

By KAREN WORLEY

Made in



MISSOURI

180 artisans
take wares

to market through a University-sponsored craft catalog.



ALL ACROSS MISSOURI, hands are busy sculpting, painting, stitching, staining, engraving, arranging—keeping alive old-time craft traditions.

Now, 180 artisans from the Show-Me State are getting a helping hand to market these products through a 200-page catalog. Flip through *Best of Missouri's Hands* and find a veggie chopper, water fountain, wooden puzzle, roll-top bread box, wall quilt, leather jacket and scores of other hand-crafted treasures.

The \$14.95 catalog is published by the home-based business committee of Alternatives for the '80s, an economic-development plan for rural Missouri sponsored by the University of Missouri and Lincoln University. Experts in finance, law, home economics and agriculture make up the 10-member committee.

"The beauty of this project is that it features the handwork of our Missouri citizens," says Dr. Betty Feather, associate professor of clothing and textiles and

committee chairperson. "Those selected come from all over the state. The whole state will benefit."

Through the catalog, the artisans will reach national retail and wholesale markets.

"Sixty percent of people in home-based business are in the craft business," Feather says. "An important part of home-based business is marketing. The catalog is a marketing tool for people in the craft business."

Vignettes on selected artisans add a folksy flavor to *Best of Missouri's Hands*. Writer Linda Benedict and photographer Duane Dailey, both from Mizzou's Agricultural Editor's Office, teamed up for the stories. Gary Hennigh, associate professor of housing and interior design, created the project logo shown above.

Available since late July, 9,000 copies of the catalog have been distributed to bookstores, airports and resorts throughout the state. They also may be ordered

through the Alternatives office, 628 Clark Hall, and county extension offices statewide. In addition, the committee has contacted retail gift and department-store buyers in several major cities and the states of Arizona, California, Florida, New York, Texas and Missouri. A second edition of the catalog is planned in early 1988.

Seven jurors spent several days choosing the items for the first edition. They looked at 800 slides from 371 applicants. Three of the jurors, who buy for their own businesses, offered special insight into what consumers want and how much they'll pay, Feather says.

Catalog shoppers buy products, priced from a \$5 candle to a \$5,000 tapestry, directly from the artisans. Prices include shipping and handling.

"People are so thrilled to be in this catalog," Feather says. "And the University of Missouri is pleased to do something to help the people of the state." □



DOLL MAKER

FARMER'S WIFE Kathy Tempel, BS HE '61, battles dust from the dirt road and dampness in the basement of a two-story white house that doubles as the doll-maker's workshop.

In the battle of the elements, she's a winner. From the home that's been in the family for three generations, the 47-year-old housewife and mother of three has crafted porcelain dolls with exquisite detailing, right down to the correct embroidery on underclothes. Tempel lives five miles north of Higginsville, population 4,595, in central Missouri.

From the petticoat pocket of her turn-of-the-century Bread Peddler (pictured at left), Tempel pulls a shiny penny that brings good luck to whomever purchases the 26-inch doll (price, \$400). The curvaceous doll wears layered winter clothing to sell a cherry pie, pretzels and sugar cookies. Pockets inside the old woman's heavy black coat hold baking pans, extracts and rolling pins.

A gross of rolling pins lines the walls of Tempel's country kitchen, where the 1986 Missouri Mother of the Year has cooked thousands of meals for the family. She met her husband of 26 years, R. Allen Tempel, BS Agr '60, on Campus through Residence Hall Association work. He now runs a 625-acre livestock-and-grain farm and surveys land for the Soil Conservation Service. Their children are Emily, 15; Amy, 22; and Elise, 24. They have one grandson.

Over the years, Tempel has sewn 90 percent of the clothes worn by herself and her daughters. For Elise's wedding, she sewed the bride's gown, plus 12 others. Later, she created a replica called June Bride in the form of a Jumeau doll popular in France 100 years ago. Thirty yards of lace adorn the snowy-white creation, which sells for \$675.

Tempel switched from oil painting to doll making because dolls "are something that children could relate to at art shows. This combines everything—painting, sewing, crafts, history, costuming and dolls." A doll takes 60 to 70 hours of work. Sometimes, she spends hours searching for just the right fabric for clothing. Not one to skimp on materials, Tempel uses eyes that cost up to \$50 and large composition bodies that run \$70. Over seven years, Tempel estimates she's made 400 dolls. Each is signed and dated, and several have been blue-ribbon winners at Missouri State Fair.

In addition to doll making, Tempel bakes and decorates wedding cakes and cans 300 to 400 quarts of fruits and vegetables from the garden. "I'm never bored," she says. □



CANDLE MAKER

A FRIEND'S GRANDSON started to butter one of Harriet Platz's corn candles before he realized it wasn't edible.

Her candles, modeled after an ear of Indian corn, are that realistic. "I feel there's a strong future in this," says Platz, 48, BS Ed '60, a former schoolteacher. "I've always wanted to have my own business."

All the folks in Shelbina, population 2,169 in northeast Missouri, know when Platz is working. The scents of vanilla, green apple, honeysuckle and lemon drift across wide downtown streets and majestic old buildings. Every single candle, available in many hues, is hand poured from urns heated to 190 degrees. Vanilla is the most popular scent; autumn yellow is the best-selling color.

One advantage to this business is that "You can melt your mistakes," Platz says. Burns from the hot wax are an occupational hazard. The cure? Dunk scorched fingers in the tank of cold water, where candles float until cool, in just the wick of time.

