# Ms. Pac-Man, Food Fight, Quantum, and the rest: Arcade Game Design at GCC

Steve Golson

Retro World Expo September 28, 2019

### Introduction

Who am I

What was General Computer (GCC)

When did it happen

Why it matters

### MIT 1978

Doug Macrae

Kevin Curran



# Pinball and video games at MIT dorms

Pioneer Star Castle

Playboy Rip Off

Paragon
Battlezone

Fire One Missile Command

...and more

# Speedup Kits

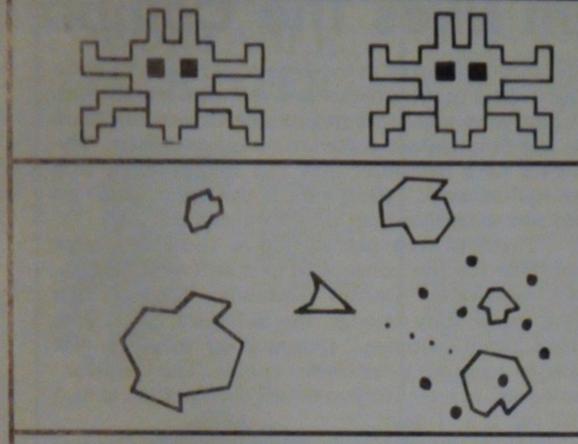
Asteroids

Galaxian

Pac-Man

Missile Command?





### Increase Profits With Super Galaxian Kit

Renew Excitement With

### ASTEROIDS SPEED UP KIT

#### KIT FEATURES:

#### Galaxian

- Increases number of diving creatures
- Adds new variations to creatures flight path

#### ASTEROIDS

- Up to 6 speed increments
- 4 different time delay settings
- Easy installation, only one IC to remove

### March 1981

General Computer Corp.

### Super Missile Attack

enhancement kit for Atari Missile Command

developed March-May 1981, first sale May

total sales ~1,000 units for profit ~\$250,000

July: Atari sues GCC for \$15M

October: Atari drops lawsuit
GCC signs Atari development agreement

# Developers of Super Missile Attack

Doug Macrae

Kevin Curran

John Tylko

Chris Rode

Larry Dennison

Steve Golson

### Crazy Otto

enhancement kit for Midway Pac-Man

developed June-October 1981 (while the Atari lawsuit was ongoing)

October: give demo to Midway sign Midway license agreement

### Name Changes!

Crazy Otto

Super Pac-Man

Miss Pac-Man

Pac-Woman

Ms. Pac-Man

# Developers of Crazy Otto / Ms. Pac-Man

Doug Macrae

Kevin Curran

John Tylko

Mike Horowitz

Chris Rode

Steve Golson

Phil Kaaret



Classic Game Postmortem: Ms. Pac-Man

Steve Golson
Trilobyte Systems





### February 1982

Projects being worked on include:

Fireman music driver

for TI sound chip

Food Fight

character

Molecular Magic

development

(Quantum)

system

All are coin-op projects...

### February 3-4

Ray Kassar and Manny Gerard visit GCC

### March 4

Manny Gerard and Skip Paul visit GCC

## Fireman

### Fireman

Mike Horowitz, Chris Rode, Larry Dennison

Maze-like game, putting out a building fire

Early prototype on Donkey Kong hardware

Resurrected in 1984 by Mike H, Brad Parker



### Atari coin-op

6502 8-bit processor Assembler code

GCC coin-op

M68000 16/32-bit processor Clanguage

# Quantum

### Quantum

Betty Ryan

Color vector hardware by Art Ng

Early name: Molecular Magic



\* \* \*

HI SEORE 48400

GCC PRESENTS QUANTUM

3

O LIL ISBE



The following comments appeared on paper taped to the sides of the Food Fight and Quantum cabinets. I have transcribed them so that they will be easily acessible and so that they will be on permanent record.

### QUANTUM

- add a "get small" button
- stay small much longer than large
- need an indication of when the star will get small, e.g. a dial indicater or sound (high pitched = small).
- start everything in a random position and make a preliminary check to see that the star doesn't touch anything.
- don't stop anything when tail gets clipped unless something was captured.
- use a longer tail.
- use a wider tail, like a comet.
- when the star is "killed," reset to number of nuclei left rather than to the original number.
- wrap star around a show where the starfield limits are.
- make nucleus, electron, and star border coterminus. (sp?)
- pairs of photons shoot onto the screen from opposite sides and collide to form a new electron. The photons are a danger to the star. Further: photons strike electrons and bump them into a higher orbit. Electrons decay and emit photons.
- diatomic molecules for later racks? (you mean with a link between nucleii? ( ) can't cross.)

# Food Fight

### Food Fight

Jonathan Hurd

Raster graphics stamps + fixed playfield

Banana joystick didn't last long...

Some software by Roland Janbergs

Instant replay

Music by Patty Goodson





he graphics are superb... Ms. Pac-Man is a great piece of work, with all the appeal gamers could want."

-Electronic Games July, 1983



JAHurd 1/4/82

### Object

Capture and devour an ice cream cone before it melts away, using food to defend your against attacking every.

Using a four-way joystick, as controls the movement of the "hero" on the screen. Along the right edge of the screen are four tables, each with a different kind of food. At the middle, is an ice cream cone, and across the top of the screen is the crowd. The hero can move anywhere below the crowd, between the tables and the ice cream cone.

In addition to the joystick, the control panel has one- and two-player buttons, and a for throw button.

At the start of the round, enemies appear at the left of the screen and begin moving toward the right at various speeds. Enemies move somewhat randomly, but in general toward the hero. The enemies are armed with whipped cream guns—when the catches the hero, there is engulfed him in a pike the other way the hero can die is if the cone melts before he properties captures it.

