

PATRICK J. KELLY

World's Biggest Cop, But An Even Bigger Santa Claus

Robert A. Hageman

Patrick Joseph Kelly (Pat) came into this world on July 31, 1891. He was born in Summit. Pat had three sisters (Katherine, Mary, and Esther) and a brother (Nicholas). Their home was located at 242 Morris Avenue.

World's Biggest Cop

Growing up in Summit, Pat joined the Summit Police Department in 1917. At the time, his 6'5" frame supported 207 pounds. Five years later, 1922, he married Mary Lynch. They had no children. Their home was located at 361 Springfield Avenue.

Pat served twenty-one years as a policeman in Summit, reaching the rank of sergeant before retiring in 1938.

During his tenure in the police department his weight ballooned to 433 pounds. He was known as the "world's biggest cop" and his gigantic size caused very few to dispute this claim.

A True Santa Claus

Pat's true claim to fame in Summit's history however, was his role as Santa Claus and the work he did for children at Christmas. Pat played Santa until the age of seventy years. He was Santa for churches, schools, civic organizations and the Chamber of Commerce annual Christmas program.

More profound, and simply a wonderful contribution to the community, was his work with children. He was able to obtain toys (some new, many old) by personally soliciting the police and fire departments, the Elks and the Animal Welfare League's annual rummage sale. In turn, Pat, along with his wife, Mary, would repair the toys and distribute them at Christmas.

Pat was also able to make an arrangement with the Post Office, whereby the letters written to Santa Claus would be handed over to him. In turn, Pat would personally answer these letters either by mail or a phone call.

He was truly a "real Santa Claus".

Other Community Activities

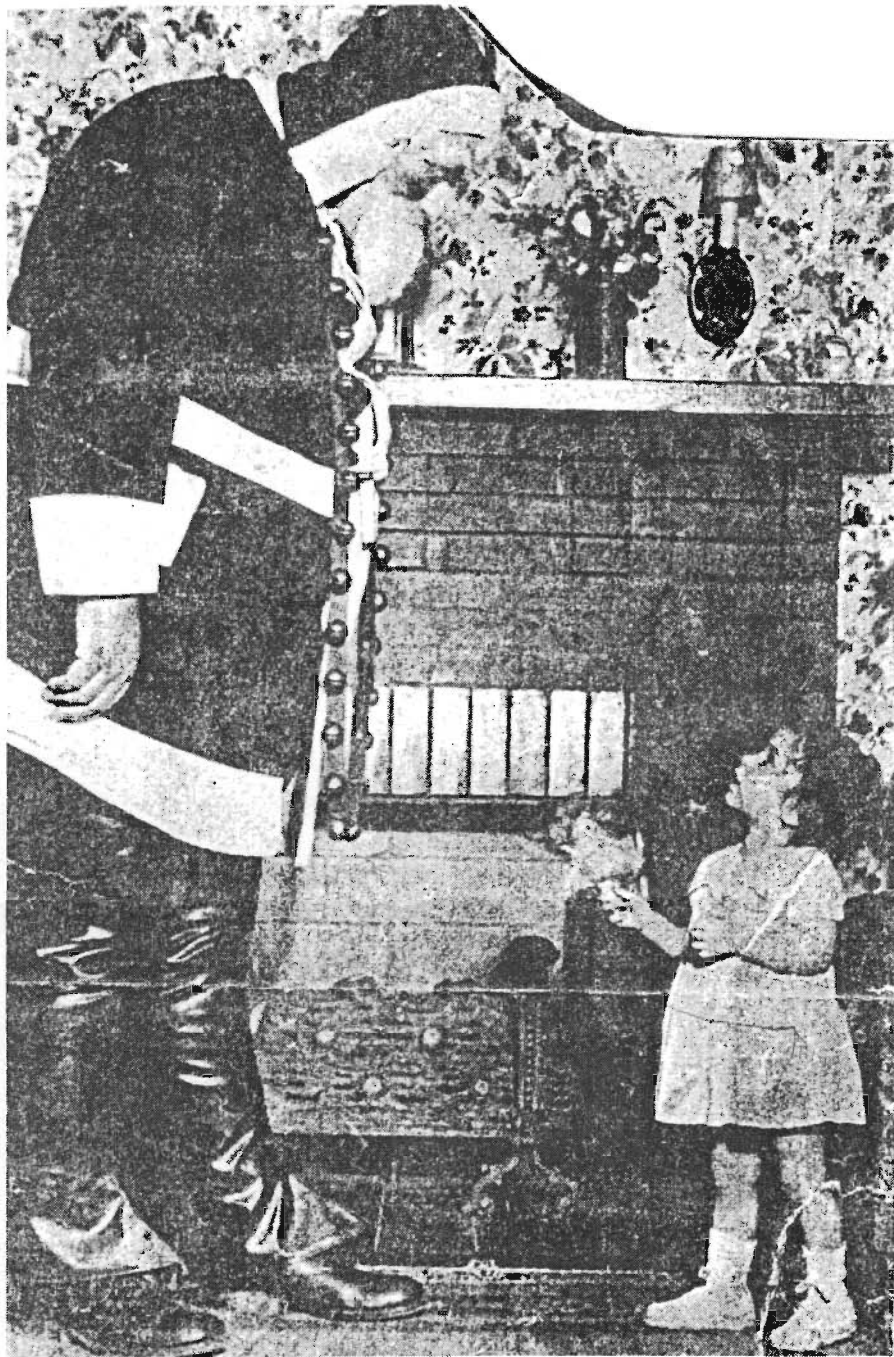
Pat was active in the local Elks Lodge, eventually becoming its secretary. He was also a member of the Old Guard and St. Teresa's Holy Name Society.

1964

Patrick Kelly died in February, 1964 in his home at 361 Springfield Avenue. He was 72 years old and his weight had dropped below 200 pounds.

The man who made many children happy was a true role model for life. He is buried in the parish cemetery of St. Teresa's.

Author's Note: Thank you to Harold Ahern, Board Member, for much of the research input that went into this and the Courtot article.



Pat Kelly being surveyed by two-and-a-half year old Elaine Crouma