

## History Inspired Crafts: Gizmos, Gadgets, & Thingamobobs



Solomon Lee Van Meter Jr., was born in Fayette County, Kentucky, in 1888. Van Meter invented the first successful backpack parachute and filed for a patent on his design in 1911. He filed more patents on different versions of the parachute in 1916. Tests of the parachute showed that it worked well. The U.S. Army made parachutes from Van Meter's design for men in the U.S. Army Air Corps to use. (At the time, the U.S. Air Force did not exist as a separate branch of the military.) Kentuckians also have invented or been involved in the invention of traffic lights and the gas mask, among other things.

### Suggested Activity: Recycled Parachutes You Will Need:

- Small plastic cup\*
- Plastic grocery bag or garbage bag
- String
- Hole punch
- Scissors



- Step 1: Cut square about 1 to 1.5 feet across, from your plastic bag.
- Step 2: Measure and cut 4 strings of equal length, about 1 foot long.
- Step 3: Make 4 equally spaced holes around the rim of the cup using your hole punch.
- Step 4: Tie all 4 strings onto your cup where the holes are and then tie the other ends to each corner of your plastic bag. Be sure to keep all of your strings the same length as you tie them.
- Step 5: Test your completed parachute!

\*You may replace the cup with a pipe cleaner person or other lightweight object.

Notes: photo of Solomon Van Meter Jr. courtesy of KET.org, crafts by KHS.