

# COLLECTOR'S COURIER

Volume Seven

Number Four 1993

## Club Members and "Sgt. Santa" Give to Richmond's Neediest

He's something of a legend in Richmond, Virginia. More than 20 years ago, this veteran police detective traded in his uniform for a bright red Santa suit. He's been spreading goodwill throughout Richmond's underprivileged neighborhoods ever since.

Dubbed Sgt. Santa, Ricky Duling makes appearances year-round at children's homes, detention centers, nursing homes, hospitals and schools. And whenever there's misfortune in Richmond, such as a house fire or a tornado, Sgt. Santa and his elves are on the scene with clothes, cleaning supplies and a helping hand.

This year, Sgt. Santa's efforts received an added boost from the Richmond Ornament Collector's Klub (ROCK). The club raised more than \$2,000 for the policeman turned Santa from an August collector's show.

"He's the true Santa Claus," observes Jeanne Walls, ROCK vice president. "He does so much for so many people year-round."

In the early 1970s, following an appearance in a TV ad, Duling got an offer to appear as Santa Claus at a

Christmas party. Duling then had an idea. "Driving around one night, just before Christmas, I began to wonder what would happen if I wore the Santa suit and drove a police car into poor neighborhoods. Would the kids come up to me or run away?" he says.

With the help of friends, Duling gave out 300 packages of candy that first year. Some children were tentative at first, but soon warmed up to

*continued on  
inside page*



*Photo courtesy of Richmond Times-Dispatch*

*ROCK  
members  
Diane  
Klisavage (left)  
and Jeanne  
Walls (right) are  
just two of the  
volunteer "elves"  
who help Sgt.  
Santa.*

*Inside this Issue: Costume Contest Winners  
Check our list of Holiday Ideas  
The Man Who Created the "Perfect Santa"*



*continued from front page*  
the jolly fellow in the red suit.

"If the Good Lord made me look like this," he muses, "it must have been what he intended for me to do."

Now it's a Richmond tradition. Each Christmas Eve, Sgt. Santa's police cruiser, with sirens blaring and red lights flashing, turns a corner in Richmond's neediest areas. Doors burst open all along the block as



*Sgt. Santa with just one of the many friends he has made.*

children run out and surround the cruiser, grateful for the gifts and warmth given so generously. The scene repeats itself in neighborhood after neighborhood until the next morning. In recent years, more than 15,000 gifts have been distributed each Christmas.

"My main objective with Sgt. Santa is to get the kids to realize that the police are here to help them. A lot of them don't know that," Duling says.

Duling estimates that more than 60 percent of the children he gives packages to get no other Christmas presents. The presents—books, crayons, candy, stuffed animals and other toys—are assembled by Sgt. Santa and his volunteer "elves." Everything is donated or bought with cash gifts.

That's where the Richmond Ornament

Collector's Klub comes in. Members contribute to Sgt. Santa throughout the year with toy drives as well as volunteering time. He seemed the perfect beneficiary for the collector's show proceeds.

"The show surpassed all of our expectations and dreams," reports Robin Atkins, treasurer of the event. "I believe wholeheartedly it was due to Sgt. Santa."

More than 500 people attended the event, the first of its kind to be held in the Richmond area.

Collectors traveled from as far away as Texas, Florida and New York. "It amazes me the distance

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people will travel to try to complete a collection," says Robin.

She says ROCK organized just two years ago and is sponsored by the Richmond Office Supply Company, a Hallmark store. ROCK, made up of collectors of Keepsake Ornaments and other collectibles, now has 70 members, with 20 new members signing up at the collector's show.

The collector's show took on a special atmosphere with Christmas music playing in the background and costumed characters. Of course, Sgt. Santa was there, too.

Children whose faces light up this Christmas can thank Sgt. Santa and his elves from the Richmond Ornament Collector's Klub.



## **Yule Tidings**

Have you ever contacted the Collector's Club? Perhaps with a question regarding your membership or wondering if your renewal had been received. Maybe you moved and wanted to make sure we had your new address. Or, maybe you shared a special memory with us as you went about putting up your tree for the holidays.

Well, we love to hear from you. But as our membership continues to grow, we receive more and more phone calls and letters. That is why I'm asking for your help in this column. When contacting your friends at the Club, please include or have your membership number available. This helps us assist you more efficiently and quickly. We are all here at your service and would like to do the very best job we can.

