Retrogaming Times

Issue #40 - December 20th, 2000

Table of Contents

01.	Playing a Perfect Pitfall! by Alan "Pitfall Harry" Hewston
02.	Pitfall Solution by Robsterman
03.	How Many Games?
04.	Holiday Wishes for Classic Game Characters
05.	The Many Faces of.....River Raid by Alan Hewston
06.	New Games, Old Machines by Fred Wagaman
07.	CCAG Has a New Date
08.	Letters to the Editor
09.	The TI99/4A's "Christmases Past" by Jim Krych
10.	eBay Notes
11.	Infogrames Entertainment to Acquire Hasbro Interactive and Games.com
12.	Conclusion

Playing A Perfect Pitfall!

By Pitfall Harry

(Is that Pitfall Harry or a pixelated Alan in his Halloween costume?)

For a couple weeks now, I've been waiting to write this article, but had to wait until someone finally recorded a perfect game on Atari 2600 Pitfall! As it turns out, yours truly, a.k.a. Pitfall Harry (see issue #26) was the one lucky enough (and I mean lucky) to be the first to record a perfect score. Actually, it is suspected that some gamer has already had a perfect score but either did not think to record it, or had no means to do so. As Tom Zjaba has reminded us, no matter how good you are at a game, there is always someone out there who is better. Twin Galaxies (TG) has recognized me as the first player in history with proof of a perfect game.

I recorded the entire game on videotape and submitted it to the TG Atari Judge Ron Corcoran. You may recall that 2 issues ago we announced the results of the Atari/Colecovision 2000 decathlon. In that competition, one of the games that we played was Atari 2600 Pitfall!. Early in this competition, I was the first to break the existing record by collecting all but one of the 32 treasures. Shortly after that, Robert Macauley and then Robert Mruczek had done better by collecting all 32 treasures in this game. Quite a feat, and the first to ever do so.

After the competition was over, Robert Mruczek threw down the Gauntlet and challenged us to get a perfect score. Since all 32 treasured could be collected, we knew that a perfect

score was possible, so someone had to do it. It was just a matter of time before one of use would be perfect for 20 minutes. Mruczek just missed it with a score of 113,995 out of a possible 114,000. Eventually, I found time to join the race, but not until I corrected the mistakes on my Pitfall map and then optimized my path. Soon thereafter, I recorded a game with all 32 treasures, and knew that even I may be able to do it. After hundreds of frustrating games, I nearly gave up. One mistake and the game was over. Because the game is timed, you only have 20 minutes to collect all the treasures and not lose any points. I only had 7 seconds remaining when I got all 32 treasures. Macauley and Mruczek had 7and 20 seconds remaining respectfully in their best efforts, so they were farther along than I was.

With Pitfall!, constantly on my mind, I discussed it frequently with Robert Mruczek and with a fellow Atari gamer at work, Tim Roach. Tim encouraged me to keep trying and give it a fresh look. I told him about a set of jumps in the beginning of the game that appeared to be possible, but would be very exacting. That night I had learned that the jumps were possible, and that the maneuvers led to a 10 second savings in time. After many more games I finally got in synch again and came ever so close to a perfect score. I got nicked just once but continued on to finish that game with a new, world record score of 113,998. But, on top of that, the 10 seconds at the beginning translated into a whopping 38 seconds remaining at the end. Wow. The next night, I played it a new plan - take no Risks. I played in "white knuckles" mode for the first 10 minutes or so and then, when things got tougher, I had to remain patient. I knew that I had time to spare and should use it if necessary - by staying on the vines unless it was completely clear. This ultra conservative approach was almost too much as I only had 3 seconds remaining when I ended my perfect game. I finally got 114,000 and we could all stop playing this game to death.

Originally, I was only trying for a perfect score, since you do not lose points when you lose any of your 3 lives. In fact, on my previous best game with 38 sec left, I died twice, probably saving 6 to 8 seconds from dying. ie, when heading left and you die, your next life drops down on the left edge of the screen, saving you some time crossing that room.

Here's all you have to do to get a perfect score. 1st make a map, or ask me for mine (on Excel or Word). Next, play an awful lot to get your skills sharpened. Here's my path going mostly Left:

Direction until score is then take the tunnel

Right 6K 1st Left
Left 8K 1st Left
Right 13K, reverse Left 2nd Left
Left 33K 1st Left
Left 69K 1st Left
Right 71K, reverse Left
Left 110K 1st Left
Right 114K

You cannot play while looking at your map, so you'll either have to memorize these tunnels, or post it onto your TV like I did, so that you can quickly glance at your directions.

