PSYCHOLOGY

Pick Right Child's Toy

➤ PICK THE RIGHT TOY for your child's age if you want it to hold your child's attention for a long time, is the advice of Drs. Kenneth E. Moyer and B. von Haller Gilmer.

The psychologists of the Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, made a study of the holding power of a few especially designed toys, trying them out one at a time on 681 children from 18 months to seven years old.

The toys were first designed, then redesigned and modified to give them high holding power.

One toy, chosen because of its extreme simplicity, was a little red plastic car with white wheels. This little toy caught the eyes of the children and at least the three, four and five year-olds played with it for a few minutes. After three, four or five minutes, although there was no other toy in sight, the youngster would put it down and walk around the room, play with his clothing, hum to himself or try to talk to the observer.

Contrasted with the simple little plastic car was a take-apart airplane. This toy could be taken apart with the simple tools provided, and then could be fitted and bolted together again. The take-apart airplane proved to be not suitable for younger children, but the four, five, six and seven year-olds would be engrossed with it for 30 to 40 minutes at a time.

Close seconds in holding power to the take-apart airplane were two other toys. One was another to take apart and put together, a truck made out of blocks, with other blocks that could be fitted in it for a load. The blocks of the load involve simple puzzle patterns. This toy appealed only to three, four and five year-olds.

The other toy with which the average child would play for 30 to 35 minutes was a wagon with two removable poles and 50 colored chips. The chips had holes in them and could be fitted over the poles or into slots to provide sides for the wagon. The chips and wagon provided an outlet for repetitive behavior, a need of small children. It appealed to ages two to five.

Details of the study are reported in the *Journal of Genetic Psychology* (Dec. 1955).

Science News Letter, April 21, 1956

VOLCANOLOGY

Wrong Volcano Blamed

➤ THE FAMOUS ERUPTION of 1912 attributed to Alaska's Mt. Katmai, one of the most violent natural events in recorded history, was actually another mountain's explosion.

Apparently a neighboring mountain blew its stack, belching volcanic ash that spread over the entire globe, while Katmai's top simply caved in from the shock.

The real villain of this volcanic violence, it now appears from research by two University of California geologists, was Mt. Novarupta, six miles away from Katmai.

In the eruption seven cubic miles of rock and volcanic ash were catapulted out of the earth in only 60 hours, the city of Kodiak a hundred miles away was nearly buried, brilliant sunsets were regular in the Northern Hemisphere, and the temperature of the Northern Hemisphere was lowered more than a degree Fahrenheit for about three months.

So great was the destruction that a scientific expedition could not enter the area until 1916. Then an expedition, led by Dr. R. F. Griggs of the University of Pittsburgh, discovered and named "The Valley of 10,000 Smokes," and examined the terrain.

Mt. Katmai seemed to have blown its top, and volcanic ash lay all around it. It was natural to assume it was Katmai that erupted.

Dr. G. H. Curtis of Berkeley, and his graduate student, Jack Sheehan, come to a different conclusion from new work. They measured the thickness of volcanic ash throughout the entire Valley, recorded measurements on a map, and connected all points of equal depth.

The lines connecting equal thicknesses of ash formed incriminating rings around Novarupta, and none at all around Katmai.

The geologists suggest that there may have been an underground connection between Novarupta and Katmai. The violence of the Novarupta explosion may have caused Katmai to cave in. If Katmai's top had exploded, the scientists would expect to find some large fragments around the crater's rim, and there are none.

Science News Letter, April 21, 1956

INVENTION

Three-Way Iron Awarded Patent

➤ A TRIPLE-THREAT IRON for the American housewife has been invented by Henry Maykemper of Eau Claire, Wis. It permits the housewife to dry iron, steam iron, or sprinkle, all with the same appliance. The flat iron has a built-in reservoir for tap water. Mr. Maykemper was granted patent No. 2,741,044 and assigned the patent rights to the National Presto Industries, Inc., of Wisconsin.

Science News Letter, April 21, 1956

•RADIO

Saturday, April 28, 1956, 2:05-2:15 p.m. EST

"Adventures in Science" with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over the CBS Radio Network. Check your local CBS station.

Dr. Harry Wexler, director of meteorological research, U. S. Weather Bureau, and chief scientist, International Geophysical Year Antarctic Program, will discuss "World Weather."

ENTOMOLOGY

Search for Insect To Kill Halogeton

➤ AN INSECT that will kill halogeton, a fast-spreading poisonous range weed, is being sought by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The search by Dr. G. B. Vogt of the USDA Agricultural Research Service will extend into North Africa and the Near East.

Halogeton originated in Asia, where it is not a serious threat to cattle. United States scientists speculate that some Asian insect may be keeping the poisonous weed from spreading. If such an insect were found, it could eliminate the danger of halogeton poisoning for cattle on 9,000,000 acres of Western range land.

Chemical weed killers are considered too costly for general control of halogeton. Effective controls include forage development, range reseeding on adapted sites, and good range management.

Although halogeton has difficulty competing with good range grasses in favorable locations, the weed can grow at high altitudes, in dry areas and in alkaline soils.

Seeds planted in greenhouses have germinated within 15 minutes. In one year a single plant can produce about 25,000 seeds.

Science News Letter, April 21, 1956

MEDICINE

Advises Logistics for Stopping Polio Now

➤ PREVENTING PARALYTIC POLIO is now a problem in logistics, not medical science, Basil O'Connor, president of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, New York, said.

By applying logistics, the supply of vaccine can be used to cut paralytic polio in half in the epidemic period this year and prevent paralytic polio almost completely in 1957, Mr. O'Connor said.

Among suggestions he made for doing this are the following:

Parents of children in the 0 to 19 age group will have the vaccine given to their children when and as it becomes available and not wait until June when its administration to such a large group will present insuperable practical difficulties.

Local public health officials and doctors will let the public know promptly when vaccine is available.

Science News Letter, April 21, 1956