

San Diego Union

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 8, 1970



Hans K. Lindemann, owner of the Museum of American Treasures at 1315 Fourth Ave., National City, demonstrates that antique bell in front of his museum is still in working order and ringing.

IN NATIONAL CITY

Museum Holds Loved Treasures

By JERRY REEVES

NATIONAL CITY — Craftsmanship, a word of relatively little meaning in a mass-production society, is a magic word which opens the door to the Museum of American Treasures and the heart of its owner Hans K. Lindemann.

Lindemann, now 72, has devoted his life to his one-man museum which stands quietly on a tree-lined street at 1315 E. Fourth St. Off the beaten path, the museum's single qualification for an antique, a photo or a collection of carved elephant tusks is craftsmanship.

NEW BRONZES

The brown frame building contains a treasure-house full of historical items which range from 100 million years old to a recent memorial to deceased member of the USS Pueblo crew.

Lindemann likens his museum to the family he never had and estimates it contains half a million dollars in treasures. He said he spends \$5,000 annually to update his collections and make it even more appealing.

Among his newest additions

are some bronze busts including one of Queen Victoria, a dignified-looking gentleman from the early 1900s called the "unknown personality," and a bust of a woman cast in France 150 years ago.

Other additions are an animal kingdom, a painting from butterfly wings, buffalo horn utensils and hand-crafted animals from Mexico. Lindemann has arranged his collection in new cabinetry and installed red curtains to show off the rows of marble busts which line one of the corridors.

His favorite is a bust of Princess Piccarda, a 330-year old sculpture from central Italy. He estimates the value of his princess at \$20,000. "If I were to find her in Italy today," he says, "the Italian government would not let me take her out of the country."

A new addition to the museum is a Reginaphone, about 100 years old, which plays music from a metal disc which looks like a round IBM card. He says this was used in turn-of-the-century United States.

SHELL CASINGS

Admitting his partiality to

sculpture, he also admires his collection of shell casings. He proudly points to the fine engraving on a 75 mm shell manufactured by General Motors in 1917. He also takes pride in his 300 mm casing left over from World War I. He said it is one of the war's few survivors.

A recent addition is a mistake, but it is likely to be an historical mistake. Lindemann said a memorial was planned for the grave of Duane D. Hodges, USN, who died in the USS Pueblo seizure. "Unfortunately," he said, "they forgot to put his date of birth or the day he died on the memorial. It was discarded."

Lindemann estimated there are 12,000 single pieces in his museum which include intricate items from the Orient, Ecuador, Alaska, Peru, France and practically every country in the world.

The museum owner said all the items have a single thing in common and that is craftsmanship. He inspects each item as if it were the first time he saw it and says, "Look at the work that went into that. It must have taken years."

Lindemann, who celebrated the museum's 16th anniversary in September, has willed his museum to National City.

Frank Rhoades

I BECAME CONCERNED when I learned that Hans Lindemann, the cold foods chef at Lubach's, had retired.

It was no big surprise; he had worked past his 82nd birthday. But what would become of his beloved private museum, the Museum of American Treasures in National City?

Would the art works he had spent his life and earnings collecting be affected, perhaps closed at last, by his retirement?

I went to see him and found my sly old friend had pulled the unexpected.

I knew all about the sacrifices and the drudgery that had gone into assembling a houseful of bronze and marble statues, giant ivory carvings and a conglomeration of Americana.

And he has taken such joy in finding a prize and buying it at a bargain price.

When I was visiting him and his bride, he placed a loving hand on a life-sized bronze bust and said: "This is President Taft. I bought it for \$500. It's worth \$20,000."

Hans served in the German army in World War I, an artilleryman. Then he put up an apprenticeship in the Black Forest as a "culinary artist." (That's his term.)

Hitlerism was repugnant to Hans and he came to the United States in 1936. He came to San Diego because his brother Ernest was an architect here.

Ray Lubach remembers Hans from 1938. Ray was assistant manager of the Bel Air County Club and Hans was there, making the fancy desserts.

LINDEMANN WORKED at Lubach's here 23 of the restaurant's 25 years.

So the customers miss him standing behind the plate glass that separates the seafood counter from the dining room, standing majestically straight in his white jacket and chef's hat.

(Hans slipped little plates of seafood appetizers to favorite customers, making the delivery to their tables himself. No charge. I'm sure Ray Lubach never knew about that.)

Shirley Fulks Lindemann is aware of the extent to which her bridegroom traveled and plunged himself into debt assembling his incredible collection.

"At one time, he had seven bank notes going," she said during my visit.

Quoting again from the column of Jan. 31, 1967: "Now, at age 69, Lindemann finds himself living in a closet-size room in the museum, cooking himself one meal a day and wearing second-hand clothes. But, at the same time, he has the things he wants most. He lives to be surrounded by man-made beauty."

The museum is a converted house at 1315 East Fourth St., National City. Hans owns it and the houses on either side of it. He and his wife occupy one of the houses.

LINDEMANN ONCE offered to make National City a gift of the museum but he and the city government could not come to terms.

Hans said shamefully the other day: "They wanted to store the collection and sell pieces at will."

So what will become of the museum now that Hans has retired.

"We will continue to operate it," said Mrs. Lindemann, "opening it to groups by appointment."

All through the years, visitors were charged no admission. Near the door was a collection box to receive a donation if a visitor cared to make one but he never was asked to do so.

Hans still is a little wobbly from a winter illness, which, it is believed, was a chief factor in his deciding to retire.

His bride is aware of their age difference and is, at the same time, a realist. She said during my visit: "I'll have to sell some of the (museum) pieces when the time comes to pay the inheritance tax."



