



# PIECES FROM MY HEART

by Jan Keller

## Anyone Can Do It!

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The first time I entered the doll studio, I felt like a child in a toy store. Everywhere I looked were beautiful porcelain treasures I wanted to touch and hold. But it only took a few brief minutes for me to behold the captivating little miss I most desired to make and call my own.

“Oh, I love this doll,” I said to Jean Edsall, owner and instructor at All Dolled Up in Colorado Springs. “Is she hard to make?”

“Violet? No. It’s not difficult to make Violet, or any of the dolls—anyone can do it!” replied Jean, who then went on, to say, “But a sleeping baby would be my recommendation for your first doll.”

As she lead the way, I followed Jean to the display bassinet. “Here are three sleeping baby dolls,” she continued. “You could start by choosing and making one of them.”

I loved the baby dolls, each with an obvious and individual personality—but I couldn’t help longingly looking back to Violet.

In spite of good intentions, over a year passed before I actually made it to one of Jean’s doll classes. If a baby doll was the place to start, so be it—but instead of one baby doll, my plan was to do two so I could give them as a keepsake to Morgan and Reagan, my one-year-old twin granddaughters. The dolls, the size of an actual newborn infant would be a great way to utilize the hand-smocked dresses and bonnets I made for the girls when they were born. Once I completed the baby dolls, I would then move on to Violet.

“I like the way you get things done—start to finish,” a friend once told me—and my ‘dolling’ was definitely a get-it-done quest. My goal was to complete all three dolls in a month—

and nearly a week of my month was already gone when I arrived at my first doll class!

When I shared my goal with Jean, she carefully responded, “Complete three dolls in a month . . . it could be done.”

I chose to make “Sugar Britches” for Reagan and “Serenity” for Morgan because the characteristics of those dolls most closely resembled the features of each girl. With those decisions made, the work began.

Doll classes at Jean’s doll studio are open and very friendly. There are seven class times each week, and though the same gals tend to regularly attend one weekly session that fits into their schedule, anyone can just show up at any of the classes. I fit into a ‘class’ of my own. I was more of a “show-up-at-every” kind

of student because some weeks I was at four sessions—and sometimes I’d be at two in one day!

“I’ve got to keep a close eye on you.” quipped Jean during one class, “You’re fast!”

At the first session, I learned about

the sounds that caused everyone seated at the various work areas in the room to gasp and hold their breath.

Gurgles. It’s a very bad thing to plunge a piece of greenware into a tub of water and let water gurgle into the hollow cavity. Rather, one should carefully allow water to fill the void while slowly submerging

the porcelain piece in water. Clinks. Unfired greenware is fragile and two pieces clinking together could cause a crack.

I soon learned first-hand about the fragility of porcelain when, for no apparent reason, a crack appeared in the body part I had in hand. With trepidation, but hope it could be repaired, I said, “Oh no! Jean, I think I have a problem.” With one look she took the piece and nonchalantly threw it in the conveniently placed wastebasket, saying, “It happens.”

The details of Morgan and Reagan’s dolls were a cinch. I knew what color the wigs needed to be, as well as what they would wear. But my Violet—she was a different matter. I lamented over

what color her eyes and hair should be—as well as the style of her hair. Did I want her to have long hair? Curly hair? Braids? Ponytail? And once I’d settled the hair matter, I not only needed to decide how I want to dress her, but also make the outfit. To make a long story short, let’s just say I purchased more than one piece of fabric!

The night before I knew I would finish my Violet, I was up sewing her dress until 4 a.m. The next morning when I walked into the studio, all I had were completed body parts. With Jean’s instruction, however, I proceeded to construct my doll—and in the process I was totally amazed at the way plumber’s toilet putty, dental floss and heavy electrician’s wires were utilized.

That morning, in due time I created a doll and gained a new perspective on what it must be like to be the Creator of the universe. For, as I lovingly dressed my doll and tied bows in her hair I was bursting with pride.

Over the course of a month (21 days to be exact), I completed all three dolls and proved Jean correct—“It could be done” and “Anyone can do it!”

