

Lynda Sproules – Moon Marble Company

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Have you lost your marbles? If so, I know a place where you can replace them. You can also learn about how marbles are made, find some vintage toys and games, and have fun, right here in Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Lynda Sproules and Bruce Breslow are the owners of the Moon Marble Company in Bonner Springs. This remarkable company specializes in marbles and more.

Lynda is from Canada originally, although she has been in Kansas since the 1970s. Bruce Breslow is originally from Connecticut. Lynda met Bruce when they were working at a greenhouse in the Kansas City area. Bruce left the greenhouse when he opened his own custom woodworking shop and Lynda eventually joined him in the business.

Bruce was building custom furniture in his woodworking shop, but he and Lynda also had an interest in games and toys. Using the scraps from his wood projects, he decided to make game boards out of the scrap wood. Some of those games needed marbles.

“Bruce called a company back east and ordered marbles to go with our games,” Lynda said. “We got a whole truckload, a thousand pounds of marbles. I thought we’d be drowning in marbles forever.”

But the games and marbles proved popular. Bruce and Lynda decided to focus their business on the games and toys. In 1995, they opened this new business in Bonner Springs.

What should the business be named? As Lynda and Bruce considered this, they thought about a popular design of marble called a “Moonie.” This evolved into the name Moon Marble Company. Now the company logo features a big smiling face on a round, full moon – shaped like a marble.

The Moon Marble Company began in 1995. Interest in this unusual business has taken off. “It is the quirkiest, weirdest thing,” Lynda said. The store now employs 11 people. Lynda lives in the nearby rural community of Linwood, population 378 people. Now, that’s rural.

According to the Kansas Sampler Foundation, Moon Marble Company is the only store in the nation where a person can buy toy marbles and handmade marbles and watch marbles being made.

Bruce Breslow is the artisan who creates these glass marbles in the shop as people watch.

The store now includes a Wall of Marbles where a person can pick out an amazing variety of styles and colors of marbles in different sizes. In fact, a person can get a foot-long plastic tube in which to carry them.

In the back is Bruce's shop where he creates new marbles. A display counter exhibits other beautiful marbles which can only be described as works of art. These are created by artisans around the country. There are also other glassworks such as hearts and paperweights in various colors and sizes.

Another part of the business is the toys and games. These are not generic games as might be found in a big box chain store. Many of these are vintage games and toys which some of us remember, such as the slinky, spirograph, etch-a-sketch and rock'em sock'em robots. Doesn't that bring back memories? Almost no battery operated toys are in the store, but there are modern types of toys such as a wall of bling for girls as well as brainteasers, gag gifts, and a junior scientist section.

On the first weekend of March, Moon Marble Company sponsors an annual event called Marble Crazy, when artists and craftsmen from around the nation will come display their wares. The store regularly hosts tours. In fact, one page of the guest register showed visitors from Texas, Virginia, Colorado, Ohio, St. Louis, South Dakota, Germany, Ireland, and Japan.

Remember that initial load of a thousand pounds of marbles? This amazing company now regularly buys four to five-thousand pounds of marbles at a time. Wow.

For more information, go to www.moonmarble.com.

Have you lost your marbles?! If so, or even if you haven't, go to Moon Marble Company in Bonner Springs, Kansas. We commend Lynda Sproules, Bruce Breslow and all involved with this business for their creative entrepreneurship. This is a store where one can find marvelous marbles and more.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.