

# Sneak-a-Peek Visits with Santa Claus

By: Stephen and Debra Gillham

(Abridged version from the book "Santaology...")

Sneak-a-Peeks visits came into existence for Deb and I after doing hospital work our second year of our Santa. By the second year we had added Duke Children's Hospital in addition to UNC Children's Hospital and as every Santa knows who does this kind of work, you never think what you do is enough. For me this feeling lasts well into January. I kept thinking about the children I saw and their families and thinking what more can I do. How can I do something really special for these children and their families? Any Pediatric nurse will tell you, you don't just treat the child you treat the entire family.

I always thought the ultimate Christmas night event for a family would be to actually wake up and catch Santa Claus in their home delivering their presents, eating the cookies, drinking the milk and reading their letters to Santa. What would make this super special would be for the entire family to watch from a hidden location without Santa having any knowledge they were there and then rush back to bed just as he was leaving... with Santa Claus never knowing he had been observed. This was the idea I presented to Debra and one that she took to right away. I knew if she liked the idea then it had to be good. Now, having done so many, I can also tell you that this is the ultimate for any Santa. To actually go to a child's home and act out the role of Santa while the children look on from a hidden location is as good as it gets. Plus, there is nothing else that quite exemplifies the feeling you would get if you were the real Santa than performing this effect. For those few minutes you are "Santa!"

Let me say right away that after speaking with a few Santa's that do this their own version of a Christmas Eve or home visit, that there are many fine ways to perform this task. By writing my thoughts on "Sneak-a-Peeks", I do not mean to imply that what I am going to describe is by any means the only way this should be done and it is my hope that by sharing my information it will get you thinking "outside the box".

## Sneak-a-Peek Information:

First, let me give you some definitions:

### **Sneak-a-Peek:**

This is a home visit where the family hides from Santa and observes him work. The family does not interact or speak with Santa...they watch. Santa pretends that he doesn't know they are watching. He tries not to look at them.

### **Home Visit:**

This is a visit where the family interacts with Santa. He may tell stories, give the first gift of Christmas, do a little magic, etc.... These visits can last anywhere from 15 minutes to 30 minutes.

Here is the form I use for the Pre-Visit Check:

## PRE-VISIT SAP NOTES FOR CHRISTMAS 20\_\_

TIME OF VISIT: \_\_\_\_\_

CHILDREN'S NAMES AND AGES: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT'S NAME: DAD: \_\_\_\_\_ CELL PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

MOM: \_\_\_\_\_ CELL PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

ON GPS: \_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_ NO CHECKED OUT ON GPS: \_\_\_\_

MY DIRECTIONS FOR FINDING THE RIGHT HOUSE: \_\_\_\_\_

WHERE DO I ENTER THE HOUSE: \_\_\_\_\_

DISCUSS TOY SIZE WITH PARENT: \_\_\_\_ DISCUSS CONTINGENCY PLAN: \_\_\_\_

DISCUSS LOADING STOCKING: \_\_\_\_ DISCUSS EMERGENCY PLAN : \_\_\_\_

DISCUSS BIG TOYS AREADY AROUND TREE: \_\_\_\_ DISCUSS SAP VISIT FACT SHEET AND SIGN: \_\_\_\_

WHERE WILL FAMILY HIDE: \_\_\_\_\_

FAMILY TREE IS IN: \_\_\_\_\_ DISCUSS ROOM LIGHTING: \_\_\_\_\_

WHERE WILL REMOTE FOR TREE GO: \_\_\_\_\_

DISCUSS LASER LIGHTS: \_\_\_\_ DISCUSS FAIRIES: \_\_\_\_

WHERE WILL LASER LIGHTS GO: \_\_\_\_\_ WHERE WILL SMELL MACHINE GO: \_\_\_\_\_

DISCUSS COOKIES AND MILK: \_\_\_\_\_

DISCUSS FAMILY TRADITIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

DISCUSS PETS: \_\_\_\_ DISCUSS VIDEO RECORDING: \_\_\_\_\_

DISCUSS FAMILY LEAVING HIDING PLACE AND GOING BACK TO ROOMS: \_\_\_\_\_

WHERE DO I LEAVE THE HOUSE: \_\_\_\_\_

WHERE WILL SLEIGH BELLS BE: \_\_\_\_\_

WHERE WILL CAR BE PARKED: \_\_\_\_\_

IS THIS A HOUSE DEB CAN BE IN AND WHERE WILL SHE BE: \_\_\_\_\_

# Sneak-a-Peek Visit Fact Sheet

This document is designed to give the parents a clear understanding of what a Sneak a Peek visit is.

