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**For Immediate Release**

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## **2015 National Toy Hall of Fame Inductees Announced Today: Puppet, Twister, and Super Soaker**

Please note: Images can be found in the [full online press kit \(http://www.museumofplay.org/press/kits/national-toy-hall-fame-inductees-2015\)](http://www.museumofplay.org/press/kits/national-toy-hall-fame-inductees-2015).

ROCHESTER, New York—They represent a wide range of play, from role-playing and imaginative play to active and outdoor play. The simple, ancient **puppet**; innovative and once-controversial **Twister**; and raucous, splashy **Super Soaker** became the latest inductees to The Strong's [National Toy Hall of Fame \(http://www.toyhalloffame.org\)](http://www.toyhalloffame.org). The honorees were selected from a field of 12 finalists that also included: American Girl Dolls, Battleship, coloring book, Jenga, PLAYMOBIL, scooter, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, top, and Wiffle Ball.

**About puppet:** The puppet appeared thousands of years ago and in nearly every culture—including across Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Plato and Aristotle wrote of puppets, and ancient puppeteers presented the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* using figures made of clay and ivory. Early Chinese and Japanese puppeteers fashioned miniature figures for religious ceremonies and the telling of folktales and epic stories of gods and heroes. In Europe, the Christian church used puppets to present morality plays. Eventually puppet theater included secular stories and comedies, and puppetry became a popular form of rowdy entertainment at carnivals, fairs, and market gatherings. Europeans brought puppets to the New World, and the playful figures entertained Americans in street theaters and later in vaudeville houses and on public stages across the country. In the 20th century, television spread the popularity of puppets among children and adults and produced some beloved American icons.

"Puppets belong in the play world of individual children too," says Curator Patricia Hogan. "Hand puppets have been a popular toy form for more than a century. Playing with puppets helps children develop coordination and manual dexterity. Children use their imaginations to provide voice, plot, and purpose to their puppet characters. Using puppets also allows children to try on new personalities, emotions, and goals."

**About Twister:** In 1964 toy inventor Reyn Guyer conceived a shoe polish promotion as a game on a colored mat, with people serving as the playing pieces. Guyer hired two salesmen to help him with the development of the game, and the three devised a version they called Pretzel. They took the idea to the Milton Bradley Company, which saw promise, and the men received a patent for the design. The company changed the name of the game to Twister. Then Sears Roebuck and Company refused to carry the seemingly racy game in its 1966 catalog, so Milton Bradley cancelled production. A public relations firm had already placed Twister in the lineup for Johnny Carson's *The Tonight Show* though, and no one received word of the cancellation. Carson and actress Eva Gabor played the game to the delight of millions of viewers, and Twister went on to sell more than three million copies in 1967.

Some saw Twister as a passing fad, but large-scale Twister matches, popular on college campuses in the 1980s, boosted sales," says Curator Nic Ricketts. "And increasingly, Twister found favor among very young children. Candy Land-like simplicity of play—just know your colors—and an inexpensive price keeps Twister on many families' toy shelves."

Says Reyn Guyer, original inventor of the Twister game, "For almost 50 years, the Twister game has been giving endless hours of enjoyment to kids and families by challenging them to using their bodies as the game pieces, and to bend and stretch in challenging ways. When my team first conceptualized the game in 1964, we never could have imagined how engrained in pop-culture and beloved by kids it would become. It's truly an honor to have the recognition of the National Toy Hall of Fame."

**About Super Soaker:** The Super Soaker story began in the early 1980s, when Dr. Lonnie Johnson, a

Tuskegee Institute-trained mechanical and nuclear engineer, replaced Freon with pressurized water vapor in a heat-pump he was designing for NASA's Galileo Mission to Jupiter. Tinkering with the pump's design at home, Johnson hooked the nozzle up to his bathroom faucet. The steady stream that shot across the room gave Johnson an idea for a high-powered water blaster. From PVC pipe and an empty soda bottle, he improvised a model that featured an air pressure chamber and a water reservoir. Johnson later enlarged the tank and moved it to the top of the blaster, making the prototype look even more like a prop in a science fiction movie. In 1990 Johnson worked out a deal with Larami Corporation, a maker of inexpensive plastic toys and action figures, to produce his invention. Larami's aggressive advertising sold 27 million Super Soakers at \$10 each in the first three years of production.

Says Chris Bensch, The Strong's vice president for collections, "Fun with Super Soakers yields several dividends: exercise in the chases and brain-training while calculating vectors to moving targets and improvising tactics on the fly. Getting soaked in the process adds up to good, clean fun."

### **About the National Toy Hall of Fame**

Anyone can nominate a toy for annual induction into the [National Toy Hall of Fame](http://www.toyhalloffame.org) (<http://www.toyhalloffame.org>). An internal museum advisory committee comprised of curators and historians reviews the submitted nominations and determines which toys meet the criteria for selection. A national selection advisory committee then reviews the list of toy finalists. Toys are celebrated year-round in a state-of-the-art exhibit at The Strong museum in Rochester, New York. For more information about the hall and to see the list of previous inductees, visit [toyhalloffame.org](http://www.toyhalloffame.org) (<http://www.toyhalloffame.org/>)

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