

# (Tell Me) A Story . . . About Creating a Centerpiece

By Judy Lancaster



When I agreed to be centerpiece chairman for the 2006 National Convention - four years ago - I really had no idea what I was getting into. I knew it was a very big job; I also knew that my husband and I were planning on moving from southern California to Oregon - a daunting prospect by itself. However, I agreed to take it on, thinking at least it was a means of staying connected with the friends I was leaving behind.

By the time I actually began working on plans more than two years later, we were reasonably well settled in our new home and I had established a new circle of "mini" friends, some of whom I already knew. Also, we now had a theme, and a logo, with a cute little fellow to help "tell a story".

Of course, my mind had not been

idle in those two-plus years, and various story line suggestions had emerged from discussions with my two circles of friends. The question of how to present those story ideas was still something of a challenge, however. I've always stuck pretty much to traditional miniature representations and to one inch scale with very few forays into fantasy themes or smaller scales. In addition, I was faced with a budget - and we all know what that means in the miniature world!

After deciding on seven "stories", and the round base common to all, I began the hunt for figures and materials to use. I haunted craft stores and gift shops, toy stores and cake decorating suppliers, and, of course, miniature shops and shows. I raided my friend's supplies of "stuff" and gathered discards from anonymous NAME members. I (and my "elves") made discoveries in the unlikelyst of places. I found manzanita roots in a woodcrafter's store (it took two more such stores to collect enough). Someone brought some branches of contorted filbert (also known as "Harry Lauder's Walking Stick") from a trip to the beach. We found wizards in a museum shop on a "mini" outing and I came across unicorns in a store in Seaside. The cake sup-

plier had porcelain fairies, plastic swans and pirate ships, plus Cinderellas by the half dozen. Good ol' Michaels carried fairly realistic horses, tiny teddy bears, and silk flowers at half price. Assorted metal minis, jewelry findings, and funky little frogs, geese, and other critters found in bins and trays from various dealers gave me a good start. Now, the trick was to assemble this rather motley jumble of things into something meaningful and worth winning.

Through this lengthy creative process, I've learned that it is possible to combine nice miniatures with "found items", miniature landscaping with things from nature as well as the craft store, and to use various scales in a composition. With these centerpieces, I was attempting to create an illusion - a suggestion of what the storyteller (our bookworm) might be relating. As such, it is all fantasy, or imaginary, even if the story is true. Although there are no actual "directions" for any of these designs, I've included some tips and suggestions which might be useful to others when creating your own "stories" - for isn't that what any miniature scene really is; a "story"?

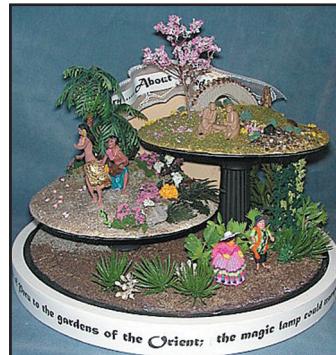
## Secrets from the Centerpiece Committee

In lieu of directions for making your own "story" or vignette, here are some examples of the materials and tricks we used to create our centerpieces.



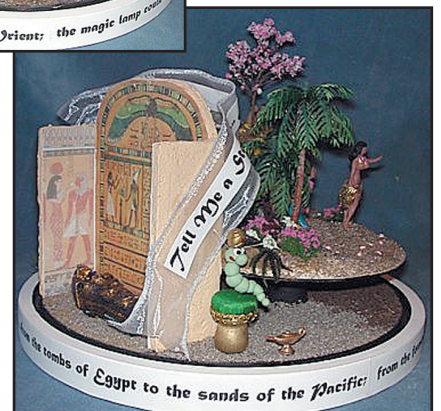
### Flower Faïres

- gnarly stump - manzanita root from woodcrafter's store, contorted filbert branch
- porcelain fairy - cake store
- tiniest fairy - metal mini
- swans - cake store (painted and glittered)



### Fabled Lands

- tomb wall designs - book
- palm trees, Polyne-sians - cake store
- cherry tree - sprig of nandina





## Fantasy & Folklore

- beanstalk - tinted Sculptamold & papier mache over a dowel
- leaves - paper towels
- Cinderella - cake store



## Barnyard Friends

- animals - craft store, some repainted; horse mane and tail from doll hair
- mice - buttons
- brooms - dowels and pipe cleaners
- tree - nandina



## Chivalry & Heroism

- castle - TP tubes, PVC pipe
- stucco - Dap stucco patch
- rocks - real & Sculptamold
- tower top - jewelry findings
- gate & door - Grandt Line product
- flags - internet website



## Childhood Dreams

- teddy bears - cotton chenille pipe cleaners, craft store pom poms
- tea table - craft store "Woodsies" and golf tees
- sleeping baby - craft store doll head and arms
- stucco - Kleenex and paint



## Pirates & Buccaneers

- mountain/cave - papier mache pot from florist
- pirate ship, pirate, trees - cake store
- barrels - craft store
- treasure chest, jewels - jewelry findings