

Melissa Hoagland

Folklore and the Media

Nov. 18, 1997

The Folklore of the Christmas Season

The birth of Christ, as observed by Christians, is a holiday meant to honor their lord and savior's birth. The meaning of this holiday is still maintained by Christians but a secular celebration has also developed with somewhat different themes but celebrated under the same name "Christmas." Rather than celebrating a birthday many people see Christmas as a time of year to gather together with loved ones and celebrate the goodness of humanity.

In the following articles selected from the Courier-Journal during the month of December. I found many references to the secular meaning of Christmas and only a few references to the religious meaning of Christmas. The religious themes were often found in references to music. The most common references in the articles were to Christmas trees and to Santa Claus. These symbols are central to the secular traditions of Christmas. Many people in Kentucky erect decorated evergreen trees every year and then take their children to the local mall to sit on Santa Claus's lap.

Food is also a large part of the holiday celebration. Cookies play a central roll during this time of year. Between gingerbread men and

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decorated shortcake there are plenty of mouthfuls of decadent enjoyment. Another Christmas time staple is the fruitcake. A mixture of various fruits molded into a cake, many tales float around about the aunt that always makes those abominable 10 pound fruitcakes. At many holiday events there is warm apple cider to sip while savoring the cookies and fruitcake. The pinnacle of the feasting during the Christmas season is the Christmas dinner and no Christmas dinner is complete without turkey or ham.

Among the other decorations of the holiday season some of the most common I found in the articles I collected were lights, candles, stockings, bells, tinsel and ornaments. Many of the references to lights were included in mentions of lighting ceremonies. These events which are very common during the Christmas season, often signify the beginning of a celebration. Candles are used to decorate and to bring a feeling of the Christmases of the past when they did not have brightly colored lights. Stockings are to be hung above the fireplace so that Santa will find them and fill them with goodies. Ringing bells often signify beginnings and endings. The chime of a bell is heard at the beginning and ending of each hour and of church services. Bells are also used in some of the most common holiday tales such as in The Christmas Carol when the evil character comes to see the true meaning of Christmas.

While many of the articles discuss upcoming events some other topics are strategies for dealing with the holidays and some are advice on

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where to find great holiday deals. Another important topic of these articles is the glorification of fine arts that celebrate a Christmas theme.

All of the articles I found discussed folklore in a variety of ways. The various items that I identified as symbols of folklore are common not only in the print media but also in broadcast media and oral tradition, thus the relationship to folklore.

Christmas is a nostalgic time for many people to gather together with loved ones and celebrate the holiday season. They decorate trees, tell stories of Santa, give gifts and sing joyous songs of the season. They pass down stories of Christmases past and enjoy delicious food.

Articles

All can be found in 1996 issues of the Courier-Journal

Fragrances have a way of boosting holiday spirits. Dec. 1

Sweet Season. Dec. 4

Town plans music, food, fun for light-up ceremony. Dec. 4

Celebrate the season. Dec. 6

Schools opt to stick with Christmas celebrations. Dec.

Two needlepointers stitch stockings for the White House Christmas tree.

Dec.18

Kentucky Horse Park all aglow. Dec. 17

North Pole Air. Dec 16

From soup to nuts, you can buy food for a feast. Dec 16

Tree for a small and large fee. Dec.16

Springerlees, brownies, bars...Buy yourself a tray of cookies. Dec. 16

Is it OK to give what you have received? Dec. 12

Thanks, but no thanks, for bad gifts. Dec. 16

National Christmas broadcast to feature St. Matthews church.

Dec.14

Chorus gives Christmas songs of bells, voices a heavenly touch.

Dec. 15

'Nutcracker' respects and enhances tradition. Dec 15

The note from Santa and other Christmas treasures. Dec. 15

Bus drivers' holidays not happy with flap over 'merry Christmas'

Dec. 12

The Best. Dec. 11

Santa and Mrs. Claus. Dec. 11

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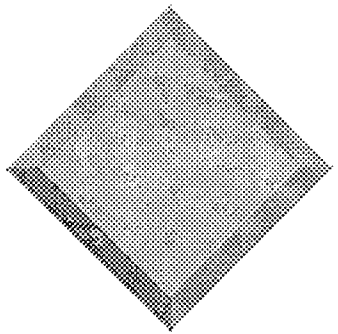
Dec. 15

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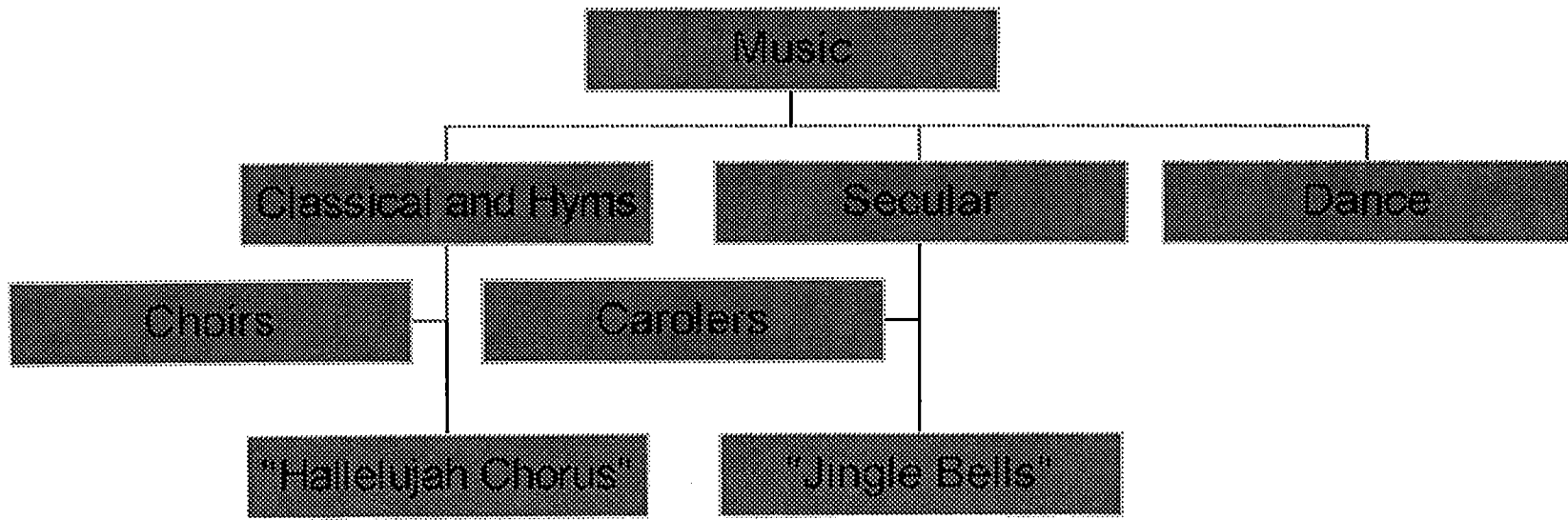
Articles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Lights (16)	1	3		1			3	3		2				1			2			
Candles (5)	2	2													1					
Music (11)	1		2		1									2	2					1
"Nutcracker" (5)						3										2				
Gifts (10)												5	2				2			1
Stockings (5)					1	4														
Bells (7)											1	1		1	3			1		
Turkey (4)	1								3											
Ham (4)									4											
Cider (2)	1	1																		
Tinsel (1)		1																		
Tree (27)	1	4		2	1	5		2		2	1						2		7	
Santa (18)		2									2		1				6	1		4
Ornaments (5)		1	2								1						1			
Cookies (15)		5		2		1		1			7						1			
Fruitcake (3)													3							
Totals	7	18	4	5	3	13	3	6	7	4	14	6	6	4	6	2	14	2	7	6

