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cutting, and operates a lapidary school.

Elmhurst has been well zoned. The residential area, which is one of the loveliest of all the western suburbs, has been kept intact through careful planning and restrictive zoning. Shopping centers lie south and west of the older residential section, while the industrial parks are located well north of the center of the city; and on the Chicago and Northwestern the big town is only 30 minutes away. Little wonder that the population of Elmhurst—over 48,000 — makes it the largest city in Du Page County. People find the good life here.

*(Much of the history of Elmhurst contained in this article was taken from "Old Elmhurst, Being the Personal Recollections of a Native". The booklet was written in 1919 by Dr. Frederick H. Bates, who was a son of Gerry Bates, the founder of Elmhurst. Our thanks to the Elmhurst Chamber of Commerce and the Historical Society for providing us with this material.)*

It takes more than trees  
and houses, streets  
and shops, to make a city thrive.

It takes

PEOPLE,

... active, interested, interesting people,  
like —

## Edward Rohn

Portrait of a Happy Man

If at first you don't succeed — keep on trying. If Edward Rohn hadn't done just that he wouldn't be the happy man he is today. Ten years ago he was a transplanted midwesterner living in affluent Bergen County, New Jersey, and a successful regional sales manager. Today he is a highly accomplished sculptor with a studio in Elmhurst, and a nationally recognized name in his field.

How did it all happen in such a brief time? First of all he had a talent he didn't know he had. Probably in the genes. His father was an accountant and his mother a school teacher with skillful hands. He recalls her making all sorts of amusing and educational cut-outs for her elementary classes, and as a young child, "I was doodling and sketching and modeling in clay, too. I thought everyone could."

After serving in the Korean War, Rohn, who was then married, went to the University of Illinois in Bloomington for a degree in business administration. "I was 25," he said, "and a lot older than all the other kids. On Friday nights they all



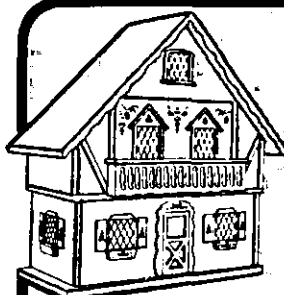
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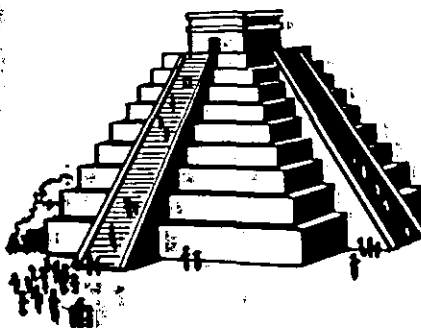


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(Above) Sculptor Edward Rohn working on a bust of Judy Garland. (Right) Rohn's remarkable study of Harry Truman, commissioned by a Pennsylvania company.

came over to our apartment and we sat around drinking beer.

"One of the girls was in Fine Arts and had to sculpt a bust for a class project. Her capabilities in art weren't very strong—actually her main reason for being in college was 'to find a husband, so I did the project for her.' She brought along the clay and I did the work. That's when I realized not everyone could do it."

After graduation, a sales job, a promotion, and a transfer came along. "So here I was in New Jersey with a good income, a loving wife, three children, a mother-in-law and a dog, and I felt like a fish out of water. Something was gnawing at me, but I didn't know what. My wife knew, though. One day she said, 'you seem to be the most content when you're working in clay'. That was it. So I asked her, 'how much have we got in the cookie jar?'"

The Rohns moved back to Illinois. To support his family Edward Rohn got a job designing pension plans and retirement programs. He spent all his free time, nights and weekends, designing in clay. He had a lot to learn. The talent was God-given but the skills had to be acquired.

Because Rohn is such a nice guy, an open and friendly person with no artistic pretensions, people gave him a lot of constructive advice—the owner of a hobby shop, a sculptor in Wisconsin, and other artists in his field. But Rohn himself had



to do the work, and there was a long trial-and-error time until he finally developed the difficult techniques, some of which he originated, of sculpturing in porcelain.

Rohn sculptures are character studies, for the most part. Some are imaginary faces, others are real people. One of his most famous is a bust of Harry Truman. One that is destined to become equally popular is a Judy Garland sculpture he's now working on. Rohn's work is exquisitely detailed—something next to impossible to achieve in porcelain. Every wrinkle, dimple, crease; every facet of a facial expression is carefully molded to

create remarkable portraits. As a diversion from character studies, he does a few things from nature.

