

# Retrogaming Times

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## For the Love of the Game

Did you ever think about your hobby? What was it that attracted you to classic games instead of the more popular hobbies like comic books, baseball cards or action figures? What keeps you striving for these classic games when there are many new systems out there with much better graphics, deeper games and now online play? It is the love of the game. No, not the Kevin Costner movie (though it was a pretty good movie), but the deep down love you have for these games.

Remember your first kiss? How about that first true love you had (hey fanboy, I am talking about your first human love, not your Atari)? Think back to how you felt about that person. As you look back, you have fond memories (unless you were one of those poor people on Jerry Springer whose first true love was really a cross dressing orangutan) of that person. They may have had little flaws that you overlooked and have faded with time. Same is true with your Atari or Coleco or whatever. Instead of seeing the dated graphics and the limited capabilities, you instead see your first video game love. You see the system that first enchanted you, that showed you how exciting a video game could be

and the possibilities that existed.

Next time you fire up your first system, think back to the first time you played it. Think about how enchanted you were with it, the newness of the whole experience. Think about what your favorite game was back then, back before we knew anything of rarity or value. Back when you would have easily traded Chase the Chuckwagon for a Pitfall and felt you ripped the other person off. This was when video games were fresh and new.

About the only other time that can compare with this is the first six months of collecting. When you first decided to collect video games, instead of just playing them. When your collection was small and each trip to the thrifts or flea markets would yield new games and new experiences. This is also a magical time. It is a time when you try to amass the games of your youth, when you pick up that first ER game and jump up and down like a man who hit the lottery. These are fun times too! These are the things that keep you going later on as your collecting has swelled and the finds are few and far between. The memories of playing games that you didn't know existed until you got back into the hobby. This is what makes this hobby so much fun. This is what kept you coming back and will keep you playing.

## **More Classic Game Shows Coming!**

OK classic game fans, pull out those calendars and get ready to mark down a few dates. We have two classic video game shows for all classic game fans, but especially the ones who live on the East Coast and Midwest!

### **[Phillyclassic Show](#)**

The second annual Phillyclassic show is scheduled for April (the exact date is yet undetermined). Once again, David Newman will be heading the show that as you can tell, is in Philadelphia. While I was unable to attend last year's show, regular RT writer, Fred Wagaman attended and enjoyed himself. I hope to make it this year.

I will keep you posted as new information comes out on dates, contests and people attending. Here is the URL for the show:

**<http://www.phillyclassic.com/>**

### **[C.C.A.G. 2001 \(Classic Computer And Gaming\)](#)**

This is the show that I am really excited about! First off, it is in my neck of the woods, Cleveland, Ohio and secondly, I hopped onboard to help out this year! I am hosting the website and doing alot to attract attention to the show. Already we have more dealers committed and the attendance appears to be much higher than last year.

The show will be June 23rd and admission and table fees are totally free! That's right, no charge for admission at all! But there is a limited number of tables, so if you want one, it is best to let us know ahead of time.

I will be doing regular updates both at the site and here in the newsletter about the show.

Here is the link to the website:

[C.C.A.G.](#)

## Stranger in a Strange Town

by [Doug Saxon](#)

Some people may live in what I call town #1. It is flooded with collectors and consequently, the thrifts and fleas may be something left to be desired as far as classic games go. You deliberately wake yourself up at 7 in the morning on Saturday and rush up to the flea market to arrive when it opens hoping to beat all the other 10,000 collectors in the city. However, to your dismay you find a box of commons and after asking the guy if he has anymore he says, "Sumguy just bought a bunch of them 5 minutes ago. "This is what I would call Cincinnati, where I used to live! On the other hand, some of us may live in town #2 where there may be few, if any at all, collectors and consequently, the thrifts and fleas are nothing short of a dream. This is Colorado Springs, where I live now. The question then remains: where would you rather live? Some people may think the answer is obvious, "Duh, I would much rather live in town #2, because then I will find Chase the Chuckwagons everyday."

I would have given the same answer while I was living in Cincinnati. Wow, can you imagine a town with no collectors and a Chase the Chuckwagon at every thrift? But now that I have relocated to a different city, I realize that this is Never-Never land. Maybe if I really was finding Chase the Chuckwagons everyday here, it wouldn't be an issue, but let's be practical. The point is, I think there is one thing that alot of us collectors in town #1 take for granted and that is each other. Without other collectors in the area, who will you play your games with? Who will you show your collection to? There was a group of us in Cincinnati that would try to get together once a month and we would have a blast. It was also a primetime to get some good trades in, and of course it is always fun to know that when you DO find something with brag-potential in town #1, you have collectors around you to brag to! It is kind of like driving. For those of you who like to speed and can't stand it when grandma is in the passing lane going 50 MPH, don't you sometimes wish that everyone would just clear the road or just disappear so you could have the road to yourself? I know I do sometimes, but then you realize that with no one else around to speed by and honk your horn at, it's probably not much fun. And how much fun would Pole Position and Turbo be with just a road and a time limit? Boring.

