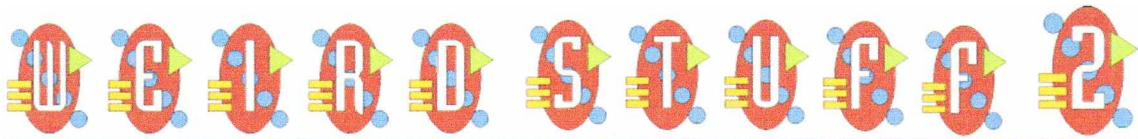


W E I R D S T U F F 2



© 2003 S. Hughes | 701 Rainbow Mt Dr | Ellijay, GA 30540 | [steve@shughes.com](mailto:steve@shughes.com) | Published for SFPA # 231 on 01/28/03

## NEW PAPERS AND INKS

Some of you commented on the paper we used to print the last *Traveler's Tales*. It's called "HP Brochure and Presentation" paper. It works with most inkjet printers and, even though it looks great, you won't be seeing a lot of it in our zines because it costs about 25 cents a sheet.

In the last year or so, several manufacturers have been trying out high quality, double sided, gloss papers for the inkjet market. Most of them show up on the store shelves and then vanish in a month or so never to be seen again. They are so expensive that people are slow to try them so sales volume is low. Low sales volume means they don't stay on the shelves so volume never improves. It's a classic sales failure cycle.

We've been picking up some of the new papers to try out. The cover of this zine is printed on an Epson C82, using "DuraBrite" inks, on HP "Soft Gloss Laser Paper." It's a 32# double-sided paper intended for quality output on color laser printers. In boxes of 200 sheets it costs 10 cents a sheet.

The body of the zine is printed on Hammermill "Photo White" color copy paper. It's a 28# paper intended for color copiers and printers. At around \$10 a ream it's a lot more cost effective and still has a smooth surface and a nice feel to it. It's also a very "white" paper without the faint gray shade that a lot of high brightness papers seem to have.

I would really like to find a high quality, easily available, paper for printing zines with lots of color content. As it is, I try a new paper, figure out all it's quirks, set up the right printer options to produce good output, then it's off the market the next time I try to buy some.

At this point those of you who are familiar with inkjet printers are wondering how we can print on laser paper and expect to get good results. The answer lies in new inks.

Epson has always been an innovator in low cost printers. I think I have the first model they made, an impact dot matrix printer that cost about \$700, in a box some place. By today's standards \$700 seems like a lot to pay for a printer, in its day it was the cheapest full-page printer you could buy. Now they have made a significant advance in inkjet technology.

Their new "DuraBrite" inks are pigment based instead of being dye based like almost all other inkjet printer inks. Dye based inks tend to sink into the paper making it hard to do double sided printing and they are mostly water based so they smear easily. Pigment based inks, on the other hand, dry mostly on the surface of the paper and are not water soluble. As a nice bonus, pigment inks normally have much longer life spans than dye based inks. Epson is claiming that prints made on Epson paper with the "DuraBrite" inks are truly archival quality.

How water proof are they? Well a lot of stores selling the new printers have a jar full of water with a page of print out in it. It's a nice sales gimmick.

Epson's first two printers to use the new inks are the Stylus Photo 2200 and the C80/C82. The 2200 is a high end printer intended for true photo quality printing. The C80/C82 are specifically designed to perform well printing on plain paper. And they do.

High tech printing is fun but some times I do find myself thinking wistfully of the good old days when all you needed to produce a nice zine was a couple of reams of memo paper and a handful of stencils.



## TOYS IN THE HOUSE

BY SUZANNE HUGHES

It's a good thing it was just Christmas. When you look around our house, especially the living room, the first question that comes to mind is, 'Who is the Kid?'.

### KNEX TRAMPOLINE TOWER

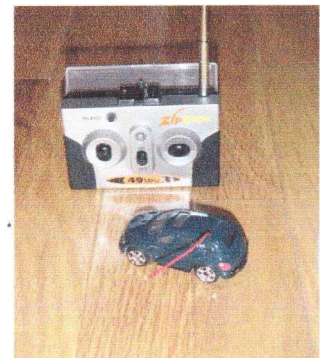
The first thing that you see is the Knex Trampoline Tower. Knex is a building toy with colorful posts and gears to hold them together which you make things out of. When I was a kid, you got a set of Lego or something that had plain pieces and you used your imagination to build things. Not any more, now Lego and Knex come in sets to build x. Oh sure, you can build anything you want, but naturally the first thing is to build whatever the set builds. The Trampoline Tower advertises itself as having over 2700 pieces but



I didn't count them. The Big Tower has over 150 steps to build it and it is over 6 feet tall, which is taller than Steve! There was only one step that the drawing was so misleading, that we had to totally ignore it and figure out what was suppose to happen and how to build it. It is kind of cool though, with several paths to get the ball from the top to the bottom and a 'chain' to bring the ball back to the top. The paths to the bottom include slides, the ball freefalling into a bucket, two sections of rubber bands that bounce the ball into a different bucket and a zigzag that the ball falls out of. There is also a rotating flag at the top of the tower. The amazing thing is that it actually works. We might get a stray ball once in awhile, but for the most part they stay in the path and bounce where they are suppose to. Oh, this is officially Steve's toy, but it took a team effort the better part of four evenings to assemble it. Now Steve's going to add some fiber optic lights to it so it can be even cooler!

