PLAY METER Magazine

VOLUME 21, No. 3 | FOR THE COIN-OP ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY | FEBRUARY 1995

BENCHMARK ENTERTAINMENT... BRINGING THE GOLD TO REDEMPTION

TAX AND MANAGEMENT ISSUE

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NEWS BULLETIN

DOLLAR COIN BACK ON FRONT BURNER

While Congress is in a cost-saving and balanced budget mode, AMOA feels that 1) the dollar coin issue is sure to gain attention, and 2) the time is right for passage of dollar coin legislation that has bounced around in Congress since 1987. AMOA has contracted with Valis Associates, a Washington, D.C.-based consulting firm, to spearhead a major effort to gain approval of a dollar coin during the new 104th Congress that took office in January.

Said AMOA president Tami Norberg-Paulsen: "A dollar coin is extremely important to the future of our membership and the industry. The chances for passage in this political climate are excellent, but we felt something more was needed than was done in the past. Valis Associates' qualifications and expertise are highly regarded in the nation's capital. We feel they will be of great help in securing passage of a new dollar coin."

AMOA is a strong advocate of the dollar coin at the grassroots political level, through its Washington, D.C., activities, and in its support of the efforts of The Coin Coalition, a broad-based Washington coalition of diverse industries. The U.S. General Accounting Office conservatively estimates that the federal treasury would save $395 million a year by replacing the $1 paper bill with a $1 coin. The United States remains the only major industrialized nation in the world that does not have a widely used dollar coin in mass circulation.

BETSON ACQUIRES EASTERN DISTRIBUTORS

Joe Cirillo, president of Betson Enterprises in Carlstadt, N.J., announces the company's acquisition of certain assets of Eastern Distributors in Philadelphia. Pa. The new Betson-Philadelphia office will officially open on March 1. Eastern president Phil Sternberg and vice president Morris Zacher will pursue other ventures; the remaining staff will become Betson employees. More details will follow in the March issue.

SONY ESTABLISHES EUROPEAN OFFICE

Sony Electronic Publishing Co. and Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. announce the establishment of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe, which will be responsible for the European introduction of Sony's new 32-bit, CD-based video game system, the PlayStation. Chris Deering, formerly executive vice president of sister Sony company Columbia TriStar Home Video International, has been named president of the new company. Deering considers the PlayStation "a unique opportunity for Sony to marry its entertainment and technology assets into a breakthrough home video game product."

In other Sony news, company president Olaf Olafsson announced the promotion of Steve Race to the post of president of Sony Computer Entertainment of America. Race was formerly executive vice-president and general manager.

SEGA RELEASES VIRTUA FIGHTER 2

Sega Enterprises Inc. USA announces the long-awaited release of *Virtua Fighter 2*, which uses Sega's new Model 2 Hardware System that generates 300,000 polygons-per-second. *VF2* succeeds the popular *VF1* and features new fighting arenas, two new characters, texture-mapped graphics, 60 frames per second, and 500 all-new moves. Sega shared some player comments with us, which indicated player appreciation of a fighting game that focuses on the technique of martial arts without blood.

In other Sega news, Sega Pinball Inc. announces the appointment of Deith Distributing Inc. as a factory authorized distributor for its pinball product line. Deith will represent the line in the state of New York, with a heavy emphasis on Long Island. Operators in the area are invited to visit Deith to see Sega Pinball's latest release, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. Deith is located at 84 Mineola Ave., Roslyn Heights, N.Y., (516) 621-1234; FAX (516) 621-1238.

DYNAMO REACHES MILESTONE

Dynamo Ltd. reports it has shipped its 1,000th video gaming terminal. Dynamo, which is known primarily for its line of table games, holds a manufacturer's license for legalized gaming machines in Montana and Louisiana. The 1,000th unit, a *High Country Video Poker* terminal, was shipped to Montana in early January.

Dynamo has also acquired the software and hardware related to video gaming terminals from Merit Corp. of Bensalem, Pa., which had over 2,500 video gaming machines in Montana. With the acquisition, Dynamo has gained a stronger foothold in Montana, while gathering momentum to expand its products into other states as well.

ROCK-OLA AND G-TEL ADDRESS CHANGES

Rock-Ola Mfg./Antique Apparatus Co. has a new address, phone, and FAX in Illinois: 5233 N. Pearl St., Rosemont, IL 60018; (708) 928-2121; FAX (708) 928-2121. The company's California address remains the same. G-TEL Enterprises Inc. has moved to larger quarters in Texas: 16840 Clay Road #113, Houston, TX 77084. G-Tel's telephone and FAX numbers remain the same: (800) 884-4835 or (713) 550-5592; FAX (713) 550-1028.

ALG BENEFITS COWBOY FUND

American Laser Games joined with the U.S. Tobacco Co. to donate $1,000 to the Justin Cowboy Crisis Fund at the Pro Rodeo Cowboy Association convention held recently at the Sahara Hotel in Las Vegas, Nev. ALG set up two *Fast Draw Showdown* arcade video games at U.S. Tobacco's Copenhagen Skoal display at the event. Booth visitors had the opportunity to try their quick-draw skills against 60 filmed gunfighters. All proceeds collected from the machines were donated to the fund. Said Stan Jarocki, vice president of marketing and sales for ALG: "Cowboys and the rodeo are a favorite topic of mine, and many of our games are set in the Old West, so it is fitting that we proudly support this fund."

CCI ROLLS OUT TWO NEW GAMES

Coin Concepts Inc. announces the debut of two new games on the heels of its popular *Home Run Hitter* coin drop game. The titles are *Triple Play*, a new Pick 3-style lottery game that allows players to win a possible 1,000 tickets, and *Over the Rainbow*, a spin-the-wheels, skill-stop game that awards tickets for achieving certain symbol combinations. ▲

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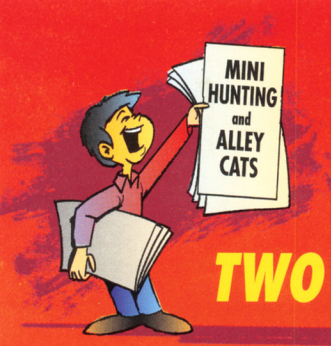

BIG NEWS FROM THE GAME PEOPLE.....

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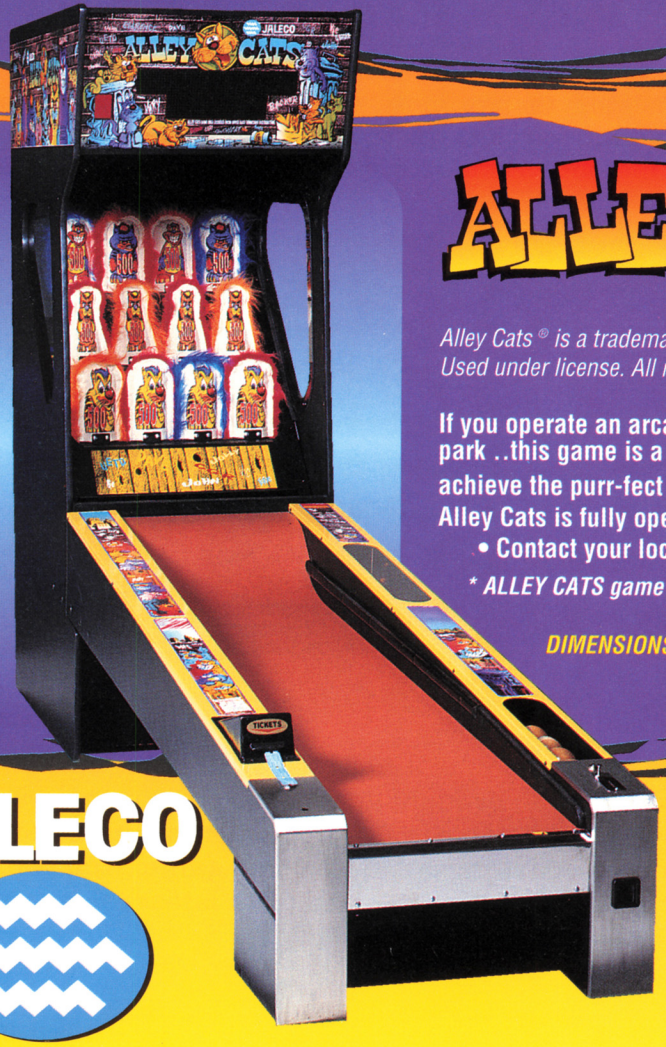

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If you operate an arcade, bowling center, family fun center or amusement park ..this game is a MUST. Players try to knock down all rows of cats to achieve the purr-fect score. The game play appeals to players of all ages. Alley Cats is fully operator adjustable, and is earning GREAT!

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** ALLEY CATS game idea licensed from Upper East Tennessee Distributing*

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There is a more advantageous method of calculating the depreciation on video games: income forecasting. Back in 1993, then-AMOA president Craig Johnson obtained a private letter ruling that gave operators a tax break. Revisit the ruling and learn how other operators apply it to their businesses. If you haven't adopted the method, here's all you need to know to give it a try.

Walking the tax and management tightrope 57
Our tax and management experts have done it again—produced an insightful series of articles (21 pages to be exact) aimed at helping the small businessman well in advance of the dreaded IRS deadline, April 15. This special section has become a tradition, one we are happy to continue, with the help of Irving Blackman and Channing Hayden.

Riverboat Expo 94
Riverboat gaming is a growth market, and it's no wonder. As gambling measures go, proposals to legalize riverboats enjoy more favor with legislators than proposals to legalize video poker games. Find out what transpired at the recent trade show that showcased gaming equipment and related products for riverboats, plus excerpts from seminars.

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COVER

Benchmark Entertainment's Al Kress, Arnold Kaminkow, and Ron Halliburton, who brought gold to the coin-operated interactive skill redemption business, are pictured with their *Golden Goose* progressive target ticket-out game, *Roll for Gold* straight target ticket-out game, and their latest release, *Golden Goose* digital display metal-out game.

A TECHNICAL KNOCKOUT! 2

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LETTERS

Costly complaint

I operate a vending company, with more than 2,000 pieces of equipment, in Michigan's upper peninsula. I have a yearly equipment budget of $200,000. I am really starting to feel exploited by the equipment cost and angry at the quality of equipment I get for my money.

Every new Data East or Gottlieb piece I buy absolutely has to stay in the shop for a week and be gone over to finish building it before I can put it on location. I am paying about $3,100 a game and feel it should be ready to go.

A new Dynamo Air Hockey at $2,400! Tell me how much research and development has gone into air hockey in the last 10 years.

I absolutely refuse to buy any Williams product new. To me their machines are overpriced to the max, and I refuse to let them stick it to me.

If these manufacturers are not smart enough to know that they have to put out good products at a fair price, I have to believe that their days are numbered.

If there are other operators who feel this way, let your distributors and manufacturers know your feelings. Without us, the operator, these people will be out of work in no time.

Dewey Baldwin
Superior Vending Inc.
Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

Kind recognition

I wanted to write on behalf of everyone at Valley Recreation Products to congratulate the Play Meter staff for the contributions made during the "first 20 years," as well as your dedication to the coin industry.

The time and commitment you have given to the industry is evident by the magazine you publish every month. There are not many "8 to 5" jobs, if any, in this industry, and the frequent flyer miles add up fast!

Recognition comes in a variety of ways. Please trust that Valley will continue to support Play Meter as you have so well supported us over the years.

Richard B. Shelton
President
Valley Recreation
Products Inc.
Bay City, Mich.

Now here's a game with LEGS!

WHEN THE OTHER GAMES ARE HEADED BACK TO THE BARN...

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FROM THE EDITOR

The good far outweighs the bad

You've heard people say that the good outweighs the bad when talking about a lot of things. And while the good might not really outweigh the bad, it's usually the good part that takes hold in our minds.

Nothing cements this better than to attend a class reunion. You'll see your old school chum, and suddenly a fun, memorable time comes to mind. You can't help but recall that fantastic trip to the beach when your tan began to deepen and that really, really cute guy sat down by you and asked for your phone number. Oh, what a day!

Valerie Cognevich
Editor

Of course, you totally have forgotten that your friend burnt to a crisp, her swim suit fell off in the ocean, her tinted hair turned green, and she saw her boyfriend walking along the water hand-in-hand with another girl.

That astonished look on her face when you recall that picture-perfect day is enough to make you realize that maybe it wasn't so perfect in her eyes. In fact, maybe she won't even remember it, something like amnesia to block out the most horrible times.

Anyway, children can sometimes do just the opposite. Once you are an adult, you travel back to your childhood and focus on one event that seems to have affected your future. You'll confront your parents about that day they wouldn't let you go with your friends to (fill in the blank). In your mind it positively ruined your entire life. You were probably surprised to realize that the folks didn't even recall what you were talking about. Again, everyone sees things from different viewpoints.

Here's a quick true story illustrating the point: I ran into a man who had a crush on me when we were in the ninth grade. He told me how excited he had been when I agreed to go to the local fair with him. He remembered that I let him hold my hand and that it was the happiest day of his life. Here's my side of that day: he had asked me out so many times that I finally said I'd go because I didn't have anything else to do. I even explained that if something better came along, I would do that. Anyway, during the day he stepped on a pack of ketchup, and it squirted all over my brand new shorts and white shirt. He did hold my hand but it was shortlived—just long enough for me to notice he had cotton candy melted onto his palm. Well, needless to say, it was not one of my most cherished memories.

Our industry is so typical of a vast array of viewpoints spanning the many decades we've had a coin-op industry. Even when you bring up something that you perceive as being good, there's always someone with memories of the negative aspect of it. This past year, the industry was bombarded with the issue of violence in games. It's a subject that will go down in the industry's history to be dredged up time and again. What will we say about it in the future? Those opposed to the graphic violence will praise the rating board and gush that it was only the act of placing these ratings that saved a generation of youth from witnessing savagery at its worst. Others will lambaste the whole concept as a total waste of time, claiming that ratings only alert the kids to the objectionable games, and suddenly it's only those they want to play.

When video gaming became legal in Louisiana, some called it a Godsend, while others viewed it as the devil's work. I remember sitting in on some of the early meetings between the police and operators. If you ask each side about some of those early meetings, I'd be willing to bet (no pun intended) that their memories would be vastly different.

Nothing has stirred up more controversy than gambling in any way, shape, or form. Even redemption is viewed in some areas as gambling. Opponents have gone so far as to call redemption a way to teach youngsters the value of gambling. Yes, it sounds absurd to us, but those spouting this opinion are firm in their beliefs. They are as sure they are right as we're sure they're wrong.

Our 20th anniversary issue was an opportune time to relive some of the industry's past events. We received some wonderful phone calls from our readers on our December issue with stories of their own memories of a certain game, a show, or a story we recounted. It was fun, they said, to see old photos and remember what they were doing when certain games came out. Thanks to all of you who called and a very special thanks to those who placed a congratulatory ad in that issue. We'll have some more anniversary issues for you in five, 10, 20, and more years from now. Keep reading, we're making history!▲

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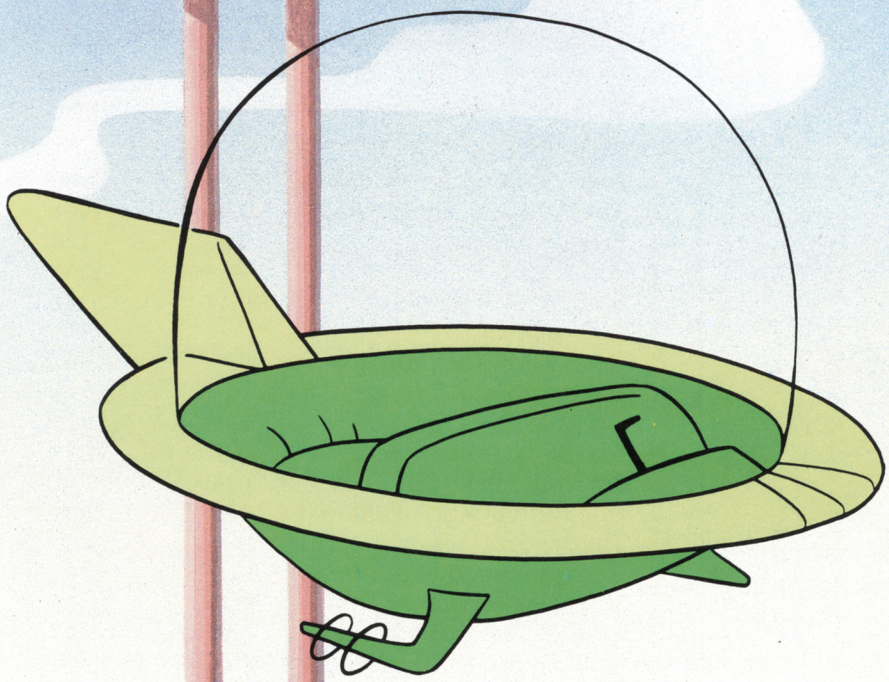

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EQUIPMENT POLL

REDEMPTION

GAME	MFG.	POINT VALUE
ALLEY BOWLERS		
1. Skee-Ball	*(Skee-Ball)*	7.18
2. Smartball	*(Smart)*	6.00
SPORTS GAMES		
1. Sonic Blast Man	*(Taito)*	8.25
2. Full Court Frenzy	*(I.C.E.)*	6.92
3. Shoot to Win!	*(Smart)*	6.92
4. Arm Champs	*(Jaleco)*	6.80
5. Around the World	*(UET.)*	6.67
6. Hoop Shot	*(Doyle)*	6.60
7. Two Minute Drill	*(Taito)*	6.33
8. Slugfest	*(Williams)*	6.12
9. Champ. Basketball	*(Grayhound)*	5.50
10. UB-QB Football	*(National Sports)*	5.13
SINGLE COIN PUSHERS		
1. Klondike	*(Fun Merchants)*	9.25
2. Jungle Jive	*(Coastal)*	8.60
CRANES		
1. Classic Watch Crane	*(Smart)*	8.75
2. Clean Sweep	*(Smart)*	7.94
3. Watch Shoppe Crane	*(CCI)*	7.00
4. Candy Crane	*(Smart)*	6.87
5. Big Choice	*(Fun Merchants)*	6.25
6. Skill Crane	*(Grayhound)*	6.17
7. Challenger	*(Wedges/Ledges)*	5.50
8. Jumbo Crane	*(Grayhound)*	5.40
CHILDREN'S GAMES		
1. Li'l Dump the Ump	*(Doyle)*	8.50
2. Paint 'N Puzzle	*(Century)*	7.67
3. Shoot to Win! Jr.	*(Smart)*	7.25
4. Smart Toss 'Em	*(Smart)*	7.20
5. 1/2 Pint Frenzy	*(I.C.E.)*	7.00
6. The Flintstones	*(I.C.E.)*	6.75
7. Super Mario Mushroom	*(Premier)*	6.25
8. Jr. All American	*(CCI/UETD)*	6.00
9. Awesome Toss Em	*(Lazer-Tron)*	5.83
10. Bozo Basketball	*(Design Plus)*	5.50
11. Skee-Toss B.C.	*(Skee-Ball/ Fun Merchants)*	5.17
12. Toss 'Em	*(CCI/UETD)*	5.00
BALL ROLL DOWNS		
1. Clown Rolldown	*(Bay Tek)*	8.25
2. Spin to Win	*(Lazer-Tron)*	7.67
3. Jungle Rama	*(Lazer-Tron)*	7.60
4. Quackers	*(Seidel)*	6.67
5. Shake, Rattle & Roll	*(Lazer-Tron)*	6.33
6. Rock 'N Roll 4	*(Bay Tek)*	5.00
NOVELTY		
1. Dinoscore	*(Planet Earth)*	8.75
2. Flingshot	*(Planet Earth)*	8.50
3. Ribbit Racin	*(Lazer-Tron)*	8.22
4. Whac-A-Mole	*(Bob's Space)*	8.00
5. Flip 'N Win	*(Planet Earth)*	8.00
6. Buddy Bear	*(Smart)*	8.00
7. Pop-A-Ball	*(Coastal)*	7.71

REDEMPTION

GAME	MFG.	POINT VALUE
8. Super Mario Bros.	*(Fabtek)*	7.67
9. The Flintstones	*(Lazer-Tron)*	7.67
10. Dump the Ump	*(Doyle)*	7.50
11. Simple Simon	*(Am. Sammy)*	7.33
12. Pop-A-Slot	*(Coastal)*	7.00
13. Knock Down	*(Meltec)*	6.63
14. Hop-A-Tic-Tac-Toe	*(Data East)*	6.57
15. Feed Big Bertha	*(Smart)*	6.36
16. Neck 'N Neck	*(Bundra)*	6.20
17. Coin Circus.	*(Am. Sammy)*	6.00
18. Big Mouth	*(Meltec)*	5.90
19. Hot Shot Basketball	*(Williams)*	5.60
20. Pogger	*(Lazer-Tron)*	5.40
21. Bouncing Bandit	*(CCI)*	5.33
22. Boom Ball	*(Meltec)*	5.20
23. Cosmo Gang	*(Data East)*	5.00
24. Hungry Hungry Hippos	*(I.C.E.)*	5.00
COIN DROP GAMES		
1. Super Wheel 'Em In	*(Bromley)*	9.00
2. Wheel 'M In	*(Bromley)*	8.33
3. Rock 'N Bowl	*(Bromley)*	8.22
4. Home Run Hitter	*(CCI)*	8.00
5. Roll for Gold	*(Benchmark)*	8.00
6. Aftershock	*(Lazer-Tron)*	7.60
7. Super Bank-It	*(Lazer-Tron)*	7.25
8. Super Rock 'N Bowl	*(Bromley)*	6.67
9. Addams Family Values	*(Midway)*	6.25
10. Sonic the Hedgehog	*(Sega)*	6.20

PINBALLS

GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1. Star Trek: Next Generation *(Williams)*	7.58	709
2. The Addams Family *(Bally)*	7.46	1991
3. Freddy *(Premier)*	7.33	123
4. World Cup Soccer *(Bally)*	7.24	1937
5. Shaq Attack *(Premier)*	7.17	41
6. Red & Ted's Road Show *(Williams)*	7.14	97
7. Tales from the Crypt *(Data East)*	7.08	370
8. Rescue 911 *(Premier)*	7.00	367
9. Jurassic Park *(Data East)*	6.86	771
10. Demolition Man *(Williams)*	6.81	324
11. The Who's Tommy Pinball Wizard *(Data East)*	6.81	279
12. Maverick *(Sega)*	6.75	83
13. Indiana Jones *(Williams)*	6.65	664
14. Guns N' Roses *(Data East)*	6.65	192
15. Last Action Hero *(Data East)*	6.54	435

Results are based on monthly Equipment Poll ballot returns. Point Value: average of ballot ratings on a scale of 1-10. Longevity Points: determined by standings in Video & Pinball combined column (#1 game receives 60 points, #2 game receives 59 points, etc.) **Indicates new or reappearing games.*

EQUIPMENT POLL

VIDEO & PINBALL COMBINED

	GAME	MO. ON CHART	MO. IN TOP 10
1.	Killer Instinct *(Midway)*	1	1
2.	Daytona USA *(Sega)*	5	5
3.	Cruisin USA *(Midway)*	3	3
4.	Suzuka 8 Hours 2 *(Namco)*	9	9
5.	Solitaire Challenge *(Dynamo)*	8	5
6.	Star Trek: Next Generation *(Williams)*	13	12
7.	The Addams Family *(Bally)*	35	35
8.	Mortal Kombat II *(Midway)*	15	15
9.	Out Runners *(Sega)*	17	17
10.	Lucky & Wild *(Namco)*	18	4
11.	Freddy *(Premier)*	3	3
12.	Suzuka 8 Hours *(Namco)*	9	9
13.	Samurai Shodown II *(SNK)*	3	2
14.	Raiden DX *(Fabtek)*	2	1
15.	World Cup Soccer *(Bally)*	7	7
16.	Fast Draw *(Am. Laser)*	5	2
17.	Under Fire *(Taito)*	7	2
18.	Primal Rage *(TWI)*	5	4
19.	Drug Wars *(Am. Laser)*	11	8
20.	Shaq Attack *(Premier)*	1	1
21.	Red & Ted's Road Show *(Williams)*	2	2
22.	Virtua Racing *(Sega)*	27	25
23.	T-MEK *(TWI)*	5	2
24.	Lethal Enforcers II *(Konami)*	9	4
25.	Tales from the Crypt *(Data East)*	14	7
26.	D & D Tower of Doom *(Capcom)*	8	8
27.	Rescue 911 *(Premier)*	9	7
28.	NBA JAM Tournament *(Midway)*	9	9
29.	Jurassic Park *(Data East)*	20	15
30.	Raiden II *(Fabtek)*	14	14
31.	Demolition Man *(Williams)*	9	8
32.	The Who's Tommy *(Data East)*	10	4
33.	Maverick *(Sega)*	2	1
34.	King of Fighters *(SNK)*	4	2
35.	Virtua Fighter *(Sega)*	11	10
36.	Indiana Jones *(Williams)*	16	14
37.	Guns N' Roses *(Data East)*	5	3
38.	Lethal Enforcers *(Konami)*	28	28
39.	Last Action Hero *(Data East)*	15	5
40.	Alien vs. Predator *(Capcom)*	7	6
41.	Aero Fighters 2 *(SNK)*	5	3
42.	DarkStalkers *(Capcom)*	5	4
43.	Star Wars *(Data East)*	27	11
44.	Windjammers *(Data East)*	4	2
45.	Revolution-X *(Midway)*	7	4
46.	Twilight Zone *(Bally)*	22	20
47.	Fish Tales *(Williams)*	29	18
48.	Cybersled *(Namco)*	14	5
49.	Battletoads *(Electronic Arts)*	1	0
50.	Jurassic Park *(Sega)*	20	14
51.	Ridge Racer *(Namco)*	12	8
52.	NBA JAM *(Midway)*	10	4
53.	Corvette *(Bally)*	3	2
54.	Mortal Kombat *(Midway)*	28	25
55.	White Water *(Williams)*	24	14
56.	SSF II Turbo *(Capcom)*	8	5
57.	World Rally *(TWI)*	16	2
58.	Street Slam *(Data East)*	2	1
59.	Ridge Racer 2 *(Namco)*	2	0
60.	Run and Gun *(Konami)*	14	7

VIDEO DEDICATED

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1.	Killer Instinct *(Midway)*	9.21	60
2.	Daytona USA *(Sega)*	9.14	299
3.	Cruisin' USA *(Midway)*	9.08	175
4.	Suzuka 8 Hours 2 *(Namco)*	8.50	496
5.	Solitaire Challenge *(Dynamo)*	8.07	346
6.	Out Runners *(Sega)*	7.46	894
7.	Lucky & Wild *(Namco)*	7.36	592
8.	Suzuka 8 Hours *(Namco)*	7.33	484
9.	Fast Draw *(Am. Laser)*	7.20	144
10.	Under Fire *(Taito)*	7.20	229
11.	Primal Rage *(TWI)*	7.19	264
12.	Virtua Racing *(Sega)*	7.13	1418
13.	T-MEK *(TWI)*	7.11	223
14.	Lethal Enforcers II *(Konami)*	7.08	383
15.	Virtua Fighter *(Sega)*	6.65	549

VIDEO KITS

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONGEVITY POINTS
1.	Mortal Kombat II *(Midway)*	7.46	873
2.	Samurai Shodown II *(SNK)*	7.27	92
3.	Raiden DX *(Fabtek)*	7.25	58
4.	Drug Wars *(Am. Laser)*	7.17	1027
5.	D&D Tower of Doom *(Capcom)*	7.06	332
6.	NBA JAM Tourn. *(Midway)*	6.93	387
7.	Raiden II *(Fabtek)*	6.86	560
8.	King of Fighters *(SNK)*	6.67	88
9.	Lethal Enforcers *(Konami)*	6.63	1311
10.	Alien vs. Predator *(Capcom)*	6.52	237
11.	Aero Fighters 2 *(SNK)*	6.50	87
12.	DarkStalkers *(Capcom)*	6.48	201
13.	Windjammers *(Data East)*	6.44	100
14.	Battletoads *(Electronic Arts)*	6.25	12
15.	Corvette *(Bally)*	6.06	74
16.	Mortal Kombat *(Midway)*	5.95	1332
17.	SSF II Turbo *(Capcom)*	5.93	163
18.	World Rally *(TWI)*	5.92	407
19.	Street Slam *(Data East)*	5.91	27
20.	Super Sidekicks 2 *(SNK)*	5.82	21
21.	World Heroes Jet *(SNK)*	5.82	117
22.	Wild West C.O.W. Boys *(Konami)*	5.71	18
23.	Great 1,000 Mile Rally *(Kaneko)*	5.60	41
24.	Samurai Shodown *(SNK)*	5.47	532
25.	Golden Axe Revenge *(Sega)*	5.45	373
26.	SSF II *(Capcom)*	5.38	107
27.	Twin Eagle II *(Seta)*	5.33	*
28.	Spinmaster *(Data East)*	5.33	*
29.	King of the Monsters 2 *(SNK)*	5.29	206
30.	Fighters History Dynamite *(Data East)*	5.29	9

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UP FRONT

When convenience becomes annoyance

Everyone has had this experience: becoming frustrated because we crave speaking to a human being instead of a machine. Such was the case when I called a manufacturing company that had moved to new headquarters. After wading through the 35 options available via the answering system, I finally heard: "If you haven't celebrated your next birthday while waiting, and need to speak with an operator, press O."

At last, a real live person instead of a recording.

Bonnie Theard
Managing Editor

I asked for the sales representative I needed to reach and the extension number for future reference. The reply: "That person is the only one who can give out the extension number. She's not here right now. I'll connect you with her voice mail." More machinery, less humanity. As Charlie Brown would say—Aarrgghh! In these tough economic times, when companies seek to downsize and adopt such measures as "early retirement" packages to trim the budget, an automated answering system probably sounds like a good idea. With technological advances, who needs people when machines can accomplish the same tasks? A nightmare come true: automation run amok.

The creators of automated answering systems may be unaware of the problems created by a convenience that has become an annoyance. The money saved by not hiring a person to answer the phone may be outdistanced by income lost when potential customers are turned off by the answering system and hang up.

Yet technology marches on. There is a new twist in automated answering systems that further eliminates the need for a human being to provide information over the phone lines. If you do not know the extension of the person you want to reach, you can punch in the first three letters of the person's last name and be connected to their voice mail. And, if you don't have the spelling of the name handy, you can listen to a litany of names and extensions. It seems that anything and everything can be provided so you can do it yourself.

What's wrong with this picture? The human equation is missing. There is no substitute for the personal touch, that all-important element vital to businesses, such as those in our industry, which are built on service. Service is what sets one operating company apart from another.

Locations that see only the collector taking coins from the machines could feel as isolated as callers who encounter automated phone systems. We are in a very personal business, with generations of families carrying on the coin-op tradition. Maintaining a friendly relationship with locations is not only good business today, it's a requirement for staying in business tomorrow.

When the location is a game room or fun center that you own or manage, your customers deserve the best entertainment experience, the tastiest food, and the most cordial attendants you can provide.

Industry conversations often focus on products that are the backbone of the business, while service is the cornerstone. Continue to do your part in setting high standards of service within your organization.

On a segment of "Home Improvement" TV's Tim Allen and his sidekick Richard Carne argued on the point of who said it first, but the quote remains: "There are two things every task has in common: 1) It must be done, and 2) It must be done right."

As the new year unfolds and new challenges present themselves, keep service a priority and you will always be doing it right. ▲

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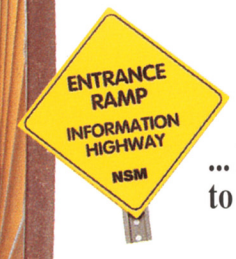

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New Mexico grapples with gaming issue

Despite a constitutional challenge to a referendum authorizing lottery and video gaming, the New Mexico legislature began holding hearings on the issue last month.

"Regardless of how the Supreme Court rules it appears the legislature is looking at going forward with some form of video gaming," said Ken Anderson, secretary of the state's Vending Amusement and Music Operators Association.

Voters in the state approved a constitutional amendment in November that provides for a state-run lottery, as well as video games of chance.

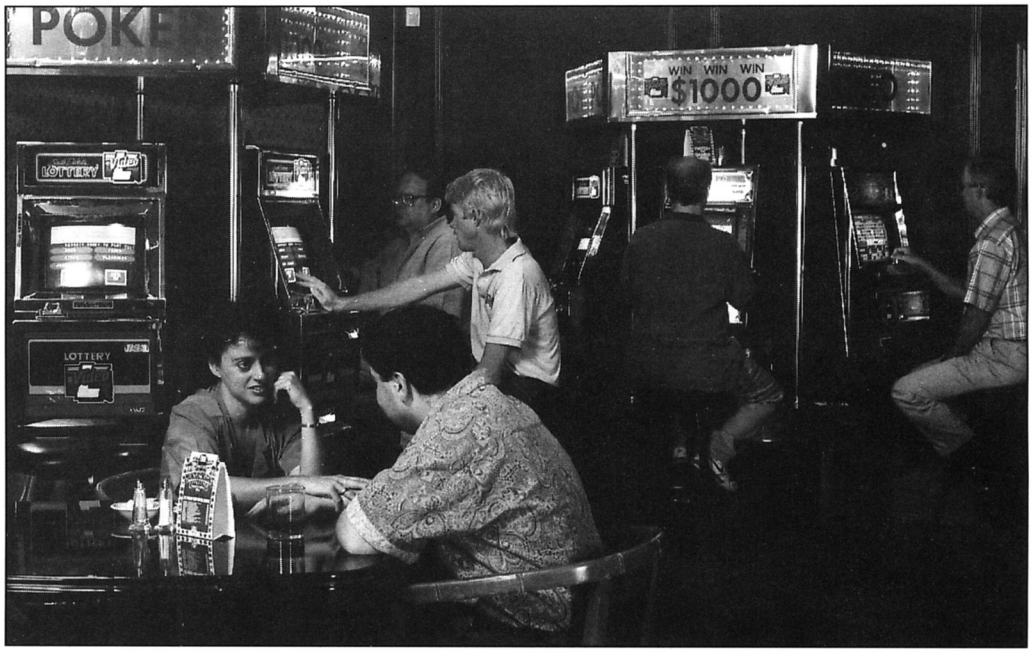
In early January, the legislature heard from out-of-state experts, as well as representatives of the coin-op industry in New Mexico.

Anderson explained that the legislature has always had the power to authorize gaming. "The legislature could have written the enabling legislation whenever they wanted," he said. "But they wanted a reading from the public."

However, a coalition of opponents has challenged the decision, arguing that they should have been able to vote on each issue separately.

But judicial precedent in the state has previously allowed items in a constitutional amendment to be linked if they are germane, Anderson said. "Our contention is they both come under the umbrella of gaming."

A ruling was expected before the end of January.



New Mexico is reportedly taking the first steps toward establishing a video gaming program similar to the one in South Dakota, which has brought extra revenue to restaurant and tavern locations such as this one in Sioux Falls.

As worded, the constitutional amendment would become law in June, 90 days after the end of the legislative session. That gives the legislature sufficient time to pass enabling legislation that included rules and regulations.

"If it becomes constitutional law, that means the legislature must do something" to facilitate gaming, Anderson said.

State officials have apparently given no indication on how video gaming would be structured, whether it would be privately or publicly run, which establishments would be eligible for machines, or how many they would be able to operate.

Supporters of the referendum, which received 56 percent of the vote, included the state's race tracks, fraternal orders, and the liquor industry.

"We in the vending industry have a working relationship with all these retail industries," Anderson noted. "We have the routes. We have the infrastructure. We feel the vendors will get it."

Another issue at stake is whether lottery and video gaming will be regulated by the same or separate commissions.

"We don't advocate it be run by the same commission," Anderson said, pointing to the fact that South Dakota has one commission and yet a vast majority of the revenue comes from video lottery there. "Government has a tendency of letting one program pay for another."

One suggestion that could be palatable to operators is one overall commission, that operated separate subcommissions for each form of gaming, including Indian gaming and the race tracks.

"They do have impact on one another in terms of discretionary dollars," Anderson argued. "That way one industry does not cannibalize the other."

But whatever the final outcome, Anderson concluded, operators have to continually keep in mind their duty to provide entertainment to the public or face the dismal fate of race tracks across the country.

"You can't make people relate to something that they don't relate to," he said. "Look at Vegas. They are remembering that they are in the entertainment business. We in the coin-op business need to remember the same thing."

