Issue #13 – August 2, 2025

Start Menu

Loading Screen

Trust me, I really *will* run out of autobiographical topics to write about soon. I've already featured my game collection (issue #3), a retrospective on the VGG podcast (issue #4), all about my interactive fiction and text adventures (issue #7), and my *Lunatix Online* and BBS games (issue #10).

This week, I'm going back to the beginning to write about my early game development efforts on the TRS-80 (Tandy Radio Shack) CoCo 2 and 3 (short for Color Computer). After that, I'm doing something I never thought I would. I'm going to play at least a little of *every* one of those early games, writing my impressions (sometimes in real time) as I go along.

This is mostly for preservation and posterity. I want to write about this collection of my old games while I can still remember enough about the time I spent making them. Who knows? Maybe it'll be a fun read.

Recent Events

Even though I'm not including mini-reviews this week (this issue is packed and arguably far too long as it is), I want to keep up at least the pretense of it being a sort-of normal issue. To that end, here are a few news items in the world of video games.

Sony is suing Tencent over the Horizon IP.

Several months ago, I came across social media posts about *Light of Motiram* with people questioning how the developers were getting away with something with cover art that looked very much like the *Horizon* games (*Zero Dawn* and *Forbidden West*). The answer, it turns out, is that maybe they aren't.

When it was discussed on *Kinda Funny Games Daily*, they also noted from another source that Tencent had approached Sony with the idea for a Horizon spin-off or mobile game or something, which was rejected. It sounds like plans proceeded anyway, with only minor tweaks to change the name.

These aren't "fun" stories, but I'm interested in seeing how this turns out.

Source:
https://www.reuters.com/legal/litigation/sony-sues-tencent-allegedly-ripping-off-horizon-video-games-2025-07-28/

GameFile has a longer write-up about this, with side-by-side comparisons between *Horizon* and *Light of Motiram*. The article includes several other comparisons as well.

Source:
https://www.gamefile.news/p/sony-sues-tencent-horizon-light-of-motiram

EA won't charge $80 for games, for now.

This is non-news, really, but maybe another sign that publishers aren't as confident in hiking the launch price of new games another $10 (less than five years after the jump from $60 to $70) as they seemed to be (by some reports) only a few weeks ago.

Microsoft also recently reversed course on the decision to release their upcoming game *The Outer Worlds 2* at the same inflated price.

Source:
https://kotaku.com/battlefield-6-price-70-80-ea-preorder-black-ops-7-1851787292

==============================

A new Nintendo Direct partner showcase.

The presentation ran for a little under thirty minutes and covered quite a few games coming to the Switch and Switch 2 later this year and in 2026. I'm not a fan of rating these showcases, and I cringe a little when other people do it, because the main metric used is always just "how many of these games excite me?" and not every game is for every person.

For me, nothing in the showcase moved me to start looking around for stores or sites that might have a Switch 2 in stock. I'm likely to get one eventually (I have some FOMO over *Donkey Kong Bananza*, and it would be better to play *Metroid Prime 4* on updated hardware), but for me, the showcase was game after game I'm either not interested in at all (Monster Hunter, Hyrule Warriors, Just Dance 2026, FC 2026, Apex Legends, Katamari, PVZ, Madden NFL 26) or can get on other platforms (Octopath Traveler 0, Borderlands 4, The Adventures of Elliot, Hela) or have already played in some form already (Yakuza, Persona 3, Star Wars: Outlaws).

From *Hela* in the July Nintendo Direct Partner Showcase.

CoCo Code and BASIC Beginnings

It must have been 1987 when I first started programming games. In VGGN issue #7, I mentioned a little about this in my write-up about interactive fiction. It's possible I'd already dabbled a little on Apple computers in school. I know I did at some point, but it may have been later. After nearly 40 years, I just don't remember.

The TRS-80 CoCo 2 was one of the most affordable home computers on the market, and that's what I went for over other popular options like Commodore 64 and the TI-99/4A (which, incidentally, was the first computer I ever used and learned a bit of BASIC for).

Not a CoCo 2 but this is about the best I could get from AI.

Somebody introduced me to a magazine called The Rainbow, so named because it was all about the Color Computer.

From there, I found out about T&D Subscription Software, which was a monthly service that would send you ten games and utilities on tape or disk each month. It's a business model that's unlikely to work today, given that everything is online and abundant. Back then, though, the closest thing to the internet was dialing into a BBS, but even that wasn't something just everybody knew how to do or had the modem and software *to* do. That made a service like this appealing to CoCo enthusiasts and gamers.

T&D didn't create all the software they sold. It mostly came from amateur developers who would send in their own programs to sell.

Tom Dykema (owner of T&D) would review those submissions and make an offer to buy them outright. This wasn't a commission, and no royalties were involved. Selling a program meant T&D bought the copyright and could distribute it when and if they wanted.

As a (very) poor high school student who had traditionally made money just in the summers by mowing a few neighbors' lawns, this was a dream scenario. I was going to write these games regardless, so selling them just made it all the better. Plus, it meant my stuff would get out there to an audience who might actually play and enjoy it; a definite win/win.

This was what I did in high school. I was an introverted nerd from a small gossipy town with no "real" job or car or disposable cash, so it wasn't like I was out there going on dates, playing sports, or pursuing any social interests. I wrote games. From time to time, I'd hang out at a friend's house, maybe sleep over and watch movies, but I was usually busy at my computer, just programming away.

It was like that until college in the fall of 1990, at which point I became too busy, was often hanging out with friends, and came out of my shell. It was great to be in a new place where nobody knew me as the nerdy shy kid, and even though I never stopped programming and making games, it wasn't something that dominated all my time anymore.

The first set of games I submitted to T&D were accepted, except for the misspelled "Antartic Adventure" which was my first text adventure. Rather than money, they offered me every back issue (on tape, since I didn't have a disk drive at the time), and I happily accepted. At some point I must have also gotten paid with a permanent free subscription too, but I forget.

The Business of Games

For those of you who grew up in the age of the internet, some of this may sound downright ridiculous, if not entirely made up. Yes, it was possible to put software on cassette tapes.

Cassette image found on eBay here.

A decent cassette player and the cord to connect it was a lot cheaper than a disk drive, although tapes were far less convenient. Not only did it take longer to save and load these programs from a tape, it was also very easy to accidentally overwrite your work unless you broke off the little protection nub at the top.

Of course, commercial software already came that way. I had a few unfortunate mishaps while working on games, though, until eventually I did get a disk drive. If you were to play a software cassette in a tape deck, it would sound like electronic scratching and screeching, just like the data transmitted over fax or modem sounds.

For those three years or so before I went away to college, I partnered with friends to form a little indie game company. My friend Frayne Black was a co-founder, and we called it "Biware Enterprises" because there were two of us. He had a CoCo 3, but he wasn't really a programmer. My brothers Jimmy and Charley helped with ideas. Another kid a couple years younger, LeRoy Cooksey, got involved briefly somehow. Then there was Kandi Stinson, who was also a bit younger. She mostly handled marketing as we began trying to publish and distribute games on our own. For a kid even younger than I was, she was legitimately good at that kind of stuff; a real knack for business.

computer whiz creating, selling own games

By TONY PIPPEN
Staff writer

— Mike Snyder, a senior at ▇▇▇▇▇▇ and a self-taught computer whiz, says if he ever rewrites the computer manual, he will make it more fun for the beginner.

Most beginners don't become as engrossed in the computer as Snyder did and very few learn to write their own programs or develop their own games.

Snyder's compulsion for computers started when he was about 13 years old. He borrowed his aunt's Texas Instruments home computer for a couple of days. He read the manual and was able to understand it.

"I'd been mowing lawns for a couple of years and later saved up and bought a Radio Shack computer," Snyder recalled. "I used all my free time to read programming manuals. A friend of mine knew of a magazine called Rainbow, that had articles about computers and computer games and advertisements from companies that accepted new games. I started creating my own games. I submitted them to a company advertised in the magazine called T&D Software in Holland, Mich. I sold five all at once in 1987."

Snyder's first games were what he called "just text adventures," but as he learned more about graphics he began creating better games with better graphics and by 1988 had sold about 15 games.

"They bought the entire copyrights to the games and paid me from $40 to $70 each."

As Snyder became more involved in graphics, he bought a better Radio Shack computer in February 1989 with better color graphic capabilities and began creating his games on disc drives.

He also invested in a Basic Compiler (which turns basic language to machine language).

"It made my games faster. I'd load up my basic program and my compiler would change it to machine language. I could create better, more complex games with better graphics."

By August 1989, Snyder had written a game that he believed was good enough to submit to a company in Toledo, Ohio, called Sportswear. This company is much more selective in the games it distributes.

Snyder's game was accepted and put into distribution. "I will receive 25 percent of the gross royalties, Snyder noted." His first game for Sportswear was titled "Eldus." Snyder explained that it involves a king searching through several worlds for the Pool of Life.

By the end of the year, Snyder had written another game titled "Gnomequest." It was accepted by Sportswear, but he had to make several revisions because the company wanted to feature it in its Rainbow magazine ads. They will appear from July through December of this year.

He then created "Gnomequest II," and it was accepted. He's already working on "Gnomequest III," and is reasonably sure it will also be accepted.

Snyder says he is an avid television watcher and often gets ideas for games from television or from friends. "Usually, I just make up games about things I just think of, he says."

"First I write down my ideas. Then I make a variable list and draw a map of everything. Then I look at everything and make data files. I usually program in basic, using different code words. It's kinda like writing a story, except in computer language."

In 1988, Snyder and two friends formed their own company, called Biware Enterprises. They first planned to sell their own games, but since Snyder spends a lot of time creating the games, they decided to submit them to other distributors. Snyder and Frayne Black are co-presidents of the company and Kandi Stinson handles the bookwork and writes various companies for information. "We all contribute and we all come up with ideas," Snyder said.

Snyder plans to attend college this fall. "I'm thinking of ▇▇▇▇▇ where I'll major in computer science," Snyder said. He also noted that he hopes his company doesn't dissolve while he's in college.

After college, he still wants to create video games, possibly for a larger company. "Whatever I do, it will still have to do with computers."

Snyder's computer connection hasn't been all fun and games.

Although he had only one semester of computer programming as a sophomore, he has garnered several awards in interscholastic meets while in high school, including about 10 first place trophies and several seconds and thirds at East Central University, Murray State College, Southeastern and others. He took second in general knowledge and third in advanced programming in competition with advanced computer students at Edmond in April 1989, sponsored by the Oklahoma Educational Microcomputer Association.

Snyder says if he works every day, he can finish programming a game in about a week, then he "debugs and polishes it" before offering it for sale.

Snyder is the son of ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ His two younger brothers, Jimmy and Charley, enjoy playing his games, but he says neither plans to follow in his footsteps and create his own.

Staff/Tony Pippen

Mike Snyder pulls up one of his games on a computer screen to check the graphics. This game, "Gnomequest III," will be submitted for sale when he completes it.

An area newspaper article from the spring of 1990. That was quite the hairstyle I had.

The Business – Continued

Once they were out of free software to offer, I started getting actual money from T&D for the games I sold them, though never a large amount for any one game. By then, our little software company was in full swing, so I was splitting the income with my partners. Most of the work – the programming and design – was done by yours truly. Even the four or five games credited to or co-credited to Frayne, Kandi, Leroy, my brothers, or the occasional other friend was probably 95% my work. I don't say that to diminish their involvement or boost my own. It's just the way things went.

I do remember Kandi doing a lot of the map, story, and puzzle design for *Destination Unknown*, a text adventure. She even came up with the name, although I realized later it was also the title of an early 80's song by a band called Missing Persons, so that might have had something to do with it.

I was cranking out a new game every one to three weeks, although as I've looked back over the years, it's no surprise. As interesting as they seemed at the time, most of them are unplayable by today's standards, if not by the standards even back then. There are a few good ideas here and there, but I was *very* amateur.

Mike Snyder

Dear Mike:
Thank you for your latest submission of software. I'm very sorry that it took so long for me to get back with you.

Here is my offer for your programs:

Break 2	$75
Rahul	$75
Eldus	$75
Gnome 1	$75
Gnome 2	$75
10 Adventures $200	($20 Each)
Total	$575

Please let me know as soon as possible. Also, please provide your phone number for me.

Sincerely,

Tom Dykema
Tom Dykema
President
T&D Software

An acceptance letter from T&D dated March 22, 1991.

Three of my games were published by SPORTSware before I later sold them to T&D. I'll write more about that later in this issue.

I don't know what happened to my copy of the physical manual for *Eldus*, but I still have the two for *Gnome Quest* and *Gnome Quest II*. I think the information is basically the same as what's available in the MANUAL.BAS files for each one, although I have them in archival plastic bags currently and prefer not to remove them now. These might be the only copies remaining in existence, although I did find a scan of an alternate version of the GQII manual here at the Color Computer Archive.
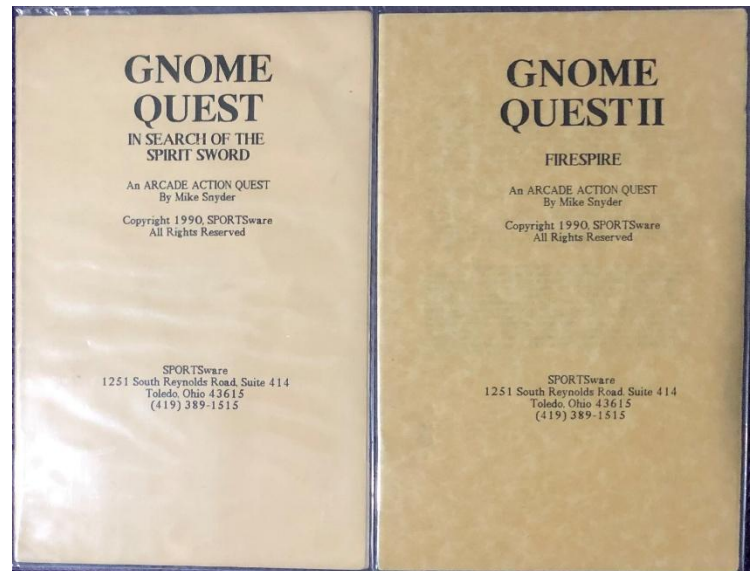
My friends and I had big hopes and dreams for Biware Enterprises, so much so that we even started stacking sub-brands under it for specific types of games. Arcade-style games would be marketed as Chrystalis Software, which I only remember because it's on the title screens for *On Target* and *Journey Up*.

We had a name for our text adventure brand and our simulation game brand, but I don't remember what they were. I want to say one of them was called "Prodek Software". If the word *Prodek* had any meaning to us, I don't recall what it was.

Even though it didn't last long after high school, it was a lot of fun while it did. How many people get to say they ran a prolific game development business as teenagers? Not many, I would guess.

CoCo Questing

I set up a website at cocoquest.com in March of 2000, shortly after I started searching for copies of all my CoCo games. When I went to college, I'd entrusted all my T&D tapes and disks to my youngest brother Charley, and I even left a lot of my computer hardware with him. A few years later, when I realized I should probably get it all back, it was long gone. I don't know what he did with it. He may have sold it all to somebody, pawned it, or who knows what. It was simply gone.

It's hard (for me) to believe that I set up that website less than 10 years after winding down my time as a CoCo game developer (which did in fact fizzle out when I went to college, as I feared it would). At the time, it already seemed nostalgic and a part of my distant past. Now, it's twenty-five years after *that*.

Sites like the TRS-80 Color Computer Archive at https://colorcomputerarchive.com/ have collections of magazines, game discs, all the T&D disks, T&D cover sheets, various manuals and guides, ROMs... pretty much everything CoCo-related a person might want or need.

A small number of my games are forever lost to time, though. That includes *Gnome Quest III*, which is the game that's pictured on a monitor in the newspaper article shown on the prior page. Most, fortunately, were published by T&D, and so people had copies.

I was even sent copies of *Monster Mash* and *The Entity*, which were two of my only self-published, self-distributed ones. Those are included in my collection on disks 9 and 10, respectively. Disk 10 is just called "msnyder0.dsk" in the zip file.

I never found *Space Ace* (no, not *that Space Ace*), my next big game after *Monster Mash* and another that was originally self-published. I'm sure I ended up selling it to T&D later, though, because I remember their acceptance letter called it "Space Race". Sadly, it and a few others may have been sold to T&D but never published.

Much later in this issue, I've included a review for *Space Ace* from *The Rainbow* (magazine). It might be the only thing that remains of it.

I also remember my game *Time Attack* would only work from cassette, and T&D published it as a bonus on the back side of one issue. I've looked through all the cover sheets, though, and there's no mention of that. The game is just lost, and I'm starting to think I must have just imagined it.

Even though I haven't written games for the CoCo in decades (and wouldn't remember how), I do pop in from time to time with an update to cocoquest.com (if there's anything new to say). I recently posted about some clean-up to the site itself, and I plan to link and mention this issue of the newsletter there.

I also added a full map I put together for *Monster Mash*. CTRL+CLICK this zoomed-out image to view or download the full version:
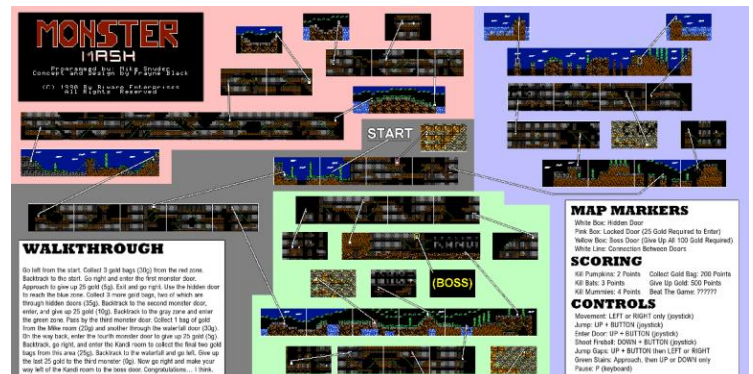
It's very detailed and can be zoomed in, too.

This came about after I was invited to the *CoCo Nation Podcast* for a live interview that went for about 2 hours at the start of the show. That was episode 342, which was back on December 9th of 2023, so around a year and a half ago. It was fun to sit and talk about these games and my time making them, although I have two regrets.

One, I wish I had relocated to a more interesting spot to be on camera. Two, I was having some kind of severe pain in one arm (it lasted for days), so I'm very fidgety through the whole interview. I probably looked like a madman with my arms.

My CoCo Catalog

The TRS-80 Color Computer Archive (mentioned previously) has a web-based emulator that lets you load virtual .DSK files and run those programs right in your browser:

https://colorcomputerarchive.com/xroar-online/?machine=coco3&tv_input=3&joy_right=kjoy0&cart=rsdos

It's called *XRoar Online*, and it was created by Ciaran Anscomb (more info here).

I'd still recommend a native downloadable emulator (such as VCC), because:

1. It allows you to set up and save your own configuration to suit your needs.

2. You can over-clock the CPU (in settings) to make these old CoCo 2 and 3 games play at a much better speed.

3. Some (like MAME, apparently, but I haven't tried it) allow you to snapshot and save CoCo memory mid-program, which would be useful in many of my more difficult games that have no built-in save/load function of their own.

However, this *XRoar Online* emulator seems to work well, especially just as a quick way of trying out specific games from my catalog; or any other CoCo .DSK image, for that matter.

On the next page, before I fully dive into my write-ups about each game, I've included links (you'll see them in the green table) to open and launch each game in *XRoar Online*.

As I write a little about each game, I'll be grouping them by disk number (from my collection zip file) and playing them mostly in the order listed at my website here (or in the clickable catalog I've included on the next page). For each one I write about, I'll include:

1. The game's title.
2. Which T&D disk/cassette it appeared on.
3. The description from the T&D cover sheet.
4. The command to RUN or EXEC the game.
5. A few screenshots taken from each game.
6. My thoughts and comments on the game.

Cavern Quest 2 [1]

T&D Subscription Software #91 – January 1990 [2]
This Coco3 only game is similar to the popular 'PITFALL' game. As Jumpin' Joe Davis you must search for the lost [3] treasure of the Baldana Civilization. There is an instructional program which precedes this called 'QUESTINS'.

`RUN"QUESTINS` [4]

[5]

What happened to Cavern Quest 1? It must have been one of the few games that was so bad, T&D wouldn't publish it. [6]

I can't imagine it being much worse than this

Although the best way to run these CoCo 2 and CoCo 3 games is with an emulator such as VCC (mentioned earlier, and for the reasons I already covered), this catalog of links will launch each one in the web-based *XRoar Online* emulator.

DISK #1
>RODOC
>Hostage
>The Orbs of Derra
>Police Cadet I
>Java
>Crionaut Warrior
>Chambers of Krid
>TrioRace
>Earth Trooper
>Star Trek Log
>The Sandstone
>Monsters & Magic
>Snow Fight

DISK #2
>Dungeon Maze
>Blaster
>Tiler Tex Two
>Dream Tunnel
>Mount Death
>Terron
>Maxomar's World
>Police Cadet II
>Starship Showdown
>Police Cadet III
>Crazy Chemist
>Journey Up
>Sub Mania
>Genesis Project

DISK #3
>Tiler Tex
>Police Cadet IV
>Ghost Hunter
>RoboCrook
>Lost Treasure
>Snak Shak
>Destinat: Unknown
>Silence Syndrome
>Crionaut Warrior 3
>Flying Saucer
>Mower Madness

DISK #9
>Monster Mash

DISK #4
>Speed Games
>On Target
>Time Trap
>Country Club
>Shadow World
>Adventure Tutorial
>Adventure Sample
>Rahul (Instruct)
>Rahul's Quest
>Name This Tune
>Virus-D

DISK #5
>Food Factory
>B.E. Break-in
>B.E. Break-in 2
>Lord Silvercape
>Gnome (Instruct)
>Gnome Quest

DISK #6
>Smurf (Instruct)
>Smurf Quest
>Cavern (Instruct)
>Cavern Quest 2
>Gopher
>Gnome (Instruct)
>Gnome Quest II

DISK #7
>Snow Ski
>Police Cadet V
>Aliax
>Galaxy Q
>Eldus

DISK #8
>Doctor Who Part 1
>Doctor Who Part 2
>Doctor Who Part 3
>Doctor Who Part 4
>River (Instruct)
>River Raid

DISK #10
>The Entity

While I realize most of you reading this won't have any inclination to try out any of these old games – almost none of them still hold up today – here are a few notes about launching and playing them with the links provided, just in case you're curious.

Open links in a new tab.
To avoid losing your place in the newsletter, you may be able to right-click links and "open in a new tab" or if your reader/browser allows it, simply CTRL+CLICK.

They'll probably seem slow or sluggish.
The CoCo 3 wasn't a fast computer by today's standards, and I wrote these games as an amateur who was unable to really push the hardware. You may see very slow load times, often with black or empty screens that might make you think nothing is happening. The emulator does seem to pause when you switch tabs, but otherwise, just wait.

Say YES when asked about high-speed pokes.
The CoCo 3 did have its own speed-up trick, in the form of a "POKE" into memory. If any of the games ask if you want to use the high-speed poke, answer YES, and if asked about using a CoCo 3, answer YES.

Orange is red in CoCo 2 high-res "artifact" mode.
Some of the games use an "artifact" graphics mode, in which red and blue are simulated and can be randomly swapped on real hardware. You may notice that "red" looks orange, but that just seems to be how this emulator works. The default should be correct.

Keyboard mapping quirks.
If you need to type a quote mark, it's SHIFT+2, and a colon (:) is a dash (-); something about the keyboard mapping to a real CoCo layout. You shouldn't need to type either character to play these, but just in case.

Turn the volume down.
Some of my games have louder and more obnoxious music and sounds than others. You can either turn down your computer's volume or use the AUDIO tab below the emulator window to lower the audio gain.

These links will target a composite display.
If asked for the display type, choose CMP, not RGB. I wrote them all with composite displays (TV) in mind.

Joystick controls.
I've set the joystick for each game appropriately in each of the links. *B.E. Break-in* 1 and 2, and *On Target* use your mouse to move and the mouse button to fire. Other joystick games use the arrow keys to move and the ALT key as the fire button. Keyboard-based games either require typing, or arrow keys and SPACE BAR.

Let's Play - Disk #1

RODOC

T&D Subscription Software #71 – May 1988
Rodoc is a text adventure game requiring 32K. Explore the Bronyid Field, the Forest and the Mushroom Field as you control the robot from your underground base. Beware! If your robot malfunctions, you will have to defeat the dragon yourself.

RUN"RODOC


```
NEED INPUT-->?
I AM IN A FOREST. TO THE EAST I
SEE A MUSHROOM FIELD, TO THE
WEST IS A WATERFALL. NORTH--
UNKNOWN.  SOUTH--- BRONYID FIELD

I SEE
```

```
NEED INPUT-->?
THAT DOES NOT COMPUTE
I AM IN THE BRONYID FIELD. I DO
NOT KNOW WHAT AWAITS ME EAST,
SOUTH AND WEST, BUT NORTH IS A
FOREST.
I SEE
BRONYIDS
```

```
I AM IN A DARK CASTLE. WEST--
RESTON FIELD.
I SEE
GOLD
I SEE A WEREWOLFF! TELL ME WHAT
TO DO... QUICK!!!?
```

```
I AM UNDERGROUND, AT THE MOUTH
OF THE CAVES.  UP- BRONYID FIELD
WEST AND EAST-- UNKNOWN. SOUTH-
ROCK SLAB.
I SEE
A CAVE IN-- MALFUNCTION!!!!(&%%#
134342I'MDYINGHELPMENOTKDFKDFKAD
JFKLJFLJLFJA......&(&(&#()%&)%'%
BY-----
OK
```

First up is one of the many rough, unplayable text adventures I wrote. I think RODOC was one of my earliest, so I didn't even have the experience of knowing – even just a little – what I was doing. I don't think any of them got much better later, even when I started adding graphics (which, really, only served to slow them down and make them more of a pain).

This one has a very simple title screen that just says RODOC and my name. The intro music and the "GOOD LUCK" that repeats over and over after pressing ENTER at the introductory text are fairly short, which is good, because it seems like a game with plenty of instant game-over fail states.

To the south is a "bronyid" field, but what the heck is that? I can't LOOK at it, I can't GET it. When I wrote these, I had a system for what parts of the code used which range of line numbers. I've forgotten it all now.

Still, I do remember how to use the LIST command. After a bit of trial and error from peeking at the BASIC source code, I solved that particular mystery.

A "bronyid" is apparently a flower or a plant (ah, of course, it's a field of them) and the command I wanted players to use was PICK, not GET.

But what now? East of there is a castle with a werewolf that kills me. To the north and west a couple times from the starting location leads me to an oil-sucking vampire... which kills me.

In both cases, I'm prompted for some command to save myself, but presumably I need an item to use with a specific verb, and I have neither. I die, I'm returned to a command prompt, and I have to start over by typing RUN again.

North into the desert and east, there's a canteen I can pick up. East again, and there's a "jiant rock" (wow, my spelling was *terrific* back then). I can't look at it, climb it, move it, or anything. What's it even for?

Moving from location to location has a few seconds of overhead while the screen "draws" the robot. Well, it can't be helped, so back to that bronyid field. If I PICK one, it uncovers a hole. I can go DOWN into the underground, but I'm immediately killed by a cave-in.

Yeah, no. Enough of this. Like most of these text adventures I wrote in BASIC, I could almost certainly solve it by LIST-ing out all the source code and getting clues from all the embedded commands, but there's really no sense in it. I feel bad for the kids (and adults) who tried to play this piece of garbage back when T&D published it. It probably only made sense to me.

Not from RODOC. I asked AI to make this.
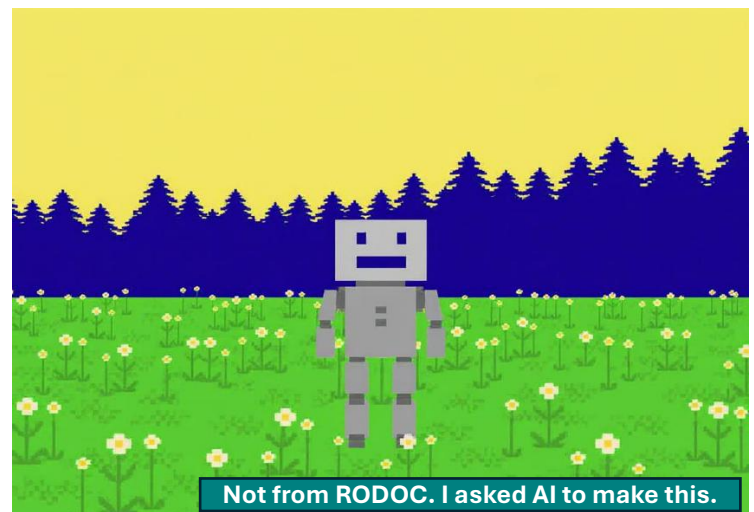
Hostage

T&D Subscription Software #72 – June 1988
In this text adventure game, you rescue the hostage to solve the adventure. You start out in a research lab. You can use verbs like kick, move, get, take, drop, leave, look, examine, etc. Also, use N., S., E., and W. for direction.

RUN"HOSTAGE

```
********************************
YOU ARE IN THE RESEARCH LAB OF
ROGART TECHNOLOGY. SCATTERED
ABOUT THE ROOM ARE MANY GEARS,
AS WELL AS MACHINERY AND PLASTIC
BODY PARTS.
VISIBLE OBJECTS ARE-
*CLOTH
*PLASTIC BODY PARTS
*GEARS
A CLOSED DOOR
*BUTTONS
YOU CAN GO-
--==]>
```

```
CLOTH TAKEN
--==]>  GET GEARS
GEARS TAKEN.
--==]>  GET BUTTONS
YOU PICK THEM UP OFF THE FLOOR
--==]>  BUILD A ROBOT
YOU CONSTRUCT A FINE DUPLICATE
OF YOURSELF. THERE ARE BUTTONS
ON THE SIDE FOR PROGRAMMING-
YOU    CAN PROGRAM HIM TO GO IN
ANY OF FOUR DIRECTION.
ENTER DIRECTION- ? N
HE MALFUNCTIONS! HE EXPLODES AND
THE FLYING PARTS KILL YOU
OK
```

```
ROGART TECHNOLOGY. SCATTERED
ABOUT THE ROOM ARE MANY GEARS,
AS WELL AS MACHINERY AND PLASTIC
BODY PARTS.
VISIBLE OBJECTS ARE-
AN OPEN DOOR
YOU CAN GO- S
--==]>  S
YOU ARE BY A DOOR TO THE SOUTH
THAT HAS THE WORD EXIT ABOVE IT
VISIBLE OBJECTS ARE-
*A PHASER
YOU CAN GO- N E W
--==]>  GET PHASER
YOU HAVE IT
--==]>
```

```
--==]>  E
YOU ARE BY A SPY CAMERA. IT
IS AIMING A LASER AT YOU!
VISIBLE OBJECTS ARE-
NOTHING WORTH MENTIONING
YOU CAN GO- N E W
--==]>  SHOOT CAMERA
KABING:::::--THE SHOT BOUNCES
FROM A NEARBY WALL AND BEANS YOU
ON THE HEAD. YOU STAGGER TO A
WALL TO CATCH YOUR BREATH. IT
WAS ONLY ON STUN
--==]>  LOOK PHASER
THE LAZER ZAPS YOUR BODY.
OK
```

Up next is another text adventure. There's a short tune set to a black screen, then the whole screen flashes a few different colors. There's a brief title, and then we're right into the game. At least I didn't go overboard.

