



John Blouin

Steve....you sounded great when I called you the day after your great milestone 100th birthday congratulations againit seems not that long ago that I first met you and your dear friend and team mate Norm Clark at WMS however can you believe it was 1972 so FORTY years ago Steve....I transferred with GE from Milwaukee for my dream position of being a lighting sales representative calling on WMS,Bally,Gottlieb and Chicago Dynamics selling you guys all those 44's/47's and of course those 455 flashers the low wattage lamps for your pinball's....I know you remember that in those days WMS was building 300 pins plus a day so every few weeks I would get a new orders from a few million more lamps from Bill Spencer because at over 130 lamps per game we always struggled to keep up with you! ...I had to do a little research but I do remember one of your mechanical games that you released in 1972 was Jubilee and you had a great run of nearly 7000 oh what fun those times were Steve....I can still picture you and Norm with your pressed white shirt colorful tie and in 72 Sam Stern was President of WMS and not long after that your friend Norm left for Bally and I know that Sam was so concerned that you might also leave that he made you an offer to stay that you couldn't refuse....what we all know is that you Steve would have never left WMS because of your love for the company and your team of very talented designers that you mentored.....for all these 40 years Steve I am honored to know you as a dear friend you were always accessible to me early and through out my career you are a man of great integrity and honor and you always demonstrated your strong faith in our Supreme Creator by the way you lived and continue to live your life...what a fulfilled life of touching so many lives in a really positive way Steve and you continue to have the greatest passion for life, your family, your faith and always always for that great game and those great PINBALL GAMES that you designed and even for the ones that you didn't designI know that I'm joined by all of your friends in toasting to you Steve and your life long personal and business success and for your friendship...you always were and will be Steve my greatest mentor and our memories together have a very special place in my heart.....Love You Steve and Happy 100 my dear friend....ATB John Blouin



Henk de Jager:

Birthday congratulations from across the ocean to Steve Kordek. Wish you a very, very nice birthday!!!

Henk de Jager (author Pinball Machine Maintenance)
Almere, Netherlands



Jim Patla

I don't know if I can put Steve's love of the industry into words, his passion, enthusiasm, energy and love had to be experienced. He was always there to help with the new design and couldn't wait till it was ready to play. Always looking for the next great game. Happy 100th Steve.

Barry Oursler

Here is an amusing story that only 3 people were witness to; Steve Kordek, Norm Clark & me.
It took place in the mid-70's, while I was still a technician and before Norm went to Bally.

I was in Steve's office helping him with his latest game. Steve's back was to the door. Norm snuck up behind Steve and told me not to say anything. Norm then snuck up behind Steve and blasted an airhorn. Steve proceeded to fall to his knees, clutching his heart with one hand and grabbing the game with his other.
Norm started to panic, thinking that he just killed his best friend. Steve was finally able to get back on his feet and said that he was alright.
That was the last prank that Norm ever pulled on Steve.
-Barry

Karen Trybula

Steve is the true "Godfather of Pinball". Happy 100th Steve!

Chris (Jediturtle):

A happiest birthday to a true living legend! Thank you for all you have done and continue to do for our crazy hobby. Here's to many more, great health, and much happiness! :)

Chris



Eugene Jarvis

Bing Bang Boom! Talk about running up the score...its time for a add-a-ball!

I got to Williams in the winter of '79, and I was in complete shock after leaving sunny green California for the sludge of Chicago March. I was hired by Stroll to be the latest Steve Ritchie programmer, after the last few quit. (like they always do!). Randy Pfeiffer, the last Ritchie sub-coder showed me the ropes as he literally packed up his bags - his advice was never deliver the final program disk until you had the check in hand! I was learning the Chicago rules. Steve R. showed me around Williams engineering - it was about four guys at that time. I was eager to meet Kordek, the Space Mission legend, so we dropped by Mr. K's office. As we walked back down the hallway, Steve R. related how Design Manager Kordek, being almost 70, was near retirement and Steve R would be taking over very soon. Fast forward 20 years and Steve K still looked almost 70, still was the design honcho- and Steve R had quit 3 or 4 times in the interim. I think they finally threw Kordek's desk in the river to get him out of there.

- Eugene J

Kathy Schmidt

I'm still in CA, so won't be in town for that party. I'll attend next year's! Happy Birthday Steve!



Rick Swanson

At a Pinball Expo a few years back, Steve told us what he did during the War Years of WWII. My recollection is that he told us that the Marine Corp was having reliability problems with its hand held "walkie-talkie" radios. They just were not "shock proof" enough to stand up to the rigors of combat conditions. The company that Steve then worked for was asked to see what they could do to "harden" the walkie-talkies. Steve and his team determined that the soldering technique being used to produce the walkie-talkies was a poor technique and that the technique used by Steve and his employer to make arcade games was much more durable.

So, Steve's contribution to the war effort was to make reliable walkie-talkies. That story stuck with me because everybody who has ever served in the military understands how essential reliable communications are to effective combat operations. The simple truth of the matter is that GI's die when communications break down. So, in addition to designing some great pinball machines, Steve and his co-workers increased the numbers of U.S. Marines who survived the war. Some of those survivors could be the fathers and grandfathers of the very people who are reading this post right now... who otherwise wouldn't be around to read this post.

Thanks Steve. The ripple effect of your life's work has certainly spread around the world and enriched countless lives over the past 100 years. That's pretty darn cool in my book.

Rick Swanson

Dennis Dodel:

Happy Birthday Steve! Thank you for everything you have done in every corner of the pinball world. And for just being such a nice guy. Your help with "The Pinball Trader" will never be forgotten. Dennis Dodel



DJCharlie:

Henry Ford didn't invent the automobile... he just made everyone want to drive.

Steve Kordek didn't invent pinball... he just made us all want to play!
Happy 100th Steve!
Charlie



Jack Haeger

Do i wish Steve a Very Happy Birthday? "YES! YES!!" Jack H.



Frank Furhter:

Steve will always be revered as not only a flipping pioneer, but a great human being and a very nice guy. Here's to you and your upswing in health. The industry needs to remember where it came, please pass or carry the torch some more.



Bruce Bis (MrBally):
To Mr. Kordek,

I believe it was the AMOA show in 1978 where I first met you. I had seen your name in a few articles in Play Meter and seen pictures of you with Space Mission in Roger Sharpe's Pinball! book. I was nervous to approach you as I was a teenager at the time. You made me feel welcome and let me take your picture with the models. And boy did Williams hire the cuties from Bud Solk's agency. I sent copies to you and received a personally signed letter from you. Receiving that letter and seeing that Williams Electronics logo on the envelope and letterhead will always be remembered by me.
I wish you health and happiness.
Bruce Bis



Steve Ritchie

My memories of the influence Steve had on my career go back to Atari, when the first game I ever unpacked and played as much as I wanted was Space Mission. Atari wanted us to study all the latest pinball releases in 1975-76, and I played at least 500 games of Space Mission not only because it was fun and exciting, but also to tear into the inner workings and construction of the game. Space Mission provided my first pinball design education!

Space Mission also influenced my first pinball design, Airborne Avenger in many disciplines. Steve is also the guy that knows how to correct a myriad of kinetic pinball problems with cheap and clever remedies I would never have conceived. I really enjoyed the time we had working together, and often wish for a return to those days.

