

RETROGAMING TIMES

The Newsletter for the Retro Gamer in All of Us

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RETROTIMES #16

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Introduction

Sweet sixteen! What better issue to devote to the ladies of classic games than this one? While they were a minority in classic games, their presence was still felt. So let us tip our hats to them and enjoy this theme issue.

The Sweet Sixteen Ladies of Classic Games

Here is a list of top ladies in the world of classic games. Some are characters and others are real. Some were influential and others controversial, but they all helped to shape the industry that we know and love. Please note that it was quite hard to compile this list and some of the later ones may be a bit of a stretch, but I wanted to go with the Sweet Sixteen theme and so I must persevere.

- 16. Mom**-She was the one who we pleaded with to get a new game or to get a system at all. Plus how many of us can fondly remember her saying "Will you turn off that game and come to dinner before I throw it in the trash". Gotta love Mom!
- 15. Ladybug**-A Pacman clone that is a very fun game. Moving walls, spelling words and all kinds of different bugs and prizes made this a worthy game and one I gladly owned on the Colecovision.
- 14. Cabbage Patch Kid**-Gotta love that cute little girl who wanders through the most dangerous park in the world. Why anyone would send their kids to play in a park like that is beyond me. As annoying as she can be (especially the temper tantrums when she loses a life), you have to love the very well made game!
- 13. Kangaroo**-Dear old Mama Kangaroo, was she one tough cookie or what. Some mean baboons steal her baby and she jumps into action and kicks tail! Don't those silly baboons know not to mess with a mother and her infant?
- 12. Jungle King/Hunt lady**-You remember the lady who you freed at the end of the game. I always called her Jane as I played the Jungle King version and what other lady would Tarzan, err.... I mean Jungle King save? Guess I can see why there was a lawsuit. Anyway, it also featured one of the first video game kisses as she gave you a kiss of thanks.
- 11. Jamie Lee Curtis**-Yes, she is the star of the Halloween game from Wizard Video (well actually they just call her the babysitter, but we all know it is her). It is one of a few games that has a female as the lead character in the game. It is also another game that came under fire for its violent themes. Your job is to lead the children to safety and save them from being killed by Mike Myers. Quite scary and disturbing for a 2600 game.
- 10. Smurfette**-While she only appeared on the final stage of the Smurfs game, how many of us remember seeing her standing on that table with the skull on the ground in front of her and thinking how this looks like a really cool game! While the graphics were very good, the game wasn't.
- 9. Frogette**-You remember the little pink frog in Frogger you had to pick up and take safely to your home. How many of us died trying to save her and how many off color comments did you and your buddies make when playing this game?
- 8. Indian Princess**-While we don't know her name, we all know how much controversy she stirred. From the infamous game, Custer's Revenge from Mystique, she appeared as the prize for Custer. Some called it forced and others said it was consenting (the company who produced it and who was trying to justify their release). Regardless, it was one of the first, if not first game to be boycotted.
- 7. Princess Daphne**-The first lady of laser discs, she was the love interest of Dirk the Daring in the famous Dragon's Lair game. For the first time a female character in a video game really looked good! Was she worth all the trouble poor Dirk had to go through? You bet!
- 6. Dona Bailey**-She was the first female programmer and her game, Centipede is one of the all-time classic games. It is also one of the few games that attracted as many female players as male players.
- 5- Carol Shaw**-One of the Activision programmers who created a whole genre with

the release of River Raid. Countless shooters sprung from this game including, Xevious, 1942 and countless others.

4. Sue-She was one of the four ghosts in the Ms Pacman game. While we all suspected Pinky of being a girl, they threw us all for a loop and made Sue the yellow ghost. Give them a hand for not being too sexist.

3. Stella-While all we know is that she was a secretary at Atari and very pleasing to the eye, her name will live on forever. She is the first lady to have a video game named after her. The Atari 2600 nickname to the programmers is Stella and it started a trend of nicknaming all the systems to come after attractive female secretaries at Atari.

2. Mario's Girlfriend, Pauline-One of the most common themes in classic games is to rescue the damsel in distress. We all tried our hand at freeing her from the dastardly ape, Donkey Kong.

1. Ms Pacman-No other female character is as well known (except maybe Lara Croft). She not only starred in her own game, but she also starred in a much better game than the her predecessor.

Tom the Game Dealer Take One

Not a well known fact, but I was a classic game dealer once before. Of course when I was a game dealer the first time, they weren't classic games, they were new games. Back in the summer of 1983, I used to go to a local video tape rental store. While I didn't have a VCR, I did have video games and this was the only place around that let you rent them. All they carried was Atari 2600, Intellivision and Colecovision, but they had a nice selection. There were over 200 games in their rental library and they seemed to be doing decent business.

Well, I got to know the owner of the store and he used to put the new ones aside for me to rent. One day when I went in to rent some games, I saw that he was clearing them off the shelves. Perplexed, I asked why he was getting rid of the games and he told me that he needed the space for faster renting video tapes. He said that while the video games did alright, the movies did much better business and so good bye to the video games. I asked him what he was going to do with all of the games and he said he was going to sell them. I then asked how much he wanted for the whole lot? Well, we haggled back and forth for awhile and we finally agreed on a price of \$800.00 for all of them. Since I had some money that I made from the Coleco stock, I was able to do it. The one thing was that it had to be cash as he didn't want to report it. So we made the deal and I was now the proud owner of over 200 games!

