

with fellow employees on her free time.

Puckett said she has only been able to score 700 points on Defender (a relatively low score), but it takes time to master a game.

"You have to be willing to spend three or four dollars. I think it's fun



... it's you against the machine," Puckett said.

Bryan-College Station has other older, more established game parlors, such as Games People Play, next to Ardan's; and Funway Freeway, at Manor East Mall.

Bruce Hall, manager of Funway Freeway, said because his establishment is at the mall, it sometimes operates as a babysitting service.

"During the summer it was mostly school kids," Hall said. "Now the kids come in after school."

Here, too, the favorite game is Defender. Hall said one of the regular players scored 1,400,000 points in one and one-half hours on Defender, with one quarter.

Such skilled players may be glad that the machines can be speeded up, although novice players may flinch.

Ross Todaro, owner of Todaro Amusement and Vending Service, said the company speeds up some games (like Defender) to make them harder, by flipping a switch inside the game.

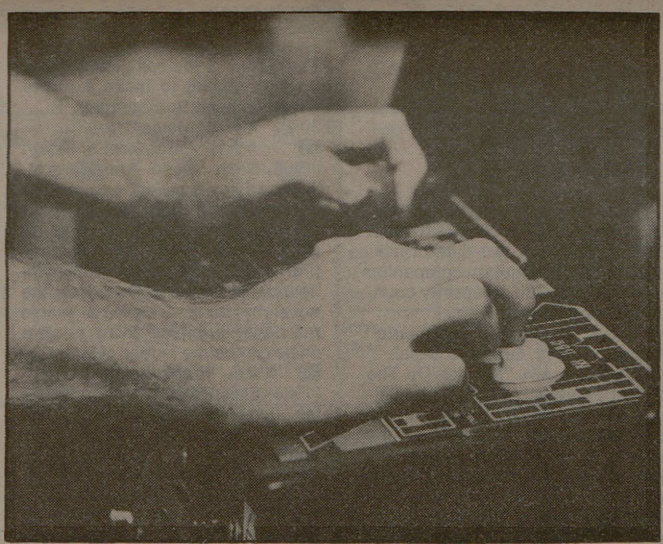
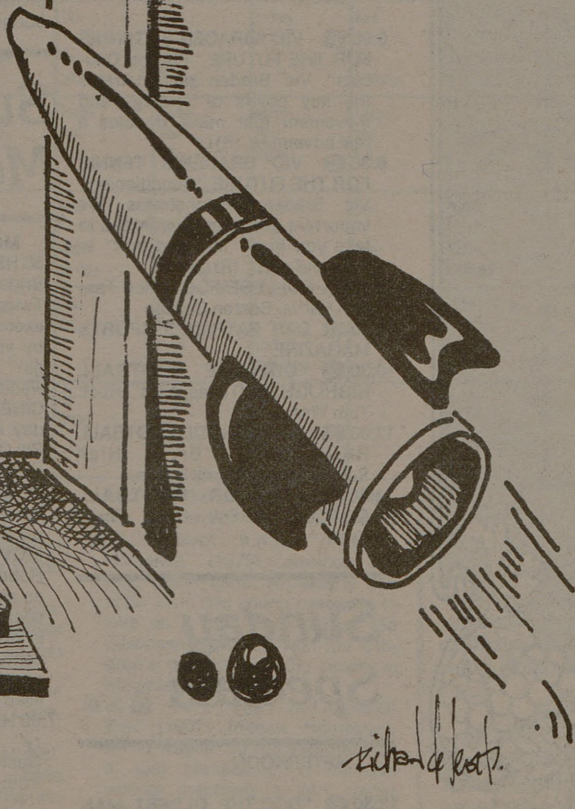
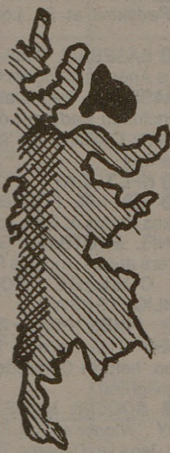
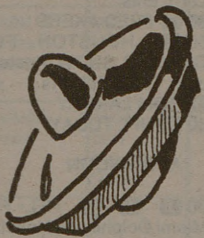
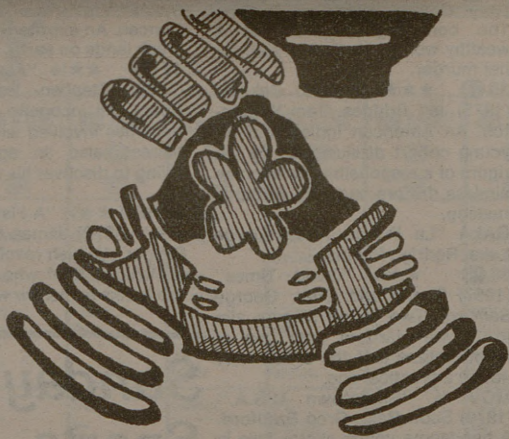
Todaro's company owns about 800 games, which it supplies to many area counties. He said each game costs about \$3,000, and repairs are costly and difficult because parts are hard to find.