No block graphics to draw in this one, so it's snappier to play and doesn't keep positioning the cursor or anything silly like that. I figured out that I need to pick up each of the four parts, open the door, then make a robot, then send him south. A guard shoots him… and then simply leaves. If I go south before that, the guard shoots me instead. Game over.

I can leave now, and there's a phaser. To the east is a camera. I'm able to shoot it, but then I mess up and it shoots me. Game over.
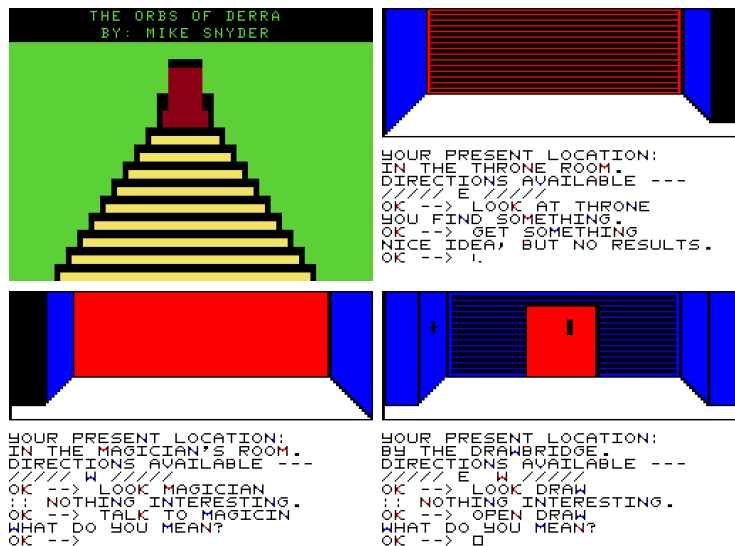
It adds insult to injury that my text adventures were so cruel about instant death like this AND made you start from scratch when you failed. Hey, past self, it's not MY fault I can't read your mind. I really was bad at this, but I thought I was making magic in each game.

The Orbs of Derra

T&D Subscription Software #90 – December 1989
This 32K adventure is a graphic adventure for Coco 1,2 or 3. In this adventure, the player must find six orbs in the evil world. You can use standard adventure syntax like N, S, E, and W for north, south, east and west.

RUN"ORBDERRA

```
THE ORBS OF DERRA
BY: MIKE SNYDER
```

```
YOUR PRESENT LOCATION:
IN THE THRONE ROOM.
DIRECTIONS AVAILABLE ---
//////  E  //////
OK --> LOOK AT THRONE
YOU FIND SOMETHING.
OK --> GET SOMETHING
NICE IDEA, BUT NO RESULTS.
OK --> ].
```

```
YOUR PRESENT LOCATION:
IN THE MAGICIAN'S ROOM.
DIRECTIONS AVAILABLE ---
//////  W  //////
OK --> LOOK MAGICIAN
:: NOTHING INTERESTING.
OK --> TALK TO MAGICIN
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
OK -->
```

```
YOUR PRESENT LOCATION:
BY THE DRAWBRIDGE.
DIRECTIONS AVAILABLE ---
//////  E  W  //////
OK --> LOOK DRAW
:: NOTHING INTERESTING.
OK --> OPEN DRAW
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
OK -->
```

Ah, we're changing it up with a graphic adventure this time. It's from several months later, so I had quite a few games under my belt (and more experience) by the time I created this one. Let's see if that helped.

Okay, this game uses artifact colors. That was a trick to get red and blue in CoCo 2 graphics on composite displays, but which one you'd get was seemingly random. Games like this would start with a test screen asking you to RESET if you saw red (or blue), or press ENTER to continue if you saw blue (or red).

It looks like in my version of VCC (2.01) I need to hold F1 and press F9 twice to force a reset and toggle to the opposite mode. But first, I need to go to settings and stop F1 from emulating the joystick fire button.

Okay, here we go. Looking at the throne says I find something, but it doesn't tell me what. Even LOOK-ing at the room again doesn't tell me. What the heck? For that matter, why don't I actually see the throne in the graphic, if I'm in the throne room?

Whatever I did for handling input on a graphics mode is a bit flakey. I have to type slowly to avoid it missing keypresses. It's not helping me progress, though. As usual, the game expects very specific actions and I'm just not getting it. I can't open the drawbridge or talk to the one NPC I encountered. Oh well. Moving on.

Police Cadet I

T&D Subscription Software #69 – April 1988

```
There is hidden money in Charley
Varingen's house! Your mission: Find it
if you dare. Use commands like E, W, N,
S, SE, SW, get, look, open, close, etc.,
to solve this text adventure game.
```

RUN"CADET#1

```
YOU ARE ON THE DOORSTEP OF THE
VARINGEN HOUSE.  TO THE NORTH
IS A OPEN DOOR, AND TO THE WEST
IS A SHED.
YOU SEE
COMMAND***>? UNLOCK DOOR WITH KEY
YOU CAN'T 'UNLOCK DOOR WITH KEY'

COMMAND***>? W
THE DOOR IS RUSTED SHUT.
COMMAND***>? KICK DOOR
YOU CAN'T 'KICK DOOR'
COMMAND***>?
```

```
YOU ARE IN A LARGE LIVING ROOM.
ON THE COUCH ARE A NUMBER OF
PILLOWS. DETAILED PAINTINGS OF
SUNKEN SHIPS HANG FROM EVERY
WALL.  ON BOTH ENDS OF THE SOFA
ARE SMALL COFFEE TABLES. THE
NORTH TABLE IS AN ASSORTMENT OF
SPRAYS.
EXITS ARE SOUTH-EAST, NORTH, AND
SOUTH.
YOU SEE
COMMAND***>? GET SPRAYS
YOU PICK ONE OF THE EMPTY ONES.
COMMAND***>? SPRAY SPRAY
YOU CAN'T 'SPRAY SPRAY'
COMMAND***>?
```

```
YOU ARE IN THE SMALL BATHROOM.
THERE IS A SHOWER, A  SINK,  A
BATHRUG, TOWELS, A CABINET ON
THE WALL, BEAUTIFUL GREEN TILES
ON THE WALL, AND A CABINET ON
THE FLOOR--OPENED.
YOU SEE
COMMAND***>? LOOK CABINET
AH! HERE IS A BOTTLE OF VITAMIN
E-- SAYS EXTRA STRENGTH!!!
COMMAND***>? GET BOTTLE
VITAMIN E TAKEN
COMMAND***>? EAT VITAMIN
IT GIVES YOU TEMPORARY STRENGTH
COMMAND***>?
```

```
THIS IS THE CENTER OF THE HOUSE,
IN A WAY. THERE ARE OPEN EXITS
TO THE SOUTH AND NORTH. TO THE
SOUTHWEST IS A PARTLY OPENED
DOOR. TO THE EAST IS A HUGE IRON
DOOR. ALONG THE WEST WALL IS A
BOOKCASE HALF FULL OF BOOKS. TO
THE NORTHWEST IS AN OPEN DOOR.
TO THE SOUTHEAST IS A CLOSED
DOOR, AND TO THE NORTHEAST IS A
CLOSED DOOR.
YOU SEE
COMMAND***>? E
IT IS CLOSED
COMMAND***>?
```

Here's yet another text adventure, and the first in what would become a five-part series. It features a long, pointless, unskippable title sequence, which was a habit of mine in nearly all my CoCo games. The theme song is catchy, though. All these years later, I still remember it note for note. It sometimes pops into my head when I think about these games.

In the original TRS-80 CoCo BASIC: (listen here)

```
T$(1)="O3;T3;L8;6;P4;10;O4;1;P4;1;3;1;
O3; 11;O4;3;1;O3;10;L4;6;L8;O4;3;1;O3;
11;O4;3;1;O3;10;L4;6"
T$(2)="O3;T3;L8;11;10;8;6;L4;8;P4"
T$(3)="O4;T3;L8;3;1;3;5;L4;6"
PLAYT$(1):PLAYT$(2):PLAYT$(1):PLAYT$(3)
```

Expressed in ABC music notation:

```
X:1
T:Police Cadet - Title Theme
M:4/4
Q:1/4=160
F z2 Ac z2 c | dc^Adc=A F2 | dc^Adc=A F2 | ^A=AGF G2 z2 |
F z2 Ac z2 c | dc^Adc=A F2 | dc^Adc=A F2 | dcde f2 z2 |
```

And then represented as sheet music: (listen here)

Police Cadet - Title Theme

Okay, let's dive into this and see if it's the epic adventure I remember. Well, referring to the door to the house as "a open door" does not bode well. I knew better. That's just sloppy.

Okay, I can't do anything with the door to the shed, so let's explore the house. I found an empty can of Windex, and a bottle of "extra strength" Vitamin E in the bathroom that makes me super strong temporarily. Let's go back outside to that rusted shed door and see if it will open while I'm strong. A ha, I had to try a few things before landing on the simple OPEN DOOR command, but that worked!

It's a supply room. I'm actually making progress in this one! Okay, here we have hammers, nails, lots of wood, and a pile of leather on the floor. The tools appear to be locked in a fiberglass box. I'll try picking up the leather... and... yeah, of course. Instant death. Poisonous spiders "crawl" out and kill me. I wonder... could I spray that Windex on the leather to kill the spiders before trying to get it? That's just the kind of thing I probably would have built into this as a puzzle solution.

Let's try this again. Go get the spray, go get the bottle of vitamins, and then back to the shed. Oh for... I went south from the shed which apparently takes me back to the police station, abandoning the mission and ending the game. Good grief. Alright, once more.

Okay, neither USE SPRAY nor SPRAY LEATHER does anything. It's either "guess the verb" or this spray isn't the solution for those spiders.

Alright, I think I'm done. Let's see what's next.

The Varingen house bathroom's description, fed into AI.

Java

T&D Subscription Software #74 – August 1988

Try to collect as much treasure as you can in this game. To shoot, you must be on the bottom level, with the joystick aimed down. To jump to a new level, push the joystick up and down and press the fire button. If you try to jump to a level that isn't there, you will fall and lose one of your three lives. Shooting the things that fall will give you 20 points. Jumping to new levels and touching treasure will give you 10 points. If the treasure is somewhere on the screen where you can't get it, touch the treasure box on the bottom left corner of the screen. This will place the treasure in a new place, but will also take 5 points from your score.

RUN"JAVA
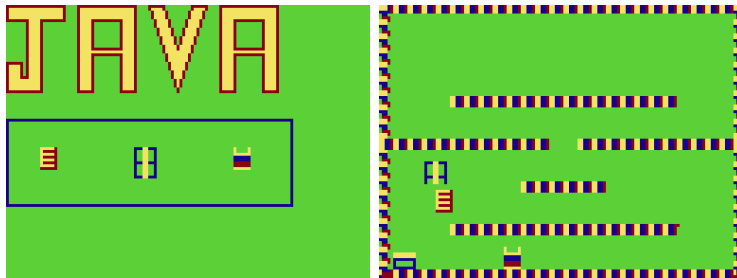
Here's the first actual *video game* on this first disk. Like most of the ones I made (especially the ones for CoCo 2), any sprites that move (the player and any enemies) flash a lot because of how I coded erasing them and redrawing them in a loop.

The controls are a bit unresponsive, at least in the emulator with the keyboard mapped as a joystick, but I did figure out from those instructions how to shoot, move up, and what the goal is. This seems kind of easy.

Aw, dang, is that falling enemy falling faster now? And is it taking two hits to kill it now? At least I scored 165 that time.

**T**here isn't much to this game. It seems to be just this one screen. Fun for a few minutes.

I came up with the name "Java" because it sounded cool. I had no idea it was another name for coffee, and this was way before Java or JavaScript were programming languages.

Crionaut Warrior

T&D Subscription Software #74 – August 1988

Use your arrow keys to maneuver through the five levels in this game. An instructional program called 'CROINS' precedes the main program.

RUN"CRIOLOAD
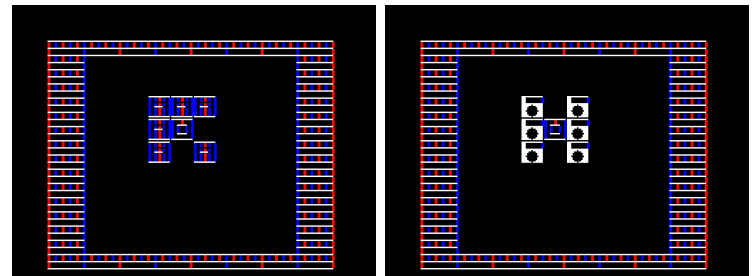
Even though it's just annoying one-channel audio, the two themes in this title song sound familiar. Is part of this the theme from the original *Battlestar Galactica*? If not, it might be something like that. I might have mimicked (as best I could) various themes like that for the title screens in my games.

The in-game instructions weren't kidding when it said there's a lengthy delay for each level to load. Just getting started in the first one is taking a minute, with lots of bleeps and bloops playing to (I guess) let me know it's doing something.

All that for a maze game where I'm a block in the middle of a 3x3 grid. Everything beyond that is apparently too dark to see, as if only this small bit is lit by a flashlight. For what it is, it does seem to work well. It's played with the arrow keys, and it seems like I could take my time trying to solve this maze. Oh hey, it took a few minutes, but I found the first exit. Nice.

Mazes are pretty tough when you can only see one tile in any direction. But hey, I found the second exit, too. There are only five levels, so maybe I'll try to finish the whole game.

Oh cool. Level 5 has a new kind of wall tile... and I won! It says I made it out in 2444 turns. Ok then.

The Chambers of Krid

T&D Subscription Software #76 – October 1988
Use the right joystick to control the man at the right. You must go through four doors before you can move. The long range view at the left shows where you are. Can you make it to the exit room? Use keys to open doors and find potions to heal yourself.

RUN"CHAMBERS

```
**********        **********    INSTRUCTIONS: RIGHT JOYSTICK
*        *        *        *    CONTROLS CIRCLES. WHEN YOU
*     *     *        *          FIRST ENTER A ROOM, YOU MUST
*        *     *        *       PASS UNDER FOUR DOORS ON THE
*        ******        *        RIGHT. THEN, MOVE THE LARGER
*                      *        CIRCLE IN THE DUNGEON ON THE
*  THE CHAMBERS OF KRID *       LEFT.  PICK UP KEYS AND POTIONS
*      BY MIKE SNYDER   *       ALONG THE WAY. USE KEYS TO OPEN
*                      *        DOORS. POTIONS HEAL YOU. TO WIN,
***********************          YOU MUST MAKE IT TO THE EXIT
                                ROOM. GOOD LUCK!

         ONE MOMENT PLEASE
                                PRESS [ENTER]?
```

Oh cool, I was experimenting with volume modulation in that short title song. This one loads me into the game quickly, which would be nice if it wasn't such a dull game.

From what I can tell with those instructions and a few minutes playing it, the first time I enter any room (including when the game starts), I have to play a mini-game on the right-hand side where I'm a circle at the bottom and I need to line up with the gap in a descending white line so it doesn't hit me. When I do that four times, I'm able to control the bigger circle in the square room on the bottom left. Then, it's back to the mini-game if I've entered a new room, unless I backtrack.

The maze concept itself might be interesting, but it's sure a slog having to keep doing that mini-game to make any progress. It's not hard, because the line moves slowly and I have plenty of time to line up under the gap. It just isn't fun. It's time to see what's next.

Earth Trooper

T&D Subscription Software #76 – October 1988
You must destroy the robots. Use your right joystick to maneuver your laser gun. Do not shoot when the moving shields are directly above you. In the tape version, the robots are moving. Because the routine used to maneuver the robots interferes with the disk operation, the robots do not move in the disk version.

RUN"TROOPER

```
EARTH TROOPER              EARTH TROOPER, BY MIKE SNYDER

                           A HERO'S WORK IS NEVER DONE ...

                           YOU DESTROYED THE SPACE INVADERS
                           WITH EASE, AND YOU WERE INSTANT-
                           LY A HERO. NEXT CAME SLIME
                           MONSTERS AND ALIEN INVADERS, AS
                           WELL AS MARTIAN MEANIES AND A
                           HORDE OF OTHER EVIL MENACES.
                           JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT
                           COULDN'T GET WORSE, THE ROBO-
                           FORCE ARRIVED ON EARTH TO SPOIL
                           YOUR DAY.

                           PRESS <ENTER>
```

```
                           **********************************
                                    EARTH TROOPER
                                   BY: MIKE SNYDER

                           HIGH SCORE- 100     COMPUTER

                           LATEST SCORE- 40

                                  G A M E   O V E R

                           PRESS <ENTER> TO PLAY AGAIN
```

Another song with volume modulation, and it seems like it must have been an original.

Now it's asking me to press **1** for normal speed, **2** for the high speed poke, or **3** for CoCo 3 high speed. You should always go for the CoCo 3 high speed poke, if you're playing on a CoCo 3.

Basically a "poke" as it pertains to the CoCo was to change a value at a specific location in the computer's memory; "poke" it into memory, so to speak. In this case, the "high speed" poke was a way to force a higher clock speed, which sped up the systems in a noticeable way. You can do that at the command prompt, but I followed the example set by other game developers and just made it a choice when you start the game.

There's a surprising amount of stuff going on here, and the robots don't even move in this version. You have to stay on the move to avoid the enemy attack pattern and shoot when the shield isn't above you. It looks like I included some ML subroutines. Sadly, this isn't fun.

TrioRace

T&D Subscription Software #76 – October 1988

```
Three races make up this game. The first
one involves avoiding the potholes either
in the left lane or in the right. In the
second level you only have a certain
amount of time to jump the waves. In
level three you are clinging to the vine.
Good luck!
```

RUN"TRIORACE
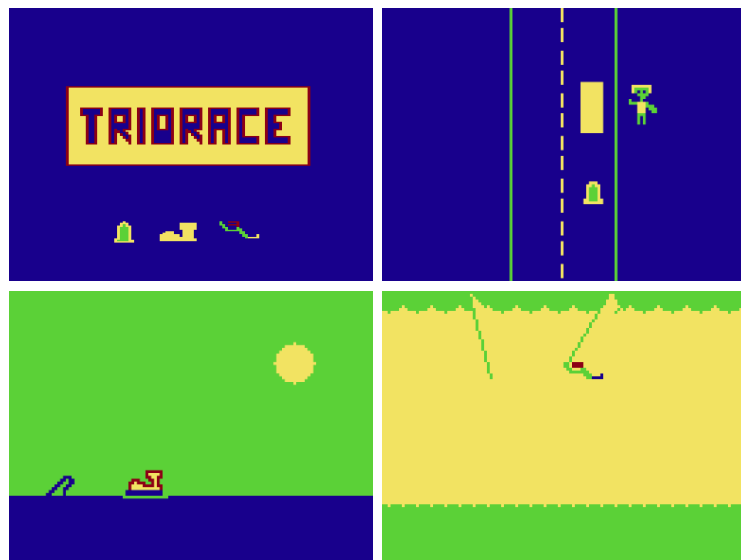
That title screen wasn't too egregiously long, I suppose. Do I want instructions? Sure, why not? There are three levels, with the first one being a two-lane car game.

It looks like I can speed up and switch lanes to avoid a randomly placed obstacle in one of the lanes on each screen. I scored 22 that time and passed several screens but still ran out of time. I must have to go full speed, meaning I'd need split-second reflexes as the next screen loads to decide whether to stay in my lane or switch to the other one. I'll try that again, because I'd at least like to get a screenshot of the second stage.

Just how many screens *are there* on this first level? I scored 52 that time, passed a lot more screens than before, and still ran out of time. Ah, it looks like I can hit obstacles several times before it's "game over", so I can afford to go fast and be a little careless. It would be nice if the number of lives was displayed.

I made it to the second level. Looks like I have to jump over a wave that's coming at me from the left. Oh, I needed to press the fire button to jump. Too late. I only had two lives left.

I wonder if I can find the line of code that sets my number of lives, and change it? Ha! I changed **ME=5** to **ME=9999** and that actually worked! I still have the time limit to contend with, but all I really need to do now is just go full speed and run into everything.

Lives are no longer an issue, but this last level needs me to figure out the perfect time to jump between vines. No number of extra lives is going to solve this problem, and I'm bound to run out of time. The swinging animation is cool though. I have him drawn swinging forwards, backwards, and falling. It's slow, but it's an interesting scene.

Wait, what? I'm still not out of time? Maybe this last level isn't on a timer. Still, it looks nearly impossible to jump right when the other vine is exactly "six spaces" away (the number of forward animations before the little guy falls, whether he's too far from the vine or has jumped past it).

It doesn't help that the fire button almost never registers (mapped to the F1 key), so even when I see what looks like the perfect gap, nothing happens in most of my attempts. This is frustrating. Oh, okay, I need to hold it down long enough for however I coded the game loop to reach the line of code where it checks for the button press. Okay, I can do that.

I made a successful jump twice now. No way I could do that without these 9999 lives, and no way I *would* do that if it meant starting over from the car level each time, just for a tiny chance of practicing the timing on this last level. For that matter, the middle level with the boat that looks like a boot would be a big pain, if I hadn't cheated.

Okay, "round complete" after four successful jumps (maybe five), and it's asking me to press enter for the next round. My score was 243. Oh, the next round sends me back to level 1. To heck with this. I'm moving on.

Star Trek Log

T&D Subscription Software #76 – October 1988
Here is one for all you Star Trek fans. A menu provides 7 options for dealing with the series. The first four options will list the shows. The next two options give you star dates and authors. The last option will list the actors.

RUN"STARLOG

```
S T A R   T R E K   L O G                     - MAIN MENU -

BY MIKE SNYDER                      1) SEASON 1
                                    2) SEASON 2
(C) 1988 BY T&D SOFTWARE            3) SEASON 3
                                    4) ANIMATEDS
A LIST OF THE 100 EPISODES          5) STARDATES
                                    6) AUTHORS
ENTER NUMBER OF YOUR CHOICE TO      7) CHARACTERS
VIEW EPISODES AND OTHER CHOICES.    8) QUIT
WHEN ASKED FOR AN EPISODE NAME,
BE SURE TO ENTER IT EXACTLY AS
IT APPEARS IN THE LISTS (1-4)


PRESS <ENTER>
```

```
SEASON #3  (9/20/68 TO 6/3/69)     -- CHARACTERS
SPOCK'S BRAIN                      JAMES T. KIRK: WILLIAM SHATNER
THE ENTERPRISE INCIDENT            MR. SPOCK: LEONARD NIMOY
THE PARADISE SYNDROME              DOCTOR MCCOY: DEFOREST KELLY
AND THE CHILDREN SHALL LEAD        SCOTTY: JAMES DOOHAN
IS THERE IN TRUTH NO BEAUTY?       SULU: GEORGE TAKEI
SPECTRE OF THE GUN                 UHURA: NICHELLE NICHOLS
DAY OF THE DOVE                    YOEMAN RAND: GRACE LEE WHITNEY
FOR THE WORLD IS HOLLOW            CHARLIE EVANS: ROBERT WALKER JR
THE THOLIAN WEB                    HARRY MUDD: ROGER C. CARMEL
PLATO'S STEPCHILDREN               NURSE CHAPEL: MAJEL BARRETT
WINK OF AN EYE                     MIRI: KIM DARBY
THE EMPATH                         CHEKOV: WALTER KOENIG
ELAAN OF TROYIUS                   GEM: KATHRYN HAYES
WHOM GODS DESTROY
PRESS <ENTER> FOR MORE             PRESS <ENTER>
```

Quite a few of my programs were on T&D issue #76. This is the fourth one (in a row), which must be a record. They called this one *StarGate* on the info sheet, maybe to avoid any potential trademark infringement on the name *Star Trek*?

Ha! Little did they know *StarGate* would be the title of a 1994 movie starring James Spader and Kurt Russell, then a pretty cool TV series starring Michael Shanks, Richard Dean Anderson (of *MacGyver* fame) and Christopher Judge (the voice of Kratos in the recent *God of War* games), then at least two other spin-off shows. But I digress (again).

This isn't a game. It's a database of information I harvested from a library book about *Star Trek*. You can see episode names for all the *Original Series* episodes, look up a star date by the episode name or the authors of a specific episode by name, or simply get a list of all the characters and their actors. I probably could have presented this in a better way, but it's a moot point now. We have the internet.

I absolutely loved *Star Trek: TOS*. My aunt used to let me stay up late when I stayed at her place as a kid, and there was one classic episode on TV each night. Those were good times. *Star Trek: TNG* had premiered by the time I wrote this program, but it was still new.

The Sandstone Adventure

T&D Subscription Software #80 – February 1989
In this 32K adventure you must find your kidnapped friend, Gary Lamburd. Your only clue is a Sandstone which was also stolen.

RUN"SANDSTON
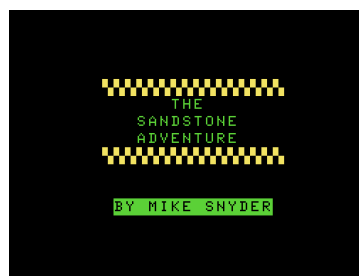
```
                                   YOU ARE AT A BUSY STREET MARKET.
                                   YOU CAN HEAR THE FLUTES OF SNAKE
      ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓                CHARMERS NEARBY. YOU CAN SMELL
          THE                      SOMETHING BURNING. THE STREET
        SANDSTONE                  WINDS EAST AND SOUTH.
        ADVENTURE                  A DAGGER IS HERE!
      ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓                SOMEONE IS PLAYING ANOTHER OF MY
                                   ADVENTURES.. POLICE CADET PART
                                   3...
       BY MIKE SNYDER              OK, GET DAGGER
                                   YOU PICK IT UP.
                                   OK, KILL SELF
                                   DON'T GET HOSTILE!
                                   OK, IF YOU SAY SO
                                   - - - - HUH?
                                   OK,
```

```
YOU ARE IN AN ENDLESS NORTH-       YOU ARE IN A FOUR-WAY SEWER
SOUTH TUNNEL. A LARGE STRAW        TUNNEL.
BASKET IS HERE.                    A PLUG IS STUCK IN THE WALL.
OK, GET BASKET                     OK, GET PLUG
YOU CAN'T SEEM TO TAKE THAT.       WATER GUSHES IN AND YOU DROWN.
OK, LOOK BASKET
NOTHING IS GAINED BY LOOKING AT       **** GAME OVER ****
THAT.
OK, OOOOOOH I BET I'M SUPPOSED T   DO YOU WANT TO PLAY AGAIN-?
O FIND A FLUTE AND PLAY IT HERE
TO CHARM A SNAKE. THAT'S PROBABL
Y WHAT I THOUGHT PEOPLE DID IN I
NDIA, BASED ON MOVIES.
- - - - HUH?
OK,
```

Now we're back to another text adventure. It's no surprise, though. I wrote a lot of them (and later, a few graphic adventures, which were even harder to play because "drawing" room graphics and a hand-made graphics-mode font made them very slow and clunky).

The title song, if my ears are interpreting these bleeps and bloops correctly, is my one-channel take on *Ghost Riders in the Sky*; probably the Marty Robbins version, because my grandpa was a bit of a cowboy in his younger days and he really liked that music. What this has to do with a story set in India – a place I knew nothing about – is beyond me.

Oh wow, I was a dork. On the western street where a dagger can be found, I have it stop and play the theme song from *Police Cadet 3*, a modified version of the tune from the first game that I linked earlier. I must have spiced it up by the time the third game came around. It ends with a sort of volume fade-out effect.

Ah, good old instant death. I pushed a crate, went down into the sewer, went east, pulled a plug from the wall, and flooded the sewer. Starting over. Hey, this time the location with the dagger didn't have the person playing *Police Cadet 3*. Was that a random event? Anyway, my job here is done. Moving on.
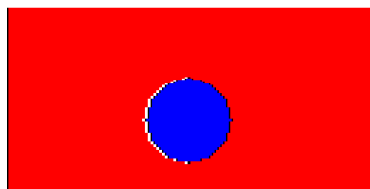
Monsters and Magic

T&D Subscription Software #81 – March 1989
Your goal is to destroy 5 groups of outlaw monsters in this 32K Dungeons and Dragons type game. You and your 100 troop army move around towns, dungeons, and other places. In the dungeons you can fight monsters in search of gold and treasure. In towns you can buy supplies, hire troops, gamble, and even buy wizards. In the arena you will be able to fight beasts for money. Good luck!

```
RUN"MONSTERS
```

```
IF YOU SEE A RED CIRCLE ON
A BLUE BACKGROUND, PRESS
ENTER, OR PRESS RESET AND
RUN AGAIN IF THE COLORS ARE
SWITCHED.
-=> □
```

```
YOU ARE IN TOWN: HAVERSHAM

HERE, YOU CAN:
       (1) GAMBLE
       (2) HIRE TROOPS
       (3) FIGHT IN THE ARENA
       (4) BUY SUPPLIES
       (5) LEAVE TOWN
```

```
IF THEY ADD UP TO AN ODD NUMBER,
YOU WIN YOUR BET. IF THEY ARE
DOUBLE NUMBERS, YOU LOSE YOUR
BET.

YOU HAVE 113 GOLD PIECES.
<Q>UIT OR <B>ET--B
AMOUNT OF YOUR BET:? 25

FIRST DIE COMES UP: 5
SECOND DIE COMES UP: 2
YOU WIN 25
GOLD PIECES.

YOU HAVE 138 GOLD PIECES.
<Q>UIT OR <B>ET--■
```
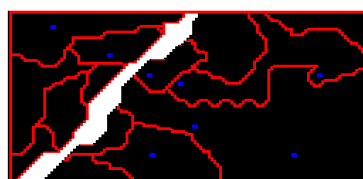
```
MONSTERS AND MAGIC.
(C) 1988 BY T&D SOFTWARE
WRITTEN BY: MIKE SNYDER
NEED INSTRUCTIONS?
-=> □
```

Yeah, the colors on that artifact test panel are backwards, but I figured out earlier that if I turn off joystick mapping, I can hold F1 and press F9 twice in VCC to reset and swap it.

