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Biography Peter Hodgson, Jr.

Imagine growing up the son of the man who made Silly Putty a household word. For Peter Hodgson, Jr., whose father Peter Sr., was the man behind the popular toy, Silly Putty has been a commanding presence and a paradox for 50 years.

Now, a retired professor of Russian literature from UCLA, Peter has always felt the excitement of marketing Silly Putty and often pitched in to help. Of course while growing up, he never lacked for a supply of the pink “solid liquid.” Even while attending Yale University, where he first discovered the writings of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, Silly Putty remained close to his heart, literally: The Silly Putty packaging operation was located on university property in a building which eventually became the Russian Department!

While completing his doctoral work at Yale, Peter signed on for several special Silly Putty promotions. In 1961, he introduced Silly Putty to thousands of excited Soviets in Gorky Park. “They absolutely went nuts when they saw it,” said Peter. On that trip, he rode a motorcycle to Kiev and the Caucasus for other Silly Putty expositions and married a Swede on the way home.

Peter was instrumental in launching Silly Putty to many parts of Western Europe as well. He was in London in '63 where Silly Putty's arrival coincided with the birth of the Beatles. In '76, he orchestrated a promotion in conjunction with the Tour De France bicycle classic which helped spread news about Silly Putty throughout the countryside.

Peter remained active in the Silly Putty business until the time of his father's death in 1976. Presently, he lives in New Orleans where he is developing interactive software for teaching literature, and has four grown children, who have also grown up with Silly Putty. “Ordinary people have difficulty making sense of Silly Putty which accounts for their fascination when they experience it,” says Peter. “Successfully marketing Silly Putty as a toy resulted from my father's intuitive grasp of the silly relations occurring among the product's unique properties and the universal human experience.”

