent Nights*. Enjoy the peace and quiet and take a moment to look up and see stars usually hidden by electric lights. And when you see the brightest one, remember where it led three wise men so many years ago and experience the blessing they discovered.

Congratulations - Frans & Bianka on the birth of their bundle of joy. May Joshua light up this and every Christmas.

Auf Wiedersehen - Elton. Thanks for all the laughs, chocolates and going easy on me lunch times.

WEATHER

The weather will be mainly cold with the occasional freezing taking place. There'll be snow followed by more snow falling on top of yesterday's snow. Clothing options should include a warm jacket, mittens, a scarf and hot chocolate. Take care to keep your donkeys warm because I heard that one could literally freeze them off. So take care.