

JUST SO YOU KNOW! . . . FEBRUARY 6, 2024

IDEAS, HINTS, AND OPINIONS

BY DAVID SPEARS

. . . I've long thought about adding **graffiti** to our displays. Nothing big or fancy, but 'real' looking, colorful and not insulting. I recently discovered our friend Diane just might be capable of accomplishing this for us. Now I'm beginning to look for ideas; finding a location to place the art. First look was at our buildings. Not wanting to 'change' a house, I looked for duplicates. In Dept. 56 we have duplicates of 'Gad's Hill Place,' 'Glockenspiel,' 'Mulberrie Court Brownstones,' 'Santa's Lookout Tower,' and 'Springfield Studio.' None seem appropriate for graffiti. We have no duplicates from other companies. Note: I'm thinking this idea will only work in 'Christmas in the City' or 'New England' villages; 'North Pole' if we get creative.

. . . My 'sign question' (in the most recent JSYK) was **answered** by Larry Treadwell (and others): "The 'Moon Light Bay' sign "is part of a 2 part Original Snow Village set Moonlight Bay Bunkbed and Breakfast. #55074 and was issued in 2002 and retired in 2004." - I obviously didn't know this. It shows I just don't pay enough attention to Dept. 56 Snow Village. We only have nine SV 'houses.'

. . . Our *ski hill* and *carnival* - visitors noticed those 'areas' were **missing** from our displays this year. We just don't have room for everything we'd like to use. • Numbers? Less than 100 houses used of the 180 we own; less than 1,000 'little people' displayed this year. 2,000 plus remain downstairs in storage. All are not people; some are animals, birds and elves.

. . . . It has been suggested to me the person with no ID from *Efteling* is a 'Court Jester.' I pictured him in my most recent column. He most certainly 'looks the part.' I'm still wondering why he doesn't have a name with his description. The words 'small message' didn't help at all. • Thanks for the replies.



. . . Part of the display, our zoo, was very popular this year. The penguins and polar bears are always attention getters. We thank Tom Iacovilleo for them. The skiers in front are Dept. 56 skating elves from/by John Rapacz). Linda, the background 'trees;' photographer, right front, is me – just so you know!

... 'A Nice Souvenir' – the name of the accessory, lady on the handicap scooter, I pictured in last JSYK. Do I know what that name means? No! We still might want one (or two). Jim said "I guess our villages are not yet handi-capable."

... Dept. 56 did the 'Jackson & Sons Hardware' as a tribute to **Rick Jackson**, their recently retired Creative Director. This *First Edition*, limited to 560 pieces, will come in special packaging with a hand numbered bottom stamp. It will be available and ready to ship in May. Remember *First Edition* pieces are available only at *Platinum Dealers*.

... 'The rotation of earth really makes my day.' • El Arroyo, Austin, Texas

... "The time is always right to do what is right." • Martin Luther King Jr.

... Dept. 56 got my attention. For the **3rd time today** I saw a Facebook ad for the 'The Bean Depot Espresso Co.' I didn't realize it was so cute. I like the accessory, *The Daily Grind*. I don't drink coffee, but if the *North Pole* elves enjoy this shop, it must be good. Sooo, we are going to look at The Bean Depot.

... Judy Severance is the NCC Club Connection Editor – If you are a *National Council of 56 Clubs* member, be sure to read each issue of the Connection. The most recent was posted the beginning of February. Don't forget to thank Judy for all her time and effort making it possible (and interesting).

... Dept. 56, Facebook, January 21, 2024: "Here is something new for 2024! Read My Lips! Starting this year, all core Village lit buildings and accessories will come in a full box. No more sleeves! We will also be adding a short sentiment on the tucked lip of the lid that is designed to surprise and delight every collector unboxing his or her piece." • **Full box** - sounds good!

