

**TOYS**  
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## For A. C. Gilbert: Hot-Item TV And a New Approach to Marketing

NEW YORK—A. C. Gilbert Co.'s spectacular new Jump-Chicane road race is symbolic of the old-guard New Haven manufacturer's bold 1963 bid to leap the gap that has traditionally separated the toy industry's "line houses" from its "item houses."

That's how Ben Moats, Gilbert's vice president of marketing, views the new stance the firm is out to assume in the toy marketplace. "We've got items *and* lines. We're dropping new merchandise into new packaging, and bringing it to market in a new way for Gilbert," Moats told **TOY TRADE NEWS**.

Moats should know. He's the man nominated last July by Jack Wrather, whose Wrather Corp. acquired controlling interest in A. C. Gilbert, to rebuild the company's marketing operation.

Moats brought two fundamental convictions with him: first, that the market should determine the product; second, that the only way to reach today's consumers in mass is to be willing and able to pay the cost of mass media.

"There's no point," Moats told TTN, "having a designer working on a product unless he's working within specific limits of quality, price and general product characteristics as determined by market conditions and consumer wants. First define the rules of the game; then get down to playing it."

This, according to Moats, constitutes an about-face in Gilbert's marketing philosophy. "Before," he said, "design and engineering would come up with a new line, plop it into the lap of sales and say, in effect, 'Now you've got it; go out and sell it.'"

"That's changed. Now we say to engineering, 'Here's what the people want; build it.'"

With Gilbert's pitch for a mass market will come an abrupt shift in promotional emphasis. From a total consumer advertising budget of something under \$600,000 in 1963, the company will pour some \$2.25 million into promotion this year.

A king-sized chunk will find its way into television. Moats revealed, to spearhead A. C. Gilbert's debut in hot-item TV.

Hard-sell commercials, accounting for the "major part" of Gilbert's '63 ad budget, will showcase, on networks and in spots, four new TV toys: "My Mixer," Gilbert's first girl-toy; "Scrubble-Bubble," the company's first pre-schooler; "Tuggy the Two-Headed Turtle," a battery-powered, plastic action toy with which Gilbert will be invading the domain of the giant, TV-heavy, item manufacturers; and "Game Train," a combination toy that links an American Flyer train with a game board.

My Mixer is a two-speed, hand-operated kitchen mixer, which comes with color-coded recipe card and a scale. Inserted in the scale, the recipe card shows proper amounts of ingredients needed to make a variety of cold dishes. Aimed at girls in the seven-to-nine groups, the toy will carry a suggested list of \$14.98.

Scrubble-Bubble is a pre-school bath



GILBERT'S BEN MOATS  
AND JUMP-CHICANE

toy in the form of Disney's Dopey the Dwarf, with a sponge mounted on the bottom. When the toy is loaded with liquid detergent or liquid bubble-bath, the sponge becomes a washing surface and bubbles come out of the dwarf's eyes. Gilbert has this one priced to sell for \$2.98.

Tuggy the Two-Headed Turtle in-  
(Continued on Page 9)

## A. C. Gilbert Makes the Jump into Hot-Item TV And to a New Market-Determines-Product Approach

(Continued from Page 1)

cludes a large plastic turtle, wired to two control units, and a pair of finish-line assemblies. As two players press control buttons, a head pops out at one end or the other, and the turtle moves in the direction of the head. Gilbert figures that Tugger's suggested list of \$14.98 will be discounted to under \$10 in the stores.

Game Train, the company's fourth TV item, is a combination of an S-gage train and a board on which three games, all based on the roulette principle, may be played. This toy lists for \$24.98.

Gilbert isn't putting all its marketing eggs in the TV basket by a long shot. "We want the rapid volume increase good television items can give us," said Moats, "but we're still very much a line house."

Gilbert expects its biggest line-sales to come from road racing this year, has beefed up that line accordingly. New in '63 are a sulky race set, and Indianapolis-type race set and a set designed around Gilbert's new Jump-Chicane feature.

The latter, list-priced at \$44.98, is an over-and-under figure eight with a gap at the point of over-pass. When operated at the proper speed, the cars jump the gap, land in racing position on the track beyond, and continue in motion. The set can be adjusted to enable the cars to change lanes in midair. Compatible with all other existing Gilbert road race sets, the jump-chicane feature is also available as an accessory at \$7.98.

Two racing sulkies form the heart of Gilbert's sulky race set, which lists for \$27.98, and can also accommodate cars. Separately available at \$14.98 list is a package of two sulkies for use on any of the company's existing road race sets.

Sets featuring Indianapolis-type race cars are priced at suggested retails of \$34.98 and \$49.98. In addition, three basic sets have been carried over from last year.

The company will also come in strong with road race accessories, including a \$4.98 lap counter which is adjustable to fit any American race set on the market; a \$4.98 mechanical timer; and a \$2.25 automatic flag man to start races.

According to Moats, Gilbert no longer considers trains "a critical portion of its line."

"We reassessed our train picture,"

he said, "saw that the greater growth potential lay in road racing, decided to hold our current position in trains and assign primary R&D priority to racing and other significant growth areas."

Another product-line area labeled "growth" by Gilbert and expanded accordingly is ready-to-fly planes. Here, the big new item for '63 is "Wing Thing," a patented flying device in the triangular shape of a Rogallo wing. Wing Thing, which will remain aloft as a kite after its motor cuts off, will list for \$12.98.

Radically altered Erector sets are further evidence of the emphasis Moats and Gilbert place on line merchandise. Erector has been updated with the addition of curved girders, steel panels which fasten together and bolt to girders to create a closed-wall effect, a programmer (either plug-in or battery-powered) which can be set to complete

a maximum of six operations in a series (any two simultaneously). A heavy space orientation has been given the line through inclusion of a number of space vehicles in the Erector specification booklets.

In several of its science lines, Gilbert will accent fun. Said Moats, "Our market research clued us in on that one. There's evidence of a reaction against toys as pure instruments of learning."

Hence, the company has titled its new five-set electronics and physics-based group the "Fun in Science" series; and has redesigned its chemistry line so that each set incorporates a basic "do" project, with the principal component made a part of the set (thus, one set includes a miniature volcano which erupts when the right chemicals are placed in it; another contains preformed molds and raw materials with which the child can mold plastic car bodies; and so on).

Is the new look at A. C. Gilbert a one-shot deal? "Far from it," said Moats. "This is 'Phase One' of a coordinated, long-range program."