



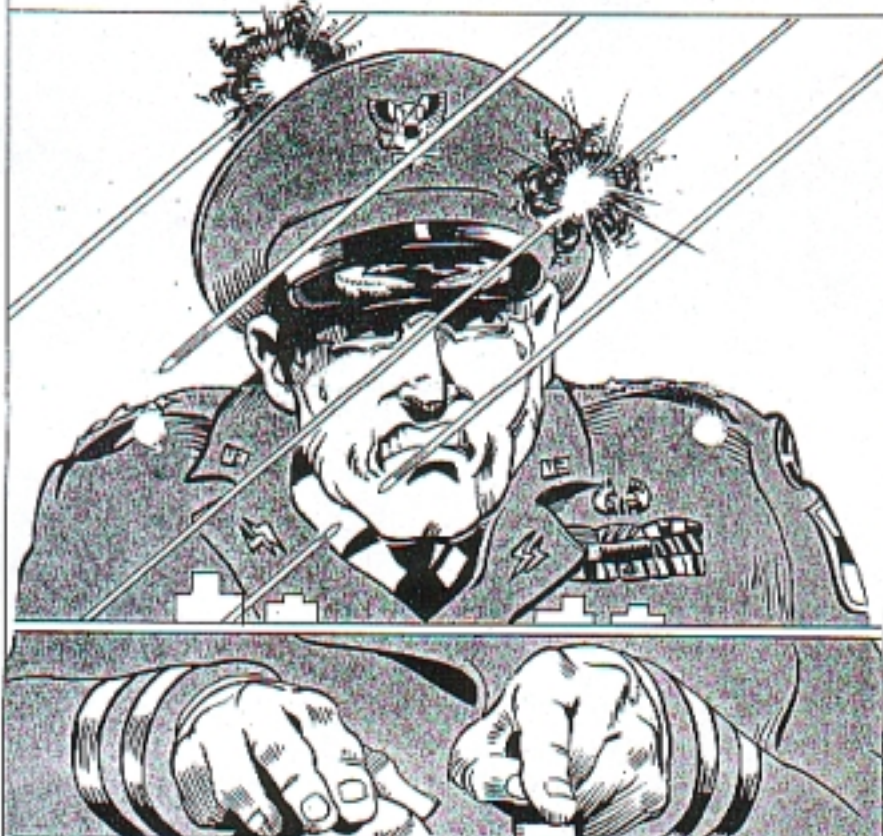
ATARI AGE™

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ATARI® GAME CLUB™

Volume One
Number Two
Summer, 1981

ATARI® OFFERS \$50,000 IN CASH PRIZES

In The First Atari World Championship Tournament . . . Coming To Chicago This Fall



General Mayhem enjoys a brisk game of MISSILE COMMAND™

CONFESSIONS OF A VIDEO GAME ADDICT

It started innocently enough. Uncle Max picked me up one Saturday morning to go to the ball game. I had just turned twelve years old. The sky was clouding over fast.

By the time we arrived at the ball park, the rain was coming down hard. We waited around a bit but the weather just got worse. Finally the umpires gave up and called the game off. "Just my luck," I said.

Uncle Max explained that we were sure to find a silver lining in this rain cloud. Whatever that meant. Anyway, we got back in his car and headed downtown. Uncle Max asked if I'd like a pizza. I said we should go to the Pepperoni Palace.

The Palace smelled terrific. Uncle Max asked where the phone was and went off to tell my parents that I hadn't caught cold and that we were about to pack away a "mondo combo" pizza with double pepperoni.

While Uncle Max was on the phone, I watched a teenager play a game I'd never seen before. It was ASTEROIDS™. I stood on my tip toes to see what he was having such a good time about.

I stretched up as tall as I could to try to see over his shoulder. I watched for a few seconds, then lost my balance and had to grab his arm to keep from falling over.

(Continued on page 7)

Chicago's Expocenter will become the world's biggest game center for four days this fall when it will be the site of the first world championship coin-operated game tournament. ATARI® has joined forces with Tournament Games, Inc. to make this a truly spectacular event.

For openers, ATARI is offering a cool \$50,000 in cash and prizes for the nation's finest video game players in a variety of categories, including Open Singles, Women's Singles, and a variety of special events. So save up your quarters and get your video game strategies down cold!

There will be action galore in nearly an acre of tournament events. With over 100 ATARI video games going at once, your trip to the Tournament Games Spectacular will be the highlight of the year.

