

## SANTA CLAUS 1953

When I started to think about how I would write my Santa Claus story I realized that I have had Santa for 63 years. WOW! That's a long time. How many of us have something from when we were 6 years old? I am amazed he survived all those years considering my little brother and sister and the time I surgically cut a hole in the bottom because Santa is a bank and if I was going to put money in I had to have a way to get money out.

Let me tell you how Santa and I came together 63 years ago. It was September, about two weeks into first grade when I became very sick. I was acting sluggish and I had a fever. Within 24 hours I couldn't move my legs. Our family doctor delivered the bad news of Polio and told my parents to get me to a Pittsburgh hospital. I was packed into the back seat of our old Packard and we set out for the hospital. It must have been determined that my condition was not life threatening since they made several stops along the way. My grandmother, who didn't have a phone, lived on the Old Plank Road so they stopped to give the news to her as well as to my aunt and uncle.



I was taken to the Municipal Hospital in Oakland where I would remain in isolation for a month. Then I was transferred to the D. T. Watson Home on the hill overlooking Sewickley. Since I couldn't walk I had to be carried everywhere. It would be several more months before I would have braces made and regain my strength to learn how to walk again.

Christmas was coming and I would get to go home for a whole week. I don't remember many details about that visit home but I do remember lying on the living room couch watching my brothers and sisters decorate our Christmas tree when all of a sudden the tree fell over. We all had a big laugh over that. Sunday came much too soon since it was time to go back to the hospital. I didn't want to leave home so I was making a fuss as we headed out of Butler for Sewickley. On this Sunday after Christmas we had only gone a short distance when my dad pulled off the road. I was probably thinking, "great there is a problem with the car and I am not going back to the hospital", but

I was wrong. As it turned out we had pulled into a little china shop in Penn Township. My dad got out of the car and in a short time returned with the Santa Claus figurine pictured above. I'm sure I was surprised and felt special to have my new Santa Claus. Not being one to spend money frivolously he bought a Santa Claus bank. Now that I think about it I remember that we didn't put Santa away like you do with Christmas decorations. He was there year round; after all he was a bank, which makes it more remarkable that he survived as well as he has.

For the past 48 years my wife Linda has taken care of Santa Claus. She wraps him up and puts him away with our other decorations and every December he shows up on my dresser.

I think each Christmas is made up of all Christmas memories. Good or bad, they are our memories of our Christmases and we will always have them. I hope that you will be able to share your memories with others and make some new memories to carry into your future.

The temperature is falling and the snow flakes are flying. Santa Claus is on my dresser. Christmas time is here!

*Joe Randig*