The San Diego Union/Carol Woods

Hans Lindemann

What Hans did a couple of days after his retirement in March should not have surprised me either. It was just that I did no reasoning.

For years Hans had needed a wife and now, in retirement, he had quietly married Mrs. Shirley Fulks, an attractive, middle-aged blonde, a National City native.

A review of old columns I had written explained my surprise.

FROM THE COLUMN of Jan. 31, 1967: "I asked Hans Lindemann if he ever had been married and he said, 'I've never even been kissed.'"

But Hans has not gone through life without loving. He has been dominated by his devotion to art and anything American, anything he could display.

MUSEUMS



The San Diego Union/Bill Romero

Owner and curator of National City's Museum of American Treasures, Hans Lindemann, right, stands amid his collection of carved busts of famous people. Above is a collection of memorabilia and souvenirs from the 1936 San Diego Exposition.



A Passion To Collect Leads To Unique Museum

By KATHRYN PHILLIPS
Special to The San Diego Union

Planted in the middle of a National City neighborhood of modest homes and apartment buildings, the Museum of American Treasures sits as a sort of monument to one man's nearly obsessive urge to collect.

For more than 40 years, Hans Lindemann collected everything from sun-bleached glass to photographs, from Chinese ivory carvings to Japanese porcelain vases, from a reginaphone — forerunner of the gramophone — to a typewriter with wooden keys, from 80 marble carvings to more than 500 bombshell casings into which bored soldiers and other collectors etched intricate designs, from stacks of original documents carrying the signatures of historically notable men to marriage licenses binding long-forgotten couples, from Indian baskets to church bells.

In short, Lindemann collected anything and everything, and more than occasionally stretched any common sense definition of American treasure.

Lindemann is now 84 and he has stopped collecting. He hasn't though, discarded his collection. In fact, he opens it to public view each Sunday, and occasionally some member of the public will be lured into the museum by the hand-painted lettering on the staircase wall bordering National City's Fourth Street.

Lindemann, who still speaks with a heavy accent, came to the United States from Germany in 1936. He became hooked on collecting the first time he saw amber-colored glass that had turned blue under the desert sun.

In 1943, for about \$3,400, Lindemann bought a house in National City, and a few years later, he began building his museum, next door.

At first he built a small room he called the House of Sun-Colored Glass. Then he added rooms to the first room. Eventually he had a museum that in 1954 was commended in a resolution passed by the state legislature.

Six years before coming to the United States, Lindemann distinguished himself as a culinary artist by winning a gold medal at an international culinary olympics.

After he settled here, he continued working as a chef, retiring only a few years ago after working 23 years at Luba's Restaurant as the chef in charge of the cold foods department.

The money he made as a chef supported his

museum and his urge to collect. The awards he won for his culinary skill became part of his collection.

So devoted was he to the museum, Lindemann says, that he never had the time or the money to get married until two years ago when he married his wife, Shirley.

What drove Lindemann to collect so voraciously seems to be a mystery to the retired collector. He always admired craftsmanship, particularly in carving and sculpting. When he had the opportunity, he created ice carvings as a chef.

Those carvings, no matter how intricate or impressive, melted away within hours, erasing any evidence of craftsmanship. The carvings Lindemann could collect, however, were long-lasting, made of marble, ivory and wood. Lindemann could enjoy them for years.

Lindemann collected most of the items in the museum in California antique shops, estate sales, and the like. Some items, like the larger-than-life bust of William Howard Taft, were collected through advertisements in collector magazines.

Among Lindemann's most prized possessions in the crowded and musty museum, are ivory carvings that include an elephant tusk he bought in 1971 from a Laguna Beach antique dealer. The tusk, brought from China, has been intricately carved. It took probably several people many years to complete the carving, Lindemann says.

The tusk sits in one of several glass cases that line the walls of the museum. Inside the case, the tusk is surrounded by other items, including more ivory carvings, glass items and trinkets.

Not far from the case with the ivory, several wooden trunks sit on the floor. One is filled with small marble and glass items. Another holds a Japanese vase that fills the entire trunk.

Lindemann has laid these treasures in trunks because he's afraid that they could be easily damaged if an earthquake shook his museum.

Scattered in various corners of the museum are more than 500 bombshell casing of various sizes. The largest measures about four feet high and about nine inches in diameter. It rests on the floor beneath a window, gathered with other artifacts of war.

A simple pattern has been etched into the casing by some unknown artisan, and where a bombshell once sat in the casing, and American military wife later resented potted plants in her home, Lindemann says.

Outside, near the entrance of the museum, a

bell sits atop some wooden frames. The bell weights about 700 pounds and requires a crane to set it in a place, Lindemann says.

It's one of several bells Lindemann has salvaged over the years from old Navy ships and churches facing demolition.

Lindemann says with some bitterness that he has never been able to interest officials from museums in other areas into visiting his one-man museum.

At one time, there was talk of the museum being taken over by the city of National City, with Lindemann's consent. But that idea died when it became clear to city officials that such an arrangement would be costly because of a list of improvements that would have to be made to the building to make it more accessible, Lindemann says.

Lindemann plans to leave the museum to his wife when he dies. What happens with his collection then, he says, will be up to her.

Now, as it has been for several decades, the museum is open to the public on Sundays from about 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is located at 1315 E. Fourth St., National City.

Kathryn Phillips is a free-lance writer.



The San Diego Union/Bill Romero

Hans Lindemann displays a hand-carved solid wood tiger from Taiwan, at left. Among the most prized objects in the museum is the carved ivory collection from China. Featured is a huge elephant tusk, with beautiful, intricate carvings. At right is a mother-of-pearl altar piece that was brought to Lindemann from Africa.

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