Steve Ritchie



Bob Brown

Had the honor of playing 18 holes with Steve at Twin Lakes a dozen years ago. Steve, you played better than I ever will. Happy 100th.



Brian Schmidt
So sorry I can't make it but Happy Birthday from Seattle!



Gary Stern:

I have known Steve since I was a child, literally. My best to Steve.

Todd:

Happy 100th birthday Steve! You are a living pinball legend.

Todd

Mr. 68

Happy birthday and good health sir.



Gary Flower

Dear Steve

Many, many years ago, as youngster growing up in London, England, I discovered and was enthralled by pinball, totally unaware of your role.

Skip forward to 1985 when I met you for the first time in your office at Williams. By then, I was well aware of the key role you played in placing the flippers at the bottom of the playfield and the many games designed by you. There was still a lot to learn about Steve Kordek – the man.

Over the years I've gotten to meet members of your family and hear many tales from your life, first hand, - always a pleasure to listen.

I thought my first visit was a one off pilgrimage to the capital of Pinball and the chance to meet with you was a big attraction. Little did I know that it would be one of almost 30 visits, so far, to Chicago. Meeting with you was a highlight of my first visit and is something I continue to look forward to on every visit.

Not only are you one of the elder statesman of pinball; you are also a great ambassador for the industry and the hobby.

Though, I'm not there; this message allows me to be part of the celebration of your life (so far) and your work.

From myself, the pinball community in Britain and around the world I would congratulate you on your achievements in pinball and becoming a centenarian.

I'chaim

Michael Hanley I remember getting my first copy of Roger Sharp's book "Pinball". The pics of Mr.Kordek in the factory during "Space Misson\Odyssey" amused me for hours. I studied every detail for hours. Who was this man? I was honoured to actually meet him in 89 at Expo and he sat and talked about "Liberty Bell" for a half hour. Thanks Mr. Kordek, happy birthday.

December 26, 2011 at 1:40pm · Like · 1

Ken (EM Pinman):

To Steve,

Thanks so much for all the pinball fun you have given to all of us over the decades.

I have very fond memories of playing Space Mission as a kid and now own a Space Odyssey and love it even more! I only have 3 games total all EM's, but will have another Williams EM game in the near future.
Happy 100th and many more.
Ken.

Ken in Texas:

One of my fondest memories is my great grandpa taking me out to eat at a local spot that had a Space Odyssey. He would give me the money to play and it is one of the games that began my love affair with pinball.

Thank you sir for all the wonderful games that brought simple joy and an escape from the everyday world for so many. Seeing a child stare through the glass into a world you created makes me smile every time.

Shelley Sax:

My fondest memories were always at the tradeshow when he would be "schlepping" around his big bags of brochures he collected and drop them off at our booth so we could ship them back with our booth stuff. And, it was always our pleasure to do so!



Tom Uban

Best wishes Steve to the next 100...

Wally Smolucha

WOW 100 years. Steve is still the best.





Luran Bromley

So SORRY. I will be out of the country on the 20th. But I will practise the 101 year old polka for next year! Luran



Louis Koziarz

I started at Williams very late in the timespan of pinball and I wasn't at the factory very long. But after working at 3401 N California only a week I felt like I was a part of a larger piece of history. You could feel it in every step of the floor, every dent in the drywall, and every game that went out the door. The most amazing part was meeting Steve Kordek. Steve was a living, breathing part of that heritage and he was THERE, in the factory, every day. You could learn everything you ever wanted to know about the craft by spending an hour in his office and he was always available. He always had time for you.

Steve is unique in so many, many ways. I've never met anyone like him ever since, nor have I seen any other industry that has someone like him doing what he was doing. Pinball was...and still is...an American art form. And Steve is it's patriarch.

Happy 100th Birthday, Steve.

- Louis Koziarz / January 2012



Matt Coriale

Steve: Congratulations on hitting 100 with grace!



Juan Chapa

Happy Birthday Steve, I am sorry that I can't be at your celebration. Juan



Larry DeMar

Steve, when I think of you I think of passion, invention, determination, teacher, ambassador, spokesman and eternal youth. I've never met anyone with the same passion as you have for pinball and I've dealt with some very passionate people. In addition you always have time for the pinball enthusiasts and it was amazing how you worked with all of the developers as our mentor, teacher and problem solver, decade after decade. I've always admired how you were able to adapt to many technical transformations to the game over the years and we all love hearing your stories. Congratulations on another wonderful milestone in your very full life.



George Petro:

The first summer I worked at Williams Electronics (1983), I was an hourly employee working in field service. Of course every evening I was hanging out with the very small pinball group working on Firepower II. Somehow the fact that there existed a young person interested in pinball came to Steve's attention. One morning, sitting at my desk, my phone rang, "This is Steve Kordek, I would like to take you to lunch young man." Already knowing Steve's history from Roger Sharpe's 'Pinball!' I was fairly overwhelmed. How did Steve even know who I was and further, why was he interested? Steve drove me in his swanky Cadillac Fleetwood to The Round Robin. He told me all about the history of pinball in Chicago and many stories about gathering with his compatriots at the RR. It was kind of like going to lunch with your grandfather. At some point, he asked me about my plan for the future. I was 17 and working at my dream company, future planning was not a concern! "I'm supposed to go to college in the Fall, but I'm re-thinking that. I would like to just stay and work at Williams." I said. "That's crap!" he said. "Young man, you go to college. If you don't do it now, you never will. This place, and your job will be here when you graduate."

No more true words were ever spoken to me. I would not be where I am today if I had not listened to Steve's advice. Why he took an interest in this young kid from Fort Wayne I'll never know. But I'm sure glad he did and I will not forget that.

George

Graham West
Congratulations, Steve, and I hope I'm half as good at half your age!



Denny Nicholson Larry,
Everyone at James Industries wishes Steve all the best. Glad to hear he is doing well. Please convey to Mr Pinball our best to the Century Man
December 27, 2011 at 3:14pm · Like





John Popadiuk

Memories of Steve, most of us met Steve in Roger Sharpe's book "Pinball". He took over a 2 page spread of amazing factory photos inside Williams in the 1970's, overseeing Space Mission like a mother hen watches her chicks. I played all his games as a kid, never knowing I would meet him, let alone work alongside him one day. Every morning I would pass by his office on the way to mine. Steve was always wearing a button up sweater, drinking tea and smiling. He always seemed really busy during the day, but had time if I popped in to talk about pinball history.

Steve was good enough to tell me about how he got his job at Genco after going door to door looking for work on a rainy Chicago day. Was really by chance he ended up in the pinball business, but with his electrical background he fit in right away. It was great to hear about how things were then in the industry, and how quickly they made pinball machines in the 1940's; a new model every 6 weeks or so. Steve seemed to work with, and have "juicy" stories about everyone; but was most proud I think of knowing Harry Williams. I would always bug him for old magazines, flyers and pinball photos. One day he had out on his old oak desk, a black paper binder full of 8x10 glossies of Harry. Steve had about 300 of these black paper binders all arranged with old Billboards, and game documents. In this case this binder was very different, and full of beautiful, professionally shot images of Harry. Everything was new and he looked absolutely amazing.

