

Employee Spotlight

Gordon Barlow

Besides Ideal's *Mouse Trap* (1963), Gordon Barlow was responsible for such great Glass games as Milton Bradley's *Time Bomb* (1964), Ideal's *Monster Lab* (1964), Ideal's *Hoopla* (1966), Parker Brothers' *Gnip Gnop* (1971), Milton Bradley's *Stay Alive* (1971), and Milton Bradley's *Pivot Pool* (1972). Co-workers marveled at his mechanisms, and some referred to him as a mechanical genius.

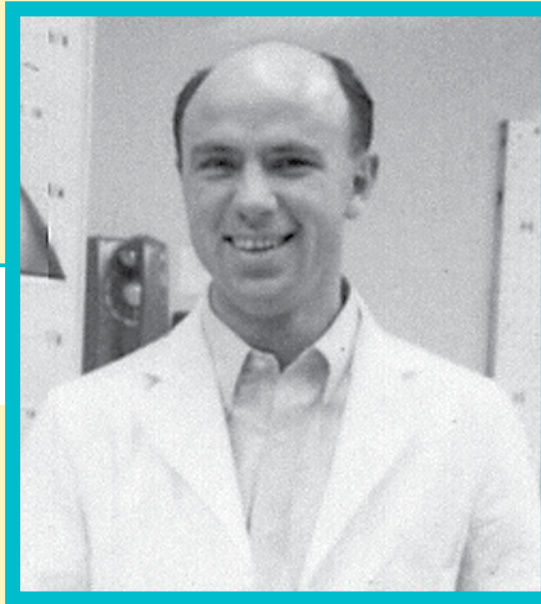
Co-worker and friend Burt Meyer remembers Barlow as, "a very intense guy." When posed with the question as to the particulars on what made Barlow such an effective inventor, Meyer answered, "One of Gordon's great qualities, which is unusual with a lot of designers, is when you're looking for an idea, a solution, to solve a problem, he would come up with idea after idea after idea, and the person that he's talking to would say, no, no, no, and he'd never get pissed off. He would just come up with another idea and another idea."

Meyer continued, "He had a very positive outlook on all of his work. In other words, if you didn't like the idea, it wasn't that you didn't like him, but you were looking for something different. A lot of designers, if they come up with an idea and you say, 'I don't like that,' they think

it's a personal affront, and Gordon was never like that. When I worked with him, he was never like that. He and I worked together a lot, we did a lot, for example, on the *Mouse Trap* game together, just doing that, bouncing stuff back and forth. In that way, he was one of the best designers I've ever known."

Dalia Verbickas recalls that Gordon often worked closely with Marvin and, "Gordon was always very active, always going and doing and

RIGHT A smiling Gordon Barlow circa 1964.



forming ideas.

I don't know if he had a degree in engineering, but he was a designer and engineer at the same time." Jeff Breslow adds, "I think Gordon was one of the more talented designers that we had. And he had the ability to work in toys, games, pretty much anything. He was extremely clever."

Barlow was a native Chicagoan who started with Glass in 1962. He was a fine arts graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and served two years in the U.S. Army. He was married and had a son. Barlow eventually became one of the first employees to be made a partner. He continued inventing toys and games until he left the company after Marvin passed away. At that time he started his own studio in the Chicagoland area called Barlow Design which he ran from 1976 until the 1990s.

Ed Larson was friends with Gordon and had this to say, "Gordon also wanted to be an artist outside of work. He created some really very interesting pieces. They were three-dimensional visual sculptures that moved. He was a meticulous craftsman." Larson described the strained relationship Gordon always had with Marvin. "He really did not like Marvin, and they disliked each other. You know, Marvin would say, I want to make the best game in the world. We were talking about a specific game or something like that. Gordon had no fear of him, and he would say, 'That game's already been made. It's called bridge,' stuff like that. That just angered Marvin. You know, Gordon had a very firm grip on what he knew he could do, and he would not bend to Marvin. Marvin knew that, so they had a kind of a standoffish relationship. They both respected each other, to some degree."

Rock'em Sock'em Robots

"You knocked my block off!" yelled kids in the commercial and in homes everywhere when they played the self-proclaimed, "Battle of the Century." Either you controlled the rollicking Red Rocker or the tough-as-nails Blue Bomber in the two-player championship of the universe. This was real "head-to-head" action, where you could hear the gear-spinning whirr of your opponent's head popping up when you knocked their block off. It was action-packed fun when you pressed or slammed your robot's two yellow plungers, each controlling a left or right punch. Once someone got a KO by landing a punch on a robot's chin, you just pressed the head back down for another



ABOVE Shown here circa 1964 are the three men who contributed to the game (from left to right) Burt Meyer, Marvin Glass and Harry Disko.

round. Made by Marx in 1964 it is still sold today in all its power-punching pugnacity.

Burt Meyer remembers the idea for Rock'em Sock'em Robots began with he and Marvin playing at an arcade in walking distance from the Alexandria Hotel. "Marvin and I used to go to arcades. We'd walk through and look at this and that, looking for ideas. In the arcades, they had a boxing game—they were common,

this format was common in arcades—two-person play. Years ago, they had really good mannequins of two boxers that were made out of metal, and you put your quarter in, and two people played it, and a button right on the chin of one of the boxers—if you hit that button, that boxer falls over. The whole body falls over." He continued, "Marvin and I were in the arcade, and we're looking at this machine, and Marvin said, 'We can do that, let's do something with that. We should do the boxers.' When the figures of the two boxers started hitting each other, we knew we had a great idea for a game kids would love."

"When we started work-