Robert Mruczek's path uses the most of the same tunnels, but is going to the Right:

Direction until score is then take the tunnel
Right 6K 1st Right
Right 10K reverse Left 1st Right
Right 51K reverse Left 1st Right
Right 87K 1st Right
Right 107K 1st Right
Right 112K reverse Left 1st Right
Right 114K

This may sound easier, but can Robert can tell you how much more difficult it is to travel against the rolling logs, than with them. Also there are rooms with logs rolling right at you

that you must know ahead of time to jump, or lose points.

Statistics from my perfect game: 69 Vines, 64 Pits, 32 ladders jumped, 23 Scorpions, 12 Ladders Up/Down, 10 Crocodile Triplets, 11 Duplicated Rooms, 198 unique rooms, 60 stationary logs, 41 rolling logs, 38 small pits, 17 snakes and 17 fires, for a whopping total of 424 jumps, all of which must be perfect.

Here are some well, deserved acknowledgements

Designer David Crane formerly of Activision. This game is great and he made sure to play test it to make sure that a perfect score was possible. He may not have done so himself, but it's possible by going either left or right (using 95% of the same path) will still get you to all 32 treasures. Ron Corcoron and Stephen Knox the TG judges for Atari and Colecovision, who set up the competition late last Summer. Robert Mruczek for inspiration and challenging us all to try this feat. Robert certainly deserved to be the first to get the perfect score, and it is only bad luck that he did not. Robert Macauley for being the first one to get all 32 treasures - as after which, we knew that a perfect score was possible. Tim Roach for discussing Pitfall with me and cheering me on. Finally, my wife, Kathy, for putting up with this, but she was also rooting for me to finish first - well, actually, so that I'd stop playing it for good.

The Twin Galaxies (TG) home page can be reached at www.twingalaxies.com. TG founder, world video game judge and fan extraordinaire, Walter Day plans to announce a new Pitfall contest soon - with a cash prize. Alan Hewston, a.k.a. Pitfall Harry can be reached at hewston95@stratos.net There's no truth in the rumor that Tom's headliner article last month was aimed at me ;-)

You can read about Alan's accomplishment at the following URL:

http://www.twingalaxies.com/cgi-perl/news_pitfallperfection.pl

Pitfall Solution

by the Robsterman

Anyone who has seen the Pitfall ASCII map is probably asking the same questions I asked.

How do I finish the game?
Which tunnels do I use?

Well, worry no longer, for the Robsterman is here to alleviate you of your adventure-playing concerns. Simply follow this walkthrough, and the result will be your character jumping up and down in excitement (literally).

For your convenience, I have included all treasures in boldface, and I have italicized all helpful hints.

SOLUTION

1. (From opening screen), go east six screens. You get the GOLD BAR.
2. Five more screens east, enter the tunnel.

   HINT: The screen before this one is the Alligator screen.

3. Go west in tunnel.
4. Upon exiting the tunnel, seven screens west is the MONEY BAG.
5. Three more screens west, enter the tunnel.
6. Go west in tunnel.
7. Upon exiting the tunnel, two screens east is the DIAMOND RING.
8. Four screens west, enter the tunnel.
9. Go west in tunnel.
10. Upon exiting the tunnel, three screens west is the MONEY BAG.

At this point, there should be 15-16 minutes of time remaining in the game.

11. After you get the MONEY BAG, keep going west until you get the 2nd GOLD BAR.

    HINT: First, you will get a DIAMOND RING, DIAMOND RING, and 1st GOLD BAR.

12. Six more screens west, enter the tunnel.

    HINT: The screens before this one are the Fire screen and Snake screen, respectively.

13. Go west in tunnel.
14. Upon exiting the tunnel, keep going west until you get the 3nd consecutive SILVER BAR.

    HINT: First, you will get a MONEY BAG, GOLD BAR, SILVER BAR, AND DIAMOND RING...

    At this point, there should be 12 minutes of time remaining in the game.

    ...MONEY BAG, GOLD BAR, SILVER BAR, GOLD BAR, 1st consecutive SILVER BAR, and 2nd consecutive SILVER BAR.

