Jordan Mechner

The Making of

karateka

Journals 1982-1985

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Introduction

THREE YEARS BEFORE *PRINCE OF PERSIA* was a gleam in my eye, I was a 17-year-old Yale freshman and avid gamer, trying to balance a college courseload with my aspiration to become a real, published game author… and maybe, someday, a screenwriter.

This is my journal from that time — excerpted so as not to strain the reader's patience, but otherwise unimproved and untouched by 20/20 hindsight.

Part 1: Deathbounce

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History at 9:30, Psych at 1:30. In between I went into town and bought the *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* soundtrack to send to the Lillies, and this notebook. Discussed the nature of the universe with Ben and Rich until dinner.

About this journal: My basic intention is to write down, at the end of each day, what happened — what I did, thought, felt, and so forth — so I can read it, years from now, and remember what it was like.

I think it's best if I don't concern myself overly with style. I'll only get frustrated and quit. The second pitfall to avoid is using this journal as a kind of valve to let off steam — for example, writing 20 pages one night about how depressed I am. I've kept that kind of journal before. Rereading it, I invariably get disgusted and throw the notebook away. If I'm depressed, I'll just say so and leave it at that. Basically, I want to write what I'll want to read later. I'll

probably get better at that with practice.

In short, I'm not very concerned with quantity or quality; I just want a reasonable entry for every day of my life, starting now.

Qix is a great game. I want to program it for the Apple.

There was an article in *Creative Computing* about generating pseudo-random numbers — just what I need for *Deathbounce*!

Scott Barnes from Hayden called. Will they *ever* publish *Asteroids*? It's been over a year — fifteen months — since I submitted it and they accepted it.

(Sigh.)

If they only sell 1,000 copies, I'll make $4,500 — if they sell 5,000, I'll make $22,500 — ridiculously high sums of money. Right now I only have $500, counting *everything*. So why am I not on the phone with them every morning, pushing, pushing?

Oh well. When I finish *Deathbounce* and sell it, I'll be rich and then I can stop worrying about money for the next few years.

Bought a record for the first time in a long time. Vivaldi's *Seasons*.

There's a Deutsche Gramophon and Philips sale on at Cutler's. I should buy a few more before the sale ends.

I missed all my classes today. Music, Philos, Philos discussion group, Sociology. Shit! What's the matter with me?

Exchanged Mozart's piano concertos (warped) for Mozart's *Requiem*, Colin Davis conducting. It's the best performance I've heard.

This morning I bought the DOS 3.3 upgrade ($60) and upgraded my system. It is now a 3.3 system. In ten minutes I made the Hayden change (changing the ship from a triangle to a V), missing Sociology (sigh), then worked on *Deathbounce*.

Also, I started a new program — a hi-res, machine language *Blockade* (I'd done it in lo-res, integer BASIC, a long time ago). I'm considering adding ALF music. (Bolero? Carmina Burana? Marche Slav?)

If you took all the hours I've spent on coursework outside of classes in the first 7 weeks of this term, it wouldn't make 8 hours total. That's, like, one hour per week. And I've missed at least half the lectures. It's ridiculous. I might as well not be taking any courses. What a waste.

I decided to add a shield to *Deathbounce*. You have a certain amount

of energy (replenished at the beginning of each new screen as well as with each new ship) which normally recharges slowly; thrusting, firing, and shield all use up energy. It should be fun. It's at least original.

Did my laundry. There's nothing quite like a basketful of hot crackling clean clothes, carrying it back through the cool winter air.

MARCH 3, 1982

[NY] Last night, walking to Grand Central, I passed a grizzled old salt — not a drunk, just an old, shabby sailor type with a duffel bag. He said "Hey, spare some change for a poor ol' guy?" in a tone of good-natured humor at his own predicament. I said sorry, and he said "Shucks. OK."

We were walking side by side. He said: "Y'know, I wish I were your age," then, like he'd just come to a big decision: "No, hang it all, *I don't*. I been through too much. It ain't easy bein' young, and that's the truth."

