

StoryCorps Interview at Octavia Fellin Public Library

Emerald Tanner interviews her uncle, Juan Delgado- a longtime Gallup, NM resident- about Juan's role as Santa Claus for more than thirty years.

Juan Delgado: There's so many memories of Gallup but, I've always been a people's person. I love people and I seemed to have always fallen into the right places.

Emerald Tanner: My favorite memory of you is you being Santa Claus. I remember being a little girl and it was Christmas Eve and you would always come to our house when you got done with all your Christmas gigs. So, talk a little bit about how you got into being Santa Claus.

JD: I don't know how I got into it! But I started doing Santa Claus and nobody knew me in town when I first started. I used to stand on the corners at intersections and give out candy. And then I started going to the restaurants, and to the bars and all that. I've been doing Santa Claus for about 32 years. And now I get house calls and private parties and all that now. I still enjoy it after 32 years. Come August, I start to grow my beard and I do that every year. I just love it.

I was at Kentucky Fried- I was giving candy- as they drive up I was giving candy canes. And I wore this ring – I always wore it- and I put my hands on the windowsill of the car and my grandkid Christian, he just kept looking at me, you know, and I said Merry Christmas and I gave him candy. And then he looks up there and touches my hand and says, "Grandpa!" One of my favorite moments.

ET: (laughs) Gave you away. Well, I remember, you know, you're a little girl, you're 7, 8 years old, you're just waiting for Christmas morning. My family always hosted a big Christmas party so there was, you know, 20-30 people there every year and I remember at the end of the night - and to this day it doesn't feel like Christmas- unless Uncle John comes in, in his Santa suit, and he's ready for me to pour him a drink. That's Christmas for me. I always remember kind of threatening the other kids on the playground saying "oh well you better behave because, my uncle, he's Santa Claus you know". So, that's something that I know for me has always been special and that's the first thing I think of when I think of Uncle John is he's Santa. He's always doing for the kids. Always doing for the community.