These must have been promo photos of Harry looking dapper, the pinball design legend standing in the newly paneled lobby on California Avenue, next to his first pinball design called Suspense from 1946. The black and white images really captured the time and majesty of pinball, especially a great designer. I was impressed at the great suit Harry had on and how the Suspense was factory new. Not a scratch. Steve let me flip thru a couple of the photos and then said "okey, dokey let me have that back". Steve always said that.

The next day Steve came to my office and told me to come over to see something special. We sat down and he said that he was keeping a journal for a friend and thought I would like to see it. I said "sure!". He pulled out the drawing of his desk a bit, then pulled it out more (seemed like 3 feet) to reveal an extremely large "secret" back part of the desk full of books. He reached inside and pulled out a rubber band wound worn diary. He unwrapped it carefully and said Harry's wife gave it to him when he passed away. It was one of Harry William's design books! Steve let me read it in his office and then snatched it back after a bit. Each page had notes and drawings for playfields, mechanisms and other creative pinball oddities. He never offered it again for me to read, and I

never asked. I have been the only one who ever looked through it besides Steve. I was in the right place at the right time.

Well tales of the flipper design Steve did for Genco's 1948 Triple Action always came up, and I was even lucky enough to play it when Steve brought in his own game from home. It was the first pinball with 2 flippers located down low on the board. They have remained there ever since. We played a couple of games together and he showed me some old flipper moves on triple Action he would use to earn some "pin money" as was back then. But his influence finally seeped into my designs in the form of long flowing shots, the spinning disk, rollover buttons and the disappearing jet bumper from his Williams "Gusher" game of 1958. We used that bumper design on Circus Voltaire and made it work almost exactly to the game Steve happened to have in his office one day. Imagine that!

I took only one picture of Steve (looking for it now) sitting in his office, with his backglasses hanging proudly on the paneled oak walls. All neatly arranged. Just exactly the way he is pictured in Sharpe's book "Pinball". Steve is really timeless, unique, inspiring and pinball royalty. Just a good guy from the beginnings of a great part of Americana called pinball. Steve like to say "pin-games".

Just a few of my memories of Steve Kordek. A strange twist in that I learned the pinball business with a company called "3 Coins" and I was born in 1962. Steve designed a game called 3 Coins in 1962.

John



Greg Freres This is indeed great news! He was the first person I interviewed with at Williams. Happy Birthday Steve! And thanks for putting in the good word for me.
December 27, 2011 at 2:22pm · Like




Christa Woss

I remember when I first started at Williams with no knowledge of the pinball industry I would talk to Steve and listen to him share his stories. Visiting his office in the back of the old Williams building was almost like walking into a museum! If we ever needed a historic photo Steve would go through his photo, newspaper and Replay and PlayMeter archives to see what he could share! He always had a great story to share from the 'old days'! What a wonderful man to have had the pleasure of working with! Thank you Steve!






 Glen Peters:
 One thing that stands out head and shoulders above the rest in this hobby, was getting the chance to meet you. It isn't very often in life that you get a chance to meet one of your heroes. I guess that wide-eyed little boy who wandered into a small cafe in 1964 and starting watching some older boys playing Heat Wave, has never really gotten over it.

Now he owns that game and many others like it. Games like Space Ship, Big Daddy, 4 Roses, Teachers Pet, just to name a few. And thinks these games that you designed, are as great as any games that ever WERE designed. I have never had any problem bringing you a few "laurel leaves" and I certainly don't have any problem with it now. I want to thank you... and fate maybe, for being that young man who, while seeking shelter from the rain... was to impact and change the face of pinball history... forever.

Steve Kordek is one of my pinball heroes. So glad I was able to meet him and Norm Clark, while he was still alive at Expo. Also meeting Wayne Neyens of course was a tremendous honor. I regret not having met Ed Krynski while he was still with us and also a few others that I can think of as well. But I don't know.... Steve Kordek has an almost "magical" quality about him, he is easily my favorite. Happy birthday, Steve!



When Steve Kordek was a young electrician with a now-defunct company called Genco, he revolutionized pinball by taking two flippers and placing them at the bottom of the playfield.

by Jeanne Marie Laskas

Inside the pinball factory, a low, red, boring building on the corner of California and Roscoe avenues in North Chicago, there were birthdays happening. The people with the birthdays had dollar bills pinned to their shirts, like enormous paper brooches. You were supposed to get the hint.

Dave Poole

Wow!
3:45 AM and I'm awake.
Larry's request for tributes to Steve in mind.
Steve's turned 100!
100! Wow! Think of that!

Amazing, isn't it, how time flies?
How "young" becomes "old,"
Yet old can still be young.
Fragments fly.
'Gotta write 'em down before I forget 'em.
My memory ain't what it used to be.
But the best parts are still there.
Like it was yesterday.
Instead of 35 years ago.

January, 1977 at Williams Electronics.
A Division of Seeburg.
First day on a new job.
I'm not even 30 yet.
Dorian's expecting. We just found out after I signed up.
Fresh from Motorola's cube farms.
Lookin' for adventure.

What have I gotten myself into?
New guy in Sam Stern's office.
Lou Nicastro's guy.
I'm one of his guys. ...an interloper.
What's he doing here?
Replacing me?

All by myself.
In somebody else's lab..
Dissecting an early "electronic" flipper.
A Mirco's something or another.
The second flipper I've ever looked inside.
Not nearly as scary as the first one.
'Know enough about 'processors do make one do what I want.
But what on earth does a Pinball need to do?

Tension in the Engineering Department.
So thick you could cut it with a knife.
Defensive Memorandum on the walls.
Doesn't matter whether the "state" is "solid" or not.

'Player just wants a good time for his quarter.
"Us" versus "them." "Them" versus "us."
Would get worse before it got better.

Meanwhile in the Game Design department.
A guy with his sleeves rolled up.
A guy named Steve Kordek.
Open. Welcoming. Gracious.

The "Game designers" report to him.
But what is a game?
Still don't really know that, even today.
I know when I'm frustrated.
But I also know when the next shot
...the next try
...the next ball is gonna be golden.
There are guys who know how to do that to you.
On a flipper table. On a screen. On a PDA!

That's what any game is, I guess.
...that next ball is gonna be golden.
...even if I know it's the last.
And Steve Kordek was the master.

I'd have told you Steve was "old" in 1977.
When I first met him.
Let me do the math.
OMG! Steve had just turned 65!
Try that subtraction again. OMG!
I'm 65 next month.
I'm old.
He's not. He never was.

Even at age 65.
A guy with his sleeves rolled up.
Open. Welcoming. Gracious.
Like an island.
In a sea that was stormier than it looked.

Selecting transistors.
Gotta buy from the only supplier left who will extend us credit.
On credit hold with everyone else.
Gotta make those transistors work.
Oh, but I digress.
The nuts and bolts always came easier.

Hired a great team
Moved to Seeburg to get out of the way.
Did an electronic conversion of Space Mission.
Or was that its name?
Phoenix? then Time Warp? ...or was it the other way around?
Kinda' turns into a blur.
But I was having the time of my life.
Tearing up a bit, here.

Told Steve about that first Pinball.
Genco's One-Two-Three
Made me most popular kid in the neighborhood
...As long as One-Two-Three was working.
A never ending job to keep it working.
Without a full wiring diagram.
Just whatever was stuck inside the backbox.
I'd already built several ham radios.
But I barely understood One-Two-Three.

