

1983 KING & COUNTRY 2008

COLLECTOR

蒐集者

A TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL
DOUBLE ISSUE

25

*'With a Little
Help from Our
Friends...'*

LOUIS BADOLATO • STEVEN CHONG • DAN GAGLIASSO
MARIE-ALIX GAFFINEL • HANS HEDRICH • ROB HENDRIE
STUART HESSNEY • JOHN JENKINS • BRAD LEWIN • LAURA
McALLISTER JOHNSON • MATT MURPHY • ANDY C. NEILSON
GORDON NEILSON • BOB NEVILLE • KEN OSEN • RON PHILLIPS
SYLVIE PICHARD • DON PIELIN • HELEN MOK SARGENT • TIM
TYLER • SHANNON REUSS • MARTIN VASQUEZ • RICK WANG

Laura McAllister Johnson -
the lady behind the idea and
the company.



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View From The Trenches...

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS... A quarter of a century... may not seem a long time in the history of the world but in the world of toy soldiers it's a pretty decent passage of time... at least in my humble opinion.

Back in 1983 I had already been a collector of toy soldiers for a good few years. At the time most of the main manufacturers of all-metal, hand-painted "NEW" toy soldiers could be found in the U.K. And that, my friends, posed more than a few problems...

Living and working in what was then "The British Crown Colony of Hong Kong", the U.K. was half a world away. That meant having to correspond and deal with companies literally thousands of miles distant who, in many cases, still seemed to be running and operating on a 19th Century timetable!

In those bygone days (before internet) I would sometimes write, often fax and occasionally phone through an order to one of these UK manufacturers to obtain their latest releases. Payment would then be sent forthwith and I would patiently await the arrival of the eagerly anticipated purchases. And that could mean weeks... usually months and, on one occasion, almost a year to get my toy soldiers.

As you can imagine this was both frustrating and annoying in equal measure. "Surely", I surmised, "there must be a better way!"

My first wife (and business partner) Laura, came up with the simplest and most straight forward remedy... "Look", she said, "this is Hong Kong - the toy capital of the world (it was then). Why don't we make our own toy soldiers?"

From those few simple words a small company came into being that has grown (occasionally startled) and developed into one of the best known and most collected designers and manufacturers of all-metal, hand-painted toy soldiers and military miniatures in the world today.

This little company, King & Country, has, over the past 25 years, given me the most pleasure, fun and pride in my entire professional business life.

On this, our twenty-fifth anniversary, I've asked a whole bunch of people to give me their likes... and dislikes about K&C and what we do. We've brought together trade dealers... competitors... colleagues... and, of course, most importantly, K&C collectors to share their thoughts and views. I hope you enjoy them.

Very best wishes... happy collecting... and here's to the next twenty-five!



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"Over There"

Andy C. Neilson

Andy C. Neilson
Co-founder & Creative Director
King & Country



Andy at a recent London
Toy Soldier Show.

LAST STAND OF THE SCARFORTH'S
CONNOISSEUR EDITION



"Once Upon a Toy Soldier"

nOT SO VERY LONG AGO in a city far, far away from most toy soldier collectors two little Scottish people launched a tiny enterprise called... King & Country.

That's not exactly how the fairytale began but it's close enough! The two Scots were *Laure McAllister* and *Andy C. Nelson* and their joint efforts helped spur this small start-up company's astonishing evolution from very modest beginnings to the hobby leader it is today.

Now K&C didn't invent toy soldiers of course, nor were they the first ever producer of matt-painted, connoisseur-style figures. But, to the legions of new collectors who they have attracted to the hobby, it must seem like they did!

My own first close encounter with K&C came a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away from where this hobby has taken me now both as a collector... and a journalist.

To be honest I can't remember exactly when we first "met" but it had to be sometime in the pre Internet early 1990s. At that time I was still hunting for toy soldiers by laboriously writing letters and faxes to mail order dealers all over the world.

One particular dealer I was friendly with offered both old and new toy soldiers. While placing an order for some older figures I noticed that he also carried various new sets of Khaki-clad Scottish Highlanders manufactured by someone

called... "King & Country".

At this point I had vaguely heard of K&C but never actually seen their work with my own two eyes. More out of curiosity than anything else I decided to add a sample set of these new glossy Highland warriors to my order. In due course these K&C Highlanders "reported for duty" and I was instantly smitten. Looking back today I wish I had the foresight (and money) to buy every one of those old K&C sets then and there. Especially now I know how highly prized the company's early work has become with collectors on e-bay and the secondary market!

ONWARDS & UPWARDS

I believe that K&C could have remained just one of a fairly large crowd of traditional-style toy soldier makers... if they had wanted. That, however, was far from their intention or ambition...

K&C turned a huge "creative corner" in 1995 with the release of their first all-matt, 1:30 scale World War Two series "ARNHEM44". This milestone range

of authentic looking, matt-finished action figures really put K&C on many collectors' maps. Since then the Hong Kong headquartered company has gone from strength-to-strength to become one of the hobby's and industry's leading powerhouses.

Over the years I have enjoyed watching the genesis of K&C as both a collector myself and as the editor of *Toy Soldier & Model Figure* magazine. As editor of the world's leading toy soldier magazine I enjoy a front-row seat when it comes to seeing and reviewing many of K&C's latest monthly releases. It never fails to amaze me how K&C keeps raising the quality bar and still releasing ever more detailed and numerous new sets... every single month.

So, maybe it's not so surprising after all how this once tiny toy soldier company from far, far away has gone on to conquer all kinds of new worlds in this little exciting hobby universe of ours.

Congratulations K&C on a job exceedingly well done... I can't wait to see what you'll do next!

STUART A. HESSNEY is the Editor of *Toy Soldier & Model Figure* magazine... through the wonders of science and the Internet the magazine is printed in the U.K. while Stuart lives and works in the U.S.



Laura's Story

“Even Andrew will admit that King & Country was one of my best ever business ideas...”

Andrew C. Neilson and I met in our home burgh of Renfreeshire in Scotland in 1975. We fell in love and married in 1977. Three short weeks later we arrived in what was then The British Crown Colony of Hong Kong. Prior to this dramatic move we had attempted to emigrate to America, Canada, Australia and even South Africa. Alas, all of them had long waiting lists. In the case of the U.S., the waiting time for Brits with no American family connection was 10 years. When you are still in your twenties, ten minutes is too long!

Andrew (only me and his mother call him by his proper Christian name) had joined the Royal Hong Kong Police and I assumed I would have no trouble getting a job in banking, in which I had trained for 3 years in Scotland. I had forgotten a small detail... I did not speak or write Chinese!

I wanted and needed to work and so I joined a cheerful group of mostly British girls who worked in Hong Kong's most famous “astering-hole”, The Bull & Bear. Soon I was promoted and eventually became the Head Barnmaid and went on to work there for almost seven years, first full time and then, as our new advertising business grew, part-time.

Andrew meanwhile did not fit in too well as a colonial “Bobby” and, decided to resign from the force. Utilizing his graphic design



Above: A very slim square peg in a round hole. skills we started a small free-lance studio which over the next fourteen years grew into the largest independent advertising agency in Hong Kong.

Below: Laura at her Black Creek ranch... a one hour drive south from San Antonio.





MAD DOGS AND...

In 1983 I suggested to Andrew that I would like to start my own pub. I felt that I could do a far better job than "The Bull & Bear" and, besides it was the only other business I knew anything about. Andrew was very supportive and encouraged me in this new and exciting endeavor. Within months we had used up our entire life savings... borrowed some more... and found the ideal premises.

We decided to call this new venture "Mad Dogs"-after the famous Noel Coward song "Mad Dogs and Englishmen"... Being both Scottish we only dropped the "and Englishmen" bit.

"Mad Dogs" right from the very beginning was a true "labor of love". For nine long grueling months we converted what had been an old run-down carpet warehouse into Hong Kong's most authentic British Pub. Together with our

tears but finally... on August 1, 1984 "Mad Dogs" was open to the buying public.



Above: Laura and Andy with some early King & Country offerings at the Chicago Show in 1989.

BUT WHAT ABOUT KING & COUNTRY?

As I wrote earlier, ever since I have known Andrew I always knew he was "different". Unlike most other guys he was never interested in Cars or any of the usual "guy things". He did however love all aspects of history... mostly military and he had a passion for toy soldiers and "dinky" vehicles from the 1950's. Andrew was crestfallen if his birthday, anniversary or Christmas gifts did not contain a vintage "dinky" car or tank, a good war book or those ever harder to obtain toy soldiers.

Every time I went back to the United Kingdom on family visits I would order many sets and sets of

them for upcoming occasions as the waiting time seemed to get longer and longer.

Finally, in early 1983 I said to Andrew "If we have to wait nine months to get a set of toy soldiers, there must be a market out there for them and this is Hong Kong, the toy capital of the world. Why don't we make our own?"

FEW WORDS... BIG DECISION

That little sentence, spoken almost casually, was to have a huge impact on both our lives that neither of us could ever have envisaged.

Now, it's one thing to come up with a bright idea it's another to actually implement it. What to do next? Where to begin? Fortunately for us one of Andrew's advertising clients was the HKTDC... The Hong Kong Trade Development Council. The purpose of the TDC, as it was commonly referred to, was to promote trade and industry between the colony and the rest of the world.

That meant helping to sell Hong Kong made products overseas and, simultaneously, connecting foreign companies and buyers with Hong Kong firms that could manufacture their goods for them.

So, we contacted the TDC's Sourcing Department with a simple request. "Can you find us a Hong Kong factory that makes all-metal, hand-painted figurines?" Within 24 hours they came back to us... with a name, an address and a telephone number.

This turned out to be sole, surviving Hong Kong based manufacturer of toy soldiers. All the others had moved into plastic decades before and this was "the last of the last". Immediately we contacted them and made an appointment to meet a few days later. That initial get together was really the beginning of King & Country although we did not even have a name for our company at that point. It was the beginning of an odyssey that would last us all over the world and last 25 years so far. It's been a roller coaster journey with plenty of ups and downs that have lifted us from the depths of despair to the heights of hope and glory... and all points in between. And, even now, it's far from over... but that, will be another story, for another day.

LAURA McALLISTER JOHNSON is a successful business woman and lives in San Antonio, Texas with her two children Jamie and Honor. Apart from K&C she is also very active in Animal Welfare and runs her own 1200 acre animal refuge.



Above: Laura and just a few of her rescue dogs at Black Creek.

contractor we designed everything ourselves... we pulled down walls... stuck up prints and paintings... scrubbed floors... polished the brasswork... and even painted the ceiling! We put in 18 hour working days and it really was blood, sweat and



Right: Laura and her elder brother Brian McAllister at a function in San Antonio.

By the summer of 1940, the overwhelming might of the German air force had triumphed over most of Europe.

As the fighters and bombers of the Luftwaffe massed to attack Britain, they had no reason to suspect that the heavily outnumbered Royal Air Force would be any more difficult to destroy than their earlier opponents.

Soon, these illusions were literally shot down in flames in the aerial conflict that history would call . . . The Battle of Britain.



