

# COLLECTOR'S COURIER

Volume Seven

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## Adventurous Road Trips, Bright TV Lights All Part of Artist's Job

**W**hen you've created Keepsake Ornaments long enough, you come to see that on any given day anything — we mean anything — can happen.

That's what we learned when we

asked Keepsakes artists Linda Sickman and Ed Seale to reflect on their years of designing ornaments and share some of their favorite stories.

This year, the 20th anniversary of Keepsake Ornaments, seemed the perfect time to look back at some of the most memorable moments.

One of the stories Sickman tells is of a research trip taken by several

members of the Keepsakes creative staff to Jamesport, an Amish community in Missouri. Sickman, who drove the van filled with artists, knew the trip was jinxed when she scraped the side of the company vehicle before she even left the parking lot.

As they neared Jamesport on a dirt road that was muddy from rain, the van slid into a ditch. "We had mud up to the bumpers, and we all had to push the van out of the ditch," Sickman recalls. Soon enough they were back

*continued on inside page*



**KEEPSAKE  
ORNAMENTS**

*20 Years of Christmas Memories*

*Inside this issue: A Member's Keepsake Wonderland  
New Ornaments You Can Personalize  
John Francis' Menagerie of Merry Miniatures*



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on the road, but the adventure wasn't quickly forgotten. "Now when we take trips, members of the staff say, 'Don't let Linda drive,'" the artist laughs.

One trip Seale will always remember occurred this past summer, when two Artist's Appearances took him to South Carolina. A local TV station sent out a man who doubled as a reporter and cameraman to interview the artist. Seale was seated on a stool, and the man stood right over him.

"His camera had this big bank of lights on it," the artist says. "When he turned it on, the lights blinded me instantly: I couldn't even see to sign ornaments for about five minutes afterwards. Thank goodness it was a short interview."

Another story Seale likes to tell is about one of his early Keepsake Ornaments, the 1982 "Baby's First Christmas" designed in the shape of a baby's rattle. In the course of designing the ornament, he spent several painstaking hours creating the tiny baby's bed. Just as he finished, it slipped out of his hand and fell to the floor.

"I rolled my chair back to look for it, and I heard a crunch," he says. "It was one of my first ornaments, and I had rolled my chair over it!"

Sickman still recalls how her six wood-look Nostalgia Ornaments from 1975 almost turned out much differently than she had designed them. She spent hours getting the ornaments' vertical grooves just right before releasing the designs for production. After the ornaments were released, Buddy Jones, who was then overseeing production, thought the grooves Linda had worked so hard on were a mistake.

"When they were molding the ornaments, he had them taken out. They had to go back with a hammer and beat up the molds to get the creases back," Sickman says.

These are just a few of the colorful happenings from Keepsake Ornaments' first 20 years, and we'll be sharing many more throughout the year.

## Introducing a New Line of Ornaments You Personalize

**G**o ahead, confess. At least once, you've wished that you could add your own words to the design of a Keepsake Ornament to make it even more special.

Your wish will be granted in September, with the arrival of 12 designs created especially for personalization.

"The Keepsakes artists have been working for some time to give our collectors this opportunity," says Michelle Ostermueller, who works in the marketing area of Keepsakes.

"We've offered ornaments that could be signed or engraved," she explains, "but we all wanted to take the idea of



personalization further. We wanted to bring collectors into the making of the ornament—enabling them to be the author of the words that complete the design.

"Personalized Ornaments won't look finished until we add our customers' messages," Ostermueller continues, "because each design has a blank space for words. The finished ornament will look exactly like it was produced with other Keepsake Ornaments. It will be a very special gift because recipients will know right away that someone took the time to order this one-of-a-kind ornament especially for them."

To be sure these ornaments will be

easy to order, Hallmark conducted a test with a few 1992 Keepsake Ornament designs. "We're very pleased with the test results," says Ostermueller. "In fact, several people from our department rushed to the store to place orders. Mary McClure, our general manager, was



among the first. She filled out the order form for the 1992 doghouse photo holder, one of the designs we tested, very carefully to be sure the capital letters in her dog's name, McDuffy, would be correct."



The 1993 Personalized Ornaments will be available only at Hallmark Gold Crown stores beginning in September.

Meanwhile, you can preview the designs in the *Dream Book*, and start dreaming up some perfect messages.