All in all, the tournament sponsors have arranged for \$400,000 in prizes. In addition to the video game competi-

(Continued on page 7)

IN THIS ISSUE

- MISSILE COMMAND™ Game Review
- New Remote Control Video Computer System™
- Where's your favorite video game center?
- Lots of prizes in the CLUBHOUSE QUIZ
- Meet Christopher Grislak, SPACE INVADERS™ Annihilator
- Great new gear in the CLUBHOUSE STORE
- Confessions of a Video Game Addict
- Join the ATARI Hall of Fame
- By George — Letters from Club Members
- Much More!

WELCOME TO THE CLUB . . .

And a particular welcome to all the new ATARI® Game Club™ members who joined us because they love ATARI coin-operated games! The club is getting bigger and bigger—so Atari Age™ is getting better and better.

For the first time Atari Age features articles about ATARI coin-operated video games along with the home video game news. In fact, this issue includes a review of the great new ASTEROIDS DELUXE™, an article about several people who played their favorite ATARI coin-operated games for over 30 hours straight, and some hints on finding a great family game center near where you live.

GOOD NEWS! The Clubhouse Store just received the first shipment of MISSILE COMMAND™ cartridges. And it's sensational! Read the review, and if you think MISSILE COMMAND is for you, get your order in fast. Even with the big stock we have on hand, this one will get scarce fast.

Hope you enjoy the newsletter. And for all the new members of the ATARI Game Club . . . welcome aboard!

George Roberts

TIP TIME

Caring For Your Cartridges

Even though your ATARI Game Program™ cartridges are packed full of star-bang action, the cartridges themselves should be neither slammed nor banged. Instead, they should be treated with the greatest care to keep them in top playing condition. Here are a few key tips . . .

- Keep your cartridges clean and dry. Other than the cartridge "door," there are no moving parts, but there are lots of electronic connections. If any of those connections get too greasy or dirty, you can lose game action. So keep the cartridges safe in a covered box or storage case between uses.
- Bake cakes, not cartridges. If you let your cartridges sit in the sun—on a window ledge, for instance, the heat may soften and warp the shell. If the shell warps too much, it won't fit in the console. Another good reason to put your cartridges away as soon as you switch games.
- Switch off before you switch games. Always turn the power off on your Video Computer System™ console before you change cartridges. This simple precaution protects your game console as well as your cartridges.
- Handle with care. Don't ram the cartridge into the console like a rocket into a bazooka. Those contacts are delicate, and can be put out of action if the cartridge is inserted or removed carelessly.

GAME CENTERS ON PARADE

Fill Up With Fun... at THE FILLING STATION

At the Filling Station Eatery in Pensacola, Florida, the happy diners get their fill of ATARI video game action—as well as of Trish Kelly's homemade chili.

Inspired by Trish's promise of all the chili he could pack away, Jody Bowles ran up an incredible 41,339,845 on MISSILE COMMAND™ during a 30-hour marathon on April 27 and 28 of this year. Good thing the Filling Station is a 24-hour restaurant.

According to Trish, her only problem with the games is keeping enough quarters around to make change.

MALIBU GRAND PRIX — a super place to play

More and more these days, ATARI coin-operated video games are appearing in places where the games are just part of the fun.

Malibu Grand Prix is an example of a place where the fun simply doesn't quit. At the 33 tracks across the country, you can take the wheel of a real scaled-down Formula Race Car

and put it through its paces. And on an authentic—but perfectly safe—racing circuit patterned after the world class tracks in Europe and the United States.

Once you've broken all the records on the Malibu circuit, you can head to the game room and unwind with a few dozen laps on the ATARI Monte Carlo Formula One game. Mario Andretti, eat your heart out!

The Malibu Grand Prix game rooms feature all the latest ATARI video games—like ASTEROIDS DELUXE™, BATTLEZONE™, and MISSILE COMMAND™. Some of the locations even have the finest miniature golf courses you've ever seen.

Got a favorite game center?

If your favorite place to play ATARI games is particularly unusual or exciting, your fellow ATARI Game Club members would like to know about it.

Tell us why your favorite place is newsworthy and send us a black and white photo, if possible. We'll publish all we can in upcoming issues of Atari Age. Send your letters to: ARCADES ON PARADE, c/o ATARI Game Club, P.O. Box AGC, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019.

NEW*NEW*NEW*NEW*NEW*NEW*NEW*NEW*NEW

REMOTE CONTROL CX-2700 ATARI VIDEO COMPUTER SYSTEM™

Looks like the control panel of an intergalactic cruiser, but it's really the most exciting development in video games since the introduction of the ATARI Video Computer System game a few years back.

There are lots of great new features, but the most exciting by far is—wireless controllers! Each controller has a built-in radio transmitter (see the antenna?) whose signals are picked up by a receiver in the main unit.

