

**THE BRITISH TOY & HOBBY ASSOCIATION  
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT  
AWARD 2011**

***Lifetime Achievement Award 2011***

***Great Fosters Hotel, Egham,  
Surrey, TW20 9UR***

***Wednesday 29th June  
1.15pm***

***Lifetime Achievement Award Lunch***

***Presentation of Lifetime Achievement Award to***

***Peter Brown***

***with an address from  
Mr Clive Jones, President, BTHA***

***3.00pm close of day***

**PETER BROWN** Peter Brown was born in Trowbridge, Wiltshire in August 1944 as his mother had to move out of London to avoid the Blitz. His father was a professional soldier and Peter's early life involved moving from army camp to army camp in various countries around the world.



At the age of 10 Peter was sent to a new type of boarding school called Woolverstone Hall which admitted bright children from many different backgrounds, rather than just the elite. The school was set up by the London County Council on the banks of the beautiful river Orwell in Suffolk. Here he developed his love of sailing and his interest in the commercial rather than the academic world. It is in Suffolk that Peter now keeps one of his interests, his sailing boat, "KITTIWAKE".

On leaving Woolverstone Hall Peter joined George Wimpey, the construction company, as a management trainee and was sent on an HND sandwich course which involved six-months at George Wimpey and six-months at college.

After the first six months at George Wimpey Peter decided that the building trade was not for him. In looking for his second placement he met Garth Drinkwater, the then Managing Director of P B Cow (Lilo), who offered him a six-month training placement. It was Garth Drinkwater who, during Peter's second work placement, helped him find a job working for a U.S. hobby craft company, based in New York.

After completing his HND course, Peter joined Palitoy, in Coalville, in 1965. He worked on Tressy and Bonanza, the boy's action figures based on the popular TV series of the time, as a product manager.

Palitoy was the most sophisticated marketing company within the toy industry

at that time. It was here that Peter got his grounding in marketing and product management under the leadership of Miles Fletcher. After two years at Palitoy, Peter left to join Triang, part of the huge Lines Brothers operation in South London. He was a product manager responsible for the products coming out of Triang's Merthyr Tydfil factory.

Peter's old colleague, Miles Fletcher, had subsequently left Palitoy. Sensing that Triang and the Lines Brothers were not in the best of health, he approached Peter to join him at Mettoy. Peter then moved to Northampton as a product manager responsible for the Wembley football range and for the launch of Hasbro's Computer Car.

This involvement with Hasbro product gave him his first opportunity to meet Alan and Stephen Hassenfeld. Alan Hassenfeld says of Peter, "Peter embodies all that is good in the toy industry. His love of the industry, his incredible toy sense, his integrity, his untiring efforts to help children in need, his fierce competitive spirit all combine to truly make him an exceptional recipient of this Lifetime Achievement Award".



*Peter as Marketing Director  
at Louis Marx 1978*

Miles Fletcher had moved on to Louis Marx, a subsidiary of the Dunbee- Combex Marx Group. In 1969 he invited Peter to join him as Marketing Director and it was here that Peter first met his lifelong mentor, Richard Beecham, then Chairman of arguably the world's largest toy group. Following a suggestion by Richard Beecham, Peter viewed the vast range of back catalogue Louis Marx products and rediscovered a product which had been

highly successful in the U.S. called Rockem Sockem Robots. He renamed them, in classic British style, 'Raving Bonkers' and they were subsequently launched with the help of the U.K.'s then heavyweight boxing champion, Henry Cooper, at the Brighton Toy Fair. Peter's eye for a good product was confirmed when he spotted Playmobil. He was responsible for launching it in the U.K. somewhat surprisingly changing the name to Play People with the agreement of Horst Brandstatter, the owner of Playmobil.

In 1979, Peter accepted a job with Byron Jardine as Marketing Director responsible for the worldwide sales of the Petite Typewriter. It was here that Peter developed the activity centre concept which enjoyed good success. However, Byron was having some problems with their U.S. subsidiary, Westco, and in 1981 Peter was asked to move to the U.S. to be responsible for Westco International; initially in New York, and subsequently in Jackson, Michigan. In the U.K. Byron's sales were handled by the Mettoy sales team and it was through this association that Peter met his wife-to-be, Penny, and they were subsequently to marry in the U.S. where their first son, Ian, was born.

Working in the U.S. provided Peter with an enormous wealth of experience both in sales and marketing. During this time Peter realised the potential opportunities that could be available with Tomy. At that time, Tomy was enjoying huge success in the U.S. market



*Peter as Marketing Director for Byron International 1980*

but Peter realised they had no U.K. operation, despite having an unbelievable portfolio of great products. Peter wrote to Tomy suggesting that if they ever wanted to open a U.K. operation then he would be quite happy to help! As it happens Tomy was thinking of doing exactly that, and Peter was invited by Frank Ward, then Head of Tomy's International division, to set up a UK operation in 1983. It was a fantastic opportunity because Tomy had a wealth of brilliantly designed and engineered products and Peter was given a relatively free hand by Tokyo management to develop the U.K. market.

Peter was conscious of a huge debate, regarding trading terms within the industry, during the time he was setting up the U.K. company. He sought the advice and opinions of various influential retailers including Ian Collinson and Barry Walker. As a result of these conversations, Tomy launched the company with one of the U.K.'s first net pricing policies which provided more equitable margins for independent retailers. The company went on to enjoy great success and in pre-school terms the Tomy range, in its original slate board packaging, became the preeminent pre-school range in Britain ahead of the traditionally popular U.S. and U.K. brands.