Symbols of Folklore

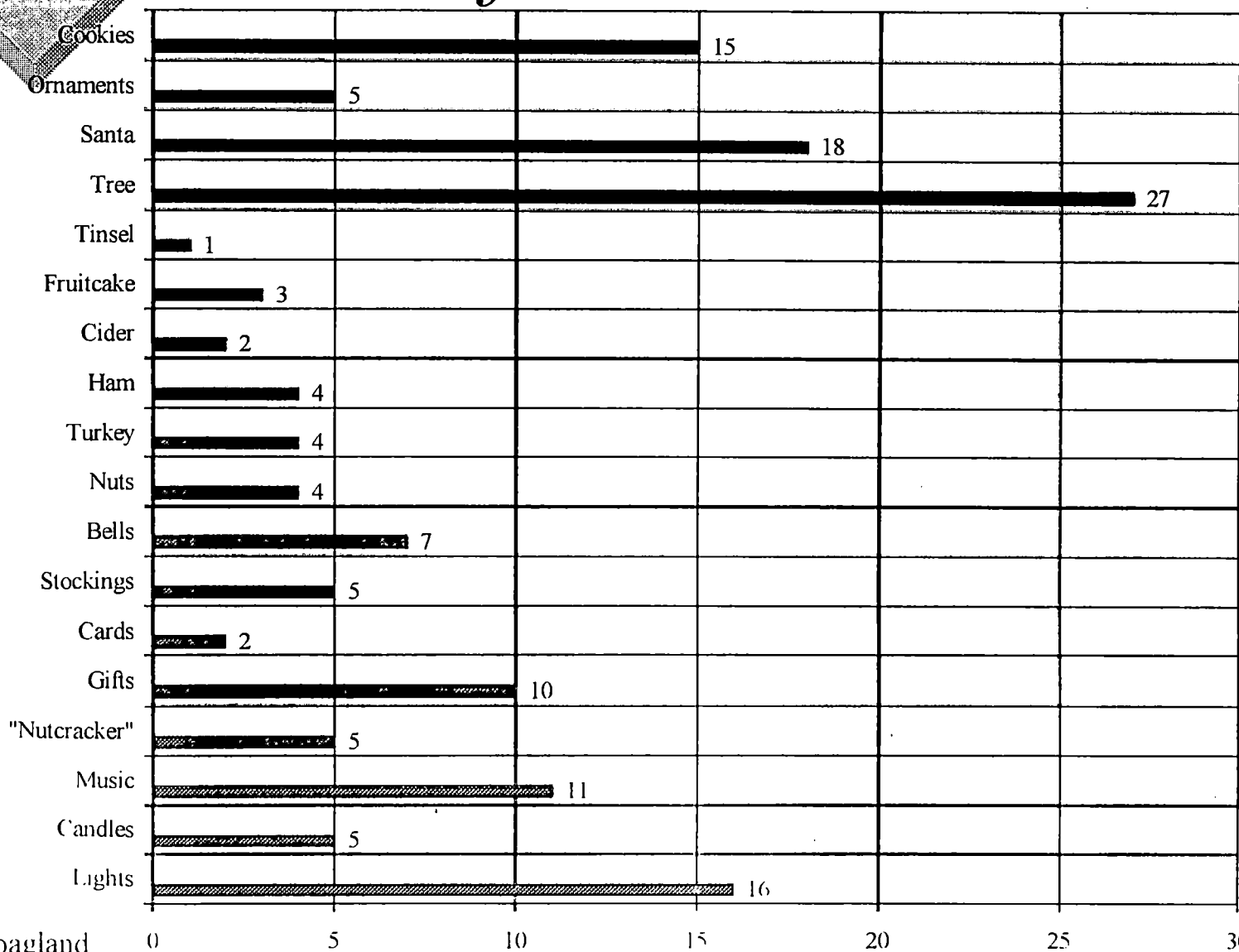


Types of Music Used to Celebrate the Holidays

Breakdown of Types of Music




Total Uses of Folklore

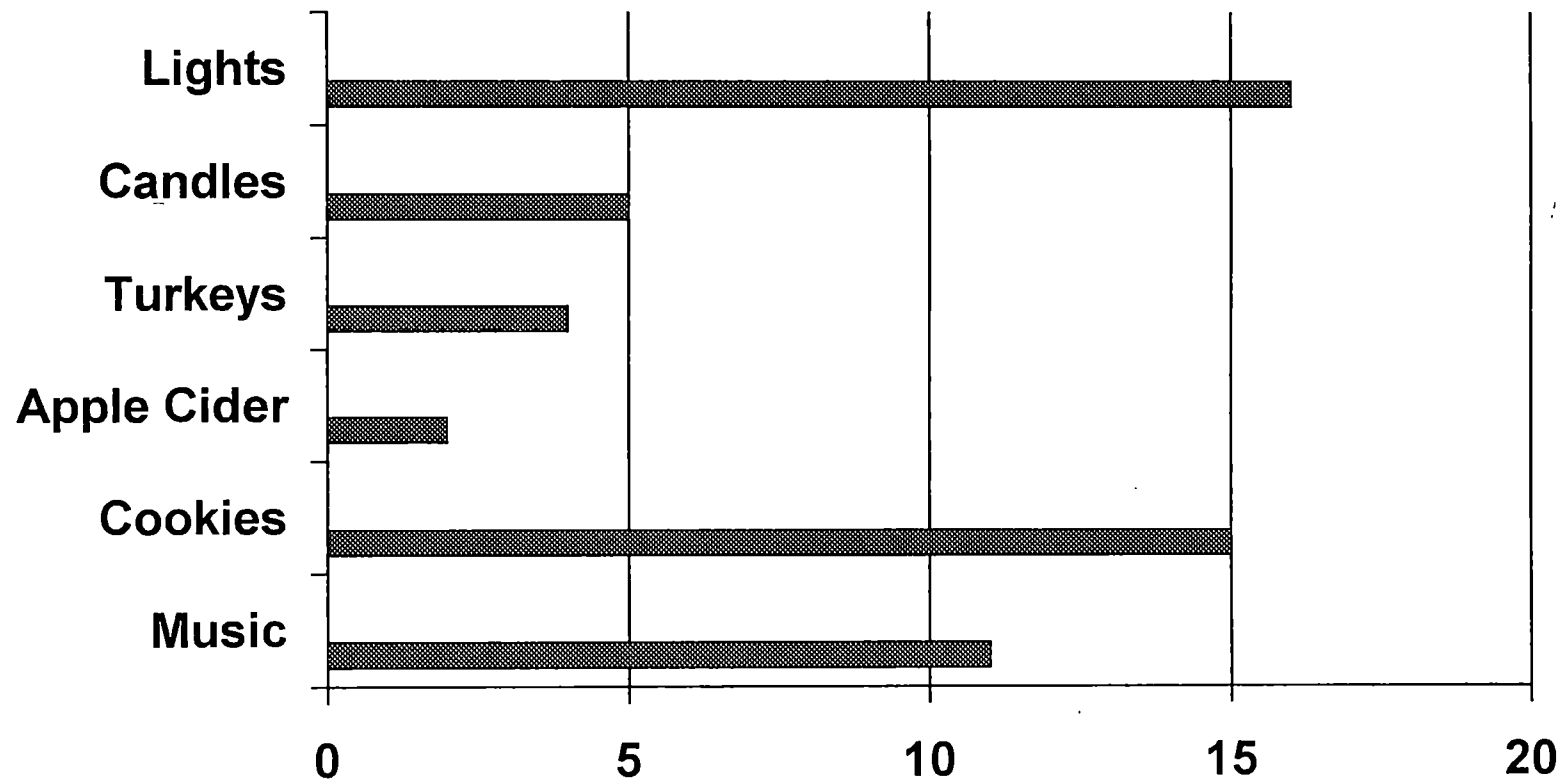


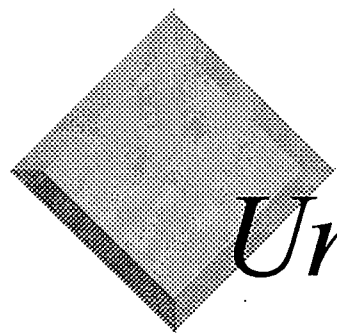
Melissa Hoagland

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Common Symbols that take on Special Meaning During the Holiday Season





Common Symbols

Unique to the Holiday Season

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Number of Times</u>
Santa Claus	18
Christmas Music	11
Bells	7
Christmas Trees	27
Fruitcake	3
Ornaments	5
Tinsel	1

Town plans music, food, fun for light-up ceremony

Santa is coming to town, and downtown La Grange, Ky., will be filled with holiday music and activities this weekend. The annual Light-Up La Grange celebration begins at 6 p.m. Friday, when the switch is thrown to turn on downtown holiday lights.

Parking is available on side streets and in lots on Ky. 53.

Here are the highlights:

Santa Claus — St. Nick will arrive in an antique car after the lights are switched on Friday and will hand out candy in the gazebo on the courthouse lawn.

Christmas music — These choirs will perform on the courthouse square on Friday evening: Hope Anglican Lutheran Church, 6:15 p.m.; La Grange Christian Church, 6:30; Liber-

ty Elementary School, 7; Ballardsville Baptist Church, 7:45; and Immaculate Conception School, 8:15.

The Oldham County Community Band will play from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the firehouse, 121 W. Main St., and carolers and dance ensembles will perform at various locations.

Merchants — Downtown businesses will have open houses until about 10 p.m. Friday and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. Owners will dress in period costumes. Many will have door prizes and refreshments.

Carriage rides — Free, with donation of one canned food item.

Food — Spaghetti supper and baked goods at La Grange Christian Church, 214 First Ave., from 5 to 8 p.m. Friday, \$5 for adults; \$2.50 for

children, and free to children under age 5.

Covenant United Methodist Church Chili Cook-off, 108 W. Jefferson St., from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Friday, \$4 for adults, \$2 for children and free for children under age 5.

Museum — The Oldham County Historical Museum on Second Street will be open from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday with a holiday exhibit.

House tours — From 4 to 7 p.m. Saturday. Tickets, \$10, available at The Garden Party, 114 E. Main St., in La Grange or by calling (502) 222-0040. The tour includes four homes, a house used for two businesses, Covenant United Methodist Church and the Oldham County Historical Museum. Live music will be performed at most; coffee will be served at The Garden Party. Proceeds go to Women in Crisis, which helps women in abusive situations.

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Chorus gives Christmas songs of bells, voices a heavenly touch

By RICK MATTINGLY
Special to the Courier-Journal

It is doubtful that the "heavenly hosts" themselves sounded any better on the first Christmas than did the Louisville Chorus last night at the Cathedral of the Assumption, where it presented "The Bells and Voices of Christmas."

