

JUST SO YOU KNOW! . . . JANUARY 26, 2023

IDEAS, HINTS, AND OPINIONS

BY DAVID SPEARS

. . . 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 – See more abbreviations on last page.

. . . The *'Coach is Here,'* by Bill Channell is new, many subjects! • Jim Peter's, *'Best Christmas Village Videos of 2018.'* • Brian Vaill's, *'The Train Station,'* current offering; "CT Balsam, pickup trucks" • Thea Heyink with her *'The Creation Station,'* • Phil & Sue Adkins, Northampton, England. Present column: *'Plantations • 'From Italy,'* Peppe Apuleo, Nov 7, 2022, *'My Christmas Village 2022'* • 'Christmas Corner' by Art Kilmer, Dec 18, 2022, *'Christmas Book Recommendations'* • <http://thevillagecollector.com/>



. . . Andrew Nelson, Dept. 56 Senior Graphic Designer, joined Melinda Seegers on *'Ms. Lit Town Facebook Live'* January 5th. They showed, and explained, the **new packaging** for D56 Village houses and accessories. The packaging begins with the 2023 pieces. It looks nothing like past packages: color 'frame' surrounding the 'displayed' piece (different color for each village); an image of coordinating accessory; descriptive words on one side added Spanish to the present English and French; added date series originated; added QR code to D56 web site. This is the fourth major change since the early '80's. See all this, and more, on the D56 Facebook Page or web site.

. . . *'2022 Hall of Fame Inductees'* - **Top village videos** of the year. Visit thevillagecollector.com to take a look. Time, and a note pad, is suggested to enjoy the videos from around the world. I try to have Linda close by to get her opinion on the things I see and like.

. . . *Balmoral Funds LLC* announced the **sale** of Enesco LLC, to Ad Populum LLC. In my mind, this simply says Dept. 56 has changed owners. We'll have to wait and see what it means to us as *'village customers.'*



• *'Alpenhorn Serenade'* Dept. 56 Alpine Village; I've become friends with all the St. Bernard's I've met – this one should like me too. However it was the 'long horns' that attracted my attention. Doing our recent Alpine display I was searching for these fellows; found out we never made the purchase. Year Released: 2014 - Year Retired: 2018. 2.7 x 1.5 x 2" Note: I read it should be a *Bernese Mountain Dog* for that part of Europe. We have one in our neighborhood. He likes to say *'Hi'* when out for his walks.

. . . *"There is no need to drive me crazy; I'm close enough to walk."* • Online

. . . *"I've learned that the more creative you are, the more things you notice."* • H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

. . . *National Council of 56 Clubs* President Brandon Taylor was at the *Atlanta Gift Market* this January. He did a 45 minute video of new Dept. 56 pieces. It is well worth the look (and a listen to his words). <https://www.facebook.com/100000880008034/videos/730607682057014/>. He plans to divide the video into smaller sections, watch *Facebook* for those.



- '1940' is engraved on the 'sitting' wall. It is in recognition of the year the first Dairy Queen opened. I do enjoy the soft serve (chocolate), but the date was the attention getter; 1940 was the year I was born. 2.5 x 2 X 3.5 inches - Released: 2018 -- Retired: 2018. Note: There was a DQ two blocks away from my home when I was a kid.

. . . kstp.com/special-coverage/so-minnesota/so-minnesota-department-56/ - is the link to a KSTP news story on Dept. 56. The four minute feature was broadcast Dec 19, 2022. The segment is called "So-Minnesota" and highlights things in our state that have become widely known. Every time I see something on Dept. 56, I learn; this story continues the trend. Note: It is a 'history' story; nothing about the future.

. . . Our local thrift stores; examples, *Goodwill, Savers, Salvation Army*, etc., had Dept. 56 items this season. Not a lot, but enough to make each visit worthwhile. Very few accessories/people offered however. Some of the other brands could be seen as well.

