FOR THE COIN-OP ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY . . . . . PUBLISHED TWICE MONTHLY

PLAYMETER

JANUARY 15, 1985

AMOA WRAP-UP PART 2

STEP ASIDE

for the MACHINE

PLAY METER

Twice a Month Publication for the Coin Operated Entertainment Industry

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Member AMOA

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Manufacturers were doing all the talking. Operators were all mum. But, when the operators spoke, what they had to say was worth hearing and not all in agreement with the manufacturers' view of things.

Chicago Bears, 21, AMOA Show 3 30

This year's AMOA Show was certainly a regional show, and the operators who attended seemed more interested in polishing up what they already had than in buying something new.

The Show Must Go On 36

Another look at the AMOA Show. The equipment on display offered some surprises and some not-so-big surprises.

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Cover Design: Paul K. Mitchell III of Atlanta, Georgia designed this illustration of Digital Controls President Mike Macke introducing its new video game **Lode Runner**.

PLAY METER

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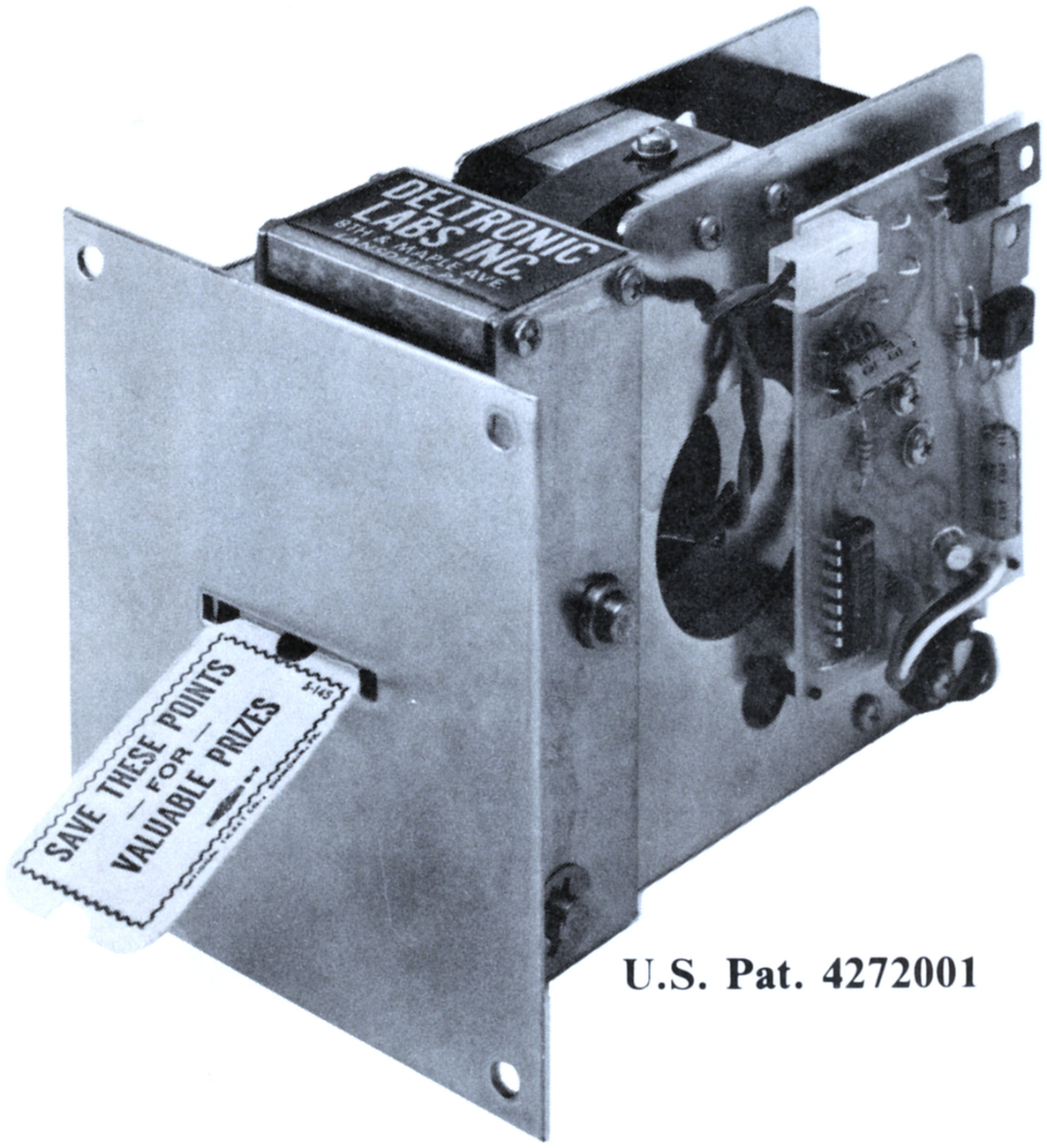

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IN MEMORY OF

RALPH C. LALLY II

December 5, 1946 — December 10, 1984

December 5th, Ralph Lally turned 38 years old.

The staff of *Play Meter* threw him a surprise birthday party, which didn't turn out to be much of a surprise because he found out a day ahead of time.

Anyway, there were the usual joke gifts, cards, and presents. His birthday cake was topped with a plastic golf figure lining up a putt on the final hole. And that seemed appropriate; after all, Ralph loved golf.

But amid all the laughter and good-natured teasing at his birthday party, Ralph kept telling himself, "I'm 38 years old, 38 years old."

It seemed a little queer, the way he

IN MEMORY OF

kept reminding himself of the fact. If it had been the big 40th, his repeated reminder might have passed as the usual reaction by someone who had just officially joined the middle-aged crowd. But 38?

Ralph talked like 38 years old was old. And those who were celebrating his birthday with him were left to shake their heads. Didn't he recognize what he had accomplished in his 38 years? Was it that he saw there was so much more that had to be done? Why all this melancholy? Especially since his 38th birthday was also a celebration of sorts for his first ten years in business.

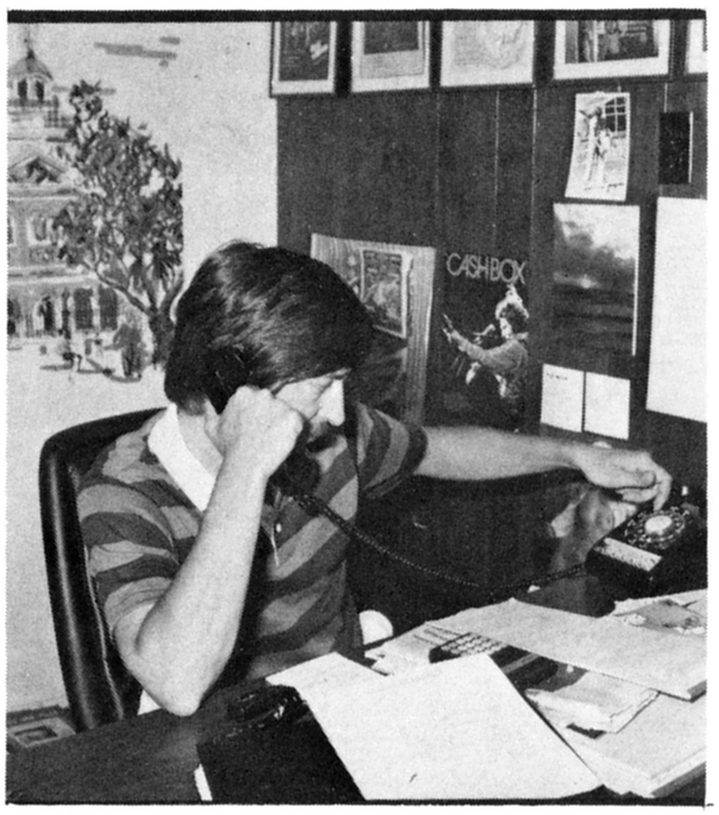
He had started *Play Meter* in 1974 and, in so doing, had created a magazine to serve an industry which, before, no one believed was even an industry.

Under his guidance, the magazine had grown to become a major success story in the publishing field. Writers, editors, and publishers in this and other fields had oftentimes expressed their admiration for his bold approach to trade magazine publishing. That bold approach was simply to report the truth to his readers, even when that meant running afoul of an advertiser.

He would often say, "I want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth"; and that had resulted in a magazine that had double the readership—and 20 times the respect—of any magazine serving the coin-op amusement industry.

His competitors would privately acknowledge that they could compete only for advertising pages against him, but they didn't have the unshakeable editorial integrity to report the truth, not if it meant losing advertising revenue.

And publishers in other fields had many times expressed similar respect for Ralph Lally and his daring publishing philosophy. He showed that a truthful publication and a profitable publication could be one in the same, that they weren't mutually exclusive. The important thing to remember is always to put editorial integrity ahead of advertising dollars, he said.



Ralph Lally on the phone in* Play Meter's *early days, selling ads and writing articles.

The editor of a major general interest magazine once called the editorial offices of *Play Meter* during the height of the video game boom for the single purpose of commending *Play Meter* for its editorial position. Other publications take all the credit for adhering to strict editorial principles, he said, but none of them had ever stood against the pressures *Play Meter* had stood against. Not the *New York Times*. Not *Time* magazine. No one. And he wanted *Play Meter* to know the publishing world had truly taken note of what Ralph Lally was accomplishing.

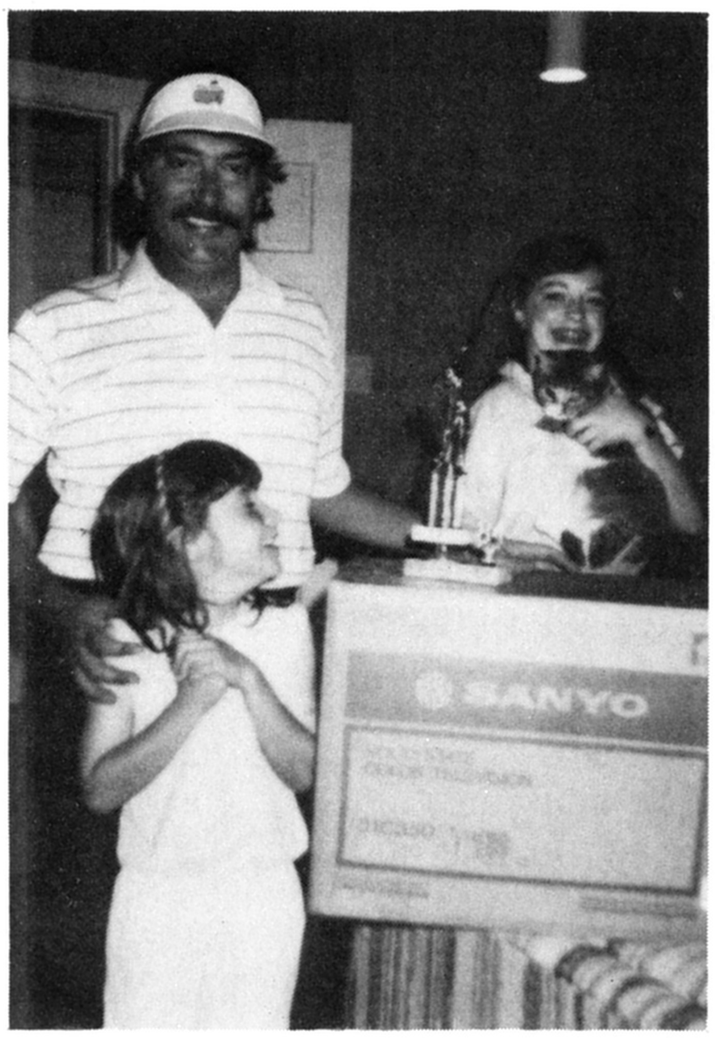
So it made no sense why Ralph would be so melancholy at his birthday party. He had already accomplished so very much.

Less than a week later, however, his staff was left to wonder if perhaps Ralph Lally was subconsciously acknowledging that his life's clock was winding down. For on a foggy December 10th night, Ralph C. Lally II was killed in an automobile accident.

Of course, tragedies always seem senseless, and those who die suddenly,

Ralph and Carol Lally on their first overseas trip to cover the international market.

IN MEMORY OF



Little Leslie and Carol Ann with their dad.

almost always seem to have died so young. But that's the way it was with Ralph.

He created something where there was nothing before, and now it wasn't even his to enjoy.

Ralph Lally was a New Orleans native, a graduate of Jesuit High School, one of the city's premier schools.

He attended the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette while working his way through school with a fulltime job at a Lafayette vending machine company. While still a student he married Carol Pearce, also a New Orleans native. And after he was finally graduated from college with a degree in Management, he and Carol returned to New Orleans where he took a job as executive vice president and general manager of Operator Sales, a distributing arm for one of the city's largest operating companies, TAC Amusement.

In early 1974, he started developing his idea to start a magazine that served the coin-op amusement industry exclusively.

After only a few months, it became apparent the magazine was going to take all his energies; so he left his position at TAC and started working fulltime at *Play Meter* writing articles and selling advertising.

From the very beginning, he decided to forge a magazine that would depend upon operator subscriptions more so than manufacturer advertisements.

Some years later, he wrote, "It is not our intention to produce a vanity publication that is designed to generate as many advertising dollars as possible. *Play Meter* is aimed at helping the operators of America become better and more profitable businessmen."

To others, that might have sounded trite, but not to Ralph Lally.

In the same way, it might sound trite to say life wasn't fair to someone, because it's hardly ever fair to anyone. But life was especially unfair to him.

He built a magazine which did more for the industry than it did for him.

Suffice it to say Ralph C. Lally II, 38 years old, is survived by his wife, Carol; his two daughters, Carol Ann, 14, and Leslie Ann, 8; his mother, Mildred; his brother, Jack; and his two sisters, Milly Steigner and Pamela Senac. He was buried at Lake Lawn Mausoleum in Metairie, December 12th in a private ceremony for the immediate family and close friends.

Those wishing to express their condolences are asked instead to make contributions to the American Kidney Fund; 7315 Wisconsin Ave.;Suite 203 East; Bethesda, Maryland 20814.

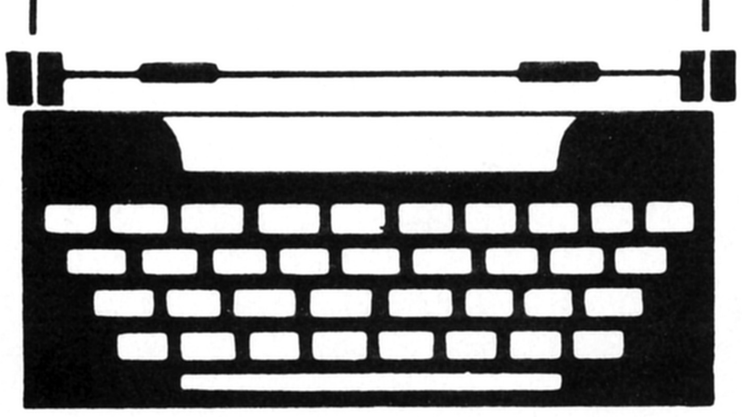
Carol Lally has assumed the position of editor and publisher of *Play Meter* and has announced her intention to continue both the magazine and the AOE in the tradition her husband set.

After her husband's death, she said, "The most important things in the world to me right now are my kids, *Play Meter* magazine, and the AOE!"

In his memory, we the staff of *Play Meter* dedicate this issue and this year's AOE. Also in his memory, we are not publishing the second of the two-part series commemorating *Play Meter*'s first ten years of existence. Instead, that ten-year special anniversary report will be published in the next issue.

Next to* Play Meter, *golf was his passion.

Letters to the editor . . .



Video slaughtery revisited

Just a brief note to thank you for the fine article concerning the video lottery industry. Your mention of Connecticut's attempt to involve the vendor was greatly appreciated.

Video Tech, Inc. has received several inquiries from other concerns interested in developing similar programs.

We will keep you informed of our activities and progress. Once again, thank you for your kind words.

James E. Duffy
Video Tech
Hartford, Connecticut

Well done

The article in your November 15 issue about NAMA was extremely well done, and I want to thank you both for the thoroughness with which you approached it and your fine writing style.

Please let me know whenever we can be of help in the future.

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NEWS

Bally closes two distributorships

Having already closed two of its 17 distributorships, significantly reducing its operation in a third, and promising more "consolidation moves by the end of the first quarter," Bally Manufacturing has finally ended its post-video game boom expansion and has, in fact, raised serious questions about its future commitments in the coin-op amusement industry.

Within weeks, Bally Distributing has closed its El Paso, Texas, and Grand Rapids, Michigan, outlets, and cut back its Central Ohio office drastically. Mike Rudowicz, Bally Distributing's marketing vice president, called the company's flurry of activity "consolidation moves."

He said the company had also set up a centralized purchasing system. "This will allow each office to order independently," Rudowicz said, "but we'll be able to make sure our offices don't accumulate an abundance of equipment."

The Bally executive said the cutbacks were done "to get in tune with market conditions." Said he, "Consolidation is the right thing now. We are planning to enter 1985 with a realistic forecast of the future."

He then said the company planned no more such moves "at this time."

However, Bally's president and chief executive officer, commenting on his company's $95 million loss for the fourth quarter, said the coin-op amusement industry "may not have bottomed out of its decline" and indicated the company would probably continue its consolidation through the first quarter of 1985.

He said the company will close certain plants and offices, cut its payroll, write down excess and obsolete equipment, and terminate arcade leases.

Bally had been expanding in the wake of the video game bust period. The most recent Bally acquisition was Banner Distributing of Philadelphia, April 1984. Both the El Paso, Texas, and Central Ohio offices were 1983 acquisitions. •

Lotteries exploit video game themes

State-run video lotteries are wrongly exploiting the video game business, angry operators said during the recent AMOA Show in Chicago.

For many operators, the AMOA Show was their first chance to see the *Illinois State Lottery* machines, which Bally is operating exclusively for the state.

In the past, criticism had been levelled against the video lottery machines because Bally had an unfair advantage in sewing up all the video lottery locations without local operators having the chance to compete for the business. The AMOA even issued a rare position paper at the show stating that presently state-run video lotteries were unfair to operators.

But, after seeing the games firsthand, many operators became incensed at something else—that the video lottery machines were using the video game facade to capture their market niche.

"Ninety percent of the people are looking down here for the new games," said a Toronto operator, Wayne Fromm, referring to the games at the AMOA Show. "But none of this will mean a thing if these lotteries go in. I've read everything that's been written on the subject, but I never realized what exactly Bally was doing until I saw it for myself.

"They have the gall to put a video game up on the screen. The game is incidental, a facade for its lottery machines. Here, we've been fighting for public acceptance of videos, and now Bally exploits it all and turns video games into a facade for its lottery machines!"

He said, "If these video lotteries are accepted, we all might as well kiss our businesses good-bye."

The lottery machine, obviously, was not exhibited on the floor of the show, but was in the lounge of the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Numbers of operators were constantly playing the game, and many said they were angry that Bally had used a video game theme for its video lottery machine.

However, an executive for Bally told *Play Meter* that the company had received very little comment on the floor from operators upset about Bally's method of attacking this market. •

AOE Returns to its Roots

In 1980 and 1981, the Amusement Operator's Expo (AOE) stunned the industry by staging an operator-oriented show in springtime in New Orleans. At the time, people said it could'nt be done. Since then, others tried to copy it. They couldn't. They found out there's only one AOE; and this year it's back in New Orleans, birthplace of Jazz, home of Mardi Gras!

Mark your calendar now—

The Sixth Annual AOE '85
March 29-31.

BE THERE!