Finally! Nobody will trip over your controller wire just when you're about to set a new record at SPACE INVADERS.* Never again will the family dog gallop through the room, ripping the controller from your hands just when you're about to beat your big brother at Basketball. Never again will you have to interrupt your game because you have to answer the phone—because wherever you go, the controller goes too!

You can even select and reset by remote control, so you can enjoy game after game without leaving the couch. And when you do get up to change cartridges, you'll notice that all the switches on the new CX-2700 are "touch buttons," so no dirt or dust can get into the set.

And what a convenient design! The controllers slip into a storage area built into the console. The power cord and TV set cord also have storage compartments—perfect for travel. So you can tuck your new CX-2700 under one arm and your Club Cartridge Case

under the other—and you're all set for an ATARI-style weekend!

Remember, the new CX-2700 accepts all your Video Computer System game cartridges. You can also plug in your standard ATARI controllers whenever you like (for four-player games, for example).



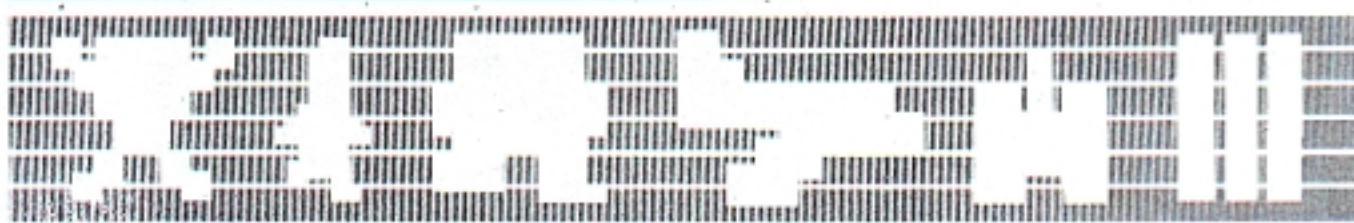
Now you can play your favorite ATARI game over and over as many times as you like without leaving the couch!

RESERVE YOUR 2700 NOW!

The first few CX-2700 Remote Control Video Computer System units will be out in the stores sometime in August . . . but you can reserve one for yourself through the ATARI Game Club. Just sign up on the Clubhouse Store order form.

As soon as the new CX-2700's arrive, we'll rush yours to you and charge your credit card \$299.00. You'll be the first on your block to be able to play ATARI games while skipping rope!

*Indicates trademark of Taito America Corp.



ASK GEORGE

George Dakota Answers Club Member Questions

Dear George: How does ATARI get all those great games in those little game cartridges? My dad thinks they're tapes, but I can't see any tape in there.

Jerry Sawyer
Los Angeles, CA

Dear Jerry: The ATARI video games are recorded on tiny computer memory chips called ROM's. R-O-M stands for "read only memory," which means that it's permanent (like a record) and can't be re-recorded (like a tape).

The ROM is a set of instructions for the master computer in your Video Computer System. The thousands of tiny electronic parts in each ROM chip tell the computer what the TV screen should look like, how the controllers affect the game pieces, what kinds of sounds to make—and when . . . and so on.

The ROM chip inside your ATARI cartridges is actually about the size of a quarter. To give you some idea how far computer technology has come in the past few years, that ATARI memory chip stores as much information as 1950's computers could store in a room full of electronics!

Think you've got a question about ATARI video games that will stump George Dakota? Send it on to "Ask George," ATARI Game Club, P.O. Box AGC, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019.

SUPER DEAL!
FREE SUPERMAN*
Wallet with Every
SUPERMAN
Cartridge



From now through September 31, 1981 (or until our supply runs out) you get a free SUPERMAN* wallet when you buy an exciting SUPERMAN Game Program** cartridge.

It's the perfect wallet for school, summer vacation, or for impressing your bank manager when you make a large withdrawal. Plenty of room for cash, keys, your ATARI Game Club membership card, and lots more. Order today, because deals like this get sold out quick!

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CHRISTOPHER GRISLAK LOVES SPACE INVADERS*



SPACE INVADERS—watch out what you see this guy!

He loves 'em to death! In fact, Christopher may be one of the most notorious SPACE INVADERS annihilators in the world!

"I scored 251,000 in three hours a couple of months ago, then I got kind of tired sitting, so I stopped. I had been hit once, I think," says Christopher Grisalak of Oak Park, Michigan.

"When I'm feeling like a quick game, I'll go for 150,000. Takes me about two hours."

Christopher is 13 years old, a 7th-grader at Best Jr. High in Oak Park. He regrets missing last year's national SPACE INVADERS tournament, but he and his friends are staying in shape for the next one.

"My friends are pretty good too," says Christopher. "Almost all of them have done better than 150,000."

How have you and your friends done at your favorite ATARI game? Anybody out there who can top Christopher Grisalak at SPACE INVADERS? Let us know.

