



A Passionate Collector

By Jennifer Slawson

Collector: Brian Styles

Passion: LEGO Building Sets

AS THE FOUNDER of a global software company, Brian Styles leads a very grown-up life. He puts in 16-hour days running the various arms of Scriptlogic, then comes home to his wife and son. With all of that adult work and responsibility, it's no wonder his hobby takes him into the world of fun and play.

Brian loved to play with *LEGO* building sets as a child and began collecting them in earnest when he was a teenager. He now has 700 complete sets, with an excess of 150,000 elements (pieces). His collection is insured through a policy available through the National Association of Collectors for \$60,000.

According to Brian, it is "hard to say when enjoyment of building became the addiction of collecting. I had *LEGO* sets as far back as I can remember. My grandparents would regularly buy me sets while growing up in Buffalo, NY. Birthdays and holidays became "*LEGO*fest," and most of my sets were kept at my grandparent's house for my weekly return visits, he said.

"My favorite series during my pre- and early teens was the "Expert Builder" series. This series consisted of eight sets, manufactured in the late 1970s by *LEGO USA*. The same series, manufactured in Billund, Denmark (home of *LEGO*), was called the "Technic" series. I had seven of the eight sets growing up. After these initial eight, the "Expert Builder" and "Technic" series were united (as) the "Technic" series for worldwide



consistency. In addition to Technic sets, I also managed to acquire the majority of the "original" *LEGO* Space series.

As Brian grew up, he managed to get virtually every Technic set, until the age of 16 when "building *LEGO* gave way to adolescence," he said. "Then the little money I had was spent on automobiles, dating, etc." Brian refers to this time in a *LEGO* collector's life as the "*LEGO* Dark Ages."

"In 1988, at the age of 20, I moved to Florida," he continued. "About that time, I picked up a few new sets from the new "Model Maker" series. I guess this reignited my *LEGO* flame, and hence, I became a *LEGO* collector. Since new sets are introduced each year, and old ones discontinued after a few years, I knew I might never find the sets I missed during my teenage years. Luckily, it never stopped me from collecting the new ones. Acquiring the

one Expert Builder set I always wanted during my pre-teens, and the Technic sets that I missed during my later teens became somewhat of a mission as an adult."

"It wasn't until the Internet became widely available in 1995 that acquiring these sets was once again possible. By searching the Internet and creating my own website, it wasn't long before I acquired the 954 Expert Builder Sky Copter I had wanted for 17 years. Today, I have two 954 Sky Copters, one in the U.S. box and one in the European box (with a different set number), along with many other complete set series."

Many collectors have mentors who helped them get started, but Brian entered the *LEGO* collecting field on his own. "I have no role models, though a bit of respect—or is it envy?—for a couple of individuals that seem to consistently outbid me during some online auctions," he said.

