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Rowe

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Every other year, they drive almost halfway across America to attend conferences held by Hallmark. When they do, they dress up as ornaments for a contest.

Mary Anne makes the costumes from felt and other fabric, and she and Danny turn into all kinds of things — from a huge red stocking to an elf in a Santa hat popping out of the letter “O” in the word, JOY.

I know what you’re asking. Everyone else does, too.

Why?
“I really don’t have any

idea,” Danny says, laughing.

Yes, he does. So does Mary Anne.

Danny and Mary Anne hail from Stokes County. They’re high school sweethearts, married a month after graduation from North Stokes High, and they grew up with drastically different versions of Christmas.

Danny is the youngest of eight, one of 50 grandchildren. He and his older brother, Darrell, used to search for a cedar tree on their family’s 60-acre tobacco farm, chop it down with an axe and drag it home to decorate.

The family’s Christmas ornaments were nothing special — glass balls, hand-me-down ornaments and



Left photo courtesy of the Amos family; H. SCOTT HOFFMANN/News & Record
Danny Amos, left, dressed up as the Joy Elf ornament, right, in a costume made by his wife for the 1993 Hallmark conference. The ornament still hangs one of their 14 artificial Christmas trees.

cut-outs of old Christmas cards hung on a tree.
In Danny’s house, Christmas was a big deal.

In Mary Anne’s house, it wasn’t.
When she was 9, her dad died the day after

Christmas. After that, Mary Anne’s paternal grandmother, who lived next door, never sent out Christmas cards and never had a tree. To her family, Christmas became too painful.

That’s changed. You see that everywhere in their house. Every room has at least one Christmas tree from Thanksgiving to mid-January. Decorating takes a solid two weeks.

Their sons, Justin and Tyler, used to see as many as 37 decorated trees every Christmas around their house.

They didn’t understand. They do now.

“Honestly, we thought it was kinda weird,” says Justin, 30, a budget analyst for the city of Charlotte.

“But looking back on it, we know it’s pretty special. We got to spend time as a family. Other people have their own traditions. That is our tradition.”

Tradition. That is why they collect.

“That is what grounds us,” says Danny, 56, a retired history teacher. “It reminds us of our past and fulfills our future, and you know, religion is a part of that. It’s all intertwined. You turn on the lights, the Christmas lights of the world, and you’re celebrating.”

Listening to Danny and Mary Anne, you get it. Tradition. That’s what counts.

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Market

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sisting the effort. “One of the farmers told us that produce brings repeat customers. We want to choose different crafts people to make it fun and interesting.”

A starting date has not been determined, but organizers are targeting March or April.

They said they have talked with the new management of the Greensboro Farmers’ Curb Market, which operates on Wednesdays and Saturdays on Yanceyville Street.

“Anything like this that adds vibrancy to downtown is a good thing,” said David Craft, chairman of Greensboro Farmers’ Market Inc., which will operate the Yanceyville Street market. “Competition is good for everybody. It keeps us on our toes.”

Organizers of the downtown market said they want to target a younger audience that doesn’t get up early on Saturday morning to visit the farmers’ market.

“We want to introduce them to a farmers’ market on a regular basis,” Amoro said. “(And) there’s not a lot going on downtown on Sunday afternoon.”

Organizers said they are in the process of putting together the market’s rules and regulations. It could not be determined Tuesday if they had talked to the city about using the South Elm lot.

If that site doesn’t work out, organizers said they hope to find another location downtown. They said they’re convinced the idea has merit.

“We have spent all fall talking to people from various businesses to farmers to residents,” said Zeke Vantreese, general manager of The Green Bean on South Elm Street and one of the organizers. “The response has been very positive.”

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Marine

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pain from other suffering lives,” Locklear said.

His spirit will continue to exist on Earth, he said.

Levy, called Jacob by his family and closest friends, was a dancer in his Lumbee tribe and cross country runner and wrestler at Eastern Randolph High School. He enlisted in the Marine Corps before graduating in 2009. He was fatally injured in Afghanistan while serving his second tour, for which he volunteered.

Younger brother Payne Sheek portrayed Levy as a loving, funny guy who would do anything ever asked of him.

“My brother taught me how to dance,” he told the crowd. “My brother taught me to stand up for what I would believe in, even if I were standing alone.”

He taught him right from wrong and how to learn from mistakes. They joked around, too.

Payne recalled an epi-



The Marine honor guard performs a 21-gun salute Tuesday at the burial service for Lance Cpl. Christopher Phoenix Jacob Levy at Gilmore Memorial Park in Julian.

JERRY WOLFORD
News & Record

sode when his brother returned from his first tour in Afghanistan. The teen knew better than to wake a sleeping Marine, but he did it anyway.

“I walked in the room, shook his arm, knelted down and told him to wake up,” Payne recalled. “He punched me in my chest and knocked the breath out of me.”

The crowd laughed. Now Jacob is in a place where there is no war or battle, Payne said.

“The way that I look at

it, everybody that passes through the gates of heaven, there’s always two Marines standing right beside that gate, every day and every night,” he said. “I’m proud to say that my brother is now one of the Marines standing at the gate.”

Chris A. Levy said Jacob was a much better person than he was at Jacob’s young age. He thanked the hundreds in the sanctuary for helping to raise him. He also thanked the Marine Corps, the church and

the Patriot Guard Riders — a motorcycle club that honors fallen soldiers — for supporting the family.

Some people who didn’t attend the service lined the route from the church to Gilmore Memorial Park in Julian, waving American flags.

Construction workers stopped their project and held hard hats over their hearts. Sheriff’s deputies and firefighters blocked the roads, cupping their chests with their hands.

The marquee in front of

the Climax Fire Department on N.C. 62 read “God Bless Lance Corporal Levy and Family.”

At the burial site, dozens of Patriot Guard Riders and Marines encircled the mourners.

As Lumbee tribe members beat a drum and sang a Native American song, Levy’s relatives put flowers on his casket and said their goodbyes.

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