

ATARI CONNECTION

Atari Product Appeal Apparent at AOE



AOE '83, sponsored by *Play Meter*, marked Atari's first exposure at the show. Don Osborne, Vice President of Marketing, described AOE as a "great opportunity to bring operators together to talk about problems. The 'Manufacturers Firing Line' provided a forum for them to interface with the manufacturing side of the business. Operators opened discussion on the pressing issues facing all of us in the industry—including the whole matter of conversion kits which came out in force at the time—and each manufacturer was given the chance to present his philosophy." Atari participated in several seminars conducted throughout: the run of the show to help operators become increasingly effective business people and more fully understand their own industry.

From a product introduction perspective, a spring trade show remains very important to the market. Atari exhibited the unquestioned hit of the show—the super revved *Pole Position*—even with the acknowledged interest generated around the new laser disc technology. Succinctly stated by Jerry Marcus, Executive Vice President of Sales, "We went in with the number one game and came out with the number one game." Bob Harvey, Western Regional Sales Manager, is quick to add, "We also came out with the 'sleeper' of the show—*Food Fight*™." The antics of Charley Chuck and the four

pesky chefs are presently eating up the competition. *Food Fight* was well-received on the trade show floor by a broad spectrum of previewers, including video game world record holders. Female attendees found Charley to be particularly charming with his blond, curly locks and big, blue, goopy eyes. Atari personnel manning the booth sighed that the game made them hungry with the drip, drip, drip of luscious ice cream cones.

Margaret Lasecke and Jamie Pinto of our Press Relations Department reported good media coverage for Atari—in terms of both trade and local Chicago press. Of particular import was our news coverage in *USA Today* and by the CBS Chicago affiliate—WBBM Channel 2. Press kits, featuring the irreplaceable *Food Fight*, were distributed at the booth, and the community relations tape produced by Atari—entitled "Video Games . . . A Public Perspective"—was shown to interested reporters.

Two monitors were placed in the center kiosk of the booth so that a continuous loop tape of the new *Xevious*** television commercial could be played. The battle of the Lone Fighter against the invading *Xevious* forces caught the attention of passersby who usually took the needed 30 seconds to view the entire piece. The television commercial was actually run-

ning on a 12 major market media schedule at the time of the AOE, including Chicago. The advertising blitz behind the release of the game also featured radio spots and national exposure on the Cable Music Television network.

Mariann Layne's Marketing Services group managed an on-site high scorers competition for *Xevious*, *Food Fight*, *Pole Position*, and *Millipede*™. A separate qualifying point level was posted above one machine in each of the four banks of games. Players scoring over that number on that particular machine were awarded an Atari Collector Pin. The hard-fired, ceramic pins with their vibrant game graphics proved very appealing and were accepted with much enthusiasm. Darl Davidson's Technical Service personnel, situated at the front end of the massive Atari exhibit, presented the entire Collector Set program to interested operators.

The Atari product display also featured the Atari Coin Executive™—popularly coined "ACE"—which is the industry's first completely integrated coin collection accounting system designed for routes, arcades, or both. ACE provides an operator with the means to manage his cash collections quickly and to constantly track and evaluate his operation with computer accuracy. For today's busy operator, ACE really counts!

In regard to Atari's product positioning in the industry following AOE '83, Don Osborne reaffirms our leadership. With a smile of personal satisfaction, he reflects: "The response to our proven hits—*Pole Position* and *Millipede*—continues to be strong. Our new products—*Xevious* and *Food Fight*—are also being met with widespread enthusiasm."

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***Xevious* is engineered and designed by Namco Ltd., manufactured under license by Atari, Inc. Trademark and © Namco 1982.



THE OVERSEAS CONNECTION

Sue Elliott, Sales Manager for Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean, was joined by Mariann Layne, Manager of Marketing Services, to launch the first product introduction for Canadian operators between March 15-18. The featured game was none other than that super graphic space fantasy, *Xevious*.

Atari hosted a luncheon in each of three cities in conjunction with the local distributors: opening in Toronto with Paul and Jerry Janda of New-Way Sales; proceeding to Edmonton with Jim Weatherhead, President, and Nelson Nickle, Branch Manager, of J.E. Weatherhead Distributors, Ltd., and concluding in Vancouver once again with Jim Weatherhead and Jim Niblock, manager of this J.E. Weatherhead branch. Approximately 200 operators, all invited guests of the distributors, were greeted during the busy pace of the tri-city itinerary. Some travelled a distance of 500 miles to attend the functions. Ms. Layne reports, "The Canadian operators were so receptive. They were so pleased to have a manufacturer come into their town and talk with them directly."

