

Our Fantastic Voyage

Civil War reenactors have been present at each of the three Rose Percy events held to date. Their participation lends a special dimension to the general atmosphere, and even better, some of them are experts in all things "Civil War" including the United States Sanitary Commission.

Here, Miss Rose Percy wears one of her white play dresses – a rare occasion. It seems that even in 1862, the girls at the Ogden Hoffman boarding school knew that our Rose was destined to be a party girl, as the majority of her frocks are meant to be worn at formal events.



We believe it safe to assume that most people in the doll world have now heard of Rose Percy, or have read about her life and events, both past and present. It was three years this month that we initially began our journey with Miss Rose Percy – a change in course for her that also represented a new chapter in her long life of service to the United States of America. In our involvement in Rose's life story, our first objective was to make sure that Rose did not fall into the wrong hands, but beyond that we did not have a firm plan as to what might be in store for any of us. Would Rose's fate be that she would quietly live with her new owner and be seen only by a few fortunate people? Would the public be willing to pay to see her? Could Rose return to the business of raising funds for charity? Further, if Rose did launch a fundraising mission, what would be the right cause for her, and for us, to stand behind?

Because the world was in such a terrible mess from natural disasters three years ago, helping to fund Red Cross-type aid to those in need seemed the right choice, but many different ideas were put on the table and discussed. One day, Sharon, a friend and fellow doll club member, telephoned and expressed her view as to what she believed Rose's new mission should be. Sharon made her case and it was a good one. "From the beginning, Rose was created to help comfort our men in uniform, and the need today is just as vital as it was during the Civil War." She then

with Miss Rose Percy

by Michael Canadas and David Robinson

added that if we didn't believe her, we could simply come to her place of employment, the VA Palo Alto Health Care System, and walk through the halls of the hospital and see that need for ourselves, because after doing so, anyone would realize what a wonderful life they have.

We could not have agreed more with her, so it was firmly decided that Miss Rose Percy would return to what she did for the first sixty years of her life — raising funds for wounded soldiers and veterans of war.

In Rose's early days, she was brought out as a reminder of the good deeds accomplished by the much-respected United States Sanitary Commission at events such as the Grand Army of the Republic's reunions. Remember, Rose made her debut and raised an astounding 1200 dollars for that commission at the New York Metropolitan Fair in 1864, but it was at these later events where she would actually meet not only the legends of the Civil War, but also quite a few of the presidents of our country. We have to thank her original owner, Bertha Chittenden, for sharing Rose with any needy cause.

As the veterans of the Civil War left this earth and took their need for care along with them, Rose found a new cause in the soldiers who fought in the Great War — World War I.

During those years, countless teas were held with Rose and her treasures billed as the star attraction. With the price of admission at 25 cents, the goal was to raise funds for medical ambulances. By the end of that conflict, Rose's owner had grown to be a lovely old lady who had lived a full and happy life of service to her country. Bertha made the decision that the American Red Cross Museum was the perfect place for her beloved Rose Percy to reside, as after all, the Red Cross is considered the offshoot of the United States Sanitary Commission.

With her installation, Rose Percy became a very important part of the American Red Cross Museum in Washington D.C. when she was positioned to greet all of the visitors who walked through the door. She acted as the first lady of the Red Cross for over 80 years and in that time she also acted as the mascot of the Junior Red Cross. We are sure that many of Rose's first juniors are members of that esteemed group known today as "our greatest generation." However, since history does repeat itself, and as Rose was created and then sold to raise funds for the United States Sanitary Commission, it should not be surprising that she would be selected



The little wax doll that Rose is holding is new to her. It wasn't until very recently that she received the first doll of her own, and it took just over 150 years. A gift from one of her fans, it is now a cherished part of Rose's permanent collection.



Rose Percy models a dress that she has not worn that often in the last 152 years. It is an elegant purple faille number with black velvet trim decorated with black jet beads, and includes a coordinating handbag sewn to the waist. In the background is a portrait of the first U.S. president to make the acquaintance of Miss Rose Percy. Rose has met several presidents of our great nation, but Mr. Lincoln will always be her most beloved.



One of the finest pieces in Rose's collection is this white faille suit that was given black soutache trim. Rose likes to keep herself amused with a great puppet show.



Miss Rose loves paper dolls. We find her here playing with an antique set, but Rose is proud to report that she has two sets of paper dolls of herself to play with, that is when she is not working. The talented Jim Howard and Sandy Hohne are the artists responsible for Rose Percy's paper doll likenesses.

to be sold by the Red Cross to help pay off a mountain of debt.

That is precisely where our journey with Rose Percy began, in our winning her at public auction on behalf of her current owner. We are quite happy about the latest case of history repeating itself, because since going back into fundraising, Miss Rose Percy has helped raise over \$74,000 for veterans and other charities, proving that in the world of dolls, she is a mighty fundraiser.

