

photo &amp; story by Mary MacDonald

Right in Aunt Dorothy's backyard

# Village of the dolls

"I had no kids of my own but with the village they are brought to me so that I have a large family now." Attracted by the miniature doll world created by Dorothy Shkrobot the kids have "Aunt Dorothy" as their hero and know that her back yard holds many treats.

That particular yard at 9818-151 Street contains approximately 700 dolls in various displays ranging from a small scale village with its shops to a miniature Disneyland. Edmonton is well represented with a Klondike Parade led by Mayor Hawrelak, the All Girls Drum and Bugle Band in full costume, and the Edmonton Eskimos contesting with a rival team.

Mrs. Shkrobot's keen eye for observation helps her to portray all facets of life in minute detail. There is not only a jail, a church, and a record shop in the village but the shelves also are all stocked with wee rolls of tissue, boxes of cereal, fruit and even mini record jackets.

The whole project began with the village and eventually grew with Mrs. Shkrobot's imagination. The initial idea began with her fondness for kids and wish to have them interested in things which were not quite so organized. Moreover, she wanted them to gain an appreciation for those things which are quite often discarded as junk. Mrs. Shkrobot also felt that it was too easy for kids to go out and buy toys. By creating a village from odds and ends she not only attracted the kids to her house but stimulated their creative powers as well, by showing them what could be done. Suddenly before their eyes what once have been bits of tin cans are turned into fancy chairs with velvet seats.

All this work takes not only imagination but also skill in constructing the displays.

Her hobby has turned Aunt Dorothy into a bit of an electrician, welder, carpenter and general handyman. Having no previous experience in these areas does not deter her. Instead she goes out to the library to read up in unfamiliar areas or asks for help at hardware stores where she purchased her tools. With instructions clear she then set to work in her kitchen which is transformed into a workshop until her husband arrives home.

The finished displays housed in metal sheds in the back yard, are made ready for free public view. With so many displays, some of which have prize ribbons, she is running out of space. If she does expand, Aunt Dorothy fears she may lose some of the personal contact with the kids. "When it starts being a business, I'll quit." However, she feels that the village will be around for a while yet and when she closes later this fall it will be just for the winter.

After the fall closure she has not time to relax for then her work begins in earnest. Not only are there new things to be made for the village but also many Christmas orders for people. Many visitors order doll clothes or furniture which Aunt Dorothy sells for reasonable prices.

With such a keen interest in her doll displays Aunt Dorothy takes quite a bit of teasing from grown ups but she shrugs it off, "Let them do their kidding. I have all the fun."

