

# GOING CONNECTION

ATARI INC., 1265 BORREGAS AVENUE, SUNNYVALE, CALIFORNIA 94086

## Atari's Game Room—Recreational Therapy

The game room at Atari's corporate headquarters building has always been a favorite spot for employees, their families and friends. But the game room serves another purpose as well. The recreational therapy staff at Stanford's Children's Hospital in Palo Alto, California, often brings small groups of patients to Atari for an evening out. The children enjoy playing the games, which are all set on free play. The trip down to Atari provides them a welcome break from the routine confinement of their hospital beds.

The games definitely lift the children's spirits. Occasionally a special trip will be arranged during the afternoon, to cheer up a child who is feeling particularly depressed. A change in treatment or a progressively worsening condition can introduce a lot of stress in the children's environment, but the Atari game room seems to be the kind of place where the tension evaporates.

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## AMOA 1980—Atari is an Award Winner



The 1980 AMOA Show was predicted to be the largest, most elaborate show ever by the organizers of the event. And judging by the continually crowded Atari exhibit, the show was a great success, both for the AMOA and for Atari.

The highlight of the show for Atari was the presentation of Play Meter magazine's award for video game excellence for Atari's Asteroids™. The award, voted by operators throughout the United States, cites Asteroids as the highest earning video game in 1980. Ralph Lally of Play Meter presented the plaque to Gene Lipkin, Co-President of the Coin-operated division of Atari, at the cocktail party on Saturday night, November 1.

The Atari cocktail party, held on the 95th floor of the John Hancock Building, was the place to be on Saturday night. Naturally, the view from atop one of Chicago's tallest buildings was spectacular, and the attendees obviously enjoyed both the magnificent scenery and the party. It was certainly an appropriate setting for the award ceremony.

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## AMOA 1980- Atari is an Award Winner continued

Of course, not all of the excitement of the show took place at the cocktail party. There was much activity at the Atari exhibit during the three days that the show ran. Battlezone™, Atari's latest combat challenge, was an instant hit. People were crowded around the game during the entire show, waiting to get a chance to challenge the super-tanks on the battlefield of the future. And based on the earnings reports so far, this game appears to be another in Atari's arsenal of successes.

On Saturday, November 1, Atari held High Score Tournaments on Battlezone and Missile Command™. Atari experts on the games were challenged by AMOA attendees. After a certain high point total was reached, each competitor was awarded a t-shirt, and more than 24 dozen Missile Command and Battlezone t-shirts were given away. Craig Hibbs of the

Game Gallery in Bellevue, Nebraska, was the high scorer on Missile Command with 165,000 points. The Battlezone high scorer was Dann Frank of Zephyr Amusement in Phoenix, Arizona. Dann scored 48,000 points on this new Atari game. Both Craig and Dann won Atari Video Computer Systems™ for their successful efforts on the games.

The Tellus™ Operator Survey was conducted once again this year by Linda Butcher and Mary Takatsuno of Marketing Research. Operators attending the AMOA were asked a number of questions regarding their businesses this year; which games were most successful for them, which style of cabinet they preferred, etc. The response from the operators was tremendous, and the results of the survey will be published at a later date. One of the preliminary facts discovered in the course of the

survey can be found in the "Did You Know?" column inside this issue of the Coin Connection. While Linda and Mary are busy compiling all the data from this Tellus survey, they are also preparing for another Tellus survey which will be conducted at the ATE Show in London during January.

Frank Ballouz, Atari's Marketing Director, was very enthusiastic about the AMOA Show. "Once again, Atari was in the spotlight at the AMOA. Both Missile Command and Battlezone received a tremendous response from attendees of the show. The events we had planned, such as the cocktail party and the High Score Tournaments, were very successful and very entertaining for all those who participated. And the crowd in the Atari exhibit at all times attested to the fact that we had a lot to see and a lot to hold the interest of those who came to the 1980 AMOA Show."



Play Meter award for video game excellence to Atari for Asteroids.