It made me kind of curious about what his life had been like.

An artist is concerned with *what*, a scientist with *why*. We read a scientific paper and say "Hey, that makes sense. Wow!" We read a poem and say "That's it exactly. That's just how it is!"

Which will I turn out to be? Education, heredity, everything seems to point toward science. I've never really seriously considered the

other option. And yet… Being a movie director. Writing novels. Screenplays. That sounds so appealing.

[Chappaqua] Spent most of the day playing D&D with David. Worked a little (very little) on *Deathbounce*.

Today I worked out a couple of principles that make arcade games fun.

First, you have to feel in control of your ship/car/man/whatever. So that when you get hit, you say "Oh, shit! I should have thrusted!" (*Asteroids*) instead of "Oh well, another ship gone. I wonder what hit me?" (*Star Castle*).

Second, you should be able to control the *form* of your attacks — in short, have a strategy: *Qix*, *Space Invaders*, *Asteroids*, *Pac-Man*. Counter-examples: *Space Firebirds*, *Scramble*, *Sneakers*.

Third, there should be two goals; the primary goal (getting points) should not overlap 100% with the secondary goal (clearing screens). In *Pac-Man*, for example, you can go for the monsters (points) or the dots (screen); in *Asteroids*, the saucers or the rocks; in *Invaders*, the creatures or the mystery ship. Whereas in *Star Castle*, you just go for the cannon; in *Galaxian*, the aliens; in *Qix*, area.

Interestingly, the only games with *all* these features are *Pac-Man*, *Space Invaders*, and *Asteroids* — the three #1 games.

Anyway, I'm hot to write new games.

Tomorrow: First, send *Star Blaster* (fka *Space Rocks* fka *Asteroid Blaster* fka *Asteroid Belt*) to Hayden; second, work on *'Bounce!* I've got a good thing going here. The Apple is still the #1 computer, arcade games are the #1 sellers, and I'm writing Apple II arcade games; so I should churn 'em out and make pots of money while I can. This summer I'll write three or four. I should establish a working relationship with some other publisher (*not* Hayden): Sirius? Broderbund?

March 13, 1982

Papi's 85th birthday at the Coopers. One day I'll be as old as Dad and have a teenage son; then as old as Papi and have a 50-year-old son; then I'll be dead.

Went to Adrian's, got a whole bunch of new games, printed out *Bounce* on his MX-80.

March 13, 1982

Feeling a little better, fever is down. Working on *Bounce*.

Right now I'm making the big conversion from single to dual-page animation. God, what a mess. It was a really bad idea to write it in single and convert at the end. I need a new printout, to go over the code step by step.

March 14, 1982

Played the new games I copied from Adrian: *Space Eggs, Falcons,*

Ring Raiders, Space Warrior, Orbitron, Gobbler, Pulsar II, and especially *Sabotage*. That's such a great game — it's original, fun, and a super programming job. The graphics are clean and colorful and pretty. The explosions are elegant. It's written by a guy named Mark Allen.

Worked a little on *Bounce*. I want to:
  1) Make it so you can destroy the spike — like the saucers in *Asteroids*
  2) Change spheres and spike to more interesting things
  3) Put in good, colorful explosions and sound, like *Sabotage*. Fuel gauge could be prettier.

Went to Greeley and copied more programs from Mrs. Lee, including *Prisoner* and *Reversal*. *Prisoner* is an adventure based on the TV series, which I'd been looking forward to seeing for quite some time. It has some neat touches, but on the whole, I'm disappointed. Also, it won't run properly on my computer (it needs Applesoft in ROM).

Reversal is an incredibly strong *Othello* program; it can cream Ben and me without even taking any time to think. It's by the Spracklens (*Sargon*).

Last night went to Adrian's, gave him some games, got one in return (*Gran Prix*) and a new printout of *Bounce*. SHIT! It's been two weeks since I finished *Asteroids* — it's in the envelope, ready to send — I'll mail it tomorrow.