NATIONAL PLAY METER

Poll Information

On the "National Play Meter," each game's rating represents its average performance as compared to the top game's average in that category. Averages are compiled by Play Meter *through its operator survey. Games on the survey (except for novelty equipment) are currently (within the last six months) being marketed in the United States.*

Operator/readers who want to participate in the survey should write Play Meter, *"National Play Meter," P.O. Box 24170, New Orleans, LA 70184.*

DEDICATED VIDEOS Arcade Locations	Rating: Average Jan. 15 1985	Rank Last Issue	No. of Times on Poll
1. *Karate Champ*/Data East	100.0	1	4
2. *Spy Hunter*/Bally Midway	76.6	4★	22
3. *Punch Out!!*/Nintendo	65.0	3	16
4. *Two Tigers*/Bally Midway	60.0	5★	8
5. *Crossbow*/Exidy	56.6	7★	20
6. *10-Yard Fight*/Taito	54.7	8★	15
7. *Birdie King II*/Coin-It	51.5	6	16
8. *Pole Position*/Atari	51.5	9★	24
9. *Hyper Sports*/ Konami/Centuri	46.3	10★	10
10. *Track & Field*/ Konami/Centuri	37.8	11★	25
11. *Major Havoc*/Atari	35.8	16★	13
12. *Tag Team Wrestling*/ Data East	35.2	13★	12
13. *Discs of Tron*/ Bally Midway	33.8	—	20
14. *Tapper*/Bally Midway	31.3	14	17

DEDICATED VIDEOS Street Locations	Rating: Average Jan.15 1985	Rank Last Issue	No. of Times on Poll
1. *Karate Champ*/Data East	100.0	1	4
2. *Spy Hunter*/Bally Midway	95.2	2	22
3. *Gaplus*/Bally Midway	70.9	3	4
4. *Punch Out!!*/Nintendo	70.5	5★	16
5. *10-Yard Fight*/Taito	57.6	10★	15
6. *Hyper Sports*/ Konami/Centuri	54.7	8★	10
7. *Pole Position*/Atari	53.7	9★	24
8. *Birdie King II*/Coin-It	42.7	7	16
9. *Track & Field*/ Konami/Centuri	41.7	15★	25
10. *Circus Charlie*/ Konami/Centuri	40.0	16★	9
11. *Major Havoc*/Atari	38.9	14★	13
12. *Tag Team Wrestling*/ Data East	34.0	13★	12
13. *Tapper*/Bally Midway	30.9	17★	17
14. *Motorace USA*/Williams	28.8	11	14
15. *Root Beer Tapper*/ Bally Midway	22.0	—	7

CONVERSIONS Arcade Locations	Rating: Average Jan. 15 1985	Rank Last Issue	No. of Times on Poll
1. *Pole Position II*/Atari	100.0	3★	24
2. *VS. Baseball*/Nintendo	94.8	1	10
3. *VS. Tennis*/Nintendo	94.3	2	16
4. *Time Pilot '84*/Konami	77.7	4	14
5. *Elevator Action*/Taito	71.3	7★	22
6. *Mega Zone*/ Konami/Interlogic	70.0	10★	14
7. *Champion Baseball*/Wico	61.9	9★	10
8. *Up and Down*/ Bally Midway	61.3	6	11
9. *Millipede*/Atari	60.0	12★	11
10. *Junior Pac-Man*/ Bally Midway	51.2	13★	16
11. *Superbike*/Crown Vending	44.3	16★	10
12. *Donkey Kong 3*/Nintendo	35.5	14★	15
13. *Mr. Do!'s Wild Ride*/ Universal	31.2	15★	15

CONVERSIONS Street Locations	Rating: Average Jan. 15 1985	Rank Last Issue	No. of Times on Poll
1. *VS. Baseball*/Nintendo	100.0	2★	10
2. *Pole Position II*/Atari	93.7	1	24
3. *Do! Run Run*/Universal	81.6	-	1
4. *Mega Zone*/ Konami/Interlogic	76.2	8★	14
5. *Up and Down*/ Bally Midway	74.3	4	11
6. *Time Pilot '84*/Konami	72.2	9★	14
7. *Elevator Action*/Taito	70.2	5	22
8. *VS. Tennis*/Nintendo	65.3	3	16
9. *Nova 2001*/Universal	64.0	10★	11
10. *Bomb Jack*/Tehkan	60.0	—	3
11. *Millipede*/Atari	56.5	7	11
12. *Champion Baseball*/Wico	55.3	11	10
13. *Exerion*/Taito	54.9	6	14
14. *H.B.'s Olympics*/ Magic Electronic	45.7	16★	4
15. *Junior Pac-Man*/ Bally Midway	44.6	12	16
16. *Donkey Kong 3*/Nintendo	44.2	13	15
17. *Mr. Do!'s Wild Ride*/ Universal	42.1	14	15
18. *Cloak & Dagger*/Atari	39.2	—	10

LASER DISCS — Arcade Locations

		Rating		
		Average Jan. 15 1985	Rank Last Issue	No. of Times on Poll
1.	*Cobra Comman*/Data East	100.0	1	8
2.	*Star Rider*/Williams	59.3	4★	12
3.	*M.A.C.H. 3*/Mylstar	59.0	3	25
4.	*Astron Belt*/Bally Midway	55.1	5★	20
5.	*Dragon's Lair*/ Cinematronics	54.7	6	26
6.	*Space Ace*/ Cinematronics	44.9	7★	19

LASER DISCS — Street Locations

		Rating		
		Average Jan. 15 1985	Rank Last Issue	No. of Times on Poll
1.	*Firefox*/Atari	100.0	4★	14
2.	*M.A.C.H. 3*/Mylstar	75.4	3★	25
3.	*Dragon's Lair*/ Cinematronics	67.7	7★	26
4.	*Astron Belt*/Bally Midway	61.4	6★	20
5.	*Star Rider*/Williams	48.2	5	12
6.	*Space Ace*/Cinematronics	41.3	2	19

PINBALLS — Arcade & Street Locations

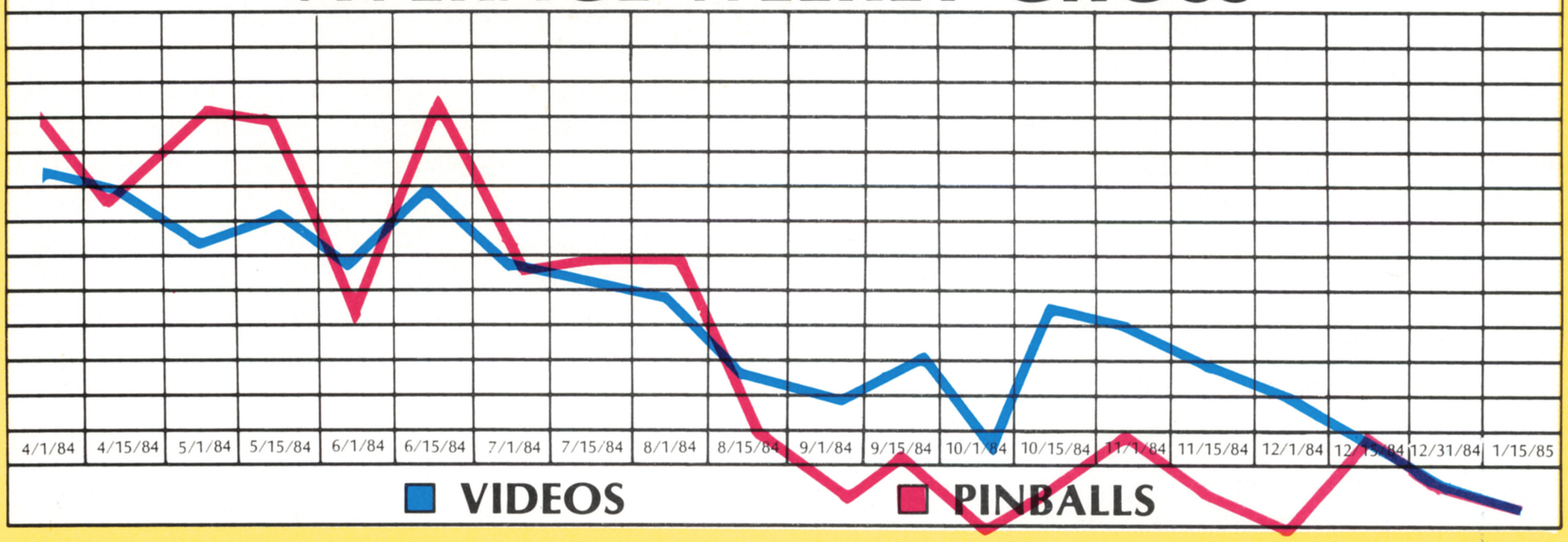
		Rating		
		Average Jan. 15 1985	Rank Last Issue	No. of Times on Poll
1.	*Black Pyramid*/ Bally Midway	100.0	6★	10
2.	*Eight Ball Deluxe*/ Bally Midway	81.5	9★	17
3.	*Firepower II*/Williams	81.3	10★	23
4.	*Attila the Hun*/ Game Plan	75.1	11★	7
5.	*Pennant Fever*/Williams	74.0	12★	9
6.	*Jacks to Open*/Gottlieb	70.1	5	17
7.	*Kings of Steel*/ Bally Midway	67.6	8★	17
8.	*Alien Star*/Gottlieb	67.6	1	4
9.	*Sharpshooter II*/ Game Plan	63.1	14★	22
10.	*Rack 'em Up*/Gottlieb	56.3	16★	18
11.	*Laser Cue*/Williams	54.7	13★	17
12.	*The Games*/Gottlieb	54.1	2	11
13.	*X's & O's*/Bally Midway	40.1	18★	20
14.	*Granny and the Gators*/ Bally Midway	22.5	15★	19

NOVELTIES — Arcade & Street Locations

		Rating		
		Average Jan. 15 1985	Rank Last Issue	No. of Times on Poll
1.	*Skee-Ball*/Skee-Ball	100.0	3★	22
2.	*Big Strike*/Williams	87.0	14★	20
3.	*Triple Strike*/Williams	73.0	9★	20
4.	*Big Bat*/Bally Midway	59.1	6★	8
5.	*English Mark Darts*/ Arachnid	48.5	13★	16
6.	*Mr. Muscle*/Zamperla	34.8	15★	8
7.	*Whirly Bucket*/Exidy	31.3	10★	19
8.	*Fire Escape*/ICE	29.0	16★	12

NOTICE: The sole purpose of this survey is to determine on a regular basis the top performing games in the country. Any attempt to use the results of this survey for any other purpose is unauthorized, wrongful, and misleading.

AVERAGE WEEKLY GROSS



Poll Update

Universal's *Do! Run Run* premiers in the Number 3 position of the street conversion category. For the first time, both the average street earnings and the average pinball earnings were exactly the same.

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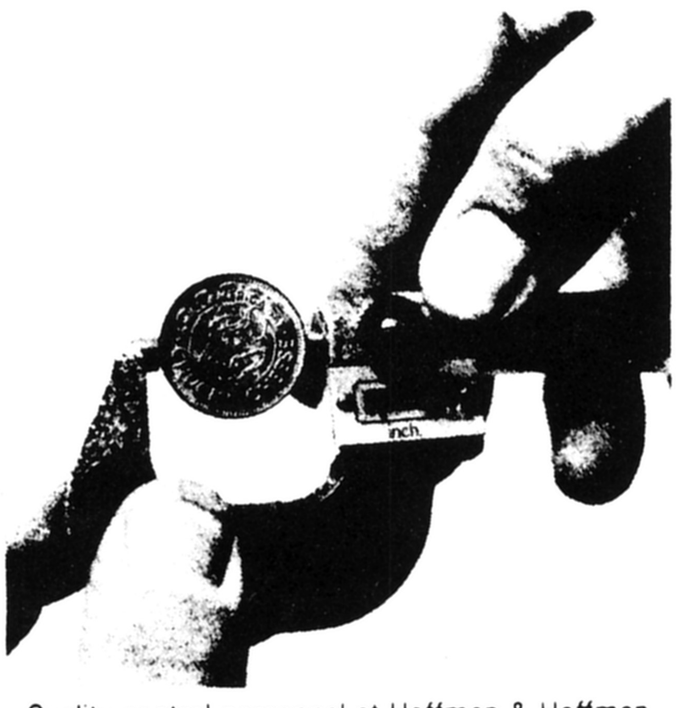

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NEWS

Copyright law unfair

The Copyright Royalty Tribunal's handling of the copyright law, as it pertains to jukebox operators, "doesn't seem to be very fair," U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) told a sparsley attended general membership meeting just prior to the opening of this year's AMOA show, October 25 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Chicago.

A member of the U.S. Senate's Small Business Committee, Hatch stressed the need of operators to get their side of the jukebox story out. Presently, the AMOA is petitioning the U.S. Congress to make revisions in the U.S. Copyright law which require jukebox operators to pay a per annum copyright fee of $50 per jukebox in addition to paying manyfold the copyright fees when operators purchase the records.

Hatch explained that the apparent injustice in the law is probably attributable to the fact that "We (in Congress) hear the other side all the time.

"So you better get behind your association," he continued, "because it's important for you to get your viewpoint across."

Hatch said the intention of the U.S. Copyright law is to "foster creativity, but not to the point where it's a rip-off to those who use it." His implication was that ASCAP, SESAC, and BMI, the performing rights societies which benefit directly from the excessive licensing fees placed on jukebox operators have won a federally-protected right to gouge the public.

But Hatch stressed time and again that injustice can only be reversed by operators becoming active politically and reversing this unjust law. "You've got a choice. Either you get involved in politics or else get out of business," he said.

On a similar note, AMOA's executive director, Leo Droste, said that operators must once again get involved politically at the local level to reverse the unfair taxing standards that were created during the video game boom.

Said Droste, "With the decline in the popularity of video games, you need to go back to those government officials and get them to reduce those taxes." •

Gilfor buys Active Amusement

The 48-year-old Active Amusement Machines company of Philadelphia has been sold to David Gilfor and Paul Russell, and the company's name will be changed to Active Amusement Distributors. Gilfor was the company's general manager before the purchase.

The distributorship, which was sold by Frank and Joe Ash, represents Rock-Ola, Atari, and other major equipment lines.

Gilfor said Joe Ash, 81, sold the company because he is retiring. Frank Ash, he said, would continue to operate game rooms.

"Obviously, I'm confident about the future of this business," said Gilfor, "bullish as they might say. I believe the worst is over, and I see many signs of that. The industry appears to be stabilizing, and the new equipment is holding more of its value. That's probably because the manufacturers are producing less."

Gilfor said he would be retaining the majority of the people at Active. "Active's reputation is well-known, well-established," he told *Play Meter*. We're known for our parts and service back-up, and we're going to maintain that tradition." •

Japanese operators squabble while federal woes mount

Faced with the recently-enacted New Fuei Act, Japanese operating companies are fighting among themselves on how best to contend with the stringent new federal controls, said the *Amusement Press*, a Japanese trade paper.

Apparently, at the heart of this rift is a power struggle between the nation's smaller operators and the game manufacturers, who are also the country's largest operators. Since 1980, the manufacturers have closely aligned themselves under the JAMMA banner. Then, in May three of the largest manufacturing/operating companies withdrew from NAO, the nationwide operators' association.

And now the large manufacturers are establishing local associations in Osaka, Tokyo, and elsewhere with the apparent goal of joining these organizations together to form a larger operators association than the present NAO.

But at least in Tokyo that organization is meeting with resistance.

About 200 operating companies joined forces in October under the Tokyo Amusement Machine Operators Association (TAMOA) and the leadership of Akio Nakanishi of Taito. But just 11 days later a second organization led by Sigma Inc. of Tokyo established the Tokyo Game-Parlor Operators Union(TGOU).

Sigma's President Katsuki Manabe contended that TGOU and not TAMOA was best suited to respond to the authorities.

TAMOA's Nakanishi, upon the formation of the new Tokyo association, said, "Now is not the time to talk about the opposition between JAMMA and NAO. What we need is an associtaion which is ready to cope with common problems facing amusement operators." •

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NEWS

Williams opens its plant for other game makers

In the wake of the reduced manufacturing demands industry-wide, Williams Electronics, Inc. of Chicago has established a subsidiary company for the purpose of allowing its facilities to be used by other manufacturers.

The subsidiary company, Williams Innovative Technologies (WIT), Inc., will be capable to design, engineer, manufacture, and test mechanical, electro-mechanical, and electronic products.

Michael Stroll, president of Williams Electronics, said the services the new subsidiary will be offering "range from concept development through electronics and mechanical prototype design to single unit or high-volume production.

"We are dedicated to product and service quality," he continued. "Our over 200,000 square feet and analytical equipment have been designed specifically for the manufacture of products that perform to our clients' high standards."

Stroll maintained that WIT will be a cost-effective alternative to other companies which are presently relying on in-house production.

"Whether prototype or large volume production, sub-assembly, component assembly or final product assembly, we get product assembly on time and on budget," Stroll claimed. •

New York City reconsiders gray games

The New York City Department of Public Affairs is reconsidering its previous approval for 11 different video poker games that are being operated in the city.

After a November 5 public hearing, the department said it was taking its previous action under advisement and would decide soon what action, if any, would be taken.

This all follows numerous complaints the department received after it approved the operation of 11 different models of video poker games. The department is empowered to make such a ruling based on its inspection authority.

A special FBI agent, an assistant district attorney, several police officers, a member of the New York City Council, a spokesman for the New York City Council, a spokesman for the New York City chapter of Gamblers Anonymous, and a number of local civic group representatives all protested the department's decision which allows the operation of the machines.

Representatives of several east coast video card manufacturing firms also attended the hearing.

Special agent William Holmes of the FBI technical laboratory described the characteristics of two *Joker Poker* models which were on display. Holmes warned the department that these models include devices which will automatically change the game from its gambling function to an amusement mode if the game is unplugged or joggled during a police raid.

Assistant district attorney Arthur Sementis of Westchester County described the recent grand jury investigation in his jurisdiction. That investigation, he said, has resulted in 24 seizures and 11 indictments. Sementis testified that the gambling poker games had filled a void left by the demise of amusement games like *Pac-Man*, and that even young children were playing them.

Others protesting said the machines were connected with widespread gambling in their areas.

According to an investigator for the state's liquor authority, at least 5,000 such devices are being operated illegally in five boroughs of the city. He said these machines were grossing between $1,200 and $3,000 per week in illegal revenues. He also testified that these incomes are seldom reported as income to state and federal taxing authorities.

Though the hearing was packed with industry representatives, none testified in opposition.

However, defense for the operation of the machines came from Ronald S. Koppleman, an attorney for the New York City Music and Amusement Association, and Howard B. Irish, who represented a group of interested manufacturers.

Protesting the proceedings, they objected that the department, by its earlier ruling, had induced their clients to invest heavily in the poker games. They also denied that their clients' machines had any gambling features or adaptations. They also explained that, besides being skill games, the *Joker Poker* models operated in New York City had none of the features sometimes associated with illegal gambling on similar games found in other jurisdictions.

They contended their clients' machines were designed as pure amusement devices and that if any locations were using the games for gambling purposes, then those machines were being used improperly because the machines were not designed with those gambling capabilities. •

Attorneys general briefed on gray game epidemic

Warnings about illegal gambling on coin-operated video games were issued to state attorneys general from across the country who gathered in Orlando, Florida, December 3-7, for the 1984 winter meeting of the National Association of attorneys general.

FBI Special Agent William Holmes, a specialist in issues dealing with the coin-op game industry, addressed the convention on dealing with illegal high-technology gambling operations.

The treatment of video gambling was a small part of an extensive program of legal topics addressed during the conference, but the three part message Holmes conveyed about video gambling games was clear: (1) Video gambling is an important concern of those whose job it is to define and direct the enactment of the laws of their respective states; (2) video gambling game manufacturers are upgrading technology in their games to hide the gambling functions from law enforcement officials or to skirt current anti-gambling laws; and (3) the coin-op amusement industry directs and controls the operation of video gambling devices.

"Law enforcement people are becoming more aware of video game gambling and what constitutes a video gambling machine," Holmes told *Play Meter*. "National publicity of the issue is helping eliminate some of the confusion between gambling and amusement games."

Holmes said most gambling statutes are built around a simple three-step formula of "consideration, chance, and reward." A player pays something (inserts a coin) to play the game; winning or losing on the game is determined by chance rather than skill; and a reward is given to winners.

"The current trend," Holmes said, "is to disguise the reward feature of the games."

Credit video card game manufacturers are creating new technologies to hide game features that allow recording and "knocking off" credits, he offered.

For example, he noted, one game is designed so that the record of credits paid out can only be called up on the screen by the insertion of a special printed circuit board into the game. The board to display payout accounting information is "kept by the route man," he pointed out.

Another game has been designed so that unplugging the machine changes the nature of the play of the game.

"The machine is dual programmed so that unplugging it changes it to an amusement mode," Holmes told the attorneys general. "That has resulted in some particularly embarrassing situations in court rooms for prosecuting attorneys."

In lambasting video gaming, Holmes laid blame on the coin-op amusement industry in general.

"Uniqueness and easy accessibility of video games (amusement and gambling) caused a surge of unanticipated popularity and, as with any explosive occurrence, proplems developed.

"The first problematic symptom was a rise in the crime rate, which affected the judicial and law enforcement systems.

"A second wave of problematic symptoms, which affected the mental and physical health systems, appeared as an addiction to play video games. The major concern of this symptom is that the elements of this alleged addiction are similar in nature to those of a problem gambler," he said.

"A progressive impulse control disorder, such as a compulsive gambler, thrives on excitement and competition," he pointed out. "Video games provide these elements." ●

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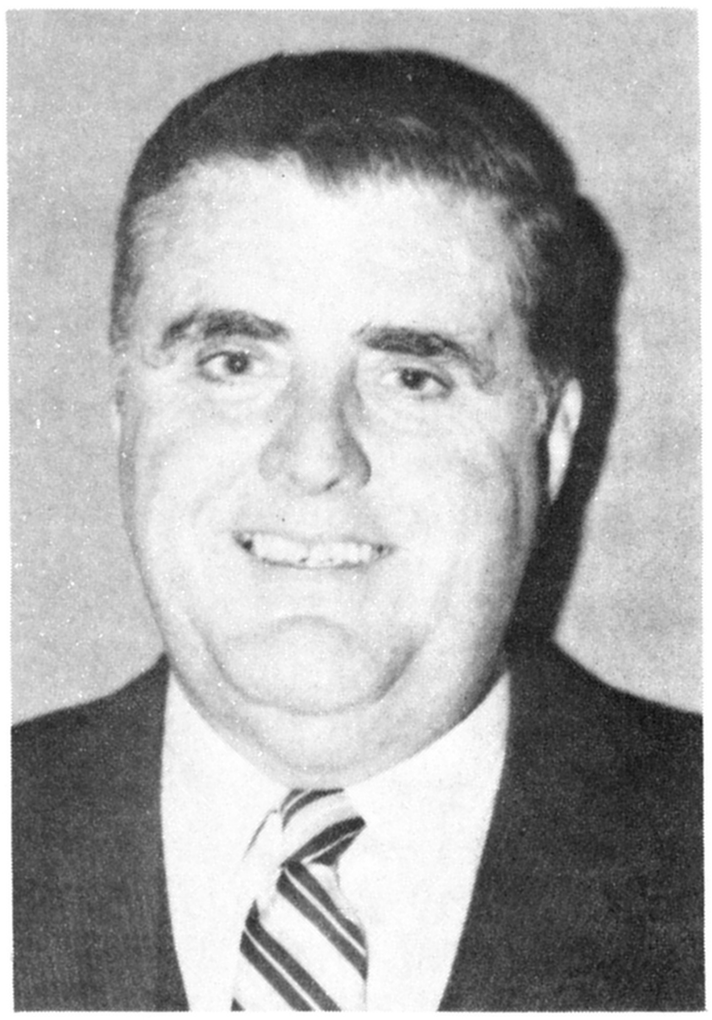


John Murnane

Industry veteran Murnane succumbs

Friends and business associates throughout the nation mourned the death of John Murnane, executive vice president of Bally Midwest Distributing, who succumbed to cancer December 9. Murnane, 57, was a resident of Niles, Illinois.

As executive vice president, Murnane had responsibilitity for all six Bally Midwest Distributing offices. He came to Bally in December 1982 from Rowe International where he had been midwest regional sales manager.

Murnane's career in the coin game and vending industries spanned many years and involved him with distributors and operators nationwide.

Murnane is survived by his wife, Margaret, and five children. One son, John, Jr., is employed by Bally owned Palmco of Bensenville, Illinois. •

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND AOE '85

Video scoreboard introduced to spur game play

A North Carolina-based company has formed a high-score monitoring service to encourage play on video games.

The company, Hi-Tech Recreations International Scoreboard of Carolina Beach, North Carolina, maintains records of the current top twenty scores in official locations.

The company consists of the following directors: Bruce Scism, Darin Scism, Leo Daniels, Jeff Scism, and Steve Caudill.

"As game players and operators," said a spokesman for the company, "we believe a scoreboard is necessary to give devoted players the recognition they deserve for their achievements on individual games. We also believe that by keeping an accurate, up-to-date scoreboard, we could stimulate interest in the entire video game industry."

Under the plan, any arcade can become an official location sight. The company accepts scores only from these official locations, verifies the scores, then tabulates a monthly top twenty scoresheet with the top twenty games.

This top twenty ranking includes each top twenty player's name, his location, and his score. This monthly player ranking will be part of a monthly newsletter to member locations, the company said.

To promote interest in breaking the current top score, the company has a toll-free telephone number which players can call to get the score-to-beat. Players who beat the official high-score on any of the games receive T-shirts.

Rules which govern the scoreboard include the following: (1) the score must be achieved by playing the game for four hours or less; (2) the score must be reported within 48 hours; and (3) the game must be set to comply with Hi-Tech's official game settings.