### ZIPZAPS

Then there are ZipZaps. What are ZipZaps you might ask. Well, they are tiny remote control cars that are 1/64 scale or about 2½ inches in length that can be bought from Radio Shack or Ebay. They were a hot toy for Christmas so I decided to buy for my nephew. This meant that I was at Radio Shack one morning at 6:45 am waiting for the store to open at 7:00 so I could actually purchase a couple. I ended up with 2 extra, so we got to test them as well. Of course, first they need to be assembled, the tires, hubcabs, motor and rear axle have to be installed and the body needs to be added. The cool thing about the ZipZaps is they have different gears and motors which can change the handling of the car, you can have performance or control. You use the remote control does double duty as a charger base for the car. It takes about 45 seconds





to get about a 5 minute charge. Once assembled and charged, running them around on the floor was kind of cool, they go forward, backward, right and left – full control. But wait, there is a race track and pylons that you can buy. The whole idea of these cars is to race against each other. So I opened the track to see what I had. The track can obviously be used with any mini cars and comes in many pieces which snap together using connectors to allow you to make one of several tracks. I started simple, the oval track. I guess I'm in an old generation, I couldn't get my car to go around the track without

hitting the walls about a million times. The turning radius seemed too great for the actual size of the car. When the battery was about worn down, then I could get around the track. Considering how popular these things are, I'm thinking the younger generation who plays video games all the time and have better thumb control probably don't have the same problem.

Of course no cool toy comes out that doesn't have competitors. There are several other companies that have remote control cars the same size as the ZipZaps. We own three of them. One is a R/C MicroSizers and two came from Sharper Image. The Sharper Image came in a package of two, so to get the Hummer H2, you wound up with an extra car. The MicroSizer is also a put together car, but the ZipZaps actually seem to perform better than either.

## MONORAIL VILLAGE

Then lastly, there is the Monorail Village. A couple of years ago when we were at Disney World, we bought a monorail with round track to go around the bottom of the tree. This seemed pretty harmless until the next time we went to Disney World and they had a different color monorail - black, an Epcot Center and a Contemporary Resort. So now we are into the business of collecting monorails. At Disney Land they had a blue monorail with the Golden Gate Bridge. The plastic stamping of the Disney Land monorail is actually different then the ones from Disney World to correctly reflect that the cars in the monorails are different. In December when we were back at Disney World, we actually stopped buying *all* the monorail pieces. This is because they had the yellow monorail, the Grand Floridian, the Polynesian, a track switch, the castle and several



of the rides that can be automated to run when the monorail goes around the track.

The castle is really cool, it opens up and has each of the Disney princesses and her corresponding prince that you can play with. It also has sound and lights, extra trees, pillars and miscellaneous supporting things for the princesses. Of course, for our village it is a closed castle with Cinderella's horse and carriage waiting at the door.

For Christmas, the village got a house and store that had changing fiber optic lights on the exterior, some reindeer and Santa's sleigh and some Christmas decorations on the bridge and Contemporary. There was also a nativity scene made up of thimbles.

Unfortunately, as all good parents know, it is now after Christmas and it is time to pick up some of the toys and put them away. The





Trampoline Tower is staying out, because it nicely fits in the corner where the tree was. This means that a monorail can stay that encircles the Trampoline Tower and the Astro Orbiter and Paradise Pier rides can also stay. The ZipZap track matches the monorail, so it is entwined among two of the supports of the monorail. The rest of the monorail village has to be put up, so the table can be freed for other things. So I guess we are both the kid but temper it with being an adult and not wanting toys scattered throughout the house.

---

## LET IT SNOW, LET IT SNOW, LET IT SNOW!!

By SUZANNE HUGHES

We had a white Christmas!!! Okay, I've moved south and become a true southerner, if *that* was a white Christmas. There was a little bit of snow on the edge of the deck where it had blown, but that was about it. When we took the truck out to go to Christmas mass, there was one spot on the hill that had a little ice, fortunately it did not extend the whole width of the road and it was gone when we got back.

On January 16, we actually had some real snow. It started snowing just before 2:00pm and snowed most of the afternoon and evening. We got about 1½ inches. This made everything white. It also made the road from our house to the bottom of the hill unpassable for three days.

Unsuspecting of what was in store for us, we left the house at about 1:45 to go to the post office and pick up a loaf of bread. There was the faintest trace of snow blowing in the air, but we broke cardinal rule #1

– don't go down the hill if it's snowing unless you don't care where you spend the night! When we got home at 2:15, the snowflakes were nice and big but we were still able to get to the top of the hill only encountering a little snow on the side of the road in a few places. By 3:00, people started sliding off the road and the area by the gate turned into a parking lot with people walking home. I'm glad we weren't one of them because a half mile up hill on ice in 30 degree weather is no fun. I know, because when I lived in MA, I did it regularly, but the hill was much gentler of a climb.



It was Monday before we could escape. Of course the temperature never got above freezing, so it's not that surprising that nothing melted.

Suddenly out of nowhere, on January 23 we woke up to a light dusting of snow and a temperature of 7 degrees, Fahrenheit! Fortunately it cleared by noon, even though our high for the day was just 29, because Friday morning it was only 5 degrees. Then on Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup> we had another light dusting of snow and were home bound until about 11:00.

That's what happens when you live at the top of a narrow winding road with up to a 30 degree slope – you buy your bread and milk any time they say there's even a 10% chance of precipitation and the temperature is going to be under 35! Back home, in Boston, they laugh at me, afraid to go out with a little snow. Of course they have gotten about an inch of snow more days than not this year, and when you take off to go skiing in the mountains of VT and NH, its play and if you get stuck, who cares?