RETROTIMES #25

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Career Day, The Classic Gaming Way

One of the time honored traditions in high school and even college is Career Day. You know the day when a bunch of businesses come and put up booths for the students to learn more about the companies. Why bother with all that nonsense when all you have to do is look at the classic games for inspiration. Look at this selection of careers that are represented in classic games, be it the arcade or the consoles. If you cannot find your calling here, maybe you are too selective!

*__Pilot__-Barnstorming for the stunt pilot or River Raid for military pilot. (Atari 2600)
*__Tank Driver__-Battlezone or Robot Tank (Atari 2600)
*__Bartender__-Tapper (Atari 2600, Coleco, arcade)
*__Zookeeper__-Zookeeper (Arcade)
*__Farmer__-Wabbit or Worm Whomper (Atari 2600 and Intellivision)
*__Presidential Hopeful__-Campaign '84 (Coleco)
*__Fast Food Worker__-Burgertime or the sequel Diner (Intellivision)
*__Miner__-Miner 2049er or Pick Axe Pete (Atari 2600 and Odyssey 2)
*__Cowboy__-Stampede (Atari 2600 and Intellivison)
*__Plumber__-Mario Bros or Sewer Sam (Atari 2600 and Coleco)
*__Fisherman__-Fishing Derby (Atari 2600)
*__Deep Sea Diver__-Shark Attack (Atari 2600)
*__Truck Driver__-Truckin (Intellivision)
*__Ruler of a Small Country__-Utopia (Intellivision)
*__Stock Market Investor__-Great Wall Street Fortune Hunt (Odyssey 2)
*__Astronaut__-Space Shuttle or Moon Patrol (Atari 2600)
*__Police Officer__-Keystone Kapers (Atari 2600)
*__Engineer__-Locomotion (Intellivision)

This is but a small selection of all the different careers that you can experience first hand! So why limit career day to one day a year, when you can experience it all year long?

Ponx and Carl Forhan, the Interview!

If you are an Atari Lynx or Atari Jaguar fan, then you will be happy to know that there are still games for both coming out! We were able to pull Carl Forhan, the man behind Songbird Productions, away from his busy schedule to do a short interview with us. Thanks to Carl for taking the time for the interview and check out his webpage

at: http://songbird.atari.org/. You can order Ponx and other great games there!

1. First off, for the readers who are not familiar with your company,

Carl-Songbird Productions was formed early in 1999 as the culmination of several years of part-time development and negotiations with many developers formally associated with the Atari Lynx and Jaguar systems.

To date, Songbird Productions has published three new titles for the Lynx -- SFX, Ponx, and Lexis. More titles are being worked on, such as Crystal Mines II:Buried Treasure. Four new Jaguar games are currently slated for release in the 1999-2000 timeframe, including Skyhammer, Protector, Soccer Kid, and Hyper Force.

2. What made you decide to support the Jaguar and Lynx? Do you have any plans to support any other systems?

Carl-I've been an Atari fan ever since the VCS of my childhood. When I learned Atari was still making game systems in the mid-90s, I began to investigate what it would take to develop games in my spare time. It soon became apparent that Atari was dropping support for first the Lynx, then the Jaguar, and no one beyond Telegames was making a serious attempt to fill the gap left by Atari.

While I still have several unannounced Atari projects in the works, I am currently evaluating other platforms for future development. I'd really like to work on a Gameboy Color or NeoGeo Pocket Color title someday soon.

3. Everyone dreams of doing their own game, but doesn't realize the amount of work that goes into the development of a game. Can you give us a basic idea of the amount of work it takes to bring a game from an idea to an actual product for sale?

Carl-Whew... it's definitely a lot of work. I spent several years (yes, years) working on and off on SFX and Ponx. Of course, a major portion of that time was spent just learning the Lynx hardware. The actual logic to a game like Ponx is relatively simple. If I started something like Ponx today, I could code it in just a few months (of part-time effort).

Beyond the actual design and test... it was a real bear getting the carts made. Where do you go nowadays to get Lynx or Jaguar carts fabricated? Companies aren't exactly lining up to do this. My first supplier bailed out on me, and I was fortunate to find another individual who wanted to do some card design and fabrication for a game system such as the Lynx. That was probably a six-month process in itself.

Finally, there was the packaging issue. SFX was released only in a ziplock baggie, but both Ponx and Lexis were published in a CD jewel case with a full-color cover. All my carts also feature full-color 'Atari-style' labels. I'm hopeful that my Jaguar releases will appear completely professional, from the box all the way to the cart casing.

4. How many people are involved in the production of your games?

Carl-I do basically all the design and testing myself, although occasionally I do recruit other testers. Usually one other person or small company handles all the hardware side of things for me -- manufacturing PCBs, programming chips, assembly, etc.

5. Is the decision to make a particular title, a individual decision or is there a group of people that decide?

Carl-Pretty much just me. =)

6. Will these games be available for a limited time or will you constantly keep them in stock?

Carl-When the current supply is exhausted, that's it. It's too costly to produce small orders "on demand".

7. Are there any hidden stuff in the games?

Carl-Yes. Ponx has a couple of cheats, one of which has already been made public. Lexis has several cheat words which have interesting effects on the game. And Protector (for the Jaguar) has quite a few cheat modes in it...