15. After you get the 3rd consecutive SILVER BAR, two more screens west, enter the tunnel.

    HINT: The screen before this one is the Fire screen.

16. Go west in tunnel.

    At this point, there should be 8 minutes of time remaining in the game.

17. Upon exiting the tunnel, three screens east is the MONEY BAG.
18. Keep going west until you get the 4th DIAMOND RING.

    HINT: First, you will get a MONEY BAG, GOLD BAR, DIAMOND RING, DIAMOND RING, SILVER BAR, MONEY BAG, MONEY BAG...

    At this point, there should be 42 minutes of time remaining in the game.

    ...DIAMOND RING, SILVER BAR, and SILVER BAR.

19. After you get the 4th DIAMOND RING, four more screens west, enter the tunnel.
20. Go west in tunnel.
21. Upon exiting the tunnel, three screens east is the GOLD BAR.

How Many Games?

When reading descriptions on eBay and in newsgroups, I frequently see people say they are selling a system with a ton of games. A ton of games??? Last time I checked, a ton was 2,000 pounds. But they are only charging $10.00-$20.00 shipping! That is like a penny a pound for shipping! Cannot beat that! But then I read the description and they usually have about 20 to 50 games with the system. Huh? Even 50 Neo Geo carts (the heaviest games ever made) would not weigh a ton.

Let us do some math here. Let us assume that an Atari with a ton of games, actually comes with 50 games. If they actually gave you an actual ton of games as they advertised, each game would have to weigh 40 pounds. Talk about some heavy lifting! If each of the 40lb carts was sent out via parcel post (the cheapest option), it would cost around $15.00 per game to ship. That would come to $600.00 for shipping, not counting the system. To only charge me $10.00-$20.00 is very generous!

But we all know that game carts do not weight 40 pounds each. So this means that the seller is exaggerating about what they are selling. Which brings me to my question, how

many games are actually in a ton? I decided to use Nintendo games for the comparison. It takes 4 of the original Nintendo games (loose without boxes, manuals or sleeves) to make a pound. There are 2,000 pounds in a ton, so it would take 8,000 Nintendo games to equate a ton of games. Atari games are lighter and it would take about 7 to equate a pound, so you would need 14,000 Atari games to have a ton of games! Talk about a bunch of combats!

So the next time you see an ad and they are advertising that it comes with a ton of games, you can let them know that they aren't even close. Not by a long shot. (Please keep in mind that this is done in a humorous vein, so please don't email me and tell me that they really don't mean a literal ton).

Holiday Wishes of Classic Game Characters

Everyone likes presents for the holidays, even classic game characters. Really! I know that you rarely hear about what classic game's favorite characters are thinking or wishing for, but I am here to let you in on what they are hoping to get for the holidays. Santa, if you are reading this, please take notes as these people deserve to have a few wishes granted. But I am unsure how Santa would deliver games to them?

Pacman-You cannot say classic games without the king of chomp's name popping up! So we started with the most celebrated character and asked him what he wanted? He said "I wish that Ms. Pacman would just drop that silly Ms. and finally go by Mrs. Pacman. I mean we have been married for almost 20 years and even have a kid, so please just become Mrs. Pacman. Oh yeah, I wish Jr. Pacman would finally grow up and get a life. The kid is way past annoying."

Q-Bert-We next headed to the Supreme Noser to find out what he could want for this holiday. As we stopped him between hops, he answered "All I really want is a very sturdy helmet. I am sick and tired of being hit in the noggin by those stupid balls. Sure, it is funny to you when I swear, but it hurts, really bad."

Crazy Climber-Between floors, we found the Crazy Climber and asked him what he wanted for the holidays. Between exhausted breaths, he answered "There is one thing I would like more than anything else and that is a universal Elevator Pass. If these darn buildings weren't so strict, I could just take the elevator up, instead of climbing the side of the building."

Pitfall Harry-The father of the side scrollers stopped between crocodiles to give us his holiday wishes. Here is what he said "I would really like a new agent. Sure, I have been getting the sequels on the newer systems, but the games just stink. If my agent was worth his weight, he would have made sure that Playstation version was better. Come on, I am Pitfall Harry and I deserve better!"

