



## 1914 Christmas Truce

The day the guns were silent

## Reading really Matters

Meet presenter Sue Grant-Marhsall



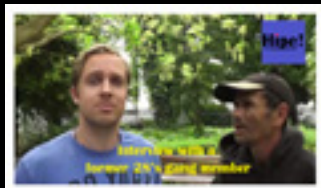
## So this is Christmas

Christmas traditions from around the world

Keeping it Real



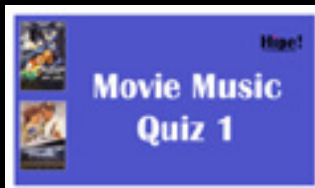
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How much do you know about movie theme songs? Take our quiz and find out.



Hipe's Wouter de Goede interviews former 28's gang boss David Williams.



The old South African Defence Force used a mixture of English, Afrikaans, slang and techno-speak that few outside the military could hope to understand. Some of the terms were humorous, some were clever, while others were downright crude.



Part of Hipe's "On the couch" series, this is an interview with one of author Herman Charles Bosman's most famous characters, Oom Schalk Lourens.



A taxi driver was shot dead in an ongoing war between rival taxi organisations.



Hipe spent time in Hanover Park, an area plagued with gang violence, to view first-hand how Project Ceasefire is dealing with the situation.

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We promised you a bumper December edition - and here it is - 80 pages.

I can't believe that in a few weeks time it's Christmas. Where did the year go?

It's been a fairly tough year for Radio Today. We've said goodbye to some presenters, but we've also been able to say hello to some new ones. Despite everything, we're still here. Still bring you great music, great content, and great companionship - Keeping it Real.

I'll be working through December, but will be taking a week's break in January. I'm looking forward to it.

From all of us - a very blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Until next month, stay safe and stay healthy.

*Matt*



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# So this is Christmas

What exactly is Christmas and how do we celebrate it. How does the rest of the world celebrate 25 December. **Matt Tennyson** takes a look at some Christmas traditions.

*So this is Christmas  
And what have you done?  
Another year over  
A new one just begun*

Above is the opening verse of a song titled *Happy Xmas (War Is Over)*, a song by John Lennon and Yoko Ono and the Plastic Ono Band with the Harlem Community Choir.

It was written by John Lennon and Yoko Ono and released on 1 December 1971.

So what does this song have to do with this article? Well, to be honest, not all that much. But, as this article is titled “So This Is Christmas” I thought it was a good introduction.

In this article we will be examining Christmas traditions from around the world. But before we even start, let’s take a closer look at what exactly Christmas is all about.

## Why 25 December?

Christmas is an annual festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, which is primarily a Christian religious celebration, but also a significant cultural one.

While the core meaning is the birth

of Jesus, whom Christians believe is the Son of God, it also includes secular traditions like gift-giving and family gatherings, and has adopted elements from pre-Christian festivals.

Christmas day is celebrated on 25 December and in many countries around the world it is a holiday. Yet nowhere in the bible does it state that Jesus was born on 25 December. In fact some biblical scholars believe that he was born in spring (March to May).

It was the Roman Catholic Church that decided to mark 25 December as Jesus’ birthday, and this was only in the 4th century.

The date was likely selected to coincide with existing pagan festivals such as the Roman *Invictus* (Unconquered Sun) and *Saturnalia*, a pagan festival of feasting and gift-giving.

## Cultural and secular traditions

Most countries associate Christmas with the tradition of giving gifts. It is often linked to the presents given to Jesus by the wise men, but has become a major part of the secular celebration.

Another popular tradition is decorations. These can range from simple decorations in our around private



**THE LIGHTS ARE ON:** Many cities around the world are decorated for Christmas. This often involves lighting up buildings and the streets with festive lights. This photograph was taken in Durban.

homes to large elaborate affairs where entire cities are decorated. Christmas trees, colourful lights and other symbolic decorations are common practices.

Christmas is also a time for family and friends to get together for meals, parties, and social gatherings.

Many secular celebrations are centered around the mythical figure of Santa Claus.

Christmas celebrations around the world can vary markedly in form, reflecting differing cultural and national traditions. Among countries with a strong Christian tradition, a variety of Christmas celebrations have developed that incorporate regional and local cultures.

## Keeping the homes fires burning

There are many Christmas traditions that are unique to South Africa. But before I even get to them, let me tell you about my own tradition.

As far back as I can remember, we would always have our Christmas lunch on the evening of 24 December - Christmas Eve. Although it was called Christmas lunch, it was served on the evening of 24 December. It’s a tradition that I continue to this day.

I always invite a small group of friends around for my 24 December ‘Christmas Lunch’. And I usually go all out.

I make at least three gammons, a brisket, lashings of roast potatoes, roast pumpkin and green beans with sesame. My wife’s grandmother would always make a chicken pie for Christmas, and

we now also include a chicken pie in her memory. We often have a traditional Christmas pudding and always a huge trifle.

And there is reason behind the madness. It means that on Christmas Day no-one has to spend time in the kitchen. On Christmas Day anyone can help themselves to leftovers. For me there is nothing better than a roast gammon sandwich with chutney. And of course there is always leftover trifle.

In South Africa many European traditions are maintained, despite the distance from Europe.

Christmas trees are set up in homes and children are given presents in their stockings. Traditional 'fir' Christmas trees are popular. On Christmas Eve children leave a stocking of milk and cookies out for Santa Claus, who brings them gifts.

Towns and cities have Carols by Candlelight at the beginning of the festive season where groups of people come together to sing Christmas carols and donate toys and clothing to needy children.

The Christmas meal can include mince pies, turkey, gammon, beef tongue, turducken (a weird combination of turkey, duck and chicken), corned beef, green salad, roast beef, or a barbecue outdoors. The meal is finished with Christmas pudding, ice cream, or trifle. Christmas crackers are used to make noise.

Despite Christmas occurring at the height of the Southern Hemisphere

summer, wintry motifs common to the Northern Hemisphere are popular.

## Out of Africa

Many countries in Africa celebrate 25 December as a holiday. In Eritrea and Gena in Ethiopia, Christmas day is known as Ledet. It is celebrated on 7 January (27 Tahsas of the Ethiopian calendar).

Many Christians in Eritrea and Ethiopia observe a 40 day fast before the holiday, culminating in dawn church services on Christmas morning. The day features vibrant musical celebrations with priests in ceremonial robes performing rituals, including dancing and drumming.

A traditional hockey-like game called gena is played in the afternoon, with the community leader awarding a prize to the winner. Most Ethiopians don a traditional shamma, a thin, white cotton wrap with brightly colored stripes across the ends.

Gift giving in Nigeria often involves money and the flow of gifts from the more fortunate to the less fortunate. Financial donations and elaborately wrapped gifts may be given out at lavish parties, weddings, and ceremonies; sometimes the money is scattered in the air to be grabbed by the others or stuck onto the sweaty foreheads of those dancing.

In Ghana, Christmas, known locally as Bronya, is celebrated on 25 December, with both 25 and 26 December recognized as public holidays.



**GAME ON:** Gena, a hockey-like game, is played on Christmas afternoon in Ethiopia.

Ghanaian Christians typically observe Christmas by attending church services on 25 December. Children often wear specially-bought or sewn Christmas attire, which brings them joy.

Overall, Ghanaians view Christmas as an opportunity to share gifts, enjoy traditional dishes such as fufu, banku, and jollof, and spend time with family and friends. Additionally, many contribute to the happiness of others by donating to orphanages.

## The Americas

In Greenland, Christmas is usually celebrated on the evening of 24 December and the days of the 25th and 26th. Christmas is known as Quvia-sukvik and the Inuit celebrate it as their New Year.

In Mexico Christmas is a statutory holiday in Mexico and workers can

have the day off with pay. Mexico's Christmas is filled with over 30 traditions found only within Mexican Christmas.

Mexican Christmas festivities start on 12 December, with the feast of La Guadalupana (Our Lady of Guadalupe), and end on 6 January, the Feast of the Epiphany.

In the United States of America the Christmas and holiday season begins around the end of November with a major shopping kickoff on Black Friday, the day after the U.S. holiday of Thanksgiving, though the period during which Christmas decorations are present and thematically appropriate music is playing in stores sometimes extends into the period between Halloween and Thanksgiving.

The traditional American Christmas dinner usually features either roasted



turkey with stuffing (sometimes called dressing), ham, or roast beef. Potatoes, squash, roasted vegetables and cranberry sauce are served along with tonics and sherries. A variety of sweet pastry and egg nog sprinkled with cinnamon and nutmeg are served in the United States. Certain dishes such as casseroles and desserts are often prepared with a family recipe. Sometimes, families also partake in a religious tradition, such as the consumption of a Christmas wafer in Christian families of European ancestry. Fruits, nuts, cheeses and chocolates are enjoyed as snacks.

Christmas Day is one of five Canadian statutory holidays observed nationwide, and Boxing Day is a federal holiday that is also observed in select provinces. North American influences on Christmas are evident in the hanging of stockings on Christmas Eve, to be filled by Santa Claus. However, Canadian children believe that the home of Santa Claus is located at the North Pole.

Christmas is known as Quviasukvik in the territories of Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and Yukon and the areas of Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and NunatuKavut and the Inuit celebrate it as their New Year.

Colombian Christmas festivities takes place on 7 December, Día de las Velitas, or 'Day of the Candles.' At night, the streets, sidewalks, balconies, porches, and driveways are decorated with candles and paper lanterns,

which illuminate cities and towns in a yellow glow to honor the Immaculate Conception on the following day, 8 December.

## Asia

In China, 25 December is not a legal holiday. However, it is still designated as a public holiday in China's special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau, former colonies of the United Kingdom and Portugal respectively.

In the mainland, the small percentage of Chinese citizens who consider themselves Christians unofficially, and usually privately, observe Christmas. Many other individuals celebrate Christmas-like festivities even though they do not consider themselves Christians. Many customs, including sending cards, exchanging gifts, and hanging stockings are very similar to Western celebrations. Commercial Christmas decorations, signs, and other symbolic items have become increasingly prevalent during the month of December in large urban centres of mainland China, reflecting a cultural interest in this Western phenomenon, and, sometimes, retail marketing campaigns as well.

Although Christmas is not a national holiday in Japan, gifts are sometimes exchanged. Christmas parties are held around Christmas Day and Japanese Christmas Cake (a white sponge cake covered with cream and decorated with strawberries) is popular.



**FEAST ON THIS:** Christmas lunch is popular in many countries and items such as turkey, gammon, brisket, chicken, roast potatoes, vegetables and traditional puddings often on the menu.

A successful advertising campaign in the 1970s made eating at KFC around Christmas a national custom. Its chicken meals are so popular during the season that stores take reservations months in advance.

Christmas is a state holiday in India, although Christianity in India is a minority with only 2.3% of the population. Despite most Indians being Hindus, millions of Indians still celebrate Christmas as a secular holiday.

Christianity in Pakistan constitutes the second largest religious minority community in Pakistan after Hindus. The total number of Christians is approximately 2,800,000 in 2008, or 1.6% of the population. Of these, approximately half are Roman Cath-

olic and half Protestant. Christians celebrate Christmas by going from house to house singing carols, and in return the family offers something to the choir. The money collected from such carols is usually used for charity works or is given to the church.

## Europe

Weihnachten is the observance of what is commonly known in English as Christmas in the German-speaking countries such as Germany, Austria and Switzerland. It is also widespread in countries with a German-speaking minority, such as Transylvania in Romania, South Tyrol in Italy, Eupen in Belgium, and various diasporas such as the German Brazilian and German

American communities. Traditions of Weihnachten influenced Advent and Christmastide culture throughout the world.

In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Christmas Eve (24 December) is celebrated as Štědrý den/Štedrý deň, which means 'Generous Day', and gifts are given in the evening. 25 and 26 December are public holidays in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia, but Vánoce/Vianocce (Christmas) is most commonly associated with the 24th. According to tradition, gifts are brought by Ježíšek/Ježiško, or 'Baby Jesus'.

In Hungary the Christmas and gift-giving season starts relatively early compared to other cultures, with the Santa-like figure, or Hungarian version of Saint Nicholas, Mikulás (or Szent Miklós) traditionally visiting the homes of Hungarian children on the night of 5 December, on the eve of Saint Nicholas Feast Day, 6 December.

Although the role of gift-giver on Christmas Day itself is assigned to the Christ Child, on the night before Saint Nicholas Day Hungarian children traditionally place a boot on their windowsill waiting for Mikulás to come by and fill it with treats.

In the largely Catholic Poland, Christmas Eve begins with a day of fasting and then a night of feasting. The traditional Christmas meal is known as Wigilia ('The Vigil'), and being invited to attend a Wigilia dinner with a

family is considered a high honour. In the largely Catholic Poland, Christmas Eve begins with a day of fasting and then a night of feasting. The traditional Christmas meal is known as Wigilia ('The Vigil'), and being invited to attend a Wigilia dinner with a family is considered a high honour.

As in some other Eastern Orthodox countries, and due to the 13-day difference between the newer Gregorian calendar and the older Julian calendars, Christmas is celebrated on 7 January in Russia. Unlike its Western counterparts, Christmas is mainly a religious event in Russia.

Christmas in Italy begins on 8 December, with the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the day on which traditionally the Christmas tree is mounted and ends on 6 January, of the following year with the Epiphany. The Italian term Natale derives from the Latin natalis, which literally means 'birth', and the greetings in Italian are buon Natale (Merry Christmas) and felice Natale (Happy Christmas).

An official holiday in Portugal, Christmas is widely celebrated and associated with family gatherings. Many who have moved to the urban centres of Lisbon or Porto, along with many who have emigrated to other countries, still travel to their hometown to spend Christmas Eve with their families.

Christmas in France (Noël on the French calendar) is celebrated mainly in a religious manner, though sec-

ular ways of celebrating the occasion also exist, such as Christmas decorations and carols. Children do not hang Christmas stockings but put their shoes by the fireplace or under the Christmas tree so Père Noël (Father Christmas or Santa Claus) can give them gifts (a practice also among French-speaking Switzerland). Some families also attend Midnight Mass and decorate their homes with Nativity scenes depicting the birth of Jesus. Additional santons ('little saints') may be added in the nativity scenes.

In England, telling ghost stories, local legends, and other strange, bizarre, and fantastic "winter stories" (as Charles Dickens – author of A Christmas Carol – termed them) is a centuries-old tradition, to which William Shakespeare contributed with The Winter's Tale (1623) but which was well known even before Shakespeare's time. (In contrast, Ireland, Scotland, and the USA favour Halloween as a time for telling ghostly tales.). Colin Fleming details other contributors to this tradition in the Paris Review.

Wales has a tradition of singing caneuon plygain, which is done on the week before Christmas day. In addition the tradition of Noson Gyflaith (Toffee Evening) used to be participated mainly in North Wales. This is where people gathered together to play games, tell stories and create toffee by taking turns to pull the slabs of the confectionery to make strands.

Christmas in Scotland was tradi-

tionally observed very quietly, because the Church of Scotland never placed much emphasis on the Christmas festival. However, in Catholic areas people would attend Midnight Mass or early morning mass before going to work.

The New Year's Eve festivity, Hogmanay, was by far the largest celebration in Scotland. The gift-giving, public holidays and feasting associated with mid-winter were traditionally held between 11 December and 6 January. However, since the 1980s, the fading of the Church's influence and the increased influences from the rest of the UK and elsewhere mean that Christmas and its related festivities have now surpassed Hogmanay and Ne'erday, New Year's Day.