For the next two weeks, my friend Ed and myself spent every available moment testing the games (a professional way of saying we played the games). Some games needed to be tested numerous times and we were up to the task. After two weeks of hard work, we finally priced all the games and went to a local flea market to sell them. I remember doing very good business at the first flea market, over \$200.00. I

soon was calling ads in the paper to buy more games from people and did a few more flea markets.

Then I was approached by someone to buy me out. I ended up selling the whole lot for the \$800.00 I paid plus I received a TI computer and a bunch of software for it. All in all, I ended up making a few hundred dollars and got a computer to boot. Not too bad for a few months of work. Oh yeah, I also was able to play a whole bunch of games for free!

Debate: The Good Old Days versus Today!

Many times you hear people talking about the good old days of gaming. The reminisce about the days when the games were fun and how much better it was. But was it really better? To debate this topic, I went back in time and brought back a younger version of myself. I decided we would do a debate about the good old days as opposed to today (please don't send me any bad puns about how I beat myself or am a master debater).

Debate-Why the Good Old Days Were Better by Tom age 17

While these new games look awesome and the levels are like so huge, I will take the old games. Something is missing in these new games. Maybe it is creativity, maybe it is soul, but they just don't hold a candle to the great games from my days. I went to an arcade the other day and all I saw was the same game, over and over. How many of these fighting games do you need? Where is the variety? Where would Baskin Robbins be if all they offered was Chocolate, Vanilla and Strawberry? I go to the arcade and all I see are fighting, racing and gun games, chocolate, vanilla and strawberry. How boring! Give me selection! Give me Donkey Kong, Pacman, Asteroids, Joust, etc.... Tons and tons of variety! You would run out of money before you would run out of choices!

Speaking of arcades, what is with all those stupid ticket games? What is with that? Is it to draw in more people? If they made some decent games, they wouldn't need all this garbage. Sure I'm gonna want a few bucks to get what? A rubber ball or a few tootsie rolls? Get real! Arcades are for arcade games, not these county fair rip-offs.

I stopped over at a video game store the other day to check out these new systems and was shocked at the high prices. \$75.00 for a video game? Are you nuts or what? That was two or three games back in my day. I look around and didn't see any Atari systems, what is that all about? I thought they would go on forever. How about Coleco or Mattel? What happened to all the American companies? All I see is a couple of third party companies making games. Nintendo? This is a company that was famous for a giant ape. How about Sega, all they were was a arcade company. What happened? Who the heck are Sony and what is a playstation? Sounds like a name for a daycare, sheesh.

Even worse than the names of the systems is the joysticks. Are these guys on acid

or what? Look at these things! More buttons than a flannel shirt and what happened to the joystick? I went to play a game on this Playstation and couldn't find the joystick. At least the Nintendo system has a joystick, granted it is very small, but it is a joystick. How do you control this thing? There are buttons all over it, top, bottom, sides. Heck, Rubik's Cube is easier to figure out than this beast. Give me a good old Atari joystick anyway. One button and a joystick, no training courses needed.

One final thought, sure the games are all pretty and the sound is real nice, but what is up with that load time? We used to all laugh at the Colecovision for that infernal wait, but at least it was only once. I went to play this Playstation system and had to wait for the game to load. Then it gave me some credits and had to wait some more. Even after the game starts, you still wait for this screen to load and wait between levels. Heck, a trip to the DMV would be less frustrating than this. Since when did gamers get so patient? If that is the price of technology, then let me off this train as it isn't worth the ride.

Debate-Why Today is Better for gamers by Tom age 32

While games in the past had more variety and arcades were a more enjoyable place, I will still take today's game market. We have something that the classic market cannot compete with, three decades of games! We can enjoy all the classic systems, at a much reduced rate, plus all the new systems of today. Back then there were no old systems (except maybe Pong), so there were no bargain systems to pick up at thrift stores. No going to the flea market and buying games as low as a quarter a piece. The bargains didn't come until the crash. But now we can buy dozens of games for the price of one game at the original retail price. At these prices, we don't have to choose if we want Atari or Intellivision, we can have both!

As far as arcades go, why bother to go to the arcades and waste money on those lame fighting games when we can play MAME! I look at it as a rebate for all the money I spent at the arcades. Now I have the ability to play all my favorite games and many games that I never knew existed or only heard of. I had a great arcade near me, but there are still tons of games they never carried.

While today's systems may be more complex than their predecessor's and the load times may border on absurd at times, I still enjoy them. Many genres have been greatly improved in the classic era. Two of these are role playing games and sports games. There were few role playing games of the classic era and they were actually more action games with fantasy themes. Games like Adventure, Dungeons & Dragons and Quest for the Rings were as close as we had to grand adventures. But they lacked a few things that are crucial to role playing. First, you could not save the game, so adventures had to be shorter and there was no room for a developing story. Secondly, your characters remained the same. No improving skills or changing party members.

In sports games, you could play one game and that was all. After the game, it was over and you started over. No continuing season or career. The players didn't have names or numbers, they were just a team of matching colored figures. The only teams were home and visitors. Needless to say, most of them were less than memorable. But today's games you can choose your team and control your favorite player (unless he happens to be an offensive linemen). You get to see his stats pile up as the season progresses and in some games can watch him age. Things like injuries, streaks and more are included to give you a more realistic approach. Plus, you can choose your stadium and sometimes even the weather conditions. Much more satisfying than playing the same teams in the same stadium, game after game. Sure the classic era had it's advantages. Everything was new and every innovation was exciting. There was an innocence and games were more about fun than money, but I still feel that the amount of choices a gamer has today and the technological improvements make this a better era to be a gamer.

Progress ? Maybe not.