8. Which one of your games is your personal favorite?

Carl-Ponx. You have to play it to know how much fun it really is. It's too easy to brush it off as some cheap Pong knock-off. Wait until you see how fast and frantic the game gets, either against a human or computer opponent. Multi-ball only adds to this, and the 'evil' cheat mode I will soon reveal on the internet makes the game wildly unpredictable. Ponx is still fun for me to play, after almost two years of tinkering with it. I'm quite proud of how nice the entire game is, from the music, to the audio effects to the AI to the game play.

Building the Virtual Arcade

Ok, you have MAME up and running! You went out and got yourself a fancy joystick to fully enjoy the games! So you think you have the complete Virtual Arcade, don't ya! Well, you're not even close. You call that an arcade? Gimme a break. But don't fear! I here to save you from some serious embarrassment. I am here to get that arcade up to snuff!

As anyone who was a major arcade player in the heyday knows, the laserdisks (if one wise-apple emails and says laserdisk is spelled wrong, I am going to devote the next entire issue to Mythicon games and I mean it) games were the rage. Sure they offer little gameplay, but they were full of eye candy and we all know how gamers love that! So get your tail out to your local software store and pickup the Dragon's Lair collection. It will set you back about $20.00 and you will have the big daddy of all laser disk games, Dragon's Lair to play! Add in the sequel, Dragon' Lair II:Timewarp and Space Ace and you have a healthy representation of the genre.

Wipe that lousy smirk off your face, we are not done yet. So get that wallet ready for another whack. Think about what your arcade is missing. No, not cigarette stains. Think a little harder, Einstein. Give up? How about pinball machines? What self respecting arcade would be without some pinball machines? Obviously yours, bright boy. But once again, I am here to save the day! So go get a good pinball package. Before you start crying how there are so many pinball packages and you don't know which one to choose, I'm going to give you a little tip. The Microsoft Pinball Arcade is a great one and will only set you back $20.00 (I must give Frank Traut credit for pointing this out to me in his article in Classic Gamer Magazine). I know you are thinking "There's only one game from the 80's here, how about authenticity?" Don't give me that bullhockey, you are sitting there in your ducky slippers playing classic arcade games on your computer and you want authenticity? Like you would go out in public in those slippers, gimme a break.

Ok, your arcade is pretty darn stocked now! All you need is some tunes from the era and you have it all set! I recommend getting some of those lame collections you see advertised all the time. It doesn't matter which one you buy, they all have Katrina and the Wave. So now you are ready for business! Invite some friends over, watch Tron and then come up and play until your eyes bleed. But make sure to toss Dragon's Lair and some pinball in there and watch how impressed your friends are!

MAME Reviews

With so many new games added, it was hard to pick. This is the third great MAME update in a row and each one has given me one of my favorite games! So I will take the two games I most wanted to be added and will review them, plus one that I forgot about! So here are three more of my favorite games!

Pacmania

What a wonderful month, MAME finally adds my favorite of the Pacman series, Pacmania and I get the marquee too (and at a great price)! So I can enjoy the game and my marquee! Is this a great country or what?

Anyone who hasn't played this gem (and there are probably quite a few as the game wasn't ported to any of the classics systems and is a very rare game for the Nintendo and Genesis), needs to grab a joystick and have some fun! The gameplay is classic Pacman, with a few differences. The first and most noticeable is that this one is in 3D! Pacman, the ghosts and the maze all have substance to them and look gorgeous! The artwork is very nice and very eye pleasing.

The second difference is that the mazes are not only different, but different themed. They really look different, with the first one resembling legos or something. The biggest difference in this game is the addition of a new feature for Pacman. No more just moving and chomping (though he still does both). Now he has been given the power of jump! How a creature with no legs can jump is beyond me, but he can really jump! Which is good as there are now five ghosts to contend with and they will give you fits. One word of caution, do not rely too much on the jump as it will be your downfall. Try to only use it as a last resort and you will be a better player.

Another nice feature is the different things to eat. You have the usual food items for points, but there is other stuff. There is a energizer that appears in the middle. If you see this, grab it as it will send your score soaring! Not only does it work as an energizer (but a short one, so watch out), but it also boosts what the ghosts are worth when you eat another energizer. The first ghost will now be worth 400, the second 1600 and everyone after that is worth 7400. This can add up to some serious high scores! And this bonus is good on every energizer you eat until you die, when it returns to normal.

The mazes are also different as they are more than one screen big. So you cannot always see what is coming until it is almost too late, so keep those eyes open. There are also the intermissions, which as you would guess are very nice to look at. They will keep you going, trying to see another one.

With this release, MAME has finally added all of the Pacman games and in my opinion, the best one! Now there is no reason not to have Pacman Fever!

Space Harrier

"Get Ready" can be heard at the beginning of the game and you better be ready, as this is one fast and frantic game! Space Harrier is the kind of game you play when you want nothing but action and plenty of it! This game is no walk in the park, so timid gamers need not apply.

Your character is a gun toting, rocket pack wearing kind of guy who wants to clear his world of all kind of monsters. From the flying fish-faced beasts to the Easter Island Heads to one of the best bosses ever in a video game, the mighty Dragon, you have a menagerie of foes. This game is as weird as it is hectic and that is saying a lot!

