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SECOND SECTION

Toys Like "The Real Thing" Favourites Today, Says Expert

You will not find one professional child psychologist on the staff of the biggest toy making firms in the world. Only businessmen and technicians. Yet, in spite of this — maybe because of it — they have built up a multi-million dollar organization on the basis of knowing what pleases a child's mind.

And what does please a child's mind? Experience with my own two small sons suggests it is a home-made bow and arrow, rather than a shiny chrome-plated bicycle, a saucer and spoon, used as a kettledrum, rather than a toy dog that goes "woof" when you squeeze it.

But Mr. Graeme Lines, who has been "brought up" in toys and has spent his life selling them, has no time for the saucer and spoon theory. "Realism," he says. "That is what they want. The more like the real thing the toy is, the better they like it."

True or false? Well, Mr. Lines' family hasn't built up the world's biggest toy firm on a falsehood. And their toys are so like the real thing that, to my mind, many of them are hardly toys at all but collectors' items.

Content, Not Fooled

"A child," says Mr. Lines, "is above all, a realist. So long as the only toy car was a piece of bent metal with four wheels on it he was content. But he wasn't fooled. What was good enough for us in our childhood isn't good enough for our sons and daughters. They know there are toys just like the real thing and they are satisfied with nothing less."

But here it is necessary to make a sharp distinction between toys and novelties. The essential difference is that toys don't change (oh, no they don't!) but novelties are here today and gone tomorrow. How many children of today have ever seen a yo-yo? It enjoyed a phenomenal popularity at a stage of my childhood, yet now I wouldn't know which way up to hold one. It was a novelty; a craze one moment, forgotten the next.

Teddy Bear

But toys are different. Toys don't change. I could not sleep as a child unless my teddy bear was tucked up beside me in bed; neither can my two small sons. But my teddy bear was a very inferior article compared with theirs.

Of course you might say, a teddy bear is an exception, and, in any case, it is comparatively modern. But dolls, which, after all are toy replicas of living creatures, just as teddy bears are — are as old as history. Earliest man carved crude wooden dolls to keep his offspring happy.

Nowadays, a doll is made of vinyl which feels uncannily like human flesh, her hair is made of nylon, and she is mass produced by modern industrial methods. For the super-realist child there are dolls that walk and talk (with the aid of a tiny concealed phonograph record) and even take a bottle, with inevitable consequences.

But the point is that, basically, dolls haven't changed in a thousand years. Today they are more like the real thing, they are more hygienic. But they are still dolls.

Unchanged

Look through a toy catalogue and see how many things in it are really new. There, prominently, is the rocking horse, unchanged in appearance and purpose, but made of new materials. Doll's prams, too; beautifully-finished and well-sprung replicas of mother's, infinitely superior to the contraptions our grandmothers delighted in when they were children. But doll's prams, for all that.

And so on through the catalogue, doll's houses, with all the

furniture to go with them, fortresses with their garrisons of lead soldiers. And, of course, humming tops.

And they are the same toys you played with as a child? Certainly they are but with a difference. The doll's house is now a neat, suburban detached villa and its fittings include a television set and washing machine. The fortress has hardly changed at all in appearance, but the soldiers who man it carry modern weapons of destruction.

Guiding Principles

But best of all I liked the maker's description of "the modern humming tops. It had individually tuned vibro-brass reeds, precision built gear-box, nylon gears to suppress gear-box hum, pressed steel case and other up-to-date wonders. The old-type top that had one note, rising to an earsplitting scream as you bore down on the spiral winder, is definitely out. We now have tops with triple change four-note chords, whatever they might be."

I have deliberately left the most important group of toys to the last because these bring up another of Mr. Lines' guiding principles.

"Toys," he says, "are a reflection of history through the ages." And, by that, he means that as fast as scientists develop new machines, toy makers reproduce them in miniature for the current generation of half-pint realists.

And nowhere has this been more evident than in that vast range of toys that, for want of a better term, I shall call transportation toys. Grandfather might have been content to gallop around on a hobby horse that bore, in his imagination, some resemblance to great-grandfather's real live horse. But your child and my child want to pedal around in comfort in a toy car that might be the real thing looked at through the wrong end of a telescope. The principle is the same; only the vehicle has changed.

Competitive Industry

And, of course, technique. Have you ever thought of the amount of research and experience that went into the "2x1" model car that your child might at this very moment be showing off to the kids next door? The first thing about it is that it almost certainly looks just like the real thing that you saw in the car show-room in town only the other day. That is because the toy industry is one of the most competitive businesses in the world. So the maker of the toy car started to plan his prototype the moment the real thing was first shown to the public. Car makers co-operate with the toy industry by supplying original blue prints from which the toy designer works. The result: a scale model, perfect in every detail.

That is all very well as far as it goes, but the trouble is it only goes when you push it. What our modern child wants is a car that not only looks like the real thing, but one that he can get into and drive.