Score Score Score

Things that will get tougher as rack goes higher:

> 1. # Holes increases

-> 2. # Piles increases

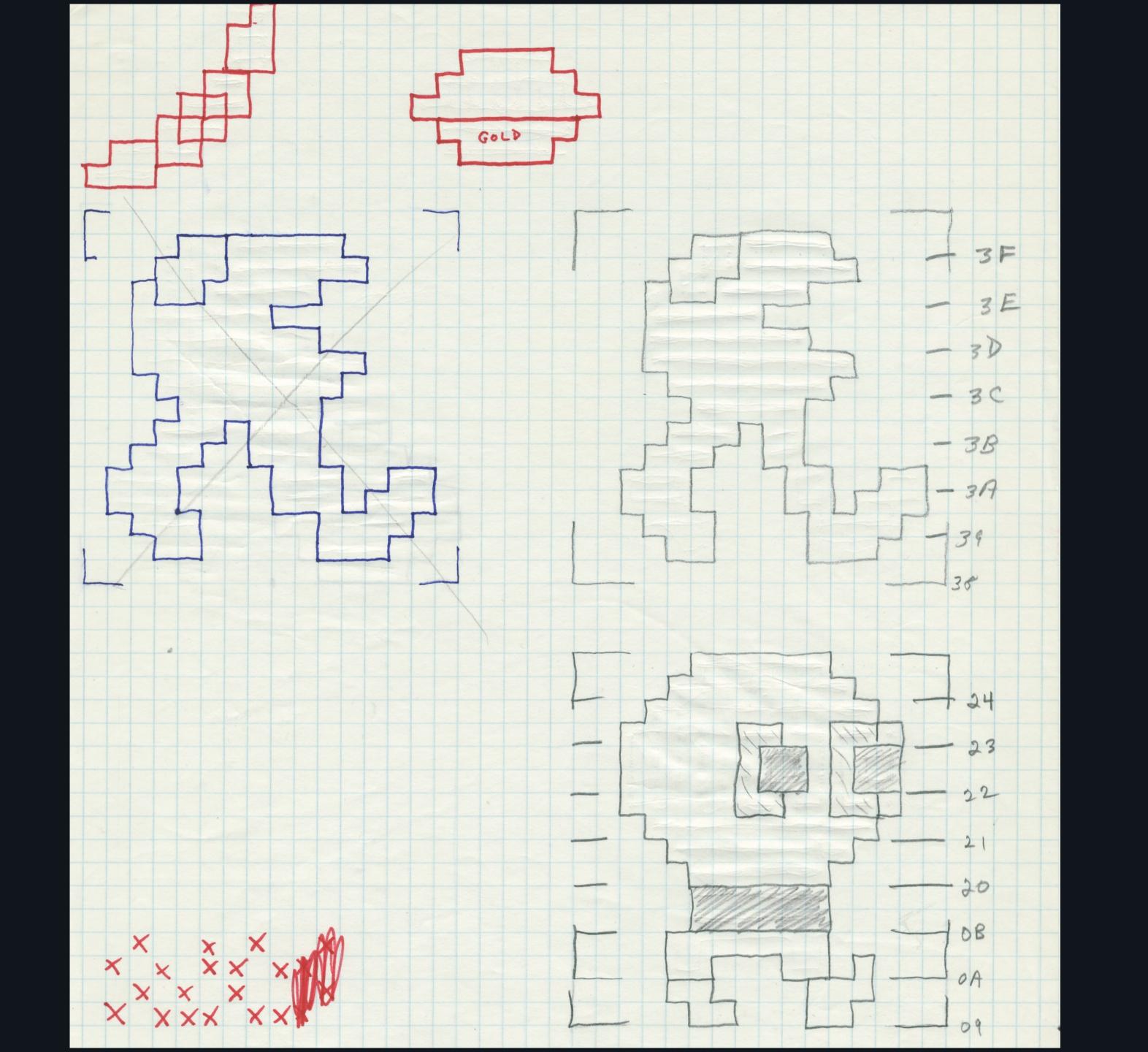
3. Maximum food per pile decreases

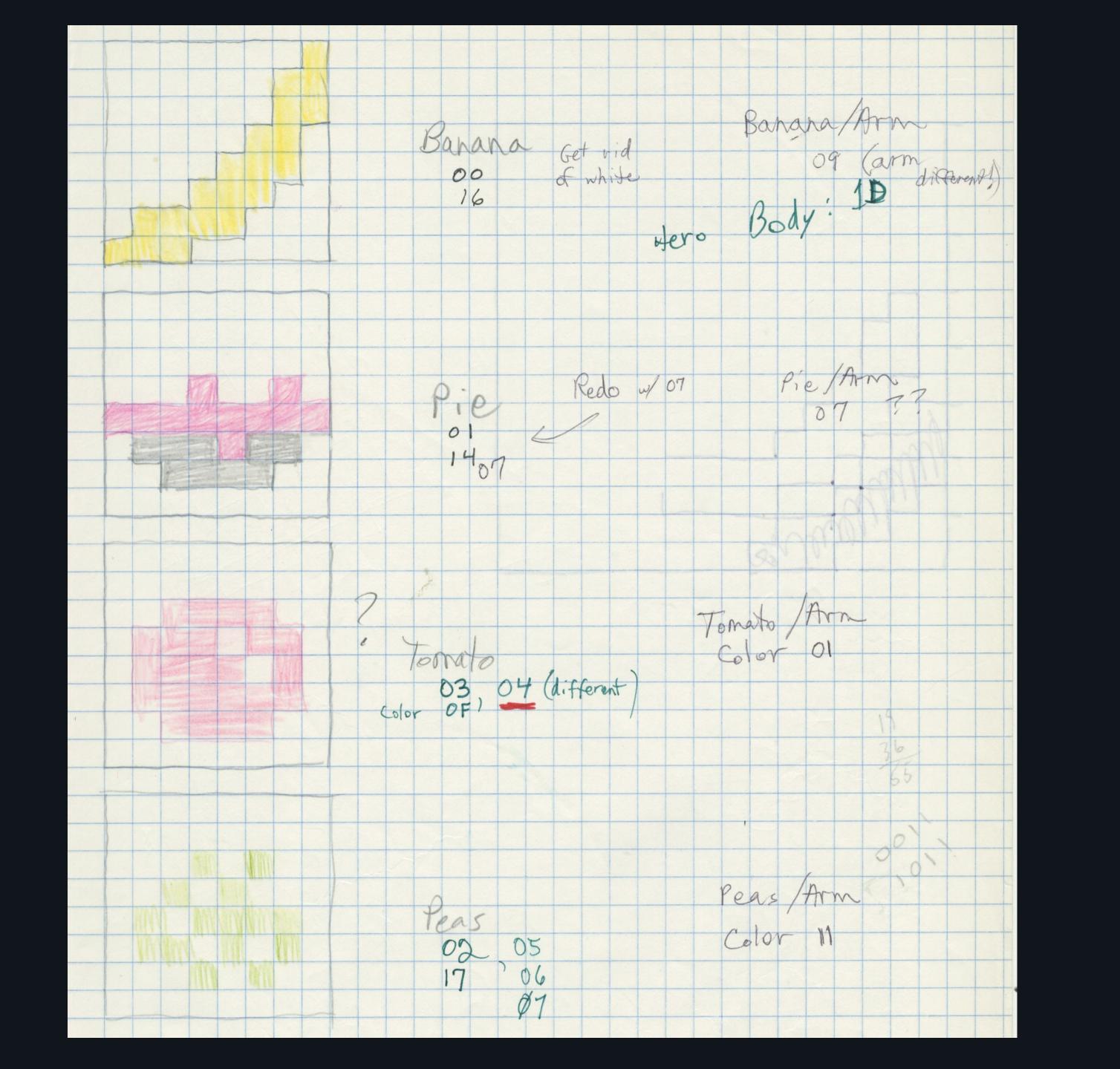
> 4. Enemies throw food (starting in rack 3)