So where would you rather live? Tough question. I'm content here, but I do miss the guys in Cincinnati. I have found more in Colorado in the past month than I found in Cincinnati in over a year! But don't we all love giving our neighborly collector a call and telling them about it? Let's not deceive ourselves, we all do. I guess the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. I think alot of us live in cities that have both alot of collectors and alot of potential finds. These are the guys that are most fortunate. Maybe someday I'll relocate to one of those cities and write another article. Probably not though. But I suppose I can be satisfied here for the time being. So am I inviting you all to come out here? Sure,

just stay away from the thriffts! ;)

*(Doug Saxon is an avid collector who has now taken his thrifting across America and even has searched for carts overseas. Is that a collector or what? He can be reached at [dj7695@aol.com](mailto:dj7695@aol.com)).*

## The Many Faces of . . . Tapper

By [Alan Hewston](#)

In **Tapper**, **Root Beer Tapper**, or **Mountain Dew Tapper**, your job as Sam the Soda-bartender, is to serve all thirsty patrons a beverage, and then pick up their empty glass. Customers start at, (or show up later) in one of 4 rows of bars and move towards you until they either get their beverage, or reach the end of the bar - in which case Sam gets dragged across the bar & you lose a life. When served, they either leave after one beverage, or stop, drink it, slide their glass back to you and continue walking towards you, wanting another. Fortunately, you and your bottomless kegs, and an infinite supply of glasses are stationed at the opposite end of each bar. Every press (release) of your button fills up another drink and slides it down the bar to the next customer. Moving left and right allows you to collect the glasses; up and down gets you from row to row.

Our Editor, Tom, primed me with this arcade-to-home-history. The original (bar) game **Tapper** advertised Budweiser ("This bud's for you"), and was later re-released for the family (arcades) as **Root Beer Tapper**, then finally to the home consoles. In Australia (editor, If I am wrong about the country, feel free to correct me at [tomheroes@flashcom.net](mailto:tomheroes@flashcom.net)), the Suntory Beer company label was displayed, and "This one's for you" was heard after earning the Beer Hunter bonus. On the home versions, Mountain Dew advertised on the Atari and Commodore versions. Root Beer was still served on the Colecovision.

There are 4 different levels (bar scenes), each having (2, 3, 4 and 4) rounds respectfully, before moving to the next level. Every round/level gets harder, and on the 3rd and 4th levels, the bars are split such that half (or every other row) are facing in opposite directions. This is enough to drive you nuts, or simply make it one of the all-time most challenging hand-eye coordination classic video games ever. The c64 version even swaps the left/right symmetry from round to round. The bar scenes vary from system to system, but are essentially: 1) Old West Bar, 2) Sports Stadium Concession Counter, 3) London Punk Rock Bar, (or Oriental Seaport, or a 2nd Western bar), and 4) Alien Space Port.

After completing a level, you play the bonus round, "Beer Hunter" as Bob & Doug MacKenize called it. Sneaky Pete shakes all but one of the 6 beverage cans, then mixes them up (the shell game). Pick the correct can and get a nice bonus to your score. Open the wrong one and get a "wet head". You can earn a brief reprieve if you collect a tip, in which case the patrons are treated to a dancing show (with show girls, an organ grinder, cheerleaders, or aliens. This instantly stops most of the crowd who watch the show, but, there's just no stopping until the bar is completely cleared of patrons. And, if you take too long the patrons whip their glasses back at you so fast that you are guaranteed to miss

one. If beverages or empty glasses break, then you lose a life.

Bonus lives are earned at different point levels, such as at 20,000 & 50,000 on the Atari 2600.

The number of starting lives, scoring, and bonus lives varies from system to system. The 2600 & CV provide all 4 starting difficulty levels: Beginner, Intermediate (missing on C64 & Atari 8-bit), Arcade, and Expert. All 4 home versions allow a two-player game, where players take turns after each life is lost.



Original (Arcade) Designer for Root Beer Tapper: Steve Meyer [1983, did Timber in 1984]

Other Designers: Ken Jordan (Atari 8-bit, 5200, SEGA), Henry Spragens (C64), ? (CV)0

Classic Platforms: Apple II, Atari 2600, (& maybe a 5200 prototype), Atari 8-bit,, Colecovision, and Commodore 64.

Categories: Gameplay, Addictiveness, Graphics, Sound & Controls

### **Disqualified: Atari 5200, Apple II**

Too bad we never got to see the 5200 port - even if only as a prototype.

I do not have an Apple II, and have never seen or played this version.

### **The Have Nots: Atari 2600 (36)**

The Graphics are mediocre, with sparse details, and very plain looking patrons. The Sound is very good, but the worst of the 4 systems. The Gameplay was great for a 2600 game, but lacking a pause or collecting tips makes it the worst of the lot. Despite being the most challenging to play, it offers 3 more challenging difficulty levels via use of both A/B switches. The Controls are outstanding and the Addictiveness is very good. Tons of fun to play - just a bit hard to find.

### **Bronze Medal: Atari 8-bit (38)**

A notch above the 2600, this port should have been much better. The Graphics are not plain like the 2600, but still poor. In an attempt to improve the graphics, they actually turned out worse; so much that it is harder to play, especially on the Space Port level. The

Addictiveness is very good, but suffers from the poor Graphics. It's frustrating to try to play what you cannot easily see.