Dinner at the Green Tree with Dad and Joe Sucher. Ben was impressed that my dad knew Bobby Fischer and that he and Stuart Margulies had written *Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess*, which Ben had read. Then we went to see *Quest for Fire*.

[New Haven] I'm back. Classes restart tomorrow.

I got a ton of mail. All four magazines (*HiFi, Chess Life, Creative Computing*, and *Softalk*), both bills (Bursar and Co-Op), assorted junk mail… and a letter from Doug Carlston at Broderbund re: software submission. I like Broderbund. I'll send them a letter describing *Bounce*.

Doug's letter mentioned that they might even pay airfare for programmers to come work with them. WOW!! Out in sunny California… Oh man, I want to so bad… But first, *Bounce*. Yes, *Deathbounce* is a great title. I'll keep it. *Deathbounce*.

Ohh, reading *Softalk*'s got me so psyched up! I'll finish *Deathbounce*, Broderbund will publish it (I know, I'm counting chickens, but realistically, nobody would reject a hi-res, machine-language, fast-action videogame), then this summer I'll write one or two or three more. *(Revenge? Plague? Destroy Planet Earth?)* And next summer… maybe… go to CA and work for them? Dreams, dreams… Oh, I want it so bad!

Sent off the letter to Doug Carlston at Broderbund this afternoon; worked on *Deathbounce*. It's coming along. Since I don't have *too* much coursework this week, I should have dual-page working fine by Sunday.

By the way, I missed both History and Psych today. Not good.

Next: Ball and missile explosions; ship explosions; fix up scoring, extra ships, graduated difficulty, etc. Then… TEST, TEST, TEST. And the game will be finished. (Well, maybe one or two more small details: display high score in upper right; sound effects; etc.) Ohh… I can't wait! (What a silly expression! I don't have to *wait*, I just have to do it.)

Started programming a new game tonight (an easy one): the number-matching game from that guy's wristwatch at Papi's birthday party at the Coopers'. It's so irritating: I can't get it to work right, it's so simple, I've been over it a hundred times and all the parts work, but the whole doesn't.

Also, last night falling asleep I thought of a really new game idea: The Ten Plagues. Locusts, boils, frogs, hail. You're Pharaoh, trying to hold them off. In the end, of course, there's no way to win, as in any *Galaxian*-type game.

Considering using the ALF for a soundtrack. The music? Handel's *Plagues*, of course! ("He spake the word…") It'd be quite an ambitious project, even more so than *Revenge*.

Dual-page is almost working fine: Spike, balls and ship are all okay. Missiles, however, do not exist; neither do collisions. I should be done by Sunday, and send it off by the 4th.

I think I'll do *Star Fortress* (fka *Star Sentries*) next. I'm bursting with neat ideas for it. Also considering a *Qix*-like game; but originality is better.

Slept till noon again and missed all my classes (Music, Philos, Soc). This is getting ridiculous.

Today felt like spring -- sun shining, blue sky, people out in the quad sunbathing and playing Frisbee and football; Beethoven's Ninth blaring out a window above the post office. It's still cold, but that spring smell is in the air.

Missiles and collisions now OK. Still remaining: Score, extra ships, screen number. Right on schedule. I'll do those tomorrow.

Saw *The Lady Vanishes* (I'd seen it once before, about five years ago); very neat, tongue-in-cheek Hitchcock.

Work is proceeding apace. This evening I added "*bounce*" — balls and spike now *bounce* off your shield. It was quite difficult. Had to take into account angle and conservation of momentum. But I did it, with some good ideas from Ben. The game looks *so* good

now — animation so smooth, balls zinging around going boing boing boing — I really am proud. If I can keep up the standard of quality, this will be technically one of the best Apple games of this type ever. Yup, I'm proud of myself. It looks like it might even be done this weekend.

Went to Sociology today, but not Music and Philosophy. Finished reading *The Nazi Seizure of Power*.

Another beautiful spring day.

Oh: Scott Barnes from Hayden called with some outlandish suggestions for changes. Like: no firing; you just dodge the *asteroids*. I drew the line. I'm afraid I was rather hostile. Katie was very proud of me.

