

Up On The Rooftop

There's an old Burl Ives Christmas song that tells of reindeer up on the rooftop with Santa bringing joy and presents to all the children of the world. We would sing it each year as a run up to Christmas Eve and the big day.

Christmas is also the time when fathers make fools of themselves. It's not always evident at the start, but before the tale is ended, it seems to deviate from the main story. Take, for example, this tale from my early childhood of living through a traumatic Christmas event originally planned as an unforgettable Christmas story that would stagger your imagination.

The story begins, as many of the great Christmas adventures do, with two dads sipping beer in the basement and wondering what to do to amuse the children this year at Christmas. They thought some more, drank a beer, thought some more, drank another beer well you get the idea.

Finally, in an alcoholic haze, the idea unfolds as in a dream. One dad would dress up as Santa Claus and go up on the roof while the other held him steady with a rope. Santa would also have some bells with him to make the kids think that Rudolph was there as well. They planned this in advance and the idea was to have all the neighbourhood children gather around the Christmas tree in our house and have Burl Ives sing Up On the Rooftop. Suddenly, like a scene out of Charles Dickens, Santa and Rudolph would appear on the roof and amid bells ringing and Santa Ho Ho Ho.. ing to wish every boy and girl a Merry Christmas.

To paraphrase Robert Burns, "sometimes plans often go astray." The idea seemed sound when planted firmly on the ground but when you have a 250 pound man climbing a snow covered pitched roof wearing Steel Plant boots, you just know something is going to go wrong.

Bimbo Lusk wrapped a rope around Santa as a safety precaution and anchored it around his waist. He played out the rope as Santa climbed the roof. Just like clockwork, as Burl Ives finished his song, bells rang out from up on the roof. Santa was here! All the kids listened as they heard Rudolph's bells ringing. Santa, to make sure the kids heard Rudolph, started pawing the roof. That was the first mistake. The kids heard santa bellow, Ho, Ho ... holy shit as he began his death spiral down the slippery roof.

Bimbo felt the rope tighten and tried to lasso the fence post. He finally got the rope tied off just as santa was about halfway to the ground, directly in front of the picture window. The kids all ran to the window in wonderment waving to santa. However, he was oblivious and yelling, "Get me the hell down from here!" Mothers scrambled to herd the kids away from the window, fathers rushed outside to help Bimbo untie the rope and lower santa gently to the ground.

Santa now found himself the centre of attention surrounded by innocent faces. He rallied however, and pretended that Rudolph was playing a joke on him and everything would be okay and the kids should get home to bed.

Santa walked away gingerly as the rope had found its way to Santa's nether regions and it was difficult to stand. On the record player came the strains of Burl Ives singing, " Up On The rooftop reindeer paws"