5. Enemies get smarter

-> 6. Enemies reappear faster

-> 7. Enemies get faster (Later)



















#### FOODFIGHT FOCUS GROUP TESTING

(August 17, 1982) Overview

Group I:

Ages: 15-18 Area From: West Roxbury, Dedham Number: 8 (all male)

Preferred games and why:

Omegarace: not too complicated; have a choice on how to play

Dig Dug: like blowing up things

Galaga: double fire power; blowing up everything Zaxxon: 3d; good control; blowing things up

Defender: different things to do; fast; have to concentrate on different

things

Defender: somewhat complicated, but not so much that it isn't fun

Centipede like trackball control and freedom of movement

Pac-Man: like gobbling things and the graphics

Initial reaction (moderator explained that the game was new and not completely polished; they were told not to touch the game, but just look at it and then were asked about their initial reactions to the game):

o Looked flimsy and easily beat upon

o Not sure how control worked

o Graphics look simple like the comics, but not sure that they understand what is going on.

o Majority said that they learn by watching, and are not experts on new games

#### After playing:

Negatives:

o Didn't understand watermelon

o Did not like instant replay (surprised initially, bored after) & o Screen is too busy, too much going on in a small area

o Should speed up the guy; not enough control on the speed

o Walk and throw should be different controls - NO!

HOLD o More variation in the screens (different foods, creatures)

o Not clear how manholes work (what are manholes doing in a kitchen?)

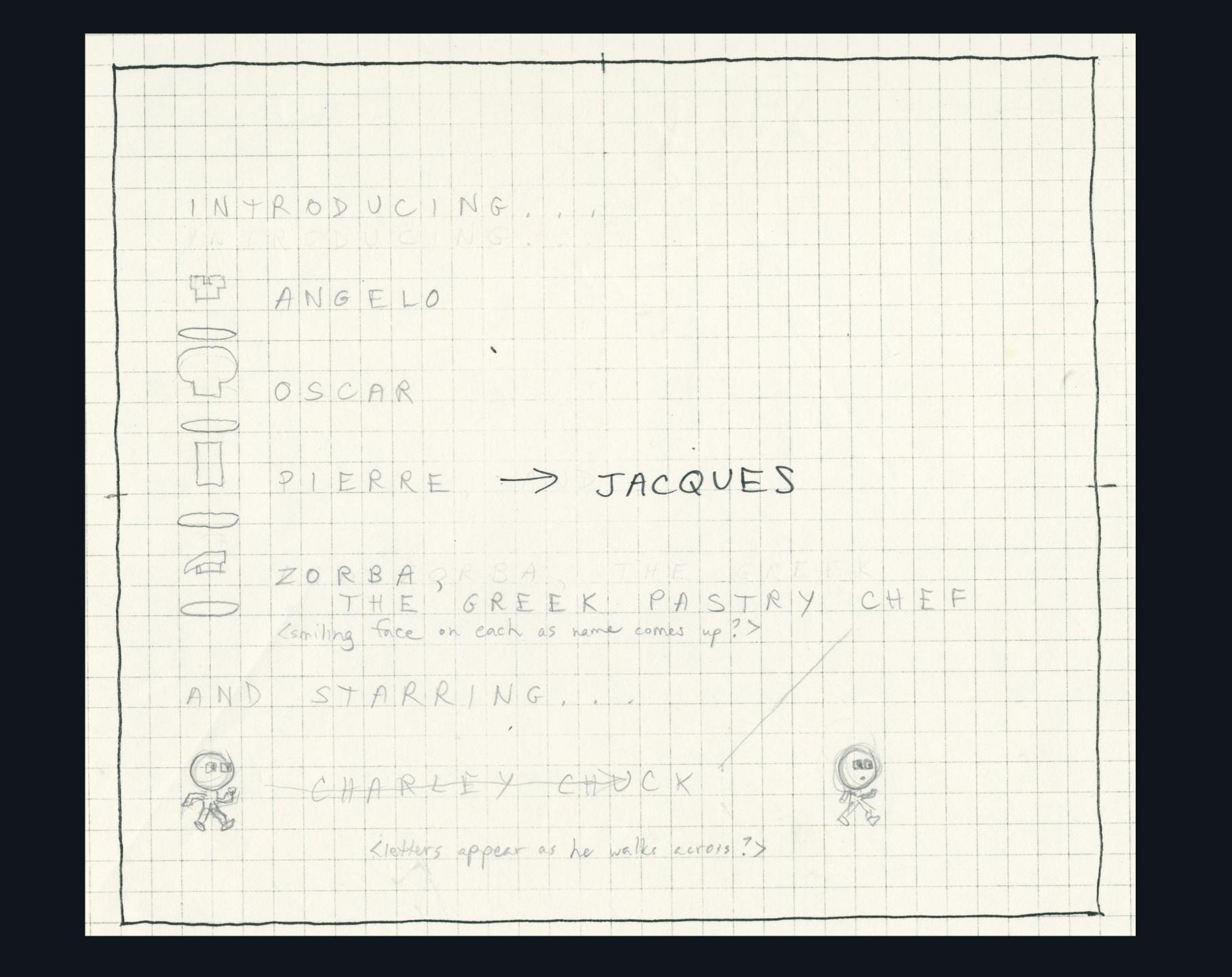
2) Encoder wheel +

o Need variation on background; not just black; maybe more scenery

o Peas unclear (parsley, mold, spinach?)

