



A few anxious students count the seconds as the timing devices are put through a final test by instructors Bruce Bentz and Nobukhi Ohtani of the I.D. 272 class.

## Rube Goldberging the Heath Robinson Steel Ball Blues

Feature by Peter Jarvis

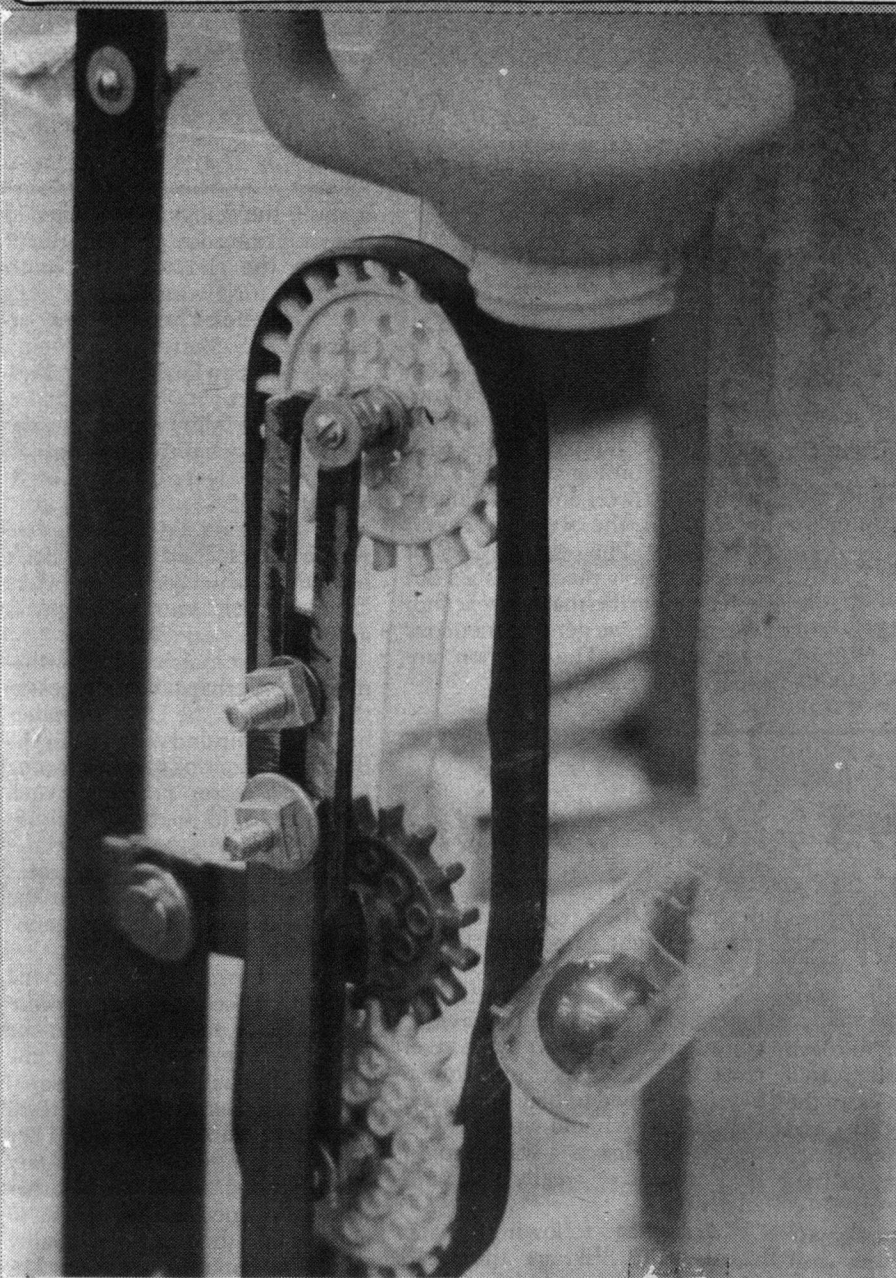
At the next coin-op encounter consider the plight of the junior designer faced with the task of creating a precision timing mechanism. Over in our industrial design studios the I.D. (372) Introductory class seems to have graduated from egg yolks to steel ball bearings. Their chore is to design a device using found objects as simple mechanisms to cause a 7/8" steel ball bearing to release 5 ounces of liquid from a

reservoir of a minimum of twenty ounces. As the junior designers "see" unusual functions in all kinds of ready-made plastic and metal objects, somehow kitchen utensils become elevators and levers and even old toys do things to boggle the imagination. Wonderful combinations emerge. One device sports a plastic lawn flamingo that loses its head in the process — with precision timing, of course. Instructors Bruce Bentz and Nobuoki Ohtani say that this

year's devices predictably have the appearance of a Heath Robinson or Rube Goldberg invention. They explain that this year's class, unlike previous groups, do not have the choice of manufacturing simple mechanisms. So the project demands some clever re-cycling. One of the harder tasks too, is to design along with another designer — the class is divided into teams of two. Co-ordinating plans and sharing work skills to produce a solution with

mechanisms that must work right every single time is not the easiest task. About half of the just under a dozen projects manage to deliver the steelie within an allowable one or two seconds of the stated time.

Perhaps the most demanding of the entire year's projects, the devices now stand in the I.D. workshop; the trial runs have come and gone leaving more than a few with memories of the steel ball blues.



It's the next best thing to clockwork - precision timers from recycled readymates.



Obvious isn't it? Especially the funnel Flamingo.



Studio skills at Arts Workshop I include learning about designing with a colleague.