This little detail—your membership number—helps more than you can imagine. In fact, we would love to consider the inclusion of your membership number as kind of a Christmas gift . . . to us!

Merry Christmas and Happy Collecting from all of us at the Club.

*Rachel Perkal*

Rachel Perkal  
Collector's Club Manager

## The Most Popular Commemorative In Keepsake Ornament History...

If someone in your family is age 17 or younger, you may well have a Keepsake Ornament captioned "Baby's First Christmas" on your tree. At least one such design has been featured in every Keepsake Ornament collection since 1976, the year this popular commemorative caption was introduced.

In all, more than 85 "Baby's First Christmas" designs have been created. Each design appears for only one year, and nearly every Keepsake Ornament artist has contributed at least one design to the group.

The first ornament was a ball, a format that continues to be offered. The first handcrafted "Baby's First Christmas," a colorful stocking filled with toys, debuted in 1979. A sparkling acrylic design and a fabric photoholder appeared in 1981, and the first silver-plated commemorative arrived in 1991.

The Keepsakes artist credited with the largest number of "Baby's First" ornaments is LaDene Votruba, whose paintings first adorned ball ornaments in 1985. She often includes stars in her

designs, she says, because a star is a symbol of Christmas and a new baby is the star of the family.

"A 'Baby's First Christmas' design was one of the first two or three Keepsake Ornaments I did," recalls Ed Seale. "It was a rattle with a tiny room inside...a forecast of the type of design I'm fond of doing." Seale also sculpted the caption's first lighted ornament (a 1985 carousel) as well as its first musical Keepsake Magic Ornament—a 1989 design which plays a lullaby while mother mouse rocks her baby.

Unlike mementos packed away in an attic, or rarely seen, "Baby's First Christmas" ornaments are part of a joyful annual celebration. They also appear frequently at baby showers. Guests seem to understand that

duplicate gifts are welcome—sentimental insurance against the day when Mom and Dad might otherwise see their grown-up Baby leave home with a one-of-a-kind Christmas treasure.



*A sampling of the Baby's First Christmas designs that have been offered since 1976, when the commemoratives were introduced in the Keepsake Ornament line.*

### Designs Begin With Special Memories

Keepsake Ornament artists often draw upon personal experiences when creating their designs. But nowhere is their willingness to share more evident than in "Baby's First Christmas" ornaments.

John Francis, known to collectors as "Collin," often features teddy bears in his "Baby's First Christmas" designs. That's because his favorite childhood toy was a teddy bear. The bear shown here is outfitted in coveralls reminiscent of those worn by his special childhood pal.

Patricia Andrews displays her 1992 fine porcelain ornament, depicting a baby asleep in a basket, in her studio booth in the Keepsake Ornament building. "That is my daughter, Elizabeth, when she was a baby," Andrews says as she points to a photograph (shown at left) and smiles proudly.



## Haddon Sundblom: The Man Who Created the "Perfect Santa Claus"

**A**lthough his legend has been traced back to the fourth century, many would argue that Santa's first birthday was really in 1931. That was the year The Coca-Cola Company began publishing artist Haddon Sundblom's Santa Claus illustrations on posters and in magazine advertising.

"He may have actually invented the all-American Santa Claus," says Keepsake Ornament artist Robert Chad. Long an admirer of Sundblom's painterly

*Historically Speaking...*

style and craftsmanship, Chad enjoyed sculpting the figurine "Satisfying Break," which was based on a Sundblom illustration and was offered as part of a theme group in the 1992 Hallmark Collections for Christmas.

Before Sundblom, the predominant image of Santa Claus was a "jolly old elf" as described in Clement C. Moore's poem "The Night Before Christmas." Santa was often depicted wearing a small, pointed hat and elf-like slippers.

Sundblom's characterizations featured a fun-loving, cuddly Santa Claus enjoying an ice-cold bottle of Coca-Cola. According to The Coca-Cola Company Archives, Sundblom's hearty Santa was so beloved he inspired fan mail—and many requests for reprints of magazine advertisements. His portraits were embraced by millions as the "true"

image of Santa Claus.

"When I think of Santa Claus, I think of a guy who looks just like that!" says Anita Marra Rogers, the Keepsake Ornament artist who created the 1993 Keepsake Ornament "Playful Pals." "He's more of a classic Santa."

