

Back Yard Artistry

first published February 15, 2018 in Newswest

We ten year olds were used to being evicted from the house when my mom had what we called a cleaning fit. These attacks happened frequently, and during the latest one, Karen, Judy and I tumbled out into my backyard in search of something to do.

“This winter will never be over” Judy moaned. “What should we do?” We were unrecognizable in our hats, hoods, scarves snow pants and brown galoshes. The February sky was deep blue and the snow was just sticky enough for some kind of construction.

“I'm going to make a beautiful snow lady”, Karen decided, as she started rolling a giant snowball. Judy got started on a fort in the corner of the yard using one of my mom's loaf plans to form bricks. My plan was to build a beautiful horse complete with saddle and bridle so I could gallop through the sagebrush covered hills chasing the rustlers just like my hero Adam on Bonanza. Adam was much handsomer and so much more mature than his brother Little Joe.

The big snowballs weighed a ton but soon my horse started to take shape. Carefully, I sculpted his head and his saddle, then found a rope in the garage to use as a bridle. After a few finishing touches I climbed on his back. At ten and with little experience in horseback riding, I felt as though I was sitting on a real horse, and looked forward to many happy trail rides together.

Karen's snow lady was now dressed in a ball gown, complete with train. “There's a wig in the basement from Halloween. Should I get it?” I asked her. “Sure” she giggled, “she needs some hair - or a hat.” I found a long black wig and a matching black slouch hat in the basement and we fitted them on her head. “She looks so much better.” Karen said happily.

We went to help Judy with her upscale fort which had a snow couch and two snow chairs. She was busily trying to build windows without the whole thing collapsing. With the combined architectural experience of three ten year olds, we managed to finish it successfully.

“Let's go in, I'm soaked” Judy said. “Can we put our clothes in the dryer?”
“We don't have a dryer, we'll have to hang them up in the basement.” I suggested.

The previous day my dad had walked up to the Laura Secord store at Wellington and Holland, and brought back a two pound box of chocolates for my mom for Valentine's day. They were passed around once or twice, then we were told to stay out of them. They were for a treat for the family, but there they were sitting on top of the fridge. “Let's each have one” I said. “Karen keep an eye out for my mom”. We tiptoed into the kitchen and each sneaked a chocolate before heading to the basement to dry off and play Clue.

A few days later a warm wind from the south caused some damage to our creations. The window frames in Judy's fort collapsed which caused the main wall to fall down. Karen's lovely snow lady had turned into a creepy witch. Her hat had blown away, and her wig had fallen to one side on her melted head. It was quite disturbing to see her peering through the kitchen window of our house. My horse's handsome head had developed a long, pointed, snarly beak, and he suddenly had a serious sway back. Our entire backyard looked like a house of horrors. I found this all very distressing, so I went out and knocked them all over.

On the bright side though, spring clothes, chocolate Easter rabbits, eggs and chickens and rubber boots started to appear in the stores, cheering us up and turning our minds toward a new season.