

Keith Lovik, who inherited a ventriloquist figuremaking business from his father, is looking for an apprentice and wants to expand the business.

the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles. Frustrated by his inability to communicate with his ethnically diverse group of students, he decided to make a "teacher" doll in hopes that they could relate to it, if not to him. His experiment worked, and the success of the ventriloquist teacher attracted the attention of a major puppet distributor, who ordered one for his collection.

After the Watts riots in 1965, Lovik left his job in the schools and dedicated himself to puppet making. By the time Keith took over the business, his father had developed 25 lines of puppets, including ventriloquist figures. Keith, however, decided to set

aside all but the ventriloquist figures while he devoted himself to learning the art of making these complex dolls.

Keith Lovik currently runs a one-man operation, but would like to find an apprentice. Although his high-end figures are popular, he is focusing on the less-expensive and easier-to-produce models, which he can keep in stock.

In spite of the quirky nature of his business, Lovik is confident in its viability and says, "It is tried and true. Dolls have been around forever."—Lilium Pierson

## HE'S NO DUMMY

KEITH LOVIK

VENTRILOQUIST DUMMY MANUFACTURER lovikipuppets.com

When Keith Lovik inherited his father's business 11 years ago, he had never made a ventriloquist figure in his life.

With a dozen orders waiting to be filled, he decided to take apart an old doll and copy what he saw. It took him two months to figure it out. Now that he has mastered the art, he wishes he could get that first doll back.

Sounding embarrassed by the memory, he says the doll wasn't his best work, "It had a lot of problems; it was terrible."

But that didn't discourage Lovik, who learned quickly and has been running the business ever since, transforming hunks of wood and buckets of latex into figures that sell for \$400 to \$1,200 each.

Keith's father, Craig Lovik, began the ventriloquist figure venture in the mid-1960s when he was a history teacher in