

Damon Montague

puts

A R M Y

PRIDE into his trucks

When Damon (pronounced D'mon) Montague tinkers with model trucks, he always goes with green. Green is the signature color on the seven die-cast trucks he's created as short-run production models. The color signifies his other passion—the U.S. Army.

"Talking to me, we're either going to talk Army or trucks, that's it," he says with a laugh.

Now living in El Paso, Texas, Damon's passion for trucks came first. He started building 1/25 scale plastic model kits when he was about 8 years old, and he has early memories of being instantly drawn to the hobby.

"I was 7 or 8 years old, when it started to take shape, like, 'I'm kind of good at this. I like this,'" he says. Growing up in Houston, Texas, he and his cousin entered their models in local competitions so they could get into the shows for free.

He remembers one particular show that brought him affirmation of his skills.

"We came back the next day and there was a trophy next to my truck and I was floored. That was a big deal," he says.

In 1986, Damon joined the U.S. Army, a career that would span more than 20 years before he retired in 2008 as a first sergeant.

During his career, he served in Desert Storm and Desert Shield with the 82nd Airborne Division.

"I have 20 years worth of stories," he says. As a drill sergeant for three years at Fort Jackson in Columbia, S.C., he trained thousands of soldiers.

"I took a lot of pride in that," he says. "Everything for me in the Army was setting people up for success and knowing how to get to that success."

Damon traveled across the world during his U.S. Army career, taking pride in his service that followed the footsteps of his father,

who is a Vietnam War veteran.

"There was not one time that I regretted it,



Damon Montague holds one of his custom models, a Kenworth W900L.

by Luann Dart



Die-Cast Promotions has produced six trucks for Damon Montague. A seventh model will be released in February.



Damon Montague served for more than 20 years in the U.S. Army.

but there were a lot of miserable moments," he says. During his tours of duty, he continued his other passion—collecting and building model trucks.

"I build in all scales, but when I was deployed, I didn't care what scale it was, I just wanted the truck," he says. He often ordered or purchased trucks and kits and had them sent to his home in Texas.

"When I got home, it was like Christmas," he says. Damon also continued to build trucks during his U.S. Army career. Although most of his collection was destroyed during his many moves, he's started rebuilding the models after retirement. But after retirement from the military, Damon felt somewhat lost.

"I was kind of lost a little bit. It's kind of like walking into a dark room and where's the light switch," he describes. But as he settled into a permanent location, he turned his full attention to model trucks. "I turned the light on in the dark room and the

room was empty. Let's decorate it," he says. "It was like a good hamburger. I've got one truck, next thing you know, I've got two trucks."

Then pretty soon, I have 150 trucks."

Today, his collection is predominantly Kenworth models of all colors, although his truck collection also includes Peterbilt, Mack, International and other brands.

"I like the Kenworth brand the best because I grew up around Kenworths," he says. "In fact, my first long-haul trip as a kid was with my dad in his 1973 Kenworth COE K100."

Damon likes the classic appearance of the Kenworth W900L, which is his all-time favorite truck. "The 1/64 has my heart," he says. "That really lit a fire for me, that 1/64 scale, because all those other scales, there was no way they could keep with what was being done in 1/64 scale and that attracted me to it."

Damon has a variety of truck and trailer combinations in his collection, but most are the over-the-road, long-haul, owner-operator type of trucks paired with trailers such as specialty tanker trailers like food grade, end-dump trailer-



A 1/64 scale Kenworth T660 with a Wilson livestock trailer produced by Die-Cast Promotions for Damon Montague.

ers, open-deck trailers like flatbeds or lowboys and refrigerator van trailers.

As he grew his collection, he also taught himself how to cast and mold parts, and soon other collectors and builders were asking him about his parts.

In 2006, he launched a website at www.thelarge-carmodelbuilder.com, where he offers some of the parts he has built.

Soon, he became familiar with Die-Cast Promotions (DCP) and started exploring the possibility of doing his own production runs.

"I'm a tactical thinker. I know how to infiltrate the perimeter and go find what I need," he says with a laugh.

In 2012, DCP manufactured 150 of Damon's first truck, a 1/64 scale Kenworth W900L with a chrome Transcraft stepdeck trailer with a green cab.

"I wanted to do a green truck. I thought I'd just do one run on the green truck and say, 'Hey, I did it,' but that wasn't good enough," he says. He's now done five other productions and has another which will become available in February.

They include:

- Two different 1/64 scale Kenworth K100 models with a food grade tanker trailer.
- A 1/64 scale Kenworth W900L flat-top tri-axle with a Mac tri-axle end-dump trailer.
- A 1/64 scale Kenworth W900L with a Fontaine LXT40 Renegade lowboy trailer.
- A 1/64 scale Kenworth T660 with a Wilson livestock trailer.
- The 2017 truck will be a 1/64 scale Kenworth W900L.



Damon, left, joined his brother, Tyrone, and their father, Michael, in the trucking business for a short time.



A 1/64 scale Kenworth K100 with a food grade tanker trailer was the second model Damon Montague created with Die-Cast Promotions.

"The fun part of it was that I got to choose everything about the trucks," he says. And all of the trucks have Damon's signature green coloring.

"My trucks are dark green or light green. Green is discipline to me, just like red, white and blue is pride," he explains. "Green has always been something that's in me. If I were to outwardly express myself, it would be green. I would be in camouflage."

The foray into the production runs has been more than just a hobby in many ways.

"It wasn't so much about the truck, but I needed this transition from the Army to normal life and that was probably the biggest thing that I did that rescued me. It turned the light on," he says. "I'm still a soldier. I'm just not a soldier in the uniform I would prefer, but I'm still serving."

Although it was a gamble to produce the trucks, they have been well received, and are available on his website.

The Large Car Model Builder name on Damon's website comes from a reference to the trucks as "large cars."

"The large car is privately owned, it's a truck that took some years of work. It's how a real proudful owner would refer to his truck," he explains.

"It says large car, but in reality, it's kind of small, but they have a large spirit."

As Damon delved into creating the production runs, he scaled back on his collection, going from about 300 to 150 Kenworth model trucks.

his ultimate favorites are the trucks he's produced. "These six have to stay with me. I'm not parting ways," he says.

Damon appreciates the camaraderie he's found in the hobby, and he compares it to that with fellow soldiers.

"That camaraderie is a really, really big deal," he says. "That common ground is really a big motivator for me. For me, the hobby is 95 percent friendship and 5 percent trucks."

He shares his hobby with fellow veterans, bringing trucks or kits to recovering wounded soldiers.

"Guys and men always want to tinker with stuff. What better fun is it for a guy to get a die-cast truck," he says. "We're talking about a guy who probably is in physical therapy to regain use of his eyesight, or hand and eye coordination. Yeah, they may not get it right and it may not look the best, but it's pointing them in the right direction."

He donates unfinished large-scale trucks to veterans to share his hobby also.

"As they gradually progress and get better, they go onto something else, but at least in that moment, they have something to work with and help them in their therapy," he shares. "I don't leave my comrades with nothing."

He finds those common links wherever he travels. "To really be a collector or model builder, it has a lineage to it. That's probably the biggest motivator," he says. "It doesn't matter where you're from. We're talking toys and tractors." And maybe a little about the U.S. Army, too.

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"I can't afford to grow my collection and do the production runs," he says. "The trade-off is that I get to do my own run."

He strains to name a favorite in his collection, though.

"If I pick one, I have about 15 to follow it,"

he says, but