

Linton's no dummy, but says her partners are

By SUSAN ROGERS

"You've got to dream—if you don't dream you never do anything." That's the attitude of Muriel Linton of Livonia, who became a ventriloquist "late in life."

"I taught a Sunday school class, and one day fell in love with a figure (that's what you call a dummy) and knew he'd be perfect for the kids," she said. But her first attempt at the craft was a failure.

"I tried to tape a voice and have the figure move his lips to it," she said. "It was hard to synchronize and it just didn't work."

She thought it was a shame she wasn't a ventriloquist. "I thought, 'Why couldn't I do that?'" she said. And that was the beginning.

Miss Linton discovered the Detroit area didn't have a teacher of ventriloquism, and taught herself from a library book. "I was living in Canada at the time and driving to work in

Warren," she said.

"I would practice my vowel sounds and the exercises, trying not to move my lips." It took her two four months of practicing two hours a day, but "finally one day I could do it," she said.

Miss Linton, who primarily performs for children's groups, gave her first performance to a group of four- and five-year-olds. "A little boy was talking to a little girl and they were discussing how the doll talked."

"The boy told the girl that the doll had a motor inside, and I thought to myself, 'That's it! I must be a ventriloquist,'" she said.

Miss Linton speaks of her dolls as real people. "Of course they have their own personalities," she insists. "Let's see, there's Candy, she's a sweet little girl. Andy, the boy, is full of mischief. Sugar is a little girl who sits in a chair and talks to Andy. She's shy. And then there's Granny, who has her own rocking chair."

"They all tell stories and sing," she added. "All except Granny, whose voice is getting a little shaky. She performs at mother and daughter banquets a lot," she explained.

Miss Linton, who has been a Livonia resident for a year, has performed throughout the Detroit area. "Candy even had a religious radio program on

WBFG a few years ago," she said. The dolls have also performed at the Michigan State Fair, Garden City Co-op, Suburban Nursery School and various other schools and parties.

"When we did the story hour at Carl Sandburg branch of the Livonia Public Library, they had more than 344 youngsters, the largest group ever for a story hour," said Miss Linton.

For Miss Linton and the children, the dolls are more than just entertainment. "When I went back to Madonna College to get my degree a few years ago, they used Candy for a special program to teach potential teachers of children with learning disabilities," she said. "Since it is against the law to use real children in the simulation films, Candy was used as a learning disabled child. They are using ventriloquism more and more now in the treatment of children with learning problems," she said.

The dolls are also useful as a teaching and authority aid. "When I was at a nursery school a while back, I told a little boy to drink his milk," she said. "He wouldn't do it, but when Candy asked him, he drank the whole thing."

"I think the children identify with the little characters and love them as they would a little doll," said Miss Linton. "It isn't an adult telling them what to do, but they listen and

'Andy acts up more and is always getting his foot in his mouth. I guess he acts like the children wish they could.'

—Muriel Linton

respond. They watch the dolls and don't take their eyes off them," she said.

Miss Linton says the children like Andy the best of all her characters.

"It's really interesting," she said. "They like Andy, a little \$14.99 doll, as opposed to Candy, who cost \$150 and is equipped with full movement. Andy acts up more and is always getting his foot in his mouth. I guess he acts like the children wish they could."

Miss Linton, who is also an accomplished oil painter, takes the time to teach her craft to others. Among her students is 13-year-old Lisa Witte of Westland, whom Miss Linton claims is "coming along real well. She'll be performing on her own in a few months," she says.

Miss Linton just doesn't stop dreaming. "My latest dream is partly happening now," she said. "I'm about half finished with a book of real but

humorous incidents that have happened during my performances. Other parts of it will deal with humor in America. I hope I can finish it," she said.

Miss Linton enjoys entertaining, and if it can be used as a learning tool, so much the better. "I love children," she says. "And I enjoy entertaining people. It's great to be able to share something you love so much."