But the creatures are not the only thing you have to worry about. There is the landscape that will waste you faster than you can say "Jimminy Cricket". Some of it can be blown up (which is enough to drive Greenpeace insane) and some that must be avoided. There are mushrooms, pillars and giant broccoli plants (I don't think they are actually broccoli plants, but they sure look like it). The graphics are gorgeous and will make you wish you could

slow the game down to enjoy them all. Don't stop to look or you will become a permanent part of the landscape as there is always something to kill you.

The best way to play this game is to set the autofire feature that was recently added to MAME and go postal on these creatures. Make sure your joystick is primed as you will be doing some fast moves and if that joystick doesn't cut it, get another one.

Space Harrier is a great game and one that will completely captivate you. While some people think it is too unforgiving in the fact that stuff just pops up everywhere, I think it is awesome! So if you are looking for a challenge, the download this game and "Get Ready"!

Bottom of the Ninth

As you can tell by the title, this is a baseball game. I remember sinking way too many quarters into this bandit. This is one of those games that was made to suck every single quarter out of you and have you running to get change, so you can finish the game.

Like many sports games, this one is pretty straight forward. You are the batter or you are the pitcher. You have to score more runs to win. But where this game was evil is that it would give you a set amount of time for each quarter you put in, when the time ran out, so did the game. So I never played a full game at the arcade as I didn't feel like pouring a few bucks into the game. But I would usually play a few innings and see how I would do. Now with MAME, I can not only play a full game, but I can also take my time. No more swinging at the first pitch to speed the game up, I can sit back and wait for the right one! This really makes the game better!

The game plays as a typical baseball game of the era, you have four pitches to choose from and select them by pushing the joystick either up, down, right or left. They are the typical pitches, fast ball, curveball, changeup and slow ball. The pitcher and hitter are both very large and well drawn. The hitter can move back and forth around the box, but that is about it. Just time it right and swing!

The defense is the usual fare, get under the ball to catch it. You use the joystick to aim at the base you wish to throw the ball. Right for first, up for second, left for third and down for home.

One humorous thing is when you hit a homerun, it sounds like you are hitting it with an aluminum bat, as opposed to the wood bats used in the majors. Maybe this is really a college baseball simulator?

As you can guess, the teams and players are all fictious. But this doesn't stop it from being a good game. So if you are looking for some fun baseball, then download Bottom of the Ninth and play a game! It won't cost you a fortune anymore!

Atari 2600 Pain Games

by Alan Hewston

This is follow-up article to those about the gaming zone. See previous two issues. Here are 10 Atari 2600 games that really put the controls into your hands - literally. In some cases I've played these games and the black plastic from the joystick has rubbed off a bit and stained my hands. Don't get me wrong, I've never broken any sticks, but to play these games you've got be somewhat masochistic.

Wait - I better clarify that I am not talking about playing a game over and over for hours.

And certainly not playing a marathon session of those games that never get any harder (like Asteroids, Berzerk, Defender, Space Invaders, Pac Man, Missile Command . . .). OK, so let's talk about those games that are painful after just one good game.

1 **Star Wars, The Empire Strikes Back** - How many times can you fire that joystick button? Can you say? "I hate playing that game - it hurts mythumb". A leading candidate for inventing those rapid-fire joysticks.

2 **Crackpots, Frostbite, Oink, Stampede** - Many of those great Activision games got harder and harder over time, or with each wave. That's what made them great, and made you want to come back for more. All 4 all of these will wear you down over time, after just one good game. You have to keep pressing harder, since the game gets tougher.

3 **Boxing** - Yet another Activision game that was way ahead of the competition. Actually, there was no competition, because those classic systems were too limited for boxing. You had to love this one to play it, because it sure hurts a lot to play this game. If you were really good, the game would be over fast anyhow.

4 **Decathalon/Track and Field** - Aka, the great joystick breakers. Just like at the arcade, those track and field type games really beat on the controllers, and the body. Is it really worth destroying your joystick?

5 **Tapper** - As much as I love this game, it does drain the muscles quite a bit.

6 **Super Breakout** - Can you feel the arthritis setting into your wrists. No break in action - means no break in the pain.

7 **Gyruss** - This is yet another fun, but long game that drains you.

8 **Squeeze Box** - Fast and furious. Gotta throw that stick from one end to the other and force it to just the right angle all while pressing the fire button rapidly.

9 **Sentinel** - Holding that gun will start to wear on your arm muscles. Not to mention trigger-fingeritis. My secret is to take the gun apart, and take out the counter balancing weights. You'll have to get use to it, but enjoy that dead weight being gone.

10 **Air Raiders** - Something about flying an airplane game/simulation makes you want to think in "analog" and drive that stick HARD over. It hurts to play this game to the hilt.

I'm sure that there are plenty of other games that hurt to but this playable and not too uncommon game comes to mind. I took Turmoil off my list since it typicaly doesn’t last long enough to cause pain. But after many games it will hurt a ton.

Nowadays, they can add vibrators to the 64 bit controllers, but let's hope that the next

generation of video game systems do NOT have pain settings on the controllers. What's the name of that James Bond movie with the world destruction/conquest video game? Of course 007 won.

