

GOLDBERG *inspires* GIZMOS

Clark engineering students meet simple goals with complex gadgets



Jeff Mack sets up steel ball bearings for a ride down Highway 666, part of a "Journey Through the Afterlife" device built mostly with used auto parts. "Made from 100 percent awesome," the device was perfect on two attempts.



Photos by N. SCOTT TRIMBLE/The Columbian

Clark College engineering student Andrew McConathy watches his team's device launch a golf ball, lower right, during a Rube Goldberg-type competition Tuesday. Each device used five to 10 steps to send the ball toward its target.

By HOWARD BUCK
Columbian staff writer

Cheers and the occasional groan filled the Penguin student lounge at Clark College on Tuesday, as golf balls soared and either clunked into a large tin can or missed their mark.

"Golfing with Goldberg" played tribute to the famed 20th century cartoonist Rube Goldberg, who lampooned technology with wacky

designs to complete simple tasks.

That explained the clever use of marbles, mousetraps, dominoes, Popsicle sticks and at least one Slinky toy.

About 60 students in Clark's Engineering Club, enrolled in three engineering classes, showed off 15 team projects built on the cheap (\$20 or less) but with great precision.

"It's to use the basic theory they're learning and to apply it to

something," said Tina Barsotti, engineering professor who helped score results.

The exercise was a hoot, said Jeff Mack, 26, a mechanical engineering hopeful whose four-person team built a memorable entry dubbed "Journey Through the Afterlife."

His team scavenged junkyard parts, including the front grille of a

Contraptions:

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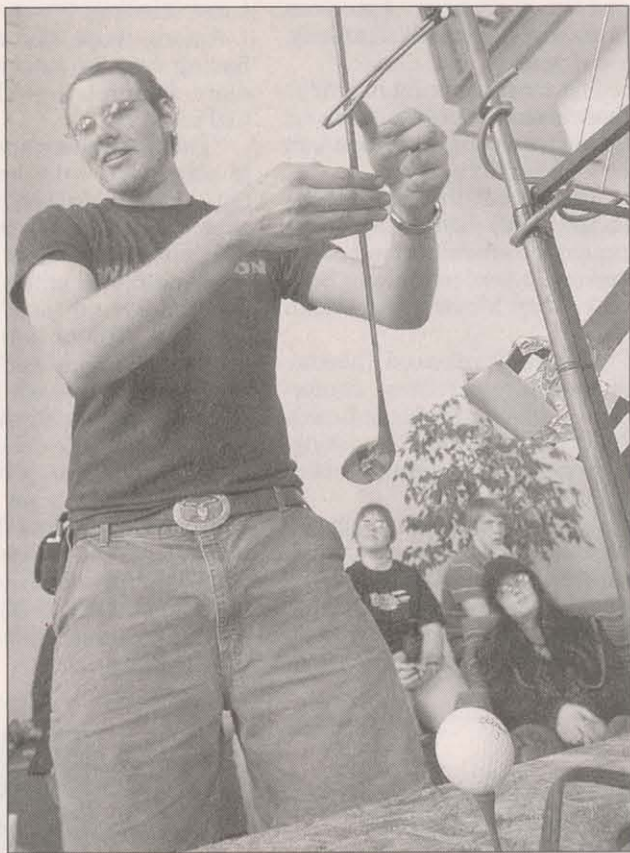
1980 Toyota Corolla, windshield wipers, radiator hose, headlamp casings and accelerator pedals.

From atop the 5-foot-tall contraption, ball bearings looped through a Guggenheim Golgotha (large water bottle), the Passage of Darkness (hose) and Seesaw of Sorrow (wipers) to the Highway to Hell (signed as Route 666, of course) into the Gyre of Despondency (headlamps) to trigger the Jacob's Ladder (pedals) into pitching a golf ball down a Mega Ramp, launching it toward Heaven — a perfect strike.

For good measure, images of the 14 stations of the cross, Cerberus the Hellhound, Charon the Ferryman and the devil himself adorned the project. An iPod rendition of "Highway to Hell" and "Stairway to Heaven" tunes lent to the mood.

"I jumped up and down, when it made it. I was pretty relieved," Mack said after the golf ball nailed its target on both tries. Not a bad ending for a \$6.21 project first sketched on a Burgerville place mat.

It took about a month's hard work, Mack said — most of it (gulp) on Sundays. "I barely slept the last couple nights. But, I'll recover," he said.



N. SCOTT TRIMBLE/The Columbian

Andrew McConathy sets up a golf club to strike a golf ball for the Rube Goldberg competition at Clark College. Engineering student teams focused on complicated methods to reach a simple goal.