Those interested in learning more about this novel approach for promoting video game play should contact Hi-Tech Recreations at 1-800/334-1609. In North Carolina, call 919/458-5361. •

New tariff law aimed at pirate copiers

Countries which harbor pirate copiers of American products will lose their preferential trading privileges with the United States, according to the Omnibus Tariff and Trade Act which President Reagan signed into law in November.

This law would, in part, protect video game manufacturers who allege that pirated copies of video games emanate largely from certain countries.

This new law would penalize those countries which harbor pirate industries by revoking their Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) tariff waiver or favorable trading status. Accordingly, the renewal of a countries GSP status would be based largely on its ability to protect American creativity.

The Omnibus Tariff and Trade Act requires that a U.S. representative review stolen intellectual property rights and review this against each country's trading privileges with the United States and submit those findings to Congress by January 1987.

Also passed was the Trademark Counterfeiting Act of 1984. This act provides for criminal penalties, treble damages claims, and unannounced seizures of counterfeit goods. •

Wurlitzer donates records

Wurlitzer—a manufacturer of pianos, organs, jukeboxes, and vending machines—has donated its past corporate records to the Earl W. Hayter Regional History Center at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois, for historic preservation.

The documents, which are 75 cubic feet thick, should provide a rare insight into corporate survival through eras of economic boom and bust.

The records include dated catalogs, advertisements, photographs, ledgers, promotional efforts, and drawings that detail the installation of organs in ornate movie palaces and other locations.

"We hope Wurlitzer serves as an example to other companies that donating or placing records here is a good way to preserve important records and document the history of the company," said Bob Graham, field representative for the history center.

"The potential uses and users of these types of records are very broad, from the company itself to any number of researchers," Graham continued. The collection could be used for research in a number of areas, including research on pop culture, business, the music industry, the development of musical instruments, and the history of Northern Illinois.

"These records are unique," Graham explained. "This collection will be in good shape 150 years from now."

The oldest document in the collection is a price list manuscript from the 1860's, Graham said. "The broad range of types of records will allow researchers to look at different aspects of the company and what it did.

"What we're trying to do," he continued, "is document all aspects of life in northern Illinois from 1800 to the present."

The center is also part of the Illinois Region Archives Depository system and is involved in preserving local public records—including tax records, circuit court case records, probate records, and school board minutes.

Though founded in 1856 in Cincinnati, Wurlitzer in 1908 acquired a plant in North Tonawanda, New York, near Buffalo, and in 1919 established the DeKalb, Illinois division.

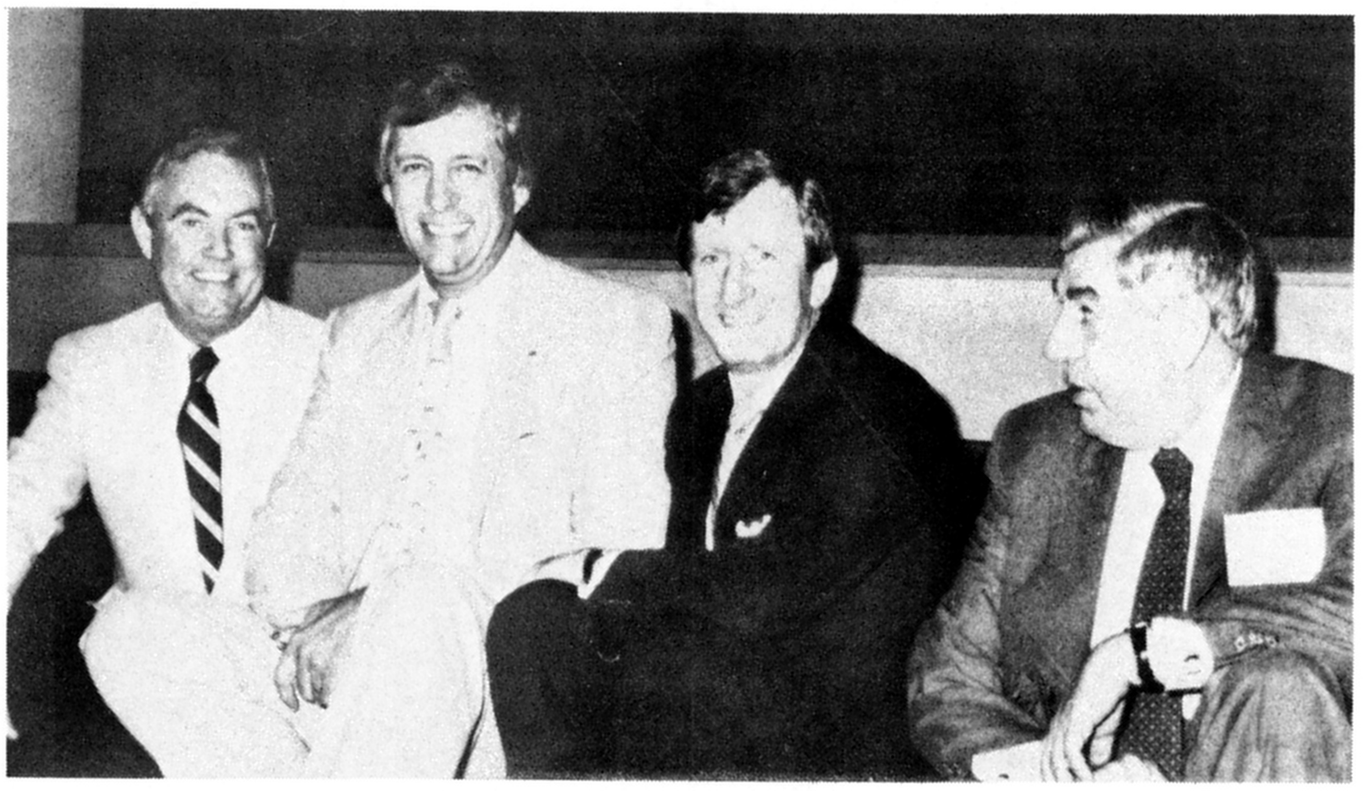
The DeKalb piano plant was closed in 1973, though marketing and administrative operations remained. The following year the manufacture of jukeboxes was shut down at North Tonawanda. In 1975, Wurlitzer's electric organ production ended in upstate New York as all manufacturing operations were consolidated at two northern Mississippi plants southeast of Memphis.

Three years ago George Howell took over as Wurlitzer president and has been credited with the company's recent turnaround in this country. ●

Oshkosh holds dart tournament

Teams from ten different cities competed in a masters tournament played on *All-American* dart machines at the Bittersweet Lounge, Oshkosh, Wisconsin. The event was sponsored by Bittersweet Lounge; 7-Up Bottling Company; and Specialties Unlimited, (all of Oshkosh); Allied Games, Beloit, Wisconsin; and IDEA, Sycamore, Illinois.

Lane Helgeson and Rick Brinkman went straight through to the winners bracket. In the finals, Jeff Reglin and Frank Andrews of Sheboygan won the first two games, but Helgeson and Brinkman took the next two for the win. Reglin and Andrews settled for second place. Tom Reinket and Bruce Holmes of Appleton placed third.



The National Association of the Vending and Foodservice Management (NAMA) elected officers at its recent convention in Atlanta, Georgia. President G. Richard Schreiber far right congratulates newly elected officers. From left are William K. Walsh, Continental Vending, Orange, California, treasurer; Jay B. Moyer, Moyer-Diebel, Ltd., Canada, vice chairman; and John M. Darden, Sands & Company, Marietta, Georgia, chairman of the board.

THE CALENDAR

January 7-10
The 41st Amusement Trades Exhibition will be held in London at the Grand Hall, Olympia. For further information contact Amusement Trades Exhibitions Ltd., 12 Clapham Common North Side, London SW4 9SP England, or telephone 01-228 4107.

January 17-21
Second annual Induferias Show, Valencia, Spain. For information, contact Induferias at Apartado 476, Valencia, Spain. Telephone: 364-00-11. Telex: 62435 Feria E.

March 1-3
Amusement Showcase International, Expocenter/Downtown, Chicago, Illinois. Telephone 312/771-3290.

March 4-7
AMOA Executive Development Program, The Center for Continuing Education, Notre Dame, Indiana. Telephone 312/654-2662

March 29-31
Amusement Operators Expo (AOE), New Orleans Sheraton downtown. Telephone: 504/488-7003.

AMOANJ installs officers

More than 300 industry members and guests attended the Amusement and Music Operators Association of New Jersey (AMOANJ) annual dinner dance and installation of officers, in mid November.

Frank Mandia, installed as a vice president, was honored as a founder and past president of the association. And James Cuccio, Chess Amusements, was honored as he entered his second term as president of AMOANJ.

Other officers installed were as follows: Allan Waldor, ABC Distributing, Hillside, vice president; and Dianna Minero, G & M Vending, Paterson, secretary/treasurer.

Installed as directors were: Sheldon Abrams, Eskin Corp., East Brunswick; William Englehart, Bill's Vending, Sewell; Edward Gilmore, EG Vending, Haledon; Edward Silverstein, Cue Vending, Clifton; Joseph Corrao, Wayne Vending, Wayne; Michael Fricchione, Camelot Amusements, Garfield; Edward Lettieri, Betson Enterprises, Moonachie; and Vincent Storino, S & S Amusements, Toms River.

John Estridge, president of AMOA, was the guest of honor. He was accompanied by his wife Sandy. Estridge complimented AMOANJ for the turnout and the enthusiasm of the association's membership. Estridge also thanked the association for dealing with legislation in Washington.

Other guests were John F. Vassallo, director of the state Alcoholic Beverage Control and state commissioner of amusement games; and William Treger, games bureau chief. •

Chicago—As the first *Prelude Juke Box* came off the line, shown celebrating with the plant crew, are (L-R): Bob Breither, director of marketing; Ed Blankenbeckler, president; Wally Cline, production foreman; Nick Hindman, executive vice president; and Curtis Wagner, plant manager.

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Status appoints southern distributor

Lucky Distributing, Inc. of Nashville, Tennessee, has been appointed exclusive agent for Status Game Corporation's *Triv-Quiz* and *Casino Strip* for 13 southern states.

Irv Jeffries, president of Status, said, "We are honored to have Lucky as our southern representative. With its years of experience and excellent sales staff, we are confident they will do an outstanding job."

Jeffries continued, "Our *Triv-Quiz* and *Casino Strip* games are turning in strong collection reports across the country, and we are already preparing update kits for both games which will prolong the games' street lives."

Lucky Distributing has been serving the Tennessee region since 1979. The company is headed by Steve Shacklett, and its staff is managed by Clint Shockey, an industry veteran. •

Smithweck named sales director

Neal Smithweck has been named director of sales for Digital Controls, Inc., the Atlanta-based manufacturer of countertop and upright video games. He will be responsible for coordinating the company's domestic and international games sales effort.

Neal Smithweck

"Neal's appointment is particularly important in light of our current expansion into the upright market," noted Digital Controls Vice President of Marketing Marty Glazman. "He will help us implement our broadened commitment to the industry which includes widening our distributor base to include more of the nation's top distributing outlets."

From 1975 to 1983, Smithweck was at William Electronics. Hired to train the firms technicians, Smithweck became a regional sales manager for the Chicago game manufacturer in 1981. As such, he formulated much of the sales organizational procedures, including the development of game testing programs, distributor evaluations, and warranty policies.

Prior to joining Digital Controls, Smithweck had been with Bally/Sente as director of sales.

Smithweck will be moving to Atlanta from his current residence in Dallas. He holds a degree in Engineering from the University of Iowa. •

Abi Carman

In Service for service

Abi Carmen, former director of technical services for Mylstar Electronics, Inc., has opened In Service, Inc.

In Service will handle all video/laser disc player repairs and all *M.A.C.H. 3* printed circuit boards.

Angel Pagan, also from Mylstar, has been appointed senior technician. Angel brings with him a vast background of laser player and board repair experience.

The company's address and phone number are: 2600 W. Touhy Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60645, 312/338-7500. •

Utah plans 8-ball open

Utah Amusement Music Association will hold its annual Utah Eightball Open at the Sheraton Hotel in downtown Salt Lake City, April 20, 21, 1985. There will be a prize purse of $5,000 for the men's tournament and a subsequent women's tournament purse depending upon the size of registration.

The tournament, in its fourth year, continues to grow in response and participation drawing in excess of 400 pool players throughout the state.

The event is the largest single event for Utah operators. •

Two appointments at Bally Sente

Bally Sente announced two recent appointments—Jesse Osborne as a sound designer and composer and Owen Rubin as a game designer.

The Sunnyvale, California subsidiary of Bally Manufacturing Corporation designs and markets the Sente System, an interchangeable video game system utilizing hand-size software cartridges, control panels and graphics.

Osborne composes original music and sounds using electronic waveforms to create ambiances for video games in the systems' standard library of games and for its new simulator game system.

For many years prior to joining Bally Sente, Osborne was an audio engineer with Fantasy Studios, Berkley, California. Included among his list of credits are the important film productions of *Return of the Jedi, Amadeus,* and *Peanuts*. Osborne also held staff production positions in the recording industry, and spent the early part of his career as a popular music composer.

Reared in San Francisco, Osborne graduated from Galileo High School and attended Merritt and Laney Colleges, Oakland, California.

Rubin, 30, is responsible for the game play design, software structure programming and implementation for the systems' standard library of games and for its new simulator game system. He also serves as assistant systems programmer for the company's computers and software tools.

For eight years prior to joining Bally Sente, Rubin was senior programmer for Atari, Inc., Sunnyvale, California where he was on game development for *Space Duel, Major Havoc* and other games.

A native of San Francisco, residing in San Jose, Rubin earned a B.S. degree in electrical engineering at the University of California, Berkeley. •

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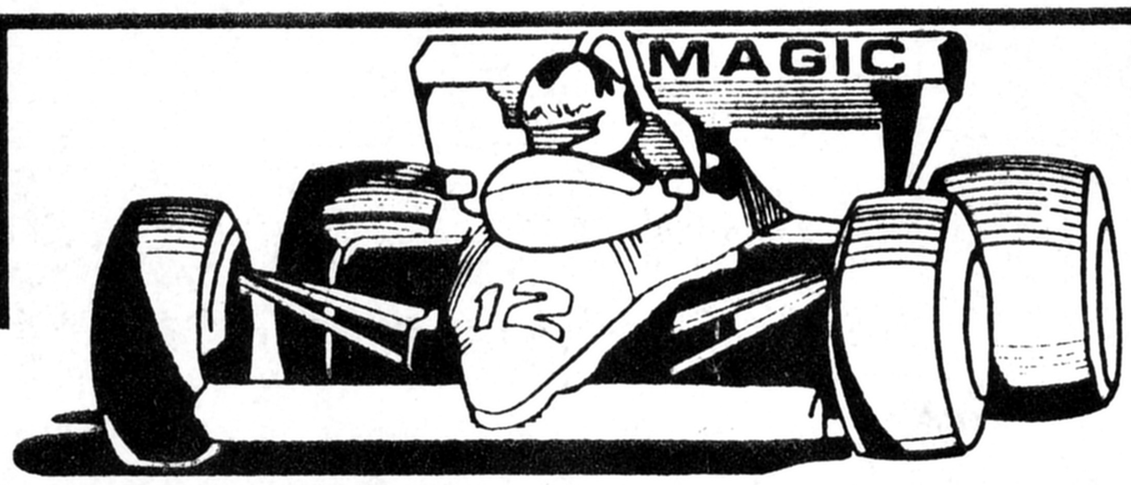

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Bob's Space Racers win IAAPA exhibit award

Bob's Space Racers of Daytona Beach, Florida was recently awarded the "Most Outstanding Exhibit Award" at the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) annual convention held in Dallas, Texas.

The company's exhibit was selected for the award from 462 companies and 1,019 exhibit booths at the convention.

Bob's Space Racers, a large manufacturer of group games, manufacturers games for amusement parks, carnivals, and arcades throughout the world. Water games, *Whac-A-Mole, Bowler Roller, Super Shifter, Roll-A-Ball,* and *Can-Alley* are among their most popular games.

IAAPA features companies that serve all aspects of the entertainment and leisure industry. The convention and trade show included displays and products from over 40 countries with over 9,000 people in attendance. The trade show is annually one of the largest in the United States.

In addition to the "Most Outstanding Exhibit Award," Bob's Space Racers also received the award for the "Most Outstanding Games Exhibit." During the past decade, Bob's Space Racers has received 18 other awards for its games and exhibits of their games. •

Contel signs agreement

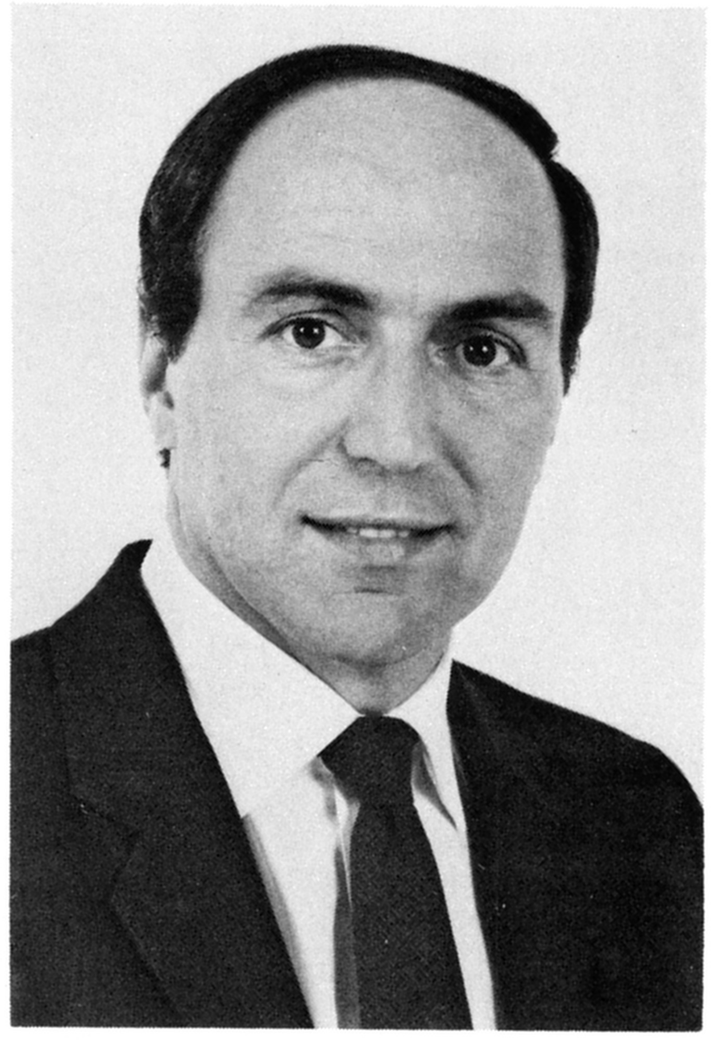
Cointel Corporation, the first publicly held company to install customer-owned pay telephones, has announced the signing of an agreement with Entertainment Properties, Inc., (EPI), under which EPI has purchased 2,105,000 shares of Cointel restricted common stock in exchange for EPI's forgiveness of $1,850,000 in Cointel's debt. These shares are restricted from public trading under SEC Rule 144, and were purchased on the basis of approximately 88 cents per share.

The shares purchased by EPI represent 10.5 percent of Cointel's outstanding common stock. Cointel will enjoy a substantial increase in net worth and cash flow as a result of the agreement, according to Allan M. Glezerman, president of Cointel.

Glezerman also announced that Cointel today filed Form 10 with the Securities Exchange Commission, in order to become a reporting company under Section 12 (g) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended. He pointed out that immediately upon this filing becoming effective, in approximately 60 days, Cointel intends to apply for a listing on the NASDAQ system. •

WAMOA announces officers

Washington Amusement & Music Operators Association announced its new officers for 1985. They are as follows: president elect, Ron Diamond, Pearson Music, Port Angeles; vice president elect, Steve Livingstone, Bumper's Amusement, Spokane; secretary/treasurer elect, Karen Hart (Mrs. James), Yakima Music, Yakima; board of directors, Ken Johnson, Capitol Amusement & Vending, Olympia; and John McGruder, All American Amusement, Coeur D'Alene. •



Peter Nasca

Nasca forms company

Peter Nasca, formerly vice president, Bruce Rubin Associates, has formed Peter Nasca Associates, Inc., corporate communications.

Nasca, an accredited member of the Public Relations Society of America, currently serves as president of the organization's Miami Chapter. He has also held the positions of president-elect, treasurer and secretary.

Prior to entering the public relations counseling field, Nasca was director of public relations for Miami-based Fidelity Electronics, Ltd., an international consumer electronics manufacturer. He began his career in broadcast journalism as a radio reporter and news director in New York. He also spent four years as a general assignment reporter for WBRE—TV (NBC) in Northeast, Pennsylvania.

Nasca earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, Connecticut. He is listed in Who's Who in the South and Southeast.

A resident of Plantation, Florida, the 36-year old Nasca is married and has three children.