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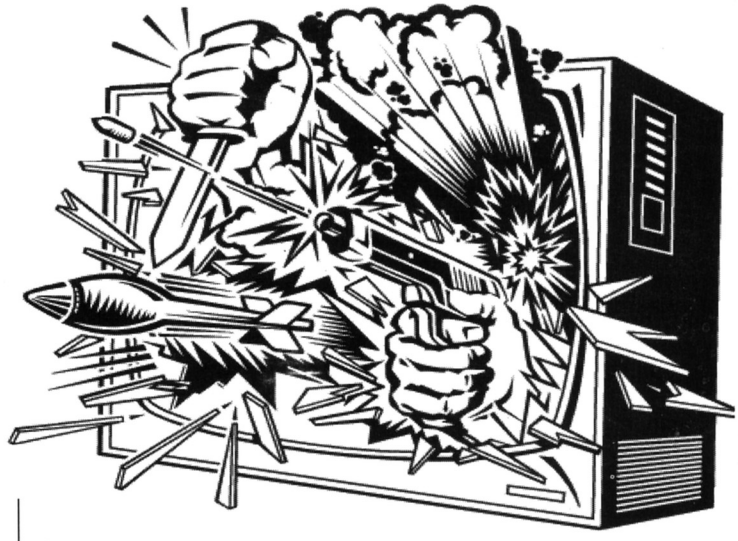
PBS documentary looks at violence in the media



"Getting a gun is as easy as getting a loaf of bread."

This chilling statement from a young woman convicted of murder was among a series of revelations during a two-part, four-hour Public Broadcasting System special program that aired in early January.

Award-winning TV journalist Bill Moyers set out to find solutions to "What We Can Do About Violence" by traveling around the country looking at successful violence prevention programs, as well as focusing on the juvenile justice system, gun control, domestic terror, and yes, the media (TV, movies, and video games).

James Q. Wilson, professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Los Angeles and author of "Thinking About Crime" called juvenile justice "the dark unexplored land of criminology." He said the profile of the high-rate offender is the same whether measured in Stockholm, Sweden; London, England; or Orange County, Calif.

Mostly male, they represent only five to six percent of boys in any given country but are involved in a staggering number of crimes.

Judge Joseph Farina of Florida's Dade County Criminal Court had this to say: "Statistically, younger people are committing more of the violent crimes in society. We've got to do something about it. People are frustrated and angry."

Many offenders come from dysfunctional families and poor neighborhoods, and have little or no parental guidance. What are the influences in their lives? The love and kindredship of street gangs in more instances than our society would like to admit, according to the program.

Where does the media fit into the picture? Moyers observed, "While children learn about violence in their real life families and on real life streets, they also grow up today surrounded by ghastly, simulated reality—streams of mass-produced images that pour into their social environment and their inner lives, all for profit.

"Those violent movies and gangster rappers glorifying violence, TV crime shows and local news shows replaying every ghoulish promo over and over, and the brutal video games, are all responding to the bottom line."

Moyers asked, "What happens to our children when the marketplace is their most powerful mentor, the arbiter of their values, teaching them this one lesson: if you want juice, power, money, ratings, respect...use violence? Because in the media sweeps and on the streets, violence sells."

Family psychologist David Walsh commented, "Every single one of us has a persuasive guest in our families, and oftentimes we don't even realize what it is communicating and selling to our kids.

"The average child in the U.S., if he or she watches the average amount of TV, will witness 200,000 acts of violence by the time he is 18 years old. That screen becomes a window through which they learn about the world, pick up values, and learn how to handle different situations."

Walsh put his finger on the attraction of violence: "It grabs our attention because we have an emotional response to it."

Smiles sometimes accompany the violence portrayed in the media, he said. "The message coming across is that this is fun and enjoyable. We never see the suffering that follows those kinds of experiences.

"On an intellectual level kids may be able to say yes, that's fake, it's not real. But we are constantly incorporating images that make connections that aren't on an intellectual and cognitive level, but on an emotional level."

The telecast showed scenes from the *Mortal Kombat* video and promos for the game's home release, the popular "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" TV program, "slasher" movies, and a number of action-adventure-thriller films that depict an abundance of graphic violence.

In one scene from "The Simpsons" TV show, Bart Simpson tells his sister Lisa, "If you don't watch any violence you won't get desensitized to it."

Walsh added that he believes most parents are motivated by the question, "What's good for our kids?" but all too often "the motivating question in the larger, anonymous society is 'Will it make money?' We're sacrificing our children at the altar of financial profit."

"There is nothing wrong with making money," explained Walsh. "But we have to balance our desire to make profits with a sense of responsibility to our children."

Moyers added, "A movement is growing around the issue of media violence. Millions of people are realizing that it's not just a matter of what we're watching, but what we're becoming."

Wilson concluded: "In the long run I think the most troubling problem this nation may face is not crime and not drugs, or certainly not them simply, but the fact that we are increasingly raising our children in isolation from human contact. We are turning over to electronic devices—TVs, VCRs, electronic games, and computer games—the task of occupying ourselves, and particularly our children, during all or most of their free time.

"When we isolate ourselves we are reducing the chances that we will learn what it means to be fully human. This change, if it occurs, will occur so slowly that we will not notice it. But at some time we will look back and say to ourselves, 'What did we do wrong?'"

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Former gaming executive pleads guilty to felony

Former Bally Gaming International president Alan Maiss has pleaded guilty to two felony counts as a result of an investigation into a Louisiana video poker distributor, according to federal authorities.

Maiss reportedly pleaded guilty to prior knowledge that one of the founders of Worldwide Gaming, Christopher Tanfield, did not hold a state license. Worldwide was Bally's exclusive distributor of video poker games in Louisiana.

The two counts of misprision of a felony could result in a maximum of six years in jail and/or fines of $500,000, said Eddie Jordan, U.S. attorney for the eastern district of Louisiana.

Jordan said Maiss admitted dealing with Tanfield even after learning that he had no license. Tanfield was indicted along with 16 others last year on racketeering charges in connection with Worldwide's activities.

Federal authorities allege that Tanfield was an organized crime associate, who facilitated criminal control of Worldwide, its subsidiary Louisiana Route Operators, and several other video poker companies.

Maiss is cooperating with the federal investigation, Jordan said. He reportedly told federal prosecutors that he did not report Tanfield because he was hoping to recoup Bally's investment in the failing Worldwide company.

The former Bally president is expected to testify in the trial scheduled for May 1.

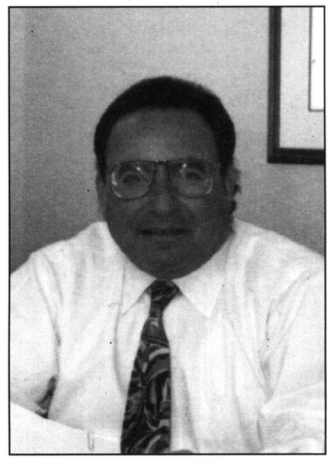
Federal authorities have said Bally Gaming, which financed Worldwide, was a victim in the case. Bally reportedly lost $15 million as a result of Worldwide's collapse.

Maiss was terminated by Bally in April 1993, a month before the initial indictments in the Worldwide case were handed down.

"The company was a victim of massive fraud and we are cooperating fully," said Bally Gaming general counsel Lou Tavano, who noted that company employees will also be testifying for the prosecution. "We sympathize with Mr. Maiss' position, but it really has no effect on us."

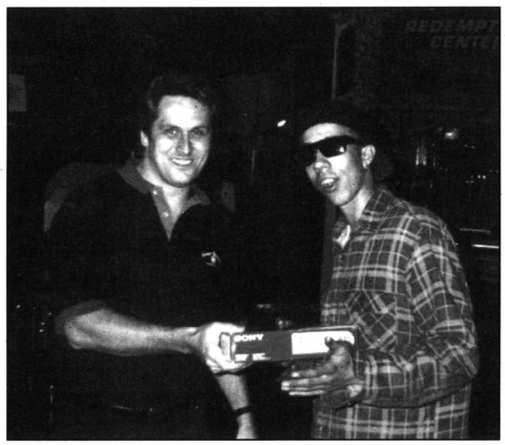
Profits from Worldwide were allegedly diverted to organized crime families in the New Orleans and New York areas, according to the investigation conducted by the FBI and the Louisiana State Police.

Tanfield's partner Steven Bolson, who was a co-founder of Worldwide, has pleaded guilty to one count of conducting an illegal gambling business and four counts of wire fraud against Bally.

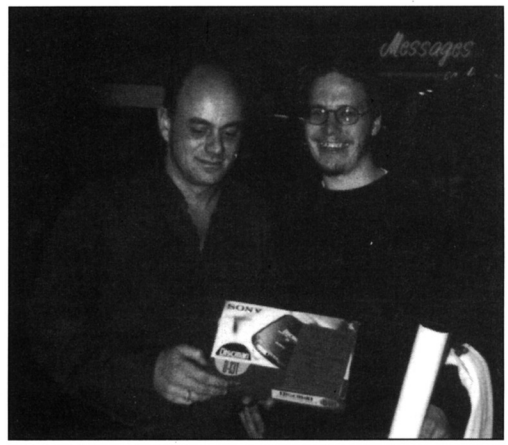


Alan Maiss

Namco takes Tekken on tour



In Atlanta, Sean Thomas (r) was the first place winner in the Tekken tournament.



In Philadelphia, top honors went to Dave Barnett (r) for his Tekken skills.

Namco recently hosted sneak preview parties and tournaments in the United States and Canada to introduce its new futuristic fighting-themed video, *Tekken*.

Sales and marketing representatives traveled to 12 cities in three days to assist in the promotion and explain the finer points of the game, which features 3-D textured polygons with Gourand shading for added realism.

The game's debut was promoted prior to each tournament. Once it was on location, experienced players were quickly at the controls, warming up for the competition.

All contestants received *Tekken* posters and T-shirts. First through fourth place winners collected prizes that ranged from Sony Discman CD units to *Electronic Gaming Monthly* magazine subscriptions to game room tokens and coupons.

Tekken tournament packages can be obtained from Namco distributors or sales representatives. Contact the sales office at (708) 238-2248 for more details. *Tekken* posters are $2.50 each, while they last.

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Jukebox license fees rise slightly in '95

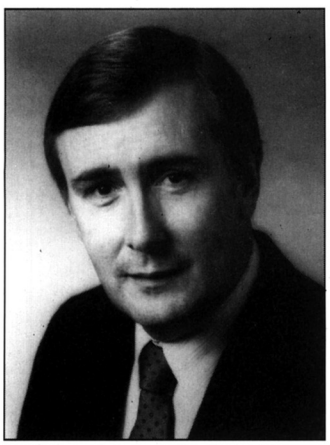
On Jan. 9 the Jukebox License Office announced the jukebox license fees for 1995. Adjusted based on the consumer price index, the new rates are 2.61 percent higher than in 1994.

Fees are: first jukebox, $294; two through 10, $55 (each); 11 and above (each) $47.

The JLO, which administers the Jukebox License Agreement, will soon mail the revised rate schedule to all jukebox operators who obtained agreements during 1994.

For further information, or jukebox license materials, contact the JLO at 1740 Broadway, 2nd floor, New York, NY 10019-4315; (900) 955-JUKE or (212) 581-0190.

Economical 64-bit games closer to home



Howard Lincoln, Nintendo of America president, looks to the next wave of video game entertainment.

Nintendo's Ultra 64 home video game machine is closer to becoming a reality. The company has formed an exclusive agreement with MultiGen Inc. of San Jose, Calif., under which MultiGen will provide 3-D development tools for the 64-bit unit.

The new game machine is being developed jointly with Silicon Graphics Inc. and should be introduced in North America and Japan in the fall of 1995 at a suggested retail price of under $250.

According to Dennis Yeo, president and CEO of MultiGen, "This alliance with Nintendo represents a huge leap in expanding the reach of high-end technology that was available only to a limited number of government and corporate users just a few years ago.

"The combination of MultiGen's tools and the power of the 64-bit system will be stunning. Using our 3-D technology, Nintendo Ultra 64 game developers can deliver to the family room all the excitement and creativity previously available only in cutting-edge virtual reality exhibits."

Earlier, Nintendo formed an alliance with Alias Research Inc. of Toronto, Canada, to begin developing customized graphics software tools for the 64-bit system.

Nintendo of America president Howard Lincoln explained, "Game developers for Nintendo Ultra 64 will be able to use MultiGen's advanced 3-D technology, along with the development tools provided by Alias, to bring to life the next wave of video game entertainment."

Smoyers and Nicholas form TryMagic

Howard Smoyer and Tom Nicholas announce the formation of a partnership and the opening of a new company, TryMagic, that will focus on designing new products for manufacturers.

Smoyer and Nicholas are well known in the industry from their years at Merit Industries and more recently at New Image Technologies.

Nicholas is the founding engineer behind touch screen applications on countertop games. His philosophy is to utilize the latest technology to make a better product.

TryMagic will pursue several markets in which Smoyer and Nicholas are experienced. The two favor bar sports games and videos and redemption games. Countertops are a particular area of interest, because as Smoyer says, "they are such a good value to the operator."

"There are many products that need a new level of excitement," he observed. "We plan to fill that need."

TryMagic is the realization of a lifetime dream for both Smoyer and Nicholas. "We've always aspired to have our own company," remarked Smoyer, "And we're glad to have the opportunity to do just that. The drawing board is full of concepts and we are working diligently on the first of a long line of products."

TryMagic is located at 9968 Oak Shore Drive, Lakeville, MN 55044. The phone number is (612) 435-7790; the FAX number is (612) 435-3137.

Media ready

Officers and government relations committee chairmen of AMOA recently participated in two days of media training at the Burson-Marsteller firm in New York City. The purpose: to prepare them to handle TV, radio, and newspaper interviews and press conferences. Seated, (l-r): Gail Quattlebaum of Burson-Marsteller, Gene Winstead and Tami Norberg-Paulsen of AMOA. Standing, (l-r): Frank Seninsky and Jerry Derrick of AMOA, reporter Jeff Bloch, Don Hesch and Randy Chilton of AMOA.

Pick out the Valley pool table slate.

Actually, they're both ours. But only one has been through our flattening process.

The one with the water — the uneven slate — is just the way we receive some of them from our suppliers. And would be considered "ready to install" by most all other pool table manufacturers.

Not Valley.

Yes, it's Italian slate ... the best money can buy. And just because it may not meet our flatness standards doesn't mean the supplier hasn't done their job. Our standards are demanding. Exceptionally demanding. And we know it.

But players will detect the difference.

A less-than-flat slate may not be noticeable to the eye. Maybe not even that easy to detect test-rolling a few balls during set up. But players can tell. Especially the more accomplished players, the people that account for the majority of what operators find in their cashboxes.

That's the reason we won't install a slate unless it's within 10/1000ths of an inch flat across the entire playing surface.

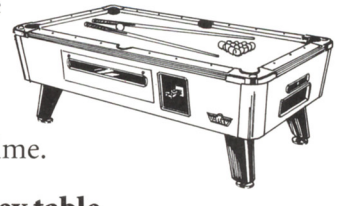
And we subject all of our slate to a 3-step process to assure just that:

- Inspection, separation & flatness check. Those that pass are cured and ready to install. Those that don't are racked for curing.
- After curing, those that didn't pass are checked for flatness again.
- If they still don't pass, they're rotary-ground to our 10/1000ths specification.

Over half of the slates we receive require some grinding.

We'd love to save ourselves all the grief and money the slate flattening process costs us.

But we won't. Nor will we cut corners on any of the literally dozens of other quality features unique to our pool tables. "Valley Built" means something because of those differences and you'll never see that meaning change. Guaranteed.



Look a little closer and we bet you'll pick a Valley table next time.

Pick a Valley table.
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Alpha-Omega goes silver!

Celebrants include, (l-r): Joe Camarota Sr., Charlotte and Joe Camarota, Sondi and Steve Epstein of The Broadway Arcade, Bob Boals of Betson, and Bob Geshine.

Cutting the 25th anniversary cake, (l-r): Joe and Charlotte Camarota, Frank Seninsky, and Karen Nagel.

Alpha-Omega Amusements of Edison, N.J., recently celebrated 25 years in the coin machine business. Officers Frank Seninsky and Joe Camarota marked the occasion with a "little" party at one of its outstanding accounts, Sports 'N' Games in East Hanover, N.J. Hundreds of well-wishers showed up.

The fledgling days of what was to become Alpha-Omega gave new meaning to the term "humble beginnings." Try a $25 used pinball game Seninsky placed in one college location. Then imagine all the work that was involved in building from that point to the position the company now occupies in the industry.

Alpha-Omega is not only a leading game distributor, but also assists in game design; conducts promotions and tournaments; and offers consulting, management services, and redemption center set-up for family fun centers.

Seninsky has the high-profile spot in the company due to his years as a contributing writer for Play Meter and other industry trade press.

In addition, he has labored tirelessly on behalf of AMOA, serving on the board of directors, the standardization committee, and the government relations committee. Seninsky is a sought-after seminar speaker, particularly on the topics of redemption and family entertainment centers.

Congratulations Frank, Joe, Charlotte, Karen, and the entire staff.

Treasure Chest approved by GLI

Gaming Laboratories Inc. has approved the *Treasure Chest* video poker game from Drew's Distributing for the Minnesota Indian gaming market.

Hardware, software, and the random number generator have all been tested and approved by the lab. The machine features three games: Jacks or Better, Jokers Wild, and Deuces Wild.

Game features include a 19" monitor, hopper or printer payout, an internal bill acceptor with locking removable magazine that takes from $1-$100, and a progressive jackpot.

EMT adopts warranty policy

EMT America, the North American distributor of EMT Kiddie Rides, has announced a new warranty policy on its ride products. The policy became effective at the beginning of the year.

The new policy will extend a warranty of 24 months from the ship date of its product on the motor, transmission (gear box), and electronic module.

According to Alicia Sadoff, sales manager, the new warranties will be a big plus. "EMT has always designed its rides keeping the ideas of excitement, safety, and durability in mind," she said.

"The interactive nature of our rides is unique and EMT kiddie rides were the first rides to be tested and approved by ETL," she added. "With implementation of a two-year warranty, EMT is once again at the forefront of the market."

For more information on the extended warranty, contact Sadoff at (708) 860-5100.

In other news

• The International Family Entertainment Center Association (IFECA) has unveiled a new store front on the information superhighway which can be reached via the Internet.

IFECA headquarters can now be reached on e-mail at IFECA@aol.com. Members are already using this service for day-to-day communications with the IFECA office. Other plans include forums, educational seminars, and informal chat sessions.

• Children who play indoors at Explorations sustain very high heart rates, according to research by Dr. Michael Whitehurst of Florida Atlantic University.

Whitehurst's research reportedly represents the first attempt to study whether Explorations, a nationwide children's fitness and entertainment center franchise, provides an alternative form of exercise.

• Veryfine Products Inc. has become a sponsor of the A+ America technology for schools program, which aims to provide classrooms with the latest teaching and learning tools.

Through a partnership between educators and businesses, UPCs, proofs-of-purchase, and special product certifications are redeemed for technological equipment that schools can use as educational tools. ▲

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Crisis brings gloomy new year in Mexico

The monetary crisis which rocked the Mexican economy as the new year came and went has prompted gloomy predictions from coin-op industry representatives both in and outside the country.

"We foresee very difficult times," said Jacob Shemaria, president of the Guadalajara-based distributor Mexel. "Equipment now costs more and the people have no money because businesses were not doing well already. I don't think we're going to meet our projections."

During the last days of 1994 and into 1995 the peso fell approximately 35 percent in relation to the U.S. dollar. That relationship forms the basis of currency value in Mexico.

Analysts said the plunge was prompted by rising U.S. interest rates, a growing trade deficit, and political turmoil. A recovery plan proposed by newly-installed Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo to utilize foreign loans, tighten monetary policy, and institute wage and price controls was

met with skepticism.

"After we heard the president, we came back and said let's plan for the worst; the government doesn't have a plan," said Shemaria. "I think it's going to get better (slowly). But it's better for us to think pessimistically."

Wall Street insiders seemed to agree. "It is far from clear to us to begin with, that the Bank of Mexico will be able to deliver the promised credit restraint...few devaluating nations ever outrun inflation to the rainbow's pot of gold," the *Wall Street Journal* opined.

Prices have already been on the rise, according to Shemaria, and the falling value of the peso erodes buying power, thus foiling further attempts to stabilize revenue through raising the price per play.

In addition to rising costs, Shemaria said the credit crunch produces a double-edged sword that makes it even more difficult to rejuvenate business investment.

"What you're obviously going to have is a lot of flight capital leaving the country like you've had before," explained John Gatens, president of San Antonio-based Southgate Amusement and Vending which does a significant amount of business in Mexico.

"It's a very uncertain situation," Gatens added. "Not a lot of equipment is going to be sold in the Mexican market in the short run. I had a $300,000 order and the gentleman had already sent a $100,000 down payment. I don't think I'm going to get the other $200,000."

The blow comes at a time when investors both at home and abroad were beginning to rebuild confidence in the Mexican market.

"Mexico is not as stable as most people think," Gatens said. "I don't think it's temporary. It looks like a long-term crisis."

While billions of dollars in loans and aid from sources like the United States and the International Monetary Fund are expected, Shemaria said from his perspective affordable credit will have to come quickly in order to keep business from totaling drying up.

"I think the key to recovering is to find a good way of financing," he said.

Polish trade show set for spring

The ABP/Affiliated Group will host the fifth annual Polish exhibition showcasing amusement machines, music and games, restaurant equipment, outdoor amusements, family entertainment centers, and casino equipment on April 27-29.

The show will be held at the Katowice International Fair Grounds in Katowice, Poland.

Since gaining independence, over two million privately owned businesses have been created in Poland. Of those, there are more than 3,000 members of the amusement industry, one that did not exist prior to 1989.

Poland has the second largest amusement park in eastern Europe, and several more are in the planning stages or already under construction.

However, there is hardly a vending machine to be found in the country's 12,000-plus factories. Why? Simple enough: Poland has not had coins until now. At the beginning of this year the country issued coins, ensuring explosive growth in the coin-op industry there.

Each of the previous Polish shows has sold out, drawing in excess of 5,000 visitors hoping to forge stronger business partnerships.

For more information, contact George Herman, 4774 Park Granada, Second Unit, Calabasas, CA 91320; (818) 222-6161; FAX (818) 222-6165.

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Proposed tax hits U.K. operators hard

The U.K. is reeling from a proposed tax increase on AWP machines, such as these from Project Coin, as well as a possible new tax on video games.

A proposed 20 percent increase in duties on gaming machines, as well as a new tax on coin amusement machines that do not pay out in prizes or money, has operators in the U.K. running for cover, *Coin Slot International* reported.

Chancellor of the Exchequor Kenneth Clarke announced the increases as part of the proposed fall budget. They would increase the the annual duty on small stakes amusement with prize machines (AWPs) from 450 pounds (approximately $675) to 535 pounds ($800). On high stakes jackpot machines the duty would increase from 1,150 pounds ($1,725) annually to 1,375 pounds ($2,065).

In addition, an annual fee of 250 pounds ($375) would be imposed on non-gaming machines. Excluded from the new tax proposal are vending machines, pool tables, jukeboxes, kiddie rides, and soccer tables. Furthermore, video games that allow multiple players would be taxed for each additional player. Thus, a four-player game could be taxed 1,000 pounds ($1,500) each year.

If implemented, industry experts say, approximately 12,000 jobs could be lost and thousands of machines would disappear.

The proposed tax would not go into effect until this November, and members of the U.K. coin-op industry are attempting to mount a letter writing campaign to turn the tide. The British trade organization BACTA, with 1,200 members, is expected to weigh in heavily on the issue.

"We therefore have plenty of time to win our argument at both the political and administrative level," BACTA president Roger Withers told *Coin Slot*. "I am confident that common sense will prevail and that our members will get relief from the current proposed levels of taxation."

Two trade exhibitions to be held with Gulf show

Organizers of the Gulf Leisure Parks & Fun Centre Show have announced that two complementary trade exhibitions will be held concurrently on March 6-9 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

The Dubai-based organizers, International Expo-Consult, will stage the second Sportex, exhibiting sports, fitness, and leisure equipment, and Gulf Stadia, a specialized event for those involved in the design, construction, and furbishment of leisure facilities.

This move will effectively create the largest presentation of products and services for the leisure industry in the Middle East.

Organizers said the prime factor for bringing these events together was the similarity of the target visitor, most of whom have commercial interests in each of the three areas.

Patronage for the shows has been granted by Sheik Mana Bin Khalifa, and they are supported by a number of Gulf trade organizations and government departments.

For more information, contact Trade Shows International Ltd., First Floor, 13 Sansome Place, Worcester WR1 1UA, England; +44 (0)1905 61 32 56; FAX +44 (0)1905 72 47 68.

Project Coin launches international subsidiary

Project Coin, an independent gaming machine manufacturer in the U.K., has launched a wholly owned subsidiary under the name Project International.

The dedicated company has been established to develop Project's expanding program of international business interests in a structured manner while protecting its share of the U.K. market.

"1994 has seen Project grow its share of the domestic market at the same time as enjoying substantial success in the international arena," explained sales and marketing director Paul Terroni. "With significant numbers of product sited and operating profitably in areas including Scandinavia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, and North America, it was the decision of the board of directors to drive the expansion forward through a new company.

"The formation of Project International means that the Project group of companies will continue to address the needs of the U.K. industry in a vigorous and imaginative manner at the same time as meeting international demands for product tailor-made to specific cultural and legislative requirements."

Project International was formally announced to the worldwide amusement industry at the ATEI show last month.

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Nintendo develops new portable game system

Nintendo Co. Ltd., located in Kyoto, has developed a new portable game system, Virtual Boy, that is scheduled to be out in April in Japan, *Game Machine* reported.

The game was developed through the application of the Virtual Display technology of U.S.-based Reflection Technology Inc. and was shown in January at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

Nintendo obtained an exclusive license to the technology, which utilizes a light emitting diode (LED) combined with a mirror that converts red rays into images against a dark background. By combining images in each eye, the result is solid 3-D images. The system is portable and uses neither a TV monitor nor a liquid crystal display.

Three software titles in cartridge form, *Super Space Pinball, Telero Boxer,* and *Mario Brother VB* will be released along with the game console.

Kieffer leaving Sega Europe

George Kieffer, deputy chairman of Sega Amusements Europe and executive director of Sega Europe Group Ltd., will leave the company to pursue a private career in the entertainment field, *Coin Slot International* reported.

Kieffer leaves following the restructuring of the coin-op divisions of the Europe division overseen by new CEO Bob Deith, director of the Sega subsidiary Deith Leisure.

"When I joined Sega in August 1991, I set myself certain targets," Kieffer told *Coin Slot*. "Having achieved these, it seemed an appropriate time to move on."

Duel takes the gold in London

Acclaim announced that Duel, a demonstration of the company's proprietary motion capture technology, was recently honored at the London Effects and Animation Festival (LEAF).

Duel won the gold award in the category of research. LEAF is Europe's largest graphics technology exposition.

Acclaim's motion capture technology has garnered several other industry awards, including a specially created award at Nicograph, Japan's annual computer graphics and interactive visualization conference, and recognition from Siggraph's Electronic Theatre.

In other Acclaim news, the company has completed the acquisition of Iguana Entertainment Inc., a major interactive entertainment software developer.

With the closing of the acquisition, Iguana becomes a wholly owned subsidiary of Acclaim and will continue to maintain offices in Texas and the U.K.

Bass Leisure appoints Moir

Bass Leisure has announced the appointment of Neil Moir as manager for new product development. He took up his appointment at the beginning of this month.

Moir is based at the company's offices at 3, the Maltings, Wetmore Road, Burton on Trent, Staffordshire, DE14 1SE. New product development, led by Moir and supported by a dedicated team, will bring added focus to the company's effort.

Moir has served as director of marketing for Barcrest Limited, the Bass Leisure gaming manufacturing subsidiary.

Best game performers announced in Japan

Japan's *Game Machine* has released its list of the best games in 1994 with Sega's *Puyo Puyo* topping the video category and Namco's *Ridge Racer* leading the pack of dedicated videos.

Puyo Puyo is a *Tetris*-like game in which players control a balloon-shaped object with a button and lever as it travels down the monitor screen.

Leading the list of pinballs was *Lethal Weapon 3* by Data East Pinball, although pin games are not widely operated in Japan.

Each game's score was calculated by totaling the magazine's semi-monthly ratings, which are based on income.

Here are the full results:

Best Software

1. *Puyo Puyo* (Compile/Sega)
2. *Super SFII Turbo* (Capcom)
3. *Virtua Fighter* (Sega)
4. *Super Real Mahjong* PIV (Seta)
5. *Shanghai* (Sun)
6. *Raiden II* (Seibu)
7. *Tetris* (Sega)
8. *Fatal Fury Special* (SNK)
9. *Super Shanghai* (Hot-B/Taito)
10. *Run & Gun* (Konami)
11. *Samurai Shodown* (SNK)
12. *Premier Soccer* (Konami)
13. *Fantastic Journey* (Konami)
14. *Columns* (Sega)
15. *Netto Gekito Quiz-to* (Namco)
16. *Super SFII* (Capcom)
17. *Art of Fighting 2* (SNK)
18. *Tant-R* (Sega)
19. *Mahjong Soo-Chi-Pie* (Jaleco)
20. *Great Sluggers* (Namco)
21. *Super Sidekicks 2* (SNK)
22. *DarkStalkers* [Vampire] (Capcom)
23. *Quiz Crayon* Shin-Chan (Taito)
24. *Crazy Cross* (Konami)
25. *Shanghai II* (Sun)

Best Dedicated Video

1. *Ridge Racer* (DX) (Namco)
2. *Virtua Fighter* (DX) (Sega)
3. *Lethal Enforcers* (Konami)
4. *Out Runners* (2P) (Sega)
5. *Daytona USA* (DX) (Sega)
6. *Virtua Racing* (2P) (Sega)
7. *Final Lap R* (SD) (Namco)
8. *Air Combat* (Namco)
9. *Cybersled* (2P) (Namco)
10. *Soreike Kokorogy 2* (Sega)
11. *Alien 3—The Gun* (Sega)
12. *Jurassic Park* (2P) (Sega)
13. *Title Fight* (2P) (Sega)
14. *Speed King—King of Quiz* (Jaleco)
15. *Speed Champion—King of Quiz* (Jaleco)

Best Pinball

1. *Lethal Weapon 3* (Data East)
2. *Star Wars* (Data East)
3. *Jurassic Park* (Data East)
4. *Street Fighter II* (Premier)
5. *Tales from the Crypt* (Data East)

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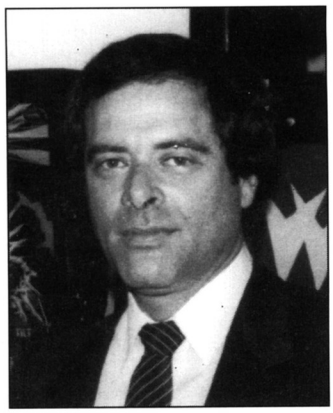
GameStar brings Stroll aboard



Michael Stroll

Mention the name Michael Stroll and longtime industry members will harken back to the days of early solid-state pinball games, when Stroll was at the helm of Williams Electronics.

Now Stroll is poised on the threshold of another new undertaking, that of leading the pinball and redemption game design and manufacturing house GameStar.

The new company has settled in Arlington Heights, Ill., and is busy producing games set to debut next month at ACME '95 in Reno, Nev.

As reported earlier in Play Meter, GameStar's staff includes veterans Rene Lopez as vice president and Tim Jackson as sales director. The design team boasts other memorable industry names, such as Mark Richie, Python Angelo, and Bill Pfutzenreuter.

Warner named to IFECA board

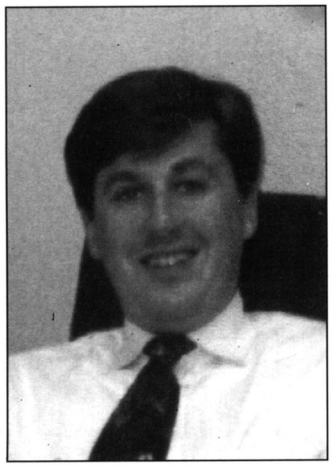
Gary Warner, vice president of Coin Concepts Inc., an East Brunswick, N.J., company that designs and manufactures redemption games, has been appointed to the International Family Entertainment Center Association board of directors.

In accepting the post, Warner stated, "The association has already established itself in a relatively short time as being the intra-industry information source and contact facilitator for family entertainment centers. This industry is growing and Coin Concepts plans on growing right along with it."

IFECA president Joey Herd commented, "Gary is an energetic guy with a lot of great ideas. We're very pleased to have him on our team."

Warner has been with Coin Concepts for four years. He recently served as chairman of the Silent Auction committee for Fun Expo '94, the IFECA's official trade show. The auction netted $33,000 for the association.

According to Warner, most of the proceeds have been earmarked to fund a series of market research studies on industry practices and trends.



Gary Warner

Gail Rubin

ALG names Rubin

American Laser Games, the Albuquerque, N.M.-based manufacturer of full-motion, live-action video games for the coin machine industry and entertainment software for home CD-ROM systems, has named Gail Rubin its director of public relations.

Rubin will handle news media relations, corporate communications, and community relations for the company. She has been working with ALG for three years as a public relations contractor.

Rubin's background includes five years as a TV producer with C-SPAN, as well as experience in broadcast promotions in Washington, D.C.

Valley appoints Kristal

Pool table and electronic dart game maker Valley Recreation Products of Bay City, Mich., has appointed Dave Kristal as national promotions manager.

Kristal has been the coordinator of the company's Valley Gold tournament program and served on the AMOA National Dart Association board of directors for three years. He joined Valley in 1987.

Said Doug Blair, vice president of sales and marketing, "Dave has many strengths that have contributed to Valley's success over the past seven years, and his progress in the company recognizes this. But more than that, it also demonstrates that Valley will continue to emphasize and commit to promotions for both pool tables and darts for our distributor and operator base."

Kristal will continue to manage and develop Valley's leagues, tournaments, and other promotional activities.

Reber appointed new CEO

The board of directors of the Michigan Distributors and Vendors Association and the Michigan Coin Machine Operators Association announce the appointment of Polly Reber to the post of chief executive officer.

Reber replaces Candace Super-Cummings, who recently moved from Lansing, Mich., to Washington, D.C.

Reber will direct the operations of the MDVA and MCMOA, associations that represent the business interests of Michigan's coin machine operators, distributors, wholesalers, and vendors.

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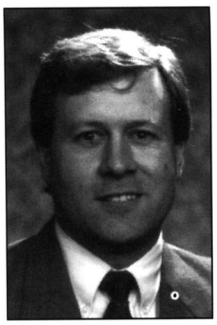
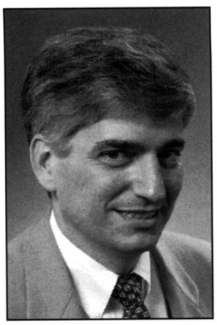
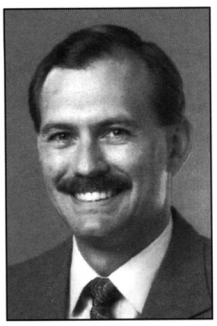
Bally Gaming appointments



John Garner



Stephen Sutherland



Michael Farnham

Bally Gaming of Las Vegas, Nev., has announced appointments in four executive positions.

John Garner, former controller, takes on new responsibilities as vice president of finance.

Stephen Sutherland, who has 15 years of management experience, joins the company as vice president of sales.

Michael Farnham, who spent the last two years at Bally Systems and has 19 years of administrative and business management experience, accepts the reins of director of sales.

Barton Jacka, former director of government affairs and gaming compliance for the company, becomes vice president of government affairs.

VLT selects Burt

Video Lottery Technologies has named Richard Burt to the post of chairman. Burt is a former U.S. Ambassador to Germany and former Assistant Secretary of State in the Reagan administration.

VLT is the Atlanta-headquartered company that numbers among its subsidiaries Video Lottery Consultants, Automated Wagering International, and United Tote.

J. Stephen Vanderwoude, president and CEO of VLT said, "Ambassador Burt's international reputation and experience as a strategist and negotiator are directly relevant to VLT's domestic and global prospects. In selecting Burt, the board has gained a chairman who is respected at home and abroad."

Burt noted that opportunities for lottery, gaming, and tote systems continue to grow throughout the world, particularly in Canada, Europe, Asia, South America, and the United States.