The Rohn Monarch butterflies in shell-like porcelain are as fragile-looking and as beautiful as nature's own. The Monarch is the Illinois State butterfly, and a Rohn sculpture is on display at the museum in Springfield.

All Rohn sculptures are limited editions, usually 250 at the most. But to make those 250 Rohn and his assistant, Bonnie Berg, will make many more than that—30% of the work is lost in the firing.

The sales job, the pension plans and retirement programs now long in the past, Edward Rohn, sculptor, is doing what he loves best. No wonder he's a happy man.

(Janet Ketterer)

## Bill Popp Sherlock Holmes's man in the suburbs

"I'd like some snuff, please." The young clerk at the supermarket would be thrown by this request. But William Popp, owner of the Sherlock Pipe Shop, 198 North York, Elmhurst, would calmly reach for his special imported brand of snuff. He'd even sell you a sterling silver box to hold the rarely-called-for pulverized tobacco that's sniffed through the nose.

Popp specializes in the finest and unusual in smoking needs and accessories in his shop. He also provides the easy chatter and expert advice that are part of the personal touch.

Popp's amiability accounts only partially for his stream of faithful customers. Even that precise detective and shop's namesake, Sherlock Holmes, would appreciate Popp's keen knowledge of pipes and tobaccos. Bill Popp's expertise was not attained by his merely smoking a pipe for the last eighteen years. His long-time interest in collecting pipes and tobacco coupled with his European visits to pipe and tobacco factories and private shops when he was in the printing business gave him the incentive to open his own shop. That was seven years ago and he hasn't regretted it. As he explained, "There are more profitable professions, but none more interesting and fun."

Semi-annual visits to European pipe and tobacco factories and tobacconists are still very much a part of Popp's business. Such trips are not usual for most shopkeepers. But William Popp wants to give his customers a taste of the unusual. So he journeys to Europe "to find items not attainable in the United States and to

The artist has the tremendous gift of reaching out and touching the souls of those who appreciate beauty. He can capture a moment in time in the pose of his subjects. A Gypsy's laugh. The perceptive eyes of a Sheriff. The natural beauty of an Indian Maiden. The whimsy of a frog.

Edward J. Rohn is that artist. His media is porcelain. Each of his creations begins with a sculpture in clay. A lifetime of study guides sensitive hands. A piece of clay is deftly transformed into a smile, a bit of lace, or the wings of a butterfly. When satisfied with the result of his original model, Mr. Rohn carries out the intricate steps for reproduction in high-fired porcelain, the most sophisticated of all ceramics. Failures run high, but when

