



Above: The Miniature Engineering Craftsmanship Museum has relocated from Vista to a larger space in Carlsbad. Below: A 1/16 scale model of a P-51 Mustang airplane that was built from aluminum is on display. JAMIE SCOTT LYTLE | jlytle@nctimes.com

CARLSBAD

MINI MARVELS

Museum showcasing miniature models of engineering moves from Vista to Carlsbad

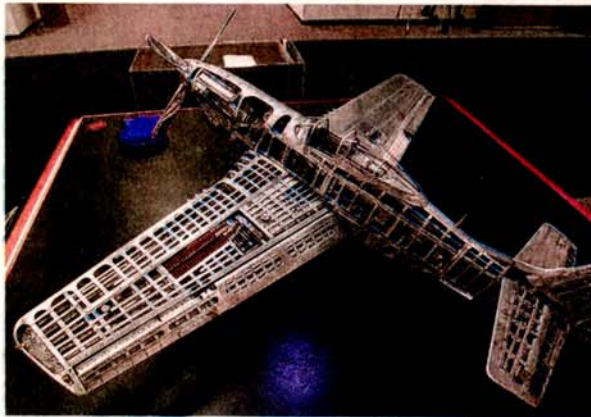
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A free museum that celebrates the work of miniature motor and model builders has relocated out of a machinery shop in Vista into a modern, new office building in Carlsbad's business park region.

"We had 6,000 square feet of space (in Vista) and we ran out of room," said Craig Libuse, director and curator of the Miniature Engineering Craftsmanship Museum, during a tour Thursday morning of the new 16,500-square-foot facility.

The museum informally opened in February in its new digs, but didn't put a sign on the building's exterior until about two weeks ago, Libuse said. Having a sign is a huge step for what once was an online-only museum, he added.

Founded by Joe Martin, who owns a miniature



machine tool company called Sherline Products, the "museum" initially consisted of a Web site with photographs of fabulous miniature models and biographical information about famed craftsmen.

Then in 2006, Martin turned part of his Vista shop building into an open-to-the-public museum display space after he received several engine models from a dentist in

Hawaii and about 65 miniature engines from the family of the late Rudy Kouhoupt, a famed model craftsman and writer.

From that point, the collection has only grown, Libuse said.

The museum now has more than 150 small internal combustion engines, and more than 100 steam and Stirling

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engines — a heat engine mostly used in specialized applications such as submarines. Plus, there are tiny airplane, train and automobile models, as well as miniature tools and engraving equipment.

Visitors also can walk into a real machinery shop behind the exhibit gallery to view the museum's resident craftsman making model engines.

There's no requirement that the models or the miniature engines be made using Sherline products, only that they exhibit outstanding craftsmanship, Libuse stressed.

On Thursday morning,

several visitors said that one of the highlights of the museum was a 1/16th-size P-51 Mustang airplane made from aluminium roof flashing material purchased at a Home Depot store.

Young C. Park, a now-retired dentist in Hawaii, spent three years building the plane, working roughly six hours a day on it, museum staff members said. There are thousands of rivets in the wings, the landing gear actually retracts and the control stick can actually move, though the plane doesn't fly, Libuse said.

Mike Germano, a Vista resident who came with a half-dozen motorcycle riding buddies to the museum, stared at the plane in disbelief.

"I want to know to know

why this guy wasted his time on this when he could have built a real one," he joked as his friends laughed. Then, he added as he looked closer at the plane, "That's incredible."

Libuse said that miniature engine builders have great prestige within the machinery industry because it is so hard to scale down a working machine.

"A lot of things that work in full-size don't work in miniature," he said.

The free museum is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. For information, visit the museum Web site at www.CraftsmanshipMuseum.com.

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