Frisbee flies past Pluto Platter

LOS ANGELES — They might have been Pluto Platters — those enormously popular discs that hover almost constantly over the country's parks, beaches and backyards. We might have experienced Pluto Platter World Championships, Pluto Platter T-shirts and Pluto Platter

But Pluto Platter insanity never overcame America. The time wasn't right. But, 10 years later, Frisbee madness did. Now the fad has matured and may become an actual

Frisbee championships attract hundreds of participants and thousands of enthusiasts worldwide. A movie depicting the plastic disc's simplistic grace was nominated for an Academy Award, and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington

abc) INTERSTATE Theatres

OPENS It was the Deltas 6:45 against the rules... SHOWS the rules lost!

NATIONAL LAMPOON'S

displays what essentially started out as a child's toy in an exhibition devoted to flight for the fun of it.

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In fact, if it hadn't been for Calif. another American craze — the Hula Hoop — Frisbees might have gone into cornerstone time-capsules with photographs of Dwight Eisenhower instead of Richard Nixon.

The idea for the toy came to a midway pitchman named Fred Morrison who traveled the California carnival circuit in the 1950s selling what he called "invisible string was a bargain by sailing a pie plate down it to a planted accomplice in the crowd.

Invisible string didn't make Morrison a millionaire, but he thought the sailing pie plate might. In a softer, less dangerous material, it

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In 1956, Wham-O introduced a plastic flying disc called the Pluto Platter and another toy that looked like a stiff section of garden hose joined at both ends: the Hula Hoop. The Hula Hoop became an American craze and the Pluto Platter never got off the ground.

Ten years later, the company string." Morrison convinced skepti-cal customers that 100 feet of the and decided to promote it aggressively. Instead of a planet, this time Wham-O named it after a pie company, the Frisbie Pie Company of Bridgeport, Conn.

> been sold since 1967, and executives at Wham-O have no intention of allowing the Frisbee - which accounts for 25 percent of its annual usiness — to become a nostalgic bit of memorabilia like the Hula

Dan Roddick, head of the International Frisbee Association, said the company is now attempting to convince school administrators the time is ripe for Frisbee education in America's schools.

Roddick, a former Frisbee world champion who still competes, said Wham-O organized the association and pays him a salary to run it. He recently organized the fifth annual World Frisbee Championships at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif., and is currently promoting what he refers to as the "sport" of Frisbee to physical education teachers nation-

"Title 9 forces schools to allow men and women to play on the same teams and insurance costs for the more physical sports are skyrocketing," Roddick explained. "We think Frisbee sports fit perfectly in the

I figure I've got my gimmick."
This year Engel won the champ

Frisbee sports? If you think throwing it and catching it are the only things to do with a Frisbee, you're mistaken. There is Frisbee Golf, Frisbee Guts and a tennis-like game called Double Disc Court. Freestyle competition involves a five-minute routine to music, and there also is international competition in distance and maximum time

For the world championship this year Wham-O imported competitors from the U.S., Japan, Sweden, Canada, Great Britain, Belgium, Finland and Australia. Roddick said the extravaganza easily cost the company, which paid all expenses, \$130,000.

The Rose Bowl football game is Over 100 million Frisbees have easier to organize than that thing," said Roddick, who devoted countless hours to the event. "We had people coming in from everywhere."

And even Fido wasn't left out. The Rose Bowl event this year, which attracted over 50,000 spectators to the Frisbee freebie, fea-tured the world finals of the Gaines K-9 Catch and Fetch competition. This year Dink, a Maryland mixedbreed, dethroned an Ashley Whippet and took home top honors.

Dink is probably unaware he is a Frisbee champion, but 18-year-old Laura Engel isn't. She hopes to parlay her Frisbee prowess into an acting career. Engel started throwing Frisbees when she was 10.

'When I first caught it under my leg I thought it was the greatest thing possible," said the Venice, Calif., woman. "Now I have a disc with me everyday and everywhere I

Engel is presently the stage manager for a rock group, The Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo. When I first got to California everybody said, 'Gee, you should be an actress, but you need an in.' Now

onship with her performance in five

'The Rose Bowl is so big and there were so many people," she said. "It's very exciting with all those people in the stands, and the crowd makes so much noise when but she hopes the company will

Frisbee-throwing has advanced from a novelty to a "serious" sport in the years since it was introduced in 1966. International Frisbee competitions are becoming more well-

known and popular. But some sportsmen, this one, still like to just throw and catch the

someone does a trick. Wham-O awarded Engel one share of its stock for taking the title any promises yet, but Engel plans on hiring an agent and hopes to do ter.

send her around the world promoting Frisbees. Wham-O hasn't made to an acting career.

Try doing that with a Pluto

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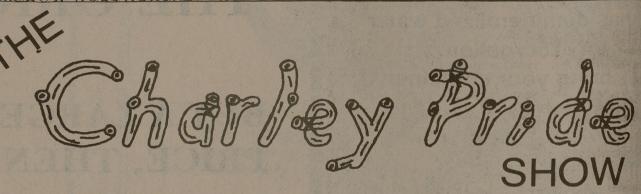
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