Billy the Block-The hobbies most unknown star had a few things to say about his wishes. Deleting the profanity (he may be black and white, but his language is very colorful), here is what he had to say "I just want a job, any job. I have been blackballed from this industry, those $&*#@. They can knock me down, but they can also kiss my %#@." I decided that it was a good time to get out as he was running out scotch and he can get very mean when the hooch runs low.

The Many Faces of . . . River Raid

by Alan Hewston

Your positive feedback tells me that the Many Faces of format is OK. No complaints so far that the articles are too long, but this month will be a bit longer with 6 versions of River Raid.

Activision proudly presents, River Raid, one of the first vertical scroller/shooters, made originally on the Atari 2600. What made this game stand out (as most from Activision did)

was that there was so much packed into the game, and great use of the limited 2600 memory. The entire length of the River is the same every time you play - the river's path, the bridges, boats, jets, and fuel depots, and in most versions, balloons, helicopter gunners, and tanks. There is still some variety/randomness in the timing of "when" the enemy will move left/right. An extra life is earned every 10,000 points, and all versions offer a pause button, except for the original. But on every version (including the 2600) you get an unlimited pause after each life is lost. While shooting up the enemy along your raid, you constantly burn up fuel and must continue collecting fuel, especially when it becomes scarce up the river.

I recommend buying the video, "Stella at 20" - by the Cyberpunks, where 2600 programmer, Carol Shaw, and other members of the Activision team, tell of using a polynomial counter to seed River Raid and compact its memory. Also, Carol tells about making the river become more challenging, with more obstacles, but fewer fuel depots the deeper you raid.

Game Designed by: Carol Shaw (Atari 2600, 8-bit), Peter Kaminski (Intellivision),

Classic Platforms: Atari 2600, 5200, Atari 8-bit, Colecovision, Intellivision & Commodore 64. Categories: Gameplay, Addictiveness, Graphics, Sound & Controls

This game is found in cart format on all of the listed systems, but is also found on disk for the Atari 8-bit and C64. I did not find this game listed for any of the Apple 2, TI-99, or CoCo computers. All versions made after the original (2600) added Gameplay features - the addition of a pause button, a chime when an extra life is earned, and start options to begin at bridge 1, 5, 20, or 50. Most importantly there is a lot more action with the addition of Tanks that fire at you from the riverside (which can only be destroyed if on a bridge), a rapid-firing Helicopter Gunner, and the ever-annoying slow-moving balloons. Which direction will they go?

The Have Nots: Intellivision (33)
The Gameplay is good (7), and follows closely to the other versions except for one major alteration. Instead of the river's edge defining your safe flying path, it is the trees along the ground that cause you to crash. Hmmn.. "Tree Raid" perhaps. ;-) Also, the fuel depots are round instead of rectangular, making them smaller for refuel from and also harder to both refuel/shoot for points. The bridges are also very long for no apparent reason, other than they actually look more realistic that way. The Addictiveness (6) does not make it the version I'd recommend playing - mostly due to the controllers. But, do hold onto this one as it's the rarest of all versions. The Graphics are all-right (6), but busy - with trees everywhere. The fuel indicator and score look to be rushed-out-the-door, and should have been centered under your jet - as is the case in all other versions. The Sound is good (7), but just not similar to the original. The Controls are horrible for me, but I think that most Intellivision fans would at least score that a (7).

The Have Nots: Colecovision (37)
Yet another major disappointment for CV fans. This game looks and plays like a pretty good River Raid . . . CLONE, not the real McCoy. The Gameplay components are all there (8), but changed. The river is too wide most of the time, and the enemies move much

faster than all others versions. Usually, CV carts offers 4 skill levels where you can play a faster/more difficult version if you want. In this case, you are forced to fight these hyperactive enemy forces. The Addictiveness is very good (8), but could be better were it not for the Graphics and Sound. The Graphics are nice and crisp (8), but where is the edge? The actual color barrier is not the edge and sometime you are forced to exceed the edge to stay alive, but yet how far, or how long can you stay over the line? The Sound is even worse, fair (5). Nothing sounds right at all, and each and every explosion is the most annoying sound I've ever heard on the CV. The Controls are very good (8), but could have been better if the speeding up/slowing down of your jet were not so delayed. This delay "feature" also occurs on other CV carts as well. Finally, one must use the Atari style sticks or lose another point in Controls.