By Fred Wagaman

The Ladies of Video Gaming. A broad and interesting subject for this month's newsletter. There are so many subtopics within this that it was difficult to settle on one. The topic that I've picked concerns the portrayal of women with video games.

In the classic era, games really didn't have discernable people. Pitfall Harry was really just an animated stick figure Well animated for the time, but a stick figure nonetheless. Many times you just accepted what the instruction book said about the characters and played the game. Of course, the classic game era poster girl was Ms. Pac Man. Vibrant, independent and really nothing more than Pac Man with a bow in a set of interesting mazes. Were women attracted to gaming because it was a woman as the hero ? I don't know. But the game itself was, and still is, a classic.

Most times in the classic era, women were the object of the game. Save Pauline from Donkey Kong, that sort of thing. Women were to be rescued as the general rule. Link saves Zelda. Mario saves the Princess. Women were either not included in the game or were the object of it. There were some exceptions. The most notable was Shamus of Metroid fame. There was no indication as to the gender of Shamus until you beat the game. Remember what a surprise that was. The hero was a girl !

The first game I remember playing with a woman as the main character was Phantasy Star for the Sega Master System. "Alis" had the task of leading the team that would ultimately defeat Dark Force (or Dark Fact) for the first time. I remember playing it and thinking to myself, "I have no problem playing as a female, but this is what it must be like for women when they play other games".

Now we move to the more modern era. Woman are included in games now more than ever. Rarely do you find a fighting game today without a woman in it. Chun-Li,

Sonya, Sakura, Felicia, et al, are as popular as their male counterparts. Heck, there are some fighting games that have nothing but women in them ! Tomb Raider is one of the most popular games each time it is released and the hero is a girl !. (This time, we know it right from the start). So we've made progress, right ?

Uh... Nope.

It might have gotten worse.

Throughout the history of entertainment, beautiful women have been used in various forms of entertainment. Stage, screen and television all have beautiful women in them. Why should games be different ?

Why indeed.

I could ramble on about the medium having the responsibility to bring people together. How that video games are basically perceived as a "guy" thing. But I won't.

There is nothing wrong with games including attractive women. I think the problem lies in the unrealistic portrayal of women in the game and the reaction to that portrayal.

Regardless of the gender of a character, women are still treated as prizes. Only this time, your surrogate persona (Mario, Link, etc.) isn't acquiring the prize, you, as the game player, are.

Who's the poster girl of the modern era of gaming ? Lara Croft. But let's face it. She's eye candy for teenage boys. She has proportions that would put Pamela Sue Anderson to shame. She's Cyber-Barbie. She wears shorts and a tank-top in the snow. She is the bikini-clad model posed in front of the car in the magazine ad.

And it has had an impact on other games. As an example, the female character from Pandemonium had a major makeover from the first to the second game. I think it was to tap into the same stuff that made Tomb Raider a success.

The game magazines (that are written and edited by 20-something, male gamers) have gushed about Lara since her creation. They've posed her in various outfits on their covers. But it's OK, because she's a tough woman. Kind of Indiana Jones meets Baywatch, right ? EGM is probably the magazine that has been the most obvious in their attraction to this creation. They have alerted readers to nude sites for her. Published Fanboy letters about how they like to stand her in a corner and get her to turn around just so they can look at her. They use suggestive ads with her in them to sell their sister publications.

And Sony is does the same thing. In their latest TV ad, they have the goofball in a Crash Bandicoot suit yelling at live action people with a megaphone. A cyber-Lara (in all her glory) is there with him, nodding encouragingly while he convinces these people to lighten up and play with a Playstation.

It's certainly not her intelligence and tracking skills they're pushing in the ad. (If you know what I mean)

This is not progress. It's time for the video game industry as a whole (creators, publishers and publications), to stop treating women as material objects. There for our visceral gratification only.

It's amuses me that an industry that argues that is wants to appeal to a more mature audience would continue to become more juvenile.

It's time to grow up.

(Fred has been playing games for over 20 years and actively collecting them for almost 10. The 2200+ games that he has takes up most of his home office and living room. He lives in Denver, PA with his understanding wife Jennie and his 3 year-old, button-loving son, Max. He's recently been bitten by the arcade machine collecting bug. Pray for his family. He can be reached at fcw3@postoffice.ptd.net.)



The Many Faces of....Choplifter

by Doug Saxon

Choplifter was a game that made it onto the classic gaming scene a little later in the scheme of things. It debuted on home computers before the home consoles decided to pick it up. It is a pretty cool game where you're on a mission to rescue hostages from enemy territory. You have your trusty helicopter which you use to fly into enemy territory, land and pickup hostages and fly them back into friendly territory. But it's not that easy, enemies come from all over to keep you from succeeding in your mission. The Atari 5200, Colecovision, Atari 7800, and the Sega Master System all have their own versions of this game.

Disqualified: Atari 5200

Although I would consider myself an Atari 5200 junkie, this is one of the few games that I don't like on this system. The control is probably the most frustrating part about this version. The analog controllers aren't compatible with this game, especially if you were raised using digital controllers on this game! Graphics are pretty lame too. The background is nothing but a purple sky with shining stars. Twinkle, twinkle, little star...Choplifter on the

Atari 5200 is...not on par.

Bronze Medal: Colecovision

An improvement over the Atari 5200, but the Colecovision version still isn't anything to rave about. Graphics are a little better, and control as well, but this version is too hard. I like a challenge, but you have to draw the line somewhere.

Silver Medal: Atari 7800

This version is a long distance silver medal. It brings us better control and better graphics, but the same ol' gameplay. If you have ever played the arcade version of this game, you would know what I'm talking about. This version just doesn't have all that it should have. It only has 3 nasties and only 1 level! C'mon, the 7800 is capable of better.