1. Sneak-a-Peeks typically occur after midnight on Christmas Eve. With young children there can be exceptions. Sometimes we can start at 11 pm if the parents set the clocks forward.
2. Children under the age of 3 are possibly too young. Young children sometimes are afraid during the visit. Recommended age is 3 or older. Leave young children in bed.
3. Upon Santa's arrival children should be asleep and not be expecting that they will see Santa. When their parents wake them up it should be a complete surprise.
4. Parents should be in their night clothes and look normal to their children. You should look pretty much like you do when you wake up in the morning. Don't wear street clothes and don't turn on all the lights. Remember you are trying to sneak up on Santa.
5. For a Sneak a Peek, the children will not interact with Santa. They remain hidden. If a child does get discover Santa will adjust his performance to a typical home visit.
6. Santa will call parents if he is running late and let them know estimated time of arrival. With Sneak a Peeks you never know if a child might come up to or interrupt the visit turning it into a typical home visit. Normally Sneak a Peeks last about 10 minutes.
7. When Santa turns the tree off and throws his bag over his shoulder the children should run with their parents back to their rooms and hide. Try and keep them from looking out the windows.
8. The primary and secondary phones should be on and monitored by both parents. It is very important that Santa communicate with parents before the visit.
9. If Santa has a traffic accident and is unable to perform the Sneak-a-Peek, then the family will be one of the first families to have a Sneak a Peek next year. Fortunately, the children will not be disappointed because they didn't know they were getting a Sneak a Peek. Extreme bad weather will also cancel a Sneak a Peek.
10. A Sneak a Peek only happens once for any family. After all, you would never catch Santa twice.
11. All pets will be put in a safe place so they don't interfere with the Sneak a Peek.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Santa signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Santa Information:

Stephen F. Gillham and Debra H. Gillham

Home address:

5316 Elm Grove Lane

Chapel Hill, NC 27516

Phone #'s. cell for Steve: 919-624-6916 cell for Deb: 919-624-0140

Email: [sgillham@nc.rr.com](mailto:sgillham@nc.rr.com) OR [sgillham3@Gmail.com](mailto:sgillham3@Gmail.com)



I use a special suitcase from Wal-Mart for all my props. I have foam inside with cut outs for all the different things. There is a place for each prop. You do not want to leave anything behind. Gathering up all of your props and getting out of the house can be nerve racking. Once again, you do not want to leave anything behind.

On the big day, I call and send all the parents an email telling them I am coming and approximately what time I expect to be at their house. Here is my checklist for the big night:

## Checklist for the Big Night:

- \_\_\_ Two copies of notes on each family. You do not want to lose your notes! (Give one set to your driver)
- \_\_\_ Prep Car for night. Turn off all interior lights and try to run as dark as possible.
- \_\_\_ Enter GPS addresses. Use Google Maps to plot out route and decide on approximate ETA for each family. Do this ahead of time – all addresses do not come up on some systems!
- \_\_\_ Call and email each family and let them know approximate ETA. This is very important.
- \_\_\_ Get snacks for the night set up and in cooler or thermos.
- \_\_\_ Check and double check all equipment and props.
- \_\_\_ Have phone charger in car.
- \_\_\_ If possible have back up GPS system. Borrow one from a friend.
- \_\_\_ Discuss with your driving partner the night's arrangements.

Here is my checklist for when I arrive at each house:

## Checklist for Inside House:

- \_\_\_ Leave sleigh bells at exit door
- \_\_\_ Set up Video camera and turn on record button
- \_\_\_ Set up tree remote and remote #1
- \_\_\_ Set up laser and remote #2
- \_\_\_ Set up Smell Machine and remote #3
- \_\_\_ Check all props for working
- \_\_\_ Put out D'Lite Flight effect for fairies
- \_\_\_ Pack toy bag with toys
- \_\_\_ Get into position at stockings
- \_\_\_ Double check that parents know when to leave\*
- \_\_\_ Always count to ten before turning to leave\*
- \_\_\_ Pack up all props before leaving don't forget camera.

# My Props Are:

## Stanley 31164 Wireless Remote Control Outlet Control:



[http://www.amazon.com/Stanley-31164-Wireless-Control-Transmitter/dp/B0020ML762/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1331824618&sr=8-2](http://www.amazon.com/Stanley-31164-Wireless-Control-Transmitter/dp/B0020ML762/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1331824618&sr=8-2)

This device is great! It's only \$38.00 from Amazon and is responsible for the magical tree lighting, the laser display of fairies and the scent machine activation.

## The Laser Jet Dual Laser Light from Spencer's Gift:

<http://www.spencersonline.com/product/laser-jet-dual-laser-light/96995.uts?relationType=recentlyViewed&thumbnailIndex=0>

This item is \$49.99. This is what I use when the fairies come into the room for a visit.



## The D'Lite Flight w/2 replacement gimmicks:

<http://dlite.com/magic-tricks/40-d-lite-flight-red.html>



Priced at \$49.95 this is one of my favorite effects and the children love it. It's on a 14" wire. Please excuse the photo, its hard find a good one that shows off the effect.