## For John Francis, It's 60 Merry Miniatures and Still Counting

Artist John Francis has sculpted more Merry Miniatures than any other artist in the Keepsakes department—60 at last count! That's because he began sculpting the tiny figurines as far back as 1977.

"You might say that a 'cute' styling is what comes most naturally to me," the artist says with a laugh. "I pay special attention to the facial expressions, proportions and poses of the animals to make them as endearing as possible."

Can Francis remember the first Merry Miniature he sculpted?

"Of course," he replied and pointed to a photograph of the flocked 1979 Easter "Bunny." But it's the 1981 Easter "Lamb" that he finds most memorable. It was inspired by his brother's pet lamb.

Leaning back in his chair, the artist tells the story: "My dad found the lamb when he was out fishing and gave it to my brother. Because the lamb was just a baby, my brother had to feed it from a bottle. I was very little then so I can't remember the lamb,

but I've seen pictures. The lamb's name was 'Mutton.'"

Among other Merry Miniatures that Francis sculpted are the 1982 Christmas "Mouse" writing a letter and the 1983 Christmas "Penguin" on ice skates.

"I think action in the figurines is important," explains the artist. "The little penguin has fallen down, just like me. I could never ice skate and always ended up in the same place as the penguin. Except he looks as if he's having fun!"

Francis adds that he especially enjoyed sculpting

pairs of Merry Miniatures, such as the 1986 Thanksgiving "Mr. Squirrel" and "Mrs. Squirrel."

"It's fun to develop an interaction between the animals," the Keepsakes artist says. "The pairs have a family feeling, a togetherness that reflects the spirit of the season."

Francis' experience creating pairs of Merry Miniatures was perfect training for designing the 1993 "At the Beach" theme group. Francis painted the beach scene backdrop and drew sketches of all the animals.

"I haven't done much painting," he reveals, "so the backdrop was especially challenging. Painting the hot dog stand, with the elephant and bear ordering treats, was the most fun."

The figurines were sculpted by several different Keepsakes artists. "Each sculptor has a different style, so it was interesting to see how they interpreted my sketches," Francis says. "I liked watching other sculptors bring my ideas to life. We worked together very closely to ensure that each piece would appeal to our collectors."



## Collector Creates a Keepsake Wonderland in Her Home

**W**hen Mary Turner and her husband Bud were looking to buy a new house, one of the questions that was uppermost in their minds was, "Is there room for all of our Keepsake Ornaments?"

Mary, a Club member from Vacaville, California, transforms her home into a Christmas wonderland each year.

From November through January, her friends and family enjoy viewing the ornaments on the many trees and wreaths she displays. Mary creates imaginative holiday scenes using Keepsake Ornaments, Merry Miniatures, homemade decorations, and cleverly devised props such as tree-branch forests.

"It's basically a Hallmark house," she says with a smile in her voice.



Mary stands next to the 9-foot tree gracing her living room. "My 6-year-old nephew helps me decorate this tree," she explains. "He likes to test me on ornament names!" The tree is trimmed in theme groups with a variety of Keepsake Ornaments and other Hallmark decorations. Some of the themes are angels, golfers, penguins, and snowmen.



This tree displays Mary's miniature ornaments. Like her large tree, this one is trimmed with theme groups such as mice and babies. Mary now collects commemorative ornaments—"Baby's First Christmas," for example—because they complement her themes and, most of all, because she loves the designs.



Mary has created a different "ornament story" on each shelf of this wall unit. Santa parachutes ("Joy Is in the Air") into a Keepsake Magic village with lighted houses on one shelf. Another shelf shows some busy beavers such as the '90 "Happy Woodcutter" at work. And a third reveals the world of Tender Touches with ornaments and a Hallmark Galleries figurine.



"I woke up at four in the morning and thought of this display," Mary reveals. She created the tiered effect for her "Frosty Friends" using round Styrofoam discs trimmed with red velvet ribbon. "My husband bought me the first edition 'Frosty Friends' this year for my birthday," she adds. "Now I have the complete series."

# Artists Put on Thinking Caps in Designing Ornaments for Easter

When it comes to creating ornaments for Easter instead of Christmas, Keepsakes artists do much more than simply substitute spring bonnets for Santa hats on their designs. You might say the artists put on their Easter thinking caps.

