

Vic Reiling Prototype Game and Toy Donation

Notes by Chris Bensch, December 10, 2008

Items picked up from [REDACTED] on July 31, 2008

Vic started work at Fisher-Price in 1970. In 1974, he left for Milton Bradley where he spent three years as product director for two of their divisions. After that, he became a freelance toy and game designer.

Five prototype toys and associated materials to be donated in 2008: Happy Valley, Mad Machine, Tooney Bird, TV1 and EMT sets, and Carry & Play

1. "Tooney Bird," 1995—includes 1 prototype, 3 drawings, and 2 photos. A true prototype, this concept was never sold. The topknot on the bird controls the pitch of the song at left wing. The notes are the 8 colors. The right wing lets you play a tune. Vic envisioned it being licensed in the form of Donald Duck. It contains batteries in the body. He showed it a lot of places, but it never sold.
2. "TV1" and "EMT Set," 1985—includes 2 prototypes. Never sold. These were like a doctor set but with a different angle. The EMT set has a blood pressure cuff, mask with air pump, D-fib, cell phone, x-ray, drawer for medicines, and a splint (that would originally have had Velcro). It's more a shoulder bag than a backpack. The TV1 set is for a reporter. The mike has an air control. The tape rewinds and the monitor mirrors show different angles.
3. "Happy Valley," 1980—includes 100+ prototype parts and 5 picture boards. Never sold but optioned by Fisher-Price. Nic will add a rubber band to the water tower.
4. "Carry and Play," 1987—includes 1 prototype, 2 drawings, and 1 photo board. Never sold. The rink links the cloth play panel and lets you gather up all the contents inside. Moms love toys with storage capacity. Soft figures called "Socksies" were intended for use with it.
5. "Mad Machine," 1990—includes 1 prototype. Never sold. The rider's legs extend beyond the steering wheel. It has direct drive with no gear shifting. The front pivots 360 degrees. Uses a 6-volt battery. The battery is on one side, the gear train on the other—very compact and very easy to maneuver.

Four prototype toys and associated materials to be donated in 2009 and on loan to the museum until then: Auto Exporter, Builder Bob, Animated Blackboard, and Things That Never Were

1. "Auto Exporter," 1990—includes 1 prototype and 2 drawings. This was a big one that never sold. Vic intended it for Hot Wheels. It comes with a dock, ship, swivel crane, elevator to take cars to different decks, unload off each deck out the ramp at the back. He never knew why it didn't sell. A model like this takes about a week to build. The crane functions as a handle when it's latched. Vic bends and cuts out plastic, all the while keeping in mind how it might be molded in the production process.
2. "Builder Bob," 1990s—includes 1 prototype and 4 drawings. Never sold. Missing one wheel. Bob's arms can lift or maneuver devices. Each hand triggers separately.
3. "Animated Blackboard," 1998—includes 1 prototype. Never sold.
4. "Things That Never Were," 2002—includes 1 prototype. Never sold. These are collectible models inspired by Popular Science magazine of the 1930s. Along with the model, you'd get a cover with an article predicting a future that never happened.

Five prototype toys and associated materials to be donated in 2010 and on loan to the museum until then: Big Build, Ocean Explorer, Clip Game, Crash One, and Puss-in-Boots

1. "Ocean Explorer," 1985—includes 1 prototype and 1 drawing. Never sold. This floats with a magnifier so that you could see underwater. It also had a dredge device. The diving device could launch down the center ramp. The ramp can pull up the device from the rear. The crank can pivot. The upright latch goes in the center locked position. Vic says that he had just enough drawing skills to cartoon and "toys are essentially cartoons of reality."
2. "Clip Game," 1999—includes 3 versions (Hair, Barber Shop, and Tie), 2 game boards, 2 rules, and 1 prototype (with four gooney birds). Never sold. The game's objective is to be the first one to have your bird feathers its nest from its tail. In another variation, you'd cut the tie. And there's another variation that involves cutting a girl's long hair. The game also lets you color and then trim the hair.
3. "Big Build," 1990—includes 100s of prototype parts and 20-30 photos. Never sold. Inspired by the Bild E-Z sets from the 1920s. Vic thought this would be the perfect size to make Matchbox parking garages. There are hundreds of prototype parts out of polypropylene, so that it has flex in attaching the flaps.
4. "Crash One," 2003—includes 1 prototype and 2 photos. Never sold. The boat tilts. It runs on radio control through a course of buoys. You can pick up frogmen, etc. It was inspired by the radio control boat ponds at amusement parks.
5. "Puss in Boots," 1992—includes 1 prototype. This toy is designed to be like Dapper Dan and Dressy Bessie, where kids learn how to manage clothing closures. Vic wanted it to have unisex appeal and lots of different functions. This is made by Karen Lyons, a woman in Seattle, who Vic considers to be the best soft plush cat maker in the business. He feels this is a brilliant prototype.