*Indicates trademark of Taito America Corp.

ATARI IN THE NEWS

You can hardly pick up a paper or tune in the news without coming across another story about ATARI video games. In this regular column, we'll review what the media is saying about our favorite pastime.

We won't catch all the articles, so if you come across particularly interesting ATARI news, send it to George Dakota. We'll print your name and send along a prize for every clipping used.

National TV News Features

Both "20/20" and "PM Magazine" have broadcast special reports on the explosive popularity of video games in the United States. One of the more incredible statistics discussed on these programs is the 40 million times each day that Americans play coin-operated video games! Check your TV listings regularly so you're sure to catch the next video game news feature.

Secrets of the Video Game Superstars

The April issue of *Panorama* includes a strategy-filled article on winning tips with SPACE INVADERS* and ASTEROIDS*. Top players are interviewed and quoted. The complexity of play—and thus the long-term interest—of these games is brought home loud and clear.

Different players have different techniques, and new strategies are evolving. There are even books coming out on the subject! This article is a must for serious video game buffs.

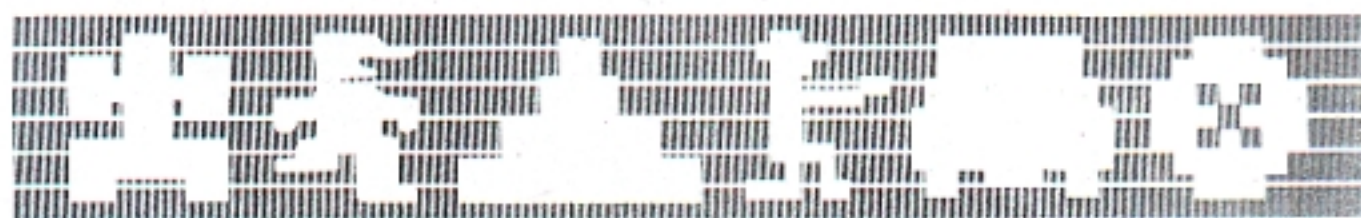
Invasion of the ASTEROIDS

David Owen's article in the February issue of *Esquire* documents the conquest of Manhattan Island (and the rest of the world) by ASTEROIDS*, the most popular video game yet. Stockbrokers, top bank executives, construction workers, students, and just about everyone else is pumping quarters. This article explains why.

SUPERMAN** is the Game of the Year

Video Magazine's 1981 Arcade Awards presents an "ARKIE" to the SUPERMAN **Game Program** cartridge for the ATARI Video Computer System*. "SUPERMAN is the kind of bold, creative design that significantly stretches the frontiers of videogaming. An outstanding achievement," they proclaim. SPACE INVADERS received an honorable mention.

*Indicates trademark of Taito America Corp.
**Indicates trademark of DC Comics, Inc.



ATARI GAME REVIEWS

by George Dakota

HOME VIDEO COMPUTER SYSTEM™ GAME: **MISSILE COMMAND™**

RED ALERT! Incoming missiles picked up by our radar. Your hands clutch the joystick anxiously. The long-awaited Krytolian attack has begun.



Protect your cities against the Krytolian assault

The missiles are now in range. Quick, efficiently, you release your ABM's into the paths of the alien

missiles. There's the last missile of the first wave... aim... fire... got it! But don't relax, because the next wave is just seconds away.

You wipe out the second wave of Krytolian missiles, and the third, without sustaining damage to the cities you protect. But now the missiles come faster and faster, and you reach the first dreaded moment of decision... save a city, or save your missile base?

It's a complex decision. You have 30 ABM's per Krytolian assault. Ten at a time are stored in your missile base, vulnerable to an enemy hit. Two more groups of ten are safe in underground bunkers, called up automatically when needed. You can afford a hit on your missile base if you have enough extra ABM's in the bunkers. But run out of ABM's and your cities are sitting ducks.

Did you study missile warfare tactics at the Academy?

Back to the battle... The Krytolians have taken their gloves off. Now they are throwing cruise missiles at you—sometimes even "smart" cruise missiles that can detect and avoid your ABM's. So you fire a bigger salvo of ABM's and pray that you don't use up your arsenal before the next wave of the attack is finished off.

Whew! I break into a sweat just writing about MISSILE COMMAND. Beyond a doubt, this is one of the greatest video games ever invented. ATARI has even included beginners' and children's versions—so the game is challenging for all skill levels. Even for an ace like you or me.

Get the best of both worlds!

While you're mastering MISSILE COMMAND at home on your Video Computer System, be sure to check out the coin-operated version at your favorite family game center. It's got special features you won't find on any other video game—a really spectacular play experience. Good shooting!

