

Title:

A Classic Toy, By Accident

Word Count:

449

Summary:

With the popularity of Internet shopping, classic toys that were hard to find, have now started to find a whole new audience. These classics, which sold very well after they were introduced, never seem to go out of style and can still bring a smile to any child's face.

Let's step into the past and take a look into the history of one of these classic toys.

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Keywords:

classic toys,educational toys,internet shopping

Article Body:

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Let's step into the past and take a look into the history of one of these classic toys.

In 1943, a Naval engineer accidentally knocked some springs off of a shelf while he was working on a meter designed to monitor horsepower on battleships. He marveled at the way they "walked" instead of falling and the odd movement of these springs gave Richard James an idea and an instant toy was born. That toy: The Slinky.

Richard James then spent the next two years testing and refining the best steel gauge and coil to utilize for his new toy. His wife, Betty appropriately found the perfect name for this new toy- a Slinky; which is the Swedish word meaning traespiral or sleek.

The couple borrowed five hundred dollars and James designed a machine to coil

eighty feet of wire into a two-inch spiral and manufacture their new toy. Sales were slow at first, but soared after the Slinky was demonstrated at Gimbel's Department Store in Philadelphia for the Christmas season in 1945. The first 400 sold within the ninety-minute demonstration and a new fad had begun.

Around 1960, Richard James suffered what some called a mid-life crisis and left his wife, their six children and joined a Bolivian religious cult. He also deserted the Slinky toy he worked so hard to produce and left the company in debt and ruin. Betty James took over as CEO of James Industries and introduced other toys for the "Slinky line-up" including: Slinky pets, crazy eyes Slinky (glasses with Slinky-extended fake eyeballs), neon Slinky, and also replaced the original black-blue Swedish steel with American steel. Additionally she moved the company headquarters from Philadelphia to Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania and began an aggressive advertising campaign, complete with the now famous Slinky jingle:

"What walks down stairs, alone in pairs, And makes a Slinkity sound?
A spring, a spring, a marvelous thing, Everyone knows it's Slinky...
It's Slinky, it's Slinky, for fun it's a wonderful toy
It's Slinky, it's Slinky, it's fun for a girl or a boy"

However, the Slinky is not just an entertaining toy for children. It is used in schools in physics classes to demonstrate wave properties, forces, and energy states. The Slinky still continues to sell (250 million have been sold to date) and are still manufactured in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania using the original equipment designed by Richard James.