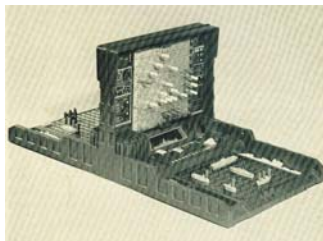


The Milton Bradley Company

Their partnership with Texas Instruments and other MB history

Introduction: The information and the images that follow this 'Introduction' were provided by Mike Langieri in a series of emails to Bryan Roppolo. Mike Langieri was a Milton Bradley Company employee, who joined the firm in the summer of 1977, and who was involved with or on the edge of some exciting product design and development work at Milton Bradley.

Before receiving the information from Mr. Langieri I had little knowledge about the Milton Bradley Company-Texas Instruments Incorporated business partner relationship, except that there was a relationship.



Past research efforts revealed that Milton Bradley's 1978 "Electronic Battleship" game used the Texas Instruments TMS1000 chip, as did a 1977 handheld game named "COMP IV", that challenges you to guess a number. There may have been others?



TI's internal "Product Specification Home Computer" document, dated May 29, 1979, included the requirement that the home computer be able to support a,

- 19) Large selection of Solid State software (TM) Command Modules including that of Milton Bradley and other third party software vendors.

The first third party command modules for the TI-99/4 Home Computer (Connect Four, Hangman, Yahtzee and Zero Zap) were to come from Milton Bradley, as reported by Interface Age magazine in their August 1979 issue. In that article we even got to see photos of the MB Gamevision modules, shown here in a separate flyer.



Even after Texas Instruments' October 28, 1983 announcement that it was leaving the home computer market, Milton Bradley had a relationship with TI, though likely estranged. In August 1984 they introduced the "Programming Animation and Graphics" product for the TI-99/4A and Apple II/IIE computers. The set of 60 task cards was designed to introduce animation and graphics to beginning programmers. Developed for teacher use, the cards included definitions and programs for user interaction with the computer.



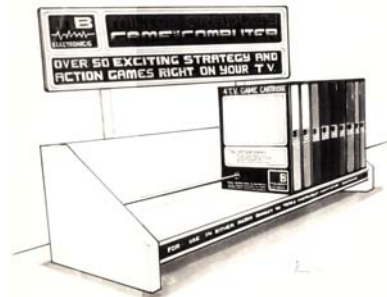
Lastly, any cursory search of the internet will reveal that Milton Bradley Company was founded in 1860 by the company's name sake, and that it was taken over by Hasbro in 1984. Hasbro retains the Milton Bradley name and product line to this day, one would assume because the products are leaders in the market place and the name has a storied and respected place in American business history.

Mike Langieri's information: We've probably discussed this before, but I joined Milton Bradley in the Summer of 1977. Roy Nyman was heading up the joint development project

between Texas Instruments and Milton Bradley. Roy's then "Advanced Development" group was headquartered in downtown Springfield at what was then called "Baystate West Tower" a 27-story office building with a shopping mall in the lower two levels. IIRC, Milton Bradley had offices on the 25th and 26th floors. Roy's group had part of the 25th floor which was shared with other corporate-level groups like marketing, advertising, and product testing. On the 26th floor we had the executive offices which included Jim Shea's (CEO/Chairman) office and also Mel Taft's and Mike Meyer's office, along with my office. About my only involvement at that time was they asked me to develop some ideas for the POP (Point Of Purchase) displays... it was really Roy's baby back then.



manufacturing group were trying to develop the keyboard in house rather than buying one that big (from) outside (the company) and they did manage to do a great job and produced working chomeric keyboards which were used in various prototypes. Development kept moving along,



Over the next year or so, our team of industrial designers worked on various models of the MB Home Computer. The primary difference between what TI was doing and what we were doing was based on cost... ours was always an all-plastic, injection molded chassis, no metal/foil trim, and the most obvious feature was the chomeric (flat) keyboard. I can recall sitting at a few progress meetings and I suggested that rather than a flat surface we ought to try some kind of dimensional relief keyboard. During that same time, our engineering and manufacturing group were trying to develop the keyboard in house rather than buying one that big (from) outside (the company) and they did manage to do a great job and produced working chomeric keyboards which were used in various prototypes. Development kept moving along, and yes during that whole time I recall seeing some of those "classic" games being presented as candidates for our software. Frankly... the games were pretty awful from my perspective because I made it a habit to stay on top of the arcade game business and I never thought those games could ever compete with the likes of Pac-Man and numerous other then-popular arcade games. Plus they were developed by Paul Ahrens' software engineers and not by real game designers.