COIN-OP VIDEO GAME: **ASTEROIDS DELUXE™**

NEW!

If you thought that ASTEROIDS™ was the greatest coin-operated video game ever, just wait until you try ASTEROIDS DELUXE™ by ATARI.

Pump in a quarter and get ready for something incredible. The same drama and excitement is there—now accompanied by a full-color universe, three-dimensional action, and more options than ever.

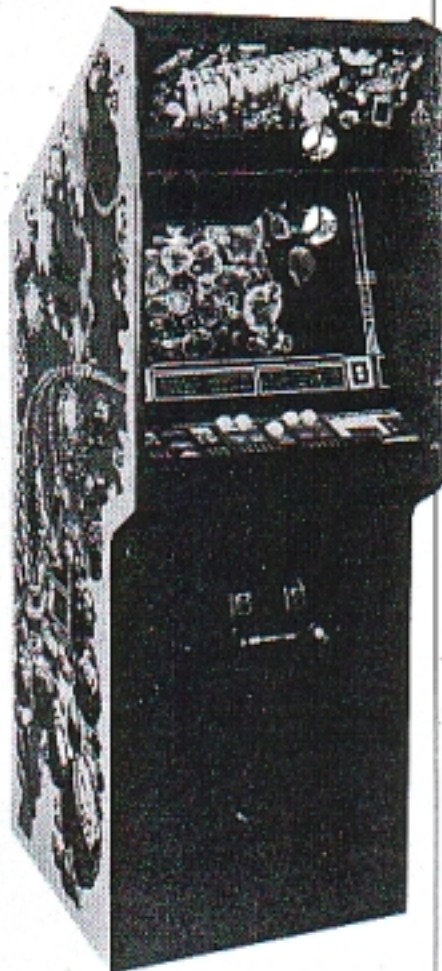
The game begins with a storm of colorful, dimensional asteroids tumbling toward your lifelike fighter ship. You blast them apart as quickly as you can. If a collision seems inevitable, hit the "shield" for temporary protection. But use it sparingly, because shield power reserve is limited.

The next wave of asteroids thunders

towards you, and with them comes a killer satellite. Hit the jets and attempt to evade the attack, but the satellite chases with determination. Spin and shoot, but a direct hit just blows your assailant into three smaller craft... and they begin to chase you.

As if you haven't got enough trouble on your hands, here comes the enemy saucer. Not only does the saucer attack you, it also takes on the asteroids and the killer satellites as well. It's a jungle out there in outer space!

So for all of you who asked what ATARI could do for an encore after ASTEROIDS, here's the answer—ASTEROIDS DELUXE.



It's a jungle in outer space!





Suit Up For Your Favorite Video Game ... **ATARI COSTUME CONTEST**

Imagine strolling into your local arcade to find a General Patton look-alike hunched over the controls of **BATTLEZONE™**. Or rubbing elbows with a silver mylar space cadet at an all-night **SPACE INVADERS™** party. Or tearing around the track of **NIGHT DRIVER®** against cousin Stan, who is wearing a grease-spattered **NASCAR** jumpsuit ...

It's all part of a growing trend that says, "Hey, if I'm going to really get into my favorite video games, I might as well look the part, too!"

Some of the ATARI Game Club members are really going all out to perfect costumes that make their favorite video games even more fun. Some of the best video game parties are becoming costume parties, too.

If this sounds like fun to you, we'll make it even more fun by offering prizes for really outstanding costumes. Send us photos of you and your friends dressed in full ATARI splendor, and if we judge your photo worthy of being published in Atari Age, we'll send you a terrific mystery prize.

Remember, your costume should be practical as well as great-looking. After all, how can you repel an alien invasion in a hot, cumbersome space suit that obstructs your vision? Or blow away an outlaw with a holster that snags your joystick? Got the idea ...?

So get together with your friends and throw a home video game costume party. And suggest to your local arcade operator that he include prizes for costumes in his next tournament.

By the way, rumor has it that George Dakota has an absolutely incredible King Arthur costume he wears to play **WARLORDS™**. We'll try to get a photo for the next issue.

Send your pix to:
ATARI COSTUME CONTEST, c/o
ATARI Game Club, P.O. Box AGC, Half
Moon Bay, CA 94019.

*Indicates trademark of Taito America Corp.

Announcing . . .

THE ATARI COIN-OP HALL OF FAME

The ATARI folks have been keeping record books for some time now, and some of the achievements are really mind-boggling. Can you imagine playing for 35 hours? Can you just imagine trying to stand in one place for that long? Whoa!

But all of these achievements have been verified by the store operators. Every time a really great score is logged in, the hero receives a great-looking certificate and a special gift.