Todaro would not comment on what percentage of the profits his company gets from the games.

F&F Vending Service, the other local supplier of video games, splits profits 50/50 with each establishment, said employee Florence Wilder.

Wilder agreed repairs on the games are "extremely expensive."

She added, "Right now, the trouble is getting enough games to our customers."



## Game addiction strikes at random

By Debbie Nelson  
Battalion Staff

America has a new set of addicts to rehabilitate — the video game fiends.

These buddy-can-you-spare-a-quarter hobos chuck silver into Defenders and Pac-Man and Phoenix till their thumb and forefinger show slight impressions of Thomas Jefferson and the American eagle.

They're in gaming parlors and student centers and bars as soon as the front door is unlocked in the morning, ready to slice down the machines' highest scores and leave their own top score and initials emblazoned across the screen for video novices to wonder at.

The addict is easy to spot: bloodshot eyes and frown lines on his forehead from squinting at a video screen for hours, an empty wallet from changing all dollars into quarters, and fingers frozen into claws from the thrills-and-spills tension of video mania.

It all starts with one quarter, the player lured in by the blinking colored lights and futuristic beeping.

And the addiction grows until nothing else matters but defeating that slime who dared get a higher score on the machine.

Sometimes the addicts stumble up to bank cashier windows and say in hushed, robot-like voices, "Two rolls of quarters, please."

Oh, the addicts will claim they need the silver for making frequent long-distance calls from telephone booths. Or for supporting a junk-food habit from vending machines.

But watch them as they leave the bank, wrapped rolls of silver weighing down their pockets.

Suddenly they hear ringing bells and their dreams of the previous night come back to them — spaceships and squiggly monsters with bullets and lasers and big chomping mouths chase them through maze-like corridors and across barren planets, whispering, "More quarters ... more quarters."

And the addict's radar seeks out the nearest game and starts

getting rid of that awful heavy weight of quarters in his pocket.

Consider the mounds of dirty laundry piled in the addict's abode because quarters can't be squandered at the laundramat. Washing machines offer a limited number of buttons to push, generally have no blinking lights or bleeping tones and don't rack up a higher score for choosing the correct temperature for colors and whites.

(But because of slacking business, most laundramats now have Asteroids and Space Invaders side by side with Maytags and Speed Queens.)

The video addiction spreads daily.

Business men in three-piece suits mingle with little children who can barely reach the game controls. (That's why the slot for the quarter is placed so low on the machine. Get the little devils hooked early and they'll be blasting spacemen for life.)

How to reform them? Well, the choice must be their own. Maybe they decipher the firing pattern and get bored with being smarter than the machine. Maybe they advance so in skill that they punch away for days on one quarter.

Maybe they're knocked to their senses when they start spending money from the envelope marked "Groceries" to feed the gobbling mouth of the Pac Man.

Maybe they just can't stand the never-ending tension of not knowing when the next spaceship will swoop down on their Defenders.

Who can say what finally makes the video addict snap and say, "No more!"

But, like an alcoholic, the video addict must constantly remember that "just one little game" leads to a nightmare of waking up in the gutter outside the local video gaming parlor, nursing the first quarter of the day.

Search a reformed video addict's room and you'll most likely find a roll or two of quarters stashed in his Nikes or inside a hollowed-out textbook, "just in case."