To help grow Tomy's U.K. business even faster, Peter looked at other Japanese companies for product opportunities. It was at the Tokyo Toy Fair in 1986, that Peter first saw the Sylvanian Family range which he launched with great success in 1987 and which subsequently went on to win Toy of the Year for a record 3 years in a row, 1987/88, 1988/89 and 1989/90.



*Peter, prior to the opening of  
Tomy's UK launch, 1982*

It was during this time that Peter's second son, Andrew, was born. It may have been fortuitous timing, having a new baby in the house, that made Peter receptive to an approach from an outside inventor with a new style of nursery monitor. Peter recognised a huge opportunity for Tomy to enter into an undeveloped market with a sophisticated range of nursery monitors that would help introduce parents to the Tomy brand for the first time. Other successful products like Scamps, Pop up Pirate and Screwball Scramble followed as Tomy's business grew very successfully in the U.K.

During Peter's tenure at Tomy he had been approached several times by Hasbro but he felt that he would be inhibited by a large corporate structure. He also enjoyed the freedom afforded by Tomy and their "hands-off" management style. In 1994 he was approached by Norman Walker and invited to set up an independent joint venture between Hasbro and K'NEX Industries to launch a new construction system, K'NEX. He started the business with Russ Ward, his colleague from Tomy, launching K'NEX to the world outside the U.S. K'NEX was a very significant success and took a major market share from the brand leader. It also involved opening a very large factory in Ashford, Kent to assemble the products which sold in 60 markets worldwide achieving trade sales approaching US\$80 million.



*Tim Willis hands the BTHA Chairmanship to Peter, 1994*



*Peter gives a Lifetime Achievement citation to  
Richard Beecham J.P. 1999*

In 1999, Norman Walker, having joined K'NEX himself in the U.S. initiated the merger of the joint venture with Hasbro and although Peter was invited to join Norman as Head of International, Peter felt that there were other opportunities to be considered. With the encouragement of Richard Beecham and his colleagues, Peter realised that there was a good opportunity to start a new company that they would own themselves. With Richard's backing Peter assembled a group of shareholders including Hasbro, Epoch, Learning Curve and industry colleagues such as Gary Grant and David Fogel and established Flair Leisure Products. plc.

Gary Grant describes Peter as, "Mr Tomy, Mr Knex, Mr Flair; a true friend and colleague, a gentlemen who would always go the extra mile. Peter gives back more than he takes. He is an all round player, trustworthy and reliable, a true example of implementing positive discrimination, a real asset to our industry."

Whilst financially secure Flair lacked a strong product portfolio. Coincidentally Tomy had just given up Sylvanian Families and Hasbro had decided to drop Play-doh. This presented a superb opportunity for the company, and resulted in Flair once being described as a hospital for sick brands. In addition, as a result of the Learning Curve connection, Flair was able to acquire the licence for Thomas the Tank Engine Wooden Railways in the U.K.

Flair benefited from a very experienced management team and excellent support from trade customers and as a result the company grew steadily despite a number of significant setbacks. The first of these was when Learning Curve was acquired by RC2 and Flair lost some 40% of its turnover overnight. Following the loss of Thomas and the Learning Curve brands Hasbro decided, quite rightly, to bring Play-doh back into its own product portfolio. At that time Play-doh represented some 30% of Flair's turnover.

The next major crisis occurred in 2003 when the Import Services warehouse in



Southampton, where Flair held all its stock, was burnt to the ground at the end of October leaving Flair without a single product to sell. It was notable that each time Flair experienced any setback the company galvanised itself and came out in a stronger position. Indeed it was at the Toy Fair dinner in January 2004 that Flair was awarded the 'Supplier of the Year' award by the Toy Retailers Association. This was a huge testament to the level of service that the company provided its customers in extreme conditions.

The continuing success of Flair attracted the attention of the European Toy Group, Giochi Preziosi, and in 2008 they made an offer which the Flair shareholders found attractive. Flair then became the U.K. arm for the highly successful Giochi Preziosi group. Since then, Flair's business has more than doubled as it continues to provide innovative products backed up by excellent customer service. Peter is still an active member of the Flair management team continuing to be the Chief Executive Officer.

Peter has served on the Council of the British Toy and Hobby Association since 1989. He was Chairman from 1994 to 1996 and President from 2004 to 2007. Peter joined the Toy Trust Committee at its inception in 1991 and remains a member today. Peter has been a



*Flair receive an award for outstanding contribution to the overall growth of the Giochi Preziosi group, Spring 2011*



*Peter as part of the BTHA Council, June 2010*

member of the Fence Club for a number of years and was its Chairman in 2001. In 2011, Peter was awarded the Toy Retailers Association's 'Personality of the Year Award', which came as a great surprise and honour to him.

Peter has been able to show commitment to the toy industry with the support of his wife Rev Canon Penny Brown and his two sons Ian and Andrew.

The British Toy & Hobby Association is delighted to honour Peter Brown's lifetime of work for the toy industry by presenting him with the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award.



*“Peter Brown is a very worthy recipient of this Lifetime Achievement Award. He has been the driving force behind the creation of more than one successful and lasting toy business and has served the British Toy & Hobby Association with distinction over the past 22 years.”*

**Clive Jones, President  
British Toy & Hobby Association**

BRITISH TOY & HOBBY ASSOCIATION  
80 CAMBERWELL ROAD, LONDON SE5 0EG  
TEL: 020 7701 7271 EMAIL: [queries@btha.co.uk](mailto:queries@btha.co.uk)