The Have Nots: Commodore 64 (38)
Now I know why I never played this game much - it is not as good as the original. The Graphics, are fine (7), but too many colors blend (Blue on Blue) - just use 2600 color scheme. The Sound is also good (7), but also the biggest disappointment to me. Yet another port where everything sounds off-key. The Gameplay is nice (8) - but contains a minor glitch where shots miss the fuel after re-fueling. The Addictiveness is very good (8), and the Controls are superb (9). I have not played the cart version.

Bronze Medal: Atari 2600 (41)
Being the first version made is a disadvantage, but not enough to keep it from earning a medal, nearly a silver. The Gameplay is essentially perfect when compared to itself, but good (7) compared to the revised games. It lacks the new enemies, start options, pause, and "extra life" chime. The Addictiveness is nice (8) and you'll definitely play this again and again. The Graphics, although simple, are still the best (9) and never leave any doubt. The Sound is very nice (8) and the Controls are excellent (9) but I like the 8-bit even more.

Silver Medal: Atari 5200 (42)
Despite the joysticks, this game still shines. The Gameplay is Great (9). The Addictiveness is very nice (8), suffering only from the Controls. The Graphics are very good (8) and the Sound is outstanding (9). The Controls get mixed reviews. Given some time, the Wico controls will produce nice results (8). If not, you'll really struggle with the 5200 sticks acceptable (6). A medal regardless, but if you do not have the Wico or better, then only a Bronze.

Gold Medal: Atari 8-bit (45)
This game rocks! You've not played River Raid until you try this version. There are an incredible number of enemy ships, helicopters and planes moving and firing at the same time. Multiple sound channels pipe in great accord with all those obstacles, such as the rapid-firing of the helicopter gunner, the tank's exploding mortar, and the fuel gauge warning and refilling. My wife, usually unimpressed, watched me play and said "Wow, is this a newer version of River Raid"? This game receives the top score in all categories but Graphics. The Gameplay and Addictiveness are both outstanding (9). The Graphics are nice (8), but probably could have been better. Having 20+ targets and missiles displayed at once is awesome, but then there is that certain jaggedness of the 8-bit Graphics which detracts. The Sound is superb (9), and the Controls were perfect (10). I can steer better on this version than any other. Especially those hard-over-to-one-side-and-then-stop-precisely-at-the-edge-of-the-river maneuvers. I highly recommend this game if you can find it on cart or disk. I have not played the cart version.

Sequels: A hard to find sequel, River Raid II cart was made, but only for the Atari 2600. It is a fun game but not the same as the original. Programmed by David R. Lubar for Activision in 1988. Come back next month when I plan to review Mouse Trap for the Atari 2600, Colecovision, and Intellivision.

(Alan Hewston is still meeting new people to trade with due to these messages here. So, here's another shameless plug to invite you to contact him at Hewston95@stratos.net if you want to trade games, especially if you are looking to expand your Commodore 64 disk collection.)

New Games, Old Machines

By Fred Wagaman

New games have been released for the Sega CD system.

That's right. For those of us that still have a Sega CD system, this is great news.

Good Deal Games (www.gooddealgames.com) has received license and permission to sell 3 previously completed but unreleased games. They are Bug Blasters, Star Strike and Wing Nuts. More information, including cost, can be found on their web site. They mention that they have some access to unreleased prototypes and will try to release those in the future as well.

In the past, other systems have had finished or nearly finished games released. Telegames released several games for the Atari Jaguar many moons after the Jaguar had gone to the great silicon pile in the sky. I've never heard how many copies of those games were sold (Iron Soldier 2, World Tour Racing, etc.), but I know that they are still available at their website (www.telegames.com). Songbird Productions (songbird.atari.net) have also released new games for the Jaguar and Atari Lynx.

We had this sort of thing happen for the "joystick" era machines as well. Several complete, yet unreleased, games were released after the machine had, for all intents and purposes, died. If I remember right (and someone will correct me if I'm wrong), Telegames was also involved in releasing several Coleco games at one time.

But what I'm more interested in is what comes after this era of releasing "found" games is over.

In the Atari world, we've seen "new" games released as talented programmers have found out how to develop for these ancient machines. In a previous article, I mention John Dondzila's (www.classicgamecreations.com) fine work on Vectrex games. He has also created new games for the Coleco and Odyssey 2 systems.

One of the issues that seems to plague the new creations for the older systems is how to package it.

