

Hello! And welcome to my archived article originally published in the [Southern Nevada Country Register](#) ...

Holiday Questions and Answers



I wrote this article in for the **2002 December and January (2003)** issue of the [Southern Nevada Country Register](#) – as Thanksgiving was nearly upon us and the store was in full fall and pre-Christmas selling season.

Our Annalee doll signing event in November had been a huge success – Owner-designers Chuck Thorndike (son of the original artist, Annalee Thorndike) *and* his lovely wife Karen were very generous with their time for both our customers and with us. So -- we planned to head on into the Christmas season with three more signing events in December – one a week -- right up to Christmas ...

We even had a video for these running in our shop. (I suggested to our favorite newspaper's publisher that he bring this edition by for some cookies and our famous hot, mulled cider!)

We also thanked all who had attended our successful events that fall ...

[Le Mélange Gifts & Collectibles](#) says “Thanks!” to Chuck and Karen Thorndike, owners and creators of the famous *Annalee* Mobilitee Dolls for appearing in our store for Las Vegas’ first *Annalee* Artist Signing Event. Thanks too, for donating a sold-out and retired Artist Piece which was raffled to benefit **Good Bears of the World** in our store. And a big “Thanks” to the all of the collectors who attended this event. Looking forward to their return!

And we shared these up-coming calendar items as well...

[Le Mélange Gifts & Collectibles](#) wishes all of our customers and friends a pleasant fall and a good Thanksgiving! Please mark these events on your calendar:

- **December 1.** Janice Stewart signs her handmade dolls and baby gifts in our store.
- **December 7.** Mary Kessler signs her Embroidered Paper Art pieces in our store.
- **December 14.** Dawn Manning signs her Limited Edition Santas and Bears in our store.
- **December 25.** Christmas Day.
- **December 25 through January 6.** [Le Mélange Gifts & Collectibles](#) is closed for our long winter's nap.
- **January 7.** [Le Mélange Gifts & Collectibles](#) reopens with regular hours.
- **Mid January.** To market, to market, to buy new things for you! Get your special needs to Georgia so she can be on the lookout for “just the right thing” – for you!

- *Late January.* Get ready for Valentine's Day with RED, RED, RED from our store.
- *They still have birthdays in the winter!* Better shop ahead with us – just to be safe.

See how busy our schedule got only a couple of months from move-in? We still have this kind of fun in our store! See what is going on now in the most current (and complementary) [Country Register](#) – available in our store and many other fine country-oriented stores in Southern Nevada.

***** Article follows! *****

Holiday Questions and Answers

Georgia Ritter, Owner of Le Mélange GIFTS and COLLECTIBLES

Over the 24 years I have been in business, I have heard several questions over and over -- every Holiday season. These are a few of ones I hear the most:

What is an Advent Calendar? Advent calendars have been very popular calendars in families with children for many years. They cover just four weeks – the days leading to Christmas. They mark each day of the Christmas season with a special activity, story, or bible verse building the anticipation of the season. Truly a family activity, their greatest use involves both children and parents. They are one of the best “Open well before Christmas” presents.

What is a “mouth-blown, glass” ornament? And why are they so special? Glass blown ornaments begin as glass tubes which are repeatedly heated over open flame while being blown into the desired shapes. Although they are similar to each other each has its own distinctives and each becomes just a little different from any other. Because they are uniquely made (by the artist’s hands and mouth) they can be very delicate.

Well then, what is a molded glass ornament? Molten glass is poured into molds to obtain a particular shape. It is then coated with liquid silver and then quickly dipped in hot water and propped up to dry before attaching an ornament top to hang it by.

What is a German pyramid? (or more often, What is *that* thing?) A German pyramid is a conical shaped moving display. They usually contain one or more carefully designed wooden scenes balanced on a central axle and are surrounded by 2 or more candles which power wooden blades arranged in a circle around the top. Pyramids originated over 250 years ago in the Erzgebirge region of Germany. They may use only a few -- or over 700 wooden pieces to create a certain theme. Some have only one level of themed display, but most have two or more levels that rotate around the axle when heated air, rising off the lighted candles at the base, causes the blades at the top to turn the axle. If you have a pyramid but are not familiar with it, be cautious about the size of candles you use and about the positioning of the blades. Most important, be sure not to leave it unattended when lighted.

What is a Black Forest Nutcracker? Collectible nutcrackers are more for show than for cracking nuts! They are generally standing figures that would “crack the nut” between their “teeth” – actually a pliers one of whose arms is the body of the figure and the other is the extension of the lower jaw through the back disguised as clothing or a coat tail. These figures were originally carved by miners, farmers, and woodmen during the long winter months and resembled popular characters of the town and area. Originally made to chase away evil spirits, if you look at some of their carved and painted expressions today, they may have been early political cartoons! Because of their popularity, nutcrackers now are manufactured in many areas of the world, but the best still come from descendants of those original carvers using the old and new themes but keeping the original quality of hand-carving, dressing, and painting.

How should I start a nutcracker collection? There are several theories about starting a nutcracker collection. One suggests beginning with the King because he was the original ruler of the nutcrackers. This theory then suggests adding an armed soldier to protect the King before adding other members of the King's staff and court. But, nutcracker themes have gone well beyond a King and Court. Perhaps you would like to draw from your own interests or life experiences to begin where you like and include professionals, sports, or storybook characters. You also may choose to purchase or build a collection like the Nutcracker Suite or Alice in Wonderland. One of my customers chose to collect nutcrackers with different hats! The best guidance is to collect what *you* like.

What is a German Smoker? And what do they smoke? German Smokers are figures made of wood that are designed to burn cone incense. There are vents constructed into the upper area of the design that allow the smoke of the incense to escape so that it might appear to be a man smoking or some other novel twist to tease our imaginations. Burning incense is often associated with the Magi and therefore is thought to bring blessings to the surroundings where it is used. Our favorite is a modern Dad tending his bar-b-que!

How do I know if I get a good one? The three most famous names in Black Forest nutcrackers and smokers are: Steinbach, Ulbricht, and Erzgebirge. Most of the Nutcrackers and Smokers in our store are made by these companies. We do carry some other German names and occasionally American (Milford) and Far Eastern makers if the quality is good. You get a "good one" if it speaks to you – and you love it.

I am sure that this list only gets you started. Please come in to view our nutcrackers, smokers, ornaments and other decorations – traditional and not-so-traditional.

Now then, do you want to hear the **legend of the German pickle** ornament? The **spider on the tree**? The **mouse ornament**? We can search for answers and share a cup of mulled cider or coffee together. Maybe we can start an ancient holiday legend tradition for your home and family this year!

The editor of the [Country Register](#) was kind enough to include this note:

Ed note: Georgia has owned her delightful shop for over 24 years and she keeps Christmas season decorations on display all year long. Now; however, she goes all out with unique selections and warm displays that will help you find just the thing for the hall, tree, or door in your home. Visit her shop, [Le Mélange Gifts & Collectibles](#), in its new location -- Just off US 95 at 120 East Horizon Drive, Suites D, E, and F – in Henderson, of course!

Thanks for reading through these memories with me! Stop in and reminisce in our shop's "new" location (well, "new" since 2002!). We are at 120 Horizon Drive in Henderson – just one block east of the Horizon Drive exit off US 93/95.

Georgia

Georgia Ritter, Owner

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