



FORT WORTH
**TRADITIONAL
 TIDINGS**

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For as long as he can remember, Joe Minton has been cognizant of tradition. While he was growing up, his parents told him stories about his ancestor, Julian Feild, who was Fort Worth's first postmaster and mill-owner. By adulthood, Minton's understanding of self was inexorably linked to the past and to his distinction as a fifth-generation Fort Worth resident.

Professionally, Minton's appreciation of heritage has served him well: The acclaimed ASID designer has a penchant for classic style. It shows in his Fort Worth home, especially at Christmas. For Minton, any celebration of the holiday not saturated with tradition would be an anomaly.

"I've always loved Christmas, as a child and then as the father of my own two children," says the partner in Minton-Corley, a Fort Worth design firm noted for its collection of furnishings. "Only yesterday, it seems like I was putting together fire trucks for Christmas and planning our first Christmas Eve party. It's been 25 years since that first party; now the children are in college and my wife and I are divorced."

OPPOSITE: A Siamese carved wooden deer, a year-round mainstay of the entryway to Joe Minton's Fort Worth home, assumes holiday charm when juxtaposed with a natural fir tree decorated with old-fashioned ornaments. ABOVE: Highlights of the living room include a hammered-iron coffee table from the Minton-Corley Collection, a 19th-century Bessarabian rug and an oil painting by Julio Larraz.



Though times have changed, Minton connects the past with the present by re-creating traditional seasonal images. He continues to host a Christmas-Eve party, for which he begins decorating well ahead of December 24. "Usually I decorate the first weekend in December," he says, "so that I have time to enjoy the decorations." Minton's antiques-filled home is an appropriate backdrop for the customary colors and foliage that bespeak the holiday. "I've wired fruit as decorations a lot over the years. Once I did a whole tree in fresh fruit. I had to throw it out after about 10 days when the fruit began rotting, but it looked wonderful while it lasted," he recalls. "And I like to use fresh flowers at Christmas, especially lilies and white tulips.

"Christmas, to me, also is smells," says Minton. "I love the smell of Christmas greenery—all of the fir branches and foliage I use are real. I love the food smells of Christmas: The smell of a ham cooking is one I remember from my childhood." For his Christmas Eve party, Minton recaptures those childhood aromas, serving guests a time-honored feast of Virginia ham, turkey or wild goose, plum pudding, fruitcake and eggnog. "Open fires also are a Christmas memory, and I always have the fire going during the party. I love Christmas music, too, and I play a recording of the Texas Boys Choir singing carols, over and over."

Most of all, though, Christmas—past, present and future—is regarded by Minton as a time for people. "I have a lot of feelings about family and friends at Christmas. It's the time I especially like to be with them. Once everyone is past all the chores and stresses, people seem to have more happiness and good will at Christmas than at any other time of year." In his mind, that's one tradition definitely worth preserving. □

ABOVE: A Julio Larraz painting and a custom pine poster bed by London-Marquis inject contemporary touches in the otherwise traditional master bedroom. OPPOSITE: A collection of 19th-century French plates modeled after the style of Palissy is displayed in the dining room.