Alan hasn't played many games lately due to kitchen remodeling, but Fall and Winter usually permit a lot more gaming. Speaking of pains. I'd love to play my 5200 games, but have yet to find a WICO Y cable adapter. Got one to trade/sell? Alan can be reached at [hewston95@stratos.net]

MEDICAL UPDATE

(Editors note: Fred Wagaman can't be with us this month. He is currently under the care of a medical professional. His doctor has graciously stepped up and offered to explain his condition as it may be of some interest to the gaming public. We at Retrotimes appreciate his time.)

Good day. My name is Doctor M. O. Howard from the offices of Howard, Fine and Howard. I am a medical professional in the field of mental health; specifically in the area of obsessive/compulsive behavior. I have recently begun a study involving Mr. Wagaman and his rather unusual condition. The condition that Mr. Wagaman is experiencing is, what is referred to as, "Game Acquisition Syndrome".

This condition involves the individual accumulating an unusually large number of games. The accumulation of these games causes pressure to build in the individual. This pressure comes from a lack of time, space and organization, familial dissatisfaction or changing tastes. The pressure continues to build until the individual feels significant discomfort. The pressure can only be relieved by expelling a number of the offending items. Whether through sales, trades or gifts, the individual will not be relieved of the pressure until enough of the items in question are dispelled. Even after the dispelling has occurred, there may be some discomfort for both the individual and those around them. Possibly even feelings of guilt or shame by the individual.

Treatment will vary from person to person. In some cases, slowing the amount of items that the individual acquires is enough to relieve the condition. For others, avoiding certain groups of items is the key to relief. But the individual must always be on guard for the signs of the condition's return. For some, a more radical approach may be necessary involving the removal of a large section of the items in question. As long as the individual does not attempt to replace that section again, no additional treatment will be necessary.

The current treatment for Mr. Wagaman is the slowing of the amount of items. This allows for him to adjust to the pressure and deal with it much easier. His condition will continue to improve as long as he paces himself.

But there are many others out there like Mr. Wagaman. The warning signs of the first stages to look for include:

a) Video Games or related material in every room of you house
b) Strange looks from your family members when you tell them about your new game system
c) Finding boxes of games you forgot you had
d) Buying games because "they're a good deal", even if you'll never play them
e) Beginning a collection for another classic system you'll never play
f) Buying games for a system you don't have, or do not have hooked up
g) Wondering if your company will allow you to post a "Wanted:Games" advertisement in the company newsletter
h) Tripping over games or related materials that are just lying around
i) Considering moving the car out of the garage for more storage space for games
j) Not being able to move your car out of the garage because of the games
k) Offering a kidney on ebay in exchange for a "Good Condition Atari 2600 Crazy Climber, preferably with box and instructions"

There are more symptoms; too numerous to list here. If you are experiencing "G"ame "A"quisition "S"yndrome, please seek professional help. Or at least, keep it to yourself.

Get well wishes can be sent to Fred at fcw3@postoffice.ptd.net

Dr. Gamelove: (or, How I stopped worrying and learned to love the Bomb Carts)

by Geoff Voigt

Ever since I picked up my first 2600 game in an attempt to start collecting them (Berzerk, if I remember right) back in 1993, I've always had a small, minuscule nagging thought rattling around in my head; it usually goes like this:

YOUR'E CRAZY!!!!! WHY THE HELL ARE YOU DOING THIS?!! NO ONE IN THEiR RIGHT MIND WOULD TAKE UP A HOBBY LIKE THIS!!!!!!! JUST STICK WITH MUSIC COLLECTING INSTEAD!!!!!

Well, that tiny wonderment has never left me, all these years. Am I crazy? is rec.games.video.classic really just an asylum in the guise of a newsgroup, with me as one of the more longtime patients? Why do we, why do I, collect these outdated electronics with questionable label quality? We all (or at least, most of us) remember sitting in front of a TV with that new "Asteroids" game that just came out, either playing it in our living rooms, or at a friend's house; enraptured with the thing. But why still give in to that now? I've grappled with these imponderables for the last 7 years, and I still haven't come up with a good answer.

One of the first moments I didn't feel so out-of-whack for collecting old games was three days after I had started collecting, two weeks after I had been reading RGVC and decided to get a 2600; bought one from a friend for $7. Ironically, he now gives me a hard time about my hobby. But anyway, back to that story:

I had acquired 35 games, all of them extremely common, and I walked into the workplace of one of my other good friends, the local comic and collectible store, with a glaze in my eyes that you can only get from 3 nights of Pac-Man, Donkey Kong, (I still play them, I don't know why) Yar's Revenge and Berzerk.

"I just got an ol' Atari", I said, not being as up on the collector nomenclature then as I am now.

"You mean one of those old,old,old,old game systems?" He replied, with a look of interested surprise on his face.

"Yeah, one of those."

"I wanna see it!"

Two days later he had 12 more carts in his collection than I had. My first convert. I wasn't alone. I knew that others could be taken by this affliction.

While I did feel good about having someone in my corner, I pressed on whereas he was content with the 2600. I continued to get more systems and still not know why I liked to do it. But one of the best ways to find out that you're not alone is to attend a collector's meeting. (Expected kudos to my fellow Southern California collector's added here; you know who you are: Chris, Rob, John, Ben...) That's where one of the bigger secrets was revealed to me:

You can't see the smile on your own face

Well, you can see yourself smile in front of a mirror, but when you're playing Warlords with 3 others, you're more focused on the game. Enjoyment of the games! That's the key to enjoying our little nuthouse of ER's, proto's, thrift raids, tabletops and trade sessions. "Without love I am nothing", while it has a different meaning in the Bible, it can still be applied here. (To stave off a mail or two, I know I'm taking that quote out of its original context, and I know what it's original meaning is supposed to be.) This is why you can always find a home for that spare Pitfall 2 you've come across, why Thin Ice and Diner are

always in demand; sure, Thin Ice and Diner are rather rare, but you don't see such a clamor for, say, Coconuts and Clown Around Town, do you?

