

By 1960, the new Wham-O toy company produced more than 100 million Hula Hoops.

The 42-inch Marlex (HDPE) plastic hoops sold for \$1.98. Marketed as a gravity-defying toy that could rotate “perpetually with body-english,” the Hula Hoops craze swept the world, transcending barriers of geography, class and race.

Soviet propaganda cited the Hula Hoop as an example of “the emptiness of American culture,” yet it was adopted by Russian and Chinese circuses and rhythmic gymnasts.

Today, a community of adult hoop dancers — or hoopers — and fitness aficionados have rekindled interest in the Hula Hoop.



By James Joseph



HULA-HOOPING craze has swept the nation. Adults as well as kids have undulating fever, are joining the fun.



## HOW THOSE HULA-HOOPS GOT ROLLING

CREW-CUT and boyish Spud Melin, 33, went to grammar school one day last April and graduated into the ranks of America's youngest millionaires.

Rolling a bright plastic hoop into his daughter's Sierra Madre, Calif., schoolyard, Spud invited a couple of fourth graders to give it a whirl.

"Like this," Spud demonstrated, as he stepped into the hoop. He held it waist high, spun it with his hands and kept it going with hula-like gyrations of hip and body.

"Gee," shrilled an excited moppet, "let me try!"

Spud handed him the hoop—the 36-inch diameter plaything which, less than an hour before, had been fashioned from ten feet of polyethylene tubing by

Melin and his partner, 33-year-old Rich Knerr.

Ten days later—with \$100 invested in their vision—Spud and Rich asked a local toy dealer to give their idea a spin. "A hoop?" winced the toy man. "Who'd buy a hoop?"

"Just kids," Melin and Knerr chorused. "The nation's 30,000,000 youngsters, aged five to 14!"

Overnight the Hula-Hoop spun across the nation, picking up speed—and faddists. It rolled on to become the most popular toy ever to captivate the young of heart and lithe of body. Sales estimates run to 1,000,000—the number sold during the first four weeks. At \$1.98 apiece, that's nearly \$2,000,000 gross.

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