

Elf Frank: Greetings and welcome to a very rushed edition of the North Pole Podcast. As Elf Crash and I discussed what we would present here today we debated whether what we have to share should have been put out in a North Pole Radio News report or via this podcast and we ultimately decided on the podcast because this is a sensitive topic that affects a lot of people. We're going to talk about the Elf on the Shelf and some new things we've learned about that whole thing. Joining me now to get started is Elf Crash Murphy. Crash, we've avoided talking about Elf on the Shelf because honestly those of us at the North Pole have never understood it.

Elf Crash: In our own defense, Frank, we're not alone in that. To much of the world the Elf on the Shelf tradition is just plain weird.

Elf Frank: I've read that. Why do you think some people love it while other people don't care for it?

Elf Crash: I think it's because it supports things Santa could never support. The idea is that elves come from the North Pole to homes of believers to promote Christmas cheer and to keep kids on the nice list. And all that flies in the face of what Santa believes.

Elf Frank: Santa doesn't believe in being nice?

Elf Crash: Of course Santa believes in being nice. He just doesn't keep a list of nice people. Or naughty people. We have always been very clear about that here at SantaUpdate.com. There are a lot of myths associated with Santa and that's one of the biggest ones, as you know, Frank. So the whole Elf on the Shelf thing begins under a mistaken idea and, I think, it promotes things that aren't really Christmas.

Elf Frank: What do you mean?

Elf Crash: Well, if Santa has a nice list and you're not on it, what does that make you? You see why Santa doesn't make lists like that? He would never do that. So any so-called elf who promotes that nonsense likely is wrong about other things too.

Elf Frank: Like what?

Elf Crash: Well, the Elf on the Shelf in many cases creates chaos. And any real elf knows that Santa would never allow that. The idea is that Elf on the Shelf is funny. But funny is not behaving badly. So yes, Elf on the Shelf has a lot of problems, Frank. That's why what you have uncovered is really disturbing to me.

Elf Frank: Should we break that news?

Elf Crash: Yes. It's time. I know it's Christmas. I know a lot of people out there have their elves in their homes and are doing whatever it is their tradition is with Elf on the Shelf. But we need to get the truth out there.

Elf Frank: Elf on the Shelf does have a story at the North Pole and it begins with an elf by the name of Horace Feeney, an elf who worked for many, many years in the Reindeer Operations Department.

Elf Crash: We have confirmed that or is that what this guy says?

Elf Frank: I confirmed it. Elf Victor, who is one of the oldest elves here at the North Pole and one of Santa's closest friends, I might add, runs the Reindeer Operations Department. When I started asking questions about Horace Feeney, Elf Victor brought me into his office to talk about him and to warn me about his story.

Elf Crash: Warn you? Why would he warn you? Is this guy a bad elf?

Elf Frank: No, he's not. He's a good person. I do want to make that really clear. This Elf on the Shelf thing has turned into something that some make out to be not-so-great but it didn't begin that way. It was an innocent thing meant to be kind and helpful. And I think Horace Feeney is kind and helpful.

Elf Crash: It sounds like this might be a good story then. But before you tell it, can you tell me, how much of this does Santa know and approve of?

Elf Frank: I discussed this all with Santa over Thanksgiving, Crash. He knows every bit of it. He already knew much of what I learned. He thought the story of Horace Feeney was dead and buried, never to be talked about again.

Elf Crash: So Santa doesn't approve?

Elf Frank: Santa approves. He does not endorse Elf on the Shelf. And it is important that people realize what that means.

Elf Crash: What does that mean?

Elf Frank: It means that Elf on the Shelf does not operate under the director, knowledge or approval of the North Pole or of Santa at all.

Elf Crash: Officially?

Elf Frank: Officially.

Elf Crash: So what does THAT mean?

Elf Frank: It means that anyone who has an elf on the shelf is on their own. They don't work for the North Pole and have no connection to the North Pole.

Elf Crash: That's going to hurt a lot of feelings, Frank.

Elf Frank: I know that. I know Santa knows that. We talked about how to tell this story and if we really should. Mrs. Claus weighed in. And some very influential elves also weighed in.