Gold Medal: Sega Master System

The original Sega brings home the best version of Choplifter...by far. It not only has the best graphics and control, but it features different levels. I took a quick look at the arcade version on MAME and I was shocked at how closely the SMS version resembles it. I've played the SMS version enough to know that it has at least three different levels, the desert, the sea, and the cave. There may be more. If you like Choplifter, you can't live without the Sega Master System version.

(Doug Saxon is an engineering student at the University of Cincinnati. He's mainly into 2600, 5200, Colecovision, and Intellivision. He's also a proud owner of a mint Chase the Chuckwagon cartridge and Swordquest Waterworld. He can be reached via email at saxondj@email.uc.edu. Doug has finished his Atari 5200 collection. If you have any for sale or trade give him an e-mail.)

MAME Reviews

Time once again to fire up MAME and break a few laws, err...I mean play some games. This month, I once again reviewed a game that had sound added and allowed me to do a complete review of it. The other was a game that I started playing again after Doug Saxon came over (we try to get together for a some classic game playing with the V-Stick, whenever he is in town). Sometimes it takes someone else to make an old game seem new.



Zaxxon

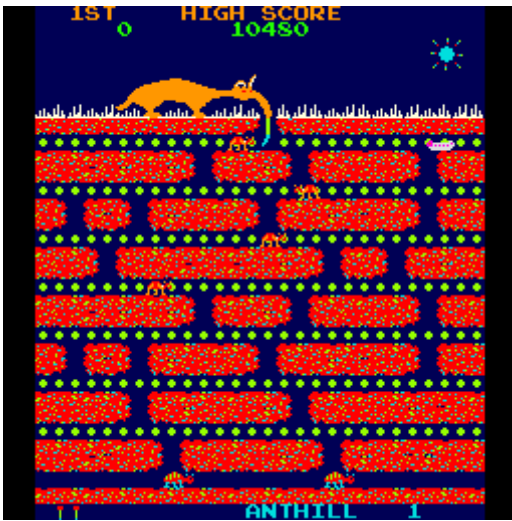
When I returned to classic gaming, one of the first games I found was Zaxxon for the Colecovision. I remember that this was one of the games that made me buy a Colecovision because I was such a fan of it at the arcades. Well, after playing the Coleco version, I started to think I dreamed it all. It wasn't that big a deal and I wonder if it was just the excitement of youth that made this such a big deal to me. Well, I waited until I had a complete version of the game on MAME before really giving it a try. The early versions had no sound and the colors were off. This didn't help recapture any of the passion I had for this game. Then they fixed it and I tried it again. Will it be different this time?

Before I answer the question, let me say that until I played the silent version of Zaxxon and now the version that has all the sound, I really didn't appreciate how crucial sound can be to a game. It was always something I have taken for granted. But after playing the full version of the game, I was instantly hooked! The sounds in Zaxxon are among the richest and most exciting of the classic era. From the lasers to the ascending/descending of your ship, this game is full of wonderful sounds. It adds a whole dimension to the game! I found myself dying too often, because I was overwhelmed by the sounds. I turned those speakers way up and just immersed myself in it. I was a teenager again!

For anyone in the dark about the game of Zaxxon, it is a simple game. You are a ship that attacks these large space ships and try to destroy a set amount of ships. When you achieve this, you get to go and battle one of the first "bosses" in gaming. It is a big robot with some serious fire power.

The game features both attacks on the immense ships and also space battles. There are numerous things to dodge, like electrified fences, laser turrets and other ships. The game features a pseudo 3D look that was quite revolutionary for the time.

It was nice to finally reconnect with the feelings that originally attracted me to this game. Sometimes we don't realize how good something is until we play an inferior version.



Anteater

Sometimes you play a game on a home system and go through your whole life not knowing it was an arcade game. That is how Anteater was for me. My first knowledge of the game came when I bought it as a birthday present for my Uncle Ron. It was a TI game and it looked pretty cool. Little did I know there was an arcade game out there. That was 1982 or 1983.

Jump forward to 1997 and I am looking over the list of MAME games. Anteater? The name was familiar, but I wasn't sure from where? When I loaded the game, it came back. I remember this game! Plays alot like Oil's Well for the Colecovision. Well, I played it a few times and forgot about it again.

Then Doug comes over and as we are looking over the list of MAME games, he asks about Anteater. Well, we boot it up and he starts playing it. After a few games, he starts to figure the game out and moves to the next level. Well, after he leaves I begin playing the game. Now I have found myself addicted to the little game.

The game is quite simple, you just move the anteater's tongue through the the ground and clear out all the dots. Along come ants that you can eat. But make sure not to let them bite your tongue. You have to grab them with the tip of the tongue. There are also other creatures scurrying around. Some can be eaten from behind and others you need to flip the tongue over it.

Well, there is a time limit to this game. As the sun moves across the sky and it gets dark, out comes the spider. This bugger cannot be eaten and will end your game.

There are some nice tasty queen ants at the bottom of the screen and if you eat one of them, then you clear the screen of all the bad guys. This can be a regular lifesaver.

Anteater is just one of those fun little games that you will find yourself playing. Not as

addictive as Robotron or Defender, but still an enjoyable little game.