Tunstall joins BWB

Don Tunstall, former general manager at Brady Distributing in Orlando, Fla., has joined the British company BWB-Newark as its U.S. sales manager.

Tunstall is presently establishing a distributor network for the BWB line, which includes a new electromechanical game, *Sunset*, featuring skill-stop reels. Brady is one of the first distributors to carry BWB product.

Tunstall can be reached at (407) 578-1238. ▲

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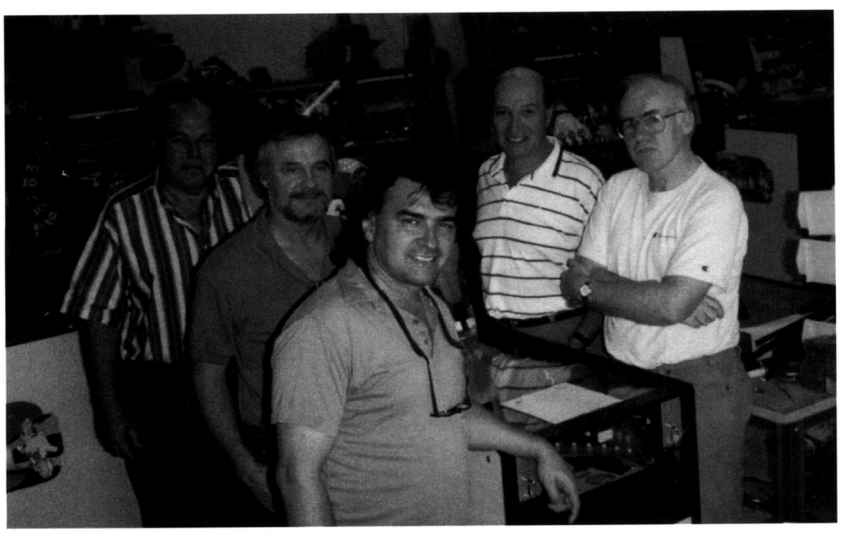
COVER STORY

Benchmark lets its games do the talking

If you wondered why Ron Halliburton, Al Kress, and Arnold Kaminkow named their new company Benchmark, you need only look in the nearest dictionary. Benchmark is defined as "something that serves as a standard by which others may be measured," which accurately and aptly describes the goals set forth for Benchmark.

However, it's not that easy to get the three men to talk about the company. Instead, they prefer to talk about the industry and where its headed. "The real story here is interactive skill redemption," Arnold said.



Key executives, (l-r): Al Kress, Ron Halliburton, Roland Berrios, Arnold Kaminkow, and Tom Gilbert.

Arnold, Ron, and Al, who have over 110 years combined experience in the coin-op business, are using their knowledge to build a company that fits into today's entertainment industry. And they stress the entertainment part.

"We are in the entertainment industry and if you lose sight of that fact, you lose sight of what you are doing," declared Kaminkow. Arnold began his industry career at General Vending in the early '60s. He went on to serve as president of Robert Jones International, which later became Bally N.E. Distributing, president of Centuri, the former Allied Leisure, and as president of Sega's Time Out Family Amusement chain of arcades.

It was while he was with Sega that Arnold became acutely aware of the value of the family entertainment business. He explained: "The evolution of our industry began with Nolan Bushnell. *Pong* was the catalyst that changed the coin machine business to the entertainment business. He was a true visionary. He recognized the value of family business and saw a need to increase the player base. *Pong* brought in a broader player base."

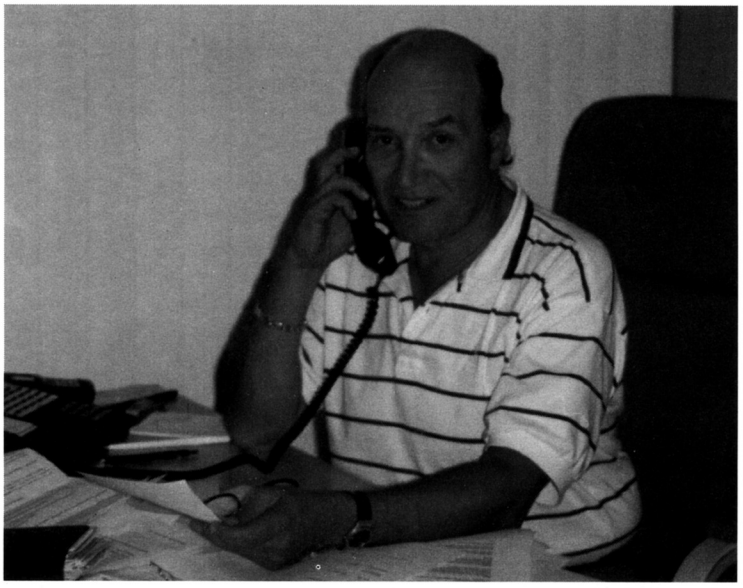
Arnold saw this same philosophy first-hand while at Sega. "We were ahead of our time," he began. "The industry was going far beyond 12-year-old kids and branching out to families. I saw then the future of bringing families into locations to play. And that's where redemption comes in."

He continued, "Basically, redemption is offering fun for the whole family. I've been fortunate to have traveled extensively throughout the United States, U.K., Europe, and the Far East and it has given

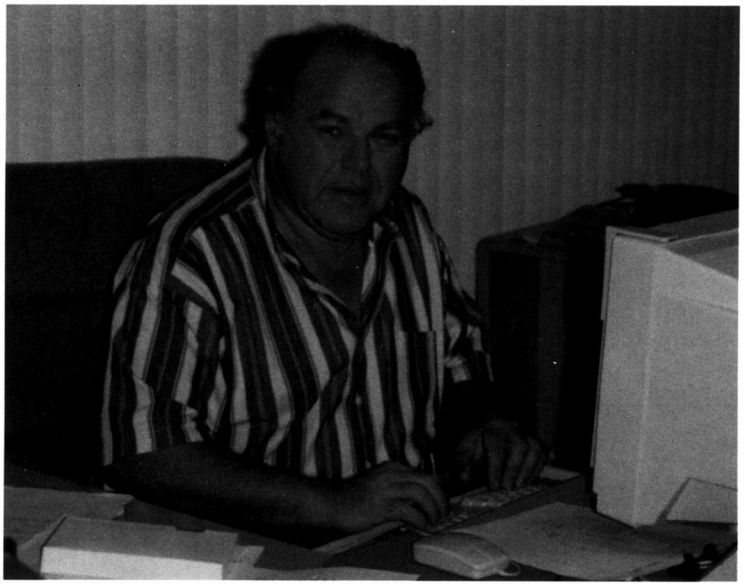
me a keen understanding of where redemption is taking us. For example, in Taiwan, Hong Kong, The Philippines, and Singapore redemption has gone far beyond where it is here in the United States. The operators there are literally in the 'retail merchandise business,' providing product to their customers that you wouldn't believe. In Taiwan, families save tickets to get a motorbike!"

He added, "Also in Taiwan, players are issued savings passbooks to deposit their winning game tickets, just like at a bank. Instead of carrying around hundreds of tickets, they can simply give them to the location where they were won to be deposited in the passbook for future use. If the credits aren't redeemed by the end of the month, the customer is issued 'interest,' say at 10 percent per month. This is emphasizing the fact that tickets are as valuable as money."

Ron Halliburton also knows the industry better than most. He was one of the founders of Allied Leisure, which became Centuri. After his success at Allied, he formed Arcade Engineering, which was purchased by Bally. As part of that deal, Ron stayed on developing games until his retirement in 1982.



Owner/partner Arnold Kaminkow



Owner/partner Al Kress

But Ron soon found out that retirement was not for him, so in 1986 he formed Jeron Technology—shortened to J-Tech—the world's largest manufacturer of on-premises pagers.

The third partner, Al Kress, got into the coin machine business just out of college, operating large routes in the New York area. In the '70s he started his own coin machine distributorship, which eventually included four offices. After selling to Betson, Al began developing large entertainment complexes because he had seen the value in family entertainment. Al brought that knowledge to Benchmark.

Arnold, Ron, and Al all developed a keen awareness of the industry and know where it's headed. All arrows are pointing toward redemption as far as they are concerned. "To be honest, I've seen this industry for 30 years and it was always a street location-based industry with pinballs, jukeboxes, pool tables, and cigarette machines," Arnold noted. "Then along came video and digital jukeboxes and our industry was propelled out of the dark, dingy image it had. I remember when we were afraid to tell anyone what we did for a livelihood because they'd look at you funny.

"Today, it's a sensational industry. It's a recognizable part of the entertainment business. Now when people find out you are in the coin-op business, they want to ask questions. It's respectable," Arnold declared.

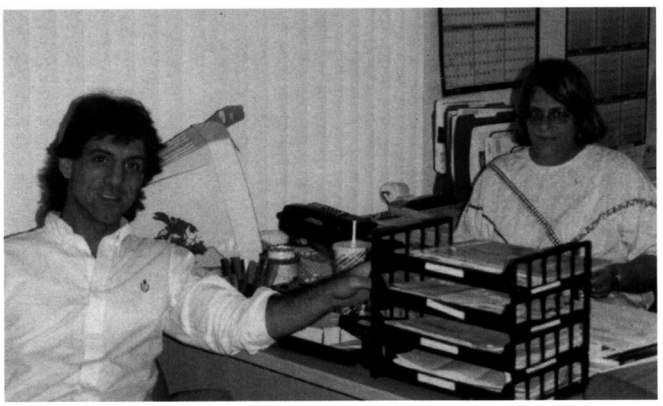
other equipment in the amusement game industry. They always stay fresh and create excitement and fun for the player."

Arnold, Ron, and Al talk freely about what they see as the future of the industry—redemption. Or should we say fun retailing?

bination of both that is the key to redemption success," Arnold explained.

They have convinced us that redemption—fun retailing—is good for family entertainment centers and large arcades, but what about street locations? "It'll work!" Arnold exclaimed. "I understand that

The production team, (l-r): Dean Lovelace, Mark Williams, Raymond Bonilla, Robert Izquierdo, Arnold Kaminkow, and Tom Corday.



Controller Fernando Tereso with Cheryl Johnson, executive secretary.

Benchmark opened in January 1993 without a lot of hoopla and fanfare from its founders. However, its first game, *Roll-For-Gold* gave them all of the publicity they needed. Ironically, while operators were raving about the game itself, few could remember the name of the company showing it. Of course, Arnold thinks this is the way it should be: "How many times have you heard the folks at a new company ranting and raving about how great they are. Then their product is shown and it's a dog. We will let our product do the talking for us."

Benchmark is committed to the industry and is looking toward a bright future. "Redemption is showing no sign of letting up. Saturation? We've only seen the tip of the iceberg and it's a big iceberg!" exclaimed Arnold. "Redemption games don't get tired like

"We are in the entertainment industry and if you lose sight of that fact, you lose sight of what you are doing."

"When an operator makes the choice to get into redemption, he is choosing to get into the 'retail fun merchandise business.' And it's a commitment that cannot be taken lightly. Redemption is far more than placing games that spit out tickets. It is vital to have merchandise that has a perceived value for players to give them incentive to play the games. If you have great games and no prizes, it won't work. If you have great prizes and games that aren't fun, it won't work either. It's a combination of both that is the key to redemption success," Arnold explained.

They have convinced us that redemption—fun retailing—is good for family entertainment centers and large arcades, but what about street locations? "It'll work!" Arnold exclaimed. "I understand that street locations are competing with arcades; they have videos, pool tables, jukeboxes, pinballs, etc. They could add redemption but can't store, display, and distribute prizes. Well, what about a catalog? Street locations could have a catalog listing a variety of prizes with redeemable ticket values. Players then could save tickets and choose from the items shown. It's one way street operators can compete even in this area."

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prizes and merchandise offered for tickets in family entertainment centers. Benchmark intends to offer a product line of games to give players the most fun for tickets they'll find anywhere. And Benchmark has the staff to accomplish this lofty goal.

In addition to the three founders, there's Roland Berrios, whom Arnold describes as a multi-talented creative game designer. Roland does game graphic artwork and game, cabinet, and game feature design. His official title is director of design, but as he says, "I wear a variety of hats." Roland has been in the coin-op business since 1972, when he was at Allied Leisure. He left Allied with Ron to form Arcade Engineering. After a short hiatus from the industry he's back.

Engineering department, (l-r): Vice president of engineering Ron Halliburton, director of design Roland Berrios, and software director Tom Gilbert.

Tom Gilbert also worked with Ron at Arcade Engineering and J-Tech. Ron describes Tom as "the foremost game programmer in the industry as far as understanding what it takes to program and develop games." Ron and Tom have worked together so long and so well that between them they have this uncanny knowledge of what a game can and has to do.

Benchmark has an impressive product line. Arnold explained that with redemption you don't have to rush a product into production because you will be selling it for years to come. "We can test a game for six months or more to make sure we can't possibly make it any better. You are building a product line. You don't build a game, sell it for a few months, and then move on to your next game like pinball and video. You always will be selling redemption games as new locations open, and adding to the expanding current locations base. But I want to emphasize that you must build quality redemption games. I've seen a lot of inferior product because companies try to rush product out because they are used to doing that with video and pinball."

Benchmark's current line of coin rolldown, interactive skill redemption games are *Roll-For-Gold,* a straight coin-to-target game, and *Golden Goose,* a coin to progressive target ticket redemption game. Arnold hinted that there are several more games that are nearly ready to be introduced. From the experience the company boasts and the games so far, we are eager to see its next product.▲

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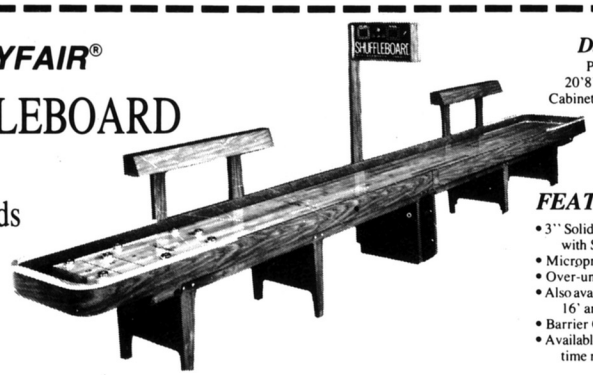

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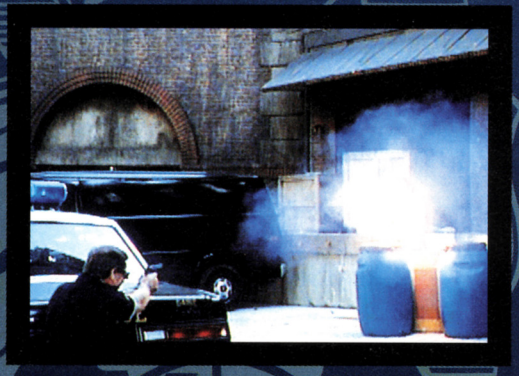

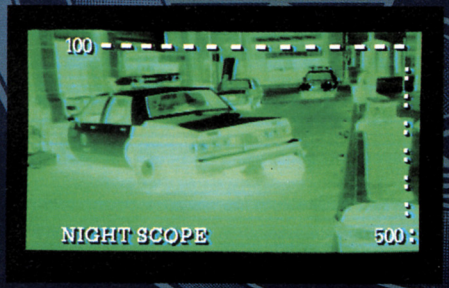

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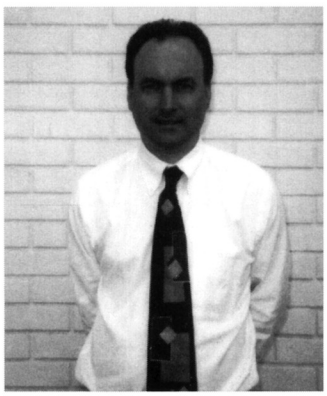
GUEST COMMENTARY

Operators must get more than a quarter



John Ridgway

There are two industries that, perhaps, I'll never get the complete economic grasp on. Let me talk about the first one, and then I'll tie it to the next one. In the mid-'80s I sold my distributorship, left the coin-op business, and jumped blindly into the music business.

I figured that since I knew music and loved listening to my 20 zigawatt sound system at home, I'd be a natural at music retailing. I took my dough from the previous business and opened up one of the most beautiful music stores you've ever seen. It sure was fun! I sold lots of CDs, which were just hitting the market, and rented out lots of video tapes.

I made one big mistake, however. I priced my product so I'd be competitive with others selling the same thing. I assumed that if they were making a profit at the prices they were charging, I must be too. Sure it's a ridiculous statement, but I didn't think I had a choice. I HAD to price competively or I wouldn't sell product—right? If I didn't I thought my customers would go down the street and buy there instead.

Guess what? I'm not selling music anymore, and I didn't make any money, either. In fact, I lost all the money I started with and more besides. Talk about a wake up call! Lucky for me I was at a point in my life where I could lose the money and start over again in the industry I knew and loved—coin-op.

How does the music industry, and my experiences in it, tie into the coin-op business? The independent music store owners and the American coin machine operator share something in common that I just don't understand: the record companies pass along price increases every so often to the store owners who, in turn, don't always pass a proportional amount to their customers. The net result is that there are virtually no independent music stores left. And you know what? The American coin machine operators are in much worse shape! Most operators have not raised game play prices since the early '70s! In a way, you should be congratulated because I can't believe ANY of you are still in business.

The manufacturers sure have passed on THEIR costs! Every operator should be given a medal for busting their butts all these years and for surviving well into the '90s. Operators are among the most intelligent and savvy businessmen we have when you think about paying more for product and not passing any of the cost onto their customers! There are few industries that could perform as well, given the circumstances.

I have a concern, however. Just like in the music business, there will come a time when you simply cannot survive any longer on the cash flow your business is currently generating. It's my opinion, judging from what many of you have told me this year, that the time has arrived already for many.

My friends, you have been asking the manufacturers for something to boost your collections. Most of them are trying,

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believe me. Coming from two sides of the industry, I'm more aware of the costs involved in bringing quality product to this industry. If you knew the costs, I'm sure you would stop blaming the manufacturers for your problems (i.e. game prices) and would begin looking at your own business practices.

I don't mean to sound negative about operators, but if you don't ask yourself tough questions and look at ways to raise your revenue now, while you still can, you may have few options in the near future. Costs are going to continue to rise if you want competitive product from the manufacturers.

One thing often stated by the manufacturers—and it just sank in at the last AMOA show—is that game prices are roughly the same in other countries, and yet the operators there are doing much better. Why are American operators still charging 25 cents to play a $5,000 video game? My mind used to quickly justify it by saying that the kids won't put 50 cents in a game, that's why. And I'll bet most of you are thinking the same. And that may be true if everyone continues to operate under the same status quo. Our game players will NEVER put two quarters into a game if you don't ask them to.

The manufacturers have a point: we must start charging more for our product. The games offered today are far superior to the products of yesterday. Your vehicle costs have risen, labor costs have gone up, not to mention insurance, game costs, and the list goes on. And yet, none of those escalating costs are passed on to players. You may have to stop worrying about what the guy down the street is doing and start charging what you have to. It might hurt for awhile, but in the long run you will be much better off.

Take it from someone who learned the hard way. I tried to do what the other guy was doing, even though it hurt my business. Ironically, I had to close that business anyway. Don't worry so much about what the next guy is doing. You are the only one in charge; isn't that one of the reasons you're in this? Didn't you want to be your own boss?

Today would be a great day to do just that! If you have to, start with just one game in each location. But whatever you do, get out there and do it. Worried that your players might leave? Well, they might—for a short time. But when that next killer game comes out and you are the only one in the neighborhood who has it because your competition can't afford it, you'll feel mighty proud!

Speaking of competition, we have a customer in Los Angeles who owns an arcade. He decided that he couldn't make it anymore at 25-cent play. He raised his game pricing and after a few months he is absolutely thrilled with his revenue. He couldn't have done it on 25-cent play. He was just as concerned about competition as anyone else would be, but he took it upon himself to take action. I hope all of you will too; 50-cent play makes great sense. ▲

John Ridgway is sales manager at Betson Pacific and edits the "Betson Bullet," a newsletter that is read by over 3,000 customers. John's commentary is an expansion of a piece he wrote for the newsletter in November.

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BUSINESS FEATURE

Devil is in the details with video depreciation

While taxes may be the lesser evil of life's infamous constants, April 15 is just around the corner and any new found savings at this time of year may seem like a reprieve from the financial grave.

More than a year and a half ago video game operators were given such a break in the form of a private letter ruling obtained from the IRS by former AMOA president Craig Johnson. That ruling was considered a milestone for the industry, and it is proving to be more profitable and more popular as each tax year passes.

"In reality, if you have not collected data yourself you would have to use industry averages for three years."

The ruling which Johnson received allowed him, and other operators indirectly, to use a more advantageous method of calculating the depreciation on their video games.

That method, known as income forecasting, calculates depreciation by computing each machines' annual revenue in relation to its overall projected revenue. In depreciating video games this produces radically different results from the traditional depreciation method, which is based on a set life of five or seven years as spelled out by federal income tax rules (MACRS).

Here is how the formula works:

Depreciation = (Cost-Salvage) x Current Net Income/Total Forecasted Net Income

When the ruling was first announced, the AMOA, working in conjunction with the Deloitte & Touche accounting branch in Salt Lake City produced a report detailing how the method can be used.

Some operators were already using the method prior to the ruling. While it is difficult to determine how many more operators have adopted the new approach since the ruling, Johnson said he believes that number is on the rise.

"Based on the number of calls I get about it, I assume there are a lot more people using it," he said.

According to some calculations a relatively small operator can defer up to $30,000 in tax liability a year. A deferment of that magnitude over the course of several years can equate to real money savings.

The five to seven year lifespan provided for under MACRS grossly overstates the operating period of most video arcade games. While the equipment may last for the five or seven year period, a game generally loses appeal after the first or second year thus effectively ending its usefulness. With the uneven flow of income based on popularity, a game's useful life can last even less than a year if it fails to catch on with the playing public.

"Sometimes after two or three months, there's no earn-

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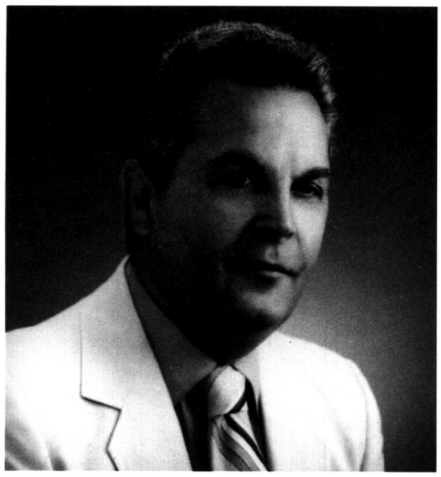
Craig Johnson



Gene Urso

Jim Hayes

ing power or selling power," says Gene Urso of Madison Coin Machine Co. in Monona, Wis., who has implemented income forecasting for the first time this year. "We simply think it's to our advantage."

This is what Deloitte & Touch came up with in a survey of operators comparing income forecast depreciation percentages to those computed under MACRS:

	Income Forecast Method	5 Year MACRS	7 Year MACRS
Year 1	53.37%	20.00%	14.29%
Year 2	23.33%	32.00%	24.49%
Year 3	13.54%	19.20%	17.49%
Year 4	8.60%	11.52%	12.49%
Year 5	1.16%	11.52%	8.93%

As seen in the survey results most of the tax savings from using the income forecasting method come in the first year a game is operated. Assuming an operator is in the 28 percent tax bracket and receives no salvage value from the machine, a $3,000 video game depreciated 50 percent in the first year under income forecasting would result in a tax deferral of $252.

Debate over other games

IRS officials have previously allowed the use of the forecasting method for properties such as movies, television programs, books, and musical compositions, all of which generate income based on their popularity as opposed to their physical life.

While the current ruling cannot be cited as a precedent, it is being stated as current IRS policy with regard to video games. It does not specifically include other coin-op amusement machines.

Some operators predict that it will eventually be expanded to include other equipment, possibly as a result of another private letter ruling. Others suggest that while use of the method for other equipment may not be challenged by the IRS, it is also unlikely that another landmark private letter ruling is forthcoming.

"To win a private letter ruling is a shock," Johnson said. "When we first took on this battle a lot of people said we were nuts."

The basic requirements for using the income forecasting method are as follows: 1) the physical life of the asset must be largely irrelevant to its income producing potential; 2) each asset must have unique income producing potential; 3) the useful life of the asset must be measured in terms of its income producing ability.

While using the income forecasting method for video games, which have such a high rate of turnover, is clearly a boon for operators, there is much debate over whether it is as applicable to other coin machines.

"There are some scenarios with other products where there is not the advantage," Johnson said.

Many operators agree that it would not be as advantageous for equipment such as juke-

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boxes and pool tables, which have a longer earning life, and some contend that even the small savings reaped on pinball machines might not be worth it.

According to Johnson's calculations, the tax benefits of depreciating pinball machines using the income forecasting method versus a five-year MACRS is fairly small and is even further skewed when operators sell their used games. "You're treading on unknown waters and the difference (in the depreciation percentage) is not as big as video games," he said.

Salvage value can also play a large part in whether the income forecasting method is profitable for game operators because MACRS does not take into account resale worth. So operators who sell their games while they are still popular decrease the benefits of using income forecasting.

Another potential downside to the method is the accounting work required. Income forecasting is not a free ticket to a tax deferment while machines are still earning money. It does require a significant effort to calculate the annual depreciation so that those tax savings can be substantiated. Courts have ruled that failing to keep adequate records can result in the disallowance of deductions computed using the method.

To group or not to group

According to the AMOA report, there are a number of ways to track the information necessary to substantiate use of the income forecasting method. The first is to track the income of each game or groups of the same game.

A number of operators are already using software to track their games for in-house accounting, and forecasting the revenue for tax purposes is now made easier through software add-ons that estimate the depreciation.

James Hayes of Gem Music and Vending in Dayton, Ohio, who has been using income forecasting to depreciate his video games for the last two fiscal years, said his firm uses the popular software program Silent Partner, which includes an add-on for depreciation developed specifically for accommodating the terms of the private letter ruling.

"Once you set it up you just have to push a button," he said. "It gets a little confusing tracking your games (for tax purposes) when you're kitting them. That's the only problem I see."

With a system already in place to track games, Urso said he too intends to utilize computer technology to calculate his depreciation.

"We have no problem keeping good records," he said. "We've got the facts and figures down to show exactly, for instance, what *NBA JAM* did in the first three or four months."

Another way of tracking games for tax purposes, according to the AMOA report, is to select a random sample of the year's new games and create a single income forecast depreciation percentage based on the group's performance.

A third alternative is to track games in theme categories, grouping driving games or fighting games together, to make the necessary calculations.

The AMOA report cautions that it is not certain whether the IRS will allow using groups of games, either randomly selected or chosen according to theme. Thus, it is important to be able to substantiate that the method used closely matches the results of calculating depreciation on a game-by-game basis if possible.

However, some operators say that in practical terms depreciating games in groups is the only feasible method. In fact, many contend that a title can be interpreted as a type of game, such as all video games, as opposed to a particular game.

"That's probably the biggest point of contention in this area," Johnson said. "I know one person who does it on a game-by-game basis, was doing it even before the ruling. But at the beginning of each year he spends 40 hours just to prepare depreciation."

According to Johnson, tracking games by groups and using historical data and earning trends from past years is ultimately a much more precise way of calculating the total forecasted income necessary to figure the depreciation.

Calculating future revenue

Attempting to project revenue on each new game, Johnson said, "is nothing but a shot in the dark. I argued to the IRS that using the historical data for all video games is much more accurate."

It makes more sense, Johnson explains, to calculate future revenue by looking at video game revenue as a whole from previous years instead of attempting to predict the roller coaster revenue that individual games will generate.

This can also be examined in relation to the IRS' aversion to utilizing industry averages for

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calculating depreciation, excepting machines that are put in use near the end of the tax year. And in such cases, the IRS will apparently allow operators to adjust their depreciation upward of the average monthly percentage if they have not passed their peak season yet. In other words, a game might have been on the street or in the arcade for only two months, but those two months happen to be when the operator generates a large percentage of his income.

"It appears likely that the IRS would challenge the depreciation deductions of an operator that used industry averages to compute depreciation for all years," the AMOA report says. "As such, it is not advisable to use industry averages beyond the first year."

However, it may be idealistic on the part of the government to believe that operators can estimate their total revenue without the use of extensive business data and income trends from previous years, or in the absence of such information—industry averages.

"In reality, if you have not collected data yourself," Johnson said, "you would have to use industry averages for three years" to establish the baseline necessary to make a revenue forecast.

Operators planning to adopt the income forecasting method should consult with their tax advisor before doing so. They are also advised to attach a statement of intent to their tax returns notifying the IRS that an election to use the method has been made.

For more detailed information contact the AMOA at (800) YES-AMOA.▲

Operator, accountant share forecast history

Gene Winstead

Using an income forecasting method for depreciation is the only accurate way to portray the economics of software-driven coin amusement machines, says Gene Winstead.

"It mirrors the industry," he said.

Winstead, of American Amusement Arcades in Minneapolis, has been using a version of the income forecasting method to calculate depreciation for close to 12 years.

While the company has never received a private letter ruling, Winstead's CPA and chief operating officer Bob Bayer said they had an accounting firm do extensive research on the issue in the early 1980s. "It was a place to hang our hat on if the IRS came after us," Bayer explained.

"Technically we did it for 12 years without being challenged," said Winstead. "AMOA really fought the fight."

The method used by Winstead's company is a slight variation on the format developed by the AMOA. Bayer said they depreciate games 48 percent in the first year, 35 percent in the second, and 17 percent in the third. AMOA numbers are slightly higher in the first year and then lower in the second and third.

The system Bayer currently uses, in particular the revenue forecast, has been developed based on trends gleaned from previous years.

"We've been using it for quite some time; it may be that we're not making enough depreciation in the first years," said Winstead, adding that his company is looking at adopting a more aggressive depreciation method.

"Bob set it up with some basis. Most CPAs would not understand the short life of our equipment," he added. "We came to the same conclusion as the AMOA from a different angle. Longer life depreciation was really unfair to the operator."

The real goal, Bayer said, is to have depreciation percentages in each year match the percentage of total revenue in that same year. That provides for tax savings in the early years, when compared to a five- or seven-year MACRS, and less depreciation deductions in the later years.

"This gives you a true market feel; it realistically portrays a non-cash expense," Bayer said. "We're talking about an accounting principle known as matching, matching the expenses to the revenue. It's also an operating principle that allows us to get better return on our investment."

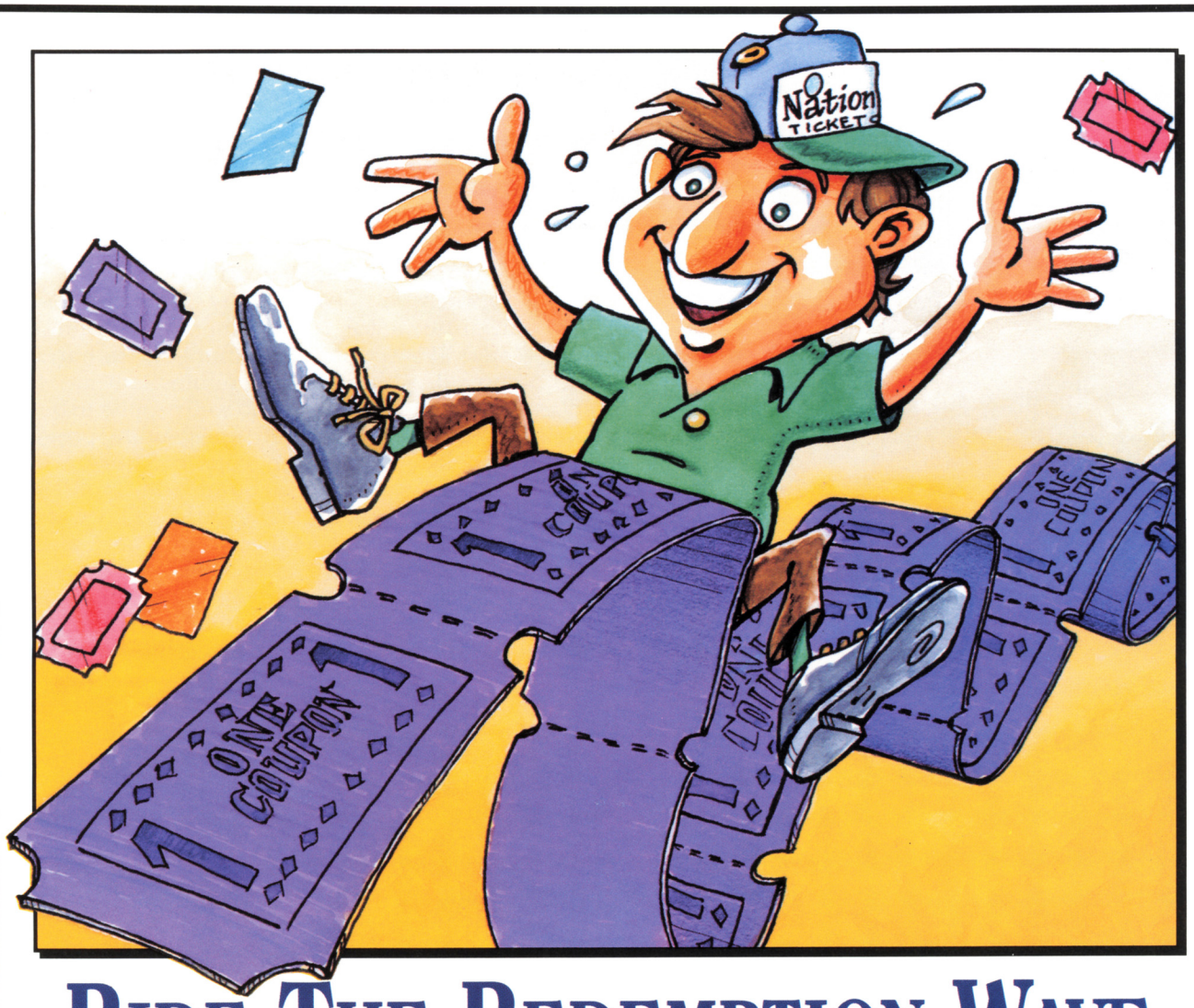
While Winstead said he does use the forecasting method for his pingames, which have a heavy turnover, he has been "straying away" from applying it to his redemption equipment. "The harder assets like pool tables and jukeboxes we also treat differently," he said.

Games are depreciated in groups, with separate categories for driving games, fighting games, etc. Both Winstead and Bayer said they would like to track depreciation on each and every game. But echoing other operators, they said the resources to do that just aren't available at present.

In order to pursue a more aggressive depreciation model, Bayer said the company could start with AMOA's percentages and work from there. "I'd probably start using their percentages and see if history bears that out," he said. "We still have to make the adjustments" on revised total income projections.

But Winstead cautioned that operators should not recklessly adopt aggressive depreciation figures.

"You do have to back it up; it can still be challenged by the IRS," he added. "That's why you better be correct with your income forecasting."



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Randy Fromm's TechFest at ACME '95

Randy Fromm, the industry's most famous technician, will present something really new and different at ACME '95 in Reno. It's called TechFest and Randy describes it as the first time ever at a major trade show that the "coin-op technicians will get the special recognition they deserve."

TechFest will include lectures, presentations, demonstrations, displays, PCB repair tools and supplies, an employment "job shop," multiple video theaters presenting non-stop tech training films, and more.

TechFest will take place in a special section of the main exhibit floor, where exhibitors are invited to participate in a special display area. There will be exhibits by suppliers of parts, diagnostic tools and equipment, PCB rework equipment, and any other company wanting to talk with technicians.

Randy is so excited about this new concept in education for technicians that we wanted to hear more from him about TechFest. Here's what he had to say:

Q: How is this different from the typical seminar program you present at major shows?

A: We need to make it clear that it's on the main floor and it's an ongoing educational experience. Technicians could spend all three days at TechFest and still not see and experience everything we have to offer. Attention all technicians: tell your boss that this is one show that he should bring you to. It will be well worth the trip.

The lectures are not going to be the formal sitdown type of seminars. We're going to have an open amphitheater for one-hour mini seminars. We'll have manufacturer's representatives talking about their product, telling what failed and how to fix it. All who agreed to participate admit that games do fail, so they'll tell us how to fix them. This will be technician-to-technician talk.

Twice a day I'll be doing monitor troubleshooting seminars in which I'll demonstrate hands-on monitor troubleshooting techniques. Also we're going to be running video tape training programs on game repair. There will be chairs around the monitor so technicians can sit and watch as long as they want. There also will be one in Spanish.