The luncheon activities included gourmet dining as well as the viewing of the *Xevious* game play demonstration tape and the newly released *Xevious* television commercial. The operators also listened to the captivating sound effects of the *Xevious* radio spot. Ms. Layne spoke to the three groups on the direction of Atari's advertising and promotion. She explained that the Dig Dug™ test of mid-1982, including both Screenvision and television commercial exposure in three major markets, produced dramatic and positive results—not only in regard to

its effect on sales and the ordering behavior of our distributors and operators in the test markets, but also on the earnings of the game in the locations and the general awareness factor. This positive information led us to commit to a larger television and radio test in 12 major markets for *Xevious*. This media blitz marks the first major consumer advertising support for a coin video game. "The concept was enthusiastically received," comments Ms. Layne. "Operators expressed hope that the new test would be successful so that similar advertising efforts could be expanded at a later date to include them." In fact, she adds, "Canadian operators located close to the border might already experience some spillover into their market."

Sue Elliott then addressed each audience on the marketing condition in the United States. She acknowledged that it has been difficult the last year for operators and distributors, but business has been picking up over February and March. Those "quick buck" entrepreneurs will not be around much longer, leaving the industry in the capable hands of those operators with sound business principles. The

Canadian market has not been as saturated as the U.S. market, which should help even more to boost a turnaround for the Canadian operators who do remain.

Summing up their feelings upon returning to the office, Mariann Layne begins, "It was very encouraging to go into a market and be met with such an enthusiastic response. The Canadian operators who attended are dedicated to their businesses and are looking for ways to grow. I enjoyed the opportunity to talk with them in a relaxed setting after lunch instead of our usual meetings in the midst of hubbub on a trade show floor."

In turn, Sue Elliott recalls, "Mariann and I enjoyed coming up to Canada and appreciate the fine level of acceptance we were given by the operators. We look forward to coming back."

Winners of the Atari VCS™, given as a door prize at each luncheon, were Brad Merrill of DBA Fun and Games in the Skyline Hotel (Toronto), Stan Whyte of Bullwinkle's (Edmonton), and Carlton Gilbert of Carlton's Amusement Ltd. (Vancouver).

*Dig Dug is engineered and designed by Namco Ltd., manufactured under license by Atari, Inc. Trademark and © Namco, 1982.



Smiling left to right are Paul Janda, Mariann Layne, Sue Elliott, and Jerry Janda, who re-cap the shared feelings: "The day was a heartwarming event. I was pleased to meet so many operators who believe so strongly in the future of our industry. Many expressed the belief there is still considerable profit potential to be had if one is willing to invest in the new and proven games arriving on the market."



AT YOUR SERVICE

Elaine Shirley may still be a Texan at heart, but she is incredibly committed to Atari in spirit and work style. Nearly a decade ago, she ventured from her native Houston to vacation in California without an inkling of the transformation her life was about to undergo. Caught up in the surge of opportunity that was sweeping the Silicon Valley, Elaine decided not to return home. She has since lost most traces of a southern accent but has gained so much in the tradeoff: most recently, a promotion to Coin-Op Customer Service Manager as of March 1 and a new baby, Travis, delivered April 7.

On October 23, 1973, Elaine Shirley, then Elaine Thompson, reported to the original Atari facility in Los Gatos, Califor-

nia, to begin a career in which she was destined for rapid promotion. There she encountered the unfamiliar printed circuit board as a staffer on the Pong® line. She and PCB soon became old friends... leading her to a succession of positions: Production Control Clerk, Senior Clerk, Material Planner, and Material Supervisor. She also forged another important friendship those first few days on the job which blossomed on September 24, 1978, when Elaine married Steve Shirley, a fellow Atari employee who has since moved on to form his own company in a specialized engineering field.

In July of 1979, when the material departments for PCB Assembly and Final Assembly merged into one unit, Elaine's upward mobility continued, and she was appointed Planning Supervisor. A year later, upon returning to work after having her first son, Bret, she transferred to Coin-Op Customer Service to accept the offer of Warehouse and Shipping Supervisor under Darl Davidson's direction. Her moti-

vation was simple: "I felt there was more growth potential in Customer Service. You really feel involved when you speak directly to the customer."

In May of 1981, Elaine was promoted to Office and Materials Manager which made her responsible for ensuring that customer inquiries regarding replacement parts for the coin video games were handled promptly. Her recent move into the Customer Service Manager role follows Davidson's rise to Director of Technical Service.

