

81-year-old great-great-grandma says

Too old for dolls? Never!

BY PATTY GROSS
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Mildred Nocks likes dolls. That may not sound unusual for a young girl, but the Tyrone woman will celebrate her 82nd birthday next month.

Mildred doesn't have time to play with dolls. She is far too busy making them instead. The vivid colors of the "boys and girls" adorn Mildred's apartment. She has no idea how many of the dolls she has made over the years, however, hundreds have found life through Mildred's nimble fingers. The demand and popularity of her products have grown immensely since the first doll she stitched-up back in the 1950's.

The great-great grandmother has not trouble selling or getting away the dolls. Her 44 great grandchildren keep the supply low, and Mildred admits she can't keep up with her growing family, which spans 5 generations.

The woman, elderly in age only, likes to keep busy. "I don't like to sit around holding my hands," confides Mildred. At Christmas time she bought herself a new sewing machine.

Many times the Blair County woman designs the dolls herself. It is obvious that Mildred enjoys her work as she lovingly sews the dolls, taking time for the smallest details. One proud pair looks as new as the day she made them 22 years ago.

The dolls, so very lifelike, are freckle-faced and complete with ears, painted finger nails, and hair. An example of the tedious

tasks. Mildred says, is the 12 hours she labored securing the hair.

Mildred explains that she has bought felt hats at rummage sales, washed and pressed them, and uses the material to make shoes and hats for her dolls. She completes the dolls with ruffled undergarments and sheer and feminine dresses. The wide-eyed boy is dressed in short pants, covering his striped legs.

The 81-year-old woman has been making her own clothes since she was 12 years old. She learned to sew in the early 1900's by making doll clothes. Mildred says she was ten years old when she learned to crochet.

Known as "grandma," Mildred remembers her very first doll. It was 72 years ago that she received a \$3 doll from Germany for Christmas. That doll with the china head and long curls on a kid body is still around today. Mildred trusted it to her oldest daughter.

She never wants to stop her fascination for the dolls. "I hope I never get too old to like dolls," jokes Mildred. Even when she was in a car accident years ago and came away with several broken bones she never slowed down.

Mildred enjoys telling the story of one of her "girls" going to college. She has made three different dolls for a girl. While the others had a tough time surviving childhood, the most recent one was whisked off to a college dorm. "I hope she gets a better education than her creator," muses Mildred. She explains she never finished high school.



Mildred Nocks of Tyrone doesn't think you're ever too old to appreciate dolls, and she is her own proof of this belief - the great-great-grandmother celebrates her 82nd birthday

next month. And Mildred says, she has made so many dolls through the years, she has lost count.

She may not have a diploma, but she says she feels she has everything of real value in life. The mother of eight has family not only in Pennsylvania, but Arkansas, Virginia, Florida, North Carolina,

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These dolls, so very lifelike, are freckle-faced and complete with ears, painted fingernails, and hair. No truer dedication to her task can be found than the fact that she spent 12 hours securing her hair.



This great-great-grandmother says "I hope I never get too old to like dolls." Perhaps the two characters above are a couple reasons why. They are cute, playful and huggable and will be scooped up very fast by one of Mildred's 44 great grandchildren.

Homestead Notes