The other secret isn't much of a secret: others are starting to see our point of view. Our hobby is on the path to being a full-fledged legitimate collecting field; and unfortunately that includes the profiteers, the price guides, the auctions with laughable opening bids; it comes with the territory. But at least we've kept it from becoming a "Beanie Baby" for this long, that's something worth mentioning. But also with the bad sides, comes the good, and the realization I had that told me I wasn't as nuts as I once thought, back when Ms. Pac Man was the big cart I _REALLY_ wanted for my collection.

It was last night, at the time of this writing. My friend who I got into collecting by letting him try to destroy the Qotzle cannon once again, came back into town for a visit, and naturally he wanted to see how far I'd come. So along with other friends we have, I showed them the Vectrex, 7800 Dig Dug, Food Fight, and Galaga, the 2600 rares, and other things of note. Because of this night, there are now 3 other people that want a 7800, a Vectrex, and the good rares. As they were all leaving, one of my friends turned around to me and said,

"Geez, I wish I had gotten into all this back when you did....."

Maybe crazy isn't all that bad.

(Geoff Voigt now openly hugs his 2600, and is busy working on a FAQ for RGVC. He is also working on marrying the gal of his dreams, who has already told him he can keep and expand his classic collection to an entire room. He hopes to get a few full-sized games eventually. Flames, agreements, debates, and other appropriate mail can still be sent to him at <gvoigt@ridgecrest.ca.us>)

Maintain Those Classic Games!

by William Cassidy

Today I thought I'd share some of the various tips I've picked up for maintaining a classic game collection. I'd like to be able to say that I came up with most of these, but the truth is, I didn't.

Most of them were authored by various people on rec.games.video.classic. I'd like to give proper individual credit, but to tell the truth, I've forgotten the original sources. Oh well, I'm sure they know who they are.

That said, I'm going to start off with the one tip that actually is my own idea: the best way to clean really stubborn carts. Rubbing alcohol will work to clean the contacts on 99% of carts, but for those few that won't work no matter how much alcohol you use, this might do the trick. Note that Activision carts are particularly prone to this problem.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- A Popsicle stick
- A pencil
- Super Glue
- Flat razor blade or X-Acto knife

Slice off a thin, flat slice of pencil eraser with the razor blade. Make the slice of eraser thin, but make sure it is thick enough to withstand a little abuse. Apply 1 drop of Super Glue to the end of the Popsicle stick, and glue the eraser slice onto it. Let it dry. Now you have a handy cart cleaner! Insert the eraser end of the Popsicle stick into your cart, and rub the eraser back and forth against the contacts. This will remove even the most stubborn oxidation.

You can potentially wear down your contacts this way, but if the cart won't work beforehand, what have you got to lose?

Now, onto price tags. Don't you hate how you'll find something great in a thrift store or wherever, only to have an ugly tag stuck to it? Well, there is an easy way to remove them

without damaging your cart or box or whatever item you have.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:
- A hair dryer
- Goo Gone
- A paper towel

With the hair dryer, blow-dry the price tag for about two minutes. The glue holding the tag in place will melt, allowing you to peel it off easily. Don't worry; while it might be a little hot for your fingers, the heat has yet to damage anything I've tried this technique on. Once you peel off the sticker, most of the glue will remain stuck to the cart/box. This is where Goo Gone comes in. Put a little Goo Gone on the paper towel and wipe off the glue with it. Voila!

The other annoying thing stores do is write the prices directly on the cart's label or box front! Hopefully they use a grease pencil, because this will usually come off with the application of a little rubbing alcohol. Rubbing alcohol will also remove non-black magic marker. Unfortunately, alcohol has a tendency to smear the ink or grease pencil, so be careful. I have yet to find anything that will remove black magic marker. Alcohol helps a little, but it usually won't remove it completely. (Editor's note: A little hair spray will remove black magic marker off the back of carts. Just spray it on, wait 30 seconds and wipe. You may need to repeat a few times. I haven't tried it on labels, but would recommend taking a Pac-man cart and trying it on that first).

Next I'm going to describe a technique for restoring crushed cardboard game boxes that I read about a long time ago, but didn't think would work. It sounded to me as if it would further damage the boxes I wanted to restore! But a while back, I found a 2600 E.T. box that was crushed beyond hope. I had nothing to lose, so I tried it out. Afterward, the box didn't appear to be in mint condition, but it does look respectable now!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:
- A manila folder
- A large, heavy, flat object (I use a box filled with books)
- A flat surface
- Warm water

Take your game box and unfold the top and bottom flaps so it lies flat. Don't fold it! Fill a sink with warm water, and soak the box in it for about 10-20 seconds. This is the part that I thought would damage the box, but trust me! When you take the box out, you should be able to smooth out any minor defects like creases, etc. But be careful--the box is very fragile when wet and it will tear easily. Place the box in the manila folder and lay it on a flat surface.