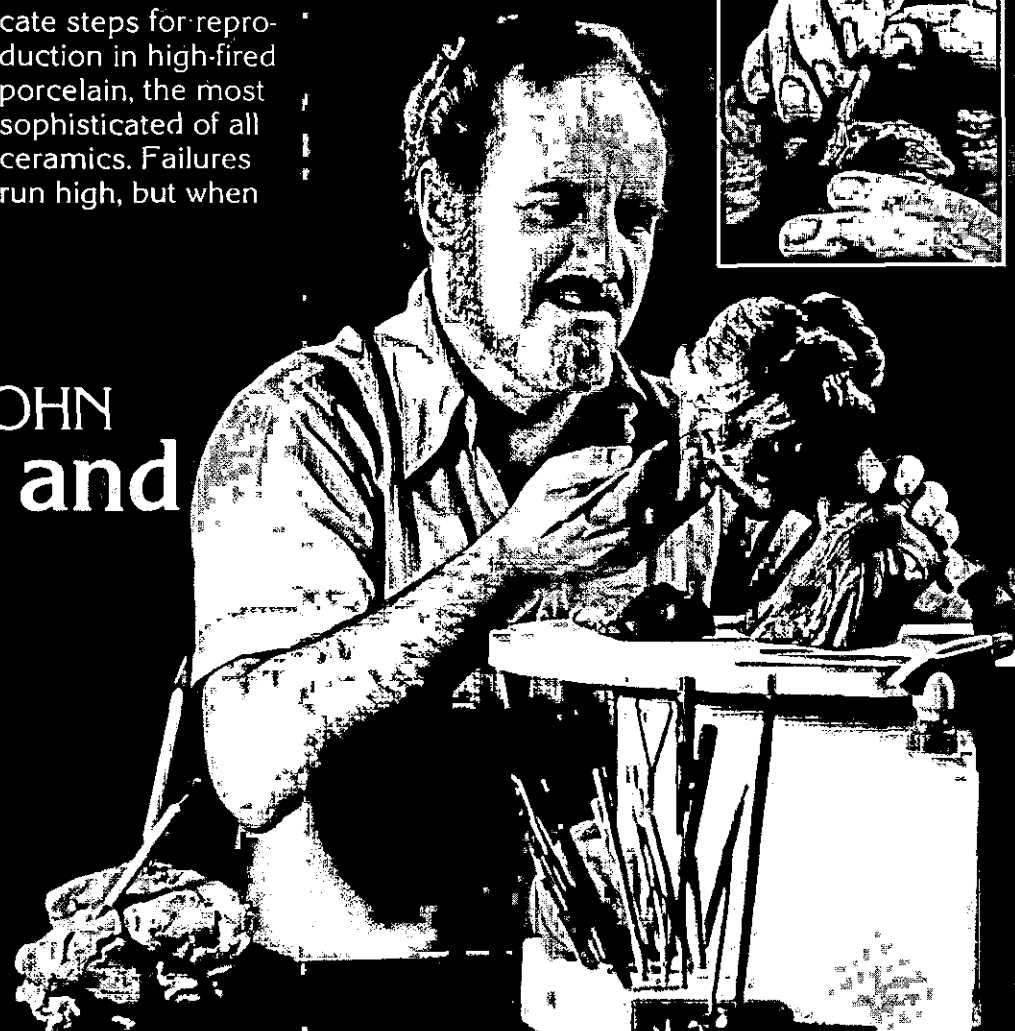
it is done — the porcelain sculpture is ready for individual finishing touches that make each piece truly unique. As an American sculptor, Mr. Rohn is well known by collectors around the world for his special skill in capturing the essence of a subject's personality. His interpretation of

Harry S. Truman is displayed in the Truman Library. The exceptionally thin wings of "Butterflies" are on display in the Illinois State Museum.

A picture gives us a thousand thoughts—a sculpture a thousand pictures. The following is a sampling of his current collection.



## EDWARD J. ROHN The Man and his Work



Rohn, Edward J.  
This is a folder.



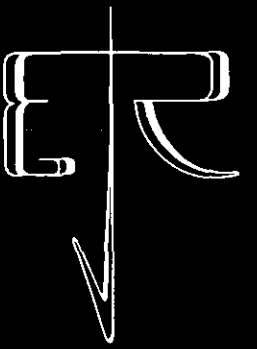
ZAIDE

(Copy of Hebraic Torah)

"Be deliberate in judging, and raise up many disciples, and make a hedge for the Torah."

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## Rohn Sculptured Porcelain



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Can't you hear the sounds of the arena as you view the "Matador"? Majestic and composed – ready to play his part in a classic drama. Limited to 90 pieces. 13½" high, including walnut base.

#### SHERIF

The piercing eyes of the "Sherif" are the focal point of this timeless study – capturing a fiery, complex nature. Limited to 100 pieces. 11¾" high, including base.



#### RIVERBOAT CAPTAIN

Most people have known their own – "Riverboat Captain". Vitrally alive and pleased with the fact he has made his way in life on his own terms – self assurance, almost to the point of being cocky, is on his face.

Limited to 100 pieces.  
14" high, including base.



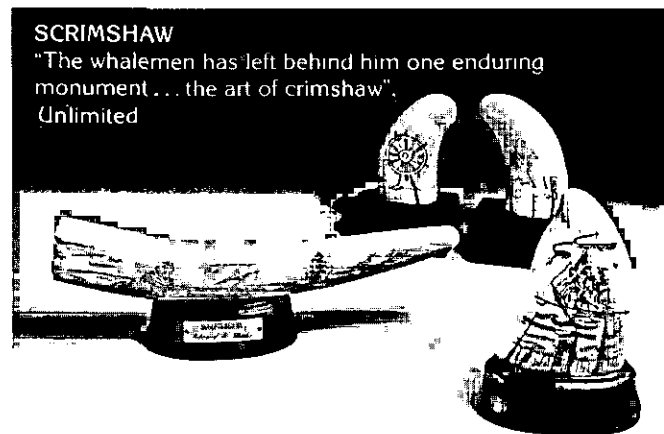
#### SOU'WESTER

The saltwater spray caressing your face – a man of the sea is the epitome of a free spirit and makes you wish you could ride out the storms with him.