Elaine remarks that "Customer Service reflects the old Atari family feeling." In a professional sense, they all grew up together and now incorporate into the department strong expertise from varying fields of experience, including quality assurance and assembly. "The input is contributed with one thought at the forefront—to make our Customer Service the best in the world." A satisfied customer's letter attests to their combined efforts:

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At Your Service

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"Thank you so much. . . . You were very thoughtful for handling the problem so thoroughly. I sure wish the competition was as thoughtful in its efforts as Atari is. But they're not. That's why I buy ten times more Atari games."

Katy Lawson, Parts Manager for Bally Advance of South San Francisco, California, seconds the motion. On February 14 of this year, she sent a box of candy as big as Texas to thank Elaine's special group of people for their ongoing responsiveness and efficiency. "They're my valentines. No manufacturer has a better Customer Service Department than ATARI Coin-Op. They don't even have any competition, and I don't think any distributor would disagree."

And true to the old Atari slogan, the group has found an effective way to take fun in work seriously. They share a camaraderie that is rare in any corporate organization today. Their pride shows through in a relentless determination to get the job done right. Elaine explains, "We ship most orders out the same day but no later than the next day, and—honestly—mistakes are seldom made." Her Customer Service personnel are not strangers to overtime duties either. Just recently in preparation

for the Chicago Amusement Operators Exposition, they beat it back to the office at 5:00 a.m. one Saturday to collate brochures. Now that's dedication!

In the same uncompromising way, Customer Service builds its own games with spare parts so they can anticipate any problems that may be encountered out in the field as well as offer first-hand solutions. As technical calls come in regarding a new release, it could be very hard to identify the parts and/or problem in question with a machine taken right off the production line. "Building our own model from 'ground zero' allows us to become to-



tally familiar with the game and do our job more effectively," Elaine affirms.

Customer Service depends upon everyone—both inside and outside the company—to keep operating. This need for continual update and contact is the aspect of the department's function that plays a major part in sustaining Elaine's interest. "We maintain an overall outlook on each game. . . beginning with its design through production and right out into the field. We deal with planners, production, marketing and sales, distributors and operators. . . and that's what I really enjoy." Elaine will soon be making that contact at least partially in person. Included in her new managerial responsibilities is an opportunity to travel and visit with distributors and operators throughout the nation. Although it may be a little sad to leave her newborn at home (it won't be difficult to leave all the diapers!), Elaine Shirley is looking forward to the challenges and excitement of the itinerary she is presently planning. In the meantime, she encourages operator input over the phone: "The answer or part you're looking for is just a call away. . . if Customer Service can't actually help, we'll make sure to steer you to those who can."

California Customer Service 800-538-1530
California Technical Service 800-538-1611
New Jersey Technical Service 800-526-3849



Do You Listen to Your Players?

The following are excerpts taken from a letter recently submitted to Marketing Services by Jean Clarke of Denver, Colorado. As a two-year video games playing veteran, he offers operators some suggestions on how to effectively promote their location—in the "eyes" of their playing and paying customers.

If Clarke were given the opportunity to open the deluxe gameroom of his fantasies, the crux of his business philosophy would be to "think like a player" and "give players credit for their intelligence". . . an operator by trade, but a player at heart, so-to-speak. Whereas most operators react in terms of money first and only, he believes an emphasis is needed on projecting originality and developing a highly creative image.

Jean Clarke is a *serious* player who takes the environment where he plays just as seriously. We feel he spins around in that super-motivated brain of his some exceptional promotional concepts that merit any operator's consideration. He has made the effort to share his thoughts make the effort to listen to your players.

Part 1: Direct Sales Motivations

1. Make display collages from game literature art.

A flair for graphic arts is helpful. Segre-

gate game groupings by brand name. Display on wall near an entrance. Adds unique quality to your arcade—also noticeable creativity.

2. Sell video-related magazines.

Stock *Joystick*, *Video Games*, *Video-gaming Illustrated*, and *Electronic Games*. You have a very viable market, as you're "advertising" only to people most likely to buy (so they sell fast), while making player interest much more solid.

3. Sell game T-shirts with added arcade endorsement.

Face it, no player is going to wear an "arcade shirt," as that is not "expression" in the player's mind; it's free advertising. But they will wear a game shirt. So simply emboss arcade name and address around transfer. Be careful not to melt game transfer when adding lettering. Recommendation: Give a player three to tens every time he visits wearing shirt. . . . once per day maximum.

4. Paint attraction panel logos on front of establishment.

Whether you put them on a window or wall, players spot (and recognize) attraction panel images very fast. They make a hard-hitting eye-catcher to draw in street traffic. Hints: Update regularly (so you'll either have to paint on surface from which it can be removed, or "cover-up" and paint over.) Put a "We have" prefix in the upper left corner of the display. Put manufacturer's symbol next to game's title.

