



Story available at [http://billingsgazette.net/articles/2007/12/23/features/yourhome/20-decor\\_g.txt](http://billingsgazette.net/articles/2007/12/23/features/yourhome/20-decor_g.txt)

Published on Sunday, December 23, 2007.

Last modified on 12/23/2007 at 1:04 am

## Collector of holiday décor shares his collections

By **ANNA PAIGE**

**Gazette Special Sections Writer**

In one room of Rollie Bach's home, it's Christmas every day.

His guest room features a Victorian-themed Christmas tree that is on display year-round. Adorned with strands of pink pearls and hung with delicate glass ornaments, the tree is one of 12 currently erected in Bach's home.

In fact, every room of the home is adorned with Christmas trees during the holidays. Even the bathrooms feature festive décor.

Numerous collectible Christmas items are on display throughout the house. An extensive collection of Byers' Choice Ltd. Carolers are spread through several rooms.

Charming miniature homes modeled after Charles Dickens' famous story, "A Christmas Carol," line the mantle and shelves in his living room.

### Collection History

Rollie and June Bach moved to Billings in the 1960s, leaving their families in Minnesota.

"Holidays were always really big there," Bach said. "I was in the retail business and couldn't leave and go home. So my wife and I decided to make Christmas as big as we could make it. We just kept adding and adding and adding."

The family gathered four years ago in July to celebrate the couple's 50th wedding anniversary six months early, and June died shortly after.

It takes Bach nearly two weeks to set up the decorations. The tree that displays his collection of nearly 400 glass ornaments takes 12 to 14 hours to put together.

"It takes so long to set up because a memory is associated with every ornament," he said.

He points out a glass cross ornament on the tree, hung at eye level.

"My wife died before we could get to Italy," he said. The cross came from Vatican City, which Bach visited two years ago.

Bach and his wife had been collecting Christmas decorations for nearly 50 years. Many of the glass ornaments were collected on trips the couple took.

They brought Mexican drummers, New York nutcrackers and German angels, among many other ornaments, to Billings to adorn their home during the holidays.

## **Christmas Trees**

From the shiny gold-themed tree to one covered with red cardinals and poinsettias, each tree is decorated in a different theme.

Besides setting up trees in his home, Bach volunteers his efforts and decorates a tree at the Moss Mansion for the Billings Studio Theatre every year. This year's tree, themed "Winter Wonderland," is located in the sitting room.

Each year Moss Mansion guests vote for their favorite tree. Bach's 2006 tree, decorated festively with red poinsettias, won the People's Choice Award.

An active theater participant, Bach has acted in many performances and built sets, and he has received several awards for his efforts. He most recently appeared in the staging of "The Odd Couple" at BST.

June was also active at BST, and volunteered countless hours there. Each year she helped Bach decorate the theater tree at the Moss Mansion.

## **Department 56**

In Bach's extensive Christmas collection, he has a 20-foot display of Department 56 houses from the Dickens' Village Series.

Lights in the windows of the porcelain houses illuminate the tiny village, the setting for "A Christmas Carol."

Bach started his collection in 1984, the year the Dickens' series was launched, and has all seven of the "Original Shops of Dickens' Village," the first buildings in the series.

Throughout the village, Bob Cratchit carries Tiny Tim on his shoulders and Ebenezer Scrooge peeks into the window of the Fezziwig's Ballroom. Tiny light poles are strung throughout the village. Ice skaters glide on a pond. The baker, spice merchant, shoe repair salesman and other townsfolk carry on business.

The village takes Bach about two days to construct. It sits atop a custom-cut plastic foam base that lends the look of snow.

Many of the 60 homes in his village collection are retired from production. Bach doesn't plan on increasing his collection any further.

"I don't have any more room," he said.

### **Byers' Choice Carolers**

Bach's wife started the collection of Byers' Choice Ltd. Carolers shortly after the couple moved to their house in Billings.

The dolls, 65 in total, are grouped in collections around Bach's home. Their mouths are open as they appear to be in full song. Some gather around chestnuts roasting on an open fire. Others are ice skating. One scene Bach calls "Neighborhood Gossipers Around a Fence."

The traditional and Victorian carolers are hand-crafted by artisans in Pennsylvania.

No two carolers are the same, according to Joyce Byers, company founder and creator of the dolls.

"As many as 10 people will work on one caroler. Consequently, it is almost impossible to find two carolers that are exactly alike," Byers said.

Copyright © The Billings Gazette, a division of [Lee Enterprises](#).