The Sound is outstanding, maybe the best. The Gameplay is also outstanding, probably only missing a pause feature, which I didn't discover. The Controls are perfect, programmed to use the standard joystick even better than all the others.

#### Silver Medal: Colecovision (44)

Just missing the Gold medal again, this time due to Graphics. The Graphics are very good, but would otherwise be outstanding if not for the pastel (yes, pastel - yech) colors of the patrons. They're difficult to discern, yet critical to controlling the action. This pastel blur of the patrons prevents the Addictiveness score from being a perfect 10. The Sound and Controls are outstanding. The Gameplay is perfect, plus it even has a pause.

#### Gold Medal: Commodore 64 (45)

Hmnn, winning again due to a flaw (maybe a programming deadline), from the silver medalist.

All five categories were outstanding, getting scores of "9". Gameplay only loses a point due no pause, or "intermediate" start level. The Sound and Controls are outstanding. The Addictiveness could only be better if there was a pause. The Graphics are reason enough to play this version over all others. Clear crisp patrons so that you can completely enjoy the fast paced action, knowing exactly how many patrons, and whether they need a drink or not.

Warning: The C64 cart version only includes the 1st two levels and not all 4. Definitely get the full version on disk, or play the CV version instead. Feel free to ask me for the C64 disk copy. Anyone know if the Atari 8-bit cart is also lacking?

Come back next month when I plan to review H.E.R.O. found on the Atari 2600, 5200, Atari 8-bit, C64 and CV.

*(Alan Hewston has held the Twin Galaxies World Record score on Tapper for all but the CV version - still getting used to those pastel colors. Thanks go out to Steve Knox (a great Tapper player) for getting me the Atari 8-bit disk version. Alan can be reached at [Hewston95@stratos.net](mailto:Hewston95@stratos.net)).*

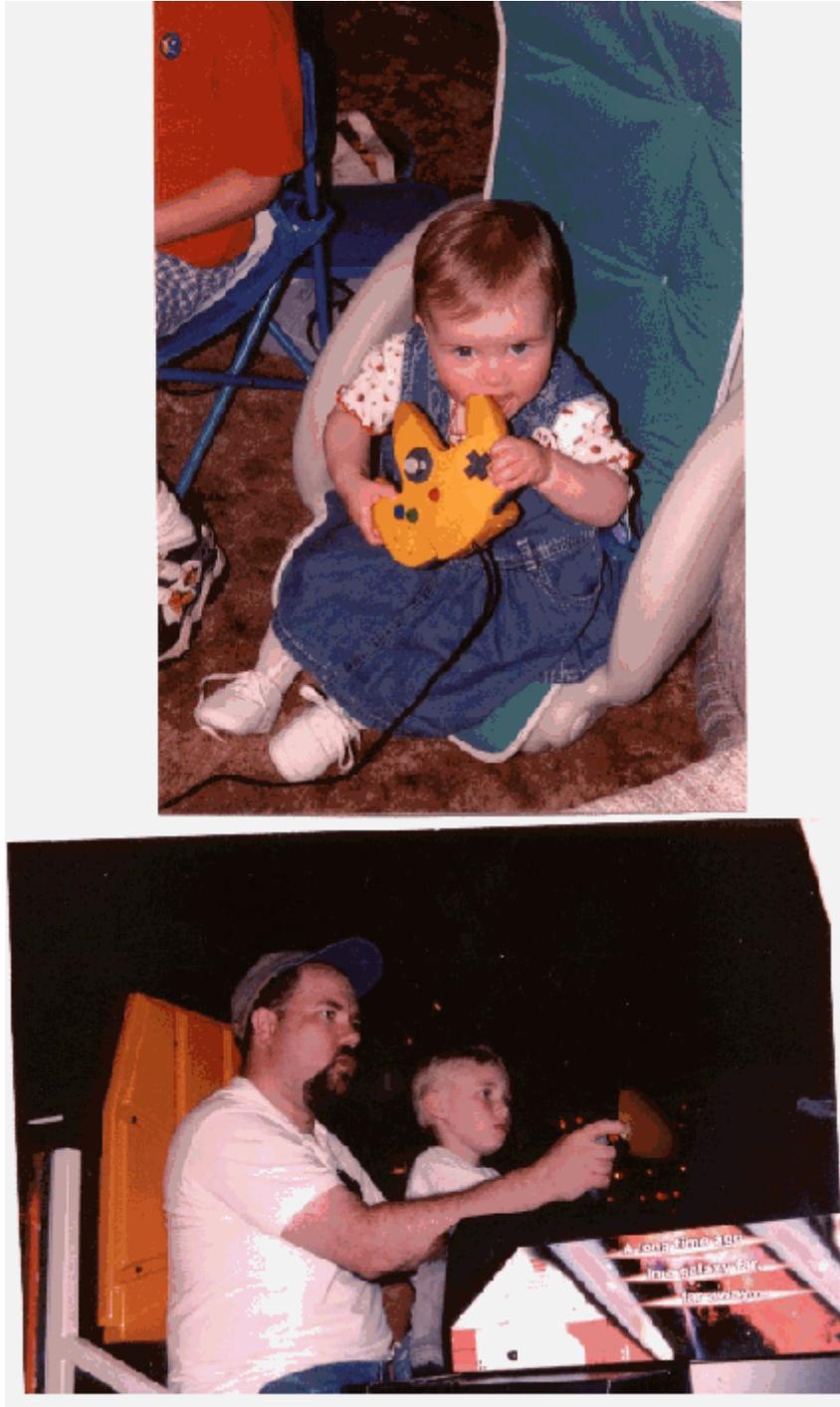
## **Kids and Games**

By [Fred Wagaman](#)