Peter Nasca Associates, Inc. is located at 9781 N.W. 91st Court, Miami, FL 33166, telephone 305/884-1700. •

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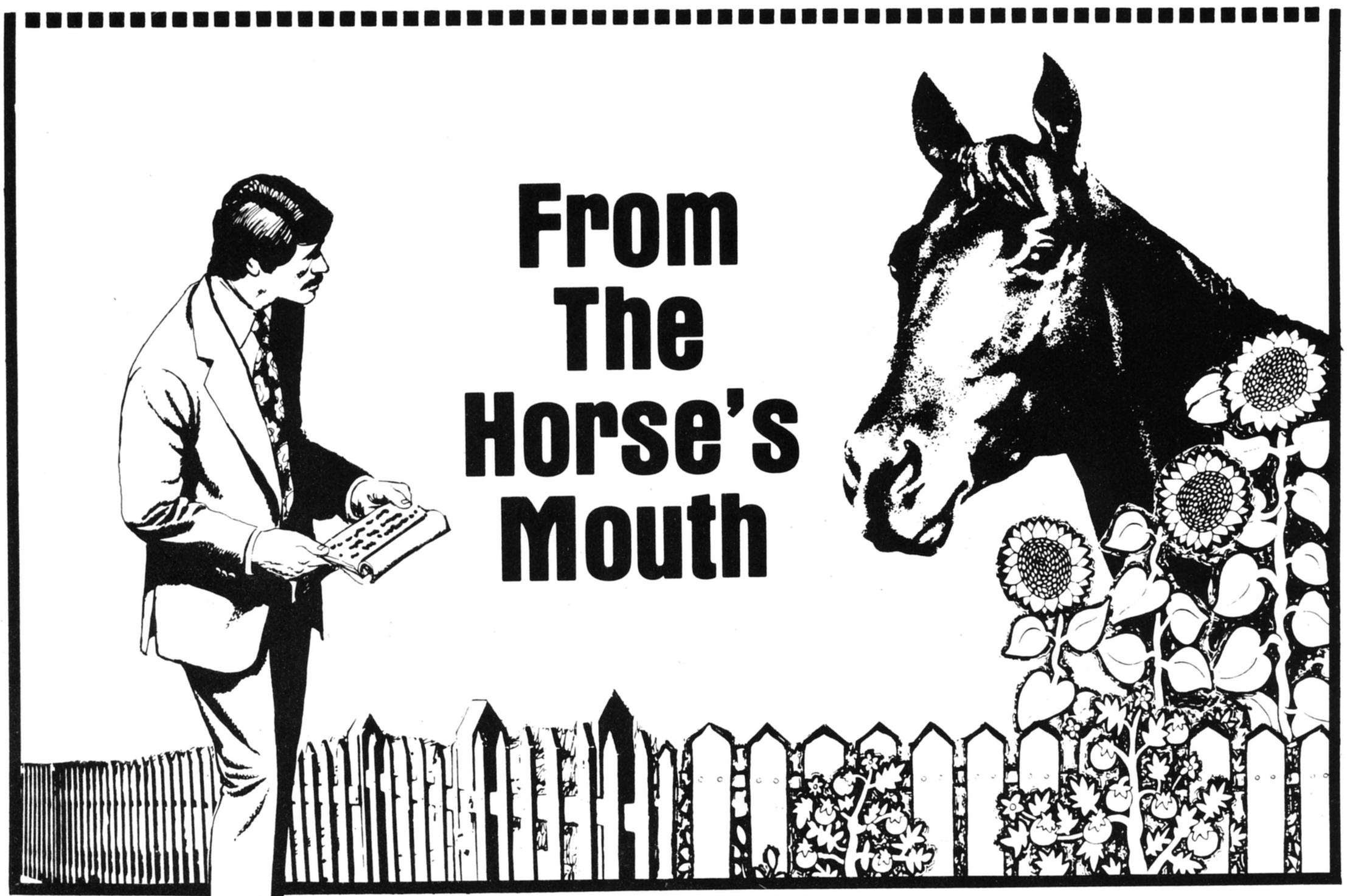


From The Horse's Mouth

By David Pierson

Ol' Man River,
He must know somethin',
But he don't say nothin'.
An' Ol' Man River,
That Ol' Man River,
He keeps on rollin',
He keeps on rollin' along.

—From the song "Ol' Man River"

The opportunities to talk with manufacturers and distributors are endless. Most are accessible and willing to talk at length about their businesses and the overall state of the industry.

At times, their willingness to talk can even be a problem. Here's an example of what, no doubt, most visitors to the recent AMOA Show in Chicago, October 25-27 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, probably experienced:

A manufacturer spots you and pulls you aside. "Buy my widget," he tells you.

You're not really in the market for his widget, you tell him; it's just that his booth happens to be on the way to the men's room.

"Doesn't matter," he tells you back. "Want to hear what I think this industry needs to turn itself around?"

Not really, you say.

"Of course, you do," he says.

Before you know it, you've been buttonholed.

You try to excuse yourself, but he won't let you go. He wants to explain himself to you, in detail.

You smile. You nod. You cross your legs. His view may be interesting, you think. It may even be unique. But it can hardly be as compelling as the call of nature. So you try to excuse yourself.

"What is it?" he asks. "You don't like me personally or something?"

You say no that's not the case; and, before you know it, he's re-explaining his opinion of what the industry needs to turn itself around.

Unlike past shows where many manufacturers were too important to be seen in the company of operators, nowadays they can be found in public places, offering their unsolicited opinions to anyone they can buttonhole.

The operator, on the other hand, is quite the opposite. He's unassuming, to the point of being self-abnegating. Ask him, point-blank, what's his view of the state of the industry, and you're likely to here him say his opinion isn't really worth discussing. He'll downplay his own importance and suggest that you mistook him for a distributor or, maybe, a manufacturer.

Something I learned in Journalism 101 but which has never failed me yet is what I call the "Ol' Man River Principle of Investigative Journalism." Whenever someone tells me he can't tell me somethin' 'cause he don't know nothin', then I know I finally got to the source—the

veritable horse's mouth.

At the recent AMOA Show, when I found manufacturers quite willing to tell me one thing, and distributors quite eager to tell me something slightly different, and operators not talkin' at all—I knew it was high time I invoke the "Ol' Man River Principle of Investigative Journalism" and focus in on what the operator had to say.

The result is a glimpse of where this industry is headed. And, let me tell you, it's not exactly what the manufacturers and distributors are saying.

To listen to the game sellers you'd think that, after a long stretch with little or no equipment purchasing, operators are now in the position where they have to buy new equipment to update their routes.

But operators don't see it that way. Their competition has been whittled down also, and that means operators don't have as compelling a reason to update their equipment as they once did. They're not thinking of themselves as being in competition with motion picture theaters, other entertainment forms and all that. They see their business as secondary diversions for bar and restaurant patrons. It's a living.

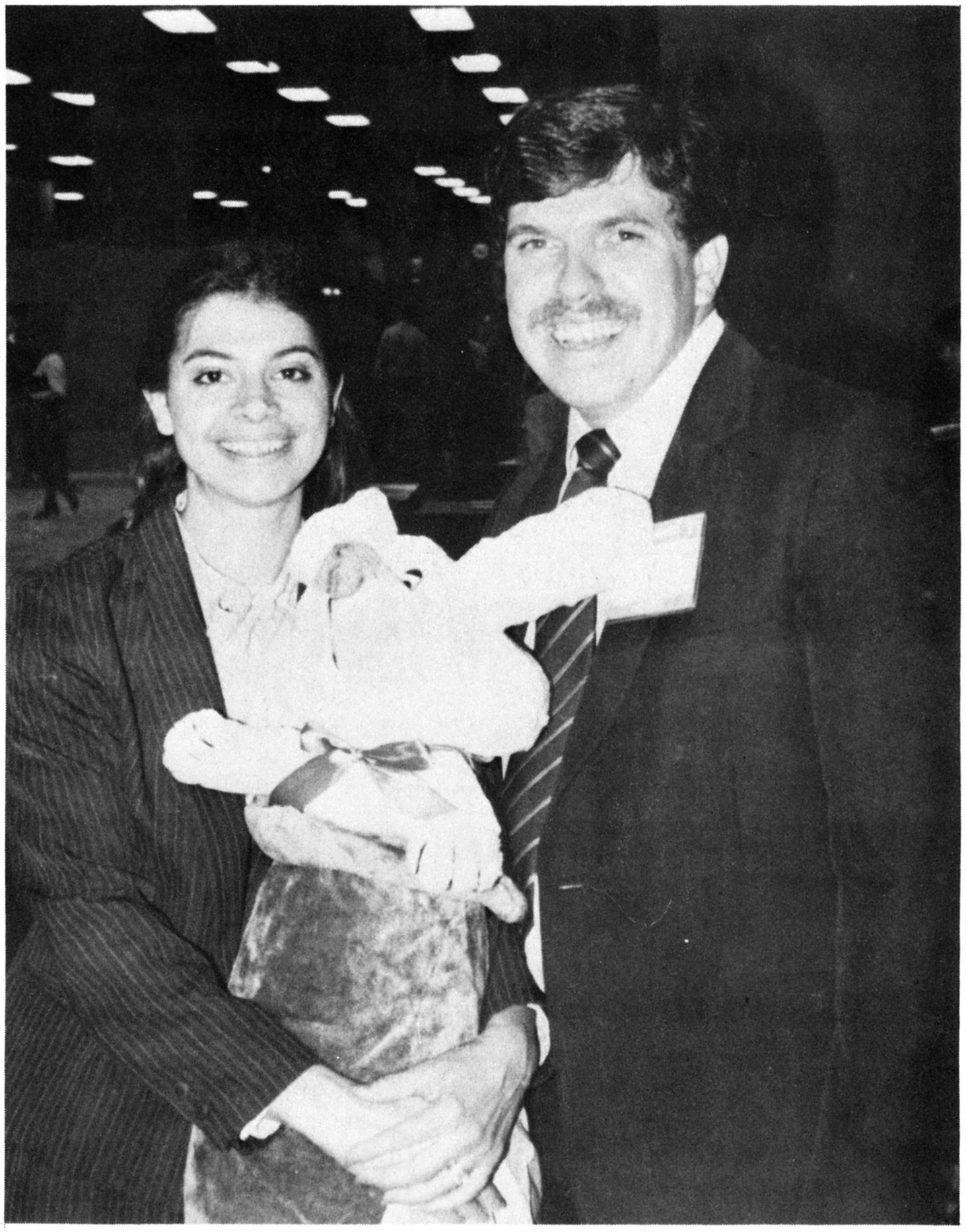
If they see a piece of equipment they like, then they'll buy it. But if they don't, they feel they're in a position to wait...and wait...and wait...

The reason is, quite simply, operators today are making money again. Those who aren't making money aren't operating today, and when they exited, those operators who were left got a larger piece of that diminished business.

Bill Harris of Automatic Amusement and Vending Service in Fremont, Nebraska, was one of many operators attending the AMOA Show who has a view completely different from game sellers. On the final day of the show, he assessed the product offering at the show bluntly and unsympathetically. "There's nothing great out there," he said, pointing back at the exhibit floor.

He explained that the games are

Bill and Nettie Chamness: "Our business has levelled off, but we can live with it."



Marguerite and Ron Phillips: "With competition down, it sure helps us."

no longer major attractions but are back to being diversions for patrons who are in a location for another purpose—to eat or drink. "There isn't any walk-in business anymore," he said. "And there aren't any women in the bars. Added to that, we still don't have the 25-and-over player base back, and you see why I'm looking for equipment with a long life.

"I'm looking to buy things that'll be here five years from now," he continued. "I have to buy a few jukes, pins, and pool tables, but that's about it. Maybe three or four decent kits."

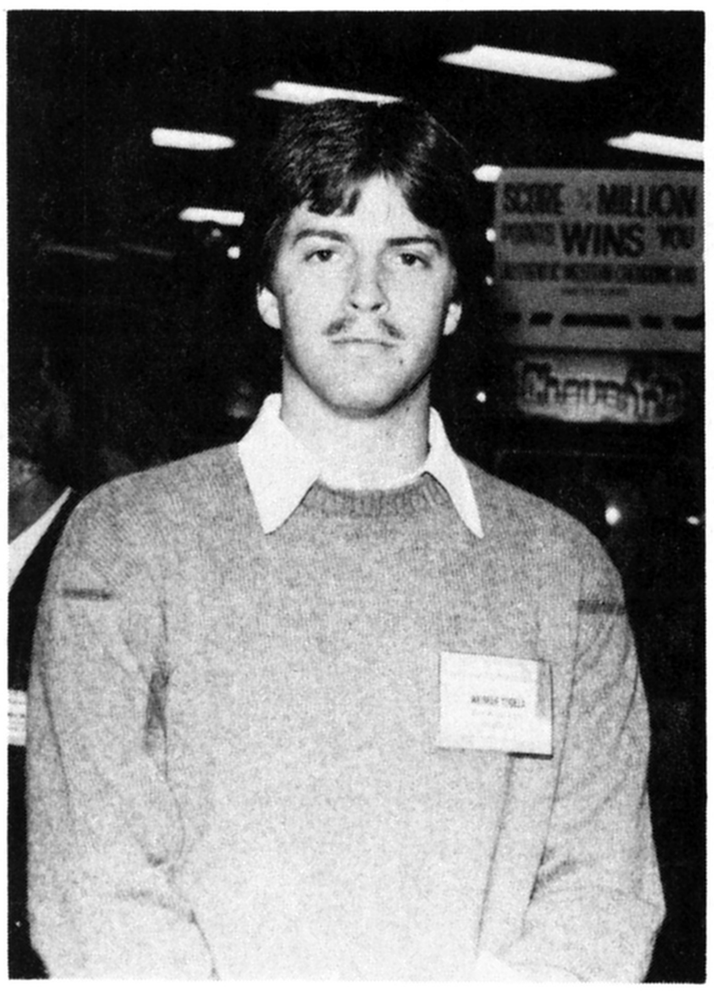
But, as for his video game purchases, he said, "I'm reducing the number of videos I'll buy. I'll tell you, I'm afraid to buy a dedicated game when I know the kit will come out a few months later. No operator can afford to pay those kinds of dollars before a game dies."

He went on to say, "Operators are down on buying videos. We all got stung bad with them. All we're doing in Nebraska is buying time. We're keeping things running and working well because, at this time, the only thing I'm finding profitable is buying kits and adjusting my games to give the players more playing time."

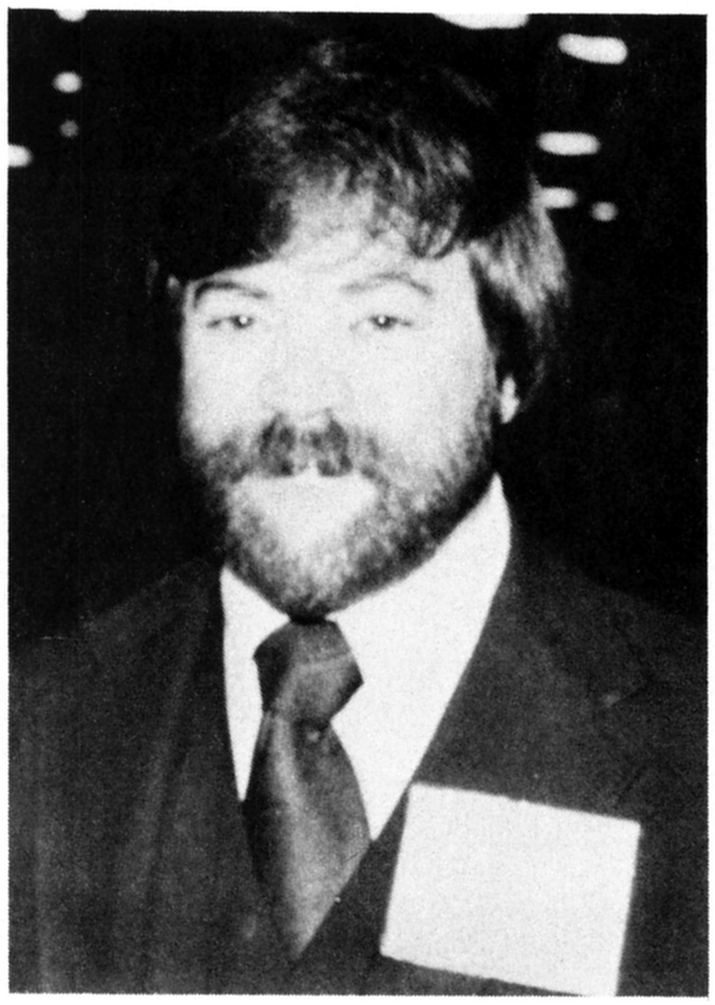
Then he leaned over, as if to confide something, and said, "I'll tell you what we need. We need the old common gun game, not these laser shooting games. All these space videos are dead. Sports videos are up but only as kits."

He then offered a view on pinballs. "I have to buy pins," he said. "All mine are three years old now. But, let me tell you something. This resurgence in pinballs is just not true. Sure, if you put a pin in place of a video you'll do $50 to $60 a week. But you try changing an old pinball for a new pinball, and you'll find there's no collection change."

Bruce Bauldridge of Aspen Amusement Services in El Jebel, Colorado, has been in business since 1978. He said his videos make up about 50 percent of his 500-piece route. He also said his video inventory was 12 months stale, yet he's looking to replace only half of it.



Weimar Tudela: "You just get a better ROI with conversions."



Bill Harris: "You try changing an old pinball for a new pinball, and you'll find there's no collection change."

Bauldridge said he was still finding operating a profitable business, even though his gross has dropped about one-third from his 1982 peak. "My nets," he explained, "haven't dropped as much as the gross because of the things I've put back on the street—jukes, pins, and pool tables."

He went on to say, "I know I've got to upgrade." But he added that he really came to the show "looking for one new pin and one shooting game." He said he also wanted to investigate the countertops and Nintendo's VS. System but that he didn't carry any preconceptions coming into the show.

He added that he was also looking for something in the "Unusual and different department" but hadn't found it yet. Then he laughed and said, "Last year I thought I found it with *Ice Cold Beer.*"

Ronald and Marguerite Phillips of the Twilite Zone in Groton, Connecticut, operate a number of arcades in enclosed malls and in strip centers. They said that they still found the business profitable if only because there are fewer people in the business today.

"With competition down," Ron said, "It sure helps us."

They admitted, however, that they were not actively buying but were, rather, "regrouping."

He said he saw a slight upturn in business but couldn't tell whether that was due to decreased competition or a general business upswing. The Philipps said they operated mostly dedicated videos, were not in the market for conversions, but because of market trends were "starting to look back at pins."

"We haven't bought pins in two years," Marguerite said, "and pinball play is going up."

Frank Battaglia of Amusement Arcade in Woodside, New York, said he's convinced coin-op telephones are the way to go. He said he went to the show looking for something that would give his operation a stable earning base.

"Right now," he said, "it's too much of a roller coaster ride, with all its ups and downs. But I'm not going to give up on this business."

He said coin-op telephones will offer him the same stable earning base that pool tables and jukeboxes are known for. "I've got a lot of grocery stores and candy stores on my route," he explained, "and obviously you can't put a pool table or a jukebox in those kinds of locations.

But a coin-op telephone would fit in just right. I see it as offering me some variability for my locations.

Weimar Tudela of Dale Williams of Orlando, Florida, said his company operates approximately 300-500 prices of equipment and 80 percent of that equipment is video games.

Tudela told *Play Meter* the company would try to maintain its current video game percentage but that it's looking to accomplish that with conversion kits rather than with dedicated games. "You just get a better ROI with conversions," he said.

He said his company has been in business for five years and has a number of pinballs. But he seemed to suggest his company wouldn't be buying many pinballs at this time.

Said he, "The pinballs we have are still doing good."

William Chamness of Chamness Vending and Video in West Frankfort, Illinois, also said he went to the show looking specifically at conversion kits to upgrade his route.

"Our business has levelled off," he told *Play Meter*, "but we can live with it.' He added that business has been good enough that he was in a position to buy up another route.

In business since 1961, he said videos make up 75 percent of the pieces on his route, but only 50 percent of the income.

Then he added, "But we've always had good luck with pinballs."

Ron Dingus of Coin Machine Distributing in Kingsport, Tennessee, said his collections are still down anywhere between 65 to 70 percent from his peak year. He said he went to the AMOA Show looking specifically for conversion kits and perhaps some pinballs.

When asked if he felt his business was still profitable for him, he shrugged as if to say so-so.

So we asked him one final question. Why do you stay in this business?

He smiled weakly and offered a response that seemed to sum up the feelings of those still operating today. "Why? I just like it." •

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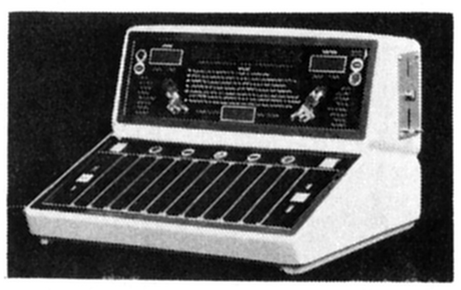

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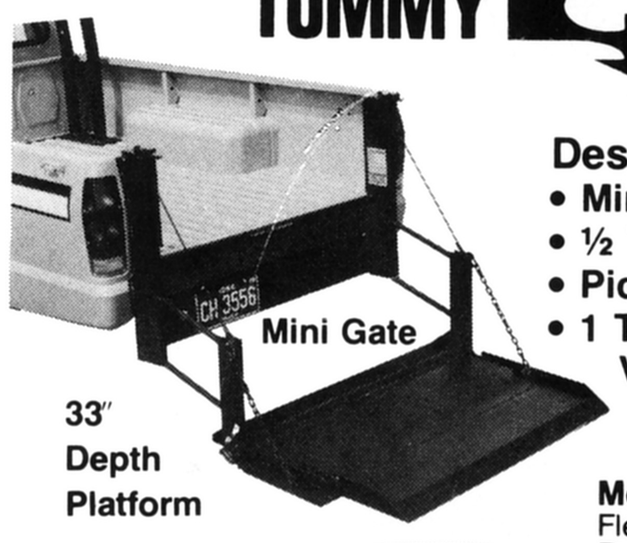

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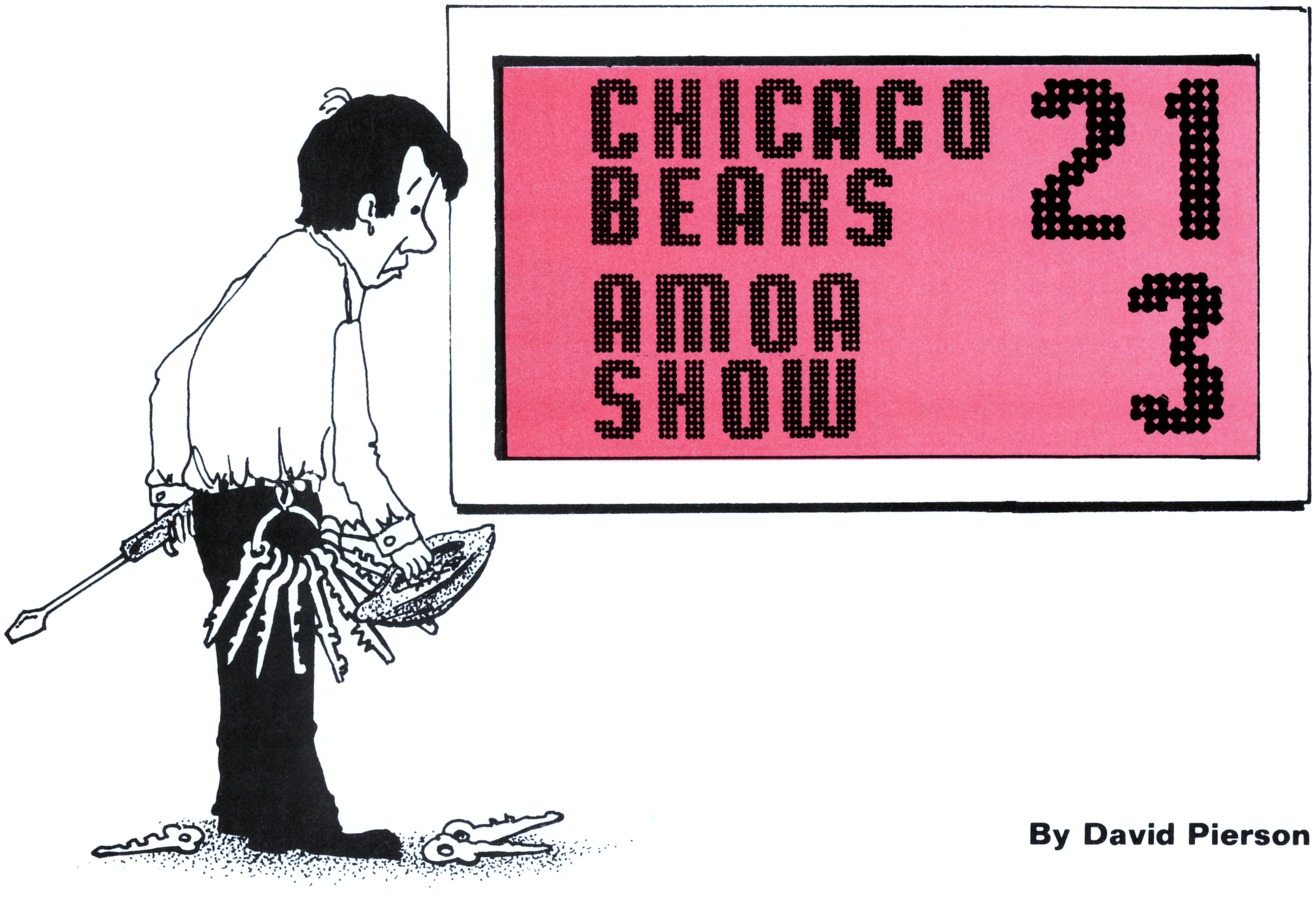

AMOA Show: Bears 21, AMOA 3

By David Pierson

The few operators who attended this year's AMOA Show were probably happy to learn the next day that the Chicago Bears, St. Louis Cardinals, and Cincinnati Bengals all won their football games. However, the rest of the convention-goers were probably disheartened to learn the Dallas Cowboys had beaten their beloved Indianapolis Colts, 22-3.

