

# New Toy Ideas Come From Many Directions - Some Are Pretty Wild



## Carols Integral Part Of Christmas Season

NEW YORK (NEA)—Christmas is a joyous time of year, and one of the world's oldest ways of expressing joy is through songs.

Even the coldest heart can be reached in the Yule season by the strains of "Silent Night" squeezing through the opening of a stained glass window of a church. Or perhaps a group of carollers standing in the snow will make the day just a bit more pleasant than it might have been for some lonely person.

There are different types of Christmas carols. For example, we have nativity carols, prayer carols, dance carols and so on.

As might be expected, the Nativity carol is the largest group.

In the olden days dance carols were the most popular. While it would certainly be a strange sight nowadays, at one time there used to be dancing before the altar in the Cathedral of Seville in Spain. No reverence was intended as altar boys, to the accompaniment of song and the rattle of castanets, performed their dance. Such actions were finally prohibited in 590, but the custom lingered on in certain areas until the 14th Century, and in England, up to the Reformation.

At the present time in the Scandinavian countries, carols are sung as the people take part in a ring-dance around the Christmas tree.

Following the Reformation, most of the old hymns and carols were discarded. As a result, in many parts of the world they were forgotten, until their revival in the 19th Century.

Organized Christmas Eve carolling in Boston began in 1909, when groups of people sang their songs in front of every house with a lighted candle in the window.

In French Canada, the carollers bring help to the needy. There, young men and women wear old-style country costumes and go from house to house singing and collecting food and clothes for the poor.

Singers in the Slavic countries visit different homes while carrying a huge, lighted star. After the carols, some of the singers perform scenes from the Nativity.

National groups have done a much to preserve some of these customs in America.

## Shasta Set To Revamp Yule Trim

MOUNT SHASTA—The Mount Shasta Chamber of Commerce committee which tried to plan a tree decoration program for streets during the Christmas holidays has decided to keep the aluminum streamers used for the past several years. These must be repaired.

It was decided that future additions to the decorations will be made of plastic which is more durable and in less danger of being warped by the wind.

A public plan for revamping the decorations began Monday evening in the National Guard Armory. Members of various local clubs assisted in the work, with Charles Echols, superintendent of public constructions, supervising the repairs.

The bald eagle was the great symbol for the Iroquois Indians.

By ALICIA HART  
Newspaper Enterprise Assn.

NEW YORK (NEA)—If you have dreams of making a million dollars with an original toy design, don't waste your time developing a four-handed checker game.

"We get one of those submitted about once a month," said Ned Strongin, a New York toy designer who gets many of his ideas from thousands of persons across the country.

About 2,000 ideas—in the form of sketches or cardboard models—arrive across Strongin's desk every year. They come from such people as bus drivers, housewives and airplane pilots. If the idea is considered good (only about 50 a year are), a split fee deal is arranged, and Strongin markets the product.

"One of our best was called 'Wonder Art,' a non-messy finger painting set. That was dreamed up by two Pan Am pilots. A big one this year is 'Hurdy Gurdy,' designed by a newspaper mechanic. And our 'Pretzel,' the 'Pick-Up Pooch' was thought up by a clerk."

Toy ideas, explained Strongin, are judged by a nebulous standard of "play value." Three questions which must be asked before a toy is developed are: Can it be feasibly manufactured? Can it be made of plastic or metal? Can it be sold at a realistic price?

"Some of the ideas are pretty wild," said Strongin. "One man came into the office, I recall, and made me shut all the doors. I spent about an hour convincing him that nobody was going to steal his idea. Then he spread a blotter on the desk and dumped paint on it.

"Then he produced a jar of live worms and spotted them onto the paint.

"'Worm painting!' he announced triumphantly. 'Then if you get tired of painting you can go fishing!'

"I tried to keep a straight face, but I had to tell him that Dali thought that one up years ago."

Strongin is just one of hundreds of toy makers across the nation who are constantly hunting for the "perfect toy"—the one which will capture the imaginations of children and reap profits for the manufacturers.



Whammo! Electrified cars pile up on table-top track.

A. C. Gilbert, for example, is counting this year on its "Flying Over Chicane" auto racing creation. With this, miniature cars zip electrically around a tabletop track. They jump open bridges, crash into one another and, if somebody is nimble on the remote control switch, one of them might even win a race now and then.

In the process of developing a set of ghoulish plastic characters, Aurora Plastics Company of Long Island, consulted child psychiatrists. "Go ahead," came the answer. The horrors would amount to "harmless escapism." Called "Movie Monsters," the set includes Dracula, The Mummy, Wolf Man and a little delight called The Creature From the Black Lagoon.

One mother wrote that her son had nightmares after seeing a monster movie. So she bought him a miniature Dracula; he played with it before going to bed and the nightmares ceased.

A New Jersey engineer, Irving Lieberman, turned his knowledge of electronic computers in the direction of toys. The result, a miniature plastic computer, called "Digi-Comp," which operates by hand. With it problems of surprising intricacy can be solved. For example, the machine can tell you with the click of three buttons what number between 1 and 7 you are thinking of. The child can also play a numbers game with the computer in which he has to

be on his toes to beat the machine.

Lieberman admits that adults would probably not understand how the computer works—but what with today's math in schools it should be a pushover for kids.

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The Creature. Who knows? The nightmares could cease.

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MANY-IN-ONE — Some toys adapt themselves to a variety of skill levels, such as this construction set — here designed into a rocket launching unit.

## Fit Toys To Child

By HAROLD SHEEHAN  
Newspaper Enterprise Assn.

NEW YORK (NEA)—About \$2 billion will be spent on toys in the United States this Christmas season. Some of those dollars will be converted to hours of pleasure and—dare we use the word?—education for the nation's children.

Many other dollars will miss the mark, and the toys and games which they buy will languish in the attic beginning on Dec. 26.

Toys sometimes are designed to catch adults, not children; because adults must often do the buying. Just as some fishing lures are created to catch fishermen, not their finny prey.

How to avoid the pitfalls of toy buying? Not an easy task. But, happily, there exist guidelines to this mission into which parents hurtle themselves each year—with the best of intentions.

Some of the more important things to look for when buying a toy were spelled out by A. C. Gilbert Jr., head of one of the nation's pioneer toy companies. Gilbert, through the years, has developed a sense of child psychology, which, he claims, is essential to the proper hunching of next year's toy models. Gilbert's advice:

—Buy a toy suited to your child's stage of development rather than his age, and take your cue from the child's interests. Infants prefer dangling toys or chewy ones; while young children like toys they can push, pull and handle. When they're old enough to read, science sets and board games are popular.

—Consider what a toy can do to improve a child's skills. Foam rubber squeeze toys and sports equipment can help build muscle tone and improve coordination while science sets widen intellectual horizons.

—If possible, choose a basic toy, one that can be used in several different ways. Construction sets, for example, allow a child to make many toys, and it fits a variety of skill levels.

—Expect full value for your money. Consider how long the

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