Like Chad and Rogers, Keepsake Ornament artist Duane Unruh studied Sundblom's paintings carefully before beginning work on his "Ready for Christmas" snow globe featured in the Hallmark Collections for Christmas in 1992, and the 1992 Keepsake Miniature Ornament "Coca-Cola' Santa." According to Unruh, one of the biggest challenges of translating Sundblom's

work was creating the correct facial features. "There's a certain expression in the brow that has to be done just right," Unruh explains.

Sundblom's original model, a jovial-faced, retired salesman named Lou Prentice, provided that "certain expression" for many years. When Prentice passed away, a friend suggested that Sundblom look no further than the mirror for a suitable replacement. It's obvious from comparisons of Sundblom's photograph with his later illustrations that he took the advice.

Whichever model he was based on, Sundblom's "Coca-Cola" Santa became an American institution—a symbol of the warmth and generous spirit of the holiday season. Artist Anita Marra Rogers may offer the best explanation of all for his popularity: "He's just the perfect Santa Claus!"



*Haddon Sundblom (shown with one of his illustrations) created distinctive portrayals of Santa that inspired (left to right) 1992 "Satisfying Break" (sculpted by Robert Chad), 1993 "Playful Pals" (interpreted by Anita Marra Rogers), "Coca-Cola' Santa" (a 1992 Keepsake Miniature Ornament sculpted by Duane Unruh) and the "Ready for Christmas" snow globe, which Unruh also created.*

## With Spring Just Around the Corner, Collectors Choose Easter Favorites

Even though we're approaching the Christmas season, we know that winter will soon melt into spring. And we just can't wait to tell you which 1994 Keepsake Easter Ornaments are collectors' favorites!

At the recent Collector's Club conventions we asked collectors to select their three favorite designs, after previewing all 20 ornaments on a special television program in their hotel rooms.

Many participants lamented, "It's hard to choose just three!" One inventive collector added three "honorable mentions." And even our vote-counters

had to declare a "tie" for third place.

A whimsical vehicle from the new "Here Comes Easter" Collectible Series drives away with the blue ribbon for First Place. This snazzy "egg-mobile" is equipped with a custom license plate, "Hop N Go." The ornament was sculpted by Ken Crow, whose "Colorful Spring" design received second-place honors. The bunny in his second design is munching on a carrot and relaxing in a porch swing crafted of Crayola® Crayons.

Collectors also cast their ballots heavily in favor of two of Ed Seale's Easter

designs, producing the tie for third place. The first design, "Sweet Easter Wishes," a Tender Touches ornament, portrays a little bunny whispering to the Easter Rabbit. The "Sunny Bunny Garden," a set of three ornaments which also tied for third, introduces "Top Carrot," "Prize Posey" and "Daisies' Friend."

Collectors shared many thoughts on their questionnaires, ranging from disappointment over the ending of a series to enthusiasm for certain designs. Said one, "Baby's First Easter" is so cute I'll buy it even though I have no baby!"

For Club manager Rachel Perkal, this survey is an important step in increasing communications with members. "Our collectors often say, 'why don't you ask us what we think,'" she notes. "In the future we'll find more ways to do that."



1st Place



2nd Place



3rd Place (tie)

## Surprise Will Be Cropping Up Soon For 1993 Club Members

The end of the year is near ... and now there's an extra-special reason to be sure your membership is up-to-date. Everyone whose membership is postmarked by December 31 will receive a special appreciation gift from the Club.

We can't tell you what it is, but our Rodney is quite good with hints. He suggests that you "think spring ... think Keepsake Ornament ... think about a friend, a companion, a sidekick. You might even think about a favorite ..."

That's enough, Rodney. We don't want to spoil the surprise!

Please be sure to send in your renewal, or gift membership, so that it's postmarked by December 31, 1993. Your free appreciation gift will be on its way to you in January.

