



Getting to Know the 2011 UFDC Convention Souvenir Artist

Darlene Lane

By Loretta Nardone

Artist, sculptor, costumer, teacher, lecturer and author - these are some of the words that describe the 2011 UFDC convention souvenir doll artist, Darlene Lane. Darlene has been making original and reproduction dolls for over thirty years. She has gained the respect of fellow doll artists and collectors for her ability to create dolls that exemplify the art of doll making. The dolls Darlene creates are regarded as so high in quality, that on occasion, even experts have had a hard time distinguishing them from the originals.

Darlene's doll-making journey began in 1981, when she took a ceramics class with relatives. At that time, she already loved antique dolls and had a collection, but doll-making soon became her passion. The excitement of making and creating drove her to improve her abilities. She focused on the quality and authenticity of her reproductions. It is sometimes said that the student becomes the teacher. That is true of Darlene, who soon became a teacher in the art of doll-making. She worked for Bell Ceramics for twelve years as a traveling seminar teacher.

Darlene is married to her husband Tom, and is the mother of five children. She credits Tom with keeping her focused, due to his support and help. Darlene initially started her doll business in California and eventually the family moved to Tucson, Arizona where she now resides. In the beginning, she sold her dolls at local doll shows, and before the show even opened, dealers would come in while she was setting up and buy her entire inventory! That is what prompted Darlene to make the decision to only sell her dolls on a wholesale basis.

In the year 2000, Darlene received an interesting telephone call from Mildred Seeley, the renowned collector and doll-maker. Mrs. Seeley wanted her antique Bru Jne 3 restored, and she asked Darlene to replace the head, and one missing arm. Darlene recalls what a thrilling experience it was to hold Mildred Seeley's little Bru in her hands. The restoration process allowed her to literally take the original 100 year old doll apart, piece by piece, thus providing her with an in-depth knowledge of how the doll was made. This attention to detail and thirst for authenticity is what sets Darlene Lane dolls apart from other doll makers. The finished restoration was so beautifully detailed that it was difficult to tell it from the original!

It would not take long for UFDC to discover the work of this talented lady. The first doll Darlene produced for UFDC was a souvenir for a regional conference held in Scottsdale, Arizona, in 1999. Darlene's bonnet-head Hilda was a hit! Four years later, she was in the middle of producing one of her original dolls as a regional souvenir doll for San Diego and a special event doll for the 2003 UFDC New Orleans convention, when tragedy struck - Darlene suffered a brain aneurysm.

Darlene's determination and work ethic would not allow her to give up. Just four weeks after surgery, faced with deadlines for the dolls, she went back to work. A friend once made the comment that, "The only reason Darlene Lane would fail to fulfill a commitment, was if she were dead!"

It was because of the aneurysm that Darlene finally made the decision to focus on her first love, which was making dolls, and to resign her position as a traveling seminar teacher for Bell Ceramics. The doll world continued to keep her very busy with many more commissions for event pieces, while she continued to develop and enhance her skills.

For the past three years, Darlene Lane has been diligently working on creating the 2011 UFDC convention souvenir doll. It has been a labor of love. Darlene said, "From the making of my first porcelain doll, I found what I was looking for. I never get tired and see no end to what I can learn. The possibilities of making and designing dolls are endless."

This extremely talented doll artist is meticulous in every detail of her creative process. Convention registrants will truly be pleased with their Darlene Lane doll.



