

Argus

Library displays architectural toy

By Tom Anderson
STAFF WRITER

Sunday, September 07, 2003 - DAVID "ZONKER" HARRIS didn't play with Legos when he was a kid, but the 43-year-old software developer and tester discovered the joys of the plastic building blocks after a funeral 10 years ago. "I had to entertain my young nephew, so the rest of the adults could talk. He had Lego blocks, so we started building things," Harris said.

Harris, who lives in Fremont, was fascinated how many structures could be made from the blocks. Now, he owns thousands of Legos and has built more than a hundred tiny model trains with them.

Harris is not alone. He and more than 100 Lego enthusiasts are part of the Bay Area Lego Users Group, which meets regularly at the Fremont Public Library.

Seven-year-old Jeremy Lee of San Jose came to his first meeting Saturday at the library. Jeremy brought his Lego-version of a Valley Transit Authority bus. It came complete with a little Lego bike rack and model bikes.

"I just build whatever pops into my head," Jeremy said. "I like the toys because you can build whatever you want."

Jeremy and other member were displaying the creations they had made, which ranged from a model of San Francisco's Palace of Fine Arts to a 3-foot-long spaceship.

"We are a family-oriented club," said Paul Sinasohn. "About 60 percent of our members are adults, and the rest are children. We have both adult and children's activities."

Sinasohn, who is in his 40s, said most adult members played with Legos as kids and then rediscovered them in their mid-20s.

"When you're growing up, you become more interested in girls, music, sports, whatever," Sinasohn said. "Then you find some old Legos in the attic, and you start building again. We call the period before you rediscover the Legos 'The Dark Ages.'"

Clubs members host Lego building competitions, and some use special computer-aided design software to make their block constructions.

The West Coast BrickFest, one of the biggest Lego-building competitions, happens every President's Day weekend. The next one will be in Portland, Ore., but the Bay Area club is hoping to bring it to San Francisco, Sinasohn said.

The idea for the Bay Area Lego Use Group sprung from a Internet chat room, Harris said. Members met for the first time in person during the LEGO Truck Tour visit to San Francisco during the fall of 1998. The club has been meeting ever since.

Membership is \$10 per person or \$20 per family. The club's next meeting is Oct. 4 at the Fremont library. More information can be found on the Web at www.baylug.org