

(Androman)

Hi Rick,

Yup, I was involved in at least one incarnation and was at the big meeting as Atari HQ where we demoed the product to them.

As far as I know there was a contract to develop the hardware and six game titles awarded to Western Technologies circa 1982. If I'm not mistaken it was a \$3 million contract of which I think 1 or 2 million was paid. Nolan Bushnell as Androbot, Inc was the contractor and he was assuming he'd be able to sell the finish project to Atari.

There were four programmers. I think only 3 games were finished before the contract was canceled. I finished one of the games, a computer version of the board game 'Clue' and was about one month into a second game (I don't recall the second game name or names of the others).

I also developed the VCS<>robot communications code that was used in all the games.

The hardware was developed by a Western Technology office in Florida, I believe, and me and the other game programmers were in Los Angeles office. The drive gear in the prototype that we used to develop the games was cannibalized from a 'Big Wheel' toy truck. The robot didn't have much on board smarts, just a small embedded microprocessor. He had a 360 degree IR tx/rx unit on his head and there was a matching unit that plugged into one joystick port on the Atari 2600. He also had a photosensitive unit on his base (basically a bar code reader) so he could read bar codes on the play mat as he moved over them.

My involvement in the project was about 6 months long and terminated with the meeting at Atari where they declined to do anything with it. The word was it was not a good year for introducing any expensive new toys (putting the robot into mass production was ex\$pen\$ive)

To the best of my knowledge I turned in the playmat and all the hardware, including the rom carts, at the end of the project. Same with docs. Even if I did keep some of it I'm sure it didn't survive the several garage cleanouts that have occurred as my house in the past 15 years.

I am a senior programmer with Dell Computer now. Dimension product line, and have been here for about 5 years. I still dabble in game programming on the side and have a successful multiplayer internet gaming site called Igames at <http://www.igames.com>

I'm still in touch with one of the other programmers, Mike Case, who is now president of Digital Dialect (a pc game design house) at <http://www.digitald.com>

The only other name I recall (other than Smith brothers who owned Western Technologies) is Joel Hassel (sp? Hassle) who was the software project manager. Joel is an ivy league grad who was a few years younger than Mike & I which would put him at maybe 38 yrs. Old today. Mike and I were just over 40.

Best regards,  
David Springer