The toy makers' business is not only to see that he gets what he wants but that he gets it even before he knows he wants it. Anticipating "wants" before they are even formed in the child's mind is what Mr. Lines calls "know-how." And it pays — because the firm of which he is a member leads the field.

"You'd Never Guess"

"You'd never guess it," says Mr. Lines, "but we spend just as much time figuring whether our newest toy car will be fitted with a horn and electric lights as the car designer himself spends huddled over his drawing board puzzling over whether his latest model should be fitted with automatic drive.

And, like him, when we reach a decision, we treat our plans as top secret. Why, do you know there are other toy makers who would give their eye teeth for a look at our designs for future production?"

And what is the result of all this? It is a car that is fitted not only with electric lights and a horn, but windshield-wipers and radio (actually a music box) too. It is a police squad car, complete with siren; a dump truck that carries, and actually dumps sand. It is a tow truck with a winch that works; a fire engine with ladder and bell. It is a racing car and a tractor, a jeep and a special deluxe job with shaftdrive and two

year transmission. But if children are realists, so are their parents. And the parent's realism is usually in the form of a simple question: "How much does it cost?"

Well, of course, there are cheap toys and expensive toys. Fortunately, a child usually finds the former as acceptable as the latter. Realist or not, he draws copiously on his imagination to supply the details that the designer has omitted or Mom and Dad couldn't afford. (Incidentally, where is the mechanical substitute for that nerve-racking "br-r-r-r-r" that makes up for the missing power unit?

Better Judges

But, like it or not, you can't separate toys and money. People being what they are, they usually spend a little more than they can afford for their children's toys. Grow-ups are better judges of quality than children and they will naturally make the "best buy," which usually means spending a little more than they had planned. But cost doesn't interest children. They will have just as much fun with a toy aeroplane that shoots out of a catapult as with one that is radio-controlled.

The plain fact is, however, that it isn't the rich man's children who have the most expensive toys. Working class families, I am told, spend more per head on toys than the people whose names are listed in the social register. But there is the exception — I like to picture him as a successful bookmaker or a sheik living on oil royalties — whose only criterion of value is money.

For him (hardly for his child), one British toy manufacturer has produced a replica of a grand prize racing car that is driven by battery and looks for all the world like a

slightly smaller version of the real thing. I won't waste time describing it because I am sure you won't be tempted to buy one, but I can tell you, if you are interested, that in Britain it costs £110 plus another £10 for the battery. So far, 200 of them have been ordered, which surprised the manufacturer who produced it as a special exhibition showpiece — almost as much as it surprises me.

Your child may not be among the 200 speeding along at eight miles an hour in an electric racing car, but this I am certain of: he will be the happiest child on earth with whatever you buy him. That is what is so nice about children.

Elect Irwin Noble Masonic Principal

Ex. Comp. Irwin G. Noble will succeed Ex. Comp. Charlie Renwick as First Principal when the

Halton Chapter No. 234 officers are installed on January 21st. Mr. Noble was elected to the office on Wednesday, Dec. 17th when the chapter held regular convocation in the Masonic Temple.

Other officers for 1959 are 2nd Principal, Ex. Comp. John T. Armstrong; 3rd Principal, Companion Sam Penrice; Scribe E. Ex. Comp. Jack Addy; Treasurer, Comp. Ed Wilson; PS, Comp. Bev Moody; SN Comp. William Kinrade; SS, Comp. John Gunn; JS, Comp. George Si-vill; Sentinel, Comp. Ed Hall.

Master of the 4th Veil, Comp. Bernard Dunning; Master of the 3rd Veil, Comp. Gordon Harley; Master of the 2nd Veil, Comp. Thomas Niven; Master of the 1st Veil, Comp. Victor Gunn. The January installation will be conducted by Rt. Ex. Comp. George C. Brown.

Nine Beautiful Colour Photos
Will be given as prizes for the best Exterior Decorating of Georgetown Homes

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Sunshine Club Prepares Candy for Xmas Concert

Bags of candy for the Christmas concert were filled at the December meeting of the Sunshine Club of First Baptist church held in the Sunday school rooms on Tuesday, Dec. 16th. The president, Mrs. Donald Hancock, presided and Mrs. Jim Emmerson's group was in charge of the program.

The election of officers will be held at the January meeting at the church and a visiting project was announced for the New Year. Roll call and minutes were read by Mrs. Ren McCosh and the treasurer's report was given by Mrs. J. Emmerson. A letter was received from Mrs. Graham Porter, in Newfoundland, a former member of the group.

Mrs. J. Emmerson conducted the devotions and read an interesting account of Christmas. Mrs. Albert Norton read the Scripture and prayer was conducted by Mrs. Donald Livingstone. Christmas hymns were sung with Miss Norma Thompson at the piano.

Mrs. Hancock conducted games and refreshments were served by the group in charge: Mesdames J. Emmerson, A. Norton, D. Hancock, D. Livingstone, John Emmerson and William Cumpsty.



Merry Christmas

Be of good cheer and have a happy holiday full of the wonderful things that come each year at Christmas.

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