"You have to change your whole outlook," says Linda Sickman. "There's a real challenge in designing for a completely different season." For the 1993 Keepsake Easter offer, for example, Sickman sculpted "Backyard Bunny," a whimsical little rabbit peering out of a watering can decorated with flowers. He seems to be saying, "It's spring — time to water the garden!"

## Soft pastels and traditional symbols of the season inspired many of the 20 new designs.

Like Sickman, Duane Unruh notes that gardening and flowers play an important role in Easter designs. "In the springtime nature is waking up," he says. "And we have a greater variety of flowers to choose from than at Christmas, when we're limited to the red and green colorings of holly, mistletoe and poinsettias.

"Color is a very big difference between the two seasons," he continues. "For Easter we're much more prone to go into the pastels...fresh, clean, soft colors. Also, in designing for Easter, we use many traditional symbols — bunnies, chicks and ducks."

Expanding on the idea that Keepsakes artists use different animals to represent

the two seasons, Trish Andrews observes that "we see more woodland or forest animals at Christmas. Also, with winter being the end of the year, Christmas includes lots of older things — such as an old Santa. Easter has a lot of baby animals," she goes on, "and there's much less nostalgia. We don't have as many traditions."

Don Palmiter, who sculpted a bunny design for "Baby's First Easter 1993," points out that one very special animal characterizes the spring season: "One of the first things you think of for Easter is — the Easter bunny!" he says, adding, "of course, some of the inspiration for my design goes back to my daughter's fascination with bunny rabbits."

For LaDene Votruba, "Easter is a spring holiday, and I think about new beginnings. Our designs can be inspirational, or cute — with bright, light colors and fresh pastels." And she says with a shopper's smile, "there are new spring outfits to think about, and the Easter parade of days past."

One thing is clear. Although the Easter and Christmas seasons are very different, the appeal of Keepsake Ornaments is the same. The designs capture special memories that collectors will treasure now and for years to come.

So in this, the third season of Keepsake Easter Ornaments, let the parade begin!



## Superman's™ Greatest Feat: Keeping Fans Happy for Nearly 60 Years

For anyone who grew up during the past 60 years or so, Superman™ is perhaps the greatest fantasy hero of the era, and this year he'll be hurdling skyscrapers and stopping speeding trains in the form of a Keepsake Ornament.

Originally created in 1934 as a comic book character for kids, over the years the Man of Steel has inspired radio and television programs, movies, cartoons and even a Broadway musical.

The Superman™ ornament, sculpted by Robert Chad, shows the superhero in one of the classic poses he struck in his battles against Lex Luthor, gambling czars, gangsters and other evildoers. The design combines the look of Superman™ as he appeared in the 1980s and as he appears now. "The people at Warner Brothers and DC Comics were very pleased with the sculpting when I finished the design," the artist says.

Superman™ was the brainchild of Jerry Siegel, a young writer from Cleveland who lived for comic books. "All of a

sudden it hits me. I conceive a character like Samson, Hercules and all the strong men I ever heard tell of rolled into one, only more so," Siegel once told an

*Historically Speaking...*

interviewer. Siegel's overactive imagination conceived the character, but it was his collaborating artist, Jerry Shuster, who brought the crusader to life in sketches.

In their search for a publisher, the pair was turned down repeatedly. Finally, Superman™ appeared for the first time in *Action Comics No. 1* in 1938. Today, that first issue can bring \$50,000 to \$80,000.

To protect the world from the likes of Lex Luthor, Superman™ was endowed with an arsenal of super powers, including the ability to fly, X-ray vision, Herculean strength and the fact that bullets glanced off him "like peas," as one bad guy discovered.

While Superman™ is in many ways a uniquely American hero, his popularity seems to know no geographic boundaries. "He's a hero for everyone because he's known in every corner of the world," observes Rick Jarvis, a longtime employee of Clint's Comics and Books in Kansas City.

Sales of Superman™ comics skyrocketed this past November when word spread that everybody's hero would finally meet his match. In the November 19th issue, Superman™ and a humanoid character called Doomsday kill each other in a showdown.

The clamor for copies of the comic was unprecedented, according to Jarvis. Many thought they had seen the last of Superman™, but true fans never doubted that he would return.

