

## **THE FISHER-PRICE STORY**

The year was 1930. With the shadows of the Depression still looming, a fledgling toy company introduced the world to its “16 Hopefuls.” The whimsical and magical elements captured in these 16 toys became a distinguishing trait of the newly established toy company, following it through its rich 75-year history in which it has become the world’s largest and most trusted name in preschool toys – Fisher-Price.

It all began with three energetic entrepreneurs who were each in touch with their “inner child.” Herm Fisher had previously been involved in the manufacturing, selling and advertising of games by a company in Churchville, New York. Irving Price was an early retiree from F.W. Woolworth and Company, at the time one of the country’s largest variety stores, and Helen Schelle was owner of the Penny Walker Toy Store in Binghamton, New York.

In addition to their vast experience, all three founders shared a similar vision. An early creed for the new business, and one that has been followed for 75 years since, stated that each Fisher-Price toy must have “intrinsic play value, ingenuity, strong construction, good value for the money, and action.” The creed went on to say; “children love best the cheerful, friendly toys with amusing action, toys that appeal to their imagination, toys that do something new and surprising and funny. This idea is so simple, it is sometimes overlooked – but if you have forgotten your own younger days, test it out on the nearest children.”

The trio established a manufacturing headquarters in a simple concrete-block structure in East Aurora, New York, a small village 20 miles southeast of Buffalo. With 15 initial employees, mostly recruited from the immediate area, the company was banded together by a strong faith in their founders and a realization that a unity of purpose would be required if the company were to succeed in the current economic climate.

## 2/Fisher-Price Story

Despite the slow-down in the economy into the late 1930s, consumer interest in Fisher-Price toys continued to grow. Especially with the introduction of the Snoopy Sniffer, the realistic looking black and white dog, that so exceeded Fisher-Price's expectations that the company had a hard time keeping up with orders.

In 1943, Fisher-Price joined the many companies throughout the U.S. in contributing to the war effort. There was virtually no production of toys during World War II. Instead, Fisher-Price provided the military with such items as medical chests, ammunition crates and repair parts for fighter planes.

In the economic boom of the 1950s, Fisher-Price recognized the versatility and increasing popularity of plastic and began to use it in their toys, the first of which was the Buzzy Bee. Plastic allowed the designers to incorporate more vivid and longer-lasting decorations into the toys. By the end of the decade, there were 39 toys in the Fisher-Price line, more than half of which incorporated colorful, durable plastic. Two new toys both introduced in 1957, the Snap-Lock® Beads and the Corn Popper®, represented the quality and ingenuity of Fisher-Price toys and remain classics in the line today.

Towards the end of the 1950s, Fisher-Price introduced the precursor to one of the longest-running and most popular brands in the entire toy industry – the Safety School Bus. The Safety School Bus included six little removable wooden peg figures that so increased the play value of the toy that they sparked a line of playsets, including a farm, house, school and garage. These “Play Family” playsets eventually became the world of “Little People®” and for more than four decades, Little People toys and playsets have helped toddlers grow and make new discoveries about the world around them.

### 3/Fisher-Price Story

At the start of the 1960s, Fisher-Price introduced yet another icon that remains a classic symbol of Fisher-Price today – the Rock-A-Stack®. This simple stacking toy was introduced as an educational toy and showed the company’s commitment to creating products that combine fun with developmental qualities.

In 1961, Fisher-Price broke new ground with the establishment of the Fisher-Price Play Laboratory. The first of its kind in the toy industry, the Play Lab provides a place where designers and engineers can observe children playing with products and gain immediate feedback from the “experts.” The success of the Play Lab carried on through the subsequent decades and is still the hub of all Fisher-Price toy development today.

As the decade of the 1960s came to a close, Herm Fisher and the stockholders of Fisher-Price approved the company’s acquisition by The Quaker Oats Company. The acquisition ushered in a new era of growth for Fisher-Price: international growth accelerated; Fisher-Price launched its “Crib and Playpen” line of toys for infants; the company expanded into new categories such as arts and crafts, dolls and trucks; and for the first time, national TV advertising was used to promote Fisher-Price toys to parents.

In the mid-1980s, Fisher-Price introduced its first line of juvenile products that included high chairs, nursery lamps and diaper bags. With the strength of the trusted Fisher-Price name behind these products, the line was a huge success. Today, known internally as babygear™, this collection features cutting-edge, innovative products like bouncers, monitors, swings and more that are better for mom, and better for baby. With that, the company was no longer only a toy company.

#### 4/Fisher-Price Story

Fisher-Price Toys changed its name to simply Fisher-Price. The name change reflected the company's expansion into juvenile, licensed and other non-toy related children's products. For a short time, the company also expanded into toys for children over five years of age.

In 1990, The Quaker Oats Company decided it would spin off the Fisher-Price Division. Fisher-Price, Inc. became an independent, publicly traded company listed on the New York Stock Exchange in June of 1991. A new management team at Fisher-Price set to work and re-directed the company's focus towards its core infant and preschool products.

In November of 1993, the stockholders of Fisher-Price, Inc. and Mattel, Inc. joined forces, and through Mattel's strong network of affiliates in Europe, Latin America and Asia, the merger initiated remarkable growth for Fisher-Price in international markets.

The 1990s continued to be a decade of growth. Mattel acquired Kransco, makers of Power Wheels® battery-powered ride-ons, and assigned development of the brand to Fisher-Price. The Power Wheels line features pint-sized versions of some of the most popular vehicles today, including the Jeep® Wrangler, Ford F-150, Chevy® Silverado™, Volkswagen® Beetle, Harley-Davidson® motorcycle and most recently, the Cadillac® Escalade.

In the spring of 1997, the Mattel/Fisher-Price franchise grew through a merger with Tyco Toys, Inc., makers of Matchbox®, Tyco® R/C, View-Master™, Magna Doodle® and Sesame Street® Preschool toys. As part of the restructuring, the Fisher-Price name became the umbrella brand under which *all* Mattel infant and preschool product lines reside. Today, Fisher-Price Brands consists of core product such as View-Master™, Doodle Pro™, Little People®, Power Wheels® and Rescue Heroes™.

## 5/Fisher-Price Story

Also included under Fisher-Price Brands are product lines that feature characters from Sesame Street, Blue's Clues™, Winnie the Pooh™, Barney™ and Dora the Explorer™. These entertainment-based toy lines are designed and marketed out of the company's offices in New York City known as Fisher-Price Friends.

In 2000, the Fisher-Price Brand was recognized as "one of the Top Ten Brands of the 1990s" by Equitrend Surveys. Today, according to market research, Fisher-Price is the #1 brand of infant and preschool toys in the world, with an impressive 100% rate of brand recognition in the United States, and levels of brand awareness that are well above industry competitors in developed markets worldwide.\*

After 75 years, Fisher-Price encompasses the most popular and complete line of preschool toys in the world. An early company slogan, "Our work is child's play" forever rings true as Fisher-Price continues its legacy through 2005 and beyond, a legacy that would make Herm Fisher, Irving Price and Helen Schelle very proud.

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\*Based on aided awareness