

Meet The Elves Of Orchard Ridge

By Alecia Goodlow-Young

In December 1997, the elves were born. They began to arrive at the Orchard Ridge Campus of Oakland Community College. The creator of the elves is Denise Whipple who said: "At a Christmas Eve dinner, I made an elf as a present to pass. A woman named Eve chose the first elf, and she named it Elfita. Elfita was an instant hit and soon everyone wanted his or her own personal elf. The only rule was that each elf had to contain the word 'elf' in its name."

Soon after that, other elves were born: Selfish, Melfis, Elfis, Purple Pelfis, Lord Elfton, Elf Zeppelin, Elfton John, Chelf Puck Elfederov, Psychedelf, Bubba Elf Paso, Public Safety Elficer, Dorelly Hammell, Elfin Kleinmeister, Jane Elfond, Christelfer Lowell, Elfriend O'Mine, Claddelf (Clyde), Mr. & Mrs. Piatelf, Debielf, and Angelf. As of today, 22 have been made, including a recent bride and groom that has an elf on the way.

"In the past, the International Department and the P.A.S.S. Department were combined to make one department. We had started playing this riddle game whereby a paper elf was moved around a world map once the riddle was solved. This inspired me to make an OCC elf and actually sent it around to 23 counties in the spirit of the millennium. This is how the most famous elf, Elfis was created. His job was to fill the footsteps of a world traveler," says Whipple.

Elfis started his mission around the world in February 27, 1998. His assignment is to visit as many countries in the world before December 31, 1999. Elfis was sent out with a letter to the Postmaster General of each country in their native language. Included within the package is Elfis' passport and an itinerary of which country to send him to.

So far Elfis has visited London, England; Paris, France; Madrid, Spain; Lisbon, Portugal; Rome, Italy; Vienna, Austria; Bern, Switzerland; Berlin, Germany; Copenhagen, Denmark; Oslo, Norway; Stockholm, Sweden; Helsinki, Finland; and the last correspondence that was sent on behalf of Elfis, he was in his 13th country in Cairo, Egypt.

The response from countries that Elfis has visited has been extraordinary. "We have received greeting cards, post cards, souvenirs, and even a specially made letter. This letter had all of the late Elvis Presley songs within a letter. This large note was supposed to come from my Elfis. Towards the end of the letter Elfis states that he is well and off for yet another journey. I was so thrilled to hear from him in this way," says Whipple.

Denise was inspired to start making the elves from an English knitting pattern which was sent to her from her mother. "It only takes a couple of days to complete an elf. If I do nothing else and just work on the elf I could finish in just a few hours," she explains. To make the elves she uses a nylon polyfill that can be found at most craft stores. They are all the same size weight-wise, and their height is about 14 inches with a hat.

These dolls are washable, but they must air dry. The dryer is not a safe place for them. The elf dolls are considered collectibles and are not recommended for child's play. It costs only a few pennies to make the dolls. Denise says that she makes the dolls for her friends and she does not charge for them. But if they want specific colors and special yarn, they will provide the materials for the upcoming elf.

"My favorite elf is Elfton John. He has nifty glasses that he is never without," says Whipple who works in Academic Support Services P.A.S.S. as a specialist. In P.A.S.S, she works with June Czopek, department coordinator, helping students with disabilities in a variety of areas. For example, Ms. Whipple arranges interpreters for the hearing impaired students and she's also in charge of the new adaptive equipment area. She has been with OCC first as a tutor in 1990, then later as a P.A.S.S. specialist since 1997. Denise was once an OCC student, and graduated from the Culinary Arts Program in April 1989.



Elfis- Born 2/7/98

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