

The Toronto Military Show

By Jim Trautman

The Toronto Military Show was held at the easy to access Etobicoke Olympium on Rathburn Avenue on June 4th. As one of the collectors visiting my table said, "Looking around I guess there have been many wars in the history of humankind." I think what he meant was there was a great variety of military collectibles for sale.

There were military items for every collector on display and something to fit every budget. If you were looking to complete a World War I Canadian cap badge collection, several dealers had hundreds of cap badges on display. Hugh Crawford was one such dealer and if he did not have a particular badge at the show he was more than happy to take the information down and check when he returned home. There were also books on cap badges for sale, useful for identifying the different badge that each Canadian unit had and for providing information about the symbols featured on each one. A history lesson in itself.

Jay Fournier of Kitchener was doing his first show. He had a vintage World War II medic helmet from the US 82 Airborne Division. Who knows, maybe it was worn on the jump on D-Day the 6th of June, 1944. Jay said his wife had told him he was not allowed to buy anything he wanted for his own collection until he sold an item. Dave Dunford of Kitchener had many vintage items and in his booth had a sign to indicate that reproduction helmets, from the 1800s to the present, were available for re-enactors. (Many years ago I attended a Civil War re-enactment in Hamilton and then wrote an article about a gentleman who produced custom ordered Civil War boots for re-enactors.)

Several dealers had displays of various types of toy soldiers for sale. From the 1930s -50s Dime Store soldiers to the more expensive Minots of France. I fought the urge to purchase a soldier or two since I am a big collector of several types of toy soldiers including the authentic Minots.

If you wanted to discuss Samurai swords, it was a must to stop at the table of Lloyd Fleming. Besides having some swords on display he has written several books on the topic and is working on a new one.

Some dealers even dressed the part. One was a British soldier and another was a United States flier of World War II. The show was a great place if you are a collector of uniforms. A gentleman purchased a World War II US Marines leggings from me still caked with mud at the last show. To make your uniform authentic several dealers sell a vast variety of the different unit patches.

If you are only interested in reading about wars, battles or specific events several dealers had books for sale. There were many German World War II items available, from helmets, gas masks, bayonets, uniforms, medals, and books.

Trench art is becoming very collectible. There were several pencil holders, cups, and even a lamp made and classified as trench art. Trench art has become a major area of collectors interest due to the fact that it was handmade and is one-of-a-kind.

There are record albums of military marches, propaganda songs and even one issued by NORAD with an introduction by Doc Severinsen of the old Johnny Carson Show. Military bands and marches dating back to Roman Times have been an integral part of the military. In fact, some of the most valuable Britain's Toy Soldiers are the band figures.

The next Toronto Show will be on September 17th in Etobicoke. Even if you are not a collector, the show is a great place to browse in a nice, wide open setting and to learn history from the objects that are on display.



Large collection of toy soldiers including many Dime Store soldiers that were sold in 5&10 cent stores. The booth of Gary Schofield.



Table of World War II German helmets and cloth caps. eMedals Auction Services of Burlington, Ontario.



Field radio, petrol cans and other World War II items at the table of Dave Owen. He has a rare World War I Crown and Anchor game.



Military cap badges at the booth of Hugh Crawford of Whitby, Ontario.



Helmets, hats and other military items at the booth of Marie and Brian MacLure.



Left: Table of various helmets made for present day re-enactors. Kitchener, Ontario.

Right: World War II German magazines, Nazis arm band, 1942 German gas mask, pennant from Stoney Creek with image of War of 1812 embossed. Large photo book of 1901 1st edition of History of the South African War.



Right: Upon entering, the first table to greet you was filled with military artifacts from World War II.



Paintings on display of aircraft and black and white drawings of German soldiers that appeared in German World War II magazines.



A World War II helmet worn by a medic of the US 82nd Airborne Division. Other helmets and German gas mask containers. At the booth of Jay Fournier and Dave Dunford of Kitchener, Ontario



Right: Lloyd Fleming and various Japanese swords. Lloyd has written several books on Japanese samurai swords.



Left: Table of George West of Stoney Creek, Ontario containing historical military books and swords.



Right: Japanese flags at the tables of Sante Tonellato.

