

A SMALL WORLD B&B IN CHEMAINUS



John and Lynne Landygo

By David Morrison

Writer Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, once said: "Many a small thing has been made large by the right kind of advertising." By bending the meaning of the great man's statement just a tad, it takes on a whole new literalness in describing how I first encountered the charming Chemainus B&B, A Small World.

Ever on the lookout for interesting accommodations

offering something a bit different, I regularly scour the Internet to see what pops up. When I ran into A Small World's website, it was obvious within seconds I'd found a winner. This is an accommodation, you see, that is literally full of "small things" – "made large," it could be said, by my desire to write about them!

The particular feature that attracted me was a wonderful collection of painstakingly detailed miniatures, or, for those unfamiliar with the craft, 3-D dioramas of everyday scenes, populated by delightful little figures going about their lives. Among those on show here are a lovely schoolroom scene, in which diminutive pupils sit at tiny desks with Lilliputian books; a vendor's stall selling miniscule pies, cakes and pastries; and Farmer John's Market, where mini-customer Mrs. Kowalski inspects an arrival of fresh cabbages around the size of real marrowfat peas.

In the elegant, spotless suite we occupied, a celebration for Polly's 5th birthday is occurring. Little Polly, her teensy-weensy dog, Ruff, and teddy bears, Honey Bear and Mr. Binko, are enjoying a party, and it seems from the amount of minute birthday cards that she's a popular girl! In the adjacent suite, Felicia's Millinery Shop displays a selection of unfeasibly small, yet most stylish ladies hats for all occasions.

There are many more miniatures around the house, most bearing a distinct Victorian-style presentation. They were built by Lynne Landygo, with love and assistance from friends and her husband, John. Together forty-four years, the Landygo's have run A Small World as a B&B since 1998 (with help for the last eight years from their beloved housekeeper, Wendy Warner), but as Lynne explains, the original business plan was rather different.

"I got to an age in life when I thought I wanted to do something for myself, so we built the house with the idea of having a miniatures store. But due to zoning we couldn't get a licence from the municipality to retail. We could have a business in the house selling a service, but not a commodity, so that was the end of the miniatures business! Shortly after that we visited a friend in Campbell River who had decided to do a bed and breakfast. This got me thinking that we could do it, and once we'd put all the bathrooms and partitions in we had our first paying guest in September 1998. And here we are, thirteen years later!"

Photos: David Morrison



Photos: David Morrison

Lynne Landygo works on 'The Karena'



Miniature Hats

Despite her passion for miniatures and how heavily they consequently feature around the B&B, Lynne says they are more a theme than a marketing tool. Interesting me as they did on their website I feel the miniatures definitely sell the accommodation, so I was quite surprised to hear this. But when taking in the B&B as an overall experience, the miniatures are irrelevant. The comfort of the rooms and the Landygo's excellent service ensure that they act

as a pleasing bonus attraction, rather than a gimmick. The key to a good stay at A Small World is really more that its hosts thoroughly enjoy engaging with their guests, having fun in getting to know them. This approach has kept guests coming for thirteen years, is likely to for many more, and generates plenty of repeat business.

Testament to this was our sharing a wonderful breakfast (of fresh fruit parfait with vanilla yoghurt; poached eggs and ham on a biscuit, topped with grated cheese; fresh-baked apple and

cinnamon scones; OJ, tea and coffee) with guests who had stayed at A Small World before.

Dennis Lelonde, a Canadian working for a Russian mining company in Guyana, was in town on business, and had nothing but good things to say about the Landygo's.

"What I really appreciate about being here is that it's like coming home," he gushes. "John and Lynne treat you like family. You can have fun, make jokes and trade barbs, if you will! It's always a pleasure to come down and have morning coffee with these guys, have a nice breakfast and meet other guests."

Up from Victoria for a Chemainus Theatre production, Marian and Gwyn Hughes were staying at A Small World for the third time. "We found out about the B&B on the theatre website, and in their program," says the 6' 3" Gwyn. "Initially, when I saw the name, I was rather concerned. We've stayed in places that were very nice, but rather small with little headroom. But when I spoke to Lynne on the phone she said, 'Oh, it's not a small world in that way!'" "I love how they join you at breakfast," adds Marian. "It brings a homey atmosphere, so there's a lovely feeling that you're part of the family."

John is a big part of the fun times at the breakfast table. He's a man of few words, but those that he does utter are invariably amusing. He delivers quips and remarks with a quick wit and deadpan expression, reminding me of the brilliant Ameri-



Detail of Lynne Landygo's charming miniatures

can comedian, Steven Wright. (My all time favourite one-liner is one of Wright's: 'I almost had a psychic girlfriend, but she left me before we met.')

"Well, you've gotta have some laughs, haven't you?" says John, with impassive dryness.

While I agree with the appraisals of Lelonde and the Hughes' it was certainly the presence of Lynne's miniatures that initially piqued my interest in A Small World. And as someone who really appreciates people as passionate for their chosen pursuits as she is for her miniatures, I was keen to discover more. In the course of our conversation, however, one story that emerged about Lynne's hobby moved me deeply.

"There was lady in Victoria named Karen, who I never met, who was a member of the miniaturists club there," she began. "She passed away from cancer and her husband called her club to ask if someone would come

over to the house to pack up her workshop, take the stuff back to the club to try and sell it. Karen had started this house, she had the shell finished, and it was her pride and joy. It was really important to her husband that it went to someone who would finish it. The last thing I needed was another dollhouse, but I bought it, and everything that came with it that Karen had been working on, including photos and plans of how she was going to finish it."

Visibly emotional, Lynne proudly shows me Karen's house, a large Walmer Cherrydale dollhouse, occupying most of a table in the living room. "In continuing with her work I feel like I'm getting to know her," Lynne goes on, "because of the choices she'd made in how she would finish off the house. So although I never met her, I feel like I know her...and I like her. I now have an emotional attachment to Karen and this house, in trying to finish it for her, because she never had the chance to. I'm going to call the house 'The Karena' in her memory."

In respect of my lovely experience at A Small World, there is nothing that could or should follow this touching story. It is simply a delightful place to stay, run by a great couple, and the miniatures provide a quirky angle to keep guests fascinated. However, what I will say is that when my wife and I returned to the B&B on a randomly chosen day, weeks after our stay, to take a few additional photographs to accompany this article, it just so happened that Dennis Lelonde was booked in again on a brief trip back to Chemainus from Guyana. What are the chances, eh? It just goes to show, as the old saying goes, that it is indeed a small world. ■

A Small World is situated at 9866 Willow Street (at Willow & Oak), Chemainus. For more information, including availability and rates, please visit www.asmallworld.ca. Lynne Landygo can be contacted by email at stay@asmallworld.ca or telephone on (250) 246 9962.

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