Steve remembered it.
December, 1948 according to the Pinball Database.
He was there. At Genco.
I was still "kicking the slats out of my cradle."
"Did I need the wiring diagram?"
No doubt that he had it.
He probably could have drawn it for me right there.

'Fraid not, Steve, but thanks for offering.
Dad gave One-Two-Three away.
While I was off to College
And it quit with nobody to fix it.

It's 1979 and I'm ready to move on.
Probably was a mistake to leave Williams.
The job I took sure was.
Lookin' for adventure
...and whatever comes our way.
[strains of Born to be Wild here]

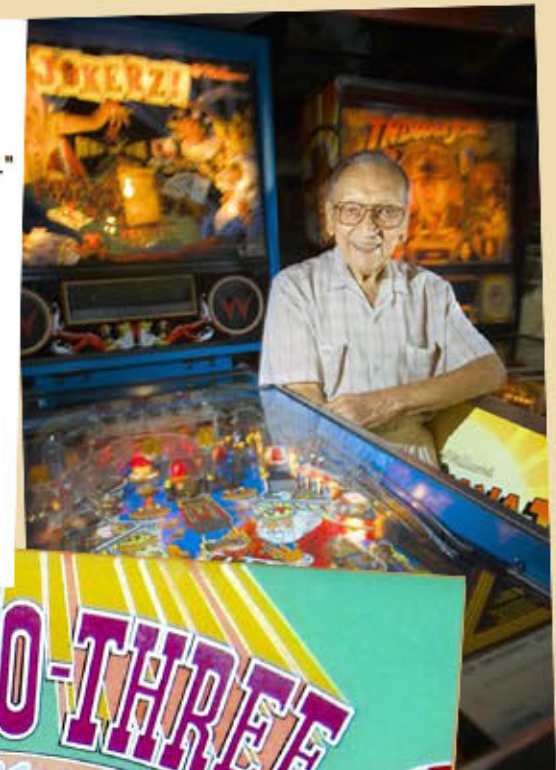
My "Going away" party
My legends exposed.
A burned screwdriver handle.
The remains of a smashed phone.
Something about a floor tile with a shoe glued to it.
They saved that?

The goin' away party, again. I think.
Steve gives me a bottle of Remy.
Fine stuff, it was.
He says something like...
"Enjoy this, and when you do, think of me."

I did, I have since, and I do now, Steve
...though the Remy is long since gone.
And fine stuff, it was.

Open. Welcoming. Gracious.
And a Master of the Game.
Here's to ya, Steve!
Enjoy another 35 years, buddy!

4:51 AM, 10 January, 2012
Dave Poole
"Manager Advanced Development"
Williams Electronics, 1977



Rob Berk:

He always seems to light up when you mention Harvey Heiss and Genco. I recall in particular his story about working on a game called "VICTORY". Steve mentioned with great pride how he wired this game. I would definitely mention this.





Keith Johnson

I wish I got to work with Steve more than I did. I have enjoyed many of his games over the years. Probably my highlight on a Steve Kordek game would be winning the split-flipper competition on a Williams Grand Prix. Great great game for its time and is still great today.

Don Hassler

Steve,

Happy Birthday and Genton (Italian for a 100 more)! Keep hitting Them straight like you always did and always remember the good times we had at Williams/Bally and the golfing in Monticello, IN.

Take care and God Bless you,
Don Hassler



Dennis Nordman

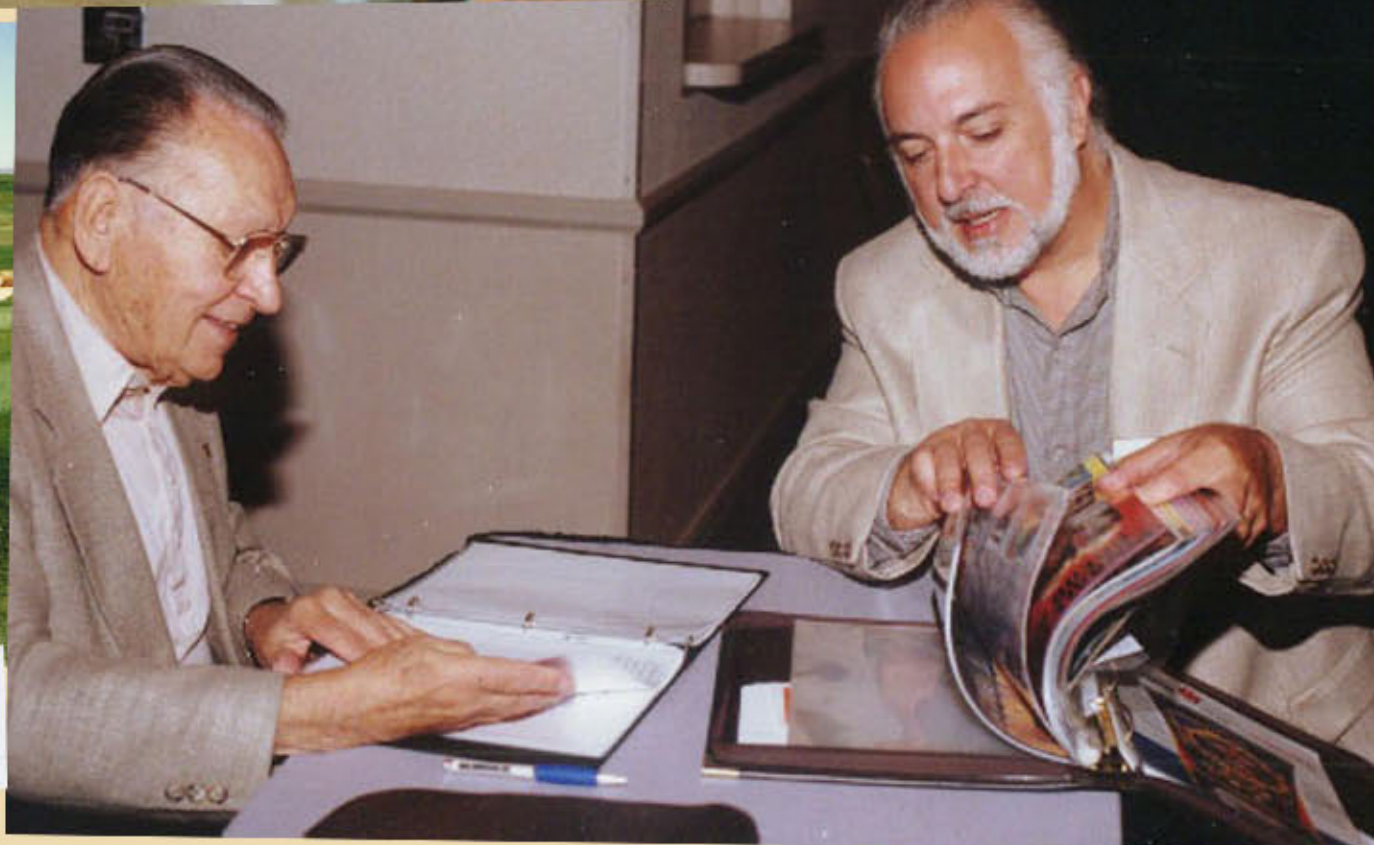
Steve, it was an honor and pleasure working with you for the years I was at Williams. I am proud to be a small part of pinball history and to have worked with you, a real legend in the pinball industry. All the best to you.
Dennis Nordman



Michael Stroll Steve, this world is a much nicer place with you here. Stick around for another century. Much love Mike!
December 28, 2011 at 3:39pm · Like



Denny Nicholson Happy Birthday to Steve...wow 100





Roger Sharpe

A Century Of Progress

Back in 1974 I ventured into the world of pinball, beginning research for what was originally only going to be a feature for Gentlemen's Quarterly Magazine. What followed, however, managed to somewhat influence the course of pinball history and, more personally, dramatically alter the course of my life. It wasn't just the games themselves that I was completely captivated by, it was the meeting of the people behind the scenes that grabbed and held me. During my three year journey of attempting to piece together the history of pinball, I found myself discovering a generation of incredibly gifted and talented individuals who I attempted to pay homage to. Their consummate zeal and excitement for their craft was apparent and uplifting. These weren't just games, each were unique life forces offering singular personalities imbued by the passion of their creators.

