

"Writing the truth
as I see it;
trying not to
offend
those who will
disagree."

The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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Christmases past

December 21, 2009

December 26th my wife and I celebrate our 28th anniversary. The year we married I was a single father with a 3-year-old son, whom my wife later adopted.

And, this year is the first Christmas it will be just the two of us. After cutting down our 28th Christmas tree, we reminisced about some special Christmases past.

Our son's eighth Christmas was difficult. He was having doubts about Santa Claus. He was too young to lose that belief and he desperately wanted his friends to be wrong.

So we called Santa Claus, a.k.a. Bob Simons. Bob spent every Christmas as the "real" Santa. His was not the Santa suit we dads buy; his was the expensive, perfect suit, with the perfect beard.

I told Santa our problem and asked for help. Our alarm clock awakened us at 5 a.m. Christmas morning. We opened the front door and there was Santa, in his best suit with a red velvet bag slung over his shoulder.

We filled the bag with presents and then woke up our son and daughter, telling them we heard something. Jeff crawled down the hall on his stomach, Kim following, and with bugged-out eyes they watched Santa carefully putting out their presents.

We finally convinced Jeff he could talk with Santa without risking Santa taking his presents

away. Twenty-three years ago at 5 a.m. Christmas morning our children spent time with Santa Claus, sitting on his lap, talking with him and even pulling his beard. They met Santa Claus.

Last year, Bob's wife Carol sent us a Christmas card with a professional photo of Bob in his best Santa's suit. This year my wife framed one of these for each of our children. With it, she wrote the story of the Christmas they caught Santa Claus.

Well, that Christmas was all Jeff needed; he saw the "real" Santa and that was that. His unwavering belief continued all the way into junior high school. But the teasing of other kids was again leaving doubts, until one day when he and my wife were driving home, he asked the dreaded question. We had agreed that when he asked again, we would tell the truth about Santa and what it meant.

Jeff was betrayed. His parents were liars. Santa was a liar. It was so painful for both of them, my wife pulled the car over and they cried together, only interrupted by Jeff's accusations. Christmas left him that day and he wanted nothing to do with it. It was a fraud and his world was destroyed. We did not know what to do for him or how to help him.

That year I worked in the emergency room the day before Christmas - a beautiful day snowing into the late evening. I

came home after dark and parked in the garage. During those years, our street was on the Christmas light tour and buses were already driving by.

As I entered the house, all the lights were off and all I could hear was my wife crying. I went upstairs, finding her sitting at the kitchen table crying. She had no words; she just pointed to the window.

I looked out the window only to sit down and hug her, tears running down my cheeks too. The past week Jeff had hibernated in his bedroom, not talking to anyone, barely eating - but thinking.

Earlier that evening, without talking to either of us, he went through the boxes of Christmas decorations, remembering a Santa suit I wore when he was very young. He donned the suit, found a bunch of candy canes and was standing on the corner, covered with snow and handing them out to the children on the tour buses.

He was Santa. He understood. For years to come, each Christmas eve we lost our son to the street corner, handing out candy canes.

He figured it out. It was about people. It was about children. It was about giving. It was about caring. It was about family. It was about believing and it was about faith. He showed us "do unto others." He gave us the gift of Christmas. He helped his parents put the "Christ" back in Christmas. Merry Christmas.