And you already know the story about how close we were to introducing our revised gaming/educational console (the Gemini), and then Coleco jumped into the mix with Colecovision and now you had Atari, Mattel, and Coleco...well the people at the very top got nervous and scrapped the program altogether. By that point it was Paul Ahrens who had taken over from Roy Nyman, to develop the speech chip and software, and he came to me and asked if we could come up with something to salvage all those years of great technological research. We came up with a couple of products, and one of them was the MBX, designed specifically as a peripheral for the TI 994/A.



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The MBX was a fun project, and they put me in charge of it so I had responsibility for the aesthetics of the case, selection of the games, and

development of the games. We started a software game development group that had a nice mix of game designers, software engineers and a couple of hardware guys. It was then that we also hooked up with Joyce Hackinson up in the San Francisco area...she had just left Children's Television Workshop to start her own software development group. Paul's group focused on the real hardware and development of what you might call the "operating system" of the MBX and that included all the speech encoding as well.

My group focused on games like Baseball and others, plus I was the liaison to Joyce's group so I was traveling out to see her progress every couple of weeks. As a total group, I think we all worked well together. When we introduced the MBX at CES, the crap hit the fan. We were inundated with high tech development engineers from every tech company in America including AT&T, Intel, Apple, Atari, and numerous other companies.

What Paul and his group had packed into the MBX's hardware was simply blowing everyone's minds. We glass enclosed booths at the CES where I was demonstrating the voice command Baseball and Terry Turtle programs (and others) and we had lines 20-30 people deep all week waiting to see how a under-\$100 peripheral could not only add pretty realistic speech to a low-end personal computer, but it also recognized speech through the headset.

Once the CES was over, we had several meetings with Atari and had developed a MBX module that would connect to the Atari Consumer products including the 2600. Once the basic technology was established, we had reverse-engineered the Atari 2600 unbeknownst to them... and when we demo'd it they jumped out of their seats. We also had a couple of meetings with



Apple believe it or not... and in a private meeting they showed us the first Macintosh, the one that was a one-piece unit (monitor and system). We were going to develop an MBX for the Mac and it would not have been difficult at all.



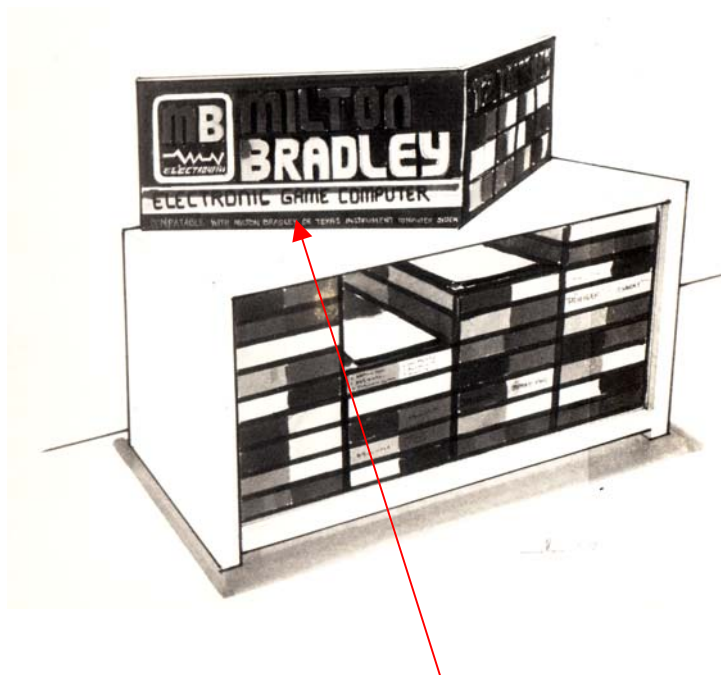
Milton Bradley was riding high at that time and what eventually killed the MBX was that Atari had put out a poor-playing/looking version of Pac-Man on the 2600 and the consumers left them with a huge inventory on the shelves because it was so bad. The video game industry was rushing to put out new titles and rather than develop really good interpretations they were using deadlines and lots of money to put out junk. So the video game industry took a big hit back then, and Milton Bradley's extremely conservative upper echelon management decided that the business was far too volatile for them and they killed the MBX.