- In *JSYK* I've begun talking about 'roundabouts' for displays; Bernice informed be they are called 'circles' in New Jersey. Jim sent me a picture of his *animated* version; Bill now tells me in the northeast they are called 'rotaries.' He has no problem driving through them; he was only confused 'overseas' driving on the "wrong" side of the road and deciding which direction to go :) Note: A recent 'Minnesota Roundabout' on Facebook.



A Minnesota Roundabout

. . . In December, **LEGO houses** were featured in a story on KARE-TV in the Twin Cities. I saw an image of several of the houses online. They looked very much like D56 CIC buildings. Does anyone have any history or knowledge of the LEGO houses?

. . . "Due to severe winter weather, Bronner's will be closed Dec. 23 & 24. Bronner's will also be closed Dec. 25 for Christmas Day. Bronner's will be open Dec. 26 at 9:00 a.m." Bronner's Christmas Wonderland, Frankenmuth, MI. - I received this email from **the** Christmas store. I mean closed before the holiday; it surprised me. - Yes, I know it is now 'next year.'

. . . Members of our *Village North Collectors Club* again were the 'noise makers' at a *Blackwood's Restaurant* in Duluth (our annual Christmas Party). Thanks to the 'sisters' in our club, we had **Christmas Crackers**. The United Kingdom 'festive table decorations' make a snapping sound when pulled open, and often contain a small gift, paper hat and a joke (ours included all). They are also part of Christmas celebrations in Ireland and Commonwealth countries.

. . . "Sometimes it's better to let the silence do the talking." • Online

. . . I was asked, "Did your club put up a display for the Ronald McDonald house or just help with their collection?" Answer: Several times a year our *Village North Collectors Club* buys food staples for the *Ronald McDonald House*. And, we do collect and then donate pop tabs to *RMH*. No display.

. . . "I was thinking about how people seem to read the Bible a lot more as they get older, and then it dawned on me—they're cramming for their final exam."- George Carlin



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- *Hidden* – do they look hidden to you? Each year we place Woodstock and Snoopy somewhere in our village displays. It is a family thing begun by Linda's sons Jeff and Russ. It's amazing how difficult it is for most folks to spot them. It does seem to make them look at everything else closer. This is where they were recently 'hidden.'



- Dickens Christmas 2022 – **Larry Treadwell** begins *"It is Christmas time at the little English seaside village of Greenwich Park. Come along as we take a stroll through the village and see how life was one hundred and seventy years ago."* He continues saying *"the village is located near the River Thames; is accessed by ship and also by the new mode of transportation, the railroad."*



Image number 20, 'Looking back up Portobello Road' drew my attention. The caption says, "While looking back up Portobello Road I just noticed a very special couple walking over the bridge. The couple (Sir David and Lady Linda) have been part of the village for many years. They can be seen here enjoying the view of the town square and the harbor." Larry concludes the 30 images with "Merry Christmas to all; God bless us everyone" <http://thevillagecollector.com/>

. . . My questions still would appreciate an answer: Can anyone ID the piece on *Facebook*, November 20, posted by Lara Damgaard? It was a gentleman **properly escorting** the lady to the 'Winter Ball.' Image on page 4, December 14 JSYK. • Piece #2: A man doing **card tricks**, with two observers, on the side of the road. The display was on 'Snow-Covered Christmas Village' - Kimberly Maness - *Hot Wire Foam Factory*. Anyone know 'who' the accessory is, and where it comes from? <https://gallery.hotwirefoamfactory.com/> - page 5 Dec 14 JSYK. Please and thank you!

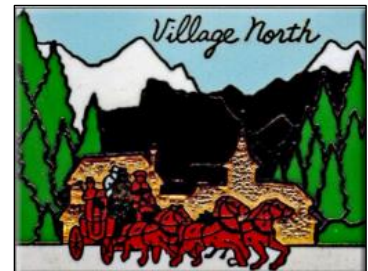
. . . December 31, 6:23 p.m., *National Weather Service* in Duluth tweeted the 0.8 inches of snow today, brought the city's **snowfall** to **44.7 inches** for the month. The total broke the previous record of 43.3 inches set in 1950. (Total reached 44.9 inches before the end of Saturday)

. . . *Lemax Carnival* – we really appreciate it/them. Very happy we bought most of the carnival pieces as they came out; inexpensive and nicely done. They work well with the *Dept. 56 Carnival* pieces (we have all of them). The carnival will be the last display we build this season. Many clowns!