### Cabaret™ Game Winner

Congratulations to Mike Benson of Michigan Nickel Company. Mike is the lucky winner of a new MISSILE COMMAND™ cabaret game. His experience in the amusement industry has also made him this month's featured Operator of the Eighties.

Operators who purchased a cabaret game and submitted their name and phone number to Atari became eligible to win their choice of a free ASTEROIDS™ or MISSILE

COMMAND cabaret. Mike Benson's name was randomly chosen from among those respondents in a drawing held on September 15, 1980.

In conjunction with the introduction of the Cabaret cabinet, Atari Marketing Research conducted an operator and distributor survey to evaluate the market acceptance of this new smaller cabinet style. All operators who returned a completed questionnaire will soon be receiving a free gift from Atari.

### Did You Know?

Seven out of ten amusement game operators feel that their business was more profitable this year than last year. This information was obtained from Atari's Tellus™ Operator Survey conducted at the 1980 AMOA Show.

The large number of operators reporting increased profits is most likely due to the recent high-earning video games. In fact, compared with last year's Tellus survey, significantly more operators reported that they recover their costs on a new video in as short a time as seven months.



## Atari Promotional Items Direct from Customer Service

Atari's Customer Service department is now offering selected promotional items direct to operators. Atari baseball caps, coffee mugs, ashtrays, windbreakers, and rainbow shirts are some of the things which can be ordered from Customer Service. Asteroids t-shirts and Missile Command t-shirts are also available.

Plus, Customer Service just received Battlezone t-shirts and posters. These dynamic, full color Battlezone t-shirts and posters depict the exciting combat theme of the game: supertanks competing in a world beyond the stars. The t-shirts are a durable cotton/polyester blend available in sizes small, medium, large and extra-large. Both the t-shirts and the 22" x 28" posters make great

giveaway or incentive items for any game operator.

To order the new Battlezone t-shirt or any of the other promotional items mentioned, please mail a registered cashier check or a money order only for the exact amount (windbreaker—\$10.65, rainbow shirt—\$13.50, Asteroids, Missile Command, and Battlezone t-shirts—\$5.50, cap—\$4.95, ashtray—\$1.70, coffee mug—\$6.45; California residents add appropriate sales tax). Orders will be filled on a first come, first served basis. Not all items are available at all times. All orders will be shipped freight collect; post office box addresses are prohibited. You can mail your orders to Atari Inc., Coin-op Customer Service, 1105 N. Fair Oaks Avenue, Sunnyvale, CA 94086.

## Promotions for Profit

Does your location have a 'star' game player who seems to continually get the highest scores on the games? Novice players often hesitate to try a challenging game because they do not understand the game strategy and the star players always outperform them.

When a new game is introduced into your location, set up a "How to Play" exhibit. A good game always looks more exciting and challenging when you actually see the game in full action. A highly skilled player can demonstrate the game to your patrons. In addition, you can have the game on free play for a few hours to spark interest in the game by new players.

Be sure to post notices in your location to announce the game demonstration.

## Operators of the Eighties December Profile: Mike Benson, Wyandotte, Michigan

In 1939 Mike Benson was not satisfied with his career as a prize fighter. When a friend asked him to help install equipment on his route, Mike accepted, not realizing that he would be entering a career that would fascinate him for the rest of his life.

Mike's story is probably similar to many operators in the industry. He started in the arcade business by working for another person and then decided to purchase equipment to begin his own route. Mike's company, Michigan Nickel, has maintained some of the same locations for over 30 years.

In the last 40 years, Mike has watched the changes in the industry. He has seen the development of the various forms of arcade pieces, beginning with pinball and including the skee balls, shuffle alleys, pool tables and electromechanical football and baseball games. As these games have declined in popularity, video has taken over as the major attraction. But Mike says that the basic return on investment of the games has changed very little. "The money is the same as it has always been. The videos take in a lot more money, but the money is worth a lot less now also. He explains, "It used to be you could buy a pinball game for



\$75.00. If it would take in \$10-\$12 a week it was a good collection. Now if a game were to earn that little you would lose money in gas and other expenses just to go collect it."