5. Display side-panel art.

Do so for any game's side that is obviously well thought-out, e.g. *Liberator™*, *Gravitar™*, *Quantum™*. . . it's a shame for

the art to go to waste. Just do a little creative arranging of machines.

6. Record your own game "commercials"; play them over the arcade's sound system.

Must have a tape deck. Produce impact making "spots" by dynamically describing game, with sound effects from game play for background. Make them sound professional!

Part 2: How to Personalize Your Business

1. Eject all change machines.

Hire an extra attendant just to sell tokens. This treats players in a special way. They'll feel more important by being given change from a person rather than a machine. They'll also remember your arcade more than others.

2. Have player ballots.

Hang a poster to "advertise" balloting; supply a pen with a stack of ballots at a convenient desk near change counter. Include the following questions: What games here are your favorites? (Leave space for four entries.) What games would you like to see here in the future? What games do you have to wait your turn to play? Your rating of this arcade from 1 to 10? Suggestions?

Player/operator interaction should be considered important at any arcade.

3. Declassify operator-catering publications.

Let regular players browse through a *Play Meter*, *Replay*, or *Coin Connection* on a one-to-one request basis. They're very intrigued with the industry.

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Where in the world is Ottumwa? The name now registers a flash of recognition on faces of coin video game enthusiasts everywhere. While it is probably best known for being the hometown of Fadar O'Reilly, a character from the popular television comedy series "M*A*S*H," this city in Iowa is attracting national attention through the incessant efforts of Walter Day, Jr. and his Twin Galaxies Arcade.

Day is waging a mighty one-man campaign to bring into focus the positive aspects of playing video games. Seizing the idea to involve not only his own community but the state and nation as well, he has elicited response from Iowa State politicians and even President Reagan on the subject. During the weekend of January 8-9, he gathered 19 of the highest ranking players in America at his game room to compete in the first-ever "Video Game Olympics." (Incidentally, President Reagan phoned to say he would not be able to attend the proceedings but sent his best wishes to all invited.) The event was highlighted on a recently aired (February 21) segment of ABC TV's "That's Incredible," which filmed the Video Olympics in Ottumwa and then featured the top three contestants in a nationally televised finale.

The Twin Galaxies International Video Scoreboard has gained notoriety as being the one credible source in the country that video game champions can check to ascertain the latest high scores on their favorite games over the phone. Day conducts stringent evaluation of high scores documentation sent in before the entries are accepted for publishing. Updated postings of the scoreboard are printed in various trade and player publications. During competitions and other special

events, the computerized scoreboard electronically displays the high scores on monitors covering one wall of the arcade.

Last March 19, Ottumwa was officially proclaimed "Video Game Capital of the World" by Iowa Governor Terry Branstad, the Amusement Game Manufacturers Association (AGMA) and Atari, Inc. The Governor initiated the early-morning festivities with a short speech thanking Ottumwa Mayor Jerry Parker and Walter Day for "providing a forum for fun family entertainment." Don Osborne, Vice President of Atari Coin-Op Marketing, next presented the Mayor and Day with the following honorary certificate as well as a Lucite trophy constructed in the image of the Atari logo and mounted on a wooden base—now on display at the arcade:

Whereas: *The City of Ottumwa, Iowa is providing its youth with a play-oriented introduction to the computer age, and The City of Ottumwa, Iowa is providing a forum for youth who have achieved excellence in video game skills and strategies; and The City of Ottumwa, Iowa actively encourages excellence in these areas; and The City of Ottumwa, Iowa recognizes the potential long-term benefits these skills will provide;*

Now, Therefore, We, Atari, Inc., and the Amusement Games Manufacturers Association do hereby give special tribute, due honor and recognition to the City of Ottumwa, Iowa, and declare it to be Video Game Capital of the World.

AGMA Executive Director Glenn Braswell followed with a presentation to Governor Branstad of an honorary membership to the association on behalf of all coin-operated games manufacturers. The Governor took the framed certificate back to Des Moines with him for display at the state capital. Statements from Iowa Senators Charles Grassley and Roger Jepsen, and Congressman Jim Leach, whose district includes Ottumwa, were also read. The ceremony concluded with Governor Branstad kicking off a combined Video Game/St. Patrick's Day Parade down Main

Street... a rousing finish to the given testimonial acknowledging Walter Day's strides in the industry. He believes in what he is doing and is determined to pass the good word about video games. Fortunately, his commitment seems to be spreading to high places.

Gentlemen, Don Your T-Shirts



Look like a winner in an Atari Pole Position T-shirt with red and blue racing stripes... available in the following unisex sizes: small, medium, large and extra-large. The game's so hot you'll feel the steam rise right off your back! Call Customer Service toll-free at 800-538-1530.

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