Ironically, a few years later, Nintendo proved that it was all about content and Milton Bradley's upper management reluctantly agreed that perhaps we should give it another try. Well, they again put me in charge of development, but rather than ramp up inside, I worked only with outside programming houses. We had several awesome games and our version of Marble

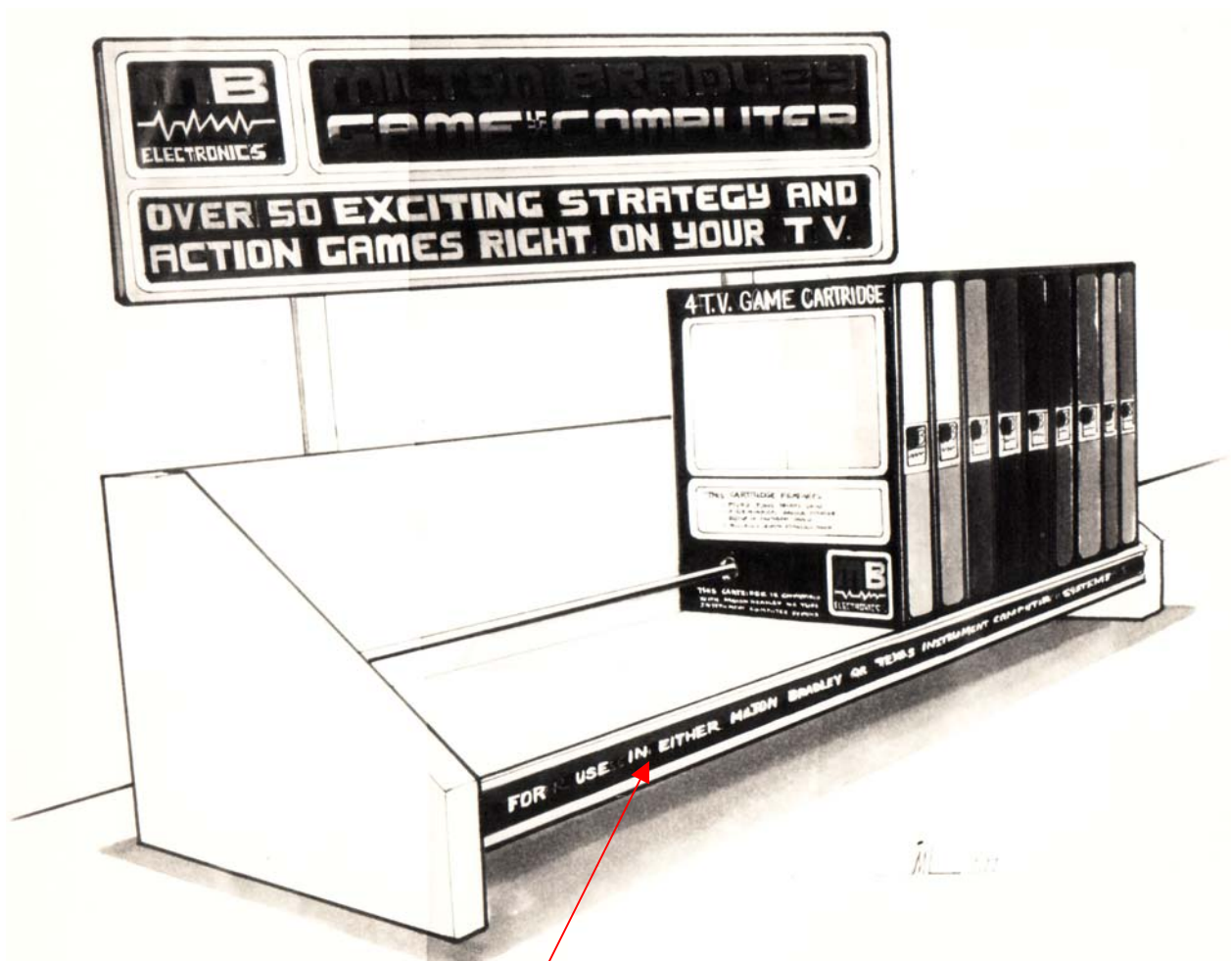
Madness was the Number One game in sales. But it was always a tenuous process, and the minute there was some negative press on video sales Milton Bradley again bailed out.

What is probably not well known is that while Bradley was exploring the Nintendo business, and this was well before Nintendo really took off in the USA, we were approached by the head of Sega USA and asked if we would be interested in becoming the USA distributor/marketer for Sega's video game consoles and games. We would not have to do any development, simply use our marketing clout. After some deliberation, MB's conservative upper management again backed away even though people like myself, Mike Meyers and Mel Taft were very enthusiastically pushing for the chance to become Sega's USA arm. Had we done that, there's a good chance that Nintendo would never have become the powerhouse it became. OTH, with MB's history of getting cold feet with regard to the video game business, maybe we would have bailed on Sega too. George Dittomassi, who was a great guy to work for, someone who worked his way up in the company from almost nothing to SVP Marketing and eventually President of MB... always, through all the videogame cycles, felt that video games were a "fad" and that they'd never last. George was so sharp on so many other issues. I never could understand why he felt that way, but then in hindsight, if you look at Milton Bradley's "staple" business (board games & puzzles) that continues to sell millions of copies year after year. Well, perhaps you can understand his reluctance to deal with a roller coaster category like video games.