As a parent, I'm always trying to look out for the best interest of my kids. Teaching them the things they'll need to survive in life. How to dress themselves. Look both ways before crossing the street. Always wear a helmet when biking/skateboarding/roller skating. So what does this have to do with games ?

My kids are young. Both of them are under 5. My son, Max, has been playing (or trying to play games) since he could crawl. My daughter, Lynzie, had her own controller before she

was born (we were getting ready for the 4 player games). And when my son and I play, she wants a controller and wants to sit right there with us.



I've been wrestling with how games affect my son for a while now. When he was younger, they were basically cartoons for him. Something bright and colorful to watch. But now that he's almost 5, I'm casting a more critical eye towards the type of games he plays, the type of games I play when he's around and the length of time we both play.

Fighting games are off his play list. Wrestling games and games that involve guns are too. These games seemed to have an adverse affect on him in his dealings with others. Most games with a "T" rating are also set aside. Some things in "T" games are too much for him. And obviously, games with an "M" rating are not on his play list.

Unfortunately for me, those games are off my play list too. At least when the kids are around. And the time I have to play when they are in bed is very short with all the other things I have to do. So I'm left with the choice of not playing certain games, or not playing. Oh the sacrifices we make as a parent !

I don't mean for this to become a tale of woe. What I really wanted to talk about isn't what the negatives are, but the positives.

My son had "borrowed" Mario Kart 64 from my collection and had been playing it for about a week. He was never very good at racing games and as he played it, I could see him improving. I got a call a couple of weeks ago at work. His excited voice on the other end told me (loudly) that he had won a gold cup. Now in case you haven't played this game, you receive points for finishing in the top 3 positions. Races are grouped together in blocks of four and whatever driver has the most points at the end of the 4 races receives the gold cup. Basically he had won and was so excited, he couldn't wait for a couple of hours to tell me. I was very proud of him and told him so.

The positive point I'm trying to make here is that, like many other activities, video games give kids a sense of accomplishment. The right games (and I'm not talking the namby-pamby educational games) let kids develop a positive self image of personal growth and improvement. His sense of self worth improved because **he** "beat" the game.

Can he drive a car now ? No. But his bike riding a steering skills have improved.

I remember a time about a year ago. We were at the local Blockbuster video store. Max always gravitates towards the games when we go there (go figure). He was waiting impatiently for another little boy to stop playing so he could have his turn. The little boy put the controller down and walked down the aisle. Max picked up the controller and started to play. After about 2 seconds, he paused the game, leaned out into the aisle and yelled to the boy, "I'M BETTER AT GAMES THAN YOU ARE !" and went back to playing. Now I wasn't exactly thrilled at this, but I've come to the conclusion that kids at this age are always comparing themselves to others. "I'm taller than you" or "I can run faster than you" are common comparisons. This was Max's way of doing the same thing that children (and adults) have done forever. He just used a different yardstick.

Another thing I noticed is that kids aren't relegated to playing the game they way it was meant to be played. They don't always do the things that, as adults, we see as obvious. And in doing so, they find new things about games that we would miss. The most recent example I can think of is Strider 2 for the Playstation. Max was playing a level that had you jumping from flying car to flying car as the screen forcibly moved you to the right. All while fighting an enemy that appeared and disappeared at will. At one point, he missed a jump (or so I thought). But instead of plummeting to his doom, his character, grabbed onto the bottom of the vehicle and was able to climb back on top of it. Not only did he not get injured, but the enemy couldn't reach him down there. Here was a case of not only applying problem-solving skills to a situation, but also applying *creative* problem solving skills. The obvious solution is not always the only or best solution.

Sometimes they just hit the right buttons. My daughter found the button that brings up the

settings for Robotron on my Mame cabinet. I can now change the number of players and free man settings. I would have never thought to hit button 1 on player 2 for that function. To me, Robotron was just a two joystick game. And the standard Mame dip switch function wouldn't affect Robotron.

Max misbehaves. Every kid does. Having something that we can punish him with, as a parent, is a wonderful tool. And because he enjoys the thing that gets taken away, it has an impact. For a real double-whammy, when he really gets in trouble, he gets both TV and video games taken away for a period of time.

My wife is also very concerned about the amount of time he plays video games (and watches TV). So she'll set limits to how long he can play. Then he has to do something else. Learning limits is important for many aspects in life.