In 1989 we first produced a series of 4 pilot figures to portray typical flyers of the Royal Air Force during the Battle of Britain in 1940.

Their success was soon followed by our German Luftwaffe set which in turn led to American Flying Tiger and Marine Corps aviators. A Japanese pilot (complete with Samurai Sword) was also added.



One Man & His Museum

— PART ONE —

"So you're the famous Louis Badolato!"

THERE ARE MANY things about King & Country that have set it apart from other toy soldier makers over the past 15 years I have been collecting their products... From continuing innovation and constant improvement in their figures and models to their striking advertisements and amazing displays. For me however, what I like most about K&C are the people.

Back in 1999, I went to my very first toy soldier event - The Valley Forge Show held annually at King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. I had one purpose in mind... to put a face on the voice of Andy C. Neilson. Something else about King & Country that sets them apart from their competitors whom I had also dealt with is... Andy's accessibility.

Long before there were websites there were faxes... then emails... and finally a "phone call". One evening I was pleasantly surprised to receive an international call with a strange Scottish brogue on the other end. I was delighted to talk with this funny, gregarious and knowledgeable person who was more than happy and willing to answer this particular collector's many questions and comments.

Andy also appeared to equally enjoy pumping me for ideas, suggestions and opinions on all aspects of the hobby. In those days he could also make special, custom-designed products to suit a good client's individual requirements! I always looked forward to receiving by mail or fax Andy's own drawings and plans for one of my "special requests".

When, eventually, I got to that first Valley Forge Show I eagerly sought him



out. "So, you're the famous Louis Badolato!" were the first words that greeted me after I introduced myself at the K&C show table. From that time onwards I have been proud to call Andy a friend.

That's why, in my humble opinion, to really understand the progress and development of King & Country and its 'hold' on collectors you really should get to know Andy C. Neilson. He has enjoyed one of the most varied and interesting professional lives of anyone I know. Prior to running K&C, Andy has been a graphic artist... a Royal Marine Commando... a Hong Kong Police Inspector... a successful (along with first wife Laura) bar owner... and last British adjutant of the now-disbanded Royal Hong Kong Regiment. All of these experiences Andy has "parlayed" into co-

creating and developing the world's most successful toy soldier company.

Over the same period I have also become "a good mate" with Andy's younger brother, Gordon. It's Gordon Neilson who has created and built most, if not all, of K&C's amazing dioramas and show displays that are frequently seen (and sold) at the Chicago Old Toy Soldier Show and the Los Angeles Westcoaster. Gordon's gently ironic sense of humour frequently leaves me in stitches and is an added bonus.

Indeed, the entire King & Country "family" has always been friendly and responsive and a genuine pleasure to do business with.

Finally, no discussion of King & Country would be complete without a word of praise for the many and uniformly terrific K&C dealers located all over the world. A more decent, honourable and easy to deal with group of individuals would be hard to find.

So yes, it's definitely the people like Andy, Gordon, Helen (the new Managing Director) and many other K&C folks who work with and for this company that make it so great and what I love best about King & Country.

Now, as I recall, there is one thing I hate about K&C... It's the plain, simple fact that I have neither the money nor the space to collect every single amazing and wonderful product they produce!

LOUIS BADOLATO is one of New York State's most successful Apellate Lawyers. The proud father of two small children, he lives with his lovely wife Meredith in historic Roslyn Harbor, Long Island along with a large dog and possibly the most extensive collection of King & Country toy soldiers and model aircraft in the world.

One Man & His Museum

PART TWO

"If I build it they will come!"

My wife and I had made a deal . . . when we left our small Manhattan apartment and went looking for houses, we agreed I could have my choice of one location in the house for my collection and that room would be renovated first. After more than a year of looking, we were the first people to see a Colonial style historic home built in 1843 when it came on the market. It had a walk up attic, originally divided into three rooms for servants' quarters, since stripped down to the framing and used for storage by the previous owners. I turned to my wife, who was raving about the house, and said, "Honey, we can start bidding!"

When I looked at that attic, I didn't see a 160 year old bare-framed storage area full of boxes, broken furniture and assorted bric-a-brac, I saw 800 square feet of prime toy soldier display space. Those of you who attended the first Symposium held at my new home, only three

months after we moved in, saw the raw space, full of junk. When I told the attendees my ideas, I distinctly remember more than a few cocked eyebrows and shaking of heads, seeming to indicate that poor Louis had finally "lost his marbles".

I sat down with my wife and mother-in-law and drew up a space with three rooms, diorama platforms, and banquettes for seating. One small room would be dedicated exclusively to aircraft models, complete with a 10 x 6 foot platform to hold an RAF airfield diorama. In another, intended to be my office, would be a showcase for early K&C glossy figures (those produced between 1984 and 1996). The main room however would hold ten display cabinets, two desks and a large table for a diorama display and would provide sufficient seating for 20-30 people. Adjustable lighting appropriate for display, as well as heat and central air conditioning for climate control were a must. I selected suitable tapestry fabric for the banquettes, from which I chose the color of the carpeting and the paint.

Then the bidding process for the renovations began. I ended up going with the most expensive general contractor to do the job, mainly because his bid covered every last detail, and he came highly recommended by a friend as an honorable guy. I couldn't have been happier with my choice. I told him in December 2006, when he started the job, that I needed it done by the last week of the upcoming February in order to have time to load my collection into the museum for the next event. The museum was completed by Valentines Day 2007, almost two weeks ahead of

*Lenzi asked for a desert airfield...
This is what Gordon built for him...
'The Lost Airfield of the Pharaohs'*



Another of Gordon's dioramas that can be seen in The Museum



schedule and except for my many additions, on budget. When Lou, the General Contractor, and John, my Carpentry subcontractor, attended the Symposium a few weeks later, they received a standing ovation for a job well done.

Next came the furniture. I had bought two desks, a large table and 10 display cabinets from the Bombay Company (I got a great deal, and free delivery because I bought it all in December, during the Christmas specials). The problem was it all had to be carried up two flights of stairs and then assembled. Fellow K&C collector, Brad Levin and his lovely wife volunteered to help. After Brad and I recovered from our post-transport collapse, we attempted to put together the first of the cabinets. Luckily, his wife had brains enough to read the instructions and we were in business.

Later, in the days leading up to the Symposium, my very supportive (and understanding) wife Meredith helped me hang the antique swords, bayonets, banners and military prints that completed the decor. Brad and another great friend and collector, Laurence Le each helped me move up and display 13 K&C built dioramas, over 2,000 K&C figures, more than 50 K&C Warbirds and 200 plus K&C vehicles, into my "pride and joy". The museum was finally ready for inspection just three days before the 2007 Symposium was to begin. In the following two days Tony Neville of K&C,

and his lovely wife Jane, and dedicated K&C collector Clive Gaudle (now Figarti's European distributor) were the first guests. A few days later Andy and Gordon Neilson and the rest of the 2007 Symposium guests saw it for themselves.

The response and appreciation of all of these people was a joy to behold. Even Andy was envious, "Louis", he said, "You've got stuff from King & Country I don't even remember making!"

Today, two years after I opened up "My Museum" this unique boy's toy room has hosted 2 Symposiums... an entire K&C collection of now over 3,000 figures... 65 K&C warbirds... almost 300 fighting vehicles... 16 hand-crafted K&C displays and dioramas... and provided me (and others) with many, many hours of pleasure and enjoyment.

As my 2 1/2 years old son Alec often says "Daddy, I love your room with all the soldiers, tanks, trucks and planes". What more can a proud father say except... "Don't worry son, one day this will all be yours!"

THE NEW YORK TOY SOLDIER SYMPOSIUM

This unique event was dreamed-up by three friends and avid toy soldier collectors... Louis Badolato, Hans Hedrich and Larry Lo. Together they created a three-day event that would include special dinners... visits to see

collections as well as invited guest speakers from the world of toy soldiers.

Collectors from all over America as well as the rest of the world have made the trip to New York in early March each year to take part and enjoy the gathering. Several selected toy soldier dealers have also been involved as well as well-known manufacturers such as Andy and Gordon Neilson of King & Country... Rick Wang of Figarti and talented newcomer John Jenkins.

The Symposium usually begins with drinks and a special introductory dinner at Louis's private club in New York City on the Friday evening. Saturday sees the gathering move to Louis's home and museum in Roslyn Harbor, Long Island. Here lots of question and answer sessions go on between the collectors and the manufacturers.

That evening guests return to Manhattan for a great Chinese dinner at Larry Lo's restaurant.

On the Sunday, in the past, there has been a toy soldier show in New Jersey to visit followed by a farewell lunch at the famous Smith & Wollensky's Steak House.

Happy, well-fed and contented guests depart ready and eager to return the following year.

If you would like to find out more or how you can attend simply contact Louis Badolato - Nickthene7@aol.com. You won't regret it!

The front cover of K&C's second foray into the American Civil War.



ANTIETAM

September 17, 1862

"As the fog of battle cleared away our Regiment made a dash for the bridge... cursing and shouting ourselves hoarse as we ran... fired... reloaded... and ran again... it seemed like a swarm of angry killer hornets surrounded us... all around comrades were stung and fell never to rise again..."

a

True Treefrog Tale

By Shannon Reuss

Speaking very personally, I did not start out to be a King & Country dealer although today that may be hard to believe!

Back in 2001 I was strictly a William Britains dealer selling mainly 54mm figures in a high-gloss finish. Then, one day in 2002, that all changed. I received a call from one of our customers... he was very excited... he had just "discovered" a new company called King & Country and wanted to know were we going to pick it up. At the time I had already been kicking around the idea of adding some other companies to our Treefrog roster so I decided to take a closer look at this King & Country company. I did, however have a few reservations... to begin with I was not sure about their bigger 1:30 scale. *Would it appeal to my customers? And what about the matt finish? Wasn't the world of toy soldiers supposed to be only painted in gloss?*

Fortunately for Treefrog our customer "sealed the deal"... If we would recruit K&C as one of our suppliers he would buy every single figure in their American Civil War line as well as their entire Revolutionary War series "1776".

On that simple business proposition my relationship with King & Country began.

EARLY DAYS

Although K&C's Second World War ranges were, even then, their largest and most popular we began modestly enough with our original customer's suggestion... *American Civil War and Revolutionary War... not one single piece of WW2!*

A few months later, at the Chicago Show, I met Andy for the first time. When we met I explained that most of my customers were Civil War buffs and if the initial K&C products were well-received I would consider adding more in the future. He kindly complimented me on my Treefrog strategy with a little twinkle in his eye. He also agreed that it was vitally important to know and understand our own market and our collectors' needs, wants and requirements. He also predicted that we would "get into WW2 before very long".

How true that prediction was... within a few short months we had not only added Second World War but every other available King & Country series as well!

