



all the mechanics on that thing, the Mouse Trap game. The idea, really mechanics with a little help from me, and mostly me saying, ‘Work on it, work on it.’” Sam Cottone confirmed, “The one Gordon Barlow came up with that was a real hit was Mouse

Trap. That was his claim to fame. He actually did that one.”

In the game, players move around the board cooperating to build the elaborate multi-piece mousetrap. Each player has his or her own colored mouse token that moves around the board. Once the trap is completed, each player turns against each other and tries to trap the other player’s mouse by turning the crank.

Once the prototype was finished, it was time to show it around. One thing to point out is that the Glass prototype always had gameplay, and it was always presented as a game. That’s what makes it so different. Even the Glass patent, filed in August of 1962, is titled, “Game with Action Producing Components.” Surprisingly, Ideal was

not the first client to see the game. It had been passed by some of the top game companies first. Meyer explained, “And we showed that around, we showed it to Milton Bradley, we showed it to Parker Bros. They all said, ‘You call that a game? That’s not a game, that’s a toy. We don’t

want anything to do with that.’ And finally we show it to Ideal.”

Marvin showed it directly to the president of Ideal, Lionel Weintraub. Burt Meyer recalls, “Lionel Weintraub’s sitting there and says, ‘Hey, this is going to be a new entry into games—this is going to be a whole new category in my business, a whole new type of game.’ Lionel looked at it like that, and he said, ‘Yeah, this is going to be good.’”

Lionel brought it home to have his kids informally child-test it. Lionel’s son, Richie, remembers being the first kid to play with the prototype. “My dad used to talk about Marvin. He’d go to Chicago



1 Here are clips from the original Mouse Trap TV commercial. The excited announcer exclaimed, “Mouse trap. The wildest, funniest game you’ve ever seen.”



2 “Here’s where the fun begins. Move two spaces. One, Two.”



3 “Start building the mouse trap. Race your mouse around the board building the mouse trap as you go.”



4 “Then comes the funniest part of the mouse trap game.”



5 “MOUSE TRAP! The nuttiest, funniest game you’ve ever seen. It’s a wonderful game, it’s Ideal.”

and bring stuff back from Chicago. In fact, one of my favorite stories is that when I was a teenager I remember my dad went to Chicago and brought home this game. I’ll never forget it. The next day it snowed and, you know, he couldn’t go to work so he let us set up this game and play with it and, it was Mouse Trap. It was pretty cool ... we’d never seen anything like that, so it was amazing. My dad pulled out this game board and put it on the table. He said you’re going to take one of these pieces each time and build up this contraption. This was a prototype, a handmade model ... we were very careful. We must have played that game for five hours!”

Stewart Sims, Lionel’s son-in-law and Ideal’s executive VP of marketing, said, “Lionel recognized that it had an element which made it very attractive for television, which is that it had some visual activity, some action going on. So Mouse Trap became the first televised three-dimensional action game. And that would’ve been a Marvin breakthrough for Ideal and for Marvin, because it changed the nature of the game business from something that was played on basically a board to having plastic and action figures and things like that.”