Anyway, he'll talk to their General Manager and get back to me. I offered to change the *asteroids* to soap bubbles, but nothing more. I'm fed up.

March 26, 1982

Just woke up from a nap, a truly incredible sleep: I was asleep, but I *knew* I was asleep and dreaming. I tried all sorts of things to test out my senses: I hurled myself on the gravel, scrambling, felt the little sharp stones digging into my knees with incredible clarity. I smelled the dust, even tried licking the ground with my tongue. I was in a dream, yet fully conscious and in control of my actions. God, it was great. Sleep should always be like that.

It SNOWED today! It was an awesome blizzard! The air was just FILLED with whirling clouds of black flakes against a white sky — you couldn't see three feet in front of you — snow WHIPPING across the Old Campus, more horizontally than vertically — Blinding torrents of SNOW!

They closed the university. No classes, no library, nothing. Naturally, I did no further research on the Soc paper. I worked a bit on '*Bounce*.

Well, it's Monday, and my Psych paper is NOT all typed up and ready to be handed in. Maybe it has something to do with the fact that I haven't started it yet.

The day wasn't a total waste, though. I did some work on *Bounce* (got the top ten scores loading and saving to and from disk) and even started a new project: *Space War*.

I wrote to Broderbund on the 22nd. Allowing 5 days for my letter to get to them, they've had it for 12 days. Should I write again? Maybe I typed the address wrong on the envelope? Maybe it's Easter vacation for them? Maybe I offended them somehow? Should I have enclosed a SASE? (Don't be silly.)

If Broderbund doesn't respond, I'll try Sirius or On-Line. But I can't think *why* they wouldn't. They should have jumped at the description in the letter: "Hi-res, machine language, shoot-em-up video game!"

There's a minor Happening going on here in the suite: Kevin owes $88 for his phone bill and he hasn't paid. Our service is due to be cut off tomorrow. Also, the walls are sprayed with shaving cream and fire-extinguisher foam from Mike, Rich, and Chris's battle.

At dinner Ben, Katie and I were talking about life goals and majors. Then, about an hour ago, up in Ben's room, the idea hit me: What about being a writer?

Instant reaction: You could never pull it off.

Memory of Dad saying: "Writing's very useful; it can help you in whatever you do."

The problem: Almost everybody fails.

Can I write? Am I any good? Could I succeed?

I could always do it on the side, say, while writing computer programs.

Jeez, it'd be fun to write a short story. Just to try it. See how it works out.

Deer Hunter at 7, pizza at Sally's, then *Fame* at midnight. All three were superb.

Deer Hunter is a truly great movie. It was three hours long, but I wasn't bored at all. It was like a Beethoven symphony; I had the sense that there were relationships between different parts of the movie, and symbolism, and the same things recurring on different levels, that there was a master plan.

Fame was good too — lots of fun, full of flesh — but I'll remember *Deer Hunter* longest.

Bounce is virtually finished. But what's the rush, since I haven't heard from Broderbund?

I started it — when? Thanksgiving? Christmas? So, 4 or 5 months ago. Not that I've been working steadily. I bet I could have done it in a month, if this were summer vacation. It certainly went faster than *Asteroids*.

I still need to see it on a color TV. It might be worth waiting another week so I can see it at home, get a printout at Adrian's, before I send it in.

I should hear from Broderbund by the end of reading period, for sure.

I still need to:
 1) Finish GAME module; clean up code.
 2) Test, test, test, on typical college students. Hone gameplay.
 3) Finish up TOP; add cursor control when entering initials, etc.
 4) Combine into a single BRUNnable file, residing in memory from 5FFD to approx. 7E00 — about 30 sectors or so.

Then put on a disk and send to Broderbund. Assuming they ever get around to asking for it.

I hereby vow NO MORE WORK on this project until Friday. Until Psych paper, History paper, Psych test, Philosophy paper, Music are out of the way. Then finish the game during reading period. Then a week of exams, and — whoops! Freshman year will be over and I'll have to pack my stuff and go home!

