

Christmas in July (and all year through)

In his 1843 tale “A Christmas Carol,” Charles Dickens wrote that we should “honor Christmas” in our hearts and “keep it all the year.” In that spirit, author Mark Voger brings us “Holly Jolly,” his latest volume on pop-culture history, subtitled “Celebrating Christmas Past in Pop Culture.”

“Of course, the subtitle is a Dickensian reference,” says Voger, who conceived the profusely illustrated, 192-page hardback to be enjoyed 365 days a year.

“The idea that we should be charitable toward our fellow man all year, not just on Dec. 25, is prevalent in Christmas culture, from the ancient carols to ‘The Honeymooners’ Christmas episode.”

“Holly Jolly” explores movies (“Miracle on 34th Street,” “It’s a Wonderful Life”); music (“White Christmas,” “Little St. Nick”); TV (“Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer,” “How the Grinch Stole Christmas”); books (“Babar,” “Madeline”); decor (lights, ornaments, 1950s silver trees); and comics (super-heroes meet Santa).

The book, from TwoMorrows Publishing, presents Voger’s interviews with creators of Christmas culture such as Charles M. Schulz (“A Charlie Brown Christmas”), Andy Williams (TV’s “Mr. Christmas”), Darlene Love (“Christmas, Baby Please Come Home”), Antony Peters (the character designer for TV’s “Rudolph”) and others.



“It’s amazing that so many of the ways we celebrate this holiday — Christmas trees, Christmas cards, Christmas carols, the prototype for Santa Claus — date back to as early as the 1600s,” Voger says. “The evolution of the Santa character is a fascinating journey, mixing religiosity with folklore.”

The book covers the religious origins of Christmas as well as the cultural notion of the “Christmas miracle.” Dickens’ story of Scrooge, the miserly curmudgeon who is redeemed by three Christmas spirits, is a running theme throughout.

“At heart, I’m a South Jersey Catholic-school boy,” says the Camden-born resident of Ocean Township. “In my childhood home, the Nativity set was never far from the Santa Claus doll.

“I do love Christmas,” adds Voger (who is At Home New Jersey’s design director). “I left my decorations up for two years to stay in the spirit while working on ‘Holly Jolly.’ I have one of

those vintage aluminum trees — super-fake, super-sparkly. I’ve grown so accustomed to it, I might leave it up for good.”

“Holly Jolly” (shipping Nov. 4) can be pre-ordered online and at book stores. Mark Voger’s previous books include “Monster Mash” and “Groovy.” Excerpts at MarkVoger.com.



Courtesy TwoMorrows Publishing

Vintage Christmas cards and other holiday ephemera are among topics in the forthcoming book “Holly Jolly.”

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