The title was literal as well as programmatic, as musicians Sam Harris and Jason Gregory provided accom-

Music review

The Louisville Chorus

paniment on chimes and glockenspiel for several selections, many of which centered

on the theme of Christmas bells. Throughout the evening, conductor Daniel Spurlock relied primarily on traditional Christmas music that celebrated the birth of Jesus, forgoing sentimental "pop" holiday staples.

But he didn't devote the program just to well-known carols. The two that probably were most familiar to the majority of the audience that packed the cathedral were "Carol of the Bells" and "God Rest You Merry Gentlemen."

Pieces came from a variety of countries. France was represented by "Ding Dong Merrily on High." England contributed "Noel (the Babe in Bethlehem's Manger Laid)," "Gesu Bambino" and "Fum, Fum, Fum" had a Spanish flavor and "Kling, Glockchen" came from Germany.

The concert also included rich settings of "Sing Your Psalms," "In dulci jubilo," "From Heaven on High" and "Today is Born Emmanuel" by Michael Praetorius.

Even "Hear the Bells Ring," written by jazz composer Dave Brubeck and his wife, Iola, had a very traditional flavor — although its "Here is the church; here is the steeple; open the doors; and see all the people" lyrics were more silly than seasonal.

The chorus sounded particularly rich and full in the cathedral's resonant acoustics, with the male voices sounding stronger than usual.

A room with so much echo could be disastrous for a choral group with sloppy diction or lacking a sense of ensemble. But for the Louisville Chorus, the acoustics enhanced the sensation that the sound was coming from the heavens.

The singers displayed a full range of vocal styles, from hushed and gentle to soaring and triumphant, all matched perfectly to the moods and themes of the songs.

Soprano Darlene Welch added an operatic flavor to "Some Children See Him," while four chorus members provided effective "echo" singing during "While By My Sheep."

As is customary at Christmas concerts by the Louisville Chorus, the singers did not end with a loud, joyous finale, as is so often the case with holiday music performances. Rather, they stressed the peace of Christmas with a tender performance of "Candlelight Carol."

Schools opt to stick with Christmas celebrations

Associated Press

MARION, Ind. — Christmas concerts, parties and pageants, long a holiday tradition, can raise uncomfortable issues for school officials sensitive to keeping church and state separate.

"If you want to be entirely safe, then you have to have no (holiday) celebration at all," said Superintendent Robert Bothwell of Mississinewa schools.

The U.S. Constitution's language is simple: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

But court interpretations often are confusing, said William Kerr, a professor of law and expert on church-state relations at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis.

Bothwell said his school corporation observes a generic winter holiday, as well as some Christmas traditions.

Christmas cards, Christmas trees and car drives for the needy — we do the whole ball of wax," he said. "And we do it unabashedly and unabashedly."

Bothwell said the schools' celebrations reflect community values and beliefs.

Kerr said the number of non-Christians, especially Muslims, is growing in Central Indiana, and he expects the number of challenges to school holiday activities to grow.

The holiday observance at Eastbrook Junior High School includes the "Hallelujah Chorus," a classic hymn with lyrics from the Bible.

It's not exactly in the same secular league as "Jingle Bells," but the hymn is a tradition at the school's winter concert. Eastbrook invites alumni and other friends of the school to participate in the performance.

The kids love it," choir director Cindy McNew said. "Any controversy about it is overwhelmed by enthusiasm."

She said there have been no objections to the music's religious references. If courts get involved in such cases, she said, music teachers would have little to teach.

"Most classical music was written for churches," McNew said. "It is almost impossible to think of classical music without sacred works."

Fragrances have a way of boosting holiday spirits

By LISA FAYE KAPLAN
Gannett News Service

The holiday season is a festival for the senses — constellations of colored lights, symphonies of joyous sounds, smorgasbords of traditional tastes.

But if you want to create holiday memories that could last forever, celebration also must be in the air, say interior designers who believe a home is never fully dressed without a pleasing smell.

"The sense of smell plays a large part in the pleasure a home can bring, and it's one of those senses we don't think about often," said Terry Willis, author of "Creating A SenseSational Home" (Zondervan, \$19.99).

Smell is the first sense developed and the sense with the longest memory, according to David Brogna, a New York City interior designer and teacher at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Pine trees, roasting turkeys, simmering cider "bring back good memories that bring us feelings of warmth and comfort," he said.

Pleasant scents also invite guests to stay awhile.

"People don't understand the impact that fragrance has with the human interaction that comes after," said Betsy Williams, author of "Potpourri and Fragrant Crafts" (Readers Digest, \$24.95). "Walking into a room that smells good sets the stage for everything that comes afterward."

Decorating with aroma is a simple and inexpensive way to make a lasting impression.

The winter holidays are closely linked to the aromas of cinnamon, citrus, clove, rosemary and evergreens, Williams said. Also, the smells of lavender, chamomile, sage and woodruff.

"You can either mix them all together in a bowl, or if you're lucky enough to live where they grow, you can cut them and use them in bunches," she said.

Here are some other ways to send holiday scents through your house:

- Light scented candles — pine, vanilla, cinnamon — that provide flickering light and fragrance.
- Simmer cinnamon sticks or cider on the stove.
- Toss citrus peels on a roaring fire. Also, burn fragrant woods, like applewood, in your fireplace.
- Revive old potpourri by simmering it on the stove in a little water.
- If you don't trim a tree, scatter pine boughs throughout the house.
- Drape a long orange or lemon peel over the stove. When heat and steam rise, the peels release wonderful scents.
- Dab scented oils on the underside of furniture.
- Make votive-candle holders from hollowed-out apples or oranges.

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Thanks, but
no thanks,
for bad gifts

11. **Call me on my cell phone.** I have a cell phone, but I don't use it very often. I usually use it when I'm on the go and I need to call someone. I have a lot of friends and family members who live in different parts of the country, so I use it a lot to stay in touch with them. I also use it to make business calls. I have a lot of clients and I need to be able to reach them at any time. I have a lot of work to do and I need to be able to get things done. I have a lot of things to do and I need to be able to get things done. I have a lot of things to do and I need to be able to get things done.

24. *Alouatta palliata* (Linnaeus, 1758)
 25. *Alouatta palliata* (Linnaeus, 1758)
 26. *Alouatta palliata* (Linnaeus, 1758)
 27. *Alouatta palliata* (Linnaeus, 1758)
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 29. *Alouatta palliata* (Linnaeus, 1758)
 30. *Alouatta palliata* (Linnaeus, 1758)

THE

...Christmas Cake," featuring a word of what obviously is a fruit. The word, "fruticasa," is pronounced nowhere in the glossary. The description of the dessert in the F-word isn't used at all. You read the leery type at the end of the ad, where the book describes itself as "Home of Original Deluxe Fruticasa." At least favorite holiday gifts stop with fruticasa. (The Do (D) Little Report)

Worst case scenario: a contest that is a "Mao Contest" to help people understand the Chinese Revolution from a Mao perspective. They will be given a list of 100 names, and they will be asked to pick the 10 most "Maoist" names. The names will be chosen from the most "Maoist" names in the contest. The names will be chosen from the most "Maoist" names in the contest. The names will be chosen from the most "Maoist" names in the contest.

two bottles of store-brand bud-
— subscription to two for St.
— Field & Stream
— with no interest in
— fishing to him
— accounts of his handling
— purchases of sportsman-
— and some of his com-
—

usually, some of those gifts
are, I'm such a romantic devil
in asking Santa for a power
driver this year. Seriously.

RIE - 50000-
DEC. 16, 1996

Celebrate the season



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HANMAN, THE COURIER-JOURNAL

The Courier-Journal

The annual Festival of Trees and Lights, celebrating Christ-mas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa will continue from 9:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. today, and noon to 6 p.m. tomorrow and Sunday at Com-munity Convention Center, in downtown Louisville. The holiday event benefits Ko-sair Children's Hospital.

Admission is \$5 for adults and \$2.75 for senior citizens and children 12 and under. Tickets from this year's festival will help remove and improve the hospital's pediatric in-patient ward.

Elementary in Louisville; took part in a Kwanzaa program; Nix (purpose) is among seven principal of Kwanzaa



—*Adapted from "The Christmas Spirit" by John L. Long, Jr., from the book "The Christmas Spirit" by John L. Long, Jr., published by the American Baptist Church, 1950.*

'Nutcracker' respects and enhances tradition

By ANDREW ADLER

Courier-Journal Staff

The Nutcracker has been with us for as long as a century, now, and seems likely to endure at least as long into the next millennium.

Cynics may grumble that the work particularly in America, has become untied to base commercialism; ballet companies' eagerness to court deficit reduction.

That may be true; yet there's also an undeniable social dynamic involved. The piece connects powerfully to a great number of audiences, and not just because it's a convenient means of feeding a little culture to the children.

The Louisville Ballet's production, which opened yesterday at the Kentucky Center for the Arts, recognizes that its patrons do not want their traditions upset. Mark Morris may have "The Hard Nut" and Donald Byrd, "The Harlem Nutcracker" (the latter, an African-American jazz reinterpretation is now on view at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York City), but Alvin Jones is no such iconoclast.

