

Local group dedicated to making miniatures

By **KATY J. VOPAL**
Freeman Staff

EAGLE - While the name of the group is Monday Mini's, the members have a gigantic talent for making miniature items and creating miniature worlds.

A messy fishing shack, a turn-of-the-century kitchen, a Victorian garden and an outdoor campsite are just a few of the miniature worlds members of Monday Mini's have created. For the seven members of the group, collecting miniatures is more than just a hobby, it's an art form that they want to share with other people.

Monday Mini's members Melody Erd, Bernice Nowicki and Jeanne Rindt said that they've always had a fascination with small things.

"I started saving little miniature things when I was younger just in case I ever had a dollhouse someday," said Erd, an Eagle resident. "When I had a daughter, my father-in-law built a dollhouse for her. I didn't get my first dollhouse until about 1985."

Erd said as a child she was fascinated by the grand dollhouse displays in Chicago museums, saying they were "every little girl's dream."

Nowicki said she also always wanted a dollhouse. When she and her late husband, Phil, settled in Eagle, he began to build spectacular dollhouses for an antique dealer in Wauwatosa. Finally, Nowicki said her son had to finish her dollhouse because she had plenty of tiny things to fill it.

"When I was 16, I made my grandparents a nativity set out of clothespins," Rindt said. The North Prairie resident said that she really started collecting dollhouse furniture and other items in the late 1970s, but there wasn't a lot available.

"You had to really look for things at antique shows," Rindt said. "It was hard to find, so I just started making things."

But a rekindled interest in dollhouses in the 1980s prompted the formation of the Monday Mini's, a club for women who have interest in making or collecting miniatures for dollhouses or room boxes. Today, the club meets at Linden Ridge, a senior residence in Mukwonago, and aside from projects and camaraderie, they share their collections with other people.

"For a long time, we took turns leading

projects," Rindt said. "This year, we're each working on our own room boxes and everybody has a different theme."

One of the projects the Monday Mini's members learned was how to make a pot of flowers that might be placed on a dollhouse porch.

Erd said she never throws anything away, and some of the most simple household items can be turned into small wonders. A plastic film container can be transformed into the pot of flowers with a little paint, some moss and tiny, hand-punched flowers.

Rindt, who has a particular interest in tiny gardens, showed the group how to make a potted orchid. Erd said group members make small weaved rugs, furniture, food or tiny people to sit inside.

Erd said that sometimes the entire group embarks on a project, including a recreation of a miniature replica of **Christoph Bros. Dry Goods and Groceries**

General Store. The store was once located in downtown Waukesha and the group members did research. "We all made something for the store, such as the food or baskets or bolts of cloth," Erd said.

The store has been on display at the Waukesha Public Library and art shows around the area.

Monday Mini's also made a miniature replica of the Donna Lexa Art Center for an art auction. However, the winner of the miniature creation donated it back to the center, where it is on display, Nowicki said.

Now, Erd said that members of the group share their works with the senior residents at Linden Ridge, where they enjoy looking into a world scaled to a fraction of its normal size.

"This is really more than a hobby. I think it's meant to be shared," Erd said. "People get a lot of joy when they look into the rooms or the dollhouses. That's why I first got interested in (miniatures). And this

AT A GLANCE

What: The monthly meeting of Monday Mini's, a club for area women who enjoy making miniatures for their dollhouses or miniature room boxes

When: 7 p.m. today

Where: Linden Ridge, 841 County Road NN, Mukwonago

Information: Call Melody Erd at 363-6830

group has really helped me expand on that joy by sharing ideas and being with other people who are just as enthusiastic about it as I am."

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