

**THE BRITISH TOY & HOBBY ASSOCIATION
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD 2015**

Lifetime Achievement Award 2015

*Great Fosters Hotel, Egham,
Surrey, TW20 9UR*

*Wednesday 24th June
1.15pm*

Lifetime Achievement Award

Presentation of a Lifetime Achievement Award to

Gary Grant

*Award to be presented by
Mr Phil Ratcliffe, Chairman,
British Toy & Hobby Association*

3.00pm close of day

GARY GRANT LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

To the toy industry Gary Grant is an inspiration. An outstanding example of what can be achieved through dedicated hard work and an ethical approach to life.

THE FIRST STEPS

Gary had a very tough childhood, a factor that was to influence his future views in business life. His parents were divorced when he was still a child, money was tight and Gary, suffering from dyslexia, was no scholar. If he needed anything he knew he had to work to earn money. And work he did.

Leaving school with just one “0” level Gary found employment in a bike shop in Amersham during the skateboard boom of the 1970’s. It was here that he discovered that he had a natural talent for buying and selling and when the skateboard boom subsided, Gary had the insight that the new craze was to customise boards so he started buying and selling skate board accessories. He cannily bought up wheels and bearings, which he stored at home. That was until he found the weight was making the bedroom floor collapse! His business flourished so much so that his boss fired him because most of the phone calls to the bike shop were for Gary’s burgeoning business.

THE FIRST ENTERTAINER AND THE EARLY YEARS

In 1978, after two successful years of buying and selling skateboard parts, Gary married Catherine. Together they bought a house in Amersham, and when Gary was fired from the bike shop they managed to raise enough capital to buy the local toyshop, which was for sale at the time.

The previous owner had an interesting approach to children - he simply didn't like them! The shop owner had a strange rule – that children were allowed in but they had to remain on the narrow carpet that ran down the middle of the store.

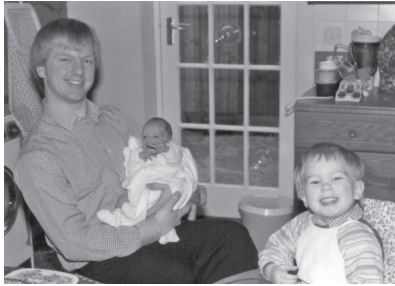


The first Entertainer toy shop in Amersham, 1981



Gary at an early days store promotion alongside Darth Vader

The early years of business were a real challenge but fortunately and much to their credit, Gary was helped by toy industry friends like Paul Caspari who supplied Gary's fledgling shop with quantities of stock on a weekly basis thus helping Gary's modest credit limits. Other independent retailers like Vic Butcher and Lillian Woods - the Chairperson of the National Association of Toy Retailers at the time also supported Gary. Popular brands like The Dukes Of Hazard, Transformers, My Little Pony, Britains and Playmobil also helped the business along.



Gary with sons Duncan and Stuart, 1984

By 1985 the business embarked upon its first steps in growth, with the opening of stores initially in Beaconsfield and then later in Slough.

Over the years Gary's business went from strength to strength while his stature and reputation within the toy industry also grew. It was at this time that Gary became involved with voluntary buying groups Upper Thames Wholesalers, Concord Toys and eventually Youngsters.

During this period Gary teamed up with David Fogel - of Toy Stack fame, and they both became a formidable industry duo as they bought huge quantities of clearance stock which they went on to sell directly themselves and also to other independent retailers. The magic of this working relationship was that David knew how to do the deal while Gary knew his numbers.

This profitable association came to an end when Toy Stack was sold to Hamleys. Eventually Hamleys sold Toy Stack, enabling The Entertainer to move directly into the London area.



An early edition Entertainer store catalogue, 1992

GARY AS AN INDUSTRY SPOKESPERSON

Gary was first elected in 1989 to the British Association of Toy Retailers Council (BATR), latterly the Toy Retailers Association, and he served as a member on the Council and board continuously for over 20 years until 2010. He served as Chairman of the TRA for two terms in 2001-2003 and later in 2007-2010 and as President during 2004-2006. Gary has also been an industry spokesperson whenever the media wanted a suitable sound bite. More recently Gary has been a major driving force behind Dream Toys, the annual pre-Christmas media event for the whole of the toy industry.

