

# Caroler Chronicle



Edition II

Summer 1997



## Woman with Wreaths

Our latest Caroler figurine is a wreath vendor who hawks her yuletide wares standing next to a metal tripod that displays her varied inventory. She comes with six different decorated wreaths in all, four of which will be available separately for you to enhance your own Caroler collection with.





## Dressing Department Brings Carolers to Life



One of the most popular stops for visitors to the Byers' Choice Christmas Gallery is the observation deck which overlooks the dressing department. Each weekday the dressers can be seen working diligently with the tools of their trade – scissors and glue guns, boxes of pins and baskets of fabric pieces – to bring Joyce's designs to life.

Today Tracy Richardson is dressing Victorian women and her fingers work speedily yet smoothly to get just the right drape on the satin sleeves. After ten pairs of arms are adequately attired, she moves on to attaching the lace cuffs.

Tracy says she enjoys listening in on the conversations of collectors when they are looking at a display of Carolers in a store. She often introduces herself to the group and answers questions about her job. "Are they really that difficult to dress?" is the question Tracy is most often asked. "Some designs are simple and some are more challenging," answers Tracy, who doesn't do handcrafts outside of work, preferring to spend her time pursuing outdoor activities with her husband and two young children.

One of Tracy's favorite things about being a dresser is the chance to see the final product. "We see it all come together here," she says.

Over at a nearby table, Tina Kratz deftly places three white pins down the front of a Traditional woman's blue felt jacket. After ten such maneuvers, she begins again at the figure on the left of her table and before long has quickly and securely glued ten heads in place. The hair, hat, and signature sprig of holly come next. Finally each woman receives an accessory – this time a strand of garland artfully placed in each woman's hands.

Tina has worked in the dressing department for six years, and still says she hasn't seen all of the designs. When she does come across a design she hasn't dressed, she takes a look at the photo of Joyce's sample to see if she can figure it out. If she can't, she talks to one of the other dressers seated around her for advice on how the various pieces of fabric and accessories for this design will fit together to create the Caroler in question.

One of the biggest challenges, says Tina, the mother of three, is trying to come up with ways to make each of the Carolers she dresses unique. The accessories are positioned differently on each figure and the Carolers are posed so that no two leave her table looking exactly alike. Add in the fact that they sport different color eyes and hair and have slight variations in the shape and size of the wrapped body, and each of these 100 Traditional women will be one-of-a-kind. Together with the 100 similarly dressed men, these pairs will be shipped to 100 different stores. So if you see a pair you really like, remember that you're not going to find one like it ever again, at least not if Tina, Tracy and the rest of the dressers can help it!





## Carousel

One lunchtime this spring, Bob Sr. loaded all the Byers' Choice employees into school buses for a surprise field trip. The destination: a trip back to childhood! The whole Byers' Choice extended family rode a restored carousel at Menlo Park in nearby Perkasie, PA, then visited a nearby playground where the youngest at heart enjoyed their impromptu "recess."



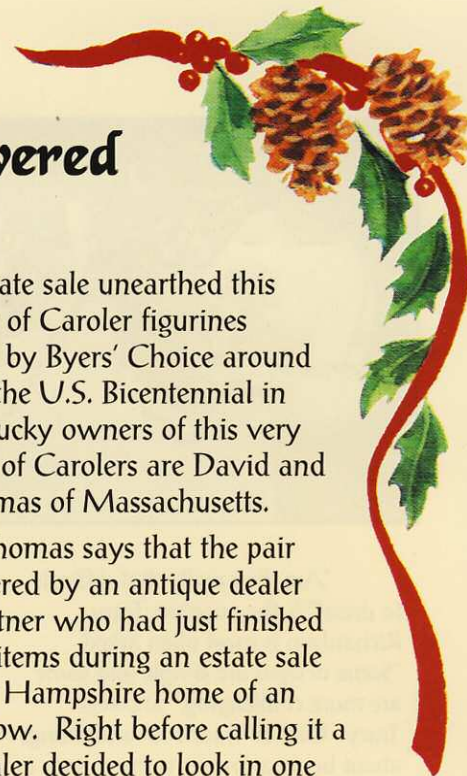
## "Sweet Shop" Backdrop

A new backdrop, featuring the exterior of a candy shop, is now available. This backdrop is similar to the toy shop backdrop introduced last year, except for the addition of some three-dimensional elements which makes it look even more realistic as a setting for your own Caroler figurines.





## 20-Year-Old Colonial Couple Discovered



*Original Caroler Figurines handcrafted in 1976. Not available for sale.*

An estate sale unearthed this pristine pair of Caroler figurines handcrafted by Byers' Choice around the time of the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976. The lucky owners of this very unique pair of Carolers are David and Louise Thomas of Massachusetts.

Mr. Thomas says that the pair was discovered by an antique dealer and her partner who had just finished purchasing items during an estate sale at the New Hampshire home of an elderly widow. Right before calling it a day, the dealer decided to look in one last closet. There, in a box together with various memorabilia from the Bicentennial, was this mint-condition colonial couple. A unique feature of the couple is their plastic hands, seen only on some of the very earliest Carolers.

The antique dealer who made the discovery had just recently begun her own Caroler collection, so immediately recognized the significance of this rare find. She was given the name of Mr. Thomas through a secondary market dealer, and eventually ownership passed to him and his wife.

"This is the best find we've ever had," says Mr. Thomas, whose collection of Carolers numbers around 1000. "They're the most beautiful pair we've ever seen." He says that it looks as though the pair were in the box for all of their 20 years. "Even the paper under the woman's skirt is still white," he says, and the man's music scroll also looks brand new.

Except for showing them to some area Caroler dealers and collector friends and bringing them to Pennsylvania to share with Bob and Joyce, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas are taking no chances with this lovely pair. "They're still in the same box," Mr. Thomas says, only now they're in *his* closet.





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## Volunteering: A Tradition Continues

"I am absolutely delighted and extremely proud," says Bob Byers Sr., when he speaks of the efforts of his children, Bob Jr. and Jeff, to give back to their community. Following their parents' example, Bob and Joyce's two sons have made an effort to be involved in many volunteer activities over the years.

Drawing on leadership experiences he hones as production manager at Byers' Choice, Bob Jr. has recently served several years both as a board member and president of the local branch of the American Red Cross. Not only does he help direct fund-raising efforts for disaster relief, he has also been called on to join other Red Cross volunteers to help victims of floods and fire when and where disaster strikes.

"The Red Cross serves a vital role in our community, bringing real, tangible relief to families affected by disaster," says Bob, who also serves on the local United Way board. "I'm proud to be serving such a worthwhile organization."

Using the marketing and public relations skills that he draws on daily in his work at Byers' Choice, Jeff and his wife, Dawn, have led a community-based effort to build an extraordinary playground at a local park this year. "When it's completed, the 'Kids' Castle' playground is going to be a great place for all kids to enjoy," says Jeff. "And it's wonderful to see literally thousands of people in the community working together to make this dream a reality."

"The example that my parents have set is profound," says Jeff. "They taught my brother and I to be community-minded ever since we were little, and now we're glad we have the chance to give a little bit back."





*Byers' Choice Employees enjoying a carousel ride during a surprise picnic in the park*



### Write-in Your Best Caroler Moments

Next year Byers' Choice will celebrate 20 years of helping people create Christmas traditions. We would love to hear how the Carolers fit into your family's traditions. Write us with your best Caroler moments. Selected letters may appear in a 20th anniversary Caroler book. Send letters to: *20 Years of Tradition, c/o Byers' Choice Ltd., P. O. Box 158, Chalfont, PA 18914-0158.*

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