

RICHARD ROUNDTREE • POLAROID INSTANT CAMERA • ARCADE GAMES

# REMINISCE

STORIES THAT SHAPE OUR LIVES

EXTRA

INVENTIONS

WHAT WILL  
WE THINK  
OF NEXT?



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**ATARI CO-FOUNDER** (and the man behind Chuck E. Cheese restaurants) Nolan Bushnell changed arcade gaming with electronic pingpong 50 years ago. A timeline of Pong's roots is on page 36.

## 24 WHAT IF WE TRIED THIS?



A look at inventions, with excerpts from *Brainstorms* and *Mindfarts* by Tom Connor and Jim Downey.

## 34 COIN SLOT JUNKIES

Arcades gave kids a place to go, where skill was all in the wrist.

## 8 SPOTLIGHT

**10 TIME CAPSULE** 1972: Air Hockey, garage band, wafflestomper and *American Pie*

**11 TRIVIAL PURSUITS** Olympic gold medalists

**12 WORD WISE** Glitter rock

**14 FRONT & CENTER** Richard Roundtree was the coolest private eye on screen

## 16 OUR LIVES

**18 GROWING UP** East Fourth Street in Brooklyn

**20 AT WORK** Riding to the sawmill with Dad

**21 OUR HEROES** Newly enlisted man gets uniform, haircut and citizenship

**22 TRUE LOVE** At the drive-in—with her parents

## 39 RETRO REPLAY

**40 INNOVATIONS** Polaroid's revolutionary camera

**42 VINTAGE ADS** Classic timekeepers

**44 BRUSH WITH FAME** Sitting down with the legendary Ella Fitzgerald

**46 KEEPSAKES** Knitted sweaters kindle warm memories

## 49 BACK IN TIME

**50 PICTURES FROM THE PAST** Welcome, Baby!

**52 NAME THAT CAR** Burgundy beauty comes with some assembly required

**54 MOTORING MEMORIES** Bike trip to Mexico

**58 LASTING IMPRESSION** California dreamer

### IN EVERY ISSUE

**4** Editor's Note

**6** Tell Us Your Story!

**53** Crossword Puzzle

**56** Contributor guidelines, answers, find Hattie's hatpins

### ON THE COVER

Charles Steinlauf's contraption puts the whole family to work in 1939.

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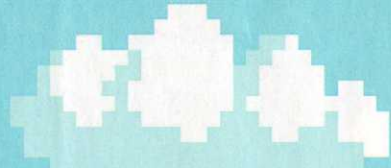
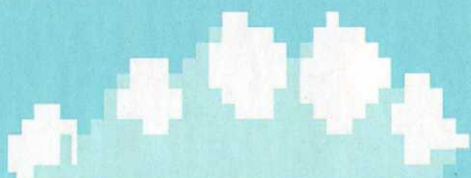


DAYS AT THE ARCADE WERE  
AN EXCITING MIX OF DINGS, PINGS,  
GONGS AND PONG.

# COIN SLOT JUNKIES



BACKGROUND THROUGHOUT: ROBUART/SHUTTERSTOCK



## PINBALL FLIPOUT

Pop hands out nickels, and she conquers the playfield.

BY CHERYL MILLER • OAKHURST, NJ

**D**o you want to go to the arcade?" my grandfather asked one day in the summer of 1960. Pop, as we called him, didn't need to ask twice. I ran out to his Plymouth Belvedere as fast as my little 5-year-old legs could carry me.

It was a short ride to Leon's Arcade at the Long Branch Boardwalk. My older brother, Glenn, was already there with his friends, having ridden his bike to the pier. Leon's was always crowded and I stood with Pop at the entrance, drinking it in.

What a din! Music from the antique carousel swirled in the background, accompanied by the constant thud from the Skee-Ball machines. Most enticing were the clicking flippers, thumping bumpers, and chiming bells from the many pinball machines.

I watched intently as Glenn played on one of them, mesmerized by the colorful art on the playfield and backbox,

as well as the deftness with which he controlled that little silver ball.

"Teach me to play!" I said. Glenn gave me a few pointers, but soon got tired of me hanging around. "Go play on your own—that's how you'll learn." I got a handful of nickels from Pop and dragged a soda crate to one of the machines. I climbed up and played until the coins ran out. Pop smiled when I asked for more. The afternoon flew by while I tried machine after machine, until Pop finally said, "It's time to go now."

I played as often as I could at arcades all along the Jersey Shore. Sometimes I could wheedle Dad into renting a machine to put in our house

for several weeks. That really boosted my popularity with the neighborhood kids!

