



113 Harbor Way, Suite 190, Santa Barbara, CA 93109 • sbmm.org • 805 962-8404

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Curator, Collections & Exhibits
805-456-8745 efalke@sbmm.org

CELEBRATING SANTA BARBARA MARITIME MUSEUM'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY: The Exciting Online Dwight Brooks Model Collection to Open on July 29th!

In 1997, the fledgling Santa Barbara Maritime Museum (SBMM) received a most unusual gift—32 large-scale fully-operational Dwight Brooks boat models—a gift that would enable the museum to open in less than three years, on July 29, 2000. You may have seen some of these models on display in the Museum—especially [Nordkap](#) and [Toot-Toot](#)—but now, through the magic of computers and the Internet, SBMM can make all of this [collection](#) accessible to the public at <https://sbmm.org/sbmm-online-collection/brooks-ship-models/>



Dwight Brooks was a most unusual man who built some very unusual boat models. Born in Minnesota, he worked in his family's newsprint business, fought in the Korean War, founded a company that produced all of the Hobie skateboards sold in the US, became a jet pilot, a real estate developer, an entrepreneur, and a restorer of old cars and airplanes; but he was always an avid modeler whose work was featured in many modeling, boating and woodworking magazines. Far from being "kitchen-table" models, Brooks' models were designed and built in his 20' x 80' workshop and often took months to complete, including detailed interiors—often down to the furniture, pots and pans in the galleys, and dolls dressed to simulate the activities on board each craft. All of them were uniquely powered and radio controlled to be fully operational. The speed boats and PT boats are powered by modified model airplane engines or two-cycle gasoline engines. The larger boats are powered by electric motors.

Although SBMM has had the Brooks models for 23 years, putting this digital exhibit together has been a daunting task, undertaken by three people over the past year—Curator Emily Falke, Collections Manager Lydia Kaestner, and volunteer John Hill, who has been restoring the models to their former operating condition and installing new interior lighting in each. Asked to

describe the most difficult aspect of readying this exhibit, they mentioned “deciding how to photograph each boat (some are longer or taller than 10 feet), reviewing all the documentation that came with the collection, including magazine articles, photo albums, plans and personal notes, and figuring out how to tell the story of the disparate models in a coherent whole.”

While Brooks was quoted as saying that his favorite was the model he had most recently completed, he was proudest of two vastly different models—the 3-masted schooner [Atlantic](#) and [Gulfstreamer](#)—both in SBMM’s collection. *Atlantic* is 10 feet tall from its keel to the top of its 8-foot masts, and *Gulfstreamer* is modeled after an Italian motor yacht and noted for its beautiful detailing, including the people depicted on her decks, which SBMM’s Curator Falke sees as “telling a story about extreme wealth...and there are ghosts!” Another favorite is the model of the [USS Cree](#), a Cherokee-class fleet tug which is so detailed and realistic that when placed in the water, looks like the real thing. Another unusual operating model was the WWII submarine [USS Pampanito](#), which could dive and then come back up to the surface (The actual submarine is now part of San Francisco Maritime Museum).

The most detailed model and one that was used as a stand-in for the real thing in movies is the *Madcap Nordkap*, the 8 1/2 -foot long 285-pound reproduction of a North Sea trawler. Like many of his models, she was highly detailed, realistic, and filled with a variety of electronic wizardry designed by expert Dail de Villeneuve, who also designed the inner workings of Star War’s R2D2 robot. Among her other accomplishments, *Nordkap* can troll and fish (cutting loose any that are too large to haul aboard) and has a working winch, a loudspeaker system, speed and directional controls, bells and whistles, full running and interior lights, a working water cannon, and a firing rocket launcher—all of which Dwight could control from a 19-channel transmitter. A bit of a practical joker, Brooks liked to sail *Nordkap* up to a real fishing boat, whistles blasting and then demand on the loudspeaker to know if its license was in order!

And we’ve only mentioned six of the 32 models! You won’t want to miss this exciting virtual exhibit, now available for viewing and research at <https://sbmm.org/sbmm-online-collection/brooks-ship-models/>. Because of the wealth of material SBMM has in the Brooks collection, this is just the beginning. Videos and more detailed information will be coming soon.

Funding support for the **Brooks Models** virtual exhibit was provided by the City of Santa Barbara's Organizational Development Grant Program.

Since 2000, the [Santa Barbara Maritime Museum](#) has featured many artifacts, stories, and online resources to share the history of the Santa Barbara Channel with more than 40,000 visitors annually. The museum also provides year-round experiential maritime history and marine science education for local youth. Featuring the impressive *First-Order Fresnel Lighthouse Lens* from Point Conception, SBMM's current exhibits explore the *History of Oil in Santa Barbara Channel*, the *Honda Disaster*, Brooks models, *Mermaids: Visualizing the Myths and Legends through Photography*, and *Wives and Daughters: Keepers of the Light*.

SBMM is located at the historic Santa Barbara Harbor at 113 Harbor Way, Suite 190, Santa Barbara, CA 93109. Visit sbmm.org or call (805) 962-8404 for details.

7/20/2020