Mr. Dondzila used altered Intellivision game cases to house his games. Other developers have taken old carts for their selected systems and changed the guts. Some have used the Atari 2600's Supercharger peripheral as a means of delivering their games. But a majority have used the internet and emulators to showcase their talents. Granted, it isn't quite the same as actually playing it on the "real" system, but most developers don't have the equipment necessary to do anything about it.

Hozer Video games (www.netway.com/~hozervideo/index.html) has the capability and permission to create actual carts from these fan-developed games. Great news if you're not particularly fond of emulators.

As for the newer classics (from the "pad" era if you will), there is some developers working on games for the PC-Engine and Turbografx 16. There is currently a beta version of Tetris floating around on the internet for play using the Magic Engine emulator.

The Turbografx, Sega CD and newer systems offer a tremendous opportunity to the enterprising game developer. The capability to create a new game and manufacture it easily in the comfort of your own home without unusual equipment is now within reach, thanks to CD burners.

These devices are relatively inexpensive and have readily available media. You can find blank CDRs at Kmart ! And the software necessary to create duplicates of the games usually comes with the hardware.

But here's where we run into a problem.

Most (if not all) of the CD-based game machines have some sort of license checking. This was to prevent unauthorized developers from creating games and not paying the proper royalties to the hardware manufacturer. PC-based games do not have any such restriction.

On a side note, Nintendo did similar licensing on its carts since the beginning. If your cart didn't have the proper license code imbedded in the software, the machine would not run it. And Nintendo had the copyright on the code. Some companies took the time to reverse-engineer the code. One of the most creative solutions to get around this issue was done by Wisdom Tree software with their "Super Noah's Ark" game for the Super NES. What they did was make a cart that you could attach another cart to (ala Sonic and Knuckles for the Genesis). Super Noah's Ark would use the license code in the other cart to gain permission to run itself on the SNES.

Anyhow, for a person to create their own software for the CD-based systems, they would have to be able to imbed that code on their CD in the proper place. Playstation games have that code placed on the disk where the average CD-burner can't write. I'm sure similar schemes are used on other systems.

The other thing that would be needed would be access to the software necessary to write the games on these platforms. Most of the older system games were written from scratch in some sort of assembler language. Most of the newer systems use development kits and code libraries. These were PC-based environments that simulated the software running on the actual machine and offered bits and pieces of programming for doing certain functions so that the developer would not have to write certain code from scratch. Some members of the Turbo mailing list had approached Hudson (a Turbografx developer) about gaining access to a developer's kit a few years ago and were turned away.

Some companies have experimented with end-user development in the past. Sony had sold a developer's machine with software in the past. But the license was such that you could never publish anything yourself and that your were never allowed to sell the unit. Sega also marketed a Saturn BASIC package, but it was only released in Japan and was, from what I'm told, very poorly documented.

As systems begin to fade into the past, it would be a fitting tribute for more game companies to open the doors for their system's supporters to be able to experiment on these long gone systems.

Anybody game ?

(Fred has been playing games for over 25 years and actively collecting them for over 10. The 2500 + games that he has takes up most of his home office and living room. He lives in Denver, PA with his understanding wife Jennie, his 5 year-old, button-loving son, Max and his 1 year old, 4th player, Lynzie. Fred remembers seeing a 3DO developer's machine on eBay a few years back. Anybody know where it went? Fred can be reached at fcw3@postoffice.ptd.net.)

CCAG Has New Date!

The CCAG (Classic Computer and Game) Show has a new date. Because of some problems with scheduling (Also known as the US Government has the final say in when they need the armory and can change it as they see fit. You cannot complain with people with that much firepower). So the show has been moved from June 23rd, 2000 to June 30th, 2000. We hope this doesn't inconvenience anyone.

On a positive note, Classic Gamer magazine has confirmed that they will be coming to the show with their great magazine! Another reason to attend the show! If you come in costume or act really stupid, then you may get your picture in the magazine and be forever immortalized. Mike and his cart flinging are a shoo-in.

Letters to the Editor

This month we will concentrate on more video game related articles. No more political stuff, honest. By the way, the majority of the people who bothered to write in, said they did not mind the little blurb at the end of the newsletter about what music inspired me that month. So, it will stay. Thanks for all who gave their two cents.

Man, what is up with the preaching? That was really lame dude. signed What's Up With That?