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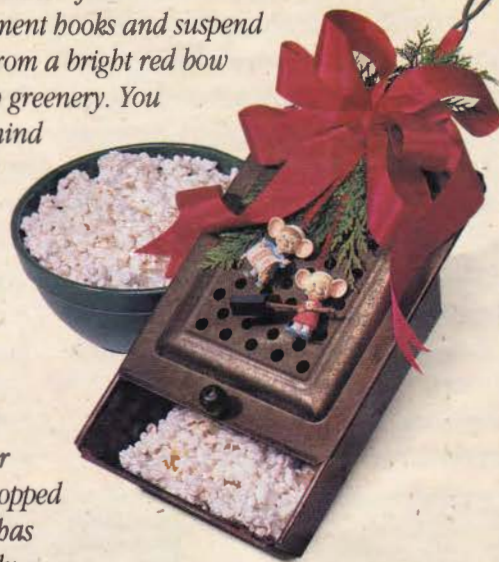


## What A Good Idea For Christmas!



*C*hristmas goodies are always welcome gifts. Add a festive Keepsake Ornament touch by attaching Miniature Ornaments to the decorative ribbons on your gifts. And don't forget to send the recipe card along—decorated with a coordinating Hallmark Keepsake Ornament sticker, of course!

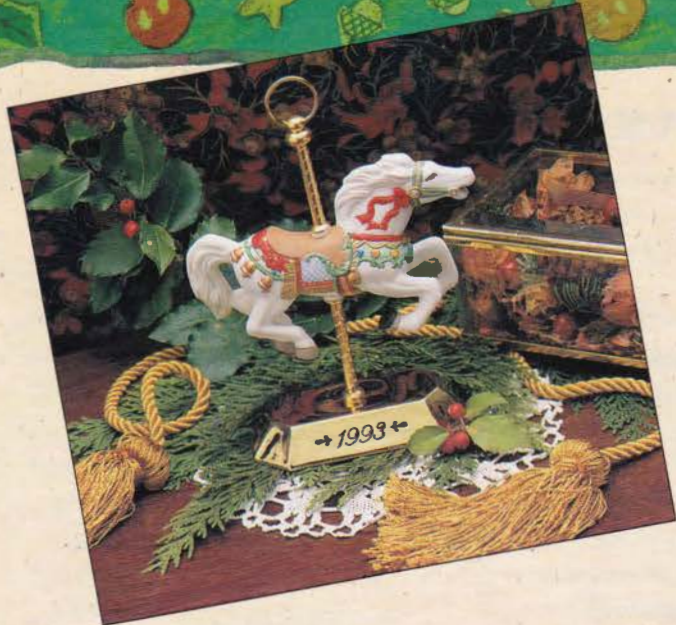
*H*ere's a new tradition to get the holidays popping! An old-fashioned popcorn popper makes a perfect display for the 1993 Keepsake stringer ornament set "Popping Good Times." Just substitute red ribbon for ornament hooks and suspend the ornaments from a bright red bow embellished with greenery. You may have to remind your guests that this display is for looking—not for eating! And, of course, be sure to attach the ornaments and decorations after the popcorn is popped and the popper has cooled completely.



*G*ive a friend or coworker a refreshing break from the holiday hustle and bustle with a soft drink decorated with the 1993 Keepsake of Membership Miniature Ornament, "Forty Winks." One side of the bottle cap bears the inscription "Santa's Club Soda," while on the reverse side a mouse finds a cozy place to take a nap. It could be that "Santa's Club Soda" bottle caps may attract other tiny Christmas visitors. If so, you'll certainly want to collect them all!



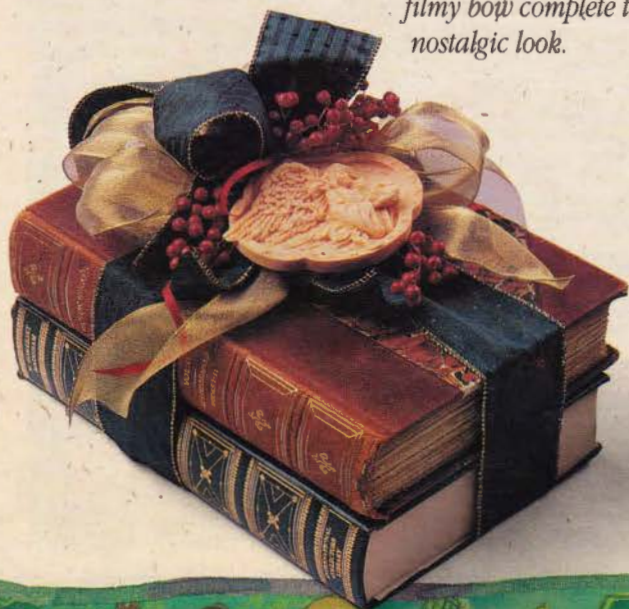
*A* Club membership is a memorable gift that lasts throughout the year! This year's special "thank you" to Club members who give the gift of membership is "Circle of Friendship." Featuring caricatures of all 14 Keepsake Ornament artists attending signing events in 1993, the dated ornament can become a cherished part of your collection or be given as a thoughtful gift. Orders must be postmarked by December 31, 1993.