Jones preserves the classical essence of this work. He and his wife, associate artistic director Helen Starr, have choreographed the major sections with minimal fuss and clutter. They maintain firm control over a ballet that can easily blur into disorienting indulgences.

Last year, Jones adopted a new design scheme for his "Nutcracker." He opens his Prologue in 1930 with an elderly Clara, allowing the rest of the ballet to unfold sixty years earlier as her dream. The choreography in several sections was opened up, though not always to overall advantage, and the look of the Sugar Plum Fairy's grove changed substantially.

The evolved treatment retains two favorite interludes: Lev Ivanov's Act II Grand Pas-de-Deux for the Sugar Plum Fairy and her Cavalier, and William Christensen's exuberant trepak for the Russian Dances. The Louisville Ballet's production, adept at moving vast numbers of performers on and off stage in a hurry, is most satisfying in its smaller moments.

As is usual here, principal roles are multiply cast; during this extended run, Kentucky's pantomime, Clark Reid, danced the Nutcracker Prince, with Elizabeth Harwell taking on the dual assignments of Snow Queen and Sugar Plum Fairy. (The other pairings are Dale Brannon and Katie Moss, and David Goud and Kathy Sawyer.)

Both of these artists have a long experience in this style, though some of their dancing was thickly rendered, stressing preparation for the phrases instead of the phrases itself. Still, they did not diffuse their initial lines with busy gestures, and when necessary, they summoned up reserves of technique and bold partnering.

The Act Two diversements had their typical ethnic appeal, with an occasional collapse of surprising characterization. The corps looked strong, handsomely lit by Michael T. Ford.

A 7-year-old companion of mine offered high praise for the Rat King, which in this production is roughly the size of the Humanoid building. And as 21 or over, viewers had to raise a glass of Stolichnaya in tribute to Kenneth Branson, Vladimir Snegulow and Robert Dattner, whose Russian Dance soared bravely.

Performances, with Jeff Holland Cooke conducting, the Louisville Orchestra, continue through next Sunday at the arts center's Whitney Hall.

PHOTOS BY STEWART BOWMAN, THE COURIER-JOURNAL

The lights display at the Kentucky Horse Park in Fayette County includes a scene showing one of Santa's helpers delivering a wreath as Santa hangs a star atop a tree.

Kentucky Horse Park all aglow

More than 1 million lights have been harnessed to create holiday scenes at the Kentucky Horse Park's "Southern Lights: Spectacular Sights" on "Holiday Nights."

In addition to the 2½-mile car loop in Fayette County, there is a walk-through area that includes entertainment, holiday displays, arts and crafts, and a model railroad.

This is the third year for the show, which opened Nov. 22 and runs through Dec. 31. The walk-through area is open through Dec. 23. Admission is \$10 per car. So far, about 15,000 cars have passed through.

The Kentucky Horse Park Foundation produces the event; proceeds go toward park improvements.



The holiday lights captured the attention of these youngsters as they peered from a car window at the display. The 2½-mile car loop is open through Dec. 31.



"Southern Lights: Spectacular Sights on Holiday Nights" uses more than 1 million lights.

COURIER JOURNAL - DEC. 17, 1996

1-18

North Pole Pair

Paul and Thelma Phelps, New Albany's Santa and Mrs. Claus, spread cheer throughout the year.

By CYNTHIA SCHULTZ
Special to The Courier-Journal

A screaming firetruck pulled to a halt in front of the White House Centre in New Albany on the last Saturday of November.

Out hopped Paul and Thelma Phelps.

They weren't firefighters, but celebrities who were marking their fifth year as the city's Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Inside the center, the Phelpses — Paul, 71, and Thelma, 64 — cut a path through the crowd to Santaland, a gazebo with a fake fireplace with hanging stockings.

Ready to work on opening night at Santaland, they plopped into a pair of wooden rocking chairs, smiled and waited as about 50 children and their parents filed by to recite wishes.

Amanda Youngs, 7, of New Albany, froze with shyness, her chin dropping to her chest.

Her mother, Terri Youngs, jogged her memory about the veterinarian Barbie that comes with a dog and a cat that she wanted.

Cara Cunningham of New Albany brought her daughters Andrea, 5, and Lindsay, 3, who had their arms wrapped around each other as they chanted something about characters from "A Toy Story."

To avoid trouble, the Phelpses kept their comments generic.

"Oh, that's nice."

"We'll see what we can do."

But Thelma Phelps was worried on this night that her husband "blew it" when a little blond boy with a missing tooth requested a dirt bike.

His father asked Santa: "Don't you think he's a little young for a dirt bike?"

Santa said: "No."

The couple passed out Christmas books and candy and looked very much the part of the jolly old elf and his wife.

Thelma Phelps wore a red velvet dress, white apron and a gentle smile that seemed to comfort the timid whom she drew to her lap.

Paul Phelps winked above the pink makeup that was smeared across his nose and cheeks, giving him the appearance of having just stepped inside from the cold. The soft, white mane of a beard he sported looked real enough to yank.

But perhaps it's the genuine, but infectious giggles that make the couple seem authentic.

They clearly enjoy their jobs.

Linda Norwood, of Develop New Albany, believes she hit the jackpot five years ago when she went on a Santa and Mrs. Claus search. "I never

See SANTA
Page 4, col. 4

Santa and Mrs. Claus spread cheer

Continued from Page One

even thought of a married couple," said Norwood, who hired the Phelpses. "They are so patient with the children and have so much energy at their ages," she added.

About 300 children share wishes annually, providing the couple with plenty of anecdotes, Thelma Phelps said.

Many are humorous.

There was the boy who, when asked what he wanted for Christmas, admonished Santa: "I already told you at the mall!"

And the girl who said: "Grandma wants a new husband for Christmas."

"I told her I'd try," Paul Phelps said. "If she didn't get one, I'm in trouble."

Some memories are touching.

Once a woman brought Thelma Phelps a pair of pajamas; she had bought for her daughter. Having told her child that Mrs. Claus makes her new clothes, she asked Thelma to pose for a picture.

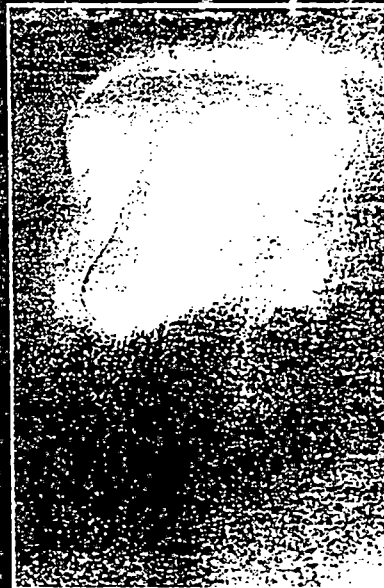
"She had me sit like I was sewing," Thelma Phelps said. "So sweet."

And there was the woman who came asking for more than toys for her children.

"She wanted food," Thelma said. "I told her to come back before we closed. That's the year I got my family involved," buying food and toys for the woman's family. "The teary moments make you feel good."

Thelma especially enjoys the groups of small children who come from preschool programs.

"They're so innocent," she said.



BY BRIAN BOHANNON, SPECIAL TO THE C-J
Pink makeup gives Paul Phelps' nose and cheeks a rosy glow.

impressed that so many ask unselfishly for gifts for their siblings too.

The Phelpses — married 18 years — do more than just lift the spirits of the community at Christmas.

They spread their Christmas joy throughout the year volunteering. For example, Thelma Phelps works one day a week at a social-service agency; Paul Phelps sings at a retirement home in honor of people's birthdays. They work in the soup kitchen at their church, St. Mary's Catholic in New Albany.

They visit patients at the veterans

hospital in Louisville and deliver food to the homebound. They also sing with a local group called the Silver-toners, and bowl twice a week.

They put extra miles on their Santa and Mrs. Claus outfits by making volunteer appearances at such places as schools and nursing homes.

Their love of dancing brought them together at a singles dance at the Drop Inn in Louisville in 1973.

"And that was it," Thelma giggled.

They were an unlikely match. Thelma was divorced with seven children.

Paul, at 53, was a bachelor and an only child who had never driven a car. (He still doesn't.)

"He would come for dinner. He fit right in with the kids," said Thelma Phelps, who has eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

The Phelpses take their roles seriously.

"It makes Christmas so much better," Thelma said.

"It's my gift to the children," Paul Phelps said.

What makes a good Santa or Mrs. Claus?

"You have to have a feeling for children and an overwhelming laugh that sounds like Santa," Paul Phelps said.

"When I put on the Santa Claus suit, I really am Santa!"

Santaland is located at the White House Centre, 222 Pearl St., New Albany. Santa and Mrs. Claus will be there through Dec. 23. Hours: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mondays; 5 to 8 p.m. Thursdays; and 1 to 3 p.m. Saturdays.

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DEC 16, 1996

COURIER-JOURNAL
12/12/96

FORGET ANY fantasies of cleaning up that nice old extra wooden salad bowl for your pal Peg as a Christmas present. And those 75-cent thrift-store ties? Tie them ribbon-style around a boxed present, but don't wrap 'em for gifts as if they were new.

On the other hand, it's probably OK to give as a gift any brand-new item you might have received earlier and didn't want.

Just be sure you really think the recipient would like it.