I promise there will be no more preaching, dude. I thought that term died out, anyway, I will keep the preaching for the church and keep the gaming here.

Would it be at all possible to do an article on computer-to-system cart dumpers? I'm talking about things like the Intellicart and the Supercharger. Basically any device you can hook up to your computer and dump the ROM into the actual console, like a 2600. I don't know much about them myself and would like to see more of what's out there.

Great idea! Only problem is that I have limited exposure with either (actually none with the Intellicart, but I have heard great things about it). If anyone out there has some exposure to these and would like to write a review or just tell us your experience with either the Supercharger, Supercharger CD or Intellicart, this is your invitation to write for Retrogaming Times! Destiny is calling!

The TI 99/4A
"Christmases Past"

by Jim Krych

First of all, my apologies to Tom for this being rather last-minute! Sorry about that Tom!

I want to first thank the readers of my articles for their kind words of encouragement-and the refreshing of my memory in regards to game makers for the TI. That during the TI Era, Parker Brothers made EXCELLENT arcade ports for the TI 99/4A.

My first Christmas with the TI 99/4A was in 1982. I really couldn't do much with it until I got the TV, so it sat for a while until then. Talk about having patience!

It was during the later years that Christmas and my TI were indeed special times.

I remember the following year about going to KMART, and seeing for the first time, those Atarisoft games! WOW! Defender and Donkey Kong for my TI! And they certainly were worth buying too! This was also when I had friends from school who had TI's, and we traded games. (I also would end up with quite a bit of their stuff when they got out of the TI world)

I remember when I first purchased the T.O.D. Editor from Asgard Software, and of course, all the fun my brother and I had playing different adventures with T.O.D. Our, playing different Extended BASIC games with my youngest brother! A lot of fond memories.

It was around another Christmas that I would be given a Volksmodem, and the journey into the BBS world would begin! And one after that when Walter Ryder and I would plan the latest hardware hacking projects.

When I had my first "real" job, the U.S. Coast Guard, and was able to have a place to use my TI, I would often buy for Christmas gifts for myself, various software, hardware, and other goodies! My highly modified TI was quite often used for Delphi chats and word processing-Funnelweb in 80 columns.

I have been recently in email contact with a good friend of mine from the AEMS Project, and besides catching up on the latest, remembering those TI days of past.

It's funny, in this era of almost one style of computer-the PC compatible. (With kind regards to the Apple crowd), it seems that owning a first computer isn't what it used to be. Call me

nostalgic, but those first times of owning your own home computer, and being able to program it, or play some really good games, and be able to expand it on your own, really meant something.

I mean, with PC's having the power of mainframes now, and having been around for some time now, they are simply appliances. Going to Walmart to buy one.

It was a totally new field, and a brand new industry, and those of us who were blessed to be around when it began, have the advantage of where things have been, and can grasp of where they may be going.

So here is to that little computer we all know and love! Of remembering the first time of hearing "Press Fire To Begin", and of that distinct "BEEP" when we first turned it on! Those endless hours of playing Tunnels Of Doom, and trying to get your team out of the latest mess! Of learning for the first time, what CALL HCHAR and CALL VCHAR could do. Of doing CALL CHAR and then CALL SPRITE, to display your own version of a favorite arcade character! Seeing that little computer grow up, but always keeping that very same charm!

And to the many friends one would meet, due to that little computer!

Though I no longer use the TI, it still has a special place. So, to all of you out there, new or old users out there:

```
100 CALL CLEAR
110 OPEN #1:"SPEECH",OUTPUT
120 PRINT #1"Have a very Merry Christmas!"
130 CLOSE #1
```
Happy Holidays!

(Hi, my name is Jim W. Krych. I am a 31 year old technician, with an Electronics Diploma and a soon-to-be finished Computer Programming and Operations Diploma. I am currently employed at the finest maker of electrometers/nanovoltmeters/etc., in their troubleshooting/calibration department. I have a 16 month old son, his name is Treyton. I enjoy retrogaming and things that go with that. :) My email address: jwkrych@n2net.net).

eBay Notes

This month we are going to look at some things you can do to improve your online auctions. While most of it is common knowledge, sometimes we overlook the obvious.

While you hear it a thousand times, pictures really can help an auction. People like to see what they are bidding on. So if you can include a picture, all the better. Make sure it is a clear picture that shows what they are bidding on. A blurry pictures can be worse than no picture.

