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Profile Essay

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The Amazing “Head Elf”...A Story of “Passion and Intrigue”

To those who know her she is known simply as Piper. But to countless thousands who have never met her, she is known as the “Head Elf” of Elf-Magic, LLC. Born on March 21, 1956 in Atlanta, Georgia, it became obvious that Piper Jan Berryman possessed a passion for baby dolls and an adventurous imagination. She also had a keen sense of enthusiasm for Christmas, in part due to a special family Christmas tradition. By the time she grew into her teenage years, this passion carried into a love for babysitting and playing with small children. She was openly willing to spend her time babysitting, free of cost, for the sole purpose of getting to spend time with young children. This was particularly true at Christmas, when she would bake cookies with the neighborhood children and discuss their mounting anticipation of Santa’s arrival.

As a young girl, Piper became a devout Christian and follower of the Lord, thus enhancing her love for the Christmas season and the celebration of Christ’s birth. Piper attended the University of Georgia where, to no surprise, she majored in Early Childhood Education and Child Development. Although she spent ten years as a Delta Airlines flight attendant following her college graduation, all of her friends knew that her real ambition in life was to become a devout and dedicated mother. A few years later, she became married to Bob Worthington, a wonderful man with whom she had three children. When her children were young, they were naturally curious and excited about Christmas and

Santa Clause. Piper seized upon this as a prime opportunity to take advantage of her children's innate intrigue with "Santa," and she introduced a tradition to them that had been a part of her own experience as a child. In short, Piper suggested to her children that they leave out crackers and water on the kitchen counter one night in hopes of attracting an elf to stay with them through the holiday season and that the elf could return home to the North Pole with Santa on Christmas Eve. The next morning, three soft and cuddly elves appeared that would "magically" come alive each night while her children slept. The elves became known for their nighttime mischief, such as rolling the den with toilet paper, and for their love of "hide and seek." Almost immediately, Piper's children developed a special bond with their elfin friends who would return each year in early December for a month's visit. Little did Piper realize how that seed would multiply and grow over the ensuing years!

Friends of Piper's children became fascinated by the elves, and they, too, began leaving out crackers and water in hopes of "luring" an elf into their house. Upon their failed effort, the kids would become extremely disappointed and their moms would call Piper to find out what exactly her children were telling theirs. Piper would respond by driving all over the town looking for anything that resembled an elf to give to the inquiring moms. She began to gather all of the elf dolls she could find to give to other mothers so that they could start the same tradition in their family. Piper's purpose and goal was twofold. She not only wanted other children to benefit from the joy of the tradition, but it also helped bolster the belief of her own children that the elves were real.

As interest in the "magical elves" grew throughout the community, it became evident to Piper that she could not keep pace with the growing demand of those who

wanted elves, financially and otherwise, with her current approach. She then developed a plan to have elves made, and to sell them at her cost. Piper's vision, initially, was not to start a profit motivated business, but rather to spread the joy that the magical elves brought to children.

This plan quickly became extremely consuming, and the demand continued to grow exponentially. Piper then recognized that the time had come to create a real business. Within a short period of time, and by total word of mouth, the business developed a "snowball" effect, and Piper formed the company, Elf Magic, LLC.

Soon after creating Elf-Magic, an article was featured in *Southern Living* magazine. Almost immediately, her business jumped to another level with greater geographic awareness. Before she knew it, Piper was being profiled on the local news, featured in various newspaper articles all over the country, and interviewed on a syndicated television show and local radio stations. Once again, her business was propelled to yet another level. To help cope with the hundreds of phone calls and emails she was receiving daily, Piper then created an Internet based website so that her business could be made available to a greater geographical area, with a stream-lined distribution capability. Amazingly, her business had grown in a few years from a small, word of mouth, hobby, which was being conducted out of her trunk in the carpool line, to a relatively sophisticated business that was strategically geared for mass marketing and large geographical distribution. However, while the business changed dramatically, Piper did not!

Piper Worthington remains to this day a loving mother and devoted wife, who has not allowed her business success to alter her priorities in life. She values her business

success more for the opportunity to positively influence the joy of childhood and to spread the truth of Jesus Christ than by the economic success of Elf-Magic. As an example, it was recommended to her years ago by professional toy consultants that she steer away from any reference to Jesus' birth in her marketing and product literature, so as not "to offend anyone." Although the consultants were very well known and extremely successful businessmen, Piper was unwilling to compromise in this manner for the sake of additional sales. In fact, she changed the literature to further accentuate her reference to Christ! Additionally, Piper has further spread the joy of Elf-Magic by giving away over half of her profits thus far to charitable causes.

Today, anyone in the world can order from as many as fifteen different elves and elf accessories from Piper's web page, www.elf-magic.com. When asked about last season's sales, Piper stated, "Last year, I shipped out over eleven thousand elves to places all over the world including Australia, Mexico, Japan, and Kuwait." To those who do not know her personally and have simply watched her business grow over the past fifteen years, her business and the history behind it is viewed as amazing. But those who know her best recognize that her success is simply a by-product of her genuine affection for children, her enthusiasm for the Christmas season, and her appreciation for the captivating imagination of children. Therefore, it is not coincidental that Piper's love and passion for dolls as a child, babysitting as a teenager, and devoted mother as an adult, developed into a business which was never "intended," but rather "developed" because of the fact that she followed her heart, her desires, and her passions to their fullest. If the "Elf Magic" tradition is to continue beyond Piper's time on this earth, eventually

someone will have to take over her position as “Head Elf,” and perhaps it will fall to me...as I am her loving daughter!