. . . Tree **bases** of three different sizes, good reason; Dept. 56 put three different size **holes** for them in the base. I'm guessing they want us to place them where they were designed to be; hadn't seen it before. It was that way in our new D56 *Halloween Village* 'Little Red Riding Hood.' It took me more than a few minutes to figure out which tree went in which hole.



• 'Boy Reading With Horse,' 2891199, FG Square, Menard's, paid \$2.99 (end of season price); \$16.99 online. (H x W x D) 3.15 x 1.97 x 1.97 inches. – Don't know where we'll use piece; but it is different.



• 2016 Lemax 'Santa with Playful Dogs Presents & Boy.' I don't know if this is the 'proper' name, but I think it's cute either way. I've not seen anything like it.



. . . *Larry Treadwell is back* on *The Village Collector* for 2023. I've always enjoyed his displays and story-telling – welcome back! See him now on <http://thevillagecollector.com/>

. . . "My favorite winter activity is going inside where it's warm."

. . . Another new stand-alone Dept. 56 accessory will be available in 2023. It's the 'Hot Cocoa Stand;' marshmallows, whipped cream and candy canes are available. I enjoy hot cocoa, but only with whipped cream. I do like small concession stands for our displays.

. . . *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 • *City Lights*, Mankato, MN, Mary Zellmer, mzellmer@hickorytech.net • *D56 Builders and Treasurers*, Janesville, Beloit WI/Rockford, IL, Charlene Swansboro. • Region VI Representative: Debbie Oehme, region6ncc@ncc56.com.

. . . Reason to join an *NCC Club*: To create long lasting friendships.

- To commemorate the last item 'named' by Creative Director **Rick Jackson**, Department 56 created '1231 Dunn Street.' The Original Snow Village piece marked the day *he retired* from D56. The colors are nice; the 'tall' basement is a good idea (wish our home had one). Looks like it belongs on a street a couple of blocks from our house. In a display, maybe sneak it into our NEV. Measurements: 7.5in H x 5.6in W x 7.8in L. • Rick was done on December 31st!




- 'Stumps' from a friend's yard. Intended for Linda's fairy garden; we used for our Halloween and Christmas displays first. Both drew nice attention from visitors. Note the 'sawdust' at the stump base on right. Either our woodcutters are working hard, or we have some small creature 'eating' in the stump.



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. . . I have no idea what I would do with this 'gang' of *Garibaldi Toy Soldiers*, but they sure got my attention. Note the fun outfits and very interesting faces. Their bayonets don't even frighten me. What do you think? <https://trainsandtoysoldiers.com/brands/Garibaldi-Toy-Soldiers.html>



• The ad says "These elves are tinkling the keys of the giant piano at FAO Schwarz for the "FAO Piano Dance Contest." They will win on cuteness alone!" - I took piano lessons as a young child (not good at it then, worse now); remember, Linda and I met dancing (I am/was better at that). This looks like fun. I'll never win a contest on cuteness – just so you know! Might have to buy it anyway. Intro 2023, \$56.00. 1.73 H x 2.3W x 4.13 in L. Dept. 56 North Pole Village.

• Dept. 56 posted this image on-line; I understand these are the pieces for their new 'Dickens' Zoological Society' (an all in one place picture). Due to Tom I., we have been 'building' a zoo for many years. Now Dept. 56 is helping us. Like others, I like the rounded fences and the 'Zoological Society' building. I'm sure it will easily fit in Christmas In The City. D56 says; "A zoo is a facility in which animals are kept within enclosures for public exhibition and often bred for conservation purposes."