Another unique concept is encouraging demonstrations in the booths by the exhibitors, which previously was impractical. For example, there will be demonstrations on test equipment.

Q: Tell us more about the job shop?

A: It'll be a bulletin board to bring operators looking for technicians and technicians looking for a job together.

Q: You mentioned the technician certification program in one of your articles. Can you briefly explain this concept?

A: This is a hopeful thing. People will be able to sign up for participation in the National Amusement Technician Certification Program.

Q: How will the exhibitors be included in TechFest?

A: The TechFest section will be exclusively for companies who want to reach the technicians. They can have their booth in TechFest or they can have a satellite booth. This could include the service departments of the major manufacturers so the service people can talk to the technicians; national parts houses like Wico; and manufacturers of test equipment.

As I said, this section will be devoted to technicians. They don't get the recognition they deserve and you can imagine where the industry would be without them!

If you want more information on TechFest, contact W.T. Glasgow at (708) 333-9292 or FAX (708) 333-4086.▲

Tired of walking the tax and management tightrope?

Relief is on the way in the form of Play Meter's expanded 21-page Tax Tips and Management section aimed at helping the small businessman. There's a delicate balance between what's good for your company and what government extracts in April. Longtime columnist and tax guru Irving Blackman explains several measures you can take to legally lighten your tax burden and beat the IRS at its own game. Management expert Channing Hayden offers sage advice on how to salvage a sinking enterprise: where to go for help, how to keep the bankruptcy bogeyman away, and how to interpret financial statements and profitability ratios.

MANAGEMENT

Mayday, mayday, my business is sinking

Part 1: Where to go for help

When your small or mid-sized company is in trouble, what should you do? There are 1,700 turnaround consultants in the United States who would like you to hire them, but frankly, if a small business is in crisis, it usually can't afford a for-profit consultant.

Help you can afford

Surprisingly, there are a number of sources of no-cost or low-cost help, and first on the list is the Small Business Administration. The SBA has three programs that provide no-cost consultants for small businesses: the Service Corps of Retired Executives (S.C.O.R.E.), a nationwide network of Small Business Development Centers, and Small Business Institutes across the country.

To be eligible, you must meet the SBA size standards for small businesses accompanying this article. The Small Business Administration says, "Most businesses are considered small by (our) standards."

S.C.O.R.E. (the name says it all) is staffed by retired business people who volunteer their time to help small businesses. Through S.C.O.R.E., you should be able to find a counselor with expertise applicable to arcades or amusement centers, if not one who has successfully operated a business exactly like yours. Help from someone who faced your problems, and overcame them, may be just the prescription for what ails your company.

Most Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) operate through universities, although you may find one through your state's Department of Economic Development or other sources.

SBDCs furnish paid counselors to help you; paid by the SBA, not you. SBDCs associated with a college or university may make use of the school's faculty and students to help the SBDC counselors. You're responsible for the cost if those resources are used.

I asked Rene Puissegur, Development Counselor with the University of New Orleans SBDC, what's the difference between S.C.O.R.E. and a SBDC. Essentially, S.C.O.R.E.'s strength is providing counselors with specific experience in a given industry. SBDCs' counselors have MBA degrees with a diverse knowledge base, but not necessarily experience in a particular industry.

The perfect solution may be alphabet soup. S.C.O.R.E. and the SBDC program work together. With a counselor from each (perfectly acceptable, according to Mr. Puissegur) you get practical experience and theoretical grounding at no cost to you.

The SBA's Small Business Institutes (SBI) are associated with colleges and universities, too, making use of faculty and students to perform a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) of clients' businesses. As with its other two programs, the SBA, not you, pays for the SWOT study.

As far as advice to small businesses using S.C.O.R.E., the

Channing Hayden

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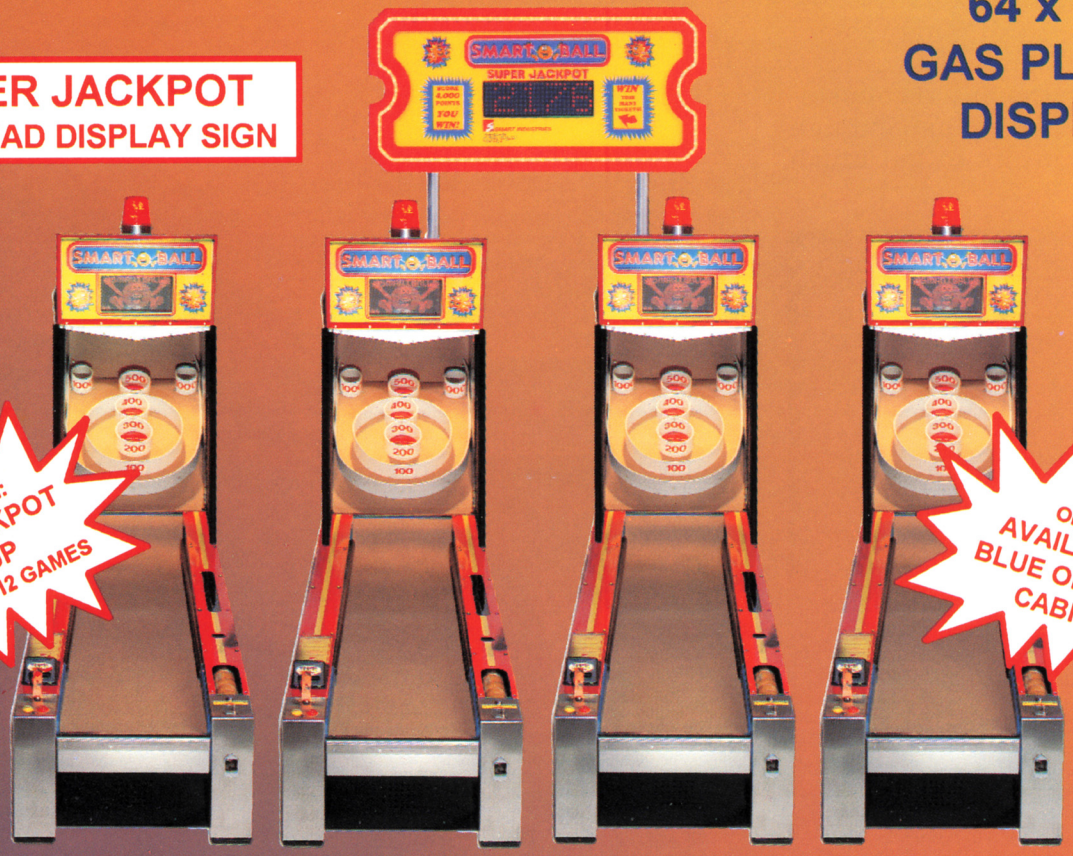

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SBDC program, or the SBIs, Mr. Puissegur says to come in before your problem becomes a disaster. Much of his SBDC's work is crisis management because clients wait too long to seek help. When a small business owner does finally show up at an SBDC, he may sometimes find a one- or two-week wait before the initial counseling session, more than enough time for matters to get much worse.

"The true test of a consultant's professionalism is how he approaches your problem."

Don't expect miracles from the counselors. I was once assigned an SBDC client who sat across the desk from me at our first meeting and said, "I filed Chapter 11 last week. Now what?" After seeing his financials, I suggested a novena to St.Jude, the patron saint of impossible causes.

If there is no S.C.O.R.E. program, SBDC, or SBI nearby, you may want to go directly to your local business college for help, engaging a faculty member(s) as a consultant. The cost of this option depends on the arrangements you make with the consultant.

Another alternative is offering your amusement center as a case study for one of the business school's courses. This is similar to going to an SBI, though the class may focus on just one aspect of your business, i.e. finance or marketing. The analysis and insight of bright students guided by an experienced professor may be quite helpful. And, as the subject of a case study, you may get that help for as little as the price of a few pizzas.

Your local Chamber of Commerce may provide some limited counseling, as might your in-

Sources of no-cost and low-cost business consultants

The Small Business Administration through these programs:

1. Service Corps of Retired Executives (S.C.O.R.E.)
2. Small business development centers
3. Small business institutes
4. Local universities and business schools—engaging faculty a consultants or offering your business as a case study
5. Local chamber of commerce
6. Trade association
7. Local library or bookstore (start with "Valuing a Business, the Analysis and Appraisal of Closely Held Companies" by Shannon Pratt (Second Edition, Richard Irwin Inc., 1989, ISBN 1-55623-127-X).

SBA size standards for small businesses

(Based on average annual receipts for the last three complete fiscal years, or the average number of employees per pay period during the most recently completed 12-month period.)

Retail and Service	Under $13.5 million
Construction	Under $17 million
Agriculture	Under $3.5 million
Wholesale	No more than 100 employees
Manufacture	No more than 1,500 employees

These are the SBA loan guidelines which generally define the size company eligible for S.C.O.R.E., SBDC, and SBI assistance. Individual types of businesses within these broad classifications may have different requirements.

Source: University of New Orleans SBDC

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dustry trade association. For die-hard do-it-yourselfers, there's always the library or bookstore. When reviewing current management books, don't look for a silver bullet to solve all your problems; it doesn't exist. Do your research, find the technique which seems best to address your particular problem, then tailor it specifically to the needs of your company.

A good book to start with may be "Valuing a Business: The Analysis and Appraisal of Closely Held Companies" by Shannon P. Pratt (Second Edition, Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1989, ISBN 1-55623-127-X). Not only is it a source of good information, it's big and heavy enough to supply small business owners with the exercise they usually don't get.

Professionalism, expertise, experience, and click

These are the four most important qualities of any consultant. For me, the true test of a consultant's professionalism is how he approaches your problem. Uppermost in a consultant's mind must be the fact that at the end of the day he goes home and the problem stays with you.

In his book, "Up The Organization," Robert Townsend defines a management consultant as a person who borrows your watch to tell you what time it is. Essentially, that definition is correct. However, the exercise of helping you find your watch is the true value of a consultant. The correct solution to your problem usually lies within you and your company.

The proof of a consultant's professionalism is whether he offers a solution to your problem, or helps you find the best solution given the individual circumstances of your business. Canned answers are fine as long as both you and your counselor realize that even the best one must be tailored to the cut and color of the environment in which you operate.

Expertise and experience are self-explanatory. Look for a consultant knowledgeable in the area of your problem, ideally with a background dealing with companies like yours. Don't be shy. Whether using S.C.O.R.E. consultants, SBDC counselors or college faculty, interview several. Ask for references and check them. Don't sign on with a consultant unless you're satisfied he can help you. Don't be unreasonable ei-

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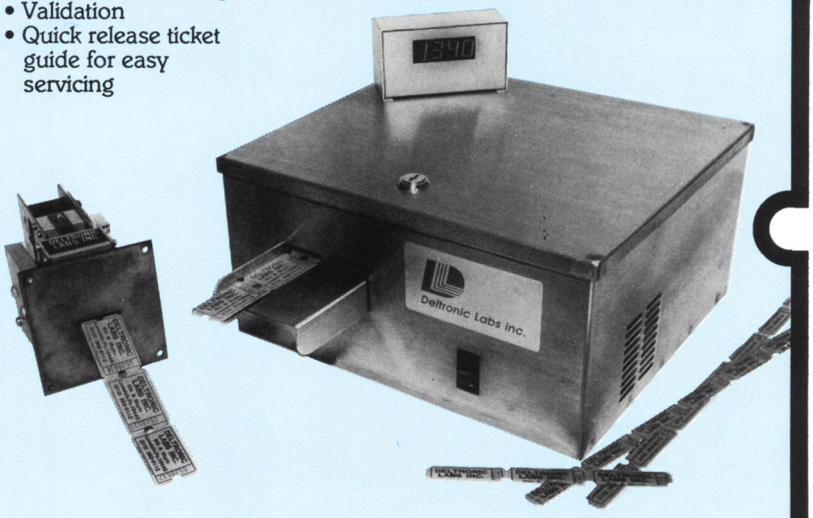

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ther.

Click is the rapport that must exist between consultant and client. While it's not necessary for the two of you to become lifelong friends, a certain compatibility must exist.

Click might also be described as mutual respect. However you define it, if you and your consultant don't click, your problems likely won't be solved.

Shut up and listen

Just as you should expect certain things from a consultant, he expects certain things from you. The most important is for you to maintain an open mind. My most frustrating consulting engagement was with an entrepreneur who wanted me to validate his opinions rather than help him solve his problems. As he rambled on, arguing whenever I suggested a different slant, I wondered why I was there. He knew all the answers. And if he did, why was he in so much trouble?

When anyone has been close to a problem for a long time, forget not seeing the forest for the trees. We can't see the trees for the bark. It's the different perspective a consultant brings to your problem that's so valuable. Give him the opportunity to express that viewpoint.

Of course, you should ask questions. Of course, you should challenge the assumptions on which recommendations are made. Though your consultant is probably no more savvy then you, his greatest value in helping you solve your problem is a fresh and different viewpoint. Use it wisely.

Your consultant also requires, no, demands that you be completely honest. It's confession time. He must be told the deep, dark secrets you'd rather die then let the IRS know. If you dip into the cash register whenever the kids need lunch money, if some of the potato chips from the concession stand find their way to the pantry at home, say so.

"Apply the three-step management control process: measure performance, compare performance, and take remedial action when performance deviates from the standard."

Finally, your consultant would like a little feedback. Six months or so later he would like to find out how you're doing. A consultant's skills increase based on knowing what works and what doesn't. Understanding the glitches that developed in implementing the solution you and he applied will help your consultant do a better job. And if you can use a tad of help in glitch-adjusting, a little free advice over the phone never hurts.

Life after the consultant leaves

When the consultant leaves, you usually have a lot of work ahead of you implementing the solution. Effecting some are easy. If the consultant helped you prepare a business plan to secure an expansion loan, all that's left is getting the loan (the consultant may have helped with that) and spending the money as planned.

But suppose the solution requires a different attitude on the part of your staff in dealing with customers. It's not enough to say, "Be nice to the kids," and walk away. You have to follow through—monitor the staff, reinforce the behavior you want, discourage the conduct you don't, perhaps provide training.

Most importantly, you must tie the desired behavior to your reward system. Put your salary increases, bonuses, and promotions where your mouth is.

Part 2: Keeping the bankruptcy bogeyman away

We already talked about how to find no-cost or low-cost help when your business is in trouble. Wouldn't it be better to avoid the problem in the first place? Of course, but how?

One option is to have the SWOT Analysis done by an SBA Small Business Institute (SBI) even when your business is doing fine. Think of it as preventative maintenance. If you'd rather not have strangers poking around your business, you can do the work yourself.

Analyzing your financial statement

Before you or an SBI can analyze your financial statement, you have to have one. In order to reduce costs, many small businesses skip financial statements and operate with only a tax return. That may be a mistake.

Tax returns are usually good for only one thing—paying taxes. Since it's every citizen's patriotic duty to pay as little income tax as possible (otherwise

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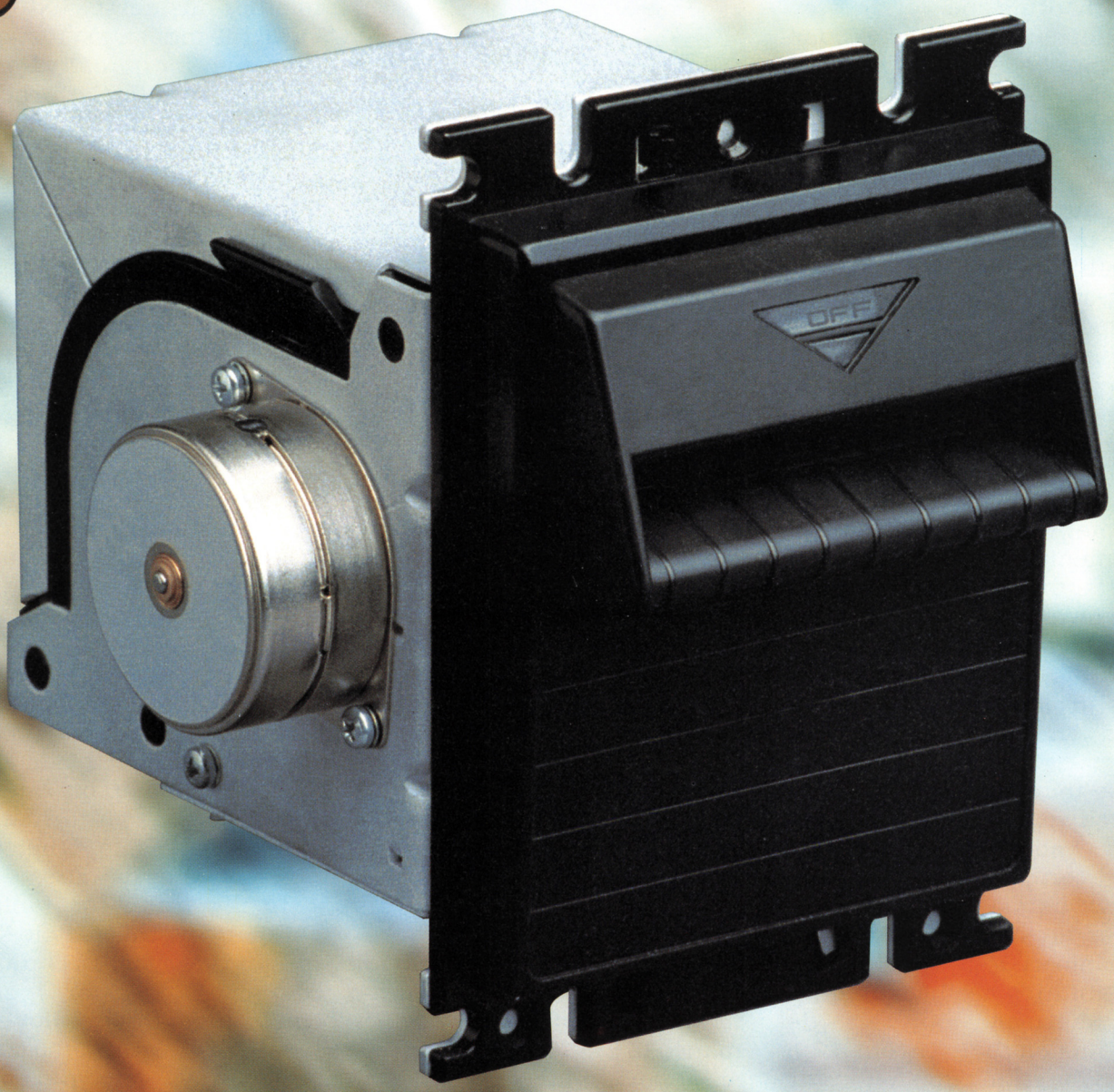

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Congress wouldn't have created all those loopholes), many small business tax returns are, shall we say, extremely creative. What's OK to tell the tax man may not be the best information on which to run a business.

I'd suggest a financial statement regardless of the size of your route or amusement center. There are many small business accounting software packages available to do the job. Talk with your accountant before choosing one.

Alternatively, your accountant may be able to provide a financial statement for you based on the data he has on file. This option could be expensive because, to be useful, a financial statement should be available at least quarterly, if not monthly. Your best bet may be software for your personal computer.

There are two parts to a financial statement, the Balance Sheet and the Profit and Loss Statement (P&L or income statement). The Balance Sheet shows your assets, liabilities, and net worth (the owners' investment in the business). Total assets must equal liabilities plus owners' equity. That's why it's called a Balance Sheet.

Assets and liabilities are further broken down into short term and long term. Short term, or current assets are those that can usually be converted quickly into cash, i.e. cash, accounts receivable, short-term notes receivable, and inventory. Real estate, vehicles, etc., may take longer to turn into cash.

Liabilities are broken down into short and long term depending on their payout. Generally, anything due in the current fiscal year is a short-term liability; payouts beyond that are long-term liabilities.

The Profit and Loss statement is just what it's name implies: a statement of income and expenses for the time period in question—usually monthly, quarterly, and annually.

"Financial ratios allow you to determine the condition of your business by comparing it to similar companies."

The best approach may be a monthly P&L that shows year-to-date results as well. Then you have both a summary of your most recent performance and your operating results during the fiscal year to date.

Taken together, the Balance Sheet and P&L forms the basis of a SWOT review or your own analysis of your business.

The three-step control process

To prevent the bankruptcy bogeyman from visiting your business, you have to look for the symptoms that tell you things are not going well. This requires applying the three-step management control process: measure your performance, compare your performance to a standard of acceptable performance, and take remedial action when your performance deviates significantly from the standard.

Your financial statement represents the measurement of the performance of your business. The next step is to find a standard against which you can measure your performance.

Here's how. When you file your income tax, you report your Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). Numerous data-collection companies compile financial information by SIC, which allows you to compare your financial results to other businesses like yours. Of all the industry statistics I've seen, I prefer *Industry Norms & Key Business Ratios* produced by Dunn & Bradstreet Information Services. It should be available in your local library or the library of your local business school.

Industry Norms presents data by four-digit SIC for most, if not all, SICs. Other data-collection publications either do not provide data for every SIC, or lump companies together according to the first two-digits of the SIC.

Not only does *Industry Norms* present data by four-digit SIC, it provides information by company asset size and gives typical balance sheet amounts and percentages, operating data, comparative information for 14 commonly used ratios, and quartile data for the ratios. All this allows you to compare, on a nationwide basis, the performance of your business to other businesses similar to yours.

To illustrate, the table accompanying this article shows *Industry Norms'* 1993 data for SIC 7993, Coin-Operated Amusement Devices, for establishments with $100,000 to $250,000 in assets. Information on SIC 7996, Amusement Parks, is also available.

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So you can see how the data is targeted, listed below is *Industry Norms'* breakdown of SIC 7993 by asset size for 1993.

No. of Companies	Asset Range
139	No Breakdown
30	$100,000 to $250,000
20	$250,000 to $500,000
25	$500,000 to $1 million
38	$1 million to $5 million

(Part 3 will cover how to use Industry Norms' information in analyzing your businesses' operation.)

The third step in the control process is to take remedial action if your arcade does not measure up to standard in some area(s). The kind of corrective action depends on the problem and your individual circumstances. You'll have to tailor the solution to your needs or get help from one of the sources listed in Part 1.

Now for the first two steps: how to analyze and interpret your financial data and compare it to the industry standard.

How do you stack up?

After you've found the SIC data in *Industry Norms* that applies to you (by SIC code, asset size and region, if available) the first thing to do is compare the balance sheet of your business to the typical balance sheet for businesses the type and size of yours.

We'll assume your businesses' SIC is 7993 and that you fall in the $100,000 to $250,000 asset range, so we can use Table 1 for discussion.

On average, businesses of this size have total assets (and total liabilities and net worth) of $178,882, allocated as shown. But suppose your business is at the top end of the asset range, $250,000. What should your asset distribution look like?

That's where the percentages comes in. Businesses with assets between $100,000 and $250,000 have 10.3 percent (or $18,425) of their assets in cash. Thus, a business with $250,000 in assets should have 10.3 percent ($25,750) of its assets in cash, and so on. The percentage distribution of liabilities is used the same way.

"In order to reduce costs, many small businesses skip financial statements and operate with only a tax return. That may be a mistake."

Below the entry for Total Liabilities and Net Worth, Industry Norms gives operating (P&L) data: Net Sales, Gross Profit, Net Profit After Taxes, and Working Capital. Again, compare your business to the standard, making whatever adjustments are necessary because of asset size.

To adjust Net Sales for asset size, divide your assets by the asset value for the average company, then multiply the result by the Net Sales for the average company.

For example, if your assets are $100,000 your Net Sales should be: $100,000 divided by $178,882 = 0.559, the asset adjustment factor; 0.559 x $373,362 = $208,709, the expected Net Sales for a SIC 7993 company with $100,000 in assets.

Gross and Net Profit margins should be calculated using the percentages given in Industry Norms. Typical working capital is calculated by applying the asset adjustment factor to the working capital given in Industry Norms for the average company: $(33,093) x 0.559 = $(18,499). (Look for more about negative working capital in Part 3.)

Using ratio analysis

In addition to typical financial information for businesses like yours, *Industry Norms* provides data on 14 commonly used financial ratios. These ratios allow you to determine the condition of your business by comparing it to similar companies in three areas: solvency, efficiency, and profitability.

The Key Business Ratios chart accompanying this article explains how ratios are generally interpreted and used. *Industry Norms* gives three values for each ratio: the upper quartile (UQ), median (MED), and lower quartile (LQ).

Here's how these three numbers are calculated. For each company in *Industry Norms'* sample, the ratio is determined and the results ranked from best to worst. In some cases, the lower the number, the better. After the results of a ratio have been ranked, the number in the middle is given as the median. Halfway from the median to the best ranking is the upper quartile, and halfway from the median to the worst value is the lower quartile.

Take some time to get your financial statement in order and calculate the 14 ratios for the past three years (trends are important).

Table 1
SIC Code 7993
Coin-Operated Amusement Devices
Assets of $100,000 to $250,000
1993 Data (30 Establishments)

Category	Dollars	Percent	
Assets			
Cash	18,425	10.3	
A/C Receivable	2,147	1.2	
Notes Receivable	4,830	2.7	
Inventory	4,472	2.5	
Other Current	6,261	3.5	
Total Current	**36,134**	**20.2**	
Fixed Assets	115,916	64.8	
Other Non-current	26,832	15.0	
Total Assets	**178,882**	**100.0**	
Liabilities			
A/C Payable	5,009	2.8	
Bank Loans	--	--	
Notes Payable	20,929	11.7	
Other Current	43,289	24.2	
Total Current	**69,227**	**38.7**	
Other Long Term	28,800	16.1	
Deferred Credits	--	--	
Net Worth	80,855	45.2	
Total Liabilities and Net Worth	**178,882**	**100.0**	
Net Sales	373,362	100.0	
Gross Profits	238,205	63.8	
Net Profit after tax	24,269	6.5	
Working Capital	(33,093)	--	
Ratios	UQ	MED	LQ	T.C.
Solvency				
Quick (times)	0.8	0.2	0.1	0.3
Current (times)	1.6	0.4	0.2	0.52
Cur Laib to NW (%)	21.5	58.1	153.4	85.6
Cur Laib to Inv (%)	161.1	320.9	442.4	1448
Tot Laib to NW (%)	21.5	112.4	226.5	121.2
Fixed Assets to NW (%)	66.9	154.2	272.8	143.4
Efficiency				
Call Period (days)	4.1	5.3	6.5	2.1
Sales to Inv (times)	81.0	43.2	21.1	83.5
Assets to Sales (%)	43.8	46.8	86.0	47.9
Sales to Nwc (times)	26.4	9.2	2.9	--
A/C Pay to Sales (%)	1.3	2.4	4.6	1.3
Profitability				
Return on Sales (%)	15.3	3.9	(1.8)	6.5
Return on Assets (%)	15.4	7.6	(5.2)	13.6
Return on Nw (%)	36.1	22.0	(4.1)	30.0

Source: Industry Norms & Key Business Ratios, Three Year Edition 1993-94. Used with permission, Dunn & Bradstreet Information Services.

Part 3: What the numbers mean

If you did your homework you have a financial statement and most of the 14 ratios calculated for the last three fiscal years. Now we'll get a handle on interpreting the ratios.

First, we need a common set of financial statements from which to work. Refer to Table 1. I've calculated the 14 ratios for the typical company data given above the ratios in Industry Norms and put the results under the column headed T.C. for Typical Company.

Seeing how Typical Company compares to industry standards and what those comparisons mean, you should understand how to interpret your own data. If some points are not completely clear, your accountant or one of the SBA programs mentioned in Part 1 should be able to help.

Some of the standard ratios are not meaningful to an arcade or amusement center; for example, collection period (because yours is a mostly cash business) and those ratios involving inventory (i.e., Current Liabilities to Inventory). We'll include them in the discussion below for completeness, but their usefulness in helping you manage your business may be marginal.

Solvency ratios

The Quick and the Current Ratios measure the protection afforded short-term creditors, with the first more stringent than the second. The Quick Ratio is more exacting because it only looks at the most liquid of your businesses' assets (cash and accounts receivable) in determining your ability to pay debts.

While a Quick Ratio of 1.0 and a Current ratio of 2.0 is considered good, don't look at these two ratios from the point of view that more is better. Being too liquid may mean your assets are not working hard enough for you.

"Solvency isn't just an issue for creditors, it should be a main concern of company management as well."

Typical Company's Quick Ratio is significantly less than 1.0 (though above the median for companies of this size). The Current Ratio, also greater than the median, is substantially less than the "good" rating of 2.0.

Taken together, these ratios mean our Typical Company doesn't have sufficient liquid assets to pay its current debts and must rely on current sales to generate the cash to do so. Any interruption in sales (remodeling the shopping mall where its arcade is located, for example) could put a severe strain on the company.

Persistent cash shortages seem to be a characteristic of the amusement business (something I feel many of you already know). The median values for the Quick and Current Ratio for all breakdowns of SIC 7993 in Industry Norms are less than 1.0 and 2.0, respectively, and working capital is negative for all but the largest Typical Company (assets of $1 million to $5 million).

This data suggests that those of you doing a self-diagnosis must compare your company to the recommended values for the Quick and Current Ratios, not the data shown in Industry Norms. It also suggests that any company with negative working capital take steps to correct that situation.

Current Liabilities to Net Worth compares how much you have at risk in your business to how much your short-term creditors have at risk. Suppliers may become concerned about extending credit when this ratio is greater than 66.6 percent. For Typical Company, this presents another problem. With a ratio of 85.6 percent, additional trade credit may be hard to come by.

Total Liabilities to Net Worth measures how much all your creditors (short- and long-term) have at stake in your business versus how much you have. Banks like you to have at least as much money at risk as they do (a ratio of 100 percent).

Typical Company has pushed this ratio past what lenders like to see and may have trouble getting financing for, say, the latest games. I know I've taken the last two ratios out of order but they are so closely related it seemed appropriate.

The same is true of Fixed Assets to Net Worth. There's no set rule on what the value of this ratio should be, but in general, a smaller percentage is better than a large one. A high ratio shows a large investment in fixed assets and low working capital, or the funding of work-

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Key Business Ratios and What They Mean

Ratio	Calculation	Interpretation	Comments
Solvency			
(1) Quick Ratio	Cash + A/C Receivable / Current Liabilities	Measures ability to pay current debts.	A ratio of 1.0 is a good target.
(2) Current Ratio	Current Assets / Current Liabilities	A less stringent measure of (1).	A ratio of 2.0 is considered good.
(3) Current Liabilities to Net Worth	Current Liabilities / Net Worth	Measures the security of creditors.	The smaller the ratio, the more the bank likes you.
(4) Current Liabilities to Inventory	Current Liabilities / Inventory	Measures the extent short term debt relies on inventory for pmt.	Used with ratio (8) to gage inventory control.
(5) Total Liabilities to Net Worth	Total Liabilities / Net Worth	Measures creditors stake in the business.	Over 100% creditors have more at stake than the owner.
(6) Fixed Assets to Net Worth	Fixed Assets / Net Worth	Measures overtrading or heavy debt financing of working capital.	A ratio of 0.75 normally indicates over investment.
Efficiency			
(7) Collection Period	A/C Receivable / Sales x 365	Measures Receivables turnover.	1/3 over normal term (40 days for 30 days net) indicates slow turnover.
(8) Sales to Inventory	Annual Net Sales / Inventory	Measures Inventory turnover.	Low numbers indicate excessively high inventory; high numbers may mean insufficient stock.
(9) Assets to Sales	Total Assets / Net Sales	Measures the investment used to generate sales.	Low (above upper quartile) may mean overtrading; high (below lower quartile) may mean poor sales management.
(10) Sales to Net Working Capital	Sales / Net Working Capital (NWC= Current assets minus current liabilities)	Measures the ability to sustain sales based on available assets.	Best indication of appropriate level is industry comparison.
(11) A/C Payable to Sales	A/C Payable / Annual Net Sales	Measures supplier financing of operations.	A high ratio may effect vendors extending credit.
Profitability			
(12) Return on Sales	Net Profit After Tax / Annual Net Sales	Measures the efficiency of operations.	Should be within industry norms and satisfactory to owners.
(13) Return on Assets	Net Profit After Tax / Total Assets	Measures Profitability.	Well run businesses have a high return on assets.
(14) Return on Net Worth	Net Profit After Tax / Net Worth	Measures the return on invested capital.	At least 10% is needed to provide dividends and fund future growth.

ing capital through debt.

A high ratio also indicates a large deduction from income for depreciation. A good rule of thumb is to consider a ratio of over 0.75 as showing overinvestment and time to rethink the amount of fixed assets you're using to operate your business. Typical Company's ratio is almost twice what it should be, showing it has the problems noted above.

Current Liabilities to Inventory tells you how much stock you'll have to liquidate to pay current debt if you get in a jam. When this ratio is used with Inventory Turnover (Net Sales to Inventory) you get an idea of how well you're managing your inventory.

These two measures have little meaning for Typical Company, which operates in an industry where inventories are small relative to sales, and capital investment quite large.

Liquidity problems appear to be chronic in the amusement business. Industry Norms for all asset breakdowns show only the upper quartile in any asset classification meeting the solvency tests set out above. Perhaps I needn't say this, but I will. Solvency isn't just an issue for creditors; it should be a main concern of company management as well.

Simply put, if a company can't pay its bills, it can't stay in business very long.

Combine the solvency problems of Typical Company with its negative working capital and you have a recipe for bankruptcy. Monitor your own solvency and working capital very carefully. At the first sign of trouble, take whatever corrective action necessary or run, do not walk, to your friendly neighborhood business advisor for help.

Efficiency ratios

These five measurements tell you how well you're managing certain aspects of your business. As a general rule, your Collection Period should be no more than one third greater than your credit terms (i.e., 40 days when you sell 30 days net). Anything more indicates slow receivables turnover.

This guideline has to be tempered by the industry norm, which tells you what your competition is doing.

Collection Period is another measure which has little meaning for most arcades and amusement centers. Both are cash operations—bright, shiny quarters spinning the sprockets of those little play meters. However, larger amusement centers with pay-one-price admission may accept credit cards as a way to increase business. If you do, accept only those that give merchants cash when sales receipts are presented (i.e., VISA).

If yours is a pay-one-price family entertainment center that doesn't already accept credit cards, consider doing so. Not only is it a convenience for your customers, it may allow you to profit from the newest in plastic money: debit cards.

Debit cards are, in effect, plastic checks. Using the card takes funds directly from your customer's checking account, rather then generating a credit balance they pay later.

The debit card verification process usually confirms the customer's balance to see if it is sufficient to cover the amount of purchase.

A word of caution. Be careful of the fee charged by your bank on debit card transactions. While two or three percent might be reasonable as a credit card fee (because of the non-payment risk the bank assumes), that's too high for a debit card where the bank's risks are minimum. Shop around to get the best debit

"A good rule of thumb is to consider a ratio of over 0.75 as showing overinvestment and time to rethink the amount of fixed assets you're using to operate your business."

Other SICs that may apply to your company

SIC 5099—Coin-op game machines
SIC 5962—Coin-op machines selling merchandise
SIC 7359—Coin-op machine rental and leasing
SIC 7999—Amusement and recreation not elsewhere classified

card transaction fee.

The correct value for Inventory Turnover varies by type of business. In general you should be guided by the information in Industry Norms and try to maintain a turnover between the upper and lower quartile. Amusement centers with food concessions may want to concentrate on inventory management in that segment of the business.

Assets to Sales measures the investment made to generate your sales. Industry Norms should guide you and your goal should be to stay between the upper and lower quartiles.

Too low a ratio (above the upper quartile) means you're overtrading on your assets; too high a ratio (below the lower quartile) means your sales don't justify the investment you've made.

A high ratio may mean you need a more a aggressive marketing plan or some of the company's assets can be converted to other uses. Typical Company's ratio is right in the ball park.

Sales to Net Working Capital gauges overtrading when the ratio's too high compared to similar companies, or management decisions that are too conservative (the company's too liquid) when the ratio's too low. Typical Company's ratio can't be calculated because they have negative working capital.

Either cash flow from the operation is not enough to sustain the business or the owners have taken out too much cash. To correct the situation, the Typical Company's owners should inject more cash (either through owners' equity or a loan) to insure the company's long-term survival.

Accounts Payable to Sales measures how much you rely on vendor credit. Vendors view the ratio as a measure of your ability to pay them. You should view it as a measure of how effectively you use short-term, usually non-interest loans to operate your business.

"Any company with negative working capital should take steps to correct that situation."

While all debt should be used wisely, the prudent use of vendor credit shouldn't be overlooked as a way to increase profits without additional investment. After consulting with their business advisor, Typical Company's management may want to increase the amount of vendor credit they use, if possible.

