

Chasing Santa

Elf Frank Myrrh: Greetings once again from the studios of Kringle Radio, we welcome you to this all new episode of the North Pole Podcast. I am Elf Frank Myrrh of North Pole Radio News. In this episode we talk with Elf Crash Murphy about his role as an Eye in the Sky reporter chasing Santa on Christmas Eve. In this unique job Elf Crash captures the imaginations of millions just by the nature of what he does. He joins us live now. Crash, are you ready to answer questions about following Santa on Christmas Eve?

Elf Crash Murphy: Sure, Frank. But let's not make this about me. Let's make this about the job and Operation Merry Christmas.

Elf Frank: For some people what you do is kind of personal, Crash. What kid doesn't want to be with Santa on Christmas Eve and help him do what he does?

Elf Crash: I know I'm lucky to have this job, Frank. I do. But it's not as glamorous as people think. I follow Santa, but I'm not with him. I see Santa, but I don't go through what he goes through. When we're up there and he's working like crazy we don't have time to talk. If it weren't for Kringle Radio on Christmas Eve I might actually even say the whole thing is boring.

Elf Frank: I know you have radio contact, because that is how I talk to you on the news every Christmas Eve. I assume that is the way you and Santa also talk when you do?

Elf Crash: Yes, we're both pre-wired for sound, Frank. It can be noisy up there, so in Santa's suit and in my flight gear we've got all we need with wind resistant microphones, ear buds, and constant power supply to keep communication lines open. But only when Santa is flying in open space one place to another between stops does he ever speak to me and even then it is only if he needs to. Most of the time Santa is silent because he's got a lot on his mind, Frank. All those kids and their presents and wish lists, the reindeer, the weather, where he's going next, the name of the dog at the house he's going to – Santa has a lot more to think about up there than me and what I'm thinking in the sleigh behind him. And I don't speak unless I'm spoken to, Frank. That upholds our journalistic standard.

Elf Frank: What do you mean?

Elf Crash: You talk about it all the time, Frank. We report the news. We don't insert ourselves into it. We're background – almost invisible except for the truth that we observe. We don't want to become part of what we're reporting. So I go up there, I observe. I share

what I see but my communication with Santa is pretty sparse. I mean, I'll help him. I'll do anything he asks me to do. But my primary job up there is to report the news and I do that by staying out of the story.

Elf Frank: Have there been times where Santa has said, "Hey, Crash – lend me a hand here?"

Elf Crash: Not that I can remember. If he asks me anything it's along the lines of, "Hey, can you ask Flight Command where they put my binoculars" or something dumb like that. We do talk about the weather a bit just because we're both up there flying in it. And because I am the International Director of Santa Trackers he sometimes asks me to pull strings in certain parts of the world with Elf Supervisors and trackers for special information. But no – I don't land. I don't go down chimneys. I don't have anyone leaving cookies out for me. I go up there and I stay up there until Santa gets home.

Elf Frank: We forget sometimes about how long you're up there, Crash. You usually head out on the final test flight of Santa's sleigh – which usually ends a few hours before Santa takes off. That flight can last from minutes to hours and you usually take that flight. Then you come back and launch after Santa leaves and you follow up for more than 30 hours. It's has to be exhausting. Why do you always go up on that Final Test flight?

Elf Crash: I know it makes for insane hours but you have to remember the sleigh they fly on that final test flight is the actual sleigh that Santa gets in. These aren't models or prototypes any more. The last test flight is in Santa's actual sleigh. And it is the only time I ever get to sit in it. That final test flight is for me to understand Santa's perspective. I get to sit in his seat. And even though I'm not a professional sleigh pilot I get enough experience in that sleigh by flying it a little bit to know how to report when Santa flies. I look forward to that flight every year, Frank, and I consider it critical to what I do.

Elf Frank: So you get into Santa's real sleigh – only to return to your own sleigh, which I've heard you call a bucket of bolts, to follow Santa.

Elf Crash: I haven't called it that for a long time. My first couple of sleighs in this job were like that though. Old clunkers. Back then they weren't concerned about the guy following Santa. It's a little different story now.

Elf Frank: Tell us about your sleigh.

Elf Crash: My sleigh now is one Santa used just a few years ago. You know, he gets just one trip around the world in a sleigh and then it goes into a museum. So it's not like I'm flying around in a piece of junk now, Frank. They made modifications to it to accommodate my job and what I do. It's light. It's fast. But it's also top of the line now. Seats are all leather,

they're heated and cooled. Plush. I've got a total sound system, which I use quite a bit and since I'm not carrying around presents for everyone I put a little bed in the back of it. It's like an RV in the sky, Frank.

Elf Frank: A bed?

Elf Crash: Well, yeah and why not? Flying around in an empty sleigh is kind of boring, Frank.

Elf Frank: Have you ever used that bed?

Elf Crash: Not really. I got a little airsick due to some turbulence over the Philippines a few years back and I laid down back there for about 6 minutes when Santa got to Siberia. And that's the only time I've ever used it.

Elf Frank: Do you fly on that sleigh at other times? Is that like your personal sleigh now?

Elf Crash: No. I almost never use it at other times, Frank. Technically that sleigh belongs to Flight Command, just like Santa's sleigh. They have charge over it, they make the decisions for it, they do the maintenance and install any new or needed gear. There's a whole committee now and a rule book for just my sleigh, Frank. They handle it with kid gloves, just like Santa's sleigh. North Pole Security is part of that, as you can imagine. There are a handful of special sleighs like that in the North Pole sleigh fleet, Frank.