Imagine telling your grandchildren ... "Back when times were really tough, back when it was just man versus machine, I decided one day that I'd teach this game called **MISSILE COMMAND™** a real lesson ..." In case you think you've got a prize-winning score, ask your game location operator how to submit it. If your operator doesn't know how to verify your score, have him call the ATARI Mail-Ing Department.

Here are the scores to beat:

ASTEROIDS™

Current World Champ. . . . Rick Larson
Age 24
Played at Family Book Trader, Inc.
West Palm Beach, Florida
May 2/3, 1981

Time 34 hours, 55 minutes
Score 21,184,000

Runner-up Douglas J. Ede
Age 20
Played at Charlie's Arcade
Salt Lake City, Utah
February 28, 1981

Time 33 hours, 39 minutes
Score 17,000,000

MISSILE COMMAND™

Current World Champ. . . . Jody Bowles
Age 27
Played at Filling Station Eatery
Pensacola, Florida
April 27/28, 1981

Time 30 hours; 0 minutes
Score 41,399,845

Runner-up Edward Trudeau
Age ?
Played at Just Fun
Holyoke, Massachusetts
February 24, 1981

Time 6 hours, 0 minutes
Score 6,373,305

BATTLEZONE™

Current World Champ. . . . Brian Olson
Age 18
Played at Voyager I
Madison, Wisconsin
April 17, 1981

Time 3 hours, 30 minutes
Score 3,010,000

THE ATARI HOME VIDEO HALL OF FAME

Think you're really good at one or more of the Video Computer System games? Can you tally 200,000 or more at **SPACE INVADERS™** with one hand tied behind your back? Can you beat the computer at **BASKETBALL** by 10 points almost every time? Can you rack up 864 at **BREAKOUT®** in one ball with the small paddle?

Let us know your greatest scores with your favorite ATARI home video games. If you can, send a photo of the TV screen, showing your super score. And, of course, send us a photo of yourself.

Just to get the ball rolling, we'll inaugurate Christopher Grislak for his 251,000 **SPACE INVADERS** achievement ...

VIDEO COMPUTER SYSTEM HALL OF FAME

Christopher Grislak 251,000
SPACE INVADERS
Game #1, Difficulty A

Who's next?

*Indicates trademark of Taito America Corp.



BY GEORGE

Stocks? Bonds? Real estate tax shelters? Forget 'em! "The ATARI Video Computer System must be the best investment I ever made," proclaims Club Member James Newman of North Tonawanda, New York. "That TV commercial with all the baby sitters in the neighborhood trying to get a job at your house so they can play ATARI games—that is exactly the way it is with me. Keep up the good work!"

Are you nuts, too? "I'm glad to see someone's finally organized a club for ATARI nuts like myself. I started my collection over two years ago. Right now I have all the cartridges that ATARI's come up with ... and I'm holding my breath waiting for the newest creations," writes Club Member Dennis Roth from Lincoln, Nebraska. Note to Dennis: the official ATARI Game Club™ way to show impatience is not breath holding—it's pacing back and forth. Pacing is good exercise and much easier on the lungs.

More fun to compete dept: We've had numerous inquiries about ATARI tournaments and contests. Seems that Club Members like Shawn Knaggs of Phoenix, Arizona can hardly wait to show their skill with a joystick. Good news for Shawn and all the rest of you—in the next issue of Atari Age, I'll tell you all about the 1981 International World Championship ASTEROIDS™ Tournament ... and how you can uphold the honor of the ATARI Game Club by entering and bagging a prize.

Speaking of ASTEROIDS ... Looks like ASTEROIDS is the game we're all waiting for—and it's a beauty. I've had the pleasure of testing one of the prototype cartridges and—take it from George—it's a blast!

Now you're probably too busy playing video games, but maybe you could find a few minutes to write me a letter. Tell me about your greatest scores on your favorite ATARI cartridge. Tell me about how you and your friends have the best video game arcades in your neighborhood. I'll print all the letters I have room for in this column. I may even print your photo (if you don't look too mean!).

Back to my ASTEROIDS game. See you next issue...

