Chauvin man dreams big with little boats

By The Associated Press

CHAUVIN — It's a "Love Boat" for Lilliputians, and Brian Eymard is the captain.

Eymard built the 5-foot-6-inch ship, with painstaking detail, making it 100 times smaller than its television counterpart. It's one of two working, radio-controlled model boats he has constructed.

The other is a nearly complete 6-foot-6-inch tug powerful enough to tow him down the bayou in a 10-foot flat-bottomed boat.

Eymard, a native of Chauvin, is a former fisherman. He also worked on tugboats and shrimp boats, where he got many of the ideas he used to build his models.

But the only plans or blueprints were in his head.

Eymard, 31, traces his hobby to a specific time and day: 5:30 a.m. May 5, 1980. He was in a car collision and was in a coma for three days.

His injuries — a fractured skull, broken arm and broken ankle — left him immobile for months with his body in a cast.

While in the hospital, he watched a lot of television, including the popular Love Boat show. From there, Eymard's imagination and desire kicked into gear.

It took four years to finish the model, which weighs 55 pounds.

The radio-controlled Pacific Princess has 250 light bulbs, three electric motors and railings made of 2,000 straight pins.

"I've got somewhere between 10,000 to 12,000 hours in the Love Boat," he said. "The Love Boat materials cost about $2,000 to $2,500. I wouldn't sell it for less than $40,000."

In 1985, Eymard started building a triple-deck North Sea tugboat that would take seven years to complete. After thousands of hours, the Seaman's Dream is 99 percent finished.

The Seaman's Dream is a 1/25 scale model of a real tug. The fire pumps shoot water several feet into the air, the radar scanner spins, and the boat has all the running lights a real tug would have.

It also has two anchors that can drop independently and two winches that reel in and out independently.

He uses toy soldiers for the crew, as suggested by Amber Boudreaux, 8-year-old daughter of a friend.

Eymard said he's spent thousands on his boats but could win tens of thousands back in competitions.

"I'm trying to find someone who is interested in helping sponsor me and my boats so I can enter contests."