AMOA Show '84 was truly a regional show. There were hardly any operators there who followed the fortunes of such teams as the Seattle Seahawks, Houston Oilers, New England Patriots, and Miami Dolphins.

Still, the regional nature of AMOA '84 can't be blamed wholly on the AMOA, anymore than the regional bias of AOE '84 and ASI '84 can be blamed on those shows. It's just that operators outside the Chicago hub can't afford to fork out the money for round-trip airfare to Chicago, a hotel room for $125 a night, and still have to come up with more money to pay for meals and entertainment. At least, they can't afford it with today's collections.

When the industry was in boom times, showtime meant party time. Now the party's over; and operators, more frugal these days, are opting for (1) sending fewer people to the show or (2) not going at all. From this year's attendance at all three shows, it's clear most operators are opting for (2).

The large no-show at the AMOA Show this year should warn game sellers about what's happening. Operators are not so anxious to see the new games as they once were. Operators are not as anxious to go to a show when the only reason for going is to see new equipment that they're not in the market to buy.

John Vassalo of the New Jersey state amusement game commission stressed that operators work for merchandise equipment laws at the state level, not at the local level.

What it all means is that game sellers can expect worse days ahead.

While the shakeout is nearly over at the operator level, it's only just begun at the game seller level. Operators just don't see a reason to buy as much equipment as they once did. In the past, operators bought even when they knew they were overbuying, because they had to keep pace with their competition.

Today, however, the surviving operators don't have that furious operator competition; so they're not in such a great hurry to buy. After all, many operators think, "Why should I buy new games right now? All the equipment on my route is only one or two years old!"

The industry has, in fact, diminished in size. According to *Play Meter's* most current estimates, operator population is down about

42 percent from the peak period in 1982. But, if your estimate of the operator population were based on trade show attendance, you'd think the number of operators in business today is only one-third the number that were in business two years ago. And that just ain't so.

Consider the following item: Last year's AMOA Show in New Orleans drew 9,079, and this year's show in Chicago drew 7,303 (both figures according to the AMOA).

It is common knowledge in convention circles that a trade show in Chicago will draw more attendees than the same show in New Orleans—simply because chicago is surrounded by cities like St. Louis and Cincinnati, while New Orleans is surrounded by towns like Pascagoula, Mississippi and Thibodeaux, Louisiana.

Yet, even with this sparser population base, last year's show in New Orleans drew nearly 2,000 more attendees than this year's show in Chicago! Doesn't that tell you something?

There are two reasons for the drastic decline in attendance at all three Chicago shows this year. (1) There are fewer operators in business today than there were in 1983; and (2) the operators who are still in business are no longer as interested in seeing what the manufacturers have to offer as they were in 1983—when everybody wanted to see the new laser disc games.

Neither reason by itself can account for the abysmal operator showing at the AOE, ASI, and AMOA Shows this year. Sure, the bitter in-fighting between the AOE and ASI shows resulted in a diminished attendance at both of those shows, but the attendance of the two shows added together was not even close to last year's New Orleans total. And why would the bitter AOE/ASI rivalry carry over to adversely affect the AMOA Show? It wouldn't.

What is evident is that, although the operator population has declined dramatically, it certainly has not dropped to anything near what operator attendance at the Chicago shows would lead you to estimate.

And consider, also, the following

Crane games, one of the more attractive merchandise equipment types, were exhibited in several booths.

Merchandising equipment includes many various forms—including coin pushers.

with the laser games. Games like *M.A.C.H. 3*, Erickson said, were set so that over 50 percent of the players played for less than one minute.

"It's impossible to believe you could market a game with that," he continued.

The only reason the laser disc games lasted as long as they did, he said, was that they were new; but, after that newness wore off, the players turned against the games, feeling they weren't getting their money's worth.

He then told the operators that manufacturers have got to listen to what operators are saying about the games—that they must incorporate features into the games which will allow players to play the games for sufficient periods of time and which, therefore, means operators can make more money.

His first suggestion to manufacturers, he said, would be to incorporate a new feature into their games whereby a player who played for less than a minute would be given extra playing time.

"The cardinal rule in this industry used to be that if the average playing time of a game was less than two minutes, the game would be a flop," Erickson said.

Then he told the audience to rethink the game *Qix* from Taito. "Too many people liked that game for it to be a flop," he said. Again, he noted, it was probably the game's setting more than the game play itself which eventually killed the game on location.

The cardinal rule in this industry used to be that if the average playing time of a game was less than two minutes, the game would be a flop.

Besides the usual contingent of seminars on jukebox programming, conversion kits, and cigarette vending—one seminar which drew a small attendance but whose subject may become one of the major operating strategies in this post video boom era was a panel presentation on "Merchandising Merchandise Equipment."

Merchandise equipment, according to the panelists, is equipment which dispenses tokens or tickets which are redeemable for prizes or merchandise.

The panel discussion included four speakers from the state of New Jersey where merchandising equipment is legal: John Vassalo Jr. and William Treger of the New Jersey Amusement Games Control Commission; Michael Redpath of the New Jersey operators association; and Art Warner of Betson Distributing in Moonachie, New Jersey.

Warner's presentation singled out the reason operators can expect this type of equipment to become a more dominant force in the industry in the future.

Said he, "With video game collections down, we are all seeking

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alternatives. And we in New Jersey have found it." He said games that pay out tickets or tokens which are redeemable for prizes have a tremendous profit potential. Most notably, merchandise equipment, he stated, is non-depreciating. "The income of these games," he said, "is not subject to decline in equipment value." The reason for that is the merchandise is what maintains the appeal in the games.

The problem with operating this equipment, obviously is that it's illegal in most areas, although it is legal in some form in some areas in 25 states. Merchandising equipment includes all ticket or token dispensing games. Such machines include *Skee-Ball*, reaction time games, *Pokerino, Bingorino, Boom Ball*, coin pushers, *Penny Falls, Silver Skis, SplashDown,* crane machines, even videos and pinballs modified to dispense tickets or tokens.

These tickets and tokens are not able to be replayed in the game but instead are accumulated by the player for redemption for prizes. Usual prizes include radios, stereos, television sets, glassware, stuffed animals, and so on.

According to Warner, the collections on merchandise equipment will run three times greater than the cost of the prizes that will be redeemed.

Obviously, some sort of government intervention is necessary with the operation of such equipment, and the New Jersey operators association even recommends operators lobby for statewide controls governing the operation of such equipment.

Redpath of the AMOA-NJ said New Jersey operators are allowed to set their games at 50-cent play and award prizes valued as high as $300.

Vassalo of the state control commission also stressed that operators not assume these types of games are legal in their area just because they are being operated by others like Pizza Time outlets. He said operators should investigate the matter first because most areas don't allow the games, but there is a good chance that a concerted effort by operators could push through such legislation on a statewide basis.

Vassalo also urged that operators not try to attack this issue on a local basis. "Do it at the state level," he told operators. "Otherwise, you'll find it becomes a political football and a revenue-producing measure for local municipalities."

Treger told the gathering that the games truly were profitable games for both operators and the state. He said that currently there are 21 municipalites in New Jersey where the games are legal and that there are 7,354 such machines operating there. "These machines," he said, "are generating around $15 million a year, mostly in the warm summer months. So you can see we're talking about a lot of money here."

One of the key factors which must be assured before the games will be allowed in operation, all panelists agreed, were that the machines average a 100 percent payback. That means, on the average, one ticket or token be dispensed for every play. It is the appeal of the prizes which maintain the draw of the games.

This distinction is critical in differentiating merchandising equipment from gambling machines, the panelists said.

Vassalo explained this by saying there are four classifications of machines, as defined by New Jersey law:

1. Entertainment equipment includes pinballs, video games, pool tables, etc. These are legal in the state.

2. Gray area games include subterfuge gambling devices which allow for under-the-table payouts to players. These are banned outright in licensed liquor locations.

3. Gambling devices include all machines which allow for money in/money out. These are outlawed except in Atlantic City. (Vassalo said money in/money out means, in effect, that the player eventually ends up with the money in the machine.)

4. Amusement equipment includes all money in/token or ticket out machines. (Vassalo said the distinction here is that the player cannot reinvest those winnings directly into the machine but can only redeem them for prizes.) •

item: Nearly 3,000 of the 7,303 attendees at this year's AMOA Show weren't even operators; they were exhibitor personnel, distributors, and guests—this according to another source.

So operators simply aren't going to shows because they can't afford to and because there's nothing there for them to see. And indications from the lower and lower attendance at trade shows seems to indicate it's more a case of operators not being interested in what manufacturers have to show them.

You see, operators were hurt real bad by the video game bust; but, with the shakeout of marginal operations and the shutdown of most arcades across the country, operators are in a better financial position than they were twelve months ago.

They are definitely in better shape than the manufacturers and distributors who haven't yet realized that it's only the operators who have hit bottom. The game sellers still have a long way to go—down, that is. The sad thing is that the manufacturers and distributors, wishing so hard for better times, are telling each other that they've hit bottom also and are now going to start their upward climb.

The reason game sellers haven't yet hit bottom is this: The operators, who have hit bottom, are so entrenched that they feel they can survive—maybe not prosper, but at least survive—with their current complement of equipment. Accordingly, operators have pared down their operations to the point where they can, in fact, survive indefinitely on these decreased earnings. But how long can distributors and manufacturers survive if they aren't selling equipment?

They are definitely in better shape than the manufacturers and distributors who haven't yet realized that it's only the operators who have hit bottom.

Operators are looking at reinvesting in this industry, but distributors and manufactuers aren't exactly fitting into those plans. Operators are looking at a lot of different things right now—novelty pieces, merchandising equipment, coin-op telephones (Coin-op telephones are really a hot item right now). The few pinballs they will buy will be only to fill out their present inventories. Indications are operators are more inclined to polish up their old pins and put those out on location than buy new pins.

As one operator at the show put it: "This resurgence in pinballs is just not true. Sure, if you put a pin in place of a video, you'll do $50 to $60 a week. But you try changing an old pinball for a new pinball, and you'll find there's no collection change."

And, as for videos, operators are looking for conversions to upgrade their current games. But that's all. The rest of the operators' purchas-

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ing dollar will be going into other coin-op avenues.

That was never more clear than when one considers that the best attended seminar at this year's AMOA Show was Todd Erickson's session on "How to re-market your seond- and third-ranked equipment for first-rank profits."

Presented in two different time slots, that seminar, by far, drew the most operators and operator interest. Here was a seminar showing operators how to bring out their old equipment—like *Sea Wolf* and *Qix*—and start making money with them again.

If ever there was a popular seminar topic which spelled bad news for new game sellers, it was Erickson's seminars. The overwhelmingly favorable operator response to the sessions underlined exactly what the operators were interested in. And it wasn't what Bally or Atari had in their booths.

Operators are out to make money again, by any means possible. And over and over again they said that meant not buying new videos. Today's games, they told *Play Meter*, die on location long before they pay off. So, to most, that means one thing—that they resurrect old games and, like the old days, get back into the moving business where they rotate their equipment from location to location.

Erickson reminded his seminar attendees that many of the operators' old games haven't been out on location for some time. That means they're ripe for operators to reintroduce them to the public.

Old pinballs, he said, could be reintroduced to the marketplace if the operator were to give the games liberal free play percentages. He said operators should not try to adhere to tight replay percentages with their old games because such an effort would be a flop. Instead, operators should test what percentages work for them. He suggested operators start with about a 35 percent free play percentage.

If you're going to place your old games on location, Erickson told his listeners, "You must keep your games clean." His implication here is that the old games must make up in cleanness what they lack in pizzaz. "If you put out an old game that's dirty," he said, "don't expect anything but low collections.

One suggestion he made was that operators retouch their old games, perhaps by painting the cabinets.

Other suggestions he made concerned changing player controls for games which operators know made the game less desirable to play. The example he used was Atari's *Food Fight*. He said the game had a *Red Baron* joystick which turned out to be a mistake.

Another suggestion he made concerning *Food Fight* was also worth noting. He said that certain games just naturally do better in certain types of locations, and operators should keep this in mind when they re-market their old games. The example he used was that *Food Fight* did well in food places and around kids.

When Erickson talked about old games, he didn't just talk about recent old games either. One of the games he spent quite a deal of time talking about was the old Midway game *Sea Wolf*. That game, he said, can still make money in today's marketplace.

Erickson also said operators should extend the playing time on the games for the players. "Today, with lower incomes," he said, "extended play won't drop revenues." His point was well-taken. He reminded operators that it was during the video boom era that playing time became a major problem for operators. Back then, with good players tying up hit games for excessive periods of time for one quarter, and with a line waiting to play, extended playing time meant lower collections.

Nowadays, however, operators don't have problems with players standing in line waiting to play their games; so Erickson's thinking is simply that the operator can offer his players a bargain, thus encouraging play on the games.

"I don't like games that have a lot of initial play under a minute," he said. He theorized that the tight playing time restrictions were probably one of the biggest turn-offs

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The Show Must Go On

AMOA '84 offers a glimmer of hope that there still might be some fun in the fun and games business.

By Roger C. Sharpe

Somehow the dark wood panel walls of the old Conrad Hilton Hotel seem a more fitting setting for the AMOA than New Orleans or even the slick look of the Hyatt Regency in Chicago. I know it's been a few years since the fall extravaganza left those friendly confines, and interestingly the show really hasn't been the same since. Admittedly, market conditions have taken a terrible toll on the industry, but I still hope for the future.

Ten years ago when I attended my first AMOA, we were still looking at legislative restrictions on the operation of pinball machines in both New York City and Chicago. Video was still black and white blips rebounding on a screen, and flipper games were just coming into the public spotlight.

It was a period of relative innocence and isolation from the real world, with conditions not having changed too dramatically for more than 25 years. But then came the outside interests who invaded the coin-op business on all levels, and the nature of the industry was forever altered.

The way we were

The atmosphere of peaceful coexistence and above-board competition, were just beginning to come to a close when I stepped out onto the exhibit floor that late fall day in Chicago, in 1975. So much has happened since. Yet, if you step back and look at things now, you'll see we're much closer to those old days.

True, the players, by and large, have changed, and so has the power base of leading product developers.

But the scramble to make ends meet and gear down without adversely affecting profit and loss margins is leading the industry back to more insular times.

Still we should have learned a great deal more over the years, but our hit-or-miss approach to game development still predominates. As a result, distributors and operators have become increasingly wary of any piece of equipment to the point that some very fine product is ignored.

Many are finding it difficult to re-adapt in this post-boom era. And that's necessary if we're to keep coin-op alive and exciting for the player. This latest edition of the AMOA Show reaffirmed that the industry is still in desperate search for answers to so many questions. From what was seen on the show floor, the next six to nine months should prove very interesting, if only to see who falls in the next, inevitable shakeout. Hopefully, we'll see if any well supported category of machines will emerge and stimulate player appeal over a sustained period of time.

One fact will remain constant, however—there will always be a place (however large or small) for coin-operated amusement games. Their role as an alternative form of leisure time entertainment will depend on the successful application of available technology. But it will also hinge on attitude and acceptable standards for where these products will be found—arcades, family fun centers, and game rooms.

Public attitude, in many ways controls the chance for future growth. And success won't come if operations aren't upgraded. The days of putting new, expensive equipment into rundown, dilapidated, dirty surroundings are over.

So, in broader terms, the way things used to be a decade ago is gone, and even if many conditions may resemble some of the industry's past cycles, it's a whole new game, with new rules and new ways to score.

No substance

As for this year's show, there wasn't too much substance on the floor. In fact, compared to the old days when talk of stand-out hits and potential sleepers was a constant part of the proceedings, there was hardly a word.

It was as if many were motivated by curiosity alone to see who would be exhibiting and who wouldn't and speculations as to the relative health of one manufacturer over another. The machines seemed to be only a background. They lacked overall strength or design direction that might have indicated how far we've come in the electronics era. Surely, graphics and other cosmetic effects were not lacking, but sophistication and diversity of game play action and theme were.

The first thing I wanted to see were the hydraulic lift games. You know, those modified kiddie rides that some say will eventually provide total environment simulations. To me, the few on display conjured up images of the wholesale move, a

few years back, by pinball manufacturers to make all their flippers multilevel and multiple ball play. More recently, it reminded me of the plethora of laser disc video games the manufacturers introduced last year. Those games failed to utilize that technology during play, and so those games were doomed from the outset.

In the same respect, these first simulations failed. They didn't offer the inherent challenge and basic, even rudimentary, controls to master, with enough pizzaz to make the entertainment value worth the price of admission. The models we saw on the floor are as good a place to start as anything else, but it remains a novelty attraction, like Atari's old giant sized pinball *Hercules*.

Sports games

By contrast, everyone had sports games on the floor. The surprising success of *Birdie King* obviously didn't go unnoticed as Kitco introduced its interesting version and Nintendo added to its VS. System with a golf game. And Coin-It and Monroe came back with a more challenging and sophisticated *Birdie King 3* in the hopes that the public hasn't gotten enough of teeing off.

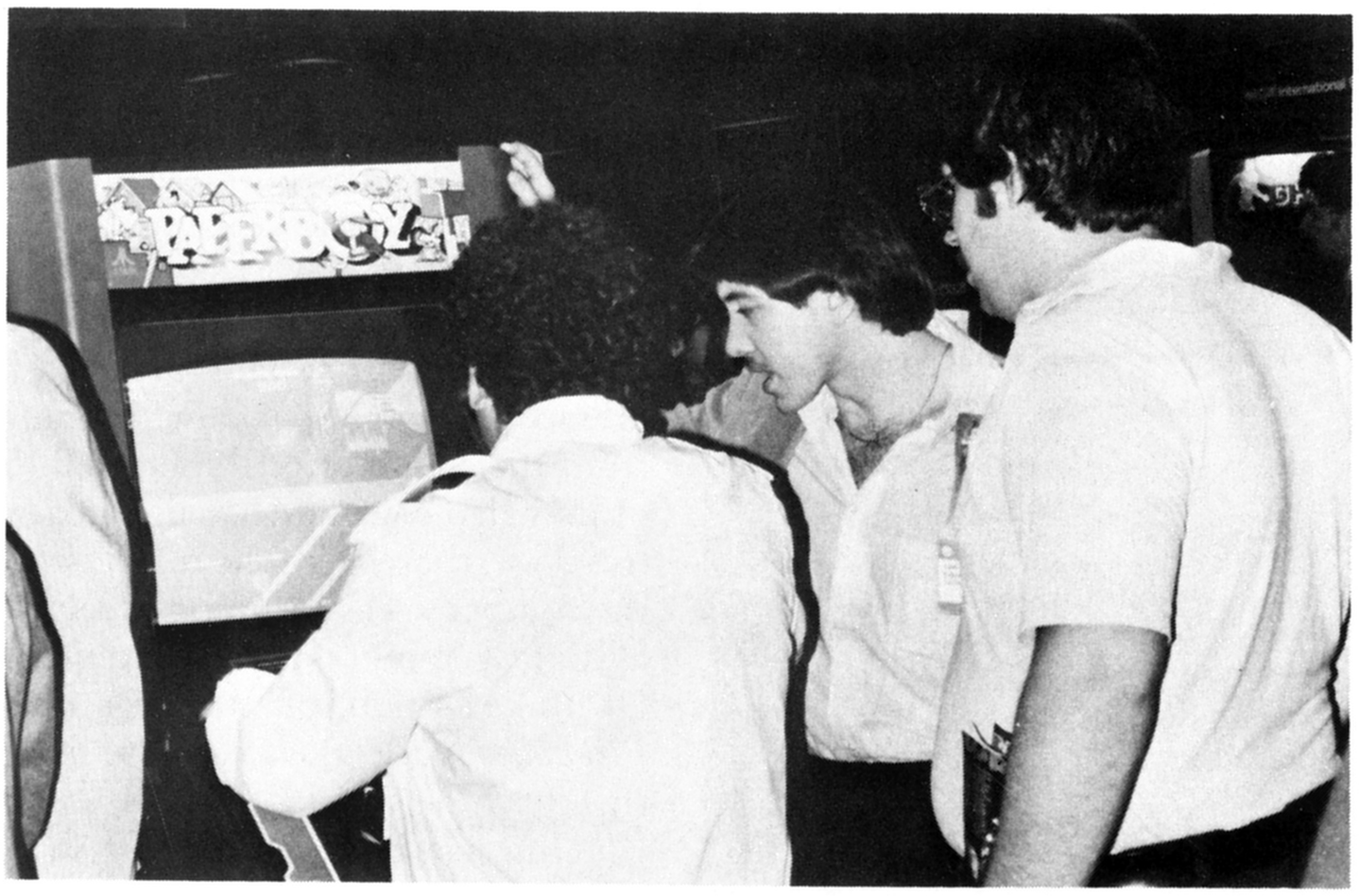
Elsewhere, there was the kung-fu action of Data East's already strong performer, *Karate Champ* and *Chinese Hero* from Kitco. And Nintendo showed off a new, updated conversion of *Super Punch Out!*. Sente, meanwhile, offered a selection of SAC I games which included a combo paddle ball/tennis/ping pong title called *Off The Wall*, a hockey contest called *Hat Trick* and *Goalie Ghost* which brought soccer down to its bare essentials.

