



Kevin Milaeger

Milaeger's

Musical Ornaments and War Ornaments

Kevin Milaeger

At my house I start putting up my main Christmas tree right after my Thanksgiving Day guests have left. I usually don't get much done that first night, but I like to at least get a start. After the tree is up, I check all the lights and replace any burned out bulbs. (That's the most important thing you can do to extend the life of any light set.) After the star is in place at the top of the tree, it's time to hang up all the "new" vintage ornaments that I have acquired since last Christmas. This year I have over 150 new ornaments; that's more than usual. Of course, last Christmas my tree was completely filled, so this year I had to edit my collection to make way for the newcomers. Those ornaments that got left behind aren't necessarily inferior. Sometimes I have several examples of a particular style, or I might replace something that has condition issues. Often, my taste has evolved, and I am just no longer interested in certain ornaments. The ornaments that get edited out often end up as gifts to friends. (No, I don't give anyone the ones with condition issues!)



Christmas Tree at Kevin's House

Every year my goal is to have the main tree completed by my favorite night of the year, St. Nicholas Eve (December 5). This year I was a bit rushed, but I managed to get the tree done, and here is a video of it. The video is accompanied by my favorite Christmas carol, "The Holly and the Ivy." I posted a similar video two years ago, but since I have so many new ornaments, I thought it was time for a new one. My niece, Kara, produced the video. In addition, here are a few photos of my tree.



Listening to "The Holly and the Ivy" inspired me to assemble a collection of vintage ornaments with a musical instrument theme that we now offer to you at Milaeger's. They seem to liven up any Christmas tree. Some of the horns will actually "toot" if you blow on them; I haven't yet tried to play the drum ornaments. Note some of the rare colors such as the lime green and aqua horns, and also the hand painting on some of them. The painted valve buttons on some of the horns are another nice feature. Also



Horns

of interest are the saxophones and the red clarinet-shaped instruments---

both of those shapes are hard to come by. Drums are not too hard to find, but the pastel drums are unusual. I hope you see something that appeals to you, something that will make your Christmas merrier.



Now that we are close to Pearl Harbor Day, I thought it would be a good time to showcase some of our "war era" vintage ornaments. I wrote about these last year, but let me review briefly. There were many shortages of raw materials during WWII, and some of them affected Christmas ornament design. The most obvious is mercury, which provided the silvering on the inside of the ornament. Lacking the mercury, manufacturers produced clear ornaments, and then tried colored glass, painted glass, stenciled glass, and other innovations. Of particular note are the transparent ornaments that were supplemented with a twig of tinsel, slipped inside---



Assorted Instruments

Lacking the mercury, manufacturers produced clear ornaments, and then tried colored glass, painted glass, stenciled glass, and other innovations. Of particular note are the transparent ornaments that were supplemented with a twig of tinsel, slipped inside---



1940's American Ornaments

Of particular note are the transparent ornaments that were supplemented with a twig of tinsel, slipped inside---

see photo. The other important change that was made because of the wartime shortages was in ornament caps. Before the war, American manufacturers used aluminum and other metals for caps. During the war

they switched to other options, most often paper and cardboard. These paper capped ornaments are getting harder and harder to find, but we currently have quite a few examples of them. Some of the war ornament styles persisted after the war, even when there were no restrictions on raw materials, and I am including a photo of those, too.



Twig of Tinsel Inside Ornaments

I've had a few queries from readers wondering why they can't find

these old ornaments on our website. Most of the time we have only one ornament of a kind; occasionally we might have two or three, and they are



Paper Caps

distributed between our two stores. We don't have them on our website because it is too difficult to keep track of the inventory. With over a thousand different vintage ornaments at any one time, it is just too difficult to monitor the inventory.

However, we are happy to help you find ornaments---we'll take photos and send them to you with prices, and then ship your choices to you. Just let us know

how we can help, and we will do our best for you. Please [email me](#) if you have any questions or comments.

Happy St. Nicholas Eve!