Gauntlet Legends is a favorite in our house. This is one of the more mature games that we allow Max to play. One of the biggest features that I like to emphasize with this game is the cooperation necessary to play. If you run off by yourself, you can get into a position that, without the cooperation of the other players, leaves you stuck. One of the most uttered phrases when we play this game is "I need a little help over here!". Usually that occurs when being overrun by a team of goblins. This game teaches sharing ("You get the food next time") and concern for others ("I've got the invulnerability. I better go in front"). Bet you didn't expect a Mr. Rogers lesson from a Hack-n-slash game ?

But the thing I value most is the time we share when playing. I know that in a short time, he'll be in soccer and T-ball and band and karate and hockey and youth group and anything else that comes with being a kid today. To be able to spend a few hours a week participating in something we both enjoy will become an even rarer treat than it is today.

*(Fred has been playing games for over 25 years and actively collecting them for over 10. The 2400 + 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 4 year-old, button-loving son, Max and his 1 year old, 4th player, Lynzie. He would like to congratulate the indomitable Russ Perry Jr. for correctly identifying "The Bear Went Over the Mountain" as the song that plays during the intermission of Rabbit Transit for the Atari 2600. Fred can be reached at [fcw3@postoffice.ptd.net](mailto:fcw3@postoffice.ptd.net)).*

## **Midnight in the Garden of Good and Ebay**

By [Geoff Voigt](#)

It was a long time ago, the monster had just awakened. We were all encountering something we didn't understand, and none of us liked what we saw. It was beyond our control, it had the potential to take what we all held dear and twist it into something we saw as evil- potential massive price hikes on all that was left to get in our collection. "Kill the Beast!" We cried, "Destroy what lies within that website!" We armed ourselves with our pitchforks, newsgroup rants, torches, and some newsgroup auctions to slay that which would change our hobby as we knew it.

"Kill Ebay!" Kill Ebay!" "KILL EBAY!" The chants could be heard all the way to where we pounded on the site's door. It opened, and some went in... ..but not everyone came out. "You should see this place!" those that came out had said, "There's Chuckwagons to be had by all, if you don't mind the prices." We went in, and we had to laugh. "Rare! 2600 Combat! L@@@K!!!", "Colecovision Donkey Kong \_AND\_ MOUSETRAP!!! HTF!!!" [sic], "2600 Boing! Only \$200 reserve!!" There was a feeling that this place was secretly being run by that one Flea Lady (in more meanings than one...) who charged \$3.00 just to have her look at you. We've all encountered one or more of those. So some of us left, intending to never return again. We'd be able to find all that stuff on our own, right? We'd never become one of... them.

Time passed, and our hunts became less fruitful, and when we did find something, it had a ridiculous price on it. "It can go for twice that... on Ebay!" 'Maybe we should have attacked that place', some were found to be saying or thinking. Where's all the good stuff? A revisit to that place answered that question. The Flea Lady was now wearing a fur coat and diamond rings. Prices had stated to temper off, but insanity was still to be found. Those of us who left once again, still held the faith that the wild Thrifts and Fleas could support us. But sometimes if we found stuff, we couldn't trade it or didn't know what to do with it; "It's a Power Glove, I don't collect NES!", "Here's some memorabilia, but no carts to be seen." And so once again, we entered Ebay, and got those strange items to people who wanted them, and some of us got decent money for it, too.

But I didn't want to give up; I didn't want to become one of.... them. But I still looked anyway. PSX Namco 2! Imported Saturn games! stuff I've been looking for years! And I broke, I registered and bid for all those items; and was bid sniped by epsilons with no table manners in their own quest for this stuff. This was less of a castle to be burned than a circus with 60,000+ rings. And we were all in at least one. I found myself taking a cue from the now-late Sir Alec Guinness; "Madness! It's all Madness!" I was muttering to myself at the keyboard, I wanted to leave, but I couldn't; there was stuff in here I'd soil myself for if I found in the wild, memorabilia I'd only head about, but never seen. I could no longer check out any time I'd like, and I could never leave! I had become one of ...them. An Ebay'er, hunting down my latest fix, and making the Flea Lady's next payment on that Corvette I'd flick a booger onto if I had the chance. Why Ebay had me feel so broken was that my hunter's pride was diminished; I can't find everything I'd looked for. I wasn't alpha-thrifter anymore; no one was.

The hobby has been changed. Those Halcyon years of 8-system finds are gone. 4 days ago, as of this writing, a friend and I went on a 180 mile thrifting trip on the outer areas of what I consider my 'zone' in Central/Southern California. I came home with only enough stuff to fill a plastic grocery bag after 20 thrifts and 5 Pawns. But while on this trip, we sighted some items that looked intriguing. "Hey", I said, "We could see what these things could go for on Ebay." And so here I am, a lone Farmer extinguishing my torch, putting down my pitchfork, and entering the castle Ebay. God Damn you, Flea Lady.