Profitability ratios

These ratios evaluate whether or not the investment in your business is justified by the returns. When viewed together with your gross and net profit margins, you can determine if your costs of doing business are in line with the industry's.

If your Return on Sales (net profit margin) is not what it should be based on the Industry Norms data, cost control may be what you need. If Fixed Assets to Net Worth is too high, perhaps your profitability is being affected by high depreciation charges. If that's not the problem, look at your other expenses to see how they can be controlled to increase your profitability.

Now what?

The answer depends on what you've found as a result of your analysis. If things are going well, it might be time for that Hawaiian vacation you've always wanted. If not, you should have some idea of the problems you face. If, like the Typical Company in this article, you have acute solvency problems and/or negative working capital, I strongly suggest you contact a professional business advisor immediately.

In Part 2 I mentioned that the trends in the ratios are important. Before you leave for Hawaii, remember to look at the trends in all the ratios over the past few years. Typical Company's 1993 Return on Sales may be a satisfactory 6.5 percent. But if it was 10 percent in '92 and 14 percent in '91, a problem's brewing.

The three-step control process we talked about (measure your performance, compare it to a standard, and take corrective action) identifies problems which should be addressed immediately. Watching the trends in areas where you have no problems prevents trouble from starting. To manage your business properly, you must do both.▲

Channing Hayden is a New Orleans businessman, writer, and management instructor at Tulane University.

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TAX TIPS

Relying on estate myths can only enrich the IRS

This article continues the most common and expensive (in terms of tax dollars) estate planning myths, misconceptions, and mistakes. (Refer to "Tax Tips," November 1994, pg. 146.)

4. Myth: You will lose control of your business if you transfer more than 50 percent of your corporation to your children.

This myth probably costs family businesses up to half the value of their wealth. Who gets the other half? The IRS. Can this huge tax be avoided? YES. It's a two-step process. First, recapitalize your corporation so you have voting stock (say, 1,000 shares) and nonvoting stock (say 99,000 shares). This is a tax-free maneuver. It works for both a C corporation and an S corporation.

Second, start transferring the nonvoting stock to your kids via stock bonuses and other means. You save three ways: income tax, gift tax and estate tax. Plus, the future growth of the business is removed from your estate. Who has control? You do. You can give away all the nonvoting stock (almost the entire tax value of your business), yet the 1,000 shares of voting stock, which you retain, gives you absolute control for as long as you live.

5. Mistake: Not considering the generation skipping tax (GST).

The GST prevents wealthy families from transferring their wealth from generation to generation, yet avoiding tax on each successive transfer, by putting the wealth (assets) in a trust. The GST is a 55 percent flat tax imposed in addition to the regular estate tax, which also reaches 55 percent over $2.5 million.

The purpose of the GST is to guarantee that grandchildren receive their inheritance only after the assets have been taxed twice; once, as if the assets had gone from the grandparent to the parent; and a second time as if the assets had gone from the parent to the child. Ouch!

But take heart. There is a $1 million exemption. Only the excess is subject to the GST.

Example: When a grandparent (Joe) leaves $1 million to his children (assume Joe and his children are in a 55 percent estate tax bracket), Joe's grandchildren receive just $450,000 because of the estate tax imposed on the children's estates.

But if the money is left in trust for the life of Joe's children, then to the grandchildren, no taxes (estate of GST) are owed at the children's death because of the $1 million GST exemption. A great tax deal. Joe's family saves $550,000 in estate tax. Wait, there's more. Joe's wife can pull off the same trick and double the family's tax-saving pleasure to $1.1 million.

6. Misconception: Life insurance on your life will pass to your heirs free of the estate tax.

Here's the law. Owning insurance policies on your life and designating the beneficiaries means the proceeds will be taxed in your estate. Even if you leave the proceeds to your spouse or if your spouse owns the policies, the proceeds will be taxed in the second estate.

Can the tax be avoided? Absolutely. Just set up an irrevocable life insurance trust (ILIT)

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leaving the insurance proceeds to the trust. Then, your spouse gets the income for life. At his/her death, the balance in the trust goes tax-free to your children or grandchildren.

Simply put, an ILIT can save your family up to $55,000 for every $100,000 in life insurance. An ILIT is one of the best tax-saving tricks available in the entire tax law. Use it.

7. Myth: There is an advantage to holding assets jointly with someone else.

Joint tenancy is often called the poor man's will. Many husbands and wives hold assets jointly. For tax purposes, those assets will pass estate tax free to the survivor under the unlimited marital deduction.

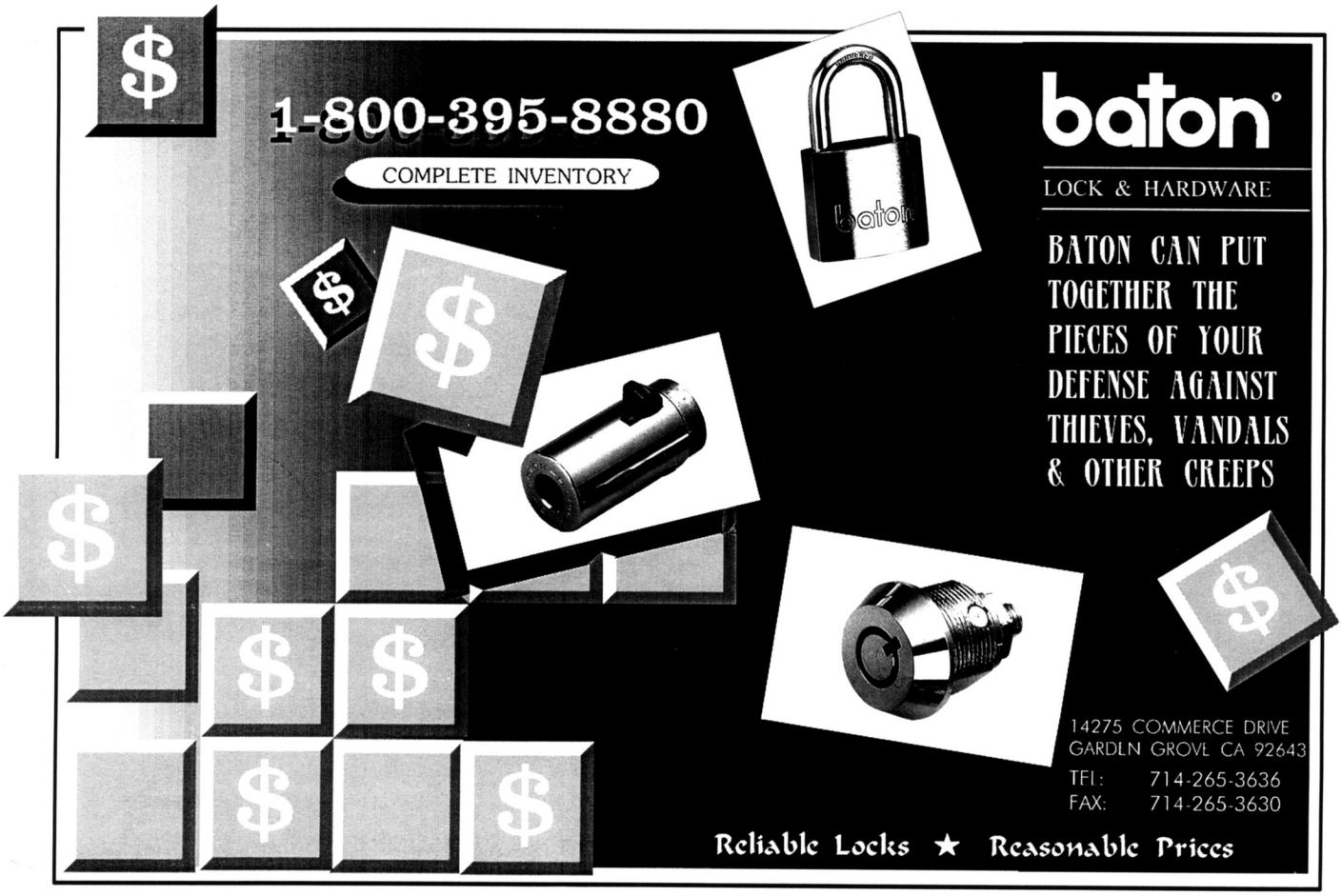
However, holding everything jointly will have the same effect as leaving everything to the other spouse. The opportunity for the first spouse who dies to leave $600,000 of assets to children tax free will be lost. An expensive, but common result of the joint tenancy myth.

One more thing: when you die, the basis of property you own is raised to its value at the date of death for income tax purposes. For example, say Joe and Mary own in joint tenancy all the stock of their family business (Success Co.), which is worth $1 million but only has an income tax basis of $100,000. Joe dies. Mary now owns 100 percent of Success Co. What's her tax basis? Only $550,000—$500,000 for the half she inherited from Joe and $50,000 for the half Mary owned as a joint tenant.

If Joe had owned the stock and left it all to Mary, her new tax basis would have been $1 million. As a joint tenant, if Mary sells the stock for $1 million, she must pay tax on $450,000 profit instead of zero. Some difference!

8. Mistake: If you are in a high income and estate tax bracket, leave large sums in a qualified pension plan or IRA.

Did you know that funds in a qualified plan or IRA will be taxed at least twice after you die—once for income taxes, and a second time for estate taxes? A third tax—a 15 percent excise tax—for large accumulations is also possible. Typically, the tax burden for a high-bracket taxpayer is at least 70 percent and can go (depending on your state taxes) over 90 percent. Your family will be shocked. Simply put, $1 million in a qualified plan will



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turn into only $300,000 or less for your heirs.

What to do? Taking an annuity from the plan to fund a life insurance policy (on your life or a second-to-die policy with your spouse) owned by an irrevocable trust will beat all of your tax liability. This technique can even create wealth, often up to two or three times the amount in the plan. Consult your tax advisor.

9. Misconception: Since the gift tax rates and the estate tax rates are the same, I may as well keep my property and let my kids inherit it.

True, the gift tax and estate tax are combined and use the same table. But because of a quirk in the law, gift taxes are a bargain. For example, suppose you are in a 50 percent gift tax bracket (you have made many large gifts during your lifetime) and will be in a 50 percent estate tax bracket. A gift of say $100,000 to each of your two children will cost you only $100,000 ($200,000 x 50 percent) in gift taxes.

But if you leave the same amount net of taxes after you die to your two kids, the estate tax will be $200,000—twice as much. Why? Well, if you want to leave $200,000 ($100,000 each) to your kids, you need $400,000 in your estate, which will be taxed at 50 percent. Result: a $200,000 tax. Like I said, the gift tax is a bargain.

10. Big myth, mistake, and misconception: The estate tax laws rarely change, so I don't have to review my estate plan.

Wrong! Even if the federal law didn't change (but the reality is that Congress and the IRS are always making some change to the estate tax law), review is a must every year or so.

Here are some of the common reasons: inflation, real growth, or both have increased the value of your assets and skyrocketed your estate tax liability; family circumstances—marriage, divorce (you or your kids), new grandchildren, etc.—change; new tax techniques are discovered; and changes occur in state law.

Should the truth be known, this series of articles could go on and on and never cover all you need to know to beat the estate tax. To arm yourself with more information on common estate planning errors, send for these special reports: "Pay Zero Estate Tax the Super Trust Way," "How to Triple Your Pension, Profit Sharing, or IRA Value," or "How You Can Beat the Estate Tax—Legally." ▲

A sure way to cut your costs

If I had my choice, this column would systematically attack every expense item on your profit and loss statement. Of course, taxes first. Then whatever expense item would help improve your bottom line. So, today, let's attack the cost of long-distance telephone service.

My motivation for writing this article came from reading a terrific story in the September 23, 1994 issue of USA Today which said, "Long distance overload? Multimillion-dollar marketing blitzes by MCI, AT&T, and Sprint could be confusing more customers than they're helping."

Let's start by asking a question: Would you pay $2 per gallon for gasoline when you could buy gasoline of the same or superior quality across the street for $1.20? Of course not. You wouldn't overpay by 40 percent—knowingly. But do you know that if you're an average long-distance customer of the big three (AT&T, MCI, or Sprint), you unknowingly pay 40 percent more for your long-distance calls every month?

Long-distance telephone service is, annually, a $59.37 billion industry. AT&T once received almost 100 percent of this huge amount of money. But since 1984, AT&T has lost 36.22 percent of its market share—a cool $21.5 billion. Why do closely held businesses switch from AT&T (and other high-cost carriers), and why is AT&T continuing to lose business to the competition?

Burn the answer in your mind: the high cost per minute. Per minute cost is the smart way to buy long-distance telephone service.

When you buy gasoline, no one would dare try to fool you by offering you a discount off of an imaginary price. Why? Because the price of a gallon of gasoline is boldly posted on 30-foot high signs declaring "1.19 per gallon." There is no way to be fooled by gimmicks because you are an informed customer.

But what about long-distance telephone? The big three never tell you the actual cost per minute for a call. They tell you how to get some large percentage off, but they never tell you off what. Think back for a moment. What do the AT&T, MCI, and Sprint ads say? They advertise savings, but never give you the simple common denominator that would instantly make you an informed cus-

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tomer, the actual cost per minute.

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The fact is that the same or superior quality service with proven pristine voice clarity is now available for under 15 cents per minute. One program charges you only 13.9 cents per minute. If you want to find out if your company qualifies for one of these cost-saving programs, call 1-800-260-9642.

"If you are an average long-distance customer of the big three, you unknowingly pay 40 percent more for your long distance calls every month."

I was so fascinated by this subject that, with the help of some experts in the telecommunications industry, I have written a special detailed report. Want to learn how informed business owners are slashing their phone bills? Read my report "The Easy Way to Cut Your Long-Distance Bills," which is free to readers of this column.

From estate tax trap to tax victory

You hear it all the time: "The tax law is too complicated." Well, it is. My job is usually to explain the complex tax law in understandable language and beat up the IRS legally.

Recently a reader of this column asked me to give him (let's call him Joe) a second opinion on his estate plan. Unwittingly Joe, as well as his professional advisors, had fallen into an expensive tax trap.

First, here's the story: Joe, age 66, was married to his second wife Mary, age 52. Joe had three kids from his first marriage. The size of his estate clearly put him in the 55 percent estate tax bracket. Joe had two main goals: he wanted to leave his business (worth $3.1 million) to his heirs and $800,000 in an IRA (a rollover from his business profit sharing plan), which fell into the tax trap (much more about this later).

Joe had accumulated about $3 million in additional assets, mostly liquid-type investments including a $500,000 home. The intent was to use this $3 million to pay the estate tax. Joe has no insurance but is insurable; so is Mary.

Next, here's the law that applies to Joe's estate plan. Federal estate tax laws allow an unlimited marital deduction for assets left to your spouse. Generally, in order for property left to your spouse in trust to qualify for the marital deduction, your spouse must be granted unlimited access (means that your spouse gets not only the income, but the principal as well, if needed to maintain the spouse's lifestyle) to the trust property during his or her lifetime.

But there is a wonderful exception called a "Q-Tip trust," which allows you to do this delightful tax trick. You leave property in the Q-Tip trust, which requires your spouse to get all the trust income for life, and when your spouse dies, the property goes to your kids. A terrific tax planning tool for second-marriage situations. Joe had set up a Q-Tip trust.

Now the trap. Joe made the Q-Tip trust the beneficiary of his IRA. When a beneficiary (in this case, Mary) becomes eligible to receive distributions from a qualified plan or IRA (usually at 59-1/2), the annual distribution from the plan is determined based upon the value of the plan at that time and upon the life expectancy of the beneficiary. The annual distribution could be less than the annual income generated by the assets in the IRA.

Consider this example: if the $800,000 in Joe's IRA is invested at six percent, it will earn $48,000 each year. If Mary elected payment from the IRA over 20 years, the annual payout to the trust would be only $40,000. What's the result? Disaster. Since all of the income from the IRA is not being paid to Mary, the IRA is disqualified as an appropriate asset for a Q-Tip trust. The result does not change even if the annual payout from the IRA happens to be greater than the annual income of the trust.

Now here's the disaster. Joe would have blown the marital deduction. The estate tax would be $440,000 (55 percent times $800,000). Withdrawal of funds from the IRA to pay this unexpected estate tax liability will be subject to income tax.

You're right. Very complicated stuff. But the fact is that we have learned how to beat the estate tax. Best of all...it's easy

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to do. What did we do in this case? We created two irrevocable life insurance trusts (we call them "super trusts"). One was funded with a policy on Joe's life; the other with a second-to-die policy (on Joe and Mary). We used Joe's liquid assets and the funds in the IRA to pay for the premiums.

This second-opinion estate tax plan eliminated the Q-Tip tax trap. Better yet, it eliminated the entire estate tax liability by transferring this liability to the insurance carrier.

Want to learn more on this subject? Send for these reports: "Pay Zero Estate Tax the Super Trust Way," "How to Triple Your Pension, Profit Sharing or IRA Value," and "The Secret of How the Rich Create Wealth and Income Without Risk."

To capitalize or not, that is the question

Readers of this column often call with questions concerning repair vs. capitalization problems. Well, let me start by saying that if Hamlet had owned a business, he might well have pondered, "To capitalize or expense, that is the question." A classic court decision (L&L Marine, TCM 1987-428) on the subject implies that the answer might be found in another Shakespearean paraphrase, a repair by any other name is expensed the same.

As any business owner knows, massive discord with the IRS frequently focuses on issues of capital improvement vs. repairs. Repairs are deductible currently, but capital improvements must be depreciated over a period of years.

The pivotal point is whether the expenditure is made to improve, alter, or renovate the property or equipment, or merely repair it. And this Tax Court decision says that nomenclature is secondary to the real facts when making the determinations.

Here's the story. L&L Marine spent money for work needed to continue to qualify six of their barges for sea duty. They classified the expenditures as repairs on their books and took a deduction for the expense on their tax return. But their CPA thought the work was a capital expenditure and refused to issue audited financial statements unless the expenditure was capitalized.

The IRS was delighted. In its audits of the marine company's tax return, the IRS adopted the CPA's treatment of the expenditure and disallowed the deduction for repairs.

But justice prevailed, and L&L was able to salvage their deduction for repairing the barges. L&L was persuasive in their argument that answered the real question in such cases: Did the repairs significantly increase the useful lives of the value of the barges? The IRS merely relied on the CPA's classification, presenting no other argument for capitalization.

Unconvincing, said the Tax Court. A repair is still a repair, no matter how the CPA classified it on the financial statements. The IRS was required to produce convincing evidence that the expenses were capital in nature, and they failed to do so.

Here's a little more help. In addition to the question asked in the L&L case, ask this question: Can the property be used for the purpose for which it was originally intended unless the repair is made? If the answer is "no," then the cost of the repair is deductible.

For example: a building needs a roof; a boat, ship, car, truck or tractor needs a motor; machinery may have to be vented to meet the requirements of a new local ordinance. The list is endless.

So the cost of the new roof (the old one leaks) or a new motor (the old one blew out) or venting (no vent, can't use the machinery) in the examples given are all currently deductible as a repair. The next time your CPA wants to capitalize such items, show him this article.

Saving taxes means knowing the law and how to use the law.

For more tax-saving tricks, send for the companion special reports: "How to Take Money Out of Your Closely Held Corporation" and "Your Business, America's Best Tax Shelter."▲

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Create tax-free wealth without spending a dime

My favorite day is when a reader of this column calls for a second tax opinion. This caller (as usual, we'll call him Joe) had put his estate plan to bed. All documents, wills, and trusts for Joe and his wife Mary had been completed and executed. Joe used an experienced and knowledgeable estate planning lawyer. Yet, Joe was still an unhappy camper with the projected $2 million in estate taxes.

I asked Joe a series of pointed questions. Based on his answers, it sounded like Joe's family would indeed share $2 million of his estate with the IRS. But I agreed to take a second look. At my request, Joe sent a stack of information such as tax returns, financial statements, and, of course, the new documents.

Now pay attention all you successful business owners. Joe's corporation (Success Co., which is an S corporation) had accumulated $1.2 million in cash over a 30-year period when the business had operated as a C (taxpaying) corporation. The only way for Joe to get all or a portion of this money was via a dividend with a tax cost over 40 percent. Unacceptable. About $.7 million was not needed in the operation of the business.

Bingo! I called Joe and a young insurance broker to get more information. In a nutshell, this is the plan that we hatched. Success Co. would make a split-dollar arrangement (a way to pay for life insurance) for a $3 million second-to-die life insurance policy on the lives of Joe and his wife Mary to be owned by an irrevocable life insurance trust (ILIT).

As part of the transaction, Joe transferred sufficient stock to Mary, so each owned (through a revocable trust) a 50 percent interest in Success Co. Upon the first death, the stock owned by the decedent will pass to a trust for the benefit of the survivor so that the survivor will control the corporation.

Until the second death of Joe or Mary, Success Co. will pay all of the annual policy premiums to the extent of the increase in the cash surrender value. The ILIT pays the small balance of the premium with funds provided by Joe and Mary. The total annual premium cost is only about $42,000.

Now, let's skip the technical jargon and take a look at the amazing tax results:

1. The premium payments by Success Co. are tax-free to Joe and Mary.

2. After the second death when the $3 million in insurance proceeds are collected, Success Co. will be repaid every dollar it advanced during the years (also tax free).

3. The balance of the proceeds, probably $2.5 million or more, will be paid to the ILIT free of income and estate tax. This amount will more than pay for the $1.2 million in projected estate tax liability. The balance, over $1 million, would go tax-free to Joe and Mary's children and grandchildren.

Flexibility: The split-dollar arrangement works just as well for a C corporation. Your corporation, C or S, does not need a pool of money; premiums can be paid out of future earnings. The insurance does not have to be second-to-die; it can be on a single life only (usually the stockholder owner). In the hands of an expert, the concepts presented in this article can be used to help successful business owners legally beat the estate tax and even create wealth.

Caution: This article does not give you all of the variations, rules, and tax traps. You must dot all the i's and cross all the t's. Only use experienced professional lawyers, insurance people, and CPAs who have been there before. To get started read Rev. Rul. 64-328 and IRS Letter Ruling 9348009.

To learn more, send for these reports: "Pay Zero Estate Tax the Super Trust Way," "The Secret of How the Rich Create Wealth and Income Without Risk," and "How to Beat the Estate Tax Legally."

Increasing deductions now and in the future

With estate taxes at a sky-high top rate of 55 percent, estate planning has become a favorite taxpayer sport.

But it is an expensive sport. Professional fees for competent experts are high. Can the estate planning process yield any current income tax deductions? If you do things right, the answer is yes.

As a general rule, fees for estate planning are not deductible. But fees for the tax aspects of estate planning are deductible as a miscellaneous expense. So, have your professionals, lawyer and accountant,

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If you would like to leave a portion of your estate to charity, there is a neat way to get both a current income tax deduction and a huge future estate tax break. Here's how: have an irrevocable trust buy insurance on your life and name a charity as the beneficiary.

Every year when you give the trust the amount necessary to pay the premium, you get an income tax deduction. The charity gets the proceeds at your death, and none of those proceeds will be taxable in your estate.

Or consider this variation to have your business give huge amounts to charity, ultimately at a profit to your business. Say your corporation, Success Co., becomes the beneficiary of a $500,000 (more or less) policy on your life or other key executives. Success Co. pays the premiums, which are nondeductible. Upon the insured's death, Success Co. collects the $500,000 death proceeds free of the income tax and then pays $100,000 per year, which is deductible, to the deceased's favorite charity.

The combination of the policy proceeds always exceeding the premiums, and the tax-free death proceeds being used to get a charitable deduction, will ultimately yield an after-tax profit to Success Co. This arrangement has no tax impact on the executives.

Winning the tax game requires a flow of innovative tax ideas that work. To get a host of such practice-proven ideas, send for these special reports: "How to Take Money Out of Your Closely Held Company," "Your Business, America's Best Tax Shelter," and "The 25 Best Tax Saving Ideas of the '90s."

Some good news on deducting club dues

Dumb law! I mean Congress passing the punish-successful-business-owners law disallowing a deduction for club dues. Simply put, the law says zero deduction for membership in any club, organized for business, pleasure, recreation, or other social purposes.

Well, the IRS finally issued proposed regulations. Here's the bad news: clubs (whose members are stuck in the no-deduction club) include any membership organization with a principal purpose of conducting entertainment activities for members of the organization or their guests or providing members or their guests with access to entertainment facilities.

Such clubs include, but are not limited to, country clubs, golf and athletic clubs, airline clubs, hotel clubs, and clubs operated to provide meals under circumstances generally considered to be conducive to business discussion. Sorry, but membership business lunch clubs are included in the latter category.

Now the good news: specific business expenses at a club are deductible to the extent they otherwise satisfy the rules for deductibility. For example, 50 percent of allowable meal and entertainment expenses are deductible at a luncheon or golf club.

Miracle of miracles! The IRS has created an interesting list of organizations that escape the no-deduction rule. Join one of these and your dues are deductible: business leagues, trade associations, chambers of commerce, boards of trade, real estate boards, civic or public service organizations, and professional organizations such as bar and medical associations.

Careful. If, in practice, the principal purpose of the organization is to conduct entertainment activities for members or their guests, or to provide members or their guests with access to entertainment facilities, the IRS will slap the no-deduction rule on the members.

But there are still plenty of other huge dollar-saving ways to skin the travel and entertainment cat. Send for these special reports: "The Complete Guide to Building Your Entertainment Deductions," "The Complete Guide to Building Your Travel Deductions," and "The Complete Guide to Building Your Automobile Deductions."▲

Court approves valuation discount for real estate

When it comes to the valuation of a closely held business for tax purposes, our side (the business owners and their competent appraisers) have been winning the valuation game for over three decades. Why? Because the courts have given us two very valuable discounts.

The first discount is for general lack of marketability, which runs in the 20 to 40 percent range. This discount applies to all closely held businesses. The second discount is for a minority interest (the interest—usually stock in a corporation—in the business being valued is 50 percent or less of the ownership), which yields an additional discount of 10 percent to 15 percent. In our office, the combined discount often runs as high as 45 percent when we value a client's business for tax purposes. Bless the courts.

What about transfers of real estate? Do the same discounts apply? If so, how much? Finally, a recent case (Lefrak, 66 TCM 1993-526) answers these questions.

Here's the tax winning story: Mr. LeFrak transferred fractional interest in 20 apartment houses and two office buildings to his children or trusts for their benefit. Each property was then conveyed to a partnership. After the transfers, Mr. LeFrak owned a 70 percent interest while the children and the trusts owned 30 percent.

The IRS argued that no minority discount should be allowed since the donor and all the donees were members of the same family. Thumbs down, said the court, while allowing a 20 percent minority discount for the value of each gift.

I love the reason the court gave: holding that the mere fact that family members owned the property "should not preclude allowance of a minority discount because the possibility of internecine bickering and dissention can never be excluded."

es in this area? Send for these special reports: "How to Value Your Business for Tax Purposes," "Transfer Your Corporation to the Next Generation Tax Free," and "Transferring Your Business When You Have Two Or More Children."

"Most gifts are part of a comprehensive plan to transfer a family business and other wealth, while keeping the IRS out of your pockets."

Two little-known investment strategies

Finally, you own a winner.

It cannot be assumed that a family will always act as a unit. (OK, I admit it. Didn't know what internecine means. Looked it up. Webster says, "Mutually destructive: applied especially to war or strife within a group.")

Wait, there's more. The court also allowed a 10 percent discount for lack of marketability. A total of 30 percent in discounts for an interest in real estate held by the same family.

Wow! The old and tested law of discounts applied to family owned business, together with the new LeFrak case dealing with real estate, open many new opportunity doors. This opportunity is particularly apparent in the transfer/succession/estate planning area.

Want to get a running start on how to save a bundle of tax-

You invested $2,000 in Up-Up Public Co. and now, after 12 years, it's worth $20,000. But just two months ago, it was worth $25,000. Your analysis of the situation—GET OUT. NOW! But you want to push the tax cost to next year. Can it be done?

Yes. There are two basic approaches.

The first is using puts and calls. Buy a put (option to sell) that expires next year. This is one way of locking in the current stock price while pushing the taxable gain into next year. A call (option to buy) can be used in the same way to defer a loss.

For example, you buy a put on Up-Up stock at the current market price. Just make sure that it doesn't expire until next January. This protects the

$18,000 built-in gain if the market drops during this year. If the market goes up, however, you should not sell the stock or exercise the put until January; the loss on the put will then be offset by the rise in the stock value.

Selling short against the box is the second option. Investors who sell stocks they own are said to be selling long. Investors who sell short are selling stocks they do not currently own.

When you sell short the same stock that you also own, you are selling short against the box. By selling short against the box, and then delivering after year-end the shares held long to close out the short sale, you can defer any gain until the day (next year) the short position is closed.

You must remember that these techniques involve transaction costs and opportunity costs. Also, your investment is tied up during the deferral period.

"Most gifts are part of a comprehensive plan to transfer a family business and other wealth, while keeping the IRS out of your pockets."

When making a year-end gift, do it right

I'm already bald. But this problem is making me gray. Every year, right around Christmas, readers call me about year-end gift giving. You name it, they want to give it: cash, stock in their closely held business, an interest in real estate, publicly traded stocks or bonds, and an endless variety of other goodies.

Yes, gift giving at year-end is a favorite American tax-saving game. But there is a right way and a wrong way. It's a very expensive game tax-wise if you do it wrong.

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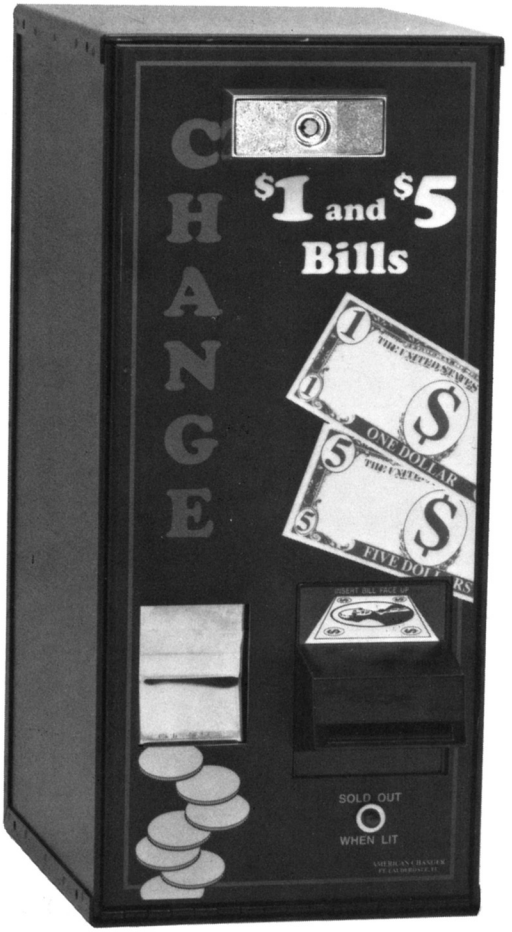

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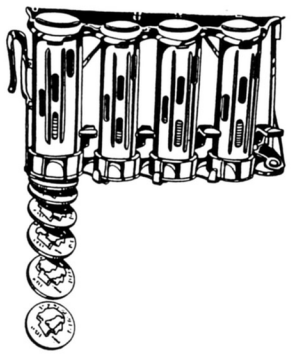

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give every donee (the person receiving the gift), $10,000 per year (called the annual exclusion) without incurring any gift tax liability. If you are married, the tax-free gift can be up to $20,000 per donee.

Remember: If you want to use your $10,000/$20,000 annual exclusion for a particular year, you must complete the gift in that year.

"The old and tested law of discounts (applied to family owned business), together with a new case, open many opportunity doors."

Here's the classic case of what not to do. Back on Dec. 24, 1980, Elizabeth Dillingham wanted to play this year-end game. She delivered six checks for $3,000 (the magic number before the boost to $10,000) to six donees. On Jan. 28, 1981, she delivered another set of $3,000 checks to the same six donees. All 12 of the checks were cashed in 1981.

Almost 10 years later, the court lowered the boom on Elizabeth's 1980 gifts (Estate of Elizabeth Dillingham, 5/14/90, CA-10). The court ruled that the 1980 checks were not unconditionally delivered (the gift was not completed) and that Elizabeth still had control over the checks because she could have stopped payment on them.

What can you do to protect your year-end cash gifts made by check? Either make sure the donees cash the checks in the year they are given, or better yet, have the checks certified before delivering them to the donees.

What about gifts of stock of your closely held corporation? Transfer the shares before year-end on the corporate records: actually issue the new stock certificates to your donees. For the gift to hold water, you must get an independent appraisal. Hire your appraiser early in the year. For real estate, record the transfer deed before year- end.

Mistakes cost money. Most gifts are part of a comprehensive plan (or should be) to transfer a family business to the kids and transfer other wealth, while keeping the IRS out of your pockets.

To get a head start on how to win this tax game, send for the companion special reports: "Transfer Your Corporation to the Next Generation—Tax Free," "Transferring Your Business When You Have Two or More Children," and "How to Value Your Business for Tax Purposes."▲

Irving Blackman is a senior tax partner in Blackman, Kallick, Bartelstein, a CPA firm specializing in closely held businesses. He has agreed to consult with readers of this column. His tax hotline is (312) 207-1040. The address to send for the special reports (at a nominal cost) is Book Division, 300 S. Riverside Plaza, Chicago, IL 60606.

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"It's great! You should have come out with it 10 years ago."

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.900	9,000	1.125	6,000

Coin	Capacity	Coin	Capacity
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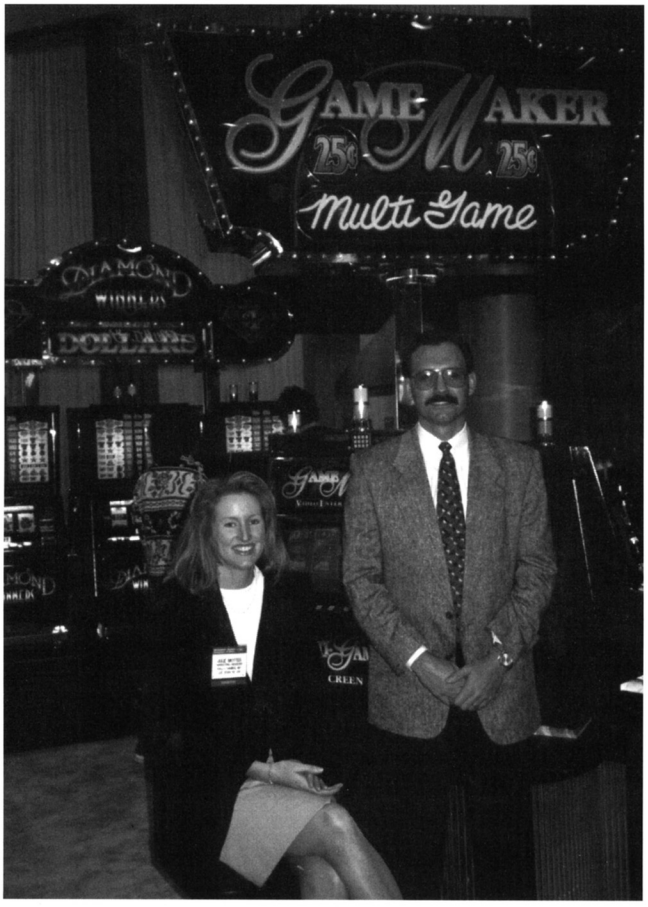
RIVERBOAT EXPO

Floating casinos could reach epic proportions

Make no mistake, riverboat gaming is a growth market. In three short years floating casinos are into double-digit numbers, with more in the development stage. Such vessels are legal in six states while no less than nine more hope to join the ranks.



Julie Mottes and Mike Farnham of Bally Gaming next to the GameMaker.

The potential of rapid expansion beyond the Mississippi River region drew industry experts, officials, regulators, suppliers, consultants, shipbuilders, and trade association representatives to the fourth annual Riverboat Gaming Congress & Expo in New Orleans on Nov. 15-17. Gaming & Wagering Business magazine and Michael Jones and Co. sponsored the event.

Attendees had an opportunity to view a wide range of riverboat-related products from over 150 exhibiting companies. Included were video poker and slot machines, computer services, money handling equipment, cashless wagering systems, marketing firms, interior designers, and video surveillance systems. And don't forget the basics of playing cards, tokens, chips, roulette wheels, and flashy signs.

Seminars covered the evolution of gaming policy, safety and risk management, legislative and regulatory issues, event marketing, advertising, vessel design, funding alternatives, and market saturation.

