

SPINNIN' YARNS

19 Events from Published Frisbee History... That Never Happened!

1. The Frisbee came from Frisbie pie tins.

The easy way to debunk this ubiquitous urban legend is to separate the “thing” (the plastic flying disc) from its “name” (Frisbee).

Humans have been tossing disc-shaped objects since prehistoric times. The Greeks discovered that the discus performed well as both a long-range weapon and an Olympic event. To this day, folks throw all sorts of round, flat objects such as can lids, pie tins, paper plates, yogurt tops, etc. just for pure fun.

Plastic flying discs were invented in 1948 by Fred Morrison out in Southern California as the outcome of ten years perfecting his concept for a “better flying cake pan.” It was his second disc design, the 1955 Pluto Platter, that Wham-O bought from him in 1957.

Meanwhile, back in Southern New England, the activity of sailing disc-shaped objects on several college campuses became known as “frizby” or “frisbie,” quite possibly because throwing pie tins from the Frisbie Pie Company (with an outlet near Yale) was best-known.

Shortly after acquiring the rights to the Pluto Platter in 1957, Rich Knerr, president of Wham-O, while on a sales-promotion trip back East, heard of college kids referring to Pluto Platters as frisbies. Not knowing why or where the name came from, he decided that, if it would help sell products, Wham-O would use the new nickname to their advantage. Not having seen a spelling of the name in print, they settled on “Frisbee” to trademark.

Thus the “name” was wedded to the “thing,” which became the first (Pluto Platter) Frisbee.

2. Fred’s father invented the sealed-beam headlight.

Fred’s father was an optometrist and never claimed to have invented the sealed-beam headlight.

3. The Flyin-Saucer was designed by Warren Franscioni (Fred’s financial partner from 1947 to 1950).

The Flyin-Saucer was designed by Fred using his 1946 Whirlo-Way drawing as a basis.

4. Fred passed by the Frisbie Pie Company while visiting Bridgeport, Connecticut in 1948.

Fred had never heard of the Frisbie Pie Company until long after Wham-O had used the name Frisbee in 1957.

5. PIPCO (the name of Fred and Warren’s partnership) stood for “Partners In Plastic.”

PIPICO originated from “If it’s a PIPICO product, it’s a Pip.”

6. Prototypes for the first plastic flying disc were hand-carved out of a block of hard plastic.

Prototypes for the Flyin-Saucer were lathe-turned using Fred’s handmade cardboard templates.

7. The first flying disc was called the Flyin’ Saucer or Flyin’-Saucer.

The spelling of the name as molded into the 1948 disc is Flyin-Saucer.

8. Fred and Warren sold Flyin-Saucers through Disneyland.

Fred left Warren in 1950. PIPICO was dissolved before 1953. Disneyland opened in 1955.

9. Fred was still with PIPICO during the Al Capp “debacle.”

Fred and Warren split up two months before (Al) Capp Enterprises first contacted Warren in April 1950.

10. Fred was a Los Angeles building inspector before or immediately after the breakup of PIPICO.

After Fred left Warren in 1950, he continued working as a carpenter for eleven years. He served as a Los Angeles building inspector between 1961 and 1968...long after the 1957 Wham-O Contract.

SPINNIN' YARNS

PAGE 2

- 11. Fred and Warren were still selling discs together in 1953.**
After their split in February 1950, Fred and Warren never again had ANY form of contact.
- 12. Fred designed the Pluto Platter in 1951.**
Fred designed the Pluto Platter in 1955; it was produced just in time for the September 1955 L.A. County Fair.
- 13. Fred changed the name of the first disc from "Rotary Fingernail Clipper" to "Pluto Platter."**
"Rotary Fingernail Clipper" was Fred and Warren's pet name for the 1948 Flyin-Saucer but it was NEVER advertised as such. The 1955 Pluto Platter was a completely new disc.
- 14. The Pluto Platter is a "redesign" of the Flyin-Saucer.**
The 1955 Pluto Platter was a completely new design and is universally recognized as far superior to the original 1948 Flyin-Saucer.
- 15. Fred was spotted by Wham-O while he was selling Pluto Platters in a downtown L.A. parking lot.**
Rich Knerr and "Spud" Melin, copartners of Wham-O, said later they witnessed demonstrations of the Pluto Platters at a few local fairs, but didn't make any contact with Fred.
- 16. Fred was approached by Wham-O to discuss acquiring his Pluto Platter.**
Fred first contacted Wham-O in late December 1956 to see if they might have an interest in marketing his Pluto Platter.
- 17. Wham-O purchased the rights to the Pluto Platter in 1955.**
Wham-O contracted for the rights to the Pluto Platter on January 23, 1957 (Fred's 37th birthday!).
- 18. Fred told Wham-O about the Frisbie Pie Company.**
Fred had never even heard of the Frisbie Pie Company until sometime in the 1970s.
- 19. The Frisbee was invented by Spud Melin, or Ed Headrick.**
(Widely reported in the media after the death of both Spud and Ed in 2002.)
The first plastic flying disc (Flyin-Saucer) was invented/designed by Fred Morrison. The first disc to carry the name "Frisbee" was a Pluto Platter (originally designed by Fred in 1955), modified by Wham-O in 1958.

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Flat Flip Flies Straight, True Origins of the Frisbee
Wormhole Publishers, June 2006, 436 pages.
ISBN: 0-9774517-4-7

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