

Santa's New Orleans Vacation

by Warren Swenson

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Before you read this story
Be forewarned my friend
This vacation took place
Before the new millennium.
This all happened in the nineties
So, some of this, I'm sure
As sung by Benny Grunch and the Bunch,
"It Just Ain't There No More."

For years I've kept a secret
That I have never told
Not to my closest friend,
Not to a single soul.
I've decided now to share it
And the secret I will tell
Is about a special trip each year
Made by Papa Noel.

That may not be a name you've heard
But I am sure, of course,
That everyone has heard the name
Of Good Ole Santa Claus.
Well Santa Claus and Papa Noel
Are one and the same.
Papa Noel just so happens to be
Santa's southern name.

It is a fact that Papa Noel
Lives at the North Pole
But even Papa Noel
Can get tired of the cold
So after every Christmas Eve
When all his work is done
He packs his gear into his sleigh
And takes a vacation.

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He leaves the North Pole heading
For a southern latitude
Where he can tan under the sun
And dine on southern food.
Though Santa could go anywhere
He chooses New Orleans
For there isn't any other place
That has such great cuisine.

Not in London, not in Rome
Not in Moscow nor in Paris
Will you find Emile Lagasse
Or a chef like Gerrard Maras.
Though Santa's quite a chef himself,
Rather than eat at home
He loves to dine at Tommy Wolfs
As well as Paul Prudhomme's

Yes, he loves great Creole cooking
And the spicy Cajun taste.
When he's finished you won't find
A grain of rice left on his plate.
On Christmas Eve I guarantee
You'll hear him say HO! HO!
If instead of milk and cookies
You leave him some hot gumbo.

Though I'm certain no one doubts
Papa Noel loves to eat
I wonder just how many know
He's light upon his feet.
If you've ever read the stories
About good ole St. Nick
You should know that Papa Noel
Can be lively and be quick.

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Yes, he loves to do the two step
Loves to jitterbug and prance.
Papa Noel loves good music
And he really loves to dance
Which is just another reason
He's in love with New Orleans.
Cause he loves great music
Just as much as he loves great cuisine.

And New Orleans is the only town
On this planet that has
So much lively Cajun music
So much rhythm blues and jazz.
He has been to Tipitina's
And on Thursday night's, I'm told
Papa Noel has been seen
Dancing at the Rock N Bowl.

When he wants to hear a big band
With the brass and tambourines
Papa Noel will go dancing
At the Jefferson Orleans.
Though he is a little heavy
It should come as no surprise
That he's very fit and healthy
From all of this exercise.

Now I'm certain dancing's not
The only exercise he gets.
Papa Noel happens to be
Quite a sports enthusiast
But he chuckles at those players
Who would call their sports Xtreme.
Cause they never have played football
With his eight man gator team.

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Yes, he really likes to play
With the reindeer and the gators
But there are times he enjoys
Simply being a spectator.
He loves to watch Saint's football
But Christmas is the reason
He can only make the home games
That they play in the post season.

I have on good authority
That he was in the stands
Working his post season magic
The day the Saints beat the Rams.
There's not a single Saint's fan
Who cannot recall
Hearing the announcer yelling,
"Hakim has dropped the ball."

I spoke to several players
From the Zephyr's team who claim
He's been seen at Zephyr's field
Watching several baseball games.
Though he seldom says a cross word
And he's almost always kind
They say they've heard him holler
At umpires several times,

"If you've left your glasses home
I'll be glad to lend you mine
Cause to miss a call like that
You must be legally blind."
Though I cannot say for certain
If he's bought his tickets yet
I am sure that he'll be cheering
For the New Orleans Hornets.

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Yes, sports can be exciting
But when he really wants a thrill
I hear he goes to Jazzland
Where he says they've yet to build
A ride that he can't ride
And he doubts they ever will
Though he hopes that they will try
And I hear they're trying still.

First he'll ride the Bayou Blaster
Then the Great Zydeco Train
The Sonic Slam, the Zephyr
Then he'll ride them all again.
Though he's ridden every ride
He truly doubts that there
Will ever be a ride quite like
The one he takes each year

On every Christmas Eve
When he travels everywhere
Through the heavens in a sleigh
That is pulled by eight reindeer.
He has been to the aquarium
And he has also seen
All the sights along the river
When he rode the Creole Queen.

He likes to take the trolley ride
On St. Charles Avenue
Then walk through Audubon park
On his way to the zoo
Where he talks to all the elephants,
Giraffes and kangaroos
Which is something I am certain
Only he alone can do.

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The one thing at the zoo
He likes to do most of all
Is to sit back and relax
With a peppermint snowball.
That refreshing minty taste
Is so frosty and so cold
It reminds Papa Noel
Of his home at the North Pole

Where snowballs are so plentiful
Whether day or night
You can eat all that you want
And still have a snowball fight.
While thinking of the North Pole
He's reminded once again
That every great vacation
Has to come to an end

But before he leaves New Orleans
He will make one final stop
To enjoy some Creole cooking
At the famous Gumbo Shop.
Then he'll pack up all his gear
And put it in his sleigh
And hook up the reindeer
Before heading on his way.

As he takes off from the levee
High above the trees
Heading over lake Pontchartrain
On a warm summer night's breeze
If you listen very carefully
I am certain you will hear
Papa Noel say,
"Good Bye, New Orleans
I'll be back again next year."