Limited to 225 pieces.  
11" high, including base.

#### SCRIMSHAW

"The whalemens has left behind him one enduring monument . . . the art of crimshaw".  
(Unlimited)



#### HARRY S. TRUMAN

The thirty-third president of the United States of America. A man from a very common background who was called upon to make some of the most difficult decisions ever made. He was faced with major decisions which he made honestly, clearly and emphatically – to you, we present, a very uncommon man.

Limited to 75 pieces.  
16" high, including base.



# Sculptor breathes

By Sharyn Kane

EVERY WRINKLE, dimple, cleft, and curve in Harry Truman's head was as close to perfect as the sculptor could make it look when the statue broke.

The White House and the Truman Library would have to wait as Edward J. Rohn, porcelain sculptor from Elmhurst, began again the tedious and unpredictable task of molding the fine clay into shape.

When he was through, the likeness would be sent for display in the White House, and an almost identical statue would be sent to the Truman Library in Independence, Mo.

THESE STATUES, pastel, three-dimensional portraits of the 33d President of the United States, mark the zenith of Rohn's career as a sculptor, work that he began eight years ago as a hobby.

He was chosen to sculpt Truman by a Pennsylvania company that intends to sell Rohn's Truman busts, made from the same mold as the ones to be displayed in Washington and Independence. Each will sell for \$2,500.

Rohn, 45, never sculpted a portrait of a living or dead person before he began the Truman bust in May. All his work in porcelain represented imaginary people and animals.

IT WASN'T that he couldn't sculpt por-

traits of the living, Rohn said, but the process and time involved are costly.

Rohn said he must make more than one of any statue to recoup his investment. Usually, the statues are limited editions, which means Rohn destroys the statue molds after a certain number have been made. The Truman busts are a limited edition of 250.

He was chosen to sculpt Truman because of his attention to detail and expression, qualities difficult to achieve in shell-like porcelain.

ROHN BEGAN the Truman bust by studying hundreds of photographs of Truman loaned by the Truman Library and other archives. He needed to know how Truman looked from every angle, because unlike painting, sculpting must capture every dimension of a form, not just the face or area visible from the front.

As he studied the photographs, Rohn watched Truman age. He saw features become stark, wrinkles deepen, and hair recede, and he began to admire Truman.

"I had no feelings about the man one way or the other when I started," he recalled.

AS THE WORK progressed, Rohn learned about Truman through the photographs and captions. "He was a gutsy guy. He was boss. He was good-natured and he would wait, but in the end, he made the decisions." Rohn chose to depict Truman in 1951, about the

Rohn, Edward J.



# life into creations

time Truman relieved Gen. Douglas A. MacArthur of command of American forces in Korea.

Rohn first sculpted the form in deep gray modeling clay, spending months on the eyes, nose, chin, and expression. He works in a studio on West Avenue in Elmhurst where white powder from molds is everywhere and partially finished sculptures line shelves.

Next, he made plaster molds of the form and poured liquid porcelain, which looks like heavy cream, into the molds.

WATER IS absorbed by the plaster mold, leaving a shell-like buildup of porcelain. When the dried form is removed from the mold, it is carefully sponged free of any creases by Rohn and his assistant, Bonnie Berg of Addison.

The next step is a test by fire of the work. They bolster the form and place it in a batch kiln where temperatures up to 2,400 degrees Fahrenheit bake the porcelain into hardness. It is during this process, when the artist can't see what is happening or help if he could, that 30 per cent of his work is lost. The sculptures often collapse, crack, and crumble useless and Rohn must begin again.

If the forms survive the heat, they are then polished and painted in muted pastels. Rohn said he wants observers to look first at the eyes of his statues, then at the rest of the form.

WHEN LOOKING at the Truman bust, observers do notice the eyes first, blue and big behind gold-rimmed glasses, and outlined with deep crow's feet. The face, seen from some angles, is so lifelike that it resembles a pliable rubber mask.

Truman wears a spiffy bluish-gray suit, maroon tie, and his famous "ruptured duck pin," a memento given to all World War II veterans who were honorably discharged from military service.