... 'Inner Tube Sled Dog Race, German Sheppard pulls child and 2 puppies on an inner tube. The 300 mile John Beargrease Sled Dog Race begins in Duluth this month. Is it unusual I just spotted this Dept. 56 piece that was introduced in 2017? 1.81 in H x 2.72 in W x 4.92 in L. Note: We do have the Dept. 56 North Pole sled dog team so we don't really need it. Note #2: I worked Beargrease communications for several years; Amateur radio, WBØZAH.



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• The Department 56 Village 2023 brochure for \$6.50. It should be available to order on <https://department56.com/>

• Per a posting on the NCC Facebook page, your Village D-Lights 2022 Qtr. 4 should be received within 10 days. If not received (or to subscribe), call 800-765-1960. I have every issue!

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... If you think **the order of things** in my column makes no sense, I agree. The 'Just so you know!' headline on the first page; 'contact info' on the last, otherwise nothing is planned. Sometimes it is where it fits, sometimes when I found it. Or if I have an image to use, I'll see if there is a place open where it fits. You should have already figured out, nobody is watching over me, soooo ☺.

... February 2, Ground Hog Day • February 14, Valentine's Day • February 22, Ash Wednesday • March 17, St. Patrick's Day • March 20, Spring Begins • April 1, April Fool's Day • April 9, Easter

. . . 'Havenwood Lodge;' Vail Village, Lemax. For "boarders, skiers, and sledders" I was asked for the name of village ski lodges, this one wasn't on list I shared. I just noticed it on: www.lemaxcollection.com/villages/, new for 2023. (H x W x D) 6.89 x 7.56 x 5.12 inches.

. . . As of January 18, 2023, *The Village Collector* has had a total of 353,877 visits; 235,060 unique visitors. <http://thevillagecollector.com/> - JSYK is among the several columns offered there.



- **Open House (s)** at our home - We have had two this year - so far. The first was with our *Village North Collectors Club*, seven attendees. The second was simply 'ours.' Being the first time in three years (Covid), we were OK with the 41 guests. We were happy to have a nice combination of newbies and old timers. • As usual, Linda had good goodies, more than you can imagine. Now I will be eating them for a while ☺ • One regular visitor brought a friend - a person she told only she would be happy she came - she was! • Big choice of beverages: coffee (weak/strong); hot chocolate;

hot cider; tea selection; pop selection - someone even found my V8 in the refrigerator. • 24 degrees, four foot snow banks, no new snow. • Most commented on: the animated snow angel and bumper cars; our John Rapacz items: ski jump, halfpipe, elf skiers, Glenn Burke and 'me.' • For the *Ronald McDonald House*, we collected several large bags of paper products donated. Plus, several containers of pop tabs. Our friend Mary Ann offered to make the delivery. • She took lots and lots of images; at the age of 12, she was our youngest visitor. Abby asked lots of questions and had good opinions when asked. • Our friend, Karl, came for cookies, again! • CIC was under the table/shelf in front room; almost no one noticed. • Debbie posted several Open House village images on her *Facebook* page. -

. . . *The Golden Glow of Christmas Past* and *NCC Gathering* August 16-19, 2023 Hyatt Regency Crystal City Hotel Reagan National Airport, Arlington, Virginia. For the latest information go to: www.goldenglow.org. To attend the event you must be a member of Golden Glow; \$60 per year. If you are a NCC Club member you will be credited \$30 after attending your first convention.

. . . Additional abbreviations (I might use): AV - Alpine Village • CIC - Christmas In The City • DV - Dickens' Village • NEV - New England Village • NP - North Pole Village • SV - Original Snow Village.



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

- 1,806 is the number of words in this JSYK - not counting this line •

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"Hey David - Thanks for another neat column. It's always a fun read." - Bill

"Ron & I enjoy your newsletter & Linda's input so much." - Barb

"Thank you so much for surprising me with seeing my name in your wonderful newsletter. I look forward to reading it every month and am always amazed at all of the new ideas and suggestions you come up with. I really appreciate you and Linda keeping us informed. Hope to see you two at the next Gathering." - Alita