We believe the key to that success is the choice of American's veterans as the recipients of the lion's share of the funds raised. *Half of all funds raised at Rose's events must go to veterans charities*, while the other half is divided among her hosts' choice of charities. The host clubs and organizations put a lot of thought and time into their selections and not one cent of the money raised at a Rose Percy event can be kept by the host after all of the bills are paid. Another aspect that has made Rose a financial success is that no volunteer gets anything for free. We insist that each and every attendee pays for their lunch, or dinner and souvenir, including Rose's escorts. These strict rules have helped the events represent true volunteerism, and the results should be clear to everyone in Rose's presence.

Even though we should be used to it by now, as we have attended three successful Rose Percy events, we are regularly surprised, and heartened, by the sheer generosity of the people that volunteer their time, talent and money for Rose Percy's goals. All of them have done great things for their communities and our veterans, and all have shown complete dedication to the cause.

In many cases, the selected charities have no idea that they will be receiving a donation from a Rose Percy event. For us, that is one of the joys of life, to be able to present a \$3000 check to a food bank, and to be told by the volunteers that they "don't get donations like that, ever." Especially touching to us was the

\$4000 donation raised from the Maryland Rose Percy event, which hosted a barbeque for 250 injured veterans and also supplied them with niceties, such as toiletries, that our government does not provide. From that same event, the Maryland Patriot Guard helped purchase a titanium wheelchair for a young veteran who, through combat, had lost one eye, and seen both of his legs so badly impaired that he could no longer walk. That simple gift will have a long-lasting effect on improving that deserving soldier's life.

At each Rose Percy event, there is a moment that sticks with us. In Milwaukee, it was the words of jolly Colonel Lee, the doctor who spoke on behalf of the VA Brain Trauma Center. Colonel Lee told the audience that day that the Rose Percy event marked, for him, the very first time that an organization aiding his veterans did not ask for anything in return, such as billing in advertising, et cetera. He remarked that it was especially touching that the event's organizers, and the people in attendance were willing to give without a single string attached to their gift. Colonel Lee then shared that when he returned to the States from duty in Iraq, he had been treated for brain injuries at the Palo Alto Veterans Hospital, and was aware that the hospital — "his hospital" — was the recipient of \$10,000 from the Carmel Doll & Toy Study Group, the doll club that hosted the very first Rose Percy Luncheon. That gentleman did his homework, and after the event, the Doll Scholars of S.E. Wisconsin rewarded Colonel Lee's soldiers with a check for \$20,000 — the largest donation ever to have been received. These are just a few of the good deeds that have materialized due to Rose Percy's return to the fundraising arena, through the hard work of the host organizations, and we are all pleased to share them with you.

We would be remiss if we did not tell you that one of the most special parts of a Rose Percy event is seeing Rose herself. In the photos upon the pages of her book she seems



While wearing her blue wool school uniform, Rose prepares her thank-you notes the way she used to back in the 1860s. We try very hard to not let her use her original Tiffany & Co. stationery, due to a very limited supply.



Like many famous characters, Rose likes to read about herself — she even Googles "Rose Percy" on a regular basis. But in order to remember things long past, she will pick up the book dedicated to all things Rose — and who can blame her? No 152-year-old memory is perfect.



Together again ever so briefly, Rose enjoys a moment with an old friend — a Sanitary Fair parian dressed as the lead character in the *Daughter of the Regiment*. The rare doll is now part of the UFDC Museum collection – gifted by a doll club from proceeds raised at a Rose Percy event. At this writing, Rose Percy events have donated a grand total of \$10,000 in cash and gifts to the United Federation of Doll Clubs.



Miss Charity, one of the highlights of the live auction items that were offered at the Gaithersburg Rose Percy event, models her skating costume -- a small, yet exquisite component of her extensive trousseau.



to be small and fragile, but in life she is quite overwhelming, both physically and spiritually, and she possesses an overpowering presence. Yes, that is due in part to the sheer volume of her historic collection, but she also has the ability to communicate with her audience in a way that we have never experienced with any other doll. But to say that Rose Percy is “just a doll,” is like saying that Lady Liberty is “just a statue.” A true test of this fact is that at each event so far there have been guests present who are not doll collectors, and yet they, too, are moved by Rose Percy — and her story.

In our own roles pertaining to Rose and her possessions, we are not unlike the Secret Service in the sense that we must protect the “commander in chief” at all costs, and that is what we have done thus far. So it is hard for us to believe that there exist some critics in the doll world who don’t seem to like what Rose Percy is all about — that somehow her events, in which we are heavily involved, take away, rather than enrich. And to those who charge, or believe, that “There must be something in it for Michael and David.” we say, “Guilty as charged, because there *is* something in it for us, but that thing is not money.” We firmly believe we are helping to preserve something that is worth preserving — giving it an important purpose that helps others — others who are, shamefully, most often overlooked by our society, and our reward is something that is infinitely priceless. We also believe that each and every person who has helped bring a Rose Percy event to life can relate to our words, and we thank those individuals for their dedication.

Again, as history does repeat itself, we will go forward with no worries, for you see, Miss Rose Percy has always been on the right side of history, and it our pleasure to stand behind her.