Despite a 'slight' difference in age, it was the youthful enthusiasm and energy of those I was meeting that drew me in closer to their world and provided the additional incentive to give them a voice and a face to the outside world. They were worth adulation and acknowledgement for bringing so much joy to so many for so many years.

The inherent creativity and imagination that brought to life every dazzling world under glass was almost inexplicable. How did they weave the magic time after time? I wanted to hear their stories and memorialize them.

Steve Kordek was one of those 'wizards' who I had the honor and privilege to get to know. And to say that he had a profound impact on me as well as millions of pinball players and enthusiasts around the world would be an understatement. Steve not only endured but he thrived over a remarkable period of decades that embraced not just fundamental design changes but truly revolutionary technological advancements. And his numerous achievements were accomplished seamlessly from one era to the next. It is a true testament to his skills and the legacy he shares with all of us.

Even more he was unconditionally generous in sharing his wisdom and insights with subsequent generations of designers. Always ready with an observation and a suggestion for consideration to take good to great and great to timeless. No one could have asked for a better mentor or tutor in appreciating what could be achieved on a bare piece of wood. Steve was always there and still remains a legendary force. Steve represents all the best that is pinball. He is light, sound and action, the smooth rolling of silver into objects that either disappear or are transformed, the unexpected nuance of angle and geometric precision. He is genius in the guise

of someone who could just as easily be a part of the family with that gentle smile, that reassuring word of advice.

It was Steve who helped me realize a dream when he stepped in to help with the development of Barracora. And for that I will be forever indebted. But he has meant much more to me and my life over the past 38 years and I celebrate his centennial with unvarnished affection and love.

To a true original...I wish a very happy and healthy birthday and many, many more!!

Roger Sharpe



Marty Glazman

When I was first made VP of Sales for Williams Pinball we were at a trade show, shortly after Steve brought into my office about 50 pictures he had taken at the show of our games and all our competitors games, I was looking and looking and finally realized that they all had the same thing in them; besides the game they all had a female, playing, good looking female,...When I asked Steve about it he told me that, that is what kept him young. Games and Dames.



Mark Ritchie:

Dear Steve,
Congratulations to you on 100 years of life. I would like to take the time to just say "Thanks" for all you have done for me over the years. You were both an inspiration and mentor to me for the many years I was employed at Williams Electronics. I have subsequently used much of that guidance and knowledge through the years, not only working for various companies within the Coin-op games industry, but also in life itself and it has served me well. I will always cherish those years and remember you as first and foremost, the most fair-minded and fun boss I ever had the pleasure of working with and as a seasoned game designer with more know-how up his sleeve than any other designer of the time. You were a tremendous resource for Pinball history and a good teacher for practical Pinball design habits which, I found very useful. Your dedication to helping me solve problems and your advice were always there when I needed them and I still hold those times as priceless. You are a great guy and a great teacher and I shall always be thankful for the relationship I have with you. Happy Birthday Steve! May the good Lord grant you many more years of life and prosperity. Your friend and student, Mark Ritchie



Eugene Geer
Happy 100 Birthday Steve, I hope you have many more. Cheers!



Eddy Hicks

I was a pinball fan since high-school. When I came to Williams as a senior project engineer I was a huge pin fan following a dream but also a neophyte next to all the real geeks that comprised engineering and design. The first insider advice Joe Joos gave me was "The game designers are kings... they are Prima Donnas but you have to deal with it". Then with a change of voice and a gentle smile he told me the name Steve Kordek. The name sounded legendary. Joe told me a couple of nice stories about Steve's achievements. I knew I was going to have a blast at Williams and I couldn't wait to meet him. I had so many questions. I had no real idea until I met Steve what a very nice man he was, how willing he was to share his knowledge, or how much he contributed to pinball and in fact embodied the industry. Steve is one of the nicest men I've ever met and remains one of the clearest examples of "subject matter expert" that you'll ever meet. Thank you Steve for making the Williams experience that much richer for me. I have very fond memories thinking of your stories, your daily contributions, and your smiling face gracing the Williams engineering group. Happy Birthday Steve!!

- Eddy



Duncan Brown

I first "met" Steve in the well-thumbed pages of the book Pinball Portfolio, which was my first clue that other people really liked pinball as much as I did. Little did I imagine that years later I would be working with the legend himself. Some of my best memories from Williams are of the times spent chatting with Steve about the history of the company and of the industry. He was there for every minute of it! Congratulations, Steve, on the big One Oh Oh.



Joe Kaminkow

Even though I was at Williams for a short while and had my hand in Defender Pinball, Space Shuttle and a few mechanical games. As we started Data East Pinball Steve would always stop at The Data East booth and offer encouragement even though we were competitors. For Steve it was the love of the game perhaps more than the game company. As years passed he delighted in how "you kidz" Larry, Steve, Mark, Barry, Eugene and I went on to bigger and better things.

I just remember in Steve's sometimes softer tone the words, "Barry, Barry, Barry oh yes, Barry, Barry, Barry!"

I never told Steve this for a short while I had a crush on his daughter!

Steve here's to 100!



Joe Kaminkow Happy 100th Steve, Now where is Barry Oursler- we need a new game design Barry and Steve is waiting! Happy 100th Steve!!
December 27, 2011 at 8:46pm · Like · 1



Frank Happ
Tell Steve that I wish him another 100 years, he is an inspiration to me Thanks,
Frank



Vince Pontarelli

I hope I maintain the enthusiasm, energy and clear minded positive insight for creating cool products that Steve exhibited every day I was in his presence. Being around Steve was like being around a life force that just kept me in awe. I just sat back and watched with my mouth open. I feel privileged to have had the experience of working with Steve and learning from him.

- Vince Pontarelli



Brian Eddy Yes! yes! - When I worked with Steve I was in my 20's and he was probably in his 80's and he had more energy than me! He has an amazing passion for pinball and his contributions to the art are endless. Even at the young age of 100 I bet he still has more energy than me. Go Steve! Happy 100th birthday - time to add another score reel to your life!
December 27, 2011 at 6:26pm · Like · 1



Dan Forden

I'm sorry to miss it, but I'll be out of town. Please pass along my best wishes!