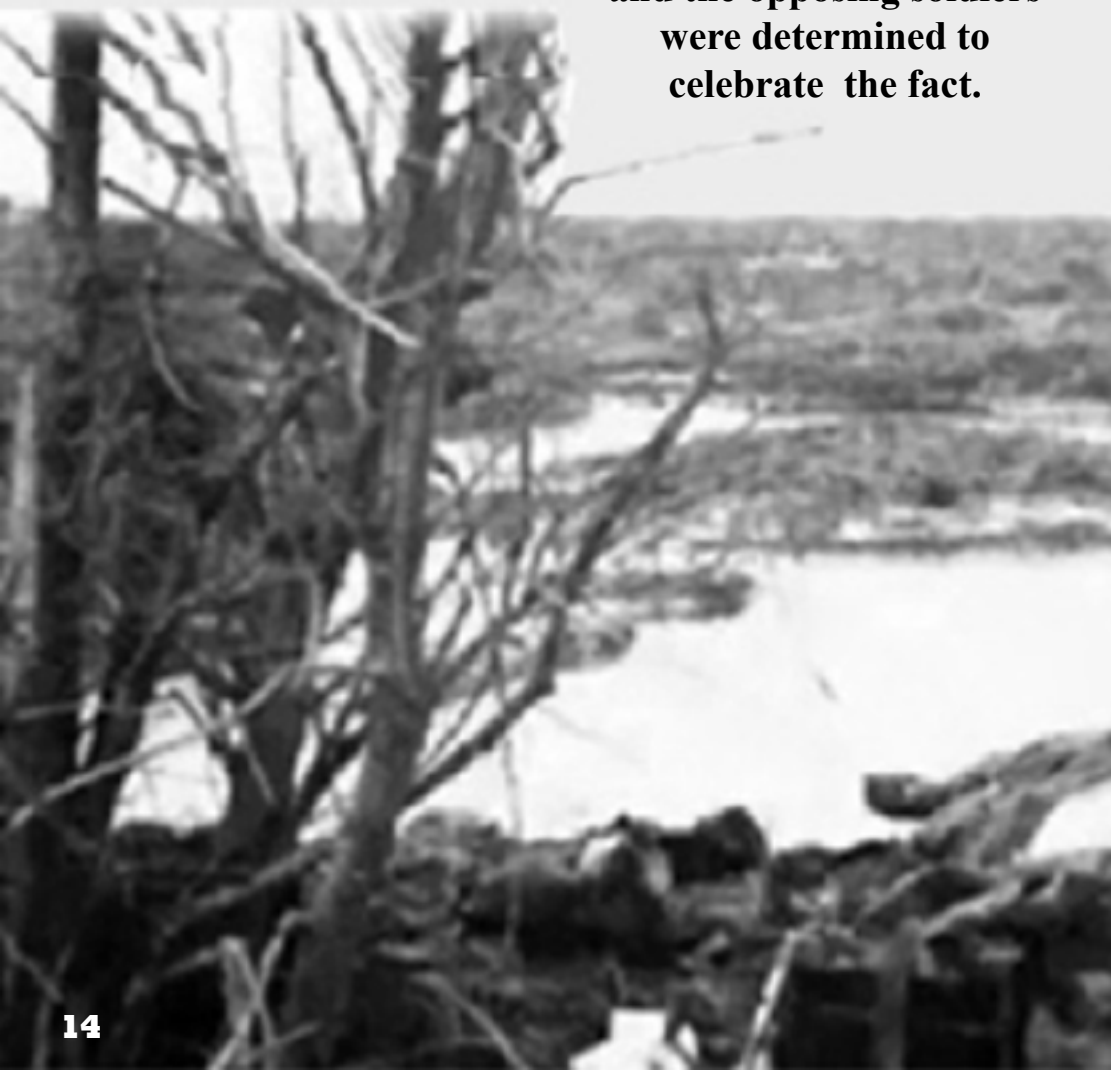
Christmas in Ireland is the largest celebration of the Irish public holidays and lasts from 24 December to 6 January, although many view 8 December, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception as being the start of the season, as schools used to close on this day, making it a traditional Christmas shopping time. This is no longer compulsory and many schools stay open. It is extremely popular on Christmas Eve to go for "the Christmas drink" in the local pub, where regular punters are usually offered a Christmas drink.

No matter how you celebrate Christmas, may this year be a special one for you and your family. From all of us at Radio Today, may you have a joyous Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

# Silent Night

**The First World War had been raging for nine months and countless lives had already been lost.**

**Yet on 24 December 1914 the guns along the Western Front fell silent. It was the first Christmas of the war and the opposing soldiers were determined to celebrate the fact.**



**I**t was called the ‘Great War’ or ‘The War to end all Wars’. It had begun in April 1914 and by the time it ended in November 1918 more than 10 million lives would be lost. Yet in 1939, a mere 21 years later, the world was at war once again. This new conflict would become known as World War II and the ‘Great War’ of 1914-18 would be renamed World War I.

By December 1914 the war had become static. An elaborate trench system had been constructed by both the Germans and the Allies. In some places troops faced each other with less than 100 m of ‘no-man’s land’ between them. December 1914

would also see the first Christmas of the war.

A few months earlier Pope Benedict XV had begged the warring governments to declare a truce for Christmas, “that the guns may fall silent at least upon the night the angels sang.” The Germans gave it serious consideration but the British angrily denounced the Pope.

On 24 December 1914, Christmas Eve, German troops in the region of Ypres, Belgium, began decorating the area around their trenches by placing candles on trees. The British troops watched with a mixture of





confusion and more than a little suspicion. Then the Germans began to sing *Stille Nacht*. While the words may have been unfamiliar the British troops could recognise the tune of *Silent Night*. The British troops responded by singing English carols.

The two sides began shouting Christmas greetings to each other. Many of the Germans had worked or studied in Britain and could speak English fluently. There were calls for the two sides to meet in no-man's land. Tentatively, in ones and twos, troops began leaving the trenches on both sides. Normally if you showed the slightest part of your body above a trench it would be hit by a bullet within seconds. Now people were climbing out of trenches, exposing themselves to the other side.

It must have been a strange feeling for those involved. Earlier that day they had been trying to kill each other, as they had for the past nine months. Now they were standing face to face with the enemy, shaking hands and greeting one another. Troops began to exchange small gifts such as whisky, jam, cigarettes, cigars and chocolate. The artillery in the region fell silent that night and, for the rest of the night, an eerie silence fell over the Western Front.

### Mourning the dead

Early on Christmas morning troops began meeting in no-man's land again.

Both sides took the opportunity to bury the many dead that lay in no-man's land. Proper burials were held and in many instances soldiers from both sides mourned the dead together and paid their respects. In more than one sector informal football matches were arranged in no-man's land. In many sectors, the truce lasted through Christmas night, but in some areas, it continued until New Year's Day.

While the troops at the front may have been enjoying the break, the higher commands on both sides, especially the British, were furious. They ordered the artillery to open fire and gave orders for attacks to take place. After all, this was a war. British commanders Sir John French and Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien vowed that no such truce would be allowed again, although both had left command before Christmas 1915. In all of the following years of the war, artillery bombardments were ordered on Christmas Eve to ensure that there were no further lulls in the combat. Troops were also rotated through various sectors of the front to prevent them from becoming overly familiar with the enemy.

### Celebrated and retold

The Christmas truce of 1914 has been celebrated and retold in songs (such as *Christmas 1914* by Mike Harding; *Christmas in the Trenches* by John McCutcheon; *Belleau Wood* by Garth Brooks; *Pipes of Peace* by Paul



**FIRE:** British guns fire at a German position. During the Battle of the Somme 1,738,000 shells were fired at the Germans. During this battle the British took over 60,000 casualties on the first day of the battle.

McCartney) film (*Joyeux Noel* and *Oh What a Lovely War*) and has also been the subject of a number of books.

In the final episode of *Blackadder Goes Forth*, the protagonists discuss events of the past that led them to their current situation, including the Christmas Truce. Captain Edmund Blackadder (Rowan Atkinson) was apparently still sore over being ruled offside during a football game with the Germans. He also cynically muses that "Both sides advanced further during one Christmas piss-up than they did in the next two-and-a half years of war."

On 7 November 2006, Irish singer Chris de Burgh paid £14,400 at

Bonham's auction house for an original 10 page letter from an unknown British soldier that records events and incidents with the Germans on that night describing "the most memorable Christmas I've ever spent".

The letter begins:

*This will be the most memorable Christmas I've ever spent or likely to spend: since about tea time yesterday I don't think there's been a shot fired on either side up to now. Last night turned a very clear frost moonlight night, so soon after dusk we had some decent fires going and had a few carols*

and songs. The Germans commenced by placing lights all along the edge of their trenches and coming over to us-wishing us a Happy Christmas etc.

They also gave us a few songs etc. so we had quite a social party. Several of them can speak English very well so we had a few conversations. Some of our chaps went to over to their lines. I think they've all come back bar one from 'E' Co. They no doubt kept him as a souvenir. In spite of our fires etc. it was terribly cold and a job to sleep between look out duties, which are two hours in every six.

First thing this morning it was very foggy. So we stood to arms a little longer than usual. A few of us that were lucky could go to Holy Communion early this morning. It was celebrated in a ruined farm about 500 yds behind us.

I unfortunately couldn't go. There must be something in the spirit of Christmas as to day we are all on top of our trenches running about. Whereas other days we have to keep our heads well down. We had breakfast about 8.0 which went down alright especially some cocoa we made. We also had some of the post this morning.

I had a parcel from B. G's Lace Dept containing a sweater, smokes, under clothes etc. We also had a card from the Queen, which I am sending back to you to look after please. After breakfast we had a game of football at the back of our trenches! We've had a few Ger-

mans over to see us this morning. They also sent a party over to bury a sniper we shot in the week. He was about a 100 yds from our trench. A few of our fellows went out and helped to bury him.

About 10.30 we had a short church parade the morning service etc. held in the trench. How we did sing. 'O come all ye faithful. And While shepherds watched their flocks by night' were the hymns we had. At present we are cooking our Christmas Dinner! so will finish this letter later.

Dinner is over! and well we enjoyed it. Our dinner party started off with fried bacon and dip-bread: followed by hot Xmas Pudding. I had a mascot in my piece. Next item on the menu was muscatels and almonds, oranges, bananas, chocolate etc followed by cocoa and smokes. You can guess we thought of the dinners at home. Just before dinner I had the pleasure of shaking hands with several Germans: a party of them came 1/2 way over to us so several of us went out to them. I exchanged one of my balaclavas for a hat. I've also got a button off one of their tunics. We also exchanged smokes etc. and had a decent chat. They say they won't fire tomorrow if we don't so I suppose we shall get a bit of a holiday-perhaps. After exchanging autographs and them wishing us a Happy New Year we departed and came back and had our dinner.

We can hardly believe that we've been firing at them for the last week



**HELLO:** Descendants of Great War veterans, in contemporary uniform, shake hands at the 2008 unveiling of a memorial to the truce.

or two-it all seems so strange. At present its freezing hard and everything is covered with ice...

There are plenty of huge shell holes in front of our trenches, also pieces of shrapnel to be found. I never expected to shake hands with Germans between the firing lines on Christmas Day and I don't suppose you thought of us doing so. So after a fashion we've enjoyed? our Christmas. Hoping you spend a happy time also George Boy as well. How we thought of England during the day. Kind regards to all the neighbours.

With much love from Boy.

On 11 November 2008, the first official Truce memorial was unveiled in Frelinghein, France, the site of a Christmas Truce football game in 1914. On 21 November 2005, the last remaining Allied veteran of the truce, Alfred Anderson died in Newtyle, Scotland at the age of 109.

### Counting the cost

Nearly 8.5 million soldiers lost their lives during World War I. Germany suffered the highest loss with 1,773,700 followed by Russia with 1,700,000. France suffered 1,357,800 casualties and the British Empire, which included Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand and South Africa, suffered 908,371. The United States of America, who entered the war in 1916, lost 116,516 men.

During World War II the casualty figures were even higher. More than 30 million soldiers died, as did millions of civilians. The Russians alone lost more than 13 million troops.

Let us remember the spirit of the Christmas Truce and pray that our generation and generations to come never have to experience a war and that we never have to calculate the cost of a World War III.







# Merry Christmas

*Feliz Navidad, joyeus noel, god jul. Well how about Arabic, Greek, Hindi or Swahili? Let's show you how.*

Sometimes it's the little things that can make a difference. Let's say you're travelling or in an area where English is not the first language. And let's say you need help or information. Being able to speak a few phrases of the local language will often make the locals more inclined to offer you assistance.

Last month we looked at saying "thank you". This month we will learn to say, "Merry Christmas."

- Afrikaans - geseënde Kersfees
- Arabic - eid milad majid
- Bosnian - sretan božić
- Chinese - Shèngdàn kuàilè
- Croatian - Sretan Božić
- Czech - Veselé Vánoce
- Danish - glædelig jul
- Dutch - Vrolijk Kerstfeest
- French - joyeux Noël
- German - Frohe Weihnachten
- Greek - Kalá Christoúgenna

- Hebrew - hag shmah
- Hindi - krisamas kee badhaee
- Irish Gaelic - nollaig shona
- Italian - Buon Natale
- Japanese - Merikurisumasu
- Korean - meli keuliseumaseu
- Malay - selamat hari natal
- Maori - hari Kirihimete
- Nigerian - ikini odun keresimesi
- Norwegian - god jul
- Polish - Wesolych Świąt
- Portuguese - Feliz Natal
- Russian - S Rozhdestvom
- Sotho - kereseme e monate
- Spanish - feliz navidad
- Swahili - Krismasi njema
- Swedish - god jul
- Tamil - Iniya kiristumas
- Xhosa - Ikrisimesi emnandi
- Zulu - Jabulela Ukhisimusi

Chow for now. ■

## Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus

*Following is a reprint of what is probably one of the most famous letters ever written to a Newspaper.*

EDITORIAL PAGE,  
NEW YORK SUN, 1897

We take pleasure in answering thus prominently the communication below, expressing at the same time our great gratification that its faithful author is numbered among the friends of The Sun:

*I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, "If you see it in The Sun, it's so." Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?*

*Virginia O'Hanlon*

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the scepticism of a sceptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little.

In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.

He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight.

The external light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if you did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove?

Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.



You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived could tear apart. Only faith, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus? Thank God he lives and lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!!!

**FROM THE PEOPLE'S ALMANAC, PP. 1358-9.**

Francis P. Church's editorial, "Yes Virginia, There is a Santa Claus" was an immediate sensation, and became one of the most famous editorials ever written.

It first appeared in the The New York Sun in 1897, over a hundred years ago, and was reprinted annually until 1949 when the paper went out of business.

Thirty-six years after her letter was printed, Virginia O' Hanlon recalled the events that prompted her letter:

"Quite naturally I believed in Santa Claus, for he had never disappointed me. But when less fortunate little boys



**VIRGINIA O' HANLON**

and girls said there wasn't any Santa Claus, I was filled with doubts. I asked my father, and he was a little evasive on the subject.

"It was a habit in our family that whenever any doubts came up as to how to pronounce a word or some question of historical fact was in doubt, we wrote to the Question and Answer column in The Sun. Father would always say, 'If you see it in the The Sun, it's so,' and that settled the matter.

"Well, I'm just going to write The Sun and find out the real truth, I said to father.

He said, "Go ahead, Virginia. I'm sure The Sun will give you the right



**FRANCIS P. CHURCH**

answer, as it always does."

And so Virginia sat down and wrote to her parents' favourite newspaper.

Her letter found its way into the hands of a veteran editor, Francis P. Church. Son of a Baptist minister, Church had covered the Civil War for The New York Times and had worked on the The New York Sun for 20 years, more recently as an anonymous editorial writer. Church, a sardonic man, had for his personal motto, "Endeavour to clear your mind of cant."

When controversial subjects had to be tackled on the editorial page, especially those dealing with theology, the assignments were usually given to Church.

Now, he had in his hands a little girl's letter on a most controversial matter, and he was burdened with the responsibility of answering it.

"Is there a Santa Claus?" the childish scrawl in the letter asked. At once, Church knew that there was no avoiding the question. He must answer, and he must answer truthfully. And so he turned to his desk, and he began his reply which was to become one of the most memorable editorials in newspaper history.

Church married shortly after the editorial appeared. He died in April, 1906, leaving no children.