Over at the Nichibutsu booth, I sampled a novel translation of a roller derby-type game that offered some strong graphics and interesting play action. The sports theme, of course, was in evidence at Centuri and Konami with *Hyper Sports*, the follow-up to *Track & Field*, and the latter's display of *Super Basketball*.

Initially, I was put off by this game because I had problems pass-

Space Shuttle *was not only a sight to behold but also a joy to play.*

Wico managed to turn a fair share of heads with a new game called Af-Tor.



Atari could possibly take a giant leap ahead due to two outstanding games, Paper Boy *and* Marble Madness.

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ing the ball to the player I wanted to, but this past week I've watched some folks in New York City tackle the game and their artistry has given me a different feeling about the potential for this machine.

Pinballs

The biggest surprise in the world of video were the many attempts at bringing pinball to the screen. There were a number of variations at the show—Nintendo and Taito to name just two—and the efforts weren't bad. It will be interesting to see, at a time when flipper games are making a comeback of sorts, whether the video game public can warm up to something that's presented in their format.

And speaking of pinball, I was personally gratified to see all the machines on display. A couple of surprises were thrown in to reinforce the belief that pinball is indeed alive and kicking. At the top of the list is Williams' splashy, feature-packed and graphic/sound effects extravaganza. *Space Shuttle* was not only a sight to behold but also a joy to play. There's enough on this board to satisfy the staunchest wizard as well as entertain the novice. Nice job Barry!

Dismayed by the prospects of a coin-op industry without some link to the Gottlieb name, I was happy to find a new name on the block—Premier Technology—and some old faces such as Gil, John, Adolph, and so many others. In the transition, we'll be seeing *Touchdown* and *El Dorado* before the group gets down to the business of keeping pinball alive.

At Bally the pinball attention was focused on *Spy Hunter*, a nicely dressed up layout that should benefit from the sound effects and graphics of its video cousin. Although not on the floor, there were the rumors that the company was planning to release a slightly modified, yet graphically faithful, edition of the legendary *Fireball*. What the response is to this machine should go a long way in gauging just how much value some of the older classics have and whether they should, in fact, be dusted off and resurrected.

Following the acceptance of *Sharpshooter II* into the Smithsonian, Game Plan was at full tilt with *Attila the Hun* and a brand new model called *Agent 777*. The latest piece features some vintage pinball artwork/humor and a jammed packed playfield that incorportes a slot machine motif.

And the flipper fun didn't stop there. Stern, a company that had abandoned pinball when video proved to be too hot, decided that the time might be right to return to a coin-op staple by unveiling a machine called *Laser Lord*.

If Stern's return wasn't surprise enough, Wico managed to turn a fair share of heads with a totally new game called *Af-tor*. Having been a major force in the parts business for so long, it was a promising indication of just how far pinball has come as the company showed off its initial entry into the market.

Rounding out the assemblage was Zaccaria's *Haunted Castle*, complete with some vintage backglass mechanics and a truly loaded playfield that integrated some double level action.

Highlights

As for the highlights of AMOA '84, one of the major moves had to be Centuri's "Direct Connection" program to sell a game called *Mikie* directly to operators. Whatever one may think of this action, I couldn't help but think about what a difference a year can mean in this business. From *Time Pilot* to *Track & Field* and now this. It makes you wonder about coin-op and what you'll see next.

By the same token, with all the clouds of doom and gloom hovering over their heads, Atari managed to pull off a double play combination that might just put to rest whether they're on the verge of self-destruction. From what I saw, this company is a long way from being out of the race, and could possibly take a giant leap ahead due to two outstanding video games. *Paper Boy*, I know,

I see the major emphasis in video still being taken up with conversions and game systems.

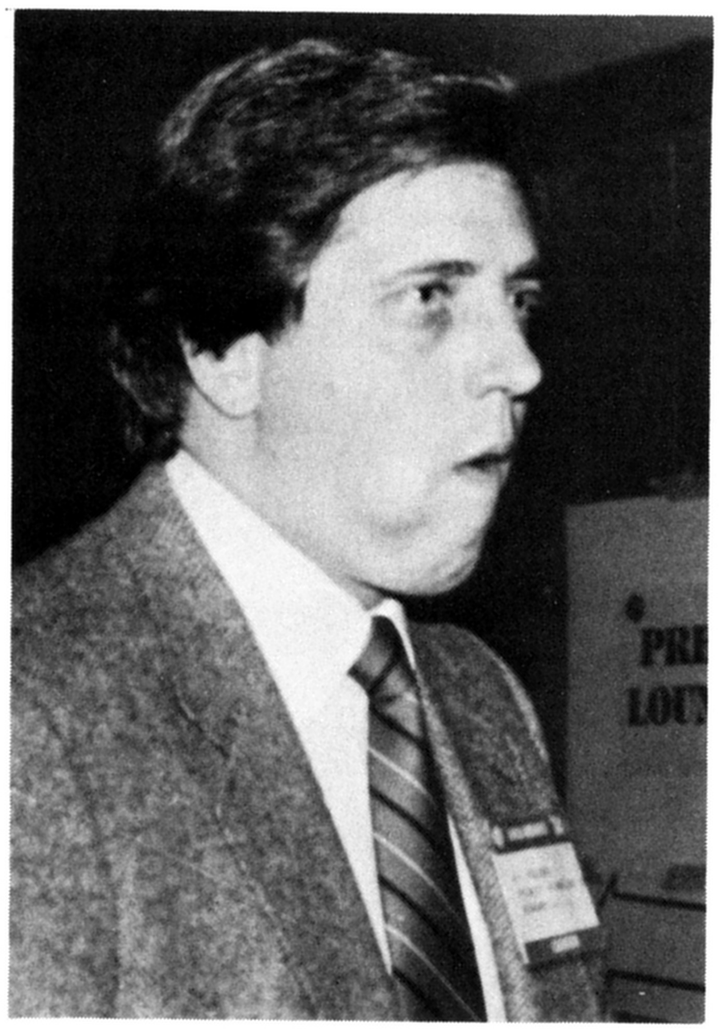
received a great deal of play and attention (with good reason because the game is an intriguing mix of theme, controls, and graphics), but the model that got me excited was *Marble Madness*.

It may have only been two little marbles rolling around a surrealistic landscape, but when I saw the attention to detail, such as a little broom sweeping away the broken pieces of an ill-placed marble, the little mechanics of a draw bridge and slinkys turning into cups, I knew that here was a game which could have an impact in the marketplace.

But Atari wasn't the only manufacturer that managed to rise above the norm of current arcade game design. Rick Dyer and his Halcyon system are moving in a direction that will be a major part of coin-op entertainment in the coming years. Imaginatively presented, with a full library of both animated and live-action discs, this system offers an infinitely better application of laser disc technology in a world where static text adventure games have given rise to a whole new breed of game players. I give Dyer a great deal of credit for attempting to carve a niche in the coin-op market and will be curious to see how the rest of the industry responds.

In terms of viewing the overall impact of the AMOA on the general health and direction of the industry, I see things remaining pretty much the same based upon the new products. Even given the machines which caught my attention as a select breed apart, I see the major emphasis still being taken up with conversions, and game systems such as Nintendo's creation which will allow for future change-overs.

One of the prime examples of just how far kits have come was at the Bally booth where its "six pack" lined the wall and tended to overshadow yet another addition to the *Pac-Man* saga, called *Pac-Land* and an interesting model, *Timber*, where players have to chop down



Gil Pollack, new general manager of Premier Technology.

trees and get the lumber to the mill.

At Williams, besides *Aeroboto* and the gun video *Turkey Shoot*, in a cockpit model and upright configuration, I had the opportunity to try out Steve Ritchie's *Devastator*, which the famed designer had discussed in a recent *Play Meter* cover story. The experience was an eye-opener in that it gave a glimpse of the potential which exists with the new, advanced hardware system that's the heart of the game.

Visually, the definition of the objects on screen was extremely impressive, but it was the dimensionality of the action and the speed at which everything moved that really had me appreciating the dynamics of an artform that can become an integral part of upcoming coin-op.

Still, the exposition produced a mixed bag of coin-op standards and updates as well as a sampling of more creative efforts that might not have the immediate strength to be considered sure-fire hits.

It is, perhaps, indicative of the general state of the industry that just having a booth and showing off product isn't enough to allay some very real fears. There is, after all, an uncertainty attached to how many view current manufacturers. The majority of companies are cautiously eyed in an attempt to evaluate whether they'll be around in six months. And the suddeness by which things happen, such as the Mylstar demise and Premier resurrection. And this only adds to the shakiness of the foundation upon which the industry operates.

It was easy to notice the hesitancy and forced optimism of many industry members I talked to. Everyone would like to believe that things are on the upswing and that some of the product on display might well serve as a bridge for further advancement, but the words seemed hollow and tinged with a bit of remorse and resignation.

I'd like to believe that 1985 will prove to be a year of positive growth for manufacturers, distributors, and operators, but I know that to achieve this end the need is to do more than what has been the standard operating procedure in the past. It's time for coin-op to become an active part of the 1980's and not rely on time-worn, temporary solutions.

Some of the games I saw in Chicago gave me hope for better things ahead and that the legacy of the amusement game business isn't something that will simply fade from view. The basic product may well change in the future, but no matter how it's defined, coin-op will always be a part of the leisure time scene. •

In Appreciation of Sam Stern

By Roger C. Sharpe

For more than a decade I've been involved with the coin-operated amusement game industry, and I've seen how, in a large part, my views have been shaped by the old-timers I initially came in contact with.

I was fortunate to have entered onto the scene when so many true industry giants were still active. Their youthful enthusiasm about work and their reminiscings of the industry's early days brought the past alive for me.

But I'm afraid we're losing that link with our coin-op past. It doesn't matter that the technology and times have changed, creating this impersonal, big business mentality.

What is important is that we not forget the heart and soul that built this industry. Men like Ray Moloney, David Gottlieb, and Harry Williams left us a rich legacy on which to base our future. And now another industry pioneer has passed on. Oh, the void he leaves behind!

Sam Stern lived for the coin-machine industry. All who came in contact with the man have special memories of him. For me, it came on my first venture through the Chicago factories—Bally, Gottlieb, Chicago Coin, and Williams.

On North California Avenue, I discovered a team of individuals who brought the pinball past alive for me and showed me where things were headed. There was the design team of Steve Kordek, Norm Clark, and Gordon Horlick, and the pinball playing wizardry/story telling wonders of Bill DeSelm. At the apex of all this activity were Sam Stern and his son Gary.

It was my first visit to an arcade game factory and, for a journalist hoping to capture the history of the business in a book, the reception and warmth given me reinforced my commitment to do all that I could for this magical entertainment form. Among my many interviews, ten years ago, was this one with Sam Stern. I believe it can probably do more to give you a sense of the man than any writer's reminiscences.

It was a measure of Sam Stern's intensity and dedication to the art that somehow rubbed off on everyone.

Sam Stern began in the clothing business in Philadelphia. It was 1931 when he received a tip from one of the city's detectives who used to come in to buy his clothes.

"This detective," Sam began, "came in one day and told me about a bar right across from City Hall that had a pinball machine in it. 'They're making a fortune,' he told me, and that I was crazy working in the clothing business for a small salary when I could be better off in the pinball machine business. He even told me that he and the other detectives would help me get locations if I needed them.

"So, I bought five pinball machines, put them out and quit my job. They were supposed to be such good money makers that I couldn't even sleep that first night. The next morning I got up bright and early and ran to the machines. But they didn't have very much money in them. So I called up one of the detectives and told him that the machines weren't making money and that I had quit my job. Well, his answer was that I must have had a poor location and I started to look for better ones and began to move around.

"From that point I just stayed in the business, found better locations and bought new machines. In 1932, after the repeal, I also bought some jukeboxes and wound up putting them out along with my pinball machines. I was really jobbing pinball machines at the time. What I would do would be to buy used machines and have somebody fix them up. Then I would sell them to a store in Philadelphia.

"By 1938 I had gotten together with a cousin of mine who was with the Sun Ray Drug Company, and the two of us bought a company called Keystone Music which operated about 300 or 400 jukeboxes. I was partners with him in 1939 for the distributorship of the jukeboxes; and, in 1940, right before the war, I bought a cigarette vending machine company.

"This company was in financial

trouble and was operating about 250 cigarette machines, which we built up to the point where we had about 700 jukeboxes and about 1,500 cigarette vending machines. Then, in 1946, I bought a major interest in Williams from Harry Williams and merged it with Sun Ray Drug.

"By 1960 we decided to split from Sun Ray Drug and were back on our own until about 1964 when we merged with Seeburg and also bought United, moving into the 3401 California Avenue building where United used to be."

Many who knew Sam and worked with him, acknowledged that he was a frustrated game designer who always had a sixth sense while being in the midst of many flipper game innovations. Sam was a player and appreciated those efforts that managed to capture just a little bit extra on the games.

Under his encouragement and critical eye for playfield design, the company introduced the original drop target to the world of pinball. There was also the swinging target which appeared on a number of memorable Williams' games, as well as the first model to feature a long flipper.

But there was more to Sam Stern than just his inventive mind; he was also a kind and compassionate man who always seemed to have a nice word to say about everyone. I remember asking him about the great personalities of the industry and what he thought about them. This is how he responded.

"Well, Dave Gottlieb, of course, comes to mind. He was one of the pioneers and one of the smartest men in the business. He was very charitable and was highly thought of because of his charities. Plus he always had a funny story to tell. But the most important thing was that he really knew the pinball machine business backwards and forwards.

"Then there's Bill O'Donnell of Bally who is one of the nicest people you'll ever want to meet. He's a great salesman, and he knows the business more from the gaming machine end, in my opinion, than anyone else. But he also knows the flipper amusement business as well. I think he's more knowledgeable in all facets of the business. Most of us only know one part of it. He knows both."

Sam went on, "I'm glad to see so many young people coming into the business. O'Donnell has his sons in it and they're young men with college educations. Gottlieb has young men. They have Judd Weinberg, who came out of another industry, and I'm sure he likes the business. And, of course, Alvin. Even my son Gary is in it. He went to college, majored in accounting, worked for one of the major accounting firms during the summer and worked for us during the summer, then went to Northwestern Law School. He graduated, practiced law for two years, and likes this better."

There was noticeable pride as Sam spoke an undeniable love for an industry that he had done so much for. It was a love affair that endured and even when Sam tried to leave he couldn't. It was only a brief separation, between his leaving Williams and suddenly reappearing to resurrect Chicago Coin's fortunes under the banner of Stern Electronics, with his son Gary at his side.

For me, one vision will always remain. It's a picture of Sam standing over a rough whitewood of a game that would eventually turn out to be *Stingray* (one of the company's earliest hits). He was tinkering with ideas as I played one ball after another. Something was missing, and I could almost hear his mind turning over years and years of experience until the pieces all fell into place. And, by the time we returned from lunch, there stood the modified and reworked playfield.

It was a measure of Sam Stern's intensity and dedication to the art that somehow rubbed off on everyone around him. Although now he's gone, I bet if you close your eyes you can still see that smiling face and feel thankful that a man such as Sam Stern chose to grace this industry and leave his indelible mark. •

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Digital to Sell *Lode Runner*, Not Futures

While other factories are reducing their financial commitments, one company appears to be running counter to this trend.

"We're expanding our involvement in the industry," said a spokesman for Digital Controls, an Atlanta-based manufacturing concern.

In a move the company calls "a broadening commitment to the coin game industry," Digital Controls has begun manufacturing dedicated upright video games. Previously, the company had been marketing all its games in countertop cabinets, but its introduction of *Lode Runner* at the AMOA Show in Chicago marked a change for that company.

Digital Controls prides itself on having identified the countertop game market. Its introduction of the countertop card game, *Little Casino*, in 1981 opened the way for a new product line just when the upright video game market was diminishing.

The company has been continuously producing that one game, *Little Casino*, and claims there are now about 20,000 on location. Additionally, the company has introduced other countertop games, like *Tactician*, which are designed for locations hesitant about having a card-themed game on the premises.

Marty Glazman, vice president of marketing for the company, asked that this new venture by his company be considered in the vein with the company's past history in another market.

Said he, "Digital Controls created a new market when it introduced amusement countertop games, a market that provided solid returns for operators who were struggling in a soft upright market. Now the marketplace is ready for our innovative upright games."

He went on to say, "We're going to produce a broad range of new games. We're adopting an aggressive stance that will include seeking out the best game concepts we can find, and developing new and pervading marketing strategies. We're backed by an in-house development staff whose knowledge of computer and video technologies is unsurpassed, and they will continue to provide us with technological innovation."

As for the company's first upright offering, *Lode Runner*, Glazman said the game has been riding high on the Japanese equipment polls since August. The game was licensed from Irem, and reportedly there are Irem-designed conversions for the game that will be released at a later date.

But Glazman insisted that is not the company's marketing strategy. "We're not selling futures," he told *Play Meter*. "Sure, there are two or three games from Irem that happen to be on the same board system as *Lode Runner*, but we're not asking the operator to buy our game based on what's to follow. We're asking operators to judge us on the game itself."

Glazman went on to say, "We're looking to introduce games which have few peaks and valleys. What we want to offer are games that are consistent, steady-earners. And that's what kind of game *Lode Runner* is. It's a straight-line earner, and that means it's got good ROI potential for the operator." •

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COINMAN INTERVIEW

MIKE MACKE

By Ralph C. Lally II

Mike Macke at 28 is running a successful company, Digital Controls. As a youngster, he worked a myriad of jobs including driving a garbage truck. He left home and entered college at 16 and found he was interested in computers. He was the top student in one of his computer courses at Georgia College and says he just couldn't get enough of it. Though not making much money, he soon learned to be a good salesman and a fair programmer.

He landed a job at Sperry Univac and they paid for his additional schooling. Said Mike, "They threw me in the alligator pit and I worked my ass off night and day, programming computers and getting very good."

When he left Sperry Univac, he went into business for himself, programming and managing main frame computers in Atlanta. He met Mike Pace, who was repairing computers. They got together and formed Digital Controls. Pace had been tinkering around with the concept of Little Casino, *and it became the focus of their new company. They are still together and the success is history.*

Since you weren't in the coin-op business before dealing with a distributor network, how did you market your game?

I guess you would have called us biz-ops. We sold them to a guy who would peddle them at a huge markup. But it didn't work out because I didn't want to do business like that.

How did you enter the legitimate mainstream of marketing through distributors?

Some started coming to us. We may not have had the top 40 distributors, but we've worked hard setting up a legitimate network. I think *Little Casino* saved a lot of operators.

Some operators at the AMOA Show said the gray area poker games are losing popularity. Do you agree?

The earnings may be coming down because of saturation, just like any other game. There are only so many you can put out. It's a cutthroat business. Of course, we're not in the arena of gray area, but we're still doing well. Where they sell we don't sell, and where we sell they don't sell. When gray area games shut down, we pick up sales in that area.

"My objective is to keep the company big enough to be profitable, but small enough to avoid bureaucratic bull."

What was your next move after the success of Little Casino?

We came out with *Countercade.* We brought distributors to our factory, and they realized they didn't have to spend a lot of money for something that would make money. *Fax* outearned *Little Casino* in many cases. I started going to Japan to look at games. The Japanese will control the future of this industry in America. All the good games are Japanese.

Didn't you license Lode Runner from a Japanese company?

Yes, but the original game was designed for the home market in America. But then Irem in Japan redesigned the board and we licensed it from them. It has been a winner in Japan, with steady earnings. It's a thinking man's game, a strategy game—a casual man's game.

That's a switch, taking a home game and then coming out with the coin-op version. Why did you think it would work?

I think those in the coin-op business should realize that with a home game you have recognition, and you can take advantage of that. Many of the best designers are working in the home industry; so we may have to look in that direction.

What is so different about* Lode Runner *compared to other video games?

You have a defined market of players who want a challenge, and *Lode Runner* offers that challenge. There is stategy involved. With different screens, you can play different ways. We have no plans to make the game in kit form. The cabinet is not built to accept generic conversions. However, *Lode Runner* is the first game in a series from Irem. The next game is *Battle Road.* It will be interchangeable in the *Lode Runner* cabinet. I think it will also be a hit in cocktail form. People are dying for a good cocktail game. We are testing *Lode Runner* in countertop form also. We can't overlook the adult bar locations.

Do you see a future for laser disc games?

We have spent a lot of money in laser technology, and I think there is a future for it. When I was in Japan, I saw about 12 of them. It is so expensive it will take a decrease in cost of the player for it to be profitable to operators. Animation costs about $900 a second. You can't ever recoup your investment in this market. Laser technology is tainted in this industry. Everyone thought the laser disc would be the savior of the industry. The opposite was really true, the industry was the savior of the laser disc business. Interactive laser disc for point of sale and training purposes will be one of the giant industries of our future.

What will it take to get the cost of lasers down?

An expanded base. I believe the real market is in kits. Data East is an example with *Cobra Command.*

When we saw the rush into incorporating laser technology into video games, we chose to put it into other things. One of these is a video disc trainer that we furnish to computer stores enabling them to schedule students for education. Computer hardware and software has become a cutthroat business; so they must to start providing extra services like this trainer.

You're a fairly small manufacturer. How have you been so successful?

We don't have the huge overhead that large manufacturers have. The days of the 20,000 and 30,000 piece production runs are over. A small manufacturer can be successful with 500 or 1,000 piece runs, and can make a killing on the 5,000 piece run. The big guys created their own demise; they just got so big.

Have you ever considered selling direct to operators, bypassing the distributor?

No, because I don't think that is the way to go. Sometimes I say the distributors haven't really pushed our product, but I think it is because they don't understand countertop product. They know how to deal with poker but are not sure of the amusement only. We have some good amusement countertops. What sells has a lot to do with product. Confidence in the company is what makes the distributor want to do something for you.

Why did you decide to manufacture a dedicated upright?

We have to be full line, handling uprights, countertops, and cocktails. If we find a game that is

(continued on next page)

The optimistic people in the industry who want to put together good, fair deals, who keep coming out with new games at fair prices will be successful.

good for a kit, we'll get it. The optimistic people in the industry who want to put together good, fair deals, who keep coming out with new games at fair prices will be successful.

It's interesting that you mention a good fair price because price resistance is one reason manufacturers aren't selling too many games. Then there is the tendency to reduce the prices in order to stimulate more buying. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Lowering the price of a game is a close out tactic. It doesn't matter how you disguise it, the manufacturer will lower the price until it doesn't do any good anymore. You take a good game, like *Birdie King,* and that price never changes from the first piece to the 5,000th piece.

