

An excerpt from "Long Live The Arcade" by Jeffrey B. Geske, M.D.

I cannot help but remember the many times I spent at Circus Pizza or Chuck E. Cheese playing arcade games. When there was an upcoming birthday party, be it mine or a good friend's, I would anticipate it for weeks. My friends and I would talk over lunch about how amazing it would be to spend the whole afternoon at the arcade, not just looking over the shoulders of others, but with cups of our own tokens!

There is something to be said about the atmosphere of an arcade. It is more than the sum of its parts. Those who haven't experienced a 90's arcade might not understand that this was not a quiet venue—arcades were loud. They were a symphony of attract screen music, screaming kids, and the music playing intermittently from the janky, semi-broken Rock-a-fire Explosion (the animatronic, anthropomorphic "band"). There were the cries of victory when a game was conquered, more often drowned out by the creative profanity accompanying a friend removing your spine after a close match of *Mortal Kombat*. And underneath this wonderful cacophony, was the monotone, boring chit-chat of adults who didn't know that they were sitting in the middle of paradise. I remember the pervading smell of marginal quality pizza, the de facto meal of choice for parties. And if you weren't sitting in your booth eating pizza, you had to be careful not to spill your refillable soda cup when a parade of kids hopped up on sugar came by every few minutes to beg their parents for more quarters.

But, dear friends, let's get to the heart of it. The real reason we had pined over that afternoon for so long: the games! Sure, I enjoyed the occasional skee-ball game that dispensed tickets for chintzy prizes, but even as a kid, I saw through that racket. Why spend my limited supply of quarters to end up with a small packet of Spree and an army man that I would lose in the next week? No, we must delve deeper into the dark, neon lit room to find the real reason for my excitement. Was it air hockey, you ask? Air hockey was there, but it was usually broken. That was no big deal, because we weren't there for that. The real object of our fanaticism was to play the latest and greatest stand-up arcade games. The ones we could only dream of playing at home.

Written by Jeff Geske. This excerpt from the book *Digital Archaeology: Retrogaming Recollections* is © 2024 SCAR Productions. Please do not distribute without the author's permission. Direct all inquiries to Rob Strangman at [gradiusone \[at\] yahoo \[dot\] com](mailto:gradiusone@yahoo.com).