

# THE SUPER SOAKER

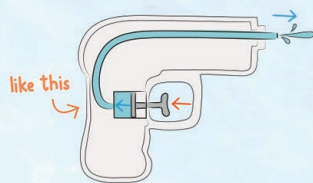
## THE NEED:

A toy that could make a serious *splash* with consumers.

## THE INVENTION:

The Super Soaker water gun.

The world's first water guns left a lot to be desired — like the ability to actually splash anything beyond your own arm. Many worked by pushing a small piston into a water tank to drive water out, resulting in an itty bitty *splurt*.



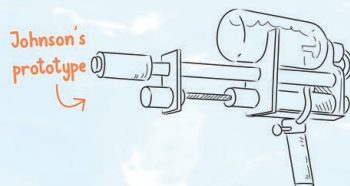
In the 1980s, everything changed... and all because a NASA engineer blew a leak.

**Lonnie Johnson** was trying to create a new refrigerator cooling system that used pressurized water instead of harmful chemicals. He built a pump, connected it to a faucet... and blasted water across his bathroom.

This wasn't the first time Johnson harnessed pressure power. As a kid, he built his own robot, using pressurized air to make its arms move.



In an instant, Johnson knew he had the technology for a toy sensation on his hands. He prototyped a water gun using plastic pipes, plexiglass, and a 2-liter soda bottle. Sounds crude, but it could shoot water nearly 40 feet across a room.



Unlike other water guns of the time, the pump in Johnson's toy didn't drive water out — it forced air *in*. It contained a sealed

water chamber and a slide-action pump. As you slid the pump back and forth, you pushed more and more air into the chamber, pressurizing the water. Then all it took was a single pull of the trigger to release the pressurized fluid in a high-speed, far-reaching, *wallop* of a water blast.

Johnson showed off the toy at an Air Force picnic. He blasted an officer right between the eyes, leading to an all-out water war. The other picnic-goers threw cups of water... but they were no match for Johnson.

Johnson needed help mass-producing his toy, but manufacturer after manufacturer rejected him... until one little toy company took interest. During a meeting with the company's executives, Johnson took his prototype out of his suitcase and shot their coffee cups right off the conference table. The execs were *pumped*.

When the Super Soaker hit shelves in the early '90s, it blew its competition out of the water. To date, 300 million Super Soakers have been sold, totaling over \$1 billion in sales. Johnson made enough royalties off of his Super Idea to fund his own research company, and dedicated his life to invention — from new Super Soaker models, to a Nerf dart gun, to the water-based cooling system he set out to make in the first place!