#### Positives:

- o Liked the fact it was a different idea, funny
- o More realistic
- o Non-violent
- o Takes thinking to play the game
- o Liked the way food went into score
- o Liked the beginning; gave a chance to figure out what was going on



#### Inter Office Memo





Coin Operated Games Division

To: Distribution

From: Market Research

Subject: FOOD FIGHT - TOPLINE

Date: 3-14-83

Collection reports on three prototypes and a summary matrix of the pre-prod FOOD FIGHT games are attached. The Albany Bowl FOOD FIGHT game was returned to Atari on 3/9 after eight weeks of testing.

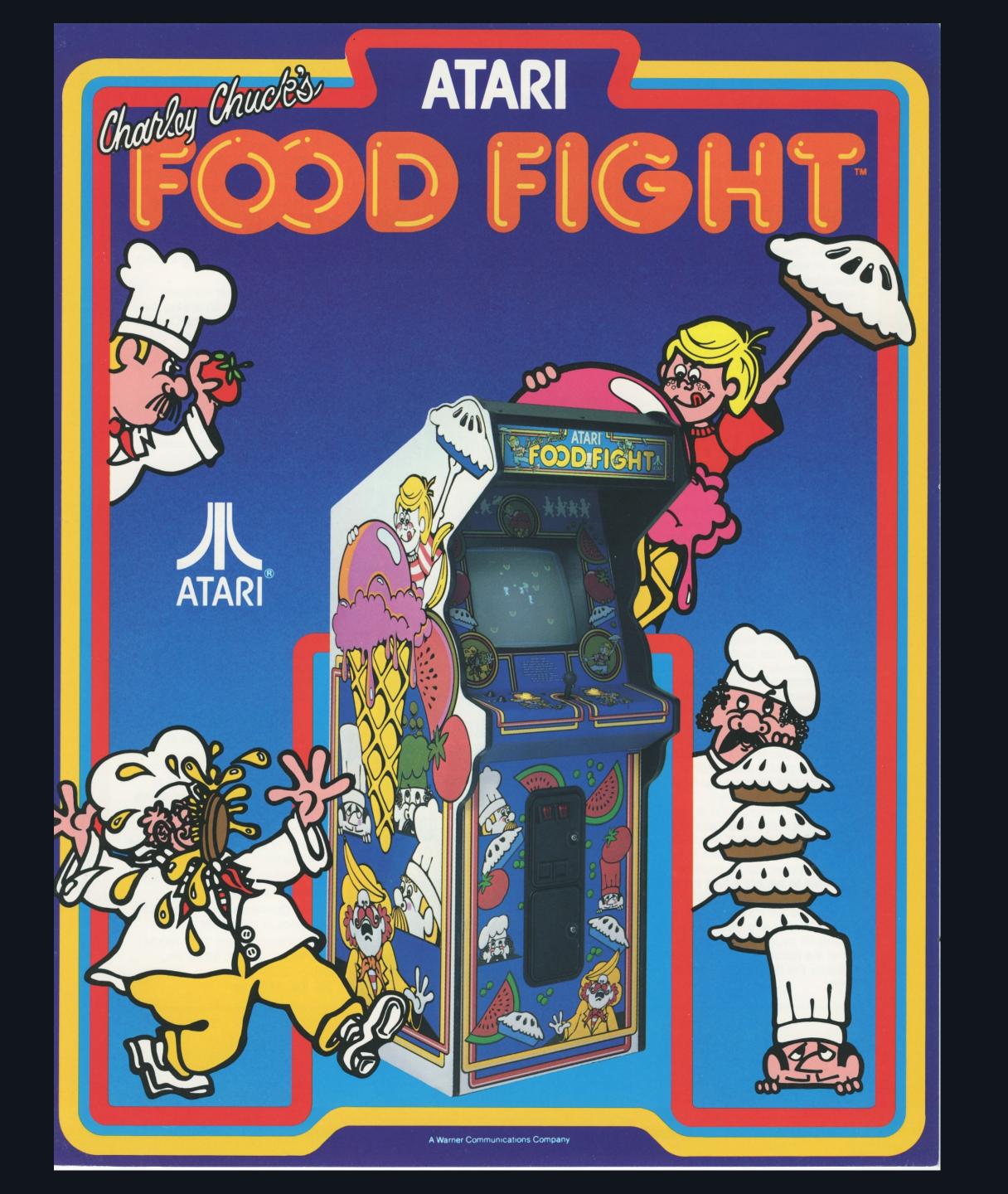
<u>Captain Mike's Pizza</u>: After ten weeks on test, the FOOD FIGHT in this location remains as the top-earning game. The operator is very pleased with FOOD FIGHT'S performance in this location.

7/11 Store, Salt Lake City: Remains as the number two of the three games in this location (below POLE POSITION and above Ms. Pac Man) for the past four weeks. FOOD FIGHT was relocated to another 7/11 store on 3/9.

Festival Game Palace, Fresno: FOOD FIGHT ranked as the 19th game in this arcade location for this, its first full week without technical problems. Due to previous technical difficulties, players may be avoiding this test game. Earnings will be monitored in the coming weeks to assess players acceptance of the game.

Pre-Production Distributor Samples: The attached matrix shows several of the FOOD FIGHT samples displaying exceptional performance; in particular, games testing with New Orleans Novely, Betson and Rowe are earning very well. These distributors are very pleased with FOOD FIGHT'S earnings. In contrast, C.A. Robinson is very disappointed with their FOOD FIGHT game.





#### THE ATARI EDGE: NEW PROFITS.



The Atari Edge means new ways to make money. New CHARLEY CHUCK'S FOOD FIGHT is a fantastic example of how to do just that. There are great space and driving games, cute character games, but Food Fight is unique! It's pie-in-the-face funny. It's frantic, fast, far-out fun for kids from 5–150. Best of all, it's from Atari so you know it's a game with high return on investment potential. Food Fight is a video feast. Charley Chuck's objective is to reach and eat an ice cream cone before it melts. All he has to do is get by Oscar, Angelo,

FOOD FIGHT.

Jacques, and Zorba.
They're four pesky chefs
who throw all kinds of fruit
and veggies at him to keep

and veggies at him to keep him from his goal. Not to worry! Charley has a fat supply of ammo himself—pie, tomatoes, peas, bananas, watermelons—for fighting them off. New features like Instant Replay, up to 125 operator-selectable game levels and more let you clean up big profits. Step into the Next Decade. Get the facts from your Atari Distributor now! Or contact us for referral at Atari, Inc., 790 Sycamore Drive, P.O. Box 906 Milpitas, CA 95035.

