



Pictured are Sam Dixon 7yrs, Sidda Dixon 20 months and Evan Dixon 3yrs

MOMENTS SHARED WITH SAINT NICHOLAS

By Tanya Hammond

Last month I received a surprise phone call from a friend of mine who took a job years ago making toys at the North Pole. This old friend had a special message for me from someone I've been trying to interview for over ten years. That's right, Saint Nicholas himself was going to be visiting Brockville, and he was willing to meet with me to give this once in a lifetime interview. "Why me?", you must be asking, "why not me?" After all, Saint Nicholas (or Santa as many of you know him) knows I've been good this year.

We see his helpers visiting neighbourhood malls throughout the country, but there is only one Saint Nicholas. Meeting him face to face I am impressed to see how well he has aged, after all, he is close to 200 years old. I asked him what his secret was, but he simply smiled and with a twinkle in his eye he said "magic my dear, magic." I had so many questions; I wasn't sure where to start.

He must have known just what I was thinking as he began telling me what it was like back in the 1800's, when he secretly set out to bring joy to all the little girls and boys. For years, his secret was safe as he delivered parcels on Christmas Eve, until a gentleman by the name of Clement Clarke Moore spied

him one Christmas Eve and wrote a poem entitled, "A Visit from St. Nicholas," known today as "Twas The Night Before Christmas."

That was the beginning of Santa's popularity, so he had to enlist the help of more elves to work in his shops at the North Pole and even had to employ a "keeper of the Naughty and Nice lists." Santa says, now technology is a big help with computerized lists, automated assembly lines, and GPS to help guide him. However, he wouldn't give away the magic behind his ability to squeeze down the chimneys. Some things are just best left to the imagination.

Santa was willing to divulge a few personal things about himself, such as, he and Mrs. Claus often vacation during the Summer months and this year they visited the Tall Ships right here in Brockville. He also told me that each year just after Christmas Mrs. Claus insists that he shave his entire beard off. I asked if that was because Mrs. Claus likes a smooth face to kiss under the mistletoe. He laughed, "HO, ho, ho bless my buttons! How did you know that, my dear!"

Although we shared many laughs that day, we also shared some touching moments, as he reminded me that not all children are looking for the latest and greatest toys.

Tears welled up in his eyes as he told me of the many children who just want peace in their home. He also recounted a Christmas, not long ago, that one small girl asked him for a favour. Her Grandmother had recently passed away, and she wanted Santa to make sure her Grandmother was happy. The young child clearly *believed* that Santa lived somewhere magical, and that he had a way of communicating with her Grandmother.

Sometimes we all need to *believe* in something that maybe we just can't explain. Saint Nicholas was quick to add, "it's important to enjoy the simple pleasures of the season and the pure joy of Christmas Traditions." His stops at Fulford Place in Brockville and Upper Canada Village, amongst others, are about taking people back to the Victorian times with handmade gifts, family gatherings, trees decorated with ornate ornaments that were passed down through generations. A simple reminder of, "A time when believing wasn't so complicated," said Saint Nicholas. LH

SAVE THE DATE: Be sure to visit Saint Nicholas at Upper Canada Village, Morrisburg, On December 2nd-23rd.