LITTLE PEOPLE FREQUENT ROZALYNDE'S

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by Barbara Little

Rozalynde and John McKibbin have created a unique concept, with class, in downtown Victoria. After four months of renovations involving 2,500 square feet, at 816 Fort Street, they have opened a traditional Victorian tearoom and gift boutique featuring artistically handcrafted dolls.

The piece de resistance of the complex, which tourists and locals alike are quickly discovering, is a population of 1,000 "little people" from the past and present. They literally "live on show," in a maze of 16 thematic floor-to-ceiling glassed and wall-papered alcoves, in a doll museum.

The reason for the doll theme becomes sharply apparent when you meet Rozalynde and see the dolls she creates or recreates herself. The McKibbins have, over the years, attended antique fairs, estate sales, flea markets, auctions and other collectors' and dollmakers' exhibitions, finding hidden treasures of the doll worlds of the past.

As you enter the tastefully decorated, gold and beige, picturesque tearoom area, dulcit strains of Mozart, Haydn, Strauss and Bach are audible. On Saturdays, Rozalynde herself, pretty, petite and doll-like in costume, greets you as you enter the elegant 45-seat tearoom.

On the "Berlin", 1886, pump organ sit Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara piano dolls surveying the McKibbins' guests. A copy of 'Victoria, My Homeland', by Macey, sits on the organ. The sense of authenticity is what makes the concept so entertaining and educational.

Rozalynde's is open Monday to Saturdays from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The tearoom menu offers a good choice for breakfast, lunch or afternoon tea at reasonable prices.

The Doll Museum

The McKibbins arrived from Winnipeg last October with their seven-year-old son, Chris, to fashion Vancouver Island's own version of '*It's A Small, Small, World.*'

Entering the doll museum, is stepping back, authentically, in time. The Pope, the Dionne Quintuplets, Queen Elizabeth and Laurel and Hardy are all there.

"Authenticity in our collection, is the key," says Rozalynde, who started with just one doll 20 years ago. Their collection is now valued at approximately $1 million, but you sense the dolls are invaluable to their owners.



Rozalynde McKibbon and her dolls greet customers to their museum and tearoom on Fort Street.

A Tea for Two ensemble, inhabited Bedrooms of the Past, Granny at the Sewing Machine and a young lady giving her party piece on the piano for mother's friends live again in miniature. The Christ Child, over 250 years old, lies in subdued lighting in an antique cradle. Yesterday's childhood memories are there in cast iron toy trains, an 1884 pinball machine, cut-out dolls, children's story books, greeting cards and a plethora of memorabilia of ages past. A life size bedroom scene of mother and child is a personal favourite.

Enchanted Porcelain World

Rozalynde's window of porcelain-sculpted face people she makes herself is definitely the doll museum highlight. She is currently working on Emmett Kelley, the famous clown, plus 25 other personalities.

"Victoria is a beautiful climate for the dolls", smiles Rozalynde.

After 17 years of making them herself, and 20 years of collecting dolls of the past, she still feels she has just begun. Several of her dolls have appeared on television.

"I prefer to make the Cadillacs instead of the Fords. I'm very icky-picky, fussy-fussy, about details. It takes a long time to perfect one of my little friends, she explains, with conviction.

Her mood determines the faces she makes. The dolls laugh, cry, smile or look sad or saucy. Each face is a work of art. When she finishes the face, after seven or eight firings, she then designs authentic costumes for Pat Harper of Sidney to make.

Look for Victoria's Lavender Lady and a replica of Chistopher, her son holding his lookalike doll, which are especially moving.

"More and more people are visiting the dolls as the tourist season progresses and as more of the local populace become to know us through word of mouth," says John. The tearoom, doll museum and gift shop has been opened for only six weeks.

John's the warm person who greets you as you enter the boutique or tearoom weekdays.

Susan Ferguson, Mary Jane Phillips and Denise Redman are artists, who have dolls and related items on display and for sale in the boutique area. Home Gnome Applehead dolls are created by Julie Jirik and Gordo Langston. Rozalynde's original porcelain friends range from $150-$550.

It's a splendid setting for a family outing, tea, birthday parties for senior and little girls or entertaining that long list of relatives and friends who visit annually. Children under six are admitted free to the doll museum, seniors and students have reduced rates. Group tours are available as are specialty teas for the connoisseurs. Call 386-64 for details.

I met a lady who had visited twice one week. Mary Cooper, a gentle Gordon Head senior, said, "I've come back twice this week because of the atmosphere, the quality of food and inexpensive menu...and it's such a beautiful and very interesting collection. I could be back again before the week is out!

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VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Submitted by Rozalynde McKibbin