

# FAMILY BUSINESS BUILDS TOYLAND

27

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2005 BOSTON HERALD



STAFF PHOTOS BY PATRICK WHITEMORE

**LET'S PLAY:** Pieces from a vintage Kenner Toys set are seen, above, at the Flack home in Weston. Below, from left, family members are Carol; Paul Jr., 9; Paul Sr. and Ruth, 12.

By JENNIFER HELDT POWELL

It started as a Christmas wish.

Paul Flack wanted to give his son a building kit he had cherished as a child. The classic Girder & Panel set had inspired the Weston man to become an engineer.

But the toy, originally made by Kenner Toys in the 1950s and '60s, was long out of production. All that remained were pricey vintage sets.

Paul's wife, Carol, a corporate executive with a background in manufacturing thought it might be "fun" to set up a small family business to bring the toy back.

Thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of labor later, the Flack family is watching their dream become a reality. Their small company, Bridge Street Toys, just started selling the toy on its Web site, [bridgestreettoys.com](http://bridgestreettoys.com).

At first, Carol Flack thought it would be just a small hobby to bring the toy back while teaching her children about business.

"I wanted to offer them something

more," she said. "The business is here and they can do as much or as little as they want."

Ruth, 12, was named vice president of marketing. Paul, 9, was named vice president of product development. Both have had an active hand in steering the company, Carol Flack said.

The sets consist of tiny girders and panels built to scale that can be used to build miniature skyscrapers, bridges and other structures.

Carol Flack found that the patents had expired and the trademark had been released into the public realm. She snapped it up and got to work.

The Flacks hoped to make the product at their home, but found out it was much more complicated than expected. They've outsourced most of the manufacturing, with much of it being done locally. The family is assembling the toy at home.

Kenner sold about 350,000 sets a year. But that was in a smaller market when people bought fewer toys, Flack said.

"I think it could be much, much larger," she said.