Several companies displayed new products. Atronic Casino Technology (formerly Betstar) highlighted Reel Poker, a flip-card poker game; a new line of slots, including Hold It and Mystery Express, that offer different features in each game; and new video slots Volcano Island and Hot Cash with second-screen bonus games.

WMS Gaming debuted a new line of slot machines that feature music and voice interaction, using the CDS sound system used in pinball games to create a high entertainment value in casino games. Unusual slot themes ranged from Western (Stampede) to the animal world (Leapin' Lizards).

International Game Technology featured the Select-A-Game touch screen 10-game

At the IGT booth, (l-r): Val Haydel of Delta Gaming; Mike Cochran, Pan Howatt, and Don Miller Jr. of IGT by the new Select-A-Game.

Peter Zemlock (r) of VLC welcomes Sandy and Ron Steiner of World Casino Getaways.

An impromptu meeting, (l-r): David Goudeau of Southland Distributing, John Nicastro of WMS Gaming, John Hess of Southland, and John Nicastro II of WMS.

From left: Bob Harzer of Atronic, Lee Lockhart and Dennis Bridgeman of The President Casino, and Jason Stage of Atronic.

At the Gaming Labs International booth, (l-r): Jan Sharplin, Keith Burton, and James Maida.

Steve White (l) of Play Meter gets a cashless wagering demonstration from Ray Sherrod of Intercard.

unit with embedded bill acceptor and 1,000 bill stacker. Games run the gamut, from poker and keno to blackjack and video slots.

Bally Gaming offered a big display of the GameMaker, the interactive touch screen multigame machine with 32-bit microprocessor, illuminated bill acceptor, and large library of software.

Video Lottery Consultants showcased the Winning Touch multiple game format video with advanced modular design, 19" touch screen, and on-screen administrative and diagnostic functions.

Innovative Gaming Corp. of America demonstrated its Live Video Craps that uses a track ball, and semicircular five-player station Live Video Blackjack.

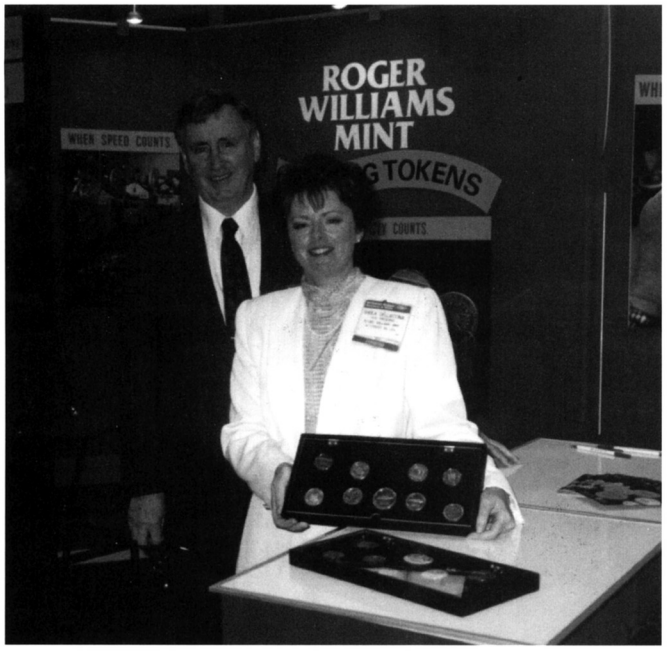
U.S. Games showed the Pot-O-Gold touch screen multi-game machine with 19" monitor and wide range of games, from poker to keno to pull-tabs.

Riverboat casino operators and equipment suppliers commented on different aspects of this new industry.

Jack Reid, Isle of Capri Casino, Biloxi, Miss.: "We broke ground as the first casino on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Now that the emphasis is off opening casinos. There is more enforcement of the regulations. The Mississippi Gaming Commission is taking a closer look at internal systems and trying to get everyone on one standard. Our emphasis is on running the most efficient operation possible." (There are 32 dockside casinos in Mississippi).

"Sure I want to see the expansion of gaming, but I want to see it well regulated."

Keith Burton, Gaming Labs International, Gulfport, Miss.



Sheila Dellacona and David Kilmartin of Roger Williams Mint show the company's personalized tokens.

Rich Mines of Asahi Seiko and Sharon Harris of Stan Harris & Co. amid a display of coin handling equipment.

office: "Now (in Mississippi) it's come down to a service business."

Ray Sherrod, Intercard (debit) card system: "Casinos want to track the players and keep as much money out of the system as they can to save on money handling, bill acceptor malfunctions, and coin jams. Debit cards make it easier to get into the game and start playing. It's convenient and helps locations with promotions and obtaining valuable marketing information."

John Nicastro, WMS Gaming: "Riverboat gaming is becoming a bigger and bigger market segment. There's been so much rapid growth in a short period of time. Sure I want to see the expansion of gaming, but I want to see it well regulated."

Attendees check out track ball-controlled Live Video Craps from Innovative Gaming Corp. of America.

Bob Harzer, Atronic: "Existing operations are looking for fresh ideas and innovative products, something different than the ordinary slot machine. That's the draw to come to the show in the first place—to see new products and games."

For those who may wonder where a traditional game room fits into the picture, some dockside casinos in Mississippi offer arcades and supervised child care. Said exhibitor Troy Dunkley of childcare provider Kids Quest: "We address the need for safe, secure child care centers in these locations. This convenience can have a positive impact on gaming hours and attract new customers. We also supervise arcades adjacent to our licensed facilities."▲

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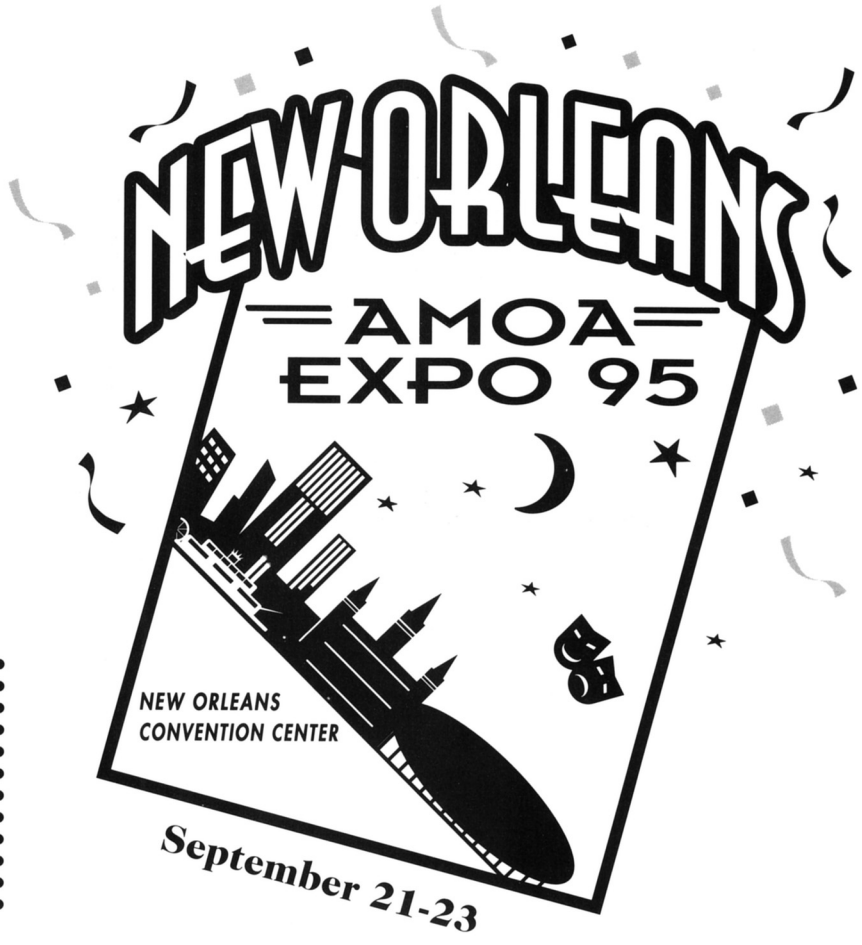

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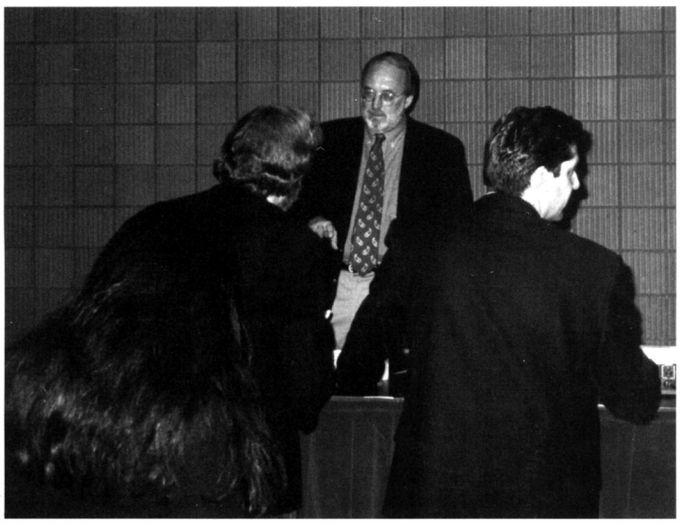
RIVERBOAT SEMINARS

Gaming regulation proves to be a rocky road

Legalized gaming has spread like wildfire across the country in the past three years, slowed only by the tangled web of laws, administrative rules, and court decisions which have been strewn simultaneously across the political landscape.

But just like good poker players, public officials and industry advocates must know when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em if legalized gaming is to continue prospering, experts say.

"As gambling spreads, politics is at the essence," said keynote speaker Ken Bode, correspondent for CNN who produced an hour-long documentary on the growth of gaming in America. "If you don't get the politics right, you don't get casinos, riverboats, video poker, etc."



Keynote speaker Ken Bode, a CNN correspondent who produced a documentary on legalized gaming, talks to audience members after his speech.

That same message was delivered time and time again at the Riverboat Gaming Congress & Expo.

The problem, according to many of the speakers present, is that public officials are often enthusiastic about gaming but naive about the industry. This makes it difficult to fashion coherent laws and policies toward gaming in the face of public misconception and distrust of the business.

Gaming, formerly known as gambling, is still suffering a "hangover from the past," Bode said.

That negative image is only exacerbated by conflicting policies and cronyism in Louisiana, said Bode, using the state as an example of what not to do. "That's what happens when you do it all wrong; when you do it without referenda."

But most featured speakers agreed that it doesn't have to be that way, and is, in fact, not so in some of the other states that have approved gaming.

"When you can be forward looking then it's possible to do it right the first time," said former Illinois Gaming Board chairman William J. Kunkle Jr., lamenting some of his own state's problems implementing gaming laws.

Here's a brief look at several of the seminars dealing with the creation and ramifications of state gaming laws.

Spotlight on gaming in America

In his keynote address, Bode gave a brief history of the meteoric rise of legalized gaming, praising the industry for its phe-

Steve White

nomenal success. "You folks have turned a lot of this around and turned it into the fastest growing industry except Republicanism," he joked.

But Bode noted that there are still problems, especially when it comes to public perception of the relationship between politicians and the gaming industry. "When gambling hits the legislature the cash register is assumed to be open," Bode said.

Ironically, almost all of the scandals and criminal activities connected to the latest wave of gambling have occurred in governmental and not gaming industry circles.

Unfortunately as well, many of the laws authorizing gambling are less than perfect, Bode said. While state officials may see the promise of jobs and economic development, they fail to understand the gaming industry.

In addition, they are often rushed into action by the threat of competition from a border state which is authorizing legalized gambling.

The jockeying for position by different forms of gaming is yet another force which works against coherent policies and prompts complex legal battles that can radically alter the picture, Bode said.

But in spite of all these problems, legalized gaming continues to grow and prosper. "In just four years, what began as an experiment in Iowa has become a multibillion-dollar industry," said former Illinois lottery director Michael Jones in his introduction of Bode.

The CNN correspondent-turned-gaming-expert predicted that while some saturation is sure to occur in the near future, legalized gaming, with its huge success in unlikely places like the state of Mississippi, is probably here to stay.

Striving for the ideal legislation

In many states, the road to legalized gaming may have been paved with good intentions, but it was also riddled with gaping potholes.

In states like Illinois and Louisiana, legislatures have passed laws requiring riverboats to cruise while gaming is taking place, only to have regulatory bodies waive that legal mandate when bad weather and inclement conditions threatened. That essentially allowed for dockside gambling.

However, in Illinois the gaming commission is likely to reverse itself, and one week after the convention district attorneys in Louisiana were attacking the practice as well.

Such confusing situations can be avoided, panelists said, if laws granting authority and spelling out gaming provisions are crafted with more care.

An independent state gaming commission with strong, broad authority to regulate and autonomous funding can go a long way toward solving these problems, according Kevin Mullally, legal counsel for the Missouri Gaming Commission.

"I think the biggest potential for political corruption in gaming is at the local level," said Mullally.

States should also move at a more moderate pace when enacting legislation in order to ensure that all the parts work together and form a rational policy.

"It is also good for public perception to get a strong set of ethics rules in place," added Kay Fleming, legal counsel for the Indiana Gaming Commission.

The evolution of gaming policy

Government regulation of legalized gaming has come to be seen as a necessary evil, but panelist all agreed that much can be done in the field of public policy to make it work more efficiently.

"If we allowed gambling the way we allow drinking milk, we wouldn't be here today," quipped panelist Michael Jones. "We need to get involved in the public policy debate!"

In Colorado, more than $1 billion a year is generated by the combined energies of slot machines, card games, the lottery, charitable games, and even non-authorized gray-area machines.

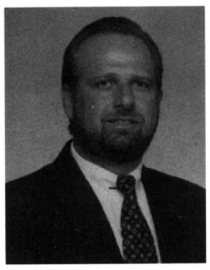
"But none of these organizations talk to each other," says George Turner, director of the Colorado Division of Gaming.

Kenneth Pickering, chairman of the Louisiana Riverboat Gaming Commission, says nine riverboats netted $73 million in October 1994 alone. But nobody is sure who really regulates the boats, the commission or the state police.

"The regulatory laws are a mess because they were put together piecemeal," Pickering said. "We need to straighten it out. Where we are headed is a superboard" that would regulate all forms of gaming except parimutual betting and the lottery.

John Tipton, former director of the Colorado Department of Revenue and general counsel for Seven Circle Resorts Inc., agrees that some unified form of regulation should be looked at for gaming.

"There ought to be a sharing of information," he said. "There ought to be some thought to consistent regulation."▲



DOLLARS & SENSE

A look at the new equipment line-up

I would like to dedicate this month's column to the myriad of equipment introduced in the past few months at the seemingly never ending parade of trade shows.

The major shows this past fall took place in many interesting cities ranging from San Antonio and Las Vegas to Miami Beach. The general consensus was that although a wide and diverse array of product was shown, for the most part there was more quantity than quality. Some of the equipment was available immediately; most wasn't going to be available until after the first of the year.

I think the fall show season left much to be desired in the category of affordable equipment necessary to generate acceptable return on investment. This is true for street operators as well as family entertainment centers.

While I'd be the first to admit that technology brought us some outstanding games, the price tags were out of this world. The cost made a great deal of new equipment impractical for street operators. Most of the larger pieces are suitable primarily for large, high traffic locations like theme parks and elaborate family fun centers. Unless the standard 50/50 split between operators and locations is somehow innovatively and creatively modified, it simply will not be possible to place pricey equipment into an average location.

REDEMPTION: Once again redemption seems to be drawing the most attention, and rightfully so. There were many games that deserved recognition, and only the cashboxes will tell which ones will be winners. Planet Earth's *Dino 44* and *Dino 60*, the latest variations of the already successful *Dinoscore*, are excellent. Instead of playing for tickets, players can play for points that can be instantly and automatically redeemed for merchandise from an accompanying prize vendor containing either 44 or 60 prizes.

Coastal's *Pop-A-Ball II* has a progressive jackpot sign, which should enhance the earnings of the original time-tested piece. ICE's revised version of the already popular *1/2 Pint Frenzy* is titled *Mini Dunx* and is a more compact and attractive version of the original.

A redemption game deserving a closer look is Benchmark's *Golden Goose*, a fast-paced token rolldown game. It should keep players coming back for more. The same can be said about Coin Concepts' *Home Run Hitter.*

Perhaps the most excitement in the area of redemption is the POG craze that was incredibly successful in Hawaii and has spread to California. It was predicted to move eastward and by now should be in full swing.

Lazer-Tron's *Pogger* is a four-player rotary-type game that allows players to win highly sought after POGs and slammers. Noel Industries recently introduced a POG version of its

Paul Virgadamo

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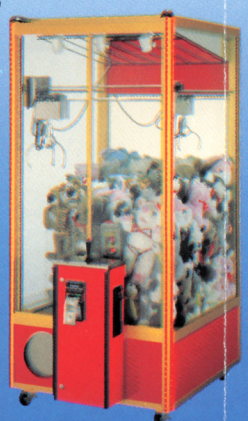

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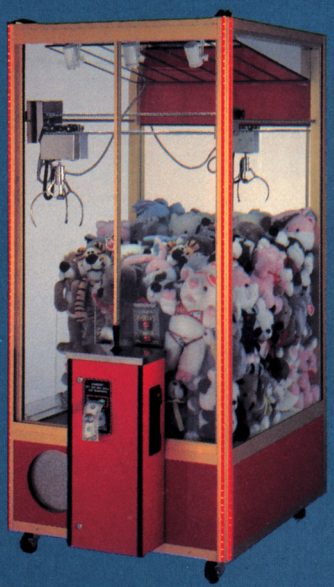

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successful *LAX* machine. What makes this game particularly interesting is that merchandise other than POGs (candy, super balls, etc.) can be put into the loading tubes to be dispensed onto the playfield. Better yet, when the POG fad is over the *POG LAX* can be converted, by means of an economical retrofit kit, back to the seemingly timeless original *LAX* machine. For those who already own the original *LAX*, Chris Noel has informed me that a kit will be available to convert to the POG version.

PINBALL: Williams and Bally have done it again, and there weren't even close seconds. Williams' *Roadshow*, featuring the voice of country music star Carlene Carter, is the best pin to come along for quite a while. Bally's *Corvette*, although not the pin that *Roadshow* is, has good action and is sure to be a collector's item. The only negative thing I can say about these products is that the price has shot into the stratosphere. Unfortunately, it may not be long before operators will have to turn to lesser pinball products because the best has become unaffordable.

VIDEO GAMES: This continues to be the most disappointing category. Sitdown games, although incredible, simply are not affordable to most operators. Sega's *Daytona USA*, is the best game ever, but there are only so many locations that can justify its cost. Quality uprights are few and far between. The best, *Killer Instinct* and *Cruis'n* by Midway, are expensive; Atari's *Primal Rage* should have been produced as a kit.

Speaking of kits, three have possibilities: Capcom's *Darkstalkers*, which is already at the top of the charts; SNK's *Samurai Shodown 2*, which is a must for every Neo-Geo system; and Strata's *Pairs*, which we tested in the adult version. The adult version is not for every location, but there is another version designed specifically for general audiences.

Finally, for those locations with busy lounges, it would be hard to find a better return on investment than Merit's *Megatouch* countertop game.

As we ring out the old and ring in the new, these are but a few coin-op titles that I hope will make your new year a bit more prosperous.

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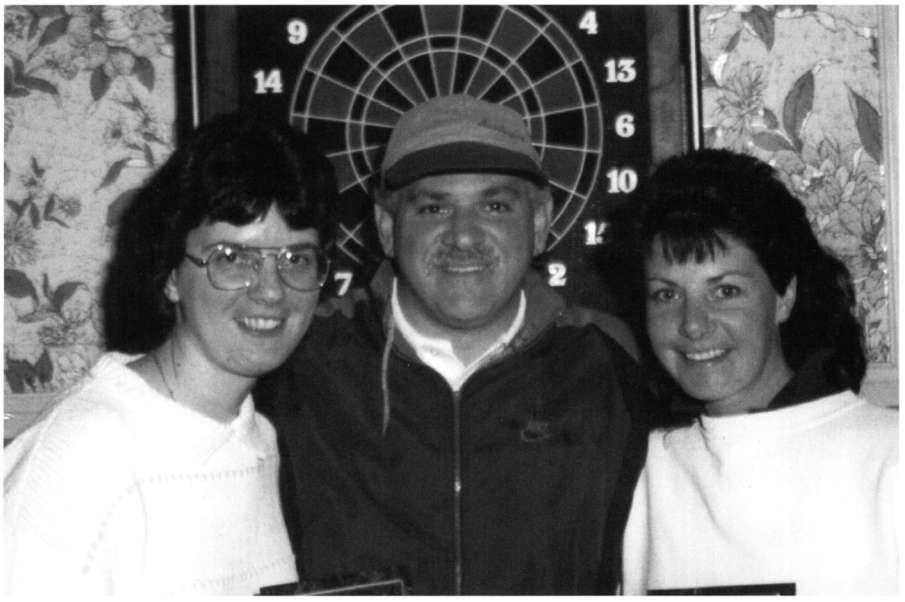
TOURNAMENTS & LEAGUES

PAMMA event raises funds for association

Pennsylvania darters helped raise close to $4,000 for the Pennsylvania Amusement Music Machine Association when the organization held its first yearly dart tournament on Nov. 4-6 at the Day's Inn in Butler, Pa.



Here are Women's Doubles A Flight winners Kathy Karpowich (l) and Connie Soroka with Lou Larson.

The event was spearheaded by PAMMA's board of directors and co-sponsored by Betson Pittsburgh Distributing and Mondial Distributing of Philadelphia.

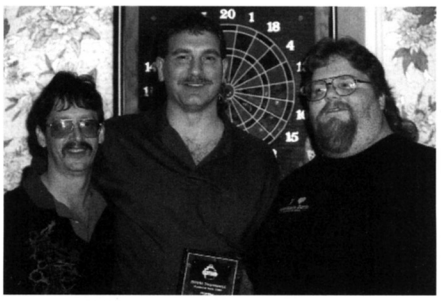
Also supporting the tournament were dart operating companies of Pennsylvania, contributing prize monies to the tournament and sending their league coordinators to help with the running of the three-day event.

Those companies included: P-N-L Vending, City Coin Amusement, B&B Amusements, Tri-Area Amusements, Dobkin Bros., Marsico Amusements, Deleo Amusements, Country Mountain Amusements, Wescal, Cannonsburg Amusements, H. Lazar & Son, M & G Services, Apple Vending, Warner Coin Machine, Marsh Amusements, Angelo Amusements, Jay's Vending, Kay's Music Service, and Mid-State Amusements.

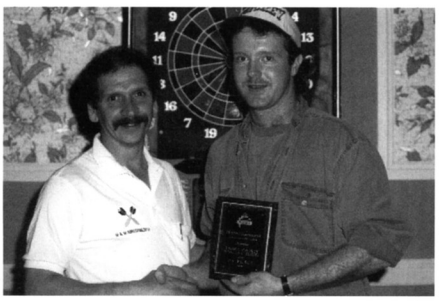
The PAMMA tournament was unique in that it was completely classified. All registered dart shooters were challenged to throw against other darters of equal proficiency. The classifications were based on local league statistics provided by the operating companies.

Acknowledged as the Keystone state's dart gurus, PAMMA president Lou Manolios of P-N-L Vending in Pittsburgh, Bob Mills of Arachnid, and Lou Larson of Betson Pittsburgh-were charged with conducting the tournament. All three praised the participating operating companies, saying that their support "makes this type of event possible for their league players."

Mid-State Amusements was the first Pennsylvania operating company to experiment with a divisionalized or classified tournament, a $5,000 event held the previous month. Fred Wood, Mid-State president, said players really respond to the format, and he is already



Pro Men's Singles winner Mike Abboud (c) shows off his prize to Colonel Edward "C.E." Boring of Mid-State Amusements (r) and another competitor.



Wayne Hazlett (r) is congratulated by Warren Morgan of Arachnid on his first place finish in the Unisex Cricket C Flight competition.

Gary Musselman, shown with Mimi Capotosto, finished second in the Cricket Singles B Flight.

planning for a similar event this year.

Lending his wisdom to the task of separating more than 1,000 entries into divisions was the National Dart Association's former president Dave Warner of Warner Coin Machine in Erie, and tournament stage director Charlene Suchy of P-N-L Vending was credited as being "the glue that held it all together."

The event grossed approximately $15,000 through registration, contributions, and coin-drop. Close to $10,000 of that was returned in prizes. "After the cost of operation PAMMA should see about $4,000 for the state association," Manolios said.

Betson Pittsburgh and Mondial helped with the collection of money, supplied the *Galaxy* boards used in the competition, and provided assistance during the tournament.

With only four exceptions, all first, second or third place winners were Pennsylvania residents. Friday night winners were:

Women's Luck of the Draw: 1st—Kathy Karpowich of Freeland and Charlene Suchy of Pittsburgh; 2nd—Kim Cruise of Pittsburgh and Pam Anderson of Moundsville, W. Va.; 3rd—Michelle Rush of Landsdale and Char Haganey of Freeland.

Men's Luck of the Draw: 1st—Tracy Brown of Butler and Bob Yurga of N. Apollo; 2nd—Walter "Hots" Pankow of Buffalo, New York, and Kraig "Barney" Walker of Pittsburgh; 3rd—John "Slug" Gasdick of Pittsburgh and Cliff Bendig of Erie.

Midnight Madness: 1st—Tommy Baker and Pete Scotti both of Pittsburgh; 2nd—Tracy Brown and Mark Jasko of Finleyville; 3rd—Jim Denkovich and Shawn Brennan.

Saturday's competition included:

Women's Doubles A Flight: 1st—Karpowich and Connie Soroka of Sellesville; 2nd—Fran Grinder and Maria Fricher both of Landsdale; 3rd—Liz Davis of Newport, New York, and Hla Tlou of Blacksburg, Va.

Women's Doubles B Flight: 1st—Colleen Donlin of Drifton and Char Haganey; 2nd—Sharon Whitley of Erie and Veronica Grey of Fairview; 3rd—Melanie Osella and Anna Faure both of Bridgeville.

Men's Doubles C Flight: 1st—Michael Carnell of Arnold and Jason Yingling of Tarentum; Terry Trojanovich and Dan Whitney both of Erie; 3rd—Jim Grimming and Tim Dale both of Altoona.

Men's Doubles B Flight: 1st—Matt Whitmore of New Waterford and Jim Denkovich; 2nd—Lee Cherry of Valencia and Dave Shomaker of Mars; 3rd—Frank Ebert of Stroudburg and Weasel of Pittsburgh.

Men's Doubles A Flight: 1st—Greg Jones and Darin Young both of Whitehaven; 2nd—Joe Haganey of Freeland and Mike Abboud of Conynham; 3rd—B.J. Gerber and Mark Sniscak both of Nesquehoning.

Unisex Cricket A Flight: 1st—Mike Abboud; 2nd—Greg Jones; 3rd—Joe Haganey.

Unisex Cricket B Flight: 1st—David Constant; 2nd—Gary Musselman; 3rd—Jim Denkovich.

Unisex Cricket C Flight: 1st—Wayne Hazlett; 2nd—Dan Whitney; 3rd—Joe Balestrein.

Unisex Cricket D Flight: 1st—Jim Hutchinson; 2nd—Veronica Grey; 3rd—Doug Sprankle.

Mixed Triples A Flight: 1st—Michael Abboud, Kathy Karpowich, and Joe Haganey; 2nd—Greg Jones, Liz Davis, and Darin Young; 3rd—B.J. Gerber, Connie Soroka, and Mark Sniscak.

Mixed Triples B Flight: 1st—Robert Marshman, Trish Hazlett, and Terry Wright; 2nd—John Petrick, Char Haganey, and Tom Mulhearn.

Sunday winners:

Pro Men's Singles: 1st—Michael Abboud; 2nd—Joe Haganey; 3rd—Walter "Hots" Pankow.

Pro Women's Singles: 1st—Kathy Karpowich; 2nd—Elona Bridge; 3rd—Liz Davis.

Women's Singles B Flight: 1st—Jamie Stewart; 2nd—Char Haganey; 3rd—Diane Voltz.

Men's Singles B Flight: 1st—Cliff Bendig; 2nd—Dan Weaver; 3rd—Wes Sornisky.

Women's Singles C Flight: 1st—Veronica Grey; 2nd—Colleen Donlin; 3rd—Ann Teyssier.

Men's Singles C Flight: 1st—Dan Whitney; 2nd—Dan Doutt; 3rd—Jim Grimming.

Mixed Cricket A Flight: 1st—Kathy Karpowich and Joe Haganey; 2nd—Elona Bridge and Tracy Brown; 3rd—Char Haganey and Mike Abboud.

Mixed Doubles B Flight: 1st—Hla Tlou and Bob Slifer; 2nd—Maria Fricher and Jerry Finnell; 3rd—Pam Anderson and Sam Jacovetty.▲

In the Mixed Triples B Flight winners Robert Marshman, Trish Hazlett, and Terry Wright (l-r) are congratulated by Charlene Suchy.

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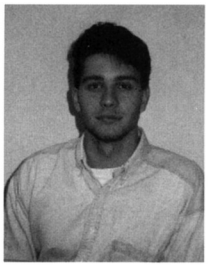

PLAYER'S PERSPECTIVE

Simulators give players a run for their money

Greg Reeves

Last year a new breed of video came on the scene, actually challenging the fighting games for a number one earning spot. Probably the most consistently popular theme since the inception of video games, driving simulators, has jumped ahead of the competition since texture-mapping debuted.

Namco's **Point Blank**

What was so impressive in Sega's *Out Runners* or *Virtua Racing* was surpassed with the introduction of *Daytona USA*. Similarly, Namco's popular *Final Lap 3* was outmoded visually by *Ridge Racer* and its sequel.

Unfortunately, with state-of-the-art games come huge cabinets and hefty prices. Realistically, not many operators can afford to buy a game that costs more than a new car, but players do want games they can't play on their home systems.

Point Blank

Theme: Namco's newest shooting game proves that nonviolent themes can be more fun than rival police or gunfighter roles. *Point Blank* contains several dozen minigames in one: the player can shoot and destroy meteors heading for Earth, prevent jumping piranhas from reaching a man hanging above, knock apples off of people's heads, or just challenge one of many moving target shooting galleries.

Each player starts with three lives and must choose a difficulty level: practice, medium, difficult, or hard. The harder levels contain 16 stages to complete and a final round. Hitting bombs or benevolent targets on-screen, or not completing the given quota for each state, costs one life. Therefore, completing each stage before the game ends is the player's goal.

Graphics: There are no digitized, texture-mapped, or polygon visuals here; only simple, oversized, non-detailed cartoonish characters that make up the game's graphics. The purpose is not to achieve realism, but rather to challenge

skill and reflexes, so background details are limited and target movement is a priority.

Controls: At first glance the game appears to be a redemption piece, mainly due to the oversized cabinet and simple effects. Two guns and holsters are attached to the front of the game, distinguished by color.

A large monitor is inverted by a mirror to increase screen distance from the player. The guns contain internal motors to produce a kickback effect after a shot is fired. Namco claims to have the most accurate gun in the business with this game, necessary because screen targets often move rapidly and vary from big to small.

Game Play: Whether choosing a one- or two-player game, each person must decide on a difficulty level. The chosen level is then displayed as a hill with a castle on top and 16 or so stages on the way up. All of these must be completed without losing three lives.

SNK's **Samurai Shodown II**

A set of four stages is offered at one time; each one has a differing time limit, bullet allowance, and target quota to fulfill. Often, bombs will appear among the targets and will cost a life if hit. Missing a quota also speeds the game's end. If all 16 stages are completed, a final fireworks round declares the winner and the end of the two-player game.

Overall: The graphics and theme seem more suitable for a child, but the speed of game play is too difficult for little people. The lack of violence is a positive aspect, plus it is an example that shooting games can be benevolent. It is appropriate for any location, but I believe a family fun center is ideal. I don't expect it to have the popularity of a *Revolution-X* or *Terminator 2*, but it should have long-term appeal.

Samurai Shodown II

Theme: As in the original, *Shodown II* is unique in that only one type of fighter is present in the game—a sword expert. Actually, some of the new characters carry claws, staffs, or gauntlets, but the weapon theme is intact. Sixteen total characters can be chosen to do battle in redrawn or altogether new background scenery for the title of supreme Samurai.

Graphics: The game has the appearance of the patented mega-shock graphics, if not the designation, due to the zooming camera angles and dramatic finishes. Especially interesting is the reacting scenery during battle, such as sliced trees and barrels. Many of the same background locations from the original appear, all redone with better detail and some with season changes.

Graphics in general are the cleanest of all SNK fighting games, especially the company's other current hit, *King of Fighters '94*, and are shown in the first and best style—Japanese animated.

Controls: Available in dedicated form or as a Neo-Geo addition, *Shodown II* makes use of a joystick and four buttons. Buttons A and B allow weapon strikes in light and medium strengths, respectively, and a combination of both causes a powerful attack. Buttons C and D work along the same lines, though with kicks. A character can be relieved of his weapon and must strike with his hands instead until he recovers his sword.

The joystick can cause a forward dash, jumping retreat, forward roll, or backward roll if two successive movements are made in the correct direction. Otherwise, control is normal, and, of course, several energy or special fighting moves are possible with various combinations.

Game Play: The fighting is virtually identical to the prequel, but certain things have been added: a power meter increases in strength after several combos are performed, and

the corresponding attack directions are displayed at the bottom of the screen.

This way, the player doesn't have to guess the move, only read and perform it. The clashing swords effect has been simplified to just knocking the weapon out of the opponent's hand, and more techniques are possible with the added rolling movements.

Overall: The release of the sequel is timed perfectly to help rejuvenate the success of the original *Samurai*. The dedicated cabinet will draw more crowds than the kit, due to the importance of this game and the number of titles present in a Neo-Geo cabinet.

The specialized weapon theme is a great idea. Future games should also concentrate on only one type of warrior, instead of incorporating all of them. It is what makes this game unique and what drives it.

Ridge Racer 2

Theme: The sequel to the very first texture-mapped driving game was released quickly, in less than a year. There are a few improvements to help compete with other simulators.

Unlike the rest, Namco has converted a city to a race course, rather than using a conventional track. This greatly emphasizes scenery and realism, as well as makes the play more interesting. One through eight players, depending on the number of linkup cabinets, can challenge one another in Rave War racing cars to complete three to five laps through the city.

Graphics: What can be said about a graphics capability that is way ahead of its time? Namco's patented TR3 system constructs polygon forms to make cars, buildings, walls, and rocks, and then covers these shapes with texture that defines them.

Namco's Ridge Racer 2

The computer world that is formed as a result remembers where obstacles were hit or skid marks were placed during the previous lap and displays their location on the current lap. It gives the impression that the city course is really there and not just formed as the player goes along.

Higher difficulty levels increase the length of the course, or are blocked off for a shorter track. Weather and daytime conditions change from game to game and lap to lap. The sky becomes darker and lights in building windows come on, or the sun comes up and puts a glow on the scene. A helicopter often zooms by to check the race's progress.

A new feature is a rearview mirror that allows a player to prevent another car from passing him. Also on the screen are the speedometer, track map, car placement, shift gear in use, and lap timer. Perhaps the most interesting sight is a large screen, seen above the entrance to the tunnel, which displays a demo game of the classic *Gorf*.

Controls: The cabinet is available in a one- or two-seater model and can link up to eight people at one time. Each player has a molded seat with built-in speakers, accelerator and brake pedals, steering wheel, and a shift up/down lever. The lack of a clutch pedal or numbered shifter promotes faster handling.

Game Play: Before commencing, the game allows time for others to join in, followed by a choice of music, automatic or manual transmission, and difficulty setting.

The race begins just outside of downtown and takes the players through and under the city, near the beach, and between cliff faces. Two checkpoints along the course extend game play while an announcer informs the number of laps or player position.

The perspective is that seen only from inside the car. No multiview buttons are present, but the addition of the rearview mirror adds realism. The game ends with final car placements after all laps are completed in the allotted time.

Overall: The car handling is easy, curves and turns are managed well, and the city course is most interesting. It is hard to imagine graphics improving beyond this point. It would seem that real racing footage would be the next step.▲

TECHNICAL TOPICS

As others see us: Part 2

Randy Fromm

[Editor's note: Last month we ran a lengthy article that pertained to obtaining information from internet. That particular one focused on how to buy machines. Reading the comments generated from outside of our industry gives us a perspective on how we are perceived. Randy has again extracted a portion of information from internet, this time on pinball. We enjoyed reading it and hope you will too.]

