

business: SPOTLIGHT

Living LEGENDS

Legends sports gallery, devoted to the game

One day Jerry Glenn, then owner of the Cinnamon Bear gift shop in Main Street Village, placed two boxes of baseball cards on the store's front counter. Those two boxes expanded into a showcase at the back of the shop, and volume grew enough over time to convince Glenn to sell the Cinnamon Bear and concentrate on the sports card business. Today, some 16 years later, out of those humble beginnings has evolved what former Cleveland Indians great Bob Feller calls the greatest sports memorabilia shop he's ever seen, Legends Sports Gallery.

The store, called Sports Cards Plus in the early days, thrived by offering high-quality, unusual items procured through national conventions, relationships with sports agents and professional athletes, and acquisitions of complete collections. Its growing reputation as a source for unique and novel items that cannot be found anywhere else eventually prompted the name change to Legends.

The 1994 Major League Baseball strike dealt a severe blow to the sports card industry, according to Jerry. His daughter, Lori Glenn, general manager by then (she's now in charge of the business), took the lead in aggressively pursuing collectibles other than cards. She convinced Glenn and his partner to invest in Cooperstown Bears, a collection of high-quality Teddy bears dressed in authentic uniforms that have been carefully researched for actual materials, logos, patches, caps and special insignias.

These top-of-the-line German mohair Bears depict some of the greatest sports stars of all time such as Jackie Robinson, Arnold Palmer and Joe Namath. Many of these elite limited editions are now retired. Particularly notable is the deluxe mohair Ted Williams Teddy, of which only 1,006 were produced. The late "Number 9" himself liked it so much that he purchased 60 of them to give to friends. Legends possesses two of the now-retired Ted Williams bears. These days Ms. Glenn consults with Cooperstown Bears and has been responsible for the development of several recent issues, including the newly released Mickey Mantle bear.

Autographed items are perhaps the most important category in the sports memorabilia industry, and are a major part of the Legends Sports Gallery collection. "The credibility of authentic autographs is of paramount importance," explained Jerry. Over the years he and Lori have established relationships with Baseball Hall of Fame greats, Feller, Stan Musial, Yogi Berra and Ted Williams prior to his passing. The family is in constant touch with them to secure authentic autographed materials.

Have you got an old game program with Mickey Mantle's autograph on the cover, but you're not sure of its origin? Drop by Legends and Jerry, a self-avowed baseball historian, can tell you how to identify the authenticity of some of the most valuable autographs like Mantle and Joe DiMaggio.

Another unique aspect of Legends Sports Gallery is that it is the exclu-



PHOTOS BY ROB KAUFMAN



Above: Lori Glenn at the top of her game

Left: The new 'Mickey Mantle' from Cooperstown Bears

sive dealer for official Baseball Hall of Fame artist Dick Perez, who is also the official artist for all of Philadelphia's professional sports teams and the first sports artist to have his work shown at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Legends features autographed art cards, deluxe lithographs and original art from the artist.

Perez also accepts commission work through Legends Sports Gallery and will re-create a portrait or action photograph of any sports personality in watercolor or oil. To date, Perez has created over 20 pieces for Legends and its customers. Recent commissions include Michael Jordan, Duke Snider, Sandy Koufax, Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb. Ms. Glenn says that this area of the business is beginning to explode as more people become familiar with Perez's amazing work.

Walking through the door into Legends Sports Gallery is a trip back to a time when talking sports did not include such language as salary caps, free agency, lockouts, drug testing and jury selection. Patrons are surrounded by a mind-boggling array of autographed items, team collectibles from bobbleheads and pennants to paperweights and chess sets, vintage photos and paintings of players and ballparks, collection displays and more. Oh, yeah...the baseball cards are still there too.

Most of what you will see in the 1,800 sq.-ft.-shop is baseball related, a reflection of its founder's passion for the sport and all of its lore, but you can find stuff for almost all sports like football, basketball, hockey and, of course, golf. This is Hilton Head after all. A new addition to the collection is a line of Tiffany-style team logo table and floor lamps. The shop has sold over 200 of these high-quality lamps since Thanksgiving.

What really makes Legends special, though, are the one-of-a-kind items that, though sports related, transcend the games and remind us of our history. Pieces of Americana like a chunk of brick from Ebbets Field mounted and framed with a lithograph of the legendary ballpark. You might find this item at another store or on the Internet, but Legends Sports Gallery is the only place you'll find it with the authentic autographs of the 1955 Brooklyn Dodgers World Series pitching rotation.

Another rarity is the dedication to quality and customer satisfaction, not to mention enthusiasm and passion, for the products that they sell found in this 100% family-owned business where any sports fan is sure to find something to make them feel like a kid again.

Legends Sports Gallery is located at 1505 Main Street Village. Hours are 10 AM to 6 PM daily. For information, call 888.681.4442 or visit online at <http://www.legendssports.net>. -Frank Dunne, Jr.