The busts that will be sold are being offered by mail to collectors, Rohn said. His other works are sold in jewelry stores and galleries in major American cities. He doesn't sell any of them himself.

ROHN SAID he is pleased with the Truman bust and is honored to have his work displayed in the White House and in the Truman Library. But what pleases him most is that he is his own boss, doing what he prefers.

He was a salesman and pursued several other careers before he decided to work full-time at sculpting. He chose to work in porcelain for its beauty, not knowing the difficulties involved. He said he had scores of failures before he achieved the first successful statue, the likeness of a riverboat captain, which he keeps in his studio.



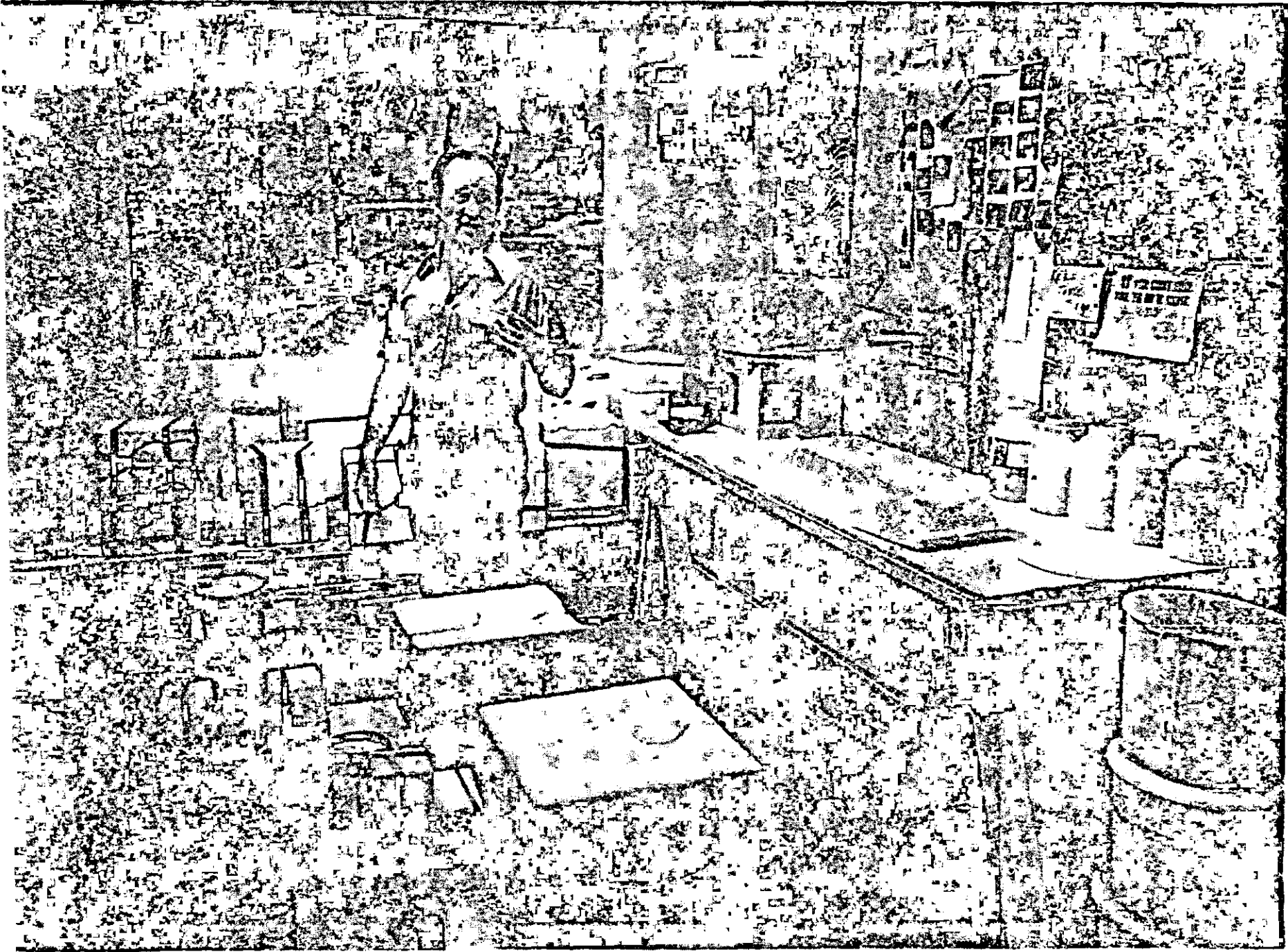
Trib photos by Richard Derk