A PRETTY HEALTHY CORPSE

Sometimes in this business I hear people say that it is a "dying hobby". Nothing, in my humble opinion and experience, could be further from the truth. Dying...? Definitely not... Changing, adapting and growing? A definite yes! Through constant innovation and



improvement K&C has led the way and pioneered the 1:30 scale, matt-painted style of new toy soldiers. They were the first to venture into mainland China and find the factories that could produce these high quality miniatures. They were the originator of the polystone and metal fighting vehicles that are now an essential and important part of the hobby... especially for WW2 subjects.

I also believe K&C have been instrumental in bringing many, many new people into the hobby who never even knew of the existence of toy soldiers before. I see and meet new collectors every single day and I keep hearing a similar story... "I was passing a store and saw some King & Country in the window and was hooked!"

People all over the world are excited and proud to express their love of history through their appreciation of military miniatures. Now the internet has opened even more new channels for sharing information and enthusiasm for this unique hobby. And it connects collectors all over the world... instantly.



A GOLDEN AGE

Today, there are figures and series for every conceivable historical time period and era. Simultaneously, collectors are being ever more creative in displaying their collections in exciting dioramas, both large and small. And the quality of what is being produced just keeps getting better and better.

This really is a "Golden Age" for toy soldier collecting and collectors and I believe King & Country has played a major role in making this possible. For all of us it's a great time to be in this hobby and business and I'm proud and happy to be part of it.



SHANNON REUSS along with her husband, Peter, are founders of Treefrog Treasures. Among Shannon's favourite figures is YA03 "A lovely GI and his dog" ... long since retired.

Napoleon Says Thank You

FOR 25 YEARS King & Country has offered the world's toy soldier collectors a wonderful choice of products and the chance to relive history...

During these years, incredible changes have taken place both in the hobby and the business of toy soldiers. I believe King & Country (and its co-founder Andy C. Neilson) can take enormous pride in being instrumental in developing and leading many of those changes. It may seem presumptuous to some but, personally, I regard Andy as "the father of the modern toy soldier". Now I know that title would embarrass him and he would probably reject the praise but allow me to explain...

Over the last few years the emergence of the matt-painted connoisseur style military miniature has totally changed the face of the "traditional" toy soldier and breathed new life into an old art. While K&C is not the only fine toy soldier maker out there (and I respect them all) it is K&C's special quality and originality that draws me closer to them than any other.

FIRST DISCOVERIES...

I came upon K&C and their little figures just

over eight years ago. It was Christmas time and I was spending the holidays with my girlfriend at her family's home in Pennsylvania. One day, wanting to escape the festivities, I took a "brother" and drove over to the site of Washington's Crossing of the Delaware River during the War of Independence. Near this historic place I discovered a small gift shop full of amazing toy soldiers. Instantly, I recalled many happy, childhood memories playing with

my Marx plastic playset figures. A wonderful feeling of warm nostalgia swept over me there and then. Among all the different toy soldiers in the store I made my first tentative selections... a set of Revolutionary War British Fusiliers and an opposing group of New York Regiment Continentals... all of them from King & Country.

A FEW DAYS LATER

Upon returning home after my trip, I logged onto the internet... I wanted to know more about this company called King & Country. Who were they? Where did they come from? What else do they make? How much do they cost? And... importantly... where could I buy them?

Suddenly I had a new hobby and a new desire... I had to have more! My research soon proved fruitful... and costly. Within months, from just collecting American War of Independence I moved effortlessly into K&C's old "Antietam" series of Civil War figures. Then, later, I delved back even further in history to "Ancient Rome" before finally alighting on K&C's newest series at the time... "The Age of Napoleon".

This particular range would not only change my existing collecting habits but also dramatically



Napoleon and Mameluke Servant



25 Reasons



heighten my historic appreciation forever. As a general history buff of many years standing I can appreciate a lot of the great periods, events and people who have shaped our world. For me however, Napoleon Bonaparte and his era tower above all others. Just saying the great man's name alone sends a magical chill down my spine. His amazing life and career... his incredible triumphs and disasters... are the lifeblood of legend. The French Armies he led to victory and defeat are also a vital part of that same life and legend.

Dashing Dragons... colourful Chasseurs... fighting Cuirassiers and of course, the Emperor's own Imperial Guard are just a few of the many fine Napoleonic military miniatures K&C has created over the years... and I have them all! I am a totally unrepentant "Bonapartist"... and proud of it.

As the years have rolled on, the figures have continued to get better and my collection ever larger. One of my very first purchases, "Napoleon himself" (NA026), is still however a personal favourite. But when it comes to Napoleonics I also have many others... all of the "Garde Impériale" along with the special Artillery Set (NA064) are just a few. One unique favourite of mine though is NA124, the little "Cantinière". After all who can resist a beautiful French woman, especially one that brings her own wine?

I personally want to thank King & Country for their art, vision and perseverance over the last 25 years and I do so look forward to their next 25... Vive le Roi! Vive L'Empereur!

RON PHILLIPS lives and works in Washington D.C. As a political lobbyist, he is Senior Vice President of M Capital Management and eagerly assists, among many other things, the reincarnation of Napoleon Bonaparte.

martin Vasquez is King & Country's US Business Promotions Manager, and has also worked with Kings X for many years. Here, he provides twenty-five of his favourite reasons why he enjoys working with King & Country.

Now read on!

1. Where else can I work and play with toy soldiers... all day long!
2. K&C's attention to even the smallest details on their figures - "Remember The Alamo" Mexican soldiers even have patches and holes in their uniforms...
3. The faces on the figures are so real... you half expect them to speak. Only last week I spoke to the Egyptian Dancing Girls... unfortunately they ignored me!
4. K&C's colours are always so fresh and vibrant.
5. There are so many different K&C historical eras for a collector to choose from. Everything from "Ancient Egypt" to modern day Iraq and Afghanistan.
6. The regular (monthly) release of new figures and fighting vehicles. No other toy soldier maker comes even close.
7. The audacity to design and produce "controversial" figures and series.
8. Two of my all-time favourite K&C releases... The now retired "Egyptian Chariot" (AE003) and the spectacular "Bishop of Tours" (MK052). Both pieces are simply stunning.
9. The K&C website.
10. New website online features such as "360" and "consult a friend".
11. The "Strictly Limited" Editions. These are always different... I can't wait to see the next one.
12. The special "Christmas Sets". These never fail to get me in the holiday mood and are highly collectible.
13. The emphasis K&C puts on history in all their advertising and flyers. Many parents have told me that this is just one of the important ways their children get to know and understand history. And it encourages them to find out more.
14. K&C's relentless quest for improvement. Each new set and series just seems to get better than the previous.
15. The K&C Connoisseur Collector's Club. Each figure is always unique... and occasionally even foretells a future release.

16. I like the fact that the company has converted "toy soldiers" into "military miniatures" by setting new high standards of sculpting and painting.

17. Affordability. While not cheap K&C products are still within the buying capability of the average collector. And they're incredibly good value.

18. K&C were the first to "break down" the barrier of only selling "multi figure sets" of soldiers. Now many of K&C's figures are available as single pieces. And their competitors have followed suit.

19. Packaging. Over the years K&C has consistently improved their boxes and their box design and covers are second-to-none for graphics, photography and illustration.

20. I love the new "concertina-like" little paper inserts in each box. Not only do you get a little background history you also get to see some of K&C's other ranges.

21. K&C's flyers and promotional material. These have become a collector's item in themselves in recent years.

22. "Remember The Alamo"... OK so I am more than a bit biased but no other company has done it as well!

23. "The Age of Napoleon"... my other big favourite series. And my favourite group within the range... The French Cuirassiers of course!

24. Our dioramas. They are the perfect setting for all our K&C scenes and a great source of inspiration for our collectors and visitors. You really must come and visit "Kings X" and see Gordon Neilson's superb E34 Alamo display... I wish I could have it in my home!

25. Finally, the entire K&C team... all my colleagues in San Antonio - Joan, Adam and Amber and all the folks back at K&C HQ in Hong Kong. A great bunch of people and personalities to work with.

There's nothing more to say!



I remember when...

As KING & COUNTRY enters its 25th year as arguably the world's largest metal toy soldier company in both volume and sales, I'd like to look back on its modest beginnings.

I remember simpler times in Hong Kong... when K&C held 'annual sales' and even boasted a cabinet full of 'half-price figures'. In those days Andy co-ordinated a traditional British pub called 'Mad Dogs' where they also had a display of K&C's earliest offerings. It was just around the corner, at 33 Wyndham Street, where King & Country opened its first Hong Kong store.

At the time when I was living in Hong Kong my daily route to work led me down Wyndham Street. One day I noticed a little shop called 'King & Country'. The name itself meant nothing to me and I had no idea what it sold. However, on one particular day I noticed a few toy soldiers in the window. This was a pleasant little surprise since the old British department store in Hong Kong that used to carry my favourite 'Elastalins' and 'Britains' had long since closed down its toy department.

King & Country's original shop was slightly above street level... you walked up a few steps into its doorway. As you opened the door one of those old-fashioned little bells jingled to announce your arrival. Inside was an eclectic mix of military memorabilia... vintage military prints and... toy soldiers!

Back then, before matt finishes and individual poses, K&C produced traditional style, high-gloss toy soldiers... just like every other toy soldier producer of the time. There was, however, a tiny glimpse into their brilliant future. One particular series caught my eye... 'Streets of Old Hong Kong'.

As a Chinese/American with little interest in British colonial figures in very traditional poses, I was instantly captivated by these Chinese-themed figures... that told a story. My first favourite piece was HK008... the Puli Cab with driver and passengers. Although I had primarily grown up with the more varied and animated figures found in plastic toy soldiers by Marx and Airfix I was attracted to the style and variety of these all-metal, hand-painted 'Streets of Old Hong Kong' figurines.

THEN AND NOW...

While today I believe most of K&C's present success arises from the many new themes it has originated and its superior design, sculpting and painting, I would argue that a portion of its popularity is also derived from its present shop and prime location in Pacific Place on Hong Kong Island.

This shop is actually smaller than K&C's original retail outlet that I first

discovered all those years ago. However its location is perfect! In one of Hong Kong's most prestigious, up market malls this tiny little shop (only 250 square feet) attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists and local shoppers every year. I have seen many people stop in their tracks... look at the magnificent window displays... walk in and become 'new' collectors.

Sadly for me, there is one thing that has changed... In the early years of the Pacific Place shop there was still one cabinet that had some odds 'n' ends at amazingly low prices. Many of these slow selling items might be available at 50% of their original retail price! Alas, with the huge surge in popularity of King &

Country in recent years these rare pieces have now become extremely valuable and much sought after. Sadly, no more happy days for bargain hunters like me!

That though is a small price to pay for the fact that the King & Country shop is still alive and well and prospering in Hong Kong and still attracting new collectors.

For me its always gratifying to know that after a long, grueling trans Pacific flight to Hong Kong I can always look eagerly forward to a visit to the K&C shop.

STEVEN CHONG is a successful attorney specializing in immigration issues and frequently commutes between the U.S. and China.



Entirely hand-crafted from mahogany, the WWI era Anado (A80020) became one of K&C's most popular warbirds.