This is pretty interesting, and unlike any of my others (which were mostly text or graphic adventures and arcade-style games).

As I slowly move a tiny box representing my army, it seems that one of the troops just randomly quits from to time. Now I'm in the arena in a town, and it's just an automatic battle with text notices about whether I hit the monster or it hits me. This has been going on for a few minutes though and I can't end it. We both keep missing. Ah, finally over.

I won 115 gold pieces. Nice. I bet I could cheese this gambling dice game. The odds are in my favor to either win or break even. The only way I lose is by rolling a double.

If I bet around one-third each round, I could probably break the economy in this game. Maybe I'll try that after exploring a bit more.

Where are the five enemy armies? There aren't too many blue dots on the map (places to press the SPACE BAR and explore).

What's this white diagonal region? I can't cross it. If it's a river, shouldn't it be blue? Maybe it's a mountain range. No, SPACE BAR for "location status" tells me it is indeed a river. I must have to find something elsewhere to help cross it.

Stopping at a town switches me to text mode, which is probably better and faster than trying to do all that in graphics mode. Another random event: I lost some health to some nebulous "sickness". Another random event: I'm attacked by "land pirates" that cost me 8 health, 17 of my troops, and all my gold. Ha! The joke's on them. I had just started over after dying a moment ago, so I had no gold.

I found a dungeon. Back to text mode. Okay, this kind of goes on and on, asking me to pick a tunnel number from some random number of tunnels, then maybe I'm jumped by a goblin or something. Another random event in the dungeon: pools of water, and I can drink from one. Well, nothing good or bad happened.

I found an exit, so let's use it. *Where* are those enemy armies? Some distant memory in the back of my mind thinks they don't show up on the map at all, and you have to just figure out where they are by combing the entire map and pressing the SPACE BAR every step along the way. Would I really have done something that cruel to the players? Shoot... yes, I probably would.

Back to a town. My dice game strategy was going fine, then I rolled doubles four times in a row. Thanks a lot, randomizer.

Without a save-game feature, and with no idea where to go or what to do, I guess I've seen enough of *Monsters and Magic*. For what it is, it's not a bad game. It's a style of game that holds up much better than most of my others.

Snow Fight

T&D Subscription Software #81 – March 1989
Use your joysticks to maneuver your men. Push the joystick down to pick up a snowball. Push the joystick button to throw the snowball. Hit your opponent in the back or on the face nine times before he hits you to win.

RUN"SNOFIGHT


```
      S N O W
      F I G H T

    (C) 1989 BY T&D
       SOFTWARE

    WRITTEN BY:
    MIKE SNYDER
    AND
    CHARLEY WOLFF
```

```
<< LEFT: Ø       Ø :RIGHT >>
```

```
WELCOME TO SNOW FIGHT. THIS IS
A GAME FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO
CAN'T ACTUALLY GET OUT IN THE
SNOW, OR DON'T LIVE WHERE IT
SNOWS. TWO PEOPLE USE THE JOY-
STICKS TO HAVE A SNOW FIGHT,
COCO STYLE.
THE PERSON WITH THE LEFT JOY-
STICK STARTS ON THE LEFT OF THE
SCREEN, AND THE OTHER STARTS ON
THE RIGHT. USE THE JOYSTICK
TO MOVE. WHILE YOU ARE MOVING
DOWN, YOU CAN PRESS THE BUTTON
TO DUCK AND PICK UP SNOW.

PRESS <ENTER>
```

```
<< LEFT: 5       Ø :RIGHT >>
```

The last game on this first disk is a two-player snowball fight. It was published on T&D issue #81, the same one as *Monsters and Magic*.

My brother Charley helped with this game. He's about 8 years younger than me, which would have made him 8 or 9 years old at the time. This must have been something fun we did together, with the end result being a game we could play against each other, requiring two joysticks.

Moving around is straightforward, but you have to aim down and press the fire button to pick up a snowball. Well, since I'm the only one here, the player on the right is a sitting duck. Take that, player two. It looks like the first person to score 9 hits wins the game.

The hit zone seems very small, so I could see this being a frustrating game. Although, if you could land a hit anywhere other than the other player's head, it would probably hand a win to whichever player can pick up and throw snowballs faster. Like real life, I suppose.

Let's Play - Disk #2

Dungeon Maze

T&D Subscription Software #82 – April 1989
You are pledging to a university frat house. In the last part of the initiation, the fraternity brothers have blindfolded you and dropped you off in a dungeon. You must find your way out. This adventure is somewhat 3 dimensional. Go through doors and move forward. Can you reach the exit in this two level dungeon?

RUN"DUNMAZE


```
<-------- DUNGEON MAZE -------->

<------- BY MIKE SNYDER ------->

YOU WILL VIEW ALL ROOMS AS IF
YOU WERE FACING NORTH. PUSH
LEFT-ARROW TO GO THROGH A DOOR
LEFT. PUSH RIGHT-ARROW TO GO
THROUGH A DOOR RIGHT, DOWN
ARROW FOR DOWN, AND UP ARROW
FOR UP. THERE WILL BE NO DOOR
SOUTH (DOWN), SO A LINE ACROSS
THE BOTTOM INDICATES THAT YOU
CAN'T GO SOUTH (DOWN).

PRESS <ENTER>?
```
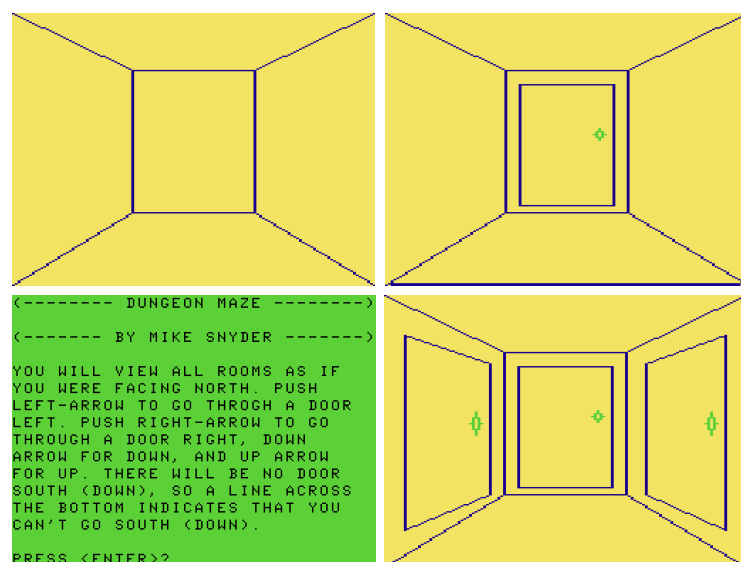
I feel like it was a bad idea to start the player out at a dead end, where the only exit is to the south. Ordinarily there would be a door ahead (up) or to either side (left and right) indicating an exit, with a solid blue line at the bottom (down) only if that direction was blocked. To a first-time player, I bet this starting room looked open, and trying "down" may not even have occurred to most of them.

If this is really just two levels without any enemies, difficult mini-games, or time limits, I bet it's solvable by just mapping out the maze. Overclocking the CPU in the emulator settings is a good idea with this one. Yes, much faster now.

This maze looks to be pretty big. I'm certain there's no big payoff for completing it, though.

Fun fact: somehow this game was also published again on issue #98 (August 1990) with a slightly different "pick your poke" intro. Otherwise, it seems identical. I have no idea how that happened.

Blaster

T&D Subscription Software #82 – April 1989
Use your right joystick to fire at the small scout ships that the mother ship lets out. You get bonus men for certain scores as you shoot down the aliens. You must maneuver your ship to fit in between the broken laser field that the mother ship emits. You can also shoot at the mothership.

RUN"BLASTER

In BLASTER, you control a blaster ship at the bottom with the right joystick. Use the fire button to shoot. A mothership will be at the top of the screen and will let out small scout ships.
Shoot these scouts to gain points. A laser field will descend from the mother ship toward you. To avoid it, either manuver under the opening in it or shoot a scout ship before it hits you.
<Press any key to continue>

Bonuses are awarded for:
1-- killing enough scouts to conquer the mothership,   and:
2-- bonus men for certain scores.
You will have to wait a while while the screen is first set up.
On the 'Game Over screen, you will notice two scores: HIGH SCORE is the highest obtained during the game, and FIRST UP is the score of the last game played.

<Press any key to continue>

For some reason, the fire button isn't working. The instructions don't say anything about there being a trick to it. I have my F1 key mapped to the fire button in the emulator (VCC) and it worked for other games. Okay, I changed it to the SPACE BAR. Now it works.

This isn't very fun, though. I can't remember what arcade or computer game inspired this. A game called *Mothership*, maybe? I forgot.

It's a little better after getting the hang of it. That descending line with a gap in it is like what I did in *Chambers of Krid*. Sometimes it's too far away to fit under in time, but shooting the W-shaped scout ship resets it, which is at least a fallback option.

That's tough too, though, because instead of moving around the screen, it stays in one spot just long enough to sometimes fire off a shot at me before warping immediately to a different random spot on the screen.

Tiler Tex Two

T&D Subscription Software #82 – April 1989
Use your right joystick to control the action in this game sequel. You must first get a broom from the lighter blinking helper and then clean up the floor. Next, you must touch the darker blinking helper in order to lay down the tiles. You can switch from the broom to the tile layer by touching them. Try to collect the diamonds as you avoid the moving security light. You have three lives in which you must sweep and tile 16 rooms.

RUN"TILERTWO

TOUCH ONE OF THEM (THE LIGHT ONE) TO GET THE BROOM, AND THE OTHER TO GET TILES. IF YOU HAVE TILES AND TOUCH THE ONE WITH THE BROOM, YOU WILL AUTOMATICALLY SWITCH TO BROOM.
WITH A BROOM, WHEN YOU MOVE, YOU WILL CLEAR THE FLOOR OF LOOSE DEBREE. EACH SWEPT SQUARE CAN THEN BE COVERED WITH A TILE WHEN YOU TOUCH THE HELPER THAT CARRIES THE TILES.

PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE
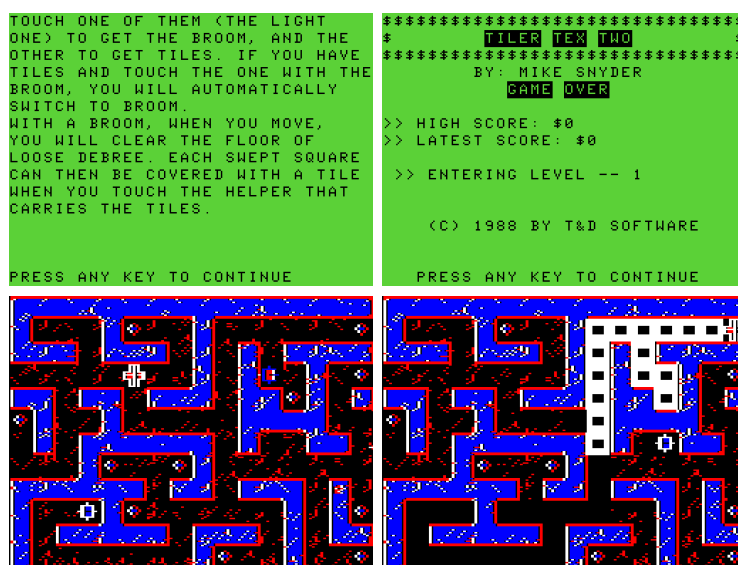
When I put together these disks of all my games taken from across the various T&D issues, I'm not sure why I decided to put *Tiler Tex Two* on a disk before *Tiler Tex*. It might have been nice to even have them on the same disk. In fact, I should have done that with the *Police Cadet* series. I did group the *Doctor Who* games together (they're all on disk 8), but we haven't gotten there yet.

That loading screen sure took forever. Hey, no fair! That enemy can float through the walls but I'm confined to the maze? It looks like the trick is to lure it towards me in a way that gets it in a bad position to follow me when I make my move.

**There are** 16 rooms in this game and only 3 lives.

This is sort of a double Pac-Man maze concept. You don't just clear the board. You clear it twice by activating "sweep mode" (from a little orb that moves around) and "tile mode" (from a different roving orb). You could end up going back and forth between them to clear the board. It's kind of cool.

Dream Tunnel

T&D Subscription Software #82 – April 1989
Use your right joystick to maneuver your spaceship as you fly thru the perilous tunnel. You can fire your laser by pressing the joystick button. You can also move up, down, forwards and backwards with the joystick.

`RUN"D-TUNNEL`
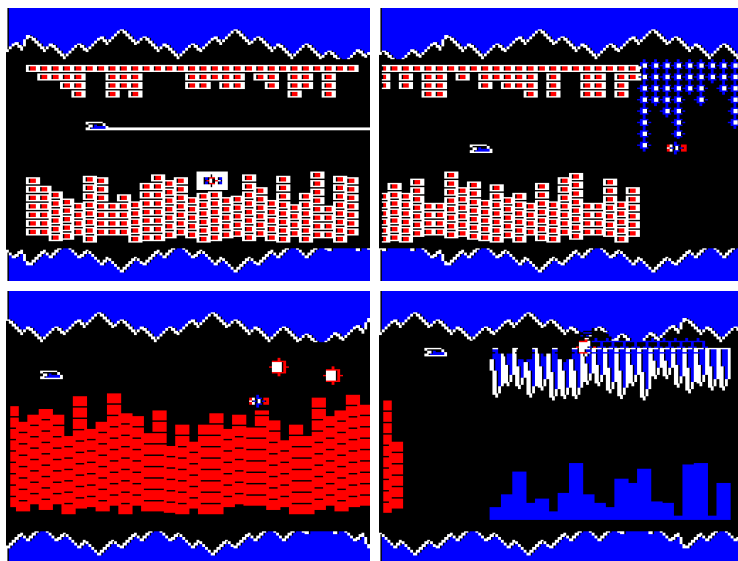
This one forgoes the lengthy musical title screen often seen in my other CoCo games, with only a simple text title screen that lets me get right into the game. It only takes a moment to draw the top and bottom of the cave, and then it's a side-scroller that seems to work pretty well.

Movement and scrolling are a little slow, but it seems to work in the player's favor, since this would be far harder if you were zooming through those tight spaces. Overlocking (a little) helps.

A short ways in, it becomes impossible. The spaces are too tight, but you have to fit through because hitting a wall is a no-no. However, there are enemy orbs that track and follow you and seemingly can't be destroyed. What the heck?

Was this inspired by *Vanguard*? I remember playing that game in an arcade for the first time (possibly at a student lounge at some college campus when I was there for an interscholastic meet in high school) and being really enamored by it. This is no *Vanguard*, but I wouldn't doubt if that's what inspired it. But wait; I thought it was *Vanguard* that inspired my game *Mount Death*?

Mount Death

T&D Subscription Software #84 – June 1989
Your mission is to fly into Mount Death in order to map out the mountain for the Airforce. Use your right joystick to maneuver up, down, fast, and slow. Avoid the walls as you go through the levels and try to get through.

`RUN"MNTDEATH`
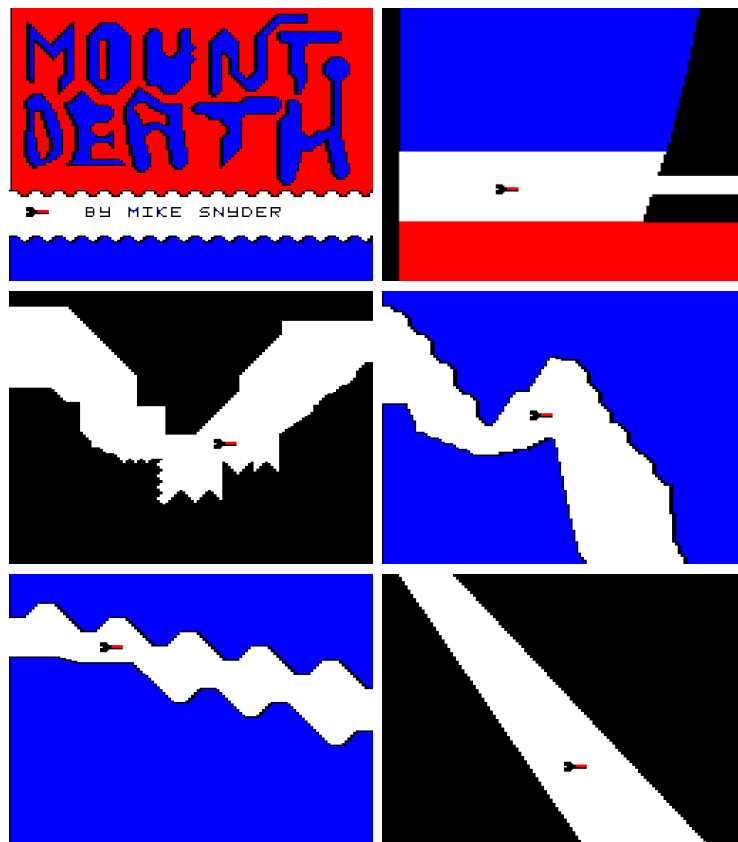
No, this one definitely doesn't resemble *Vanguard* (well, maybe a little, just without all the extra stuff), so maybe it *was Dream Tunnel* that I was remembering. I really thought there was some arcade game that inspired this one too, though. It wouldn't have been *Scramble*, because that looks more like *Vanguard*.

In *Mount Death*, the little ship constantly moves to the right, but slowly. You basically have to maneuver it up or down (or faster to the right, if needed) without colliding with the tunnel walls. This was probably a lot harder with one of those cheap black TRS-80 joysticks I used while making it, because they weren't self-centering and games like this relied heavily on precision.

Terron

T&D Subscription Software #84 – June 1989
In this graphic game you must shoot down the regenerating laser proof test ships. You must also avoid the rays from the land cruiser and avoid the ship which looks like an equal sign.

RUN"TERRON

```
WELCOME TO TERRON. AS A TERRON
SQUAD COMMANDER, YOUR PRIMARY
DUTY IS TO INSTRUCT YOUR TROOPS
ON HOW TO DEFEND YOUR TERRITORY.
COMPANY DELTA HAS CONSTRUCTED
SPECIAL LASER PROOF TEST SHIPS
THAT CAN REGENERATE AFTER A
DIRECT BLAST.  TO SCORE POINTS,
SIMPLY SHOW YOUR TROOPS HOW TO
EFFECTIVELY SHOOT, BUMP INTO,
AND AVOID THESE SHIPS.




        PRESS ENTER TO CONTINUE
```

```
YOU WILL BE FLYING ABOVE A
TEST SITE. A LAND CRUISER WILL
SHOOT UP AT YOU FROM TIME TO
TIME: AVOID IT. SCORE FOR SHOOT-
ING THE ROUNDISH AIR SHIP. ALSO
SCORE FOR BUMPING INTO THE
SQUARISH ONE. DON'T TOUCH THE
ONE THAT LOOKS LIKE AN EQUAL
SIGN.
THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT.
SIMPLE AND TO THE POINT.
------------------------------
  OH... AND SET A GOOD EXAMPLE.

        PRESS ENTER TO CONTINUE
```

```
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
X  TERRON:     BY MIKE SNYDER  X
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XX                          XX
XX   HIGH SCORE:   25  :ACE  XX
XX   YOUR SCORE:   25        XX
XX                          XX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

      (C) 1989  BY T&D SOFTWARE

   << PRESS A KEY TO BEGIN GAME>>
```

It's another arcade-style game, although not one based on anything I can remember. There's a lot going on in this one, but it doesn't seem like it offers any depth or surprises beyond just this single gameplay loop.

You move the triangular ship around in any direction. A box-shaped enemy at the bottom moves back and forth and will sometimes fire a beam upwards. It's best to just avoid being above it for more time than it takes to reposition yourself. Lose a life if you're hit.

You shoot at the circle ship that moves around to score points (it's OK if you collide with it; nothing happens), bump into the red and blue squiggly box-like ship that moves around (this also scores points) and simply avoid touching the ship that looks like an equal sign (it's deadly). The ships move diagonally around the area in predictable patterns, and the "land cruiser" just goes back and forth at the bottom.

It would have been nice if I had made a way to save your high score to disk. I'm not sure any of my arcade games did that, unfortunately.

Maxomar's World

T&D Subscription Software #77 – November 1988
As a bounty hunter you must bring the escaped prisoner, Maxomar, back to our world. He has stolen a device from one of the leading scientists. Use two word verb/noun combinations such as throw rope or climb rope. Use N,S,E,W for North, South, East and West.

RUN"MAXOMAR

```
             MAXOMAR'S WORLD

MAXOMAR, A FAMED CRIMINAL HAS
JUST ESCAPED FROM PRISON. HE
STOLD A DEVICE FROM ONE OF THE
WORLDS LEADING SCIENTISTS.
THIS DEVICE ENABLED HIM TO
CREATE HIS OWN DIMENSION.......
HIS OWN PRIVATE WORLD.
YOU ARE A BOUNTY HUNTER. YOU
MUST BRING HIM BACK TO OUR WORLD

BY MIKE SNYDER

PRESS <ENTER>?
```

```
YOUR ADVENTURE STARTS HERE IN
A PIT. YOU FEEL A COLD WIND ON
THE BACK OF YOUR NECK- ALONG
WITH A CASUAL THUMP-THUMP.......
THUMP-THUMP......THUMP-THUMP.
OBJECTS HERE-
A SHOVEL
YOU CAN GO
OKAY-? GET SHOVEL
YOU HAVE IT NOW.
OKAY-? DIG
YOU CAN'T 'DIG'.
OKAY-?
```

```
YOU ARE AT THE EDGE OF THE
ENCHANTED FOREST. THIS SEEMS TO
BE THE ONLY SPOT IN THIS WHOLE
LAND THAT YOU HAVE WITNESSED A
TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE SUN- IT IS
QUITE DARK HERE.
A BOOMING VOICE DEMANDS AN
ANSWER TO IT'S RIDDLE.
OBJECTS HERE-
NONE WORTH MENTIONING
YOU CAN GO S
OKAY-? ANSWER RIDDLE
YOU CAN'T 'ANSWER RIDDLE'.
OKAY-?
```

This is another of the impossible-to-solve text adventure games I wrote back then. It's not a good sign when the game presents you with a shovel you can pick up, but the command DIG isn't recognized.

Actually, this first puzzle is interesting. You're forced to focus on the task at hand: getting out of this pit you start in. The solution is that you also have a rope in your inventory (which you won't know unless you check "INV" for inventory, although that's standard in all text adventures), which you can tie to the shovel. Oddly, the game wants you to throw the rope itself, not the shovel, which kind of defeats the purpose of making this crude grappling hook. Oh well, it worked.

If I had all the time in the world, it might be fun to try solving some of these text adventures, even if it meant peeking at the BASIC source code. Well, fun for *me*, maybe. I can't imagine anybody else getting anything out of them.

Police Cadet II - The Haunted Carnival

T&D Subscription Software #77 – November 1988
In your second police cadet mission you must investigate the ghost sightings at the carnival. This adventure requires 32K of memory and starts you out in a parking lot. Use verb-noun combinations to do things such as get book, look can, and climb cage. Use N, S, E, and W for north, south, east and west.

RUN"CADET#2

```
PLEASE PRESS <ENTER>?

              II
         POLICE
          CADET

     THE HAUNTED CARNIVAL

 = = = = BY MIKE SNYDER = = = =
```

```
FOUR MINUTES AFTER YOU RETURNED
THE MONEY FROM THE VARINGEN
HOUSE* YOU WERE GIVEN
ANOTHER ASSIGNMENT. THIS TIME,
YOU MUST INVESTIGATE THE
THE CARNIVAL. GHOST SIGHTINGS
HAVE BEEN REPORTED FREQUENTLY.


PRESS <ENTER>?
-------------------------------
*SEE POLICE CADET 1
```

```
YOU START YOUR MISSION WITH THE
FOLLOWING: A BROOM AND A CAN OF
INSECT SPRAY. THIS IS WHAT YOU
KEPT FROM YOUR PREVIOUS ASSIGN-
MENT (POLICE CADET 1). YOU ALSO
HAVE $100.00
USE VERB-NOUN TO DO THINGS, SUCH
AS [GET BOOK] OR [LOOK CAN] OR
[CLIMB CAGE]. USE ONE LETTER FOR
THINGS SUCH AS [N]ORTH, [W]EST,
[E]AST, [S]OUTH, [I]NVENTORY.
(ONLY THE FIRST 3 LETTERS OF
SOME WORDS ARE NEEDED, LIKE
<CLI CAG>)
GOOD LUCK-
PRESS <ENTER> TO CONTINUE ?
```

```
YOU ARE AT THE TICKET BOOTH. A
LADY IS SELLING TICKETS TO
ENTER THE CARNIVAL.

OBJECTS HERE-
NOTHING OF INTEREST-

YOU CAN GO-/N/S/E/W

WHAT NOW TALK LADY
YOU CAN'T 'TALK LADY'.

WHAT NOW LOOK LADY
YOU CAN'T 'LOOK LADY'.

WHAT NOW
```

Interesting. I took the simple title theme song from the first *Police Cadet* and did a trick with the volume of each note so it sounds a bit more, I don't know, organic, maybe. Then, I added a fun little outro flourish at the end.

As I became better at programming in BASIC and started using a variety of techniques to make my games better on a technical level, it would have been nice if I had evolved the core gameplay of these text adventures too. The main room/game display in this one is nice, but behind the scenes it's still just a crude system that expects very specific commands and a limited set of actions it can understand.

I was able to roam around a bit without making much progress, eventually opening the door to a mobile home and going inside. The games ends with me being captured and killed as an intruder, accompanied by a few simple notes of *Another One Bites the Dust*.

Starship Showdown

T&D Subscription Software #77 – November 1988
Two players battle it out in this game. You can shoot left and right with your joystick as you try to hit your opponent. Hit him five times to win. The fueling stations are in the corners. You must travel back and forth between them to collect shots. Avoid the three traps and the deactivator in the middle.

RUN"SHOWDOWN

```
STARSHIP
SHOWDOWN

BY MIKE SNYDER
AND CHARLEY WOLFF
(C) 1988 T+D
```

```
WHEN YOU GO TO THE CORRECT FUEL-
ING STATION, YOU WILL SCORE 2
MORE SHOTS. THIS MEANS YOU CAN
FIRE TWICE MORE BY PRESSING YOUR
FIRE BUTTON. YOU CAN SHOOT RIGHT
AND LEFT, AND MUST TRY TO HIT
YOU OPPONENT. HIT HIM 5 TIMES TO
BREAK DOWN HIS 5 SHIELDS AND WIN
MEANWHILE, AVOID THE THREE TRAPS
THAT ARE RANDOMLY PLACED IN THE
STARSHIP. THERE ARE TWO BOMBS,
AND A DEACTIVATOR DEVICE (WHICH
LOOKS LIKE THE LOWER-RIGHT FUEL
STATION.)
PRESS <ENTER>
```

Oh cool, another two-player deathmatch game I wrote as a way to spend some time with my youngest brother, Charley. This one seems a lot more complicated than the other one (*Snow Fight*) and I barely remember this game at all. That rapid flashing the title screen does at the end was probably a bad idea. Was I trying to give people seizures?

Something is a little wonky with the emulator joystick mapping. When I press no key at all, my guy still moves downward.

I remember CoCo joystick positions being accessed by actual X and Y positions, so I must have coded "down" as a Y-axis point that wasn't actually dead center on the joystick.

It looks like your shots are lasers that go the full width of the screen in the direction you shoot (left or right only), while you and your opponent are confined to the gameplay grid. This was probably fun for a few rounds.

Police Cadet III – The Gadget Factory

T&D Subscription Software #78 – December 1988
In this continuation of the Police Cadet Adventure, you must go into the 'Gadget Factory' and find the Solar Powered Perpetual Motion Energy Center. This adventure requires at least 32K of memory. Use verbs such as get, drop, examine, look, inventory, open and one special verb; compile, along with nouns. Use N, S, E, and W for North, South, East, and West.

RUN"CADET#3

Once again, the theme song gets a makeover. There's a little of that original tune here, but I really riffed on the melody through most of it.

Looking back on these *Police Cadet* text adventures, I wonder what I was thinking. It doesn't seem likely that a trainee would be sent on these wild, silly, life-threatening missions. Also, why am I getting orders directly from the chief of police? Also, is any of this actually stuff that would fall under the purview of the police anyway?

Great. Instant death just by looking at the "new improved gumball machine." Let's try this again. Hey, wonderful, here's a whole room called the "instant death chamber".

These games might not be so bad if there was a way to save, or even just to undo a move. Starting from scratch and replaying whatever you figured out previously is just a pain.

Crazy Chemist

T&D Subscription Software #85 – July 1989
All of the labels have fallen off your chemicals! First you must mix the chemicals together. Then, mix them with powder, heat the mixture, mix it with acid and test it. What kind of result can you get?

RUN"CHEMIST
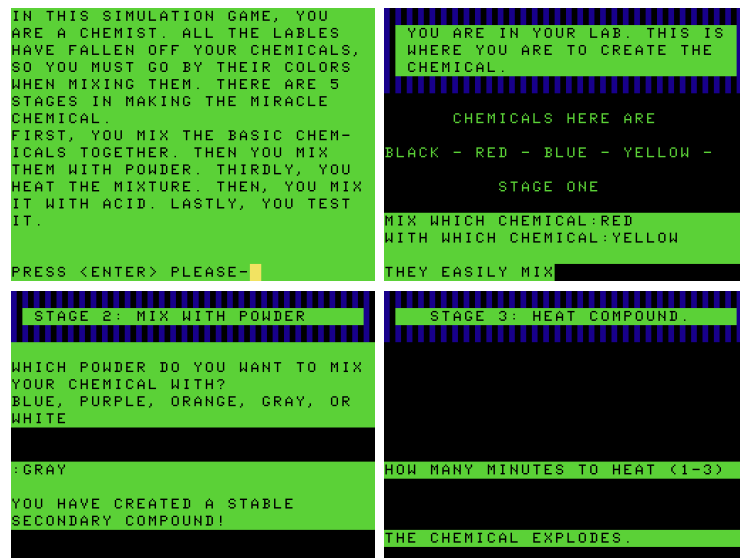
Although nothing like *Monsters and Magic*, this is another game where I decided to try something completely different from my usual go-to of text adventures and arcade games. I described it as a "simulation" game.

