

Me and Mr. Claus...

I surely do not recall my first meeting with Mr. Kris Kringle. If I were a betting man, I'd venture that the meeting involved a brand new outfit on me and a lot of screaming. I'd also bet it occurred at a shopping mall and a picture still exists tucked away in a box in my parent's attic. That's the way it happens in the 'burbs.

I must admit that I still believe to this day. My faith is not so strong that my kids go without on Christmas morning, but I really do still believe in the spirit of the old man in the red suit. Watch the movie, *Polar Express*, and you will know what I mean. Believe.

That belief makes this story all the better.

At this age (my kids are three and five) we tend to make several trips to the lighted show at the city park. If we time it right, we take pictures with old Saint Nick at least once. This year, we had to swing a second meeting for our older boy to relay his sister's list because she is still intimidated by a strange man in a suit. I can only hope that attitude lasts, at least through the college years.

So there we were, last Christmas, visiting Mr. Claus at the city park. My little girl was too young to know what was going on and my boy was giddy with Christmas cheer. We got to the front of the line and it just so happened that this night's Santa was a patient and friend. I escorted the kids to the front for their picture and Santa gave me a wink. I said hello and Santa replied back, "Hey, Chip, how are you doing?"

Words cannot describe the look I saw in my son's eyes. He turned a bit pale, and then quickly flushed red with excitement. He grabbed his sister by the hand, smiled for the picture, quickly listed his requests, and shot out of the tent.

I could tell something was up as we rushed through the trail of Christmas lights. After about ten minutes, Parker pulled me aside. "Dad, Santa called you by your real name. How does he know that if you're not still a kid?"

Usually, I think of the right thing to say about eight hours after an event occurs. This night, I was lucky.

"Parker, he knows my name because I still believe."

The look in his eyes told me he understood. He laughed and ran on through the lights.

Merry Christmas to you all, and, until next week, keep smiling.

-Please send comments to Drs. Parrish at www.ParrishDental.com.