Virginia O' Hanlon went on to graduate from Hunter College with a Bachelor of Arts degree at age 21.

The following year she received her Master's from Columbia, and in 1912 she began teaching in the New York City school system, later becoming a principal.

After 47 years, she retired as an educator. Throughout her life she received a steady stream of mail about her Santa Claus letter, and to each reply she attached an attractive printed copy of the Church editorial.

Virginia O' Hanlon Douglas died on May 13, 1971, at the age of 81, in a nursing home in Valatie, New York.

We ran this story in last December's edition of Hipe, and we will run it again every year in December. It's a classic that needs to be told and retold for as long as there is a Christmas.

# The Joyful Chaos of Christmas: Heartwarming Moments, Traditions, and Staying Connected

By Michelle Human.

As Christmas draws closer here in South Africa, we know, this season is all about family, friends, good food, and those special traditions that make our hearts feel warm.

Whether you're soaking up the sun on a beach, enjoying a braai with loved ones, or simply relaxing with a favorite cup of rooibos, Christmas is a time to feel cozy and connected.

But let's be honest - sometimes this season can also feel a little lonely or overwhelming. And that's okay. If you're feeling a bit down or just need a boost, remember—you're not alone. There are plenty of - ways to find comfort, a little fun, and even some surprises along the way.

## Reminiscing and Keeping Traditions Alive (With a Twist!)

Thinking back to Christmases past - maybe you remember that one year when the firecracker went off a little too close to the tree, or when granny's jokes had everyone laughing so hard they nearly dropped the pudding! Those moments, quirks and all, are what make this season special.

Why not create a "Memory Box" filled with funny stories, photos, or little keepsakes? And if you're feeling brave, tell a funny Christmas story at your next gathering - like how Uncle Simon's attempt at making gingerbread turned into a hilarious flour explosion! Laughter is truly good medicine.

And speaking of traditions - whether it's decorating with tinsel, singing carols, or that secret recipe for koeksisters - keep doing what makes you smile. Traditions give us roots, but adding a little twist keeps them lively. Maybe this year, you try a new song, or add a funny ornament to the tree. Who says Christmas can't be playful?

## Fun and Interesting Ways to Celebrate

Here are some ideas to sprinkle a little fun into your holiday:

- **Share Your Stories:** Gather with family or friends, or just sit quietly and remember your favourite Christmas mishaps—like that time the Christmas turkey was more "charcoal" than "golden brown."

Sharing these stories keeps the laughter flowing.

- **Tune into Radio Today:** Have you listened today? Playing lively Holiday tunes, sharing heartwarming stories, and even featuring special surprises. It's like having a festive chat with friends you've never met!
- **Make an Ornament or Two:** Got a bit of string, some old buttons, or dried oranges? Turn them into quirky decorations - like a little Santa made from a sock or a paper star that looks like it's been through a craft war!
- **Enjoy the Outdoors:** If the weather's on your side, spend some time outside - maybe do a little gardening, take a walk, or just soak up the sunshine.

Did you know that in some parts of South Africa, folks have a tradition of "braai-ing" outdoors even on Christmas Day? It's a fun way to make the day feel extra special!



## Keep the Community Spirit Alive - Support and Stay Connected

Radio Today is a real treasure for many. It's more than just music and stories—it's a place where your voice can be heard, your stories shared, and your community strengthened.

And guess what? The station reaches far beyond the airwaves through their online magazine and outdoor broadcasts. They're planning something really exciting for 16 December 2025 - a outdoor event (supporting local) that aims to bring lots of us together, share some laughs, and celebrate our community.

Supporting the station as a sponsor isn't about making a quick buck; it's about helping keep that special space alive for everyone. Imagine

your name or your favorite story being part of that event. It's a lovely way to give back and keep the good vibes going, and it helps the station reach even more people - like new friends or neighbours who might need that extra bit of cheer.

If you're interested, just give us a shout. No pressure - just a warm nudge to think about how we can all

help keep the community spirit thriving.

## Feeling a Bit Sad? Here's How to Brighten Your Day

It's perfectly normal to feel sad or lonely sometimes, especially during the holidays. But remember—you don't have to carry those feelings alone. Here are some friendly ideas:

- Tell a Joke or Funny Story: Brighten someone's day with a good laugh - maybe about that time you accidentally wore your slippers outside or when the cat got into the Christmas tree! (Let's hope this year the Christmas Tree is old news for the cat)
- Call a Friend or Neighbour: Sometimes, a quick chat can turn a gloomy day into a bright one.
- Join a Community Event: Many groups host outdoor or virtual gatherings - think of it like a big family picnic, but with a lot of smiles and stories.
- Talk to Someone Who Can Help: If those sad feelings stick around, it's okay to ask for support. In South Africa, you can reach out to:

■ SADAG (South African Depression

and Anxiety Group): Call 011 234 4837 or

visit <https://www.sadag.org>

■ Lifeline South Africa: Dial 0861 322 322 or visit <https://www.lifeline.co.za>

■ The Human Touch Podcast <https://rt1485.com/podcast/the-human-touch-nov-21-2025/>

Remember, talking about how you feel is a sign of strength, not weakness.

## A Warm Invitation

So, this Christmas, I invite you to tune into Radio Today ([www.rt1475.com](http://www.rt1475.com)) - listen, sing along, share your stories, or just enjoy the good vibes. Supporting the station helps keep those stories, music, and community events alive. It's like giving a little gift to yourself and everyone around you.

And no matter what, remember that Christmas is about love, kindness, and a little bit of fun. Whether you're laughing at a funny ornament, sharing a story, or just sitting quietly in the sun, you're part of something special.

Merry Christmas! Stay safe, stay warm, and enjoy every moment - quirks and all.

## Profmed and Knitted Knockers unite to drive breast cancer support through the Pink Bra Drive

*Profmed extends Pink Room legacy through the Pink Bra Drive, partnering with Knitted Knockers to support breast cancer survivors.*

With the success of its Pink Room campaign, where women were provided a safe space to screen, discuss, and connect around cancer. Medical scheme Profmed has doubled down on its commitment to healthier women through an inspired partnership with Knitted Knockers South Africa, a volunteer network that creates handcrafted prosthetics for women navigating breast cancer.

According to Profmed Clinical Executive, Justine Lacy, this collaboration forms part of the Pink Bra Drive, a nationwide initiative running through to 2026 that invites South Africans to donate new or gently used bras to accompany the lovingly made knitted prostheses distributed by Knitted Knockers.

"Together, these acts of generosity aim to restore comfort and confidence, reminding survivors that they are seen, supported, and never alone," says Lacy.

In Profmed's Pink Room campaign, cancer was confronted with survivors and doctors led the way. Now, the Pink Bra Drive turns awareness into ongoing support.

"Every story we heard in the Pink Room reminded us that care doesn't end with treatment," says Lacy. "The Pink Bra Drive is our way of standing with women through every stage of their journey from early detection to recovery and beyond. Getting this right is where the right partnerships come in."

Knitted Knockers South Africa provides free, soft, lightweight prosthetic breasts to women who have undergone mastectomies. They also provide emotional support to those adjusting to life after surgery. Knitted Knockers created and coordinated pensioner knitting groups countrywide, these volunteers now supply Knockers directly to hospitals, clinics, and oncology units in their communities.

Each knitted prosthesis will now be paired with a donated bra through the Pink Bra Drive, providing a complete, dignified gift of comfort.

"This partnership beautifully bridges awareness and action," says Dr Moratwe Masima, Profmed spokesperson. "It's about people using their hands and hearts to make recovery a little gentler for women who have



been through so much.”

Starting 12 November, donation baskets will be available at Publicis Groupe in Bryanston, Johannesburg – where Profmed’s communications partner MSL will facilitate the collection drive.

Dr Masima will also appear in new video content across Profmed’s social and TikTok platforms to encourage donations, introduce Knitted Knockers, and highlight how small gestures can make a powerful difference.

“Every bra dropped into a basket represents hope,” says Lacy. “When paired with a Knitted Knocker, that’s when it becomes part of someone’s story of recovery. A story of resilience, dignity, and renewed confidence.”

People in Gauteng can donate new or gently used bras at Publicis Groupe building (10 Muswell Rd, Bryanston, Sandton, 2191) collection point.

Follow Profmed on social media for updates and discover more ways to support the campaign into 2026 and beyond.

Attached are the main images for the release, and you can download additional high-resolution visuals here:

<https://lion.box.com/s/xfelv5dx7l-0w4icgusdcrint0qv8m3xq>

Please feel free to reach out if you need more information or would like to arrange interviews with Dr. Moratwe Masima, Medical doctor and Profmed spokesperson, or Justine

Lacy, Profmed Clinical Executive.



### About Profmed

Profmed’s vision is to address the healthcare needs of South Africa’s professionals. This is achieved through the tailored and comprehensive design of benefits that suit the specific requirements of professionals.

With over 60 years’ experience, Profmed is one of the longest established medical schemes in South Africa but we are as relevant today as we were 60 years ago. Through innovation, we continue to meet the changing professional landscape in South Africa, ensuring that the needs of our members are met as they move from graduates to established professionals and into their retirement years. We understand this journey and support our members each step of the way.

As a restricted medical aid scheme, Profmed is open to all professionals who have a tertiary qualification and relevant professional experience.

Profmed’s uncomplicated benefit design, coupled with excellent service, attention to detail and affordable rates ensures that we are there to sup-



**REPRESENTING HOPE:** Knitted Knockers provides free, hand-knit or crochet prosthetic breasts that are lightweight and comfortable to wear in an ordinary bra.

port our members when they need us most.



**KNITTED KNOCKERS**  
SOUTH AFRICA

**About Knitted Knockers  
South Africa**

Knitted Knockers South Africa is a registered non-profit organization dedicated to supporting women who have undergone mastectomy, lumpectomy, implant removal, or radiation treatment. The organization provides free, hand-knit or crochet prosthetic breasts made of 100% natural cotton and merino wool filling. Each piece is designed to be soft, lightweight, and comfortable to wear in an ordinary bra, requiring no special prosthetic bra

# Read it and Weep

Going through some boxes recently, I discovered an old newspaper from 27 September 1978. It was an old Afrikaans daily newspaper, *Die Volksblad*, published in Bloemfontein in the Free State.

While it was fun going through some of the old headlines, what really got to me was the adverts. I had to look at the prices over and over again, pinching myself to believe that they were true.

Granted, people earned a lot less back in 1978 than they do today. Yet if you compare the average salary earned back then with the cost of living, people had

*The discovery of an old newspaper from 1978 brings tears to Matt O' Brien's eyes.*

a far better lifestyle 30 years ago. One of the things that really floored me was the price of new cars. A top of the range Toyota Cressida, with all the bells and whistles, would cost you a staggering R7,990. The Cressida station-wagon was going for R5,990.

A Toyota Hi-Ace would set you back R5 190, while a Toyota 3-litre truck cost R4,990. The new 1978 Toyota Corolla 1.6 sedan could be yours for only R3,790. Today that wouldn't even come close to the deposit on a used car. Come to think of it, I recently bought four new tyres for my jalopy and they came to over R4,000.

I remember buying my first new car the following year, in 1979. It was a VW Golf 1600 GTS with radio/tape and a sunroof. The cost? A mere R6,050.

While on the subject of motoring, I found an ad dealing with spares and car products. A Champion sparkplug would cost you 65c, while you could pick up a 5-litre can of Castrol GTX motor oil for only R3.99. And want some music for your new car? No problem. A Tempest FM car radio would cost you R19.99.

**SHADY DEAL:** Okay, the sunglasses are at a 50% discount. Still, even at the full price they would be under R10.



**COOL RUNNINGS:** These days a pair of good running shoes will probably cost you a few thousand rands. But back in 1979 you would pay the following prices:

Running Vest - R5.99  
Running Shorts - R6.99  
Socks - R1.99  
Running Shoes - R14.99  
Watch - R19.99

with long pants was only an extra R10 at R26.95. A pair of men's short pants cost R6,50, while long pants were going for R14.95. You could get a tee-shirt to go with that for only R2.95.

A ladies pants suit would cost her a ridiculous R15.95 and she could add a crimpelen jersey for another R6.95. School shirts cost R4.95, while a local high school tracksuit could be had for only R7.95.

A pair of men's shoes was on sale for R6.95. I have, however, left the best for last. You could buy a men's three-piece suit for the outrageous price of R69.95. Hell, I paid more than that for a tee-shirt last week.

Fast-food outlet KFC (back in 1978 KFC was still called Kentucky Fried Chicken) also had an ad in the paper.

Take a look at what you paid back then. A Lunch Pack, consisting of one piece of chicken, two small salads of your choice, and a bread roll would set you back 88c. A Snack Pack, with two pieces of chicken, mashed potatoes with gravy, and a bread roll - R1.10.

The Dinner Pack - three pieces of

Looking through the classified advertising section I notice that you can rent a one-bedroom flat for R98 per month. Hey, forget renting. I also see a three bedroom house on sale for a mere R18,000. I recently bought a new camera and it cost me more than that. These days the bond on a three-bedroom house can often come to over R18,000 a month.

Then I saw an ad for Stanwell, a clothing shop. Take a look at some of these prices. A short-pants safari suit (remember, we're talking Free State here) for a mere R16.95. A safari suit

Offer valid until 31 October

**50%** discount

on our wide range of

**SUNGLASSES**

from **R4-99**



**SUNTAN LOTIONS**  
and

**AFTER-SUN PRODUCTS**

**FITCHARDPARK  
CHEMIST**



## TOP OF THE RANGE:

The year after this newspaper was published I bought a brand new VW Golf 1600 GTS. It had a sunroof and radio/tape. It set me back R6,050. These days that's the price of four new tyres.



chicken, coleslaw, mashed potatoes with gravy, two bread rolls - R1.60. The Five Pack - five pieces of chicken with fries (chips) - R1.95. The Budget Pack - nine pieces of chicken with fries - R3.25. The Value Pack - 12 pieces of chicken with fries - R4.30. The Bucket - 15 pieces of chicken and six bread rolls for R5.45. The Party Pack - 18 pieces of chicken - R5.95. The Barrel - 21 pieces of chicken for R6.85.

Don't forget the side orders. A hamburger could be yours for 70c, while a cheese burger was 80c. A small packet of fries was 30c, while the large packet went for 70c. A 500g tub of salad would cost you 60c, while the smaller 125g tub would be 20c.

Likewise, a 500g fruit salad was 70c and the 125g cost 25c. A 125g mash and gravy would break your budget at 20c, while bread rolls were 3c each.

If you weren't into the fast-food scene, no problem. You could take your date out to a really decent restaurant, have a good meal and share a bottle of wine, all

for about R40 for the two of you.

A newspaper back in 1978 would cost you 10c. Compare that to the R6.50 you pay for most newspapers these days.

You could fly one-way from Durban to Johannesburg for R49. And you could go on an overseas holiday for R1,000, and that also included accommodation. These days you're lucky if you get a single air ticket between Johannesburg and Cape Town for that price.

I must confess that I had a lot of fun looking at how much things cost back in 1978.

Who was it that sang the song, "If I could turn back time"? Still, the past is the past and nothing we can do will bring it back. All I need to do is pop into the local supermarket, check out the prices, and it brings me back to reality with a sickening thump. It won't be long before we go into the local store and ask if we can put down a deposit on a loaf of bread and pay it off over six months.

How to...

# Have mic, will travel

*Fall In/Tree Aan, the Saturday afternoon show aimed at military veterans, broadcasts live from the SA Legion Rosedale.*



**LEFT:** Jeff Marcus in action with an interview.

**BELOW:** Matt Tennyson interviews guest speaker Brig Gen (Ret) Ian Fordred.



**O**n Saturday 29 November, Radio Today presenters Matt Tennyson and Jeff Marcus were invited to lunch at the SA Legion Rosedale.

The lunch was to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the South African Signals Association, an association for military veterans that served in the South African Corps of Signals. Both Jeff and Matt serve on the management committee of the SA Signals Association. Jeff served in the Corps of Signals, while Matt served in the Infantry Corps.