I'm able to consistently mix the four base chemicals together in pairs three times, reducing them down to a single mixture. After that, though, the second step (mixing in a powder from a set of colors) results in either a mixture that vanishes, or one that explodes.

Oh no! That time, the whole world exploded!

To do that, I mixed yellow + blue, then green + black, then charcoal + red, followed by the orange powder. The same thing with blue or purple powder results in a stable compound.

I have the option to heat it for 1 to 3 minutes. With the blue or purple powder, it seems that this compound explodes no matter what.

This is just a simplistic trial-and-error puzzle, from what I'm seeing and what I remember.

Journey Up

T&D Subscription Software #85 – July 1989
Jumpin Joe is looking for treasure. Use your right joystick to control him as he tries to jump to higher levels. Press the button to make him jump but beware, some platforms are not strong enough to support him.

RUN"JOURNEY
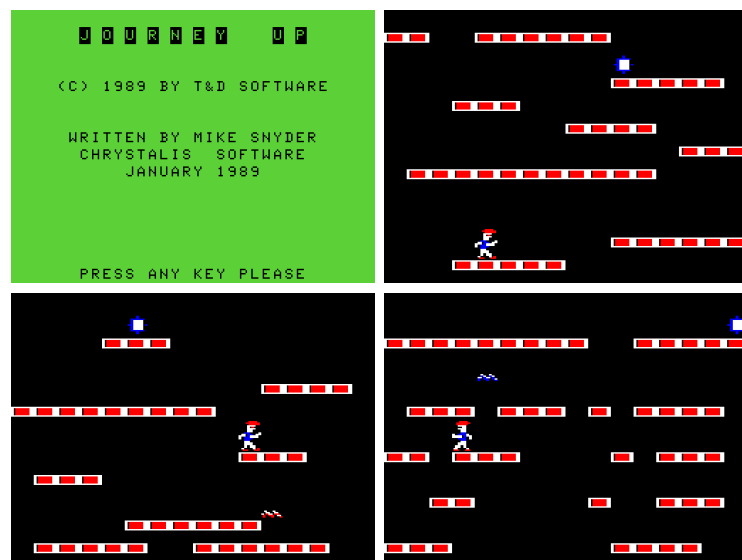
This is more puzzle than platformer, and it's actually not half bad. I mean, there's the usual frustration of having only three lives, no way to save or continue, and starting over from the first stage each time, but I'm kind of impressed by my younger self's design and concept with this one.

You move Joe left and right by a full tile each time. He can jump high (as best I can tell, about 25% of the screen), and will try landing on the first platform in range above him.

The puzzle is figuring out which platforms he can land on, and which ones he'll fall right through, because they all look the same. The answer may not be a straight path up to the exit orb. It might be a round-about path of jumping up to a specific square on the ledge above (the others are fakes), walking off to land on a platform below, and then from there, jumping to an even higher platform that was out of reach from the previous one.

If not for the descending bat, which seems to be impossible to avoid at times, this is pretty clever. It does require some memorization or note-taking to use in advancing through subsequent runs. I wonder why I opted not to have a fancy musical title screen.

Sub Mania

T&D Subscription Software #85 – July 1989
As a submarine captain you must pilot your sub through the perilous water. You control your sub with the right joystick. Shoot down the mines in front of you and catch the positive energy that falls into the water. You must also shoot down the mountain base or you will be destroyed.

RUN"SUBMANIA
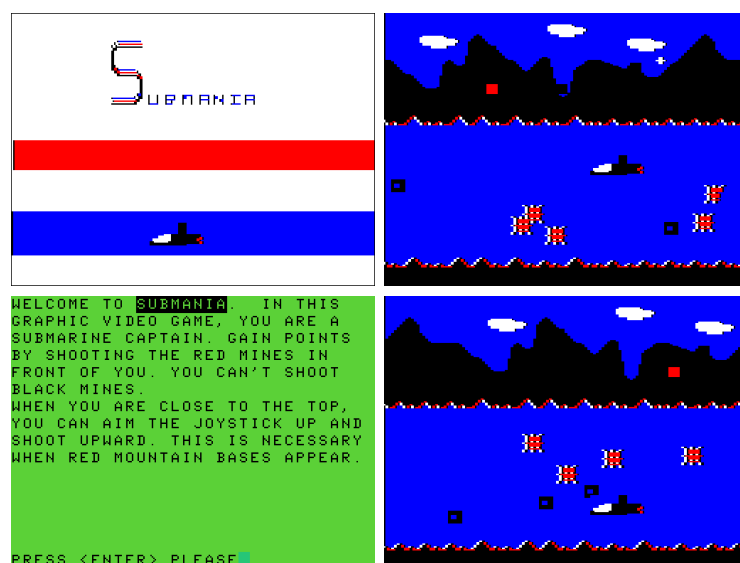
The title song in this one seems mostly an original creation, but a few notes in there are almost certainly a nod to *The Last Starfighter*.

You can move the submarine around as the screen scrolls from left to the right. This is the opposite of most side-scrollers, where you move to the right as the screen scrolls left. I guess I was trying to mix things up a bit.

There's a lot going on here, and the game looks kind of cool as a "hi-res" CoCo 2 game with 4-color artifacting. The difficulty in the gameplay is horrible, though, with no thought given to balancing or overall fairness. Moving around to avoid or shoot red mines and avoid black mines is fine, but you have to catch the occasional falling "plus sign" (else you lose a life) and shoot the red mountain bases which can only be done by rising near the surface (and missing one of those loses a life too).

I may have been pretty good at it at the time, but I bet I was the only one. It's not very fun.

The Genesis Project

T&D Subscription Software #70 – April 1988
Genesis Project is a text adventure game. You must take the travelers and the rocket to the launch pad. Use two-word commands (like 'get food') to try to solve the game. This program requires 32K or more memory.

RUN"GENESIS
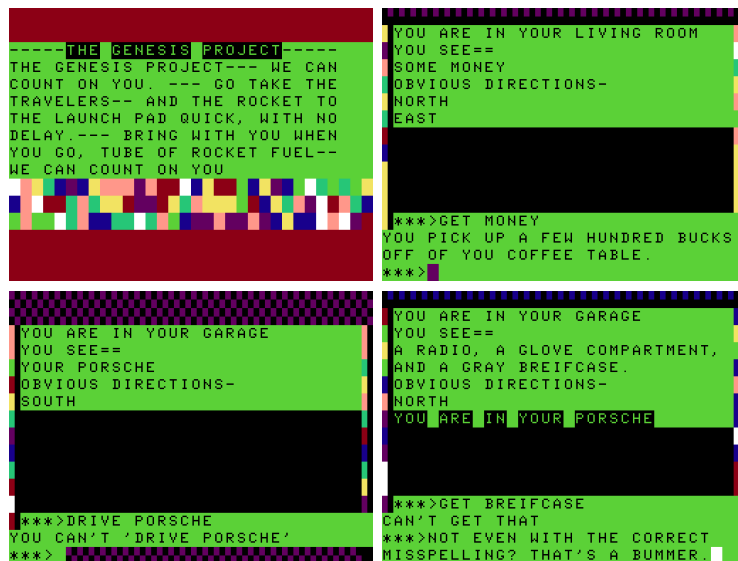
My second disk ends with another of my many text adventures. This must have been one of my earliest ones, given that the title screen shows a 1997 copyright (even though it wasn't published by T&D until later, in 1988).

I really thought I was good at this, at the time; so much so that I even wrote an "adventure game writing tutorial" which will show up later, on disk #4. In my own mind, I was the king of text adventures, making these epic masterpieces that people were bound to play and love. At least the delusion kept me going.

This one seems like wish fulfillment. At the start, I've found hundreds of dollars on my coffee table and a Porsche in the garage. I also walked outside naked and got arrested, but I'm not sure that was part of the wish.

In my own defense, these games *were* kind of clever. They worked like big puzzle boxes with a variety of things to pick up and use to make progress and ultimately reach your goal. They just lacked polish and playability (too much "guess the command") which are supremely important in text-based games.

Let's Play – Disk #3

Tiler Tex

T&D Subscription Software #79 – January 1989
Use the right joystick to move your man from the upper left corner of the screen. As you move you will drop diagonal tiles. To win you must tile all 15 levels while avoiding Fifi, the guard dog.

RUN"TILERTEX
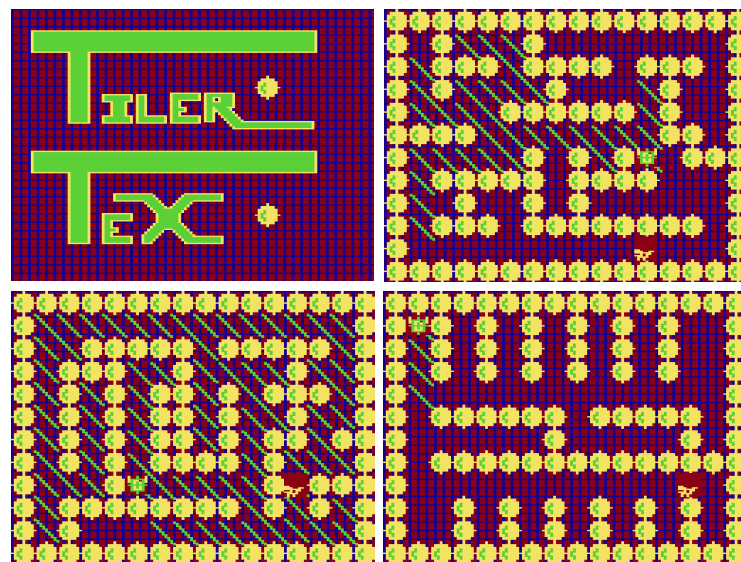
At least the title screen is short and sweet; not something I was typically known for with these. The gameplay board looks more appealing than the one in *Tiler Text Two* (from disk #2, earlier).

If I recall, the CoCo 2 had a standard graphics mode where you could select (maybe "palette") four colors from a selection of 9. The downside was a lower resolution, but in retrospect, I think that was a better choice than the higher-res mode where you had black and white, with red and blue available only as "artifact" colors that came with the unfortunate necessity of making players hit their RESET button if the CoCo happened to boot up with the colors swapped. It seemed random.

The gameplay is also simpler. A single enemy tracks you, but it wasn't coded to actually navigate the maze on its own. If a wall is in the way, it simply waits there until you move, and then advances only when it finds a gap to use. You can kind of lead it around and even trap it temporarily that way; far easier than Pac-Man.

Police Cadet IV

T&D Subscription Software #79 – January 1989
This graphic adventure was written originally on a tape system. It requires at least 32K of memory to work. Disk users: You cannot use the directory program to run this program but must enter RUN "CADET 4". If you get an SN error in line 0, simply type RUN again. Play goes like most two-word Adventures. A special verb 'SCREEN' is used to toggle the screen color. The plot is to recover the five pieces of evidence that can be used against a soviet spy. Disk users, if you need more memory, you can save this program onto tape, unplug the disk controller and CLOAD the program back up.

RUN"CADET#4
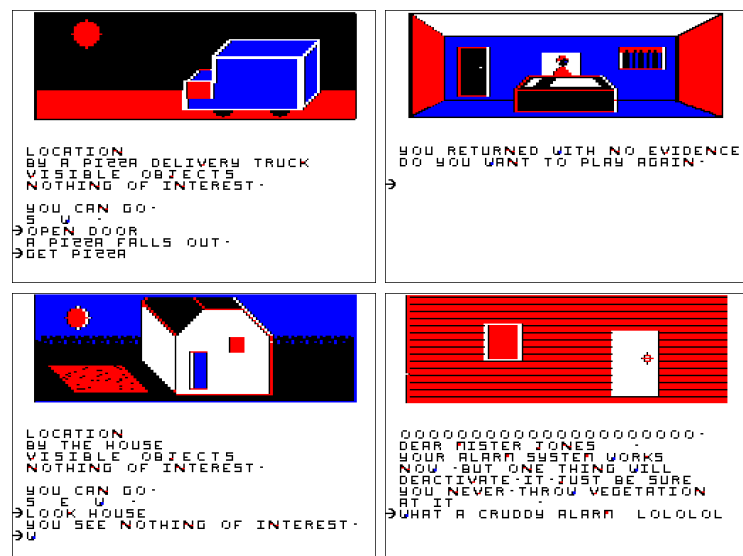
What the heck was that short title song? That wasn't the catchy little *Police Cadet* ditty I know and love. For that matter, why isn't there a title screen at all? The intro just plays over an all-white screen. Did all those graphic "draw" commands for the various locations use up all the memory I had to work with?

It seems like I forgot a lot of stuff. There isn't even an intro story to explain what's going on this time (aside from a single sentence mixed in with the general instructions in that brief text about the game on the T&D cover sheet, included above).

I played this just long enough to explore a bit, get my screenshots, and find the first pieces of a few puzzles. It's a typical adventure.

RoboCrook

T&D Subscription Software #105 – March 1991
You are trying to find the robotic menace in this 32K adventure. You might run into Spuds M., Freddy K., or Norman B. in this thriller. Use standard adventure syntax like N,S,E,W for North, South, East, and West. Use also standard adventure verbs like look, go, drop, inventory, etc.

RUN"ROBO
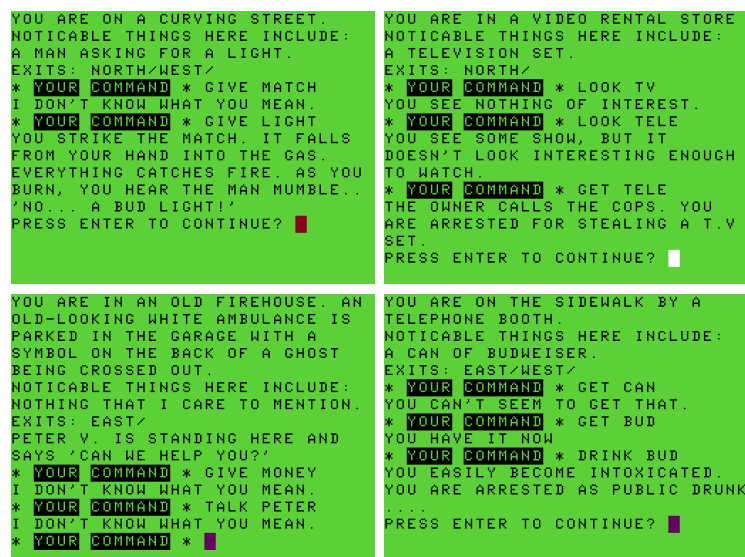
Well, this certainly seems like it'll be a hoot. The intro screen says I'm going to meet people such as Pee-Wee H. (Herman?), Tom C. (Cruise?), and Spuds M. (Mackenzie? The Bud Light mascot from way back then? That's a dog, not a "person").

Going west twice from the start puts me on a bridge that collapses, leading to an instant game over. Of course. What would my text adventures be without instant game overs?

A tip learned the hard way: don't pick up the gas can when going south *before* going south again to give the guy a "light" (a match that starts out in your inventory). It ends poorly.

Why, as a teenage high school nerd, was I even writing beer into this game? To this day, I don't even *like* beer. I guess I wouldn't have known that at the time, though.

This seems to be "80s Pop Culture: The Text Adventure Game". I also managed to find the *Ghostbusters* firehouse and Kitt from *Knight Rider*. If I had more time, I would totally see if I could figure out how to finish this goofy game.

Ghost Hunter

T&D Subscription Software #104 – January 1991
Put on Egon's ghost suit and go in after Slimer in this graphic game. Use your right joystick to maneuver into each of the different scenes. There are additional instructions in the program but the author wants you to figure the program out for yourself.

RUN"GHOST

ONE MOMENT: NOW ENTERING THE CONTAINMENT UNIT.

<< AVOID THE SANDMAN >>

--- THE TUNNEL ---
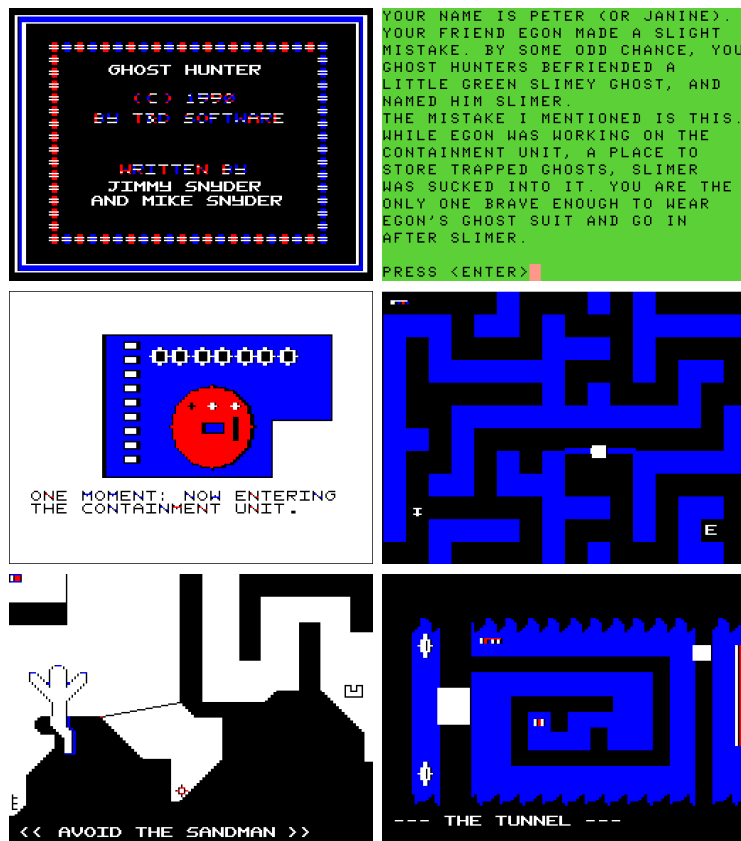
I had no concept of copyright infringement. Between this, my series of *Doctor Who* games, and my *Smurfs* platformer, it must have been the wild west for amateur indie game developers like me in the 1980s. It even starts with a one-channel rendition of Ray Parker Jr.'s famous theme song from the first movie. At least I didn't just call this *Ghostbusters*. This was probably inspired as much by *The Real Ghostbusters* cartoon as the movies, if not even more so.

Hey, cool, even though it's just a throw-away line at the start of the instructions, I made a point to say players can be Peter *or* Janine.

According to the instructions, you start on the same level after a game-over, which isn't the player-unfriendly decision I usually made.

The gameplay is a bit like that classic anxiety-inducing kid's game, *Operation*; the one where touching the sides makes the whole thing buzz. Why did we even play that as kids?

In *Ghost Hunter*, expertly navigating the maze would have taken nerves of steel and a steady hand when using a non-centering classic CoCo joystick. In this emulator, with my arrow keys mapped to the joystick, it's nearly trivial.

The second stage is a bit tricky to figure out, and it introduces a time limit. It took me a moment to realize I could move down the far left side to get the key even with a wall there, and even longer to realize I needed to use the fire button to open the gate in the middle to touch what I guess is a circular switch that opens a path to the zig-zag tunnel at the upper right. At least the space for movement in that zig-zag area looks a bit wider than the maze in the first stage, so that's no problem for me.

After this, though, I have no idea what it wants me to do. It takes most of the time limit to get there, leaving very little remaining for experimentation. I'm glad I decided to let me start again from the same stage. Oh, there we go. After picking up that U-shaped thing at the right, I need to go back out of the zig-zag area and over to the upper left, then press the fire button to open that small area.

The third and final stage is timed as well. It's more of the same: grab the key from the top, use the fire button to open the white gate on the left side, grab the two white gems then the red one that appears in the left wall, then book it out to open the white gate at the upper right and escape the area to find Slimer.

At the end, I'm given a score based on how many times I played and replayed levels; the lower the better. The ideal score, apparently, is 3. My score was 21. I don't know if my end-screen comment "you could do better next time" is encouraging or insulting. Thanks, me.

Search for the Lost Treasure

T&D Subscription Software #108 – June 1991
You start out in the woods searching for the lost treasure of famous King Erik. Watch out for snakes and Wizard's and other characters. Use standard adventure syntax like N, E, S, and W for moving north, east, south, or west. Use other verb/noun combinations like get, hit, examine, look, etc.

RUN"TREASURE

```
SEARCH FOR THE LOST TREASURE

BY MIKE SNYDER & LEROY COOKSEY

(C) 1991   T&D SOFTWARE
```

```
..SEARCH FOR THE LOST TREASURE..
YOU ARE BY A DEEP, BLACK PIT.
WHITISH SMOKE IS RISING FROM IT.
HOT LAVA IS SWIRLING AT THE
BOTTOM. AN INVISIBLE HAND PUSHES
YOU INTO THE PIT. AS YOU FALL
YOU CAN SEE THE TWISTED FACE OF
DEATH ITSELF LAUGHING. YOU DIE
IN THE HOT BUBBLING LAVA.
OBJECTS PRESENT:
NOTHING.
GAME OVER-
PLAY AGAIN (Y/N)
```

```
..SEARCH FOR THE LOST TREASURE..
YOU ARE AT THE SOUTH END OF A
HALL IN THE STORE. A DECAYING
RUG IS ON THE FLOOR.
OBJECTS PRESENT:
NOTHING.
EXITS * NORTH*

NEXT MOVE   MOVE RUG
YOU SEE A TRAP DOOR.
NEXT MOVE   OPEN DOOR
IT OPENS.
NEXT MOVE   D
```

```
..SEARCH FOR THE LOST TREASURE..
YOU ARE ON A ROAD. TO THE NORTH
IS AN ABANDONED TOWN.
OBJECTS PRESENT:
AN OLD KEY
EXITS * NORTH*SOUTH*

NEXT MOVE   GET KEY
REFER TO IT BY ITS DESCRIPTION
OR BY ITS NUMBER, SUCH AS K#5 OR
C#2
NEXT MOVE   GET OLD
AN OLD KEY TAKEN.
NEXT MOVE   N
```

```
..SEARCH FOR THE LOST TREASURE..
YOU ARE IN A TURNING TUNNEL.
A HOLE IS CARVED IN THE WALL
TO THE WEST.
OBJECTS PRESENT:
A GOLD ROPE
EXITS * SOUTH*EAST*

NEXT MOVE   GET ROPE
?*** HUH ***?
NEXT MOVE   GET ROPE
?*** HUH ***?
NEXT MOVE   GET GOLD
A GOLD ROPE TAKEN.
NEXT MOVE
```

```
..SEARCH FOR THE LOST TREASURE..
YOU ARE BY A SLEEPING DRAGON.
AN AMULET IS AROUND IT'S NECK
CAUSING A STRANGE BLUE LIGHT
TO ENCASE THE SLEEPING BEAST.
OBJECTS PRESENT:
NOTHING.
EXITS * NORTH*WEST*

NEXT MOVE   GET AMULET
AS YOU TAKE IT THE DRAGON WAKES
UP. YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO
DEFEND YOURSELF. YOU ARE DEAD.
GAME OVER-
PLAY AGAIN (Y/N)
```

This one is co-credited to LeRoy Cooksey, probably one of the nicest and most kind-hearted kids I ever met. It shames me to no end that I was kind of a jerk to him at times, as kids tend to be. Of the many things I'd do with a time machine, kicking some sense into my younger self would be somewhere on the list.

I think he designed this game himself, based on the way I designed mine (which probably wasn't a good thing). I did the programming, and I might have made some tweaks to what he came up with, but I remember this being mostly the game he had intended.

This seems like any other typical 1980's amateur-made text adventure, instant death and all.

Snak Shak

T&D Subscription Software #108 – June 1991
As the owner of your very own concession stand, you must make the decisions on how much popcorn to stock, how many cups of ice to make, as well as how much coffee to make. Try to make as much money as possible before the football game ends.

RUN"SNAKSHAK

```
SNAK
SHAK

A COCO SIMULATION GAME
```

```
RULES OF A SUCCESSFUL SNAK SHAK

1) KEEP ENOUGH ICE IN THE CUPS
2) KEEP COKE AND PEPSI STOCKED
3) MAKE PLENTY OF POPCORN
4) HAVE COFFEE AT ALL TIMES

YOU ARE THE PROUD OWNER OF YOUR
OWN CONCESSION STAND, LOCATED
AT A HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL
FIELD. IN THIS GAME, YOU MUST
USE YOUR TIME WISELY TO MAKE
THE MOST MONEY BEFORE THE GAME
ENDS.

         PRESS ANY KEY PLEASE
```

```
*******************************
* CANDY:  $.40   SUCKERS: $.15 *
* COKES:  $.50   POPCORN: $.50 *
* COFFEE  $.40   PICKLES: $.30 *
* GUM:    $.50   NACHOS: $1.00 *
*******************************
         GAME TIME
  QUARTER: 1   MINUTES: 11
  CUSTOMERS HERE: 7
YOU'VE MADE ABOUT: $ 7
    YOUR CHOICES ARE
  1) FILL CUPS WITH ICE
  2) WAIT ON CUSTOMERS
  3) MAKE COFFEE
  4) MAKE POPCORN
  5) REFILL COKE MACHINE
```

```
OKAY. I WANT...
  1 PEPSI
  2 DR. PEPPERS
  1 BAG OF POPCORN
  1 MARS BAR
  1 SUCKER
  2 CUPS OF COFFEE

THAT SALES BRINGS YOU: $ 3.35

PRESS ANY KEY
```

The inspiration for this one probably came from working at the concession stand at football games a time or two during my senior year of high school. I think it was always the seniors who did it, as part of the fundraising efforts for a senior trip. Wait, no. I was in the marching band. I wouldn't have been working at the concession stand, would I? There's no way.

That's a long title screen. Frayne gets a co-credit there, so maybe this was his idea, and he was the one working at the concessions stand? If so, then it definitely wasn't run by the seniors.

It's another "simulation" game, which might hold up better today than my arcade games and text adventures. This doesn't seem like the kind of game I enjoyed myself; a further clue that maybe this was Frayne's idea.

There's a real-time element if you sit and do nothing, but time goes faster when you take various actions. The gameplay isn't deep, quickly becoming more boring than *actually* working at a real stand, where at least you could chat and socialize. At least we tried something different.

Destination: Unknown

T&D Subscription Software #109 – July 1991
Use two word commands to control your movement in this exciting text adventure. You find yourself stranded on the highway. If you are lucky, you can fix your car or perhaps, get a new one. You can use N, S, E, W for north, south, east or west. Watch out for spiders, scorpions, or vampires.

RUN"DESTIN

```
           DESTINATION: UNKNOWN

BY KANDI STINSON AND MIKE SNYDER
        WITH HELP FROM
 FRAYNE BLACK AND LEROY COOKSEY

        (C)OPYRIGHT 1991
          T&D SOFTWARE

     WELCOME TO DESTINATION: UNKN
```

```
YOU ARE ON THE HIGHWAY BY YOUR
CAR. ALL AROUND IS RUBBER AND
OTHER TRACES OF YOUR BLOW-OUT.
WITHOUT A NEW TIRE, YOUR CAR IS
BEYOND REPAIR.
VISIBLE OBJECTS:
NOTHING WORTH MENTIONING.
EXITS:      N E W

NOW WHAT -->REPAIR CAR
THAT DOES NOT COMPUTE

NOW WHAT -->GET TIRE
NOPE. YOU JUST CAN'T GET IT!

NOW WHAT -->
```

```
THIS IS A CEMETARY. THERE ARE
TOMB STONES ALL AROUND, AND YOU
FEEL AS IF DEATH HIMSELF WERE
GRASPING AT YOUR THROAT.
VISIBLE OBJECTS:
A CAN OF INSECT SPRAY
EXITS:      E

NOW WHAT -->GET SPRAY
TAKEN

NOW WHAT -->EAT SPRAY
NOT ON YOUR LIFE.

NOW WHAT -->
```

```
YOU ARE IN A FOREST. A HIGHWAY
IS TO THE SOUTH. A SIGN READS:
'LAST REST' WITH AN ARROW POINT-
ING WESTWARD. A JIANT ROCK
BLOCKS THE EAST EXIT. A PATH
GOES NORTH INTO A THICKER WOODS
VISIBLE OBJECTS:
NOTHING WORTH MENTIONING.
EXITS:      N S W

NOW WHAT -->CLIMB ROCK
THAT DOES NOT COMPUTE

NOW WHAT -->
```

I mentioned Kandi and her game in the first section, before I started writing about each of these games, and here it is. What I didn't remember is that Frayne and LeRoy are also credited for helping with some part of it.

This intro music is *not* from the song by Missing Persons; further proof that I must not have realized it *was* a song, at the time. If I had, there's no way I would have passed up the opportunity to make my own bleep-bloop version of it. If Kandi knew, which I assume she must have, she should have clued me in. Maybe it *was* coincidental?

There's an option to skip the title screen. That should have been standard in *all* of these text adventures. Okay, let's explore a bit. Oh no; as I did in RODOC, I spelled "giant" with a "j" in one of the forest locations.

I remember this fence south of the highway, and I think I remember you're supposed to climb over it, but that doesn't work. Oh, right, I figured it out. I needed to go back, open the car's trunk to get the wire cutters, and then cut the fence to go south. Still, I'm getting nowhere fast in this game.

The Silence Syndrome

T&D Subscription Software #111 – September 1991
The West Front isn't the only thing that's quiet in this text adventure. You find yourself in an outdoor cafe, but the world seems to be totally without sound. It is your mission to solve the mystery and bring back the sound. As with most text adventures, it is run by typing two word commands, such as "get pencil" or "buy pencil". You can also type N, S, E, W for moving North, South, East or West.

