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# Ready, set, Lego: Aficionados gather to share projects, love of building toy

BY MARIAN LIU

Mercury News

Roger Rothhaar bought his 3-year-old son a Lego set. Then he got hooked on the plastic building game for kids.

That was 23 years ago.

Now many sets later, the Milpitas resident is part of BAYLUG, the San Francisco Bay Area Lego Users Group, the only such organization in Northern California and one of about 60 in the world.

In their hands, games become projects. Those projects were put on display Saturday afternoon at the Fremont Main Library, where the group meets four times a year. About 300 people came to check them out. Some old sets were for sale, and some out just to play with.

"Before, our friends would make fun of us when we played with Legos," said Russell

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Clark, a BAYLUG founder. "Now we have a place where people can ooh and ah at our stuff and get together and play."

Clark has been building things with Legos as long as he can remember. He had only one "dark age," as enthusiasts call it, when he strayed from Legos to real cars in high school.

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Another BAYLUG member, Bill Ward, displayed models of a space vehicle, a PB4Y-2 privateer plane, and a Pikachu, a Pokémon character.

He built the plane in honor of his father, who passed away in November. Ward's father had flown that type of plane on flare-dropping missions in the Korean War. "He would have been proud of it," said Ward, a 30-year-old Mountain View programmer.

The plane is built to scale, with one plastic Lego stud measuring a few millimeters representing one foot on a full-size plane. The tail flaps, landing gear and doors all open, and Lego people sit in each seat. It took Ward at least a thousand Lego pieces and a couple of weeks to build.

Ward said enthusiasts like himself can spend from a couple hundred to a thousand dollars per year on Lego pieces. Pieces cost anywhere from one cent to \$6 each and come in about 40 colors. Many BAYLUG members are men in their 20s and 30s who got started building with Legos when they were children. Many are also engineers, who find the hobby helps relieve the stress of their Silicon Valley jobs.

"It's relaxing," said David Wegmuller, a 29-year-old engineer from Union City. "I call it easy engineering, because it is still creative but you're not doing it for your job."

Wegmuller spent months creating a train station. Like the others, he started as a kid, and even had his parents ship his Lego pieces from France when he moved to America at age 25.

The expo also had its share of the next generation of Lego enthusiasts.

"All other toys only grab their attention for five minutes, but Legos keep them occupied," said Fremont resident Elaine Petersen, who brought her two boys, ages 7 and 4, to the show. "They build things that amaze me. I could never build things like that."

Playing next to the Petersen boys was the Gyugyi family, whose home as a whole room set aside just for Paul Gyugyi and his three sons to build sets together.

Asked how long his son, 10-year-old Stephen Gyugyi, could play with Legos, he replied, ``Forever."`

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**IF YOU'RE INTERESTED**

Check out [www.baylug.org](http://www.baylug.org) or call Russell Clark at (408) 747-1554. The next BAYLUG meeting is 1 to 4 p.m. Feb. 10 in the Fremont Main Library, Fukaya Room, 2400 Stevenson Blvd. Contact Marian Liu at [mliu@sjmercury.com](mailto:mliu@sjmercury.com) or (510) 790-7315.

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