

The first thing you notice about the Oglebay Park Christmas lights is the smell. It's like a perfume, a fragrance that's hard to identify, but it's there. It's the smell of pine needles, evergreen trees, and the crisp air of winter.

Bright Lights, Little City

It's the smell of pine sap, pine cones, and pine needles.

What's most striking, though, is how much light there is. You can't be blinded by so much light, one might think. Oglebay Park, home of the annual "Miracle on Main Street,"

is a everyday reminder of Clark Griswold's decorations in *A Christmas Story*. Part two was held last year, and it's one of the top 25 attractions and features new displays by the American Tree Association. It includes snow displays,

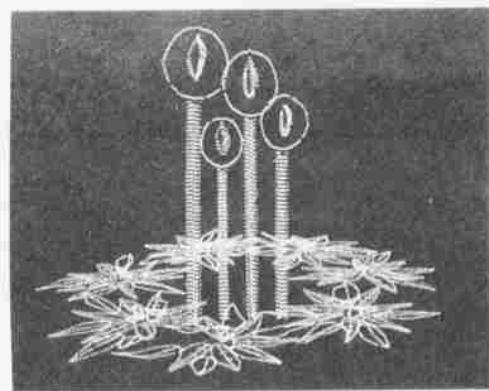
waterfalls, a light show with puppets, a lighted snowman, moon in light on the snow, and glowing reindeer.

The tree lights for the past two years have been in blue, and there's a pink light for Christmas. It's totally switchable.

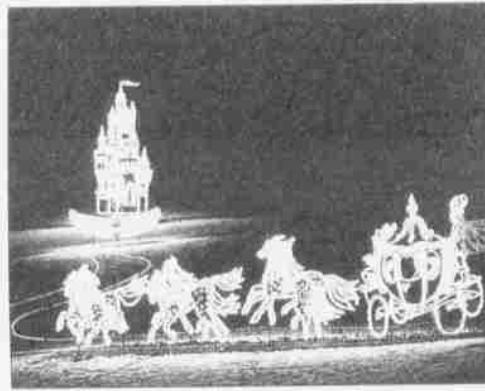
Lighting for the Jewish holiday Hanukkah is materials and methods, and lights for people who really like candles.

Ivan McFadden, Bethany College senior, says that some of the lights are special to him. "My favorite set of lights is the one of the golfer teeing off. It reminds me of my dad," he says.

Bethany sophomore Christy Gandy says she can't decide on a favorite display. "It's not the point of just seeing one set of



Oglebay Park's thousand poinsettias of light.



Cinderella has fun storming the castle.

lights—it's also throughout your house."

Nearby Zionsburg is expected to open through the month this year, and it will feature traditional red, green, blue, and yellow lights. "It's a Workingman's Christmas," says Mike Scott.

Also, a new and very splendid new attraction is opening soon at Holiday Inn with its elaborate light bulb collection filled with odd bulb art. "The 100,000 bulb collection is unique," says Mike Scott.

The 100,000 pieces are from many countries, including Germany, France, and Japan, and the collection is the largest in the world. "Grand Zionsburg," claims the Holiday Inn staff. Jim Paul Zionsburg, marketing director, says the 100,000 light collection was the 200th one of the 200,000 light shows in America.

In July 1983, the first lighting of Oglebay was officially inaugurated with a grand lights festival. That year, the show covered 125 acres and included 125,000 bulbs.

Since then, the show has more than doubled in size to 100,000 acres and 300,000 points of light. Take that, George Bush.

Bringing the lights outside is never done so prettily as when visitors go to Oglebay on a Saturday night in the winter. The lights festively stand as a testament to gaieties stirring and an old sense of taste.

The lights are good for Bethany students because they don't have anything else to do," Gandy says. "They go out on the Christmas break, especially if you're far away from home."

■ James A. Walker, *The Tower*, Bethany College
Courtesy Photo, *The Tower*,
Bethany College, contributed by iron

Don't let the country lights become jaded, consider Robert Earl Keen. "I try to keep the whole, die-hard, traditional bands."

Setting up shop around pieces of the mainstream country music world, Keen is

more than just a spokesman for the trailer park and sun-tan crowd. "We became the retro-folk sentimental attitude and behavior," Keen says.

Bob and Rita were from Hagerman, I got a puppy dog, I'm gonna round her up, they never plug their minivan home, they just turn on the headlights.

Keen first picked up a guitar while attending Texas A&M U., where he

studied acting. Keen breaks the country music standard of waydipping the western tradition, a tradition that Keen says fails to give good advice about life's questions. "Breadful Selfish Crude," also from *George Harrison*, is a song about watching your life go by as you live in the fast lane.

Stayin' up till dawn, swimmin' old guitars, Sleepin' all day long just like the big

truckers, Turnin' down, I've never been to the tip bars... I am really afraid to drink beer again. I've had myself all the previous time.

Keen says he's not worried about being accepted by the mainstream.

"I'm not looking for universal appeal. I just want an audience for my songs."

■ Andrew Fomb, *The Collegian*, Kansas State U.

Keen-Cut Country

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Despite little airplay on country radio, Keen has managed to gain cult-figure status among country music—and even some noncountry—fans. Through his albums and recordings, his performances, he has carved a loyal fan base, particularly in the Southeast.

Eric Skoog, a graduate student at the U. of Montana, may be a fan of Keen's for several years. "Robert Earl's appeal is in his unwillingness to adapt to whatever the current fad is," Skoog says. "He would just fine as a Garth Brook or Tracy Lawrence, but that's not his style."

Lyrically, Keen often uses humor to illustrate his stories.

traded looks with classmate and long-time friend, Eric Forni. After graduating with a degree in English, Keen took to playing the folk and western club circuit. Now he fronts with a full band, playing about 200 shows a year.

"It's a rowdy crowd lately," Keen says. "They don't listen as close as when it was just me and my guitar, but it's still a good fun."

Proving he's more than just a redneck courtester, Keen includes songs about adult sex and emptiness on his albums. "Not your typical country scenario of wife/dog/horse leaving you," Keen's lyrics are often taken from his own life. "I don't have to go any further than my front door for material," Keen says.

Known for his narrative style of



What a country (singer): Robert Earl Keen.