

Christmas

In the mid 1980s, Bette Learned, a friend, and I started answering letters from Santa.

It wasn't until Dec. 17, 1987, that we received a letter that was a real heart-breaker.

It was from an eight-year-old girl living in Paonia.

Following is her letter:

"Dear Santa Claus,

We have moved AGAIN so you probably won't be able to find our trailer. For my 8th birthday December 24 I would like a BB gun. For Christmas I would like a talking Mother Goose or Alf.

My parents spent all their mony for a long time moving us here so Dad could work. But he's been off a lot' cause the skidder broke down. He has to drive a long way so it costs a lot for gas. I might not get a birthday or Christmas present from my parents.

Mom works 2 nights at the nursing home but she buys food. I'm not sure I believe in you anymore.

Love,

Roxy

P.S. Our lovebird died 12-12-87 and my mom is so sad and wants a new baby lovebird. I'd like for our family to have that even better than presents just for me.

The first thing I did was contact the school was Roxy attending. I asked her teacher to check with Roxy's mother to find out if it would be all right to if we fulfilled Roxy's wishes.

The next day the teacher phoned me and told me her parents had no problem with what we wanted to do.

After getting the OK, I immediately went around to all the departments at the Sentinel to see what we could get together in six days.

The Daily Sentinel family kicked into high gear. Then Publisher George Orbanek supplied Roxy with the BB gun and a good supply of ammunition.

I don't how or where Bill Pewters, the promotions person for The Sentinel, came up with an Alf. All I know is that on Tuesday, Dec. 22, Bill came up to my desk with a talking Alf. Alf was very popular that year, and it was not easy to find one.

The Sentinel press crew came up with the money for a \$250 gift certificate for Roxy's family. Volley Teddrick, a pressman, gave the family a baby lovebird and cage from his mother.

The magic of Christmas didn't stop there. I had no idea how we were going to get Santa's gifts to Paonia or how we were going to get them delivered without Roxy finding out. I found the name and number of the owners of the trailer park where Roxy and her family lived. When I phoned the owner she said that she would talk to Roxy's mom and see what she could work out. She phoned me back and said that it was going to work out perfectly on Christmas Eve.

Roxy and her family were going to a program at the school, and Roxy's mom would leave the door unlocked. The trailer park's owner had a granddaughter who was headed for Paonia on Christmas Eve . She would stop by The Sentinel on the afternoon of Dec. 24 and pick up Santa's stash. When the coast was clear, they would deliver for Santa.

A few days after Christmas I-- or I should say Santa-- received a thank you from Roxy with a hand-drawn picture of her dad holding the birdcage, her mom with Squeaky, the lovebird, on her shoulder and Roxy holding Alf and her BB gun. In the note she said she knew Santa was real.

Her mother wrote a note too telling Santa that this was the first Christmas she had seen Roxy so happy.

Since then, every year at Christmas I have thought of Roxy and the gifts she gave me that year-- the gifts of hope and appreciation.