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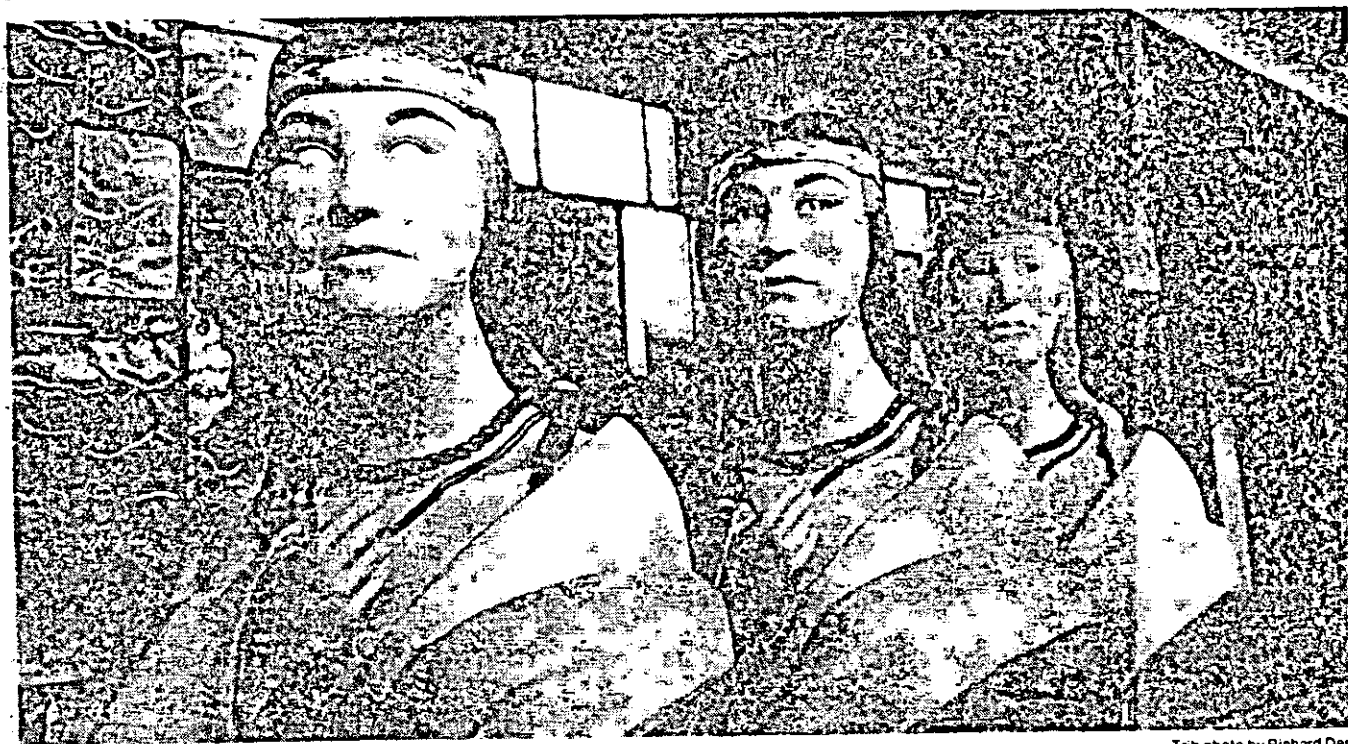
When Edward Rohn crafts a statue like that of Harry Truman, he wants to rivet attention first on the eyes, then on the rest of the carefully sculpted details. Each porcelain character starts out as a gray clay model, from which a mold is made. But months of work can end up in dust in the 2,400-degree oven in which the statues are baked. Rohn said he had scores of failures before he achieved his first statue, a riverboat captain.

Rohn, Edward J.



—Rohn, Edward J.





Trib photo by Richard Derk

## Clay comes to life

"Indian Woman," by Elmhurst porcelain sculptor Edward Rohn, is shown in three stages. Rohn has worked since May on busts of Harry Truman, commissioned for the White House and the Truman Library. For story and more photos, see pages 6 and 7.