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Top, a replica of a 1930s Fiat Roadster is part of Ron Sturgeon's extensive collection. Middle, Sturgeon holds a model of Eva Braun's Führerwagen, worth near \$10,000. Below, rare WWII-era Mercedes vehicles round out Sturgeon's collection.



Colleyville Man Has Fun with Automobile History

BY JEAN WEAVER | CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Self-made millionaire Ron Sturgeon of Colleyville blends investing with preserving automotive history as his collection of small-scale model cars grows to almost 3,000 small-scale models at his local DFW Elite Toy Museum.

Sturgeon is constantly looking for rare models and for their stories in his travels. He began his collection in 1985 with a Marklin truck and trailer circa 1935, which he bought for \$350 at one of Christie's auctions in London. That piece is now worth \$1,000.

Sturgeon's Haltom City museum and offices are home to 81 models of land speed-record holders dated from a 1/43rd-

scale model of an 1898 Jauntaud Profilee 1898 to the 1995 Minnesota Special. They include a 1991 model of Craig Breedlove's "Spirit of America Sonic-1," recorded at 600.842 mph Nov. 15, 1965. "We have \$3 million worth of toy cars here," said DFW Elite Auto Rental agent Marissa Collins as she led us to the stunning, newly acquired Batmobile. Sturgeon said he has had it only a couple of weeks.

"I bought it from an unknown, unlicensed guy who asked for \$3,000 cash delivered by FedEx. Then, he sent me the model. I've

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Cars, Cars, Cars



PHOTOS BY W.H. MISKIEWICZ/PHOTO CORRESPONDENT

already gotten 10 comments that that's the coolest thing in here."

Near the rare models of cars and motorcycles, the full-size 2006 Vipers lure eyes to the rentable fleet of high-dollar muscle cars and armored Hummers.

"One Ford Motor Co. executive calls my office the 'repository of cool stuff,'" Sturgeon said.

Many of the models originated as demos used by European driving schools. Sturgeon said that demo-training preceded driving at the mandated schools: "You can't just go and get a driver's license," he said.

Kathi Sturgeon collects Marilyn Monroe's dresses and personal items, which fill a dedicated room in her house. She said she supports her husband's hobby and enjoys his "thrill of the chase" and their travels to see and buy rare pieces, which fill their two-story library.

"I think the most interesting piece is the model of Eva Braun's car," Kathi Sturgeon said. Braun was the mistress of Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler.

The Führerwagon is worth near \$10,000 with its dual rear wheels and electric headlights, plus German uniform-clad Hitler with his arm in the *sieg heil*-position. It rests in a cabinet with numerous other WWII-era Mercedes vehicles, plus accompanying figurines and boxes valued at nearly \$100,000. Sturgeon said the boxes and figures can sometimes be worth more

than the cars, because they were usually separated when played with by the children of the times.

The most valuable piece in the collection lies across from his desk: a "one-off Fiat roadster, with hand-made parts, no casting," purchased in Switzerland, now worth \$20,000. His advice to collectors is philosophical.

"One, is [collectors] don't define carefully enough what it is they are trying to collect, so they just have a lot of stuff. I have an investment eye more than most collectors. Narrow it to the higher-quality things that can go up in value. Two, an old toy-friend

The Ultimate Toy Collection

Colleyville man has 3,000 scale models of cars ... Living 1B



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Ron Sturgeon shows off his Batmobile, above. Below is a display from a 1930s-era driving school in Europe.



of mine told me the thrill is in the search. He was right, but the thrill of ownership has some value. Three, I never suffered any

remorse over what I bought, only for what I didn't buy. The chance was gone. I've paid some stupid money for things that I really wanted that are really rare, but I tried to be fully informed at the time I did it."

Sturgeon and his twin brother graduated from Richland High School in 1971. He attended Tarrant County College-Northeast during the start-up of his auto salvage business, which has now developed into more than six companies.

He said he is very proud of his three sons who also own auto salvage businesses locally.