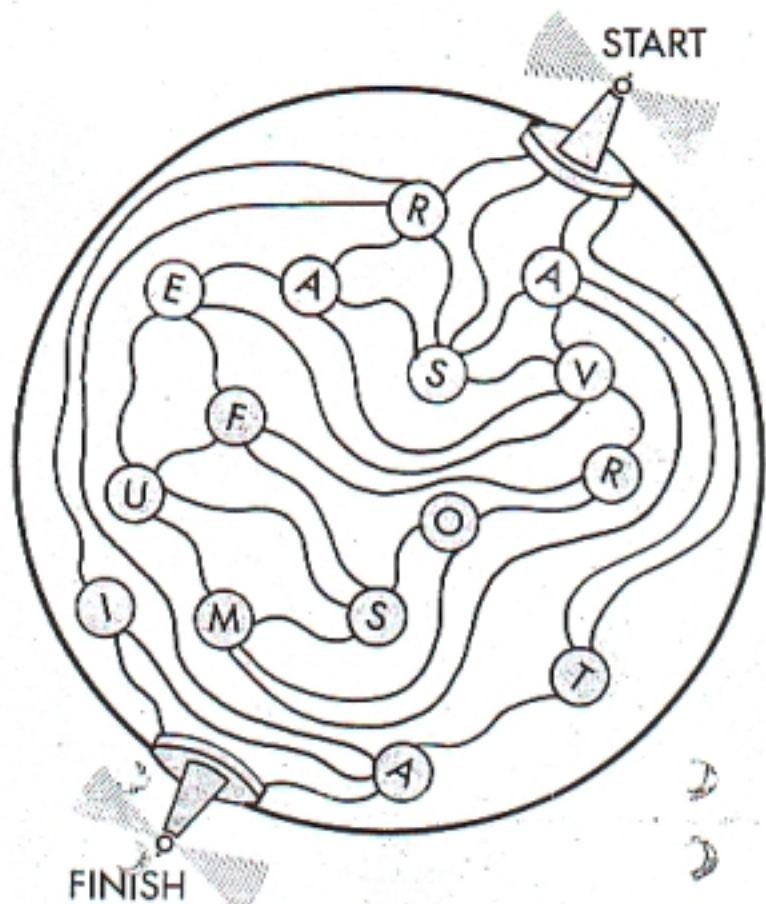
George

WHO WILL BE THE WORLD CHAMPS? COMING THIS FALL: THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL ASTEROIDS™ TOURNAMENT

Look for details and special registration information in the next issue of Atari Age.

CLUB HOUSE QUIZ

MYSTERY OF THE PLANET OF THE SPACE INVADERS*



Ever since the warlike SPACE INVADERS found that the loyal defenders of the planet Earth, particularly the elite strike force known as the ATARI Game Club, are tougher and more resourceful than they are, they've been worried that the ATARI Game Club members might strike back against their home planet.

So the SPACE INVADERS fortified their home planet with two mighty laser turrets and a cunning series of interconnecting canals. They pretend that they're not afraid, but the letters on the canal substations give them away.

IF YOU TRAVEL FROM START TO FINISH THROUGH THE CANAL SYSTEM, STOPPING AT EACH SUBSTATION ONCE (AND ONLY ONCE), THE LETTERS WILL SPELL OUT A FOUR-WORD SENTENCE THAT REVEALS THE SPACE INVADERS' GREATEST WORRY.

Can you figure out the sentence? (Hint: the word "ATARI" is in the sentence.) If you can, send your answer in and we'll put it in a hat with the other

correct answers. Ten lucky winners will be drawn, and each will receive an ASTEROIDS™ Game Program™ cartridge and an ASTEROIDS tee-shirt. Entry form is on the Clubhouse Store Order Form.

Your entries must be received by September 1, 1981. The winners will be notified immediately, and their names will be published in the next issue of Atari Age.

CONGRATULATIONS

A big ATARI Game Club salute to Matthew L. Border, Louisville, Kentucky, winner of last issue's CLUBHOUSE QUIZ. By identifying the eight ATARI playfields correctly, Matthew L. Border's name went into the hat and came out the lucky winner of four great ATARI Video Computer System™ cartridges—MAZE CRAZE™, DODGE 'EM™, PELÉ'S SOCCER™, and VIDEO CHECKERS™.

*Indicates trademark of Taito America Corp.



ATARI TOURNAMENT HOTLINE

Tell Us Where The Action Is

Do you know about ATARI tournaments—either for the coin-operated ATARI games or for the Video Computer System™ games—in your home town?

We're happy to announce these tournaments in Atari Age—whether they are big video game extravaganzas, or just down home shoot-outs with a few ornery SPACE INVADERS.*

If you've got enough lead time, we'll publish advance information and help you round up contestants. Remember that ATARI Age is quarterly, so we need information about three months in advance.

Once the tournament is over, we'll be happy to publish the winners' names and scores—even publish their photos if you send us good, sharp black & white prints. Send the info to:
ATARI TOURNAMENT HOTLINE, c/o
ATARI Game Club, P.O. Box AGC, Half
Moon Bay, CA 94019.

*Indicates trademark of Taito America Corp.

Atari Offers \$50,000 in cash prizes...

(Continued from page 1)

tion, you'll see some of the world's best Tournament Soccer®, Tournament Eight Ball™, Tournament Mark Darts™, and Tournament Hockey™ players battle it out for top honors.