FLYING HIGH

WHEN I WAS ASKED to write something about King & Country for their 25th Anniversary I did not realize how hard it would be for me.

I love all of my K&C collection so what should I focus on... where to begin? After a great deal of thought I decided to pick two particular favourites of mine - one old and... one relatively new. Both, in my opinion, are excellent but completely different from each other and they also illustrate the progression of the company.

My first 'favourite' is an old one... 'The Last Stand of The Sufortis'. These multi-figure sets were produced back in the mid 1980's and are one of my all-time favourites from that original high-gloss period of production. I have both editions in my own collection... the Khaki-clad Foreign Service troops and the red-jacketed Home Service soldiers. The traditional glossed-up, toy soldier style seems perfect for these late Colonial era warriors. Although the sculpting, detail and painting may not be as 'sharp' or as dramatic as today's output their attraction to me is still extraordinary.

Moving forward a couple of decades and selecting something more contemporary... I am a huge fan of K&C's limited edition 'Warbirds'. These hand-carved, hand-painted mahogany aircraft models are a 'stand-out' for me. The intricate details in the cockpits... the transparent canopies... the lowered landing gear and the superb carving and painting combine to create superlative 'works of art'. Although they are not cheap (quality never is) they are a fairly rare commodity and are produced in minuscule quantities of 5, 10 or 15 pieces. Only a rare aircraft model ever goes up to even 20 of the same design and paint-style.

Over the years I have learned that when it comes to top quality and great value you can always rely on K&C. That has helped and inspired me to become (and remain) a dedicated K&C collector. I know its done the same for many others as well.

On this special anniversary I would also like to thank all the folks at K&C who have helped reignite so much interest in both the toy soldier industry... and hobby.

HANS HEDRICH lives in Knoxville, Tennessee and has one of the world's largest and most extensive personal collections of King & Country... especially K&C's Warbirds.

a little postcard from Paris

In Paris there are many, many wonderful things a man can buy for the woman in his life. But what can a woman buy for her man...?



Sylvie Pichard



Marie-Alix Guffinet



Several years ago two very chic French ladies solved the problem... toy soldiers! Located only a short walk away from the historic *Arc de Triomphe* in the very heart of Paris you will find "Solda Telis" a delightful little boutique filled from floor to ceiling with military miniatures and toy soldiers. The two very knowledgeable French ladies who own and run "Solda Telis" are Sylvie Pichard and Marie-Alix Guffinet...

"We decided to open our own toy soldier shop because both of our husbands love military history" says Marie-Alix.

"In addition", Sylvie says, "we found that toy soldiers and miniatures figurines make perfect gifts for all members of the family... male and female".

For a wife seeking a very special gift for a husband fascinated by the Napoleonic era... a complete set of K&C's latest French Cuirassiers.

For a girl whose boyfriend is a

World War Two buff... one of King & Country's many Tiger or Panther tanks.

For a mother who wants to interest her young boys in history... ancient or modern... some Roman Soldiers... a few Crusaders... or even



MR027
Mounted
Saladin

"Perhaps", Marie-Alix adds, "they are attracted by the vibrancy, exoticism and colour of the Oriental Ranges plus there is also a growing interest in the mysteries of Ancient Egypt."

Now the ladies are finding some of their male collectors buying the occasional piece or set for their wives or girlfriends!

If any K&C collector finds themselves in Paris then we heartily recommend they pay a visit to "Solda Telis"... It's one K&C retailer with a very French... and very feminine ambience that should not be missed.

"Solda Telis"
33 rue des Acacias
75017 Paris, France
Tel: 01 5381 0421
www.soldatelis.com

*Chicago Show organiser Don Pielin
explains how he was partially converted
to a 'new' toy soldier collector...*



Show Stopper

Over the last 25 years

King & Country has dramatically changed the way toy soldiers are designed, produced, marketed, collected and displayed! And, in my opinion, for the better. During that same period many other companies have come and gone and, in several cases, sank without trace. Of those that have survived and prospered, more than a few have followed in K&C's footsteps as regards to scale... paint finish... and even design style.

Now let me say upfront I am primarily an "old toy soldier" collector. I collect figures, vehicles and accessories manufactured mainly before 1960. Back in 1975 when we originally began the "Old Toy Soldier Newsletter" there were basically only old metal toy soldiers or some plastic figures... there were virtually no "new toy soldiers" to be had. Then, slowly at first, these new apparitions began to appear at our annual show. At that early stage they were far from welcome... "Why are you allowing new product into our old show?" was one of the kinder comments.

My answer was always the same "Because", I reasoned, "new toy soldiers bring in new collectors and for any hobby to survive a constant stream of healthy new blood must pour in".

Today, as we approach our 28th Annual Show, it is the new toy soldiers, both metal and plastic, that dominate the event... probably close to 70% of the table space is occupied by new toy soldier vendors and manufacturers.

And that's fine by me. In such a great hobby as ours there is plenty of room for everyone... new and old... metal and plastic... and a whole lot else besides.

MY OWN HABIT

As I wrote previously I've always been mainly an "old toy soldiers" enthusiast. That means I spend a lot of time crawling through basements and attics... combing over old flea markets... and seeking out special pieces in the most unlikely places to add to my personal collection.

Of course I was fully aware of all the splendid newly-made figures that were appearing everywhere. I had however to resist my natural "collector's urge" to dive into yet another fresh pond of collectibles that would put an even heavier strain on my limited financial resources.

Then, one day, I saw the beautiful Victoria era civilian figures made by the New Zealand based manufacturer, "Imperial Productions"... and I was hooked. Over a short period of time I bought the entire collection for my wife and gave them to her as special Christmas gifts.

DON PIELIN, is one of the original co-founders and organizers of the world-famous Chicago Toy Soldier Show. It has been held in the "Windy City" during late September for over twenty-five years.

A CONFESSION

Suddenly my "double" collector's life began... I tried to convince myself, these new pieces were *her* collection... not mine... so that's O.K. A short time later I discovered K&C's own "World of Dickens" range... This was the perfect "add-on" to my wife's new Victorian collection, especially since my good lady is an English Literature Teacher. It also gave me the ideal excuse to delve deeper into the new toy soldier world for myself.

Again, within a short period of time I had bought the entire "World of Dickens" series. Simultaneously I convinced my good friend and co-founder of the "Chicago Show", Steve Sommers (another dedicated old toy soldier collector) to purchase the complete series for his wife. Since then other old toy soldier guys have been "converted", at least a little, to the other, newer side of toy soldiers and miniature figurines.

Speaking personally of the many, many series and ranges K&C has produced these Dickens figures remain my favourite.

That's not to say there's nothing else I like... I am a big fan of the company's annual Christmas sets. I saw them for the first time while surfing the Internet. Alas for me I missed out on the very first release of the series but I have managed to obtain all the others including the "Christmas Jap" set... the best one for me. During the last few years K&C's special Christmas sets have become one of the standard Yuletide gifts for the Pielin family.

And now my little grandson has discovered "Ancient Egypt" and has started his very own small collection.

Elsewhere in the family my wife thought she had finished collecting when the "World of Dickens" was retired. Imagine her delight when she came upon "Streets of Old Hong Kong". Her love of literature and, in particular, the works of Pearl Buck, Lisa See and Anchee Min which deal with the history of China has kick-started her collecting interest again. So, already we're making room for a few more vignettes and displays.

That's just one of the many pleasures and delights of collecting old and new figures in this fabulous hobby of ours.

And so, congratulations King & Country on your first 25 years... here's to many more... and plenty of new collectors!



KING & COUNTRY might be 25 years old this birthday but my business relationship with the company goes back just 10 years.

The first time I met Andy was at the 1998 OTSN show in Chicago. That was the year K&C launched their first two D. Day American releases and some of their original Romans. I was just starting out in the business and looking to add to "Hobby Bunker's" selection of products. As I viewed King & Country's wares I knew we had to have them. The very next day I shelled out US\$3,000 in cash for my first order. Now I have to tell you I was still a young college student then and parting with \$3,000 was an awful lot of beer money!

Those original D. Day sets quickly sold out and I began to suspect that this little investment of mine might just be the beginning of a beautiful business relationship with K&C.

10 YEARS ON...

In the decade since 1998 K&C has exploded all over the market place and, I like to think, so has "Hobby Bunker". Together we've experienced continuous growth by supporting each other.

As K&C has consistently "raised the bar" in quality and originality this has also encouraged other manufacturers to do the same. This has dramatically improved and expanded the hobby and the frequency and variety of new releases. We've even seen a kind of "keeping up with the Jones" syndrome appear... especially on the Internet.

All in all though the increased competition has been both fun and exciting and fantastic for the collector!

One of the best things K&C does is their talent for "creating a scene". All of their most successful sets form little scenarios where the figures almost seem to "talk" to each other. With their frequent release of "add-ons" these little vignettes can grow and develop into expansive dioramas. They are that versatile and animated. That's also what helps make King & Country so collectible and, from my point-of-view, so sellable.

So from all of us at Hobby Bunker in Boston... Cheers!

MATT MURPHY is the owner and operator of "Hobby Bunker" one of the finest and largest toy soldier and hobby stores in the U.S. He lives with his wife and 2 children in Boston, Mass.

Another Side of Flash Gordon



Above: King & Country's very first full colour advertisement... designed by Gordon.

Becoming K&C's in-house set designer and diorama maker has been one of the most rewarding jobs I've ever done... However I've been involved with the company right from its earliest days or, in my particular case, even before that...

While it's true to say that my former sister-in-law Laura definitely came up with the idea of starting K&C I like to think that my little contribution to the early stages was also vital... I got my brother Andy into collecting toy soldiers again!

As some of you know both of us were born and brought up in Renfrew, Scotland. From a very young age we both loved collecting and playing with toy soldiers. However by the time Andy became a young teenager and started getting interested in the opposite sex his passion for toy soldiers diminished. Of course being four years younger I still loved collecting and inherited a whole big batch of "reinforcements" from my brother who was far too busy "chasing skirts" to even notice I had taken over her collection.

Actually in fairness Andy never totally lost his interest in toy soldiers and was quite happy that I would look after his collection as well.

And so... the years roll by... big brother goes off to college, then the Marines and finally... Hong Kong.

All this time I still retained my interest in history... militaria... and model making. Toy soldiers for both of us, however, in the 1970's had kind of "dropped off the radar". It was a strange period in the hobby... Many of the famous names had disappeared and even the once mighty "William Britain's" was releasing only a fraction of the figures they once had. This was definitely the decade of the plastic kit... *build your own... paint your own.*

Another factor in the sad decline of the toy soldier during this period was the closing-down of the old, traditional toy shop and the street corner newsagents that once carried a cabinet full of DINKY TOYS and Toy Soldiers. It seemed as if one day all these little toy soldier outlets were there... and the next they were gone forever.

A DAY-TRIP TO EDINBURGH

Edinburgh is Scotland's capital city. One weekend, almost thirty years ago, on the spur of the moment, I decided to treat myself to a day long jaunt through to "Auld Reekie" (*The old Scots nickname for Edinburgh).