Four prototype toys and associated materials to be donated in 2011 and on loan to the museum until then: Tower City, Whale Boat, What's Under My Bed, and Power Masters

1. "Whale Boat," 1982—includes 1 prototype and 1 drawing. Never sold. The flukes are offset and a trigger tail. Jonah's cabin is inside. The drawing is of a hippo line extension in the form of a bus.
2. "What's Under My Bed," 2001—includes 1 prototype. This is a game involving coins in the bed. Each kid would have a rug to match their coins. Fisher-Price did a final design study, but the concept ultimately never sold. Parker Bros. brought out a game called "Don't Wake Daddy" and Fisher-Price didn't want to follow the same path with a similar-looking product.
3. "Tower City," (date?)—includes two prototypes and 6 photos. Designed for Micro Machines and optioned but never sold. The tower folds out into a complete city. Galoob paid \$35,000 for advance on royalties and then the project never proceeded. Then Galoob built their own model and included other details. The model was made by their pros in China.
4. "Power Masters," 1988—includes extensive set, folder, and videos. A Lionel product, designed to help them break out of the train niche. Vic had four TV-promoted toys coming out at Toy Fair that year. The line's debut was scheduled for 1988 and Lionel funded three 30-minute animated TV shows based on the toy. The concept is set in 2088 at the Mount Liberty headquarters where Lucky Cooper and the Power Masters reside. Catch phrases in the advertising include "Remember, You Hold the Power" and "A New Toy from Lionel." Buyers at Toy Fair said there were too many comparable action figures coming to market and that Lionel should wait a year before introducing Power Masters. Vic commented, "Once you do that, your dead meat." All the tooling existed at Lionel. They redid it as a futuristic Marine Corps set. The power unit inserts into different devices, and they operate. Farradays, Engs, and the Fortress of Ohm are all names based on electricity. The original concept document of Motor Masters (in the folder) led to the

Power Masters as the application. Vic wanted to animate the train cars originally. He did a whole construction line using the same principle.

Manufactured toys, minor prototypes, and associated materials to be donated in 2012 and on loan to the museum until then

