

Out with the old and in with the new. That's how it's been at our house for the past few days. I hate to rush the holidays, but every year about this time such hustle and bustle have become our standard *modus operandi*. It seems like we barely finish with Halloween, and it's time to decorate for Thanksgiving. Then, on the heels of Thanksgiving follows Christmas.

This year, for most people living in Minden, Nebraska, Thanksgiving was only a fleeting moment. At least it was for Rita and me. Following our big turkey dinner and all the stuffings, it was immediately out with the old, (Thanksgiving decorations) and in with the new (Christmas decorations). Here is why.

On November 27th, the day after Thanksgiving, the community of Minden kicked off its month long celebration of *100 Years of Lights*. As of 2015, Minden, widely known as *The Christmas City*, is celebrating a century of Christmas lights.



For the past 100 years, thousands of beautiful, colored Christmas lights have adorned the Kearney County Courthouse, shimmering high above and spilling over the downtown square. It is truly a sight to behold. What a proud tradition it has become for all who live in Minden. With such a momentous festivity underway, Rita and I immediately decorated our home for Christmas— inside and outside.

While removing and boxing up the old Thanksgiving decorations and while getting out the Christmas decorations, one particular piece of Thanksgiving décor sitting atop our fireplace mantle caught my attention. I found it intriguing, and I became intensely curious about its meaning. I asked Rita about its significance. She wasn't absolutely sure, and obviously I knew less. We both knew what it was, but not how it came to be or its symbolism. The item was horn-shaped and filled with an assortment of garden produce. I'm referring to a cornucopia. I decided to conduct a little research into its origin and meaning. For years, I've known that

a cornucopia was also called a Horn of Plenty. According to Webster, “its name comes directly from Latin –Cornu (horn) Copiae (abundance, plenty).”

Symbolically, a cornucopia is depicted as a horn-shaped receptacle overflowing with fruits, grains, flowers, and/or vegetables. From what I was able to learn, its origin dates back to Greek mythology.

According to myth, a goat by the name of Amalthea nursed and raised the infant god Zeus. She nursed him with her milk, ensuring his safety along the journey to become a powerful god. While playing, Zeus accidentally broke one of her horns. In remorse and using his godly powers, Zeus decided to repay Amalthea by keeping her horn abundantly filled with whatever she wanted.

From ancient myth, the cornucopia has become symbolic of prosperity, good fortune, and an abundance of nature’s resources. That’s not bad. However, now that I’ve traded out our old cornucopia with a new Christmas nativity scene, I realize this new décor symbolizes much more. It symbolizes the true gift of life—now and for eternity.

By the way, please accept this column as my personal invitation to you—come and visit Minden. If you’ve never seen Minden’s Christmas Lights or if it’s been a long time since you have, I encourage you to join us. Enjoy the sights and sounds of Christmas. Through the entire month of December many Christmas events will be taking place. Check out the website www.mindenne.org/ for additional information.