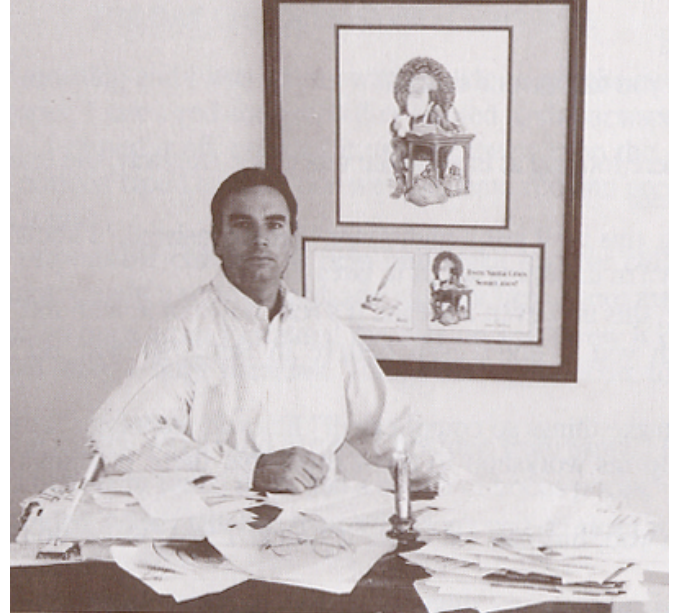


From a 1994 *San Jose Mercury News* article:

## Dear Santa:



Bruce McGuy, in all his sartorial splendor, checks some of the many, often poignant, letters he receives from children at this time of year.

BY LARRY SOKOLOFF  
Mercury News Staff Writer

An 8-year-old girl in Newark had just one request in her letter to Santa Claus:

"Dear Santa, I cry a lot, my baby brother died. I wish for you to give all my toys to him in heaven. Love, Carol."

The letter reached Bruce McGuy, a 37-year-old San Jose contractor who dresses up as St. Nick and answers children's letters each holiday season.

Carol's letter hit him hard, and it took him hours to write a response. It began: "Even Santa Claus cries sometimes."

That phrase became the title of a book of children's letters to Santa Claus that McGuy has written and published. The paperback book is full of letters that McGuy has received in recent years while serving as a local representative of Christmas cheer. "Even Santa Cries Sometimes!" is illustrated by San Jose artist Pat Sunseri.

Some of the letters are from children who discuss their problems - unemployed fathers, cancer, patients who are missing.

One asks Santa whether he makes wheelchairs. "If you do, my friend Patty needs a new one," a correspondent requested.

Other letters are more light-hearted. "Does Rudolph fly on regular or unleaded?," asked a boy named John.

One 5-year-old letter writer promised to be more careful with her toys.

"Thank you for replacing my broken doll last year," she wrote. "I didn't mean to pull her head off. Her legs were another accident. Well her arms, that is another story. Her hair got caught in the scissors. It wasn't her day!"

Some letters get straight to the point. To wit:

"All I want is money and I want it now - Thanks, Kim.

P.S. S.A.S.E. enclosed. No checks please."

McGuy's book includes the answers he sent. One girl wrote to say that she thought her parents were splitting up because she was bad. McGuy responded that it wasn't because of her.

"Your parents have things to work out together," he wrote. "Try telling your mom and dad that Santa said you should talk to them about why you're so sad."

McGuy receives more than 2,400 letters each year and said he responds to each one. He began receiving the letters seven or eight years ago after including a mailbox reading "Santa's mail" in the elaborate Christmas decorations he installs each year outside his home.

More than half the letters come from children who visited his house in Blossom Valley, which was decorated with 32,000 lights, a toy train and two sleighs. Some of the letters have come from as far away as Alabama and New York, he said.

McGuy and his family have moved north in the past year to a house near Almaden Plaza, but he expects the children will find their way to him.

Several nights each week before Christmas, McGuy stands in front of his house dressed as Santa Claus, visiting with the children who line up to talk to him.

Santa Claus is a cottage industry for McGuy, who loves Christmas and making children happy. He has plans for two more books of letters, including a collection of funny letters planned for Christmas of 195 titled "Even Santa Laughs Sometimes."

That same year, a Spanish language version of his first book is expected to be released.

After recouping his initial costs from publishing the book, McGuy plans to donate a portion of the proceeds to local school districts. In the past year, he has donated more than \$50,000 to San Jose and Sunnyvale schools to buy computers and hold special luncheons honoring students and he has donated \$10,000 to after-school sports programs.

McGuy said he also buys \$3,000 worth of presents at Christmas to give to children in downtown San Jose neighborhoods.

McGuy, who is married and has three children and two stepchildren, encouraged parents and children to read the book together and then discuss it.

"The book crosses all barriers," he said. "It's a family-oriented Christmas book, although the title's a downer."