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

... 'The Village Collector' has been with us since 2017. Bill and Kathy Channell have continually worked to build and improve the web site. Columns: David Spears, 'Just so you the world' • Thea Heyink, 'The (gone from TVC) • Phil & Sue Peppe Apuleo, 'From Italy, Villag-Corner' - • Larry Treadwell, 'Hauntsville 2023,' 'A Dickens' Christmas' and **New!** 'Christmas in the Game Preserve' •



Remember you can find the following columnists: Jim Peters, 'Show your village to Creation Station' Find her now on YouTube Adkins, 'Phil & Sue's Christmas Village' • Art Kilmer, 'Christmas in Europe' •

• 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. •



... February 14, 'Valentine's Day' • February 14, 'Ash Wednesday' • February 19, 'Presidents' Day' • March 10, Daylights Savings Time Begins • March 17, 'St. Patrick's Day' • May 19, Spring Begins • March 24, 'Easter' • March 31, 'Palm Sunday' • April 1- 'April Fool's Day' • April 6, David Spears birthday •

• Abbreviations (I frequently 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. •

... Melinda Seegers, Ms. Lit Town, in Village D-Lights Qtr 3: "The Guesthouse at Graceland will be the host site for the Department 56 **50th Anniversary Celebration** in 2026."

... As of Friday, February 3, 2024, <http://thevillagecollector.com/> has been visited 75,065 times by unique villagers since March 6, 2023. Have you been there? Newest new country visitor from Guatemala.

... Village D-Lights 2023 4th Qtr. – Coming soon, read about it on the January 19th *NCC Facebook* page. Not yet received – February 6th.

... Lemax, 'Christmas Garden Gnomes,' \$5.99, H 1.26 inches, Year Released: 2020. There are two him's and a her; a 'North Pole' sign; a snowman; packages; a candy cane; and a "Merry Kissmas!" apron

... 50 degrees on February 5th; five degrees warmer than the previous record in Duluth, MN.

. . . *National Council of 56 Clubs Facebook Vignette Contest* *changes*: There will **only be 4 Facebook Vignette Contests** in 2024. The winners will be voted on by the NCC Executive Board (rather than individual Facebook 'Likes'). VP Anna McPherson will send out info including a schedule of the contests.

. . . It was the evening before our Village Open House; I was outside shoveling snow. **Seven deer** walked down the road (normally a herd of four). The last one stopped to read the *Open House* sign. We were then wondering if the herd would show up the next day for our open house. Linda might have to add to the 'goodies' she was offering. Note: They did visit the yard Saturday; they didn't come to the door.

. . . **President Biden** was in our Duluth/Superior area January 25th. We heard *Air Force One* leave. It was too foggy to see it, but no other airplanes were allowed in the air; it had to be him. • Lots of cars on the road – everybody had been '*held in place*' as the president traveled to the airport. It took 35 minutes to drive to a friend's house; it is usually less than 15 minutes.

. . . Dept. 56 *Village Brochure 2024*, \$6.50. Available to order. See all the new stuff plus.

. . . *Village D-Lights*; that may be where you have previously seen '*Just so you know.*' I've again been asked that **question**. My column was part of the magazine for their first eight years. - Remember you can also find past versions of JSYK on www.thevillagecollector.com.

. . . A questionnaire I completed a few years ago I said my **favorite** D56 accessory was '*Sunday Stroll,*' Dept. 56 Pine Isles, Simple Traditions. Now I think it is '*Busy City Sidewalks,*' Dept. 56, *Christmas in the City.*' I read that is my favorite in my most recent column. Is it OK to have more than one favorite?



• The '*Lumberjack World Championships*' are held in Hayward, WI, 75 miles from Duluth. The Lemax Table Pieces shown here are: '*Lumberjack Games,*' '*Log Sawing Games,*' '*Tree Climbing Games,*' and '*Log Rolling Games.*' I've actually been to this event. Wouldn't you think we would have this 'set;' but no! Hayward formally had a Dept. 56 dealer. We've also gone to the area for camping, flower purchases, and country dancing. Note: The actual competition also features speeding climbing, boom running, and axe throwing. Ladies compete as well. I saw these images on: '*The World of Christmas Villages,*' Facebook Page, January 23, 2024.

. . . What can you tell me? **Is** 1/32 scale the proper size for our Dept. 56 Heritage Village; i.e. do they size match the people we already have? The ones I recently saw are about 1¾ inch sitting height, 2 ½ + inch standing. They are plastic, painted a couple colors, but no real details at all. I'm not looking for 'individuals,' instead for 'crowd' folks. Parade watchers, stadium crowd, etc.