I'm fucked. I just spent half an hour trying to study Psych. The Bartlett Effect — what the fuck is that? My only hope is to ignore everything in the book and the memos and just rely on Common Sense and bullshit my way through the test — *Fuck!* It counts 40% of the term grade and I haven't done a jot of reading — haven't been to a single session of class — since spring break, except for today — and I expect to somehow do OK?

Doug Carlston called this evening. He didn't get the first letter, but he got the second, and he definitely wants to see it. So I'm a happy guy. So why do I care about getting a meaningless little grade which, by all rights, should be an F?

I really have fucked this year up royally, in terms of taking the wrong courses and then not doing any work in them.

But I've learned so much about life. What college is like, what people are like, what *I'm* like. I got my act together, socially, personality-wise, and what-not. So what if I failed to read books and collect facts? I can do that any time.

So I might as well go to sleep. I'll bomb in the Psych test tomorrow and I'll still be okay. *Deathbounce* and Broderbund are more important.

Saw Bresson's *Pickpocket*. Really good movie.

APRIL 21, 1982

Took the Psych test. Did laughably. "What are the four postulates of Brynner's attitude-gradient theory?" I've never heard of Brynner or his theory. I wonder what grade I'll get.

Worked a wee bit on *Bounce*. I just realized, even if I finish it by Monday, I'll have to find a color TV to view it on… Oh! The computer store! Great idea, J.!

APRIL 27, 1982

Bounce is nearly finished. If I can stay awake for another hour, it'll be *really* finished — one 8K BRUNnable file.

There seems to be a distinct possibility that I will fail History.

I can't let that happen. I'll study for two days solid if need be. Learn German history backwards and forwards. Ace the final. Pass the course. I have to.

[4:45 am] Boy, it got late. Still not finished. Some dumb bug somewhere. I'll finish it in the morning.

I know what question is in your mind.

Is it finished?

The answer (drumroll) is a resounding…

YES.

Deathbounce is viable.

One BRUNnable file, 30 sectors (and the TOPTEN file, 2 sectors).

Wa-Hoo!

I took it down to the computer store on Temple Street to see it in color. It was so beautiful, words cannot describe… To see *my Deathbounce*, fruit of my labor, on a stranger's Apple, an Apple II Plus with a fan and two monitors, one B&W and one color — oh, such beautiful monitors — to see *my name* in color in a computer store… What a great feeling. And yes, the colors worked fine.

The people in the store were very enthusiastic. I was happy.

I've written a covering letter and I'll send it off certified mail tomorrow. Oh Broderbund, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

I've been getting advice and warnings from all sides about copyrighting and so on. I put COPYRIGHT 1982 JORDAN MECHNER

on the title screen, the HELLO program and the disk label. I think that'll be enough. My instinct is to trust Broderbund.

Everyone's been playing the game. Rich, Ben, Eduardo. It's addictive, I'm glad to report. Rich says it's as good as *Asteroids*; praise which would be more pride-inducing if the two games weren't so similar. (To write a *completely original* game as good as *Asteroids*; now, *that* would be an accomplishment.)

Anyway, it's great! and I'm very, very happy with the program and how it turned out, and the little good details keep sending thrills up my spine. It's clean. Smooth. Fast. Neat. I'm proud. I did a good job. I like it.

Meanwhile, I'm working on *Space War* and the number game (What should I call it? Something abstract, like *Sargon* or *Akalabeth*?) and maybe even *Star Sentries* (*Star Fortress*?)

I'll go to Applefest. Adrian, Adam, Ken might want to go too. Buy an Epson MX-80, if I have the money. I can buy more stuff when I get the first advance from Broderbund.

By summer's end (come September) I should have at least three or four more programs done and contracts signed with Broderbund. Then pack up and come back for CLASSES and SOCIAL LIFE and NO MORE APPLE.

This is, of course, pure fantasy. I've no idea what will actually happen.

Deathbounce is in the mail.

