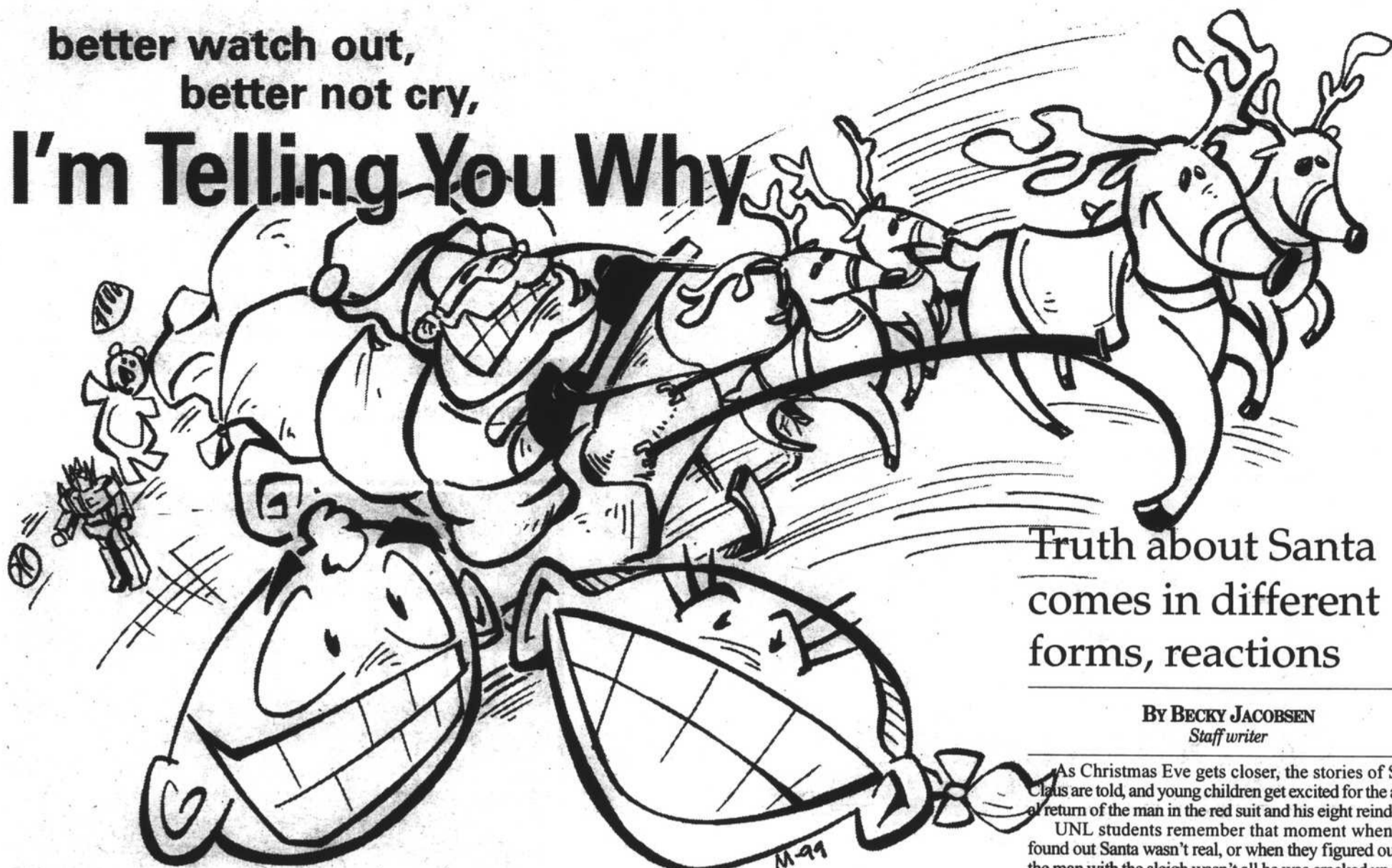


better watch out,
better not cry,
I'm Telling You Why



MATT HANEY/DN

**Truth about Santa
comes in different
forms, reactions**

BY BECKY JACOBSEN
Staff writer

As Christmas Eve gets closer, the stories of Santa Claus are told, and young children get excited for the annual return of the man in the red suit and his eight reindeer.

UNL students remember that moment when they found out Santa wasn't real, or when they figured out that the man with the sleigh wasn't all he was cracked up to be.

"I wasn't told that Santa wasn't real," said Audrey Bartholomew, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln freshman. "I compared my mom's handwriting and figured it out for myself."

Carmen Barnes was told the harsh truth, and then told to disguise what she knew was real.

"My mom told me that he wasn't real and to act like he was when my friends talked about him," Barnes said.

Being told Santa wasn't real is not the only way students learned the harsh truth about their childhood gift-giver.

Some were smart enough to figure it out on their own, even at a young age.

"When I was 6, I got a bike. From then on I knew that Santa wasn't real because there was no way in heck that he would be able to get that bike down the chimney," said Shane Lavy, a senior psychology major.

Even after being told, a small amount of students hold fast to the belief that Santa is alive and well.

"I still believe in Santa Claus," said Lee Illingsworth, 21, with a laugh.

Yet others cling to the reality of Santa for their younger siblings.

"I have to believe in Santa Claus," said Jennifer Krecklow, a freshman music major. "I have a 7-year-old sister who lives for his Christmas Eve visit."

Santa Claus was unavailable for comment on what he felt about the unbelievers.

Santa Claus is a Christmas tradition, but not many people know where the jolly red giant and his story originated.

The figure on whom the red-suited benefactor is based came from the ancient Near East. St. Nick's popularity differs from region to region: In the East his name appears on seals, and in the West his special charges are small children.

The "Santa Claus" tradition came later, when northern Europeans started giving presents in his name.

Settlers of New Amsterdam, N.Y., brought the custom to America. The story is passed on from generation to generation, each generation losing faith in the once anticipated return of the man in the red suit.

The tradition is kept alive for young children, and the custom remains animate for following generations.

"When I was 6, I got a bike. From then on I knew that Santa wasn't real because there was no way in heck that he would be able to get that bike down the chimney."

-Shany Lavy
UNL senior

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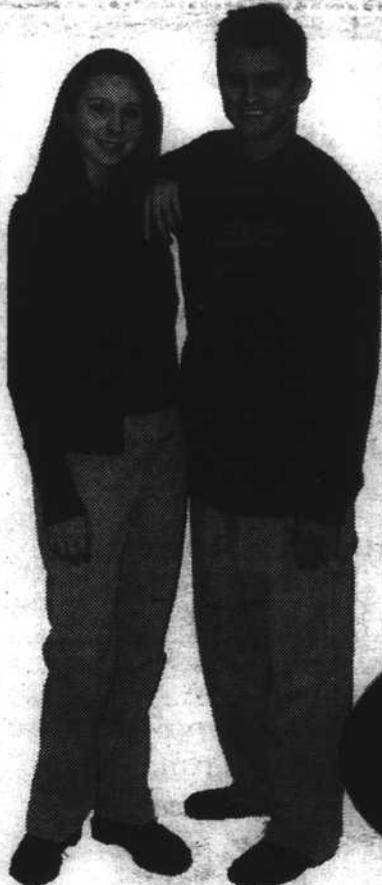
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