## 3- TRC 90511 3 wire 6 foot extension cords:



[http://www.amazon.com/Coleman-Cable-Extension-3-Outlet-6-Foot/dp/B000BPLNHS/ref=pd\\_cp\\_hi\\_0](http://www.amazon.com/Coleman-Cable-Extension-3-Outlet-6-Foot/dp/B000BPLNHS/ref=pd_cp_hi_0)

You'll need extension cords to place equipment where you need it. Don't want to go looking for one of these when you need it. This is another reason for the Pre-Visit. I use three in my kit. These are about \$14.99 each.

## 3 Prong to 2 prong grounding converter:

<http://www.amazon.com/Prong-prong-grounding-converter/dp/B000I96AUM>

These may come in very handy. Always be prepared. \$5.20 for a pair. Buy at least three...one for each extension cord.



### The Cedar Mountain P. A. D. System Personal Air Diffuser.

Enjoy the results and reliability of American Innovation



### Scent Shooter:

This is a new device I started using in the 2013 Christmas season. I learned about these devices from Joe Barney in one of his Santa classes. I had been using aerosols and spraying the room before the children arrived but this works so much better. In my North Pole and in my stories, fairies smell like cinnamon. Since children can't see fairies they have to depend on their nose to tell them when they are in the room. With this device, I load mine with the oil that Cinnabon uses in their aroma marketing. You didn't think they could possibly cook

cinnamon buns all day...did you? This creates the wonderful odor of cinnamon buns cooking and fills up the room with the odor. When the fairies arrive during the SAP visit one of the reasons I tell them they have to leave is because the entire house will smell like cinnamon if they don't. With the third remote outlet plugs in for this machine you can trigger it on and the odor comes up right away. This technique allows us to use odor to help anchor the memory of the Sneak a Peek event. You can see the website for these here:

[http://store.airessentials.com/index.php?main\\_page=index&cPath=35&zenid=3mbv1tq4l5i3knbc4lj5bjeb6](http://store.airessentials.com/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=35&zenid=3mbv1tq4l5i3knbc4lj5bjeb6)

Price is: \$159.99 and the company is AE air essentials Phone: 305-446-1670

### RF WIRELESS REMOTE CONTROL VIBRATOR:



This is one of the best inventions EVER!!! Where was this 12 years ago? For \$34.00 you can have a device that when given to mom, she can push the red button and the Santa's white pocket receiver vibrates. No more wondering when the family is in position. From [www.CARYMART.COM](http://www.CARYMART.COM) in China.



## Sounds Effect Device:

One of the most amazing devices I have found is this device that I use for sound effects. When I first started doing SAP's I used a sound shirt made by ThinkGeek.com. Unfortunately, they stopped making this \$40.00 shirt and I had to look for something else to do the magical sounds I wanted to use for a SAP. Fortunately, the device I found is about ten times better than the old device. It just cost more. These devices come from Europe. They cost \$130.00 and can hold 5 unique sounds. They can hold any sound you want as long as it is a MP3 file. Total recording time on this device is 150 minutes which means you could record an entire conversation with Bernard. You are only limited by your imagination. I believe this may change story telling by adding sound at key times to enhance the story. But for a SAP it is worth its weight in gold. If you want to purchase this device, contact me at: [sgillham@nc.rr.com](mailto:sgillham@nc.rr.com) and I'll send it to you. Pre-loaded with the sounds I use for a SAP.



## Finally:

Sneak a Peeks can be a lot of fun. They are exciting to perform and something you can do for a family that they will always remember. We started out doing Sneak-a-Peeks free for chronically ill children and their families. I happy to say now we do them also for regular families with a fee. The families with the special children take first choice for us, but if we have any times left we always offer SAP's to regular families. Cost for one of these SAP's is high. Remember, you have to make two trips to the home, one for a pre-check visit and then the actual SAP. I would recommend a premium for your market. We start our appointments at midnight December 25<sup>th</sup> and go until 5:30 am Christmas morning. If you have any questions, please contact me. I'll be happy to help in any way I can. Below is the email we send families after:

### Email to Parents after a Sneak a Peek:

Hi Mr. and Mrs. Smith,

I had a blast doing your family's Sneak a Peek. Remember what we discussed about the video. Could you please do me a favor and let me know what you thought of the experience. It helps me perfect my performance for the next family. Your feedback is very important.

Please let me know your favorite parts or tell me if there was something that you did not understand.

Thanks so much for allowing Deb and me to be a part of your family's Christmas.

Sincerely,

Steve and Deb

**If you would like a copy of the book "Santaology, The Art of Becoming a Great Santa Claus!" by Stephen F. Gillham then contact Steve at: [sgillham@nc.rr.com](mailto:sgillham@nc.rr.com)**