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Gilbert Forecasts Toy Industry Boom



Register Photo — Keeley

A. C. Gilbert Jr. (right) president of A. C. Gilbert Co. is congratulated on the firm's 50th anniversary which was observed Thursday at a New Haven Lawn Club luncheon. Extending their best wishes are, left to right, William A. Flint, president of the New Haven County Manufacturers Assn.; Stewart Hoover, executive secretary of Toy Manufacturers of U.S.A., and Gerald G. Hotchkiss, head of the New Haven Chamber of Commerce. The first erector set built by the toy firm is seen in right foreground.

The head of A. C. Gilbert Co., one of the nation's leading toy firms, Thursday predicted a bright future for his concern and the toy-making industry in general.

A. C. Gilbert Jr. speaking to 90 guests at a 50th anniversary luncheon at the New Haven Lawn Club was optimistic about the growth of the toy industry during the next few years.

Gilbert cited New Haven's "good industrial climate" as a factor in the expansion of his firm, which is now one of the largest employers in the city.

\$1 Million Payroll

He also pointed out that the Gilbert firm contributes greatly to the economic welfare of New Haven, through its payroll, which totals more than \$1 million a year, and taxes to the city.

"Lots of kids are being born," and authorities recognize that toys play a vital role in the un-

conscious education of children, Gilbert said.

By providing well-designed toys which stimulate scientific curiosity in children, thus leading them toward careers in science, the toy-makers are helping this country in the space age, he added.

Gerald G. Hotchkiss, president of the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce, said, "New Haven is fortunate to have a company like Gilbert's. We hope they will enjoy another 50 years of success, at least."

Among those attending the luncheon were Mayor Richard C. Lee and William A. Flint, president of the New Haven County Manufacturers Association.

Gilbert traced the 50-year history of the company in a brief talk. Founded by A. C. Gilbert Sr., in a Westville shed, while Gilbert was a student at Yale, the company has grown to an enterprise employing 1,200 men

and women with annual sales of \$15 million.

Initiated Growth

The erector set, invented by A. C. Gilbert Sr. in 1913, provided the seed from which the company grew. Fifty years later the company is still building erector sets — only with space age adaptations.

Gilbert said the company has 25 engineers who develop new toys. These innovations are generally cloaked in as much secrecy as possible until the annual Toy Fair in March. Then they are announced to the public—and to the many competing toy-makers—in the hope that they will win popular acceptance.

Discussing the role of toys in stimulating scientific curiosity in the Space Age, Gilbert noted that his concern helped advise the Branford youngsters who recently launched a successful home-made rocket in Virginia.