And for heaven's sake, be careful not to give it to anyone related to the person who gave it to you.

These were some of the messages from many of the 100 or so readers who responded to a recent SAVVY questionnaire about recycling. It asked whether it was sensible to give old-fashioned gifts to give someone else a gift you received and didn't like or like — or an item you bought then changed your

"Frame of mind is important. Consider yourself a gift matchmaker."

mind about.

Opinions were intense.

"It is rude, crude and unrefined. You can always tell when you receive a second-hand gift," wrote Marge Dooling, a county police receptionist/typist who considers herself thrifty in most spending arenas.

"Why would anyone pass on a gift they hate," asked Madge Miller. "The recipient will most likely hate it also. As a recipient of that type gift, I would have to assume I meant very little to the giver."

Years ago, I passed on a wedding gift I didn't need and was embarrassed to find the recipient couldn't return it," she said. "I

decided then to never give anyone a gift they would be stuck with."

On the other hand:

"If you didn't spend money on someone's gift, is it still a gift? Of course, why not?" said Jeff Call.

"Where is it written that you must spend at least \$50 per person or per gift at a socially approved store? I would much rather know that someone actually thought about me. . . . As long as recycled gifts are not worn, threadbare, dirty or obviously old and gross, go ahead and give them," said Meredith Vaughn.

Our society's "spending frenzy" at holiday time "is more tacky than recycling gifts," said Sandee Burkhhead-Dennisson.

"If something is just too horrible for you to own, don't pass it on," said Stephanie Hellmann of Madison Ind. "But if it's just the wrong size or you just have an extra sure. . . . Remember who gave you what."

though, I sent my sister a lovely barrette for her birthday with earrings to match. How surprised I was to receive the exact same set from her for my birthday five months later!"

Specifics? The SAVVY questionnaire gave four scenarios:

Is it OK to give a wallet you'd received but never taken out of the box? Two-thirds said "Sure!" One-sixth said, "fifty"; the same number said, "no."

Is it OK to give a sweater you'd bought, tried on several times but never worn? "Fine," said most respondents, though slightly fewer than the 66 percent who approved giving the wallet.

What if you had three nice wooden salad bowls and contemplated cleaning one up and wrapping it for a gift? No way, said two-thirds of those who replied. Of those who said it was OK, several suggested filling it

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Gifts that keep on giving . . .

Continued from Page D1

with something — muffins, cookies, ornaments, jingle bells or pine cones.

As for buying thrift-shop ties for 75 cents, readers were pretty evenly divided.

"Hilarious fun . . ." Don't just let unwanted items gather dust, readers said. Donate them to charities, sell them at yard sales, and consignment shops or offer them as more casual gifts during the year.

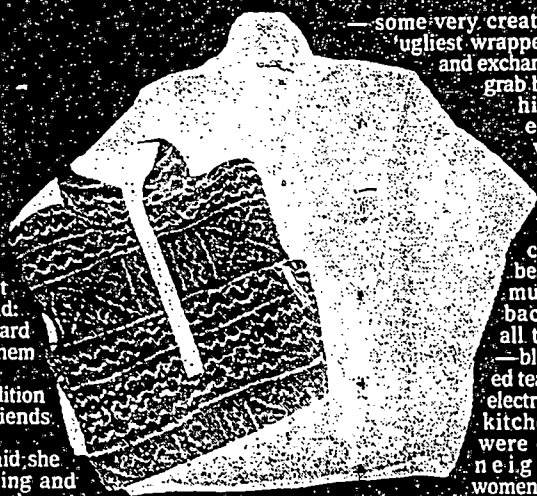
You might also consider starting a tradition where you trade used items among friends and family.

Rita Durbin, one of eight children, said she grew up with a family ritual of cleaning and wrapping favorite items as gifts for each other.

"This tradition was not cheap, lazy, tacky or thoughtless. . . . These were gifts from the heart."

And Julie Brumback-Smith, of Frankfort, Ky., sent e-mail about a new twist her family tried last year:

"My family loves giving each other gifts and loves the whole loud hubbub of opening them. However, we don't love beginning the new year in debt. . . . We drew names so each of us received a nice gift. Then we looked through our homes for things — useful, good things — we didn't use. We wrapped these things



— some very creatively for the 'ugliest wrapped' contest — and exchanged them in a grab bag. . . . It was hilarious fun, especially when my brothers got hot rollers and Tupperware collection! And best of all, after much trading back and forth, all that remained — blankets, assorted teas and coffees, electric hair curlers, kitchen items — were donated to neighborhood women's shelter."

An interesting footnote: The more money people make, the more likely they are to take a gift they didn't like and give it to someone else, according to American Express. It reported on a survey of Americans' gift-giving habits a couple of weeks ago: found 37 percent of respondents earning \$50,000 a year or more said they had recycled a gift. Yet only 22 percent of respondents whose incomes are under \$15,000 said they've passed off as new a gift that they didn't like

COURIER-JOURNAL
DEC. 16, 1996

Springerlees, brownies, bars . . . Buy yourself a tray of cookies

By DEANA NELSON, The Courier-Journal Savvy Shopper

I'M A DECENT cook, but a horrible baker. My new potato soup is always a hit. People ask for seconds of my lemon-pepper pasta.

But my pies burn, my cupcakes crumble and my cookies are not fit for human consumption. I'm a failure at anything that requires a springform pan.

The holiday season is a time for talented bakers to show their stuff. Cookies are in especially high demand. But what about the oven-impaired — or folks who are too busy to bake?

We depend on such places as Stevens & Stevens, Bussman's, Haden's and the Thornberry Pie Shop to do our "cookie-making."

Almost every bakery sells the basic holiday cookie — trees, and bells, sugar-laden and topped with red or green sprinkles.

But what else do area bakers have to offer if you're willing to pay for a cookie tray? SAVVY checked out a half-dozen and found that what looks the best

From (squash) soup to (spiced) nuts, you can buy food for a feast

YOUR SISTER was having the whole family over to her house for Christmas dinner — till she slipped and broke her leg. Suddenly dinner is your responsibility.

You get an unexpected invitation to a potluck dinner — tonight! There's no way you can cook up a good dish fast enough.

Don't panic. You can put together a huge spread of turkey, ham and other holiday favorites or come up with a delicious potluck dish. And the only finger you'll have to lift is the one that dials the phone.

Here are a few examples of what you can find in Louisville.

HoneyBaked hams and turkeys, with the famous honey glaze, should be available through Christmas Eve at the 7619 Shelbyville Road store.

You can get whole turkeys or turkey breasts smoked or roasted for \$19 to \$25. Half hams range from \$30 to \$50, and whole hams from \$70 to \$80.

Bibby's Bar-B-Que, 3812 Bardstown Road, will be working 24 hours a day the week before Christmas to help satisfy your cravings. Bring in your own turkey or ham and Bibby's will smoke it for 50 cents per pound. Drop off

your order by Dec. 20 for pickup on Dec. 23 or 24.

Bibby's will also sell you smoked ham for \$5 a pound, said Kim Johnson, president. For dessert, there are whole cobblers (blackberry, cherry, apple and peach) for \$15. Each serves 10. A walnut-chip pie that serves six to eight is \$6.

Kroger delis will sell whole Christmas dinners, including a turkey or ham and traditional trimmings for \$27 to \$43.

The turkey dinner includes a 12-pound bird, two pounds of dressing, a pint of giblet gravy, a pint of cranberry relish, two pounds of seasoned potatoes, 12 dinner rolls and a 10-inch pumpkin pie — enough to feed 10, Kroger says.

The ham dinners, also intended to feed 10, are available for \$27, \$35 and \$42 and come with four to nine pounds of meat.

For best results, try to order 48 hours ahead. But if you're in a pinch, you'll probably be able to buy one of the meals even on Christmas Eve, said Dan Sawyer, vice president of operations.

Mamma Grisanelli's at 3938 Dupont Circle can cater Christmas Italian-style. Some examples: a pan of lasagna — enough for 16 to 20 people — runs \$50; manicotti, \$45; chicken tetrazzini, \$53.

For dessert, there's cheesecake brownies or Very Berry shortcake for \$2.75 each.

Want something special, such as a pasta salad or appetizers? No problem, said Karen Barnes, manager. The restaurant asks for 24 hours' notice, but it will be catering through Christmas Eve.

Jay's Cafeteria, 1812 Muhammad Ali Blvd., has a dessert that's hard to beat — its popular lemon, caramel and chocolate pound cakes. Each \$15 cake will serve 16 people more than adequately, said general manager Andrew Fountain.

Place your order by Friday for pickup by Dec. 23. The restaurant will be closed Christmas Eve.

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See SAVVY
Page 2, col. 1,
this section

2 needlepointers stitch stockings for White House Christmas tree

By YVONNE EATON
The Courier-Journal

Two Louisville-area women have needlepoint stockings hanging on the Christmas tree in the White House's Blue Room, both in keeping with the tree's Nutcracker theme.

Ruth Whalen's stocking depicts Clara holding the nutcracker in front of a large Christmas tree. Joan Mayhugh interpreted the Mouse King in many colors with his sword lifted as if in battle beneath a Christmas tree.