There was, however, a slight problem. The lunch started at 12.00 - the same time that Matt and Jeff are usually on air with their show "Fall In/Tree

Aan". The solution - do the show live from the SA Legion Rosedale, during the lunch.

"It was a bit chaotic," admits Matt. "But I think we pulled it off."

Not only did they do the show they also interviewed, among others, Lt. Cols (Ret) Robbie Roberts and Geoff Laskey, Brig Gen (Ret) Ian Fordred and Alderman Clive Justus.

"And we even managed to grab something to eat," says Jeff.



# So you think you know Christmas

*So you think you know everything there is to know about Christmas? Well think again.*

**A**re you the guru of the Christmas season? Think you know it all? We have a staggering nine pages of Christmas trivia that you may, or may not, know. Enjoy.

■ According to historical accounts, the first Christmas in the Philippines was celebrated 200 years before Ferdinand Magellan discovered the country for the western world, likely between the years 1280 and 1320 AD.

■ A traditional Christmas dinner in early England was the head of a pig prepared with mustard.

■ An artificial spider and web are often included in the decorations on Ukrainian Christmas trees. A spider web found on Christmas morning is believed to bring good luck.

■ At lavish Christmas feasts in the Middle Ages, swans and peacocks were sometimes served “endored.” This meant the flesh was painted with saffron dissolved in melted butter. In addition to their painted flesh, endored birds were served wrapped in their own skin and feathers, which had been removed and set aside prior to roasting.

■ Charles Dickens’ initial choice for Scrooge’s statement “Bah Humbug” was “Bah Christmas.” After “A

Christmas Carol,” Charles Dickens wrote several other Christmas stories, one each year, but none was as successful as the original.

■ Before settling on the name of Tiny Tim for his character in “A Christmas Carol,” three other alliterative names were considered by Charles Dickens. They were Little Larry, Puny Pete, and Small Sam.

■ Child singer Jimmy Boyd was 12 years and 11 months old when he sang the Christmas favourite, “I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus.” The song hit the top of the pop charts.

■ At one stage Christmas was not widely celebrated in Scotland. Some historians believe that Christmas was downplayed in Scotland because of the influence of the Presbyterian Church (or Kirk), which considered Christmas a “Papist,” or Catholic event. As a result, Christmas in Scotland tended to be sombre.

■ Christmas trees are known to have been popular in Germany as far back as the sixteenth century. In England, they became popular after Queen Victoria’s husband Albert, who came from Germany, made a tree part of the celebrations at Windsor Castle. In the United States, the earliest known men-

tion of a Christmas tree is in the diary of a German who settled in Pennsylvania.

■ Christmas trees are edible. Many parts of pines, spruces, and firs can be eaten. The needles are a good source of vitamin C. Pine nuts, or pine cones, are also a good source of nutrition.

■ During the ancient 12-day Christmas celebration, the log burned was called the “Yule log.” Sometimes a piece of the Yule log would be kept to kindle the fire the following winter, to ensure that the good luck carried on from year to year. The Yule log custom was handed down from the Druids.

■ Frankincense is a sweet smelling gum resin derived from certain Boswellia trees which, at the time of Christ, grew in Arabia, India, and Ethiopia. Tradition says that it was presented to the Christ Child by Balthasar, the black king from Ethiopia or Saba.

The frankincense trade was at its height during the days of the Roman Empire. At that time this resin was considered as valuable as gems or precious metals. The Romans burned frankincense on their altars and at cremations.

■ Frustrated at the lack of interest in his new toy invention, Charles Pajean hired several midgets, dressed them in elf costumes, and had them play with “Tinker Toys” in a display window at a Chicago department store during the Christmas season in 1914. This publicity stunt made the construction toy

an instant hit. A year later, over a million sets of Tinker Toys had been sold.

■ Traditionally, Greeks do not use Christmas trees or give presents at Christmas. A priest may throw a little cross into the village water to drive the kallikantzari (gremlin-like spirits) away. To keep them from hiding in dark, dusty corners, he goes from house to house sprinkling holy water.

■ If traveling in France during the Christmas season, it is interesting to note that different dishes and dining traditions reign in popularity in different parts of the country.

In south France, for instance, a Christmas loaf (pain calendeau) is cut crosswise and is eaten only after the first part has been given to a poor person. In Brittany, buckwheat cakes and sour cream is the most popular main dish. In Alsace, a roasted goose is the preferred entrée. In Burgundy, turkey and chestnuts are favoured. In the Paris region, oysters are the favorite holiday dish, followed by a cake shaped like a Yule log.

■ In 1647, the English parliament passed a law that made Christmas illegal. Festivities were banned by Puritan leader, Oliver Cromwell, who considered feasting and revelry, on what was supposed to be a holy day, to be immoral. The ban was lifted only when the Puritans lost power in 1660.

■ In 1937, the first postage stamp to commemorate Christmas was issued in Austria.

■ In Armenia, the traditional Christ-

mas Eve meal consists of fried fish, lettuce, and spinach. The meal is traditionally eaten after the Christmas Eve service, in commemoration of the supper eaten by Mary on the evening before Christ's birth.

■ In Finland and Sweden an old tradition prevails, where the twelve days of Christmas are declared to be time of civil peace by law. It used to be that a person committing crimes during this time would be liable to a stiffer sentence than normal.

■ In France, Christmas is called Noel. This is derived from the French phrase "les bonnes nouvelles," which means literally "the good news" and refers to the gospel.

■ In Guatemala, Christmas Day is celebrated on December 25; however, Guatemalan adults do not exchange gifts until New Year's Day. Children get theirs (from the Christ Child) on Christmas morning.

■ In Greek legend, malicious creatures called Kallikantzaroi (also spelled Kallikantzari) sometimes play troublesome pranks at Christmas time. According to the legend, to get rid of them, you should burn either salt or an old shoe. Apparently the stench of the burning shoe (or salt) drives off the Kallikantzaroi. Other effective methods include hanging a pig's jawbone by the door and keeping a large fire burning so they can't sneak down the chimney.

■ In Medieval England, Nicholas was just another saint - he had not yet been

referred to as Santa Claus and he had nothing to do with Christmas.

■ In North America, children put stockings out at Christmas time. Their Dutch counterparts, however, use shoes. Dutch children set out shoes to receive gifts any time between mid-November and December 5, St. Nicholas' birthday.

■ In Norway on Christmas Eve, visitors should know that after the family's big dinner and the opening of presents, all the brooms in the house are hidden. The Norwegians long ago believed that witches and mischievous spirits came out on Christmas Eve and would steal their brooms for riding.

■ In Portugal, the traditional Christmas meal (consoada) is eaten in the early hours of Christmas Day. Burning in the hearth is the Yule log (fogueira da consoada). The ashes and charred remains of the Yule log are saved; later in the year, they are burned with pine cones during Portugal's thunderstorm season. It is believed that no lightning bolt will strike where the Yule log smoke has travelled.

■ In southern France, some people burn a log in their homes from Christmas Eve until New Year's Day. This stems from an ancient tradition in which farmers would use part of the log to ensure a plentiful harvest the following year.

■ In Sweden, a common Christmas decoration is the Julbock. Made from straw, it is a small figurine of a goat. A variety of straw decorations are a usu-

al feature of Scandinavian Christmas festivities.

■ In Syria, Christmas gifts are distributed by one of the Wise Men's camels. The gift-giving camel is said to have been the smallest one in the Wise Men's caravan.

■ In the British armed forces it is traditional that officers wait on the men and serve them their Christmas dinner. This dates back to a custom from the Middle Ages. This also became a tradition in the old South African Defence Force (SADF), especially for troops serving on the border.

■ In the Netherlands, Christmas centres on the arrival of Saint Nicholas, who is believed to come on horseback bearing gifts. Before going to bed, children leave out their shoes, hoping to find them filled with sweets when they awaken.

■ In the Ukraine, a traditional Christmas bread called "kolach" is placed in the centre of the dining table. This bread is braided into a ring, and three such rings are placed one on top of the other, with a candle in the center of the top one. The three rings symbolize the Trinity.

■ La Befana, a kindly witch, rides a broomstick down the chimney to deliver toys into the stockings of Italian children. The legends say that Befana was sweeping her floors when the

three Wise Men stopped and asked her to come to see the Baby Jesus. "No," she said, "I am too busy." Later, she changed her mind but it was too late. So, to this day, she goes out on Christmas Eve searching for the Holy Child, leaving gifts for the "holy child" in each household.

■ It is estimated that 400 000 people become sick each year from eating tainted Christmas leftovers.

■ Myrrh is an aromatic gum resin which oozes from gashes cut in the bark of a small desert tree known as Commifera Myrrha or the dindin tree.

The myrrh hardens into tear-dropped shaped chunks and is then powdered or made into ointments or perfumes.

This tree is about 5-15 feet tall and 1 foot in diameter. Legend says Caspar brought the gift of myrrh from Eu-

rope or Tarsus and placed it before the Christ Child. Myrrh was an extremely valuable commodity during biblical times and was imported from India and Arabia.

■ On Christmas Day, 1989, Eastern Europe was permitted to celebrate Christmas freely and openly for the first time in decades. Church masses were broadcast live for the first time in history.

■ One Norwegian Christmas custom begins in late autumn at harvest time. The finest wheat is gathered and



saved until Christmas. This wheat is then attached to poles made from tree branches, making perches for the birds. A large circle of snow is cleared away beneath each perch. According to the Norwegians, this provides a place for the birds to dance, which allows them to work up their appetites between meals. Just before sunset on Christmas Eve, the head of the household checks on the wheat in the yard. If a lot of sparrows are seen dining, it is supposed to indicate a good year for growing crops.

■ Santa's Reindeer are named Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blitzen.

■ Silent Night was written in 1818, by an Austrian priest Joseph Mohr. He was told the day before Christmas that the church organ was broken and would not be prepared in time for Christmas Eve. He was saddened by this and could not think of Christmas without music, so he wanted to write a carol that could be sung by choir to guitar music. He sat down and wrote three stanzas. Later that night the people in the little Austrian Church sang "Stille Nacht" for the first time.

■ The "Twelve Days of Christmas" was originally written to help Catholic children, in England, remember different articles of faith during the per-

secution by Protestant Monarchs. The "true love" represented God, and the gifts all different ideas:

The "Partridge in a pear tree" was Christ.

2 Turtle Doves = The Old and New Testaments

3 French Hens = Faith, Hope and Charity—the Theological Virtues

4 Calling Birds = the Four Gospels and/or the Four Evangelists

5 Golden Rings = The first Five Books of the Old Testament, the "Pentateuch", which relays the history of man's fall from grace.

6 Geese A-laying = the six days of Creation

7 Swans A-swimming = the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven sacraments

8 Maids A-milking = the eight beatitudes

9 Ladies Dancing = the nine Fruits of the Holy Spirit

10 Lords A-leaping = the ten commandments

11 Pipers Piping = the eleven faithful apostles

12 Drummers Drumming = the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostle's Creed.

■ The actual gift givers are different in various countries:

England: Father Christmas

France: Pere Noel (Father Christmas)

Germany: Christkind (angelic messenger from Jesus) She is a beautiful



fair haired girl with a shining crown of candles.

Holland: St Nicholas.

Italy: La Befana (a kindly old witch)

Spain and South America: The Three Kings

Russia: In some parts - Babouschka (a grandmotherly figure) in other parts it is Grandfather Frost.

Scandinavia: a variety of Christmas gnomes. One is called Julenisse.

■ The first Christmas card was created in England on December 9, 1842.

■ The first charity Christmas card was produced by UNICEF in 1949. The picture chosen for the card was painted not by a professional artist but by a seven year old girl. The girl was Jitka Samkova of Rudolfo, a small town in the former nation of Czechoslovakia. The town received UNICEF assistance after World War II, inspiring Jitka to paint some children dancing around a maypole. She said her picture represented "joy going round and round."

■ The first commercial Christmas card sold was designed by London artist John Calcott Horsley. He was hired by a wealthy British man to design a card that showed people feeding and clothing the poor with another picture of a Christmas party. The first Christmas card said, "Merry Christmas and a happy New Year to you." Of the original one thousand cards he printed for Henry Cole, only twelve exist today.

■ The four ghosts in Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol" were the

ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, Christmas Yet to Come, and the ghost of Jacob Marley.

■ The movie "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2000) features more than 52 000 Christmas lights, about 8 200 Christmas ornaments, and nearly 2 000 candy canes.

■ The modern Christmas custom of displaying a wreath on the front door of one's house, is borrowed from ancient Rome's New Year's celebrations. Romans wished each other "good health" by exchanging branches of evergreens. They called these gifts *strenae* after *Strenia*, the goddess of health. It became the custom to bend these branches into a ring and display them on doorways.

■ The popular Christmas song "Jingle Bells" was composed in 1857 by James Pierpont, and was originally called "One-Horse Open Sleigh."

■ The table for Christmas Eve dinner in the Ukraine is set with two tablecloths: one for the ancestors of the family, the other for the living members. In pagan times, ancestors were believed to be benevolent spirits who, when shown respect, brought good fortune.

■ The tradition of Christmas lights dates back to when Christians were persecuted for saying Mass. A simple candle in the window meant that Mass would be celebrated there that night.

■ There are twelve courses in the Ukrainian Christmas Eve supper. According to the Christian tradition, each



course is dedicated to one of Christ's apostles.

■ When Robert Louis Stevenson, author of *Treasure Island*, died on December 4, 1894, he willed his November 13 birthday to a friend who disliked her own Christmas birthday.

■ The world's first singing commercial aired on the radio on Christmas Eve, 1926 for Wheaties cereal. The four male singers, eventually known as the Wheaties Quartet, sang the jingle. The Wheaties Quartet, comprised of an undertaker, a bailiff, a printer, and a businessman, performed the song for the next six years, at \$6 per singer per week. The commercials were a resounding success.

■ The real St. Nicholas lived in Turkey, where he was bishop of the town of Myra, in the early 4th century. It was the Dutch who first made him into a Christmas gift-giver, and Dutch settlers brought him to America where his name eventually became the familiar Santa Claus.

■ The poem commonly referred to as "The Night Before Christmas" was originally titled "A Visit From Saint Nicholas." This poem was written by Clement Moore for his children and some guests, one of whom anonymously sent the poem to a New York newspaper for publication.

■ The first British monarch to broadcast a Christmas message to his people was King George V.

■ The custom of singing Christmas

carols is very old - the earliest English collection was published in 1521.

■ The Christmas turkey first appeared on English tables in the 16th century, but didn't immediately replace the traditional fare of goose, beef or boar's head in the rich households.

■ The Canadian province of Nova Scotia leads the world in exporting lobster, wild blueberries, and Christmas trees.

■ The abbreviation of Xmas for Christmas is not irreligious. The first letter of the word Christ in Greek is chi, which is identical to our X. Xmas was originally an ecclesiastical abbreviation that was used in tables and charts.

■ Telesphorus, the second Bishop of Rome (125-136 AD) declared that public Church services should be held to celebrate "The Nativity of our Lord and Saviour." In 320 AD, Pope Julius I and other religious leaders specified 25 December as the official date of the birth of Jesus Christ.

■ Queen Elizabeth's Christmas message to the nation was televised for the first time on December 25, 1957. For the next 40 years, the BBC aired the event.

■ Postmen in Victorian England were popularly called "robins." This was because their uniforms were red. The British Post Office grew out of the carrying of royal dispatches. Red was considered a royal color, so uniforms and letter-boxes were red. Christmas cards often showed a robin delivering Christmas mail.

■ Originally, Christmas decorations were homemade paper flowers, or apples, biscuits, and sweets. The earliest decorations to be bought came from Nuremburg in Germany, a city famous for the manufacture of toys. Lauscha in Germany is famous for its glass ornaments. In 1880, America discovered Lauscha and F.W. Woolworth went there and bought a few glass Christmas tree ornaments.