Jobs aren't always easy to come by. "It's hard to get your foot in the door, especially if you're a woman. But, one job does lead to another, and I make it OK," she said.

And how does one become a ventriloquist? "Creativity is very important, and creativity knows no age. This business keeps me young," she said. "Who knows? Maybe more of my dreams will become realities," she said.



"This business keeps me young," says self-taught ventriloquist Muriel Linton of Livonia. She and her friends Andy (left) and Candy (right) are familiar faces to hundreds of youngsters from her performances at schools and parties. (Staff photo by Bob Woodring.)

Math winners are announced

Winners in the 21st annual Michigan Mathematics Prize Competition included some Farmington area high school students.

Kevin Perry, a senior at Harrison High School, took fourth place. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Perry Jr. of 23380 Glenview, Farmington Hills.

John Sinar, 16, a junior at Detroit Country Day School, earned a silver award. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs.

Henry Sinar, 30386 Glenview, Farmington Hills.

Eric Esarey, 17, a senior at Farmington High School, won an honorable mention. He is the son of Ms. Ann Esarey, 32296 Shawasssee, Farmington.

Lisa Varns, 17, a senior at Farmington High School, earned an honorable mention. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ward Varns, 24081 Farmington Road, Farmington.

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Want to buy party? Try 56's auction

Channel 56 presents the 10th Annual Great TV Auction telecast from April 7-15.

Bidders will have over 7,000 items to choose from during the nine day sell-off including: an assortment of fine wines, a catered Greek party for 150 people, Lord and Taylor gift certificates and five automobiles.

To bid, viewers should keep these steps in mind:

- Keep pencil, paper and phone close to the TV set.
- Spot a desired item and jot down its board and item numbers.

- Grab the phone and dial the number shown on your TV screen as quickly as possible. It's important to bid high and fast. The higher the bid, the greater the chances for success.

- Once you've placed your bid, keep watching and try to keep cool.

- The highest bid will be announced on the air and the highest bidder will receive a confirming phone call.

Instructions for pick-up are given at the time of the call-back.

These Observer & Eccentric Newspaper staff members will serve as auctioneers during the event. They are: Walter Miller, Editor, Southfield Eccentric; Steve Barnaby, Editor, Farmington Observer and Rich Gold, assistant copy desk supervisor, Observer and Eccentric Newspapers.

One million viewers are expected to tune in Channel 56 during the auction week. The schedule of the telecast is listed as follows:

Friday, April 7 7 p.m. to 2 a.m.

Saturday, April 8 noon to 2 a.m.
Sunday, April 9 2 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.
Monday through Thursday 1 p.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Friday, April 14 1 p.m. to 2 a.m.
Saturday, April 15 noon to 2 a.m.

Last year the auction raised over \$34,000 and the station hopes to surpass that amount with this year's goal set at \$600,000. The money raised is used to pay for the costs of bringing viewers Channel 56 programs.

Among those programs are two projects now in production which will be aired next season: "Global Papers" and "The Shakespeare Play."

"Global Papers" starts in November 1978 and will run at six month intervals through 1980 deals with urgent world issues. The first edition will be three and a half hours of programming on the world's impending food crisis.

Each segment will be filmed on location throughout the world and offer international viewpoints to Americans bringing fresh perspectives and a sense of immediacy to the world crisis, complete works of William Shakespeare.

The first season will star Michael York, Sir John Gielgud, Derek Jacobi, Colin Johnson and Laurence Naismith. The plays filmed are "Much Ado About Nothing," "Romeo and Juliet," "Richard III," "As You Like It," and "Julius Caesar."

The series marks the first time the entire 36 plays have been committed to videotape.

Artists are recognized

Twenty-one Western Michigan University students have been announced as winners in the \$200 executive vice-president's purchase

award for their oil on canvas. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur DeBlock of 28354 Lyncastle, Farmington.

Art degree awarded

Anne Karlson, 3025 Congress, Farmington Hills, is among students who received master's

degrees recently at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She received a master's degree in art.

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