

Holiday House

Who Says Christmas Only Comes Once a Year?

For many people, me included, there just is nothing quite like the holiday season: festive decorations, cheerful music, great food, wonderful company of family and friends and, lest we forget, presents! I, personally, have about 10 boxes of Christmas decorations in my space-challenged two-car garage. These decorations certainly take what I consider to be a significant amount of time to unpack and place around my home. The more I learn about Folsom resident Kathleen Christensen and her holiday decorating, the more I realize that my accomplishments are but a minor fete.

Kathleen Christensen and her husband Ron start their Christmas decorating in October. That may sound early but in their defense, that's about the time that stores also start displaying their Christmas decorations. It takes the Christensens until about December 1st to complete the transformation. I'm not talking some garland here and some lights there. They

decorate their entire house—every single room. Their decorations include The Department 56 North Pole and Dickens Villages and dozens of Christmas trees. I know you're wondering if that was a misprint, but no, they put trees in every room – that's 13 full size trees and about 30 trees under five feet tall. (They bought their current home based on its ability to accommodate all of these trees.) Some of their tree themes include: Silver/Crystal, Red/Gold, Elves, Snowmen, Santa Claus, Candy, Disney, Patriotism, Family (homemade), and the Fire Department, that last one because Ron is a retired Fire Chief. Kathleen even changes all of the pictures on the walls and Ron makes his own stencils so that he can paint the verses of "Twas the Night Before Christmas" throughout the house. Kathleen's mom used to tease her about searching for toilet bowl tabs that turned the water green!

"Why do they do this?" you may be asking

yourself. Kathleen has always loved Christmas and is thrilled that her husband enjoys it as much as she does. They had always put the traditional tree in the living room but, like many of us, they never saw it. One year, she realized there were enough "fire department" decorations to do a separate tree for the family room. A tree or two a year was added until every room had at least one. This is an ongoing, never-ending process. Kathleen searches for new ideas and decorations year round, always buys her decorations on sale and says that her biggest "score" ever was an 8' tall fully decorated tree for \$250 (originally \$1500), purchased the week before Christmas. She's usually too wiped out to hit the day after Christmas sales, but she does make sure to go as soon after as possible. She shops anywhere and everywhere all year round, but Dorothea's on Sutter Street is one of her local favorites.

Last, but not least - who can guess how many boxes will be needed to store these decorations: 50? 100? Nope, MORE. They need over 150 boxes, which are stored in the garage loft, attic and under beds. Each year, when Kathleen opens them all up, it feels like Christmas day to her. She has so many pieces that it's easy for her to forget exactly what is there during those endless nine months with no sign of Christmas.

Do the Christensens believe in Santa Claus? Yes, Virginia, they certainly do! **1**

— Elizabeth Morabito



Photos courtesy of Kathleen and Ron Christensen.

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