So you feel that if the game is worth its salt, it can command a fair price.

If you can control your production and not overbuild, you can control your price. That way you not only maintain stability in your own organization, you're forcing stability in other segments of the industry. This overbuild stuff can't and won't happen anymore. Closing out a game hurts everybody, especially the distributor. Bally has done well with *Spy Hunter.* They haven't overbuilt and have managed to keep the base going and kept the price stable. If you control your output, you can keep your price up and provide stability.

What is your opinion of the current state of the industry?

It is turning around. Most of the shakeout has occured. We have had a declining industry for almost two years. Most of the distributors have settled on the bad paper they may have had. A lot have started to restructure their own finances. We have been kidding ourselves too long. The distributors who are saying bah hum bug and the industry isn't worth anything aren't going to be there long. It's all a matter of attitude and perception. It's like the old school of thought—what you think will happen, will. I think

Lowering the price of a game is a close out tactic. It doesn't matter how you disguise it, the manufacturer will lower the price until it doesn't do any good anymore.

the large manufacturers will scale down. The distributors will become more stable and steady. The coin-op business has been here too long for it to end. Operators will buy when they know they will get a fair return on their investment.

I also think there is room for operators to grow. There are a lot of routes in dilapidated shape that could be bought by operators who would improve them. The business will improve when neglected routes are not neglected.

Some have believed it's back to basics; not believing the video game to be viable but only a fad. How about the video game itself?

Video will always be viable. But you can't neglect any equipment you have. There is room for good, cheap games like our *Tactician*. It is inexpensive, it won't make $200 a week, but it will be a steady earner enabling operators to see a fair return on their investment.

Are you a member of AGMA?

We were but we aren't now. We are going to exhibit at the AOE definitely, and possibly the ASI. It is too expensive for any manufacturer to exhibit at two shows. Two shows isn't good. I don't agree with the politics at AGMA. They split the spring show. I knew they would split the shows, AOE didn't split the shows, it was their show. It was outright deliberate murder. They've got people in that organization that don't know why they're in it and don't know what it's going to do for them.

What are your goals for the future? Where do you want to be ten years from now?

I want to be in the coin-op industry. I'd like for Digital Controls to grow and prosper and be considered a leader in the industry. There is time in any industry for new blood and it happens every few years. We have put together a lot of new blood who don't necessarily agree with the big boy's game. My objective is to keep the company big enough to be profitable, but small enough to avoid bureaucratic bull.

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TAX TIPS

By Irving L. Blackman

Your Parents' Home—Your Tax Shelter

The tax law favors real estate as a legitimate tax shelter. The problem is that many real estate promotions don't make economic sense. As a result, the hoped for tax benefits are lost along with your investment.

My constant warning to clients continues to be this: If you don't know the promoter and he can't prove a good track record (and you better check him out)...pass the deal.

Is there another way to get into a real estate deal? Yes, you become the promoter. The most common way for a business owner to do this is to buy the real estate needed by his business and rent it to his corporation. There's another way, if your retired parents own a home.

Let's take a look at a typical example made possible by a provision in the Internal Revenue Code. [Tell your professional to see Section 280A(d)(3).] In a nutshell: You buy your parents' home for its fair market value on an installment basis and lease it back to them at a fair rental. The assumption is that you are in a higher tax bracket than your folks.

Tax Break # 1 goes to your folks: The profit (up to $125,000 when the seller is 55 years or older) they realize on the sale of their home is tax free.

Tax Break # 2 goes to you: Your lease gives you the cash flow to amortize the installment note due to your folks. The interest is deductible in your high bracket, while the folks report it as income in their lower bracket. In addition, the depreciation gives you a no-lose tax shelter. Like any other landlord, you also can deduct real estate taxes and maintenance.

When all the smoke clears, the folks wind up with a larger cash flow and you wind up with a smaller tax bill . Run the numbers on your own situation.

Making Savings Bonds Tax Exempt

Most people inadvertently reduce the down-the-road value of U.S. Savings Bonds for their children. Your child, like many others, may have received such bond gifts. When these bonds are cashed in, your child must report the entire difference between the bond's purchasing price and its then value as ordinary income.

You make two tax mistakes by allowing your child to take this normal route. First, all the income is bunched into one year; and, second, the child will be older and probably have other income, thus pushing the bond income into higher brackets. Is there an alternative? Yes!

Let's analyze this alternative. Series E Bonds are issued at a discount and increase in value each year until cashed in. The tax law allows you to elect and report that increase as it occurs as income each year. It's easy to do. Just have your child file a tax return. If the child has $1,000 or less of non-earned income, no tax will be due. In addition, the child can work and earn up to another $2,300 without paying penny-one in taxes.

Even if your child has enough income so some tax must be paid, annual reporting still saves money. Why? The income will be spread over the child's low tax-bracket (or as is often the case, zero-tax bracket) years.

This method is a great way to create a tax-paid fund for the child's college education.

Business Bash not Deductible

Imagine this: You invite 200 guests to a cocktail party. The guests are primarily business related people and their wives. These guests are a source of business referrals, in fact, you speak to some of them about referrals at the party and got referrals as a result of the party. The bash costs you $3,800. But it's not

The most complete Directory of the coin-op amusement industry is coming in the March 15 issue of Play Meter.

deductible.

Is such a fact pattern and tragic tax result possible? Yes, it is. Furthermore, it is a tax trap that many business people fall into when trying to legitimately entertain a large group of business associates. This time Dr. John Gardner, a dentist, fell into the trap. His guests included physicians and dentists. (John E. Gardner, TC Memo 1983-171)

The real question is: How do you avoid the trap? In order to be deductible, an entertainment expense must be "directly related" to the active conduct of your trade or business. For our purposes, this means you must engage in business (talking is just fine) to get the deduction. The court held that cocktail parties—like football games or a disco bar—are not conducive to talking business. Under the general rule, such expenditures, standing alone, are not deductible.

Fortunately, there is an exception. It is called the "associated entertainment rule." Here it is: The associated entertainment (the cocktail party, etc.) is deductible if it directly precedes or follows a substantial and bona fide business discussion. If the good doctor had hosted a professional meeting (bona fide and substantial) before the party with the business associates, the expenses of that meeting and the following party clearly would have been deductible.

One final point: When business associates qualify (for entertainment deduction purposes) because of the business meeting, their wives also qualify for the associated expenses. Since other wives are not involved, expenses for your wife become deductible. •

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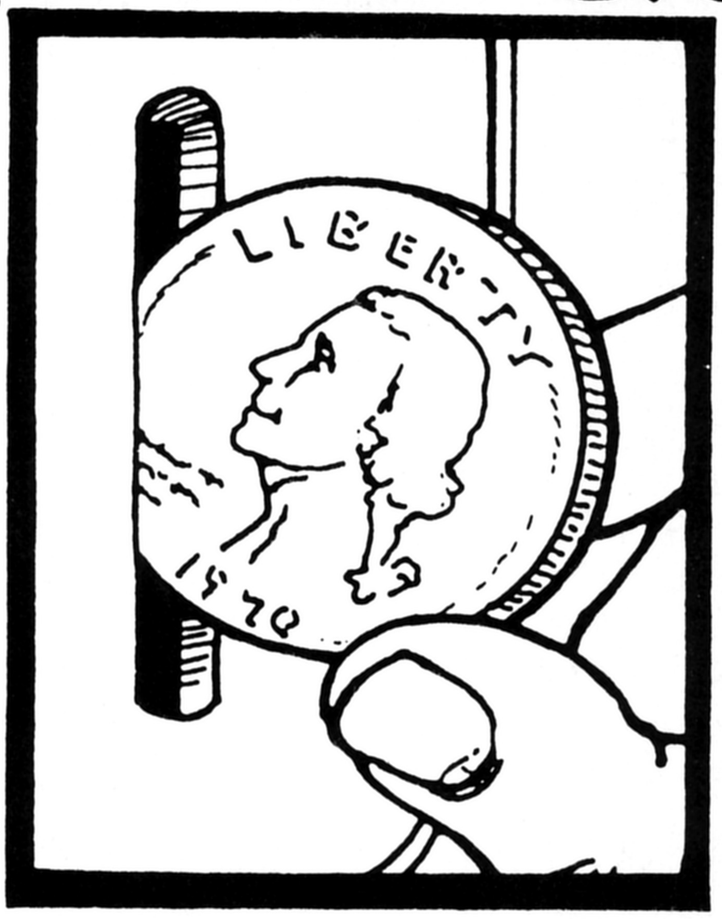

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Swapping Cuts Operators' Overhead

In an effort to cut costs, some operators are buying used equipment at auctions, installing conversion kits instead of buying new dedicated games, and others are avoiding videos and depending on industry staples to revive their routes.

Three operators in Illinois have established a cooperative system which not only brings "new" equipment into their locations, but also cuts their purchasing expenses.

Dallas Utech of Mt. Morris and John Hovey of Winnebago operate arcades approximately 30 miles from each other and have been swapping games for more than a year. Recently, another operator, Lee Libby of Mt. Carol (about 30 miles from Utech's location), began exchanging his games with Hovey and Utech.

The agreement allows the three operators to borrow each other's games for an unspecified amount of time without having to purchase the equipment. The original buyer retains ownership of his machines. Occasionally, Utech said, the operators trade ownership of certain machines.

The system works, Utech said, because the arcades aren't in direct competition with each other, but, more importantly, because of the trust the three men share.

"We all three have an agreement, and it really works out," Utech said. "We don't care that much about the cost value of the machine or how new they are. For instance, we might swap a *Dragon's Lair* for an *Asteroids* or a *Joust*. It's the income you can have from the machine, not the sale value that's important," he added. "If you have a *Dragon's Lair* that earning $10 a week, you might want to swap it for something like *Joust* which has never been in your area and might earn $100 per week. Right now, I'm swapping *Time Pilot* for John's *Jungle King*. Although *Time Pilot* is worth more than *Jungle King*, I don't care—I care about what the income from the game will be for me."

Swapping games with Hovey and Libby, Utech noted, has cut his overhead in half and supplied him with different games at the Mt. Morris arcade at the same time.

Swapping agreements

Utech said that there is no specific time limit on returning swapped games. Another agreement among the men has to do with service. If a machine breaks down, it is the actual owner's responsibility to fix it. If a machine is damaged externally (broken glass, joystick, etc.), the operator who is using the machine at the time is responsible for its repair.

Hovey and Utech discuss games before making any purchases. "Between the two of us, we decide if the game is good and if one of us is going to get it," Utech said. "But each person buys his own games—we don't split prices," he added.

"Some older games like *Donkey Kong* are doing just as well for us here as the new $2,000 games," Utech continued. While the operators exchange videos as well as pinballs, Utech said he hasn't swapped his foosball tables because "foosball is the hottest thing here." He also added that "*Mr. Do!* hasn't left my building for a year."

While operators in large cities probably wouldn't benefit from game swapping, Utech said he thinks a lot of operators could cut their overhead by using the cooperative system. "The only problem I can see for other operators is that they might not trust the guy. What we have is trust between us. Sometimes I'll move the machines, and John will come back and do something for me—like fixing a machine. If he needs something, we help him out."●

The system works because the arcades aren't in direct competition with each other, but, more importantly, because of the trust the three men have.

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SELLING A ROUTE

By Harold I. Gould and Laurence D. Merritt

In previous articles we analyzed various concerns when buying a route. Generally, a buyer of a route must be concerned that he is buying a business that will produce a good income and which is free of creditor's claims.

A seller also has concerns; so this time we'll investigate those interests.

Of course, he wants to be sure that he'll be paid the full purchase price and that he'll be held harmless from any claims that may be brought by the creditors of his business. Once again, his attorney and accountant, working as a team, can protect his interests. Here is an outline of the matters an operator should consider when selling a route.

Make sure payment will be made: Frequently your buyer will be unable or unwilling to purchase the route solely with cash. Bank financing of the purchase is normally not practical. Consequently, you will normally take his promissory note for the balance of the purchase price after his cash deposit and his assuming any existing loans and obligations your route may have. To insure he'll pay on the installments provided by his route, consider the following:

1. **Thoroughly investigate the financial history of your buyer.** Obtain a balance sheet from him which contains his social security number, driver's license, residence address, and credit reference.

A credit report from any credit reporting agency is inexpensive and usually quite helpful. Talk personally with his credit references. Don't assume. If the credit is large, a more expensive credit investigation is warranted. If you discover that the buyer has a poor credit record, such as having numerous judgments recorded against him or that he recently filed a bankruptcy, you should be ultra careful. You'd probably be wise to find another buyer, even at a lower price, or you might want additional security and cosigners from him.

2. **Adequately secure the obligation.** It's a good idea to obtain a lien on real property to secure the buyer's note. Frequently, you can obtain a trust deed or mortgage lien against the buyer's house. During escrow you should obtain a preliminary title report on his property to insure that there's sufficient equity in it to protect your position.

You can also obtain a recorded policy of title insurance. You should also take a lien against all of the equipment that you're selling to the buyer. It's most important your lawyer review all these documents; so you know for certain the obligation is properly secured.

3. **Use an escrow.** The purpose of an escrow is to insure your interest has been properly secured and the full cash payment is paid to you before your assets have been delivered to the buyer. The escrow will also pay the creditors that are to be added to the purchase price. Otherwise, the purchaser might simply neglect to pay those creditors and those creditors may sue you for debtor's obligations even though you sold your route. The escrow will also make certain your security liens are recorded properly before the sale is completed.

4. **Consult with your accountant.** He can advise you on how to structure the deal to cut your tax bite. Your gain from the sale of the business will probably be taxed as a capital gain. However, your accountant can probably show you a number of ways to structure the sale so you can legally pay the least amount of tax over the longest period of time possible.

5. **Consult with your attorney.** Your attorney can insure that the agreement memorializing the sale is drafted properly to provide you with the most protection possible. Is the agreement valid and enforceable under the laws of your state?

Does it insure that you will have the right to approve the credit history of your buyer? Does it adequately secure the purchase price?

Does it guarantee that you will not be liable to any of the creditors of the route after it has been sold? Does it contain an arbitration clause so that any disputes between you and the purchaser can be resolved quickly and economically?

It is generally a good idea to consult with your attorney before you begin to negotiate with the sale of your route. He may be in a better position to handle those negotiations on your behalf. The attorney can draft the offer and acceptance documents prior to your finding your buyer so that the agreements are written in advance in a manner to give you the most protection. •

FRANK'S CRANKS

By Frank "The Crank" Seninsky

Keep your 'Karate Champ' cranking

Karate Champ is one of the few games doing well. Collections have been strong though there have been minor service problems. Making a few modifications may save you headaches later.

Credits sometimes don't register. This can be very annoying for an operator, especialy if the game is out-of-order, because one or two players lost their quarter(s). This problem, according to Data East, can occur on all *Karate Champs* and may be due to more than low voltage.

A simple solution is adding two small 10 microfarad electrolytic capacitors to the IC chip (a 74LS04) at location 8H on the top PC board. Figure 1 shows the two inputs that are involved.

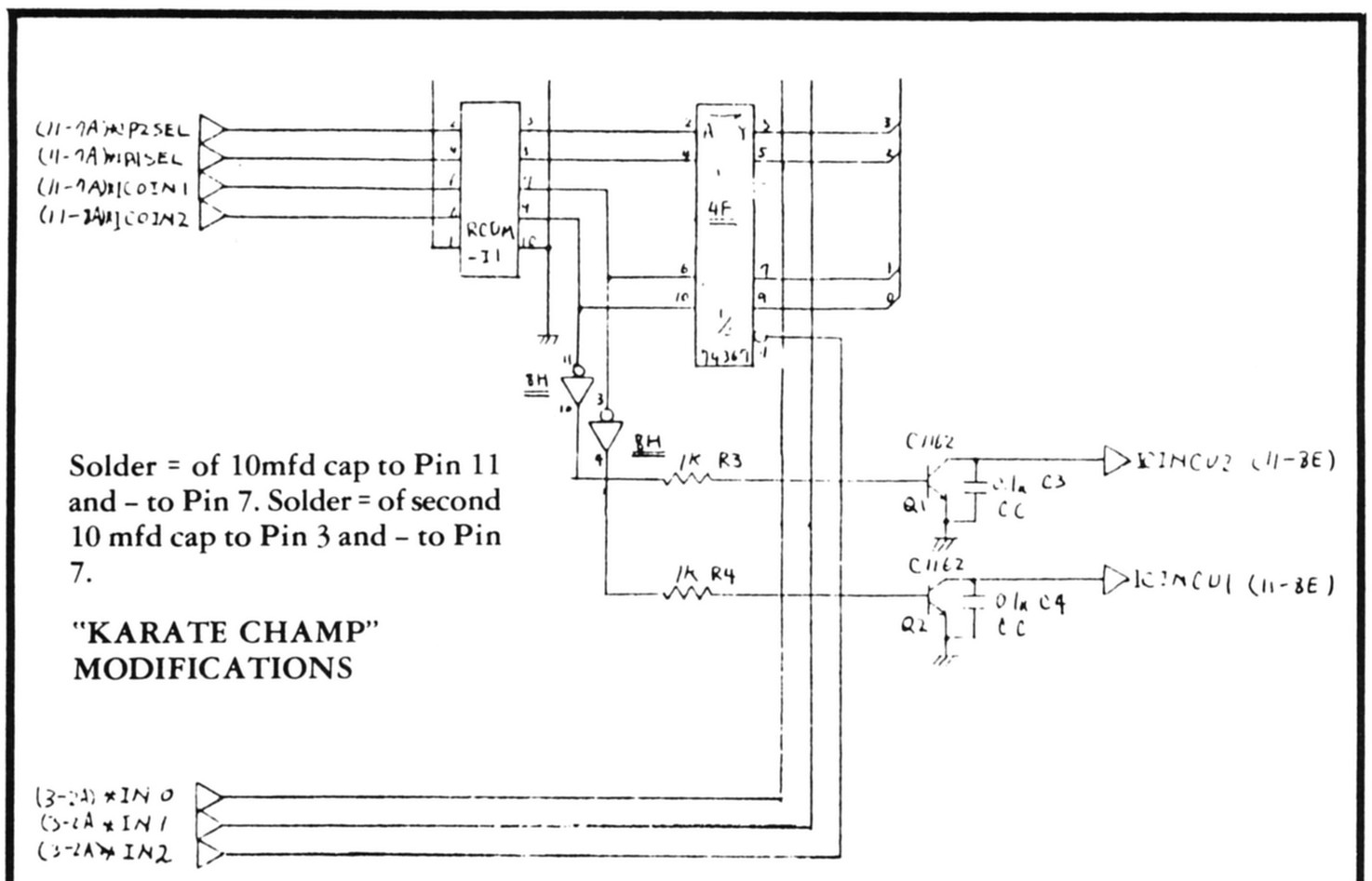
Take the positive end of one cap and solder it to Pin 3 on IC 74LS04 and solder the negative end of this cap to Pin 7, which is the nearest convenient ground. Next solder the positive end of the other cap to Pin 11 of the IC and the negative end to Pin 7 (ground). This gives the same result as attaching a small capacitor to a Bally pinball bullseye target switch.

If the switch isn't closed long enough, the computer can't read the closure. The charges stored in your caps will insure reading of a coin microswitch closure. You could add caps to the microswitch terminals; but this causes other problems, such as the player banging the coin door for credits. For instance, the caps Midway puts on its *Pac-Man* coin microswitches created this very problem; hopefully you've already removed these caps on your *Pac-Man* games.

Screen locks up or freezes and/or players complain that the action of the game actually slows down. This type of intermittent problem is usually corrected by turning the game off and then on. You may have had the problem several times during a week without realizing it. A good way to check is by opening the back door, using the interlock switch, and turning the game off and on quickly. If you can freeze the screen, the following adjustments and modifications are recommended by Data East:

1. Raise the +5 volts (measured at the PC board) to 5.1 to 5.2 volts. This will help some borderline components to function properly. The factory says this is the correct voltage. However, in error, some games were set slightly lower.

2. Static electricity can cause a freeze condition, although I've never seen this happen in *Karate Champ*. To reduce this possibility, run a ground wire from a frame bolt of the coin door directly to the main ground bolt on the power supply.



Solder = of 10mfd cap to Pin 11 and – to Pin 7. Solder = of second 10 mfd cap to Pin 3 and – to Pin 7.

"KARATE CHAMP" MODIFICATIONS

FIGURE 1
Schematic drawing showing part of IC 74LS04 at location 8H. Modification will prevent coins from not registering credits.

Also, since the metal coin mechs are mounted to plastic components, another wire connecting the two mechs and the new grounded door frame bolt couldn't hurt.

3. There is a clocking chip (IC 74LS74) on the PC board where the voltage at Pin 4 can float below +5 volts (sometimes low). By connecting Pin 4 directly to +5 volts the slowing down of the action can be almost eliminated. The output of the LS74 goes to the "WAIT" line of the Z-80A. Maintaining a steady "high" avoids having the microprocessor wait for the required information.

You must first determine which model PC boards you have. There are three models with the number stamped on the top board. On models 0190-0 and 0190-1, the 74LS74 is located at 11K. Cut Pin 4 from its trace and run a jumper from Pin 4 to Pin 14 (+5 volts) of the same IC. On model 0190-2, the 74LS74 is located at 12K. Cut Pin 4 and connect it to Pin 14.

Preventative Maintenance. Before putting *Karate Champ* on location, there are a few quick checks that can be done to greatly reduce nuisance service calls.

Remove the control panel by releasing the four latches underneath the panel. Check and set the 16 joystick blade switches (about 1/16" gap) and make sure the push-on connectors are tightly fitted on the switch blade ends. Make sure the bare wire ends (and not the wire insulation) are well crimped inside the connectors.

The top latch slots, cut only 1/8" away from the edge of the thin, sheet metal control panel, look like they may wear through as players pull down on the joysticks. The bottom of the panel has two metal tabs welded on which are made of a thicker metal. These look OK. Keep checking the top tabs weekly to avoid losing a control panel. Make sure the panel fits tightly and doesn't wobble, to slow down the rate the slots wear through to the edge. If the slot's cable breaks, cut (drill and file) a new slot and move the latch over or bolt on L-bracket or slotted tab to the panel and reposition the latch.

There are several ROMS on the PC board that can come loose from their sockets. Since the PC boards are enclosed in a screened cage, it's easy to overlook this. To remove the cage, knock out a block of wood that has been stapled and glued under the cage. This is apparently a shipping block and won't have to be replaced. The screen can then be removed by taking out four screws. Once you've gotten to the PC board, firmly press in all the socketed chips.

After reviewing several collection reports, I recommend the "harder" difficulty setting (Switch 5 is off, and Switch 6 is on). This is the third of four difficulty settings with the first being the easiest and the fourth being the hardest.