A teeny-tiny, itty-bitty percentage of the information available on the internet concerns the coin-op business. Actually it translates to an appreciable amount of data; data painstakingly collected and lovingly archived in the form of printed text by a cadre of dedicated volunteers. Last month, we took a look at the video game business through the eyes of the players and fans.

This month pinball comes under the microscope with an excellent presentation of questions and answers through the FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) document.

The FAQ is a common way to avoid having to repeat answers to frequently asked questions (hence the FAQ name). Since the FAQ exists as data, it is easy to revise and update. As a result, the FAQ is constantly being added to. The list of "hallowed contributors" is listed at the end of the FAQ.

This FAQ has been edited for brevity. Even so, it's a lengthy dissertation. Specifically, portions regarding the internet itself have been deleted. References to video pinball have been deleted as well.

The rec.games.pinball Dyna-FAQ. Originated by Keith Johnson: <keefer@rahul.net> and Kevin Martin <sigma@rahul.net>

Introduction

The purpose of this DFAQ is to provide an up-to-date list of questions and answers for the rec.games.pinball newsgroup. The current official FAQ for the newsgroup deals primarily with maintaining and finding/buying your own pinball machines.

The FAQ is a valuable guide for this kind of information, and if that is the kind of information you really need, read that. Its maintainer is Andy Oakland <sao@athena.mit.edu>. This DFAQ tries to reflect the current goings-on and trends of the newsgroup and pinball in general, as well as the interesting past.

Finally, and perhaps most important, we hope to provide some factual and interesting reading for anyone who enjoys pinball or wants to learn more about it.

Abbreviations

This is a list of abbreviations commonly used in this DFAQ.

rgp - rec.games.pinball

FAQ - Frequently Asked Question(s)

DFAQ - the Dyna-FAQ (this guide!)

BTW - by the way

K - thousand (usually points)

M - million

B - billion

SDTM - straight down the middle

MHO - My Humble Opinion

PAPA - Professional and Amateur Pinball Association

IFPA - International Flipper Pinball Association

AMOA - Amusement & Music

Operators Association

TZ - Twilight Zone

TAF - The Addams Family

IJ - Indiana Jones

JD - Judge Dredd

JP - Jurassic Park

LAH - Last Action Hero

SF2 - Street Fighter II

SMB - Super Mario Bros.

ST:TNG - Star Trek: The Next Generation

CFTBL - Creature From the Black Lagoon

BK - Black Knight

BK2K - Black Knight 2000

LW3 - Lethal Weapon 3

HS2 - High Speed II: The Getaway

VUK - Vertical Up-Kicker

EM - Electro-Mechanical

SS - Solid State

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While each of the questions listed above has an extensive answer, we have selected only a few from each section to give you examples of what people are seeing on internet:

SECTION 2: General

Q: Who are the pinball manufacturers?

A: Currently, there are Williams (who owns Bally/Midway and also uses this name to manufacture pins, effectively giving the same company two pins on the assembly line at once); Gottlieb (owned by Premier); and Data East. If for some reason you'd like to contact one of these companies, their addresses are given in the FAQ.

Q: What is that loud cracking noise?

A: That is the sound of a solenoid banging the side of the pinball cabinet. Well, not always the side of the cabinet, but usually. Some newer Williams/Bally games have the thwacker (technical term) in the backbox. Weird.

In most cases, it signals the award of a free game, a chance to play the machine again at no cost! Along with being a real-life physical entity that you can manipulate, free games are what sets pinball machines apart from video games.

Q: Do pinball machines have magnets in them?

A: NO! Well, usually not. Some games have visible, purposeful magnets in them, but they are usually pointed out to you somehow. Some examples are the spiral magnets in TZ, the power in TAF (LAH also uses the same technique as TAF), and the "don't shoot!" ball-trapping magnet in *Rollergames*.

In TZ, there is also the Magna-Flip in the Powerfield, where you activate the magnets in an attempt to sling the ball up to the top. And, in some games of the past (most notably BK and BK2K), there was Magna-Save. Hit the button, and your ball would be caught from the outlane, and generally fall back into the inlane (assuming you were fast enough, of course).

Q: What is a beta machine?

A: Beta machines are pins that show up a while before their production run. Most often, they appear in areas around Chicago (since that's where all the manufacturers are located) so that people can try them out and give their initial impressions and feelings about the game.

Betas generally are quite a bit different from their later production counterparts in the way the rules are set up. However, the artwork and playfield layout almost never change, though other things like rubber posts may be added and/or removed.

There are also even earlier prototype machines that may wind up being radically different from the later betas and production machines.

Q: How much does a machine weigh?

A: Around 250-350 pounds, depending on the number of toys in it, whether it's a widebody or not, etc.

Q: How much does a machine cost?

A: New machines fresh from the factory retail for $3,000-$3,500. Data East and Gottlieb machines tend to be on the less expensive end of the scale; Williams/Bally tend to be more expensive.

Q: What is the Broadway Arcade?

A: One of the finest arcades in the United States for playing pinball. It is located at 52nd and Broadway in New York City. Its owner is Steve Epstein, who has been an incredible force in advancing the world of pinball. He is the founder of PAPA and is responsible for numerous tournaments held nowadays. Truly a great man dedicated to a great cause!

Thanks to Steve Baumgarten <sbb@panix.com> for corrections.

SECTION 3: Playing Pinball

Q: Is there a good source of information for improving my play?

A: In the archive there is a file called Info/playingtips. It is maintained by Dave Hollinsworth: <hlsw_ltd@uhura.cc.rochester.edu>. It is an invaluable guide to getting better and explaining techniques. If you are at all serious about improving your skill, you should not be without this guide. There is a lot of information in it, but some questions are asked so often, I felt they also deserved a spot in the DFAQ.

Q: What is a death save?

A: A death save is a way to get the ball back into play after it has gone down an outlane. For it to work, you need to have a machine that is not very sensitive tilt-wise. These are easiest on any Data East machine, followed closely by Williams/Bally and Alvin G. machines. They are very hard to do on Gottlieb machines.

You can do a death save if the ball has gone down the right outlane (or down the left on a Gottlieb, since they have that rubber pin there to bounce the ball off of). When it has gone down the

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outlane, hold up the LEFT flipper. Then, as soon as the ball hits the metal plate on the left side, give the machine a sharp quick shove to the right (and perhaps back a little bit).

For a Gottlieb machine, you should reverse the process, since you'll be trying to save a left drain off the post. Right outlane saves are very hard. When you try these, please make sure there's enough room for the machine to move around, or else you'll wind up damaging the machine, machines around it, walls, etc.

The operator will be less than pleased at you if any of this should happen. However, if you do it right, the ball should now be just above the right flipper. Lower the left and flip away! Warning: Be sure you have your weight sufficiently behind you when you try this! Otherwise, you could wind up hurting your elbow or arm.

In the archive, you should check out the Misc/-deathsave.gif picture (or the compressed PostScript counterpart, Misc/deathsave.ps.Z). It gives you the general idea of how a death save is supposed to work. I think there's a bang back picture in that file, too. Also see the file referenced in the next question.

Q: Why is the replay score different from the other day?

A: All modern games use reflexing to adjust the replay value of a game every so often to a desired target percentage of replays. Generally, this is set to about 10 percent.

This means that the game looks at the last x-number of games played, determines the percentage of those games that replays were awarded, then makes the new replay value higher or lower, depending on what the actual percentage of games won is compared to the desired percentage.

Williams/Bally and Gottlieb games reset their replay scores every 50 or so games. Data East games ask you to hit start after power-cycling the machine in order to adjust the replay (or they do it right away if you are using the menus). Lots of recent Gottlieb games have a bug in them that sets the replay well out of reach for pretty much anyone. No one knows why for sure, but there are quite a few machines (*SF2s* and *SMBs*, especially) that have replays in the nine billions. Ouch!

Different from the base replay score is the replay boost: Most games will start raising the current replay score until you run out of credits (so that it isn't easy to constantly keep getting replays at a set score).

Williams games nowadays typically raise the replay by 50M points until you run out of credits or someone else puts more money into the game. Either of those actions will put the replay score back to its base (usually).

Data East games boost their replays by about 25M after a replay or a match! Running out of credits or putting more money in should reset the replay back to normal here, too. For Gottlieb games, you can get a few replays in a row at the base score, but after that, the score starts to skyrocket. And the boost gets higher and higher after each game played until there are no credits left.

Also note that the replay score isn't the only thing that can reflex on a game. The number of ramp shots needed to light extra ball is a good example of other reflexing features. Beware of Data East reflexing. Its games have a tendency to reflex either on or off, not just harder or easier. (This is a Bad Thing, of course.)

Thanks to Dave Stewart <dstewart+@cmu.edu> for suggestions.

SECTION 4: Tournament Play

Q: What are the major tournaments?

A: There are several major tournaments during the course of the year. The first one is the PAPA tournament, held in New York City in early to mid-February.

The next one is the IFPA tournament, generally held around the Chicago vicinity or fairly close. [In July 1994, the IFPA ceased operation. It used to be supported by the manufacturers themselves but they pulled out, effectively killing the IFPA.]

The other two tournaments are the Pinball Show in Arizona (held mid-summer or later) and the tournament at Pinball Expo (held in Chicago in early September).

Q: What is a tournament mode?

A: The purpose of tournament modes is to take the randomness out of a game as much as possible. What this mainly means is that any random awards given out by a game will be made non-random. Examples: The Fish Finder on *Fish Tales* and the Burn Rubber award on *HS2* give out the same awards in the same order each time.

Q: Can I start my own league?

A: Sure, why not? If you want it to be sanctioned by PAPA, then you'll need to contact Steve Epstein. If you just want to start small, and perhaps become sanctioned later, then you can run it pretty much any way you want. A good source of information are the Misc/league* files provided by Dave Stewart <dstewart@cmu.edu>. It's a real-

ly good idea to have the help and approval of a local operator when trying to start one up.

Q: Who are the past tournament winners?

A: As of April, 1994: 1991—PAPA 1, Joey Cartegena; IFPA 1, Rick Stetta. 1992—PAPA 2, Rick Stetta; IFPA 2, Dave Hegge. 1993—PAPA 3, Lyman Sheats Jr.; IFPA 3, Rick Stetta. 1994—PAPA 4, Bowen Kerins; IFPA 4, Dan Wilson.

SECTION 5: History

Q: What was the first pinball game?

A: This depends on what exactly you're asking. Before pinball as we know it today, there were machines that just had pins in them and balls would fall down from the top (like a Pachinko machine, except they weren't upright). This is probably why it was called pin-ball.

This coin-operated pinball industry as we know it today came into being around 1931. The term pinball wasn't coined until 1936. Thanks to Terry Cumming: <terry.cumming@canrem.com> for information.

Q: OK then, what was the first game with FLIPPERS in it?

A: That would be *Humpty Dumpty* by Gottlieb. The flippers still weren't as we know them today, though. They were really small miniflippers, and there were six of them. Not only that, they were in the middle at different levels and faced like this: \ /. However, the pivot point was on the bottom of the flipper, so you worked your way up.

It wasn't until much later that the flippers migrated down to where they are now. The first game to feature flippers at the bottom of the layout was *Triple Action* (Genco, January 1948), which was designed by Williams' Steve Kordek.

However, the flippers were facing outward here. The first game with "normal" flippers was probably *Spot Bowler* (Gottlieb, 1950).

The really small flippers used on these games (about the size of the Thing flipper on *TAF*) were used almost exclusively on games until around 1970.

Thanks to Terry Cumming <terry.cumming@canrem.com) for information. Thanks to Paul Fernquist <pfern@technix.technix.mn.org) for information.

Q: What are electromechanical games?

A: EMs, as they are affectionately called, are basically games that have lots of wires, bells, whistles, and (perhaps their most distinctive feature) scoring reels. I would say the name refers to their basic nature of electricity signaling certain gears to move and change your score or ring bells.

Q: What are solid-state games?

A: Basically, anything that came out after EMs died out. The first solid-state game came out around 1978. The most obvious changes in these new machines were the use of seven-segment displays for score, and more electronic-sounding noises (computer-generated beeps and boops).

Q: Aren't Tri-Ball and M-Ball really stupid names for Multiball?

A: Multiball is a registered trademark of Williams. As such, they are the ones with the rights to use it and can forbid other people to use it. The company actually sued Data East for using it, so Data East started using the infamous Tri-Ball in the middle of the production run for *LW3*. That's why some *LW3*s say Multiball and some say Tri-Ball. Everything since has been Tri-Ball or something other than Multiball.

Late breaking news: Starting with *Tales From the Crypt*, Data East can now use multiball to its heart's content.

Q: Is there a list of all the pinball games that have been made?

A: Most of the solid-state games that have been produced are in a list in the archive. It is called Lists/pinball. It is maintained by Rob Rosenhouse <rob_rosenhouse@hq-bbs.wisdom.bubble.org>

There is also a more comprehensive list covering games in a bit more detail from 1947 on up. You can get information on the guide itself or order it from: Daina Pettit, 4805 Marabow Circle, Salt Lake City, UT 84117; phone (801) 277-6296.

Q: What manufacturers have died off over the years?

A: There was Chicago Coin (which later became Stern), Game Plan, Zaccaria (an Italian manufacturer), Atari (which put out the biggest pin, *Hercules*, with the pinball being roughly the size of a cue ball!), and supposedly even Sega had a brief pinball stint.

On March 5, 1994, Alvin G. and Co., which had been in business for less than three years, closed its doors as well. A few companies also produced one or two games that I haven't bothered to list here. Capcom (of the *Street Fighter II* video game series fame) is supposedly starting up a pinball division. Nothing from them yet, though.

Thanks to Lyman Sheats, Jr. <lyman@chinet.com> for information.

SECTION 7: Specific Game FAQs

NOTE: All of these questions are covered in their respective rules sheets (I think!). However, they still come up so often that we think they warrant a space in the DFAQ.

Q: What is the four-way combo in TAF?

A: Shoot the Bear Kick ramp,

then the Advance X shot to the upper right flipper, then the left ramp, then the 5x Graveyard (swamp) shot. Doing either the first three or last three of these gets you a three-way combo.

Q: Why is/isn't there a rubber band in my TZ?

A: The rubber band in the jet bumpers was removed during the production run. Starting at the IFPA '93 tournament (L-3 ROMs), games no longer had the rubber band in there. Though it protected the ball from left drains very nicely, balls coming from the Powerfield would tend to bounce of the band into the center drain! The latter was deemed worse than the former, so out it came.

Any game that shipped with L-3 roms and later does not have the rubber band in it. Some prototype machines may have newer ROMs in it, which would explain why your machine (with, say, L-4 ROMs) has the rubber band.

Q: What are the songs used in CFTBL?

A: The game plays three out of a possible five every day. The five songs are: "Get a Job" (Silhouettes), "Summertime Blues" (Eddie Cochran), "Rock Around the Clock" (Bill Haley and the Comets), "Hand Jive" (Johnny Otis), "Red River Rock" (Johnny and the Hurricanes).

Thanks to the readers of alt.rock-n-roll.oldies for a couple of groups.

Q: Are there really secret flipper combinations in games?

A: Yep. We currently only know of ones in Williams/Bally games. The following steps describe what you can try to do. Most of them work only in the attract mode with no credits since you have to use the start button (therefore, free play is also out of the question). Also, it is best to do them right after a game, slam tilt, or power-cycle.

L = left flipper, R = right flipper, S = start button, B = both flippers. A number in front indicates hit the button that many times.

TAF - 7L S 14R S 20L S = cows 13L S 1R S 2L S = credits

TAFG - same as above, PLUS 12L S 5R S 4L S = new cows

White water - 3L S 15R S 23L S = cows

STTNG - B 8L R 5L R 5L R 6L 2R = Steve Ritchie games (works during normal play as well)

Dr*c*l* - When he crosses his eyes, hit the start (or launch) button.

SECTION 9: Pinball and Your Health

Q: Can I really get injured just by playing pinball?

A: It's possible. If you play for long periods of time often, then you can develop RSIs (repetitive strain injuries) and even CTS (carpal tunnel syndrome). It is not unlike conditions developed by typists and chicken cutters. (If you don't know what I'm talking about, don't worry.)

Thanks to Michael Field <field@cae.wisc.edu> for suggesting this section.

Q: So how do I know if I'm getting CTS?

A: From a simple test you can do by yourself (or with a friend's help). With the suspect hand, hold your thumb and pinky together as tightly as you can. With your other hand (or have your friend do it), use the index finger to try and break the hold of your thumb and pinky.

When your hands are healthy, it will be extremely difficult to break the hold. One of the first signs of CTS, though, is that this hold is extremely weak (so much so that a small child could probably break the hold as well).

This doesn't mean that you have CTS. What it does mean is that if you continue the activity causing the pain (and sometimes numbness) in your hand, you are at high risk of getting CTS, and should immediately take steps to avoid it.

As noted above, using padded gloves while you play seems to do the trick. People may laugh or make comments to you, but hey, they're your hands and you'd probably like to keep the use of them, right? Thanks to Dave Stewart <dstewart+@cmu.edu> for information.

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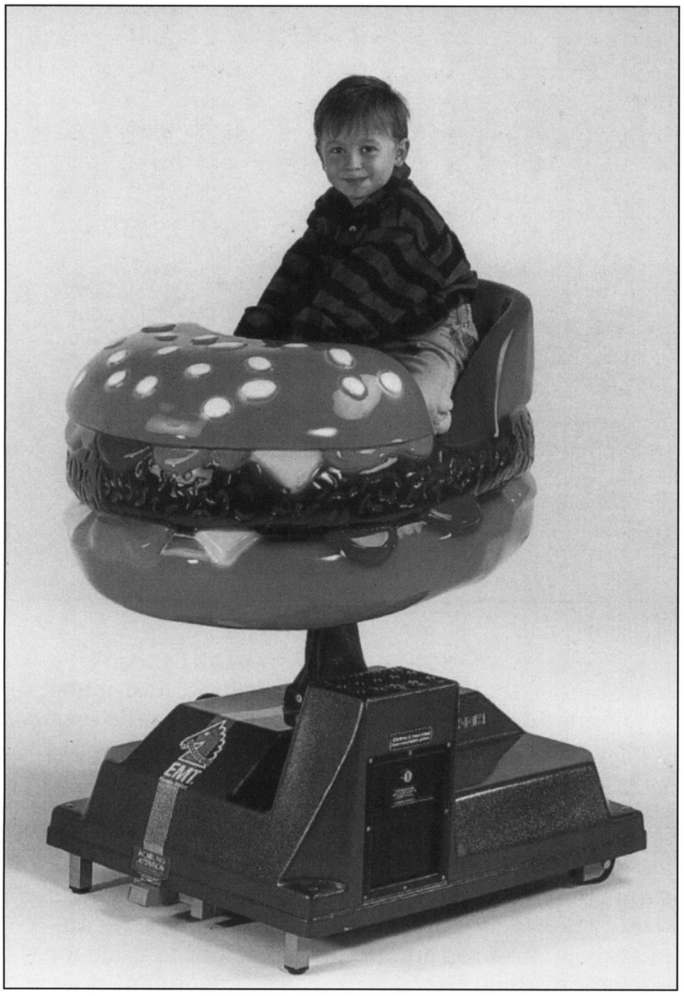
Kid Burger



EMT introduces a delicious new kiddie ride, the *Kid Burger* (230-KB), sure to satisfy the appetite of operators and young customers alike.

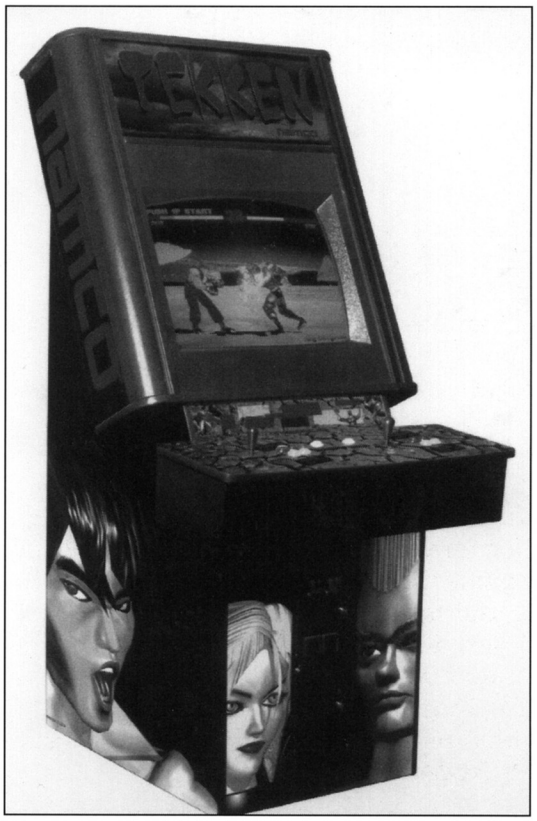
The *Kid Burger* features the likeness of a real hamburger, complete with ketchup, cheese, and pickles, with a comfortable seat for its riders.

A back-and-forth motion and cheery music are certain to provide an entertaining experience for young children. The *Kid Burger* also features the overbuilt mechanics of EMT Kiddie Rides, which assure a long-lasting operating life.

In addition, the sturdy frame, built-in casters, and rollerjack provide ease of transport.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact EMT, 1168 Tower Lane, Bensenville, IL 60106; (708) 860-5100; FAX (708) 860-5144.

Tekken



Namco announces the kick off of *Tekken*, the newest in fighting games, utilizing state-of-the-art technology to offer realistic movements that mirror true martial arts.

At the heart of *Tekken*'s features is Namco's System 11, a high-performance, low-cost hardware system that renders an unparalleled look of realism through the use of 3-D textured polygons with Gourand shading.

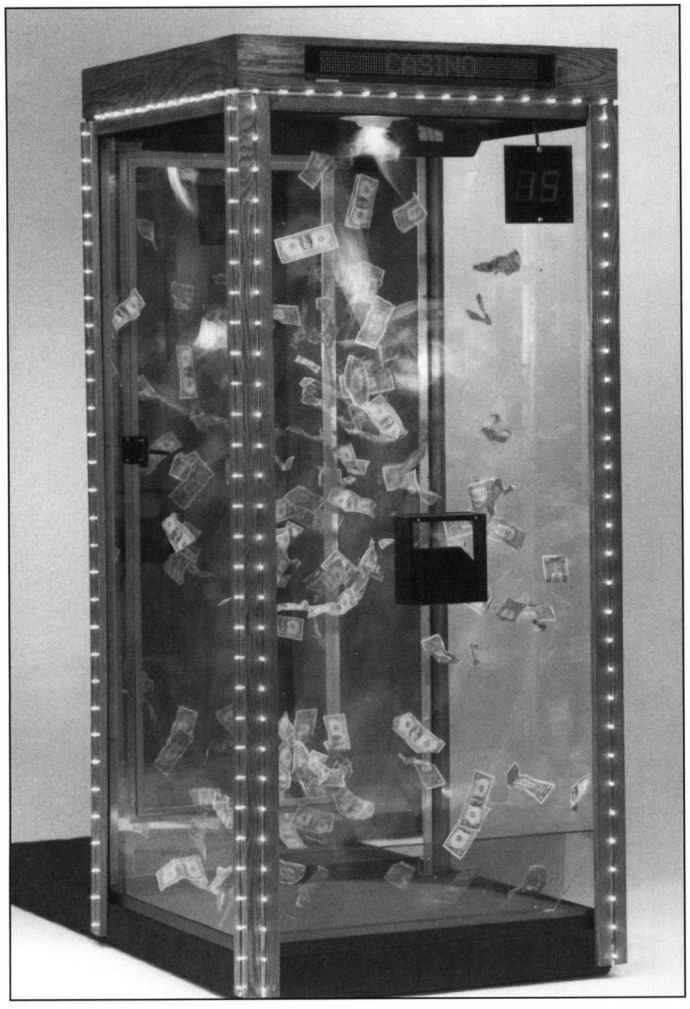
Tekken is on the cutting edge of coin-op technology, utilizing the graphics driver board from the soon-to-be-released SONY playstation.

The game also uses a new control function algorithm that allows players to punch and kick with each arm and leg individually. Other features, including different fighting tactics and rules, a plethora of original movements, and new encounters each game, make *Tekken* more than the traditional five- or six-button fighting game.

Tekken's attractive cabinet design, displaying images of the game's characters on each side, also features an ergonomically designed control panel and an angled monitor for an unobstructed view of game play. The cabinet is kit ready and uses a 27" monitor that allows for easy conversion in the future. A front access PCB panel also facilitates service and conversion.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Namco-America (sales office), 877 Supreme Dr., Bensenville, IL 60106; (708) 238-2248; FAX (708) 238-9333.

Hollywood Cash Cube



Fun Industries announces the recent addition of the *Hollywood Cash Cube* to its growing line of amusement games. Like the popular *Cash Cube Money Machine*, the Hollywood version is a promotional machine that blows money or coupons around inside a clear booth.

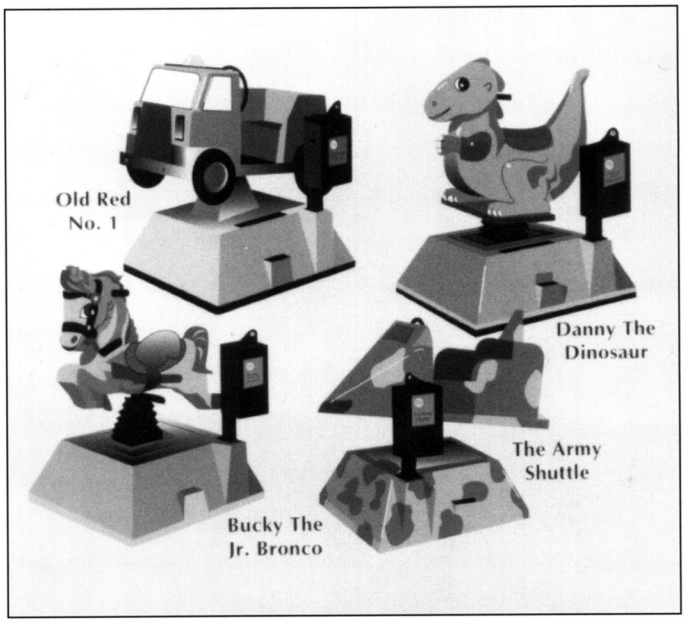
The goal for participants is to catch as many flying bills or coupons as possible in the allotted time. Features of the Hollywood version include solid oak corner posts and an all-oak top fitted out with casino lighting.

A special halogen light shines on the participant, and the top of the cube has a built-in message board that can scroll messages in any language and several colors.

The machine also boasts plush carpeting, a three-speed blower, electronic timing, and an automatic on/off attract mode. The cube sets up without tools; all the components slide together on tracks.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Fun Industries Inc., 627 15th Ave., East Moline, IL 61244; (800) 747-1144 and (309) 755-5021; FAX (309) 755-1684.

LAI kiddie rides



LAI offers a new line of kiddie rides that are ideal for smaller indoor locations and deliver continuous revenue for vending and street operators.

All the rides feature an all-metal fabricated frame built to last, a top quality belt-driven mechanism that assures quiet operation, an oil-lite bearing system guaranteeing lifetime lubrication, and a gel-coated fiberglass body ensuring rugged and dependable use.

Rides include *Old Red No. 1*, a fire truck ride; *Danny the Dinosaur*, a gentle dino character ride; *Bucky the Jr. Bronco* for young cowboys and cowgirls, and the *Army Shuttle*, a futuristic ride vehicle.

The rides come in a wide range of colors and are equipped with authentic sound units for the enjoyment of riders.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact the LAI Group, 7251 Garden Grove Blvd., Suite M, Garden Grove, CA 92641; (800) 422-2866 and (714) 373-2993; FAX 714-373-2998.

Sunset Skillstop

BWB introduces the *Sunset Skillstop*, a brand new amusement machine designed specifically for the U.S. redemption market.

While the outward appearance may be that of a traditional slot machine, the game is one of skill in which players attempt to stop the individual spinning reels so they each come to a halt on the same symbol.

The hardware and software are well-proven and ultra-reliable, a product of one of Europe's leading manufacturers.

Sunset can accept either coins or tokens, with the option of a bill validator also available. Payouts can come in either tickets or tokens, and both the value of tickets or tokens and the percentage of payout is adjustable.

Other features include electromechanical and electronic accountability, CD quality sound effects, superb graphics with digital displays for player communication, high quality cabinet construction, and a double locked cashbox.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact BWB Newark Limited, Welbeck House, Cliff Nook Lane, Newark, Nottinghamshire, England NG24 1LY; 011 44 1636 707000; FAX 011 44 1636 702758. In the U.S. contact Don G. Tunstall (USA sales manager) at (407) 578-1238.

Ace Driver

Namco introduces *Ace Driver*, a formula-style racing game that features 3-D, texture-mapped, polygon graphics.

The game offers differing levels of play, from the warm-up of the Novice Class to the toe-curling competition of the Pro Class. Technological innovations have taken feedback steering a step further, increasing in difficulty depending on the class selected.

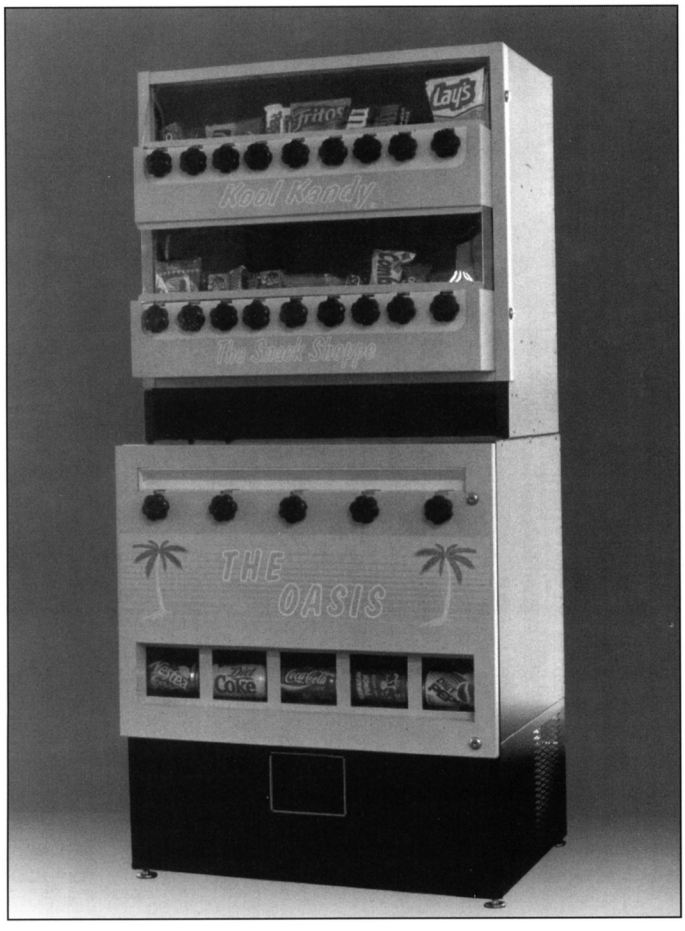
Ace Driver also offers the side-to-side action of the deluxe seat. This simulates the sensation of a high-powered race through both straightaways and hairpin turns. The seat throws the player right or left depending on the direction of the turn.

Such feedback keeps player adrenaline pumping while they attempt to maintain control at simulated speeds of 175 mph.

The two-player version consists of a cabinet with two 29" monitors and two luxury drivers' seats. Spectators can clearly see which car is in first place by viewing two display boards on either side of the marquee.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Namco-America (Sales Office), 877 Supreme Drive, Bensenville, IL 60196; (708) 238-2248; FAX (708) 238-9333.

Kool Kandy



LSA announces the *Kool Kandy* high-style snack and drink vending machine that blends perfectly with modern office decor yet delivers in the tough temperature conditions found in factories, plants, and garages.

Kool Kandy maintains a temperature of 60-70 degrees in the 18-selection upper section, which can hold up to 213 snacks. A temperature of 41 degrees is simultaneously maintained in the lower five-selection soda/juice area, which holds up to 175 items.

The unit's frost-free refrigeration uses environmentally safe R134A refrigerant, and will not require future modification.

Kool Kandy is made of 18 gauge steel, all welded construction, with thermally insulated Lexan windows. Dimensions are 30" wide x 22" deep x 64" high.

The machine uses a durable all-metal coin mechanism, and item pricing is operator-adjustable up to $1.25 per item.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Life System Associates Inc., 1380 W. McNab, Suite B, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309; (305) 971-8936; FAX (305) 979-3594.

Shaq Attack

Premier Technology introduces its newest Gottlieb title, *Shaq Attack*, which allows pinball players to become basketball giants.

The game draws on the likeness and energy of 23-year-old international basketball icon Shaquille O'Neal for its earning power.

Shaq Attack is designed to give players all the action of real-live basketball. Under the dome on the upper playfield is an actual moving basket. Players time the ramp shots which send the ball airborne and through the target, getting a crowd roar in response.

Players are challenged to a game of horse, a free-throw match, and other basketball favorites. Suspense is provided by the game's shot clock.

Premier has brought together the same team that produced *Freddy Krueger* and *Rescue 911* to develop *Shaq Attack*. The game was unveiled in December with O'Neal in attendance.

For more information, or distributor referral, contact Premier Technology, 759 Industrial Drive, Bensenville, IL 60106; (708) 350-0400; FAX (708) 350-1097.

Yogi ticket dispenser

Two-Bit Score introduces its new Yogi board, which allows operators to install a standard Deltronic ticket dispenser into any adult video game, including pokers, 8-lines, and bingos.

This tiny computer hooks to the in and out meters. When a player hits the payout button, the computer ensures that the correct number of tickets is dispensed.

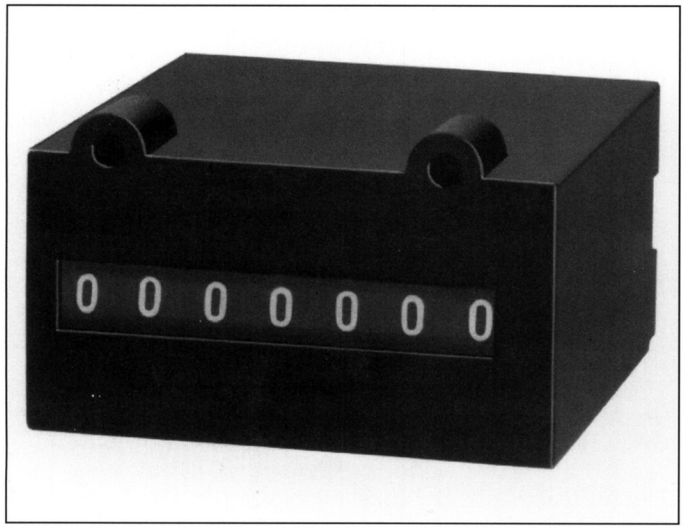
The number of credits can be adjusted from one to 80 per ticket. Any unused credits are returned to the game screen.

When dispensing tickets, the Yogi board disables the in meter and pauses after the first returned credit to allow the screen to update. Dispensing tickets in this fashion allows operators to keep control of their receipts; the location should have one ticket to justify each payout.

The board also allows operators to use pokers and 8-lines in their redemption operation.

For more information, contact Two-Bit Score Amusements, 4418 Pack Saddle Pass, Austin, TX 78745; (512) 447-8888; FAX (512) 446-8895.

E4B counter



ENM introduces its new seven-digit E4B counter designed to use on PC boards and all other mountings.

The counter's features include tamper-proof design, seven digit range, high-impact plastic case, low cost, standard DC/AC voltages, and UL and CSA recognition. The counter is interchangeable with other popular counters.

Count life is 10 million DC and two million AC, and the counter can be operated in temperatures ranging from -25 to +60 degrees C.

For more information, contact ENM Company, 5617 Northwest Highway, Chicago, IL 60646-6135; (312) 775-8400; FAX (312) 775-5968.

Controls catalog

Happ Controls has published its newest and largest catalog. This 1995 catalog consists of 56 pages of products for the amusement and gaming industry in a user-friendly format.

New and standard products include joysticks, pushbuttons, trackballs, driving controls, meters, coin doors, bill acceptor doors, electronic coin acceptors, power supplies, and pinball parts.

To receive a free copy of the new catalog, contact Happ Controls Inc., 106 Garlisch Drive, Elk Grove, IL 60007; (708) 593-6130 or (800) 593-4277; FAX (708) 593-6137.

