

Great toys of the past — still great

Editor's Note: This column ran in the 1986 Christmas supplement, Dec. 1.

The coolest toys on earth are never the most expensive.

When my parents demanded a Christmas list from me, I'd just rip the comic book novelty page out of the latest issue of "Conan the Barbarian" — x-ray specs, soap that turned your hands black, pepper gum, etc. — the whole page came to about \$19 plus postage and handling. But, invariably, I received something three times as expensive and three times less entertaining.

LIEURANCE Charles

Now, of course, I understand that putting joy buzzers and pepper gum into the hands of a child who was already three steps from reform school would have been a major tactical error on my parents' part.

The best toys were always the ones that trusted you. The ones that plugged in, lit up or heated up; flew or launched projectiles. You gotta love a toy maker that allows you to play with things like that. Because children are basically evil.

Here's a list of some of the trusting and entertaining toys available since 1965 or so.

1. Mattel Time Machine: This is my all-time favorite. What the manufacturer is giving you here is a hotplate. I liked having a small metal disk heated up to about 400 degrees in my own room. The premise of the toy was simple, though it seemed miraculous in the old days. You got this hot plate with a clear plastic dome over it. You got your plastic cubes in all different colors. You put the plastic cubes on the hot plate and they unfolded into hideous monsters from another time. Then, while the dinosaur was still soft, you put him into a little

confession chamber at the base of the hot plate and turned it into a cube again.

What the toy company was trusting you not to do: Burn yourself, of course. Also, they were trusting you not to move the metal hot plate disk, keep the wires attached to the bottom, shove the main unit under your sister's bed, and put the disk under her fitted sheet, cover the wires leading up to it with frilly bedding, and turn the disk on right around bedtime. This way, you could turn your sister into a hideous monster from another time. The time machine also was great for melting Barbie dolls.

2. Sea Monkeys: Sea monkeys never worked but the premise was exciting. The ads for them in the comic books made it look like they grew up to be Ward, June, Wally and the Beav in sea horse costumes. They were invariably flushed down the toilet. After all, they were only brine shrimp. At least that's what the cynics said. No matter how much care you gave your sea monkeys, no matter how much extra sea monkey food you purchased, or how long you watched the tiny amorphous translucent mass lay on the bottom of the Sea Monkey aquarium/gymnasium, they never even remotely resembled the comic book pictures.

But the faithful know these were

not just brine shrimp. The faithful know that one of the greatest menaces to human kind, since killer bees or tarantulas transported in the banana crates, is brewing in the sewers of America. Under every manhole is a monkey, fully grown, with arms and legs and a vaguely humanoid face waiting for the invasion of the world.

3. Operational Robots: You know the kind that walks and spits sparks with a blinking psychedelic chest panel. There were many brands and many varieties and most of them were pretty cool. Eventually, your parents got tired of buying batteries and watching it march across the breakfast table and spit sparks at them while they sluggishly ate oatmeal.

4. .45 Automatic: In most states, you can only get these when you're 13 or older, and in one, you need a written note from your parents saying "the right to keep and bear arms is the right to a free America." If your parents are reluctant to buy you one of your own, just use theirs. It's up in the drawer next to their bed.

5. G.I. Joe with Kung Fu Grip: Great idea this Kung Fu grip. You could latch Joe on the backs of cars with it, or onto your dog's tail. Or take off Joe's head, put an M-80, inside, put the head back on, leaving a little of the fuse dangling, latch

Joe's Kung Fu grip onto the end of a rope, light the M-80, start spinning the rope in the air with Joe spinning a good distance from your hand and watch those fireworks. War is hell and, as you'll see, having a Kung Fu grip doesn't make it much better.

6. Prosthetic Limbs: I was about 13 (old enough for a handgun in most states) when I realized there was a whole Christmas catalogue, not just the toy pages. Sears or somebody even had fake limbs. Now if these weren't the coolest! Parents really like it when you don't

ask for stuff from the adult sections of the wish book and they especially like it when you don't ask for the fake leg.

As I grew up, I questioned why one would buy someone a prosthetic limb for Christmas. It would look real conspicuous under the tree and it seems like its presence would kind of bum everyone out.

7. Bonzo Punching Bags: There's nothing more fun than beating the living sin out of an inflatable clown. It's particularly fun on Christmas morning. Our parents

See TOYS on 15



Top Drawer

Vintage Clothing & Accessories



For Holiday Dressing
and Gift Giving



Corner of 27th and Vine
Tues. - Fri. 12-6 p.m.
Sat. 10-5 p.m.

When you're looking for the best,
take a look in the Top Drawer!

Considering a Career in a Medical Field?



Your college science credits can give you a head start in your training to become a

Medical Laboratory Technician

at Southeast Community College/Lincoln Campus

- Earn an Associate of Applied Science Degree in 2 years or less
- Transfer credits accepted
- Excellent job opportunities and free job placement assistance

For more information, contact:
Admissions Office

**Southeast
community
college**

8800 "O" Street • Lincoln, NE 68520
(402) 471-3333

Printed in USA

Can You Offer a Creative Contribution to Your Field?

Enter the Zenith Data Systems

MASTERS of INNOVATION COMPETITION

Win a \$5,000* Zenith Computer System.

We're searching for tomorrow's innovators. If you've developed or used software or hardware—that is compatible with Zenith Data Systems products—to creatively address a problem or task in your field of study, we want to hear from you. You could win a \$5,000* Zenith Data Systems computer system for yourself, \$5,000* worth of computer equipment for your college campus given in your name, and national recognition from your peers.

For More Information And Official Rules, Call 1-800-553-0301.
Competition Ends March 1, 1989. Void Where Prohibited.



THE QUALITY GOES IN BEFORE THE NAME GOES ON*

*Prize values based on current Zenith Data Systems' standard educational pricing.

Albert Einstein licensed by The Roger Richman Agency, Inc.—Beverly Hills, CA.

© 1988, Zenith Data Systems