The Atari Edge. You need it now more than ever.

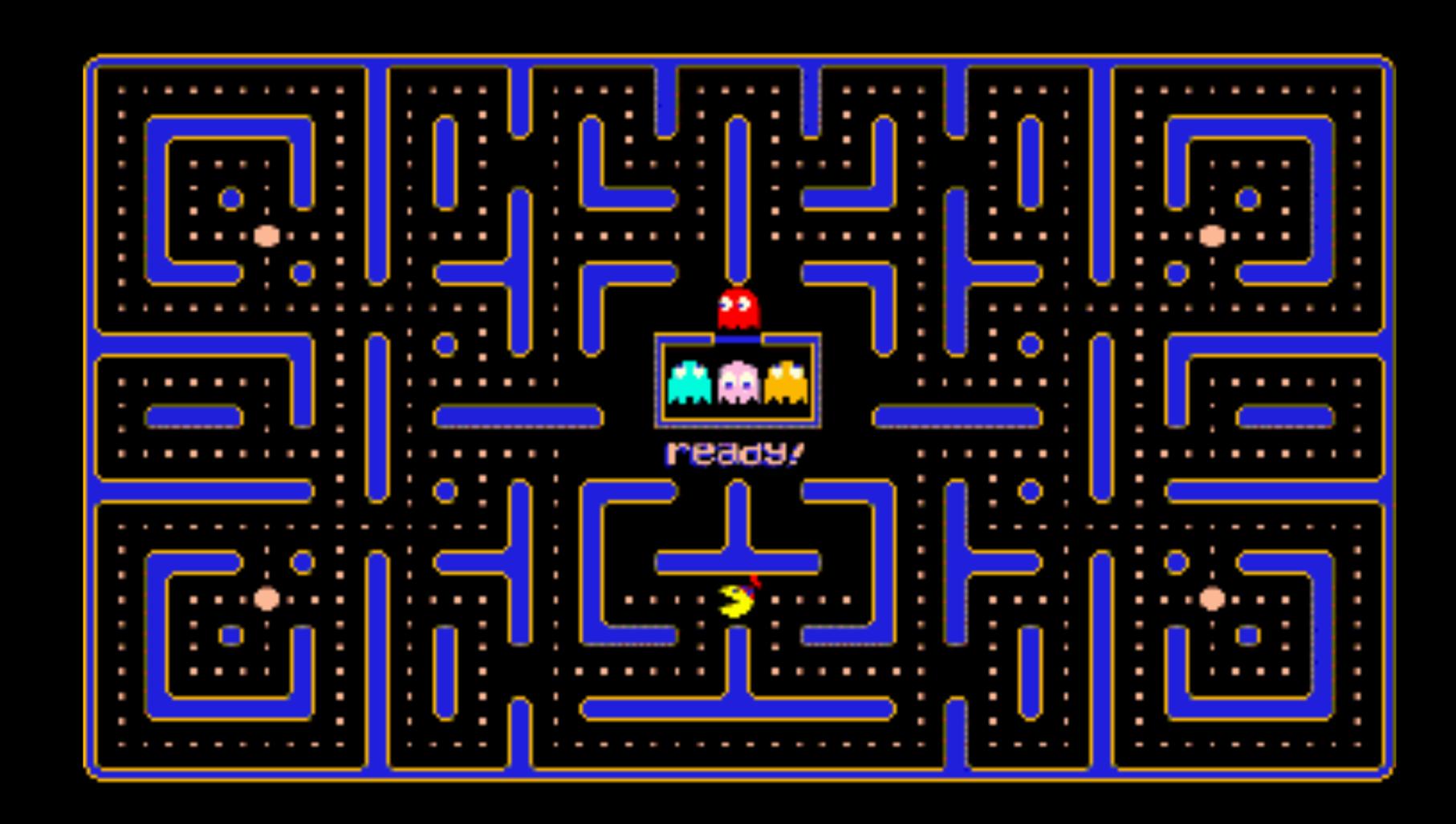


## Pac-Baby Jr. Pac-Man

## Pac-Baby

Tim Hoskins

Bruce Burns



SCRO

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAC - BABY

SCROLL



3

4300=001E8B

0

0

```
6217=
0
                              6218=LOC
                                                                   INST
                                                                                          MNEM OPER
                                                                   EB
                              6219=002C3E
                                                                                                       DE , HL
                              6220=002C3F
                                                                                                       B,07
                                                                   0607
                                                                                          LI
0
                              6221=002C41
                                                                                                       2BFD
                                                                   C3FD2B
                                                                                          JP
                              6222=002C44
                                                                                          LD
                                                                                                       B,A
                                                                   47
                                                                   E60F
                                                                                          AND
                              6223=002C45
                                                                                                       OF
                              6224=002C47
                                                                   C600
                                                                                          ADD
                                                                                                       A,00
50
                              6225=002C49
                                                                   27
                                                                                          DAA
                              6226=002C4A
                                                                                          LD
                                                                                                       CAA
                                                                                          LI
                              6227=002C4B
                                                                   78
                                                                                                       ArB
60
                              6228=002C4C
                                                                                          AND
                                                                                                       FO
                                                                   E6F0
                              6229=002C4E
                                                                                          JR
                                                                                                       Z,OD
                                                                   280B
                              6230=002050
                                                                                          RRCA
                                                                   OF
0
                              6231=002C51
                                                                   OF
                                                                                          RRCA
                              6232=002C52
                                                                                          RRCA
                              6233=002C53
                                                                                          RRCA
60
                              6234=002C54
                                                                                                       BAA
                                                                   47
                                                                                          L. D
                              6235=002C55
                                                                                          XOR
                                                                                                       A
                              6236=002056
                                                                                          ADD
                                                                                                      A , 16
                                                                  C616
6
                                                                                                                                                       Put a prompt on the screen: prompt # passed in B register. Starting at 3713, table of prompts of form: ADDRESS ON SCREEN, CHAR, CHAR
                              6237=002058
                                                                   27
                                                                                          DAA
                              6238=002059
                                                                                          DJNZ FD
                                                                   10FB
                              6239=002C5B
                                                                                          ADD
                                                                   81
                                                                                                      APC
0
                              6240=002C5C
                                                                   27
                                                                                          DAA
                              6241=
                              6242=L0C
                                                                   INST
                                                                                          MNEM OPER
10
                                                                                                                              CALLED FROM MANY PLACES - PROMPT DISPLAY ROUTINE ???
                              6243=002C5D
                                                                   C9
                                                                                          RET
                              6244=002C5E
                                                                   21A536
                                                                                                       HL 736A5
                                                                                                       3 HL = (2 + B + 36A5) 4
                                                                                                                                                                                                   HL+ on B of 3713, 3723, 3732, 3741,
                              6245=002C61
                                                                                          RST
                                                                   DF
                              6246=002C62
                                                                                         LD
                                                                                                       E, (HL) ]
                                                                   5E
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           375A, 376A, 377A, 3786,
                              6247=002C63
                                                                                          INC
                                                                                                       HL.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           379D, 37B1, 3D21, 3D00,
                              6248=002C64
                                                                                                       Dy (HL)
                                                                   56
                                                                                          L.D
                                                                                                                                                                                                                           37FD, 3067, 30E3, 3086,
                              6249=002C65
                                                                   DD210044 LD
                                                                                                       IX 9 4400
                                                                                                                              IX + 4400+ ((2 * B + 36A5))
                              6250=002069
                                                                                                       IX,DE
                                                                                          ADD
                                                                   DD19
                                                                                                                                                                                                                             3E02, 384C, 385A, 303C,
                                                                                                                               IX < color map location for text
                              6251=002C6B
                                                                   DDE5
                                                                                          PUSH IX
                                                                                                                                                                                                                            3D57, 3DD3, 3D76, 3DF2.
                                                                                                       IIE , FCOO IX & char map location for text.
                              6252=002C6D
                                                                   1100FC
                              6253=002C70
                                                                  DD19