Midway is offering program chips and a marquee to convert *Gaplus* to *Galaga 3*. There must be a charge involved, but it's worth considering. *Galaga 3*, because of its name, will attract players who have been playing *Galaga* for the past two years.

Since the show there has been a great demand for *Super Basketball* and *Hero* kits. *Super Basketball* is grossing very well, both in arcades and on the street. *Hero* is doing well on the street and is well worth the small investment.

If you need more information call Alpha-Omega Amusement & Sales, 201/287-4990. Also, thanks to Joe Rossi of Alpha-Omega for his help with these tips.

As always, keep cranking! •

Making a few modifications may save you headaches later.

Did You Know . . .

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Transformed

Aeroboto, Williams Electronics' latest conversion kit, is an action-packed game with a unique transformation theme. It offers operators the chance to capitalize on the hottest toy rage this season: "transformers" that change from one character or object into another.

Aeroboto is the first game in which the player can actually change shape and form in the midst of play, taking on a new identity with different characteristics. With the simple push of a button, the player can change from a landbound robot into a jet fighter and back again, in his odyssey across rough terrain, in the air, over oceans and into outer space. Armed with a laser gun and energy blasts, he faces a host of futuristic enemies in his quest to dock with a cosmo-booster before time and energy run out.

The kit converts any horizontal color raster monitor game.

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Rand of Phoenix, Inc. is offering a pay telephone that's constructed to withstand vandalism. It incorporates a heavy-gauge steel cabinet and chrome metal keypad with a flexible armoured cord. It meets all FCC requirements and includes numerous features, in addition to free emergency 911/800 call capabilities, touch-tone dialing, hearing-aid compatability, plus timed local and long-distance calls.

An innovative feature of the Rand telephone is the computer-synthesized voice that gives step-by-step spoken instructions to the caller. A microprocessor utilizes the voice synthesizer to facilitate long-distance calls, and determines a specific rate from any given point to its destination. Spoken instructions are easier to understand than written directions.

Audible instructions also eliminate the need for a liquid crystal display (LCD) readout, which are highly vulnerable to vandalism and temperature extremes.

Rand of Phoenix carries a full line of replacement parts. In most cases, a needed part can be shipped to the operator within 24 hours. Its in-house engineering department is available to answer questions over the phone.

Play it again, AMI

Automatic Musical Instruments, Inc. (AMI) of Clemson, South Carolina, announced *The Entertainer II*, an all-electronic version of the piano/orchestrion.

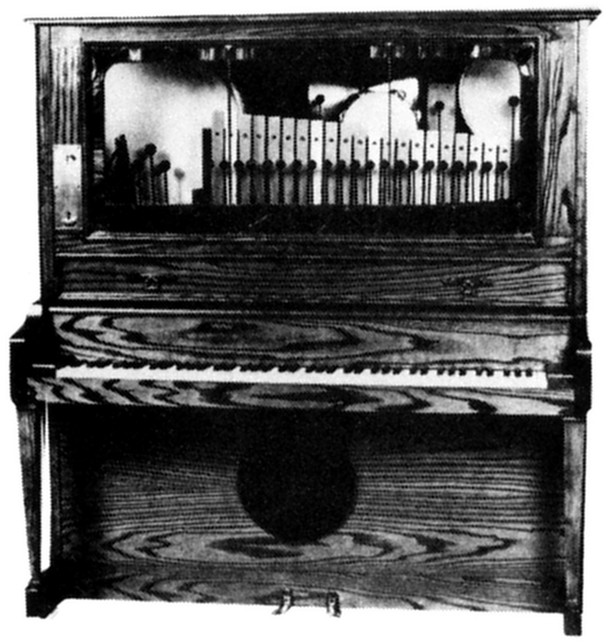
AMI President Rod Rice said production has begun. The *Entertainer II*, which can be played manually as a piano, or automatically by using specially coded instructions tapes, will offer many advantages over previous models, he said. When piano keys are depressed, the electronic contacts reproduce the sound and tone of an acoustic piano, but the new instrument will never require tuning. In addition, dual volume controls for the piano and instrument sections provide more flexibility in sound.

Instruments included in the cabinet are piano, xylophone, bass drum, snare drum, wood block, triangle, tambourine, and cymbal. The leaded glass or plexiglass panel covering the instruments can be custom ordered with a business logo or name.

Tapes which operate the *Entertainer II* automatically can be stored in a convenient drawer above the keyboard, eliminating storage problems. Weight of the instrument has been reduced to 275 pounds from 650-700 pounds.

A variety of music is offered for both the piano and orchestrion. The cabinets are handmade of oak by furniture makers in North Carolina.

"With the introduction of our latest model, we're offering the best of old and new," said Rice. "People continue to be fascinated with the quality and charm of the orchestrion and now they can enjoy it with virtually no maintenance."



The right stuff

Williams' *Space Shuttle*, a pin-game with brilliant design and engineering innovations, is a once-in-a-millenium masterpiece that's meeting with tremendous location demand. The "right stuff" for today's marketplace, *Space Shuttle's* proven earnings attest to its incredible play action excitement.

A replica of NASA's space shuttle on the playfield sets the stage. A unique mission control system guides play with verbal commands and read-outs.

Features include: two or three ball multi-ball carrying locked balls over from player to player; the challenge of making a ramp shot in the time allowed to stop and score a rolling backglass value; triggering a "heat shield" to prevent draining between the flippers; activating an "airlock" to keep the ball in play; and numbers flashing on the backglass before they lock in position to determine if a match is made for a special when the game is over. All combine to make *Space Shuttle* a sure-fire hit!

Touchdown!

For operators who had Williams Electronics' *Pennant Fever* going to bat for them in the spring, Williams now has a conversion for *Pennant Fever*. *Gridiron* is a complete kit that includes playfield, inserts, backglass, proms, full cable set, and decals. Also available as a dedicated pin game, *Gridiron* can be played by one or two players on just one quarter.

Football at its best, *Gridiron* is complete with cheerleaders and roaring crowds. The offense begins at the 20-yard line with four downs per possession and four possessions per play. The defense can blitz, rush or come at the quarterback with the nickel formation.

On first down, the player can pass anywhere from ten yards to scoring a touchdown...or get a five-yard penalty for delay of game. A touchdown gives the player a one-or two-point option play which, if completed, gives him one chance to score a bonus touchdown. On second or third down, an aggressive defense can cause a fumble or intercept. On fourth down, play is set up for a field goal attempt.

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Golf or pinball anyone?

Nintendo of Redmond, Washington, added another innovation to its VS. System of interchangeable games, *VS. Golf/Pinball*. A two-in-one VS. Pak combines two exciting games in one cabinet. This unique VS. Pak puts the VS. System dual monitor to work independently—one for *VS. Golf* and one for *VS. Pinball*.

VS. Golf allows players to take on the course or challenge another player to a round of stroke or match play. The system randomly generates a new course for every game with a variety of available holes. Not only does the order of the holes vary with every play; the wind direction and speed change to keep every game fresh and challenging.

Stepping up to the tee, players choose clubs from woods, irons, a pitcing wedge, sand wedge, or putter. Players control their swing and determine the impact point, direction, and distance of the ball. The course is viewed from close-up detail of the player and the hole itself.

Players select a one or two player game to compete for high score. Each player starts with three balls, with a bonus ball awarded at 70,000 points. An exciting bonus screen lets players earn extra points. Push button controls operate the left and right flippers to send the ball ricocheting its way from the upper to lower screens of the video pinball playfield.

VS. Golf/Pinball is available in dedicated upright or sitdown VS. System models or as an easy to install VS. Pak kit.

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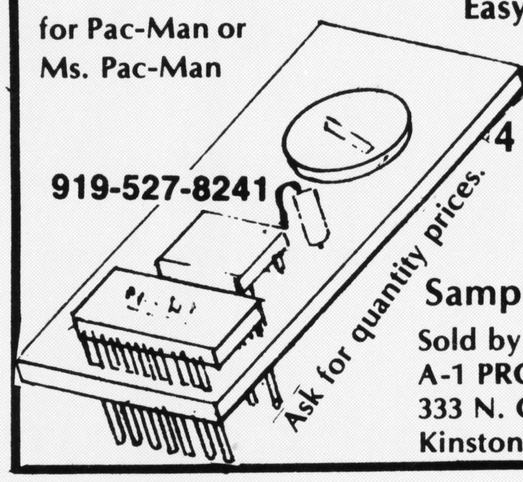

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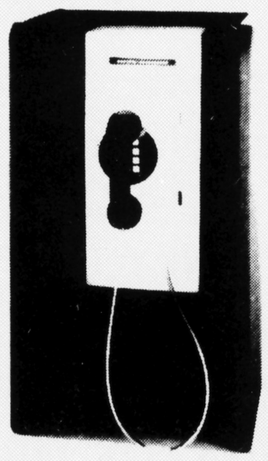

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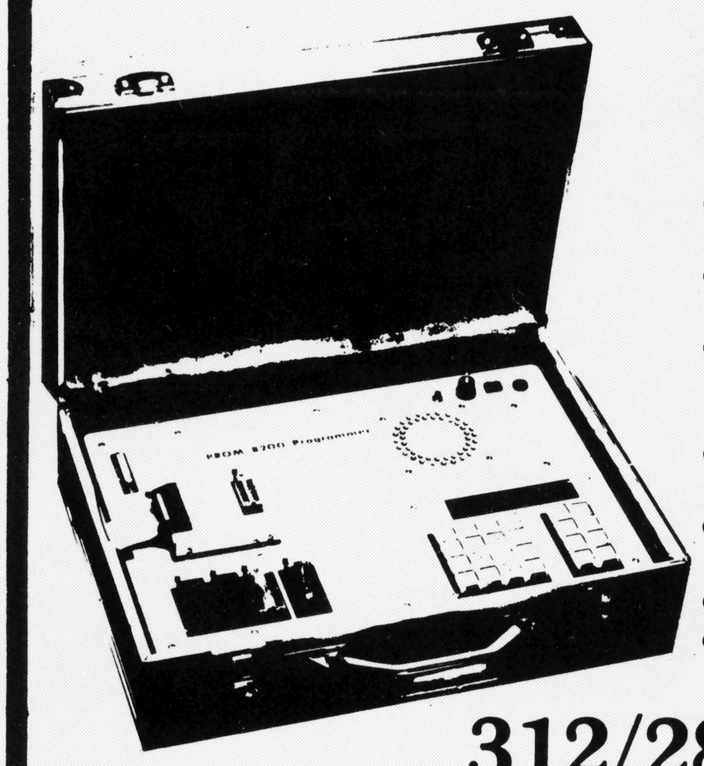

- Write your own program & replace your own IC's.
- Intelligent programing algorithm, 20 seconds needed only to finish 2764 copy.
- Check, Verify, Read, Write, and Modify the PROM/EPROM in the programming mode.
- Examine, Alter, Move, Fill, Upload, and Download the memory contents in the data mode.
- 32Kx8 dynamic RAM buffer with powerful memory handling capability from keyboard.
- Allows data transfer/combine/separate from one PROM/EPROM type and size to another PROM/EPROM type and size.
- One RS232 port, for linking to the computer to upload/download data.
- Simple to operate, over current indication, automatic check-write-verify sequence.
- Fully portable for field or in-plant use.
- One full year guarantee.

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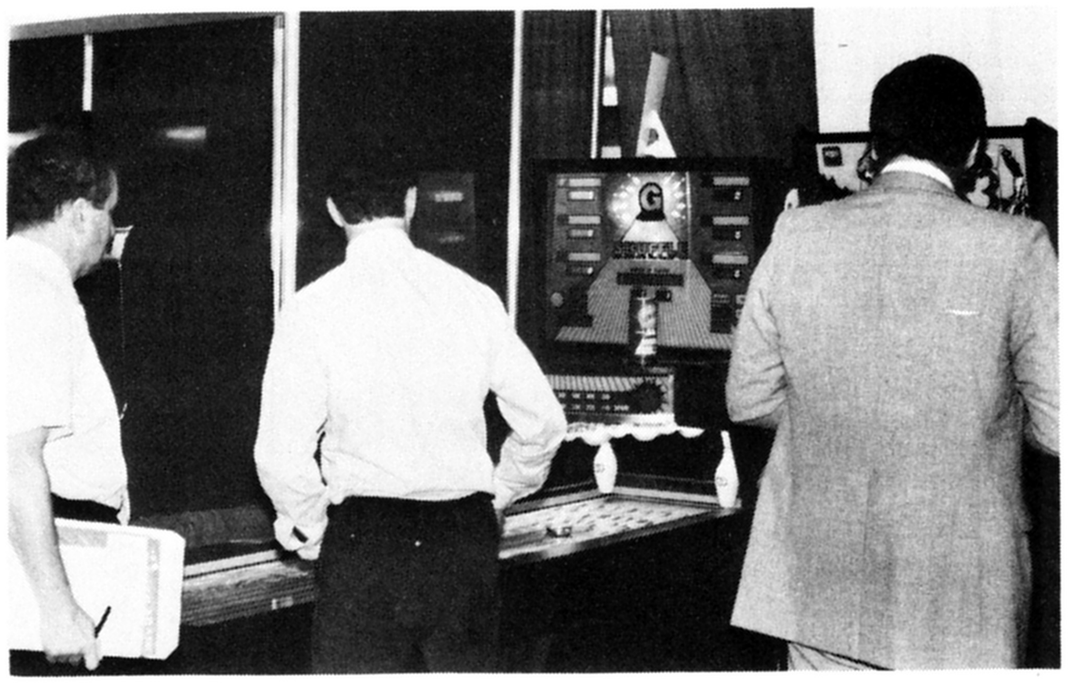
A LAST LOOK AT AMOA '84

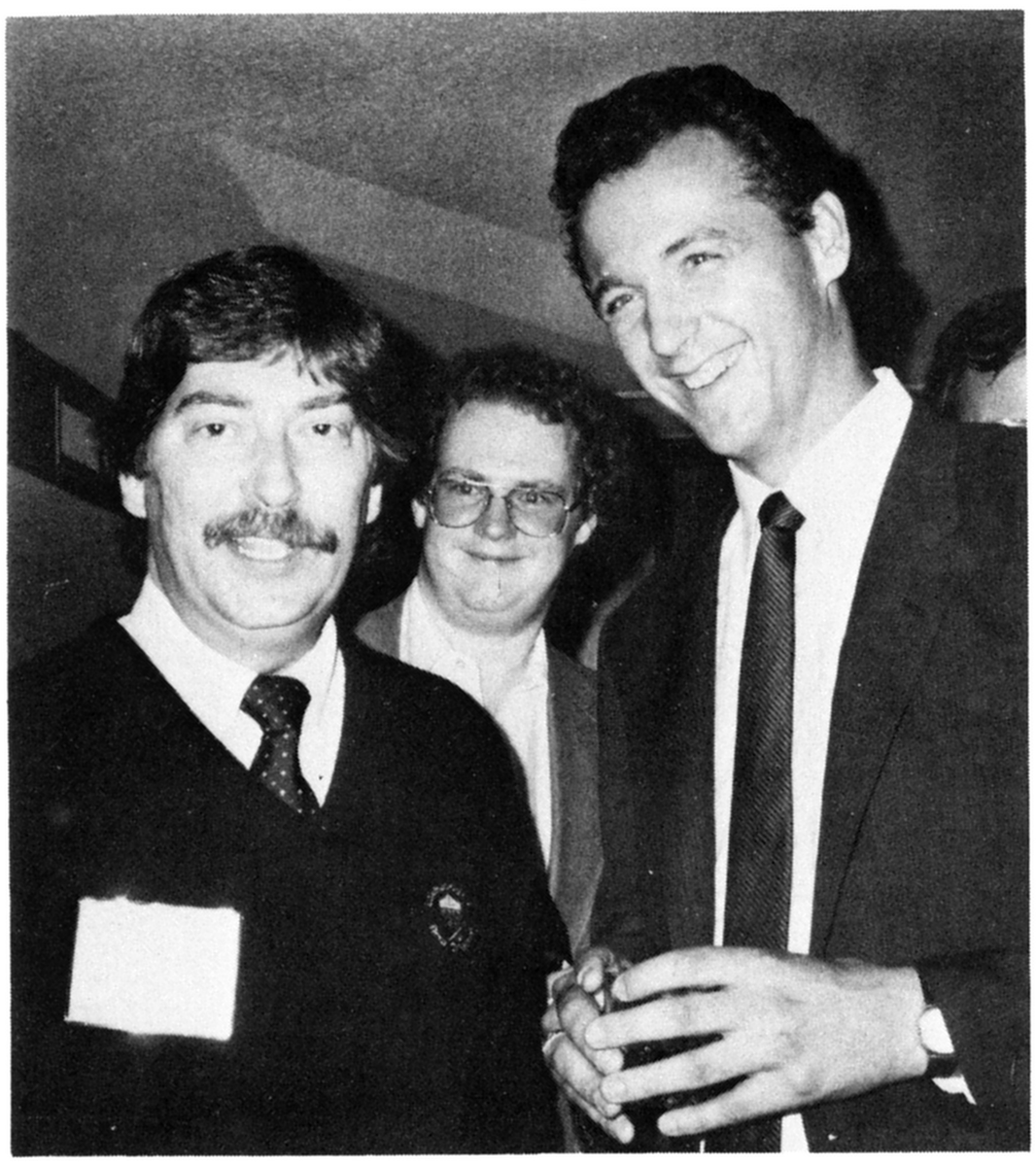
Centuri shocked the industry by announcing its "Direct Connection" to operators.

Operators showed interest in pinballs. Williams' lineup of pins was constantly being played.

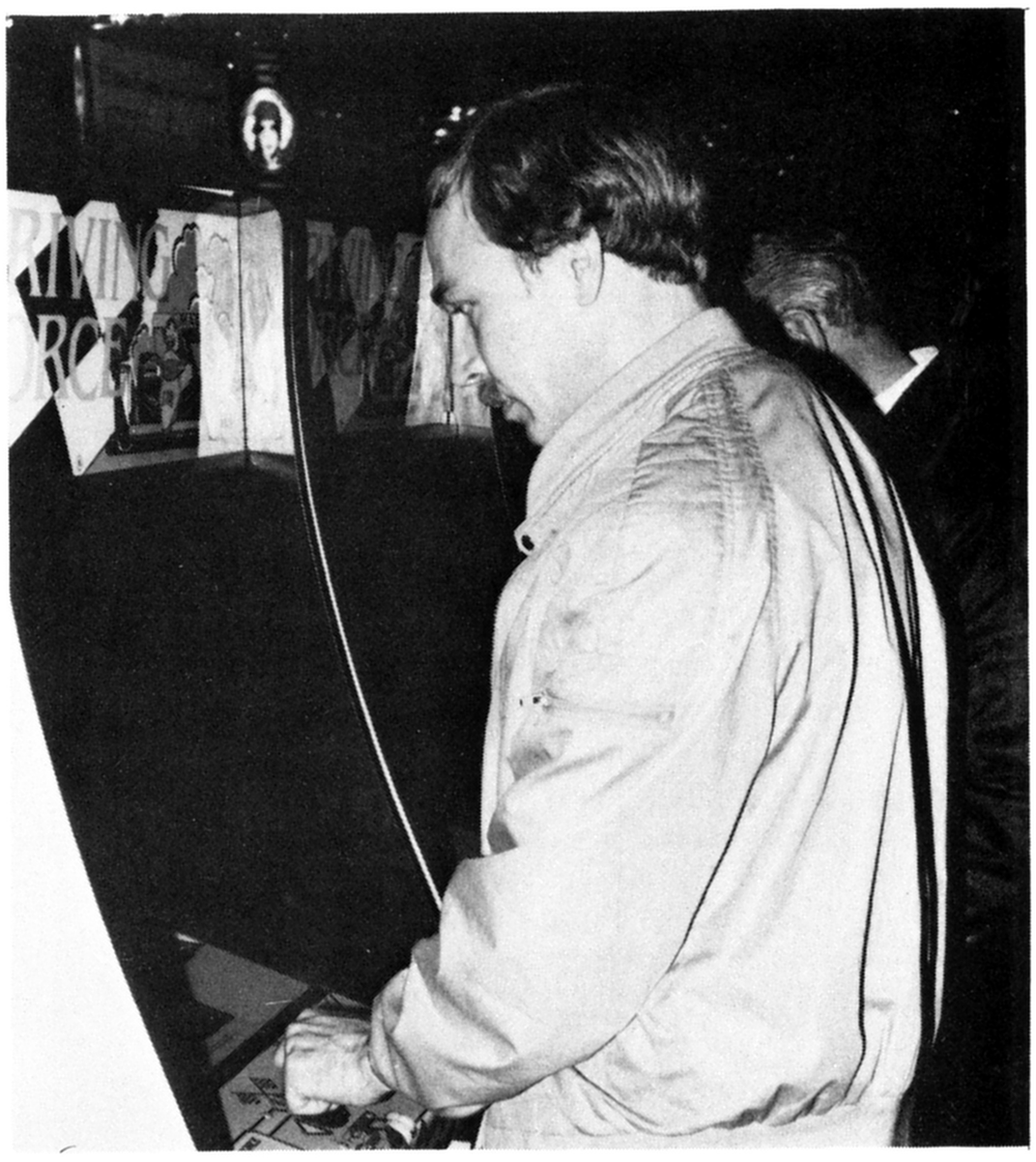
Taito Japan and Coin-It entered into licensing agreements on Birdie King 3 *and* Buggy Challenge. *From left H. Saigusa and Akio Nakanishi, both of Taito, and Joel Hochberg, Coin-It.*



"Back to Basics" meant operators were looking at pinballs, jukes, and shuffles. Here operators check out Monroe Distributing's shuffle game.



Play Meter *Publisher Ralph Lally and Digital Controls President Mike Macke share a light moment at the show.*



Operators were extremely interested in conversion kits to update their old videos. That meant good news for small companies like Magic Conversions.

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Tactician is a new adult countertop game with "back to basics" spirit, easy to understand and play, but so challenging players can't stop playing...**Tactician** draws players with its neat looks and blinking lights, then holds them as they call on all the strategy they can muster on their way to earning the title of **Tactician**...

Tactician is habit forming for the operator, too. Its low, low cost and high returns mean the kind of quick profits you can get accustomed to.

Features

- Dimensions: 11″ wide, 13″ long, 10″ high
- Shipping Weight: 22 pounds
- Cash box holds $250.00
- Security U-bolt locks game in place
- Attract mode with lights, sound, sample game
- Extended play for clearing all numbers, increased speed in each added round
- Three rounds per credit
- Accepts Little Casino II advertising keyboard: 4 messages, 64 characters each
- Battery back-up for messages and high score
- Icebreaker for countertop locations that have resisted video card games

Tactician...it gets people back into their old coin-op habits...
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