

Published January 6th, 2021

Santa and his elf bring much joy to Rheem Valley Manor neighborhood

By Diane Claytor



Elf Jeff Stone and Santa Ryan Aull with his two youngest elves, Zoe, 10 months and Carter, 2 1/2 years. Photos Sophie Aull

Before heading back to the North Pole to clean up his workshop, or traveling to the warm beaches of Florida for a well-deserved rest, Santa made one more trip through Moraga's Rheem Valley Manor on Christmas morning. He parked his sleigh on Fernwood and rode around with one of his favorite elves in a pristine, bright yellow 1932 Ford truck, delighting neighborhood kids of all ages.

The two Moraga residents, Santa Ryan Aull and elf Jeff Stone, agreed that this was one of the most joyous experiences of their lives. "We came back feeling so good," Stone stated.

The quickly planned neighborhood treat was the idea of Aull's wife, Sophie. She has a friend in San Diego whose husband drove around their housing development dressed as Santa, waving at kids. Seeing the pictures prompted Sophie Aull to convince her husband and his friend to do something similar. "Our wives agreed and

before you knew it, we were elf and Santa driving around," Stone said.

They decided on the route: Rheem Valley Manor because that's where both the Aull and Stone families live and where they have many friends. They picked the time: from 11 a.m. to noon on Christmas, "because families would be together and it's before nap time and after presents, so would fit into a nice window," Sophie Aull explained.

Costumes were obtained; Santa's came from a family member, the elf's was purchased. The beautifully restored 88-year-old truck belongs to Stone. Local friends were notified when Sophie Aull sent a text, announcing there was a rumor going around that Santa was planning a neighborhood appearance.

At the designated time, Aull and Stone boarded their "sleigh." Ryan Aull, concerned that no one would know they were coming, suggested Stone honk the horn. He started with short beeps and the more they drove, the more he leaned on the horn, Stone said. "We started seeing people peeking through blinds and shutters," Ryan Aull described, "and then all of a sudden, the door would open and families would come running out." Stone added, "You could just see the excitement on the kids' faces. It was really powerful."

Lafayette resident Kim Roth, spending Christmas at her Rheem Valley Manor childhood home, reported Santa's visit was "the absolute highlight of our toddler's day. He talked about it constantly and we watched the video I took three times before bed that night."

In real life, both Sophie and Ryan Aull work at Salesforce and Stone owns Diamond Construction, a residential construction company.

All three might now consider adding the title of "magician" to their resumes; as one social media poster proclaimed, "It was a little magic in a difficult year," while another declared, "And just like that, I believe."



Rheem Valley Manor residents greet Santa and his elf. Photos Sophie Aull

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA