

Offered Title: Superman, Star Trek, and Santa

When I was a kid I used to love, couldn't get enough of Superman comics. Come on, a guy who could fly faster than the speed of light! In one episode he even reversed Earth's rotation by flying around and around at super speed. He must have a lot of mass too!

Then I found science and Star Trek. No physics violating guy in a colorful skin-tight suit and cape. OK, warp speed is a stretch, but the concept is viable...well, maybe in the 23rd century or so. Heck, the Enterprise even went so fast once (by accident) it ended up in M33, the Pinwheel Galaxy, a mere 2.7 million light years away!

Throughout my enthrallment with Superman and Star Trek, the unlikely speed demon Santa Claus did his thing on Christmas eve (and other celebrated dates), delivering presents to good kids around the world. He's kind of rotund, dressed for the cold, with eight little reindeer pulling his sleigh. Not exactly the formula for a smoking fast ride, yet Santa manages to 'get-r-done' in one night. Santa must deliver gifts to the over half billion kids spread over the Earth who celebrate Christmas. All those gifts added up weigh over 1 million tons and take up a lot of space...just how big is that sleigh? Then there's the challenge of staying ahead of the Sun. Got to get the gifts in before dawn, and what about those sneaky kids who get up at 4am? I was one of them.

Is this dude for real? I think so, and I think he knows a thing or two about how to manipulate space-time. Let's take a stab at solving the Santa Enigma.

Santa delivers around 10,000 gifts per second, so he must hit speeds around 5 million miles per hour and somehow get the gifts right and in the right place. OK, so you get a pair of socks you didn't ask for...hey, that's a bonus! Oh, yes, and how do they not burn to cinder dust due to friction?

To get his sleigh off the ground Santa needs reindeer with at least 25,000,000-foot pounds of thrust each, assuming a 100:1 thrust to weight ratio. Compare this with a Saturn V first stage's 1.74 million-foot pounds of thrust. To get up to the speed needed requires even more power. Then there is the matter of space. How can Santa carry so many gifts in his sleigh?

I think you get the picture, this is an exercise in futility.

My guess...Santa is a Time Lord and his sleigh is a TARDIS (**T**ime **A**nd **R**elative **D**imension **I**n **S**pace) in disguise, and his reindeer are for effect, like Dr. Who's K9. Look up Dr. Who.

Merry Christmas!

What's in the Sky?

December 30; dusk: A nearly full Moon occults bright star Aldebaran. Catch it in binoculars as the Moon rises, you might see it just before it covers Aldebaran.