

JUST SO YOU KNOW! NOVEMBER 29, 2023

IDEAS, HINTS, AND OPINIONS

BY DAVID SPEARS

. . . Remember there is no planned 'location,' or 'order,' for content in my columns. In other words, I have no idea what I'm doing.

. . . November 10, 2023 - **Village D-Lights 3rd Qtr. arrived** at this address. - Halloween on cover (and inside).

. . . 'The Village Collector' has been with us since 2017. Bill and Kathy Channell have continually worked to build and improve the following columns: David Spears, 'Show your village to the world' • Phil & Sue Adkins, 'Phil & Sue's 'From Italy, Villaging in Europe' • Larry Treadwell, 'Hauntsville 2023' and 'A Dickens' Christmas' • Mark Frendo, 'Tips & Trix' •



• National Council of 56 Clubs Region VI: Northern Lights Collectors Club, Twin Cities, MN, Tom Iacoviello, tiacoviello@yahoo.com • Village North Collectors Club, Duluth MN/Superior, WI, Adelaide Cline, amcline@chartermi.net • Region VI Representative: Debbie Oehme, region6ncc@ncc56.com.

. . . December 8, 'First Day of Hanukkah' • December 21, *Winter Begins* • December 25, 'Christmas Day' • December 26, 'Boxing Day' - Canada • January 1, 'New Year's Day' •

. . . Department 56 Village Brochure, \$ 7.50, introduced January 2024.

. . . 'Collections #2,' is Jim Peter's a recent 'Show Your Village' column. Reading it, I was reminded, or learned where some of our Non-D56 village pieces came from; manufacturer(s) and store(s). It was kinda fun, I read every word; and then sent a 'thank you' to Jim. www.thevillagecollector.com/ Note: I long knew he teaches golf; now I know he lives in Kentucky.

. . . In the most recent JSYK I wrote Lemax 'Ice Delivery,' "Intro 2020," "Retired 2013." Thelma thought "maybe Back to the Future?" was the answer.

. . . **Congratulations** to Lisa Remy. She won the *October Nat'l Council of 56 Club Facebook vignette contest!* NCC members can view the contest entries on the NCC Facebook page. • The criteria for the November contest states "please build a vignette using a Department 56 clock shop. Tell us a story about "that one time"..." Additional info on the NCC Facebook page.

. . . January 15, 1997 - **1st official club meeting** of our local *Village North Collectors Club*. It was at the *Buena Vista Restaurant*, Duluth, MN. I was asked this, again! Thought if I wrote it down, I might remember next time. There was at least five pre-first meeting meetings; we were at two.

. . . The next Dept. 56 *Facebook Live Ms. Lit Town* is Thursday, December 7, 4:00 p.m. Central Time!!! I hope to watch live this time.

. . . 'Angle Inlet' is a Minnesota town 'in' Canada. No location is farther north in the continental United States. The info says 54 people; it is a 41 mile drive to enter the U.S.A. And you need a *Passport*. It is much shorter in the winter driving on the ice road (and no Passport required).

. . . For the first time 'Charlie Brown Breaks 100.' With a **bowling trophy** in his hand, Charlie celebrates. Snoopy is sharing the excitement in this 2023 D56 *Peanuts* piece. 2.18 Hx1.5 Wx2.1 in L.

• Abbreviations (I use): NCC - National Council of 56 Clubs • JSYK - Just so you know! • TVC - The Village Collector • VDL - Village D-Lights • D56 - Department 56 • VN or VNCC - Village North Collectors Club • AV - Alpine Village • CIC - Christmas In The City • DV - Dickens' Village • NEV - New England Village • NP - North Pole Village • SV - Original Snow Village. •

. . . OK, I did it! Ed Anderson, of the *Garden State Village Collectors Club*, mentioned in their recent newsletter, a way to add trees to a display. In our garden I cut four, village-sized, Sedum plants. I'll dry them, maybe add a little paint, and see if we have another source for trees. Thanks Ed.

. . . I saw a **snow shovel** on our neighbor's front porch – a not so subtle reminder of the change of seasons expected soon.

