



Vendors manned 80 tables at the show, which drew a paid attendance of 240.



Boxed British Coronation Coach and figures made by Timpo during the 1950s.

Toy Soldiers March in Florida

Curtis Sleight reports on the annual show mustered by club members

TEXT AND PHOTOS: CURTIS SLEIGHT

Paid attendance totaled 240 at the 24th Annual Florida Toy Soldier, Action Figure, Toy & Collectibles Show Sunday, Jan. 28, 2018.

Traditionally, this event is held on the last Sunday in January. It is cleverly inserted between the NFL's NFC and AFC Conference Championship Games the preceding Sunday and the Super Bowl the following Sunday.

Organized by the South Florida Toy Soldier Club, the show was staged at the Scottish Rite Masonic Center in Lake Worth, located about five miles from the West Palm Beach International Airport. It featured 80 vendor tables — about 40 less than recent years. This is probably explained by the loss of six or seven major vendors due mostly to health problems and/or retirement from participation in the event.

On the bright side, I am happy to report that paid attendance in the vicinity of 250 has remained steady. Also, the price of admission is still \$6 and children under age 12 can enter free. On another positive note, there

seemed to be more children in attendance compared to past years.

One aspect I enjoy is chatting with vendors who have been regulars as well as newcomers. For their convenience, special show rates are arranged at the local Holliday Inn. In addition, the show venue is open the previous afternoon to allow traders ample time to set up.

One such vendor is Jack Matthews, a widely recognized authority on German-made composition figures. After he retired and moved to Florida's Gulf Coast, Jack has carpooled to the show with fellow collectors from that part of the state. In essence, West meets East as collectors only separated by Florida's vast Everglades



American Dimestore conversions masterfully crafted by Roger Dubois.

are united by their mutual passion for the toy soldier and model figure hobby.

For the most part, vendors I spoke with seemed pleased with their sales volume. In my opinion, many traders had highly desirable and sometimes hard to find items.



Old and new sets of toy soldiers by W. Britain covered several tables.



One dealer offered a huge Robin Hood playset produced by Marx in 1957.

CREATIVITY & CRAFTSMANSHIP

In the context of creativity and workmanship, I wish to compliment two vendors who stood out.

First of all, Marylander Roger Dubois brought along splendid examples of his American Dimestore

conversions. Although my interest in Dimestore toy soldiers is limited, I cannot help but admire the meticulous workmanship which Roger applies to his subjects.

The same can be said of John Lesinski of Florida, who creates

magnificent historical dioramas covering multiple eras. The tremendous amount of craftsmanship hobbyists like Roger and John pour into their work represents labors of love.

The show ran from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Ample free parking was available immediately outside the gate. A food court inside the gate was operated by Masons.

Scores of creative competition entries could be admired in an exhibition room located across a courtyard from the vendor hall. Entries in various categories were judged and awards presented.

The 25th anniversary show is scheduled for Jan. 27, 2019. ■



One of several magnificent historical dioramas created by John Lesinski.



A sampling of sets by The Toy Soldiers of Wm. Hocker, Proprietor, being sold by Kay and Norman Rodriguez of Memphis Toy Soldier.



Excellent World War II armored vehicles by various makers, including King & Country Ltd., Thomas Gunn Miniatures, and Figarti Miniatures.



ABOUT THE WRITER

Curtis Sleight was born and raised in the historic Hudson River Valley of New York state. He has been an avid military history buff and toy soldier collector for many years. Prior to entering a 35-year career in public education, Curt was commissioned in the U.S. Army Intelligence Corps. The Vietnam War veteran taught at the Army Intelligence School and later was the curriculum coordinator for the school's Department of Combat Intelligence. Curt and his wife Nan, retired to Florida, where he is a member of the South Florida Toy Soldier Club. They have three children and six grandchildren.