Studied History pretty much all day. I'm really getting into it. Damn — I wish I could do it over again; go to all the classes, do the readings as we go, take notes, feel like *part* of it, get some benefit! What I'm doing now – just reading books — I could have done anywhere; it's the lectures and discussion groups that I'm "paying for." Oh well.

Got my May *Softalk* today. I note that Sirius has come out with a slew of new games in recent months; both Sirius and On-Line had big, color, multi-page ads in this issue, while Broderbund (this time) has only "Software Authors Wanted." I hope this isn't an ominous sign. I hope I made a good choice.

It would be kinda neat if *Deathbounce* became Broderbund's top game in the top 30… Full-page ads…

Dream on, kid. Dream on.

Doug Carlston called. He said he likes *Deathbounce*, but feels it needs more complexity, in the way of colorful cartoon animation and detail. At first I was surprised (and a little hurt) -- I'd deliberately created a stark, clean look, and tried to keep it as simple as possible – but he won me over.

A prospective buyer who just glances at it in a computer store would

say "Oh, a colorful *Asteroids*" (as someone passing through Doug's office did in fact remark). According to Doug, that's not enough. It needs something to distinguish it from everything else.

At first I resisted (thinking of *Sneakers* and *Threshold* with their maddening mother ships), but now I agree. My mind's working to think of replacements for the balls and Rover. (Chattering teeth? Rover a heat-seeking snake? Eyeballs? An eyeball with a tail?) Doug said there should be more of a scenario, a story line, not just abstract round things. I guess I can see where he's coming from.

By the way, he says programs like this usually make $20-50,000.

I'm hooked. A letter, he says, is on the way. This could be the beginning of a good relationship.

Before dinner I stopped off at the computer store to say hi. I saw *Twerps* and *Lemmings*, two very complexly animated games. I see what Doug meant. (This first-name basis feels strange. "Carlston"? "Mr. Carlston"? "Comrade Carlston"?)

May 12, 1982
[Chappaqua] Looks like I'm not going to get to Applefest this weekend.

Adam dropped by; I got a copy of *Twerps* (not so great, really); he got S-C Assembler and the Zaks 6502 book.

I did some thinking (and playing) and I've decided that, as a game, *Bounce* is OK as it is. I'll change the graphics somewhat – Rover be-

comes an arrow or dart or heat-seeking missile, balls grow instead of appearing (a la *Space Eggs*, *Falcons*), classier explosions, more sound effects – but that's it. No "super roto-balls." *Maybe* shrinking balls. Maybe an enemy gauge. But the game will stay the same.

If Broderbund doesn't like it, I'll go to On-Line. They published *Sabotage*, after all, which I admire greatly.

Went to karate class. It was fun.

Broderbund Secretary called, got my new address, will remail letter.

MAY 17, 1982

Ordered an Epson MX-80 printer from Orange Micro. They say seven to ten days.

It's been eleven days since Broderbund's first letter was allegedly mailed, four days since letter number two. What's up?

For the last couple of hours I've been re-allocating my disk space, cramming as many games as possible onto each floppy disk and re-initializing others. It's hot, messy, tedious work, even with FID. I wish I had two drives.

Now I've got a lot of blank disks — but some may be years old, and I'm not so sure about their reliability. I wish all my disks were brand-new, clean, never-been-used (Dyson or Verbatim or Scotch – not *Maxell*). Neatly labeled, with no half-removed stickiness of previous labels underneath. My crazy perfectionistic mindset.

I'm mulling over a new game idea: *REFUGEE*. Open and close bridges to allow refugees to get from left to right side of screen (where they'll hop a fence), while making the cars that are chasing them fall into the water.

And then there's *Star Guards*, and *Revenge*. Those other clown games, and grid games, and *Plague*, don't feel too promising right now.

MAY 18, 1982

D'you know, I spend well-nigh all my time playing *Sabotage*, watching TV, snacking, and reading. As Dad said on the phone this afternoon, "it would be a shame to let the whole summer slip by that way."

True. Tomorrow I will PROGRAM!

MAY 25, 1982

Got the letter from Broderbund. All's well.