"Everybody thought the issue in which Superman™ died was the last book," Jarvis says, "but I'm sure he will be around into the next millennium."



## Ornaments Are for the Birds!

Last December, "Good Morning America" presented a program segment on making "outdoor tree ornaments that are strictly for the birds—to eat that is!"

Reporter Denise Richardson interviewed a Fort Wayne, Indiana, family who each year make outdoor tree decorations to attract and feed birds.

Among the ornaments they create are pinecones smeared with peanut butter and rolled in bird seed, and scooped-out orange halves filled with a mix of seed, fat, corn meal and peanut butter. Richardson described these ornaments as "a special gift back to nature at Christmastime and a fun family project."

Several Keepsakes artists share this affection for nature including Linda Sickman who sculpted the '92 "Feathered Friends" ornament of a bird feeder as well as porcelain bird ornaments from years past.

"There's a greater appreciation for nature now," the artist says, "a real

interest in ecology. More and more people are taking a break from their busy lives by watching birds. It's very relaxing."

A long-time bird lover, Sickman has a heated birdbath and three bird feeders in her yard including one similar to the '92 ornament she designed. "That feeder attracts several kinds of birds such as cardinals and chickadees," the artist explains. "The more you do for birds, the more you want to do."

In her book *From Bauhaus to Birdhouse*, author Leslie Garisto affirms this when she writes that "birdhouses have become the most popular of garden ornaments." Keepsakes artists knew that all along.



## Get Ready for Convention '93

Topping the 1991 Collector's Club convention won't be easy, but plans are underway for an event that members won't soon forget.

"Our first convention came off wonderfully," Rachel Perkal says, "even though we had never done anything on that scale before. Many suggestions that we heard from members have been incorporated into the convention we're planning for July 8, 9 and 10."

Indeed, it's going to be an action-packed two and a half days. Several of the most popular events—costume contest, artists' autograph sessions, tours of Hallmark facilities and decorated homes—will return. Clara Johnson Scroggins, columnist Dean Genth, Keepsakes staff members and other notable collectibles authorities are among

the guests and speakers who have been invited.

The convention will be held at the Westin Crown Center Hotel so that as many members as possible can get rooms in the same hotel where the convention is held.

Space for the convention was limited and filled up quickly. Later this year the *Courier* will feature highlights from the convention. If you're attending, we'll see you in Kansas City!



## Courier Mail Box

Dear Hallmark,

On July 11, 1992, the GOOD CHEER Collector's Club of Akron, Ohio, had the pleasure of having Hallmark artist Bob Siedler attend our club meeting.

Members contributed food—everything from grilled chicken to Christmas cookies. The area was festively decorated complete with a lighted tree trimmed with Bob's ornaments ONLY. I made a "Welcome Bob" sign with cutouts of his ornaments which were a great help in identifying his designs. The whole evening was very memorable to us.

Elaine Obert,  
President,  
GOOD CHEER Collector's Club

Welcome Bob Siedler

Bob Siedler is our honored guest; he's a master at his art.

He creates some special ornaments we enjoy with all our hearts.

Maybe it's a "Dasher" or a

"Chris Mouse" on your tree;

Or it could be cute little "Muffin" or even "Mom-to-Be."

The sports Santas are so playful—fishing, bowling, having fun.

And we're not very happy till we own each and every one!

His penguins are also busy—"Polar Sport" and "Polar Pair."

Bob made "Tigger" "Starship Christmas," and also "Backstage Bear."

"Beary Artistic" and "Our Clubhouse" are special ones, indeed.

You must be a Hallmark Club member to have these for your tree!

And so we're very honored, Bob, and pleased that you are here;

Welcome to our picnic, Bob, from the members of GOOD CHEER!

Elaine Obert



## A New Look

If this issue of the *Courier* looks a little different, that's because we are now printing it on recycled paper. The paper, Simpson Evergreen, contains 14 percent post-consumer paper fiber.

## Quiz Answers

Here are the answers to the riddles from the Christmas edition of the *Courier*. All of the ornaments appear in the 1992 offering:

"Friends Are Tops"  
Keepsake Miniature Ornament

"Santa Sub"  
Keepsake Magic Ornament;

"Deck the Hogs"  
Keepsake Ornaments

"New Home"  
Keepsake Ornaments.



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