RUN"SILENCE

```
THE   SILENCE
SYNDROME

    BY: MIKE SNYDER

  (C) 1991 T&D SOFTWARE

  64K ALL TEXT ADVENTURE

    G O O D   L U C K
```

```
YOU ARE IN THE CAFE. THERE ARE
TABLES ALL AROUND. PEOPLE ARE
EATING STRANGELY.. THERE IS NO
NOISE AT ALL. IT'S AS IF YOU
WERE DEAF, BUT YOU KNOW THAT
EVERYONE IS EXPERIENCING THE
SAME SILENCE.
YOU CAN SEE NOTHING WORTH
MENTIONING.
EXITS LEAD:WEST
MOVE 1 IS:LOOK PEOPLE
IT LOOKS ORDINARY.
MOVE 2 IS:LISTEN
I USUALLY NEED 2 WORDS.
MOVE 3 IS:
```

```
YOU ARE ON THE STREET. THERE IS
A LOOSE MANHOLE COVER HERE.
YOU CAN SEE NOTHING WORTH
MENTIONING.
EXITS LEAD:NORTH SOUTH EAST WEST
MOVE 18 IS:MOVE COVER
EASY FOR YOU TO SAY, BUT
IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO DO.
MOVE 19 IS:PUSH MANHOLE
EASY FOR YOU TO SAY, BUT
IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO DO.
MOVE 20 IS:D
I USUALLY NEED 2 WORDS.
MOVE 21 IS:GET COVER
YOU CANNOT GET IT.
MOVE 22 IS:
```

```
YOU ARE AT THE CHECKOUT COUNTER
IN THE DEPARTMENT STORE. A MAN
IS BEHIND IT WAITING FOR MORE
CUSTOMERS.
YOU CAN SEE NOTHING WORTH
MENTIONING.
EXITS LEAD:SOUTH
MOVE 39 IS:BUY PENCIL
YOU HAVE NO MONEY, JACK!
MOVE 40 IS:LOOK CLERK
IT LOOKS ORDINARY.
MOVE 41 IS:I
YOU HAVE
A CASSETTE TAPE
A PENCIL
MOVE 42 IS:S
```

I'm 100% positive I didn't write the intro text for the T&D cover sheet (seen here, just above the screenshots). I wouldn't have known the phrase "all quiet on the western front" or that it was the title of a novel about World War 1. Now that I think about it, most of those blurbs don't sound like me at all. That must have been something Tom put together himself.

Of all the concepts for stories in these games, this seems like one of the most interesting. Suddenly, the world is devoid of all sounds! The only one that might beat it on concept is *The Entity* (which is on the final disk, so we're still quite a ways from getting to that one).

As usual, I would probably need to spend a lot more time with this game or peek at the BASIC source code to make any real progress. Some of them probably *could* be solved and finished with some patience, but I don't have it in me.

Crionaut Warrior 3

T&D Subscription Software #113 – November 1991
In this CoCo 3 only graphics game, you are trapped in a building with 468 rooms. Unfortunately, there are some killer robots trapped with you. Can you exit the building before they kill you or the timer runs out? Use your arrow keys to control your journey through the building and the space key for firing.

RUN"WARRIOR3
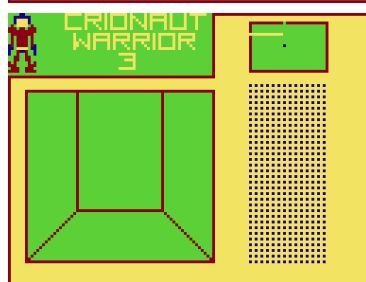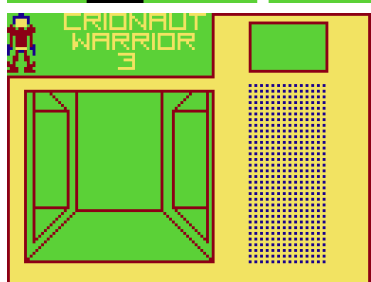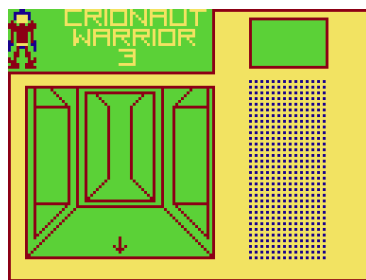
How did this CoCo 3 game end up on disk #3, which I've designated as all CoCo 2 games?

Wait no, this is a CoCo 2 game! Did Tom just *think* it was for CoCo 3 because I called it *Crionaut Warrior 3* - a designation he tended to use himself, kind of like "64" for Nintendo 64 games? The title screen even says "Crionaut Warrior Part 3" so now I'm confused.

But hey, what happened to part 2? Was that one of my few games T&D rejected, or did they buy it and it just fell through the cracks somehow?

For whatever reason, this one features a first-person maze, not the 3x3 tile maze like the original *Crionaut Warrior*. This is more like my *Dungeon Maze* game (mentioned earlier as the first game on disk #2), but with a little mini-game you sometimes have to play, like in my *Chambers of Krid* game from disk #1.

This one apparently has a time limit, but I haven't seen it yet. Maybe it's a "turn" limit. The mini-game seems easy. You just line up the dots on the X and Y axis in the tiny box at the top right, then SPACEBAR to fire at the other dot. It doesn't seem to happen often, so it's not a big distraction from exploring the maze.

Flying Saucer

T&D Subscription Software #97 – July 1990
You must sneak on board the flying saucer in your quest to become a famed astronaut. Use commands like N, S, E, W, U, D, to move around. Use verbs like get, examine, look, drop, or leave followed by a noun. Overcome the robot as you try to find the secrets of the universe.

RUN"SAUCER

It's yet another text adventure. This one looks like a game I would have written much earlier than the summer of 1990, when it made its way to T&D issue #97. I'm doing volume modulation in the music, though, which was one of my later go-to gimmicks. The little spaceship block graphic gets drawn at the top of each room, which slows it down – one of my *earlier* gimmicks – so who knows.

Going south ends the game (you leave the area), but I found a rock to the west and was able to HIT ROBOT with it to the east. THROW ROCK wouldn't work. A quick LOOK at the robot now reveals a clue for how to get inside the saucer. Nice!

I made it on board, but I died by getting into a defective sleeping pod. Okay. Starting over.

Oh, cool, it let me go north right from the start and SAY OPEN to drop the ladder leading up into the saucer. Nice! I figured I'd have to hit the robot and read the clue again first.

Mower Madness

T&D Subscription Software #97 – July 1990

Mow all ten areas of the robot factory in this high resolution game. Use your right joystick to maneuver your lawn mower. Make sure you avoid the robots or you will have to start over.

`RUN"MOWER`

```
MOST ALL PARTS OF AN AREA CAN
BE MOWED, BUT YOU MAY HAVE TO
MOVE THE MOWER SIDEWAYS, OR
GO STRAIGHT AGAINST A WALL. TO
GO TO THE NEXT AREA, YOU MUST MO
W  MOST OF THE CURRENT AREA.
TO CHECK YOUR SCORE, OR THE
RUNNING HIGH SCORE, PRESS THE
FIREBUTTON WHILE YOU ARE PLAY-
ING, AND HOLD IT. ALSO, TO
ABORT THE TITLE SCREEN AT ANY
TIME AND BEGIN THE GAME, HOLD
THE FIRE BUTTON.

   PRESS ANY KEY TO CONTINUE:
```

I'm glad I read the in-game instructions. The music at the title screen is a short, annoying loop that doesn't end the way most of them do. You need to hold the fire button to break out of the title screen and start the game.

The title screen itself takes a while to appear, but it's with an interesting effect where the little lawn mower goes back and forth across a full screen of grass, revealing it line by line from the top down.

The premise must have been based on my own summer job of mowing lawns, but on my website, I've described the gameplay as a mix of *Pac-Man* and *Robotron*. I'm not sure how accurate that is. You're not really in a maze, and the robots don't target you. They just randomly move around by one full tile at a time, much the way the enemies do in one of my later games, *Eldus*. At the moment, a bunch of them are kind of clustered up near the top in a way that prevents me from mowing up there. Wait, where did they all come from? I don't remember that many.

Hey, this time there are only three of them. I bet those others were a display glitch caused when one robot enters the same tile as another. That probably explains why some of them weren't moving last time. Yeah, it seems a bit buggy, with collisions (even from the mower) leaving pieces of sprites behind.

Yeah, this is about as much fun as mowing a lawn for real, but at least then, you usually don't have to avoid any robots.

Those phantom robots are a real problem though. I can tell which ones are glitches because they don't move, but they're also blocking that tile on the game board, meaning I can't mow it. That probably makes the game unwinnable, at least on this run.

How did I let this game go out like this? Sure, I didn't have beta testers (I may not have even realized that having somebody else test the game was a thing you should do) and it was a miracle any of my CoCo games were fully playable, but this seems especially egregious.

The instructions say I just need to mow most of the lawn, so maybe I just have to be fast enough to outpace this display glitch?

Oh no! Game over sends me back to the title screen with that long draw-in sequence all over again. Why, past self, why?

Mower Madness, as envisioned by AI.

This concludes disk #3, with only a few more CoCo 2 games coming up next (and then one straggler on a later disk). The CoCo 3 introduced 16-color graphics where you could select from a palette of 64 colors. First, though, a few more CoCo 2 games remain.

Let's Play – Disk #4

Speed Games

T&D Subscription Software #91 – January 1990
Speed Games is a 32K program which includes 7 action games in one. They are as follows: 1. Missile Smasher, 2. Maneuver, 3. Ghost Catcher, 4. Jewel Snatching, 5. Ball Saver, 6. Bar Fire, and 7. Frogger. If you want instructions for any of these programs, simply enter I for instructions.

RUN"SPEEDGAM
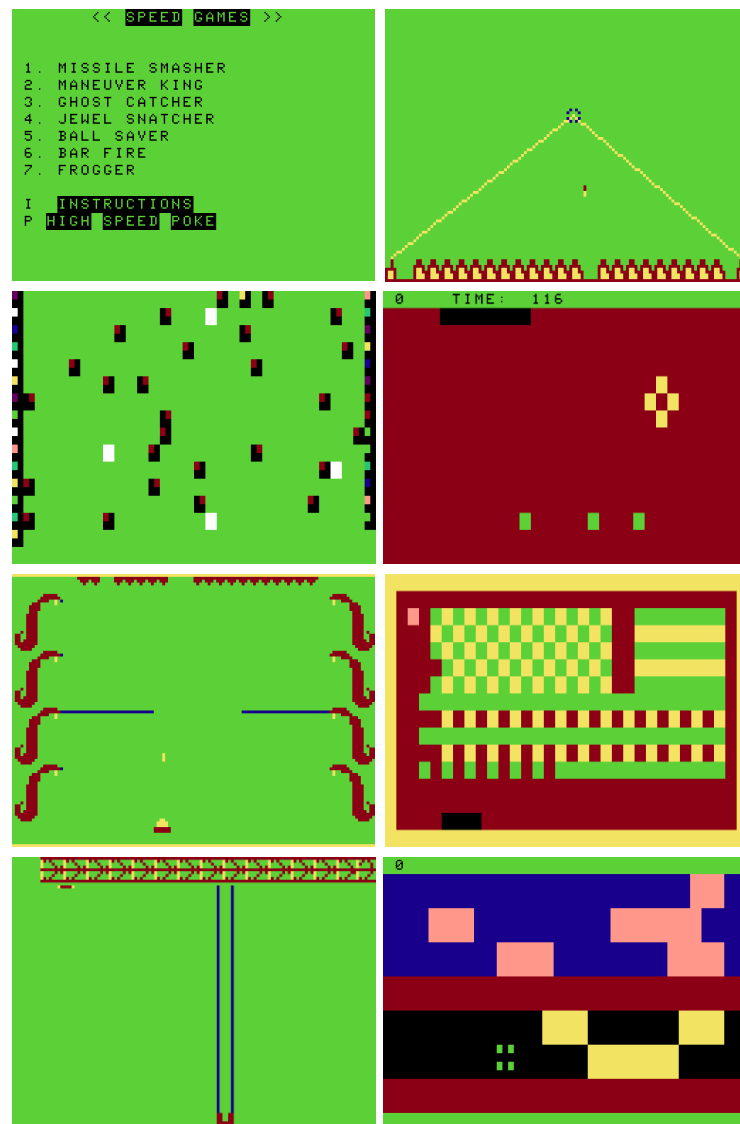
I came up with generic but original names for the first six games in this "7-in-1" pack, but I decided to just call the last one *Frogger*. Oh yeah, I remember this. Instead of using a graphics mode, do all 7 of these games use text blocks in text mode? I was experimenting.

The one called *Frogger* is certainly based on *Frogger*. To make it run faster, the pink "logs" in the top half don't start moving until your block (the frog) reaches the middle, at which point the yellow block "cars" stop moving. It looks like colliding with something simply sets you back at the bottom, rather than a game over. It's called *Speed Games* so maybe my score is simply based on a gameplay timer?

This is another where I must not have coded the joystick's true center correctly, because when I press no arrow keys at all (mapped to the joystick in this emulator), the frog block still scoots downward. Shoot. That makes it a bit impossible to play without a real analogue joystick, possibly on real hardware.

How do I get back to the main menu, since there isn't a game over screen in this one? It must expect me to reach the top and then loop me back to the game selection list, but I can't reach the top with this controller issue.

The old-fashioned way it is, then: the RESET button (F9 twice, for this VCC emulator).

The first game listed is *Missile Smasher*. Ah, so it's basically my take on *Defender*, and for this one, it does use a low-res graphics mode, not just text blocks. In a surprise twist, if I set my joystick mapping to mouse mode, this one actually works! The mouse position translates exactly to the X/Y joystick position, and I can move the reticle freely. Actually targeting and hitting a missile seems finicky, though, since there isn't a splash damage effect in this game.

In *Maneuver King*, I'm a yellow-eyed block at the top and the screen scrolls up at me, sort of like that *Snow Ski* game I made (disk #7).

Ghost Catcher is in text block mode too, with what seems to be tricky controls for catching "ghosts" and delivering them to the black box.

For *Jewel Snatcher*, it's back to low-res graphics, not text mode. You just need to move around the bottom and shoot all the jewels at the top.

Ball Saver is a text-mode *Breakout* or *Arkanoid* with your choice of four different boards. I would later do this again (twice, and with actual graphics) with the *B.E. Break-in* games.

Finally, we have *Bar Fire*. You shoot double blue lasers up at the enemy going back and forth at the top. There are a few rules involved in how your stage score timer is calculated, and the meter at the top slowly vanishes to indicate a time limit for the stage.

On Target

T&D Subscription Software #86 – August 1989
How good of an aim do you have? Use your light phaser to shoot the black objects as they appear on the screen. You must hit about 15 black objects on each level to advance to the next level. You only have a little bit of time to zero in on the black objects so before the computer shoots for you, shoot the open white area on the screen.

RUN"ONTARGET
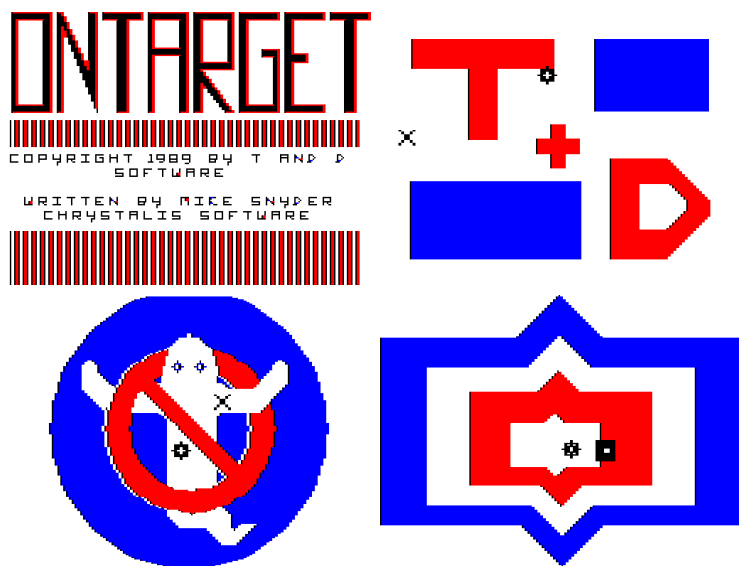
I kind of like that little intro song. To get more than one channel music in CoCo 2 BASIC, you had to use a machine language library. I didn't do that here, but it's still a fun little tune.

The instructions describe a gameplay design in which I'm using the full analogue X and Y axis range of the joystick to exactly position the on-screen reticle. If that's the case, this might translate well into mouse mode if I change the joystick type to "mouse" in VCC.

What gives? It's built in a way that you have to target the black spot quickly and shoot it, else it auto-fires for you and you lose one of your three given "misses" (lives, basically), even if you're targeting the black object when it does.

Okay, where in the code is that 3-miss limit? Maybe it's MN=2 at line 35, if it's 0-inclusive? I'll try changing that to 9999. Nope. Oh wait, that's in "retry" code, so it only takes effect after the first game over. That's fine. That does work.

Nothing about this is fun, even with all the extra lives. At least you can continue from the most recent stage, but that's a moot point if you're stuck on the first one. This was a game made for people with robotic reflexes, I guess.

Country Club Adventure

T&D Subscription Software #107 – May 1991
You are dying to get out to the golf course. You have a twelve o'clock tee-off time. Someone stole your club pass card! What will you do? Use standard adventure syntax to do things such as open door, get card, etc. in this 32K-required adventure. You only have so much time so do not waste it. Good luck! Maybe we will see you at the club house.

RUN"COUNTRY
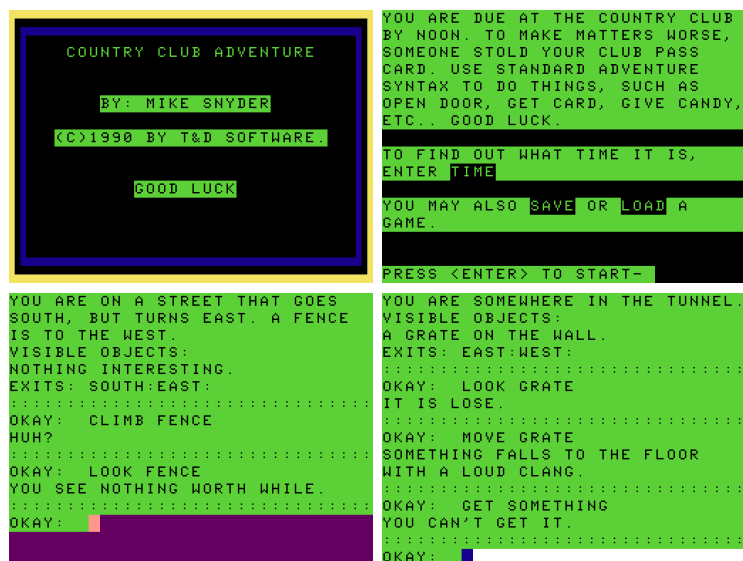
Here's another text adventure with a long title screen that can't be skipped.

Someone "stold" my club country club pass, eh? How could I have been a tech-savvy high school programmer, who wanted to be a writer before I discovered programming, and still be so bad at grammar and spelling?

Oh hey, this supports saving and loading games! I don't remember ever doing that in any of them. This disk is full, and I don't feel like testing it out anyway, but if it works, that's already worth big bonus points for this one.

This one doesn't seem to have a story hook; nothing along the lines of *RoboCrook*, anyway.

Time Trap

T&D Subscription Software #86 – August 1989
As the protector of a time tunnel you must destroy the time jumpers with your powerful death beam. The jumpers will grow in the tunnels as you try to destroy them before they become full grown. You have three men to accomplish your task. You also have different levels of play.

RUN"TIMETRAP

```
**********************************
********** TIMETRAP **********
**********************************

      (C) 1989 BY T&D SOFTWARE
        WRITTEN BY MIKE SNYDER
            JANUARY 1989

        G A M E    O V E R
        LATEST SCORE: 360

<1> SET COCO III SPEED POKE
<2> SET COCO 1&2 SPEED POKE
<3> INSTRUCTIONS
<4> START GAME
```
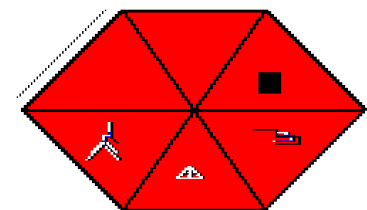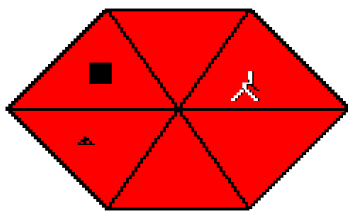
```
YOU ARE AN ELECTRO, A PROTECTOR
OF THE TIME TUNNEL. YOUR ONLY
JOB IS TO TRAVEL THE BORDER OF
THE TUNNEL AND DESTROY TIME
JUMPERS WITH YOUR INVISIBLE
DEATH BEAM.
YOUR RIGHT JOYSTICK IS YOUR
CONTROLLS. PUSHING IT TO THE
RIGHT WILL CAUSE YOU TO CIRCLE
THE TUNNEL CLOCKWISE. PUSHING
THE JOYSTICK LEFT GOES COUNTER-
CLOCKWISE. THE BUTTON FIRES A
DEATH BEAM.

PRESS <ENTER> PLEASE
```

The small town where I grew up didn't have chain restaurants (or much else of note, for that matter), but it had an ice cream shop (or maybe a flower shop, or maybe some shop that was both at once), and they had a *Tempest* arcade cabinet.

Much like my fascination with *Vanguard* when I played it, I wanted to create my own version.

The result is *Time Trap*, and it has another feature I wasn't typically known for: a way to change the difficulty between Easy, Medium, and Hard (expressed as settings 1 through 3).

It looks like you just rotate a line around the six-sided "tunnel" and press the FIRE button to destroy whatever is growing in that lane. You're penalized a life by shooting at an empty lane, or if an invader grows to full size. Even "easy" mode seems difficult in this game.

I don't know. For an amateur little CoCo 2 BASIC game, it has a certain charm to it. I wouldn't want to play much of it, but it's fun for a few minutes.

Shadow World – The Future

T&D Subscription Software #118 – April 1992
In this text adventure you must find out why all the animals you sent in a time travel experiment died. To move type the letter you want in the direction to move. Also, you can use verbs to do activities, for example: pull rope, open door. Good luck in finding the animals and watch your back at all times. Hint: The first part contains a stumper for some beginners. Make sure that you open the door, pull the rope and turn on the light to avoid the angry mob.

RUN"SHADOW

```
    SHADOW WORLD: THE FUTURE

        T&D SOFTWARE


    YOU MUST FIND OUT WHY
    ALL THE ANIMALS YOU SENT
    THROUGH TIME DIED.
    GOOD LUCK IN YOUR SEARCH
```

```
IN THE YEAR 1989 YOU WERE CON-
DUCTING TIME-TRAVEL EXPERI-
MENTS USING YOUR COCO AND A BIO-
FEEDBACK MONITOR. YOU SENT AN-
IMALS THROUGH TIME, BUT THEY
DIED. NOW YOU HAVE DECIDED TO
GO TO THE FAR FUTURE TO FIND
OUT JUST WHAT IS WRONG. IT'S
VERY DANGEROUS, BUT YOU AREN'T
SCARED... ARE YOU?

PRESS <ENTER> TO BEGIN.
```

```
    SHADOW WORLD: THE FUTURE
--------------------------------
YOU ARE ON A LARGE STAGE. THE
LIGHTS ARE OFF. AN AUDIANCE IS
TO THE SOUTH. THERE IS A PROP
DOOR ON ONE WALL.
VISIBLE OBJECTS-
NOTHING OF INTEREST
YOU CAN GO -- S -
--->PUSH WALL
TRY TO MAKE SOME SENCE, EH?
--->OPEN DOOR
THERE IS A ROPE BEHIND THE DOOR
--->PULL ROPE
THE LIGHTS COME ON!
--->
```

```
    SHADOW WORLD: THE FUTURE
--------------------------------
THIS IS THE TOWN SQUARE. A LARGE
FOUNTAIN IS HERE. WATER IS POUR-
ING OUT OF A STATUE OF DONILA M.
CRAGIN.
VISIBLE OBJECTS-
NOTHING OF INTEREST
YOU CAN GO -- N - S - E - W -
--->LOOK STATUE
YOU SEE A HOLE IN THE STATUE.
--->LOOK HOLE
YOU SEE SOME SORT OF CARD.
--->GET CARD
CARD TAKEN-
--->
```

From what I can tell, this is the last of my games published by T&D before their final issue (#121) later that year. The cover sheets begin to mention a lack of software coming in for consideration. By this point in 1992, I was probably in full "college life mode" and wasn't sending much in either, if anything.

I wouldn't doubt if their subscriber base also began to dwindle, as even the CoCo 3 was declining in popularity due to the rise of more affordable DOS-based home PCs. There may have been a few of my games they bought but never published, like *Gnome Quest III*.

I'm not sure *animal cruelty* was the best opening premise for this game, but otherwise, it's a typical text adventure. I probably had something epic in mind, but that doesn't translate well into 32-character all-caps lines.

Rahul's Quest

T&D Subscription Software #117 – March 1992

This CoCo 3 adventure requires the use of a joystick. The object of the game is to search for the secret letter of love, use the fire button to jump, the joystick to control movements and to climb up and down the ropes. There is an instructional program called RAHINST which should be run first. To load this ML program, enter LOADM "RAHUL". Enter EXEC to run. To save type SAVEM "RAHUL",4096,32185,4096.

`RUN"RAHINST / LOADM"RAHUL":EXEC`
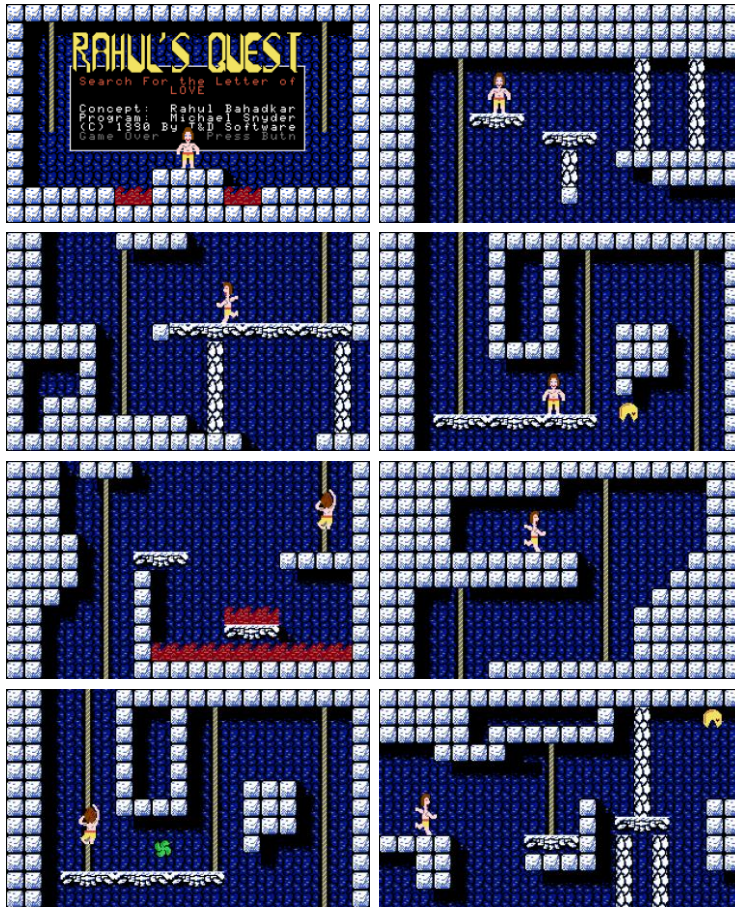
The first CoCo 3 game I'm writing about is actually one of the last ones I created, and the second-to-last game of mine ever published by T&D. In disk order, *Adventure Tutorial* comes before this, but this one needs to fit a full page.

Rahul was a friend I met during my first year in college. He was studying to be a pilot, and he lived on the same floor in our dorm. His family was from Bangladesh or India (I wish I could remember for sure), but he grew up in or around New York City. His accent was pure comedy gold for us uncultured Oklahomans.

The graphics were probably inspired by games like *Castlevania* or *Blaster Master*. Around that time, I was a big fan of block shadows, which made scenes like these really pop.

Just from a visual perspective, these later games were a big step up from the constraints of the more limited CoCo 2 graphics modes. The CoCo 3 hi-res screen was 320x192 pixels, with the ability to display 16 colors at once from a palette of 64 colors.

This platformer is moderately playable, but jumping and latching onto ropes (by pressing UP on the joystick) seems bit tricky. A single random enemy (including one that looks like Pac-Man) often descends from above, and your only option is simply to avoid it. It's nice that they only appear when I'm lower on the screen. It would be unfair otherwise.

If not for the difficulty of grabbing ropes, and the tendency of an enemy to spawn above me while I'm climbing (presumably it's random, but they move faster than Rahul can climb), I would probably be able to finish this game.

I'm not redrawing Rahul unless he moves, which helps avoid the constant flickering that happened with player-controlled sprites in my earlier games. This was also BASIC compiled to machine language (I used a compiler called CBASIC3, if I remember right), so it ran faster and smoother than my earlier games.

This isn't a side-scrolling game. Each screen's self-contained. Walking to either edge or going up or down a rope causes a fade-to-black effect while it loads the adjacent room. The transition takes about three to four seconds, which is far better than some of my others.

If I wasn't trying to play and write about my entire portfolio, it might be fun to try beating this game, with a screenshot of every room that I could stitch together into one big map, like I did for *Monster Mash* a few months ago.

Adventure Tutorial

T&D Subscription Software #73 – July 1988
This isn't an adventure, nor is it an adventure processor. It is a tutorial, designed to teach one method of writing adventures. A menu lets you choose which part you want to study. Each section must be read several times to really understand what is being taught. A sample adventure is also enclosed. This will be automatically loaded when you enter '10' on the menu option.