. . . In a *Facebook* display I saw two boys **poised to throw snowballs** at a, soon to arrive, train. I could tell; they were looking down the tracks. • It is something I might have done (in my pre-teen years). In our neighborhood, we would have been throwing down at the train; from the *Leif Erickson Park Bridge* over the railroad tracks. A nice safe place with a quick 'get-a-way' possible.



- (left) **New for 2024**, 'Ugliest Sweater Champion,' Dept. 56, Snow Village.
- (right) We displayed our Lemax 'Ugly Christmas Sweater,' set of 4. Linda modified these for our 2019 display.
- Also **new for 2023**, the Lemax 'Over The Top Sweater Shop.' They sell "sweaters all festively trimmed for an over-the-top holiday look." - All the "outrageously wonderful Christmas sweaters you could ever want."



. . . The Pioneer Woman; 'Ropin' Ree & Ladd' and 'Ree Bakes a Pie.' I found them in past years at *Walmart*. Has anyone seen any **new introductions**? The web site for *Walmart* doesn't show any people at all this year.

. . . If you go to this year's open house of Dana Stein, Fort Lee, NJ, I read you must. . . "Grab your top hat, your bumper shoot and adorn those fascinators. . . ." fascinators? - I'll have to contact Jeffrey Kirchner of the *Garden State Village Collectors Club* if I attend a "tribute to Victorian London."



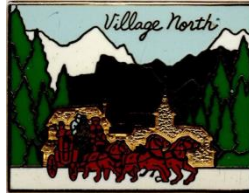
'Lunar Dragon Tea House' 'Chinese Dragon Dance' 'Chinatown Post Lamps'

- Is this a **special year** on the Chinese calendar? For 2024 Dept. 56 will offer us these three CIC pieces. I will be looking at the 'Dance' accessory; Linda likes Oriental soooo -

. . . 'Dickens' Village'- I just re-read his words about the **train stop at Queensbridge**. Larry Treadwell pictured, and then talked about it, in his 2019 story. Henry and Ellen Brantly visiting her parents for Christmas, or the Hendersons and two children heading to the pub for dinner; not sure which image and words I like best. <https://www.thevillagecollector.com/> then click Dickens' Village.

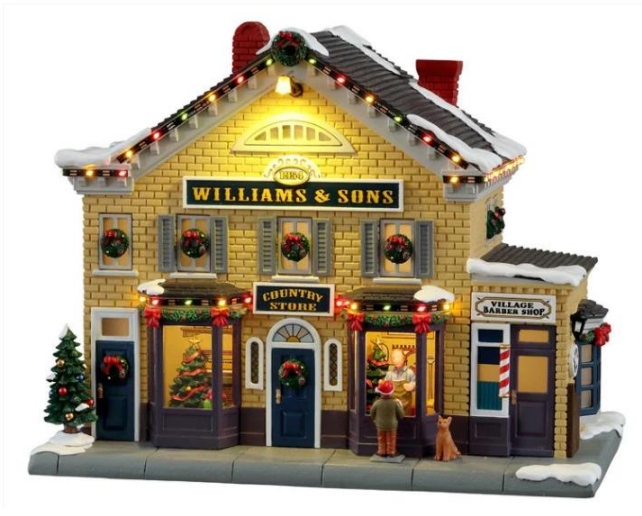
. . . Elves; female, ladies, girls – never noticed 'them' until I was looking through the 2023 retirement pictures. There must be five or six elfettes; 'A Weekend Getaway,' 'Just In Time For Christmas,' 'Mixed With Love,' 'Great Grape Stomping,' 'Every Quilt Kid Tested' – Probably others not yet retired; or maybe previously retired. Normally I notice girls? Note: Is elfettes a word?

. . . 'The Village Chronicler' a web site of **D56 products** assembled by Richard Puckett. It is a good place to 'find/ID stuff.' <https://thevillagechronicler.com> is maintained by Pete Baer.



. . . As of Friday, November 24, 2023, <http://thevillagecollector.com/> has been visited 59,555 times by unique villagers since March 6, 2023. Join the crowd!

. . . Melinda Seegers, Ms. Lit Town, informed us, via the current Village D-Lights, "The Guesthouse at Graceland will be the host site for the Department 56 **50th Anniversary Celebration**, in **2026**."