The carousel's golden age comes to life in the second in a series of Keepsake Ornaments designed by carousel authority Tobin Fraley. The ornament, displayed on its decorative brass stand, makes a splendid centerpiece when surrounded by greenery and holiday trimmings.

Each of Tobin Fraley's designs is fashioned to reflect the authentic stylings of original carousel horses crafted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Like the original horses, Fraley's ornament designs have a plain and a fancy side. This is because the original carousel master carvers put the most elaborate trappings on the side facing spectators as they approached the carousel.

Look no farther than your bookshelf for a charming Christmas arrangement! You can create this heavenly display with a pair of antique books and the 1993 Keepsake Ornament "Heavenly Angels." A satiny, green ribbon, holly berries and a filmy bow complete the nostalgic look.



Create a snowy village scene with the "Nostalgic Houses and Shops" series. Your display will come to life with artificial snow and miniature trees available at hobby or craft stores. For added realism, add a Keepsake Ornament vehicle—such as the 1984 "Santa's Deliveries" truck from the "Here Comes Santa" series.



Add Keepsake Ornament joy to your mantel with a display of "Christmas Keepers," decorative greeting cards that double as tree-trimmers. Found in Hallmark Gold Crown stores, the cards reflect Keepsake Ornament designs from years past, and commemorate the 20th Anniversary of Keepsake Ornaments. Add greenery, ribbon, candles and a favorite Keepsake Ornament—such as "It's in the Mail," the 1993 Keepsake of Membership Club ornament.

## KEEPSAKE

# SKETCHBOOK

## When Ornaments Arrive Safe and Sound, Thank Mike Griffin

Over the years, countless Keepsake Ornaments have made it into the hands of collectors safe and sound, and Mike Griffin deserves a lot of the credit.

His job as senior packaging engineer is to "make sure the ornaments arrive (at your local Hallmark store) without getting broken," says Griffin. He designs the packaging for all collectibles lines designed by the Keepsakes staff.

Griffin decides which size of box best suits a design and how the ornament should be secured inside the box. Bubble wrap—plastic wrap with air bubbles—or plastic trays protect the ornament in the box. He also considers costs as well as environmental concerns for minimizing packaging.

With the environment in mind, Griffin

and others hope to make a big change in Keepsake Ornament packaging in 1994 when tissue will replace the bubble wrap. "The biggest factors were environmental issues. The tissue is more environmentally friendly," he notes.

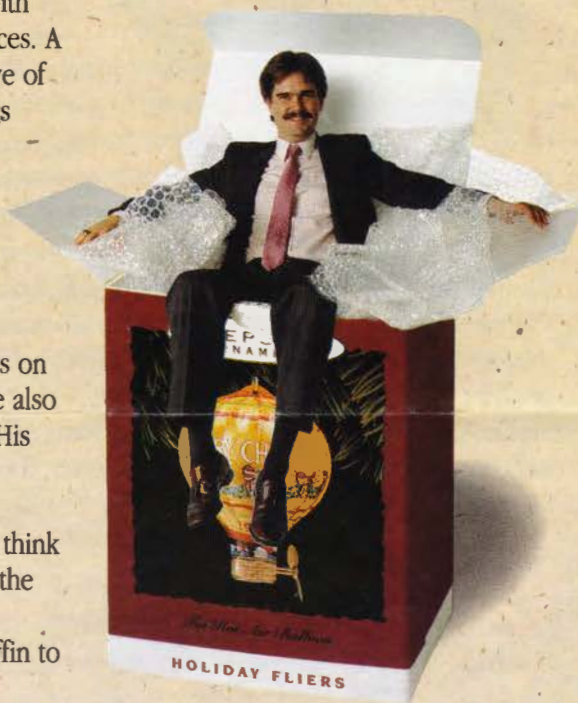
Griffin's greatest challenges are ornaments made from fragile materials, such as porcelain, or designs with moving parts or protruding pieces. A good example is the 1990 "Dove of Peace." "The large, fragile wings made the ornament a tough one to package," he says. Other difficult ones include designs in the "Here Comes Santa" and "Tobin Fraley Carousel" series.

