

Prizes galore

She fashions life-like dolls

With many hours of work and financial investment, Claire Rainbow of Markham turns gray, unfired porcelain into life-like dolls.

Mrs. Rainbow has only been making porcelain dolls for about a year, but has already won first, second and fourth prizes for her work at a doll show in May at the International Centre.

She became interested in the dolls after visiting a local ceramic store where the clerk was working on one. She decided to try herself after the woman convinced her she could do it.

The dolls start out with porcelain poured into molds for faces, hands and feet, which are placed in a kiln and 'fired' (baked at a high temperature).

After the first firing, the shapes are taken out of their mold to be sanded. Mold seams ruin the look of the finished product and must be smoothed out as much as possible.

"That's the part that takes the longest time, and you have to be very careful," she explained, "it's just like sand and it breaks very easily."

When dolls are being judged, porcelain seams are acceptable as long as the judges can't feel them.

Mrs. Rainbow uses a scalpel to scrape off the seam, followed by a nylon stocking to smooth the surface.

"You just rub the seam until you can't see it, but after you fire it the second time you can see it again."

She applies blush to the cheeks, lips, hands and feet, and color to fingernails and toenails, before firing the porcelain again. After the second firing eyelashes and

brows are painted on.

The arms, legs and body are stuffed with paper towel, eyes are set and clothes are fitted. Hooks are set in the limbs with a kind of cement and elastics are strung from one hook to another to hold the body and limbs together.

Mrs. Rainbow makes many of the doll outfits herself. "I'm just learning how to sew, too," she said.

She has made 14 dolls since she took up the hobby. Jacqueline, the baby doll that placed first, is willed to Mrs. Rainbow's granddaughter. Mrs. Rainbow hopes that granddaughter Jacqueline can wear the crocheted outfit made for her doll namesake at her christening.

The creation of porcelain dolls is not for those short of cash. Mrs. Rainbow rhymed off a list of material costs that showed a serious commitment to the finished product.

The porcelain for a baby doll costs \$35, in addition to \$35 for firing. Mrs. Rainbow paid \$30 for Jacqueline's eyes, although they can be bought for less. Body and stuffing cost \$5 and \$3 respectively.

Clothing for them can be added on top of this total, and for the child dolls, wigs average about \$25 or \$30.

Because of the amount of money invested in materials, Mrs. Rainbow said it would be difficult to sell her creations. The basic price would be more than \$100, without taking into account the labor involved.

The satisfaction of seeing a project through from beginning to end offsets the cost. In fact, Mrs. Rainbow has already decided on her next project — Anne of Green Gables.



Quite a collection

Claire Rainbow shows off her winning creations, baby Jacqueline, Dana and Michael. Mrs. Rainbow's porcelain dolls were recently judged at a doll show where they won (from left), first, fourth and second prizes. She took up the hobby a little more than a year ago and has 14 dolls in various stages of completion.

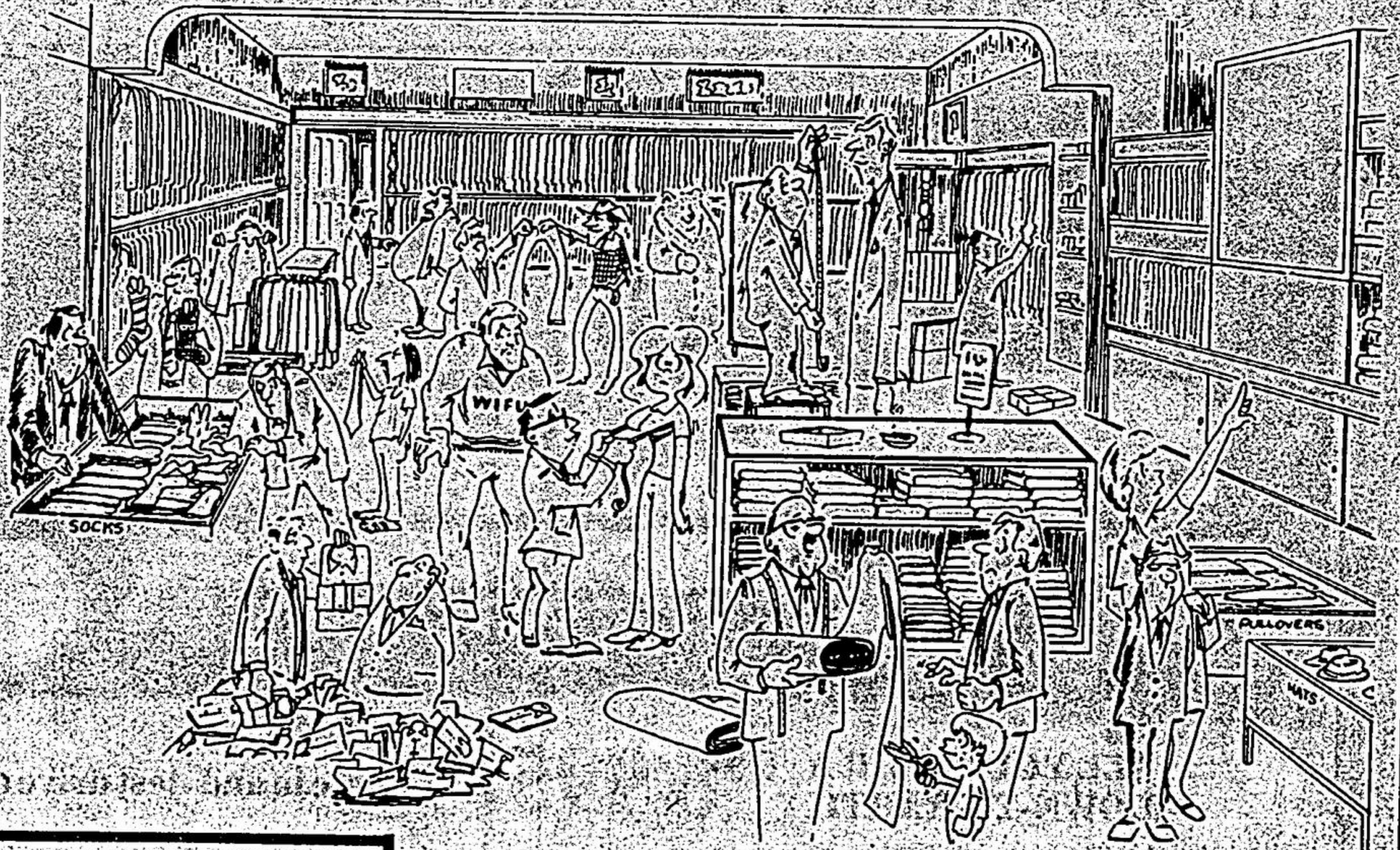
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