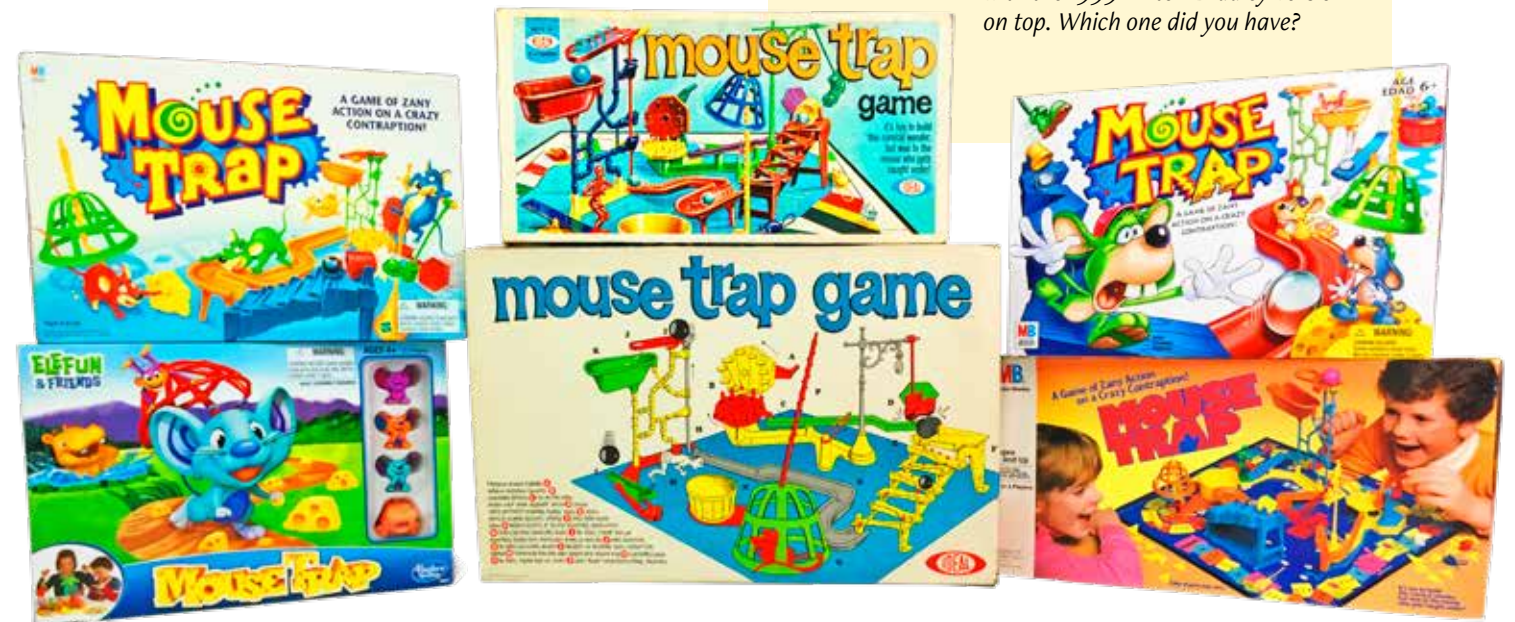
“Before it was rolled out nationwide, the original Mouse Trap game was test-marketed in Pittsburgh. A runaway success, it soon found its way onto store shelves everywhere, and more importantly, they flew off those shelves just as fast: 1,232,467 copies during 1963 alone!”⁴⁹ The chain-reaction contraption was an instant success, and it revolutionized how games were perceived. Ideal’s vice-president in

charge of product development was Anson Isaacson, who said at the time, “It’s the hottest thing since the hula hoop.”⁵⁰ Always one to over intellectualize, Marvin explained when it came out, “The end result—trapping the mouse—demonstrates the incongruity of the unrelated and impersonal chain of events that shape a man’s life.”⁵¹

Marvin was open about the game being influenced by Rube Goldberg’s drawings, but he refused to pay licensing fees or royalties to him. Goldberg was retired and elderly, so he chose not to take legal action against Glass. Mouse Trap’s success inspired Rube Goldberg to sell licensing rights of his drawings to another company, Model Products, who made animated hobby kits that Goldberg did receive royalties on.

Due to its massive success, Ideal followed up Mouse Trap with two more plastic action games, Crazy Clock (1964) and Fishbait (1965). After all the work he did on the original game, Barlow didn’t want anything to do with it anymore. Dalia Verbickas and Tony Janiszewski worked on the follow-ups. They worked across from each other in the same room, both collaborated with coming up with the contraption ideas, while Dalia illustrated them and Tony worked on the models.

BELOW Here are many versions of Mouse Trap made through the years. In the middle is the original big 1963 Ideal box (bottom) with the 1970’s version on top of it. On the right side is the 1986 Milton Bradley version (bottom) with the 2005 Milton Bradley version on top. On the left side is the 2013 Hasbro Games version (bottom) with the 1999 Milton Bradley version on top. Which one did you have?



ABOVE Marvin playing with Mouse Trap circa 1963.

BELOW Marvin on the Merv Griffin show in 1967 demonstrating Mouse Trap. Merv is on the left.