Digital Press Price Guide Review

The first of the new wave of classic video game price guides has hit the stands. For anyone who is not familiar with the Digital Press Guides, this is the fifth one and by far the largest. Weighing in at over 300 pages. This is one big boy! For the price of \$20.00, it is also one of the best deals in classic games. You not only get listings of all the carts from Channel F all the way up to the Turbographix, but you get rarity ratings and prices. There is also notes about the games and fun little facts. Add in hundreds of pictures of games, boxes, screenshots and ads and you have alot to look at!

But prices and rarity lists is only the beginning. There is a foreword before every system with some interesting stories and facts about them. There is also a whole section of personal stories that makes for some good reading. Toss in a list of all the Cubicolor and Okie Dokie owners and a list of collectors and you have one full book! Plus, there is a section devoted to web pages about video games (which I am absent from). All in all a very good job.

But like everything, there is some flaws. First the prices seem on the low side (Chase the Chuckwagon at \$125.00, a deal). My guess is that this because the info was outdated before publication. The second flaw is that there isn't enough info on rarity and prices. They pretty much just list loose games. They tend to give a blanket price for boxed games ("You can expect to pay as much as twice the price or as little as nothing extra if the box and manual are included in your deal"). While this may be the case in the majority of the cases, there are numerous cases where the box and/or manual will drive the price up alot. I felt that prices for both loose carts and boxed carts would have added more to it. But with the large amount of data there, it is a small complaint. You are already getting more than your money's worth.

Scott Adams CD Compilation Review

Anyone who spent any amount of time with the early computers will be familiar with Scott Adams. He was one of the pioneers in the text adventures and his work is still being enjoyed to this day. With games like Savage Island, Voodoo Castle, The Count and others, he took us on many great adventures. But just like the Infocom games, the whole genre was slowly phased out when graphic adventures replaced them. Gone were the days when you created much grander visions in your head than could ever be conjured on a screen.

Thankfully someone came around and made a compilation of these lost treasures. Frank Traut, with Scott Adams permission, created "The TI 99/4A Scott Adams Adventure CD". Now that is a long name! It features all of the great Scott Adams adventures, an interview and alot more! While this is a homemade product, it is a very professional job. From the cover art to the CD label, there is alot of nice little

touches that shows it wasn't just thrown together. You can see that a lot of work was put into it.

A very nice touch is that besides the games, you get a whole section of hints and walkthroughs. Now you have no excuse not to complete all these adventures. Where were these when I was young? It could have saved a lot of aggravation!

The only problem with the CD collection is that it is a one time product. Frank burned off 50 CDs total and that will be all there is. So there will not be enough copies to go around. But for anyone who is lucky enough to get a copy, you are in for a real deal, especially at only \$10.00 shipped! I personally think that Frank should have charged \$15.00-\$20.00 as I know I would have easily paid it! It is a great product and worth every penny! How many things can you say about that? Excuse me while I go complete a few quests!

(Last minute addition (Mike Berlyn of Cascade Mountain Publishing will be bringing the rest of us who didn't get a copy of Frank's CD a hybrid Frank/Scott Adams CD. It will contain Scott's latest Windows interpreter for use with his new PC game: Return to Pirates Island. The CD will be a totally professional retail version with a box, etc. and will probably sell for \$29.99.)

Here is Mike's URL if anyone is interested in other Interactive-Fiction works: <http://www.cascadepublishing.com>)

Interview with Frank Traut

After receiving this fine product, I immediately emailed Frank and asked for an interview to go along with the review. Being a friend of Frank's (he even put me in the credits on the CD, since I traded him the TI that started the ball rolling for this great project, much thanks!), I was pretty confident he would do one. The only problem was I received the CD on Saturday and the newsletter was due by Monday. I would like to thank Frank for quickly answering the questions and taking the time to answer them for me. So here is a quick interview with Frank Traut about the Scott Adams CD and the work that went into it.

Tom-Once you decided to do this CD, how hard was it to find Scott Adams and convince him to do it?

Frank-It wasn't hard finding him at all. After doing a lot of research on the web for my project, I found that there were Scott Adams Adventure pages. Further probing landed me at his very own web page! It was great to see that he was still around and only lives a few hours from me. I simply E-mailed him one day and told him about my project. He was really excited that someone like me (a casual fan), wanted to make such a thing. I basically asked him if it were okay to go ahead with the project and asked him for an interview. Scott had mentioned that he was working on a Windows

version of Return to Pirates Island and that he wanted his publisher (Mike Berlyn) to handle the distribution of that. After some negotiating, Mike and I came to an agreement about how I would handle the distribution of my "charity" newsgroup CD.

How do I fit in with Scotts new project? I believe that they will use my ideas as a template for the new Scott Adams release. It will be identical, minus the TI audio tracks and include a better Windows interpreter for use with his new game 'Return to Pirates Isle'.

Tom-How much input did he have in the making of the CD?

Frank-Nothing really outside of the interview. He mentioned that he wanted people to be able to play his original Return to Pirates Isle game with the graphics included. After some fooling around with various emulators, I found that none wanted to play this game right. He also said that it was one of his greatest achievements, mixing graphics with a text adventure. There is a commercial emulator which may run this program (no one has replied as to it's success), but licensing it would have made the cost of my CD greater than I had wanted it to be anyway, so I gave up on the idea.

Tom-I especially liked the extra effort you put in by including Walkthroughs and hints. How long did it take for you to complete this project?

Frank-To be honest, all of it was found on the Internet. I just basically edited and re-tooled them in HTML. Like I mentioned in the CD, I had all the ideas, but thanks to the Internet, I found that there were already lots of fans out there like me who had similar "ideas". I think I was just the first to put it all on one neat and easy to use CD :-)

Tom-The packaging of the CD and the CD label are both very nice touches. Was this all done by you or was there any help?