Within a day he had sold out so next year he bought more and within a week they, too, had sold. The year after that he bought 200 000 Lauscha ornaments. During the First World War supplies of ornaments from Lauscha ceased, so American manufacturers began to make their own ornaments, developing new techniques that allowed them to turn out as many ornaments in a minute as could be made in a whole day at Lauscha.

■ Mistletoe, a traditional Christmas symbol, was once revered by the early Britons. It was so sacred that it had to be cut with a golden sickle.

■ Long before it was used as an excuse to kiss someone during the Christmas season, mistletoe had long been considered to have magic powers by Celtic and Teutonic peoples. It was said to have the ability to heal wounds and increase fertility. Celts hung mistletoe in their homes in order to bring

themselves good luck and ward off evil spirits.

■ It is a British Christmas tradition that a wish made while mixing the Christmas pudding will come true only if the ingredients are stirred in a clockwise direction.

■ In Victorian England, turkeys were popular for Christmas dinners. Some of the birds were raised in Norfolk, and taken to market in London. To get them to London, the turkeys were supplied with boots made of sacking or leather. The turkeys were walked to market. The boots protected their feet from the frozen mud of the road. Boots were not used for geese: instead, their feet were protected with a covering of tar.

■ In Britain, eating mince pies at Christmas dates back to the 16th century. It is still believed that to eat a mince pie on each of the Twelve Days of Christmas will bring 12 happy months in the year to follow.

■ Hallmark introduced its first Christmas cards in 1915, five years after the founding of the company.

■ Christmas was once a moveable feast celebrated at many different times during the year. The choice of December 25, was made by Pope Julius I, in the 4th century A.D., because this coincided with the pagan rituals of Winter Solstice, or Return More



diamonds are purchased at Christmas time (31%) than during any other holiday or occasion during the year.

■ American president, Theodore Roosevelt, a staunch conservationist, banned Christmas trees in his home, even when he lived in the White House. His children, however, smuggled them into their bedrooms.

■ The traditional flaming Christmas pudding dates back to 1670 in England, and was derived from an earlier form of stiffened plum porridge.

■ The Puritans forbade the singing of Christmas carols.

■ The northern European custom of the candlelit Christmas tree is derived from the belief that it sheltered woodland spirits when other trees lost their leaves during winter.

■ Historians have traced some of the current traditions surrounding Father Christmas, or Santa Claus, back to ancient Celtic roots. Father Christmas's elves are the modernization of the "Nature folk" of the Pagan religions; his reindeer are associated with the "Horned God," which was one of the Pagan deities.

■ In 1752, 11 days were dropped from the year when the switch from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar was made. The December 25, date was effectively moved 11 days backwards. Some Christian church sects, called old calendarists, still celebrate Christmas on January 7 (previously December 25 of the Julian calendar).

■ Electric Christmas tree lights were

first used in 1895. The idea for using electric Christmas lights came from an American, Ralph E. Morris. The new lights proved safer than the traditional candles.

Now that we've filled your head with enough trivia to amaze your friends and family this Christmas, let's finish off by taking a quick look at some famous people who were born on Christmas day.

- 1642 - Sir Isaac Newton (mathematician).
- 1899 - Humphrey Bogart (Academy Award-winning actor).
- 1918 - Anwar el-Sadat (Egyptian president; Nobel Peace Prize winner with Israel's Menachim Begin)
- 1932 - Little Richard (Penniman) (singer).
- 1949 - Sissy (Mary) Spacek (Academy Award-winning actress).
- 1954 - Annie Lennox (Scottish singer and member of The Eurythmics).
- 1955 - Alannah Myles (Canadian singer).
- 1957 - Shane McGowan (rock vocalist and singer with the Pogues).
- 1971 - Dido (pop singer and rap/dance music vocalist).

## Feature

# It could happen

*In our politically correct world Ryan Murphy wonders how long it will be before the PC Police start finding fault with traditional Christmas songs.*

We live in a world that is becoming more PC (politically correct) by the day. You need to think long and hard before you open your mouth, just in case you inadvertently offend someone.

Make a statement such as; "it was as easy as taking candy from a baby" and the next thing you know you're accused of child abuse.

Or say something such as; "the room wasn't big enough to swing a cat in" and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is on your case.

These days people are no longer fat, they are horizontally challenged. Short people are now vertically challenged. You will no longer find a chairman of an organisation, they are now chairpersons. You won't find anyone that is stupid anymore, they are now intellectually challenged. People do not steal anymore, they misappropriate something.

What is alarming is that as we become more politically correct it will only be a matter of time before the PC Police start paying attention to other aspects of society. How long will it be before they start finding fault with

traditional Christmas songs? Here is a small taste of what the future could bring.

### Jingle Bells

*Dashing through the snow  
In a one horse open sleigh  
O'er the fields we go  
Laughing all the way*

A risk assessment must be submitted before an open sleigh is considered safe for members of the public to travel on.

The risk assessment must also consider whether it is appropriate to use only one horse for such a venture, particularly if passengers are of larger proportions.

Please note, permission must be gained from landowners before entering their fields. To avoid offending those not participating in celebrations, we would request that laughter is moderate only and not loud enough to be considered a noise nuisance.

### While Shepherds Watched

*While shepherds watched  
Their flocks by night*

*All seated on the ground  
The angel of the Lord came down  
And glory shone around*

The union of Shepherd's has complained that it breaches health and safety regulations to insist that shepherds watch their flocks without appropriate seating arrangements being provided, therefore benches, stools and orthopedic chairs are now available.

Shepherds have also requested that due to the inclement weather conditions at this time of year that they should watch their flocks via CCTV cameras from centrally heated shepherd observation huts.

Please note, the angel of the lord is reminded that before shining his / her glory all around she / he must ascertain that all shepherds have been issued with glasses capable of filtering out the harmful effects of UVA, UVB and Glory.

### **Little Donkey**

*Little donkey, little donkey on the  
dusty road  
Got to keep on plodding onwards with  
your precious load*

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) have issued strict guidelines with regard to how heavy a load that a donkey of small stature is permitted to carry, also included in the guidelines is guidance regarding how often to feed the

donkey and how many rest breaks are required over a four hour plodding period.

Please note that due to the increased risk of pollution from the dusty road, Mary and Joseph are required to wear face masks to prevent inhalation of any airborne particles.

The donkey has expressed his discomfort at being labelled 'little' and would prefer just to be simply referred to as Mr. Donkey. To comment upon his height or lack thereof may be considered an infringement of his equine rights.

While on the subject, Mr. Donkey takes offence to his walk being referred to as 'plodding'. It is in fact a dignified gait.

### **We Three Kings**

*We three kings of Orient are  
Bearing gifts we traverse afar  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain  
Following yonder star*

Whilst the gift of gold is still considered acceptable - as it may be redeemed at a later date through such organisations as 'cash for gold' etc, gifts of frankincense and myrrh are not appropriate due to the potential risk of oils and fragrances causing allergic reactions.

A suggested gift alternative would be to make a donation to a worthy cause in the recipient's name or perhaps give a gift voucher.

We would not advise that the traversing kings rely on navigation by stars in order to reach their destinations and suggest the use of GPS satellite navigation, which will provide the quickest route and advice regarding fuel consumption.

Please note as per the guidelines from the SPCA for Mr Donkey, the camels carrying the three kings of Orient will require regular food and rest breaks. Face masks for the three kings are also advisable due to the likelihood of dust from the camel's hooves.

Once again we must also stress that if the route plans to cross private property, written permission should be obtained in advance and compensation, if necessary, must be made to the owners of the land.

### **Rudolph the red nosed reindeer**

*Rudolph, the red-nosed reindeer  
had a very shiny nose.  
And if you ever saw him,  
you would even say it glows.*

You are advised that under the Equal Opportunities for All policy, it is inappropriate for persons to make comment with regard to the ruddiness of any part of Mr. R. Reindeer.

It is also illegal to make accusations that Mr. R. Reindeer has been drinking on duty without the necessary medical proof.

Further to this, exclusion of Mr R Reindeer from the Reindeer Games

will be considered discriminatory and disciplinary action will be taken against those found guilty of this offence.

A full investigation will be implemented and sanctions - including suspension on full pay - will be considered whilst this investigation takes place.

And that's just some of the traditional Christmas songs they can look at. It makes me shiver at the mere thought.

Now anyone that knows me even remotely knows that I am anything but PC. I will not call a manhole cover a 'person-hole cover', nor will I talk about a 'chairperson'. And when I go to a restaurant I expect to be served by a waiter or waitress, not a 'waitron'. The world waitron sounds as if it's a bloody robot of some sort.

And what are we supposed to call a policeman or a policewoman - do we call them policeperson now?

And don't even get me started about pronouns. That's another story on its own and I'll need a few stiff drinks and some blood pressure medication before I even go down that road.

So let me take this opportunity to wish you all a very good Christmas and New Year. And if you're using the roads over the festive season, keep it safe and watch out for idiots on the road.

Until 2026 then.



# Santa Claus

*Getting on in years, but still looking to be gainfully employed? Can you handle the cold? Do you get on well with children? Then we may have the perfect job for you.*

*Oh! You better watch out,  
You better not cry,  
You better not pout,  
I'm telling you why:  
Santa Claus is coming to town!*

The opening verse of the ever popular Christmas song, *Santa Claus is coming to town*. The song was written in 1934 by John Frederick Coots and Haven Gillespie and has been recorded by more than 100 artists - everyone from Alice Cooper to Justin Bieber.

Yet how would you like having the job of Santa Claus? And we're talking about the real-deal here. Not some guy sitting with a false beard at the local shopping mall.

Let's face it, being Santa must be a pretty cool job. After all you only really work one day a year. What he gets up to the other 364 days of the year is anyone's guess.

Another major bonus of being Santa is that you get to play with all the new toys and gadgets way before anyone else.

But before you rush off to send your CV you need to check if you meet the requirements for this post. You will

need certain skills and talents before you can even think about applying for this post.

## Ability to withstand the cold

Remember that you will be based at the North Pole and it does get rather chilly here. The temperature in winter ranges from  $-43^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $-34^{\circ}\text{C}$  and a temperature of  $0^{\circ}\text{C}$  would be regarded as a hot summer's day.

## Fashion sense

You need to look good in red. If this colour does not suit you, then please do not bother applying for the post.

## Fuzz face

Part of the job requires that you wear a beard and moustache the entire year. Your beard and moustache can be any colour you wish - as long as it is white.

## Gifted with languages

There are roughly 6,500 languages spoken around the world. As Santa you will have to be able to speak all of them.

After all, kids will be sending you letters telling you what they want for

Christmas, so you had better know what they're asking for.

In many countries you will be known by different names. For example in Afghanistan you are *Baba Chaghaloo*, in Poland you are *Swiety Mikolaj* and in China you are *Dun Che Lao Ren*. Get to know your names.

## Attention to detail

Another verse of *Santa Claus is coming to town* says "He's making a list, and checking it twice; Gonna find out Who's naughty and nice."

Just imagine if someone has been nice and you put them on the naughty list? You could end up being sued.

## An outstanding memory

These days Santa makes use of a Tablet or iPad and a GPS to track the names and addresses of everyone he has to deliver gifts to. Yet you still need to have an excellent memory.

You have thousands of elves working for you at your workshop at the North Pole.

These elves get very upset if you don't remember their names.

They could go on strike and cause a shut down.

**Stealth,  
cunning  
and ar-  
moured  
skin**

The job of travelling around the world delivering gifts has become hazardous over the past few decades or so. You face the risk of having your sleigh hijacked and you will also have to put up with guard dogs, electric fences, elaborate security systems and armed reaction guards.

Some countries have 'no-fly zones' and you risk having your sleigh shot down by fighter jets or surface-to-air missiles.

Worst of all - many people just don't believe in you anymore.

## Health issues

Let's see, how do we put this. You need to be of ample proportions? You need to be rotund? Oh to hell with it, you need to be fat and jolly.

If you are still interested in applying for the post, send a detailed CV to: Santa Pty Ltd, 317 Frostbite Corner, North Pole. And good luck with your application. ■





# They said it

*Over the years people have had a lot to say about Christmas and they've also had a lot to say about Santa. We look at a few classic quotes.*

**S**ome people will always have something so, even when it comes to Christmas.

In the United States Christmas has become the rape of an idea.

*Richard Bach*

In the old days, it was not called the Holiday Season; the Christians called it 'Christmas' and went to church; the Jews called it 'Hanukkah' and went to synagogue; the atheists went to parties and drank. People passing each other on the street would say 'Merry Christmas!' or 'Happy Hanukkah!' or (to the atheists) 'Look out for the wall!'"

*Dave Barry*  
*"Christmas Shopping:  
 A Survivor's Guide"*

Dear Lord, I've been asked, nay commanded, to thank Thee for the Christmas turkey before us... a turkey which was no doubt a lively, intelligent bird... a social being... capable of actual affection... nuzzling its young with almost human- like compassion. Anyway, it's dead and we're gonna eat it. Please give our respects to its family...

*Berke Breathed*

I will honour Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year.

*Charles Dickens*  
*"A Christmas Carol"*

Next to a circus there ain't nothing that packs up and tears out faster than the Christmas spirit.

*Kin Hubbard*

Christmas begins about the first of December with an office party and ends when you finally realize what you spent, around April fifteenth of the next year.

*P. J. O'Rourke*

The perfect Christmas tree? All Christmas trees are perfect!

*Charles N. Barnard*

Christmas, children, is not a date. It is a state of mind.

*Mary Ellen Chase*

What I don't like about office Christmas parties is looking for a job the next day.

*Phyllis Diller*

I once bought my kids a set of batteries for Christmas with a note on it saying, toys not included.

*Bernard Manning*

The Supreme Court has ruled that they cannot have a nativity scene in Washington, D.C. This wasn't for any religious reasons. They couldn't find three wise men and a virgin.

*Jay Leno*

There are some people who want to throw their arms round you simply because it is Christmas; there are other people who want to strangle you simply because it is Christmas.

*Robert Staughton Lynd*

And now a few quotes about Santa.

Let me see if I've got this Santa business straight. You say he wears a beard, has no discernible source of income and flies to cities all over the world under cover of darkness? You sure this guy isn't laundering illegal drug money?

*Tom Armstrong*

I stopped believing in Santa Claus when I was six. Mother took me to see him in a department store and he asked for my autograph.

*Actress Shirley Temple Black*

Santa Claus has the right idea. Visit people once a year.

*Victor Borge*

I never believed in Santa Claus because I knew no white man would be coming into my neighborhood after dark.

*Dick Gregory*

Santa Claus wears a Red Suit, he must be a communist. And a beard and long hair, must be a pacifist. What's in that pipe that he's smoking?

*Arlo Guthrie*

I played Santa Claus many times, and if you don't believe it, check out the divorce settlements awarded my wives.

*Groucho Marx*  
*"The Groucho Phile"*

Santa is even-tempered. Santa does not hit children over the head who kick him. Santa uses the term folks rather than Mommy and Daddy because of all the broken homes. Santa does not have a three-martini lunch. Santa does not borrow money from store employees. Santa wears a good deodorant.

*Jenny Zink*  
*To Santa's hired for a mall.*

The main reason Santa is so jolly is because he knows where all the bad girls live.

*George Carlin*



# Don't judge a book by its cover

*Things are not always what they appear. As Natasha Adams tells us, we should never judge a book by its cover.*

A few Saturday's ago I went with my mom to our local shopping centre. Not that it's much of a centre, just a supermarket and a few small shops.

As we climbed out of the car in the parking lot I saw three guys that are well known in the area. They are all in their early 20's and terrorise the area. They have mugged quite a few people in the parking lot and even though they've been arrested a few times, they always seem to come back.

The three of them approached an elderly man who looked to be in his late 60's. The three of them surrounded the man and one of them took out a knife and demanded the man's cellphone and wallet.

Everyone in the parking lot could see what was going on, but nobody tried to help the old gentleman. It's a difficult situation because if you try and interfere they will probably stab you as well. So we just looked on in

shock. You really do feel helpless in situations like that.