Jon Hey

When I first met Steve Kordek (it must have been 1988), I learned that he had been the man who put flippers on pinball games. His vast recollection pinball game design challenges, and obstacles overcome, helped all of the pinball designers immensely, myself included. His "repertoire" of game rules and devices kept us all humble as we tried to constantly make the next greatest pinball game, knowing from Steve that a great game was made in the perfect combination of mechanics and game flow. I wish a happy birthday to Mr. Kordek, and extend my thanks.

Jon Hey (Pinball Game Composer and Sound Designer Williams/Bally - audio coding consultant to Stern) from Jokerz to Jack*bot and many in between.



Michal-Lynn Jakala

I can just say that Steve was the epitome of a true gentleman and that having known him has been a true blessing in my life. He and his wife came to our wedding and I remember telling my husband that I wanted what they had. Their obvious love for each other was so endearing!



Michal-Lynn Fuller Jakala Please give him my love!!! What a great man!
December 28, 2011 at 7:46am · Like





Terry Cumming:
Steve Kordek turns 100 years young today, Dec 26, 2011. Happy Birthday to Steve and congratulations on living a long and prosperous life filled with, amongst other things, pinball.

He started at Genco in 1937 working there into the late 50s before moving to Williams where he settled in to the end of the pinball era in 1999 and beyond.
Steve did great work with Genco and their DC system to get the proper sequencing of actions (others used AC). He designed the first game with the flippers at the bottom (Triple Action), the first Williams drop target game (Vagabond) and other games including some classic EMs in the 70s.

I believe Steve liked his Space Mission/Odyssey along with Grand Prix the best. Also involved in solid state games and the fun Ticket-Tac-Toe redemption game.

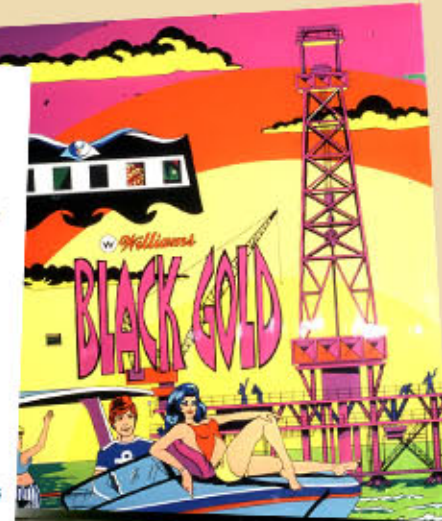
A great guy who has lived up many of the Pinball Expos and other shows over the years. When I grow up I want to live life like him.
Terry Cumming



Lloyd Olson:
Steve I want to thank you for loaning me your Pinball Circus machine in early 2006 for a party at my business.

Having your help make the event special meant a lot to a lot of people. Your contributions to pinball span many years. And every thing you did brings up even more memories of things you did. No one has ever touched so many in pinball as you have. If ever an industry owed someone a debt of gratitude it is you Steve. Pinball wouldn't have been the same without you. Your contributions to pinball have always extended beyond the factory doors.

Thank you !
LTG :)







Kerry Imming
Thank you Steve for all of your wonderful pinball innovations. I love what you were able to do on the electro-mechanical games.... it's just like magic. Every game of pinball played benefits from your contributions to the game. Thanks again!

Happy Birthday Steve!
... and thank you for all of your pinball contributions.

- Kerry Imming



Cameron Silver

It is said "don't sweat the small stuff", but with game design it's often the small stuff that makes all the difference. Steve knew this, and would devote a great deal of time to making many small adjustments in order to make one big improvement. Steve always took the time to add a nail here, a post there, or adjust a ball-guide by sometimes as little as a few millimeters. I was so fortunate to work with Steve on Ticket Tac Toe right after I started at Williams, and I still try to follow the examples Steve set. Pinball is long gone now, and we live in a world of polygons, 3d models and networked play; but this principle of "small changes make a big difference" is still very much valid. Happy Birthday, Steve; you led the industry not just from the games you designed, but also by the very way you worked.



Darren Walker

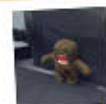
Steve, I wish you the very best on this special day. Its unbelievable to me. I'm just hoping to make it to 50. I miss all of you pinball folks. Like I've said before, working at Williams/Bally and getting to know all of you are some of the greatest memories of my life. Thank you. Steve, Happy 100th b-day. You are an inspiration.

Lee:
I want to add in my birthday wishes. Just think of all the millions of hours of pure enjoyment that Steve's creations bought to countless people of all ages!

Lee

Charlie:
It's official: Steve Kordek is pinball's very own Yoda! ... "When 100 years old we reach, look as good we will not, hmmm???"

Happy Birthday Steve!
Charlie



Chuck Hess (Big Guys Pinball):

Your contribution to pinball can't be overstated. Thank you for all you've done. Congratulations on hitting the century mark and I hope that you have many happy and healthy years to come.

Edd (FunRudy):
Happy Birthday Mr. Kordek! I wish you 100 more. I have never met you but played your designed machines over the many years.

Thank you for countless hours of entertainment and amusement. You are an inspiration to everyone for your accomplishments and passion for the silverball. Thank you again from the bottom of my heart for being a part of favorite hobby.
Edd



John Newcomer
Hi Steve,

I had the good fortune of working with so many talented individuals at Williams - Bally - Midway, yet you are by far the most influential in my life. This comes from a lifelong video designer who only dabbled a few times in the electro-mechanical world, and never designed a pinball machine.

Every day, you came into the office with a smile on your face and a hello by name to anyone who made the slightest eye contact. Pinball had its ups and downs, but even in those down times your attitude towards those around you never changed. It was always a smile and a heartfelt "hello." You treat everyone with respect and as part of a greater team.

Your aura of love for making games is addictive. Being around you is a reminder that we are making games! It may be hard work, but it is fun; it is a career... not a job. Games are my career and your daily example was a strong influence in my path.

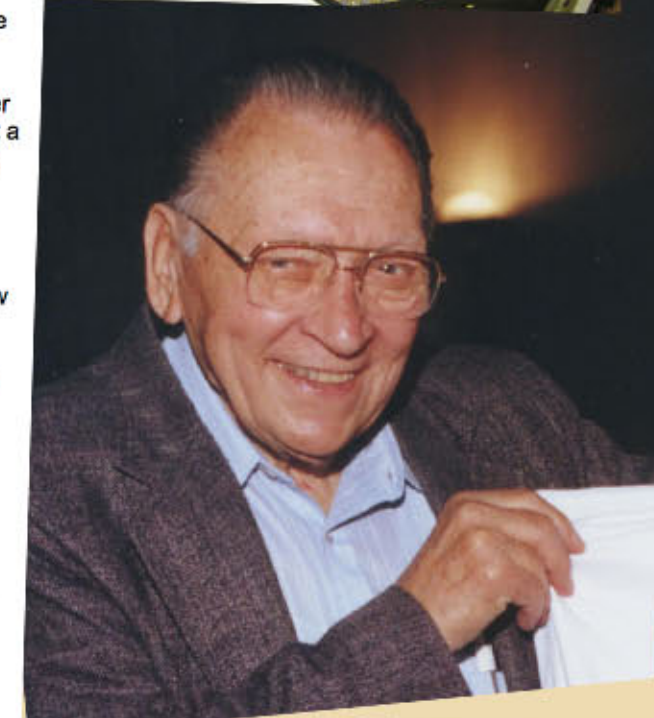
You affected my growth as a designer. Any time I asked for some advice, you gave. I remember the vigor in which you would go over some possibilities and then spring from your chair and grab a variety of brochures from God knows how many books containing games that dealt with related experiences from your decades of hands-on knowledge. You have the vision to know that a game is a game is a game. I work in pixels, you work with gadgets. But, the problems that game designers deal with are pacing, getting the player's attention, reward systems, surprises, smooth transitions, skill development and maybe a smattering of luck. Your knowledge and advice helped all of us grow in our design paths: pinball, video, gambling, cell phone, toys...