Elf Bernard. Elf Ed Zachary. Elf Victor. There are strong feelings with everyone.

Elf Crash: So why are we telling this story?

Elf Frank: While the truth here might upset some people Santa feels this thing has become big enough that it is doing more harm than good all on it's own. We have avoided this for 25 years or better and, honestly, I think Santa is tired of having to put people off about it. He's tired of having to answer for elves who in some cases are out of control. He doesn't think that is right and he'd rather operate more openly about it all so that people understand that if they have an elf they don't necessarily have a connection to Santa or the real North Pole.

Elf Crash: That's going to bring a lot of mail into the North Pole Post Office, Frank. Do you think the whole story will help people to understand?

Elf Frank: I am not sure, Crash. It's not a bad story. It's not a sad story. It's just a story that if people knew it they would think twice about allowing anyone into their homes, their lives and their Christmas who claim to be an elf.

Elf Crash: Can't Santa just put out a statement saying to not have Elf on the Shelf in their homes?

Elf Frank: No, Santa can't say that. Santa is very clear that it is not his place to tell anyone what they should and shouldn't do. Santa does not have that kind of control and he doesn't ever want to do something like that. That's one of his big worries about this whole thing. The Elf on the Shelf in many ways is used by some to coerce, to force specific behaviors and beliefs and traditions on believers and Santa definitely cannot support that.

Elf Crash: Have you met this guy, Elf Horace Feeney?

Elf Frank: Yes. And I'm considering putting him on the podcast at some point to tell his side of things, if he will agree to that and if there is interest out there in people who use Elf on the Shelf to ask questions of him.

Elf Crash: Interesting. So what's his story?

Elf Frank: As I said, Horace worked for many years as an elf in Reindeer Operations. Yes, he knows Elf Victor very well. They are good friends.

Elf Crash: You mean Horace Feeney is still alive? He's still an elf?

Elf Frank: He's a retired elf, Crash. He's a contemporary of Elf Victor, who as you know is pretty up there in age. Not many elves stay working for Santa when they reach the age that Victor is. But Elf Horace Feeney has been retired for better than 30 years now. He's still alive and he still lives at the North Pole.

Elf Crash: Wow. Does he run the whole Elf on the Shelf thing?

Elf Frank: No. He disavows it completely now. He's somewhat ashamed by what it has become.

Elf Crash: That's interesting. Why is he ashamed?

Elf Frank: Nearly 70 years ago Elf Horace Feeney became aware of a child in North America who was struggling with belief in Santa. Then this kid saw Rudolph's red nose on Christmas Eve and his whole mindset about Santa changed.

Elf Crash: Sounds normal enough, that happens every year it seems.

Elf Frank: Yes, but that's not the end of the story. This kid became a raving fan of Santa, flooding the North Pole with letters and wish lists. And Santa received them and honored those wishes the best he could until this kid turned about 11 years old and he began asking for things that were not only impossible for Santa to give him but very unrealistic for a child that age to have.

Elf Crash: That too happens every year.

Elf Frank: Yes, and as sometimes happens in that situation, when this 11-year old kid did not get what he wanted from Santa he turned very bitter. He was angry and he started sending mean letters to the North Pole. Long story short, he lost his belief in Santa.

Elf Crash: That sometimes happens too. A lot of believers lose belief if Santa doesn't bring them what they demand.

Elf Frank: Yes, the following Christmas, this child was now 12 years old, and Santa stopped by his house, as usual. Only this time, the kid had a plan to kidnap Santa, which of course, didn't work but it somehow caused some sort of slight injury to Rudolph.

Elf Crash: Did he mean it?

Elf Frank: I don't think so. I think it was an accident but the whole thing came to the attention of Elf Horace Feeney of the Reindeer Operations Department, an elf who has a big love for Rudolph as one of his caretakers and Elf Horace took it on himself to reach out to this kid.

Elf Crash: Oh boy. We're not suppose to do that as elves.

Elf Frank: Right. And Horace told me specifically he knew he was doing the wrong thing but he only intended to talk to the kid so he would understand.

Elf Crash: Yeah, that's not good. Did anyone – like Elf Victor or Santa – know that Horace did that?

