

THE FINEST CRAFTSMANSHIP

Carlsbad museum offers a showcase for a wide-ranging collection of the best in miniature engineering.

Written by Heather Bensen



Opposite page from left: a small-scale SJ Duesenberg; exhibits can be viewed in the museum or online; the museum's Carlsbad location (photos courtesy of Craftsmanship Museum).

There is something quite meaningful about an object someone makes with his or her own hands: a child's artwork, a beautiful knit scarf or, as is the case at the Craftsmanship Museum, incredible miniature projects produced by fine craftsmen from around the world.

Joe Martin is the owner and president of Vista-based Sherline Products, which has created small machine tools for light industrial and home shop use since 1974. Martin's passion for making tools translated into the Joe Martin Foundation for Exceptional Craftsmanship to "honor and make the general public more aware of the great contribution made by craftsmen throughout the world." With that, the Craftsmanship Museum was born in the lobby of the Sherline building.

The first donation was an incredible 1/16-scale, all-aluminum Corsair airplane from Young C. Park. He is a retired dentist from Hawaii and, according to Craig

Libuse, they are an imperative part of the foundation's purpose.

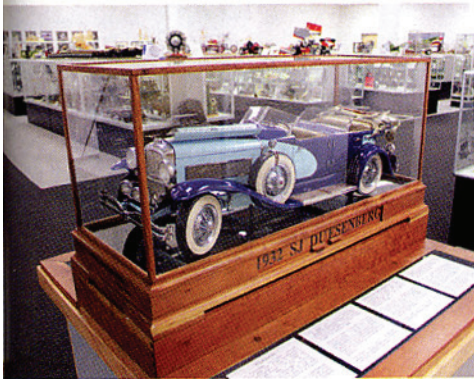
tion of miniature engineering projects by some of the most gifted craftsmen from around the world in many different trades such as model making, machining and metalworking, weaponry, engines, watch and clock making and engraving.

The top 10 highlights of the museum are marked by a blue ribbon and include works by Park, Kouhoupt, Louis Chenot (the Joe Martin Foundation Metalworking Craftsman of the Decade 2001-2011), Jerry Kieffer and Sherline Products' own lead toolmaker, Pam Weiss. Many more craftsmen have work on display, all with unique stories and abilities. See a working half-size Gatling gun created by Weiss and the Tiny Nut, Bolt and Wrench, a functional fastener you have to see to believe. The bolt is .010 inches in diameter with threads .0005 inches (one half of a 1,000th of an inch) deep. Another highlight is Chenot's 1/6-scale model of an SJ Duesenberg dual-cowl phaeton with running 32-valve, straight eight engine.

Libuse, they are an imperative part of the foundation's purpose.

"In reality, most times the people who build this type of stuff, their family doesn't really understand or appreciate it at the level that his or her friends or club members appreciate it," Libuse says. "They think a lot of times they are leaving this great legacy to their kids, but the kids say, 'What am I going to do with that?' and it gets spread to the winds, sold at a swap meet or sold at a garage sale for \$5. People are thinking about us as a destination for their work and we want the piece they want to be remembered by, their best work. We ask people if they would rather have their kids sell it on eBay or be honored in a museum."

Visitors to the museum have been growing in numbers. The museum hosts car clubs, senior groups and school children with an interest in craftsmanship. Word of mouth and local connections help this



Libuse, director of the museum and long-time Sherline employee, "he felt we had a better place to display it than his bedroom. Over the years he built a couple more aircraft models and each time he finished one he would send it to us."

Then Martin received Rudy Kouhoupt's collection of steam engines. "We had more than we could display in the lobby of Sherline so Joe built a small museum in the building," Libuse says. Martin had set aside 6,000 square feet to host the fledgling museum. As word caught on about the collections, more and more people donated projects or lent them for display until the Sherline facility could no longer host the museum. That is when the museum moved to its current 16,000-square-foot location on Lionshead Avenue in Carlsbad.

The museum is an impressive collec-

"These craftsmen push the limits on small," Libuse says. "It is harder to create an engine that runs at the smaller scale than a full-size model. This is really detailed, small stuff. It is basically mechanical jewelry. The appeal of the smallness is universal; that is what packs this place." That, and the fact that most of the items actually work. There is an engine demo daily at 10 a.m., noon and 2 p.m. run by museum shop machinist Dave Belt. These small but mighty engines are often a big hit with the crowd and enthusiastic murmurs of "awesome" and "oh yeah" can be heard in the shop when they start up.

The museum is also unique because it can be "toured" online. The collection is posted on the museum website with pictures of the projects and, when possible, the stories about the craftsmen who created them. Those stories are just as important as the pieces themselves—to Martin and

incredible collection gain attention in the community, and Libuse adds that the city of Carlsbad has been very supportive.

Whether you are a craftsman and can deeply appreciate the works on display, like the two gentlemen who went in with their lawn chairs and spent a day moving from piece to piece, or a more casual spectator, the Craftsmanship Museum is worth a visit.

3190 Lionshead Ave.

760.727.9492 • craftsmanshipmuseum.com

Hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday

Admission is free but donations are welcome.