



Toy collection earns employee a world record

April 11, 2017

When not tackling the myriad issues involved with telecommunications at the Laboratory, Susan Suazo-Martinez spends her time hunting for exotic versions of the Slinky, a “Lazy Spring” toy invented in 1943 by Naval engineer Richard James. Sue owns close to 1,500 of the springy things, from the original metal designs to exotic versions that glow in black light or are adorned with custom paint jobs created by regional artists.

“I don’t know when it got out of control,” Sue says with a smile, “but it’s out of control.”

How it all started

Sue was 14 years old when she started working in her uncle’s café in Vaughn, New Mexico.

“The place had a couple of vending machines—the choices were either small rubber balls or tiny Slinky toys,” she recalls. “So every time I felt quarters burning holes in my pocket I would buy a Slinky.”

As her collection grew, Sue began to learn the basics of negotiation that most collectors cultivate over time.

“Eventually, I got to know the vending-machine owner really well,” she says. “Whenever he showed up to replenish the machines, I would trade with him. I would tell him which Slinky toys I had and which ones I wanted. Such trading expanded the collection even more—different colors, different shapes, that sort of thing.”

Recent notoriety

In 2015, Sue’s collection earned a spot in the *Guinness World Records*, although the record did not formally appear until the 2016 edition of the book. In 2016, Sue learned through a journalist that she was also listed in the book *Ripley’s Believe It or Not!*

“It was my brother-in-law who gave me the idea of pursuing a world record,” notes Sue. “After doing some research, I began corresponding with Guinness. It was quite an ordeal, one that took weeks, but it was really exciting when I finally made it in.”

Despite these achievements, Sue says it’s not over. “I should be banned from eBay, Amazon, and from every toy store in the world,” she says with a laugh.

It turns out that there are exotic types of Slinky toys produced in China. Many of these toys are available only in that country.

“I want so bad to travel to China and come back with a suitcase full of Slinkys,” says Sue. “Some of the metal ones are quite unique—they have such beautiful artwork produced, I think, by using an airbrush. I really want those.”

[Read a longer version of the story here.](#)

These are just a few examples of the many types of Slinky toys that Susan Suazo-Martinez has collected over the years.

Los Alamos National Laboratory

www.lanl.gov

(505) 667-7000

Los Alamos, NM

Managed by Triad National Security, LLC for the U.S Department of Energy's NNSA