1. "Hand Command" Turbo-Prop by Tonka, 1980—includes 2 prototypes, 2 manufactured boxes with toys, 1 drawing, and 1 photo. Uses a pump like a pistol trigger. The landing gear retracts. It sold 1.5 million in its first year. Tonka got so excited with the product that they went on to a biplane design. Lee Majors licensed the Tonka Fall Guy Stunt Plane. They tooled up to produce 2.5 million, but only sold 200,000. The helicopter is a prototype that Vic did for year three. The drawing is of a cargo sea plane. The helicopter body unfolds like a Transformer—it's another prototype but is missing its blade.
2. "Play Rider" by Roadmaster, 1988—includes 1 toy and 3 photos. The Play Rider is a combination toy box, ride-on, and drawing board. Vic received a \$25,000 advance and then no more money.
3. "Flight Display" by Ertl, 1994—includes 3 manufactured packaged toys and 6 photos. Vic's contribution to this item was the disk that suspended the plane at any angle in its mount. The examples are all sealed in boxes.
4. "Pumpkin Farm" by Child Guidance, 1980—includes 1 toy and 1 box. The tractor rotates on a turntable. The toy was once TV-promoted, but didn't sell all that well. The packaging illustrates all the actions that the toy can perform.
5. "Sears Special" Doll House by Fisher-Price, 1970—includes 1 toy. This was the first toy that Vic ever designed at Fisher-Price. They needed a quick special for Christmas at Sears. This design could use existing furniture, so that was a time and cost savings. It's made of Masonite and had a carrying handle. They sold 40,000-50,000 that first Christmas and it continued selling for five more Christmas seasons.
6. "Cash Register" by Fisher-Price, 1973—includes 1 toy. Fisher-Price already had a cash register in their line of toys. This example is missing a label. It has sized coin slots. If you ring up Sale or Change, one goes out the change dispenser and the other sends it into a cash drawer. Vic went for the nostalgic NCR cash register look.
7. "GI Joe Battle Platform" by Hasbro, 1984—includes 1 packaged toy and 3 drawings. Vic had shown Hasbro the platform toy idea. It had started as a 3-legged oil rig with variable heights for each leg. The big innovation was the design for how the legs would work. Then he branded it for GI Joe on the drawing panel. In response to his pitch, Hasbro responded, "No, not for us." Four years later, Hasbro brought out the Battle Platform. Vic recognized it and returned to Hasbro with Jack Holden. When Vic pointed out the similarity, Hasbro agreed to pay a royalty of 2%. Vic and Jack each received \$85,000.
8. "Shape Tunes Piano" by Hasbro, 1984—includes 1 toy and 1 package. Hasbro produced this in the early 80s. You match the shapes to the colors of the tone bars and then you could play the tune.
9. "Chasers" by Hasbro, 1990—includes 1 toy with packaging and 1 patent. The control box is in the helicopter—you tilt the copter to either side. Vic actually received a patent for this one. But not too many were manufactured.
10. "Play Family Castle" by Fisher-Price, 1974—includes 1 photograph of the original prototype. The separate tower on the photo was based on the Fisher-Price farm's silo. The "water gate" at the lower level had to be renamed the "moat gate" in 1973 when Nixon got it trouble. Fortunately, they caught the change before the packaging was printed. The dungeon had an image of a Quaker counting his gold. Vic spent about a year working on this project. [The copy of this toy that's in the museum's collection seems to be missing the pink dragon.]

11. "Hit Stix" by Nasta, 1988-1992—includes 5 toys in packaging, a folder with patents, and illustrations of the design. Vic did this with partner Brian Dean. It was introduced in 1988. It allowed you to play the drums, but you didn't need an actual drum set—and only cost \$19.95. Hit Stix 2 had 44 different sounds. It ranked as the #5 top toy of 1988. It made the company Nasta a success. Buddy Brian had seen an air guitar contest—he'd been a drummer in high school and wanted to do that again. Sold a few million copies.
12. "My Puppy Puddles" by Hasbro, 1982—includes 1 toy and packaging. Vic wanted to do a toy that would be controversial. The puppy piddles on his training tray. It was inspired by wetting dolls and is mint-in-box. Between 150,000 and 200,000 sold in a year.
13. "Play Desk" by Fisher-Price, 1972—includes 1 toy and packaging. This may still be in production today. It makes use of Fisher-Price's magnetic alphabet letters. They brought in Dr. Kagan, a child psychologist from Harvard to work on the messages on the cardboard panels—you could do exercises with those using chalk or magnetic letters. Vic did this as "work for hire" so he didn't participate in the profits. This is a toy with no gender bias—the kind that every toy company likes to have as part of its product line.
14. "Giggle Gang" by Lakeside, 1982—includes 2 toys and packaging, 1 prototype. The basic concept was snap-on parts to fit a donut shape. Vic sold the concept to Lakeside Games, and they went with a Velcro donut—but the concept died. It was one of the first toys that Vic did when he was totally independent as an inventor/designer.
15. "National Enquirer Game" by Tyco, 1988—includes 1 toy and packaging, 1 prototype. Vic created this game with his son Peter for Tyco. It had a fabulous commercial done by Spitting Image using rubber puppets of celebrities. In the game, you would get photos and headlines and put funny things together. Getting usable photographs without rights issues proved to be tough. Politicians were good. They tried to cut the price and put the game in an envelope instead of a box, later in its product run.
16. "Mighty Max" by Bao (French company), 2007—includes 1 toy/packaging, 1 prototype, and 1 photo. This is a talking truck done in France. The company wanted to add electronics. Has a tilt function—the sound is tangential. It was named after Vic's grandson Max. He tried for years to come up with a good use for the tilt steering technique that he'd developed.
17. "Best Sellers" by Faby Games, 2005—includes 1 toy/packaging and 2 photos. Vic's son Peter played a game like this in college that he and his friends invented. This was the first creative writing game. You'd get a theme, use the letters in the text, and get judged on the content of what you wrote. It cost \$25 at Barnes & Noble and was too expensive. They're going to try it as a card game—cheaper.
18. "Water Lazer" by Multi Toy, 1986—includes 1 toy/packaging. The early concept let you launch toy cars etc. using "power gloves." Touching the thumb and finger completes the circuit and activates a pump. It sold well for a couple years.
19. "Sesame Street Play Set" by Fisher-Price, 1971—includes 1 toy. This is one of the first toys that Vic ever worked on at Fisher-Price. It's absolutely scaled to the real Sesame Street set. Vic's 4-year-old son was a viewer of SS. Fisher-Price was tentative about the product because of the high royalty that CTW demanded. CTW had produced SS merchandise with another company in 1969, but it was poorly made and sold badly. This set is missing one or two characters, notably Mr. Hooper.
20. "Play Family Ferry Boat" by Fisher-Price, 1975—includes 1 toy. This was a follow up to the success of the houseboat. It's basically the last toy that Vic produced while he worked at Fisher-Price.
21. "Busy Puppet" by Gabriel—includes 1 toy. It was promoted by Dick Van Dyke and encouraged children to feed the animals.

