

## My Christmas Memories as told by Santa Claus

### Christmas 2009

It was a very cold and blustery Sunday morning. The wind felt as though it was going to cut right through you. As if the strong winds were not enough, there was a mixture of rain, sleet and snow to make this morning even more uncomfortable.

This particular morning, our local firefighters and I were making our annual delivery of toys to the children in our village. Riding in the fire truck with the lights flashing and the siren announcing our arrival brought an air of excitement to the children and to this old Santa! Our delivery route would be determined by the families that participated in this annual event. The day was going great in spite of the terrible weather conditions. As we approached each home the children would rush outside to meet Santa and the fire truck, anxiously awaiting the gifts their parents had secretly provided to us.

As we were nearing the end of our deliveries, I noticed a little girl on the other side of the road standing ever so patiently at the end of her driveway. I waved to her and told her we would be back shortly. As we turned around at the end of the road and headed back, I and my firefighter elf checked our list only to see that she was not getting a gift from Santa. We pulled up next to her and chatted for a while. I don't know how long she been standing there in the cold, the wind and the freezing rain and snow but her face was beet red and her hands felt as if they were close to being frozen. We searched around in the fire truck for some kind of gift to give this sweet child. My firefighter elf gave her his flashlight to which we added some candy canes and a plate of Christmas cookies that another child had given us. She told us her name was Jessica. As she thanked us for the gifts, I told that her that Santa loved her very much and that I would see her again very soon. With that, I asked her to go inside, change into some dry clothes and have something warm to drink to shake the cold off. With a heavy heart we headed back to the fire station. I made a promise that something like this would never happen again as long as I was Santa for this event.

At my insistence, the Fire Chief contacted this child's parents. When asked why they were not on our delivery list, they said "We forgot". After some discussion, everyone decided that this child needed a "special delivery" from Santa. We called the parents and set up a time and day where Santa could come to their home. So many people came forth to help make this a Christmas that would not be forgotten for a very, very long time. By the time we were to visit Jessica's home, we had gathered a winter coat with matching hat, gloves and scarf. We had some very pretty tops, a dress, some jeans, leggings and socks. We even had toys and games. We left the fire station with the fire chief leading the way followed by the large tanker truck, a smaller grass fire truck and the first responder unit. As we neared the home, every driver lit up their light bars and strobes and let their sirens wail to announce our arrival. We were quite a sight to behold. Neighbors rushed to their door to see what was going on. With my bag full of gifts over my shoulder, everyone approached the door. Little Jessica opened the door and was nearly speechless at the sight of Santa and all of his firefighter elves standing on her porch. We went inside and spent time with her, her parents and her grandparents. As we were leaving, Jessica gave us all hugs and thanked us for all the gifts.

To this day, Jessica's family never missed another Santa Home Delivery and the fire truck never leaves the station empty. The firefighter elves always carry an emergency supply of stuffed animals for children whose parents may have "forgot". So many people coming together to help their neighbor is truly what the Christmas Spirit is all about.