RUN"ADVTUT

```
********************************
ADVENTURE TUTORIAL
BY MIKE SNYDER
```

```
********* MAIN MENU **********
<1>    PREFACE
<2>    MAKING A MAP
<3>    STRUCTURE OF THE ADVENTURE
<4>    MAKING LOCATIONS
<5>    MAKING OBJECTS
<6>    MAKING DIRECTIONS <N,W,ETC
<7>    DEFINING THE INPUT
<8>    WINNING OR LOSING
<9>    TITLE SCREENS
<10>   SAMPLE ADVENTURE

WHICH NUMBER-?
```

```
---- A SAMPLE 'IDEA LIST'
* START IN DARK CAVE
* CHECK INV, YOU HAVE MATCH
*STRIKE MATCH
*SEE EXIT, GO NORTH
* TRAILS IN ALL DIRECTIONS
*HEAR HEADHUNTERS
*LOOK TREE,SEE KNIFE,GET KNIFE
*SEE CASTLE IN FAR DISTANCE
*AT ONE PLACE IS STREAM
*LOOK STREAM, SEE KEY, GET KEY
*GIVE KEY TO DWARF
*IF YOU USE KEY, YOU LOSE IT
*ASK DWARF FOR HELP
ETC...
PRESS <ENTER>?
```
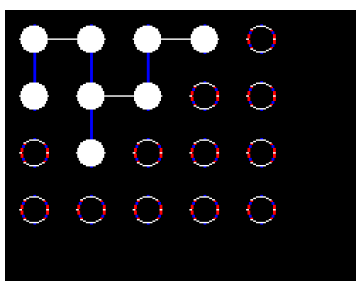
```
LINE 95 SHOULD LOOK SOMETHING
LIKE THIS-

95 LO=5:O(1)=1:O(2)=5:O(3)=8:O(4
)=7:O(5)=9:O(6)=20:O(7)=25

THIS TELLS THE START 'LO' #,
AND THE START LOCATIONS OF
OBJECTS 1 THROUGH 7.

NOW THAT YOU HAVE DEFINED THE
START LOCATIONS, YOU MUST MAKE
THE ROUTINE THAT PRINTS THE
OBJECTS.

PRESS <ENTER>?
```

```
900 PRINT"YOU CAN'T!":GOTO500
1000 CLS:PRINT"YOU HAVE-":N=0
1005 IF O(1)=0 AND W=1 THENPRINT
"WEARING COAT.":N=1
1010 IF O(1)=0 AND W=0 THEN PRIN
T"A COAT.":N=1
1015 IF O(2)=0 THEN PRINT"A KNIF
E":N=1
1020 IF N=0 THENPRINT"NOTHING!"
1025 GOTO500
5000 CLS:PRINT"YOU WIN. THE OBJE
CT WAS THE WEARTHE COAT AND GET
THE KNIFE. NOT,MUCH OF A PLOT, B
UT WHAT DO YOU EXPECT!":END
OK
```

I briefly mentioned this one earlier. Even though it describes a system for constructing and programming these text adventures in a very inflexible way, it *is* thorough in explaining how it was done, or at least how I was doing it.

I have to think that gamers back then were just used to this kind of simple two-word guess-the-verb system, even with much better commercial games out there from Infocom and others. You would learn the lingo, so to speak, which might have made some of the difficulties of playing them today less of an issue back then. There isn't much use for my *Adventure Tutorial* in 2025 though.

Name This Tune

T&D Subscription Software #86 – August 1989
This coco3 only program allows up to 4 players to play. Players take turns spinning a spinner and uncovering the squares on a grid. If you can guess the song, you will win the points. When all the squares are removed, the player with the most points wins.

PCLEAR1:RUN"NAMETUNE
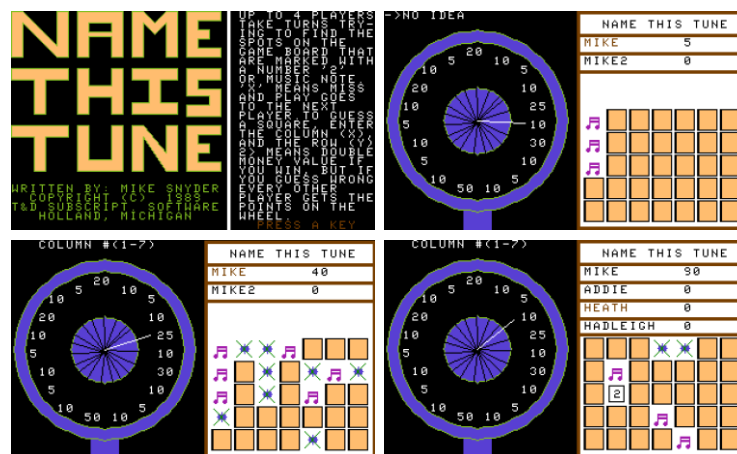
This was most likely one of my first few games for CoCo 3, since it's just BASIC without being compiled into a machine language binary.

According to the instructions, answers should be abbreviated like an acronym, but I wonder how much of a stickler it is for exact matches. The example I give is "SWOT" if you think the tune is *Somewhere Out There* but does that mean I thought "Somewhere" was two different words, or does it mean separate syllables count as multiple words? It also says to put "theme" if the song is from a movie, such as "OGP THEME" if it's the theme to "On Golden Pond". Really? That was my example? I don't even remember that movie.

Each "tune" is just a few notes, but I recognize some of them, so that's nice. That one was the theme song from *The Monkees*, so the answer was "M THEME". That one was the stage start theme in Pac-Man, but just "PM" worked as an answer. That one was the theme from *Mission: Impossible*, so "MI THEME" worked. No idea what that next one was.

I wonder how quickly the game runs out of new tunes to play, and how obscure they get.

Virus-D

T&D Subscription Software #88 – October 1989
This is a Coco3 only game played on Advanced circuit boards. There are five levels of play. The instructions are included in the program. Before loading this program, enter a PCLEAR 1 directly from the keyboard.

PCLEAR1:RUN"VIRUS-D

More spelling errors: I wrote "equipted" instead of "equipped" in the instructions.

To play, it looks like I need to stay away from that little spark thing (the "Whizzer"), which floats through obstacles even though my little "bug" thing can't. The instructions describe multiple levels. Let's see if I can at least make it to the second one.

It seems I can only grab those five little yellow "chips" if I approach them from the right-hand side. Did the instructions tell me that? This enemy "Whizzer" is a pain, but as with Fifi in *Tiler Tex*, I can lead him away then make my move. The difference here is that "Whizzer" doesn't get trapped by any obstacles, so the relief is only short-lived.

Stage 2 is another circuit board, but now there are two enemies that move up and down from either side, while slowing moving inward toward where I am. Well, that didn't last long.

This game *looks* kind of cool, at least. I also like my optimism in the game's story, which predicted a CoCo 5 would be marketed in the year 1997. This might have been a fun game back in 1989.

Let's Play – Disk #5

Food Factory

T&D Subscription Software #95 – May 1990
This Coco 3 only program involves moving your man around trying to catch as many cans as possible. When you catch enough cans, you will be allowed to do battle with the Burgermen. Since this program is written in ML, you must enter LOADM"FACTORY" from disk or CLOADM"FACTORY" from tape to load. Then enter EXEC instead of RUN.

LOADM"FACTORY":EXEC

What I remember most about writing this game is Steven Crady, the nephew or grandson of a neighbor from up the street who was in town for the summer. He must have been in middle school. He was interested in games and computers, and so I showed him what I was up to with mine. Together, we worked on this little *Food Factory* game. His go-to saying when frustrated was the funny and wholesome "cheese-ola" which drove me nuts after a while.

Weed monsters pop out of the holes, then disappear after a few seconds leaving cans behind. You can press FIRE to do battle against three gray burger monsters at any time, but it's best to collect several cans as ammunition first. That seems to be the whole gameplay loop, and you're playing to get a high score.

Aside from the flickering sprites (due to how I coded movement in the main game loop), it's not a horrible game. It's simple, and those weed monsters sometimes pop out and get me while I'm trying to collect a can (which is kind of the point), but it's fun in its own way.

B.E. Break-in

T&D Subscription Software #90 – December 1989
Break into the base on Demarus 9 in this Coco3 machine language only program. Use your right joystick to bounce the orbs at the shield power containers. Every third level is a bonus round where you try to catch falling energy pods. To load this program, enter CLOADM for tape or LOADM"BREAK-IN" for disk. To run, enter EXEC. To save this program, enter (C)SAVEM"BREAK-IN",4096,23842,4096.

LOADM"BREAKIN1":EXEC
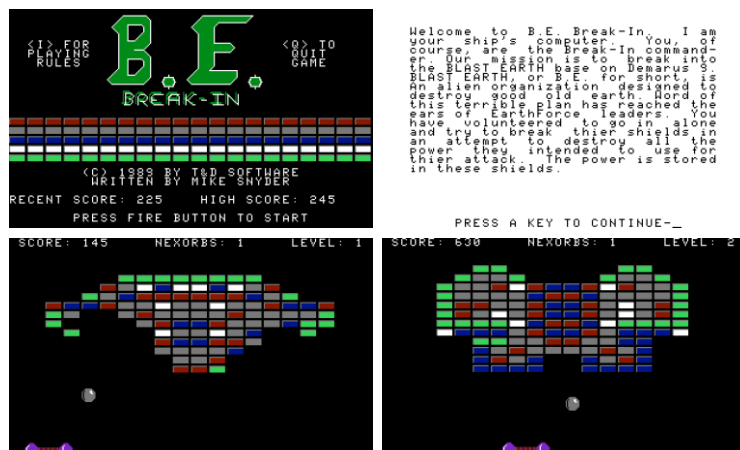
I've always had a fascination with *Breakout* and *Arkanoid* and other brick-breaking ball-bouncing games of the sort. I don't know why. Maybe they just look cool, and it's a simple enough style of gameplay that was easy enough for me to copy. I haven't really enjoyed *playing* games in the genre, although I was a big fan of *AlphaBounce* on the DS.

I was sure the "B.E." in the title stood for "Biware Enterprises" (the "company" I formed with friends in high school), but the game's instructions say it's "Blast Earth", some alien organization trying to destroy us.

This uses the full X-axis of the CoCo joystick, which works well in the VCC emulator if switching joystick settings to mouse mode.

Properly over-clocked (I'm running it now at about 20Mhz in the emulator), it plays well. The bounce physics are far from perfect, but it's a pretty competent no-frills one of these. Without overclocking, it runs a bit too slow.

B.E. Break-in 2

T&D Subscription Software #106 – April 1991
You have been sent to stop the aliens in this Coco3 only game. Watch out for the Whammy and the rows of advancing blocks in this machine language program. There are additional instructions inside the program. To load, enter CLOADM for tape or LOADM"BREAK2" for disk. Enter EXEC to run. To save this program, enter (C)SAVEM "BREAK2",4096,21380,4096.

LOADM"BREAKIN2":EXEC

George Aftamonow was a CoCo enthusiast or a fellow indie developer or something. I never met him, but he found me through my games from T&D and reached out with ideas for a sequel to *B.E. Break-in*. This version introduced a row of blocks that would gradually descend, and a yellow "whammy" that would jump from block to block and destroy your ship (the paddle) if you hit an affected tile three times.

Those seem like bad additions, in hindsight. You don't really have much control over the ball (now a blue comet-like thing), so clearing lower rows before they come too far down or running afoul of the whammy are just random systems that only serve to frustrate players. It's generally less fun.

The game also ran slower, or at least it seems a little more sluggish than the first game, which wasn't George's fault since I programmed it. The game board, with its plain gray tiles, lacked the colors and patterns that differed between levels in the first game. All in all, I've always considered this one a step backwards.

Gnome Quest

T&D Subscription Software #112 – October 1991

In this CoCo 3 only graphics game, nobody "gnomes" the trouble you'll see! You are the prince of the gones, and as such, it is your duty to rescue the three treasures of the gnomes that were stolen by an evil wizard. But beware, a journey through a treacherous mountain filled with spirits is required. While in the mountain, use the joy-stick to manipulate your gnome from stone to stone, pushing the button to jump. But remember you only have three lives! For more information run the "manual" program.

`LOADM"GNOME1":EXEC`
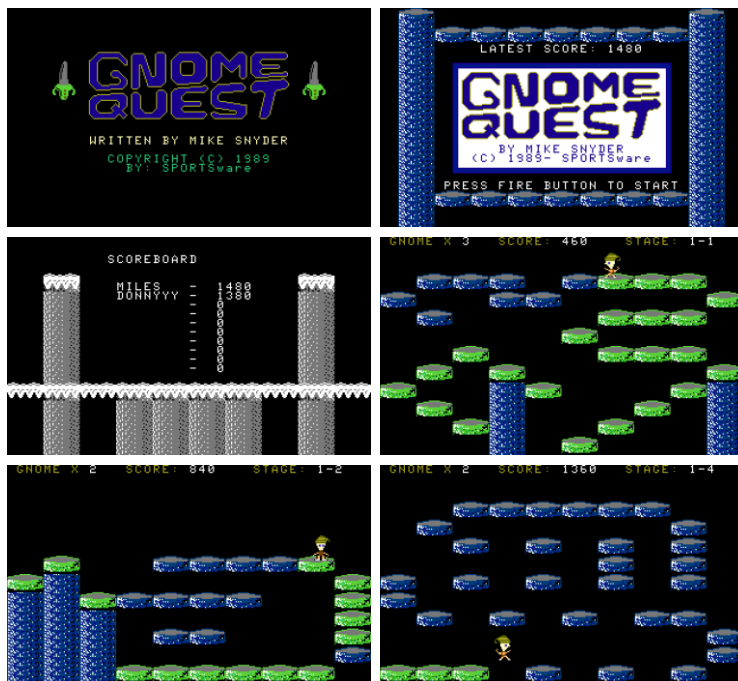
The command above the screenshots will launch the game, but the instructions are a separate program accessed by typing:

`RUN"MANUAL`

At some point in the late 80's, the three of us (me, Kandi, and Frayne) decided we might be better off making royalties from our games rather than selling them outright for such small amounts to T&D. I discovered a place called SPORTSware in Rainbow Magazine, and they were looking to publish games.

The royalty paid to development partners was only 25% (at least, that was the deal they made with us), which seems kind of low now.

Maybe it wasn't, though. They were doing all the marketing (including expensive ads in gaming magazines like *The Rainbow*), making the physical copies (including a printed manual for each), and doing the distribution.

Gnome Quest was the second of only three games of mine they published before going out of business. Ultimately, this one sold fewer than a dozen copies. Once our deal with them ended, I submitted it to T&D where it was eventually published in October 1991. I didn't update the game's title screen, so it still shows the SPORTSware copyright line.

Eventually my little company would try self-publishing some of my last games, but that yielded poor results and was short-lived when things fell apart with me away at college.

By the time I made *Gnome Quest*, my games at least looked more professional. This one has an intro title screen with a catchy theme song, followed by an attract mode that toggles back and forth between an alternate title screen and a top 10 high score board.

This is among my personal favorites from this collection. It controls moderately well, there are no enemies (unless I introduce some later, but I don't think so), and it's really just about pure platforming. There's something satisfying about jumping to each blue platform and the click it makes when it turns green. There isn't a time limit. There's a challenge in that the gnome can't jump high or far, some jumps can be tricky, and losing all 3 lives means starting over completely, but I still really like it.

The graphics are simple. Most likely, the look of the pillars and platforms was inspired by pillars in the NES game *Rygar*, which is one of my all-time favorites for that console.

This is one of only a few of my games from that era I can point to with a measure of satisfaction. It's not an amazing or innovative game by any means, but it holds up better than most others.

Lord Silvercape

T&D Subscription Software #93 – March 1990
Find Lord Silvercape and free him from the spell placed on him by an evil witch in this graphic adventure for the Coco3. Use standard adventure syntax like get, drop, and examine. There is a graphic window on the top right of the screen and a compass on the left. The middle two boxes will tell you your inventory or the objects in the room. Good luck!

PCLEAR1:RUN"SILVCAPE

Technically this is listed before *Gnome Quest* on disk #5, but I needed a full page for that.

The more I tried to make my text adventures visually appealing with graphics and a custom UI and special graphics-mode fonts, the more difficult they became to play. All of that just slows down the game, making it painful to watch as any action causes the screen to draw in over the course of several seconds.

In the VCC emulator, I can over-clock the CPU so that speed is a non-issue, but there's still something less than ideal about a custom font that still makes the text harder to read.

Oh, *this* is the game with a fence you can climb – not *Destination: Unknown*. After that, I've already encountered three instant death scenarios. Make that four. Now I'm up to five. This game *really* doesn't respect the player.

I finally managed to find a bottle to pick up, but not much else. It can hold water, but I drown if I go near the lake. This seems like a particularly tough one of these, even by my standards.

Let's Play – Disk #6

Smurf Quest

T&D Subscription Software #105 – March 1991
Use your right joystick to control Hefty Smurf in this machine language game for the Coco 3 only. Pushing the stick upward and pressing the fire button will cause him to jump. Pushing the stick left and right will cause him to walk. Up and down makes him go up and down ladders. There is additional instructions for this program found in the instructional program called SMURFINS. To load the ml program, enter LOADM "SMURF" for disk or CLOADM "SMURF" for tape. Enter EXEC to run.

LOADM"SMURF":EXEC

The command above will launch the game, but the instructions can be accessed by typing this first:

RUN"SMURFINS

I was much too old for *The Smurfs* by this point, but I wanted to make a game based on the cartoon I had enjoyed as a kid; one that maybe other kids might enjoy. The title screen plays the show's theme song, and I didn't even bother to call it "Smoof Quest" or something. It's just a clear *Smurfs* rip-off.

I have it playing background music by playing a single ultra-brief note at every step of the way through the main gameplay loop. This makes it *super* annoying.

This is a pure platformer (no enemies), but the controls are abysmal. You have to aim up while pressing FIRE to jump. The green background was a mistake, too. You get but a single life. I made this game *after Gnome Quest* (it's the same gnome sprite with a palette swap), yet it's somehow a far worse game, as if I had regressed. This one is best forgotten.

Cavern Quest 2

T&D Subscription Software #91 – January 1990
This Coco3 only game is similar to the popular 'PITFALL' game. As Jumpin' Joe Davis you must search for the lost treasure of the Baldana Civilization. There is an instructional program which precedes this called 'QUESTINS'.

`RUN"QUESTINS"   or   RUN"CQUEST2"`

What happened to Cavern Quest 1? It must have been one of the few games that was so bad, T&D wouldn't publish it.

I can't imagine it being much worse than this. *Cavern Quest 2* must have been one of my earliest attempts at writing a CoCo 3 game. I know my *first* game was *Gopher* (up next), but it wouldn't surprise me if this was the second. It had to be fairly soon after I moved up from CoCo 2 to 3, because it isn't compiled to ML.

It looks decent enough (aside from the character you control, a stick man), but the controls are weird. When jumping, there's a long pause and a bunch of clicks, as if I made the game evaluate the trajectory of your jump before actually animating it. It also lacks any swinging vines.

On my site, I describe this as a poor-man's *Pitfall*. Even that much might be too generous. It's slow, but that works to its advantage in this emulator. With arrow keys mapped to the joystick, it's probably a lot easier than it was.

With patience, it doesn't seem like a difficult game. At the same time, it's not very fun. When over-clocked to about 18Mhz, it plays faster and smoother, but it also becomes a bit tougher.

Gopher

T&D Subscription Software #111 – September 1991
I've heard this Coco 3 only game described as a cross between Pac-Man and Dig-Dug, and that has to be the best description that I can come up with. You are a hungry gopher trying to eat red proteins and roots while staying away from the deadly snake. As a gopher, you can dig through the earth, but watch out. There is a limit to the number of times this can be done.

`PCLEAR1:RUN"GOPHER`

My friend Frayne got a CoCo 3 before I did, so I stayed over at his house for a weekend, from Friday evening until late Sunday, reading the updated COLOR BASIC programming manual and figuring out how to use all the cool new features available to us.

The result was a marathon two-person game jam that saw the creation of my first CoCo 3 game, *Gopher*. We were in the zone, coming up with great ideas like the ambulance that drives across the top when the gopher dies, the roots you could only "eat" by coming directly up to them from below, the falling jewel you could try to catch for bonus points, certain walls that you could dig through to open enclosed areas, the *Pac-Man* like underground gameplay, and a single snake enemy that was easy to lead away, trick, and trap, just like Fifi in *Tiler Tex*.

I couldn't put the finishing touches on it until I got my own CoCo 3 later, but it was mostly made that weekend. To some extent, this game still holds up, at least compared to some of my others.

Gnome Quest II – FireSpire

T&D Subscription Software #115 – January 1992

It's in! The sequel to Gnome Quest is in! Gnome Quest was one of the best CoCo 3 disk only games we had seen for quite awhile, and the new version is even better. In the first game, you were told that an evil wizard had stole three powerful weapons from the gnomes. The second game takes place after you have succeed in retrieving the Spirit Sword from the wizard, and are now ready to go after the FireSpirit, second of the gnome's great weapons. Unlike the first game, you now have the power of the Spirit Sword on your side. For a complete description of the game and the instructions, RUN "Manual". To load the program, enter LOADM "GO". To run the program, enter EXEC. The ML file GO will automatically load and execute three additional files called 2.BIN, 3.BIN, and 4.BIN. Have fun!

LOADM"GNOME2" : EXEC

Or, to run the instruction program first:

RUN"MANUAL

The second game in the *Gnome Quest* trilogy was also marketed by SPORTSware at first.

The title screen features a purple box behind the word "FireSpire" that fades in and out, with one of the eyeball enemies zooming across the screen over and over.

The game starts out with an annoying bat enemy with a back-and-forth zig-zag flight pattern that makes even the first few minutes of the game a bit frustrating. It's even able to block the path forward once it settles into its back-and-forth routine on a ledge but leaving the room and coming back resets it.

After finding the right "window" to jump into, the scene switches to an interior with the eyeball enemy frequently flying across from right to left. It's often on a direct path with me, and I don't have a weapon yet, but I already figured out a cheat. If I pause and bring up the status screen (SPACE bar), it resets the enemy but not my gnome when I un-pause.

I remember at least one of the windows you can enter being below you, with no platform to land on. Quite a few windows are like that, but most don't lead anywhere, so it's instant death if you fall off the screen. That means at least one required path is a leap of faith and trial-and-error in a game where you get limited lives and only three continues.

Oh wait, I do have a weapon. I just have to be pressing down and forward at the same time to use it, and it has a very short range.

I meant for this to feel like an epic adventure, the way some games I played on the NES did (*Zelda 2*, *Faxanadu*, *Rygar*, *Battle of Olympus* and a few others). The screen doesn't scroll; it just fades out and back in as you move from room to room. The instructions describe other types of areas and different items and upgrades to find along the way, but it would take some commitment to make progress.

Some emulators probably allow full save states, though. MAME might, for instance. This would probably be a decent game with save states.

Let's Play – Disk #7

Snow Ski

T&D Subscription Software #98 – August 1990
You are stuck on a treacherous mountain loaded with trees, rocks and telephone poles. Use your right joystick to guide your skier down the hill. You have three chances to make it down the hill, scoring points as you go.

RUN"SNOW-SKI

The last CoCo 2 game in my collection is the proverbial odd man out on a disk of CoCo 3 games. Back when I put those disks together, I must have overlooked this game or simply ran out of room on the earlier all-CoCo 2 disks.

I may have been getting lazy when I made this. The title screen is just simple plain text. It looks like I was experimenting with vertical scrolling, although even opting to use the high-speed "poke" for CoCo 3, it's very slow.

Without it, I'm seeing maybe 1 frame per second (or one "game state update" per second, which might be more accurate).

Over-clocking the VCC emulator to around 10Mhz gets it running at what feels like a proper pace, but that exposes the design flaw of the skier not being nimble enough to move side to side in time to avoid far too many oncoming obstacles that litter the ski slope.

Fun fact: I've never gone skiing for real in my life.

Aliax

T&D Subscription Software #101 – November 1990
This Coco3 ML game involves controlling a Robot as you dig from one room to the next. There are two zones with eight rooms in each to explore. There are also instructions built into the program which will tell you more. This program is in machine language. To load this program, enter CLOADM "ALIAX" for tape or LOADM "ALIAX" for disk. Enter EXEC to run the program.

LOADM"ALIAX":EXEC

Two things caught my attention as I played a bit of *Aliax*. One, it doesn't have title screen music at all. It simply loads, and you're ready to start. Two, it shows the date I finished programming it: July 14th, 1990 – just a month before I left for college.

At a glance, it probably seems like *Dig Dug* was the inspiration for *Aliax*. I don't think I had ever played *Dig Dug* at the time. Instead, I took inspiration from the digging you could do in *Super Mario Bros. 2* on the NES. For being the proverbial odd man out from that original *SMB* trilogy (it wasn't even originally a *Mario* game when it released in Japan), *SMB 2* is probably the one I'm most fond of.

To play, aim DOWN + FIRE to dig and UP + FIRE to jump. You can dig up enemies to get rid of them for a moment, and you can move left and right on an underground game board that wraps around.

You have a moment of invincibility when taking a hit (that was nice of me), although the sprites are *always* flashing, making it hard to tell.

With limited room to maneuver and a time limit on each screen, it's tough to make it very far.

Police Cadet V – The Badge of Power

T&D Subscription Software #88 – October 1989

```
This Coco3 only adventure involves
finding the criminal who stole your badge
of power. Some of the commands available:
N,S,E,W, GET, PICKUP, LEAVE, DROP, TAKE,
READ, LOOK, EXAMINE, SAY, UNLOCK, OIL,
PUT, and KILL.
```

`PCLEAR1:RUN"CADET#5`
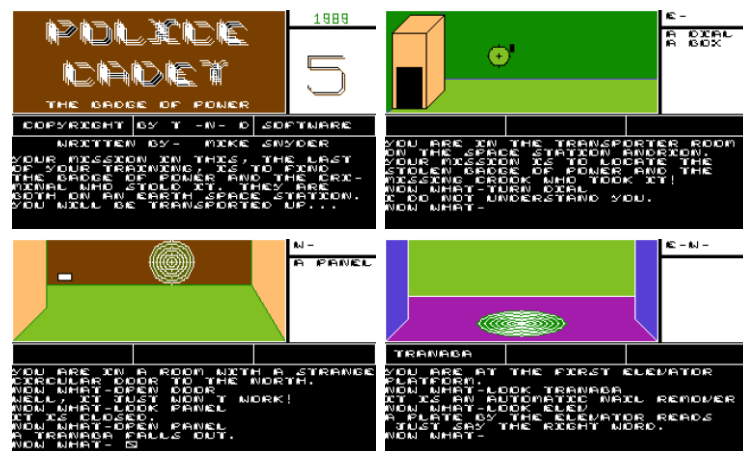
Once again, I riffed a bit on the *Police Cadet* theme song. Thankfully, it's still short and I'm into the game fairly quickly.

When T&D published this, it had a major bug, which may have been game-breaking. Instead of starting out in the transporter room like you're supposed to, you're in an east-west hallway somewhere else instead. I must have been doing some last-minute testing before I submitted the game.

When I started collecting my old games, before they could all be found easily in the T&D section of the TRS-80 CoCo Archive, I was able to fix the bug by referring to the original design map. I have a few other design maps for text adventures I never got around to making, but this is the only one for a finished game I still have. The version available in my own zip archive has been updated to start out in the correct room, location 23, possibly with a few other flags or items moved to their appropriate starting positions too.

With all this info (pictured to the right), it might be possible to solve and finish this one.

I really shouldn't have tried to be so different with the font in this game. Something simpler with lowercase letters would have helped a lot. At any rate, with guidance from the design map and a bit of high over-clocking in VCC, this one is playable.
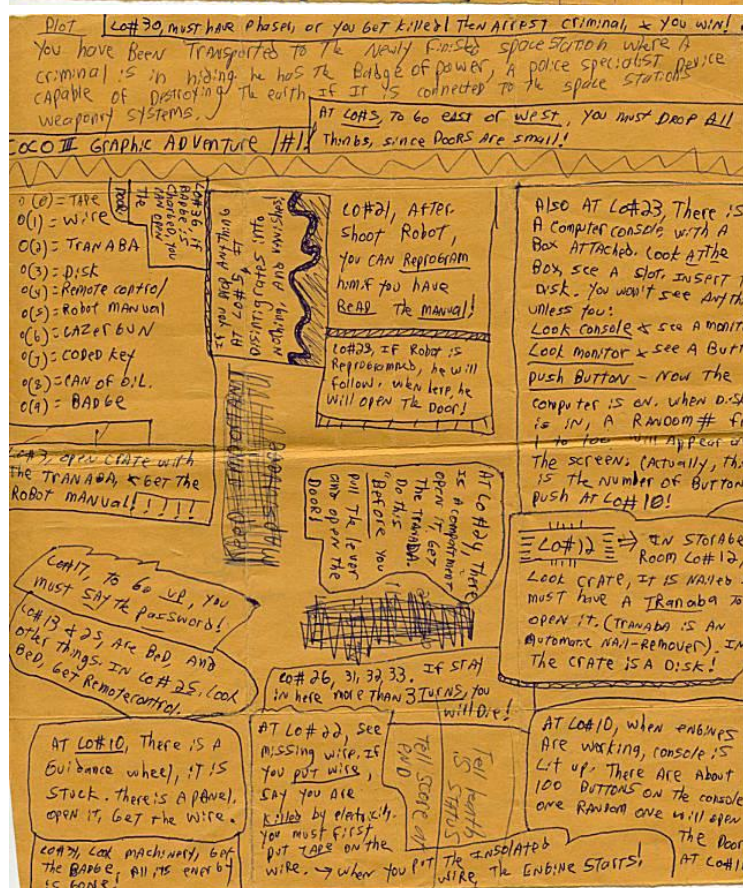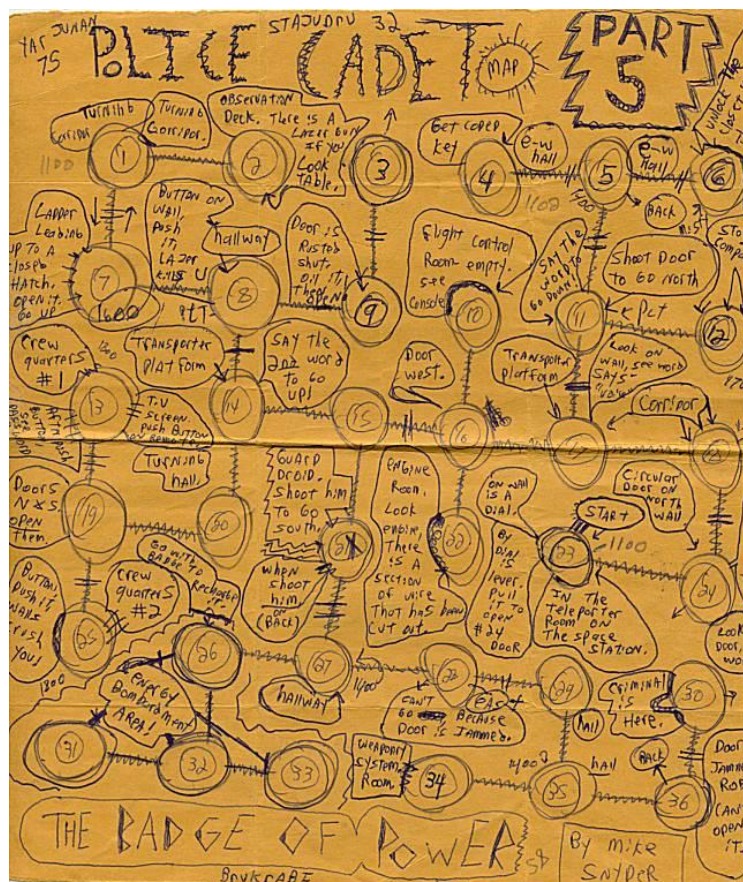
Eldus

T&D Subscription Software #106 – April 1991
You must find the "Pool of Life" in this Coco3 only game. This disk only machine language program takes up exactly half the disk! To load, simply type RUN "ELDUS". Eldus will automatically LOADM and EXEcute four ML files. To play: Control King Ralum with the right joystick. You must collect keys, jewels, fires, and the sword. There are doors and caves that will take you from section to section. Be sure to avoid the Wrelnins at all cost. You only have three lives, each having four hearts. There are over 100 screens!