                                                                                          ADD
                                                                                                     IX, DE
1
                              6254=002C72
                                                                  11FFFF
                                                                                         LD
                                                                                                       DE, FFFF
                                                                                                                              if this text is in middle, use increment of -20;
                              6255=002C75
                                                                                                      7, (HL)
                                                                  CB7E
                                                                                          BIT
                                                                                                                               if in text area, use increment of -1. Address of text is
                              6256=002C77
                                                                   2003
                                                                                          JR
                                                                                                       NZ , 05
                                                                                                      DE, FFEO
                              6257=002079
                                                                  11EOFF
                                                                                          LD
100
                              6258=002070
                                                               23
                                                                                          INC
                                                                                                      HL.
                                                                                          LD A,B
                              6259=002C7D
                                                                   78
                                                                                                                                                      operand.
                              6260=002C7E
                                                                                          LD
                                                                                                       BC,0000
                                                                  010000
100
                              6261=002C81
                                                                  87
                                                                                          ADD
                                                                                                                            I I light - order bit of dispositions adde set,
                                                                                                   APA
```

0286

4250

025A 0396

8038

0292

803B

0292

DZAF

0280

OZAF

JE

C34E36

6373=002D62

0

0

```
6329=002D02
                                             A, (4EEC)
                             3AEC4E
                                       L. D
                                       AND
             6330=002D05
500
                                       RET
             6331=002D06
                                                         Make a Sound, called from IBC
             6332=002D07
                                       LD
                                             AB
                                            (4E9B),A
                             329B4E
             6333=002D08
68
                                       RET
             6334=002D0B
                                             HL,3B30
                             21303B
             6335=002D0C
                                                                       Los sets up sound using 2DEE
                                             IX,4E9C
                             DD219C4E LD
             6336=002D0F
63
             6337=
                                                                                       as described at beginning of 2DEFE.
                                       MNEM OPER
             6338=L0C
                             INST
                                            IY,4E8C
             6339=002D13
                             FD218C4E LD
                                                        20 lood volume. I , returned by 2DEE
             6340=002D17
                                            2DEE
                             CDEE2D
                                       CALL
                                             (4E91),A
             6341=002D1A
                             32914E
                                       LD
                                            HL,3B40
                             21403B
             6342=002D1D
                                       L.D
0
                             DD21AC4E LD
                                             IX,4EAC
             6343=002D20
                                                       100
                                             IY,4E92
                                                                         what about voice it?
             6344=002D24
                             FD21924E LD
             6345=002D28
                             CDEE2D
                                       CALL 2DEE
6
                                                           load volume 2
                                             (4E96),A
                             32964E
             6346=002D2B
                                       L.D
                                             HL,3880
                             21803B
             6347=002D2E
                                       LD
                                             IX,4EBC
                                                       IX 4 4EBC
             6348=002D31
                             DD21BC4E LD
100
                                             IY,4E97 -
             6349=002D35
                             FD21974E LD
                                             2DEE
             6350=002D39
                             CDEE2D
                                       CALL
                                                            load whome 3
                                             (4E9B),A
             6351=002D3C
                             329B4E
                                       LD
NO.
                                                         25 stuff a sero in the Meseroschen high-order pitch mybble of voice #1
                             AF
                                       XOR
             6352=002D3F
                                                                ( Voice #1 has 5 mploles of pth pitch code, but 2DEE will set up only 4 of them )
                                       LD
             6353=002D40
                             32904E
                                       RET
             6354=002D43
800
                                                                       set up a sound. The description of 2DEE, also 7
                                                                           playe tone
                                             A, (IX+00)
             6355=002D44
                             DD7E00
                                       LD
             6356=002D47
                             A7
                                       AND
                                             A
                                             Z,2DF4
             6357=002D48
                             CAF42D
100
                                             CAA
             6358=002D4B
                             4F
                                       LD
                                             B , 08
             6359=002D4C
                             0608
                                             E,80
             6360=002D4E
                             1E80
100
                                                                        IX > A sound registery

HL > A sound descriptors 3 - Pointer to pointer to meladies.

IY > An output port for a specific voice
             6361=
                                       MNEM OPER
                             INST
             6362=L0C
                            ->7B
                                             AFE
             6363=002D50
1
                                       AND
             6364=002D51
                             A1
                                             NZ,07-
             6365=002D52
                             2005
             6366=002D54
                             CB3B
                                       SRL
60
                             10F8
                                       DJNZ FA
             6367=002056
                                                         sound bits set, pul
                                                                                                                                      countdown
                                               -> y vw
             6368=002D58
                                                                                                                                         for duration?
             6369=002D59 -- DD7E02
                                             A, (IX+02)
                                       LD
0
                                                                                        melody register
                                       AND
             6370=002D5C
                                             NZ , 097
             6371=002D5D
                             2007
                                       JE
                                                                                                               Painter music
                                             (IX+02),E
                                       LD
                             DD7302
             6372=002D5F
100
                                                                                                 ture #
                                             364E4
```

#### Rockslide

Roland Janbergs

Hero is climbing a mountain Volcano spews rocks and lava Trolls emerge from tunnels Throwing rocks at trolls Hero pushes boulders Nessie

#### Clone

Bill Hofmann

Cells, DNA, flagellum

Track ball + encoder wheel

## Crystal Castle

Wat Hughes

Randomly-generated maze game

Color vector hardware

Two joysticks?

