

Mini-collectibles business is a family affair

By MARIE MCGEE

The miniature doll house furniture business that Joanne Luers Hennessy started back in 1973 is not only flourishing, it's rapidly becoming a family affair.

Two sons and her sister have joined the enterprise.

She picked up from there and the business was launched.

While she has since acquired some sophisticated drills, the grinding machine is her favorite tool. She does all her work in her family room with all its Colonial era accent pieces. — and admittedly "dusts a lot."

"I DON'T LIKE working in the base-

ally has sitting on a fireplace mantel in the room settings she creates.

"Our whole family is handy with their hands," Rick commented. "When my mother saw a tiny ship at one of the miniature shows, she came back and suggested I try to make her one.

"Talk about starting from scratch," he quipped, "that's exactly what I did." The result was a three-masted frigate which his mother has on display in one of her dollhouses, but is not for sale.

WHAT SHE DOES sell are the two-masted models which Rick says he can "produce a lot quicker than I did that first one." It takes him roughly a week to do five, working about four hours a night. His workshop, incidentally, is in an upstairs bedroom, mainly because his home on Greenland "doesn't have a basement."

"Yes, I dust a lot, too," smiled Rick's wife Denise.

While he has the method of shaping and grinding down pat now, none of the intricately detailed ships are alike. "That's what it make so interesting," Rick commented. It also increases their value.

His love of the water began when he was a child and prompted to make an eight-foot hydroplane in the family garage on Sunset Avenue when he was



Sue Foucher now makes dolls for her sister Joanne Hennessy's doll houses. The larger doll is a self-portrait. An artist and a past president of the Palette Guild, she gave up her art work for the challenge of designing and making dolls completely by hand.

'Our whole family is handy with their hands.'
— Rick Hennessy, miniature ship builder

It's hardly surprising when Mrs. Hennessy recalls that one of those sons, Paul, is the one she credits for getting her into the business in the first place.

He was only 11 then and it came at a time in her doll house hobby when she was starting to make very basic stick-like furniture. The pieces had very straight lines and were rather boxy looking, she recalls. The fancy furniture she had in her houses came from from kits.

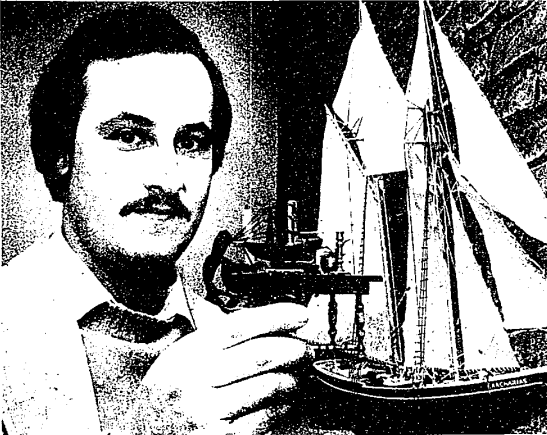
Paul introduced her to the grinding machine by accidentally shaping a piece of wood which Mrs. Hennessy could envision as a ladderback chair.

ment. I only go there to do the washing," she smiles.

Paul is 19 now and his role in the family business isn't as big as that of his brother, Rick, 22, but it's still every bit as time-consuming. Paul is in the process of making a miniature replica of the famous Brothers' rifle popular with the Colonists in the early 1800s. It's being copied from a full-size authentic muzzleloader he is making for himself, completely by hand.

His lifelong love of the water and boats led to Rick's involvement in his mother's business.

His contribution is turning out two-masted frigates which his mother usu-



Rick Hennessy holds a two-masted frigate he made from scratch for his mother's miniature doll house furnishings business.

THE BODIES are made from cloth and individual patterns are designed for each costume.

Visitors at Hill House Museum at Greenmead, Livonia's historical site, during Christmas saw two of Mrs. Hennessy's room settings which were part of a special doll house exhibit. One was a country store and the other was a saloon. For several years, her most elaborate doll house was on display at Muriel's Doll House in Plymouth, but now has come home and fills one corner of the family room.

A lot of the Hennessy creations will be on display and for sale at the Getz spring miniature show at the Troy Hilton Hotel on March 28-29. Not included is the weekend project Joanne's husband Richard is working on in Cassville, Mich. That happens to be the couple's retirement home. And — wouldn't you know — he's doing all the work by hand.

Photos by
Bill Bresler



While she has been making furniture since 1973, Joanne Luers Hennessy seriously began turning out the miniature doll house furniture for sale at shows last year. Now she's getting help from three members of her family.

INSIDE ANGLES

BY LOUISE OKRUTSKY

ROBERT AND ELSIE Smith of Farmington Hills will be tuned in to ABC-TV's "Happy Days" tomorrow evening for an extra special reason.