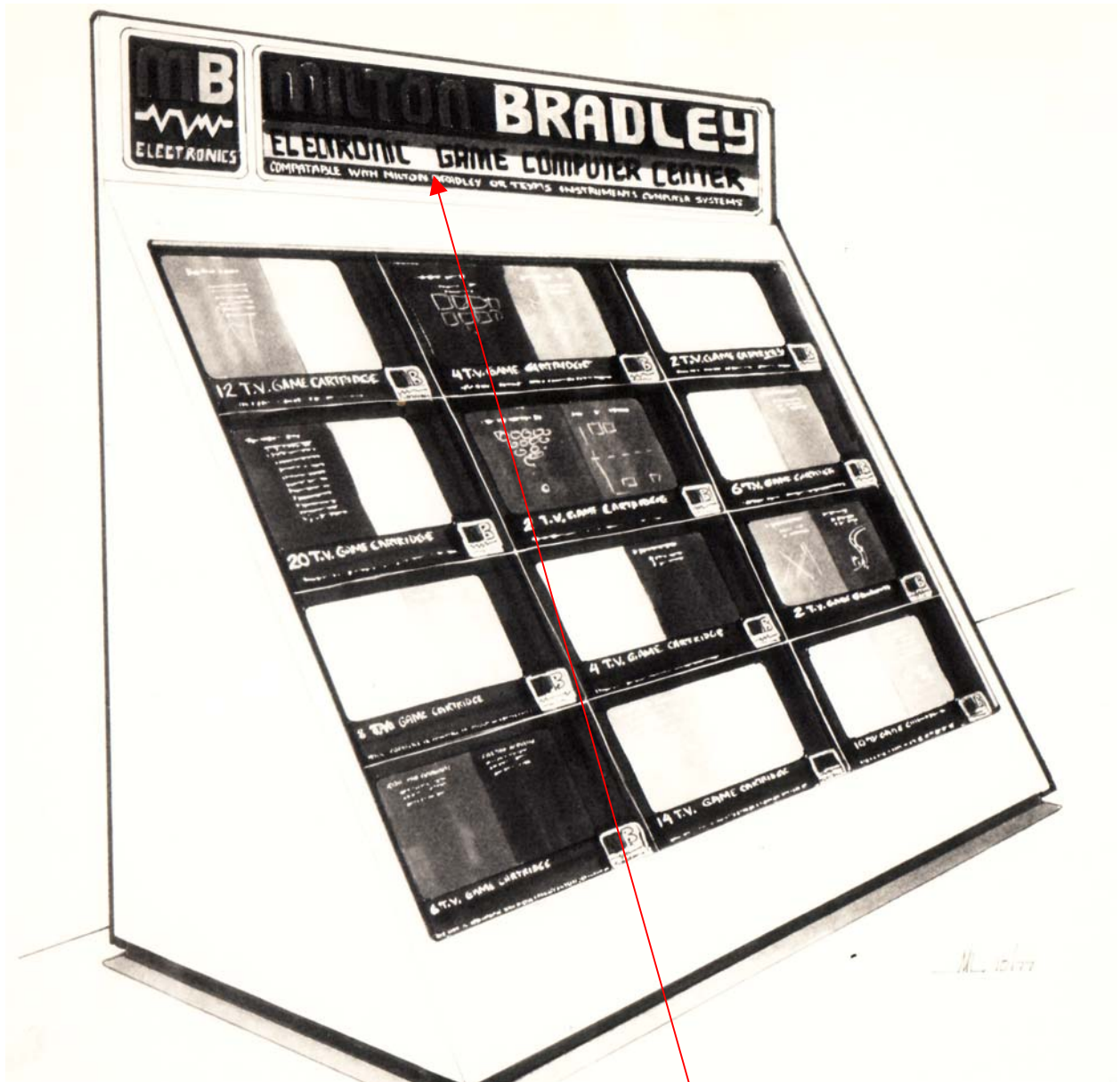
Brian... its always fun to recall some of this stuff, and as I'm writing it now I'm realizing how far back this was! I've forgotten so much, but I've always believed that the video game category was the wave of the future. My only solace is that I know I was right and the emergence of the X-Box, the Wii, and other incredible game systems only proved me right. The video game business is here to stay and its part of our culture now. Hope you've enjoyed my little walk down memory lane. With Best Regards... Mike Langieri



"Compatible with Milton Bradley or Texas Instruments Computer System"



"For Use In Either Milton Bradley or Texas Instruments Computer System"



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Our thanks to Mr. Mike Langieri for allowing this valuable piece of history to be preserved. Thanks also to Bryan Roppolo for doing the detective work to dig it up and for sharing it with the TI-99 Community.

Bill Gaskill
January 25, 2010