Steve, I congratulate you on your momentous birthday! Your age is a small number in comparison to the number of people you have touched in the most positive ways. Thank you for your guidance and example which has made me a better designer and a better man.

Too many fond memories. All the best on your 100th, Steve!

Best wishes,

John Newcomer
Director of Game Design
MumboJumbo
Dallas, TX



Josh Kaplan (Pingeek):

To Steve,
Thanks for all the many games you have designed, which continue to be enjoyed at shows all over the place.

I have a Genco "Junior" pin, released in 1937.
<http://www.ipdb.org/showpic.pl?id=1342&picno=45914>

The Internet Pinball Database doesn't show who designed it. I wonder if it was Steve Kordek, since he started with Genco in 1937. Anybody who knows Steve and could check with him, and maybe ask him what his first Genco game was, would be great to know and maybe the last game he designed for them. According to the years Genco was around, Steve would have been with this company from just after they started to near the end of the company.
Pingeek

Damion Rowe:

What Marconi was to the radio, what Jacquard was to the computer, what Edison was to the lightbulb, Steve Kordek is to pinball. A hundred million thanks on your hundredth birthday sir. Thank you for all that you have done and all the smiles that you have given.





Mark Penacho

In September of 1988, I had been at Williams about two weeks, when the schedules were changed, and I was to be the main/sole programmer of Earthshaker. At the first weekly game meeting, most of the people attending I had yet to meet, Steve included. The meeting started like this.

Steve K: Who is going to be the programmer on this game?
someone (don't remember who): um.. Mark Penacho
Steve K: And who else?

##: Just Mark.

Steve K: Oh, I don't know about this. I don't think this is a good idea, I wish we could get Pflutzenreuter on this. (Bill was busy on Jokerz! at the time)

the meeting then proceeded, and we never went back to that subject.

On a different game, a few years later, we had just received screened playfields, and everyone was in the art department looking at them. The subject of it going on test the following weekend was brought up, and Steve K. announced to everyone:

Steve K: Mark, I've got some big problems with the software on this game, and I don't want this game going on test. I want to talk to you when we get done here.
at this time, the test was rescheduled for the following week.

When Steve took me aside, he said this.

Steve K: Mark, I don't have a damn thing to say about the software, I just thought you might want a little more time. (which I did!)

Another time, at a dinner at the end of a trade show (New Orleans, maybe?) I was seated at a table next to Steve K. Midway through the dinner, Eugene Jarvis, who was seated at a different table, across the room, threw a dinner roll at me, and it landed on the table in front of me. Everyone started encouraging me to throw it back (which I knew would probably be a bad idea), and instead, I didn't. Steve K. then said to me (and the rest of the table), "Good Man, you don't want to encourage him!". Eventually, someone else did "encourage him", and you can figure out where it went from there, but in Steve's eyes, "I did the right thing".



James Hawes Steve, In my pinball world, you're an unforgettable and indispensable character. I'm a better games writer for having known you. Thank you for shaping pinball into elegant, exquisite entertainment for everyone. Thank you for guiding me.



Noah Falstein:

I strongly remember being in awe of Steve when I was at Williams (82-83, project leader on Sinistar) and his amazing history. He told us at one point that this whole video game thing was a fad that was going to blow over like so many others he'd seen, and the company would survive on its pin games... Young and cocky, I thought he was out of touch with the times, until the implosion of the arcade video game business in 83 and the subsequent weeding out of companies. Williams managed to remain in better shape than many rivals specifically because they hadn't abandoned pinball for exclusive video game development. That was a real lesson to me in my 20's about the value of experience, one I've tried to internalize since. Thanks Steve!

Damon Beals Good to hear Steve is doing great.
December 27, 2011 at 12:01pm · Like

GreatwichJohn:

Hopefully some of us can live that long & enjoy pinball. I'm still not half that way yet going on 48.



Greg(OVDFireman)-
Happy birthday, Steve, hope you see the message!
-
ovdfireman
Greg

John (Hogey):

Steve....you've always been gracious to talk at Expo, sign hundreds of autographs over the years (I have about 5 of them) and pictures that you've allowed me to take (with me in the pic too of course). Tremendous list of games you've designed over the years. Thank you, thank you, thank you...I love pinball and I love Steve Kordek.

You're the best Steve...thanks for the conversations we've had, the autographs I've gotten and the pictures I've taken. A true gentleman and asset to the hobby. Happy Birthday my friend.

John



Marcus Webb (Vending Times):

The U.S. amusements industry attracts more than its share of real ladies and old-fashioned gentlemen. You know the kind: the salt of the earth. The unpretentious, down-to-earth folks who believe in the traditional values of hard work, honesty, fair play, giving more than an honest day's work for an honest day's pay, and helping your neighbor. The kind who never complain and always have a warm smile or a kind word.

First in line among this distinguished and loveable group is Steve Kordek of Williams Electronics fame. It takes just 5 minutes of chatting with Steve to discover that the twinkle in his eye comes from his boyish enthusiasm for a million ideas...that the spring in his step comes from his passion for people and his work...and that the eternal youth in his heart comes from always looking forward to today and tomorrow.

Sorry I can't be physically present for the '61st anniversary of your 39th birthday', Steve, but I'm with you in spirit. God bless and best of luck as you launch into your second century."

Marcus Webb
Vending Times

Greg McKay
Keep me in mind for #101 Happy 100 Birthday Steve.
Russ:
HAPPY BIRTHDAY STEVE!
Russ






Phoebe James Smith Happy Birthday to Steve!! I have been worried about him, and I am glad to hear he is doing well!! I really missed seeing him at Expo, and I love to hear his stories. ;-) I will never forget when I first met him at Expo 2006...He was like the Energizer bunny, he was none stop...and it was totally amazing to meet him and I was in complete awe of him, and his energy!! Here's to Steve and 101!! and looking forward to seeing him next year at Expo! :-)
 December 27, 2011 at 2:00pm · Like



Jim Roberts

Please extend me congrats to Steve who is one of the most wonderful guys I've ever met and remind him of the fun that we used to have at the Gaslight Club. Also please tell him that I will be there absolutely for his 125th birthday.

Ross (Doc) Ellis:
I have a "Gun Club" Steve told Me it was the frist game He worked on as a designer, I also have many other Games Steve designed over the years.
People like Steve don't came along that often.
Have a great brithday, Steve.