The Smith's daughter, Martha Smith, will star in the episode as a dental receptionist. In reality, Ms. Smith is living the Beverly Hills life of a working actress.

The 1970 graduate of North Farmington High School played Barb in the madcap movie of college fraternity life "Animal House," which starred John Belushi.

She's also due to appear in a February episode of "The Dukes of Hazard," reports her mom. The Smiths watched filming of that episode while vacationing in California over the holidays.

AND LIVE FROM the other coast, the Muppets are coming, direct from Madison Square Garden in New York City. Miss Piggy and Kermit will usher in 22 of Jim Henson's famous Sesame Street Muppets to the Masonic Temple Theatre Feb. 12-22.

Thanks to financial support from Duquet Jewelry in Farmington, the Farmington Hills based Adults for Kids group will be offering discounts for kids who'd like to see the show.

Tickets normally selling for \$7 will go for \$4.50. More information is available through the Adults for Kids message center at 855-3232.

WHAT A FAMILY Means to Me is the theme of this year's Reflections contest, sponsored by the Farmington PFA Council.

Children in kindergarten through fifth grade are eligible to participate in this national contest, promoted to encourage creative expression among children in visual arts, literature and music.

Each entry will be judged on the basis of evidence of creative ability and expression of the theme, said Ruth-Anne Gallinger, Reflections chairwoman.

The contest is sponsored by the PTAs at Alameda, Eagle, Gill, Kenbrook and Longacre Elementary schools. Four finalists in each of the three divisions will be selected by each school and sent to the state PTA by March 16.

Finalists at the state level will then be judged and sent to the National PTA for judging.

Chairmen at each participating school also have entry forms for the contest to select a 1982 Reflections Project Theme. Children can enter both contests.

KUDOS TO TIM Carney, a West Bloomfield youth with a real knack for shooting a ball through a hoop.

Carney, sponsored by the Farmington Elks Lodge, entered a basketball contest at the Pontiac Silverdome recently and tied for first place in the 12- and 13-year old division of the statewide competition.

He made 21 out of 25 baskets and tied for first place with Steve Tuin of Oswego. Both boys will now head for the regional competition in Toledo, Ohio, on Feb. 14.

IS THERE AN architect in the house? The Farmington Historical Commission would be happy to put you to work pronto.

The commission's resident architect member, James Abernethy, resigned last week. He teaches a class this term the same night as the commission meets — the third Wednesday of the month at 8 p.m.

Anyone interested in filling the slot should call city hall at 474-5500.

BLOOD IS SCARCE, reports the American Red Cross. Part of the reason for the supply shortage is the downturn of the auto industry, with plant workers one of the best sources of supply in better times.

Oakland Community College students and Farmington area residents will have a chance to replenish the blood bank when a Red Cross drive comes to OCC, Orchard Ridge campus, on Feb. 18.

Appointments aren't required, but they are requested Call 475-9400 for an appointment. Happy giving.

SPEAKING OF OCC, here's some food for thought. Twelve food service students at the Orchard Ridge campus were among 46 scholarship winners named by the Michigan Restaurant Association for winter/spring 1981.

Applicants were judged on need, scholastic record, employment experience and involvement in food service industry programs.

Awarded with between \$100 and \$400 each were Kristin Blalock, Daniel Drumlake, Gari Glaser, Kevin Holmstrom, Thomas Keeley, Yu Liu and James McCandlish.

Also honored were Susan Meyer, Donald Palmer, Randal Stensbury, Brian Tanner and Claire Wagner. Bon appetit to all.

NOW THAT JELLY Bellies have replaced peanuts as the presidential favorite snack, Marge Robbins and Phyllis Swartz of Farmington Hills pass along these recipes for a presidential toast.

Try these mix and chew combinations, urge the duo at Let's Entertain, a party shop at Hunters Square.

Lemon meringue pie: two lemon, two coconut; peanut butter and jelly sandwich: two peanut butter, two grape, banana split; two chocolate pudding, two cotton candy, two chocolate banana, one very cherry; Irish coffee: two coffee mocha, one creme soda.

Whatever happened to Billy beer?

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Reg. \$290. A Stiffel for your floor: an exquisite golden distressed old brass finish; the glass tray with brass-finished gallery. 56" tall, the tray 17" diameter.

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Shown: 35" tall in bright old brass finish; slub texture shade. Reg. \$185, sale \$129.

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- 37" tall, bright old brass finish; the shade, ivory slub texture. Reg. \$205, sale \$155.
- 30" antiqued bright old brass finish; the shade beige pleated linen finish. Reg. \$195, sale \$150.
- 39 1/2" distressed old brass finish; champagne slub texture shade. Reg. \$215, sale \$164. Hudson's Lamps 60 lamps at Hudson's while quantities last.

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