Frank-The images are all from various sources on the Web. Almost all of the images came from Scott Julians web page. Again, instead of tracking down all of the boxes, etc. I was lucky to find such a person like Scott J. who already had what I was looking for. Once again, I just edited them to look like what you now have.

Tom-Was the CD limited to 50 copies because of anticipated sales or was there other factors involved?

Frank-Three reasons why I wanted to limit the distribution by me:

1) Calculating the original responses and requests I got for the CD (from the newsgroups), I found that there should have only been 30 or so interested in the project. Once people saw that I was serious and had it done by the time I said it would be (thanks to the resources on the Web), I easily got another 20 requests for

the Scott Adams CD.

2) I simply did not want to make any more than this! Factors include wear and tear on my precious CD ROM burner, the fact that the 'Neato' CD labeling software sucks and the time it takes !

3) This number was a part of the negotiations as we all agreed it might compete with the Win95 version of Scott's CD.

Tom-Now that you finished the project, anything you wished you could have included but didn't?

Frank-Yup... I wanted there to be an 'autorun' program, so when you popped in the CD, it would 'autorun'... duh! I have a program that will do this and almost included it, but I discovered that once in a while, a message window would pop up saying that you have an unregistered 'autorun' program and it asked if you would like to learn more about registering it! Considering that there was already a minor "glitch" when running the Windows 95 program from CD, I did not want there to be any other things which made this humble disc look any more humble ;-)

I too wish it was possible to play the Return to Pirates Isle game the way I grew up playing it on the TI - but I figure anyone who is into this kind of thing is going to have a TI and the real cart to play it on so it's not *that* big of a deal. After all, I had originally set out to make this disc playable only with a TI computer and the Adventure Command Module. This is the "real" nostalgic way to play the games :-)

Tom-Any plans for other compilations like this? Any dream ones you would love to do?

Frank-Now that I have a CD ROM burner, I have all sorts of plans and ideas (you know, the stuff that you think about, but never do). One of them includes a Tunnels of Doom disc :-)

I think that there are a lot of people who are still playing and programming their TI's. It would be neat if someone like me came up with some kind of users group collectors disc, playable on a real TI. One that included games, etc. written in Basic, Extended Basic or TMS9900, that people have contributed. It would be a great way to keep in touch with other 99'ers and insures that our great computer stays "current".

I would also like to do instrumental musical interpretations of Scott's first 12 games (I play the drums BTW). You could listen to it while you play the games! I have a band and some other people who would be interested in such a project, but I think that it would be cool to do this using classic collectors that happen to be musicians also - big Dan... c'mon down! I am really excited about the notion of such an album, but it really is just a dream... or is it?

Tom-How many of these adventures have you been able to complete? How many without any hints or walkthroughs?

Frank-Admittedly, I have only completed a couple of them by myself back in the day. They are: Pyramid of Doom and Strange Odyssey. I remember not being able to complete Mystery Funhouse, Ghost Town and Return to Pirates Isle without help from friends who had the hint sheets. I had all of the other Scott Adams games on a compilation tape that a friend gave me, but didn't really play them as much as the 5 listed above. It's weird... I didn't set out to beat those that were pirated. Hmm...

Lately, I've been too busy to really sit down and play these the way that I would like to. One of the largest reasons I set out to put my tapes onto CD is because I am afraid of the degradation inherent to tape. I am hoping that there will come a day when I can really take the time to play and beat them! ;-)

Frank Traut wants to let everyone know that the CD is sold out and thank everyone who ordered it. He can be reached via email at save2600@ticon.net. Also check out his web page at <http://www.ticon.net/~save2600/>

What's New on the Web Page?

I have been a busy bee adding all kinds of classic items to the web page. My goal is to give gamers a place where they can find all kinds of stuff to read and look at. Here is a list of the newest stuff!

1. Atari Log Book-Alan Hewston had sent in an article for Retrotimes. It was a multipart article about the Atari Log Books that were put out in the early games. After seeing it, I was so impressed with the amount of work that went into it, that I convinced him to let me make it a part of the web page. Instead of being an article, it became a section of the web page. You can [click here](#) to go and take a look at it. Bear in mind that there is alot more to add and Alan keeps sending me updated versions. So do check back and see the added progress.

2. Intellivision Overlays-I always considered these mini works of art. While some of the overlays were a bit bland, many were quite striking in their imaginative design. So I decided to make a section and scan in all the overlays I could find. When completed, most of the Intellivision overlays will be up for viewing. Each overlay is scanned three times! First a very large version is scanned so you can really appreciate the artwork. A second scan is done that is almost exactly the same size as the original overlay. This is for people who want to make backup ones, so not to ruin their originals. Lastly a teeny tiny one is scanned to put on the main page to use as a link. [Click here](#) to go directly to this area.

3. Atari Catalogs-I have begun to scan in pages of some of the great Atari catalogs. Currently I have a Tigervision, Xonix and Data Age catalogs scanned. I do need to

redo the Tigervision one as some of the have words that cannot be read. I also plan on adding a Parker Bros, Activision, Apollo and a few more in the coming months! [Click here](#) to go directly to this area.

[4. Classic Game Ads](#)-Thanks to Alan Hewston for lending me a few old game issues, so now I have some more classic game ads to put in my growing collection. I am now at 43 different ones and should be over 50 in a few weeks. I have also won seven issues of Electronic Games in an auction, so there will be even more ads for me to scan. [Click here](#) to go directly to this area.