Elf Frank: No. He kept it a secret. For many, many years.

Elf Crash: He kept talking to the kid?

Elf Frank: They became good friends, Crash. And Santa wasn't even aware of it for years.

Elf Crash: What about the boy's parents?

Elf Frank: Evidently they didn't know either.

Elf Crash: Oh wow. That's breaking all the big rules, Frank.

Elf Frank: Yes it is. And it gets a little worse. Elf Horace began to visit this child every Christmas and he started doing a lot of things the Elf on the Shelf is known for in some places. He put an elf doll in the house and told the kid he was being watched and that if he was naughty he wouldn't get anything for Christmas.

Elf Crash: Why would he do that?

Elf Frank: I think this child had some other problems. Trouble in school, trouble in the home. I don't know. But Horace swears he was trying to help him, to be his friend and to make his Christmas better. He wasn't trying to make a big thing happen.

Elf Crash: So...how did all this turn into Elf on the Shelf.

Elf Frank: Horace was found out. An elf, whose name was Elf Daisy, saw what Horace was doing somehow and she wanted to do the same thing. She wanted a child to take care of over Christmas and disbelief in Santa. Daisy told Horace she was going to tell on him if he didn't get a reindeer or two who could take Daisy to the house of someone else that she could be friends with.

Elf Crash: He didn't!

Elf Frank: He did. He gave into her. And she told someone else, another elf, who wanted to do the same thing. And the next thing you know it expanded to several elves.

Elf Crash: How did this go undetected?

Elf Frank: Horace retired. He stopped working for Elf Victor in the Reindeer Operations Department and he stopped being the Elf on the Shelf to this young friend. Daisy and the other elves involved wrote a book or a story about their unauthorized elf adventures and it kind of took off from there – all unaided and unapproved by anyone at the North Pole.

Elf Crash: And now it's so big nobody can control it, nobody can stop it and nobody can make these so-called elves do the right thing.

Elf Frank: Correct. Among these elves there is no direction. No leadership. Nobody in charge. No rules. No Elf Code. No Elf Oath.

Elf Crash: So what do we do, Frank? What does Elf Horace today say about what Elf on the Shelf has become?

Elf Frank: Elf Horace has ideas. He feels bad but he also feels this can be fixed. He thinks Santa and the North Pole should at least try.

Elf Crash: Well, I'd like to hear those ideas. What about those people who have this unauthorized elf tradition in their homes that has happened for these many years and it has been a good thing?

Elf Frank: Elf Horace thinks they should be grateful they got a good elf. And I would note that this is true in many, many cases. That the elf tradition has been fun in many homes. Elf Horace thinks we should focus on those and work with those who might be identified as an elf on the shelf who doesn't do the right things.

Elf Crash: In a way, I guess you can compare these guys to other remote working elves we have out there, like the millions of tracker elves who are freelancers.

Elf Frank: Well, kind of. But here's the difference. A freelance tracker elf is in their own home. They don't go to the homes of others and pretend to represent Santa. And these elf on the shelf guys do that. In most cases, and we did research this, we find that better than 98% of the elf on the shelf elves say they speak for Santa and represent the North Pole. And Santa does not like that at all.

Elf Crash: How do we get that under control? That's just one problem I see Frank. You want to know what's worse? The number of believers out there who write in to us to say their elf just doesn't come any more. They write in and it's very sad. They want us to find them, talk to them, and send them back. But we can't do that because there's no organization for these guys. They are all independent and work for themselves. We don't even know who they are. Most of the time they are using made up names. If we do find one of these guys they cannot remember even how many homes they have been to. It's a mess, Frank. We'd

like to help, and I think now, after hearing Horace's story, we'd like to really help out people who are having problems with their Elf on the Shelf.

Elf Frank: Santa has some thoughts. Elf Sandy Claus in the Department of Elf Resources has some ideas, too. Elf Ed Zachary is very opinionated about this, as are a number of the others. This is getting talked about a lot.

Elf Crash: What do we say to the person who had an elf who was active and they aren't any more? How do we help those who feel so bad?