The women are members of the Embroiderers' Guild of America, which the White House asked to provide needlepoint stockings. Guild president Karlynn Koelliker asked Whalen of the Highlands and Mayhugh of Prospect to produce the stockings. They were recommended by regional director Sandy Bradley, who considers Whalen and Mayhugh to be top-flight stitchers.

In the past few years, artisans have been invited to display their talents on White House trees. Others who were asked to send ornaments this year include members of the American Needlepoint Guild, wood artisans and personnel from ballet companies that perform "The Nutcracker."

The Louisville Ballet was invited but did not participate. Alun Jones, artistic director, had wanted to do a stocking but found it impossible to do so during the ballet's busiest time, said Debra Hoffer, executive director.

More than 1,000 handmade ornaments hang on this year's 18 1/2-tall Colorado blue spruce.

The Embroiderers' Guild received its invitation Aug. 12, and the ornaments had to be at the White House by Oct. 31.

The stockings, which had to be original designs, were created on needlepoint canvas and based on a 9-by-12-inch stocking outline sent by the White House. They also had to be trimmed in gold, have a gold cord for hanging and be completed with a gold lame backing that the White House provided.

Whalen and a guild member friend, Doris Hockenbury of South Louisville, who made a stocking last year, traveled to Washington to see that one on the White House tree.

They found "the tree was gorgeous and the White House was beautiful," Whalen said.

But shortly after they returned, a snowstorm immobilized Washington and Whalen decided "I'd rather see Washington in the spring." So neither she nor Mayhugh will take a chance to see their stockings on the tree this year.

Whalen worked practically two solid months on her stocking, spending a lot of time on the design alone, she said. "I'd get an idea and discard it. Ordinarily you don't have to be a designer to be an embroiderer, but as you get into it the more expert you become."

It also took her 40 hours to stitch



Ruth Whalen, left, decided that Clara and her gift were at the crux of the Nutcracker story, and focuses on the two for her stocking.



For her stocking, Joan Mayhugh stitched the Mouse King in many colors with his sword lifted as if in battle beneath a Christmas tree.

The Louisville chapter of the Embroiderers' Guild of America meets the second Thursday of the month at 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. at St. John Lutheran Church, 901 Breckenridge Lane. For information, call Ruth Whalen, 456-4648, or Joan Mayhugh, 228-8863.

the background behind the Christmas tree. "It was very time consuming."

Having decided that Clara and her gift were at the crux of the Nutcracker story, Whalen wanted to stitch Clara big enough that she'd have some impact.

And to get more detail, she chose to do 22 stitches to an inch and use eight different types of threads, such as cotton or rayon. She also used eight variations of needlepoint stitches.

Mayhugh put in 89 hours on her stocking. "Every time I sat down," she said, "it seemed like it was on my lap. The background took forever. The mouse was the fun part."

She used seven different types of threads and six variations of stitches, 18 to an inch.

And she turned to others for some help. Karen Hauck, a guild member and artist from the Highlands, designed the stocking and painted the



BY ARZ BARNETT FOR THE COURIER-JOURNAL



canvas. Another member, Nancy Cowell of Fern Creek, assembled it.

Nationwide, more than 150 guild members from a membership of 29,000 made stockings. Founded in 1958, the Embroiderers' Guild of America relocated its national headquarters in Louisville in 1985 and now has its offices in The Brown Hotel.

Anything done through the eye of a needle is considered embroidery, including crewel work, cross-stitch and needlepoint, said Whalen, who has been a member of the Louisville chapter for 17 years. "Until I got into embroidery I didn't realize how complicated it is. I think that's why it's kept my attention."

While she had painted with oils and worked with other crafts, "none had grabbed me like embroidery because of all the things you can do with a needle and thread."

Mayhugh had done needlepoint for 30 years, but focused on sewing her clothes while working in the family's real-estate firm.

She also was a volunteer at the Cabbage Patch Settlement for 25 years, doing some sewing there. A woman there suggested that she check into the guild. She joined six years ago and now is president of the Louisville chapter for 1996-97.

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Savvy Shopper

Continued from Page D1

doesn't necessarily taste the best. You could easily do a tray for \$10. Prices ranged from 13 cents to 75 cents a cookie.

Our recommendation: Buy a mixed dozen of elegant-looking cookies and intersperse them with homely-but-delicious treats. If you can whip together something simple, like oatmeal cookies or chocolate-chip cookies, you can keep the cost even lower.

Here are some places we visited and the holiday cookies they have to offer. Call your neighborhood bakery to see what's on the menu.

Apple Jumbles from Thornberry Deli/Pie Shop (5103 S. Third St., 367-8394) were just \$1.59 a dozen. A delicious tart apple flavor melds perfectly with the sweet taste of the cream-cheese frosting. And they look homemade. This South End bakery and deli specializes in pies, and, according to the sign in the back, the employees "still bake hams for a lousy buck." You could kill two holiday chores with one stone here.

Gingerbread men, standing slightly askew, look festive on a crystal platter. They're \$1.80 a dozen at Ermin's French Bakery and Cafe (1201 S. First St., 635-6960). The store's **fruit-filled cookies** are a good choice too, — not too sweet and just fancy enough. Try the raspberry or the apple-filled cookies, with chocolate chip or shortbread shells. They're \$7.08 a dozen.

Where to start at Stevens & Stevens Food Shop, 1114 Bardstown Road? For 50 cents each, you can choose from fabulous-looking **raspberry-topped linzer cookies**, **creamy chess and lemon bars**, **Gold Rush cookies** with tiny chocolate chunks throughout and many more. The deli is happy to put together trays.

Meringue cookies filled with chocolate chips and nuts were favorites from Busmann Bakery (1906 Frankfort Ave., 893-3822). Across from the Kentucky School for the Blind, this bakery had very nice thumbprint cookies and sugar cookies in star and tree shapes bigger than most. But we fell for the meringues, which were barely pink in the wedding cake section (\$2.20 a dozen).

If you've never tried **springerlees**, head to Hadorn's Bakery (1800 Dixie Highway, 774-2610) and sample a few. You'll be hooked on the anise flavor and the chewy texture. Not many bakeries take the time to make these, so it's nice to stock up. They're \$2.89 a dozen. The bakery's **almond shortbread cookies** come with an unnecessary dollop of red and green frosting in the middle; scrape it off and enjoy the delicate, nutty flavor of the cookie.

If you can't decide what kind of cookies to buy, go to Southern



Indiana's Williams Bakery (1051 N. Clark Blvd., 812-284-2867) and get a **potpourri collection** (\$5.75 for about 30 cookies). You'll get **sugar cookies** with sprinkles, **coconut-chocolate cookies**, **bourbon cookies**, **chocolate-covered Christmas trees** and more. And keep this bakery in mind when you plan your Super Bowl and NCAA parties: chocolate-covered football and basketball sugar cookies are available.

You're having a holiday get-together, and the kiddos are invited. You know they won't eat anything they don't recognize. What to do? Aside from putting some Little Debbie's out on a tray, try small **chocolate fudge rolls** from Winn Dixie's bakery (\$4.98 a pound). They're a bit like HoHos with red and green sprinkles. They'll keep kids occupied, and chocoholics will like them too.

A SMALL presentation note: For the money, you can't beat the attractive metal cookie trays, tins and containers at MacFrugal's, 706 S. Ind. 131 in Clarksville, Ind., and 3938 Taylorsville Road. If you're planning an informal tea-and-cookies get-together, use the trays to display your bakery goods. If you're giving cookies as a present, the designs add a festive touch.

Choose from ornate motifs, such as jumbled tree ornaments on a red background; traditional designs, including a light-blue Currier-and-Ives-type pattern; or simple and fun, with a child-like scrawl of a Christmas tree on a green background. Most pieces are \$1 to \$2.

Sweat it out

Bring a brand-new sweatshirt into Inspirations, 429 W. Muhammad Ali Blvd., and trade it in for a 10 percent discount on shop merchandise, like books or statuary. The sweat shirts will be distributed to the area's needy and homeless. The interfaith gift shop's proceeds benefit the Cathedral Heritage Foundation. Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Mondays-Fridays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturdays and 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Sundays.

'Six for the Season'

Here's another incentive to do your holiday shopping downtown: the "Six for the Season" shopping

card. Spend \$10 or more at each of six downtown gift shops before Dec. 31, and you'll receive a discount package worth \$120. The package includes gift certificates, 10 percent discounts on future purchases and tickets to the Louisville Science Center's IMAX theater. The retailers are the Louisville Slugger Museum gift shop, the Louisville Science Center gift shop, the Kentucky Art and Craft Foundation, Inspirations, the Kentucky Center for the Arts gift shop and TriArt Gallery. Pick up your shopping card at any of the six shops.

New home for glass art

Glass sculptor Mark Payton has moved his studio from Bardstown Road to 805 Lyndon Lane. The new studio/gallery has expanded to include other artists' pottery, jewelry and crafts, as well as a framing service. Be sure to check out the collection of colorful holiday ornaments. Hours will vary during the holiday season, but the gallery will usually be open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. daily.

Kid stuff

Kiddos, a children's clothing store, has reopened under new management at 11804 Shelbyville Road, next to Ben Franklin Crafts in the Village Square Shopping Center. The space formerly was occupied by the Angel Boutique, an upscale children's clothing shop. The store features name-brand clothing at discount prices, with three pieces typically under \$10. Sizes run from infant to 6X for girls, 7 for boys.

