

Sherry Kalbach - a talented Santa's elf

BY SALLY BAIR
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Sherry Kalbach's home resembles one's image of Santa's workshop, as though lots of tiny elves were at work creating Christmas fantasies. In reality, it is Sherry alone who is working with all the fabric scraps and pieces of leftovers which will become tree ornaments, decorations or gifts.

Sherry is probably as talented as any elf, and her home at 535 West Walnut Street in Cleona reflects the many projects she works on. A librarian on maternity leave from the Lebanon School District, Sherry admits that she likes to be busy and always has many projects going. She and her husband Ray have a 2½ month-old daughter Marta, but even with an infant to care for Sherry insists that, "It is only a matter of how you organize your time."

She says the "organization" characteristic is one that reflects her profession, adding, "I like to organize and plan things. You must have the interest and you must make time. To enjoy making crafts you must also have a certain amount of dexterity."

While she says she has always liked arts and crafts, Sherry says she has been doing them intently for the last seven years and in quantity for just the last three years.

Christmas is a great time of the year for a craftsperson, and Sherry says, "I love to make Christmas ornaments." Her home has two trees, one a large "antique" artificial tree, and a smaller tree to hold and display the ornaments she has created. She says, "Our friends tell us the tree is 'pathetic' and it is always a big joke, but it's the only tree I know that I can line the branches with all my

decorations." She has dreams of decorating a 16-foot live tree someday. In the meantime, the artificial tree is a beautiful showcase for ornaments of every description.

This year, as always, she made a lot of ornaments, but she also received a lot of ornaments (and new ideas) through an idea she got from friends. Sherry held an ornament exchange party, and invited 16 people, all of whom agreed to make 16 identical ornaments for the guests. "You must invite people who are really interested in this," Sherry states.

Her party was held one afternoon several weeks before Christmas and about one half hour was devoted to exchanging ornaments and asking questions of the person who made them. Sherry said no patterns were brought, because there was time afterward for detailed instruction if anyone was really interested. Each guest also brought a snack, scissors and glue, and Sherry provided for centers for making more ornaments while snacking and visiting. Sherry comments, "It was a smash success. I think it was just great."

With such a variety of ideas displayed in Sherry's home and in her presentations, one wonders where she gets all her ideas. She said, "I read a whole lot of magazines and books and I trade ideas with friends. The craft magazine I like best is 'Decorating and Craft Ideas.' I take off on other ideas, and I am always looking around for good ideas. I am kept busy all year."

Sherry has not yet found time to attend any of the numerous bazaars sponsored by various organizations at Christmas, but is planning to go next year with her



Marta Kalbach models one of her mother's Christmas gift ideas - a bib made from a washcloth, decorated with a rickrack candy cane.

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daughter. She feels it's a good way to get new ideas and inspiration.

Although she says she feels people may find her "weird," it is true that she saves almost everything "with potential. I have a big cupboard that is filled with things, but it is very orderly. I save a lot of unique things."

It gives her great joy to create ornaments for friends, and she says all the tiny details attendant to such small ornaments is no problem for her. "I enjoy doing small work."

One of her ideas most looked forward to by her friends and acquaintances is a Christmas card which doubles as a Christmas tree ornament. This is the fifth year she has sent such a card, which sometimes requires that she make an envelope to fit. She has made a gingerbread boy, and angel, a decorated ball and stocking. This year her creation is a mouse complete with a pipe cleaner tail. She mailed herself one of the cards to be sure the tail would come through the mail intact. Her cards, incidentally, were all completed before the birth of her daughter.

How does she acquire all the things she uses? She, of course, collects many items from her own household use, and her friends give her things they think she can use. She buys necessities at local craft stores and watches closely for sales on items like felt and other notions which will be usable. She said red, green or white felt is always in demand in her crafts, so she never heistates to buy it by the yard when on sale. "I don't go looking for stuff," she says, but it's obvious she's always on the lookout if a bargain comes her way. She purchases a large supply of rickrack when a local store discontinued in notions. She tries to purchase ribbons and buttons at outlet stores.

"Sometimes I substitute another item when I think it can work." An idea she is currently developing are ways to

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Making quilts is one way to reduce the pile of fabric scraps a sewer acquires through the years. These Holly Hobbie dolls are each different and are designed from fabric used by Sherry.



The Kalbach's Christmas tree is a reflection of many years' ornament making, and carries memories of the past years.



The dieter's answer to the gingerbread house is a lovely cottage made with pine cones, corn husks and small twigs.



This Santa Claus is one design Sherry invented herself. The face is made from string wrapped over a balloon, and felt and cotton make the Santa authentic-looking.