

Published January 31st, 2024

Moraga town manager unwinds by building cities with Legos

By Vera Kochan



Town Manager Scott Mitnick with his (from left) Lego business card holder, monthly calendar, White House, and 1891 Town Hall. Photo Vera Kochan

Not only is Moraga's town council loaded with talented individuals who are painters, woodworkers, potters and vintners, Town Manager Scott Mitnick has a talent for building just about anything with Legos.

On display in Mitnick's office is a multi-story replica of an 1891 town hall complete with a tiny man on the second floor balcony surveying the implied city below him. Mitnick insists that the figure is a city manager, while this reporter argues that it's a mayor. In this case only, this reporter defers to the builder of the building and his imagination.

Mitnick likes to build from Lego kits that he's purchased, and at the moment he's in the process of constructing the "city series" stating, "My dream is to complete all of the buildings so I can have my own downtown. I've done five or six so far; there are over a dozen. I've always been a 'city series' guy, because it's connected to what I do for a living."

He was approximately 8 years old when he was gifted his first box of Legos, which were only red and white with some movable windows and black tires (in case a vehicle was in the making). Those early Legos came with no instructions, and kids were expected to use their imaginations, which was usually limited to building a house, given the contents of the box.

Legos were invented in 1932, in Denmark. Lego is a Danish phrase for "leg godt," meaning "play well" in English. As the toy became more popular through the years, the pieces began to come in a variety of colors, "Lego people" were added, and eventually more complicated kits were sold that included everything, along with easy-to-follow directions, to make whatever was pictured on the box. Rare kits can sell for upwards of nearly \$3,000 in today's market.

"It's a great thing - the ability by yourself, or with a loved one, to build something from scratch," stated Mitnick. "With Legos, it's not just the end result, it's the process along the way that's just as gratifying. It's the therapeutic aspect of it, and I wish I had more time to do it."

Mitnick's best guess at completed projects is "a few dozen - not as many as I would like." And, while the kits from his younger days were gifts, he likes to buy his own now. "When I was visiting the White House, I bought the kit version in their gift shop."

When asked if his hobby drives his wife nuts, he replied, "Not really, although, there are times that she gets mad at me because I spend too much time on it." Trying to include Mia in the fun, Mitnick recently bought her a Lego flower bouquet kit to work on together. He was thrilled to see that she'd finished it on her own and put the "bouquet" in a glass vase to display. Even his two sons have gotten into their dad's hobby and occasionally join in on a project.

At last count, Mitnick thinks there are about a dozen Lego projects displayed in every room of their house. From a Volkswagen "Beetle" and vintage van replica, to a Frank Lloyd Wright house or various whimsical structures, all of them are from kits, but he'd like one day to construct something of his own creation again, just like when he was a kid.

Mitnick and family have visited the many Lego theme parks "upwards of eight to 10 times in three countries including the 'mother ship' in Billund, Denmark. I'm not fanatical, it's just fun. People of all ages, genders, and perspectives can do it. You have to be patient, and you have to be organized. You have to be accurate, or you could make a mistake that could make you take apart most of your work." In the long run, is there really a downside to that?



At least a dozen of the many Lego projects Mitnick has completed Photo Scott Mitnick

Reach the reporter at: vera@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA