

Your kids should buy you such expensive gifts

Treasure of toys

By Jeff Rosen

If you can afford to spend \$2,000 on your offspring for a rocking horse or \$500 on a stuffed bear, then The Toy Shop is the place to shop.

With an emphasis on maintaining the best quality in a given price range, The Toy Shop, in Toronto's fashionable Yorkville district, carries high price items like a \$2,000 rocking horse from England and steam engines for \$200 to \$300.

Martin Craig, general manager of The Toy Shop, says that what makes the rocking horse so expensive is the workmanship that has gone into its design. Standing about 4½ feet at its head, the mold of the toy is taken from an original Victorian-style rocking horse and the saddle and bridle are made of real leather.

While selling about eight rocking horses of that quality a year, The Toy Shop sells a lot of plush animals and collectible dolls. These are expected to be popular this holiday season.

This is a result of the various trends and cycles in the toy business where particular categories of toys become popular.

After being on the market for years, the ever-lovin' teddy bear is still the most popular of the stuffed animals, although children are also grabbing up the cats and dogs this year.

In the doll market, customers are going toward better quality baby dolls paying an average of \$72. While there is a wide variety of dolls available today, Raggedy-Ann still is popular with the younger set.

Despite the high prices at The Toy Shop, children can still come in and put down 20 cents for jacks or a ring.

"We're here not just for parents, but for kids," says Craig, explaining that The Toy Shop is a "hands on" shop which allows children to play with toys before buying them to make sure they



really want the toy. And there's a lot of toys there for tiny tots to try out.

Boasting over 6,000 different types of products, The Toy Shop — which opened on Bloor St. in 1912 and moved to Cumberland St. 13 years ago — carries a full selection of top quality children's toys, dolls, games, books and plush animals with a great deal of its stock coming from Europe and Britain.

Craig says The Toy Shop relies on imports as the foreign markets offer different and often better quality items.

"Countries like Germany have been manufacturing toys for hundreds of

years and have lots of expertise behind them," he says.

Despite its wide selection, The Toy Shop usually will not hesitate to place a special order if it doesn't have a particular toy in stock. And if you find that you'll be unable to return to the store, then the Toy Shop will send any toy anywhere in the world. It also makes deliveries in Toronto.

For those who want to stay abreast of what is happening in the toy industry, The Toy Shop maintains a mailing list of its customers and sends out newsletters outlining new products and changes in the business.