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Santa Claus In Las Vegas

By Dennis Gaub for KOA Kompass

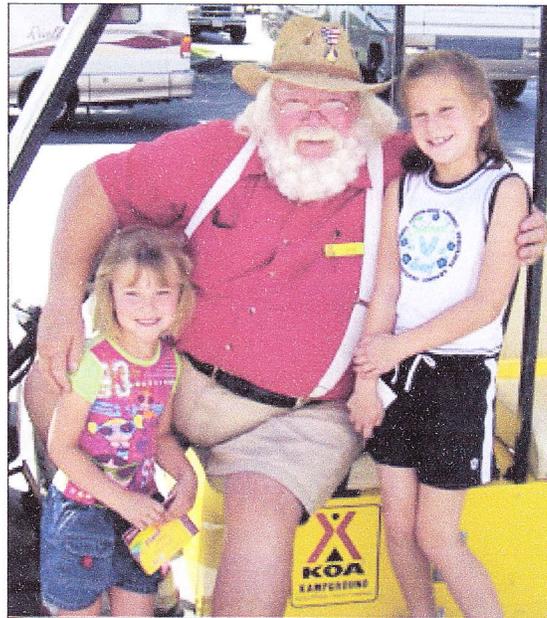
Was it Christmas from April through June in Las Vegas? Guests of KOA in Las Vegas might have asked that question after seeing an apparent Santa Claus frequenting the campground earlier this year.

The person they saw was Jimmy "Santa" Young, an ambassador/greeter at the Las Vegas KOA at Circus Circus. He also served as a "work camper"; his customer service-related duties included signing in and checking out guests, helping guests locate campsites and hook up their rigs for electrical and plumbing service, helping to resolve problems and shuttling guests between the campground and casino.

"I stayed (dressed) in red the whole time because that's the way people like it. I'm a professional Santa Claus and I've been suiting up for 12 years," said Young, 62, during an interview in late July from a pay phone in Lethbridge, Alberta.

His outfit apparently was convincing: Young said that twenty kids were lined up behind the phone booth, waiting to get his autograph. Young and his wife, Donna ("Mama Claus," he calls her), had attended the Calgary Stampede and visited friends in Canada.

They were heading back to the U.S. in their 40-foot RV, with initial plans to stop in Livingston, Montana, and Cody, Wyoming. Asked where he lives, Young said: "Home is wherever I park my rig – wherever there are people I can entertain. I vote and pay taxes in Fort Meyers, Florida."



He gave a practical explanation for his 11-week stint – from early April through June 28 – with the Las Vegas KOA.

"We were in Las Vegas, and the fuel prices in California (the Youngs' planned next destination) were too high," he said. The couple have grandchildren in the area, and "my wife said, 'let's find us some part time work.' We ended up working at Circus Circus."

Young has been working as a mall Santa for 12 years and playing the role for a total of 19 years.

"I work November and December at the Westchester Square mall in White Plains, New York," finishing on Christmas Eve. I'll take Christmas Day off, then head south, get my rig and head back on the road again," Young said.

He's played Santa to people of all ages, from an infant who was 2 hours old to centenarians. "I've had them in my lap or in my hand. A lady who was 107 or 108 said, 'This is the first time I've ever sat in Santa's lap. I said, 'Now's the time to do it,'" Young said. More information about Jimmy "Santa" Young can be found at a [web site](#) maintained

by his daughter. Even though Santa left, the new [Las Vegas KOA at Circus Circus](#) the campground still offers many other reasons for a visit. Greg and Wynn Taylor manage the only RV park on the Las Vegas Strip, which provides the convenience of camping right next to Circus Circus, one of the top-rated family resorts in Las Vegas.

Campers have direct access to the resort, featuring "Adventuredome," the world's largest indoor theme park; circus acts; and award-winning restaurants. The year-round campground includes 400 full hookup sites, a heated pool, Jacuzzi, video arcade and full-service convenience store.

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