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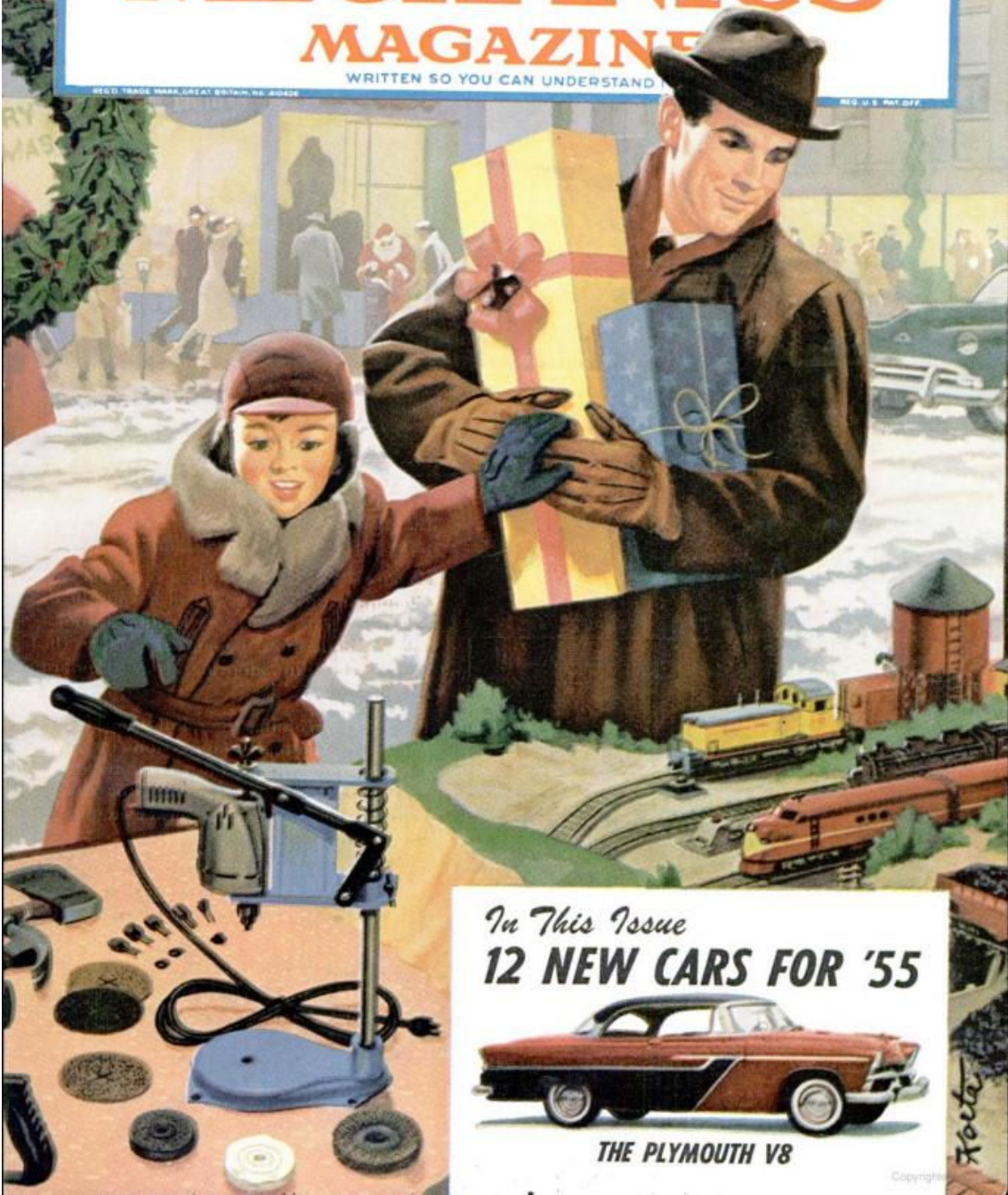
# POPULAR MECHANICS

## MAGAZINE

WRITTEN SO YOU CAN UNDERSTAND

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*In This Issue*  
**12 NEW CARS FOR '55**



**THE PLYMOUTH V8**

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Foster



Cecil Gough holds one of the ventriloquist dummies he makes as a hobby. On the bench are examples of the stages of making a dummy head—the plaster molds, the plastic-cloth head and a completed head on stick

By **Marshall L. Lincoln**

**A** MAN WHO EARNS MONEY with his spare-time hobby is no dummy. That's why Cecil Gough of Hartford City, Ind., was smart to start making ventriloquist dummies as a hobby after he retired from the drug business.