*(Geoff Voigt has started collecting classic-gaming coffee cups as a direct result of Ebay. He's not saying what his Username is, and his password is not "RARE! COMBAT! L@@@K!". Really. His e-mail is [gvoigt@ridgecrest.ca.us](mailto:gvoigt@ridgecrest.ca.us), and the starting bid is \$5.00 ).*

## TI 99/4A, the Overlooked Computer Part Three

This is the last part of my three part series on the TI computer. It is just an overview of the great computer and I barely scratched the surface on this wonderful computer and all it has to offer! This month, I am going to talk about getting a TI computer and what you need for the ultimate setup. You may be surprised that a TI computer is much cheaper than you thought.

The best place to get a TI computer is probably on eBay. They can be bought quite cheap and you can usually get a system with a handful of games and some joysticks for about \$20.00-\$30.00 (plus shipping). Once you get a TI, you need to start looking for the Joystick Adapter from Wico. This will set you back about \$10.00-\$20.00, but it is worth it. The next thing you need is a speech synthesizer. This is a must for games like Parsec and Alpinar. This should keep you busy for awhile as there are hundreds of carts available!

When you decide to take the next step, you need to get a disk drive. If you are going to do this, you should just get the PE Box (stands for Peripheral Expansion), where you can add one or two disk drives, the RS232 card and other stuff. With a disk drive, you can then play games like Tunnels of Doom and many of the later games that were only released on disk. After this, you are pretty much set. While you can get a monitor, it is not necessary. A television will do fine, even if the picture is not as good. Now you are ready to enjoy all that the TI computer has to offer and you can get it all for under \$100.00! You will not only have a fun computer, but also a very durable and well made one! It should give you years and years of quality service. Enjoy!

## The TI 99/4A “A History-Part II”

by [Jim Krych](#)

I would have to believe, that the best description of just how hard finishing a project, and doing it RIGHT, is that the idea is the easy part. The other 99% of the blood, sweat, and tears, and often, ridicule, make any project work difficult. But, if one takes things in a methodical and professional way, even hobbyist projects can be done professionally.

The second part of my history with the TI 99/4A can be best said as “The Project Years.”

It may seem that the previous article just suddenly ended. Well, that is basically how things with me and the TI were, right after High School, and I joined the U.S. Coast Guard. My first unit, after boot, was a LORAN Station in Malone Florida, as a seaman apprentice amongst a bunch of Electronics Techs. The only computer related stuff I did then-88-89, was with a '286 clone. And some involvement with the Dothan Alabama Computer User Group.

Ironically, it was while I was at the Navigator's School in Yorktown, Virginia, that I also started the AAS program in Electronics Engineering Technology from CIE. A Correspondence College. This was a paradox of my Coast Guard career-a navigator who was becoming an Electronics Engineer. (All of this was to try to go to OCS-since QM's, navigators, had better chances for the OCS program.)

The background for project ideas had been laid during the first part of my history with the TI. The second part would require the toughest parts-learning schematics AND troubleshooting, all from CIE. And, of course, a place away from my cutter, the USCGC Acacia. All of which would happen in mid-1990.

Getting back with my old buddy Walter Ryder, we decided that now, we could do the old memory project. What we did first was ask-people we had read about and could contact. It was when I had contacted Jim Peterson, that he had given me the famous "never announce until ready to ship" and pointing me to Chris Bobbitt, of Asgard Software.

My timing for contacting Chris in the summer of 1990, couldn't have been worse, I realized years later. Chris had just given up on the Press program. But, Chris took a chance on us-total unknowns. You need to understand, it was only in the 1990's that I really paid any attention to the goings on in the TI community. I didn't get a subscription to Micropendium until that timeframe-1990's.

This memory Project was called AEMS, Asgard Expanded Memory System. What is known as AMS and SuperAMS, came about as a decision to actually manufacture the Project Prototype as an actual product. Tony Lewis of the Hardware Team, had proposed a very simple design based on a 128K or 512K SRAM chip, and the 74LS612 Memory Mapper. This would allow our Software Team of Art Green and Joe Delekto, to produce the vital software. Tony and I were the Hardware Team, and I wire-wrapped the original 128K prototype design. (Walter Ryder had to drop out early in the Project)

The unique difference of the AEMS Project was our insistence to the "Ease-of-Use" concept for expanded memory on the TI 99/4A. Up until that time, and excluding the Myarc Geneve, all "memory" expansion cards, were really Ramdisks. And most people didn't want to loose Ramdisk memory for some type of CPU expansion, i.e. RAMBO. Also, programming for CPU use, compared to file storage was a nightmare. And, finally, given the mindset that ALL memory expansion cards would need a DSR, Device Service Routine, or page the memory in certain set page sizes and only in certain memory "holes", we certainly broke new ground!

And while Tony was debugging the AEMS, which used DRAM SIMMs(that prototype is still around somewhere!), our Software Team, by the Grace of God, did accomplish what we had set as our goal. A new loader, a linker, and a macro assembler. A programmer would only need to assemble the code into sections from 4K up to 24K, and with some careful design beforehand, create the linker script, and the paging would never be touched by the programmer! The best example of this is the game TI-Nopoly. This is a 96K clone of Monopoly, that showed, just how effective the system was. Joe and Jon Dyer created that game.