I didn't really see what happened next because it all seemed to happen too fast. The next thing I knew was that all three of these hooligans were on the floor. Two of them were unconscious and the one that had the knife was holding his arm and screaming in pain.

People actually started to cheer and clap and I must confess that I was one of them. We later found out that the gentleman was 67 years old and had been doing martial arts for just over 50 years. While he may have looked old and frail, he certainly knew how to look after himself.

It reminded me of something that my dad is fond of saying, "Never judge a book by its cover."

What he means is that we shouldn't always judge something until we know all the facts.

Later that same day we went for a braai at my uncle's house. When I told

him about what had happened at the shopping centre and how we shouldn't judge a book by its cover, he also had a story to tell me. In fact let him tell it in his own words.

I finished matric at the end of 1978 and found work as a new car salesman at a VW dealership in Durban.

In December 1979 I was still the most junior rep at the dealership. The VW Golf had just been released a few months earlier and it was a very popular model.

One morning, about two weeks before Christmas, a young guy walked into the showroom. I must admit that he looked a bit worse for wear. He was wearing a pair of filthy dirty jeans, a stained T shirt and sandals. It looked as if he hadn't shaved for a few days and his eyes were bloodshot.

He went over to the desk of Jeff, the senior sales rep, and said that he was interested in buying a new Golf. He also said that he wanted to take one for a test drive.

Jeff took one look at him and decided that the guy was nothing more than a bum trying his luck.

"I'm very busy at the moment," Jeff told him. "Why don't you go and speak to Clive over there. Maybe he can help you."

The young guy came over to my desk and said that he was interested in the Golf 1600 GTS model. He wanted to take one for a test drive.

Look, I also thought he was a bum,

but he was still a customer as far as I was concerned.

I took him for a test drive and he was impressed. When we arrived back at the showroom he told me that he wanted to buy one for his girlfriend as a Christmas gift. But he had been so impressed with it that he had decided to buy another one for himself. So he wanted not one, but two cars.

He asked me to draw up the deal and I asked him if he wanted us to arrange finance for him. He said that it was no problem, he would be paying cash. He left after assuring me he would be back the next morning.

After he left Jeff came over and really gave me a dressing down. Jeff told me that I shouldn't waste time with people that could clearly not afford to buy a car.

The next morning, however, the guy arrived with a briefcase with R12,100 - the cash price of the two cars.

He also apologised for looking so scruffy the day before. It appeared that he worked as an engineer for one of the big shipping lines. He had been away at sea for three months and had just arrived back. He basically came straight from the boat to the showroom.

I ended up getting a good commission just before Christmas and Jeff ended up looking like an idiot. I hope it taught him a lesson, because I sure learnt something from it. You guessed it, "Don't judge a book by its cover."





## Murphy's Law

*This month Murphy has serious issues with all those people that seem to want something extra at Christmas time.*



Don't you just love Christmas? I think that every year I'm becoming more and more like Dickens' Scrooge.

It's not that I'm against Christmas, mind you. I think that the concept of celebrating Jesus' birth is a great one. And the idea of peace and goodwill on earth is stunning. The thing is, we seem to have lost the script somewhere along the way.

These days it seems to be the season of ripping everyone off.

From the end of October already you can't walk into a shop without your ears being assaulted by the sounds of cheesy Christmas carols. And why, I ask with tears in my eyes, do they have to dig out Boney M every Christmas? If I hear Drummer Boy one more time I will beat the drummer senseless with his own drumsticks. Enough is enough.

And why do they have to start put-

ting up the Christmas decorations at the end of October.

And naturally the prices of every item seem to sky rocket when the calendar rolls onto December.

The service offered at most places is just as dismal though, you just pay more for it.

All of this I can still put up with. What really gets me about the silly season is how all the sponges start coming out of the woodwork.

Let me give you an example. Last year in November my small aluminium stepladder finally gave up the ghost. It rang down the curtain and joined the choir invisible. And it naturally happened while I was standing on the thing trying to change a light bulb. Much to my reluctance I had to go out and buy a new one. This, of course, brought a serious ache to my wallet.

Now that I had a new stepladder, I had to get rid of the old one. It was too large to fit into the garbage bin so,

on the Monday morning, the day our refuse is collected, I placed the ladder next to my bin.

I later noticed that the bin had been emptied, but that the ladder was still there. I took it back inside and decided to try again the following Monday. This time I waited for the refuse collectors. They picked up my bin and emptied it into the truck, but left the stepladder.

When I asked them if they could not take the thing, I got some serious attitude.

"We are not allowed to take anything unless it's in the bin," I was informed. "And rules is rules."

I tried explaining that the thing would not fit in the bin, but to no avail. I had to load it into my car and drive it to the dump.

Lo and behold, the first Monday in December arrived and my doorbell rang at an hour when most sane people are still tucked in bed. I opened the door to find none other than the self same refuse collector that gave me the attitude about the stepladder.

"Good morning. Happy Christmas. We've come to collect our Christmas Box," he smiled.

Shove off pal. First of all, it is by no means Christmas yet. And secondly, we all received letters from the council instructing us not to give any money to council workers for Christmas.

They all received a decent Christmas bonus and they are not allowed to solicit handouts. With great and utter glee, I

pointed this out.

"And rules is rules," I told him with a huge grin on my face.

And he's not the only one that looked for a December handout. I had the postman, who I hadn't seen once that year and who always delivers my post to the wrong address, ring the doorbell looking for his Christmas box.

And he was just one of many. The guy that delivers the weekly community newspaper, the local security guard, and a host of other people that I do not even know. They've all arrived looking for a Christmas handout.

Even the neighbour's dog seemed to want something from me. And this is the same mutt that carries out kamikaze attacks on me every time I ride past on my motorbike.

So this year I'm taking a few extra precautions to ensure no-one bothers me. I'm going to wire the doorbell directly to the mains. Press it and you're in for the shock of your life.

Last year in December I had some scruffy-looking kids from the local township arrive at my door and start singing Christmas carols. They were out of tune and didn't even know all of the words to the songs. I gave them R200.

Look, don't tell anyone about it. After all I have a reputation to keep. It's just that they were cute and it was Christmas. To all our readers that are expecting me to wish them a Merry Christmas. Whatever. ■

# Reading really matters

*Radio Today Station Manager Mike de Bruyn tells us more about Sue Grant-Marshall, presenter of the popular show "Reading Matters".*

I only took over Radio Today in 2021, so I had to research deep history to be able to tell you about Sue Grant-Marshall, Sue hosts our book show, Reading Matters, and she was sitting next to Ivan May (then chief executive of Radio Today and the Constitution Hill Trust) at a press function in 2009, when he said to her, 'It's time we featured you on Radio Today.'

She was astonished. 'What do you want me to do?' she asked Ivan. 'Well, what's your passion?', he asked her.

'Books, books and more books,' she said. 'Well, you can have your own book show then,' Ivan responded. Sue, who was at that time, writing for Business Day, City Press, The Financial Mail and several magazines, was astonished, and while rapidly calibrating how she could fit it into her busy life, it took but a few milliseconds and she agreed.

She called her show Reading Matters, because the journalist who grew up on the fringes of Botswana's Kalahari Desert, in villages that boasted few amenities that we take for granted today (like cinemas and shops), was an avid reader, and she knew how much Reading Really Matters.

'I was head down in books while my three siblings played around me,' Sue recalls.

After matriculating at St Mary's, Waverley, Johannesburg, her father sent her to secretarial college in Cape Town. He saved the family's only university finance for her brother, not that she begrudges this at all, her life might have turned out quite differently, had she gone for a degree, and certainly, we might well have been much the poorer for that.

Agitated for more, Sue walked down St George's Street, to college, passing The Argus newspaper on her way, stopping to look at the newsy pictures posted there.

Just three months into her secretarial course, on a whim, she walked into the newspaper and asked the lift operator to take her to the editor.

Wearing a short mini skirt and takkies, she was shown to the office of the deputy editor, Ian Wyllie who asked if she was applying to join The Argus Company's Journalism Cadet Course.

'I've never heard of it,' she said to Wyllie's much to his amazement. A lively conversation ensued, ending with Wyllie's suggestion that she write

him a letter, 'about her life.'

Fortified with red wine that night, Sue wrote in green ink on pink paper, about her upbringing between Gaborone and London.

She was chosen, one of 14 and mind you, the only woman in a class of men, on the cadet course.

Her journalism started six months later in The Argus newsroom.

Subsequent to that, she worked for The Star newspaper for 10 years and was then invited to run Fair Lady magazine's Johannesburg bureau.

While there, she simultaneously hosted a talk show on Capital Radio for two years.

She won the magazine industry's top features award, the Mondi Magazine Awards, year after year, before deciding to work for herself on newspapers and magazines.

And so, it was during that period that Sue had lunch with Ivan May, a world renowned marketer and philanthropist.

In the more than 16 years that Sue has interviewed authors and reviewed books for her Reading Matters show, she has built a reputation in the book publishing industry for being an interviewer, that authors enjoy talking to.

They ask for her. And she says modestly, 'It's because I read their books.'

She has interviewed, AB de Villiers, Deon Meyer, George Bizos, Nq Mhlongo, Sphiwe Gloria Ndlovu, Prue Leith, Eusebius McKaiser, Tony Park, Marguerite Poland among the

vast number of authors who have been on the other side of the mic.

When I told her recently that she's one of the hardest working presenters in Radio Today, Sue asked me, 'is it work, if you are passionate about books?'

Sue has written three books, the most recent being, 'Your People will be My People,' about Ruth Khama, wife of Botswana's first President, Sir Seretse Khama.

Sue will not divulge her birthday, as ladies of her generation very seldom did, and is my third Radio Times story, moving down from our oldest to youngest presenter on Radio Today, and we are very proud to have such deep and dedicated seniors on our team.



**BEST SELLER:** Sue Grant-Marshall with popular South African author Deon Meyer. He is one of the many authors that Sue has interviewed for her show.



# TONY'S TOP TIPS FOR CHRISTMAS

Chef Tony Zola dishes up some advice

It's nearly that time of the year again. The day when we have to prepare our Christmas lunch.

Here's a few tips that may help when it comes to preparing your Christmas meal.

## 1. Get organised.

Make a checklist of things to do, set deadlines, and stick to them. A bit of planning will make life far easier.

## 2. The Menu

Plan your menu far ahead. This way you'll know what ingredients you need and will be able to make a proper shopping list.

## 3. No Experiments please

The Christmas meal is not the time

to try out new recipes. Stick to what you know.

## 4. Light and Ready

Plan a light starter that can be prepared ahead of time. You want to whet your guest's appetite, not stuff them before the main meal.

## 5. No last minute rush

Make sure you have all your ingredients ahead of time. There's nothing worse than rushing around the supermarket on Christmas Eve trying to find stuff that's already all sold out.

## 6. The day before

Prepare as much as you can the day before. The more you can get done on Christmas Eve, the easier it will make Christmas Day.

## 7. The more the merrier

Too many cooks spoil the broth – not on Christmas day they don't! Get everyone to pitch in from washing dishes to peeling spuds, it will really take the pressure off.

Merry Christmas to you all.



# Christmas Cheer

*Having drinks with your Christmas meal doesn't have to be dull and boring. And they don't even have to contain alcohol. Here are a few easy-to-make drinks to serve around the Christmas table this year.*

## Mock Champagne Punch

### Ingredients

1 Litre chilled sparkling mineral water  
1 litre chilled ginger ale  
3 cups chilled white grape juice

### Preparation

In a large glass jug or carafe, combine sparkling water, ginger ale and grape juice. Serve immediately in champagne flutes.

## Non-Alcoholic Punch

### Ingredients

1 litre pineapple juice  
1 litre apricot or mango juice  
175 ml Lime Juice Cordial  
2 Litres sparkling lemonade

### Preparation:

In a punch bowl, combine the pineapple juice with apricot or mango juice and lime cordial. Add the chilled sparkling lemonade and serve.

## Eggnog (serves 12)

### Ingredients

4 cups of milk  
6 eggs  
¼ cup of Sugar  
1 Teaspoon Vanilla

### Preparation:

Whisk the eggs and sugar together in a saucepan. Using 2 cups of milk, heat the ingredients over a low heat until it reaches 160 degrees. (To check the mixture is at correct heat, test with a metal spoon. If the mixture evenly coats the back of the spoon, it has reached this point).

Remove from heat then add the remaining milk and vanilla. Whisk all ingredients together again and refrigerate for four hours. Serve chilled and garnish with cinnamon or nutmeg.

Enjoy the meal, enjoy the drinks, and enjoy the day.





# The alternative Christmas playlist

*Tired of listening to those same old Christmas songs every year? Well then help is at hand as Ryan Murphy brings you his alternative Christmas playlist.*

Not sure about you, but I get tired of every time I walk into a supermarket or shopping mall my ears are assaulted by the same songs every December.

There's only so many times you can hear Boney M's *Little Drummer Boy* before you start losing your sanity.

So as a special Christmas treat I've come up with a playlist of ten

Christmas songs that you can listen to instead. Click on the title of the song to watch the video and listen to the song.

In November 1987 Irish band The Pogues released **Fairytale Of New York**. I rate it as probably one of the best Christmas songs ever.

The song features the gruff voice of Shane MacGowan which is in stark contrast to the melodious voice of Kirsty MacColl. The song is bitter-sweet and sometimes purely bitter, but it's a classic. Sadly no longer MacGowan or MacColl are still with us.

As a matter of interest the band were first called Póg mo thóin, which is Irish Gaelic for "kiss my arse". They later changed their name to The Pogues. Pogue means

"kiss" in Gaelic.

Wham, comprising of George Michael and Andrew Ridgely, were popular during the 80's. **Last Christmas** made it to Number Two in the UK Singles charts.

English rock band Slade were big in the 1970's. In 1973 lead vocalist and guitarist Noddy Holder and bassist Jim Lea wrote **Merry Xmas Everybody**. It became the band's biggest selling single and in 2007 was voted as the UK's most popular Christmas song.

While Mariah Carey does have an amazing voice, I can't say I'm her biggest fan. But no-one does **All I Want For Christmas** like her.

In reaction to television reports of famine in Ethiopia, Bob Geldof (Boomtown Rats) and Midge Ure (Ultravox) put together a super-group in 1984. It consisted mainly of the biggest British and Irish musical acts at the time. It featured, among others, Bono and Adam Clayton (U2), Phil Collins, Sting, Boy George, George Michael, Simon Le Bon (Duran Duran), Gary and Martin Kemp (Span-dau Ballet), Sarah Dallin and Siobhan Fahey (Bananarama), and Chris Cross (Ultravox).

The group was known as Band Aid and they released **Do They Know It's Christmas** which went on to top the charts and raise millions for famine relief.

**Happy Xmas (War Is Over)** was written by ex-Beatle John Lennon and

his wife Yoko Ono. It was released in 1971 as a single by John & Yoko Ono/Plastic Ono Band with the Harlem Community Choir.

**Santa Claus Is Comin' To Town** was written by John Frederick Coots and Haven Gillespie. It was first sung in 1934 and has since been recorded by many artists. Check out the Boss, Bruce Springsteen, as he does his version of the song.

Queen, featuring the amazing voice of the late Freddie Mercury, had numerous Number One hits. **Thank God It's Christmas** is one of their lesser known songs. But it's still well worth listening too.

**Feliz Navidad** was written and performed by blind Puerto Rican singer-songwriter José Feliciano in 1970. With its simple Spanish chorus "Feliz Navidad, próspero año y felicidad" meaning "Merry Christmas, a prosperous year and happiness, and the English verse "I wanna wish you a Merry Christmas from the bottom of my heart", it has become a classic.

From the movie *Love Actually*, Billy Mac (Bill Nighy) is an aging rock star trying to make a come back at Christmas. He does a version of The Troggs *Love Is All Around* with the words changed to **Christmas Is All Around**.