While giving him a relaxing activity, his "dummy business" also has given him some useful extra income, since his dummies sell for \$50 to \$150, depending on their complexity. Since starting his interesting hobby in 1949, he has sold between 35 and 40 dummies.

Gough puts a lot of natural inventiveness and mechanical ability into his hobby—and he finds a well-equipped woodworking shop comes in handy, too.

A granddaughter's interest in puppets caused Gough to start making a ventriloquist dummy for her five years ago. He admits his first attempt was rather crude, but it made him decide to learn how to build a really good dummy.

Since then he has made quite a batch of really good dummies — dummies which have been sold to ventriloquists all over the United States and some to people in

foreign lands. Recently, he shipped a dummy to a soldier in Nuremberg, Germany. He said this sale shows the far-reaching effect of a tiny classified ad he has been using for several years.

Gough learned his basic technique from books and the rest came through experience and a constant effort to make his figures more lifelike.

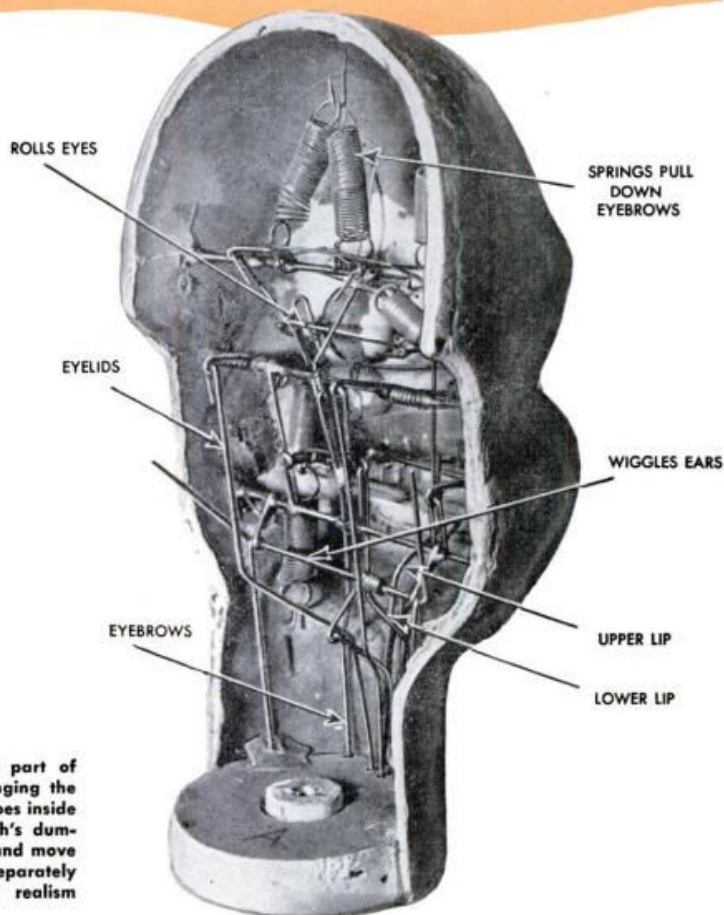
The torsos and heads of Gough's dummies are of Celastic, a plastic cloth which can be molded into any shape after it is softened with acetone. After it has hardened, the material retains its shape even if soaked in water. Such material is used by some shoe manufacturers in sole construction and also used by orthopedic craftsmen. Gough says it is ideal for his purpose because it is lightweight and easy to work.

To construct the head for a dummy, Gough first makes a head mold of modeling clay. Plaster of paris is then poured around this clay model to get two molds: A mold of the back half of the head and a mold of the front half.

From the two hollowed-out molds, he makes a one-piece plaster mold which



# Inside a Dummy's Head



By far the most difficult part of making a dummy is arranging the intricate mechanism that goes inside the head. Some of Gough's dummies can wink either eye and move the upper or lower lip separately—all in the interest of realism

resembles the clay head. This plaster head is called a "male head."

The plastic cloth is then softened with acetone and fitted around this mold. After the cloth has dried, he cuts it down the sides and removes the cloth in two pieces—the front and back. These pieces retain the shape of the plaster male head.