22. "How Much Longer?"—includes 1 prototype. On a trip, Mom and Dad would click in the time until the arrival at your destination and then the kids could keep track of the time counting down.
23. "Big Dig" by Mattel, 1978—includes 1 toy. It was meant to be an indoor sandbox. Coordinated with a line of wood and metal vehicles, also from Mattel. [When we do our oral history with Vic, ask him why sand was so important.] Mattel featured the toy in two catalog pages, but it never sold well.
24. "Learning Stix"—includes 1 prototype, photos, and diagrams. This consists of a hinged 1-7 that lets you form any letter of the alphabet. The photos are of Vic's elder son Peter using the toy.
25. "Bouncing Buggy" by Fisher-Price—includes one structural model. The Fisher-Price clown car had been around forever, but it had become dated and needed a makeover. Vic reconceived it as a 6-wheel ATV. This is an example of the structure for the final design model. Vic made a wooden form and vacuformed the model.
26. "Real Estate" by Fun Rise, 1990s—includes photos of prototypes. It came out with two houses in almost HO scale. The child got the deed, house, and all the furniture. The lights really work—a big deal during this period.
27. "Buzzin' Buzz Saw" by Play-Doh—includes 1 manufactured toy in box. The wire vibrates and makes you feel like you're sawing wood. You cut through "wood-scented Play-Doh compound." Vic says that it sold beautifully for one year and then it was over.
28. "Mobile Crime Lab"—Marvin Glass Associates made it into the final version, based on Vic's concept. Vic worked with the FBI on the idea. Includes a mockup box that contains mug shots, fingerprinting set, etc.
29. "Belly Ball"—Vic will look for the Sports Illustrated article about it. They used phenolic micro-balloons that are used to clean up oil spills. They were sold in hang boxes. It's a wonderful soft material and the toy sold well for a year or two. They're easy to catch—soft like a pillow—and the tied off end of the balloon looked like a belly button.
30. "Fun Rolls Art Center" by Hasbro, 1980—includes mint-in-box toy. The paper is printed as a tear-off roll with cartoons. Hasbro wanted it for their Romper Room line.
31. "Crash Zone" by Fisher-Price, 1989—The original prototype tested higher than any Fisher-Price toy. Moms and kids loved it in the original bumper cars form. However, Fisher-Price decided to go for an older audience and introduced the complete product line simultaneously. They invested in TV commercials and had projected \$30 million in business. F-P asked Vic to reduce his royalty by ½ point—Vic asked for more up front in exchange. It was a total flop. Others came out with similar things. The stunt drivers in the cars got ejected—wrong for safety. It was a big investment and one of F-P's bigger failures. It came out at Toy Fair in Feb. 1989. They made a last-ditch effort with a full page ad in USA Today at Christmas 1989. Vic will get us preliminary shots of the original concept—it looked very pre-school style. The original bumper disk worked better. Kids thought the Fisher-Price brand was "too baby" to find this product appealing.