To enter, just check in at your local coin-operated video game establishments. Many operators will sponsor their own neighborhood tournaments this summer. These local events will be announced by "tournament location" posters displayed in the game locations and elsewhere around town. Many operators will be awarding "free entry" passes (worth \$80 apiece!) to the top scorers in these neighborhood tournaments.

In case you have trouble getting information in your area, or if you have any questions concerning the tournament, ATARI has set up a Tournament Hotline. Just call 800-426-8897 and ask for details. This call is free.

No event is complete without a mystery, and the ATARI World Championship is no exception. Because not until September 1 will anyone know which ATARI games will be involved in the finals. So take no chances—brush up on 'em all!

Just in case you're worried about the competition, here's good news. No ATARI employees (otherwise known as "ringers") will be allowed to play. And neither will George Dakota, not that he would get past the first round anyway.

CONFESSIONS OF A VIDEO GAME ADDICT

(Continued from page 1)

"Hey, nerd nose," he said, "you just made me lose one of my best games ever."

I said I was very sorry and offered him a quarter to replace the game.

"The quarter's not the point, micro-mind," he snapped. "You just kept me from getting my initials in the top ten."

He snorted and walked away. Jeez, I thought, what a sore loser. "It's only a game!" I shouted after him. Boy, was I wrong!

Uncle Max came back and said it would be another ten minutes for the mondo combo and did I think I could beat him at ASTEROIDS.

This, by the way, was the first time for both of us. Our quarters went pretty fast. But by the time we left the Pepperoni Palace three hours later, we had the hang of the game.

"That was really fun!" said Uncle Max as he dropped me at home.

"Betcha I can take you three out of five next Saturday."

"OK, but no fair practicing," I said with my fingers crossed a little behind my back.

"Pick you up at noon," said Uncle Max.

That next week marked the beginning of a new phase in my life. Every day, after finishing my afternoon paper route, I stopped by the Diesel Diner for a game or two of ASTEROIDS.

The next weekend, Uncle Max and I headed back to the Pepperoni Palace. Max said I could go first, and I scored 61,000.



"You sure you haven't been practicing?" said Uncle Max, who proceeded to rack up 63,000 his first turn. By the time we left, we both had topped 100,000 at least once.

Three weeks later, we both made the "top ten" list on the ASTEROIDS game at the Palace. Just about that time, my troubles started.

My parents knew I was playing a lot of ASTEROIDS. Actually, they thought it was swell that I was getting really good at something.

"But everything in moderation," said my Mom. "Don't spend so much time playing ASTEROIDS that you don't have time left for homework and little league."

Moderation, indeed! Problem was, I was getting too good. In the beginning, a game took a few minutes. Easy to sneak one or two in. But now, I'd tie up the ASTEROIDS machine at the Diesel Diner for up to an hour when I was hot.

Since I was expected home im-

mediately after my paper route, I had to start phoning in excuses.

"Don't tell me your bike had another flat tire."

"Could be a case of sabotage by rival newsboys!" And so on.

Anybody could see it coming. The only question was when. As it turned out, it was 5:30 on a Tuesday evening. I was in the sweetest of grooves, I had just passed 300,000 and I felt like I could go on forever. Spin... blast... accelerate... score! This would be my finest game of ASTEROIDS.



"So this is the way you help poor old Mrs. Garfinkle recycle her newspapers," came a voice from behind. Dad's voice.

I was caught red-handed. Busted. Grounded for a month and taken cold-turkey off ASTEROIDS.

It really wasn't as painful as I thought it would be. Mom and Dad were very nice about it. My friends didn't rub it in. But what actually made life reasonable were the visits from Uncle Max.

Now Uncle Max had been having problems fitting ASTEROIDS into his life, too. He had gotten almost as good as I had and was having trouble finding time to play. So he bought an ATARI Video Computer System™ game and began playing at home.

Except for one evening a week. That evening he came to visit my family. After dinner, he smuggled his Video Computer System into the family room and we locked the door. We played a lot of ASTEROIDS at first. Then we discovered SPACE INVADERS*, MISSILE COMMAND™, and a lot of other great games.



Thinking back, I realize that we didn't fool my Mom and Dad for a second. They knew exactly what was going on behind the locked door of the family room. How am I sure of this? Because the day after our first session, Mom hung a needlepoint motto over the television set.

The motto reads, "Moderation."

Alex Quiller

*Indicates trademark of Taito America Corp.

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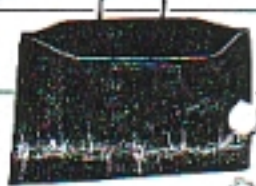
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