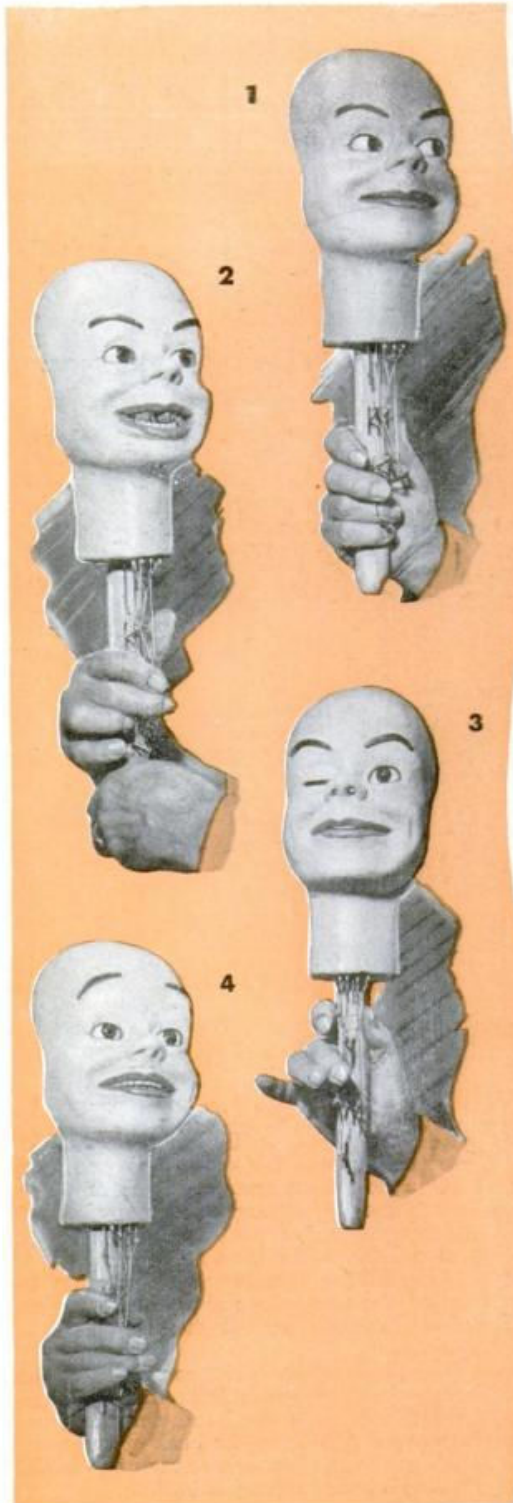
At this stage of the game, Gough begins to install the complicated mechanism which goes inside the head of each of his dummies. This mechanism is put in the front half of the cloth head.

His figures have much more than mere moving jaws. He installs levers, springs, weights and triggers in such profusion that,

when completed, a Gough dummy will wink either or both eyes, roll its eyes from side to side or up and down and move its lips. Some of his dummies can move either lip independent of the other. He now has a model that will stick out its tongue.

After all the necessary mechanism is installed, the two halves of the head are fastened together and flesh-color paint is applied.

The head, which is not connected to the body, is mounted on a long stick the ventriloquist holds in his hand during a performance. A hole in the back of the torso enables the performer to reach inside the dummy's body to grasp this stick.



Mounted on the stick are several triggers which operate the lip and some of the eye movements. Other eye movements are controlled by weights—for instance, when the head is tilted to one side, the eyes roll to the other.

Gough buys costume wigs and rebuilds them to fit the dummy heads or makes wigs from Saran or mohair.

The hands are made of the plastic cloth and painted flesh color. Gough's wife makes the costumes for his dummies — everything else is made by Gough in his garage workshop, which contains everything from power saws, drill press and lathe to tiny screwdrivers and tweezers.

After he had been making the dummies for a while, Gough decided he should know more about the problems faced by a performer in front of an audience so that he could build dummies which would be easy to operate.

To solve this problem, he took a correspondence course in ventriloquism and began performing before clubs and other groups in Hartford City and near-by towns.

Not only does this performing help him learn how to make the dummies easier to handle, but it gives him an extra thrill from his hobby.

Several times ventriloquists have called on Gough to have him rebuild dummies they bought from other dummy makers. Gough smiles with pride when he tells of such jobs because he likes to feel that his dummies are better than many others on the market.

By working steadily, he could make

**1—**Lifelike eye movements are one of the important factors in making a good dummy. An audience watches a dummy's eyes just as you do another person's. Tilting this dummy head causes the eyes to roll in a natural fashion due to well-placed weights inside the head

**2—**Here Gough demonstrates what he considers one of the neatest tricks performed by his best dummies. The lower lip is moving without the upper one showing the slightest tremble. All moving parts of the dummy's head are controlled from the stick by a skilled operator

**3—**In the hands of an experienced ventriloquist, this dummy head can produce a quick and natural wink with either eye. Gough constantly studies expressive movements of the human face with which to endow his dummies. He can now make a complete dummy in one week

**4—**The pose indicated here is of a "supercilious sneer." This effect is produced by lifting the dummy's upper lip without moving the lower one. Gough reports that this expression is particularly popular with ventriloquists who like to use dummy to ridicule themselves

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