Remember the more payment options you give a person, the better. If you only accept money orders, then you are really limiting your audience. While checks can be risky, people do like to use them. Just make sure that you wait two weeks before shipping the item and make sure that people know that when you give them information on payment. This will eliminate any nasty emails you may receive. While most people are not set up to accept credit cards, places like Paypal and Billpoint are great ways to take credit cards without having to invest the money into the equipment. Both are free to join and a great and safe way for people to pay by credit card. If you are serious about selling on eBay, then you need to offer credit card payment and this is the best way to go. I personally like Paypal, but both are good.

When it comes time to write the description, do not get lazy. Be as precise as possible. If your system and/or games are boxed, put that in the description. If you have manuals and/or overlays, tell them. These small things will increase your bids. Make sure to list any major flaws and highlight if the condition is very nice. Also, the heading is very important as it is what people who use the search features will use to find you. If you are

selling Atari games, make sure to put Atari in the description. Also try to get it into the right category. Most video game stuff is in the Photo & Electronics section of eBay.

Before you do an auction, do a little research. First off, find out how much the item weighs and check what shipping costs would be. Most post offices are equipped with scales that you can weigh the package. You can go to the Post Office or UPS online websites and check to see what shipping would be. Best bet is to factor the shipping costs for the farthest distance, within reason. Use either New York or California as factors as one is farthest West and the other East. You can get zip codes off the USPS website. Also, think about accepting overseas bidders as this can greatly increase your bids. But be careful on what forms of payment you accept as all of them will be accepted by your local bank. You may want to check with the bank and see what they will or will not accept. A good rule of thumb is not to accept checks. Money orders should be drawn on a US based bank. Once again, Paypal or Billpoint is good for this as they can use credit cards for their payment.

Lastly, you may want to research what other related auctions have done in the past. This way you can get a decent idea of what to expect. Also look at what individual games received, as any expensive games may do better if you auction them off separately. Also, if there are too many similar auctions, you may want to wait a week and see if the number comes down. Also, put a realistic starting bid and if possible, avoid reserve bids.

Hopefully this will help you in future auctions. EBay is a great place to move unwanted games and get some extra spending money for future game purchases. Just do a little research and some extra effort and you should reap the benefits!

Infogrames Entertainment to Acquire Hasbro Interactive and Games.com

LYON, France & PAWTUCKET, R.I. (BUSINESS WIRE)
Dec. 6, 2000:

Infogrames Entertainment SA (Euronext 5257) and Hasbro, Inc. (NYSE:HAS) jointly announced today that they have entered into a strategic agreement, creating one of the foremost powerhouses in the mass market digital interactive entertainment world. The agreement is comprised of three main elements, including the Infogrames acquisition of Hasbro Interactive; a long-term licensing agreement giving Infogrames exclusive rights to develop and publish digital interactive games based on current and future Hasbro properties on all existing and future digital interactive formats; and the acquisition of Games.com.

Infogrames will purchase 100% of the common stock of Hasbro Interactive and Games.com for $100 million - comprised of $95 million in Infogrames Entertainment SA securities (approximately 4.5 million common shares) and $5 million in cash. In addition, Hasbro will receive an annual guarantee from Infogrames based on sales generated from the licensing agreement. The agreements are subject to the approval of the shareholders of Infogrames, regulatory approval and other customary closing conditions. The companies expect the deal to close early in the first calendar quarter of 2001.

The acquisition gives Infogrames a catalog of titles based on well-known properties, including:

--The legendary ATARI name and properties, such as CENTIPEDE, MISSILE COMMAND, and the historic PONG, which pioneered the video game revolution.

(This was sent courtesy of Carl Forhan)

Conclusion

Sorry for the shorter than usual issue, but my computer is acting up. It is nearly midnight

and I have had to restart the computer 5 times while doing this newsletter. So, I will cut it short and get it done. Who knows when it will zonk on me again.

Be sure to check out a new issue of Bit Age Times in 10 days! Also, be back next month when we give you more news! As always, enjoy your classic games and keep a spare set of joysticks, they tend to wear out fast! Happy Holidays and see you next year!

-Tom Zjaba

(This issue done while listening to a strange combination of "Pink Floyd the Wall" and "A Peanuts Christmas". A very surreal experience!