



One of Marilyn's largest collections is her display of Christmas Santas, elves and reindeer.

# CHERISHED CHRISTMAS COLLECTIONS

By: Sally Smid

"I never quit growing up and I don't intend to," commented Marilyn Irish, as she led me on a tour of her extensive and cherished collections, which fill her home near Greenbush. A retired teacher, Marilyn has been collecting since she was in high school. Today she still has four dolls from that original collection. She notes that her doll collection includes very few male dolls or any with dark or green eyes. She has gathered many items from yard sales, thrift stores and auctions. Many friends have gifted her with items as well, helping her huge collections to grow over the years. It seems she found so many of the collections especially helpful when she was teaching. "Kids really learn the best when they have hands on items," she explained, "and when I was excited about bringing in a collection bin, they became more motivated and interested as well!"

Perhaps her most cherished items are those from her family. Her parents were Clinton and Frances Bennett. They ran the Rocksprings store for many years, where she and her brother grew up. Marilyn now has quite a bit of family memorabilia, which includes; 32 family photo albums, as well as boxes of information about 6 related

families. She has shelves, bins, and cabinets of themed collectibles, which even overflow into her barn. The avid collector is thrilled to be able to share with others. She also lends her collections to local libraries as exhibits upon occasion.

Her collections include; dolls, sailors, fiddlers, dancers, bears, hens, elephants, horses, shoes, teapots and much more. She often has to refurbish such items

and has collections of buttons, thread and materials to do just that. Many of her collectibles are handmade and many have very interesting stories. She has a small doll that was found in a garden in England, she also has one of the original Cabbage Patch Dolls. Her interest in intricate detail in each item is amazing!

Perhaps her most favourite time of the year has to be Christmas, which gives her a chance to display her large variety of holiday collectibles. Many of her dolls can even be dressed in Christmas clothing. She has a large tree and many related collections, which include; a lighted Christmas village, as well as a large variety of Santas, elves, reindeer, and more. Her most prized Christmas item is probably the doll that was given to her when she was just 12 years old with a note that said, "This is your last doll. From Santa. Merry Christmas!" It is not surprising that this former teacher has a large collection of 84 Christmas books as well. Her large group of angels also suggest a Christmas theme. She has boxes of a wide variety of nativity scenes, which of course convey the holiday's true meaning.

Marilyn refers to her hobby as "play time." Her excitement and joy in her cherished collections is quite contagious. She openly explains a scar from a traumatic dog bite that she received when she was one and a half years of age. She is also a cancer survivor, who truly appreciates that each day is a special gift. She finds childlike joy in the simple things. Marilyn also has a way of allowing her enthusiasm for her collections and for life to overflow onto others, and really, isn't that a lot of what the spirit of Christmas is all about? **LH**



Christmas collections  
4-Angel