

## During Great Depression, Kids Didn't Have Lengthy Wish List for Santa



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Another year has passed, and another volume of *Overlooked Orleans* has concluded. To write another article about Charlie Howard and his Santa Claus School is perhaps cliché for the Christmas season. Those years of perfecting the spirit of Santa, dating back to his childhood days when as “a short fat boy” his mother sewed a suit for him to play the role, brought about a more meaningful understanding to the holiday season. A man whose passions rested with the children, who anticipated the abundance of gifts and dolefully observed the quick passing of this festive time of year.

While perusing old issues of the *Orleans Republican*, I was drawn to a column which appeared during the month of December in which the newspaper accepted letters to Santa Claus for publication. The short notes written to Kris Kringle during the Great Depression reflect a gentle consciousness of the hardships associated with the time. Amidst the friendly but firm requests for the latest toy or the nicest doll came appeals for family support and gifts for siblings. I thought it might be worth sharing some of those stories this year.

“Dear Santa Claus, I am a little girl 2 ½ years old. I have long curls and blue eyes. Dear Santa, please bring me a big doll, a doll buggy and a choo choo train and some aggets. Thank you very much. Don't forget my brother Junior, my cousins Bobby and Richard DeCarlo. Your pal, DeLois Marie DeCarlo, 63 West Ave.” (1936).

“Dear Santa Claus, I am writing my letter to you for Christmas. I bet you are very busy and some of your little elves...I am going to ask for a nice little type writer and a real one too. And I want a sled. That is all I want because you have other children that want and need them...My name is Eleanor Louise Brooks and my age is 11 years old.” (1936)

“Dear Santa Claus, My name is Leona Marcks I am 11 years old. I have been a good girl and help my mother. I want shoes rubber gloves, my sister Frances is 8 years old. She want shoes rubber gloves, my brother Edward is 10 years old he want a hat, gloves. Peter is 5 years old he want a suit and stocking. Stanley is 4 years old and want suit and stocking. My baby brother Valentine is 1 ½ years old and want shoes and a suit and he want an orange. Thank you very much. Yours truly, Leona Marcks.” (1931)

“Dear Santa, We always rite you at Xmas but we wonder why you don’t bring us what we ask for, so this year I’m going to ask you again if you can find a doll buggy will you bring one for my little sister Marjorie she wants a buggy real bad also some shoes and rubbers size 12 shoes...please Santa try and think of us if you possibly can because Daddy has been sick so he can’t work and he don’t have enough money to buy us things at all now. We like oranges and candy too if you have some to spare...With love from Evelyn Durrant” (1933)

One can only imagine little Evelyn’s frustrations that her requests for gifts appeared to go unnoticed; thankfully she did not realize the impact of her father’s illness and work situation on the family’s Christmas plans. This is a season for being thankful for everything we have!