Off I went up to Glasgow

to take the train through to this great city. Although it's on the East Coast of Scotland the rail journey is barely an hour. I had decided in advance to visit Edinburgh's famous castle perched up on a craggy peak overlooking the city. I estimated I would spend half a day visiting the various regimental museums in the castle, have lunch and then explore some of the ancient streets around the castle afterwards.

Needless to say the castle and its spectacular sights and museums did not disappoint and, after lunch, off I went to explore.

The area leading down from the castle and along the Royal Mile is called the



"Old Town", parts of which date back to the 14th. Century. It's full of souvenir shops... great old pubs... restaurants... and a host of other fine attractions.

Walking past one particular shop I noticed some brightly coloured little toy soldiers in the window. In I went, the door bell jangling a welcome as I entered. Inside were lots of military books... regimental wall plaques... other bric-a-brac... and in a corner, two display cabinets full of toy soldiers! I went over to inspect them. On each of the shelves was a different scene or presentation... Scottish Highland Regiments... Zulu Warriors... 24th. Foot... Indian Cavalry and right on the bottom shelf... a small selection of Royal Marines.

Now this must have been sometime in the Autumn of 1980 or thereabouts. I immediately thought, "I know who would like a little set of Royal Marines!" I also thought that it would solve one of my Christmas present dilemmas... what to get big brother?

Because Andy's likes and dislikes are so similar to my own, quite often I would get him a birthday or Christmas gift only to find out he had already bought it for himself a few months earlier!

This time however I was sure he must not have these little figures I also knew that big brother was intensely proud of being a Royal Marine and anything to do with the "Royals" would be very welcome and greatly appreciated.

THAT FIRST PURCHASE

And so, I bought him a five-man "Royal Marine Colour Party" made by a company called Blenheim Military Models.

"Well that should please him", I thought as I left the store.

Some time later, after he received my gift, Andy phoned Scotland to

Left: From the late 1950's to the mid 1980's several generations of British and Australian schoolboys grew up with these action-packed, pocket-sized comics full of World War II tales battling dastardly huns and treacherous Japs.

K&C have often been inspired by these pocket war stories.



thank me and request that I buy him some more Marines for his new collection. Over the next couple of years Andy would send me the money and I would order or sometimes travel through to Edinburgh to pick up some more pieces for him. His wife Laura on her frequent trips back to the U.K. would also be "tasked" with "recruiting" more additions to the growing Neilson collection. Little did I realize how much my initial gift would change not only Andy's business direction but also my own life...

1984

The early 1980's were a time of great upheaval in the U.K. Margaret Thatcher had become Prime Minister of Britain and determined to change the whole direction of the country. One of her greatest challenges was British Industry... Much of it was outdated and out of touch with the modern world. It was also very uncompetitive and a lot of it only survived because of Government support and subsidies. Without these many would collapse. Maggie believed that if companies could not stand on their own two feet they must go to the wall. Unfortunately for me, I worked for one of these companies and in 1982 I was made, along with many others, redundant.

For two years I tried valiantly to get another job but there were too many people chasing too few jobs. I'm happy to say both Laura and Andy had not forgotten my situation and in early 1984 they both said, "Come out to Hong Kong".

Laura was just about to open "Mad Dogs" and Andy was desperately needing help to develop "King & Country". Fortunately I could help both of them... I became the Accountant for "Mad Dogs" and the sales rep. for "K&C".

WELCOME TO HONG KONG

My very first job in Hong Kong however was a movie... Andy and Laura picked me up at Kai Tak Airport on my arrival in April, 1984. Andy's first words were, "You start work on a new film on Monday morning!"

"What?" I replied. Andy rapidly

explained that a friend of his in the Hong Kong movie business was producing a film about the fall of Hong Kong in 1941. Andy had been hired as the military weapons and uniform consultant and I was to assist him.

Although it was primarily a Chinese film there were several large action scenes involving hundreds of British and Japanese troops.

Our job was to source and supply the soldiers... the weapons... the vehicles... and the uniforms. And this we did for the next three months... in between helping with "Mad Dogs"... "King & Country" and a dozen other things.

This was my "baptism of fire" in Hong Kong... and I loved every exhausting, exhilarating minute of it.



Today, almost twenty-five years later nothing much has changed. Hong Kong is still an incredibly vibrant, dynamic city. I have lived and worked here through typhoons... economic meltdowns... political handovers and a dozen other natural and man-made upheavals.

Together, King & Country and I have seen this company grow and develop. I've learned a whole bunch of creative and artistic skills I never even knew I had. And K&C has taken me all over the world meeting hundreds of new friends and colleagues. I still get excited every day about the new challenges and opportunities K&C provides me with.

And to think it all began with a little box of toy soldiers.

GORDON C. NEILSON has been instrumental in the continuing success and growth of King & Country since its earliest days. Today he heads up the K&C Workshop that designs and produces the amazing displays and dioramas that are often seen at the company's overseas exhibitions and in Hong Kong.

TO BE BRUTALLY honest until I joined K&C I knew little or nothing about toy soldiers and military miniatures. Well it's not really a 'girly thing' is it? I did however, help paint hundreds of tiny wargames figures for my two sons John and Paul... does that count?

One of the big reasons I did join the company for was Andy and Laura. We've known each other for almost 30 years... back to the time when they were setting-up their first little freelance design studio. At the time I was managing a printing and graphic business in Wanchai in the very heart of Hong Kong. Then, for a short time, we all shared a suite of offices.

Times passes and, before very long, we all went our separate ways... However over the years, Hong Kong being such a small place, we continually "bumped into" one another... on the street... at parties... or at other social gatherings.

In the interim I also got married, had two handsome sons and set up my own business.

PICTURE THIS



Above: Helen and her two sons, John and Paul.

"The Image Bank" was my first solo venture. It was a Photographic Agency and Library that supplied all kinds of photos and film footage to the Advertising World and Publishing Industry. We represented the work of a huge number of local Hong Kong and international photographers and their amazing images. As one of the very first photo libraries in the Far East I successfully ran "Image Bank" from its birth in 1984 until I sold it in 1997. I spent many happy years there and learnt a lot... about business... people... and photography.

Then in 1997, Hong Kong's "Handover Year" I received "the offer you cannot refuse". I sold Image Bank to "Getty Images" one of the world's largest photo

Helen of Troy

**King & Country's new
Managing Director tells you a little about
herself and how she came to K&C...**

agencies. Part of the deal was that I stay on and run the new company which I happily did... until 2004.

MOVING ON

After several very productive years with Getty I felt the time was right to seek out new challenges and opportunities. On this occasion I moved over to the world-famous Reuters News Agency. As one of their picture team I headed up the sales and distribution element covering all of Asia. A major part of my job was to introduce their superb news pictures into the broader commercial world. For the next few years I traveled far and wide across all of Asia and the rest of the world on behalf of Reuters Pictures Division.

Although I thoroughly enjoyed myself and appreciated the personal and professional satisfaction of the job it had one major drawback... constant traveling. Understandably I missed Hong Kong... and even more importantly... my family. Because of this, regrettably, I began to consider other options. That, surprisingly, was when, once more, I "bumped into" Andy C. Neilson...

ENTER KING & COUNTRY

One Sunday, in early December 2006, I attended my local Methodist church. As the service ended and the congregation rose and began to leave I saw a familiar smiling figure walking towards me holding his young daughter Carrie by the hand.

We warmly greeted each other as it had been quite some time (at least a few years) since we last met.

Andy in fact had no idea I had joined Reuters... he still thought I was running Getty! After a few more pleasantries we agreed to meet for lunch the following week. Then we could bring each other fully up to date on what we were both doing.

Several days later we did sit down for that lunch and Andy wasted no time in getting down to the point... King & Country was actively looking for a new Managing Director. I instantly knew that Andy was considering me as a potential candidate... *was I even interested I asked myself?*

Over the next few weeks and months we continued to meet and I got to know more about King & Country...



Above: Helen with a distinguished guest to K&C's headquarters in Hong Kong... His Majesty, Tupou V, King of Tonga.

toy soldiers... the business... the hobby... and the background. Much to my own surprise (and delight) I found myself getting more interested and fascinated by these little miniature figures and the company designing, producing and selling them.

I was intrigued by how K&C had risen and prospered (against all odds) over almost 25 years to become one of the best known and respected "names" in the hobby.

Andy filled me in with all the details of the company's long and winding road to where they are today... He told me of their successes... and their failures and disappointments. He also told me of the vision for the future he and Laura had for King & Country and how K&C needed me.

Of course, it was all very flattering however I had some concerns. Firstly, was I ready to leave a large, multi national company with all its many benefits to join

a smaller albeit ambitious and dynamic firm producing a unique but very "niche market" product? Secondly, even more worrying was a fact that almost consumed me with terror... "I knew absolutely nothing about Toy Soldiers!"

"Don't worry", Andy patiently counseled, none of the terrific team that K&C had built up over the years had known anything about them either when they joined. With the possible exceptions of Andy himself, his brother Gordon and one of our very talented master painters and model makers everyone else learnt "on-the-job".

What finally swung me over to K&C was the faith and belief both Andy and Laura had in me. Their words to me were, "Helen you're a leader who leads from the front... you're a person who brings out the best from your staff and yourself... and you've never been afraid of a change or a challenge!"

For me also I looked forward to working with Andy and Laura. Both of them, throughout their varied business careers in Hong Kong and the U.S. have shown courage... determination... and true integrity in abundance even in the most difficult times. I like to think, in all modesty, I share many of these virtues.

THE FUTURE...

Well, now I'm here and this is where I plan to stay. This is a great time to join and lead a great company making a great product.

I want to help grow and develop King & Country and the fantastic people who work with us. Together we can take the company to an even higher level in the hobby... and the industry. And that's not just a dream... that is my ambition.

How are we going to do it? By building on our existing strengths and developing new ones... by empowering our team and seeking out new players. And finally, by having fun doing it... *Who says work and play can't mix?*



Above: A selection of some of Helen's favourite figures from K&C's longest running series... the Streets of Old Hong Kong.

IN 2004 my family and I made a trip to Normandy in France. For over a year my son had been asking me to take him there.

First we flew to Paris, then on to Brittany and finally, Normandy itself. For many reasons traveling to Normandy was a very special experience that changed my life... at least hobby wise.

Upon my return to the States I immediately began reading Max Hastings' superb book on the 1944 invasion, "Overlord". At the same time I "terrorized" some of my son's "Forces of Valor" tanks and figures to make (touch to his objections) several little displays with a Normandy theme. Of course, by this time, a few little dioramas could not satisfy my by now nowakened WW2 enthusiasm... I wanted more!

INTRODUCING K&C

Although I had vaguely heard of King & Country I did not really know all that much about them. Some time previously my Mother had visited Hong Kong where my sister lives and seen the K&C store in Pacific Place. She said it was

expensive! So, at first I purchased a couple of sets of toy soldiers from their cheaper competitors.

