

Question of Santa evokes holiday memories

Several University students recount how they learned the chubby bearded man in red may not be authentic

By Aron Glatzer
Freelance Reporter

Sleigh bells will soon be ringing and milk and cookies will be offered. Santa Claus will be making his rounds, bringing spirit and presents to children across the globe.

But not everyone thinks 'ol Saint Nick truly exists. Many college students passed the point of believing in the chubby bearded man years ago.

"Dec. 17, 1987, that's a day that will forever lay tainted in infamy," senior Adrian Blackmar recalls. "My Christmas experience almost ended before it could even begin."

Encouraged by an older cousin, Blackmar rented a film entitled, "Silent Night, Deadly Night."

Instead of seeing a jolly man delivering presents, 6-year-old Blackmar watched the story of "an escaped mental patient dressing as Santa Claus involved in a murdering spree from house to house."

Blackmar then listened to his cousin explain how Santa Claus does not exist at all.

"Not only is Santa not real, but the escaped mental patient may come to attack me," Blackmar recalls thinking.

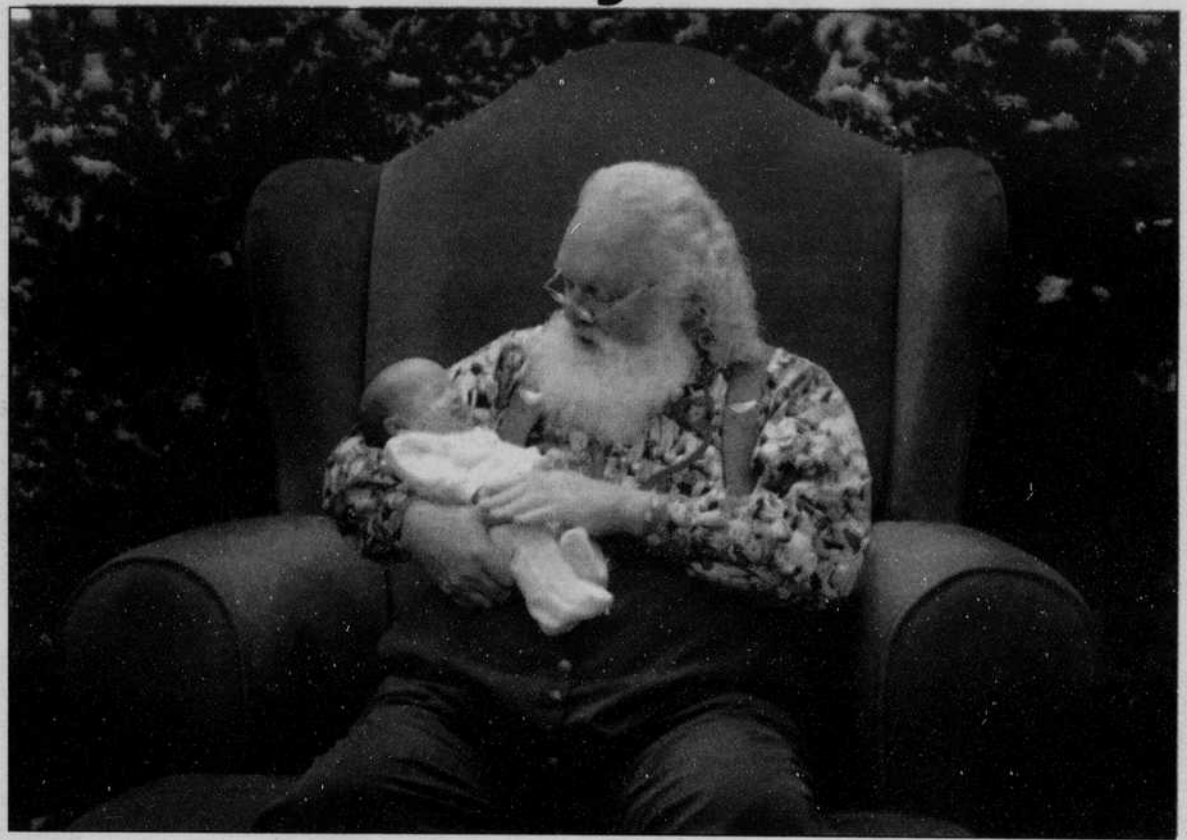
As a kindergarten student, Blackmar said he was given the assignment of reporting his holiday experience by means of a show and tell presentation.

"The few days left before Christmas I spent several hours working on a diagram to recreate the horrific details of my new Christmas beliefs," Blackmar said. "Never afraid to speak my mind, I gathered the strength and courage to tell others what I was told."

But on the night of Christmas Eve an event occurred that made Blackmar reconsider his presentation. After his cousin told him that his parents were the one's who left gifts labeled "from Santa," he snuck out to the tree to see if any loot had been left. There was nothing there yet, so he went up to his parents' room.

"When we checked on my sleeping parents, we heard a rustle," he said.

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Tim Kupsick Freelance Photographer

Santa Claus soothes Kyrsten Potter to sleep at the Valley River Center on Thursday.

Americans hop to shop during holiday gift season

'Black Friday' Wal-Mart sales totaled \$1.52 billion alone, and average holiday buying is up \$21 from 2002

By Ayisha Yahya
News Editor

The holiday season is under way with glistening light displays, Christmas

trees decked with decorations and even a few Christmas carols on the airwaves. Holiday shopping is also under full swing because Yuletide is truly the season for giving and receiving in this age. While the holiday has religious roots, it is becoming more defined as a time of revelry and gift-giving.

"I do think in our culture sadly it's becoming more commercialized because there's more money to be

made," University sophomore Zachary White said.

And the Christmas holiday is a money-making machine. The National Retail Federation Web site, <http://www.nrf.com>, projects that this year's holiday sales are likely to bring in close to \$217.4 billion in revenue. The average consumer will spend about \$670, up from \$649 in 2002, according to a federation's survey. The NRF is the

world's largest retail trade association.

The overwhelming holiday shopping craze was evident on the day after Thanksgiving — popularly known as Black Friday — as millions of shoppers flocked to stores as early as 6 a.m. to scoop up the latest deals. Retail giant Wal-Mart alone made \$1.52 billion on Black Friday, according to a Dec. 1, 2003 article in The New York Times.

Other people did their shopping on-

line. Citing Bizrate.com, a site that tracks e-commerce sites, a Dec. 3 The New York Times article stated that businesses reported \$820 million in Internet sales over the four-day Thanksgiving weekend, up from \$735 million in 2002.

"We've seen the holiday shopping season pushed back," said campus Pastor Jeremy Hadju-Paulen of the

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