Tools and more

Levy's has gone where few other hardware stores have gone before — to the mall. You can now shop for home-improvement items, garden tools and bird feeders in Mall St. Matthews and River Falls Mall. The stores are open only during the holiday season, but might extend their stay if business is good.

Double vision

Outer Loop shoppers have been treated to a double dose of the Fashion Shop for the past few weeks. The chain has kept its original store open at 4631 Outer Loop (at the Festival of Jefferson Court strip mall) while it opened a new store at the Jefferson Mall. Both stores will stay open through the holidays, after which the strip-mall store will deliver its stock to its neighbor at Jefferson Mall and close.

Have you discovered an interesting new store? Have you run into a shopping challenge that needs solving? Do you have a gift idea or shopping tip you'd like to share? Call the Savvy Shopper hot line at 582-4040 and tell us about it. Our fax number is 582-4360; or write to: The Savvy Shopper, The Courier-Journal, 525 W. Broadway, Louisville, Ky. 40202.

The note from Santa and other Christmas treasures

Can you remember the best Christmas present you ever received?

A friend asked me that question the other day, and I have been thinking. Certainly, the letter from Santa Claus that I got one Christmas ranks up there in the top five. I had written — or dictated — a letter to Santa asking for a football suit.

But before dawn on Christmas morning, there in the glow of the Christmas tree lights, I found a cowboy suit with a note pinned on the vest above the fringe. It was written in pencil in Santa's own hand, and said something like this:

"Dear Byron, I am sorry that I could not find a football suit for you this Christmas. I searched all over the toy shop for one but they were all gone. I hope you will like this cowboy suit and cap pistol. ... I'm sure that the note had a few more things to say, but I don't remember the rest. Only that it was signed, 'Love, Santa Claus.'"

"My goodness," I thought, "Maybe this cowboy suit isn't much, but this handwritten letter from Santa himself is something else."

I examined the paper. Ordinary notebook stock, just like we used at our farm house in Lincoln County.

I looked closely at the signature in pencil. Simple but strong, and elegant in a way, like my father's. If this note was any indication, Santa Claus was everything that I imagined him to be, and more.

To think that he would take time on his busiest night of the year to write a note of apology for not being able to find a football suit humbled me. I thought of all the kids who wrote to Santa every Christmas, but I knew no one who had ever gotten a handwritten reply. Yep, I was one lucky boy.

The room was still dark, except for the lights on the tree. I looked where I had left the glass of milk and plate of cookies. The glass was empty and only a few crumbs were left on the plate. A leather pillow that I had placed on a chair beside the milk and cookies held the imprint of Santa's seat.



BYRON CRAWFORDS KENTUCKY

This good fortune was nearly more than I could stand. Santa's handwritten note and the imprint in the feather pillow were the next best things to actually seeing the jolly old elf. They were tangible evidence that he was real.

By this time everyone in the house was awake and had seen my letter from Santa and the imprint in the pillow. It was a fine Christmas.

Now that I am older, with four grown children, I treasure the free verse that some of my sons have written for me on Christmas past, and the songs of the season that my daughter sang for me on a tape one year.

One of my sons worked nearly all summer during high school, earning enough to buy for me a beautiful hand-painted set of toy horses and hounds for Christmas, because he knew that I would like them.

Knowing his sacrifice has made me treasure them all the more.

I treasure, too, the small picture frame that my father made from the slats of an old corn crib that had once been part of the 19th-century gristmill on the stream where I grew up. And I count among my best gifts the teddy bear that my mother made from the worn-out quilt that all of our babies played with and took naps on.

Somewhere in Ohio, I suspect there are two women who would say that the best gifts anyone ever gave them came from a stranger in a checkout line at a discount store one busy Christmas Eve.

Someone who was there passed the story along to me.

One woman, who had two or three inexpensive toys on the checkout counter, didn't have enough money to pay for all them. The sales clerk told her that one of the items would have to be returned to the shelf.

Just then the woman behind her quietly laid enough money on the counter to pay the full amount.

I was not there to hear the poor mother's "thank you," or to see the look of gratitude shining from her tired face. But I imagine that during that moment two women who didn't know each other each got the best presents they ever received.

Byron Crawford's column appears on the Metro page Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. To contact him, call (502) 582-4791.



Deck the halls and tree for a small or large fee

By BILL WOLFE, The Courier-Journal

MAYBE IT'S YOUR TURN to have the big office party at your house this year. Or are out-of-town guests pouring in next week? Perhaps you just yearn for a bright, decorated holiday display for your family. You have no time, but you find yourself studying Martha Stewart books in desperation.

If you're all thumbs when it comes to garlands, wreaths, ribbons, lights and tree trimming, chill. For a price, area businesses are ready to help. A tree in apricot and white? Fine boughs cascading down the front banister? Centerpieces? They'll set up your tree, hang wreaths, select ornaments, string lights. Some will even do outside displays.

Does such service make decorating impersonal? "Our customers think it gives them more time to enjoy the holidays," said David King, co-owner of Panache, 100 Cannons Lane. "It's part of a treat to themselves for the holidays."

Prices vary, depending on the time and decorations or greenery you may need to buy. A typical two-hour job will cost about \$100 from King & Kraft, 141 Breckinridge Lane; not counting supplies. Dennis Tapp, interior charges \$75 an hour, plus supplies.

At Panache, "We've done things that are maybe as low as \$150 to \$200 up to a few thousand," King said.

Some companies also may charge you less per hour when you buy their decorations.

What if you just need a little advice on your decorating plans? Most decorators will also act as consultants, leaving the manual labor to you. You can still probably find someone to help you decorate, but hurry. Approaches said any remaining openings should fill quickly as Christmas approaches.

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DEC 15, 1996

THE BEST

A CONTINUING SEARCH FOR THE BEST OF EVERYTHING

The most effective tree stand can be made at home

By LAURA YOUNKIN

Who is ready to make merry?



Christmas holds lots of memories for me. I can still remember being a teen-ager and watching anxiously as my parents struggled to put up the artificial Christmas tree. We always spent the holidays with family in Iowa, so leaving a real tree behind was too much of a fire hazard.

Every year my father would fight with the tree. He could never quite make it stand up straight on the first try. He and Mom would have to work together to balance it in its little metal stand. Would it take one Sports Illustrated or two TIME magazines to keep the tree from toppling?

In my overly confident adolescent way, I figured they had to be making a bigger deal out of putting up a tree than was necessary. Surely it couldn't be that hard.

Then I got older, moved out and bought my own live Christmas trees. Dad wasn't exaggerating. Neither I nor any of my roommates could put a tree in a stand correctly. I bought every different style of Christmas stand that I could find. I bought one that had a big spike in the bottom of the bowl. The directions said to simply drill a hole in the tree's trunk, insert the spike and everything would be set. Hal-

That was assuming I had picked out a tree with a perfectly straight trunk. The tree leaned so badly that year, I finally tied a piece of rope from the window latch to the top of the tree so that the tree wouldn't fall into somebody's lap.

The rope was extremely noticeable and not particularly attractive, so friends took pity and began donating Christmas tree stands. None worked quite right for me. I had to fall back on the family tradition of propping the tree up with magazines, then covering them up with a wide Christmas tree skirt.

A couple of years ago, I got married and, like all families, my husband and I mingled our holiday traditions.

As it turned out, he had a brilliant way of making his own tree stand. It's not exactly elegant, but it's very effective and works with trees up to 6 feet tall.

Larry takes a five-gallon plastic bucket and fills it half to two-thirds full of sand. Then he adds enough water to saturate the sand. He trims off the tree's lower branches, which are usually the ugly ones, lifts the tree, plops it down in the sand and he's set. He fills in around the tree with more sand until the bucket is almost full. If the tree leans, all it takes is a little shifting and the sand supports the trunk. We cover up the bucket with Christmas cloth that is available from any fabric store.

Another added benefit to Larry's Christmas tree stand is that the tree is easier to water. Instead of those metal bowls about the size of a teacup, you have a five-gallon bucket to fill. You can add a lot of water, so the tree is happy and still standing. I recommend putting



BY PAM SPALDING, THE COURIER-JOURNAL

A five-gallon bucket filled two-thirds full of sand makes the best tree stand. And it's cheap to make too.

newspaper under the bucket, though, so in case there's a spill, you won't ruin your hardwood floors or your carpet.

The whole thing can cost less than \$10, depending on how much you spend on cloth to drape around the bucket. (Christmas fabrics are available in a wide range of prices at most fabric stores.) A five-gallon bucket is less than \$5, and 50 pounds of play sand is under \$3. You can check for buckets and sand

at most home-improvement stores.

Merry Christmas!

Is there something in your life you really love? Tell the world about it. "The Best" scores 45 columns from readers. Essays submitted should be fairly brief; they should add something that other readers can use, not waste, visit, enjoy, etc.; and they should be fun to read. If published, they'll bring you 40 bucks and all the fame you can stand.

Address: submissions, with Social Security number included, to "The Best," The Courier-Journal, 525 W. Broadway, P.O. Box 740031, Louisville, Ky. 40201-7431.