My skills were put to the test in 1977 when I entered a pinball tournament at Monmouth College (now University) in West Long Branch while I was a student there. I was the only woman in the competition, and much to the chagrin of the guys in the game room, I bested the field and won a trophy.

Nowadays, you can often find my husband and me at the Silverball Museum Arcade in Asbury Park, where we have VIP memberships to indulge our mutual passion for pinball.

Whenever I see a youngster standing on a plastic step stool, flipping away, I can't help offering encouragement and a pointer: The more you play, the better you'll get.



PIXEL ICONS THROUGHOUT: ARTUR BALYTSKY/SHUTTERSTOCK



## New Life for Old Games

**MY FAMILY MOVED** to New Hope, Minnesota, in 1981 to manage the Pheasant Park Apartments. The complex had an arcade, and when I got my allowance, I'd rush down to play video games. I knew when Ernie, the arcade technician, would be there—he'd give me free credits on Asteroids and Donkey Kong. The 30th anniversary of Pac-Man in 2010 sparked memories of that time, and I tracked down a refurbished machine. Now I own several, which I've updated. The fun of restoring these games is seeing new generations enjoy them.

**MONICA NORBIE • RICKMAN, TN**



## Find Her at the Mall

**WHEN WE PICKED UP SUBS** at Cellini's, I begged Dad for change to play arcade games. We had Atari at home, but when I was 9, there was something about sliding a quarter in the cabinet and trying to beat the high score for Pac-Man or Space Invaders. In 1981, Fun Factory opened at the Lycoming Mall in Pennsdale. It was my favorite place to be in middle and high school. I earned tokens for good grades, and traded the tickets I won for a huge rainbow comb for my back pocket.

**Laurie Cressman • Muncy, PA**

### From Pinball Pings to Electronic Pong

**Pong breathed new life into arcades in the early 1970s, until the home version debuted in '75. The game grew out of a series of advances that began in the 1950s.**

■ **1951:** Ralph H. Baer, an engineer at Loral Electronics in the Bronx, NY, floats the idea of playing games on a TV set, but his boss rejects it. Baer won't return to the concept until 1966.

■ **1952:** A.S. Douglas makes a tic-tac-toe computer game as part of his doctoral thesis at Cambridge University in the U.K.

■ **1958:** At Brookhaven National Laboratories, William Higinbotham creates Tennis for Two, a computer game. Players control the action with buttons and rotating dials.

■ **1961:** MIT students Martin Graetz, Stephen Russell and Wayne Wiitanen develop the pioneering game Spacewar! that will inspire a generation of programmers.

■ **May 1972:** Magnavox introduces Odyssey, the first home video game console, based on a prototype by Ralph Baer. It features a pingpong game.

■ **November 1972:** The newly formed Atari puts its first Pong arcade game, devised by co-founder Nolan Bushnell and engineer Allan Alcorn, in a bar in Sunnyvale, CA. The game is so popular that it breaks down days later after too many quarters jam the coin box.

**-MARY-LIZ SHAW**



## CHASING NORTH STAR

In the search for a game, Dad and son make a big discovery.

BY MICHAEL HALE • CAMBRIDGE SPRINGS, PA

**M**y father, Randy, often talked about how much he loved playing pinball at the arcade when he was growing up. Finding one of those games from his past always seemed like the ultimate gift for him, and when I finally learned the name of his favorite—North Star—I began my search.

A few weeks later, I found the North Pole-themed game through an online collector community, and my brother and I went to pick it up. As we loaded it into the truck, the seller said, “Just so you know, this won’t be your last game.” I didn’t tell him it was a gift.

It was the first time I’d ever looked inside a pinball machine. I touched up the paint, restoring the game to its original luster, and got everything in perfect working order. We surprised Dad a few days before his birthday. He recognized the game when he saw the corner of the cabinet.

He stared in disbelief at the machine, which he hadn’t seen in 50 years. I reminded him

that he’d told me about North Star a few weeks earlier. He pressed the start button—the ding of the bells as the ball rolled through its first switch brought a huge smile to his face. After playing a few more balls, Dad stopped and said, “Now, did I ever tell you the name of my second favorite pinball machine?”

That was a little over a year ago. Dad has seven machines now, including three that he played in the local arcade when he was a teenager in the late ’60s. I’ve collected more than a dozen.

We enjoy this hobby, as well as the online communities of complete strangers willing to help one another. We’re still hunting for Dad’s elusive second favorite, Tropic Isle. ●

