

# Pennsylvania's Slinky Continues To Delight

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Bedford Co. Correspondent

HOLLIDAYSBURG (Blair Co.) - Slinky, the fun toy for all ages, was created, made, and is still manufactured in Pennsylvania.

In 1945, Richard James was a Marine architect and a mechanical engineer. He was taking a ship out for a trial run for the U.S. Navy when a torsion spring fell off and "walked" across the floor.

Jim was so fascinated, he took the spring home and perfected it into a toy. His wife, Betty, who still runs the Slinky plant, was given the task of finding a name.

"I got out the dictionary," said Betty, and came up with "Slinky," the name which has stuck for 53 years.

The "Slinky" plant which is known as "James Industries," is located in Hollidaysburg, the capitol seat of Blair County in Pennsylvania.

A petite grandmother, Betty James still remembers the difficulty she and her then young husband had in getting the Slinky on the market. "No one would buy it," she recalls. "No one wanted to take a chance. Then, Gimbles in Philadelphia said we could have the end of a counter in the store for one night. We took 400 Slinkys and sold them all in 90 minutes.

"After that successful evening, everyone wanted them. We had no money, so at the end of each day, we put a few dollars aside to buy more material from the Wilkening Company located nearby."

Richard James designed the machine which made the "Slinkys." Betty did the packaging and marketing. In between, she looked after their two young children. Four more children were soon born to the James family.

In 1946, Betty and Richard went to the New York Toy Show



Nathan Smouse of Bedford plays with a Slinky, a popular toy for more than 50 years.

and found a good "sales rep." The first "Slinky" factory was located near Philadelphia.

It was in 1964 that Betty moved the plant to Hollidaysburg and began managing it on her own. Richard died in 1970.

Today, Betty has 100 employees and is proud to say that their average length of employment is from 20 to 25 years. The plant manufactures other small toys, but Slinky remains at the top of the list.

The original cost of \$1 has still not doubled. Other countries have tried to compete but have never been successful.

Slinkys are appealing for children from 1 1/2 years to adults. They are used in nursing homes for therapy. The original 1945 Slinky has been altered only slightly for safety standards.

Betty James is proud that Slinky is one of the oldest toys on the market. It has been used in cartoons, in movies, and took a ride on the Discovery Space Ship.

"But, it wouldn't defy gravity," Betty said with a laugh. "It went straight out."

Slinkys are still available at any department store for about \$1.98.

## Soy-Based Cookie Dough

NEWARK, Del. - University of Delaware senior Daniel McDowell carefully fills three baskets, marked A, B and C, each with a different type of chocolate chip cookie.

"We've got a winner this time," says the animal and food sciences major as he places a pile of surveys in front of the baskets.

Lucky passersby are invited to taste the cookies and record their preferences on the survey. Packed with chocolate chips, each type of cookie has a distinct texture and taste.

But these are no ordinary chocolate chip cookies. Made with 100 percent soy flour, they have been meticulously researched by Dr. Y. Martin Lo, an assistant professor of food processing and engineering, to provide the benefits of soy in an appealing form.

"Some Americans are unwilling to try soy products," says Lo. "Soybeans are used mainly to produce oil, and most of what's left is used for animal feed. You don't find soy flour on many supermarket shelves."

But Lo hopes to lift the lowly legume's public image. With an \$8,000 grant from the Delaware and Maryland Soybean Boards and the collaboration of UD faculty and Cooperative Extension staff, he is developing a microwave-ready, soy flour cookie dough that will appeal to the American consumer.

"Soy flour has three advantages over its wheat counterpart," says Lo. "First, it is more nutritional, providing a broader range of essential amino acids. Second, it provides a safe alternative for people with gluten intolerance - allergic reactions to wheat products. Third, it contains phytoestrogen, a group of compounds that may help reduce the risk of cancer."

Recognizing his cookie dough won't sell solely on the merit of its healthfulness, Lo is aiming for sensory appeal and convenience. His most successful recipe has the crispy, golden-brown texture of an oven-baked product but takes only 75 seconds to cook in a microwave oven.

Under Lo's direction, McDowell has baked about 100

batches of cookies in the past year.

"We've come a long way since we started this project," remarks McDowell. "One of the things we've discovered is that the appeal is all in the texture. Whether the cookies are made with white flour, whole wheat flour or soy flour, people like them if they like the texture. Some people like chewy, others like crispy."

His recipe nearly perfected, Lo is ready to move on to the next phase of the project. In collaboration with Dr. Sue Snider, cooperative Extension specialist for food and nutrition, and Dr. Cheng-Shun Fang, assistant professor in the department of nutrition and dietetics, he will seek funding to analyze the nutritional content and determine the shelf life of the cookie dough. After conducting a patent search, he will approach the food industry to find a sponsor who will take his product to supermarket shelves.

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