. . . "*You don't have to be crazy to hang out with me. I'll train you.*" • On-line



• "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 •

. . . *Deer update*: I just came home following a car down the street. We were near our house; three deer were in the middle of the road. As we both got closer, the deer finally moved from the street; onto our driveway. I had my left directional light on, **they didn't move**. Apparently deer don't 'use' turn signals.

... Linda places **throw rugs** on the wooden floors by our displays. That is in case a figurine ends up on the floor. At least then it has a chance of survival (not breaking). We know it has helped several times.

- We might have to add a road, or at least a parking spot, to our 'ski hill.' The new Lemax 'Ski Van' needs a place to live (and I like it). The 'Mountain Side Shuttle Bus' has lots of space for skiers and snowboarders; with a roof carrier for skis, snowboards and other equipment. (H x W x D) 2.56 x 4.65 x 2.17 inches. \$ 34.95. Lemax, Vail Village, intro 2024. Our ski hill was absent (and missed) this year; look for a new 'people carrier' next year.



... "Don't believe everything you think" • Bumper sticker

... Lemax, 'North Pole Lamppost' set of 2. – I like them; we could use the lights in our North Pole display, maybe three sets ☺. \$10.99 set of two. A very nice red; attached signs say "Welcome to the North Pole Official Home of Santa Claus." H 4.02 x W 2.76 x D 0.79 inches. 2023 Intro. They do light up.



- His feet are hidden in the snow - a different look! I don't remember seeing a 'street person' like this before. 'Snowy Delivery,' Lemax Vail Village, 2024. (H x W x D) 3.31 x 2.09 x 1.50 inches. Lemax says, "Caught in a gentle winter snow, a dedicated mailman braves the weather and delivers cherished Christmas cards and heart-warming gifts to eager recipients."



... **60 below zero!** The record low in the State of Minnesota. It was February 2, 1996 in Tower, MN.

- Jest and Jeer are mice happily eating their 'mouse eared' cotton candy. The mice are colorful and happy; I think they belong in our carnival, as parade spectators, or zoo visitors. They are Disney 'Cotton Candy Delight' from Dept. 56. Being only 1.75 inches tall is what got my attention. I don't believe mice should be taller than people. →



- Lemax 'Spooky Celebration'- It includes 'a clown (boy) on his scooter;' remember, I can always have/need another clown (for my collection). It also includes a 'lady/witch/bicycle;' Walking boy 'skeleton/Halloween Flag;' Boy 'red scooter/cowboy outfit.' Don't know what we'd do with them; remember we don't 'do' Halloween (maybe in our parade?). H 2.09 inches (tallest piece). Released: 2021.

... Thanks to Lorna; she searched for a model car from my 'want/need list.' The Village Idiots member sent me an image, and contact info, of a possibility in England.



- This 'Christmas Sock Hop' was noticed by more of our visitors than any of the other animated/musical pieces we previously placed in our kitchen corner hutch. The three dancing couples rotate enjoying the *music*; the band members pivot left and right. Linda believes it is the 'movement' of the *lights* that attracts attention. – (H x W x D) 9.25 x 10.24 x 10.04 inches. Released: 2012 Year – Retired: 2022.

... Changing and highlighting a word on a church sign – it gets my attention, I read it every time we drive by (either way) - *Alliance Community Church*. Note: They are not necessarily religious words.

... It said "Annual Marriage Reunion." The sign appears on the *Dept. 56 Replacement Parts* section of their web site. All the words were: "The Little Brown Church in the Vale, Congratulations, Annual Marriage Reunion, First Sunday In August, Nashua, Iowa." - I just had to look up to see what it was talking about. The event 'Annual Marriage Reunion,' celebrates all marriages; **sounds good** to me! And yes, Nashua is a real, very small town in northeast Iowa. Note: "The Little Brown Church in the Vale," is Dept. 56, Snow Village; 2012-2013 – just so you know!

... 2024 is the 40th Anniversary of Dept. 56 Dickens' Village!