However I was still intrigued by K&C and started to seek out dealers in my area where I could actually see the figures for myself. Fortunately I found one K&C dealer right in my town and decided to pay him a visit. When we met, for some reason, I asked him about "Britains"... Sadly, he replied, he did not have any... but... he did have some King & Country... and they were right behind me!

EUREKA!

I turned around and there they were... a whole showcase full of K&C World War Two releases... I was momentarily stunned.

Here was exactly what I was

looking for... infantry... tanks... mounted cavalry and a whole lot more. These little figures and fighting vehicles were unlike any other toy soldiers I had ever seen. They looked as if they had stepped out of photos from the period... they were so realistic.

Because I'm a very "visual" person I like having items and objects that help "illustrate" whatever I'm reading at the time. K & C's offerings were exactly what I had in mind!

Deciding exactly what set to buy was my next big hurdle... it was extremely difficult... decisions... decisions...?

For as long as I can remember I have always been an "Anglophile" and loved all-things British... especially if they have a military connection. Because of our recent family trip to Normandy and visits to the British landing beaches and Pegasus Bridge I inadvertently chose EA001 "Scottish Patrol". Little did I realize then that this was actually a set of 8th Army soldiers and not Normandy at all. After I took my purchases home and showed them to my son he immediately said, "Dad, lets go back and get more!"

From that moment on... I was caught... hook, line and sinker.

My only regret now is that I did not discover K&C earlier and therefore missed out on purchasing some of those old retired sets that have since become prohibitively expensive and valuable.

TIME PASSES...

Since that time I have become a dedicated K&C collector, especially of their Desert War figures and fighting vehicles. This in itself has spurred me on to read everything I can find about the Desert War and the two opposing armies that fought there... *Kommand Afrika Keeps* and *Montgomery's 8th Army*.

I've also become a big fan of K&C's new (and expensive) warbird series and own a couple. This relatively recent Toy Soldier hobby of mine has also led to new friendships among fellow enthusiasts not only in the U.S. but all over the world... among them Andy himself.

And to think it all started with a little family vacation in la belle France...

BRAD LEWIN is the moderator of the Trefrog Treasures Toy Soldier Forum and lives in Chester, New Jersey. He is a Corporate Counsel for a large pharmaceutical company, a jazz fan and a K&C enthusiast.



With the recent release of Steven Spielberg's outstanding epic "SAVING PRIVATE RYAN" a whole new generation is discovering World War Two.

As many KING & COUNTRY collectors know, we've produced many WW2 figures — *GRUNT*™, *British Paras* and *MATIN*™ *US Grunts*... but no Americans!

COMMAND DECISION

Many fine American units fought on D-Day... which to choose? We decided on just two... the *2nd BANGOR* and the *10th AIRBORNE* (the "Savannah Eagles") the same two in the *Spitfire* movie.

Rendered with hooks, maces, documentaries, and even aerial images... and uniforms, I

what our GIs actually looked like in the summer of '44. I collected dozens of drawings that would be whitened down to just right black and white.

Your portrait of four Rangers and four Airborne troops.

KING & COUNTRY D-DAY '44 BEHIND THE FRONT

2D INTO 3D

When I called in the studio, Mr. Van, a British Air paratrooper and our boss, He would transform my 2D line drawings into 3D reality.



Along with the sketches I gave him a video of "The Longest Day" and "SAVING PRIVATE RYAN" to photo reference him on the making of the movie.

Two weeks later his tough masters were ready. Together we altered a piece of equipment here and a weapon there until we were satisfied with the result. Fourteen days passed and finally eight perfect military miniatures were ready for casting.

WAR PAINT

When the black paintings returned from the factory, another expert took over... *Vicky* our finest "Master Painter". This talented Singaporean lady's artistic skills have our specimens in admiration.

Like the sculptor, Vicky was given a full military briefing and went away with a bundle of books and videos to read, watch and study.

Seven days later she returned with eight superbly researched, painted fighting tanks.

BACK AT THE STUDIO...

I describe making a new series as the making a movie... While our artists were being prepared, *Warrior* and *Ben*, a British model maker, were building the sets for our movie. We built two... a section of a battle-damaged French village and a stretch of Normandy beach with a German pillbox. The set would be used for display and promotional publicity.

COMBAT PHOTOGRAPHY

As soon as our first production samples were back home, they called in *War Photographer*, Randy Lagomarsino. Randy's work has been featured in all our brochures over the past four years. He takes care to get the best photos that tell the most interesting stories.

So, that's a very small glimpse of what goes into a new KING & COUNTRY series. Hope you'll like them as well as we do! *D-Day '44* figures...

Happy Collecting.

Andy Chubb

Andy C. Sullivan

Co-Founder & Managing Director



Left: The first advertisement for K&C's D-Day figures.

Sketchbook

An original drawing of a
US Military Policeman
for our Battle of the Bulge
Series.

A brief look inside some of the many albums of
drawings, designs and sketches K&C's Creative Director Andy C. Neilson
has prepared over the years for the company's sculptors...

Someone once asked me, at a Chicago Show I think, if I designed and sculpted all of K&C's figures. "Well", I replied, "you've got it half right... I do the design".

I wish I could sculpt but alas that was not one of the few talents God gave me. He was however, extremely generous in donating to me a great love of drawing.

For as long as I can remember I have always had a pencil or pen in my hand making images.

At school I was hopeless at Math... useless at Science and abysmal at foreign languages! But I loved to draw... and that was my saving grace and salvation. I also had a great Art Teacher who encouraged me and persuaded my parents to allow me to try and get into Glasgow School of Art. This I eventually managed to do in 1967 and began to study Graphic Design with illustration as my special skill.

Well to cut a long story short I have continued to draw ever since and today I'm drawing more than ever!

What you can see on these few pages is the tiniest fraction of the many thousands of sketches... drawings... rough ideas that I present to our K&C sculptors to illustrate what I want.

Alongwith drawings I also include photos... diagrams... other illustrations and occasionally actual items to help the sculptor convert my 2-dimensional concept into 3-dimensional reality.

It's a wonderful experience for me to see how our very talented and skillful sculptors produce these miniature works of art... it's almost magical!

But first it starts with an idea... and a sketch...

ANDY C. NEILSON

Andy C. Neilson
Co-founder & Creative Director
King & Country



General Sggt Dietrich,
commander of the
Sixth Panzer Army
during the Battle of the
Bulge in December '44.



Sketchbook R WORLD IN MINI

Brig. Gen. Norman Cota,
deputy commander of the US
28th Infantry Division on
Oahu Beach on June 6, 1944.
In the movie "The Longest
Day" actor Robert Mitchum
portrayed Cota in action.

One of the most popular
of K&C's GI figures is
this USMP on a
Harley-Davidson.

A British Commando
taking cover.



The 1776 American Revolution range of figures has included a large number of Woodland Indian combatants to add more than a dash of exciting colour to the conflict. Here are just two of them!



Now you can compare the original drawing with the finished figure.



From 'Redskins' to Rebels... several years ago K&C as part of their now retired Ceremonials series produced a small number of British Guardsmen.



K&C's new American Civil War series provides plenty of ideas and dramatic figure possibilities.

Sketchbook

WORLD IN MINIATURE

The historical eras covered by King & Country range from Ancient Egypt all the way up to the present day conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. On this page alone you can see one of our fighting Bishops from the Crusades of the 11th century and a saluting German officer from the Second World War.

One of the great pleasures of designing figures is that the artist can move between different centuries, wars and campaigns with the greatest of ease.



Not all military figures have to be in action... some of K&C's most notable pieces have been those working behind the lines or during a respite in the bottle. This particular figure is dedicated to retyper Ernie Pyle.

For a long time K&C avoided the Napoleonic Wars... finally we surrendered. Who could resist the colour and variety of the armies of the Emperor and his foes. Here is a typical French line infantryman... fighting for his life.

One of the most exciting new developments of King & Country has been our Collectors' Club. This has allowed us to design and produce a wide range of single figure subjects that can stand alone or be incorporated into many of our existing series.

One of our favourites is this standing German Cossack Officer.



Of all the many series K&C has produced the largest and most colourful is without doubt 'The Streets of Old Hong Kong'. Since this range was first developed in the 1980's there have been over 160 different sets created.

On the right is the original sketch for a young Chinese lady reading a book... part of the book seller set.

MY earliest encounter with King & Country came at just the right time in my working life...

Let me set the scene—I was attending a beer wholesaler's convention in San Antonio, Texas and had just concluded a completely unfulfilling meeting with one of my main suppliers... A little depressed and deflated I decided to ditch the rest of my meetings... go for a wander around downtown San Antonio and finally visit the Alamo.

My way to this historic mission took me past the old Menger Hotel. Casually glancing over, my eye was caught by a window full of toy



Customers, young and old call, visit or email us to find out when the latest K&C shipment is due in. All of us marvel at the amount of research K&C puts into their designs. Not only that but the skill and quality of the casting and painting of each individual piece is simply... superb!

I'm also amazed at the regularity... variety... and capability of the company. It seems as if 'the well of talent' will never run dry... Each new 'DISPATCHES' brings forth more new figures and fighting vehicles that somehow seems to satisfy the many whims and tastes of an awful lot of collectors... all over the world. I count myself among that loyal 'Band of Brothers' because I'm a collector too!

Dreams Do Come True..

For one K&C dealer a long cherished ambition has become a whole new way of life.

soldiers... I had discovered Kings X!

Fascinated and a little intrigued, I made my way into the store and found a dazzling display of handsomely sculpted and beautifully painted miniature figures... the likes of which I had never ever seen before.

Although many were painted in the traditional toy soldier gloss finish there was also a substantial number of matt-painted, connoisseur-style figures on show. How amazingly real they appeared... I was instantly captivated!

I must have spent over an hour wandering around the store... peering into cabinets... inspecting and admiring these little soldiers and getting excited about this 'new find' of mine.

I decided to temper my enthusiasm by going next door to the Menger Bar for a cool beer and a hearty sandwich. All through the meal though I kept thinking about these tiny military miniatures... I had to find out more... and so, I returned to Kings X. I was determined to purchase my first sets. And what was my initial choice? King & Country of course!

On this return visit I met Mrs. Jane Smith, the Kings X General Manager and a fountain of knowledge about toy soldiers and the companies that produce them. For the rest of the afternoon Joan and myself happily conversed on many aspects of the hobby... and the business.

Later, when I returned to my hotel my mind kept returning to what I had 'discovered' at Kings X that afternoon. As I opened up my purchases and put them out for inspection on my bedside table I

realized that I had a new hobby... and a new ambition... to one day open a toy soldier shop for myself.

"TROOPS OF TIME"

Four years later my ambition became a reality. I had sold my beer business and opened the aptly named 'Troops of Time' in my hometown... Jacksonville, Florida.

Since that original visit to Kings X I soon became a dedicated collector and a regular attendee of Collector's Shows especially the Old Toy Soldier Show held late every September in Chicago.

It was at one of these big Chicago events that I first met Andy C. Neilson. Andy's enthusiasm and passion for toy soldiers is already well known but did you know it's also infectious? Over several long talks and international phone conversations Andy encouraged me to fulfill my ambition but also explained some of the drawbacks and more than a few of the difficulties of this unique business we're in.

