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Obsolescent home collection

on 31 July 2000, 22:00



by [Niall McKay](#)

Robert Doerr runs [Robots Wanted](#), a kind of retirement home and hospice where old robots can while away their last days in a loving environment. Mr. Doerr, a 32-year-old network engineer from St. Clair Shores, Michigan, has had an unquenchable passion for robots since he was in high school. "Our electronics teacher, Buzz Dehooge, set us the task of building a Hero 1 robot from a \$1,300 kit," he says. From that moment on, Mr. Doerr has spent most of his free time restoring and looking after old robots for himself and other enthusiasts that he meets online. "It's like a full-time job," he says. "It easily eats up about 40 hours a week." His little retirement home now has about 100 residents but only 50 are in full health; the rest were cannibalized for parts. "Some of the robots I get are in boxes in bits, so I have to figure out what's missing," he says. "I got an Arctec Gemini Autonomous Robot that had no power-supply board." So he borrowed one from a friend, used it as a pattern, and built a new one from scratch.

Does he have a favorite? Not really. Like a proud father, he loves them all. But he has a weakness for those with interesting personalities. Personalities? "Well, it's mostly just what I project onto them," he admits. "But the Androbot looks like a little person, and it's very friendly." The Hubot has a television screen in its head, and when you flip on the power it displays a face and says things like "I am ready to serve you." The Hubot also will automatically dock with its battery recharger and say, "Boy, I really get a charge out of this."

So what do the robots do? Not much. Mostly, they just sit around and spout nonsense. But they do look cute.

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