

Craters and Freighters will ship almost anything. In its two years in Boise, the company has shipped a plane to the United Kingdom and a liquid-nitrogen machine used to clean the Eiffel Tower.

BY TIM WOODWARD

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So you have a great gift in mind, but you think it's impossible to ship.

You don't even want to think about the reaction you'd get asking the Postal Service to send a stuffed moose to Uncle Horace in Fargo or an antique loom to Aunt Harriet in Palm Springs. Some things are just too difficult to package up and send.

Wrong. Craters & Freighters, a relatively new company to the Boise area, will ship almost anything virtually anywhere in the world.

Some examples:

- A dune buggy to Mexico.
- A sport plane to the United Kingdom.
- A Model T engine to Tokyo.
- A liquid-nitrogen machine used to clean the Eiffel Tower.

"Things people are hesitant to send or that are difficult to deal with, that's what keeps our phone ringing," Boise Craters & Freighters owner Jeff deMarini said.

Craters & Freighters began in Golden, Colo., in 1990.

"I started another company that was basically storefronts shipping up to 100 pounds and found that a lot of people had bigger things and that was more lucrative," company founder Diane Gibson said. "We got our start with arts and antiques. We've shipped a collection of paintings by the grand masters from a vault in Sarasota to a



Adam Smithee and Wes Schaaf carefully wrap paintings to be shipped.

vault in Switzerland. I think the most difficult thing we've done was a huge flight simulator. It went out in five trucks."

Other shipping coups have included a \$145,000 totem pole and a table that George and Martha Washington received as a wedding gift.

The Boise store is one of 67 nationwide. DeMarini, who previously owned an Internet sales business, got the idea to start a franchise here when he wanted to ship

something that exceeded the size limits for Fed-Ex and asked whether there was another company it could recommend.

"They said Craters & Freighters could do it, but there wasn't one here," he said. "I started looking into it, and it exactly fit the bill for what I wanted to do."

The company is aptly named. To get their jobs, each of its five Boise employees had to know basic carpentry. The crates they build can contain almost anything. A

\$12,000 Martin guitar, for example. A classic, 1948 Indian motorcycle.

To ship that, they built skids made of heavy lumber. The motorcycle was rolled onto the skids and strapped down with its wheels blocked. Then the walls of the crate were built around it.

The smallest item they've shipped: a teacup.

"We've shipped things for \$100 that were worth \$10," deMarini said. "It's important to the customers — maybe it was something given to them as a child — and they want special care."

The largest item they've shipped: a fish-processing operation. It filled 30, 40-foot trailers.

The funniest: a motorized barstool. It has four wheels, a steering wheel and gearshift, and goes 50 mph.

"That's the best thing about the job," Adam Smithee said between China dishes he was packing. "You get to see a lot of odd stuff."

And expensive stuff. Artwork comprises

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Got a Christmas gift that's impossible to ship? Listen to owner Jeff deMarini talk about Boise Craters & Freighters and watch as workers pack an item to be shipped.

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SHIP ANYTHING

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roughly a third of the company's business.

"We can handle insurance up to \$1 million," deMarini said.

Taxidermy rivals art in volume: birds, deer, elk ... Uncle Horace's moose.

Sorry, no live animals.

In its two years in business, the Boise Craters & Freighters store has had one item damaged.

"Nothing's bulletproof," general man-

ager Dan Phillips said, "but we pack it to get there the way it left. If I don't feel it will, it doesn't go. I like to sleep nights."

Echoing his employees, deMarini says his favorite thing about the work is its variety.

"It's always changing," he said. "Every day, something new and different comes in the door. It's exciting to be able to help people and catch their enthusiasm for what they're sending. And you're not always packaging the same widget."

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WHAT

Craters & Freighters.

WHERE

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NEED TO SHIP SOMETHING?

Craters & Freighters, a relatively new company to the Boise area, will ship almost anything virtually anywhere in the world. Like a dune buggy to Mexico. LIFE 1