Elf Frank: How many other special sleighs like that are there?

Elf Crash: There are three kinds of sleighs just for Santa and all of them are overseen by Flight Command, Frank. There's his around town sleigh, his long range sleigh, and then his Christmas Eve sleigh. They are all equipped with the very best in technology and safety features. Mrs. Claus has a sleigh that is all her own. And there are several executive sleighs for department heads and other important elves that are all maintained under the authority of Flight Command.

Elf Frank: We have a listener named Elf Blaine who constantly sends us questions, Crash.

Elf Crash: Oh I know Elf Blaine. Good dude, Frank. Out in Sector 5. He's an excellent tracker.

Elf Frank: Yes, Elf Blaine says the while he understands some of the special features of Santa's sleigh he wants to know about the unique features about your sleigh that might make it a little different.

Elf Crash: I appreciate that question because my sleigh is unique and it has capabilities in some small ways that Santa's sleigh doesn't.

Elf Frank: Really, like what?

Elf Crash: Well, cameras and tracking equipment for one. Santa's sleigh doesn't have all that because he's the star of the show. He's the one everyone is watching. Santa doesn't track a thing. My sleigh is completely all about tracking Santa. I've got equipment that's made to record everything Santa's sleigh is going through. There are cameras and sound recorders and critical electronic measuring devices that precisely log Santa's sleigh, the weather conditions, the status of the reindeer – all in real time on a constant basis. It's a steady stream of data that flows and they look at what that equipment on my sleigh records all year long. It's the basis of Santa's new sleigh design every spring, Frank.

Elf Frank: Do you have to work that equipment while you fly in your sleigh?

Elf Crash: No, my sleigh is like a floating laboratory and Flight Command has a number of elves who come with me to handle that work and other things. I don't have time to do that stuff. My job is different.

Elf Frank: Okay, I guess that's reasonable enough. So what is your routine in your sleigh, how does one function as an Eye in the Sky reporter?

Elf Crash: It keeps changing. When I go back and listen to some of those first recordings doing this job I laugh a lot Frank because it was just you and me talking about what I saw in a literal moment. It was all first time and new. Well, now it's not. I've done it before. I understand better what people listening on the radio want to know about it. It takes a lot of preparation.

Elf Frank: How do you prepare?

Elf Crash: I'm in a constant state of preparation. I have taken to attending as many of the meetings that take place over the months of January through May about what new design features they can add to the sleigh. I watch videos of Santa's past performance, I talk to flight analysts and planners. I talk to each department head about what they are doing, right down the how packages are wrapped in the Wrapping department. I've learned to seek out details in a fine degree because anything can through things off course on Christmas Eve.

Elf Frank: Like what?

Elf Crash: Well, bad information. One of the reasons we have tracker elves is so that we can take advantage of those eyes on the ground where those elves live. We got a bad feed via Flight Command that came from Norad, of all people, about weather in Scotland. Our trackers were telling us one thing and Norad was telling us something else. Well, Norad is pretty big, that's US military and everyone gives them credit but in this case they were wrong and it made us hesitate. If we had listened to them Santa would have gone through

an epic storm in the North Atlantic. Our trackers in Sector 3 changed that in short order and Santa was able to avoid that storm. And because he did that he got to people faster. All of Sectors 4 and 5 that night could have been affected by that.

Elf Frank: Norad, eh?

Elf Crash: Oh, I know. I know.

Elf Frank: Well, honestly Crash we deal with a lot of people who track Santa through Norad and they aren't there until December to answer their questions. I have to wonder if all that activity with Norad doesn't affect things more on Christmas Eve when you track Santa.

Elf Crash: It does and if I'm being honest I'm getting tired of Norad. People, especially those living in Sector 5 where Norad is based, treat it like gospel truth and it's laughable sometimes. Do you know that last December Norad told people Santa was in the Philippines and it was only 7pm there? They weren't even close and that happens all the time.

Elf Frank: Well, if they're so good, being tied to the US government and all, how can they get things so wrong?

Elf Crash: Because it's not really a serious endeavor for them, Frank. They're having fun, having a Christmas party. They use radar tracking systems but they refuse outright to integrate with North Pole Flight Command because they don't care and they don't have to care, Frank. They aren't responsible for anything that Santa does or if anything happens to Santa and the reindeer. I wish they would just come out with a statement telling the truth.

Elf Frank: What truth?

Elf Crash: That they aren't anything but amateurs guessing about where Santa is. They aren't using their best technology. They aren't chasing Santa like I do, that's for sure. It's just play. Pretend even. And it confuses a lot of people out there, it really does.

Elf Frank: How do we solve a problem like Norad?

Elf Crash: We keep doing our jobs, Frank. You and I me. I follow Santa and report, you talk to people all over the world, eyewitnesses and such that see Santa, and you clue into the elves that Santa works with to bring Christmas. That's the real tracking of Santa that goes on.

Elf Frank: Ok, we carry on then. Focusing on North Pole truth, the truth of Santa, the truth of tracking Santa and getting the story right. Safe travels, Crash, and we'll see you on the news in a day or two. From the North Pole, where things are shaping up nicely for Operation Merry Christmas, this is Elf Frank Myrrh thanking you for listening to the North Pole Podcast.

