

5 June 2015 - Old Toys (Europa Stamps)

Girls growing up in the 1950s and 1960s dreamed about the Anne doll. I remember that my mother won an Anne doll at a bazaar. The doll came with the complete Telemark folk dress, which had been embroidered by a local organisation.

The Anne doll was made by Åsmund S. Lærdal's company in Stavanger. Since 1941 Lærdal had been producing picture books and various types of popular toys for both girls and boys. I grew up with the first wooden cars, which were produced until 1954. In 1958 came the soft vinyl cars, of which Lærdal produced several series. The first series was made from a synthetic resin and PVC (polyvinyl chloride) mix, and the most popular cars were those called Tomte Toys. In total, more than 100 million cars were made and sold across the world to more than 110 countries. A true Norwegian industrial adventure!



The man behind this Norwegian toy adventure was innovator Åsmund S. Lærdal. Lærdal was born in 1913 and started a publishing company in Stavanger in 1940. The following year he published a picture book for children under the company name, Tomte Småvareindustri.

Having studied marketing in Denmark, he understood the importance of marketing and advertising. During a period when toy production was slow, Lærdal developed lifesaving equipment. A full-size training doll in soft plastic, also named Anne, was warmly received by heart specialists throughout the world.



The company's production of toys eventually stopped, edged out by low-cost countries. However, the gradual development of medical equipment led to Laerdal Medical running training programs for health personnel in Africa in cooperation with the UN since 2010.

But those of us who grew up with the Lærdal toys have not forgotten them. Today there are a lot of people collecting toys from Stavanger, and a Tomte car in good condition and in its original packaging can fetch a high price.