One of the greatest influences on Griffin's work is the fact that he also collects Keepsake Ornaments. His collection now stands at nearly 1,000. "When I work on the packaging for a design, I try to think of how I would like to receive the ornament," he says.

Being a collector has led Griffin to make a number of changes in collectibles packaging. He altered

ornament boxes so the tops open and close easier. He also changed the packaging used for ball ornaments in 1991, saving material and money.

"Keeping the cost of packaging down helps Hallmark hold the line on ornament prices," Griffin says.



## To Collectors, A Box Is More Than Just A Box

Anyone who goes to many collector's shows knows that an ornament in its box is prized more than one without the box. Have you ever wondered why?

When asked, Joan Ketterer, publisher of the *Twelve Months of Christmas* newsletter, knew exactly why. "If you have the box, you have the ornament just the way Hallmark made it, so it adds value," she says.

How much value? Joan says that she sees ornaments in their boxes bringing a third more than ones without boxes. For example, "Cool Yule," first in the "Frosty Friends" series, is now valued at about \$400 with no box. The same ornament in mint condition and in the box may bring \$600.

It just proves that old saying about good things coming in small packages.



## What's In A (Local Club) Name?

At first glance, it seems obvious that members of the Frosty Friends of Western New York took the name of their local club from the popular ornament series. Unless you've ever spent a winter in Buffalo where many of the members live and where it gets pretty, well, frosty,

It's just one of the many fun and imaginative names dreamed up for the 150 or so local clubs formed by collectors across the country.

Some local club names were inspired by a distinctive feature of a region. For instance, members of the Cherry Capital Keepsake Club wanted to tout Traverse City, Michigan's reputation as the "Cherry Capital." Jim Lutfy, a member and retailer who sponsors the local club, explains that members adopted the 1989 "Cherry Jubilee" Keepsake

Ornament as the club's logo.

Terms associated with Christmas show up in many club names.

Members of a California club decided to have some fun with one such term. They decided on the Hooked on Hallmark Ornaments Club of Orange County. They don't mind at all if you call them the HO HO Club of O.C. for short. There's a similarly named club in Illinois.

Among the funniest stories involving a club name's origin is that of the What Now? Collector's Club, which has 15 members in and around Brandon, Mississippi. "Every time I walked in the

house with a Hallmark sack my husband Frank would say, 'What Now?' So when we formed the club, the name seemed appropriate," recalls member Carol Otto.



### Here Comes—Ed Seale!

Keepsake Ornament artist Ed Seale likes to take the holiday spirit with him wherever he goes. Seale says he's been decorating his truck at holiday time for several years. "I started with battery-operated Christmas lights in a garland across the back, then I added a bumper garland in the front," he explains. "I can turn the lights on and off from the inside, using a switch on the dashboard." This past Christmas, Santa came along as a passenger for the first time.

## You'll Never Believe What Happened On the Way to the Convention

In winning the Collector's Club convention costume contests, Jim Reid and Rhonda Maurer learned that there are obstacles and then there are obstacles.

Jim, whose costume was based on the 1989 "Busy Beaver" Keepsake Magic design, came close to not finishing his winning creation in time and only made it to the first convention after driving 1,800 miles in two days.

In the race to make it to Kansas City from his home in San Francisco, he skirted the speed limit now and then, attracting the attention of an understanding police officer. "He let me go with a warning," says a thankful Jim.

Once at the convention, he almost didn't get the 6-foot version of the ornament to his hotel room because it wouldn't fit in the elevator. "Actually, it turned out to be a float on wheels," Jim says of his costume depicting a beaver warming himself over a fire in a barrel at a Christmas tree lot.

The longtime collector spent the hours leading up to the contest hurriedly touching up his entry. "The paint was still wet when the judging first started," he says.