LOADM"ELDUS":EXEC
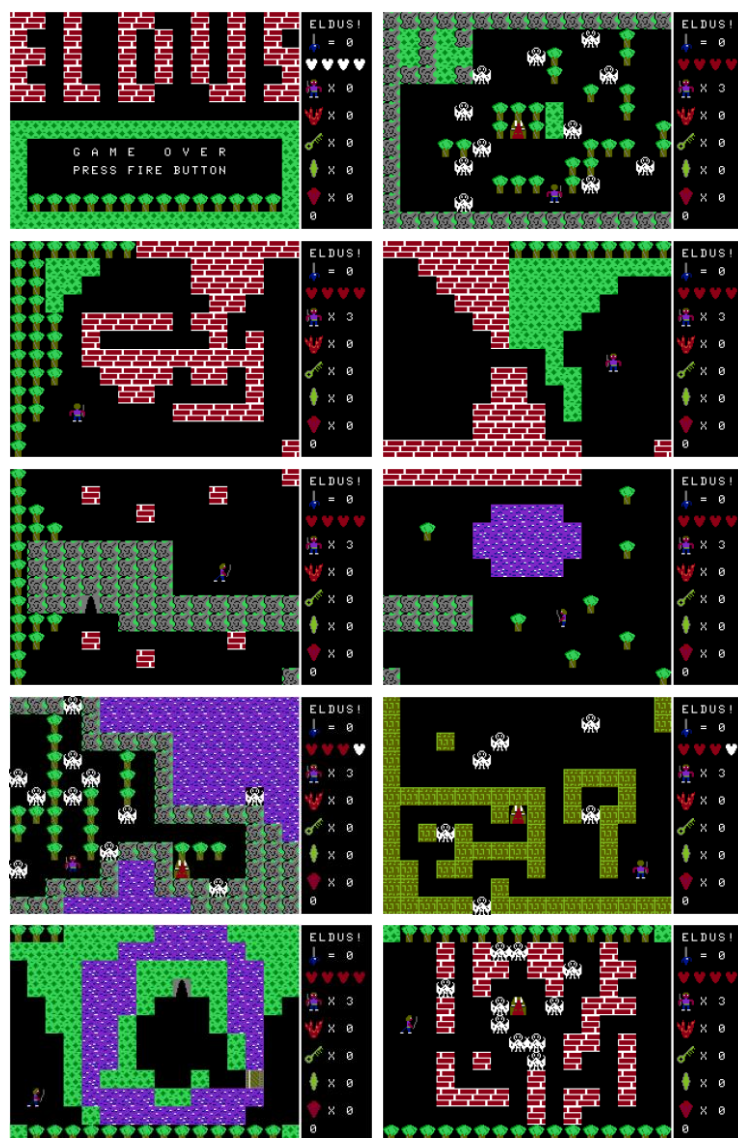
Or, to run the instruction program first:

RUN"ELDUS

The instruction program auto-launches the game itself upon completion, which saves some time.

No joke, this is a quote from the instructions:

"This is a VERY difficult game to win. It even took me six months of trying, and I made the game!"

Initial thoughts: I like the title music in this one, but the little guy (King Ralum) sure flickers a lot. My amateur way of handling the game's main update loop causes that.

This is an elaborate maze game disguised as an action RPG. It's about collecting a bunch of items without losing all your hearts (lives) to the white bat-like Wrelnins.

They don't follow you or target you, though. Instead, some rooms are full of them, and they simply take turns moving one tile at a time in a random direction – up, down, left or right, even over walls and obstacles. Their sequence is predictable, but their movement is not. This leads to frustrating situations where you need to pass through gaps or tunnels and simply hope that luck is on your side and one of them doesn't randomly come back in your direction.

If I had made a way to save your progress, it might have been a game that would hold up today, for nostalgia, if nothing else. I don't know why I rarely built a save system into my games. I either thought it would trivialize the experience and make it too easy to finish, or I didn't really know *how*, or I was just lazy.

If I made this now, I might allow saving at specific "save points" on the map, or maybe anywhere, but with the caveat that you'd always start at the beginning of the room instead of your current position.

I don't have it in me to play much of this. I remember it being a long game to finish, with much of the time spent just waiting in one spot on an enemy-infested screen while the gods of randomness took their sweet time in opening up a path for me.

This was certainly ambitious, if nothing else.

Galaxy Q

T&D Subscription Software #87 – September 1989

The mini galaxy is infested with planets, star bases, weapon dealers, moons, suns, and more. Use you right joystick to maneuver your spaceship in this Coco3 only machine language game. You may touch planets, bases, zoos and weapon dealers. Since this program is in machine language, you must enter LOADM"GALAXYQ3" or CLOADM (if using tape) to load. Enter EXEC instead of RUN.

LOADM"GALAXYQ":EXEC
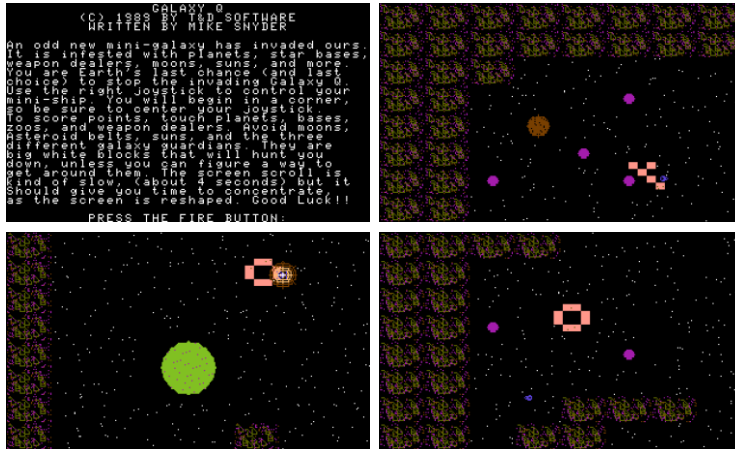
Instructions for Galaxy Q appear on the first screen upon launching the game. I'm told to score points by touching planets, bases, zoos, and weapon dealers while avoiding moons, asteroid belts, suns, and three different galaxy guardians. Will these things be visually distinctive? Or will I just have to guess?

The guardian is easy to spot. It's the flashing box-thing that stalks my little blue ship. I also saw game sprites draw in at the start (I hadn't yet figured out how to set up on the game on a hidden screen or start out with every palette color set to black), so a couple of those do seem like they'll be easy to spot.

The instructions also call out the very slow scrolling. Rather than going room to room like many of my games, it simply shifts over by one tile when you reach the edge. This ends up giving a pursuing guardian an advantage.

I'm going to crank up the CPU over-clocking in VCC and see if it's any better that way.

The sweet spot seems to be about 8Mhz. Any slower and there's not enough improvement to the scrolling, but any faster and I don't have time to react to and run from the guardian. "Run" might not be the right word. You can't outrun them. You just have to move far enough away to the side so that they go past your ship without hitting it. I figured that out after losing several times by trying to outrun them instead. You can't.

Why does the spaceship move at half-speed until the guardian appears? Usually, adding another moving sprite to the screen slows the game down. I have no idea what I did there.

Why is the hitbox on those little pink moons the full size of the black tile it's on? I explode not from running into one, but just from being too close to one.

Why does it reset me to the upper-left corner of the space map when I explode? I can sort of understand it doing that after a Game Over, but I have three lives. Why can't I continue? The various things (planets and so forth) that I touched/collected are remembered, but still.

I'm going to chalk this one up as impossible and irredeemable. I couldn't even make it far enough in any given direction to find a zoo or a weapon dealer. If I was trying to play this for real, it would be maddening; rage-inducing, even. This is a remarkably bad game.

The trick seems to be that you need to stop immediately when a guardian enters the screen, moving only if you're not in a good position to dodge it. Wait for it to get close but not too close, then slide out of the way like you're a bull fighter. When waiting to dodge out of its path, you have to make sure you don't move too close to the edge to avoid triggering a screen transition, because that tends to throw everything off and put you even closer to the guardian, or directly on top of it.

Even knowing all that, I can't make it very far.

Let's Play – Disk #8

Doctor Who – Deadly Alliance Part 1

T&D Subscription Software #93 – March 1990
Based on the British TV series, this ML game for the Coco3 involves helping the Doctor travel through time. There are four levels in this game. Once you complete a level, you do not have to go through it again. When your score reaches 500, you get to advance to the next level. You must enter LOADM"WHOPART1" and EXEC instead of RUN. This program requires the use of the right joystick.

`LOADM"WHOPART1":EXEC`
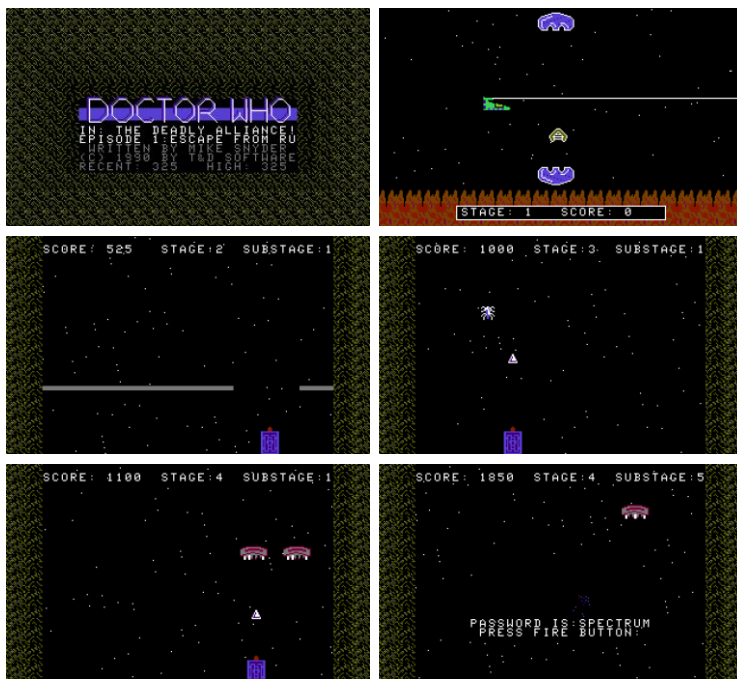
In the 1980s, *Doctor Who* was syndicated on PBS here in the states. I absolutely *loved* the show and only knew of Tom Baker (as the fourth doctor). I thought his name *was* Doctor Who (I know now it's just "The Doctor").

This one, oddly enough, seems to have no instructions included at all. What is this so-called "deadly alliance?" What is RU, and why am I trying to escape from it? Big questions. It does have a single-channel rendition of the show's theme song, though.

Each of the four games in this series has an entirely different style of gameplay. This first game has four different stages as well.

The first stage isn't bad. You just have to move around and shoot at the white ship, while making sure not to stay too long between the blue things at the top and bottom (they move back and forth as a pair) because they shoot at a regular interval. If you're caught between them, it's Game Over.

The problem is, the more you score (or maybe the longer the stage lasts), the faster the pair of blue things shoot, meaning the chance to pass from one side to the other between them gets shorter and trickier.

I had a run where I did pretty well, but then suddenly exploded without being hit. At least, I think that's what happened. Is the stage on a time limit as well? My score that time was 325. That's significantly shy of the 500 points needed to advance to the second stage. If it really is on a timer, that's just mean.

Oh, okay, no, I exploded because one of the white enemy ships made it past me all the way to the opposite side. I guess that's not allowed. That's good to know. Why didn't I include instructions?

This stage is kind of fun, and there's a certain rhythm to it. If those blue things didn't speed up their attack cycle, I could probably make it to the second stage. Unfortunately, it's Game Over at a single hit. If I did make it to stage 2, I could start from that level after a Game Over.

I got up to 400 points that time. I just need to shoot 20 of these goobers to advance. I may be imagining it, but it seems like those little white ships start moving faster too.

Oh cool, the "P" key pauses the game. Nice! The fire button (I have it mapped to the ALT key) un-pauses. I just noticed that the stars in the background blink a bit too. That's cool.

Why do the controls become unresponsive? It's hit or miss if my ship will actually start moving or will fire a shot when I tell it to. Is something wrong with my keyboard? I don't remember this game being that way before.

Finally! Okay, now in Stage 2 I move the TARDIS back and forth under a gap in a descending gray line. It's like the mini-game in *Chambers of Krid*.

With every 125 points (5 successful maneuvers through the gap), it speeds up. After the second time that happens, I'm at the mercy of the random number generator. If a gap is near one side and the next gap is over on the other side, there simply isn't enough time to move under it. I bet substage 4 is even more impossible without a lucky run. The gap also shrinks. This is just unfair.

Ah, substage 4 is actually slower, but the gap moves back and forth, making it harder to line up under it without being hit from the side by the gray line. I'm going to try that again.

Stage 3 has the TARDIS shooting a triangular missile at an erratic white bug. Since when did the TARDIS get missiles? The missile moves slowly, making it impossible to time the shot to have any chance at hitting the bug on purpose. I did it two or three times by pure luck, but after several seconds, the bug hits me with a lock-on beam of some kind for an instant Game Over.

Oh wow, through persistence and blind luck, I managed it. Each substage required just a single hit, so four hits in total. I'm actually to the final stage now! Am I actually going to beat this game?

In this stage, I'm still controlling the TARDIS at the bottom, and I can still shoot a missile, but the idea seems to be that I need to hit the two descending saucers without either of them reaching the bottom. Hitting one spawns another to descend from the top.

I did it! That last stage was probably the easiest of the four, even with multiple sub-stages that caused the saucers to speed up and even stop descending at the same speed. I actually did it, and got the first password, which is SPECTRUM. In the final game, there's a password system that lets you skip ahead to other levels. I guess I'll get a refresher on how that works soon, as I now move on.

Doctor Who – Deadly Alliance Part 2

T&D Subscription Software #95 – May 1990

```
In this 2nd episode you must find the
Daleks who are hiding on the island. Use
your right joystick to move around
searching for clues. This is a Coco3 only
program. Since it is written in ML, you
must enter (C)LOADM instead of (C)LOAD.
Enter EXEC instead of RUN.
```

```
LOADM"WHOPART2":EXEC
```


What happened to the intro music? I guess I opted not to include any this time. There's a short song when I lost the game and got kicked back to the CoCo command prompt, though. I didn't remember this game even having a Game Over. It's still the chill island exploration experience I remember, though.

As "Doctor Who" (I really wish I had known that wasn't his name), you travel the island (as a little guy on-screen), go directly below any house, and press the FIRE button to knock. There's a cool swirl-in for the little black dialogue box that appears, and a cool swirl-out when you click the FIRE button again.

With no enemies and such a small character sprite, the game is plenty fast without any kind of emulator trickery. Even the transition from screen to screen isn't bad, with a tile-based view that quickly fills in and doesn't fade out first, giving players something to watch instead of just a black screen.

The only reason I lost the first time is that I stumbled upon the house where the Daleks are hiding, and I "wasn't prepared" for them.

I found a house where the resident gave me a red coin, and another where I was given an orange coin. I forgot what these are for, but presumably I just need to explore the whole island this way until I find what I need.

I see no way to check my inventory, though. The instructions didn't mention it either. I guess you just have to keep track. I'm also making a map as I go, just in case.

Most of these houses either ignore me, or nobody is home. Still, I've been given a few items and I'm making progress.

Ah, it's a series of fetch quests. At least some of these clues tell me pretty much where on the island I need to go next. From what I can tell, if nobody answers, the house isn't important. If somebody answers at a house but says they can't help, they *can* help, but not until you reach that part of the quest chain (ex: somebody tells you to deliver a book to that person, or some person).

At this point, I think I've visited every house and had every "I can't help you" person end up helping me. If my notes are correct, I now have a gun and an invisibility ring. Am I ready to take on the Daleks now? If not, it's Game Over and I'll have to do all this again.

Well, here goes. I'll give these notes one more review to see if there's a house I marked as "I can't help you" without any additional notes.

Success! The Doctor spares the Daleks in exchange for information about The Master, who is on Earth in the year 2945. The password at the end is RADIATION.

A game like this holds up far better than any of my arcade games or text adventures. There wasn't much to it, but I can honestly say it was kind of fun to play and re-solve this.

Now that I've solved it, I can't just *not* create a full map and walkthrough for it. The map isn't large, at just 4x4 locations (16 in total).
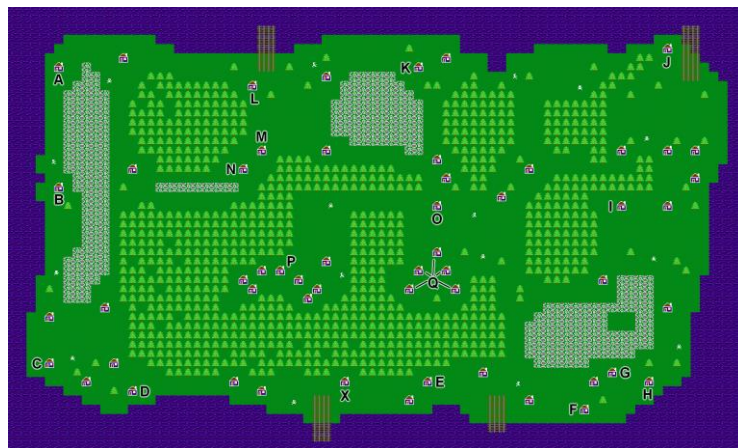
CTRL+CLICK the map above or RIGHT-CLICK and "open in a new tab" to view the full map.

Walkthrough

Get a [RED COIN] from [B].

Get an [ORANGE COIN] from [L].

Get a [NECKLACE] from [K].

Get a [SILVER COIN] from [O].

Get a [TROPHY] from [I].

Get a [GUN] from [E].

Give the [NECKLACE] to [D] to get a [WATCH].

Get five [MAP PIECES] from five [Q]s.

Give the [WATCH] to [K] to get a [NOTE].

Give the [NOTE] to [J] to get the [MAP CLUE].

Give five [MAP PIECES] to [H] for a [TROPHY CLUE].

Give [TROPHY] to [G] to get the [KEY].

Give [KEY] to [P] to get a [GOLD BAR].

Trade the [GOLD BAR] to [A] to get an [ORB].

Give the [ORB] to [N] to get a [BOOK].

Give the [BOOK] to [F] to get a [CARD].

Give the [CARD] to [C] to get a [BLUE COIN].

Trade all four [COINS] to [A] to get a [POTION].

Give the [POTION] to [M] to get an [INVISIBILITY RING].

Locate the Daleks at [X] to [WIN THE GAME].

You can find the Daleks at any time, but you'll lose and have to start over if you haven't obtained the invisibility ring and the gun. Also, the quest chain starting with the Necklace (then Watch, then Note, then Map Clue) can be skipped and you'll still get both of the required items, but apparently if you miss getting that Map Clue, you'll still lose the game.

Doctor Who - Deadly Alliance Part 3

T&D Subscription Software #96 – June 1990

The instructions for this Coco3 only program are available from the machine language program itself. To load this program, enter LOADM "WHOPART3" if you have a disk based system or CLOADM "WHOPART3" if you have a tape based system.

`LOADM"WHOPART3":EXEC`
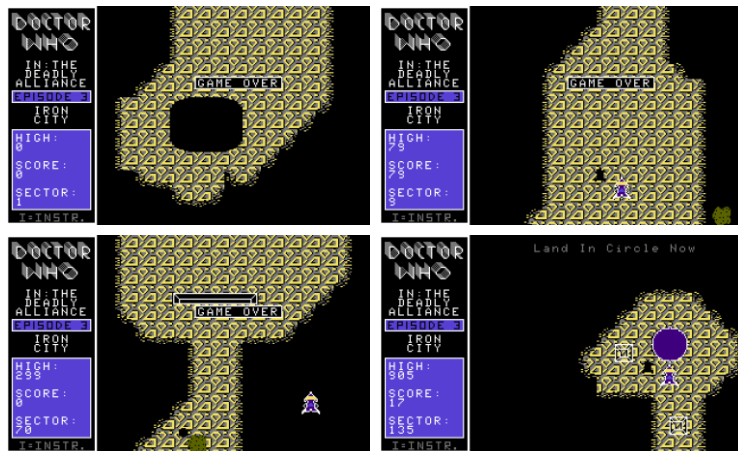
Here, I have a game screen set up kind of like *Aliax*, with the title panel on the left and the game screen on the right. Per the instructions, there are 135 sectors. A "sector" is just your position on the screen. Each time you shoot a meteor, it advances up by a single row, which counts as a "sector". I think this means that to beat the game, you must shoot 135 meteors.

To get the final password, you have to finish the game *and* score at least 1500 points. Your progress doesn't reset if you get hit or one of the meteors gets past you. It's Game Over, but you continue right where you left off. The bad thing is, your score resets, which makes it more difficult (and eventually impossible) to score the requisite points. Fewer points gets you the "bad" ending.

You get more points the farther up on the screen you are, but that's risky because it gives you less time to react and position yourself under the meteor in time to shoot it. What worked for me is staying roughly in the center of the screen, then taking shots from up there if the meteor was close to the middle, otherwise quickly backing up and moving into position to at least not miss the meteor with a lower-scoring shot.

The meteor flickers like mad, making it really difficult to see it sometimes. That's probably the main reason this is a difficult game. It's also easy to get in a hurry and miss the meteor with your shot. When that happens, you won't get a second chance. The missile will travel up the screen by itself while the meteor either hits you or goes past you.

If you do manage to get a high score of 1500, you're set. You can mess up over and over at that point and still reach the end, carrying that high score along the way.

Some stationary items along the way can be shot for 100 or 200 points each, which helps.

With a high score of 1927, I managed to finish the game and get the final password on my second attempt, after an initial failed run up to Sector 135. The third and final password is MUTATION. That unlocks an additional level in my final *Doctor Who* game.

What would have been fun is if I had gone all in on *Doctor Who* fan fiction with this. It was a missed opportunity. Without much written about the game's story at all, it's up to a player's imagination to decide what's going on with "The Deadly Alliance", why The Doctor was escaping from "RU" in the first game, how he ended up on an island in the second game, why the TARDIS was able to transform into a space ship in the third game (the "chameleon circuit" was canonically broken, I think), and what's even happening in the last game.

The seven Doctors from the classic era. Tom Baker (the Fourth Doctor) unofficially stars in this game and is the one wearing a hat in the middle. Image found online here.

Doctor Who – Deadly Alliance Part 4

T&D Subscription Software #99 – September 1990
This Coco3 only machine language game has 4 stages. When you win one stage, you can play the next. Also, you can enter codes to make things easier. If you beat any of the first three episodes, you are told a password. Although they are not necessary to play, people who have won episode 1, 2, or 3 can enter passwords to gain access to higher stages without playing the lower stages first. To load the machine language file, enter LOADM "WHOPART4". Enter EXEC to run.

`LOADM"WHOPART4":EXEC`

After two games without any title music, this one plays a CoCo BASIC version of *Doctorin' the Tardis* from The Timelords, instead of the actual *Doctor Who* TV show theme song.

From the prior three games, I have all the passwords. They're optional, though. Each of the four stages can be unlocked by finishing the one before it. I wonder if that means you just need to finish the final level to beat the game. If so, can I enter the three passwords and not play the first three stages at all?

The three passwords, which can be entered in any order or not at all, are:

SPECTRUM / RADIATION / MUTATION
After that, typing QUIT loads the main menu.

The first stage is a maze game on a strict time limit. It's solvable, but it takes a few attempts.

The second stage is one I like a lot. It's my simplistic take on the classic arcade game *Moon Patrol*. There are no enemies to shoot. You simply have to jump the gaps, which isn't too difficult (at least early on) since you can move the car (presumably the TARDIS morphed into a car as it morphed into a space ship earlier, given that it's tinted blue, but I don't know that for sure since there is no story or instructions) back and forth even while airborne. I'm not sure what the goal is, though, other than to just keep going.

I don't know what part of the car counts as hitting a gap, but it seems to be the middle, between the wheels. It seems OK when I get to the narrow rocks as long as I land on one with the center of the car. At least it puts me back where I left off until I run out of buggys.

I was so inconsistent with features. I allowed pausing with the "P" key in the first Doctor Who game, but not in this one.

The buggy flashes and a short chime plays at seemingly random times, accompanied by an increase in my score. I don't know what that's all about. After some time, my JUMP number goes up, seemingly increasing how high the buggy jumps. I'm not sure what "SR" is, but it seems to increase once in a while as well. It might be a "sector" or "substage" counter, like in Part 1 and Part 3.

That stage wasn't too hard after realizing I can simply line up over a landing spot during my jump and then move backwards in time with it so as to land safely and immediately jump again. That's helpful in a few sections where the gaps are wide and the safe spots to land are very narrow.

Oh boy. Stage 3 is a text adventure. Please, past self, please tell me it's a very simple and short one. I suppose even if it isn't, I can just skip to the final stage anyway.

This one already seems a bit buggy. I went east, opened a door (to the south), went south, and it tells me there's another door (to the south), but I can't open it or even look at it. Maybe there isn't a door there at all.

I managed to find a shovel, dig in the mud, go down underground, and find a key. While looking around to see what I could do with the key, I "ran out of time". Is this on a true timer, or did it limit me by the number of turns?

On the next attempt, I found that I can go south in the room with the phantom door (I guess it was a real door after all) because OPEN DOOR actually works if I have the key. Well, OK. I still ran out of time though. Oh, it seems to do that after turn #41.

This is very bare bones. LOOK doesn't show me the room description again, and actions only work in the right context (making me think, for instance, that a door didn't exist).

That took a while, and a small round hole in the wall underground must have been a red herring. From the start, the solution is:

E, OPEN DOOR, S, S, W, LOOK RACK, GET SHOVEL, E, N, N, E, DIG, D, E, GET KEY, W, U, W, S, S, OPEN DOOR, S, LOOK COMP, GET CARD, N, N, PUT CARD, W, W, LOOK VENT, PULL CHAIN, U, W.

The only real sticking point, aside from the confusion with the doors, was PUT CARD to open that particular door; some egregious guess-the-verb at work there.

This last level seems to require precision analogue joystick control. I'll switch the VCC emulator to mouse mode. A goofy little yellow alien drops blue "pods" and I have to catch them all with the TARDIS or it's Game Over.

After a few attempts, I managed to catch 50 and win the game. I'm congratulated by an ending screen that plays some weird music. This was quite an adventure, I suppose.

River Raid

T&D Subscription Software #92 – February 1990
This Coco 3 only program involves running your Raidboat up the perilous river. Use your right joystick to maneuver the boat and the button to fire at the obstacles. A map will show you each of the five stages. This program requires disk and is 19 granules long. There is an instructional program called RIVERINS. The ML program 'RIVER' uses a data file called 'RIVROOMS'.

`LOADM"RIVER":EXEC`

Or, to run the instruction program first:

`RUN"RIVERINS`

Much like when I wrote *Space Ace*, I didn't know there was already a well-known game called *River Raid*. I just thought these were cool-sounding names and went for it.

This game becomes quite a bit easier when you realize you can shoot any of the moving enemies, except the ones that pace up and down from the outside to shoot inward.

Any given stage (there are five) might take a few attempts, but you can continue from the most recent stage. Each stage is only a few screens, so losing and starting over doesn't make it feel soul-crushing like, say, *Monster Mash*, *Gnome Quest* or *Eldus*. At worst, your score resets.

It controls well and runs at a good speed with no over-clocking required. It pays to go slow, except when avoiding enemies. You can pause with the "P" key. Several different enemy types keep things interesting. The stage progress map at the left was a nice touch. All in all, this is one of my best.

Let's Play – Disk #9

Monster Mash

Self-Published
N/A – Wasn't distributed by T&D Software.

`LOADM"MM":EXEC`
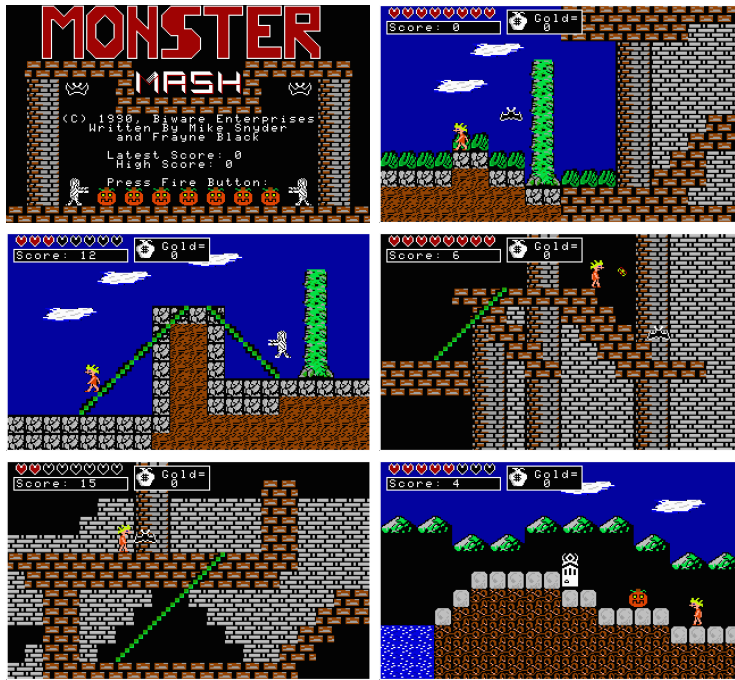
The title song is a simple little version of the theme to *Phantom of the Opera*.