There are always new challenges to be met in the coin industry, not the least of which are legal regulations and tax and license fees. "Every little city is different. The fees are getting higher and higher all the time. When one city raises their fees, others always seem to follow." In some cases, Mike must pay \$500 for a city operator's license, and in addition pay \$100 per machine per year. "Some areas

do not allow games at all, and in others, a person can drink at 19, but cannot play games until they're 21. It's ridiculous!"

In addition, Wyandotte is a city right outside of Detroit, whose economic conditions are very difficult due to the current problems of the American automobile manufacturers. According to Mike, however, the recession has not had a severe effect on the Michigan coin machine business. Historically, leisure industries have not been negatively impacted by severe economic conditions.

Mike's advice to other operators is a lesson in basic economics. "Keep your newest and best-earning equipment in your best locations; always be on the lookout for new and better locations and let go of your worst ones when it is no longer economical to service them."

The experience Mike has had in the coin industry has been passed on to his son, who will eventually assume Mike's responsibilities as president of the Michigan Nickel Company. Our industry was founded by operators such as Mike Benson who turned a part-time job into a family business. Atari is proud to have been able to share Mike's story with other people in the coin industry.



## Atari's Game Room— Recreational Therapy

continued

The Stanford Children's Hospital has a mini game room of their own with Atari's Breakout®, Superman™\* pinball and Touch Me™. They will soon be adding an Asteroids™ to this collection, thanks to the efforts of Michelle London, Director of Recreation Therapy at the hospital. Contributions to buy the game came from the Woodside-Atherton Auxiliary and from Willie Nelson, the popular country singer. Asteroids was chosen as the new game for the

hospital's "rec room" after much consideration on the part of the hospital staff. They reviewed the recommendations of the Atari Marketing staff, but their decision was to a large part based on the reaction of the kids, who overwhelmingly chose Asteroids as their favorite game.

Atari is proud to have the opportunity to serve the community in this way. Games can be more than just fun when they are used to benefit a special program and special kids like these.

## Letters to the Editor

Each month, Atari receives many letters regarding the games we produce. We thought that you, the operators and distributors, might be interested in reading some of these letters, to see what your players are writing to us.

Beginning this month, there will be a new Player's Response column appearing in each issue of the Coin Connection. In this column we will reprint excerpts from some of the letters we receive each month.

This month's letter is from Ms. September Mirghanbari of Sabine Pass, Texas, who has asked us for help.

"About four months ago my husband and I were taking a short vacation from work. We had a wonderful time. I baked in the sun while my husband ventured off to a game room. I was furious when he returned four hours later and \$24 shorter. Had he spent our money on

another woman, I ask you? He was involved with someone named Asteroids. What kind of name is that for a woman?

I learned my lesson. I decided to check her out for myself.

What an odd looking machine. Could my mind and fingers take it? After finally figuring out the game, I walked out \$22.50 less. What a fabulous and exciting game!

After challenging the rocks and ships every chance we get (\$345.25 worth), we're ready for medical help. Could you please tell me where the nearest AA is located? No, we're not drunks. We need an Asteroids Anonymous. HELP!"

If you or your players have any comments or questions regarding Atari games, please send them to The Editor, The Coin Connection, Atari Inc., 1215 Borregas Avenue, Sunnyvale, CA 94086. Who knows? You may see yourself in print!

## TECHNICAL TIP

### Sit-Down Missile Command™ Convergence

Remember that the horizontal yoke wires have been reversed. When performing color convergence outside the game, the right horizontal adjustments affect the left side of the screen and the left adjustments affect the right side of the screen.

It is best to perform color adjustments with the monitor in the game. Since the mirror will invert the picture, the right and left color adjustment will correspond to the mirror image.

## New International Distributors


Three new Atari international distributors were recently announced. Effective October 23, Amiro France and Salmon S.A. will be Atari distributors in France. And on November 9, Nova Apparate GmbH and Company will join Lowen Automaten as an Atari distributor in Germany.

Sue Elliott, International Sales Manager, commented: "We are very pleased to welcome these three distributors to our international distributor group. They will help to keep our operators in France and Germany up-to-date on all the latest Atari games."

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