

LETTERS TO SANTA IN THE 1940'S & 1950'S

By Diann Turner

Dear Santa... Have You Seen the 1952 Sears Christmas Book?

No season rivals Christmas when it comes to being powerful for children. During the second world war, the imaginations of children seeing Santa and his sleigh glissading over snow and ice, bringing toys for them, was an even greater prospect of joy than today's children's experiences. It took little to satisfy them.

In that less materialistic time, Christmas seemed nebulous until the Sears Christmas catalogue arrived in late November. Window shopping accelerated and strings of Christmas lights blinked on in neighbourhoods. In schools and homes, children were encouraged to write letters to Santa. What young child's mind wouldn't be dizzy evaluating their actions of the past year while contemplating the red-suited soul crafting toys with his elves in the North Pole workshop?

The Sears Christmas Book debuted in 1933. In 1945, the Slinky was the toy to acquire, but Radio Flyer and Rex Jet wagons were desired as well. Little girls' eyes scanned dolls of all sorts, real China tea sets and things to play house with. A boy saw toy trains, drum sets, guitars, toy revolvers, Atomic Robotman and toboggans.

The post-war 1950's, economic boom brought the emergence of media heroes. Times were less complicated and Santa's gifts were simple: Hula hoops, Barbies Dolls and Matchbox cars, Hardy Boys books and Farm sets prevailed.

Televisions became a fixture in people's living rooms and heroes like Roy Rogers & Dale Evans, The Lone Ranger and Hop-along Cassidy soared. In 1954, Disneyland's Mickey Mouse somewhat eclipsed Westerns. By late 1957, Captain Kangaroo dominated networks. In 1966, the nation's living rooms had converted to family motion picture theaters. Once that occurred, an ocean of stuff for children began to suffocate everyone!



In 1952, Junior Miss Suzie wrote her letter to Santa following hours spent in Sears Christmas catalogue:

Dear Santa

For Christmas this year, I'd like one of those pogo stix things on payge 293 and if thats two big for your slay, Mr. Potato Head, Gumby or a Barbie doll werks. I have been a good girl except when I cut my sisters hare all off. I said sorry. Oh – and maybe a Hoola Hoop thing like Kathy got. Red pleeze.

Love, Suzie.

Befitting gifts for young boys inundated the market in the early 1950's as well, and Sears Catalogue went over board to sound enticing! Roy Rogers, his horse Trigger, and his German Shepherd dog, Bullet, were top sellers. The 1952 Christmas Catalogue spun statements like – "Just what your pint-sized cowhand wants to top off his western outfit!" Or, how about – "Hat-to-spurs outfits for gun-totin', range-ridin' young cowpokes?" The Roy Rogers Deluxe Six-Shooter set was \$8.95. "You gotta have the Official Holster Set – Yippee and Cap-Firing Pistol" was another catch phrase. "See what your Christmas money can buy" jumped off the pages!

In 1954, Seven-year-old Bobby wrote:

Dear Santa

I need a Roy Rogers 6-shooter. I promise to only shute in the leg of bad guys. I'd like Trigger the Bucking Horse to. Do you think I could have the farm set? It is only \$4.99. I seen a bulldozer tracter I like. If I have to read, A Hardy Boy book would do. I promiss Im gonna be goode.

Bob

P.S. I like Tinkertoys bestest.

Ten-year-old Carrie had different ideas in 1948:

Deer Santi

My name is Carrie. Could I pleaze have a tryke and one of them Silvertone record player things? A guitar is what I want two. I will be good evry day. I leev cookies and milk out for yoo. What about a cudlee soft babe doll? Thank you.

Carrie

For Carrie, the Deluxe Velocipedes Tricycle was \$14.39 in the catalogue. I'm sure Santa knew how to spread it out evenly!

Edwin Osgoode Grover wrote that "Santa Claus is anyone who loves another and seeks to make them happy; who gives himself by thought or word or deed in every gift that he bestows!" **LH**



Diann Turner in her 1950's Rex Jet Wagon



1940's Boy and his gifts from Santa

Left: Mr. Potato Head
Favourite Toy 1940's