Leavenworth Nutcracker Museum - another sort of man cave

Six-year-old Easton Harper of Marysville enjoys checking out the newest and oldest nutcracker tools every time he comes to visit his grandma in Leavenworth. Easton is fascinated with tools and has a very technical mind already at his young age. He was a joy for visitors to watch. Photo by Barbara Washburn

Boys and their toys. Leon Perquin had to try some of the nutcracker tool gadgets at the museum. Arlene Wagner, Executive Director always has a few nuts on hand to let her visitors give it a try. Photo by Barbara Washburn

By: Barbara Washburn, Correspondent
Frau Arlene Wagner, executive director of the Leavenworth Nutcracker Museum announced recently that more and more men are visiting.

“It used to be that many ladies drag in their husbands or boyfriends, and I can see the reluctance of looking at nutcrackers on their faces as they first come into the door,” Wagner laughs. “After all, they had felt it is sort of like looking at dolls. Now, ironically, when the couples leave, it is the men that are raving about what they saw.” Let’s face it: nutcrackers really are tools – not toys.

Personally, those are the nutcrackers I grew up with, and I do remember them looking like tools. They were laying around my grandparents and great-grandparents kitchens.

You will see displays of these practical nut cracking devices and sometimes if can be thought provoking to figure them out. One such visitor is Leon Perquin, a Dutch National who lives and works in Redmond in the tech trade. “My wife gets scared every time we come to Leavenworth and I tell her I want to spend some extensive time inside the museum, “he laughs. “Our house and garages more than likely cannot hold any additional nutcrackers which have become a huge hobby of mine”. Perquin himself owns over one hundred Petersen nutcrackers. The bearded fellows were created by Paul Petersen who made his first one while being stationed in Norway in the German Army.

Little men as young as age 4 and 5 are very excited about Nutcrackers just as the little girls are. And as they get older they too will be found eyeing the tool section. One first grade youngster visiting from Marysville is Easton Harper. He was so excited about how they worked that the staff found some hazelnuts for him to give it a shot. Of course he had a cracking good time!

The museum houses around 7,000 from over 50 countries dating back to the 1500s, including the types that are nut cracker screws and levers. Some areas look like a tool display of nutcrackers, and it can be thought-provoking to figure them out. Others are not exactly the type to publish in my article since they might be a bit too erotic in nature, at least for the younger visitors. There are nutcrackers displaying various occupations, sports, political figures and just about every hobby you can think of.

The Nutcracker Museum is a fun place to visit all the way around. None-the-less, please give yourself plenty of time to go. The two story air conditioned building can be a great escape from the summer heat, or to get out of the cold in the winter days. It is a nice stopover while being in Leavenworth, and an educational, colorful experience all the way around. The museum also has a small gift shop at the entrance area. They sell beautiful holiday décor and ornaments in different price ranges.

In conclusion: yes, nutcrackers are not toys. If you have questions about them, Frau Wagner and her staff are most certainly your perfect guides.

Each year, on the annual Nutcracker Day, every visitor will be able to crack a few nuts with old fashioned kitchen tools. This year’s Nutcracker Day will be on June 1.