Pseudo-3D game? Actual 3D viewer?

Emanuel "E" Washington helped

Eventually morphed into...

## Crystal Castle -> Starship Raider

- No 3D (didn't help in focus test)
- Player is on one of several decks of large spaceship
- Goal: destroy central control before your oxygen runs out
- Beware defending robots!
- Paul Moody art, Wat Hughes programming
- Cancelled due to lack of suitable controls

## Neon

Keith Sawyer

Larry Dennison

### Magician

Keith Sawyer

Riding on dragons, steer them, breath fire

Then morphed into...

# Magician → Arena → Dune → "Game without a name" → Lagoon

Eventually incorporated Neon

Possible themes: sandworm, sea serpent, flying dragons

Worms became light beams

Killed due to "lack of enthusiasm"

#### White Rabbit / Rabbitron

Dan Nussbaum

Tom Westberg

Multi-Tasking Kernel by Dan Nussbaum

#### Rabbitron

Enemy grey hares

Flying rabbits

Eating a carrot makes you a flying attack rabbit!

Control earspeed by spinning controller wheel

#### Interface

Darrell Myers

some initial help from Wat Hughes

"dots change color as player's wand sweeps over them"

Roland Janbergs joins after Rockslide cancelled

Then morphed into...

#### Interface -> Netherworld -> Orbis

Darrell and Roland

Skulls, analog joystick

Then morphed into...

## Orbis -> Nightmare

Better plot!

Darrell Myers lead, with Roland Janbergs

also John Mracek? Lars Jensen?

"Dr John Roldar"

Two units on test at Atari...







PSYCHO-PHYSICIST
DR. JOHN ROLDARR
SEEKS TO CONTROL
THE POWER OF THE
MIND.

#### Motocross

Dan Nussbaum

Possible themes: Road Warrior? skateboarders? Rt 128?

Brad Parker, Matt "Smatt" BenDaniel join

Realistic handlebars, gears, throttle

Gameplay: cross-country race? track race?

Use optical laserdisc?

#### Laserail

Paul Moody proposal

Laserdisc game

Real-time graphics + computer-generated backgrounds

Talked to many movie effects houses, selected Magi

Much work by Darrell, Randall, Paul, Marshall

#### Laserai

What do people like that is fun?

