by Rafi Guroian

light onto the

The iridescent

a game of

there were no

number located

bar paid

inspection,

determination.   His

teeth, he

What the

man as well),

would change

infamous pieces of

computers and

business.

The screen flashed for a split second, pouring forth turquoise

man's face as if the machine was suddenly alive and vibrant.

images on the screen steadily moved back and forth, simulating

tennis.   Granted, there were no rackets, but solid rectangles;

balls, but a square blob; there was no net, save the scoring

at the top-center of the screen.   Patrons of the cramped, musty

little attention, for the man was not making any scene.   Closer

however, revealed a steady, unchanging expression of

eyebrows knitted, his tongue pressed firmly against his front

looked as if he were practicing some sort of intense meditation.

people sitting at their tables, drinking beer (and probably the

did not know was that this game was part of a revolution that

their lives forever.   Pong would become one of the most

computer gaming history that not only pushed the market of

technology forward, but drove it into a multi billion dollar

Twenty years later, we sit in a world that has not just undergone

a change,

in the office,

chiefly to

beginning of the

began as early

will never

agree on who

shunned in the

be found in

programmed

ironic that

waste of time,

to create some

computerized games

student of the

electronic

created to be

exhibit the

had just

know that from

has emerged.

computer

being the godfather

truest sense of

new "game" of

but rather a transformation in the technology we see everyday

and on TV.   It seems ironic that this transformation is due

something as simple as the computer game.

Contrary to popular belief, Pong was not, in fact, the true

video/computer game revolution.   Electronic games actually

as the late sixties and early seventies.   Just as it seems that we

know for certian who invented baseball, no one can seem to

actually made the first electronic game.   Games were often

professional work place (the only spot where computers could

those days), and there is no telling who the person was that

those first simple games of hangman and tic-tac-toe.   It is

although this type of programming was frowned upon as a

today, one of the first things a programmer must learn is how

sort of a simple game.   This is testimony to the fact that

are no longer a "naughty child in the corner," but the favorite

class.

It is generally accepted that "Space War" was the first true

game, created by Steve Russell.   Oddly enough, it wasn't even

played by bored teenagers.   Rather, it was developed at MIT to

capabilities of a new mainframe the technology department

purchased.   Regardless of how the industry began, we now

those humble beginning a driving force in today's technology

Some say that one man is chiefly responsible for the video and

game craze that we see today: Nolan Bushnell.   Credited as

of video gaming, Bushnell is ironically a businessman to the

the word.   When Bushnell was invited to a demonstration of a

video tennis, nothing would ever remain the same.   He would

go on to buy the

legend in video

become a mass

team.   To

invented until the

and

process.   No one

simply riding

gaming.   At

image; computer

typical layman did

not uncommon

the person was

generated

not required.

almost

development

what is to

Atari, would

new machine

Apple came

people began

One such person

His wife,

time on the

rights to that game, name it Pong, and witness the birth of a

game history: Atari.   Pong—simple, yet addictive—would

market craze.

Many of the original arcade machines were built by a very small

complicate matters further, the microchip would not be

late seventies.   As a result, all of the machines were hard-wired

soldered together—a painstakingly precise and complex

knew what lay ahead in the path of video games; everyone was

a wave of fortune for as long as they could.

The public didn't really know how to react to this new entity of

the time, televisions were the only means of generating an

monitors would not come for some time.   As a result, the

not have a firm grasp on the concept of "video gaming." It was

for people to ask how the TV station in town knew what game

playing.   It was difficult to understand that an image could be

locally, within a case, and that an antenna and TV station were

To present-day computer enthusiasts, this type of story seems

absurd, but it's true.   We have come so far in our technological

that we sometimes forget that fact, which can only foreshadow

come in the future.

In time, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, two defectors from

"borrow" some parts from the old company and put together a

dubbed the "Apple." Apple Computer was born. Along with the

much interest in this new age of "personal computing." Many

to take it upon themselves to learn how to program at home.

was Ken Williams, who mortgaged his house to buy an Apple II.

Roberta, had been playing a text-adventure game in her spare

wrote a story

game to her

applications for the

when Roberta

(something that had

In 1979

game featured a

illustrated

the

The name of the

Roberta's

sold more

company never

would become

stores to buy

and Police

literally nothing

Henson and

game

upon a gold

Other companies,

similar success.

forward, and

companies stretched

new computer, and began to develop a game of her own.   She

line, drew some diagrams, and presented the idea of creating a

husband.   At the time, Ken was interested in database

computer, and considered games mere child's play. However,

suggested using pictures along with words for the game

never been done before), Ken was intrigued by the challenge.

Online Systems was founded by the Williams, and their debut

technology that had never been perfected until that point: an

adventure game called, "Mystery House."

