NEWS RELEASE

Chicago O’Hare holiday decorations are a tradition for employees and customers

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’Twas the week before Thanksgiving and the airport was bustling. Load factors were high and the passengers were hustling.

But overnight things were quiet and a change was a coming. ORD’s facilities maintenance mechanics were working hard with lift engines humming.

Down came country flags from the long hall in T3, up went decorations to prompt hundreds of selfies.



For the last 30 years, the iconic holiday decorations in Chicago’s O’Hare Terminal 3’s main atrium have brought holiday cheer to the thousands of passengers who pass through American’s third largest hub. Between the time the decorations go up — in time for the busy Thanksgiving travel period — and come down, it’s difficult to walk through the terminal without seeing people stop to take photos or see children’s eyes light up as they take in the holiday splendor.

American’s facilities maintenance mechanics are the unsung heroes behind the 8-foot-tall bows, 7,500 tiny white

lights and dozens of lit doves. For more than 25 years, Viorel Petre — ORD's own Father Christmas — directs the group, making sure each of the bows is hung precisely at the correct height and angle to complement the giant metal globe in the middle of the terminal. The team works overnight for two weeks to prepare, construct and hang the decorations — a process that takes approximately 544 work hours.

"When you're here at 5 a.m. and the families are traveling and the children are crying, but then they come in and see this — they just light up," Viorel said.
You may recognize the decorations from the iconic 1990 holiday classic, Home Alone. The film's producers selected T3 in part because of the gorgeous decorations. Scenes from Home Alone and Home Alone 2 weren't actually shot over the holidays, but the decorations were rehung for filming.

Home Alone was also on the minds of The Timelapse Group. This year, American hired the New York City-based company to document the decorations as they were being hung in T3.

"Our favorite part of the shoot was finding out that the terminal we were shooting at was where one of the scenes from Home Alone was filmed," said Shiseido Ruiz with Timelapse. "And that the decorations (in the movie) were actually the same ones we were documenting."

Timelapse spent 5 nights for a total of 35 hours capturing the event. A team of two people took more than 32,000 still photographs, which were then used to create the almost 2-minute video.

The result: A festive start to the holiday season and one we know our ORD customers look forward to every year.