

THE CHIMNEY

FROM SANTA'S VIEWPOINT

by

Bob Mulloy

(This yarn is for those inspectors with insight regarding chimney problems. Enjoy the tale, but consider writing a report based on the clues within the story.)

Santa looked down over the sleepy town of Grafton, shouting HO-HO-HO merry Christmas! Lets travel along with Santa and listen to his observations as he makes one of his famous trips down the chimney.

There it is, the last house on my list - the Caldwell residence. I like the size of that dormer, it offers lots of room for my sleigh and all the reindeer. Easy there Rudolph, bring us in for a soft landing, we don't want to scuff up those shingles. Careful of that antennae mounted on the chimney, a thing like that could ruin Christmas!

Just look at that chimney. Wouldn't you think someone would do an annual safety inspection of at least fix the chimney above the roof. Darn thing is even shorter than last year, not even up to my knees! Loose bricks & mortar all over the roof. Think I'll just step back and sit on that nearby ridge and take a little rest. Good old Santa is pooped!

The sky sure is pretty tonight. Yup, here comes the snow starting right on time. Got to have a white Christmas for the children after all. Lets see, which pocket did I put that list in? I have to see who has been naughty or nice. But first, I have to wipe the snow off these glasses to see. Found the list. Now what was that name again? Oh yeah, Caldwell! According to this wish list, Bob wants a new mag light. I think I'll leave him a new trowel instead - just look at the way that chimney is leaning!

Well, back to work, no rest for the weary. Somehow I have to get down that chimney and deliver these toys. No rain cap in the way, just some loose cement to be careful of. Hey Rudolph, this ones a tight squeeze, please pass me that bag of toys when I get down there.

Here we go, left foot first for good luck you know!

Whoa! What do we have here? On your way little raccoon, I'll only be a little while and the chimney is all yours! Gee, sitting here looking way down that hole sure makes me dizzy, but thankfully no one will ever know that I'm afraid of heights. At least I won't catch the seat of my pants on that flue liner; the top edge is well below the top of the chimney. Here we go, right leg in

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and down we gooooooooooooooooooooo!

Rip! That figures, another damaged suit. Boy will I catch hell when I get back to the north pole. I must have snagged my pants on that off-set joint in the flue liner - what a way to build a chimney! Don't like the look of that vertical crack either. All this soot is a good lubricant to ease my descent. A-chew!!!

Just a litter further down and I can stand up on that smoke shelf. Made it, but it sure is dark in here. I need my own mag light now. If people only knew what I go through. Here I am standing in this narrow chimney flue balancing on a ledge and I have to bend over to lift the whole damper frame out of the way. No one but Santa could perform this magic act! Wow, that adjacent flue tile sure is hot! I wonder what that smell is?

It figures, the damper is rusted closed and this old loose brick behind it doesn't help much either. Good thing I carry one of the elf's hammers with me. Just a few taps should free things up. Tap, tap, tap - that did it! Just one step down to the firebox and into the room. Lucky, no screen or glass doors in the way. Gee, a guy could twist an ankle on one of those loose hearth bricks.

Yo up there, Rudolph! Lower down that sac of toys! Zoom, whoosh crash! I said lower down the sac, not toss it down the chimney! Now look what you've done, there is soot everywhere! What a mess! To bad Santa can't curse! Yo up there, Rudolph, send down the shop vac!

I've been cleaning for an hour now, got to hurry before morning arrives. Whoops, I almost forgot, got to eat the milk & cookies. Milk & cookies, milk & cookies, just once I'd like to find a happy meal or a candy bar! Yo up there, Rudolph! Who's turn for the chow, I'll send it up?

One last look around before I go home for a years rest. Lets see, the presents are in place, the list is complete and the tree looks beautiful. Time to go.

Back to the fireplace & missing ash dump door. That soft brick and hole in the rear wall of the firebox makes a great first step up. Gee, I didn't see all those water stains before. They must have been hidden by all the soot. Now let me think, what were those magic words? "Click your heels three times and" No that's not it. All I need is finger on the side of my nose and up I go! Yo up there, Rudolph - lower down the rope!

[Back HOME](#)