[5. Atari Age Tribute](#)-I just began a section dedicated to the Atari Age magazine. I currently have cover shots of the first five issues. I have the first eight, so I will be putting more up soon. Plus, I am in the process of securing the final three issues. [Click here](#) to go directly to this area.

[6. New Intellivision Rarity List and Price Guide](#)-Call me a hypocrite, I can take it. This project happened by accident. I was putting up a rarity list for the Intellivision games that I got off the internet. As I was doing it, I decided to put the games in alphabetical order instead of product number. As I was doing this, I found many flaws in ratings. So I decided to use a system I came up with that I use to determine prices for the site. So I created a much more precise rarity list.

The price guide section came because of I felt that Digital Press didn't put enough information. I figured that if price guides are going to be out there, someone should do a more detailed one. Since no one else offered to do it, I decided to give it a shot. I have been compiling information about what carts sell for. I have about three years worth of information and so I hope with this, I can get an accurate idea of what they go for. I began doing this because I ended up selling some carts for way below their market value and there was no price guide then.

I plan on getting as much reaction as possible to this guide. If there is enough negative feedback, I will remove the prices. If the response is more positive, I will begin compiling one for the Colecovision. I am happy to say that to date I have received over 25 responses, and not a single negative one yet. I even began to receive some price input from people who purchased items or sold them. I hope that if it remains to try and update prices on a BI-monthly basis.

[eBay Happenings](#)

The latest trend I have noticed is that boxed game systems are shooting up in price! A system that is boxed is selling for 2 1/2 to 3 times as much as a loose one. A few years ago, a boxed system barely added much to the price of a system. A system that may have sold for \$20.00, usually went for \$25.00 boxed. Not anymore as people are realizing how hard it is to find boxed systems.

Nowhere is this more true than with the Colecovision. A loose system sells for about \$25.00-\$30.00, while a boxed one fetches \$50.00-\$70.00. The better the shape, the higher the price. I have even seen them break \$100.00 on occasion. Intellivisions boxed are going for \$40.00-\$50.00 and a boxed Vectrex will get between \$200.00-\$300.00 where a loose system fetches \$100.00-\$150.00.

Even the accessories are shooting up in price. Boxed Intellivoices have fetched as high as \$30.00 and I have seen boxed Coleco steering wheels go as high as \$75.00, three times the loose price! As more and more collectors are looking to get complete versions, this price will probably rise even more.

What's Happening in the Industry

1. IDSA Continues

The biggest still remains the IDSA and their attack on sites with game roms on them. There were debates on the legality, the morality and what the future holds. Both sides were heard and even the IDSA issued a statement. Right now everyone is waiting to see what they do next as they have been quiet since the crackdown on Dave's Video Game Classics.

2. Intellivision Lives!

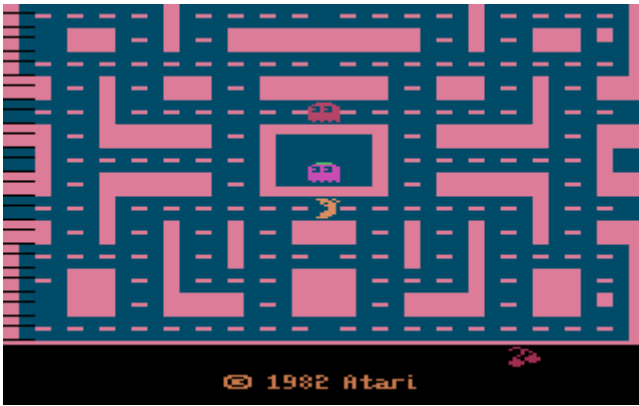
The other big news is the release of the Intellivision Lives! CD from the Blue Sky Rangers. Here is a collection of 75 games, with many unreleased games on a single CD. The excitement was great as we all dream of playing some of these games that we only read about on their web site. I have already ordered mine and urge anyone who is an Intellivision fan to buy one. As long as they deliver (something they have not been the best at in the past), this will be the best Christmas present a classic gamer can get! [Click here](#) to go directly to the site and take a look!

3. Sniping Again

Once again the sniping issue and the raising bids by a penny action drew attacks. Some argued that it was cowardly to bid in less than dollar amounts. Others like myself believe that it is a good tactic that can help you win a bet. I have put in a bid of \$10.07 and ended up winning because someone else bid \$10.00. Is this that terrible? My statement is quite simply, why pay more than you need to? Why raise the amount to \$11.00, when you can get it for almost a dollar less? Makes perfect sense to me. Guess you can paint me a coward, but one with a few more bucks in my pocket!

A Deeper Look at.....

Since this is the themed issue, I decided to do a few games that feature ladies of classic games. As always enjoy them and if there are any games you would like to see get a deeper look, let me know.



[Ms Pacman](#)

The first lady of classic games was only available on the Atari systems. She had her start in the home systems with the 2600 version and this is still one of the better games for the system. A great job was done to maintain the feel of the original and to make up for the bungled job they did on Pacman.

One of the first things you will notice with Ms Pacman is how much better the mazes look. No more of the squished look that plagued the original Pacman. The ghosts also look better and while there is still some flickering, it is less than the predecessor. The sound is also much nicer.

You will find all the extras that make Ms Pacman a great game! The different prizes, different mazes, intermissions and the bow are all here! It is a very good conversion and one that shows how much a difference the increased memory can make.

While the later versions on the 5200 and 7800 are better, there is still a certain charm to the VCS version. I can still remember how popular this game was and it really helped out Atari when it needed something positive. If you have an Atari 2600, you must own this game. You cannot use price as an issue as loose copies can usually be found as low as a dollar and generally no more than a few bucks. A true bargain for someone who is much more than Pacman with a bow!