... Lemax buildings and who they are (possibly) for: 'Top Pizza' - David; 'Winterfest Arts & Crafts' - Linda; 'Aspin Ridge Landscaping and Nursery' – Linda and David; 'The Wine Merchant,' 'The Hillside Winery,' – our friend Carol. • Continuing with Carol; 'Carmella's Wine And Chocolate Tasting Room Caddington,' she purchased four of these. Carol does have a small vignette of 'wine places;' one of the Carmella's is on display there. Daughters Terri, Dawn and Sherree received theirs at Christmas – none are 'village people.' Table centerpieces for 'wine parties' is the planned use for the 'girls' houses.

... De Kerstdorpbouwers – *Lemax Addicts Facebook* page: They posted this list of ways to **store village figurines** in a good way: 1. Wrap your figurines in bubble wrap/kitchen roll; 2. Put them in a display cabinet; 3. Toilet roll tube method; 4. Make a compartment box; 5. Ready-made compartment boxes; 6. In a cupboard with drawers; 7. In a custom-made foam; 8. In grape containers with cotton wool; 9. Keep them in the original package. Note: they had images of most of these; I can't find them again – sorry!

... Our computer monitor **screen saver** is an image of our entry in a vignette contest on the *NCC Facebook* page. It attracted a good amount of positive attention during our Village Open House.

... The votes have been counted and 'Taylor Drift' leads the Class of 2024 in the Minnesota Department of Transportation's "Name a Snowplow" contest. We will now have the name 'Taylor Drift' on a large piece of equipment clearing the snow from the roads in our state.



- Looks like Valentine's Day to me. I said "aah" while tipping my head and smiling; that was my reaction when I first saw this Disney 'Your Love Warms My Heart' Figurine. The Hamilton Collection, The Bradford Exchange.



Lemax 'The Original Ugly Sweater Company'

. . . Nine *market stalls* all on the same page. <https://villagesuppliers.com.au/>, search 'market stalls.' Eleven more there on the next couple pages. If you are looking for some fun, small pieces for your bazaar, these will give you a nice of products for sale. Both *Lemax* and *Dept. 56* are shown.



- *Great action!* - It sure looks like they are moving at speed. We have a non-animated skating rink; they will lead the pack. Lemax, 'Speed Skaters.' H 2.13 inches. Released 2023, Vail Village. • We have an actual speed skating rink right down the street.

. . . Kiri Namtvedt was Melinda Seegers' guest on *Dept. 56 Facebook Live* on February 1st. They showed and discussed many of the village accessories for 2024. Melinda explained the four stamps on one of the pieces. She talked fast so I couldn't write them all down. I do remember if there is a '*key stamp*,' the item is available only at Platinum Dealers. March 7th is the date for the next *Facebook Live*.

. . . '*North Pole Mail Room*' Lemax – I saw this animated building online again today – twice! I really appreciate the two kinds of motion (around, and up and down at an angle). Both are inside a large window. The coloring is good as well.



- I am not familiar with either of these accessories, but I find them both interesting. I found them on '*North Pole Village 2023 Lemax and Dept. 56*' by Aniko Dombi. • Find it at 'Village Videos' <https://thevillagecollector.com/> - Official selections, Video of the Month. • Who are they?



. . . Remember I always *need input* to keep going. What do you want to see; don't want to see. More of this, less of that – please let me know. My thanks to those who have responded.

. . . We are fortunate; John Rapaz visited our home today. He was accompanied by his friend Pat. We haven't seen him in a while. John has made a variety of very nice additions for our village displays. It was good to see him. John lives in the Twin Cities; approx. three hours away. We had an age discussion; he told me is older than I. He surprisingly was correct; John was born in March, I in April – of the same year.

. . . Lemax, '*Christmas Garden Gnomes*,' \$5.99, H 1.26 inches, Year Released: 2020. There are two him's and a her; a 'North Pole' sign; a snowman; packages; a candy cane; and a "Merry Kissmas!" apron.

. . . "FE" identifies the hand-numbered 560 pieces of new Dept. 56 releases designated **First Edition**. Saw the FE definition on the Dept. 56 web site.



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.

- 2,345 is the number of words in this JSYK – not counting this line •

- Comments -

"I love the "Friendly the Clown Caravan" (SO colorful)" - Bill

"I really like the "Little David" figure welcoming folks to your village." – Jim

"Especially liked your 'Welcome Sign' for your open house! Keep up the good work!" – Lynn