Then, place your heavy, flat object on top of it and leave it for at least two days. Afterward, your box will be dry and very flat. Then it's a simple matter to return it to a box-like shape. It will retain that shape and look much better!

I've heard this technique might work with damaged manuals too, but it seems to me that the pages would stick together, so I haven't tried it yet. If anyone decides to give it a shot, let me know how it turns out!

William Cassidy is classic gaming addict whose current goal in life is to save enough money to purchase a full-sized MAME cabinet. While not pinching his pennies, he maintains The Odyssey2 Homepage! at http://www.classicgaming.com/o2home

Garage Sale Days

by Alan Hewston

The close of Summer brings the end of Garage sale season - at least here up North. So, here is my $20.02 of commentary on Garage Sales, one of the best methods to add to your classic videogame collection. Hopefully none of my local competition is reading this.

Planning/Driving:
Obviously, check the local papers to find out who are having garage sales in the vicinity that you plan to search. Better still, if you only have a limited amount of time, let your path follow the garage sales that are close enough to where you will be (work, home etc) and clumped together.

Maximize the number of homes that you can hit with your spare time. The best thing to look for are streets sales, village sales, or development sales. You can hit many homes at once, early and often. If you have competition, then there is almost no point in waiting til the end of the day, on the last day of the sale. Get there early!

Keep an eye out for signs of an impromptu or unadvertised GSale. These are the ones not listed in the paper, and the seller will likely get fewer customers, which increases your odds that something awaits you. Know what street names you are looking for, so that you can quickly know if their GSale sign is already one that you are heading too. Have a map or perhaps a photocopy of the map with highlights on the street name, and/or locations. Some sellers think that everyone knows where their little insignificant street, Sugarplum-Pumkin Blvd., is located.

If you are visiting a safe area, then perhaps you can park and keep the car running. Lock the doors, but use you spare key - since you will be in and out very quickly. Always try to park right in their driveway. You won't be hogging that spot for too long, unless you actually find something there.

Finally, never plan to go to an estate sale unless you have free time to kill, or they advertize video games their. The odds are greatly against you of finding anything there.

On Location:
Unless you see carts or systems in front of you always ask if they have something. Sometimes other customers will overhear and help you to. Either they will have some at home, or know where they saw some earlier in their garage sale hopping. Always mention Nintendo, Sega and Atari videogames. If you find something, don't assume that they have nothing more. Ask. Maybe they have a Vectrex, but do not know what it is called, but recognize one of those companies. I found a working Vectrex sitting, but asked if they had any Atari or NES, because that is what I was looking for. This helped me drop the price from $25 to $20, since I really wasn't looking for a Vectrex - dreaming of one, but not actually expecting to find one. My reluctance to buy, saved $5 on $300+ in Vectrex goodies. Also, if you do spot some games, and there are no other customers to beat you too them, then do not act like you are not looking for them. Use the "Is this Atari. Does this still work?" approach. But, to play it safe, better say that you do have one, but not sure what you have, or if it still work etc. That way, you can still buy the entire lot (if cheap), or just ask to buy a game that looks cool - and is if it is an ER that you need. (or just good trade bait).

Having said that, if you have too many carts lying around, never, be afraid to walk away from a collection that is not worth buying. Think of the time and effort on ebay trying to sell it. Maybe you can start walking away and get them to come down to the price you wanted, or come back later. Of course, I did miss out on a Tron Joystick this way once. I had recently bought too much and, despite wanting the Tron stick, didn't want to pay $10 for the collection of Commons and one untested system. But I did offer $2 for the stick. No luck. I only offered $8 and never got the stick. Still want one I guess. This brings me to another point. Make sure you know how much something is worth, especially if you want one. Tron Joystick (DP Guide says $25)., Darn!@#$. Spend lot's of time reading that book!

In general, make sure that they do not think that you are a dealer, and don't tell them that you have 200 carts. Do not react to the words "internet" or "ebay". Ignorance is bliss. Sometimes they will not answer you right away, and you can tell that they are thinking about what they might have. Let them know that you are only looking for the game cartridges, and not necessarily everything. They may want to hold onto it, or most of it - so you do not want to scare them by trying to take away their old collection. They may part with a game for $1 each. You never know what they have unless you can get them to drag

it out. As a fellow player and collector, they may be willing to part with one of theirs to help your collection grow. Worked a couple times for me. WRT, "Willing to pay $1". Actually, you may be able to lower that offer a bit, if you consider instruction manuals. As is always the case, don't forget to ask if they have the instruction manuals (and magazines, handhelds, toys etc)., since the game is not worth as much to you without it. Do not make an offer for an unknown load of goodies. Let them suggest something if you can. It can help to ask if the games are good for children, since this may help reduce the price. You know which games are for kids, but you are hoping for a cheaper price, or a friendlier attitude. Bringing your spouse, mother, or button-loving child should even help more.

Maybe they will want to trade? Not likely to work, but you never know. Maybe you have newer stuff or duplicates to trade them. Find out what else they have and play. Usually 64 bit, but . . .

Afterwards:
Keep track of where you have been - I've just started doing this for areas that I go to all the time. In neighborhoods or cities that you got too the most ("your turf"), you do not want to visit the house again. That would be a waste of time, except for the rare occasion where they say - "we'll sell that in a few years, we're still playing with it now".

