IN MINIATURE

By: MIKELA RAE BOWERS | Photography: JOSHUA NOLDEN

NORMA PALMER has led a life rich in experience and love. Spending 38 years with the love of her life, raising seven children and experiencing all corners of the U.S., the native Scot has lived a full 81 years. Now a resident of Independence Hill Retirement Resort, Norma has the space and time to reflect on all life has offered her, the beauty she created and what she will accomplish next.

At five years old, the Scottish native immigrated to the U.S. with her family, escaping the specter of World War II. Naturally, Norma and her family initially arrived in New York, but they would later relocate to Michigan. The family’s move to the U.S. proved beneficial, for it was here that Norma would become enamored with miniature figurines and later start her family. Norma recalls being 12 years old when her love of miniatures was spurred. She was at a festival with her father when an ornate, glass horse figurine entranced her eyes. Norma wanted nothing else at the fair — no food, games or toys, just the glass horse. Her father ended up giving her eyes. Norma laid down her creation of miniatures.

Much like her art, Norma also prefers her canine companions in miniature. Accompanied by Ferguson — a Yorkie named by Norma’s children after her Scottish maiden name — Norma enjoys her cottage days with her tiny companion at Independence Hill. Prior to Ferguson, Norma had Maltese pups, which are always subtlelty found in her “Room Boxes” in miniature. While she was preparing to move, Norma sold many of her boxes to friends. Although, several of the Maltese miniatures were later sent back to her from the boxes. “Which I thought was just really sweet,” Norma says with a wide smile.

Aside from her art and canine comrades, another great love of Norma’s life is her expansive family and late husband, Wayne. “We did absolutely everything together,” Norma recalls. From deep sea fishing to raising children, they did it all as one for 38 years. Wayne would even come help Norma with her duties as a nurse’s aide after his work shift. “He would do the laundry for me, since that was one of my duties,” Norma recounts. Unfortunately, it was after Wayne’s death that Norma laid down her creation of miniatures. Wayne did the electrical lighting for her boxes, and not having him by her side, Norma lost the drive to continue the craft. “I had a good one,” Norma softly shares. “He was the love of my life.”

With seven children, 10 grandchil- dren, four great-grandchildren and another great-grandchild on the way, Norma’s lineage continues to light up her life. One of the most incredible occurrences based on Norma’s generosity and compassion involves her youngest daughter, who was adopted. When the time came, Norma’s youngest daughter chose to adopt children as well. Adopting two daughters individually, it was discovered that the two girls were actually biological sisters who had been separated as they progressed through the system. As Norma’s lineage of love continues, it unites on levels no one could have imagined.

Now, Norma is creating new beauty in her life at Independence Hill as she comes upon her first anniversary of being a part of the community. Finding her way to serve, Norma has spent the past several months working at the store on Fridays. “I like people,” Norma shares matter-of-factly. In service to others through the store, Norma loves the opportunity to help out where she can, including an emergen- cypizza run for her friend-in-need.

Creating a home for seven children, showing her children the beauty of a 38 year love affair, and setting a foundation for those in her care to flourish, Norma has spent her life in service to others. As we close our time together, Norma lights up at what lays ahead. With a new great-grand baby on the way, and a new experience with the Independence Hill Toppers Chorus as an alto, Norma is excited for what’s to come. “I love to sing. I sing in the shower, I sing to my dog. I love music. Any kind,” beams Norma. “You really don’t know what’s ahead,” muses Norma, and the fun part of life is making the unknown beautiful. It is said beauty comes from selfless love and service. If so, Norma Palmer has accomplished and excelled at this in her lifetime, spreading beauty one miniature Maltaise at a time.

For more information about Independence Hill Retirement Community or Independence Village’s neighborhood of homes visit www.independencethill.com or call 210.782.9892.

“I can still shut my eyes and see that pretty blue horse.”

set the tone for the woman I was to meet. I saw meticulous attention to detail, excellent craftsmanship, obvious care in creation and creativity in spades. The two Maltese pups perfectly placed in the display gave me a glimpse into her heart. I quickly understood the importance of Norma’s “Room Boxes,” as she began speaking of them immediately after our introduction. “The room on display is a conservatory,” Norma explains with delight. Learnt from her Scottish heritage, Norma explained that conservatories served as a room for plants to be brought in during the long winter months. As we moved from the “Conservatory” to a favorite amongst her creations, an elated Norma lit up with excitement as she detailed the intricacy of her miniature “Texas Room,” replete with mini-shotguns and an outdoor BBQ pit. Norma proudly explained that the Independence Hill staff insisted she share her gift with the community, and she awaits the opportunity to bring out her fabulous Library.

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