He felt, as I do, it's important to get a 'roundful' picture of exactly what you're about to get into. That means getting to hear about the good... and the bad!

FULL SPEED AHEAD!

Today my dreams and ambitions have come together to firmly establish 'Troops of Time' as one of the premier toy soldier and military miniature establishments in North America. I'm also delighted to say King & Country is still our most requested brand and our biggest dollar-earner.

A LOYAL K&C DEALER

Right from the start... when I became an official K&C dealer... I've always been intensely proud of that honour. One of the many reasons for that is because of the terrific support staff Andy has built up and invested in over many years.

As he has oft times said King & Country is a 'team effort' and that team is not only the courteous, knowledgeable, helpful and good humoured folks in Hong Kong but also dealers like myself. Together we try and reach out to new collectors as well as look after the requirements of existing ones.

'Troops of Time' was just beginning when K&C celebrated its 20th Anniversary. Five years later we continue to see a dynamic and dramatic improvement in choices... poses... facial detail... general sculpting... and painting. Sometimes I think the figures will actually 'come-alive'... they are so realistic.

Well who knows? Maybe one day K&C will be able to see their soldiers jump, crawl, run and fight just like the real thing. With all these amazing micro chips... miniature robotics... you never can tell.

Anyway, let's wait and see what the next 25 years has in store for us. I'm sure it will be even more amazing than the first

TIM TYLER is the proud owner of "TROOPS OF TIME" and lives and works in Jacksonville FL.

Sweet Inspiration

When I was first asked

to write a contributory piece for this special edition of "COLLECTOR" the subject that came to mind as a suitable topic was "inspiration" and the people behind King & Country.

I firmly believe that it's the people and personalities behind K&C (and K&C UK) that make it such a unique brand.

Since men first talked and communicated with each other there have been inspirational role models... parents, teachers, tribal chiefs even, occasionally, politicians! All of us, at some point, have been led... influenced... guided and been inspired by others.

In my own life I have been fortunate to meet a wide spectrum of political leaders... celebrities and sporting legends but few measure up to the really inspirational people like my own Mum and Dad... Mike & Sue Neville of King & Country UK.

Through good times and bad they have instilled in my brother Tony and myself the belief how vitally important it is to do what you believe in... do it well and... do it now! *Life is short so make the best use of it.*

Now what has all this got to do with King & Country? Well, everything in my opinion. From the

first time as a kid when my Dad and myself built models together till I went to Art School, Mum and Dad always encouraged me to believe in myself and live life with a passion. So, more than a few years ago when we discovered King & Country for the first time in Hong Kong, a whole bunch of separate strands in our lives and careers came together.

Suddenly an entirely different path

elsewhere so it's not my intention to go down that route. For me however it is the inspirational leadership of the people behind K&C, Andy and Laura in Hong Kong and San Antonio and the UK operation, Mike and Sue.

With so many other companies jumping on the "Made in China" bandwagon it's often easy to forget that K&C did it first... and continue to do it best. It wasn't so very long ago that the hobby and business was dominated by the traditional toy soldier style and way of doing things.

Well, today, that has all changed and much of the kudos for that must go to the very special people who had the vision to see beyond the status quo and

Andy C. meets General George S. Patton at a recent London Toy Soldier Show run and organized by K&C UK.



opened up before us.

We became inspired by King & Country and the man behind it... Andy C. Neilson.

Many aspects of the King & Country story have been well documented both here in this issue of "COLLECTOR" and

BOB NEVILLE is one of the original founders of King & Country UK along with his parents Mike & Sue. With brother Tony Neville they have built K&C UK into a multi media retail and wholesale operation. He lives and works in China.

have a firm belief in what they were doing and how they were going to do it. That means inspired individuals doing inspiring things... and that, for me, means King & Country. *"Long may it... reign..."*



Why is Bob Neville smiling all the time?

King & Country UK



KEN OSEN is one of the foremost military miniature sculptors, a dedicated living history enthusiast and, along with Richard Walker, the driving force behind the renewed and revitalized Wm. Britains Company.

So, 25 years has already come and gone since Andy decided to design and manufacture his own figures under the banner of "King & Country".

It sure doesn't seem that long to me... and I think Andy would echo that. I also think I know why... Over the years we have known each other we've spoken at shows and on the phone about a wide range of subjects. But when, as often happens, our conversation drifts onto subjects we both like, you can sense the excitement in the talk. The pace of conversation quickens and the depth of knowledge deepens and the time just flies by. That's because we both share a passion for this hobby that transcends being competitors and always having to make a profit... *most of the time!*

Yes, it's true that we are in a business and that is the road we have chosen to travel on... but it's because of our shared passion for military miniatures and the history they represent. Both of us realized a long time ago how lucky we are to do something creative and make a decent living out of it for ourselves and our families. It is not, however, as easy as some might think and this hobby business has more than its fair share of ups and downs.

That being said any toy soldier enthusiasts can see that Andy and King & Country are still as passionate after all these years... and still as determined. Their hard work and willingness to develop products and series that have no prior proven sales record has often paid off. This has helped make K&C one of the trend setters in both the hobby and the business.

Over these years I have watched King & Country grow and improve with each new series... from "Ancient Egypt" all the way up to the present-day "War in Iraq and Afghanistan". From my own position I can say truthfully that K&C's investment in originality and talent, under Andy's creative leadership, has created a brand name that is synonymous with value and quality...

And, in the end that has benefited the entire industry... and most importantly the collectors.

Below: With 26 pieces, HK354 the Chinese Wedding Procession, is K&C's largest and most elaborate set.

Below: With 26 pieces, HK354 the Chinese Wedding Procession, is K&C's largest and most elaborate set.

What King & Country has achieved for the toy soldier industry is something no other company will be able to easily replicate; the reinvention of our hobby.

Let me explain... my father James Wang's favourite K&C product is The Chinese Wedding Procession. A few years ago, my sister, brother and myself bought the set for our father's birthday. It was indeed, this particular set that inspired him to consider getting involved in this hobby and business. I remember him saying, "Rick, wouldn't it be fun to get into this business?" And I also clearly remember my short answer... "No!"

However my father is a man who is not easily dissuaded and five years ago we attended our first "Chicago Show". We had no idea what this industry was all about... we knew no one in it... nor did we understand the unique community of collectors who love this hobby.

It was at this first event that we originally encountered Andy and recognized K&C's position in the business. We also recognized his tremendous enthusiasm and dedication to the hobby. Andy's words of encouragement at that show helped get us excited about being in this industry.

DOES SIZE COUNT...?

Alone, at first, K&C created a special segment of the hobby... 1:30 scale, matt paint finish that, I believe, defines the future of toy soldier collecting. But it's not only size and paint-style that matters. K&C has also helped make the toy soldier not only a toy collectible but also a valuable future investment.

So, if my father ever asks me again if this business is fun then my answer will be a resounding "YES!" And much of the reason for that certainty is because of K&C and Andy who not only continues to help push the hobby forward but also, importantly, continues to put the "fun" element into the business equation.

On behalf of my father James, myself and the entire Figarti family happy 25th. King & Country.

RICK WANG is the Managing Director of Figarti and the driving force behind the company. Rick also manages several other major businesses in and around Shanghai and divides his time between the U.S. and mainland China.



The 1998 movie "Saving Private Ryan" has had a profound influence on King & Country's work. Prior to the film's release K&C were already working on their first two "Normandy '44" sets... US Rangers and Paratroopers.

Both Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg received complimentary sets of these first two releases.



'Making Movies'

KING & COUNTRY'S co-founder and creative director Andy C. Neilson once described to me that running a toy soldier company was a lot like running an old-fashioned movie studio... albeit in exact 1:30 scale!

"Just like Warner Brothers or Universal, someone comes up with a concept... an idea... a story", Andy said. "Then we research it... develop it and build it up with our key staff", he continued. "Once we decide to make it" Andy went on, "we cast the scene or story with the appropriate actors".

Andy thinks of his sculptors and designers as artistically inclined casting directors. While all this is going on you have to find your "locations" and build your "sets". This involves a lot of research and going through dozens of books, magazines and viewing all kinds of movies and documentaries to get the authentic and accurate look and particular feel for the project.

K&C's resident set designer (in this case Andy's younger brother Gordon) gets heavily involved at this stage and continues throughout the rest of the production.

Costume and makeup is likened to Master Figure Painting and vital to the whole process. Overseeing

plus packing and shipping. All of them play an important role in the end product.

The Premiere Approaches...

Finally, after many months of hard work and maximum effort the K&C "Movie" is ready for release. The ads have been prepared... the packaging

nerve-wracking. They and Andy, cautiously await the "critics reviews" and the public reaction.

Like all endeavors sometimes you win and occasionally you lose. Fortunately for K&C and its fans this particular "movie studio" has an amazingly solid reputation for bona fide "Box Office Hits". I really don't think it's too much of an



completed... the dealers around the world informed and the release date announced... only the "Premiere" awaits.



*Best wishes,
Steve Spillberg*

all of this from first to last is Andy himself, a mixture of writer, producer and director. It's his ultimate responsibility for putting the "film crew" together, keeping it focused and... ensuring it keeps within budget!

Backing him up are the "unsung heroes" of the K&C studio... factory production people... sales and marketing team... quality controllers...

Sometimes this can be a special "one-off" event like the Chicago, London or Westcoaster show. Most often it's simultaneous events across K&C's worldwide network of dealers from London to Los Angeles... and all points in between.

For the King & Country crew back in Hong Kong this period can be a little



00051
Brach Under Fire



00062
Calling For
Reinforcements

exaggeration to say that Andy is the "Steven Spielberg of the Toy Soldier World". His and K&C's record of success (over the last 15 years at least) is second-to-none.

K&C's Second World War "movies"... "NORMANDY '44"... "BATTLE OF THE BULGE"... "NORTH AFRICA" and the politically incorrect "BERLIN '38" have been huge "blockbusters" around the globe. But let's not forget their older historical epics—"ANCIENT EGYPT"... "CRUSADERS & SARACENS"... "1776" and "THE AGE OF NAPOLEON". All of these were major "hits" as well. Closer to home their "STREETS OF OLD HONG KONG" is particularly big in the domestic Asian market.

Even on the odd occasion when a release has "under-performed" expectations it has never been a total failure.

"A couple of years ago we launched our 'Sands of Iwo Jima' series," Andy recalls. "Personally, I still think it was one of our best but the buying public just was not all that interested in the Pacific War campaigns." When Clint Eastwood's "Flags of Our Fathers" and "Letters from Iwo Jima" were released Andy & K&C brought out all-new Japanese figures to complement their earlier Marines. Alas, sales again did not live up to the company's hopes. A similar thing happened when K&C brought out some WW2 Russian figures back in 2005. "Don't get me wrong," Andy says, "We did sell hundreds of sets but never enough to justify producing more squads".

Fortunately for K&C under-performers are far out-weighed and out-numbered by their "blockbusters".