Don't ya hate to hear/see:Last year we sold it. Too bad you didn't come here last year. Gave it to goodwill - ok - if you found it thrifting.. Gave it away - ok - at least still out there somewhere. We just sold that this morning - bummer. Threw it away. Didn't think anyone cared - rats.

TI Carts. Yech. Too many of them out there.
$50.00 for an old NES? At least tell them that they will not sell it and better to give it away to a friend or child if they cannot. Better keep it
an enjoy playing it at that price. Obviously they do not really want to
part with it. There is also Tom's method of returning the morning of the
next garbage pickup.

How about the poor soul on RGVC who spent 15+ minutes sorting through everything only to find "No Sale". The lady helped him box it up, and then took it aside to keep for herself. We want these ones - they are not for sale. What the %^&@#*!

Or they jack the price up if you appear to know what you are looking for.
When you run out of money. Know where the local bank machines are.
When they are already closed for the day. Don't give up. Knock on the door or ring the bell if there is still a sign posted, a garage full of stuff, or their add says that they are still open. They'll gladly take you out to see it, or tell you if they have none for sale.

Thursday only, or 9AM-2 PM. What is it with these people that are only open for ½ a day, on one day, or skip a day? Really dumb to waste their money advertising, only to confuse or make it impossible for the customers to get there.

I'm sure that there are many more things to tell, but until next time.

Happy G Saling.

Alan Hewston is now the proud owner of a SQ Waterworld Cart. A very long drawn out purchase and almost gave up and would have missed finding it. Alan can be reached at hewston95@stratos.net

Top 10 Reasons to go to Your Next Local Collector's Meet

by Geoff Voigt

10:The giveaway prize will be 5200 Sinistar
9:Treasure Map to the Secret Dump in New Mexico; No! Really! This time's it's for real!
8:One of the other collectors will have JTS hard drives for skeet shooting
7:Frosted Circus Animal Cookies
6:Atari Video Music versus LSD: There can be Only ONE!

5:Someone new to the Classic gaming hobby will be dropping by to learn more, so you can paternally take him under your wing, give him some fun Uncommons for luck, show him he has freinds, AND THEN CRUSH HIM LIKE A GRAPE AT SPACE WAR!!!!!!!

4:Decathalon. Le Stick. Any Questions?

3:Nolan Bushnell will probably drop by to give a personal apology

2: That "Chris" guy you've been talking to on the net will turn out to be a hot babe with an Adventurevision

And our Number One Reason to go to Your Local Collector's meet is:

1: 4-Player Warlords! 'nuff said!

Video Game Therapy

Welcome to another new addition to the newsletter. We have found that there is a video game therapist named Dr. I.N. Sane, whose specialty is helping neglected video game characters to get over their troubles. He has kindly let me sit in some of these sessions, so I could relate these back to you. This month's session features Stanley the Bugman from Donkey Kong III. Let us listen in:

Stanley-"Doc, I am still having the same recurring nightmare."

Dr Sane-"The one with the bees?"

Stanley-"Yes Doc, why do they come after me? I wasn't the one who shook their hives?"

Dr Sane-"I see..."

Stanley-"Why don't those bees sting that stinkin ape, right in his big butt? Why do they attack me?"

Dr Sane-"Stanley we have been through this before. We need to put this behind us. What else is troubling you?"

Stanley-"It is MAME, Doctor."

Dr Sane-"What is this MAME you speak of?"

Stanley-"It is an arcade emulator that is for the computers."

Dr Sane-"Why does this trouble you?"

Stanley-"Before this MAME, I was finally forgotten. It isn't like Donkey Kong 3 was a big hit or anything. But now people are noticing me again and calling me that infernal name."

Dr Sane-"I see."

Stanley-"Do you have any idea how hard it is to go through life with the name, Stanley the Bugman? Its horrible. I finally found a nice girl and we were all prepared to get married, when this MAME, this stinkin MAME showed up and now people are calling me the Bugman again."

Dr Sane-"How does your girl feel about this name?"

Stanley-"We used to be so close, regular cuddly wuddly, but now she says I give her the creeps. Her mother has called off the wedding. Said she didn't want her daughter marrying any bugman. My life is in ruins. Why did they have to call me the bugman? Why not Stanley the Exterminator?"

Dr Sane-"Have you contacted your former employer about this?"

Stanley-"Nintendo refuses my calls. I am trying to sue them as they promised me a long career. They said I would be the next Mario, but they lied. But it was a verbal contract, so no lawyer will touch the case. I'm ruined, ruined." <Stanley breaks down and cries>

Dr Sane-"Stanley, I think we need to get your girlfriend in here and try to talk this out. Could you get her here next time?"

Stanley-"I'll try Doc, please help me"

Dr Sane-"We will Stanley, we will"

Tune in next month when we listen in on Jr Pacman and his troubles. Remember, video game characters have feelings too. If you want to learn more about Stanley and his woeful ways, check out the Stanley Tribute Page at http://www.concentric.net/~Flarb/stanley.html

Bira Berra

If you are into classic games, you have heard of Bira Bira, the god of luck for video game hunters. But have you heard of Bira Berra? If not, then you must read this very interesting story by Ben Valdes!

Click here for the article, it's so long that it gets its own page!

What's Happening in the Hobby?