If you don't mind a bit of choice language, then check out the opening song from the movie where he first does **Christmas Is All Around**.



# THE TOP ~~10~~ 14 CHRISTMAS MOVIES



This month we asked Stix Mkhize for his list of Top Ten Christmas movies, but he said that as it's Christmas we should give our readers a bonus and give them a Top 14 instead.

"You may notice that most of them are comedies," says Stix. "That's what I enjoy. These movies are suitable for anyone, no matter how old you are."

## A Charlie Brown Christmas (1965)

When Charlie Brown complains about the overwhelming materialism that he sees amongst everyone during the Christmas season, Lucy suggests that he become director of the school Christmas pageant.

Charlie Brown accepts, but it proves to be a frustrating struggle. When an attempt to restore the proper spirit with a forlorn little fir Christmas tree fails, he needs Linus' help to learn what the real meaning of Christmas is.



## Bad Santa (2003)

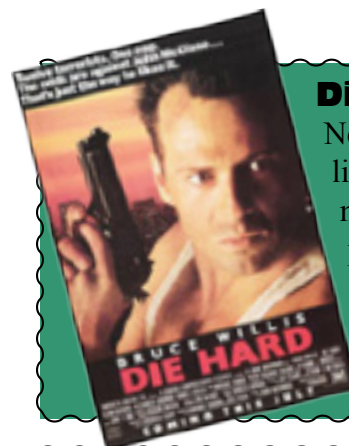
"Bad Santa" is the story of two conmen who go on a road trip to malls dressed as Santa and his elf. Rather than spreading good cheer, the duo's motive is to rob each establishment, a strategy that becomes complicated when they encounter an eight year old who teaches them the true meaning of Christmas.



## Die Hard (1988)

New York City Detective John McClane (Bruce Willis) has just arrived in Los Angeles to spend Christmas with his wife. She is at her office Christmas party. A group of terrorists take them all hostage and it's up to McClane to stop them.

And yes, I do consider this a Christmas movie.



## Elf (2003)

Although Buddy (Will Ferrell) was raised by Santa's elves at the North Pole, he's actually a human.

As an adult (a clumsy one at that), Santa allows him to go to New York City to find his real father (who's a total jerk).

This is Buddy's first interaction with real people and it's a scream.



## Home Alone (1990)

When the McAllister family goes on Christmas holiday to Paris they accidentally leave their youngest child, Kevin (Macaulay Culkin) behind.

He has the house to himself and can do whatever he wants. But two crooks are planning on robbing the place. Kevin sets up a few booby traps to stop them. Joe Pesci is brilliant as one of the crooks.

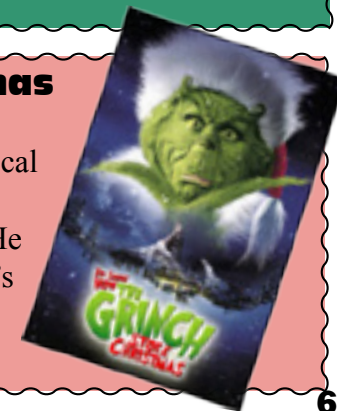


## How The Grinch Stole Christmas (2000)

Jim Carrey doing what he does best. In the magical land of Whoville all of the Whos love Christmas.

But just outside of Whoville lives the Grinch. He hates Christmas as much as he hates the Whos. It's up to a little girl to save Christmas.

Based on a Dr. Seuss book.







### Jingle All The Way (1996)

Howard Langston (Arnold Schwarzenegger) is a salesman who constantly disappoints his son. To make it up Howard promises his son an action figure named Turbo Man for Christmas. But it's Christmas Eve and all Turbo Man products are sold out. Now he has to try and find one. A good laugh.

### Love Actually (2003)

It follows the stories of a number of people in the weeks leading up to Christmas. A chick-flick that everyone will love and a star-studded cast that includes Liam Neeson, Hugh Grant and Rowan Atkinson.

Bill Nighy steals the show as an aging pop star trying to make a come back with a Christmas hit.



### National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (1989)

Nothing ever seems to go right for Clark Griswold (Chevy Chase) and at Christmas the entire obnoxious family arrive for a holiday.

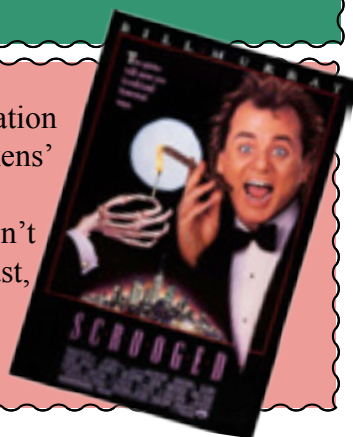
A bit slap-stick but very funny. Cousin Eddie (Randy Quaid) is a laugh a minute. A good movie for the entire family.

### Scrooged (1988)

Frank Cross (Bill Murray) runs a television station that is planning on running an adaptation of Dickens' *Christmas Carol*.

Frank is not the nicest guy around and he doesn't like Christmas. So the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future decide to visit him.

One of the best Christmas movies.



### The Muppet Christmas Carol (1992)

This is a retelling of Dickens' *Christmas Carol*, but this time using the famous Muppets as the leading characters.

All your favourite Muppets are there including Kermit and Miss Piggy. This is a feel-good movie that the whole family, young and old, will enjoy.

### The Nightmare Before Christmas (1993)

Director Tim Burton has made some way out movies, and this is one of them.

When Jack Skellington, the pumpkin king of Halloween Town, stumbles into Christmas Town he likes it. So much so that he wants to create his own version of Christmas Town.



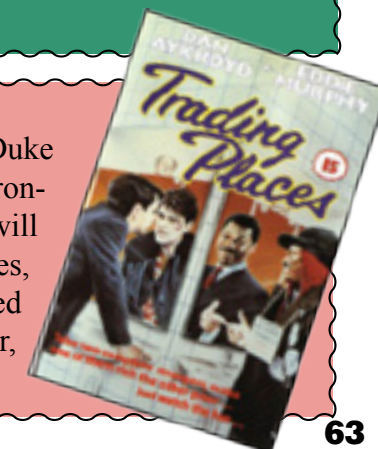
### The Santa Clause (1994)

Scott Calvin (Tim Allen) is a divorced father and not a very good one. He has to look after his son over Christmas.

Scott accidentally manages to kill Santa Claus and now has to take over the job as the new Santa Claus. Some good laughs in this one.

### Trading Places (1983)

Millionaire brothers Mortimer and Randolph Duke are arguing about whether it's a person's environment or heredity that determines how well they will do in life. They take one of their top employees, Louis Winthorpe (Dan Akroyd), and have him fired and ruined. They give his job to a street hustler, Billy Ray Valentine (Eddie Murphy).





# Did you know?

*To celebrate the festive season, this month's trivia section is all about Christmas.*

■ An artificial spider and web are often included in the decorations on most Ukrainian Christmas trees. A spider web found on Christmas morning is believed to bring good luck?

■ Charles Dickens' initial choice for Scrooge's statement "Bah Humbug" was "Bah Christmas."?

■ After *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens wrote several other Christmas stories, one each year, but none was as successful as the original?

■ Before settling on the name of Tiny Tim for his character in *A Christmas Carol*, three other alternative names were considered by Charles Dickens? They were Little Larry, Puny Pete, and Small Sam.

■ Christmas trees are edible. Many parts of pines, spruces, and firs can be eaten? The needles are a good source of vitamin C. Pine nuts, or pine cones, are also a good source of nutrition.

■ In 1647, the English parliament passed a law that made Christmas illegal. Festivities were banned by Puritan leader, Oliver Cromwell, who considered feasting and revelry, on what was supposed to be a holy day, to be immoral. The ban was lifted only when the Puritans lost power in 1660.

■ In 1937, the first postage stamp to commemorate Christmas was issued in Austria.?

■ In France, Christmas is called Noel. This is derived from the French phrase "*les bonnes nouvelles*," which means literally "the good news" and refers to the gospel.

■ In Medieval England, Nicholas was just another saint - he had not yet been referred to as Santa Claus and he had nothing to do with Christmas.

■ In Syria, Christmas gifts are distributed by one of the Wise Men's camels. The gift-giving camel is said to have been the smallest one in the Wise Men's caravan.

■ In the British armed forces it is traditional that officers wait on the men and serve them their Christmas dinner. This dates back to a custom from the Middle Ages. This also became a tradition in the old South African Defence Force (SADF), especially for troops serving on the border.

■ It is estimated that 400,000 people become sick each year from eating tainted Christmas leftovers.

■ On Christmas Day, 1989, Eastern Europe was permitted to celebrate Christmas freely and openly for the first time in

decades. Church masses were broadcast live for the first time in history.

■ Santa's Reindeers are named Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner and Blitzen.

■ The first Christmas card was created in England on December 9, 1842.

■ The four ghosts in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* were the ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, Christmas Yet to Come, and the ghost of Jacob Marley.

■ The popular Christmas song *Jingle Bells* was composed in 1857 by James Pierpont, and was originally called *One-Horse Open Sleigh*.

■ There are twelve courses in the Ukrainian Christmas Eve supper. According to the Christian tradition, each course is dedicated to one of Christ's apostles.

■ The custom of singing Christmas carols is very old - the earliest English collection was published in 1521.

■ The Christmas turkey first appeared on English tables in the 16th century, but didn't immediately replace the traditional fare of goose, beef or boar's head in the rich households.

■ Mistletoe, a traditional Christmas symbol, was once revered by the early Britons. It was so sacred that it had to be cut with a golden sickle.

■ It is a British Christmas tradition that a wish made while mixing the Christmas pudding will come true only if the ingredients are stirred in a clockwise direction.

■ Hallmark introduced its first Christmas

cards in 1915, five years after the founding of the company.

■ More diamonds are purchased at Christmas time (31%) than during any other holiday or occasion during the year.

■ American president, Theodore Roosevelt, a staunch conservationist, banned Christmas trees in his home, even when he lived in the White House. His children, however, smuggled them into their bedrooms.

■ Christmas wasn't always on December 25. Although Christmas celebrates the birth of Christ, it doesn't actually mention December 25 anywhere in the bible. In fact, some historians think Jesus was born in the spring, not the winter at all! Christmas on December 25th wasn't celebrated until about 336 AD.

■ Gifts have both Christian and Pagan origins. For Christians, gift giving at Christmas mimics the presents the Wise Men gave to Jesus and the charitable giving of the ancient St. Nicholas (the forerunner to Santa!). However, winter gift giving also has its roots in Saturnalia, a pagan holiday where they gave offerings to the gods.

■ Coca-Cola played a part in Santa's image. Santa wasn't always the jolly man in red. Older depictions of Santa from the early 1900s depicted him more sternly, and there wasn't a standardized "look" for his appearance. The classic image of a happy and plump Santa that we all know today came in part from Coca-Cola ads, drawn in 1931 by illustrator Haddon Sundblom.



# Smart Diet Tips

## For the Holidays

*Ten survival tips to keep you in your pants whilst enjoying the festive feasts.*

**“W**e’re all going on a summer holiday. No more working for a week or two” I guess Sir Cliff Richard meant “no more working on our diet” as well in this epic song. But how can we ensure come

January that our clothes still fit after numerous holiday indulgences?

Skip the annual guilt trip in January by following these easy tips for the festive season:

### 1. Don't skip meals

Holiday routines vary especially when the clock hits 11 am before you stumble out of bed. Try not to skip meals even though you have a different (relaxing) schedule, as one tends to overeat if hunger pains get too bad.

### 2. Don't drink your calories

Yes, alcoholic beverages as well as those super-size sodas contain plenty of calories. Try to alternate your beverages with a glass of water at parties or during the day whilst working on your tan in the sun.

### 3. Skip the appetizers

The smell of freshly baked bread served as appetizer in many restaurants, or the bowl of chip-n-dip while your choppie is on the braai, is a total pound packer. Try to resist those irresistible appetizers and stick to a normal size meal. If you have to snack, try out some fresh veggies.

### 4. Substitute

Try and keep track of what you're eating and substitute your indulgences with calories you would have consumed somewhere else - for example don't eat dessert with supper if you had a chocolate dip soft serve earlier during the day.

### 5. Limit the variety

When faced with a buffet of mouth-watering dishes, don't stack your plate with a little bit of everything.

Only take two items at a time, even if it means you have to return multiple times. Variety stimulates appetite, and therefore it is better controlled when choice is limited.

### 6. Trim down the trimmings

The holidays are trademarked by festive decorations, as is the food we celebrate those occasions with. Beware of all the extra nuts, cheeses and creams used to decorate your food with. Try to avoid those calorie carrier trimmings.

### 7. Stay active

Long walks on the beach or an extra set of volleyball will help you burn calories whilst having lots of holiday fun.

### 8. Mind your portions

A 500g sirloin steak sounds great, but will taste just as good as the 200g version. Portion control works wonders.

### 9. Drink plenty of water

Stay hydrated during the long summer days with at least six to eight glasses of water per day.

### 10. Sit down to eat

It might be tempting to pick at the buffet before dinner or whilst slaving away in the kitchen. But it's harder to control portions when you snag bites here and there, thus try to save your calorie intake for dinnertime.

# Beat the Burn

Bronwyn Hooper looks at a few ways to deal with heartburn.

**C**hristmas time. A time for holidays, long summer days, gifts, spending time with family and friends, lots of good food - and heartburn.

The one bit of good news about heartburn is that it's not your heart that's on fire, it's your esophagus. But let's face it, heartburn is much easier to say than 'esophagusburn'.

Your esophagus, the food tube that carries what you swallow down to your stomach, can literally be burned by the acids released by your stomach. And were talking about acid here that is industrial strength. This acid is meant to

stay in the stomach where the tough stomach lining can deal with them.

Unfortunately we sometimes suffer something called reflux. That's when some of the stomach's contents, including acid, slip back up the food tube. This causes an uncomfortable, and often painful, burning sensation between the stomach and the neck. Most people will feel it just below the breastbone.

It's fairly easy to avoid heartburn - moderation. Heartburn is generally the result of eating too much too fast. But if you do get heartburn it's probably too late for moderation. So here are a few ways you can get relief.

## Take an antacid

An over-the-counter antacid in tablet or liquid form can help cool the burn. Don't overdo it though, too much antacid can lead to constipation or diarrhea.

## Drink a glass of milk

Milk can sometimes cut the acid and decrease heartburn. A warm glass of milk just before bed is also not a bad idea.

## Say no to the couch

What's nicer after a good meal than to plonk yourself down on the couch in front of the television. People that do this, however, are asking for heartburn. Try and stay upright for at least an hour after a meal.

## Say no to seconds

Overeating is a major cause of heartburn. Your stomach becomes like a balloon that's been over inflated, so the acid will be pushed up.

## Don't eat before bed

Heading straight from the dinner table to bed is a big no-no for heartburn sufferers. Don't eat anything for at least two to three hours before bedtime.

## Loosen your belt

Avoid tight clothing around the waist. This squeezes on the bottom of the stomach and tends to increase acid backing up into the esophagus.

## Lose the fat

If you're fat on the outside you can be sure that you're fat on the inside as well. The fat competes for space with your stomach. Fat pressing against the stomach can cause the contents to reflux.

## Get in shape

Besides all the other benefits of regular exercise, it will also help with heartburn. You almost never have heartburn when you exercise. You can

even start off with a short walk after supper. This will give the food time to settle.

## Watch your diet

Fried foods and fatty foods take longer to digest and you will need to cut down on these if you suffer from heartburn. You may also find that certain foods give you heartburn and you'll need to cut down on these as well. For instance, I love hot and spicy food, but it doesn't love me.

## Take it easy

Stress is a major contributor to heartburn. It can create increased acid secretion and can cause the esophageal sphincter to malfunction.

## Be careful of coffee

It's not the caffeine that's the problem in this case. The oils contained in both regular and decaffeinated coffee may play a role in heartburn. Cut down your coffee intake and see if it helps.

