

Changing times affect toyland, altering faces of old favorites

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY
Adults can lament the demise of the 10-cent cup of coffee but other pieces of Americana are passing into history.

Barbie's sophisticated now, and superheros dolls abound. Unfettered by adult concerns over rising prices, youngsters still sneak water guns out of pockets in school hallways and backyards across town. With the advent of spring, kites dot

the sky and announce the coming of good weather.

But a visit to a Farmington toy shop will confirm the suspicion that toys have changed as much as their prices. Paper kites are as rare as dodo birds. And water guns have been transformed.

The standard black water pistol that once was featured at neighborhood candy stores for 10 cents has been glamorized into an accessory worthy of the Godfather. A model has been named after the fictional crime lord.

For more modest types, there's a water gun that fits into the palm of the owner's hand. At first glance, it looks like a plastic toy that's spent the winter next to the furnace.

ITS STRANGE shape allows its owner to hold the gun inside a closed fist. Make a tighter fist and the gun fires a stream of water at the nearest opponent.

In spite of these innovations, the truth remains. The 10-cent water gun has drifted into memory.

"You can't find one that costs 10 cents anymore," confirmed Jean Gagnon, manager of Toy Town, Farmington. "Last year, we sold the guns for 26 cents and more."

"But the water pistol hasn't changed much," she added.

Kites are another annual favorite. Find an old sheet for a tail, and the young kite flyer is in business.

But quit looking for a paper kite with a picture of an airplane printed across the front.

"There are no more 25-cent kites," said Mrs. Gagnon of Garden City. "There are no more paper kites. Sixty-nine cents is a good price to pay for a plastic kite."

Today, kites are emblazoned with the likenesses of favorite super heroes. For young Trekkies, there's a kite that is distinguished by a picture of the starship Enterprise.

"Kites are more sophisticated now," Mrs. Gagnon said.

SUPER HEROES have conquered the toy world. Their pictures can be

seen on toys ranging from dart guns to kites to dolls.

To fit into the super-hero fad, a dart gun is packaged to be a web shooter and features the picture of comic book super hero Spiderman.

Superhero dolls are selling well also, according to Mrs. Gagnon. In addition to hulkling or web-spinning heroes, dolls still are available in human form.

Like everyone else now, the dolls want to be stars. Barbie sports a longer, softer hairdo to match her more fashionable figure and clothes.

"Barbie's a superstar now," laughed Mrs. Gagnon. "She's got more glamorous clothes too. She's graduated."

Ken's kept up with the times, too. Mattel gave him a longer hairstyle and call him, the Now Ken.

If dolls are becoming superstars, then it's only logical that superstars become dolls. Admiring youngsters can have replicas of the Welcome Back Kotter and Space 1999 casts as well as Donnie and Marie Osmond.

The dolls attract boys as well as girls, according to Mrs. Gagnon.

"THERE ISN'T ANY line between girls and boys toys anymore. They buy the same things."

When the youngsters tire of kites, squirt guns and dolls, they can make noise with cap guns.

"Guns have dropped from favor, but cap guns are still a big favorite," Mrs. Gagnon said.

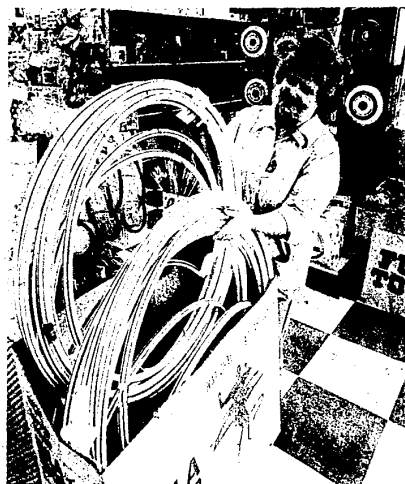
The paper roll of caps has been replaced with plastic caps that resemble bullets.

"The plastic ones are safer. The paper ones used to catch on fire," Mrs. Gagnon still stocks the paper rolls.

On the quieter side of spring games, youngsters can still spend time blowing pretty bubbles into the air. For the ambitious bubble maker, the formula is available in economy-sized bottles.

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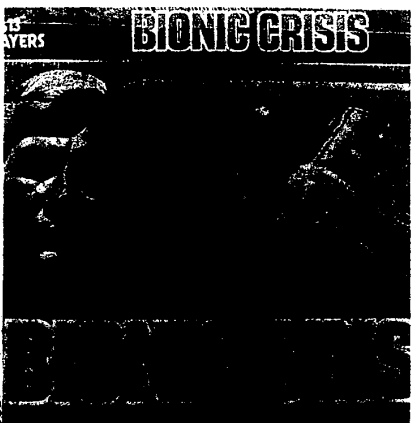
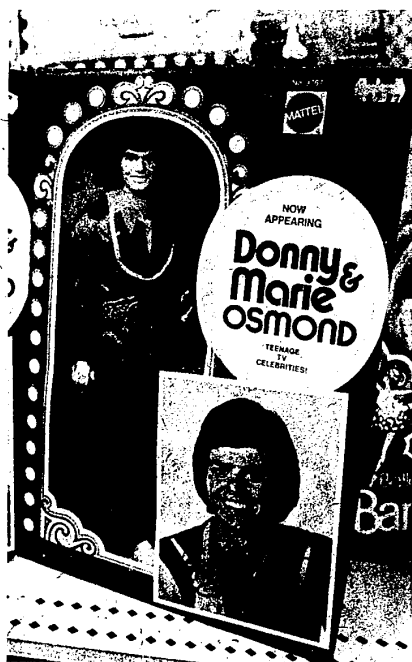
Mrs. Jean Gagnon, mgr. of Toy Town, Farmington, shows off her stock of hula hoops. The silent hoops have been updated. They now make a whooshing noise.



Greg Hiner, stockboy at Toy World, contemplates the possibilities of kiting. The age-old toys are plastic, now. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)



David Thomas, 7, of Plymouth, tries to cagle Filmore the dog from his house at the toy shop. David prefers puppets, cars and stuffed animals to guns and toy soldiers.



While some of the old favorites remain, toys have come into the age of television heroes and super-heroes. Dolls are popular among boys and girls. The Hulk, Falcon and other super-heroes from the pages of comic books and from the television screen are now dolls. The Bionic Man has a game and a doll named after him. Entertainers gifted with fans that like to believe they're superhuman have joined in the doll market. Donny and Marie Osmond have dolls in their own likeness. The duo can be supplied with matching outfits and microphones. For members of the jump rope set who want a greater challenge, there are games like the Bionic Crisis. First a bionic crisis, next a national security crisis and then, the world can open for an ambitious gamesman.

Staff
photos
by
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DIRECT FROM CALIFORNIA



PEASANT IMAGES
TO STIR A
CALIFORNIA SOUL.
CHESA DAVIS PAIRS
SUMMER-CRISP
EYELET WITH
THE SOFTNESS OF
SHEER NAVY VOILE.

Romance dressing to tempt
a summer twilight. White
cotton eyelet streamer skirt
with sash, \$70, is trimmed
in navy to match the cotton
voile peasant top, \$34.
In sizes S, M, L. By Chesha
Davis for W.W. Duke. In
The Woodward Shops.

Summer's in the bag with
white eyelet. Drawstring
dance bag, \$15. Button
clutch, \$12. In Handbags.

hudson's

