

The Time Santa Got Lost

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The storm was really bad and that old flat top was really rocking and rolling all over the place. Pappy was thinking of the last time he could remember a storm that was really that bad and he couldn't. Pappy was Master Chief Petty Officer Jesse (Pappy) Egan who had been in this man's navy for more than thirty years and he was doing what he loved best, being a sea on an old Aircraft Carrier.

It was also Christmas Eve and Pappy was up looking after things onboard the ship as he usually did. He had no one at home that he thought of. He had more wives than he could remember and never had the good fortune to have any children, so yea he was exactly where God wanted him to be.

He was thinking of Santa and how he was going to make it around the world during this God forsaken storm. He knew that he would be rough on the reindeer pulling that heavy sleigh and fighting the wind at the same time. At least Rudolph would be in the lead his nose glowing all so bright.

It was 2:00Am and he was listing to distress frequencies to see if anyone may need some help. All he heard was a lot of static. It had been that way for a couple of hours, but never the less Pappy had a feeling someone would need their help. He went over to the coffee pot for another cup of that black gold. He knew the pot had been sitting there for a good many hours and he really liked it good and black. It was at that same time that he first heard it, really faint at first. He went back to the transceiver that he was listing to and tried to tune out as much static as he could. The voice get louder and he was able to make out a "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, this is Santa Claus." He heard it and didn't believe it as he stumbled backwards as the ship rolled to port this time.

Pappy picked up the mike and said Santa Claus this is the USS Kitty Hawk can you hear me. At first he heard no one came back and then again he heard "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, this is Santa Claus." Once again Pappy tuned the transceiver a little better and said Santa Claus this is the USS Kitty Hawk. This time he heard Kitty Hawk this is Santa Claus can you hear me. Finally Pappy thought he can hear me. Pappy went back, Santa Claus this is the USS Kitty Hawk I can hear you loud and clear. Santa came back and said this wind through us off course and I don't have any idea where we are and my navigation system is not working well. Pappy went back and said Santa this is the USS Kitty Hawk, Master Chief Petty Officer Jesse (Pappy) Egan here, we will light up the sky's and see if we can't get you on our navigation. Santa just responded please hurry.

Pappy got on the phone and called the bridge and talked to the Officer of the Deck. He told him of the problem and told him to get Combat Information Center looking for something in the sky. The OOD said he will get right on it. He also told him to call General Quarters we got us a Distress Call.

Pappy's next call was to the Captain. He woke him up about the time they called General Quarters. As the Captain listened to Pappy he could not believe his ears. You got a Distress Call from whom? At the same time the OOD announced over the 1MC that CIC is tracking a low flying object just a couple miles south of their location. Pappy hung up with the Captain and got back on the radio with Santa Claus. He said Santa this is the USS Kitty Hawk and we are tracking your location. You are just a couple of miles south of us moving kind of fast.

Once again Pappy called the bridge and told the OOD to light up this old rust bucket, clear the deck and get ready for an emergency landing. Santa's on his way in.

Another phone rang in radio central and it was Pappy's best friend Billy on the Flight Deck wanting to know what's going on. Billy was Master Chief Bowsain's Mate Billy Conklin who had been in the Navy almost as long as Pappy and he was in charge of all the decks. Pappy said just clear the decks, Santa's on his way in.

On the radio again Pappy told Santa to look down he should be able to see the carrier just in front of him. Santa responded that he could see the lights. Pappy told Santa that he was going to hand the control over to the flight deck to guide him in and he would meet him on deck. Pappy called his friend Billy and told him to take over and guide Santa and the reindeer in.

Pappy grabbed his jacket and hat and headed to the flight deck. He wanted to see this landing. In all his years in the Navy he thought he saw it all but this definitely will be a first. Just as he was opening the hatch going out to the flight deck he heard a loud swish over his head and as he looked up he saw Santa's sleigh and the nine reindeer pulling it. He heard the hooves on the deck and saw the sleigh sliding side to side finally coming to a stop.

