

'Danger Will Robinson!'

Teacher is 'Lost in Space'

Passion for creativity comes to life

By Donatella Savino

After watching the show "Lost in Space" back in the sixties, Mark Thompson, Antioch Community High School English teacher, was driven to create a robot similar to that of the television show.

"I was always building models when I was a kid, this was something that I wanted to do," said Thompson. "I've always been interested in science fiction."

After the reading the book written by Flint Mitchell *You can Build the Lost in Space Robot*, Thompson was certain that building his robot was attainable.

"His hobby is important to me," said Thompson's wife, Carla. "He loves science fiction, and when he saw other people making these robots, he wanted to do it as well."

Thompson started creating his stationary robot back in 1998. It took him five years, on and off, to complete his robot.

"It's basically a six-foot model of a robot," said Thompson. "He's essentially a model made to have someone inside."

In the original TV show, it was a costume.

He indicated that in order to begin his project, he needed the most important part of his robot—the torso.

"It's basically the most expensive part [torso], it costs about \$1500," said Thompson.

Although he had to build the majority of the robot, he did have to purchase the torso and the bubble.

The bubble is the head of the robot and cost him about \$100.

"It's a Plexiglas bubble and its heat shaped into form," said Thompson. "From this point, I built everything from the waist down."

Thompson had to make the collar, which is located right above the torso.

"The collar is made of 108 pieces and had to be laid out in an oven for three minutes in order to shape the form that I wanted."

He also made the feet and neon lighting for the robot, which flashes whenever the robot talks.

The feet were made out of plywood. He also had to paint every part similar to that of the robot in the "Lost in Space" TV show.

He had to work out measurements and was constantly looking at the original blue prints provided by 20th Century Fox.

He had to become familiar with many different materials.

"I had to learn how to work with fiber glass," said Thompson. "I had to drill holes, learn how to do wood work, and basic wiring."

Thompson recalls this experience as being exciting and fulfilling.

"This robot is definitely a novelty," said Thompson. "It's unusual having a six-foot robot standing in the living room."

Carla also enjoys this prized possession.

"I can say that I am the only woman in the neighborhood with a robot sitting in her living room," said Carla.

All in all, Thompson spent a total of \$4,000 to fulfill his life-long dream.

He can now say he made and owns a robot.



"I am the only woman in the neighborhood with a robot..."
 -Carla Thompson
 Wife of robot builder

Photos by Donatella Savino

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