Was our system needed to use the expanded memory? No, and quite a few programs programmed the card directly. It was fairly easy to do, and the design was ingenious: upon powerup, the card “appeared” as a 32K card, but when put into “Map” mode, the expanded memory could be accessed, in the SuperAMS, this is both the upper AND lower free memory expansion areas, >A000->F000 and the >2000->3000 respectively.

And, we were given an “A” for the hardware, and an “A-“ on the software-by a Mr. Bruce Harrison, who at that time didn’t “need” the expanded memory. Bruce has done some fantastic work with the SuperAMS, including upgrading the Midi-Master program to use the expanded memory.

The original AMS cards were a small batch of 25 cards. When we had ordered 50 more, the PCB designer and maker, took the money, and we didn’t have anymore to make another run. SO there we were.

We had given up on the AEMS DRAM design, and in reality, a 1 meg system that works fine is a lot better than a troublesome system. Even the PSRAM design, supplemented by Chuck Abdouch, wouldn’t work on all systems-mine included (but then again, mine was a hardware hacker’s dream!) One megabyte is the limit of the AMS/SuperAMS paging(256 pages of 4K pages)

The Project was effectively ended. And no hope of making more-except for the few brave people who took the SuperAMS schematics I offered, and built them. The only difference between the original AMS and SuperAMS is this: SuperAMS allows the lower 8K to be paged in and out. And, can have one or two 128K or 512K SRAM chips.

However, I didn’t give up. And that paid off when the Southwest 99ers User Group, decided to have a new run made-of the SuperAMS design. We worked with a local PCB designer here in the Cleveland Area-Drgan, had a one-of-a kind PCB prototype made, fixed the bugs in that, and presented the SuperAMS to the TI Community at the 1995 MUG fair in Lima Ohio. And this Product, was again highly rated in the reviews.

All of the 100 SuperAMS cards have been sold, and I am not going to sell that \$600 prototype!

But, since the design work has already been done, and just a PCB house turn the Gerber data into an actual PCB, perhaps.....

Was the AEMS Project easy? Not at all! Was it frustrating? At times, very. But, it was neat to be a part of something that really hadn’t been done before, and having been told what we were doing was wrong and against the grain, and totally succeeding in our goal! A PRODUCT had been released, and announced when ready to ship! This is a rarity in the TI World. As more hype goes into vaporware and promised “this project will save your TI” . What we did was truly unique, and, did change the TI’s abilities. We left the TI a better machine than when we first started!

And, that should be the yardstick by which things are measured. And, SuperAMS will live on-in the emulation form with PC 99, and hopefully, with the MESS driver for the TI 99/4A!

I have offered the schematics to the driver programmer for free.

I won't delve into the next and final TI project I was involved in. Primarily because I consider it to be the finest PROJECT that became a PRODUCT. And also, because all I had learned about projects, and everything that goes in them, came to fruition in it. It was truly the greatest example of "don't announce until ready to ship"! That final project is for the next article!

And all it really was, was just the best solution, to a major problem, for both TI's, and other TV RGB systems. And, the most controversial!!!

*(Hi! My name is James(Jim) Walter Krych. I am 31 year-old QA Tech. I am also a member of the Ohio Army National Guard, B Co 112th Eng. I have a technical diploma in electronics technology, and I am currently taking computer programming and operations from CIE. I have a 1 year old son, August 24th, and his name is Treyton. I have an Atari 7800, 201 games, an ST, STe, MegaSTe, and a Falcon030. I can be reached at [jwkrych@n2net.net](mailto:jwkrych@n2net.net))*

## Sites of the Month

Once again, I have been able to find a few sites that are worth your time to check out! More wonderful stops on the superhighway for you to visit!

### [Retro-Remakes](#)

I first saw this mentioned on the [Arcade@Home](#) website. When I followed the link, I was sent to video game heaven! This site has a ton and I do mean a ton of remakes of classic arcade games! You name a popular arcade game and there is at least one remake, possibly more. Take a game like Pacman and you have dozens! It was like heaven for a game fanatic like me!

The best part of this site is that they have the Champ games! For anyone who missed the great Champ games, they were a company that did awesome remakes that featured not only arcade faithful versions, but also enhanced versions! These alone are worth a download, not to mention the hundreds and hundreds of other versions available! Do check this site out, you will thank me for it and try those Champ games (Centipedem, Champ Galaxian, Champ Kong and Champ Galagon).

Here is the URL: <http://www.retro-remakes.com/>

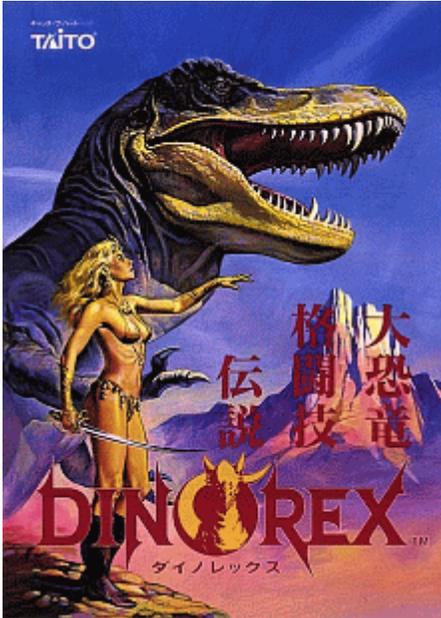
### [Retroview](#)

This is one of those sites that is still in its infancy, but it has all the makings of a great site! There are only a handful of reviews right now, but look for that to change in the future. But take a look at the reviews and the amount of work that goes into them and you will be impressed. This is a site to bookmark and check back often on.