- I certainly like the child looking in the window, his dog standing by, the store owner setting up Christmas decorations inside. 'Williams & Sons Country Store' is a charming little store that's connected to the local barber shop. \$136.00. (H x W x D) 7.87 x 9.84 x 6.30 inches. Released: 2023 - Lemax, Normal Rockwell - saw on <https://giftspice.com/>

. . . People **looking in** storefront windows, watching parades, etc., its natural seeing the backs of some people in a display. It makes sense and friends notice (and comment in a in a positive way).

- 'Hide-Away Cabin' - We **both liked** the special colors on the cabin. The lights, wreaths, greenery, even the deer was OK. And they say it has "a blazing fire add to the charm indoors." We will look for it on a store shelf. \$39.99. Lemax, Vail Village. (H x W x D) 8.46 x 6.69 x 4.92 inches. Released: 2023

- Saw this new piece at 'Fleet Farm,' the colors look better in this image; a big disappointment.



. . . If you didn't know, Linda does a nice 'fairy garden' each summer. My Gnomes aren't allowed near their garden. They must remain on the mountain; or in their wheelbarrow summer home. Linda says Gnomes are mean. • I just came across an image of 'The Happy Gnome Pub.' I took a picture at Carol's home at the *Chicago Gathering* tour of homes in 2018. It sure looks like a place for my Gnomes to come inside for the winter. • Dept. 56 North Pole, Introduced 2015 - Retired 2017

. . . I visited the 'Christmas Elves' web site; the very next time on-line I received an email from the store asking, "Have you forgotten something?" I thought about it, no nothing forgotten. Out of curiosity, I had looked at one of their special Lemax 'packages' - the price was reasonable. But I'm quite sure I won't be ordering it - from Victoria, Australia.

. . . From Jim Peters: "Hi David, Glad you enjoyed it (his most recent TVC column)! Videlicet, pretty much is an overly fancy way to say 'namely,' very Latin." Jim is trying to teach me new words.

. . . Below you will find the image and words for our entry in the Nat'l Council of 56 Clubs October Facebook **Vignette Contest**. Some folks, not on Facebook, asked me to post it here. The guidelines were: "October is National Arts & Humanities Month. To celebrate, NCC club members are invited to build vignettes using a museum, gallery or performance center/theater. You then tell about your favorite form of art, your favorite artwork, or artist."



Country dancing is the art form that brought Linda and I together. We both remember the words I said at the conclusion of our first dance, "You're spooky!" It was said because she followed the several turns I led; it was her second ever dance class. I was assisting the instructors and she was attending a community education class.

Since then we have together; danced, competed, and taught country dancing. From Community Ed, local bars and regional dance conventions, it has been part of our lives. For fifteen years we danced, or taught, five or six evenings a week. We also got married.

We attended dance classes locally and at bars, dance halls and ballrooms. We truly enjoyed learning from the professional instructors at regional conventions, as well as at Nashville and Las Vegas National events.

Many of our friends today are part of the dance community. We may do other things now, but country dancing is always somehow part of what we do, or talk about.

Dancing remains the art that brought us together; and she still lets me lead.

David and Linda Spears
Village North Collectors Club – Duluth, MN/Superior, WI

Just noticed we forgot to turn on the stage footlights when we took the above picture.

. . . I'm **looking for** 1/43 scale models of the following 'real' cars I have owned: 1946 *Oldsmobile* 2 door coupe - 1954 *Chevrolet Bel Air* 2 door sedan - 1963 *Chevrolet Corvair Spyder* 2 door coupe - 1987 *VW Jetta GLI* 4 door - 2002 *Subaru Outback* - 2014 *Subaru Outback*. Note: I have models of the other nine cars I have owned. Yes, this is a repeat request - thanks for reading.

• *Kohl's*: We checked our local store; didn't see *St. Nicholas Square*, yet. They do show quite a selection on-line. We like 'singing groups.' 'Disney's Mickey and Friends Caroling' Tabletop Décor looks fun; the size could make it right for us. We will check it out 'in person.' \$27.99. 3" H x 5 1/2" W x 2 1/4" D. • Most of their past buildings have not attracted our attention. We have been happy/bought some of the people and accessories.



