

# Museum plays around with toys from the past

By KYRA ALEXANDER  
Staff Writer

Ever heard of Bilbo-catchers, Chinese checkers, or quoits? These few games and many more are featured in the Kings Mountain Historical Museum's newest exhibit, "Toys and Games That We Loved". This collection of playthings provides more than a walk down memory lane, it highlights the creativity and imagination once brought about by these toys.

The bilbo-catcher, a toy of the "cup and ball family", has been popular for generations starting as a favorite among European adults and children, who brought them to the "New World."

"The task of swinging the ball into the cup developed hand-eye coordination and dexterity," according to the display at the museum.

Quoits, an early version of horseshoes, was also brought to the colonies by the English set-

tlers. "The game of Quoits is at least 2000 years old, dating back to the ancient Greeks in the original Olympic games," according to the museum.

Contrary to popular belief, Chinese checkers did not originate from China. The display at the museum states that it was developed in Germany in the late 1800's.

"This was a fun exhibit to do and seems to be very successful," said Mickey Crowell, director and curator of the Kings Mountain Historical Museum.

The exhibit starts off with some of the oldest toys ever played, as early as the 16th century, to the most recent in years, toys made in the 1960's.

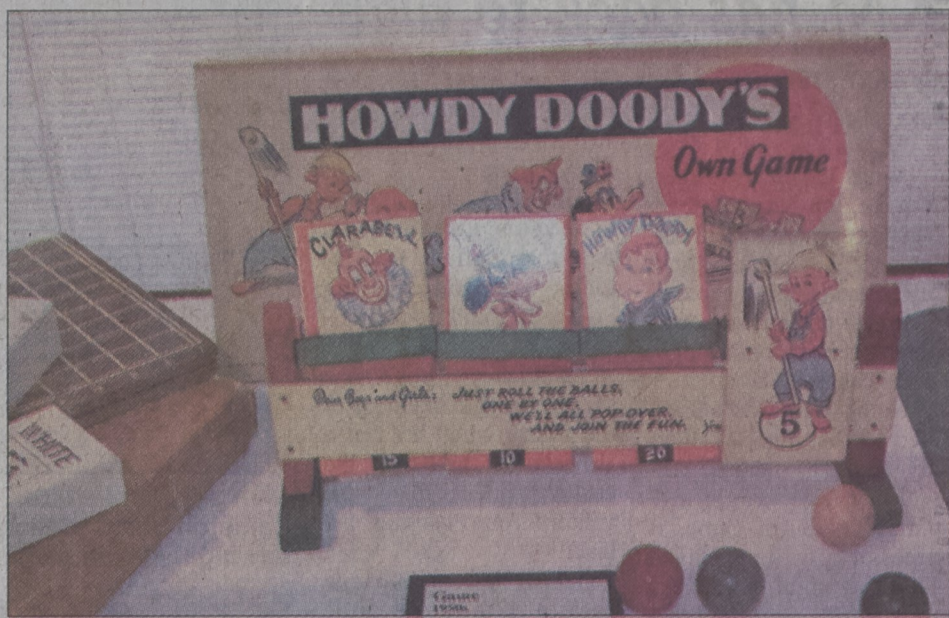
According to Crowell, three to four years ago, the museum did an exhibit called "Early Games and Toys". The difference between the two exhibits is that this one is more interactive.

Kids of all ages can come sit down and play a game of checkers, Chinese checkers, color, play cards, or play with tinker toys, such as linking logs.

To some seeing these games seems like a blast from the past, such as the card game "Go Fish", but to others they seem foreign.

"Kids now are so structured and scheduled with activities outside the home, they can't just go outside and play in the dirt and use their imaginations," Crowell said. "Now kids just want to play on computers."

Technology has fueled a change in playtime over the



Howdy Doody's Own Game, from the 1950's, is a popular attraction at the museum's current exhibit.



Tea sets have been a favorite pastime for many young girls.

years. Many of the tractors and toy cars that kids once had to pedal or propel forward with their feet are now motorized. "Boards" and even a deck of cards are no longer required for games that can now be played online or in video format.

But even though toys and games may have changed the rule of playtime remains the same: fun must be had.

According to Crowell, the two most unique games in the exhibit are the Howdy Doody's Own Game and Chinese checkers.

"A man and woman came in here and the man knew how to play Chinese checkers but the

woman didn't. So they sat down and played four games," Crowell said.

Crowell explained that the museum wanted to tie this exhibit in with the summer reading program (themed "Be Creative") at Mauney Memorial Library. A "Be Creative" corner at the Kings Mountain Historical Museum allows children to color and play.

The next exhibit the museum will have is a tribute to veterans, focusing on the women who have served our country.