In the candle-making business for eight years, Platz has had boom and bust

cycles. One year, she was hobbled by a sprained ankle. Another year, she couldn't get wax during the peak months of October, November and December, when she usually works 12-hour days. Last year business was popping. Sales to wholesalers in three states grossed \$17,000, triple the amount during any previous 12-month period.

Platz buys wax by the ton, enough to make 6,000 candles. To unload the four-foot cube of wax, she borrows the fork lift from the local lumber yard. The high-quality wax means Platz's candles can be left in a car trunk all summer without melting. "It costs more, but it's worth it," she says.

When orders pour in, she enlists the help of husband Howard, sons John and Ronald, and brothers Sam and Charles Hawkins.

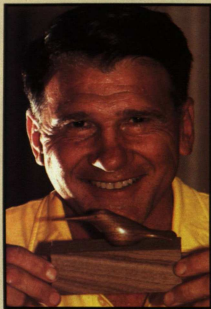
Candles cost \$6 each or \$14 for a group of three. A corn-candle arrangement is \$11.50.

"I feel grateful that we're included in the catalog," says Platz, who gets a sense of satisfaction from knowing "I made all those with my own two hands." Her husband, a biology teacher at South Shelby High School since 1956, agrees: "We have a better corn crop in here than a lot of farmers." □





BIRD CARVER



OTHER PEOPLE fish or play golf; Nick Carras sands.

His workshop is an 1851 log cabin, which sits behind his ranch-style home. Carras, 59, BS Ed '55, M Ed '60, rocks in a chair next to a wood stove, sanding rough edges of walnut into graceful snowbirds and hummingbirds. Through a picture window, he views his 35-acre wooded homestead three miles east of Springfield.

The retired Glendale High School counselor likens bird carving to playing football. "When you play football, the crowd cheers and you think, gee, that was a good run," says the former Tiger running back.

"It's the same with carving. I take a rough piece of wood and make a smooth piece of wood. It feels good. I'm glad people like it."

The four-year letterman played halfback for the Tigers in 1947, 1948 and 1949, and fullback in 1952. His educational and football career was interrupted by a broken jaw in 1950 and a return to the Air Force during the Korean conflict in 1950-51. In 1953, he played for the St. Louis Knights, a short-lived pro team.

Last year, at a party celebrating Don Faurot's 50 years of service to Mizzou athletics, Carras presented his former football coach and athletic director with a 60-pound bust of Faurot he had carved from stone. "He's got the face to be carved. I always admired him."

Carras, who started whittlin' in junior high, describes his work as "modernistic, not technical," with simple, clean, fluid lines. Throughout the home he shares with wife Wanda, M Ed '54, arc

other examples of his work: a sea lion on rock, a pig-shaped cutting board, duck magazine stand and assorted animals—swans, rabbits, turtles, polar bears and even a likeness of the family cat.

Carras starts with a pattern and block of walnut. With a band saw, he cuts out the pattern. Next, he uses sanding discs and rotary rasps to hand-form the birds. Work on the flap-wheel sander comes next. After smoothing with three

grades of sandpaper, he seals, sands, varnishes, steel wools and pastewaxes the birds. "I spend most of my time sanding," he says.

Each bird, priced at \$14.95, is unique. The difference comes in various ways: lighter wood or slightly different shapes.

"You like people to buy them," Carras says. "This way a person has a hand-made, hand-finished work that is inexpensive." □



RUG WEAVER

BARKING DOGS and humming lawn mowers accompany the rhythmic thump of Bill Mobley's loom.

Such is the warp and woof of life for the rugmaker of Downing, Mo., population 462. Besides harvest time, big events in this northeast Missouri town include monthly Lions Club dances at the old school house in the winter and Downing Appreciation Days, featuring free barbecue, bingo games and a queen contest in the fall.

Mobley, 48, and his wife of 28 years, Margaret, returned to Downing after he retired from the military in 1976. High inflation of the '70s devalued his retirement income, and the farm crisis depressed the local economy. In recent years, the Burlington railroad pulled up its tracks, and the bank 16 miles up the road shut its doors.

Mobley, also an antique dealer, started making rag rugs six years ago when he bought "a pile of cruddy, primitive looms" at a sale. Through reading, experimenting and talking to people, Mobley taught himself to restore old

looms and weave rag rugs and placemats. He now owns nine looms.

Since preparing the loom consumes half the time it takes to make a rug, Mobley always has two looms ready for action. Together, they are threaded with enough warp to make more than 700 rugs. His favorite loom is called Weavers Delight.

Mobley depends on help from family members. Wife Margaret keeps the books. Mother Martha Mobley, who lives just down the street, helps cut rags and tie off the rugs. His sister and neighbor, Susan Arnold, helps with cutting and weaving.

His 27- by 54-inch rugs, made of mostly cotton, come in plain or decorative weaves. Most popular colors are red, blue, white and brown. They're tightly woven, making a sturdy material. To launder, "Throw 'em in the machine like a pair of jeans," he says.

The cost of his rugs, \$27, and 18- x 12-inch placemats, \$6 each, is reasonable because he buys used clothing and leftover fabric from a garment factory.

"These rag rugs go right along with antique furniture," Mobley says. He guarantees satisfaction. If customers aren't happy, "I'll make 'em another one or refund their money." □

