

believe it

Ho, ho, hold on!

Santa Claus in the summer? Actually, jolly St. Nicholas is around town 365 days a year.

Santa Claus Ambassadors — Santa, Mrs. Claus and elves — is a group dedicated to enhancing the spirit of Christmas. The Central California chapter, No. 6, of Fraternal Order of Real Bearded Santas includes Fresno, Madera, Kings, Tulare and Kern counties.

Upon request, Santa will make his way, along with the dreaded Naughty or Nice List, to an event in the area — during and beyond Christmas season.

"We all have similar passions that seem to draw us together and we enjoy each other's company," says Barry Walzberg, president of the Central California Chapter.

You can imagine the stir it creates when the



group meets at various restaurants to discuss important issues. A whole room full of white-bearded men who look startlingly like the big guy can really make an impression on young and old alike — no matter what the month.

Topics for discussion? The best products to maintain healthy beards, good places to have suits cleaned and strategies to help children overcome their fear of Santa.

Sit yourself down

Worst table in the house? Or the best? You decide.



Famous Dave's has a small table hidden from view — perfectly fit for two, snug and quiet. But customers can't request the "worst table in the house." General manager Lupe Muniz

says the table — used during peak hours — is similar to a cul-de-sac. Deep. Hidden. Private. Alone.

Once a checkout terminal, the vacant area was turned into a small — and we mean *small* — table.

If you get "lucky" enough to be seated at No. 86, you'll be given a free appetizer or dessert with the purchase of an entrée. You can decide if it was worth it.

Davenport, Iowa's Famous Dave's has a similar table, and offers customers 50% off if they sit there.

Seen around town

Mayor Ashley Swearengin was feeling very confident on Election Day June 5. Instead of campaigning for last-minute votes, she was at 20/20 Optometric of Fresno checking in with the eye doc. Perhaps she figured she would need improved eyesight to locate the \$16 million needed to close the general fund budget gap?

Oh, dear, I feel faint!

Playing dead is common among the Animal Kingdom. In fact, a possum played dead when I drove past the teeth-snarling sucker last week.

Similar to possums playing dead comes an adorable, and interesting, phenomenon at Sanger's Aspen Acres — fainting goats.

The breed looks like any other goat, really, except that its leg muscles freeze, painlessly, for roughly 10 seconds when the goat feels panic — caused by a myotonia congenita, a hereditary genetic disorder.

After Aspen Acres' ranch hand, Bill Hubble, saw a video of fainting goats on YouTube, 85-year-old Lillian Pauls had to have one for her home and business of 12 years.

"The fainting goats, which have a personality different from other breeds of goats, are so easy to care for, lovable and fascinating, that owners say 'you can't have just one,'" Pauls says. And so, she's now got too many to count!

Pauls and Hubble give tours of the farm — by reservation — to groups small and large.