So, as you can see this is one "studio" that knows how to turn out the "movies" international collectors want to look at... and buy.

The Movie Influence

Throughout King & Country's development and growth the strong influence of movies and movie makers has been central to making them what they are today. Andy always gratefully acknowledges this. "Films have been important to me forever," he says, "much more than television. The screen is larger... the vista wider and the action bigger in movies. I try to bring some of that into King & Country and what we do."

Like the movies, K&C has usually found the right balance between the authentic historical "look" and the legendary "feel" of its subjects from the past. As a former Royal Marine and dedicated military history buff Andy knows only too well that the new breed of collector may want realistic accuracy and true-to-life drama... but on occasion, they also want more than a bit of,

DAN GAGLIASSO is an award-winning documentary film maker (and avid toy soldier collector) whose credits as a director, producer and writer include numerous *History* and *Discovery* Channel Shows. Among his best known works are "Boone & Crockett"... "The True Story of The Black Sheep Squadron"... "Campanche Warriors"... "The Lincoln Assassination Plots" and... the "Mail Call" series. Dan lives and works in Los Angeles.

cinematic action and... a little piece of "movie magic" thrown in.

Famed Western director John Ford once said that "when the legend becomes the fact... print the legend". Andy probably would agree with most of that statement but with the proviso that inspiration, creativity and authenticity should also combine to make that legend as realistic as possible. That's how King & Country brings a little "movie magic" into their world of miniatures... and ours.

'One Night in Hollywood...'

It was back in the late fall of 2003 that I was able to fix up a meeting between Andy and Capt. Dale Dye, U.S.M.C. Retired... probably Hollywood's best known and most respected Military Adviser to the movies.

I had known Dale for several years and worked with him on a couple of film projects. I also knew that Andy was a big fan of Dale's work on such movies as "Platoon"... "Born On The 4th of July" and, of course, "Saving Pvt. Ryan".

As Andy was transitting through L.A. on his way back to Hong Kong after the Chicago show I suggested he stop off for a couple of days while I memorably contacted Dale.

Fortunately for us Dale was in town doing preparatory work for a major new World War Two epic that would be filmed in Europe over the next 9 months. On the phone he wouldn't divulge anything but he promised to tell us about it when we met a few days later.

I, in the meantime, contacted Andy to let him know our meeting with Dale was a "go" and he suggested we all go for a steak dinner at a venue suitable for Dale.

A few days later Andy arrived in Los Angeles and moved in with some old friends from Hong Kong who are also in the movie business and live in Santa Monica.



The Meeting

Dale had suggested a great steak house in Northridge, a suburb of L.A. near his office and home. When we arrived Dale was already there, at the bar, nursing an ice-cold beer. We joined him, introductions were made and the evening began...

Over a great dinner Dale regaled us with terrific stories about his experiences (good, bad and some very funny) on the movies he had worked on. Being a big fan of "Ryan" Andy wanted to know all the "scuttlebutt" on the making of it. A couple of stories are well worth repeating.

Before filming began director Steven Spielberg wanted his squad of actors to go through one of Dale's famous "movie boot camps" where actors learn over a couple of weeks to walk, talk and act like "real soldiers". Dale and his team of former NCO's put the actors through genuine military training of the period they are acting in. That means drill... weapons handling... route marches and a dozen other military skills that recruits learn in "basic".

Well on "Ryan" it seems most of the

squad (except one) wanted to mutiny after just a couple of days. "We're actors", they whined, "we don't have to be real soldiers!"

"Maybe that's true," Dale replied, "but you're honouring the memory of real men who had it a whole lot harder for a whole lot longer than you'll ever have!"

The sole non-mutinyer also piped up, "Well I don't know about you guys but I'm not quitting!" With that comment **Tom Hanks** got up and walked away from the "mutinyers" and began to clean his movie weapon... End of mutiny there and then.

Another interesting little aside... it seems that **Tom Sizemore** who played the sergeant in "Ryan" was not particularly energetic and always liked to complain about this and that. One of his beefs was that originally he as a sergeant, was to be armed with a "Tommy-Gun". For some reason Sizemore found it "too heavy" to handle. "Aw hell" said Tom Hanks, "give him my carbine it's light enough". In real WW2 combat, most officers carried the M1 Carbine and NCO's the heavier Thompson Sub Machine Gun. So, in "Ryan", that's why you'll see Hanks kumpung the Thompson!

These were just two of the literally dozens of great stories Dale told that evening over quite a few beers and some great steaks. He also finally told us what "the big European project" was... "Band of Brothers" which would take over 9 months to film in England. In fact a week later he would leave for the U.K. with his team of skilled former NCO's to start training the actors and extras who would make up the bulk of the cast. His final words to Andy on that memorable evening were... "Be sure to call me on the set when you get to England. We'll get you down to see some filming..." But that is another story.

Left: Capt. Dale Dye U.S.M.C. and Capt. Andy C. Neilson R.H.K.R.

MY PROFESSIONAL CAREER has for many years been theatre and film design. As a set designer I have been involved in all kinds of productions... large and small... all over the world.

The most exciting and creatively challenging for me was and is...the modern musical. It's the perfect blend of drama, music and... stage design. Believe it or not many of those same elements (minus the music of course) come together in good toy soldier design and display.

Throughout the past 25 years, King & Country has shown itself adept at delivering this kind of mixture through their figures, fighting vehicles and dioramas.

Their well-sculpted figures seem individually animated and each has its own personality which almost brings them to life.

Put them next to a vehicle or a building and a whole little drama is created... just like a scene in a play or movie.

JJ & K&C

Relatively few collectors know that I worked with Andy and the rest of the King & Country creative team for almost 10 years!

I first met Gordon in the Pacific Place store one day back around 1998 and showed him some examples of my work. Gordon insisted I should meet his brother as soon as possible. When we did meet, a few days later, Andy

Building on Experience

John Jenkins and King & Country share a little bit of history...

looked through my portfolio and immediately began discussing a potential project.

This first project was a row of 3 Chinese terrace houses for 'Streets of Old Hong Kong'. That soon led to more work than I could handle as I was still involved with theatre projects both in Hong Kong and Canada. However for me the miniature work was becoming more enjoyable and creatively more rewarding.



John hard at work.

There's something about small scale figures in a landscape or next to a building that really brings them 'alive'... if only for a moment.

WORLD IN MINIATURE

For the next few years Andy and myself collaborated on a whole slew of projects... 'The last of the Idols'... an entire street full of Chinese buildings... Roman Forts... Normandy Villages... and a lot, lot more.

Now, looking back, it was a great learning experience for me to be involved with one of the most innovative companies in the entire toy soldier hobby and industry.

My only regrets are for a few of the projects that, for a number of practical reasons, had to be shelved or delayed and... For not collecting some of the special pieces I worked on!

Today, I'm following my own path but still get excited and like to find out what K&C is getting up to. I can see from this that they continue to pursue, as I do, the 'total toy soldier experience'.

Both of our companies also share many of the same dedicated dealers around the world however K&C UK deserve a special mention...Not only is their exclusive 'Crimson War' series superb but their London Shows and exciting K&C UK TV keep moving the hobby forward into new and amazing directions.

I'm proud to have played a part in K&C's own development over the years and happy to move forward with them in growing and developing this great hobby of ours. 'Happy birthday K&C'!

JOHN JENKINS was born and raised in Wales but his career as a Set Designer has taken him all over the world. He now lives and works in Hong Kong.

These Normandy Village locations were just one of the many K&C projects John worked on...



THE LAST WORD

For me, King & Country is the most fun you can have with your clothes on...!

- Andy C. Neilson
Co-founder & Creative Director
King & Country

BACK IN 1983, if you had told me then, that this is what I would be doing twenty-five years later I would have said that you were stark raving mad!

At the time my first wife, Laura McAllister Johnson, and myself had been in Hong Kong for six years. Together we had set up a very successful graphic design studio and were about to open "Mad Dogs" - a real original British pub. Collecting toy soldiers was my hobby. And it was Laura's suggestion that we also start up King & Country... I would be the creative heart in front of it and Laura would be the tough business brain behind it.

In my naivety I also thought that this was just a "fun, little sideline" that I could dabble with in my spare time. How little I knew...

Over the following decade we made, on King & Country's behalf, virtually every mistake there is to make in business. On a couple of occasions we nearly "threw in the towel" and called it quits. Something however, almost supernaturally always held us back from pulling the final plug on this little struggling business. As usual, Laura with her keen eye and strong Scottish business sense, saw the cause of the problem (and its solution).

"King & Country needs you" she firmly declared, "Not part-time... not a few days here and the odd day there. You've got to be hands-on all the time... if not let's close it tomorrow!"

GET IN OR... GET OUT!

Faced with this powerful ultimatum I made the decision to get out of advertising and graphic design and get into running a toy soldier company. It wasn't easy either... our little graphic design studio made money... K&C didn't but (and it was a big "but") something made me do it.

And it was the best business decision of my professional life. We sold our graphic design business to a partner and early in 1993 I found myself working full time in our very own King & Country toy soldier shop in Hong Kong.

Now I don't want to give



The newest, most exciting name in
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A limited edition series of hand-painted, hand-painted toy soldiers of a typical Highland Regiment of the late 18th Century Colonial Wars designed and manufactured in the British Crown Colony of

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Please note all our delivery is by first class air mail.
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If you have any enquiries about our range please let us know. Look out for more distinctive "King & Country" toy soldiers coming soon "God Save the King"

you the impression that as soon as the false bold Andy appeared full-time as a toy soldier maker all our problems disappeared and the money just poured in. Alas real life is seldom like that however things did begin to turn around... slowly. The company stopped making a loss and at last began to regularly "break-even". Occasionally, very occasionally we even made a little profit. More importantly than that though I was "learning the ropes" and beginning to really understand the toy soldier hobby and business.

Of course we still made mistakes and errors of judgement but slowly and surely we began to make more correct assumptions and decisions based on our own first-hand experiences and knowledge.

As we grew so did our confidence and determination to break out of the straight-jacket of toy soldier conformity then dominant in the hobby. It seemed to me then that virtually every company was producing almost the same kind of toy soldier and "missing" the same historical seams of gold... Zulu War... Parade figures... Indian Durbar and so on and so forth. Now, don't misunderstand me, all of these eras are exciting, colourful and fine in their own way but I just felt there had to be something out there that might just appeal to a younger audience as well as the more traditional older collector.

And so, after wandering in the wilderness for many a year K&C and myself came upon the Second World War... most pairs finish... and a little Dutch town called... ARNHEM.

But that, as they say, is another story (and one that I've told before anyway).

FINALLY...

This hobby and this business have given me so much pleasure and happiness over the years. I've made literally hundreds of new friends (and a few old enemies) all over the globe. I've had more opportunity to be creatively free than I could ever have had in the world of advertising and graphic design. I've also had the privilege of working with the most amazing team of people any boss could ever hope to have. And I owe it all to a little toy soldier company called "King & Country" and a lady who once said, "Why don't we make our own toy soldiers?"