

Just in case you'd like another copy - This is a nice write-up of Ann Seab's

1984

# Features

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## Lots of spice in her life



Ruth Rasmussen holds the first set of silver salt and pepper shakers, which started her large collection.

By SARA SUMMERHAYS  
Staff Writer

**TRAER** — In 1946, when Ruth Rasmussen bought a set of silver salt and pepper shakers at the Brooklyn Zoo, she never thought she'd end up with 12,559 sets in 1984. But she did.

"I just went to the Brooklyn Zoo and I picked up a pair of salt and pepper shakers.

"I never dreamed I'd have this many. But I just keep adding more," Rasmussen, 60, explained as she displayed what she says may be "the biggest collection in Iowa."

**RASMUSSEN STORES** her collection in two small buildings in her back yard: a remodeled trailer annex and an old milk shed.

She emptied the buildings, put up shelves and began filling in

rows and rows of salt and pepper shakers. In fact, there are salt and pepper shakers 12 shelves high and six rows deep. They're even suspended from the ceiling.

In 1949, Rasmussen had accumulated 100 pairs of salt and pepper shakers and filled a whole china closet. Eventually, there were shakers peppered across bookshelves, heat registers and cold registers.

By 1965, it was time to relieve the house of shakers. That's when Rasmussen began "spicing up" the two buildings in her backyard.

**TODAY, RASMUSSEN** has salt and pepper shakers one would rarely see on a tale set with roast beef, mashed potatoes and corn.

She's collected shakers in the shape of every state in the nation. She even has shakers with every United State's president's face

painted on them. Well, every president but Harry Truman.

"I looked everywhere for a Truman set. I even wrote to Truman. But they wrote back and said they couldn't help me," Rasmussen said.

There are cat shakers, dog shakers, Jackie Kennedy shakers and Laurel and Hardy shakers. Rasmussen has salt and pepper shakers for every holiday, season and day of the week.

But her latest pride-and-joy is her Lady Di and Prince Charles shakers. She keeps those in the house, of course.

Rasmussen said she's never paid more than \$20 for a pair of shakers. "I don't go for those antiques." But she admitted she's gone as far as Hawaii for a pair of shakers.

**EVERY SHAKER** is

numbered, with information on each filed on a recipe card. That information includes from who or where Rasmussen obtained the pair and how much it cost. And everyone who stops to look at her collection is asked to sign a notebook.

Hung outside the Rasmussen home is a sign inviting passersby to stop and spice up their lives with a view of her collection.

Rasmussen said she's not sure how much her collection is worth. "But we do have insurance on it. But the insurance wouldn't pay for what we have in there," she added.

Although no shakers have ever been stolen, Rasmussen said an entire shelf of shakers once fell down. "I just glued them back together."

Rasmussen has been approached by several people

Staff photo by Robin Scholz

interested in buying her collection. She has a simple response for them: "If I sell 'em, I won't have 'em."

The shakers have brought Rasmussen more than visitors and potential buyers. It's even brought her a little bit of fame.

"I've been on TV I don't know how many times.

"I even get mail addressed to 'the salt and pepper lady.' The guys down at the post office don't have any trouble with that. Everyone knows me as the salt and pepper lady," she explained.

When asked what she was going to do with nearly 13,000 pairs of salt and pepper shakers when she died, Rasmussen quipped, "I'm going to have them cracked up and put around my tomb stone."

Seriously?  
"Oh, I suppose my kids will sell 'em," she said with a smile.