My printer came. It's all hooked up and working now. (First try, I put the IC's in upside-down.)

MAY 28, 1982

Saw *The Secret Policeman's Other Ball* with Adam, Mo, Dennis, and Andrea. A couple of the sketches cracked me up so bad I couldn't breathe and my eyes filled with tears and I thought I was going to puke.

Hooray! I'm working again!

Yup, started in this afternoon on *Deathbounce*. There is now an Energy Gauge and (I hope) the balls change color when you shoot them: Green -> Blue -> Violet -> Red -> Boom!

Ahh, *Deathbounce*, how long it took for us to be reunited! I've let three weeks slip by since I got back. Three unglorious weeks of rest and luxurious wastage of time. It feels so good, so good to be working again.

Ideas, ideas, rattling around in my head…

Papi came by yesterday. I've been reading his autobiography. Makes me feel like a descendant of ancestors.

Been working on *Bounce* all day. It's going GREAT! I just put in the new, wedge-shaped Rover. This game is getting more and more like *Asteroids Deluxe*. I didn't plan it that way, the wedge just seemed like the best shape. Great minds. Anyway: shield gauge, color-changing, new border, new Rover are all in and working. Hooray!

The program is assembling now. Should be finished by the weekend. I'll send it to Doug. If he still doesn't like it, I'll try On-Line.

Karate class today.

Bounce is virtually finished. Tomorrow morning I'll finish it up; then before I send it off, I'll test it out on people.

I'm so proud of it. It's such a good program! It turned out so well! Technically, it's *Ausgezeichnet!* Graphics so clean, so smooth – so many difficult routines, concisely executed with precision and elegance. Ahhhh.

I've decided on my next project: *Midas*. An original, innovative, elegant game idea. (I know, I've changed my mind about ten times already; but this time it's for real – although I may work on *Zap* and *Spacewar* concurrently.)

I'm happy.

June 4, 1982

Adrian came by, we went to the Knoxes and Tom evaluated *Bounce*. The problem, we agreed, is that the game is emotionally neutral. It's just an exercise in Newtonian mechanics: technically impeccable but without spirit.

But it's fun, and it's got a lot of neat features, so I'm leaving it as is. Save the cute creatures for the next game: *Midas*.

Rick's computer went dead about two hours ago. We couldn't fix it. Poor Tom; he's bearing the burden.

I told them it was my 18th birthday. Tom broke out the Michelob.

Watched *Midnight* (Billy Wilder) on TV. I laughed harder than I've done since *The Secret Policeman's Other Ball*.

I really would like to do some writing. Short stories, like Maugham, Munro, Maupassant (Hey! All M's!) Updated, of course. I don't think I have the qualifications to write stories set in Edwardian England.

June 15, 1982

Good news! Talked to Carlston on the phone; he liked '*Bounce* ('Ray!) and wants me to consider doing another game for them. He's sending me a joystick so I can put in a joystick option. Yippy dippy day!

June 25, 1982

Broderbund sent a joystick and a copy of *Choplifter*, their new game. It's extremely well-done – I'd say the best Apple game I've seen. You're in a helicopter. Mission: rescue hostages.

Choplifter inspired me to write a 3D animated adventure; an ambitious undertaking, for sure. It'll be quite a challenge, and a lot of work.

July 7, 1982

Rastafest '82. Adam, Mo, Ayman, Jens, Tim, Kevin, Busty, Caroline, Alan and I camped out on a hilltop near the Mobaraks' house to watch the eclipse. Got home around 4 a.m.

Earth game. I started a couple of days ago. Today I didn't do anything on it because my mind was occupied with…

Karate game! I worked out (with David's advice) an awesome system, using one joystick and the keyboard, to control a *karateka* -- and an elaborate combat system to determine what effect your blows have on your opponent, and vice versa. But — I must finish *Earth* first. It being summer, I could be done by the end of July.

I talked to Doug Carlston on the phone yesterday. He said *Choplifter* is selling 5,000 copies a month.

Holy Shit.