Elf Frank: I think we tell them the truth about Elf on the Shelf. I think we try to help them to understand that the only Elf they need to be concerned with is Santa. That's what Elf Ed Zachary said to me after I met with him for 7 hours to talk about this.

Elf Crash: You had a 7-hour meeting with Elf Ed Zachary about Elf on the Shelf?

Elf Frank: Well, yes. Remember, Elf Ed Zachary is the Defender of Santa Claus. He's answered the worst letters for years and years. He feels a lot of things about Elf on the Shelf.

Elf Crash: Wow, Frank. This is kind of a big deal and I don't know we if we should do anything about this with the crisis in Santa's workshop being such a big problem this year.

Elf Frank: I think everyone agrees with that, Crash. This is a next year problem. Santa feels that way too.

Elf Crash: So what do we do for now?

Elf Frank: I think we learn. I think we gather feedback. I think we ask our listeners and those who have an Elf on the Shelf what they think. I think right now the best thing we can do is to just listen and share.

Elf Crash: Well, how exactly do we do that now and who's got time for that with everything going on. I don't mean to be mean about this, Frank, but right now with just a few weeks to go with Christmas, we can't be chasing down silly elves.

Elf Frank: I think Santa has a good idea. He has put the project in the hands of the Department of Elf Resources. Elf Sandy Claus is going to start with a survey to be hosted at an Official North Pole website called ElfHQ.com.

Elf Crash: Ok, that works, I guess, if these guys really are elves.

Elf Frank: Well, we don't really know what they are and right now Elf Sandy has told me we just want to get more information. So she's going to put out a survey and see what people think. Next year, hopefully long in advance of Christmas, there might be an effort to register

these elves and get them actually vetted by the North Pole and maybe put some order to their ranks and what they do.

Elf Crash: That sounds like a really big job, Frank.

Elf Frank: I agree. They are going to call it the Elf Project. The survey Elf Sandy will put out will be for everyone. Believers, parents, even elves themselves and I mean the Elf on the Shelf guys. They have to have a voice too.

Elf Crash: Gosh, Frank. Do we even know if these are even real elves?

Elf Frank: No.

Elf Crash: Do we know if they have taken the Elf Oath and live by the Elf Code?

Elf Frank: No.

Elf Crash: Are they safe? Have they had all their shots? Do we know where they come from, what training they've had?

Elf Frank: We are starting at ground zero. We know absolutely nothing. We're trying to create order where there has been none.

Elf Crash: There's no way this can ever get to 100%, Frank.

Elf Frank: I don't think there is that expectation. Just like there are a lot of people out there pretending to be Santa and doing a bad job of it, we have to expect there will be people out there pretending to be elves too. That will always be true.

Elf Crash: But a genuine elf – an Elf on the Shelf who is a good one – should embrace this process and become legit, right?

Elf Frank: Right. We are hoping that is true. That as word of this spreads the those working for the Elf on the Shelf thing will come to the Elf Project, get registered and start to actually take direction from Santa, work with Operation Merry Christmas, and do their part to advance the cause of Christmas.

Elf Crash: Did Santa say he had a message for these elves right now?

Elf Frank: He did. There is much Santa wants to say but right he doesn't feel it is the time to say it. He feels anyone calling themselves an elf right now needs to immediately align with the North Pole, take the Elf Oath and live the Elf Code, then chip in the help where they are asked to help. Santa does not want to disrupt plans those elves might have with the families they are serving now. He wants good things to move forward. But he does want it known this whole thing is going to change.



Elf Crash: Hopefully all those guys can encourage becoming a tracker elf to help track Santa for Santa this year.

Elf Frank: That's the spirit of this, Crash. Let's help them become legit and doing something good.

Elf Crash: What interesting times we live in.

Elf Frank: Indeed, Crash, indeed. We thank you for listening to the North Pole Podcast and we encourage you to find the survey going up soon at [ElfHQ.com](http://ElfHQ.com) to help Santa solve this issue with the Elf on the Shelf. On behalf of my partner, Elf Crash Murphy and the entire news team here at [SantaUpdate.com](http://SantaUpdate.com) I am Elf Frank Myrrh thanking you for listening to the North Pole Podcast.