• "Connecting collectors to clubs, and clubs to each other for over 30 years." Find information about the *National Council of 56 Clubs* at: <http://www.ncc56.com/>. The site includes contact information for possible clubs in your area. - Linda and I are part of the *Village North Collectors Club*, an NCC member •



• We absolutely love the expressive faces of these two girls. They were given to us by our friend Carol. • "The very best way to spend a day is to share it with a friend." Becky Kelly - 1997, Hallmark Cards, Inc. • It would be nice if all our 'village people' had faces like this.

Village North Collectors Club

Duluth, MN/Superior, WI

Northern Lights Collectors Club

Twin Cities, MN

• Sign below: German - '*schaatsen en sleeten*' is '*skating and sledding*' in English - JSYK!



• The couple looks natural to me; I like that! Skating is fun! Posted on *Facebook* by Avalon van der Hoff, Oct, 30, 2023. *Lemax/ Luville?*



- This was in the home of Gail and Jeff on our *Village North Halloween Tour*. I've always liked the pumpkins with dogs in this picture, loved them in the display. Amazing how that works. I'd never been to D56 'Jack's Carving Studio' before, JSYK. The dogs are the 2011 Lemax Spooky Town Village 'Halloween Trick or Treat Dogs.'

• A fair amount of Halloween outside stuff in Duluth again this year. I really liked this one for two reasons; it is simple and it is big. Those skeleton folks are near **ten feet** tall. Lots of people taking pictures; we had to wait our turn to get a clean shot.



... 'Sweet Home Chicago 2018' – Blue and black 'European Imports & Gifts' gift bag. Magically appeared (Linda brought it up from storage in the basement); looks like new. We were at the 2018 gathering (and the store); met a bunch of fun people, JSYK!

... Dept. 56 *Facebook Live Ms. Lit Town, Melinda Seegers*; Thursday, November 2. Her guest, Paul Lundberg, D56 artist. 'The Christmas Story,' 'Grinch,' 'Harry Potter' are his designs. He explained design sequences used for most pieces: 1). pencil drawing; 2). detailed second sketch; 3). finally a color sketch (all sides plus top view). • 'Harry Potter' is all computer art, inspired by book or film. All pieces must be approved by license holder.

... 'DULUTHSNOW.COM' is printed on the "snow stakes" (company's words) already on both sides of our neighbor's driveway – huh? I checked the web site. The two four foot tall stakes show the edge of her driveway; and, says they will plow the snow this season.

... 'The Creation Station' has four **new 'how-to' videos** on TVC. Words and video from Thea Heyink to help us build and improve our own villages. I always learn new stuff. Take a look: <https://www.thevillagecollector.com/>.

... And there they were: Two nice **birthday cards** from 'The Village Idiots' and a third card with an actual photo of a pizza, a real pizza on the front. It seems I save a lot of different stuff.

... 'Service With A Smile,' a waitress bringing **pizza and beer** to a table. Old from Lemax. If you know me, it's now on my 'look-for' list. I've had less than 12 beers in my life, so it ain't for the beer.



• A man is walking down the street looking at 'something' in his hand. The figure is called 'Too Pretty to Pellet.' The Dept. 56 description says, "Even as rubies were being pelleted for timepieces, some with the deepest color and fewest impurities were reserved for jewelry and ornamentation." It took me some time at the computer to find something that explained pelleted; def: "form or shape into pellets." Now I know our friend is holding a ruby good enough to become jewelry. Intro: January 2024. Material: Porcelain, Plastic. 2.75in H x 1.5in W x 1.5in L, Wt. 0.06 lbs. Village figures.

... Lemax 'Plymouth Corners.' Haven't seen anything in this line in a long time; just saw the logo in an online ad. Clicked on it, response, "**No products found.**" • Note: In a recent column, Jim Peters' mentioned he found some; it convinced me to look again - there they were! Thanks Jim!