Ross"doc"Ellis

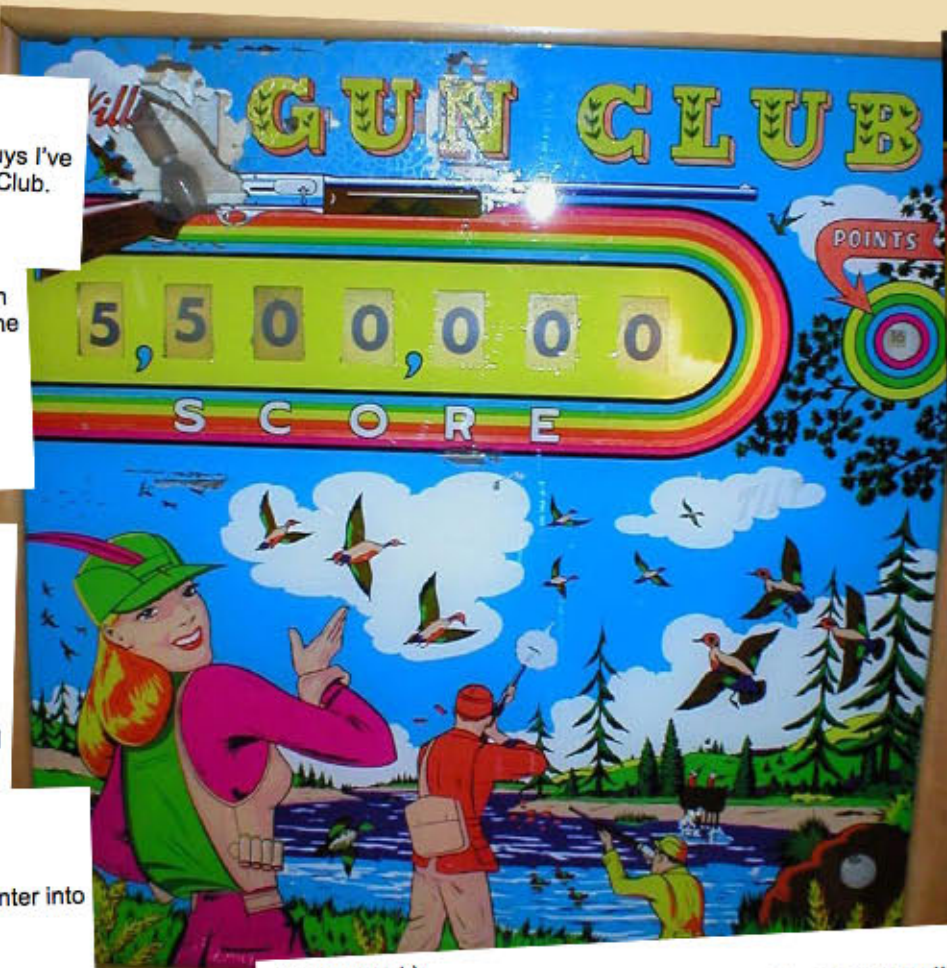


Rob Rosenhouse:

It is a great tribute for a legend. I still have great memories of chatting with Steve at numerous Pinball Expo's.

Robert Urbanowicz
BIG DADDY was the first pin that I played in my life.
A magic moment that I still remember.
Happy Birthday Steve! And thanks for show me the door to enter into the fantastic world of the pinball machines.

Robert Urbanowicz



Jim (Gott Lieb):
Happy Birthday, Steve!!! Hope you have an extra special day!!!
Jim



The Korn:

Steve, you've brought joy and happiness to so many, far more than you could ever possibly know. You say that you were just an average guy in a factory, but sometimes all it takes is to have the right guy in the right place at the right time. You were fortunate enough to be that guy, and the world is forever a bit brighter because of it.

Wbradley:

Steve Kordek is simply an amazing person who has been blessed with a life long career in the pinball machine industry and also with astonishing longevity. He has carried the torch so to speak for the longterm history of the business and what it has meant to countless others before them. I would think it must have been a great privilege for some of the present talent to have drawn the from the immense wisdom of experiencethis man has acquired. I consider myself fortunate to have spoken to this legend at Expo '10 and I'm sure hefelt the warmth and admiration of many. Happy birthday Mr. Kordek, you are truly a special person whose life embodies the very essence of the excitement and passion that makes pinball all that it is for so many. You are truly a gift to all those that have known you.

Tom (homebrood):
Happy Birthday Steve!

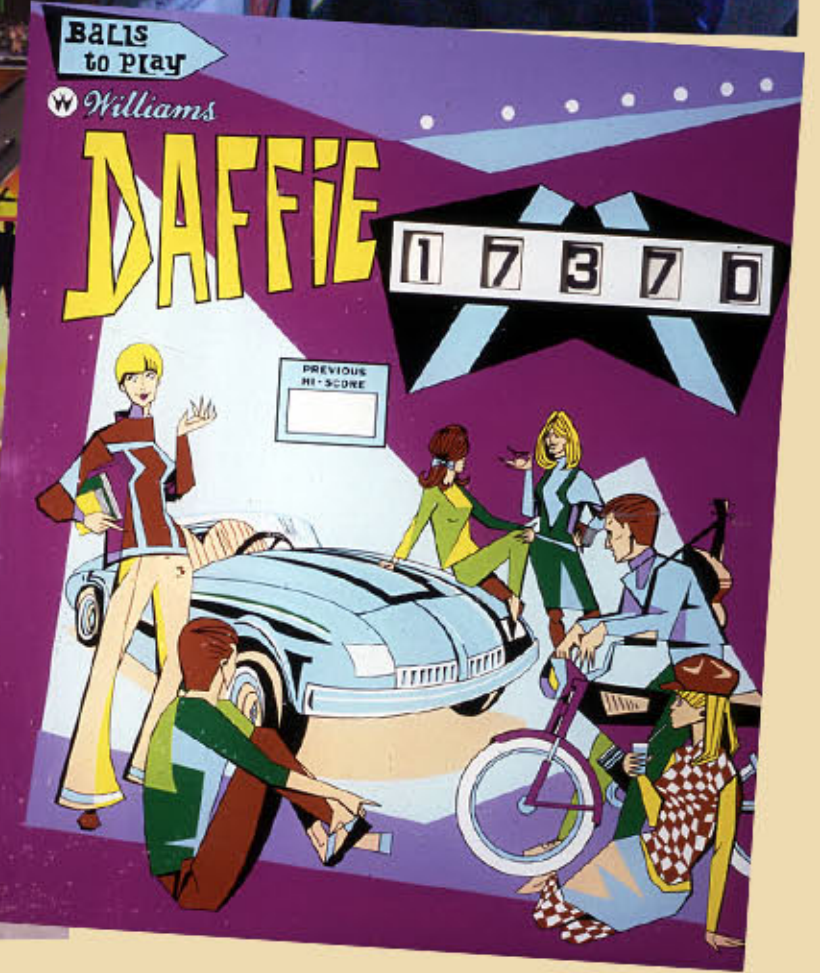
You are Amazing, and we all love all the great games!
Thank you!
Did you're over the top buzzer go off?
:)
Tom



Phillippe (MrHide):

On top of being "mr pinball", he was also "mr puck bowler!" I've had him sign a Strikemaster translite and I sold the game but kept the signed translite.
I remember him from all the expos as very generous and easy to approach!
also, who could forget that picture of him at the end of the line of p2k Star Wars?! stunning.
Best regards
Phillippe





03/08/2004

Steve
Wishing you a
Joyful Retirement!

Dee Bakery
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