

Anyone for a Little Game of Shrimp Eggs?

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NEW YORK — (NEA) — Don't be too hard on the kids if they don't come for supper as soon as you call. They may be very busy, hatching shrimp eggs.

This is a new toy. Or, rather, a new part of an old toy. And it may be the forerunner of a glorious day when kids will be playing with all sorts of live toys.

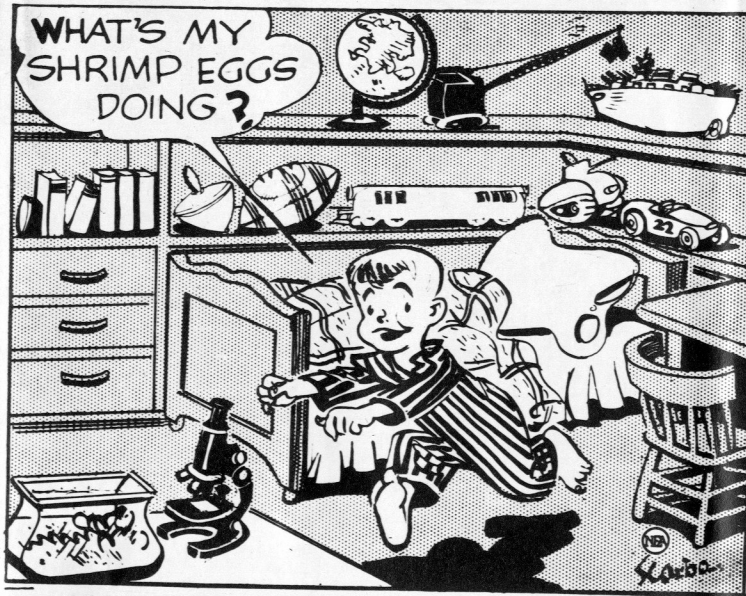
It all started with a microscope. The A. C. Gilbert Co., which makes toy microscopes for kids, has long packaged interesting tidbits like fish scales and flies' legs and bees' stingers for the young scientists to peer at. They weren't satisfied; they wanted something alive, something that would move.

The obvious perfect solution was shrimp eggs. Surprising nobody ever thought of playing with shrimp eggs before. And not just plain, ordinary, shrimp-cocktail shrimp eggs, either. These are the eggs of the brine shrimp, genus *Artemia*.

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These particular eggs make dandy playthings because they're tiny, they survive under almost any condition and they hatch into beasts so minute there's no danger of them eating Junior.

The eggs look like tiny grains of sand—some 300 of them could



fit inside a grain of rice—and a grown-up brine shrimp is about the size of a small speck of dust.

And so Gilbert nowadays includes a glass tube full of shrimp eggs in each microscope kit. The idea is to put a few at a time on a slide, add some salt water and then sit back and watch them hatch. At first glance, they look like deflated rubber balls. About an hour later, they've swollen up until they're perfect spheres.

In another four to eight hours, they begin to split open, and, over

the next few hours, they gradually burst out of the shells. But the game isn't over. When they first come out of the shell, they're encased in a thin, clear membrane. Now they have to fight their way out of that.

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It'll take the little fellow another 8-12 hours to pop out of his egg membrane and begin swimming around.

The grand total, then, from egg to swimmer is between 15 and 24 hours. Of course, by the time

the shrimp are hatched the kid is a sleepless wreck, but it's been fun.

What he's got when he's through is a slide full of brine shrimp, which swim about in their little pool with jerky motions. It is good fun to study their thorax, carapace and eye spot, all bits of brine shrimp anatomy which one doesn't find on a cat or dog.

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If he wants, the young scientist can keep his shrimp alive for a week or so with a little feeding of yeast. They never grow up into anything worthwhile, however, except maybe to another brine shrimp. About all they do, besides swim, is shed their skins. This may lead to another hobby—collecting second-hand brine shrimp skins.

The Gilbert people see this addition to their line as the first of many such adventures. They hope to add other live exhibits to the microscope kits, but they aren't saying what they have in mind.

If you have some imagination you can easily visualize a little glass bottle in the kits of tomorrow—one labelled "Python eggs," for instance. Or perhaps a small vial of army ants, for the do-it-yourselfer who wants to get rid of his father.

In any event, we are smack dab in the middle of the new age of live toys. Be guided accordingly.

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