THE CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE

The growth and success of The Entertainer is underpinned by Gary and Cath's deep Christian beliefs which are at the heart of their business ethos. Gary's Christian beliefs were not something he grew up with, instead they developed following a meeting at a Christian Men's Breakfast in Amersham. At first, Gary was really not sure that being a businessman and a Christian were actually compatible but Gary came to realise that his Christian convictions were a real asset in a business. He earned people's trust.

The first test of this was as Halloween approached Gary decided not to stock any Halloween products. Far from losing business Gary had a record month, an experience that Gary has seen happen many times over when he has followed his convictions.

More controversial was Gary's decision to 'Keep Sunday Special' by not opening any of his stores. This allows his staff to enjoy a day of rest with their families and once again Gary has been proven right in that he can do as much business in six days as most stores do in seven! This attribute has finally been accepted by major shopping centre landlords who were initially very dubious of leasing to a store that would not trade seven days a week.

GARY & PHILANTHROPY

Gary and The Entertainer have a truly unique approach to philanthropy. Gary, because of his own childhood experiences, realised that some children have significantly disadvantaged beginnings and therefore was in a position to appreciate that it doesn't take a lot to transform their young lives.



Gary's charitable work published in the local press, 2007

In 2014, approximately £300,000 was raised this way through 200,000 individual donations.

In 2014 alone, The Entertainer raised more than £1,000,000 for charities associated with children and families.

As a result, The Entertainer gives back 10% of its profits to national children's charities. This approach also extends to the staff that can also give back through Payroll Giving with The Entertainer matching whatever the staff members contribute. As well as the employee schemes, customers in store can also make a difference through a national in-store scheme called 'Pennies'. This gives customers the opportunity to round up their purchase to the nearest



A modern day Entertainer store

AWARDS

The Entertainer's unique approach to retail, philanthropy and employment has been recognised in recent years by a number of national awards including: numerous BTHA Best Retailer of the Year Awards; The Sunday Times 100 Best Companies To Work For; Retail Week's Speciality Retailer Of The Year; two major awards in 2012 at the National Payroll Giving Excellence Awards for "Best Launch of a New Scheme", and "Best Individual Contribution" to Gary himself as Managing Director, this was also in addition to being highly commended in the "Best Overall Campaign" category.

Anyone who has been so active within the toy industry is bound to have ruffled a few feathers and most suppliers would acknowledge, with a smile, that Gary is both demanding but rigorously fair.

Gary Grant is a truly inspirational toy industry leader who has made a fundamental and beneficial impact on the British toy industry over the long term. In doing so, Gary has exhibited extraordinary levels of commitment and passion combined with integrity throughout his career.

For all his hard work, dedication and commitment, Gary Grant is a truly worthy recipient of the British Toy and Hobby Association's Lifetime Achievement Award.



The Entertainer head office

In business, your company is tough but fair.
In friendship, loyal and true.
In charitable works, unrelenting and generous.

Jimmy Hunter, BTHA Chairman 2000-2002

When I reflect upon Gary Grant, a wonderful adage by David Gurgin comes to mind.

Whatever you do, do with Integrity;
Wherever you go, go as a Leader;
Whomever you serve, serve with Caring;
Whenever you dream, dream with your All;
And never, ever give up.

Truly, this adage must have been written with Gary in mind".

Alan Hassenfeld, Former Chairman and CEO, Hasbro



Gary and Catherine Grant, 2015

"Gary's contribution to the toy industry has been hugely significant and he has achieved many great things through his personal drive and his high energy. These qualities have combined with a tenacious ambition to lead to the Entertainer becoming a recognized name across our high streets, creating over 1,000 jobs and career opportunities in the process.

A major supporter of the industry's Toy Trust charity from the very early days, Gary has always placed family values at the forefront of his life - and this is reflected through the values in the business which includes many family members today and is the bedrock of their continued success.

This BTHA Lifetime Achievement Award is richly deserved for the vision and values that he has brought to his business and the Industry."

Kevin Jones
BTHA President

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