

Mary Rodas—Toys, Toys, Toys

1 Have you ever thought that children should run the toy companies? Who else would be better for the job than a customer? One toy company decided to listen to a child's opinion. Mary Rodas was hired to work for a toy company when she was four years old. By the time she was 14, she was a vice-president of the company.

2 Mary's parents came to the United States from El Salvador. They did not speak English very well but they worked hard to make a living. When Mary was 4 years old, her father took care of an apartment building. A toy inventor lived in one of the apartments. One day he asked 4-year-old Mary what she thought of his toys. Her ideas were honest and helpful. He continued to bring her toys and she continued to play with them, telling him what she thought.

3 One day he showed her a new kind of ball. Inside the ball was a balloon. The outside was a plain white cloth covering. Although Mary thought the ball was fun, it needed something more. Bright colors would make the ball more appealing. Mary was right! Children liked the colorful ball! It became popular in many different countries.

4 Although Mary was very young, she was offered a job at the toy company. People listened to her ideas and respected what she said. She told them what she thought kids wanted. Sometimes she would watch other children play to learn about toys they liked. Other times she just had a feeling about whether or not a toy would be popular.

5 Going to school and working was not easy but she did both. After high school, Mary went to college in New York. She still worked at the toy company. People often asked her why she went to college if she had a job and was making a large salary. Her reply was, "There is always more to learn."

6 Mary learned many things over the years. She believes that children will tell adults what they want to hear but they will tell the truth to another child. She also thinks that the best toys are inexpensive, basic toys with a new twist. Although she is no longer a child, she still plays with toys. She has learned to listen to people about what they like and dislike. Working hard and doing her best are important values that she learned from her parents. Mary, one of the youngest vice-presidents of a company, continues to love her work!