- Roller coaster
- Collecting
- Shoot-'em up

Passive player: dodge everything

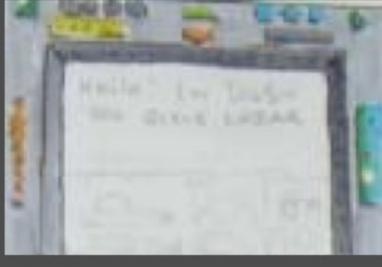
Active player: shoot everything

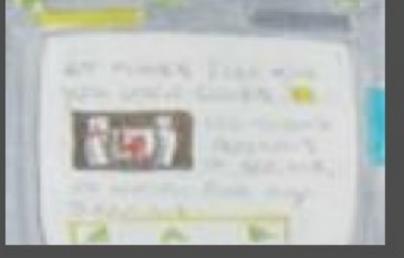


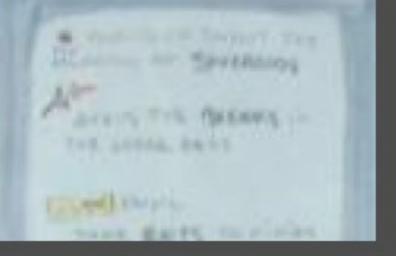


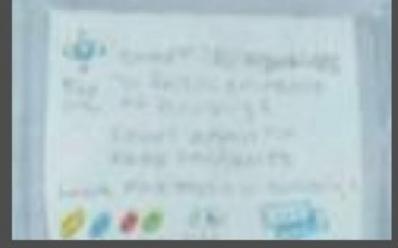














1984 LaserRail: game artifact specifications, back-story, models, sketches, time-warp feature overview



1984 LaserRail: Original arcade game - concept illustrations, concept gameplay, concept theme





1984 LaserRail: Original arcade game - concept illustrations, concept gameplay, concept theme









#### Artists

Darrell Myers

Marshall Peck

Randall McLamb

Paul Moody

### Musicians

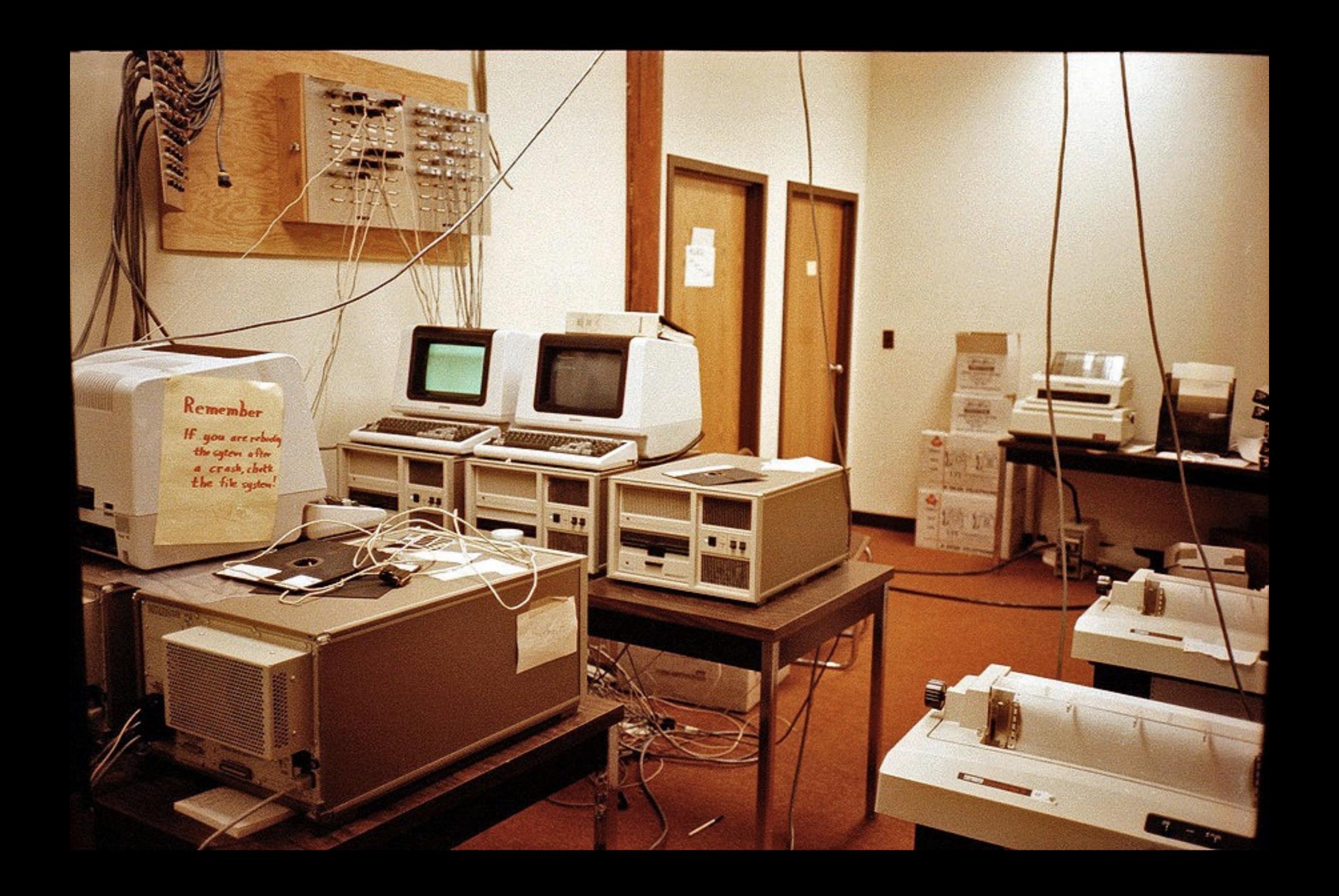
Patty Goodson

# Coin-op game design















## Life at GCC



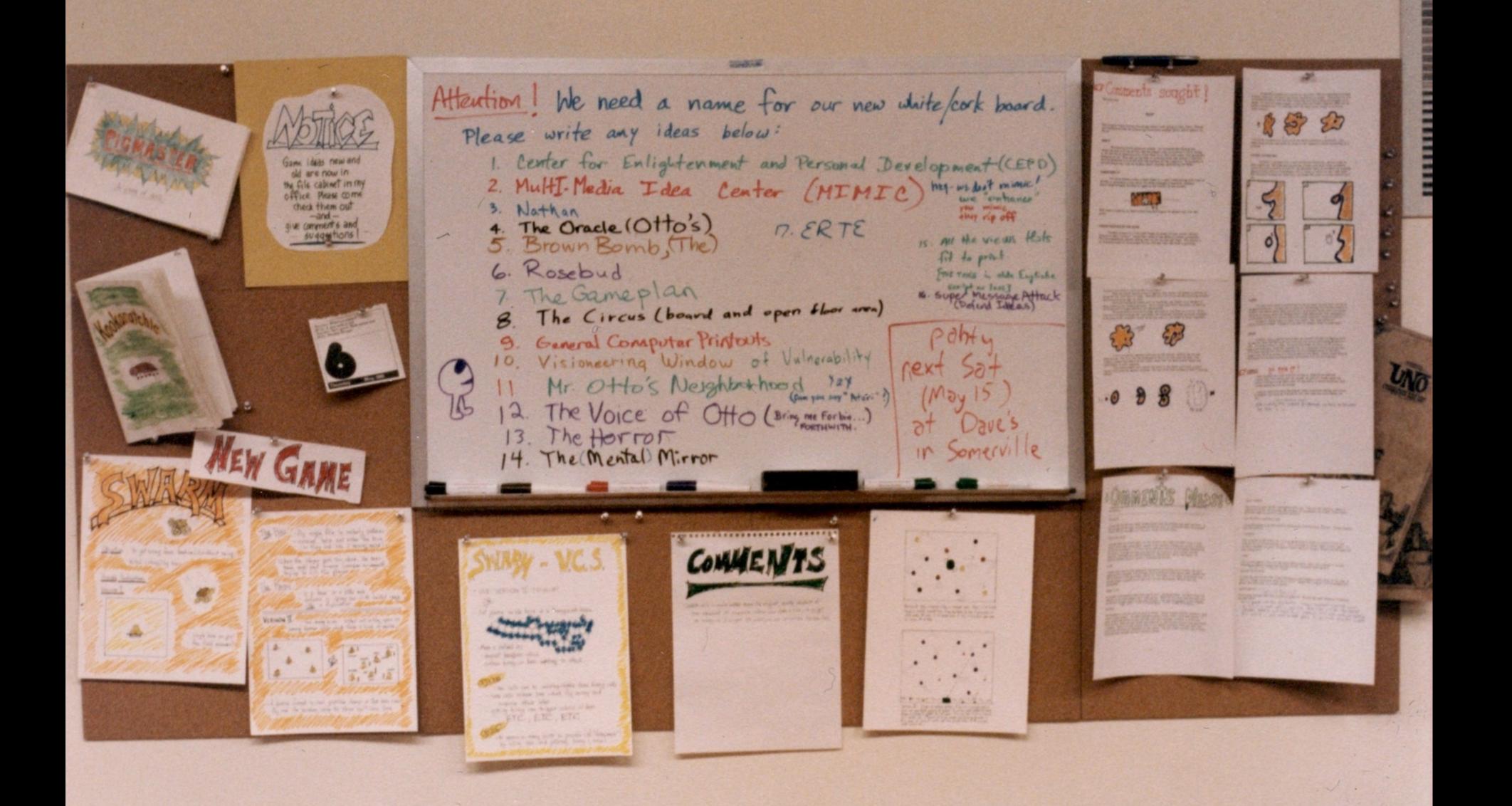












### "It was fun while it lasted"

- Brad Parker

# Q&A