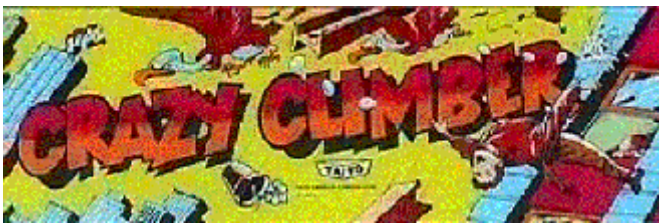
[Strawberry Shortcake](#)

This game is a lot like the Dr Seuss Mix Up for the Colecovision. The object of the game is to put the right body parts together for each character. There is Strawberry Shortcake, Lime Chiffon, Huckleberry Pie, Blueberry Muffin and the evil Purple Pieman. Yes, these are among the dumbest names ever. What imagination! Just take popular desserts. Where

is Chocolate Moose? Oh wait, he is a beanie baby. But I digress.

Anyways, you have to put these body parts together and then they do a little dance for you. I personally stink at this game, mainly because I don't know Strawberry Shortcake from Johnny Hotcakes? But like any game like this, it is a matter of memorization and once you know Purple Piemans legs from Huckleberry Pie's the game gets real boring. Not that it is much of a game before that.

The graphics are quite nice and the music is cute. But not much happens as the character is either standing or dancing. So I guess they can make good graphics when there isn't much else to the game. I do have to give them credit for making a game aimed at girls. We all know there wasn't enough of them out there. Too bad they didn't do a good game like the Cabbage Patch Kids, now there is a great game that the whole family can enjoy!



Collecting Marquees

My biggest passion of late has been collecting arcade marquees. These little pieces of arcade memorabilia make great displays and can make for some of the most affordable pieces of memorabilia.

For anyone who does not know what a marquee is, it is the top sign of an arcade machine. You know where they put the name of the machine. Some marquees just say the name of the game and others are filled with lavish artwork. Some are made of glass and others are made of plastic. Either way, they can usually be bought quite affordably, especially considering the cost of a whole machine.

I have bought marquees for as little as \$4.00 (Sky Shark) to as high as \$26.00 (Crazy Climber). Most have cost me about \$10.00. Marquees will range in price with them going for as low as a couple of dollars to as high as \$60.00-\$70.00. The price depends mainly on two major factors, how popular the machine is and the condition of the marquee. The most popular machines tend to fetch the highest prices. Some of the highest tend to be games like Dragon's Lair (be prepared to pay upwards of \$60.00) and Robotron (always around \$40.00). While lesser known games like Moon Cresta (cost me \$6.00) and Anteater (just picked one up for \$7.00) aren't in as much demand.

Best place to find them is at eBay. If you go into the collectible section, there is a place for Coin-Operated collectibles. You can find them there. Here are a few good tips to help you in buying:

1. The more marquees that are up for auction, the better chance to get a deal. When there are less marquees for auction, people tend to pay a little more.

2. Always find out the shipping and handling charges beforehand. People tend to charge as little as \$4.00 and as much as \$17.00 for shipping a marquee. A little advance warning can help you avoid sticker shock.

3. Always find out the condition first. Most people will tell you ahead of time, but it doesn't hurt to ask. Always ask about any scratches and which side they are on, chipped or missing paint, cracks and other blemishes.

4. While many people will put pictures up of the marquees, just as many won't. [Click here](#) to go to a real nice web site that has pictures of many of the arcade machines and marquees.

While the market is hotter for the popular games, I do feel that this will change. As more and more people get into marquee collecting, they will want to get some of the more obscure titles. This will end up driving the prices of some lesser known titles. Also, I think that artwork will make more of a difference in the future. Many of the obscure pieces have great artwork and people are going to want to get these for display. I have already seen a rise in prices for marquees and expect it to continue. You may want to take advantage of this time to get some great pieces while they are still bargains. Like the machines, these are very limited and will only get harder to find in the coming years.

Here is a list of the ones I currently own or just won in auctions. These are not for trade or sale, as I have them displayed on my wall.

By the way, if you see a screen name of "crazyclimber" bidding on a marquee, please don't bid me up :)

Anteater
Black Tiger
Crazy Climber
Donkey Kong Jr
Frontline
Jungle Hunt
Locomotion
Moon Cresta
Pacman Plus
Prehistoric Isle
Shoot the Bull
Sky Shark
Vanguard

Question of the Month

Last month was another month of little feedback for the question of the month. I received a very small 27 responses to the question. At least the response was pretty much the same. 25 out of 27 said that they don't have anyone regular to play classic games with and are pretty much stuck playing by themselves. That is reason enough to want to see this market grow.

This month's question is a little more cut and dried. What was the first system you quit collecting or if you haven't quit collecting any, what would be the first you would give up on and why?

For me it was the Microvision. When I got back into classic games, I wanted to get all the systems and this was one I picked up. After a few weeks of playing it, I found the games dull. The system did nothing for me and I soon put it up for sale.

Finale

Another issue comes to a close. I enjoyed the theme issue and hope you did too. As always, enjoy those classic games and please send me and my contributors your comments. Doug and Fred tirelessly contribute to the newsletter and your feedback is greatly appreciated. If you want to contribute, please feel free to. Check back in one month for another fun filled issue and please take a look at all the web page has to offer!

[Tom Zjaba](#)

(Some of the pictures are provided by the Digital Press CD. Possibly one of the best deals out there. To get your own copy, go to <http://www.xnet.com/~skelly/> or <http://digitpress.com> and order one).