

TUESDAY 6TH OCTOBER

Happy
Birthday

Happy Birthday to inventor Lonnie Johnson who was born in Alabama on this day 1949. He was one of six children and his father liked to explain to his children how things worked. Lonnie grew up in a time of racial segregation and attended a black-only high school. In 1968 he represented his school at the University of Alabama Science fair, where he was the only black finalist. He presented his remote-controlled Robot called, Linex and won first prize.

After studying engineering at University he joined the US Air Force, working on a stealth bomber. Four years later joined NASA's JPL research team and worked on the Galileo probe that explored Jupiter and its moons.

Whilst working at the Air Force he was **tinkering** with a heat pump system at home when a jet of water shot out across his bathroom. He had an idea for a toy water gun which he patented and licenced to a toy company. The 'Super Soaker' was launched in 1990 and was the biggest selling toy of the 90s. Hasbro later acquired the licence and with Johnson adapted the pressure system for foam projectiles instead; the Nerf gun was born. In 2013 Johnson took Hasbro to court for unpaid royalties and was awarded \$73m. He now holds 100 patents and works on energy technologies.



- How do you think Lonnie felt taking part in a Science Fair being the only black participant?
- Have you ever used a Super Soaker or Nerf gun?
- Have you ever taken part in a science or engineering competition at school?
- Does an invention have to solve a serious problem to be valuable?

TUESDAY 6TH OCTOBER

Happy Birthday to inventor Lonnie Johnson. He went to a segregated high-school and won a state Science Fair when he was 18.

He studied engineering before joining the US Air Force, working on a stealth bomber, then NASA working on the Galileo probe sent to Jupiter and its moons.

Whilst at the Air Force he was **tinkering** at home with a heat pump when a jet of water shot across his bathroom. He had an idea of a water gun, launched as the 'Super Soaker' in 1990. It was later adapted by Hasbro for the Nerf gun. In 2013 Johnson took Hasbro to court for unpaid royalties and was awarded \$73m.

Happy Birthday



- Have you ever used a Super Soaker or Nerf gun? Did you know who invented it?
- Have you ever taken part in a science or engineering competition at school?