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SCULPTING HOBBY 'SPAWNS' CAREER IN COMIC CREATIONS



Teen's talents scouted by New Jersey

toy company

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WESTERN WHEEL

The sculpting talents of an Okotoks youth have been scouted by an American comic corporation, an incident she calls the "spawning" of a career from an obsessive hobby.

Ky la Collier was spotted by Bob McFarlane, the father of *Spawn* comic creator Todd McFarlane, at the Entertainment Art Expo in Calgary nearly two years ago.

McFarlane (senior) was so impressed with Collier's work, consisting of lifelike characters made from sculpting clay, that he stopped at her booth and mentioned her skills could be used at his son's company.

"He came up to me and said 'it's too bad you aren't in New Jersey' (where McFarlane Toys is located)," said

Collier, a Grade 11 student at the Alberta High School of Fine Arts in Okotoks.

Excited at the prospect of providing Collier with an opportunity to work for a famous toy corporation, Collier's mom and business manager Janice told McFarlane that if there was an opportunity for Collier in New Jersey she would be there.

Arrangements were made and the two women left Okotoks to spend two weeks camping in New Jersey this summer so Collier could further develop her sculpting skills at McFarlane Toys, where *Spawn* action figures are created.

"It (working with the company)

made me a better sculptor," said the enthusiastic 16-year-old. "I saw the amount of attention they (the sculptors) pay to detail and I'm trying to duplicate that."

Initially, Collier's time with the corporation was meant to be a volunteer-based learning experience, but when McFarlane (junior) witnessed the quality of her work she was promoted to a paid position.

It was supposed to be a mentoring thing," Collier said, "but it ended up being a job because they really liked my work."

During her time at the office Collier sculpted models of *Spawn* characters such as the Dragon, the Sumo with faces in his tummy, the Cabbit, which she sculpted entirely on her own, and the *Spawn*

title character.

Due to the intricate detail of the models, Collier usually concentrated on tiny pieces of the characters, like an arm or face, and was amazed at the amount of time one must dedicate to the models.

"A lot of people don't have respect for the artists who make these figures," Collier said. "They are amazing craftspeople."

Once the pieces of the models are put together they are sent to other departments in the McFarlane facility to be painted, molded and photographed for posters and catalogues.

The molds are then sent to a manufacturing company in Japan, where action figures, based on

the McFarlane models, are created.

The figures that Collier helped to create are expected to arrive in North America for sale within the next few months.

"McFarlane Toys has only been running for six years and it's the number one action figure company in the world," Collier said. "I was the youngest person who worked with them."

Although Collier and McFarlane Junior never meet (he resides in another state and communicates with the office through video conferencing) she referred to her co-workers as being like "20 big brothers and sisters."

Those co-workers were so impressed with Collier's work that she has been invited back to work at the company for a month next summer.

If she chooses to return, this time it

for much of her success.

"I have the best parents in the world," Collier said. "(However) they do sometimes have to tell me to put it (the clay) down and do my homework."

In addition to her mom being her manager, Collier refers to her dad, Randy, as her product advisor and her brother, Kevin, as her product tester.

At home, Collier often works on characters featured in a series of books that she has been writing for eight years entitled *Myths of Selia*.

She also sculpts children and animals and teaches sculpting classes to individuals and groups.

"I decided that I like money," Collier said, "but the thing I like more is when someone gets a doll they like."

The development of Collier's personal creations takes anywhere from five

larger ones.

"I work small," she said. "I do figures that are one centimetre tall up to figures that are eight inches tall."

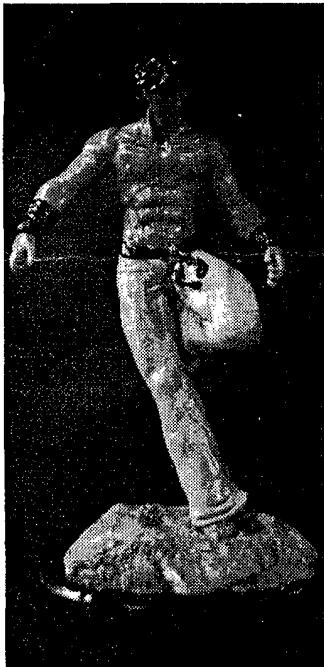
Collier has been perfecting her craft since she was two-years-old, when she began sculpting with plasticine.

As for her future plans, Collier said she would like to continue working with companies such as McFarlane Toys, but wishes to eventually branch out into her own business.

For now, Collier said she is satisfied spending her free time perfecting her hobby.

She is also confident that the new career she has "spawned" will continue to be personally rewarding, a belief that was confirmed during her time at the toy company.

"I have never seen an office so happy,"



will be without either of her parents, whom she accredits

minutes for small sculptures to six hours for

she said. "They're all doing what they love."