This Moses wants to lead you to the video land

By BOB GRITZINGER

Three years ago George Moses was playing Space Invaders on his home video arcade. Two years ago he learned how to write his own programs for the machine so he could keep tabs on everything from his biorhythms to his employees' hours. Today he writes music—all on his home video game arcade.

"The reason I bought this (Bally "Professional Arcade") originally was to play games," said Moses. "But you get so good at one game that you take it out and buy another one. Now I don't play the games—I'm busy writing programs."

Moses, who publishes two Brighton-based advertising magazines called the Marketeer and the Parade of Homes, said he played the home video games for a few months, got tired of them, and put his computer game into storage.

A few months later, Moses hauled the game out of mothballs and started learning to write programs in Beginners All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code (BASIC), a computer language that came on a cartridge with his arcade. But he didn't know quite what to do with his new-found knowledge.

So two years ago, with 23 game cartridges and his knowledge of BASIC computer language, Moses helped found the Bally Users Group (BUG) of Michigan. Seventeen people came to that first meeting. Now the organization has about 80 members from Michigan and Ohio.

At quarterly BUG meetings, Bally Arcade owners trade programs they have written on their game computers. The tapes include everything from home budget programs to facsimiles of the newest crop of commercial video games.

"I didn't know what a BASIC was before I bought this," said 39-year-old Moses. "Now I'm a national authority on something that not many people know about."

Moses said that visitors to his home often think his home video game is made by Atari, because Atari is the maker of home video games that people are most familiar with. But the Bally Arcade, unlike Atari and other machines, is designed for games but can also be programmed like a home computer.

But even better than a home computer, the Bally machine is capable of producing excellent graphic displays, colors, and sounds that normal home computers cannot produce, Moses said.

"It's the best kept secret in the world," said Moses, who originally purchased the computer game for $300.

With the addition of a few special gadgets, Moses was able to increase his computer's memory, store programs on cassette tapes, and type programs on a normal typewriter keyboard. By collecting program tapes from other BUG members, Moses now has about 100 games and programs for his Bally Arcade.

In addition to his role in BUG, Moses also works with the people who originally wrote such games as Space Invaders and Galaxian for Bally. He helped write a 120-page booklet explaining how to use the BASIC language on the Bally computer.

Moses also receives home versions of popular commercial video games to help "debug" the games before they become available to other Bally Arcade owners.

Because of his ability to program in BASIC language on the Bally computer, Astrovision (the company which bought Bally's home computer game division) recently flew Moses (all expenses paid) to Las Vegas to demonstrate the multiple uses of the Bally unit at a consumer electronics show. Moses will demonstrate the computer at a similar convention in Chicago in June.

Moses and other Bally owners are learning to take advantage of the potential of the Bally unit. Recently, Moses began tapping the musical portion of the unit which had previously been used only to make game noises.

Now Moses is becoming nationally known for writing music into computer language. He said he buys sheet music, codes it into BASIC language, and programs it into the Bally computer. He's programmed everything from Bach to the MSU Fight Song. He also programmed a tape of 27 Christmas carols which he marketed for $9.50 apiece. He sold 200 copies.

"It's just like a juke box—you buy the machine and then you buy records," Moses said. "It's not real lucrative, but it's paid for my computer—just from selling music tapes."
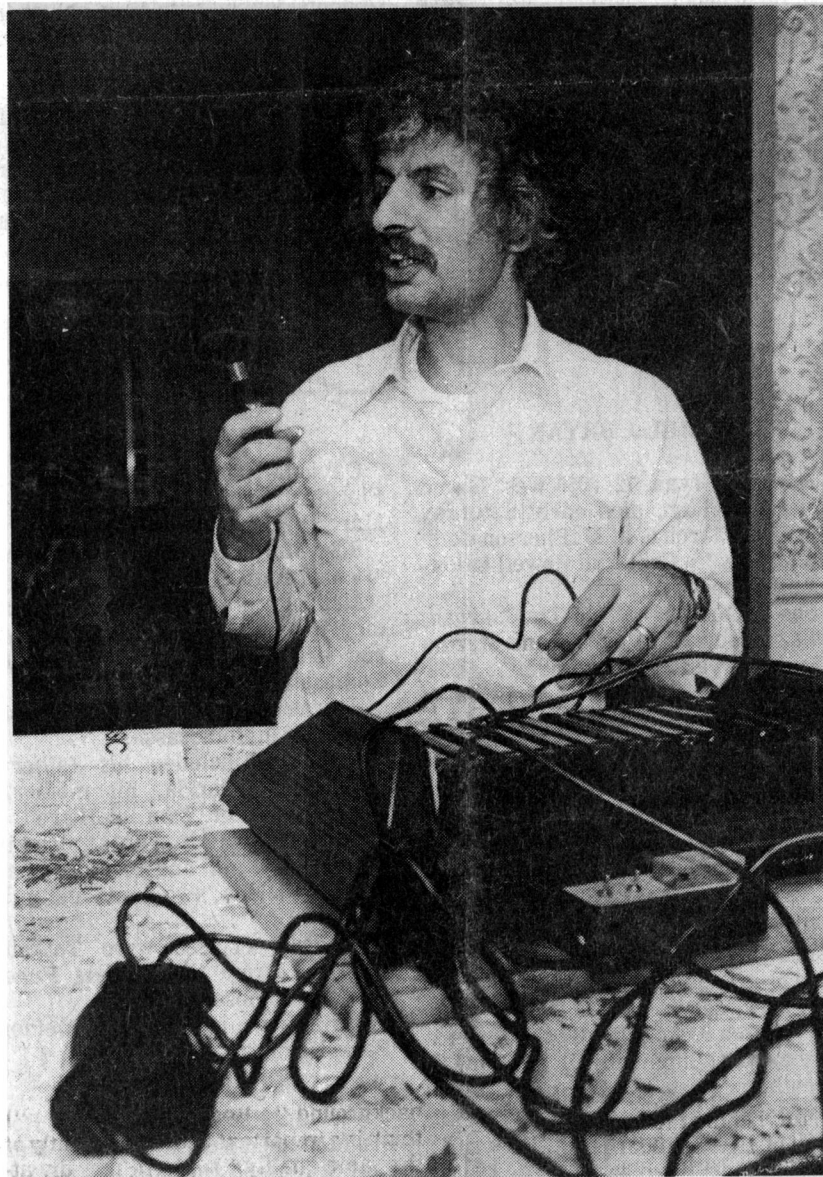
Moses said he loves writing computer music and finds it very relaxing. Has he considered a job in the computer field?

"I don't want to work in it because I like to have fun with it as a hobby," Moses said.

People buy computers for many reasons: to play games, to "crunch numbers," and to keep records. George Moses makes music.

Graphics signal game's end

Argus photo by JOHN GALLOWAY
George Moses has become a viceroy of video