Mystery House would sell 15,000 copies and make $167,000 for

Williams, allowing them to move to Coarsegold, CA in 1980.

company was changed to Sierra On-Line, and in the same year

second game, "The Wizard and the Princess" was released and

than sixty thousand copies.

The pace for Sierra's success was set at that point, and the

looked back.   Games to come out from under the Sierra label

household words.   Kids would flock to electronic specialty

King's Quest, Gold Rush, Mixed Up Mother Goose, Space Quest,

Quest.   Sierra had created a million dollar business out of

except the imagination of one woman.   In time, people like Jim

companies like Disney would approach Sierra to make computer

versions of their movies.   The Williams had obviously stumbled

mine.

Importantly, the Williams were not a diamond in the ruff.

such as Broderbund, Interplay, and Infocom were enjoying

The founders of the computer gaming world had stepped

technology would now begin to take off.   Each of the

computers to their limits.   During the early-to-mid 1980's,

computer

and

Although

extremely good use of

entertainment, much in the

throughout

graphics became

late 1980's

the same games

Redundancy was a fear

coincidence that VGA

came out just

and discover that

adventure

accomplishment in

hand-painted

have

today as "petty

been met,

increase

upwards of 20

needed.   That

bring it to the

applications

developers could fit

monitors were available in two colors (green and black, or white black), four colors (called CGA), and sixteen colors (called EGA). limited in these resources, the gaming companies made them—so much so that games became a form of tradition of the Nintendo and Atari, which were now in full force America's homes.

As computer games grew in popularity, a need for better clear.   Sixteen colors had sufficed for some time, but as the dawned upon the gaming world, people were growing tired of redone over and over again with the same graphics. that many gaming companies could not shake.   It is no monitors (supporting up to two hundred and fifty-six) colors in time.   The gaming world would undergo a drastic change it had an indefinite number of years left in its life.   Brilliant games became the choice of the day.

In 1990 Sierra would release King's Quest V, a major the industry.   The game was a milestone in its showcasing of art work and superior audio on a personal computer. Who would thought that such a jaw dropping game would be scoffed at beginner's work?"

Now that the gaming world's demand for better graphics had another problem began to emerge.   Games were starting to exponentially in size.   As a result, gamers were finding diskettes in a box just for a single game.   A new medium was new medium became CD-ROM, and games were the first to computer.   For quite some time, in fact, games were the only that made any good use of the medium. With a CD-ROM,

addition, CD's

CD's high

into the

their

almost entirely,

computers to their

actual

Towson State

game because it

outrageous." As

better computers

stepped up to bat.

that is the case,

issue is resolved,

appear in a

with in

problem with

last year, the

exponentially.

time, and there

seem to repeat

creeping upon us,

by the

playing was

he did know

as many as six hundred diskettes onto one Compact Disc.   In

introduced us to a new entity on computers: video.   With the

capacity, games could now incorporate Full Motion Video (FMV)

game.   People could literally watch and interact with movies on

computer screen.

As the CD format for computers began to replace diskettes

developers now had the resources to once again push the

limits.   "Games always seemed to stay one step ahead of the

hardware," says Matt Bloch, a Computer Science major at

University in Maryland.   "I can remember getting angry at a

required some horsepower from my machine that was truly

complaints like this hit companies, the need for faster and

increased.   And so the Pentium and PowerPC processors

Some claim that history repeats itself in an endless cycle.   If

the computer industry is testimony to that fact.   When one

another will always creep up; these issues always seem to

circular pattern.   The number of colors on a monitor was dealt

1989; the issue of data storage was addressed in 1993.   The

horsepower has been addressed in recent years.   In just the

number of colors a monitor can display has been increased

Now, games are starting to ship with more than 8 CD's at a

is a demand for a new storage medium.   History does, indeed,

itself.   Not only are we faced with a new storage medium

but this medium's push has been powered almost exclusively

computer game industry.

The man in the bar could not have predicted that what he was

part of a new revolution that would affect his life forever.   What

modern day that we

neglect to

succeed and

we will often

example,

simply because

discount for "fun

games are

computer games so

entertainment.   To

produce better

sit today with

quench the thirst of

an

was that he was having fun.   It seems all to often in this

still discount fun and games as just that.   What we sometimes

realize is that our fun and games are often what drive us to

achieve greater heights. Although we may not like to admit it,

strive to improve something that we enjoy working with.   For

movies have been given extrordinary budgets for production,

the audience demands it.   As a result, those things we often

and games" often become shining achievements.   Computer

testimony to that fact.   The public has enjoyed playing

much that it has demanded a hgher and higher standard of

be able to provide that standard, companies are forced to

computers.   The entire scenario has snowballed, and here we

our Power Mac G3s and Mac OS 8.   Computer games may

young fourteen-year-old boys, but they also quench the thirst of

adolescent industry, growing exponentially each year.