Virtual reality software

Clarus AB and Paradigm Simulation announce the release of Vega-VR Peripheral and Vega-Drive, two new software products providing easy-to-use environments for building virtual reality, simulation, and other real-time visualization applications for use on Silicon Graphics computers.

Vega-VR Peripheral is an application-specific module in Paradigm Simulation's Vega family of visual and audio products. It provides an easy-to-use interface for commercial tracking systems, gloves, and head mounted displays.

Vega's LynX interface offers immediate access to various parameters of the device, including gloves, 6D mice, and 3D joysticks.

Vega-Drive module is an application that provides next generation integrated environments for use in driving simulations. The interface offers immediate access to various parameters such as gravity, wheel friction, wind resistance, and centripetal forces.

The module can also be used to develop such factors as driver interaction with the steering wheel, throttle, brake pedal, clutch, and gear sticks.

For more information, contact Paradigm Simulations Inc., 151280 Addison Road, Suite 360, Dallas, TX 75248; (214) 960-2301; FAX (214) 960-2303.

Amusement software package

Software At Work presents an amusement software package that can produce smoother operations, reduced costs, and more control.

The various modules of the software package enable business owners to keep track of the minute-to-minute pulse of their business, and the system is designed to pay for itself within the first year.

Software system modules can track employee work hours, scheduling, credit card transactions, games, inventory, sales trends, price changes, receipts, tax reports, customer visits, and much more.

For more information, contact Software At Work, 2443 Reservation Road, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561; (904) 932-4214 or (904) 934-9797.

Cashless payment system

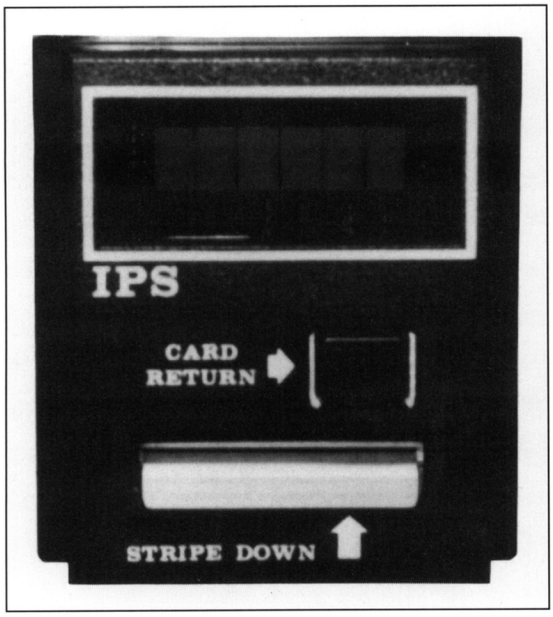
IPS has developed a new cashless payment system tailored for small- to medium-sized casinos. The system carries the three most important features for any casino: cashless wagering, slot machine accountability, and player tracking information.

The new gaming system requires only a minimum of hardware to operate, adding to its cost-effective benefits.

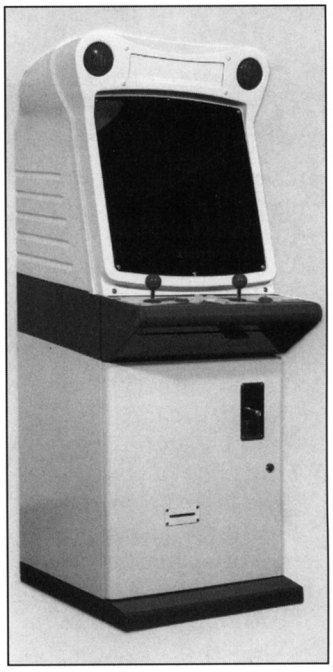
By eliminating cash handling, the system makes gaming transactions much easier and provides management with full cash accountability.

At the heart of the IPS system is the cashless card or debit card. The card holds monetary value, and winnings or losses are automatically encoded.

For more information contact International Payment Systems, 5946 Plantation Drive, Hillsboro, MO 63050; (314) 789-2866; FAX (314) 789-2899.



Universal cabinet



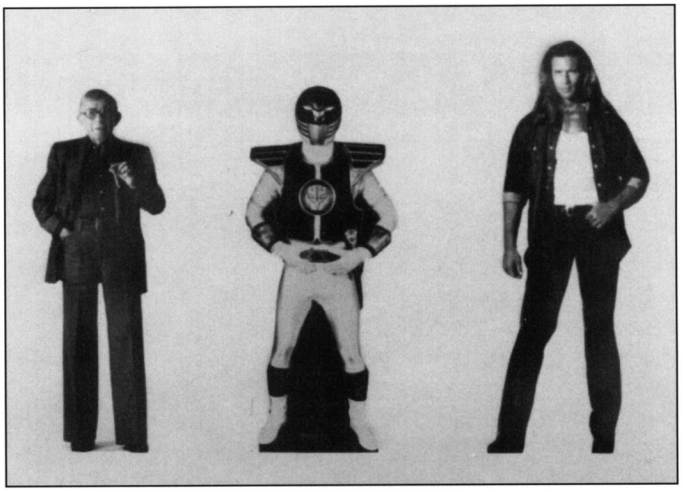
Sunsoft announces its universal 18-inch coin-op game cabinet.

The product's compact design and easy installation make this cabinet ideal for toy stores, retail stores, and supermarkets.

Attractive design and small space requirements will complement any environment, and the JAMMA corresponding harness allows the attachment of game kits.

For more information contact Sun Corp. of America, 11165 Knott Ave., Cypress, CA 90630; (714) 891-4500; FAX (714) 892-0150.

New standups



Advanced Graphics recently added three new characters to its line of licensed life-size standups. The additions are Saban's White Power Ranger, George Burns, and Lorenzo Lamas from the hit show "Renegade."

Standups currently in production include Captain Picard, Lt. Worf, Counselor Troi, Dr. Soran, and the Klingon sisters Lursa and B'Tor from the recent "Star Trek: Generations."

Superman and another Saban hit show, "VR Troopers," will also be joining the family of standups.

Additionally, Advanced Graphics has completed work and has shipped Jim Carey from "The Mask," as well as "Gone With the Wind" and "The Wizard of Oz" standups.

Other new additions include Olive and Brutus, the Flintstones, and the Jetsons.

For more information, contact Advanced Graphics, 941 Garcia Ave., Pittsburg, CA 94565; (510) 432-2262; FAX (510) 432-9259. ▲

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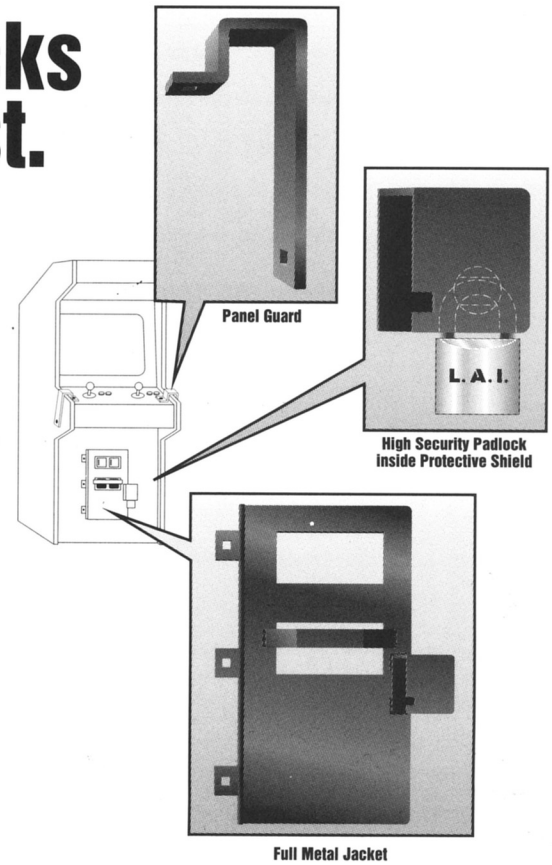

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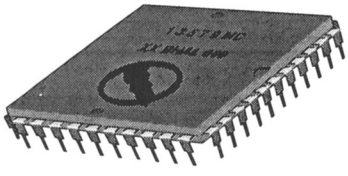

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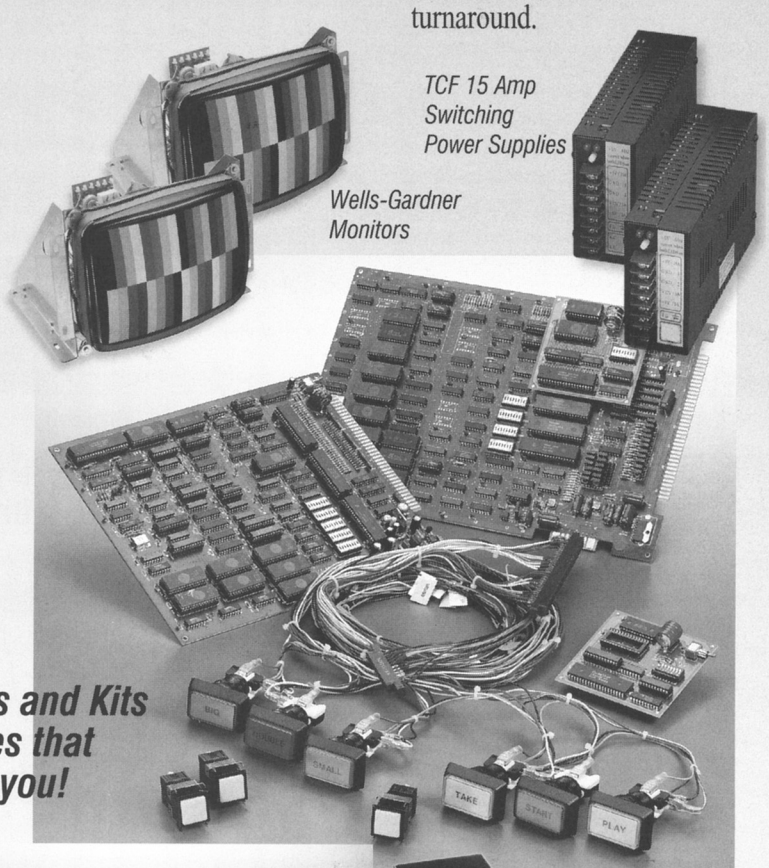

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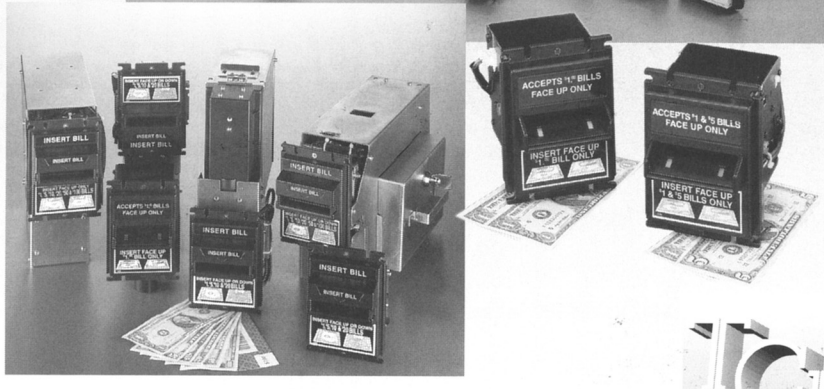

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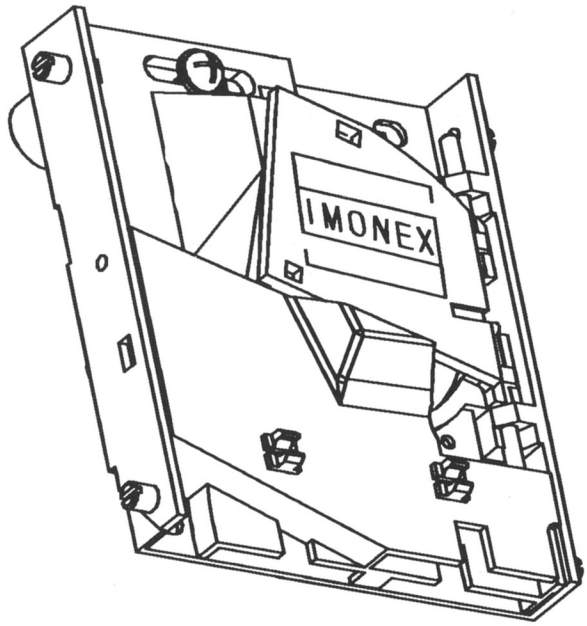

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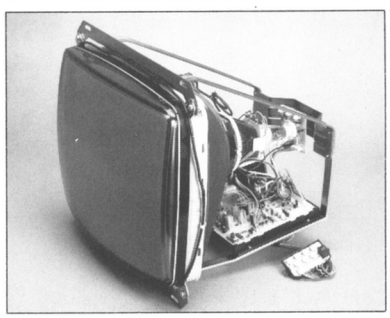

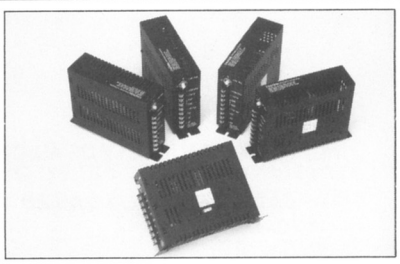

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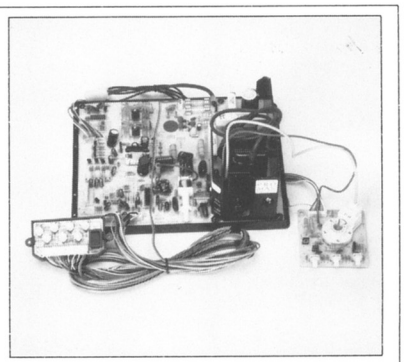

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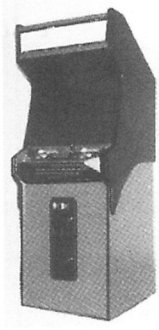

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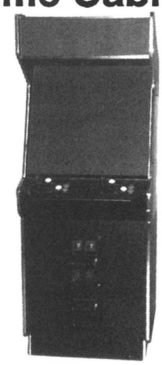

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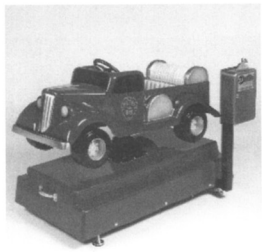

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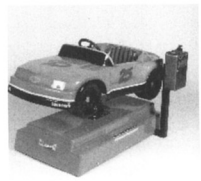

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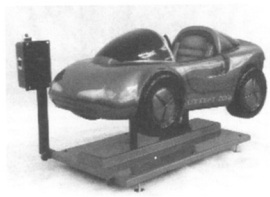

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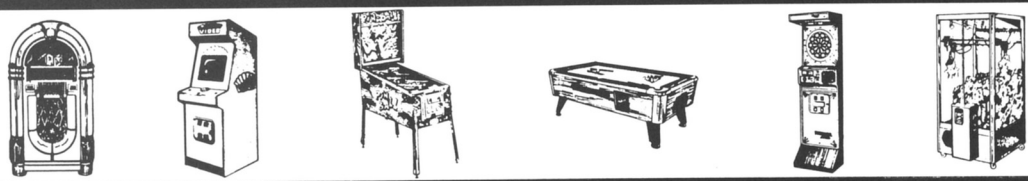

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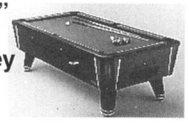

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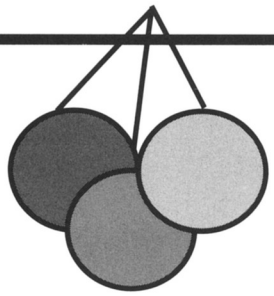

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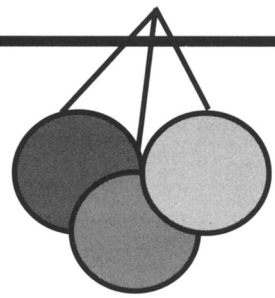

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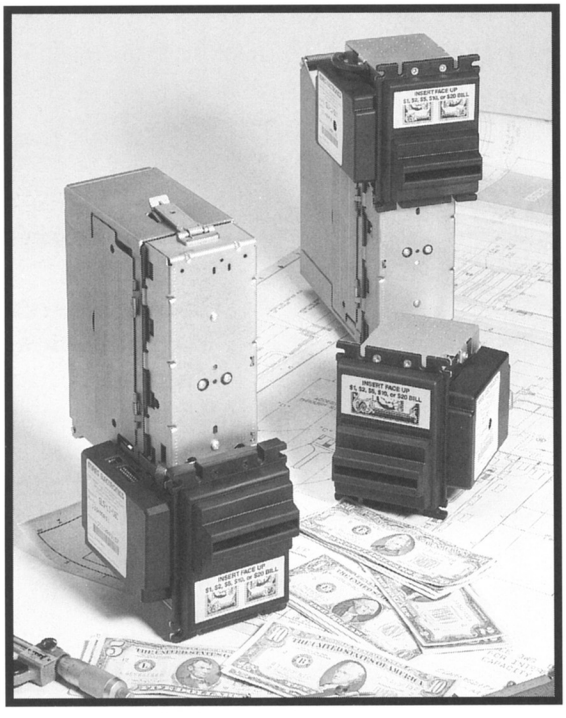

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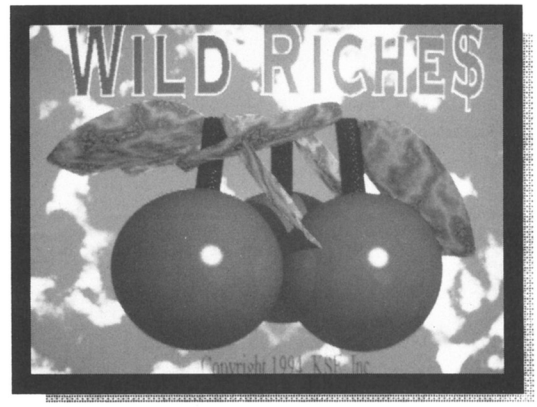

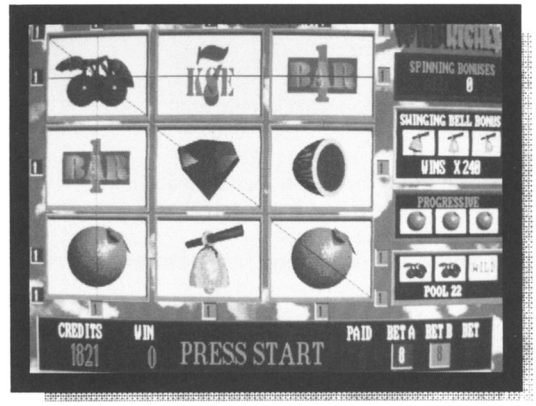

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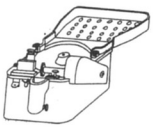

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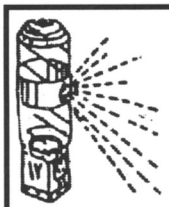

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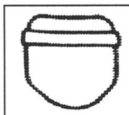

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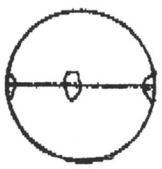

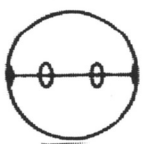

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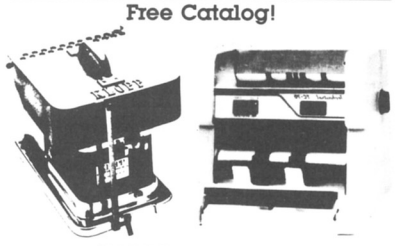

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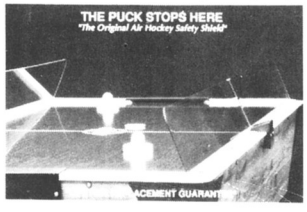

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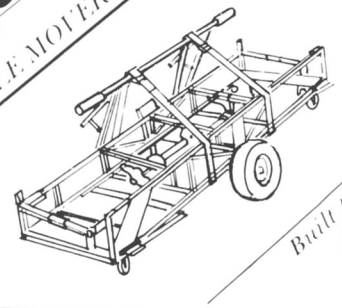

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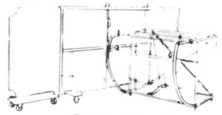

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June	**3** **Indianapolis, IN** Our Land Pavilion Indiana State Fairgrounds Cellular: 317-432-7626 Reorder Tone Dial: 502-551-1866	**10** **Denver, CO** (Brighton) Adams County Regional Park Complex, 124th Avenue, 1 mile west of U.S. 85, 4 miles east of I-25			
September	**9** **Columbus, OH**	**16** **Des Moines, IA**	**21 thru 23** ***AMOA Expo '95*** **New Orleans, LA**	**30** **Indianapolis, IN**	
October	**7** **Clementon, NJ**	**8 thru 10** ***FUN Expo*** **Orlando, FL**	**14** **Denver, CO**	**21** **Tampa, FL**	**28** ***Pinball Expo '95*** **Chicago, IL**
November	**4** **Columbus, OH**	**18** **Indianapolis, IN**			
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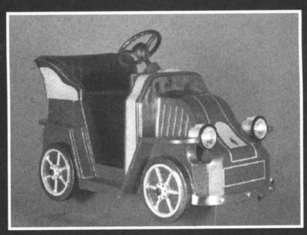
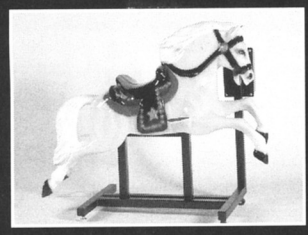

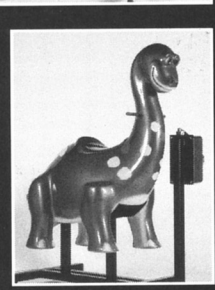

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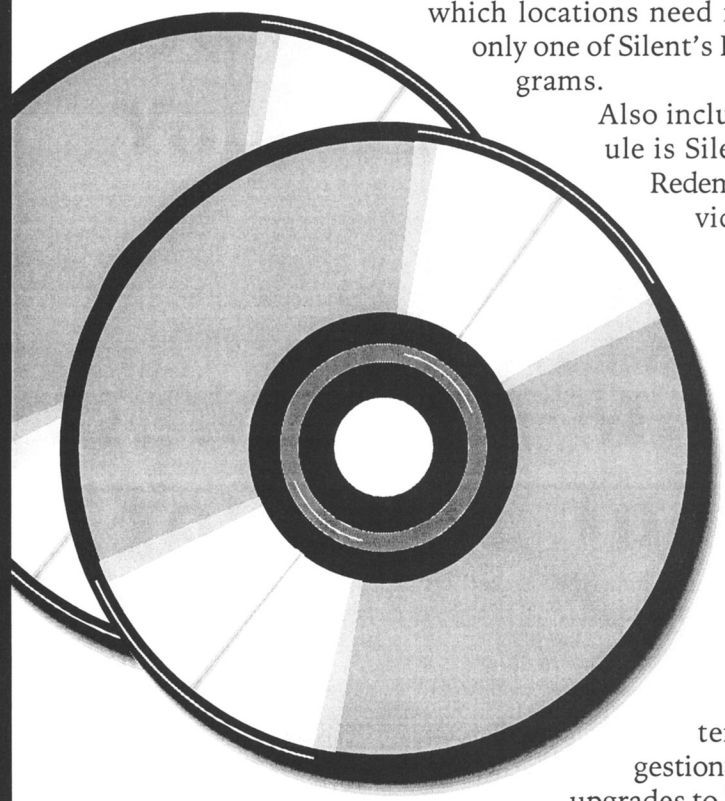

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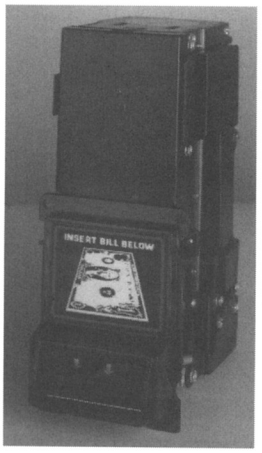

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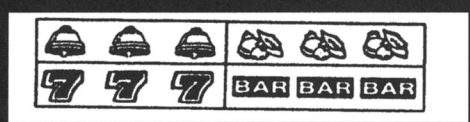

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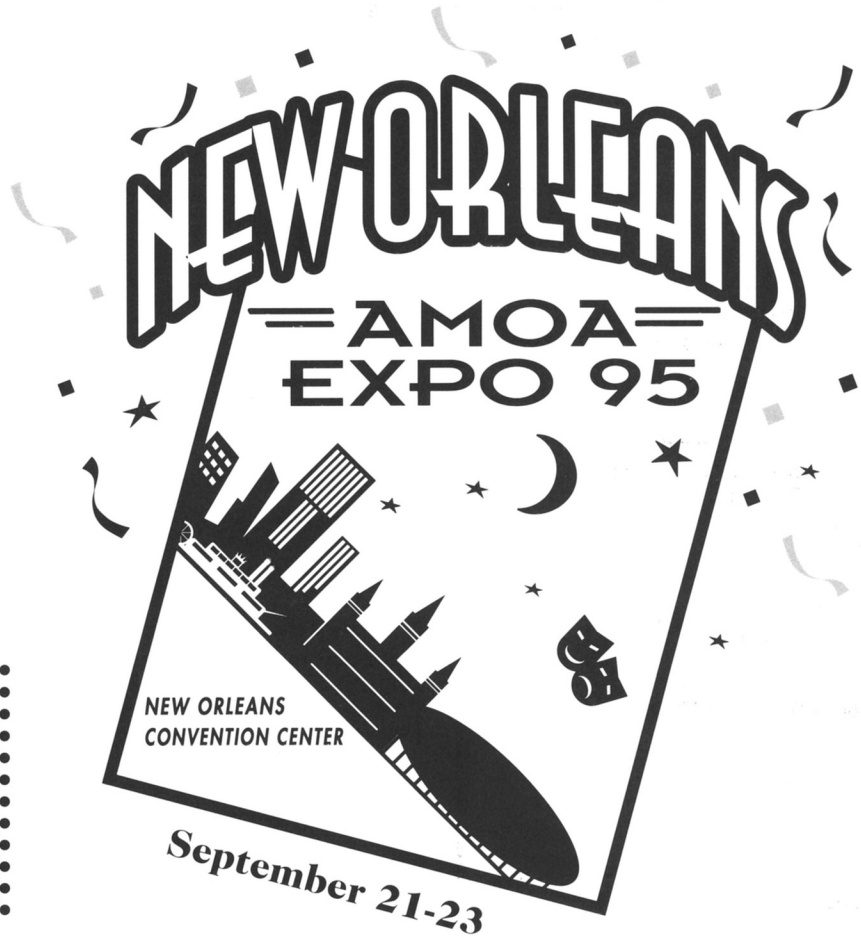

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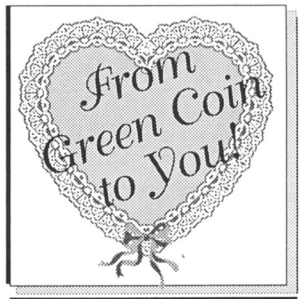

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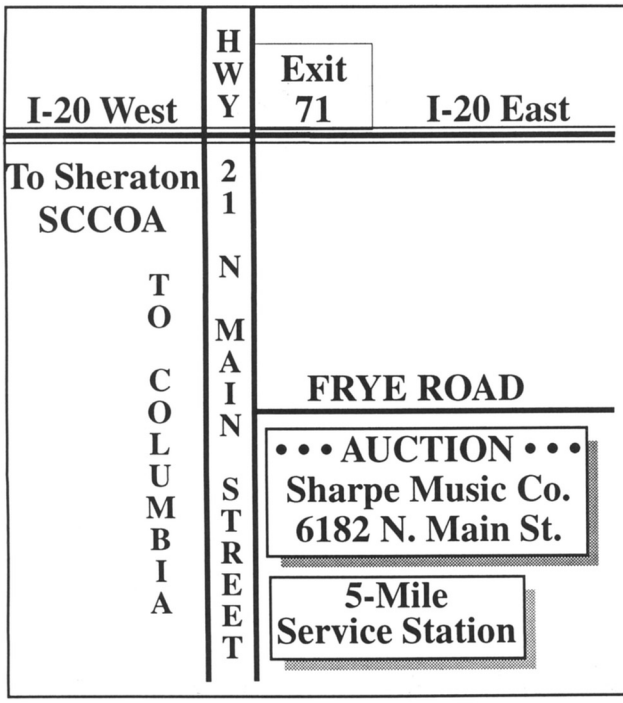

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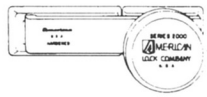

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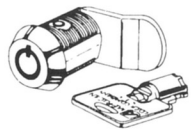

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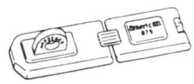

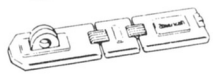

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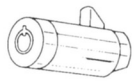

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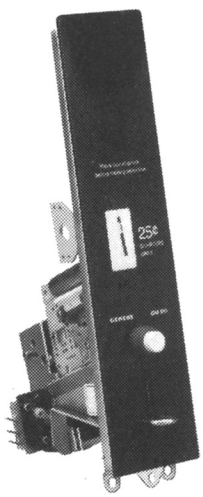

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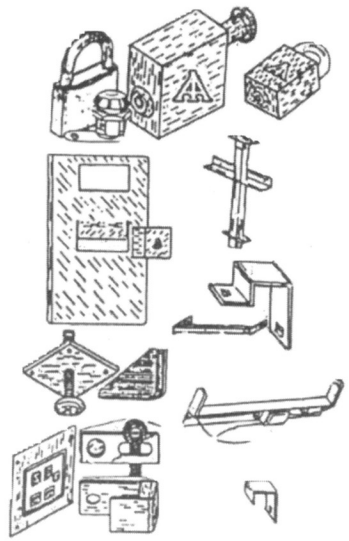

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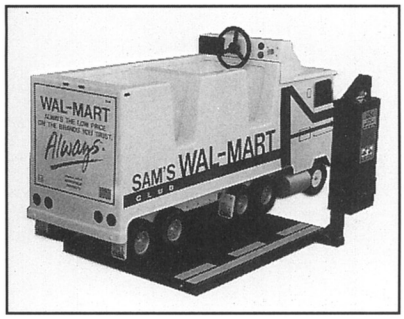

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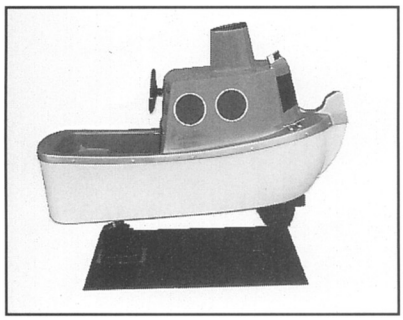

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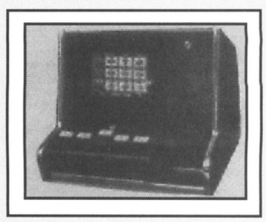

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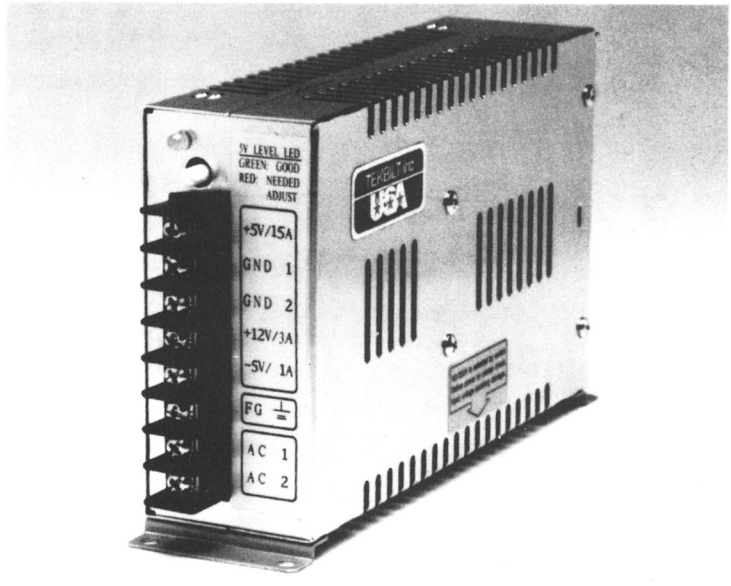

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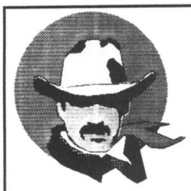

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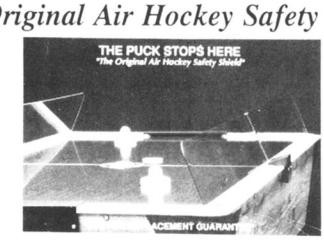

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SAT., MARCH 4, 1995 - 10:00 A.M.

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Location: Palmetto Expo Center
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From I-85, take I-385 North to Greenville. Take the South Pleasantburg Drive Exit. Turn left at the second traffic light, by Krispy Kreme, onto Tower Drive. The Palmetto Expo Center will appear on your left before you reach the Greenville Municipal Airport.
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Auctioneer Johnny King SCAL #2262
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Location: Knoxville Convention Center

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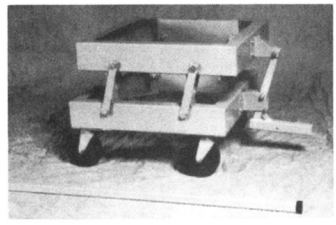

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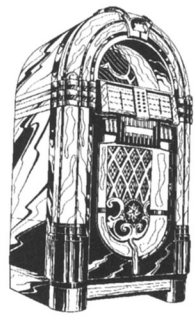

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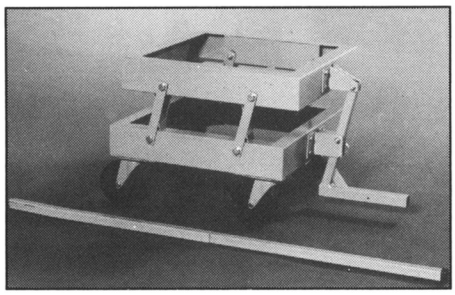

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	6	--	ROMANCE	LUIS MIGUEL
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TAE '95, Taiwan Amusement Exhibition, China External Trade Development Center, Taipei, Taiwan. Contact Creative International Public Relations, 02-746-6860; FAX 02-746-6875.

February 24-26
South Carolina Coin Operators Association Annual Meeting, Sheraton Convention Center, Columbia, S.C. Contact Helen Sikes, (803) 345-2038.

March 7-8
AmEx '95, 16th Irish Amusement Trade Exhibition, Green Isle Hotel, Naas Road, Clondalkin, Dublin, Ireland. Contact Susan Feery, 045-21190 or +353-45-21190; FAX 045-21438 or 353-45-21438.

March 23-25
American Coin Machine Expo, Reno Convention Center, Reno, Nev. Contact William T. Glasgow Inc., (708) 333-9292; FAX (708) 333-4086.

April 20-22
National Automatic Merchandising Association Western Convention and Trade Show, Reno/Sparks Convention Center, Reno, Nev. Contact NAMA Convention Dept., (312) 346-0370.

May 11-13
1st E3, Electronic Entertainment Expo, Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles, Calif. Call (800) 800-5474 or (415) 349-4300; FAX (415) 349-7482.

May 20-23
Amusement and Music Operators Association Government Affairs Conference, Washington, D.C. Contact AMOA, (312) 245-1021; FAX (312) 245-1085.

May 20-24
American Amusement Machine Association Legislative Conference, Washington, D.C. Contact AAMA, (708) 290-9088.

May 26-June 3
15th Valley National Eight-Ball League Association International Championships, Riviera Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Gregg Elliott, (800) 544-1346.

June 6-11
3rd Expo Diversiones, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. Tel. 52-3-614-3015; FAX 52-3-647-8839.

June 23-25
5th Valley National Eight-Ball League Association International Junior Championships, Mayo Civic Center, Rochester, Minn. Contact Gregg Elliott, (800) 544-1346.

July 27-29
12th Annual Billiard Congress of America International Trade Expo, The Sands Expo and Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Frank Zdy, (619) 278-3877; FAX (619) 268-9372.

August 23-25
4th Asia Pacific Theme Parks and Attractions Conference and Exhibition, Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre, Singapore. Tel. (65) 222-8550; FAX (65) 226-3264.

September 21-23
Amusement and Music Operators Association Expo '95, New Orleans Convention Center, New Orleans, La. Contact AMOA (312) 245-1021; FAX (312) 321-6869.

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