



Thanks for joining us for Junior Blasts. We hope you enjoy this quarterly column. Stay tuned for some great stuff!



by Alan Garbers

Peskunck Larrabee, illustrator

The New Junior Blasts

Mattie was a thinker. She had to be. Life was hard when she was a little girl. Her father had died and her mother was struggling to take care of Mattie and her family. It was hard living in Maine. The winters were long and cold. Farming was even harder. The growing seasons were short and the ground rocky. Families couldn't make it on farming alone. Children, usually girls, had to work in local factories to make enough money to take care of the rest of their families.

In the 1840s girls weren't supposed to think of mechanical things or how machines worked. Girls were supposed to learn how to cook, sew, and clean. Men made things, repaired machines, and invented new things, not women and especially not girls. But Mattie was different. She was good at making kites and sleds for her brothers.

Only the lucky or rich got to go to school. Mattie had to quit school and work in a cotton mill when she was twelve years old. The mill made cotton thread for clothing and other things.

The mill that Mattie worked in was a dangerous place; at the time many factories were. Water wheels turned huge gears which ran pulleys that connected to belts that connected to other pulleys that ran machines. There were hundreds of places to get a slip of long hair caught and ripped out, or a finger broken, or an arm crushed. In the blink of an eye, a careless worker could get caught up in a machine and be injured or killed. Often there was no quick way to turn the machine off to prevent an accident.

One day while Mattie was working, a thread got tangled and caused the machine to jam! There was no way to stop the machine! In a second a spindle came loose and shot out like a bullet, injuring





a fellow worker. While accidents were common place and expected, Mattie started thinking. It didn't take long for her to come up with a way to invent a shuttle to shut down the machine quickly in an emergency.

Mattie's idea worked great! Unfortunately Mattie and her family didn't know how to patent the idea so her only reward was the knowledge that her invention would save lives.

As Mattie grew older she continued to invent things. Her most famous invention was a paper bag folder that changed how bags were made. While she never became rich like other inventors, she enjoyed inventing things and making life better for mankind.

You may have heard of Mattie. Her full name is Margaret Knight and over

her lifetime she invented over a hundred things and received twenty-seven patents. Some complimented her by saying she was a female Thomas Edison. Yes, Mattie was a thinker!

Game of the Month – Burn the Strings

Burn the strings can be for individual or team play. Prior to playing, strings are strung between stakes or uprights at 18" and 24", one set for each team or individual.

At the signal, players must gather natural tinder and fuel to pile under the string. The fuel must not come closer than 4" to the bottom string. Once the pile is complete a fire must

be started using primitive means, such as a flint and steel, a fire piston, or a bow drill set.

Once the fire is started it can no longer be assisted by rearranging or adding fuel. If the fire goes out before burning through the strings, that player or team is out of the game.

The first person or team to burn through both strings wins.

Hunting Safety

Hunting Season is Here

A good hunter is a safe hunter. Remember these tips for safety:

1. Never go hunting without telling somebody where you're going and when you expect to return.
2. Treat every gun as if it's loaded, even when you're sure it's not.
3. Before each hunt, open your gun's action and check the muzzle for obstructions. (Run a ramrod down the barrel on a muzzleloader.)

For more tips go to ducks.org/hunting/hunting-safety/10-safety-tips-for-all-hunters.

What's That?

Here are some terms you might hear around a hunting camp. Can you pick the correct hunting definition?

1. Beam – 1. To smile with joy. 2. The light produced by an automobile headlight. 3. The main portion of an antler.
2. Hide – 1. The outer skin of an animal. 2. To make something not seen. 3. A hunter's blind or stand.
3. Grain – 1. Seeds that are commonly used for food. 2. The growth pattern in wood. 3. A unit of measurement used when weighing bullets and gun powder.

(The answers are: No. 1 is 3; No. 2 is both 1 and 3; and No. 3 is 3)

Funnies of the Month

Tongue Twisters – Try saying these phrases fast and see how many times you can say them without making a mistake.

1. She sells seashells on the seashore.
2. The instinct of an extinct insect stinks.
3. A proper copper coffee pot. **MB**

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