The museum, located at 100 E. Mountain Street, is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

## Graciano observes the 65th commemoration of D-Day at Omaha Beach

By Rich Lamance  
Joint Hometown News Service

NORMANDY, France - Senior leaders often call the son of a Grover woman, and those who serve with him, a part of the next "greatest generation." Army Pfc. Edwin J.

leaders from Great Britain, France and Canada at a special ceremony at the American Cemetery overlooking Omaha Beach. Celebrations at small towns throughout Normandy were capped by a parachute demonstration from airborne paratroopers representing many of the units involved with the D-Day operations.

"My specific job was force protection and ceremonial support," said Graciano.

For Graciano, it was hard to imagine that the tranquil farming villages and pristine beaches were once the scene of carnage and destruction that took the lives of more than 4,000 Americans in just one day.

"Visiting Pointe du Hoc had an amazing impact, and it helped us realize exactly what happened 65 years ago," said Graciano.

Today, the 360 miles of coastline that makes up Normandy is mostly lush farmland, bustling market towns and historic landmarks that commemorate important battles that took place more than six decades ago. The residents of the area have never forgotten the sacrifices of the Americans who fought here and embrace today's soldiers just as heartily as those who liberated them.

"Normandy is very historically based. There are farms and buildings that remain from World War II, as well as old homes. The food is very different from stateside food - not better, not worse, just different. The sun stays up a lot longer than even in Germany. It gets very cold at night and very hot during the day," said Graciano.

Graciano is normally stationed in Heidelberg, Germany, with the 529th Military Police Company, where he works as a military policeman. He has served in the Army for one year, and has not yet deployed.



Edwin Graciano

Graciano, son of Rebecca Dycus of Runyans Road, Grover, recently traveled to now silenced battlefields with names like Omaha and Utah Beaches to observe the 65th Commemoration of D-Day. They were there to honor those who were a part of that "greatest generation" who served in one of the bloodiest and most decisive battles in world history.

Graciano, a military policeman, and more than 1,000 service members from posts and bases throughout Europe and the U.S., converged on the historic Normandy area to honor those who served, and in many cases made the ultimate sacrifice, on June 6, 1944. Week-long ceremonies took place throughout the region in such historic places as St. Mere Eglise, Omaha and Utah Beaches and small villages in the area that were vital to the success of the allies push into Europe against Nazi Germany. President Obama met with



After parachuting into the same area as their airborne counterparts on D-Day in June of 1944, U.S. airborne soldiers line up for a ceremony with officials from the town of St. Mere Eglise. (Photo by AF Master Sgt. Cecilio Ricardo)



President Barack Obama shakes the hand of Ben Franklin as Prince Charles from Great Britain looks on during ceremonies commemorating the 65th Anniversary of D-Day. Franklin was one of the soldiers who stormed Omaha Beach during the early morning hours of June 6, 1944. (Photo by AF Master Sgt. Cecilio Ricardo)



U.S. soldiers begin a 21-gun salute during ceremonies at the American Cemetery at Omaha Beach in Normandy, France. The celebration honored service members who fought during what has been described as one of the most decisive battles of World War II. (Photo by AF Master Sgt. Cecilio Ricardo)

### Shytle's book to be featured at GC Museum

Dixon Community resident Tom Shytle has written a new book: "Carolina Roots from Whence I Came."

Shytle will be featured by Gaston County Museum, 131 West Main St., Dallas, in a book talk/signing Sunday from 3-4 p.m. free and open to the public. He will talk briefly about his motivation in writing the book, growing up in the Park Yarn Community near Kings Mountain and his military service in the USAF.

Tom Shytle was barely a year old and the Great Depression was at its peak when his family moved from the cotton mill village where he was born to Bryson City in the mountains of Western North Carolina. The economy was worse than it had been on the mill village and after struggling to survive on a dollar a

day his father made working for the WPA, his family held on for six years living in one of the most poverty stricken areas of the country. Tom was seven years old when they moved back to the same cotton mill village in Kings Mountain and to much better economic conditions than when they left.

His story is about his experiences growing up on the Park Yarn Cotton Mill village followed by 25 years in the USAF. The years spent in the military are related in detail from the viewpoint of an Air Force non com from the Korean War and an assignment to a covert unit whose cold war mission was to "develop an unconventional warfare capability that included inserting, supplying, and extracting indigenous partisans and to design, produce and air drop psychological

warfare materials." The organization was also responsible for supporting U-2 overflights of Eastern Europe and Russia.

"This is a unique program," said Museum Programs Coordinator Jeff Pruet.

Gaston County Museum of Art & History at Dallas is housed in an 1852 brick Greek Revival style hotel that has been adapted for visitors and travelers of today. The museum contains North Carolina's largest public exhibit of horse-drawn vehicles consisting of sleighs, drays, wagons and buggies and is the home of the "Ties That Bind, Carolinas Textile Exhibit." Pruet said Shytle's signed book will be available for \$15.

The museum hours are: Tuesday-Friday 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m.-3 p.m. and open every first Sunday from 2-5 p.m.