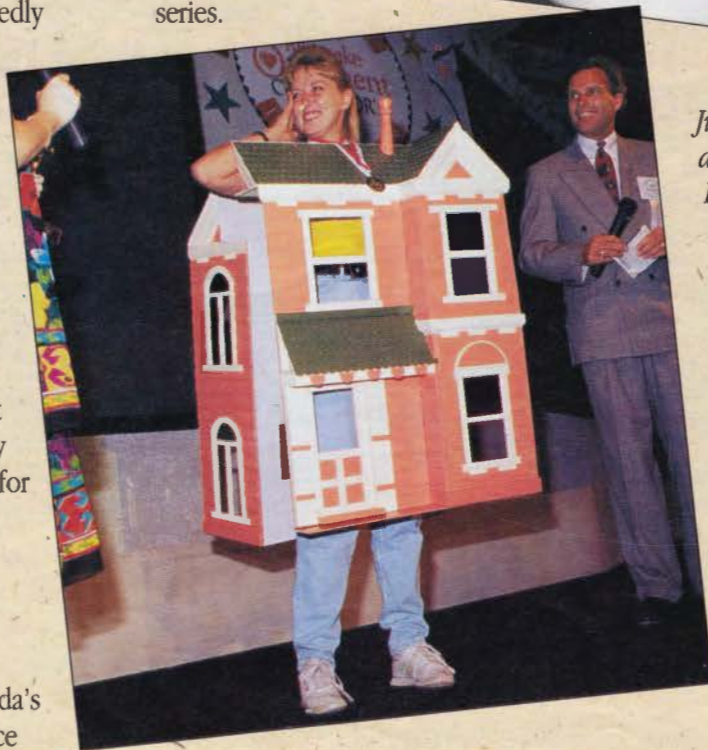
In the end, Jim says, the 200 or so hours he and his friends put in on the costume all paid off when he won the top honor at the first convention. "It was a labor of love," adds Jim.

Rhonda's story also began at the first convention. Her family planned a stop in Kansas City for the convention as part of a vacation trip, but she left her costume at home in Valmeyer, Illinois. At the convention, members heard news of the flooding in the Midwest. Rhonda's family paid close attention since

their town was near the Mississippi River.

As the convention got underway, Rhonda's family got a call telling them that the river had broken through the levy near their town, so they started for home. As it turned out the river hadn't flooded yet, but it did about a week later. "We got a lot out, but we lost a lot. I did get my ornaments out," remarks Rhonda. The Club invited her back for the second convention.

Rhonda decided to enter her costume, a re-creation of the 1984 "Victorian Dollhouse," the first edition in the "Nostalgic Houses and Shops" series. Rhonda's mother passed away in 1986, leaving her the first two editions in the series.



Rhonda continued collecting the series in memory of her mother and because she shared her mother's love of houses.

Still stinging from the flood, Rhonda just knew her luck had to change, but when her name was announced as the grand prize winner, she couldn't quite believe her ears.

"My husband and other collectors kept saying, 'You won,'" Rhonda recalls, "and finally it dawned on me. It was like being on cloud nine."



*Jim Reid's costume (shown above) based on "Busy Beaver," a 1989 Magic design, won top honors at the first convention. Rhonda Maurer, winner of the grand prize at the second convention, based her costume (at left) on the 1984 "Victorian Dollhouse."*

*Warmest Wishes for  
the Merriest Christmas!*



*From the Keepsake  
Ornament Staff*

## Courier Mail Box

In an effort to keep holiday excitement running high through the summer months, the Kansas City "Hometown" Collectors' Club decided to hold an "a-peeling" contest this past June. Each member was invited to bring a banana dressed as their favorite Keepsake Ornament. Fourteen members answered the call with a variety of ingenious creations.

From a banana pea pod made of clay representing "Two Peas in a Pod"

to a mouse-banana dressed in a tutu for "Born to Dance," each entry had its own special charm.

The participants were rewarded with—what else—banana splits after their entries were judged by hosts Carol Parsons and Barbara Parde. Here are the winners:

**Best of the Bunch:** Jana McMullin with the 1989 "Cactus Cowboy."

**Runner Up:** Pat Connelly with 1990 "Hot Dogger." (Both are shown below.)



## A "Guide" to the Perfect Gift

Searching for the perfect Christmas gift? Clara Johnson Scroggins' latest edition of *Keepsake Ornaments: A Collector's Guide* is perfect for ornament enthusiasts—and would-be enthusiasts. The 20th Anniversary commemorative edition features an individually numbered, limited edition jacket stamped with a special gold seal.



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