

THEIR HOBBY IS BUILDING

For Toledo Plastic Modelers, the fun is in the details

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BY RYAN E. SMITH
BLADE STAFF WRITER

Making model cars and airplanes may seem like a nice, safe hobby for people with a lot of patience.

But there is a dark side.

"I've never met anybody who hasn't put a firecracker in a model car or a model plane or something," said Ricky Geithmann, a 49-year-old modeler from Sylvania Township. "I think all model builders are kind of destructive.

That's a good excuse to get a new model kit."

For many diehards, even that much of an excuse isn't needed to buy another kit. Patrick Delvaux, 51, of Springfield Township, probably has 300 unbuilt ones in his basement. Some of them he trades or sells; others, like his cars from American Graffiti, have become valuable collector's items.

But the ultimate goal most of the time is to face the challenge of putting them together, even though it might take Mr. Delvaux 30 or 40 hours of work over a month's time for each one.

That's the kind of dedication that was on display last month when local modelers showed off their handiwork at Westfield Franklin Park. They were part of the Toledo Plastic Modelers, the local chapter of the International Plastic Modelers' Society.

The national organization has 5,000 members who look at hobby stores with visions of endless possibilities.

Some focus on building model cars or airplanes, others prefer military vehicles, ships, or science fiction-inspired creations.

PHOTO GALLERY

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president of the national organization.

"The kids are jumping into video games, computer stuff," he said.

The group has had more success luring 30-to-40-year-olds, who are more established and settled in life, and reaching out to troops serving overseas. Mr. Noack said American modelers probably have sent well over 1,500 kits to troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As a 13-year-old modeler, Nathan White is bucking the odds.

The West Toledo youth picked up the hobby from his father, William. He doesn't mind the long hours it may take to get a model just right — no smudging, perfect paint job, great details.



Tom Cox works on a model of a Formula One racer, his specialty. (THE BLADE/HERRAL LONG)

“The time that it takes to put into them, you learn to enjoy it,” he said.

“Especially when it turns out the way that you wanted it to. It feels pretty good that you put something together.”

Appreciating that part of the pastime didn’t come as quickly to Tom Cox.

“I found at a young age I didn’t have the patience or tolerance,” the Sylvania man said. “I used to get upset and throw them against the wall.”

Now 59, he’s come to find making models a calming experience.

He works for a local car dealer and loves researching the ins and outs of Formula One racers as he builds them and looks for ways to customize them.

There’s really no limit to what people can create. As president of the local group, Jerry Wesolowski, 59, of Maumee, has seen it all, including a custom model a member made that was “a cross between an F-16 and a dinosaur.”

Personally, he prefers aircraft and ships. A U.S. Air Force veteran who served in Vietnam, he uses models as a way to indulge his fascination with history and aircraft.

“I’ll be actually doing a model of something I’m studying,” he said. “It helps me understand things.”

There are about 30 people in the local modeling group, which meets the second and fourth Thursday of every month at Rider’s Hobby of Toledo in Sylvania.

Mr. Delvaux said there’s always a reason people will build models — of cars or whatever they love.

“You’re not able to own a lot of cars, [but] you’re able to build whatever you want.”

Contact Ryan E. Smith at: ryansmith@theblade.com or 419-724-6103.

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