

1 While music is playing an earnest musician sings: "Are you ready for your mystery date? Don't be late, it would be great."



2 The singer continues- "Open the door for your mystery date."



3 Announcer- "When you open the door will your mystery date be a dream?"



4 Announcer- "Or a dud."



5 Girl- "Aww!"



dreamy prom date, and a sloppy and unkempt "Dud" who was the boy to avoid. Spinning the doorknob determined who would appear the next time the door opened. Henry Stan's patented door mechanism was the magic behind the whole game. The randomizer's design was influenced by telephone card indexes that started a short time earlier. New phone number indexes had a tab on each page. This allowed one to slide a linear plate to a specific letter card; one could lift the lid to reveal a specific alphabet page.



ABOVE A closeup of the randomizing mystery door knob.

Henry Stan elegantly designed a randomizer on a rotary configuration, not a linear slide format, so it worked as easy as turning a doorknob. Connected behind the doorknob were two-pointed levers that would catch and lift up one of the five tabbed and stacked date cards. When a potential suitor was revealed, it would elicit either an "Eeww!" or an "Ahh!" from giggling tween and teen girls.

Like all classics it's often been updated and reintroduced for subsequent

BELOW Many versions of Mystery Date made through the years. On the top row (from left to right) are the 1970's version and the 2005 40th Anniversary version. On the bottom row (from left to right) are the 35th Anniversary version that used a phone, the 2006 High School Musical theme, and the 2009 version with sparkly glitter wrapping.



and hope their wishes would come true when they opened the door. The girls' stomachs would flutter with excitement and anticipation as they wondered who was there. If the girl's outfit matched her date's destination, then she won the game. If her outfit wasn't a match, she must close the door, turn the doorknob, and let the next player take her turn.

The five bachelors vying for attention were a beach dude, an athletic skier, a bowler, a

generations. The first update came in 1972. After being discontinued in the late 1970s it was re-introduced in 1999 for its thirty-fifth anniversary the following year. That version had an electronic phone and twenty-four possible mystery prom dates. Another re-introduction happened in 2005 for its fortieth anniversary, with the game more similar to the 1965 original but with updates such as a snowboarding date, a bicycle picnic date, and a "nerd" instead of a "dud." It's no mystery why additional versions of the game still turn up to this day.

Tip-It

This 1965 fan favorite was, as the box boasted, the wackiest balancing game ever. The patent lists Marvin Glass, Burt Meyer, Henry Stan, and Norm McFarland as contributors. "Marvin said, 'Let's do a balancing game,'" explained Burt Meyer. "Marvin was with Henry Stan and I in a meeting. Henry started his version of a balancing game and I started my idea. And we both started working on our own good ideas. Henry was working on something that you add the legs to it, it was very static, nothing moved, you just keep adding underneath this edge and this edge and this edge, until finally it falls over." "My idea was almost identical to Tip-It. I got this idea of having this thing that's going to swing back and forth and having the weights down there to keep it going, and then eventually it would fall off, and there was a marble up at the top. The whole idea was don't spill the marble."

"Marvin said, 'Well, I like your idea. You keep going with that, but you've got to do something about that marble.' He said, 'Can we have a funny little guy up there that's balancing, too?' See, that was Marvin. He said, 'That's not enough.' He said, 'It's too cold, you don't have any humor in it.' The little guy up there that's balancing

on his nose. Without that, Marvin's right, it would have been, you know, 'What the hell?'" This highly addictive game is many people's favorite due in part to its elegance, humor, and wild teetering action. On their turn a player would spin the spinner which determined what color ring they must remove from the three stacks that were on the balancing tripod. A player used the lifting fork to delicately remove the ring and place it in front of them. The little man perched on the very top holds the "balance of power." If a player's color ring was blocked by other colors, a player must gently remove those rings one at a time and place them on either of the other pegs. The tipping difficulty could be adjusted by sliding the gravity ring up or down the long balancing pole. The higher it is, the harder it is. The game swung wildly from one extreme side to the other with the man still staying on by the skin of his nose. A truly great visual with every player holding his or her breath wondering what would happen next.