Adventurevision=Big Bucks!

After many, many months of not a single Adventurevision on eBay, we have seen two in the last two weeks. Well, there were two posted, but we can only guess that one was real. The first Adventurevision was as many guessed, just a hoax. It came from someone with no feedback, had a picture that didn't load, and a ridiculous reserve bid ($50,000!!!). Surprisingly, someone decided to test them out and actually met the reserve bid! No word yet if the Adventurevision is for real, but I can pretty much guess the bidder will not follow through with the bid. In fact, I can almost guarantee it.

A second Adventurevision showed up as soon as the first auction. This one started at a more modest (in comparison to the first one) opening bid of $995.00 with no reserve. It is currently at $1550.00 and still has a day or so to go. Guess these machines are alot more desirable than most of us thought. Will be interesting to see if more show up and how much they sell for.

John Deere Atari Edition

A humorous new Atari was posted on the newsgroups. This one was a John Deere exclusive edition. It even came with the game, Johnny Tractor and his pals! Only problem is that it looks to be a joke of sorts. Is it real or just a funny hoax? Go check it out for yourself!

http://home.earthlink.net/~resqsoft/john_deere_atari.htm

eBay Notes

With more and more product popping on the scene, the prices continue to stay the same or go down. Vectrexes are still getting a little over a $100.00 for a basic system and even boxed carts are selling for as low as $10.00. The Ataris are maintaining and most carts, even the hard ones are going for less than a year ago. Swordquest Waterworld, which used to be a guaranteed $150.00 has been as low as $90.00 and the Halloween cart that was pulling in a cool $50.00-$70.00, is now in the $30.00 range. Will be interesting if this trend continues as more and more product is coming into the market and the amount of new collectors cannot keep up with it. So we are seeing a glut of product.

A few areas that have seen significant growth is boxed controllers. New in the box joysticks, paddles and add-ons (like Coleco Steering Wheel, Roller Controller and Super Action controllers) are jumping in price. The better the shape, the bigger the bid. I have

seen a boxed set of Super Action controllers bring in $60.00, while a similar pair would have fetched about $40.00 a year ago. Even Atari paddle controllers that are boxed are bringing in $15.00, sometimes more! People have shown that they are willing to pay a premium for never or rarely used, boxed controllers.

Site of the Month

For my first site of the month, I chose one that most classic game people are familiar with, but may not realize how much is actually there. The ICWhen website is best known for the "Eye Site" award that is bestowed onto classic video games sites of merit. But if you never took the time to actually go to the site and explore, you are missing out on a gold mine of stuff!

The site is managed by Donald Thomas Jr, who as most people know is an Atari alumni. He has done a wonderful job of adding alot of information that would keep anyone interested in video games, busy for years. There is a very, very extensive timeline that dates all the way back to before the 1800s, that shows all the innovations that has led to the video and computer industry of today. While most timelines would only deal with the last 30 years, Donald has gone well beyond that. I spent way too much time checking out all the inclusions.

Another nice feature is a section for downloadable newsletters. The site is the official provider of the A-One newsletter that is a great read! There are 29 issues up and they are chocked full of information. Besides A-One, there is Atari News, TI/994A page, Jaguar United and even Retrogaming Times!

If you are into more lighthearted fare, he includes word searches, word scrambles and more! This site really has something for every classic game fan and even the people who are not!

So next time you see an "Eye Site Award", click on it and check out the plethora of information that is available here. Or just follow this link to visit the site now!
http://www.icwhen.com

Letters to the Editor

To get this rolling, I am going to take a few emails that I have received in the past and answer them. I will not give anyone's name. When you are sending them in, you can have us publish your name and/or email address or you can use a nickname or nothing at all. You do not have to give a name, if you don't wish.

There is an old arcade game that I cannot remember the name of? You are a tank and you have to move up as other tanks and stuff come at you. I think one controller moved the tank and the other moved the gun. Do you know what it is?

<Editor-Since one joystick controls the turret of the tank, it isn't Battlezone. I would say it is Frontline, since you are moving up and one joystick moves the gun, but in Frontline you are only in control of a tank for a short period. So that means it is most likely Vindicators from Atari.>

I just read your Centipede story. What were you drinking when you came up with that?

<Editor-Pepsi>

Which classic game system had the best trackball?

<Editor-Easy! It was the Atari 5200! Followed by the Atari 2600 (the Atari brand one) and lastly, the Colecovision.>

Question of the Month

I have received alot of emails from people to bring back the question of the month. It was originally killed because of lack of response, but I will give it another try. If enough people show interest, then I will keep it going. If not, it will be retired for good. Enough of that, here is the question of the month!

What classic arcade game that wasn't ported to the home game systems, would you have liked seen made?

For me that is easy! I would have loved to see a home version of Zookeeper, the great little gem from Taito! I would have preferred it on the Coleco, but any system would be fine.

Conclusion

We have come to an end. Twenty five issues under my belt and two full years of publishing! Now we need to look towards the 50th issue! Hope you enjoyed the issue and please send questions, comments, jokes and whatever to the Letters Page. I hope for this to grow into something that is both informative and fun, but unlike edutainment, I want it to actually be good! So get those emails in and see you in a month!

Tom Zjaba

(If you are still reading, please make sure to turn off your computer before going to bed. Computers get very tired and bored if left on all night and may move or erase files).