There are also some game cheats and a few other things in the quickly growing site. Like I said, it has just started, but it is already looking very good! So check it out at the following URL: <http://www.mameworld.net/retroview/>

## MAME Reviews

Time to dig out some very odd games for review. I have been getting into some of the newer games added to MAME (yes, I finally decided to update my version of MAME) and decided to give some of them a review. So prepare for my tribute to Gladiator as I do games that deal with mano a mano fighting.



**(Babes and dinos, how could they go wrong?)**

### Dino Rex

One of those games that I really liked at the arcade was Primal Rage. Stop motion dinos fighting was too cool! Being a big fan of the Ray Harryhausen, it really captured my attention. Little did I know there was a clone out there. Leave it to MAME to expose it to the masses. If you are anything like me, you never heard of Dino Rex.



**(A T-Rex versus a Triceratops!)**

**All we need is Raquel Welch and we can remake 10 Million BC!**

The first thing you will notice with the game is it uses the same kind of stop motion look that made Primal Rage popular. There are many other similarities, so many that I would not be surprised if there wasn't a lawsuit involved. Both have humans in the game, both

are one dino versus another. The similarities are very close. But this game does offer something that even Primal Rage doesn't, a chance to fight with Barney! Alright, it really isn't Barney, but it is a fat, purple dinosaur and who else comes to mind?



**(Barney and the other dinosaur are breaking into song!)**

The gameplay itself is decent. For a fighting game, it really isn't great, but it is alright. There are little things that make the game fun, like how a pterodactyl comes and eats your human when you lose two out of three matches. You also get the cavemen in the crowd cheering and little dinos that pop up here and there. But there aren't enough variety of creatures and soon you tire of it. Plus, too many of the dinos are the same and the amount of moves is quite small. I can see why I never heard of this, it wasn't very good. Oh well, it is worth a download and a few games. It will not make your top ten games of all-time, but it is a good time killer and against another opponent, it can be fun.



**(Yeah, yeah another story about a big fight. Shut up and let's fight!)**

## Hippodrome

No, this has nothing to do with hippos. Time for a quick history lesson, a hippodrome was a large building for entertainment during the days of the Roman Empire. It usually housed such stuff as gladiator battles. This game takes that idea and gives you a chance to put your lowly human up against all forms of nasty creatures!



**(She is as dangerous as she is repulsive.)**

While the moves are limited, the creatures you fight are not. Each one is different and much to your disadvantage, they are all bigger and tougher than you. Like a human could beat a gargoyles or a gorgon, give me a break. But, life is not fair and neither is this game. You must venture forth and battle and that is what this game is all about!



**(Disney lied, they told me that gargoyles are friendly. Ouch!)**

You can tell a lot of time went into this game as it is more than your typical fighting game. First off, each opponent has different moves and different strengths and weaknesses. The lizard man for instance has the shield that is good at blocking. The gargoyles has ranged weapons and can fly. You need to learn how to fight each one as the same strategy will not work on all the contestants.



**(That is one mad lizard man. Is there anyone my size to fight?)**

But you do have one advantage, you can buy different weapons! After you beat a foe, you get some money that you can use at the store for different weapons and power-ups and more. Make sure to buy different weapons as you will need them. An axe may be nice against the lizard man, but not against the gargoyle as the weapons work at different speeds and ranges.

This is just one of those games that will have you coming back for more and more. You will want to be able to defeat all the opponents and it is quite a challenge. Once you download this, be prepared to waste a lot of time.

## **New Classic Game Award!**

We have all heard of the IC When award for classic gaming, but now there is another award for classic game sites to strive for, the Medal of Honor award! This is done by the same person who brought us the MakeINTV project (which still needs signatures to become a reality). For more information and soon a list of nominees, check out the following site:

<http://digilander.iol.it/AlternativeThought/>

Stay tuned and maybe this site can win an award!

## **Conclusion**

I know this issue is much shorter than last issue (you really weren't expecting it to get bigger were you?), but I needed a bit of a break after the last issue. I do want to take this moment to apologize to Reinhart who had submitted an article, but I waited until the last minute to realize it came through garbled. Look for it in the next issue. Well, summer is coming to a close around here and another season of garage sales and flea markets is also coming to a close. While I didn't find as much as I would have liked, I cannot complain. Tune in next month when we will return to two pages!

[Tom Zjaba](#)

(This issue was done while listening to the humorous songs like Outside of a Small Circle of Friends by Phil Ochs and Plastic by the Serendipity Singers. My latest song that I am looking for is Frozen Embryos. I do not know who did it, but I do remember the funny song. "We have no fingers, knees or toes, ohhhhh, we're just a couple of frozen embryos").