Everyone on deck was keeping their distance. You can tell they didn't believe in Santa Claus and seemed to be a little afraid of the reindeer. Pappy made his way through the crowd and went right up to Santa. One look and Santa said I know who you are Pappy and Thanks. Santa jumped down off the sleigh and they both hugged and patted each other on the back. As Pappy turned around the Kitty Hawk's Captain came up and shook Santa's hand and said Welcome Aboard. The Captain yelled to the crew and said lets get this sleigh and reindeer below and get the navigation system fixed immediately. Also get the reindeer fed and put some blankets on them.

Pappy following behind the Captain escorted Santa inside and headed for the Chief's mess for some coffee and Hot Chocolate. Upon entering the Chief's Mess Pappy and Santa were met by "Cookie", who was already setting a table with breakfast pastries and cookies with pots of Hot Chocolate and black strong coffee. Cookie was really Master Chief Cook Lonnie McFadden and he was the best cook in the Navy and the Kitty Hawk was proud to have him. He told Pappy and Santa to enjoy some breakfast and that he was going down to the mess decks to get some food together for the Reindeer. He told Santa that he had no hay onboard but would put together some fresh vegetables and mix it with some wheat bread. Santa couldn't believe what that these old Chief's were going out of the way for him and got up and gave Cookie a great big hug.

About the time that Cookie was leaving the Captain came in and get a cup of coffee. He looked at Pappy and made a face and stated I still don't know how you guys can drink this stuff so strong. He poured it out and decided on Hot Chocolate instead.

Santa got some Hot Chocolate and a few pastries and started to eat. Pappy was telling him not to worry that by the time he is finished the navigation system would be fixed the reindeer fed and warm and the sleigh all cleaned up. The Captain seconded that. Santa was asking Pappy how he can do this job that he does all the time and he just smiled and said that's what God had in store for me. The Captain said that this crew was lucky to have a sailor like Pappy.

Santa went on to explain how he has got to get all these presents out to the children and the Captain said that he already has the ship turned around and going full speed ahead in the direction that Santa has to go. He said that it would give him and his team a chance for a short rest. Santa sighed with

relief and Thanked them again. The Captain still couldn't believe that he was sitting in the middle of the ocean having a conversation with Santa. All three of them had a twinkle in their eye.

Pappy and Santa continued talking about life aboard a ship and all the sacrifices that are made each and every day. He told both of them that he is very proud of the crew of this great ship. About that time Billy came walking in the Mess for a cup of coffee. He told Pappy and Santa that everything would be ready in about ten minutes. Santa had time for a couple more cookies and one more cup of Hot Chocolate before having to leave. The Captain excused himself and left for the Bridge to prepare for this spectacular takeoff that was about to happen.

Walking back up to the flight deck Santa told Pappy that he would never be able to thank him enough or repay him for his generosity and Pappy said just stay in touch. As they walked out on deck the whole crew was there to see this once in a lifetime show. Santa took a moment and addressed the crew and thanked them for having him aboard and saving Christmas. Everyone cheered and patted him on the back.

Just before climbing into the sleigh Santa turned to Pappy and they both hugged each other. Pappy told him to have a safe trip and God Speed, Santa gave Pappy a magic card that only stated Santa and a special number. Santa said call me from time to time.

Once settled in the Sleigh Santa called out "Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!

On, Comet! on Cupid! on, Donder and Blitzen, lets get these toys on their way Rudolph and with that the sleight and all the reindeer lifted off into the dark night. As he banked to port and took off the crew all clapped and they heard him exclaim "Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-day, and Thanks again."

Pappy has since retired and lived in the mountains in an undisclosed location and every year about this time he pulls out that magic card and makes that special call. They talk for hours laughing and joking and every year Pappy receives a special present with plenty of Hot Chocolate and homemade cookies from the Northpole.