

Suburban Life

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Rescued dolls

300-400 piece collection decorates the house for the holidays

By Lorraine McClish
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Myrtle Desmelik Grandy doesn't go up into the attic every December to bring out her Christmas ornaments to decorate the house. Instead, it's the one time of the year she brings out a collection that has been 14 years in the making and turns her home into a showcase of dolls for holiday visitors.

Just about every flat surface in the house carries a doll or two or three. Some are clustered about the Christmas tree. Marionettes hang as mobiles. Some are attached to draperies. Some are behind glass in a show case. Grandy has lost count as to their number.

"There's somewhere between 300-400 now, I call them my 'rescue dolls' because I rescued them from going into oblivion," she said.

Character dolls run from Emmett Kelly to the Wizard of Oz's Scarecrow. Shirley Temple is there, along with Charlie McCarthy, Raggedy Ann and Andy, Miss Piggy, and Mary Poppins.

Dolls are dressed as nuns, a majorette, an English Nanny, clowns, trolls, Indians, ballerinas, or just about any costume one could name.

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— Myrtle Desmelik Grandy

She says she thinks she has a doll in native costume of "most countries." She says her favorite is The Gerber Baby.

And she got them all at garage or rummage sales.

GRANDY ADMITS to not knowing much about dolls or their make. She said she learned to tell a well-made doll from a poorly made one "just by picking them up."

And she never makes a concerted effort to shop for dolls, but rather, "just stops for garage sale signs."

"Many of them were purchased for a dollar or two, and many I know are collector's items. These are dolls that were once very popular and just aren't being reproduced or if they are they

are in the gift or specialty shops at very high prices," she said. "Some are dolls that were made in limited editions. I don't spend a lot of money for them but I have the feeling, when I see them in a rummage sale or somebody's garage, that if I don't rescue them they are going to be discards."

Grady also doesn't spend a lot of time on maintenance.

"If the dress is a little soiled, a little torn, I leave it that way. I know that at one time that doll was used and played with, enjoyed and loved. And particularly if it is a character doll I want it to stay with its original clothes," she said. "Sometimes I'll brush its hair, that's about all."

The age of the doll is also of little significance.

"If the price is reasonable and it takes my fancy, I'll buy it," she said.

Once in a while she'll buy doll furniture in the spring and fall sales. "But that is only for a chair to sit them in or a bed to lay them in when they go on display for the holidays," she said.

GRANDY'S FIRST experience with buying used dolls came long before her own collection started.

"I used to belong to a church that sent items to missions in a mountain area. I would shop for dolls in church sales that were in good condition, pass them on to a friend who enjoyed dressing them, and the dressed doll would be sent on to a child who might not have a doll. That was a long time ago. I bought those dolls just to be passed on. Other than knowing that the doll could be washed and dressed up to look good enough to give as a gift I never gave another thought to it," she said.

Grady is now a member of Grand River Baptist Church in Redford. The retired nurse spends a couple of afternoons every week in Farmington Hills Senior Adults Center swimming and in the dance-exercise classes, and extends her fitness program to moving her own considerable-sized back yard.

"The last time my picture was in the (Farmington) Observer you wouldn't have known me," she said. "I was in my clown outfit in the Founder's Festival Parade."

Grady moved into Farmington Hills when it was Farmington Township 40 years ago and has lived for 32 years at her present address, though much of her time in later years has been spent traveling.

Of her doll-collecting hobby, she says, "The fun is in the collecting. Certainly not in the storing."



Myrtle Desmelik Grandy's unusual or rarer finds are housed in a glass front cabinet. She had a body remade on her china headed doll, popular in the early part of the century, because of its age. Otherwise she says she gives proper storage is about all the maintenance and time she can afford to spend on the collection.



Above an Indian squaw with papoose sits in its own chair, and at right two English-made marionettes dance from the draperies in the large and diverse collection.



There are no duplicates in Myrtle Desmelik Grandy's doll collection. When she runs out of places to set them in the rest of the house, the overflow fills up an entire double bed in the guest room.

after Christmas
clearance

DRESSES AND SPORTSWEAR IN OUR DESIGNER, MISSES,
PETITE AND CUSTOM-SIZE SALONS; SUITS, COATS, LINGERIE

after Christmas
clearance

MISSES J DRESSES, SPORTSWEAR, SUITS, COATS, LINGERIE,
INFANT, TODDLER, GIRL, TEEN APPAREL, BOYSWEAR, CHILDREN'S SHOES

after Christmas
clearance

MEN'S CLOTHING AND SHOES; MR. J APPAREL; SPECIALTIES

Jacobson's
Shop until 9 p.m. on Thursday and Friday