

D R . T O M O R R O W

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LESSONS FROM THE FUTURE

TO MAKE A MILLION -- DO THE IMPOSSIBLE

Did you ever wonder if bumblebees went to school? Engineers do and they say bumblebees can't fly. Jerry Hill didn't go to school either. He's the guy who designed the flying "Whirligig", and when he showed a prototype of this cylindrical air foil to UBC engineers, they said this wouldn't fly either. They said he was wasting his time. I just "flew" it. It works.

Conventional education is based on the past. That was fine in ages with little change but today both the rules and the game have changed. Now we can accomplish things impossible years, months or just days ago. Take bio-technology: nobody ever heard of it until recently. Another column describes what shocking things "uneducated" "BIO-HACKERS' are about to do!

But let's get back to Jerry Hill, the inventor of the "Whirligig". He had the unfortunate experience of being on a construction scaffolding when it collapsed. His right leg, right foot, left shoulder and left arm were broken. This was serendipity in a new cloak. It gave him time to think. He had the time to toss cards into a hat or indulge in something more constructive. He chose the latter.

At the end of a two-month recuperative period, he had a working prototype of a childhood experience in which his brother showed him how to take the tops of soup cans and turn them into the pre-Frisbee version of fun. Hill was only five then and a bit slower than his seven-year-old brother and started throwing the can in the air instead of the lid. Time passed. Hill, now age 35, had a dream during his hospital stay in which he relived the soup can experience of his early childhood.

Tossed like a baseball, the Whirligig flies on, not through the air, similar to the aerodynamic action of a Frisbee. Once skill is developed, various swoops, swerves, dodges and curves at distances up to 50 metres can be accomplished. The Whirligig can be caught with ease and at no danger as the whole flying machine weighs less than 30 grams. Even such professional league pitchers as Greg Hibbard of the Chicago White Socks and Jeff Bittiger of the Los Angeles Dodgers have enjoyed the challenge of controlling a Whirligig, according to Hill.

Hill contacted Ed Werner of Toronto, one of the principals of the Trivial Pursuit phenomenon, who sent Hill a plane ticket and instructions to meet him for lunch in Los Angeles. Both wanted to escape current snowstorms.

Why would a guy who made multi-millions with his last big hit, Trivial Pursuit, be interested in this toy? "After our success we had a deluge of products submitted to us but the Whirligig stood head and shoulders above the rest," Werner explains. Werner is now a partner and major shareholder in the Whirligig corporation. His Trivial Pursuit venture returned \$700,000 on a \$1,000 investment and the game is

still a big seller (The Soviet Union gets it later this year).

Last year Whirligig was placed on the market in nine cities in eastern Canada and was an immediate sell-out in the \$5-\$6 range. Soon Whirligig will fly in the ten-times-larger U.S. market. The marketing slogan is "facing the new dynamic as pleasure knows no time".

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