If any game in my CoCo portfolio might be considered my magnum opus, it's this. The honor *might* go to *Space Ace* (inspired a bit by *Metroid*) or maybe *Gnome Quest III*, but both of those are forever gone into the ether.

After appearing on episode 342 of the CoCo Nation podcast in December 2023, I spent a good many hours playing *Monster Mash*.

The controls aren't wonderful, because it isn't good about detecting diagonal stick positions (which would seem like a necessity for what's essentially a platformer), but I used a *Joy2Key* utility that allowed me to connect with a console controller (an Xbox One controller using Bluetooth) and map buttons to actions that are otherwise clunky to pull off (UP+FIRE to jump and DOWN+FIRE to shoot). It made the game far more playable and controllable.

As I went, I made a hand-written map and notes, which I then turned into a full-sized graphic of the entire game world, complete with a top-level walkthrough for the quickest path through the game, a legend that also explains the scoring and controls, and lines that show connections between each door.

I linked to the map much earlier in this issue, but it doesn't hurt to provide that link again:

https://www.cocoquest.com/MonsterMap.png

I wasn't able to beat the game, although not for lack of trying. Even with my work-around for better controls, there were times when it just failed me and a jump didn't register, or I got incredibly unlucky with one of the bats.

The sliding pumpkins are also a pain and make for some of the hardest rooms in the entire game. Successfully shooting one only causes it to spawn immediately from its starting position, and jumping over them takes precision and steady nerves.

Still, I did well to make it *almost* to the final boss room two or three times before my luck ran out and all my hearts were gone. My journal from the time (when I made the game back in 1990) makes it sound like you don't have to do battle against the boss, but rather, the game ends with a silly cut-scene instead. If that's true, or if I changed my mind and did code in a final boss battle, I have no idea. Maybe someday I'll give it one more try.

The graphics were inspired by *Castlevania*. The title screen says Frayne helped make it too, but I think that was only by way of the top-level concept and a few general ideas.

Let's Play - Disk #10

The Entity

Self-Published
N/A – Wasn't distributed by T&D Software.

```
LOADM"ENTITY1":EXEC
```


Usually when I wrote text adventures but put them in a graphics mode, they were painfully slow. Part of that came from drawing the UI and the room scene images, but *The Entity* actually plays fairly fast. It probably didn't *need* to be done in a graphics mode, since I only made use of it for the frame around the text area (and, of course, the animated intro leading into the title screen).

Room descriptions seem to load faster in the *VCC* emulator than in *XRoar Online*, but I think that might be because of faster virtual disk access or something. To save on memory, I think it loads text from a file.

The colors are wrong on the screenshots I took for my website several years ago. I must have had VCC set to emulate an RGB monitor but I chose CMP in the game, or vice-versa. The pipes around the text, for instance, are supposed to be gray with green lines, and the spaceship is supposed to be gray. The images above look as intended.

Certain city-wide events happen after taking a few turns, which leads to a Game Over. With no way to save, this is one of the most frustrating things about *The Entity*. Instant death that comes from things you can learn to avoid next time are one thing, but here, you have to keep starting over (there is no saving) just to try to figure out what you're supposed to do before reaching any of those fail states.

I can see why Mike Shay, the reviewer on this game for *The Rainbow* (magazine), seemed at his wit's end when he reached out to me for help in finishing the game.

Even though it's difficult to play and figure out, I did put more thought into the design for this than any of my earlier adventure games. You play as an "entity" (probably an alien, based on the title screen), and you have to take control of humans (ex: ENTER GUARD and then later LEAVE GUARD) to interact with things in the game world. Also, you aren't there to cause mischief or mayhem. Instead, you're supposed to help as many people as possible by doing a series of good deeds.

In the *Rainbow* review, Mike Shay pointed out my poor spelling. Yes, dictionaries existed and I probably even owned one, but here's the paradox. You have to *know* that you *don't know* how to spell a word, else why bother looking it up? I was completely confident that my spelling was right, hence all the mistakes.

Thank goodness that spell-checking is built into everything these days. I need it far less (it's mostly helpful now for fixing my typos), but back then, I was at the mercy of my own misguided confidence.

I was probably too harsh on this game when I added it to my site and wrote about it in March of 2009. It was challenging on purpose (as many adventure games were back then) and if I had more time, I'd try solving it and writing a full walkthrough. Maybe someday I'll do that.

Digging Up Rainbow Reviews

Thanks (again) to the TRS-80 Color Computer Archive, I was able to find several issues of The Rainbow (magazine) that published reviews for a few of my games. I also found two brief mentions of my games as part of their reviews for T&D Subscription Software, but I'm not going to include those here. For reference, though, they mention Virus-D and Police Cadet 5 in the May 1990 issue (page 76) and then RoboCrook and Smurf Quest in the September 1991 issue (page 56).

As best I can tell, *Eldus* was the first to be reviewed. It was originally published by SPORTSware, and they would always send a copy of every new release to the magazine. The review was published in the March 1990 issue on page 108.

Somehow, I didn't find a review for the first *Gnome Quest* (also SPORTSware-published). I was positive it *did* get a review, but I went through the "product reviews" list in the table of contents for all issues in range (twice) and couldn't find it. I may be remembering the ads that ran for it and other games instead.

However, *Gnome Quest II*, was reviewed by George Aftamonow in the November 1990 issue on page 78. If you've read this entire issue (and if so, you're a real trooper), you may have seen that name when I wrote about *B.E. Break-in 2*. Maybe this was how he got in touch with me. I think he did one of my other reviews in *The Rainbow* as well.

Following that, *The Entity* got a review in the December 1990 issue, on page 76. Our little Biware Enterprises company had no budget for advertising, but we figured out that we could get free publicity in *The Rainbow* by sending our self-published games for review. There was a multi-month turn-around between submitting a game and it actually appearing in the magazine, but that was the only way we had of getting the word out.

I received this letter (below) from Mike Shay, who wrote the review for *The Entity*. I must have responded (although I don't remember), since the review did indeed appear.

From a SPORTSware ad in Rainbow, August 1990, page 75.

From SPORTSware Rainbow ad, December 1989, page 41.

Rainbow Reviews - Continued

In the January 1991 issue, on , there is a review of *Space Ace*. This is one of my long-lost games. At this point, I hold little hope that it will ever turn up. I don't remember how many copies we sold (if any), and even though T&D later purchased it (at least I think so), it was never published there either. This might be the only concrete proof that this game ever existed and isn't just a story I made up.

The last review to appear was *Monster Mash*. It was published in the October 1991 issue on . If not for this review (and the review for *The Entity*), we wouldn't have sold a single copy, and they wouldn't have made their way back to me years later from somebody who either bought it or ended up with a pirated copy from somebody who did.

If only the same had happened with *Space Ace*. The reviewer really seemed to enjoy it. I found two or three *Space Ace/Race* games at the CoCo archive, but none of them are this.

In fact, none of these reviews were overly negative, aside from some much-deserved criticism for *The Entity*. I've probably been harsher on these games in my previous comments now, than these reviewers were then. Maybe I've been *too* harsh on them? Even the bulk of my collection, the stuff originally sold to T&D, must have had some merit back then, else why would T&D have kept accepting them?

The reviews I've included here are from the page scans (linked earlier) from the TRS-80 Color Computer Archive. I thought about transcribing them, but I'm days away from my self-imposed deadline for releasing this issue, and there just isn't time. Maybe I could have OCR or AI do it for me, but there's something more authentic in just including images taken from those page scans.

Eldus

A Swimmer in the Pool of Life

Eldus is a one-player arcade Adventure in which you enter the realm of Barthen in search of a pool of life called "Eldus." Movement through the 101 screens is by way of a joystick. No, that was not a misprint; there really are 101 screens. So even the most jaded adventurist will either have to get paper and pencil to map his or her progress or be blessed with extraordinary memory.
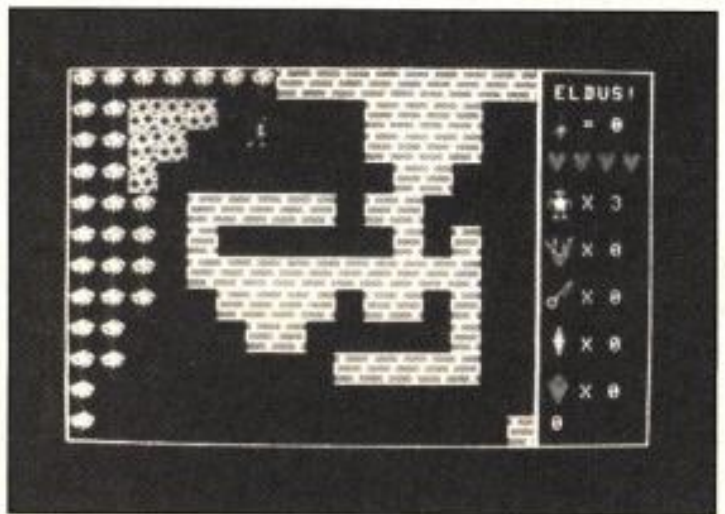
Throughout the multitude of turns, doors and passages lie treasures in the form of coins, keys, gems and fire. You must gather 21 of these items to be allowed access to the well that holds the pool of life. Be advised that this world is infested with Wrelnins, rather slow-witted, bat-like creatures whose sole purpose is to impede your progress. While you are armed with a sword, it has no effect on the Wrelnins, which must be avoided because coming in contact with one shortens your life. Unlike the proverbial cat with its nine lives, you are allotted

only three, but in each of these lives you can sustain a Wrelnin's sting eight times before you succumb.

Why bother having a sword if it has no effect, you ask? As it happens, there is a mirror-image sword hidden in this world, which when found enables you to shoot fireballs with your sword. Also, once you have located a fire, the sword has the power to burn certain items. You only need to find one fire to obtain the power, but you need all the fires to gain access to the well of life.

Your state of progress is continuously monitored and displayed on the right side of the screen. Your well-being is represented by four hearts. Each time a Wrelnin touches you, one-half of one heart is lost. So, gallant adventurer, "don't lose heart." The screen also shows a running total of all of the coins, keys, etc. that you have accumulated so far.

In order to enter this mythical world, you need a CoCo 3 with at least 128K of memory and a joystick. *Eldus* comes with three pages of documentation that includes a brief background story and adequate descriptions of the items and features found in the game. Operation is smooth and the graphics are crisp, if not detailed. But the recommended disk backup was impossible using the BACKUP and COPY commands. Some of the popular copying utilities proved equally fruitless in creating a backup copy. *Eldus* has a Pause feature, which allows you to take a breather and raid the 'fridge to build up strength before facing another room full of Wrelnins, but it does not have a Save feature. This does not present a problem because it is an arcade type of game, playing time is hardly ever long enough to really necessitate a game being saved.

Eldus is a fun game for young and old, and it doesn't require you to key in secret codes or spells, or try to figure out whether the author wanted you to TAKE, BRING, GET or maybe USE a certain item. And at a time when many programs are priced upwards of $20, it is good to see that *Eldus* costs a reasonable $16. It is a nice addition to anyone's software library.

(SPORTSware, ‌ ; $16)

—George Aftamonow

Gnome Quest II - FireSpire

Firespire is a one-player arcade Adventure game for the CoCo 3 that requires a disk drive and a joystick, preferably the self-centering type. For those not familiar with arcade Adventures, these games combine the quick reflexes needed in arcade games and the cunning, mental prowess required to navigate through a maze.
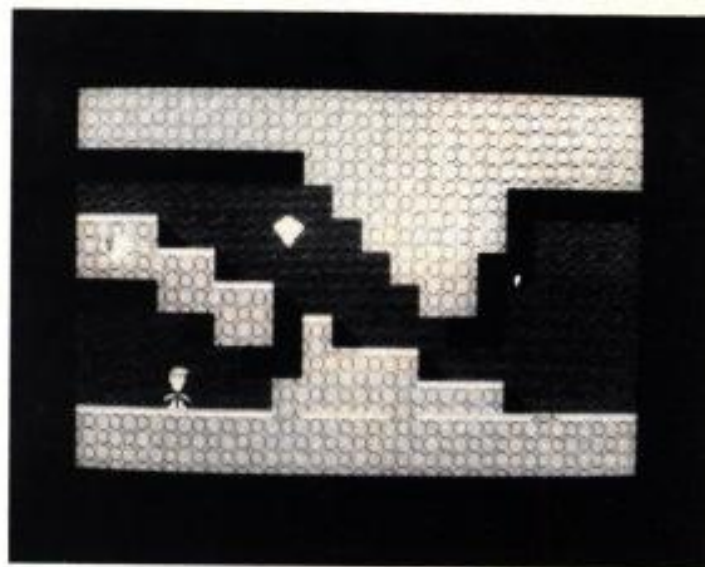
As a gnome named Tal Hilar, you are sent on a quest to find the Firespire, a gnome weapon lost during the fierce Troll

wars. Despite being armed with an energy-charged sword capable of disposing of any creature found in this world, it is not an easy task.

There are four distinct areas or worlds: the outer surface, halls and passages within monuments, rocks and pilings of the moat

*F*irespire is a fun game that will hold your interest for hours.

and an underwater lair. Each area has special hazards of its own. Death birds dive at you on the outside, huge jellyfish-like creatures charge at you in the halls and passageways, and poisonous bubbles rise from the moat. Just the mere touch of any of these is fatal. Fortunately, you have three lives and one *continue*. A continue lets you continue the game from the point where you lost your last life. Your score reverts to zero, but you can go on with another three lives and

see what lies beyond without having to start from the very beginning. A nice touch.

In your travels you find jewels, keys and icons that let you make super-jumps. The jewels and keys may be exchanged at your discretion for extra lives or continues. Three jewels may be traded for one extra life, while six jewels or one key gives you an additional continue.

Movement is accomplished by using the joystick, but you must stay on the platforms scattered throughout each screen. You may walk or jump from platform to platform; if you fall, you can steer your descent so that you land on another platform.

Keep in mind, however, that each area has creatures that try to impede your progress. These creatures can be killed by zapping them with your energy sword, which is activated by the joystick button. Should you miss a platform and fall to the bottom or if a creature touches you, one life is forfeited.

Each screen also has one or more windows — little white squares — that allow access to other areas. The problem is that only a few of these windows are entrances, and some need to be unlocked before passage to another area is possible. Since the only way to reach a window is to jump and fall into it, you lose many lives trying to determine which are entrances and which are not. It is advisable to map or keep track of the various windows. To get those easily frustrated persons started, the middle window on the second screen to the right leads to the inside of a monument.

The game comes with a four-page set of instructions that adequately covers all you need to know for survival. The graphics screens are not very detailed but are colorful, clear and crisp. By pressing the space

bar, you get a status report screen that shows your current power, score, remaining lives, jumping ability, inventory and location. It can also be used as a pause feature or as a quick escape when you are about to be done in by those nasty creatures that never leave you in peace. Since the game is not timed, you can leisurely explore and map out each area as you travel through it.

There is one minor negative point — when you move from one screen to the next, the screen goes blank and you must wait a few seconds before the next screen appears. While this may be a bit annoying to the seasoned arcade player, the adventurer may welcome the chance to catch his breath. If you have a 512K CoCo, however, you can backup the disk to a RAM disk that speeds up the game.

All in all, *Firespire* is a fun game that will hold your interest for hours.

(SPORTSware,

$21, introductory price)

— George Aftamonow

The Entity

The Entity is a new action-adventure game by Mike Snyder that will make you miss the simple days of earlier computer games. As a player, you become a bodiless alien life-form whose purpose is to perform 10 good deeds in a large American city. The number of guesses available at the proper verb/noun combinations is extremely limited and you will have to re-start the game approximately every 20 moves. It is irritating to be unable to perform your assigned deeds. Irritation became frustration and soon I was tapping the CoCo keys with a bit more insistence.

Veteran adventurers will probably overlook the above mentioned irritations and finish the game in just a few hours. Less patient players who like to break and list a game to follow a programmer's logic will have the added irritation of breaking out the disassembler to unscramble this game's machine language.
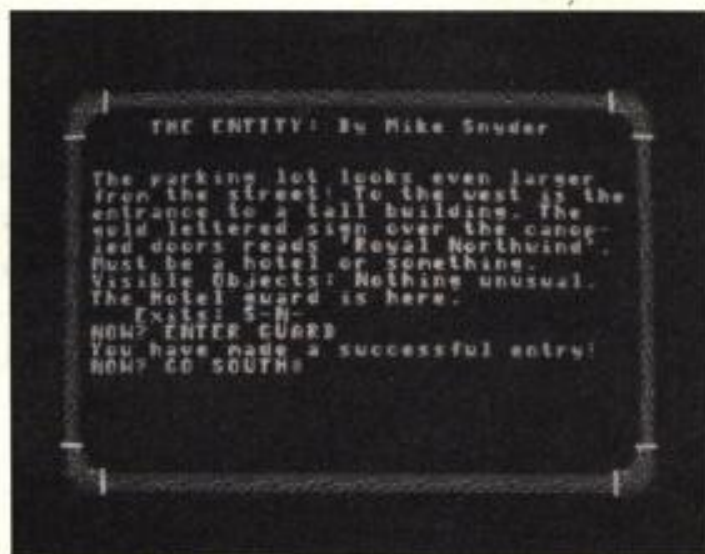
The introductory graphics are nicely displayed and reflect the time and attention given to the aesthetic content of this package. The white-on-black text is easy to read despite a few grammatical and spelling errors. Each screen is loaded separately from the disk drive (a drive is required for *The Entity*.) This slows the game slightly, but response time to player's input is very quick. This may be due to an obviously short verb/noun list.

I strongly recommend the use of a map after your first few experimental adventures. The game counts your moves and records your score. You are awarded 10 points for each successfully completed good deed. Moves must be made very carefully to avoid the ominous Play Again? screen. To display your total points and number of

moves used, enter SCORE. Note that this is counted as a move and is probably a waste of your time. STATUS is a command unique to *The Entity*. STATUS describes the body you currently inhabit. However, the use of this command counts against you as a move and should be avoided once all of the different bodies in the game have been memorized. Finding good deeds to perform is less difficult than finding an order in which to accomplish them without reaching the 20 moves-per-game maximum.

EXA (examine) and SEA (search) are useless in the various cells. SPE (speak) is not helpful either. This challenging game can often be quite lonely. But persistence is rewarded with a nice congratulatory graphics display.

The Entity could be improved in many ways. First of all, the move number and score should be displayed on each input. An updated version of the screen should be shown after each move to reflect the changes made during play. I would eliminate the unnecessary wasting of moves. For example, it should not count as a move to look at a newly created scene. I also suggest the author consult a dictionary to correct the grammatical and spelling errors that exist. I am not an enforcer of proper English etiquette, but mistakes such as these can be very difficult to decipher. It is not always immediately clear whether an unaccepted command is really wrong or simply the result of poor grammar and improper spelling. Even though author error might be a good alibi when explaining a loss, it leads to massive confusion for the gameplayer.

The Entity is a virtually bug-free program from Biware Enterprises. In all the hours my children and I spent muttering over this exasperating little gem, it did not crash. As is characteristic of games that operate on three letter input, I received some strange responses to my commands. For example, OPE might be interpreted as either "operate" or "open." And LEA as "lean" or "leave."

I will not discuss the correlation between the package cost and the satisfaction of playing the game. I will instead leave that up to individual analysis.

(Biware Enterprises, c/o Kandi Stinson, ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ $18)

— **Mike Shay**

Space Ace

Space Ace is an action-arcade game written for the 128K or 512K CoCo 3. Requirements for operation include a disk drive and a joystick. Although it looks acceptable on a color composite monitor, *Space Ace* looks great on an RGB monitor. The game is written in 100-percent machine language and has smooth Hi-Res graphics as well as fast action. It's supplied on a single, unprotected 5¼-inch disk and comes with three and a half pages of simple instructions. To begin playing, enter LOADM "X1":EXEC.

Space Ace is the story of a friendly computer turned bad. It all transpired during a period of several hundred years when the galactic master computer, Iravo, began creating robotic drone guards and mercenaries. You are *Space Ace*, a human dressed in a robot suit. This disguise was necessary to infiltrate the starbase and destroy Iravo. Iravo has successfully taken over all four galaxies whose inhabitants now live a fearful existence in slave colonies. As Ace, you must rescue these people. To accomplish

this task, Ace has an Iravo Class-2 Scout spaceship with various weapons, and the knowledge to complete this very dangerous mission.

A countdown starts at 10 and decreases after the loss of every third life. If the countdown reaches zero, you must start over. These 30 lives seem generous, but you will soon discover this mission's complexity. On this mission you are confronted by drone guards, orbs and power orbs. Use the joystick to maneuver through the four zones in the starbase. (A self-centering joystick is highly recommended.) Each zone contains computer terminals and is divided into rooms. Walk to the edge of the screen to enter the next room. Rooms above or below the playing screen are accessible with elevator platforms.

Throughout the mission there are several screen options from which to choose. Scan searches your remaining orbs. This option can be used only from certain terminals. You must discover the exact terminals. Be warned, some orbs are deadly when scanned. Item selects the weapon you want activated. Call shows your score, number of lives left and power level. Quit resumes play.

Other items of interest include power orbs, lasers and telepod keys to instantly go from zone to zone. A Super Jump command is also available for high jumps. The anti-explosion device prevents orb explosions during scanning. Be careful not to fall or jump into outer space. To win the game you must explore the entire starbase, find the needed orbs and gain access to the master computer. In addition to Pause and Continue features, *Space Ace* includes a Game Save so you can get some rest and resume play after a good night's sleep.
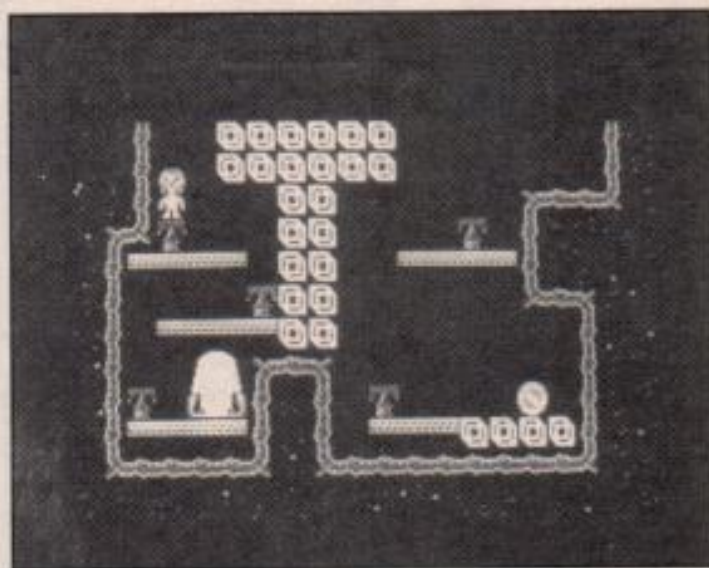
Space Ace is quality fun. It's full of unexpected thrills and situations that will leave you breathless. The graphics and sound effects are good, though game play is slowed down slightly when going from one room to another.

(Biware Enterprises, c/o Kandi Stinson, $20)

— **Robert Gray**

Monster Mash

Monster Mash is an action-packed arcade game written for the CoCo 3 with a disk drive. It requires a joystick, and the graphics look best on an RGB color monitor, though the game supports color-composite monitors, as well. The program is written in machine language and features excellent 16-color, Hi-Res graphics that are reminiscent of some popular Nintendo games.

Loading *Monster Mash* is as simple as inserting the disk in the drive, and loading and executing the machine-language program. The title screen appears and an introductory tune is played. You must leave the disk in the drive during game play because

frequent calls are made to load more screens.

In *Monster Mash*, you play the part of Kerwin, whose task is to find and conquer the evil Medusa who has controlled the village for many years. The villagers had previously sent four of their strongest and bravest warriors to confront Medusa. They never returned because they had been transformed into hideous plant-like creatures. The magic mirrors they possess were broken during battle, but can be reassembled into one piece and used to defeat Medusa. The transformed warriors are willing to sell the pieces of mirror, but they want gold in exchange.

To win *Monster Mash* you must find the four transformed warriors and 10 sacks of gold before you can confront Medusa. There are some 70 rooms you can visit, and all are connected by doors so a map is vital if you want to do well. A map of the village is supplied in the two-page instruction manual but you will need to make a more detailed map as you venture into strange territories.
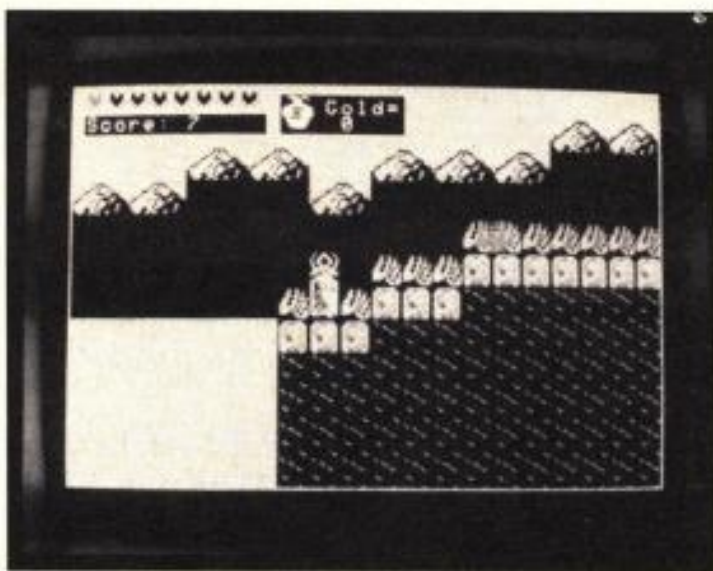
Kerwin is armed with magic swirls that can be fired with the joystick button. Ker-

win has eight lives, which are displayed as hearts and are used up as he falls or gets hit by the evil guards, which are in the form of bats, floating mummies and Jack-O-Lanterns. The action is smooth, and Kerwin is easy to maneuver. Only a short delay of four to eight seconds halts game play whenever a new screen is loaded. This can be eliminated if you have 512K and a RAM disk, allowing quicker screen changes. If you need, you can pause game play with the P key.

There are a lot of other features in *Monster Mash* that make it a real challenge and fun-to-play. You'll have to play the game in order to discover some of these other surprises. I can assure you that you won't find it boring.

(Biware Enterprises, c/o Kandi Stinson, ▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨ **$22)**

— **Robert Gray**

======================================

Other than *Highlights for Children, The Rainbow* was my first magazine. I was of course more interested in games than utilities and hardware, but there was a lot to like in every issue. I loved seeing the ads for various games from Sundog Systems, because they *looked* amazing – better than anything I was doing, anyway. I couldn't really afford or justify *buying* anything I saw advertised (aside from a compiler later), but I always wanted to.

They published programs (games and various utilities) with source code printed directly in the mag. Typing them in took a long time and would often end up with bugs or errors due to typing them wrong, but it was still fun to do. They also offered "Rainbow on Disk" (no need to type) but that was more expensive, I think.

The Final Stage

I'll be the first to admit it. I went overboard this week. I went more overboard than I have with any of the prior topics I've featured. This should have been split apart over a series of issues or included bit by bit as an extra add-on feature for several weeks. It sort of spiraled out of control, with more and more added to the feature as the week went by.

I had initially planned to just write a few sentences about each game. Then, I wanted to start with the backstory of how all these games were made. Then, I discovered the *XRoar Online* emulator at the Archive and spent a while building the links to open each individual game. Then, I remembered that some of them were reviewed in *The Rainbow*, so I spent an evening sifting through scans of those issues to find and include them here.

This certainly isn't normal, and it's a good indicator that I need to scale back going forward; at least, back to the scope of some prior issues (last week's, for instance). I just wanted to centralize all of this into one spot.

Meanwhile, I haven't touched *South of Midnight* (on Xbox) much in days, I've been putting in late nights this week, with 2AM to 3AM bedtimes, then work the next day, in an effort to make sure I didn't need to change course and put together some other topic while wrapping this one up for a future issue.

And you know what? It was totally worth it.

Writing about these games has given me the urge to get back into game development more than writing about my interactive fiction or BBS games did. I probably *won't*, but thoughts like "what if I did something dumb like cashing out my retirement savings to fund it and also quitting my day job" were ever-present in my mind as I absorbed myself in the nostalgia.

My list of future feature topics is ever-growing. I tend to look it over as I'm deciding what to focus on next time, and I face a paralysis of choice. I defer some of them because there are certain games I still want to play first (ex: at least one *Police Quest* and the recent release of *The Precinct* before I write about police in video games, or *Quern*, *Obduction*, and maybe *Eclipse: Edge of Light* before I write about first-person adventure games, or *Shadows of Doubt* before I write about detective games).

I defer others because the topic seems really broad (DS games, Vita games, PSP games), and others because I haven't decided on a way to make it fun or interesting, or because I simply lack a good angle to approach the topic (ex: modern games with a retro style, souls-likes, modern shovel-ware, or a topic I've tentatively called "ode to cats").

I think I'm ready to write about WEIRD games, though. Weird doesn't necessarily mean *bad*. Some of my favorite games and my best gaming experiences fall into that category.

What makes a game *weird*, or at least weird *to me*? Join me next week to find out.

End Credits

The title music for *Police Cadet* was turned into ABC Music Notation with the help of ChatGPT, then fed into an online utility to create the sheet music representation of it at https://editor.drawthedots.com/ (there was a time I could have written it out by hand, but I've not played/read music in many years so I'm rusty at it), then saved as a .WAV file (for the piano version), then converted to an MP3 using the site https://www.freeconvert.com/audio-converter.

Game information from T&D cover sheets was found here. Issues of *The Rainbow* magazine were found here.

The VGGN controller logo with three "X" buttons and some other artwork was made using https://openart.ai.

The title font *Closet Dwellers* and section header font *Shake Your Plums* are licensed from https://chequered.ink/.

Images sourced from elsewhere on the internet are credited and/or linked in captions that appear on or below them.