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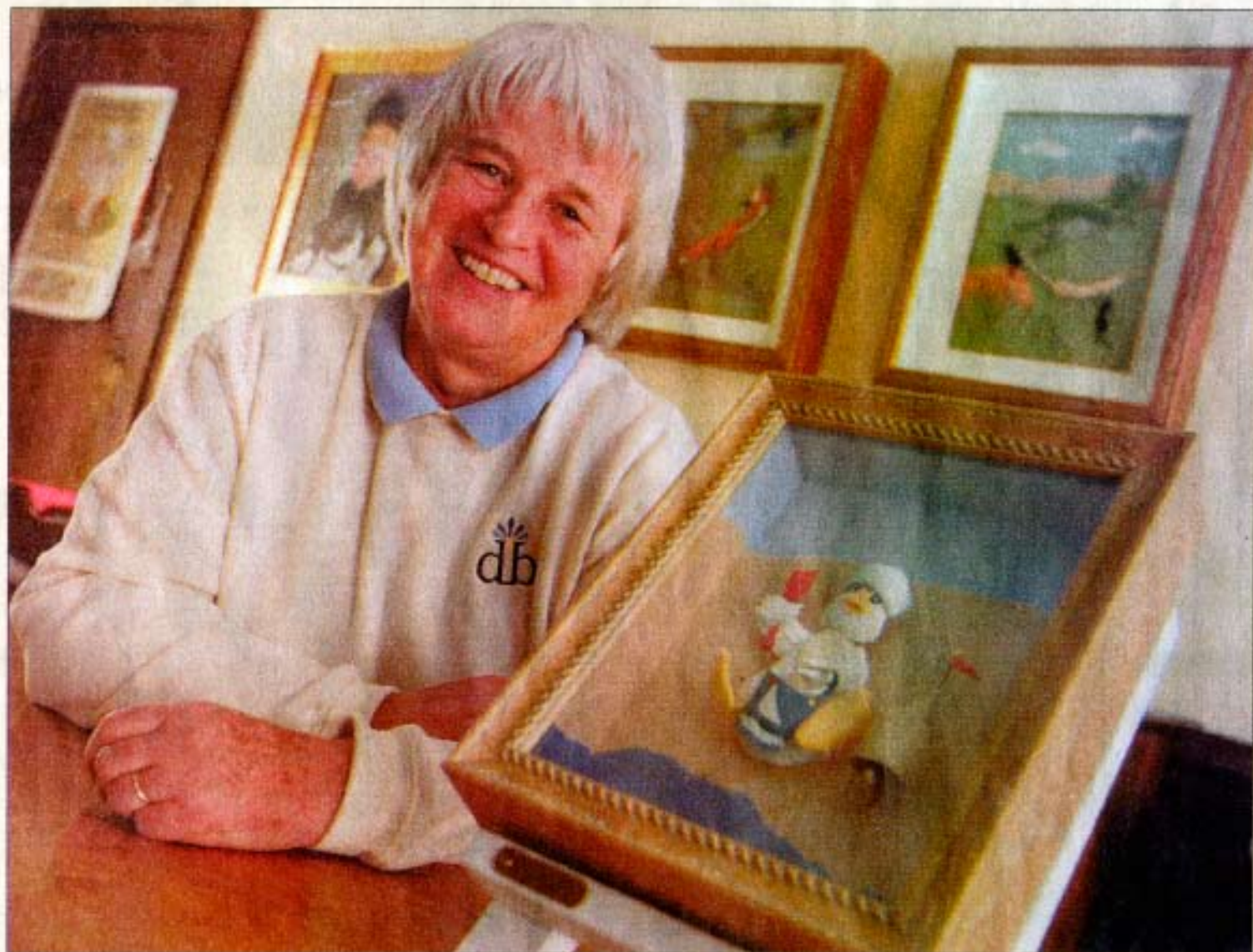
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Photos by Dave Zajac / Record-Journal

Above: Wallingford artist Doll Barnes shows "Sandcastle Beach Duck," one of her paper sculptures featured in an upcoming HGTV special. Barnes crafts three-dimensional paper sculptures, which she makes into greeting cards. **Below:** Pieces of paper lie atop a sketch of a dog, a sculpture in the making by Barnes.

No TV, but artist finds success in card craft



By Andrew Perlot
Record-Journal staff

WALLINGFORD — In late 2006, Doll Barnes was excited that her art would soon be featured on HGTV and that it could get noticed by someone looking to publish work.

Now after more than two years of delays and the subsequent launch of her greeting card company, the artist is somewhat ambivalent about her belated chance at 15 minutes of fame.

Recently gleaming from a programming guide on HGTV's Web site that her segment would air on Feb. 12 at 8 a.m., she remembered the filming and wondered if it wouldn't be better if no one knew.

"It is what it is," she said Tuesday. "I'm hoping people don't realize just how tense I

was. If I (could do it again) I'd be more relaxed and let my personality show through."

Barnes hasn't heard much from HGTV and doesn't know what caused the delays. Representatives of the cable channel, also known as Home and Garden Television, could not be reached Tuesday.

Armed with samples of her work — unique three-dimensional paper sculptures she crafts with painstaking precision — Barnes spent several years, after graduating in 2003 from Hamden's Paier College of Art, visiting large art trade shows hoping to interest a publisher. None wanted to sign her, she said.

She considered trying to break into the children's book market, but the rigid contracts and strict deadlines weren't for her.

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□ Artist succeeds with cards

Barnes put off her art career so she could be a mother to her three children, who are now grown and out of the house. Now 56, she doesn't want to deal with the stress of illustrating children's books.

But she wasn't idle while hunting for publishers and waiting on HGTV. She spent her free time learning how to shoot high-quality photographs of her work and manipulate them with Adobe Photoshop, the image-editing software.

Soon she realized she had the know-how to publish her own art, and chose greeting cards as her medium.

"I like connecting with people and greeting cards allow that," Barnes said from her home studio on Barnes Road. "Someone has picked out the card to touch a person in some way."

Doll Barnes Paper Sculpture now has 80 cards available in nine stores in Connecticut and Pennsylvania, and Barnes hopes to sell cards online soon. She spent much of 2008 getting the company up and running and wants to expand it in 2009.

The walls of Barnes's house are lined with her paper art. In one scene out of Aesop's Fables, a fox tries desperately to grab the delicious grapes just out of his reach. In another, a paper duck crafts a sandcastle on the beach.

Refusing to sell any of the originals, Barnes photographs her art on her back porch on overcast days, finding that this lends them the best light.

They're printed at Prentiss Printing in Meriden.

Although his business frequently prints greeting cards, owner Mike Glynn said he's impressed by the patience it takes to craft the paper designs Barnes sends him.

"I think it's amazing," he said. "The patience that goes into that — it is wonderful."

Although the finished cards are flat, people often run their fingers along them expecting to find definition due to the three-dimensional originals, Barnes said.

The time to make one design varies, but she estimated that one she's working on for Valentine's Day — a dog under a tree laden with hearts — will take about 10 hours.

She demonstrated why, carefully adding the dog's glassy eyes to the completed face with tweezers.

Shelley Mongillo, owner of Oh Baby on Center Street, is one of the businesses that sell Barnes' cards, which retail for \$3 to \$4.

In the six months she's stocked them, Mongillo said she's had to reorder from Barnes six times.

"I do very well with them," she said. "They're very professional, very unique looking cards with cute verses."

Convincing people like Mongillo to stock her cards is a part of running a business that Barnes likes least, but she thinks her company has plenty of potential.

"They're different," she said of the cards. "There's a built-in 'wow' factor."

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