... "Books, minds, umbrellas work only if they're open." • Miss Maggie

... "Most bald people still own a comb. They just can't part with it." • On-line

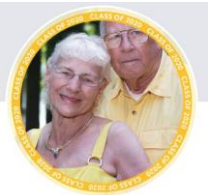
• 'One Santa Special Coming Up!' is Dept. 56, North Pole, now **retired** (2023). With my pizza history, how is it possible we don't already have these pizza makers. Elves stretching the dough; pizza in the oven; they know what they're doing. Take out, delivery or eat in - your choice. 1 3/4 inches tall.



... "You can observe a lot by watching." • Yogi Berra

... "All the effort you are making will ultimately pay off." • Fortune cookie

... 'East Harbor Ferry,' D56 Christmas In The City; the Duluth 'Aerial Bridge,' by John McGraw, Village North Collectors Club; are both in our current *New England Village* display. I wonder if anyone will notice they aren't New England.



Brian Vaill has passed. He was a founder of the on-line 'O Gauge Forum' and the 'D56 Club.' His model railroad layouts were popular online as well as in many magazines. Brian also wrote a train column for *The Village Collector*. Using D56 buildings, accessories and figurines allowed him to expand his displays. His wife Elizabeth died recently; his family and friends know they are together again. There will be a memorial service in Maryland at a future date. Daughter Debbie is planning a Zoom memorial service for his O Gauge and Dept. 56 friends. Note: Brian was 'Passenger Ptc,' a regular on Facebook including 'The National Council of 56 Clubs' page.

... 'Shakespeare Inn' Lemax Caddington Village - Don't actually really like the building all that much, but it has an **open walkway** through the center. I do like an occasional passage like that.



- I've long looked for 'market stalls' to add to our displays; **never expected** to find three selling postage, i.e., Christmas 'Forever Stamps.' Nice look, interesting-different subjects, good color. It even has people, including a letter carrier, to add life. This image is from a *US Postal Service* ad on *Facebook*.

... 'Kohl's' Christmas village: in Linda's pictures, the ski hill looks animated. Pretty sure we won't be adding **skiing snowmen** to our displays outdoor activities, so no. The hockey rink might be a bit longer that I'd prefer, but it is narrow so it might work well as a foreground or background 'moving' piece. *St. Nicholas Square*, I think. Note: Linda revisited Kohl's and took pictures for me.

... November 16, 17, 18 were the **opening dates** of the new 'Enesco Gallery & Gift Shop' featuring *Department 56*. It is located at 'Elvis Presley's Graceland' in Memphis, Tennessee. They say it "will be the ultimate destination for collectors and be home to the world's largest display of *Department 56 Lit Villages*. Pictures are available on the 'National Council of 56 Clubs Facebook' page. Artists Jim Shore, Scott Enter, and Tom Bates were available to sign up to two pieces purchased at the gift shop. Folks also visited Melinda Seeger, Ms. Lit Town.

... D56 CIC 'East Harbor Ferry' – more 'sponge protectors' than I've seen before with a village piece. They do keep the Ferry safe.

... "To make a long story short I became an editor." • Vince The Sign Guy

... "What do you call a boomerang that doesn't return? A stick." • Vince The Sign Guy

... It has an actual **front porch** complete with Christmas gifts; and a hand water pump near the side of the house. Every year I'm happy we have the Dept. 56 NEV 'Warren Homestead & Walden Cottage' combination. They are nice looking and small; a good combination for our displays.

... I have often found **interesting figures** on <https://www.treefrogtreasures.com/>. I just spotted **Mycroft Holmes**, the elder brother of the famous detective *Sherlock Holmes*. I'm thinking he may be an interesting character coming out of 221B Baker Street in our *Dickens'* display. Not sure we have that Baker Street address.

- 'Christmas Morning Express' looked really good when I saw one in action in an on-line display. I knew it was animated, but hadn't realized the **smaller size** and now good it looked with motion. 2.87in H x 2.8in W x 3.23in L - \$82.50 - Dept. 56 - Intro Oct 2022 – It would be a big help to have a local dealer to see new products in person, JSYK.



Questions, comments and/or suggestions are always welcome. You can contact David and Linda at: spears.duluth@juno.com, 105 E. Toledo St., Duluth, MN 55811 or (218) 724-6148.

- 3,552 is the number of words in this JSYK – not counting this line •