## Have it checked out

If the symptoms don't subside, have it checked out by a doctor. You may have something other than a simple case of heartburn. Listen to the old saying, "it's better to be safe than sorry."

Here's wishing you a very merry Christmas and an even happier New Year. Enjoy all the good food, but try not to overdo it.





## The

**Dominators**

*Throughout the history of sport there have all been those men and women that stand out above the rest; individuals that dominated the arena. Stix Mkhize looks at some of these remarkable sportsmen and women - the dominators.*

**S**ome stories are easy to write. Others, such as this one, are far more difficult.

It's was no easy task picking sportsmen and women that are regarded as the best in their particular sport.

Many sports have so many individuals to choose from, so it's complex trying to select one that you think was the best ever.

The individuals that I have selected are based on my personal opinion. So please feel free to disagree with me.

**Female Tennis****Martina Navratilova**

Navratilova won 18 Grand Slam singles titles, 31 major women's doubles titles (an all-time record), and 10 major mixed doubles titles. She reached the Wimbledon singles final 12 times, including nine consecutive years from 1982 through 1990, and won the women's singles title at Wimbledon a record nine times.

**Male Tennis****Bjorn Borg**

Borg's short career included 11 Grand Slam titles, including six at Roland Garros. He never managed to win the U.S. Open title and never competed at the Australian Open, but he was nearly unstoppable in the events in which he played. Had



Borg not retired at the age of 25, he would have probably won many more titles.

**Football****Pele**

Edison Arantes do Nascimento, better known as Pele, was just 17 when he won the World Cup with Brazil. He would become the only player to win three winner's medals.

He would go on to play 92 times for Brazil, scoring 77 goals. During his professional career he would score 1281 goals in 1363 games.

**Men's Gymnastics****Sawao Kato**

The former Japanese gymnast was one of the most successful athletes of all time at the Olympic Games. In three Olympics, he gathered a total of twelve medals, including eight gold medals.

He is one of only ten athletes to have won eight or more Olympic gold medals.

He is now a professor at the University of Tsukuba in Japan.

**Women's Gymnastics****Svetlana Khorkina**

This Russian gymnast competed at the 1996 Summer Olympics, the 2000 Summer Olympics, and the 2004 Summer Olympics. Throughout her career she won seven Olympic medals and twenty World Championship medals. She was

the first gymnast to win three all around titles at the World Championships and is still the only female gymnast ever to do so.

**Golf****Jack Nicklaus**

He has the most ever Major championship wins with 18 to go with his second most ever PGA Tour wins with 73. The Golden Bear won the Masters on six different occasions, the last coming when he was 46 years old, which makes him the oldest to ever win the tournament.

He was voted Player of the Year five times.





## Ice Hockey

### Wayne Gretzky

Nicknamed "The Great One", Gretzky was not only the greatest scorer in the National Hockey League, he was the most gentlemanly superstar in the modern history of the NHL.

He led the Edmonton Oilers to four Stanley Cup victories and also represented Canada at international level.



## Cricket

### Don Bradman

Sir Donald George Bradman, often referred to as "The Don", was an Australian cricketer, widely acknowledged as the greatest batsman of all time.

Bradman's career Test batting average of 99.94 is often cited as statistically the greatest achievement by any sportsman in any major sport.



## Boxing

### Muhammad Ali

Born Cassius Clay, he changed his name to Muhammad Ali in 1964.

Ali was well known for his unorthodox fighting style, epitomized by his catchphrase "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee", and fast hand speed.

Ali won the World Heavyweight title three times.



## F1 Motor Racing

### Michael Schumacher

He holds the record for most World Championships (seven), most consecutive World Championships (five), most race victories (91), most fastest laps (76), most pole positions (68), most points scored (1,369) and most races won in a single season (13).

He is the only driver to have achieved an entire season of podium finishes.



## Comrade's Marathon

### Bruce Fordyce

He is best known for having won the South African Comrades Marathon a record nine times, of which eight wins were consecutive.

He also won the London to Brighton Marathon three years in a row.

He is a former world record holder over 50 miles and the former world record holder over 100 km.



## Swimming

### Michael Phelps

Phelps is the most decorated Olympian and swimmer ever, and he's accomplished his medal haul across an array of events and strokes, ranging from the 100-meter freestyle in relays to the 400-meter individual medley.

Phelps dominated and held world records in many events for more than



## Motorbike Racing

### Giacomo Agostini

This Italian is the all-time record holder in both Grand Prix wins and World Championships with 122 and 15 respectively. The man known to his legions of fans in the 60's and 70's simply as 'Ago' split his titles between the 500cc class, (now Moto GP) with 68 race wins

and eight titles and the 350cc class with 54 race wins and seven titles.



## Chess

### Garry Kasparov

No other player has dominated as long or as strong as Garry Kasparov. His name is synonymous with chess.

He became the youngest ever undisputed World Champion in 1985 at only 22, which he held until 1993 when a dispute with FIDE led him to set up his own organisation (PCA) and technically lost him the World Title.



# The Christmas visitor

It was a hot and humid afternoon in December 1965 when a balding stranger appeared at the door of the small mission station in the then Eastern Transvaal.

It was an equally hot and humid Sister Mary Margaret who answered the door.

"So what is it you're wanting then?" said Sr. Mary, the brogue of her native Ireland still evident in her accent.

"I was a hoping you would-a have some work," the stranger replied in broken English. "I am a Jack of all trades. I can-a fix things and do carpentry and gardening." He was what was known in polite terms as 'a gentleman of the road'.

The Irish nun looked him up and down. "You're sure a sorry sight if I ever saw one. I would not have even considered you under normal circumstances. But the chapel roof has collapsed and our caretaker is off on his Christmas holiday."

Sr. Mary said that she could not offer him much money for the repair work, but that she would give him accommodation and food. She asked if the terms were acceptable.

"Si, suora, I mean sister," he said meekly. His mouth seemed permanently upturned in a beatific smile and

his eyes had a sparkle about them.

"So what's your name then?" Sr. Mary asked.

"My name is Frankie," he said. "Frankie Bernadone."

"So what are you? Portuguese, Spanish?"

"I am from Italia," Frankie told her. "I'm sorry I no speak-a English so good."

As they walked through the chapel Frankie stooped to pick up a piece of the fallen beam. He crushed it beneath his fingers to reveal a termite.

"Salute, fratello termite," he smiled. "You and your brothers have been busy. But it is not right to eat-a the house of prayer. God is not pleased." He placed the termite on the floor and followed Sr. Mary to the caretaker's small room.

The next morning Sr. Mary was surprised to see Frankie up early. He joined them for morning prayers and then asked her for a note, explaining that he was working for the mission. He said that he would go into the nearby town and ask the local businesses if they could donate some material for the repairs.

"You'll be lucky to get anything out of that hard-hearted bunch," she said.

Frankie smiled and pointed a finger

towards heaven. "Let's see what-a God will do."

That afternoon a truck filled with wood and building material arrived at the mission. Sr. Mary was still in a state of shock when she saw Frankie that evening.

"How did you do it man? I've begged, cajoled and threatened them with hellfire and damnation and have never received a penny from that lot. What's your secret? Is it for free?" she asked nervously.

"Si suora, it is gratis. I just say I need-a help and show them your note. I say I am a accattone – beggar – for God, and they help me."

"The Lord love you man. Can you start the repairs tomorrow?"

"Si suora, today has been a long day and now I go sleep. Tomorrow I will-a start."

"Bless you Frankie Bernadone. The sisters and I will say a rosary for you tonight."

She was surprised to see that when Frankie left for his room he was followed by the three stray cats and the mangy dog that had adopted the mission as their home. Normally they wouldn't go near strangers.

Early the following morning Frankie put a ladder next to the chapel and climbed on to the roof. Before he was halfway to the hole his foot went through the roof up to his knee. With some difficulty he pulled his foot out and headed slowly back towards the ladder.

"Are you trying to kill yourself man?" came a voice from the ground. The voice belonged to Schalk Kruger, owner of the largest hardware store in the nearby town. Frankie leaned over the roof and shrugged his shoulders with a smile.

"I thought so," said Kruger. "You may have the smile of a saint, but you've got the building skills of an idiot. Now get down from there. I don't know why I'm doing this, maybe the sun has fried my brains, but I'm going to help. Now stay off that damn roof and I'll go back to town to get some labourers."

Frankie went and sat under a tree. A small bird landed not far from him and began to chirp. Frankie whistled softly back and began talking to it. He was still talking to the bird when Sr. Mary appeared.

"Here I thought you were fixing the roof and I find you sitting on your backside and talking to little birdies. I'm having second thoughts about you Mr. Bernadone." Before she could continue, Schalk Kruger and a truck full of labourers arrived.

"What in the Lord's good name are you doing here sir?" she asked.

"Probably saving his life," Kruger said, pointing at Frankie. "If you let him up on that roof again the next service you hold here will probably be a funeral service. For no other reason I'm here to fix your roof. Now close your mouth sister, there's lots of flies around."



Still stunned, Sr. Mary went back to the chapel.

Before Kruger's men could even start work another truck filled with wood and labourers arrived and a tall, lanky man alighted.

"What do you think you're doing here Murphy?" said Kruger.

"Now sure I wouldn't be letting you, a heathen upstart, be helping a Catholic mission without me having something to say about it. Now stand aside and let the professionals get to work," laughed Sean Murphy, owner of the other hardware store in town.

"You Irish hypocrite! You haven't darkened a church in the 15 years I've known you. Since when did you get religion?"

"Since that man," he pointed at Frankie, "came and asked for help to repair the chapel of the good and holy sisters of my religion, not yours. I'm planning on fixing this chapel and saving it from the shoddy mess your lot would make of it."

At that moment Sr. Mary returned from the chapel. She saw Murphy and she turned pale.

"What are you doing here," she said in a voice devoid of emotion.

"I've come to fix the roof, but this dumb Afrikaner is in my way. I'm not going to let some heathen fix my own sister's chapel."

"Your sister," exclaimed Frankie and Kruger in unison.

"Yes, my sister," shouted Murphy.

Sr. Mary went white as she glared at Murphy. "I have never breathed a word that you, you fallen-from-grace hellion, are my older brother. I will not have you touching this chapel. I would rather sit in its ruins." Tears streaming from her face she ran back to the chapel.

Frankie followed her and found her sitting in the chapel. He squatted before her. After a few moments she looked at him, still sobbing.

"What is it with that smile of yours Frankie Bernadone? It is almost a sin for such a smile to be wasted on a tramp."

"It is-a small gift from God," he replied. "And now I think it is your turn to receive a gift from God."

"And what gift is that," she said.

"The gift of forgiveness."

"I cannot forgive that man," she said emphatically. "The torment he put me and my sainted mother through with his wayward ways. His drinking, fighting, blaspheming and everything else – running away and leaving us to fend for ourselves. My mother died of a broken heart. He never came home to help. No, I cannot forgive him."

"I was not-a meaning that you forgive your brother," explained Frankie. "I was-a meaning that you need to receive God's forgiveness for yourself. You've been holding on to hatred and bitterness in your heart."

"How can you possibly know that!" the nun said, anger in her voice.



"You show-a that today. Your brother is like the prodigal son in the Bible. He is-a coming home today. Be like the father in that story and welcome him home."

Sr. Mary went outside and knelt before her brother, asking him for his forgiveness. He said that it was him that needed forgiving, not her. In tears they hugged, the pain of many years being washed away.

Later Sr. Mary went back to the chapel to see Frankie with his bag, about to leave.

"I must-a go now," he said meekly.

"Indeed you must, to be sneaking off like this. I know who you are, you know."

"I knew you would-a figure it out," Frankie smiled.

"It took me a while to put the pieces together. Talking to the birds, the brother termite business, a beggar for God, the smile, the way animals react to you. Thank you for blessing our mission with your presence Francesco di Pietro di Bernadone, or should I say Saint Francis of Assisi. I don't just mean the building. You have healed me of my wounds, just as you did the lepers long ago."

"Go to Mass suora. You have quite a flock to attend to. I must-a be about our Father's business, but I look forward to the day when we will-a meet again."



RadioToday

# Program Schedule

## Mondays

00.00-08.00: BBC World Service  
08.00-10.00: Breakfast with Errol Ballantine  
10.00-10.30: Pages unbound Glenda Slade  
10.30-12.00: Living Our Best Years  
12.00-13.00: BBC World Midday news  
13.00-15.00: After lunch  
15.00-17.55: Afternoon on Radio Today  
17.55-18.00: News Scoops  
18.00-19.00: Nature Journal  
19.00-22.00: Stormy Monday  
22.00-00.00: BBC World Service

## Tuesdays

00.00-08.00: BBC World Service  
08.00-10.00: Breakfast with Errol Ballantine  
10.00-10.30: Pages unbound Glenda Slade  
10.30-11.00: Living Our Best Years  
11.00-12.00: Reading Matters with Sue Grant Marshall  
12.00-13.00: BBC World Midday news  
13.00-15.00: After lunch  
15.00-17.55: Afternoon on Radio Today  
17.55-18.00: News Scoops  
18.00-19.00: Motoring Today with Roger McCleery  
19.00-22.00: Your Classical Radio  
22.00-00.00: BBC World Service

## Wednesdays

00.00-08.00: BBC World Service  
08.00-10.00: Breakfast with Errol Ballantine  
10.00-10.30: Pages unbound Glenda Slade  
10.30-12.00: Living Our Best Years  
12.00-13.00: BBC World Midday news  
13.00-15.00: After lunch  
15.00-17.55: Afternoon on Radio Today  
17.55-18.00: News Scoops  
18.00-19.00: Risky Business  
19.00-22.00: Bad Company  
22.00-00.00: BBC World Service

## Thursdays

00.00-08.00: BBC World Service  
08.00-10.00: Breakfast with Errol Ballantine  
10.00-10.30: Pages unbound Glenda Slade  
10.30-12.00: Living Our Best Years  
12.00-13.00: BBC World Midday news  
13.00-15.00: After lunch  
15.00-17.55: Afternoon on Radio Today  
17.55-18.00: News Scoops  
18.00-19.00: Deep in Durban  
19.00-22.00: Your Classical Radio  
22.00-00.00: BBC World Service



**Tuesday 18.00-19.00:  
Motoring Today with  
Roger McCleery**

## Fridays

00.00-08.00: BBC World Service  
08.00-10.00: Breakfast with Errol Ballantine  
10.00-10.30: Pages unbound Glenda Slade  
10.30-12.00: Living Our Best Years  
12.00-13.00: BBC World Midday news  
13.00-15.00: After lunch  
15.00-17.55: Afternoon on Radio Today  
17.55-18.00: News Scoops  
18.00-19.00: The Human Touch  
19.00-22.00: The Mix Bag of Rock 'n Roll  
22.00-00.00: BBC World Service

## Saturday

00.00-07.00: BBC World Service  
07.00-10.00: From Coppers Farm  
10.00-12.00: Fishing Tales with Peter Jensen  
12.00-14.00: Fall In/Tree Aan  
14.00-16.00: The Braaifest with Mike Stroud

16.00-17.00: Bally On Air  
17.00-19.00: The 5 o'Clock Blues  
19.00-20.00: Keeping It Real  
20.00-22.00: The Bandstand Easy Listening  
22.00-00.00: BBC World Service

## Sunday

00.00-07.45: BBC World Service  
07.45-08.00: Nature Journal Express  
08.00-09.00: Nature Journal  
09.00-11.00: From Coppers Farm  
11.00-12.00: Reading Matters  
12.00-14.00: Softly on Sundays  
14.00-15.00: Anything Goes  
15.00-16.00: Softly on Sundays  
16.00-17.00: Bally On Air Irish Music  
17.00-18.00: Softly on Sundays  
18.00-19.00: I've Got My Standards  
19.00-21.00: The Bandstand Easy Listening  
21.00-22.00: Keeping It Real  
22.00-00.00: BBC World Service



**Fridays 19.00-22.00: The  
Mix Bag of Rock 'n Roll**

# Hipe!

## media

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