Laura Younklin is a librarian at Ballard High School.

COURIER-JOURNAL N.D.

Bus drivers' holidays not happy with flap over 'merry Christmas'

Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Russell Southworth drops the word Christmas from his vocabulary while driving a Fayette County school bus. An advisory from his bosses suggests that drivers stick to generic greetings.

"We sing songs — 'Jingle Bells,' 'Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer' — anything so long as it doesn't have the word Christmas in it," Southworth said.

"It just tears my heart out," said Southworth, who gave up his afternoon routes Wednesday and, dressed as Santa Claus, rode other buses just as he has for the past four holiday seasons.

A weekly newsletter advised drivers not to wish their riders "merry Christmas" but to stick to generic greetings, like "happy holidays."

It is political correctness run amok, bus drivers said.

"They say we have to be sensitive, but nobody is being sensitive to us," said Jim Regan, a driver for seven years.

John Kiser, the district's director

of transportation, said the whole thing has been blown out of proportion.

He said the drivers can say "merry Christmas" if they wish. The item in the newsletter was meant only as a suggestion. That's why Southworth is still allowed to wear his Santa Claus suit.

"There was no mandate; there was no edict," Kiser said. "It was purely a pre-emptive education effort. There is no evil intent here."

Although framed as an advisory, the newsletter says that "it is not appropriate to use a word or term which is applicable to one particular religion. The word 'Christmas' is, albeit loosely, associated with the Christian religion."

Kiser said he thought it was important drivers be aware of the impression they have on their young riders.

One Lexington rabbi thought the debate a waste of time.

"It is taking the ridiculous to the sublime," said Jon Adland of Temple Adath Israel. "Wishing a non-Christian a merry Christmas is taking something special and sacred and trivializing it."

Jews or other non-Christians who are wished merry Christmas simply shrug it off, and the meaning is lost, he said.

Kiser said most of the disgruntled drivers misunderstood the newsletter item. They have not been asked to banish "Christmas" from their vocabularies.

"If a student says 'merry Christmas' to a driver, then it is appropriate to say 'merry Christmas' back," Kiser said. "But we need to be sensitive to the fact that not everyone celebrates Christmas."

Lawyers who have studied the issue say the district has not infringed on the drivers' rights. They could order the drivers not to talk at all while driving and be within their rights.

"Government workers do not have an unfettered right to convey their opinions to non-government workers," said David Friedman, the lawyer with the Kentucky chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

The government cannot, however, dictate what its workers talk about while on breaks or other times when they are not working.

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SWEET SEASON

Homemade cookies help make your Christmas a special time



CAMILLE
GLENN

FLAVOR TO TASTE

Today's Christmas tree has not transcended the welcoming light and beauty of the earliest ones. In 1840, Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's consort, had a large tree (called a Tannenbaum in his native Germany) decked with candles and set alight in Buckingham Palace. It was the first Christmas tree of renown.

The quiet flicker of the small wax candles, the cookie-dough emblems of Santa Claus and his frolicking reindeer, gingerbread cookies and many other ornaments seem modest, indeed, beside the candescent sparkle of our electric bulbs and strings of silver tinsel. But the essence of the true meaning of sharing, and the joy of being together, has re-created itself through the ages.

Homemade cookies are very special at this time, just as they should be, and what could taste better than a delicious cookie with tea or apple cider on a wintry afternoon?

Brown sugar apple and pear cookies

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup tart peeled apple cubes
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup peeled and cubed fresh pears

Zest of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon in slivers or grated

$1\frac{1}{4}$ cups light brown sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsalted butter

1 egg

$1\frac{1}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour, sifted

$1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons cinnamon

$\frac{1}{2}$ freshly ground nutmeg

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground coriander

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda

$1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup silvered, ready-to-eat

prunes or black mission figs

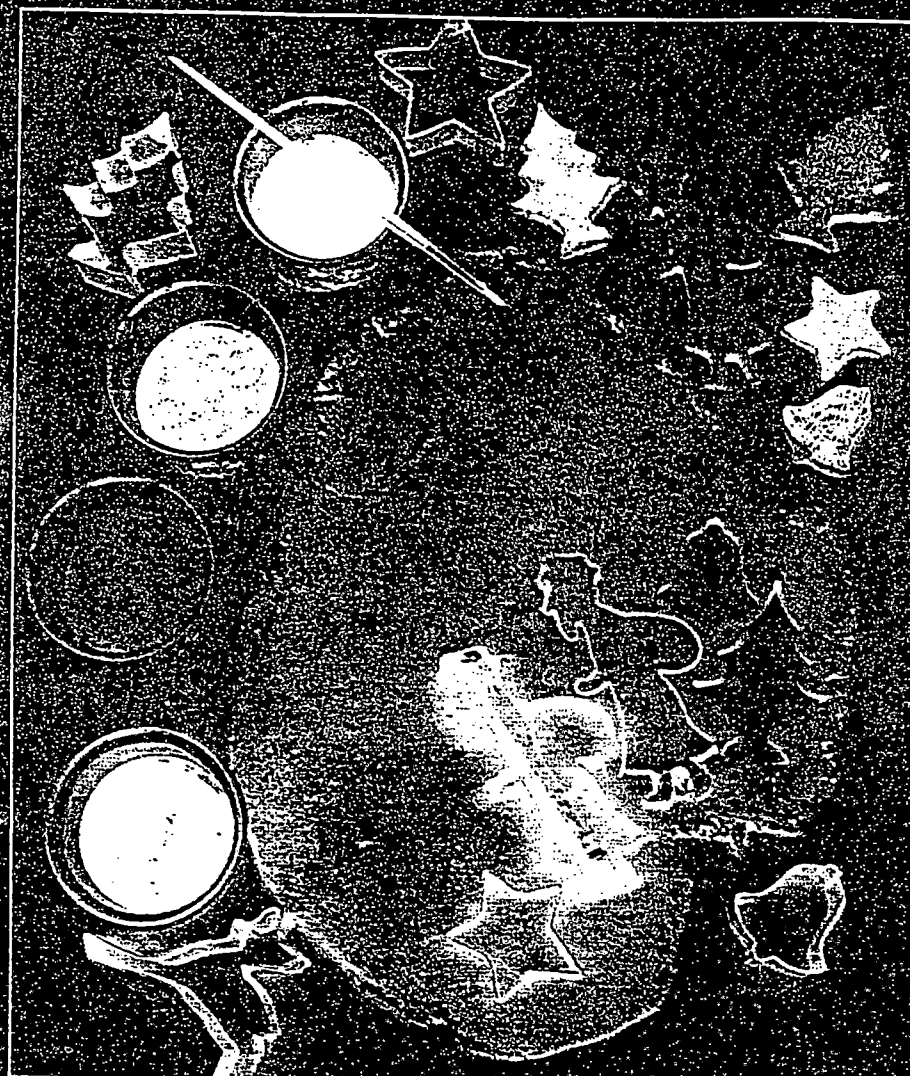
$1\frac{1}{4}$ cups coarsely chopped English walnuts

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Put prepared apples and pears in a saucepan. Add boiling water barely to cover. Cook over medium heat 3 to 5 minutes. Do not allow fruit to become soft. Drain immediately but retain liquid.

Combine slivers of lemon and brown sugar in a processor. (If not using a processor, grate the lemon zest by hand before mixing.)

Add the butter to the brown sugar and lemon zest. Blend until creamy. Add the egg and mix well.

Toss together the sifted flour, cinnamon, nutmeg, coriander, salt, soda and baking powder. Add to



Painting with colored icings adds dazzle to gingerbread Santas and other holiday cookies.

the sugar and egg mixture. Process until blended.

Fold silvered prunes or black mission figs and chopped walnuts into the dough by hand. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup liquid from cooking apples and pears as needed to make a soft, pliable dough.

Drop by tablespoons onto a non-stick or lightly greased pastry sheet. Press each cookie down a bit if needed.

Bake in hot oven until the cookies are a light, golden brown, about 20 to 25 minutes.

Makes about 50 cookies.

Gingerbread people (or Santa Claus and reindeer)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsalted butter or vegeta-

ble shortening

1 cup white or firmly packed

light brown sugar

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups light molasses

7 cups sifted all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons soda

$1\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons salt

2 teaspoons cinnamon

1 teaspoon ginger

1 teaspoon allspice

1 teaspoon cloves

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup cold water

Raisins (optional)

Strips of red candied cherries

(optional)

Combine shortening, sugar and molasses in a processor or electric mixer. Beat until creamy.

Sift flour with soda, salt and spices. Add flour mixture and water to shortening mixture. Mix thoroughly.

Put in a covered container and

refrigerate until well-chilled and firm enough to roll easily, about 1 hour.

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Roll dough out on a floured pastry cloth or board until it's $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick. Cut with the fancy cutters of your choice.

Place cookies on a non-stick or lightly greased baking sheet 3 to 4 inches apart. Use raisins for eyes and noses and strips of red candied cherries for lips, if desired.

Place in hot oven on the middle shelf for 15 to 18 minutes. Cookies must not be allowed to brown very much.

Cool slightly before removing from the pan.

Makes about 36 to 40 people, using a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cutter.

Note: Unbaked dough, covered well, will keep for 1 to 2 days.

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