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by Dan Skeen Each week,

myprimetime.com seeks out those who live and work the individual adventure.

They're celebrities, business people and (extra)ordinary folks whose work is their play.

This week: Ralph Osterhout, founder of Osterhout Design Group. The resume of this "benign anarchist" reads like an 8-year-old's career wish list. He designed the submersible vehicles featured in "The Spy Who Loved Me" and "Never Say Never Again." He created laser sites, night vision goggles and underwater military equipment for Navy Seals. These days he gets his kicks designing Yak-Baks and Gaks. In today's competitive toy market, the designer stands out for his ability to sculpt high-tech gadgetry into toys kids crave.

Is the fountain of youth really a squirt gun?

Most of the printing on my birth certificate is rubbed off because I don't feel 53. People around here would swear I don't act 53. [A co-worker shouts from across the room: "It's a stretch to say 3!"]

How do you think like a kid?

When people don't have very happy childhoods, generally they have very poignant and innumerable memories. For me, being in school and away from where I lived was one of the most important things in my existence, so I remember distinctly what kids liked and what kids thought was funny.

I would have done anything on earth — I would have committed unnatural acts with hamsters — if it meant the class would come apart at the seams. And I did. I

brought fake dog shit to class and held it in the air behind the teacher's back until I got expelled.

What's a common misconception about your job?

People think toys are easy to come up with. In fact, it's enormously hard work. There's that expression in the toy industry "children are getting older, younger." It's nothing to have 2-year-olds on PCs. So how are you going to satisfy a child with a box of blocks? The genie won't go back in the bottle.

How do you come up with new ideas?

It's a remarkably simple formula. If you want to be creative you have to feed yourself voluminous amounts of information that could potentially be relevant. I read 50 to 60 magazines a month.

What ends up happening is you'll be walking down the street picking your nose and suddenly you'll get a Godzilla eureka and realize that if I took this and connected it with that "Oh my God, I've got a solution!" That happens all the time.

Where will toys take the kids of tomorrow?

Here's what I see: Little Timmy gets off the school bus, gets into his house, and a teddy bear in his room, seemingly asleep, suddenly comes to life, pushes itself off a little chair, walks to the entryway to his bedroom with hands on his hips, looking a little bit annoyed, and says "Where you been, Timmy? It's a little bit lonely around here."

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