

Confessions of a Coin-Op Addict

by Kevin and Carole Carroll



History

My coin op addiction began on my 39th birthday when my wife, Carole, bought me a 1978 Bally *KISS* pinball machine. Although I played as a kid at the Jersey shore (Long Beach Island) in the '70s, I would say that I always liked pinball but never had enough money to play a game over and over again enough to learn the game's deeper rules. For me, it was pretty much: "Don't let the ball drain."

It was a hot, August afternoon. I arrived home from a motorcycle ride to a house full of people wishing me a Happy Birthday. After I showered, I got myself a beer and visited with my friends. At this point, we had a modest gameroom with air hockey, foosball and ping pong. Someone suggested a game of foosball. Since it was such a nice day out, my idea was to bring the foosball table upstairs and play on the deck. After recruiting a few guys to help carry the table, we headed to the gameroom. As I turned the corner, I noticed that things had been moved around. Then, I saw "It" in the corner—unmistakably a pinball machine (although I couldn't tell which one since it was covered by a blanket). I was blown away at this great gift! (even without knowing which game it was). After thanking my wife, she urged me to pull off the cover to see which game it was. It was a double whammy. I was a huge *KISS* fan as a kid, but never got a chance to see (let alone play) a *KISS* pinball machine. Now, I was the owner of one.

I could never have imagined how much that one gift would change my life. As many pinball collectors soon learn, you can't have just one. Our second game was *The Addams Family*, followed by *Black Knight* (which my wife and I both remember playing as kids). From here, it all becomes a blur, and we quickly lost track. As our fondness and obsession for all things pinball began to take root, within a year, our gameroom filled up with pins and our savings had gone down. We discovered the world of basement collections in our area and were constantly looking for places to play pinball (only to be disappointed with the few, mostly non-working games we were able to find). After a visit to Tim Arnold's Fun Night, I was inspired to quit my job as a Master Plumber and to take the collection down to town for public play (scary, I know). I was driven by a love of pinball and a desire to share what I had discovered.

Many people tried to discourage us from opening this business but, fortunately, we didn't listen. Lyons Classic Pinball

Subjects' Names:
Kevin and Carole Carroll

Occupation:
Owners of
Lyons Classic Pinball,
Lyons, Colorado.

1st Pinball Owned:
1978 Bally *KISS*





Kevin and Carole with Steve Kordek at Chicago Expo

celebrates its third anniversary in March. Located in the sleepy town of Lyons, Colorado, just north of Boulder and Denver, our public gameroom has 31 classic pingames from the 1960s to 2000s and 15 classic video games. I consider Lyons Classic Pinball my gameroom now. Here, I get to talk pinball with people everyday and still get a kick out of seeing the look of joy on people's faces when they first walk through the door. For the first time in my life, I love my job.

Four years later, our collection has grown to approximately 150 games (dating back to 1932). We feel fortunate to be part of a pinball revival occurring in Colorado. Our customers are great folks and some are incredible players. LCP hosts a weekly pinball league and monthly pinball tournaments; this year marks the third annual Rocky Mountain Pinball Showdown (the only pinball show in the Rocky Mountain region). With its share of pinball collectors, enthusiasts and pinball-related businesses, pinball is alive and well in Colorado.

Long live coin-op and pinball! — Kevin Carroll

Herstory

Pinball widow, I am not!!! I guess it could even be said that I was the one who started our pinball obsession. A decision to surprise my husband, Kevin, with a pinball machine four years ago changed the course of our lives forever. Although there was probably a good chance pinball would have entered our lives some day, I certainly set the wheels in motion (and how!)

(Rewind)

I was a child of the '70s. What a great time to grow up...pinball was everywhere! I was exposed to many games in my teenage haunts (Jersey shore, pizza places, bowling alleys, etc.) Unfortunately, many of the titles now escape me. Now that I'm a collector, I would love to be able to recall all those games that took my hard-earned quarters! I had forgot-

ten just how much pinball was a part of my life until I recently came across a journal from age 13 to about 15. It was surprising to see so many references to playing pinball. Yet another pinball connection was my family's friendship with Jeffrey Lawton, aka Dr. Bingo. I remember many visits to his house and playing his bingo pinball games. I never fully understood the games, but I loved playing them anyway. I thought they were the coolest things!

My husband also enjoyed pinball in his youth. I guess the pinball seed for us had been planted a long time ago and just laid waiting all these years for an opportunity to present itself. Our first game was a Bally *KISS* pinball game, which I purchased for Kevin's birthday. Admittedly, I paid too much for it based on its condition. The playfield had a lot of wear, but the cabinet and backglass were in good shape. In the long run, his reaction made it all worthwhile. He was blown away that it was a pinball machine and a *KISS* one at that! The game played great. We played almost nightly and didn't tire of it.

Soon, we began reading up on the hobby. Everything we read about *The Addams Family* piqued our interest. There were two in our area that we played often to see whether we liked it enough to buy one (we did). This was our second purchase. It was in excellent condition and played well. I quickly became addicted and was constantly challenging myself to 'Tour the Mansion'. To this day, TAF remains one of my favorite games. Kevin and I distinctly remembered two other games from our youth that we enjoyed: *The Black Knight* and *Haunted House*. So, the hunt was on and these classic games soon joined the collection.

Although we owned games, we still sought out places to play pinball. Unfortunately, our options in Colorado were limited. Any games that could be found were usually dirty, dark and often with one or more playfield features not working. It was out of frustration and lack of places to play (not to mention an already overflowing gameroom) that Lyons Classic Pinball



Carole and Kevin in their gameroom, pre-Lyons Classic Pinball

was born. Open to the public, our pinball gameroom offers a variety of pin games (currently 31) in a museum-like setting.

In March, Lyons Classic Pinball celebrates its third anniversary. What an adventure and learning experience! We've met many great people, both in the hobby and not. We've received a lot of encouragement and help (too many to name here, but you know who you are—your support has been invaluable and keeps us going). It has been very rewarding to share our collection, make others happy and help perpetuate interest in a great American pastime.

Collectors for about four years now, my husband and I own over 100 pins. It has been comforting to learn there are other incurable pinball collectors out there and that something isn't wrong with us! I'm sure people think that I tolerate Kevin's pinball obsession. This couldn't be further from the truth. We share the hobby together and have since the beginning (which is fortunate, as I can definitely see how a marriage could be rocked by a one-sided obsession!) We love pinball but don't claim to be great players. We're close in our playing abilities, but Kevin would probably say that I'm the better player.

Did I mention that I think I started all this? If you had told me on the day I bought the KISS game that I'd be the owner of 150 pinball games and a pinball business, I would have told you that you were crazy! — Carole Carroll



Ed. Note: Be sure and visit Lyons Pinball when you're in the Denver-Boulder area! More pictures at www.lyonspinball.com

Got a great coin-op addiction
you'd like to confess?
Sent it in!

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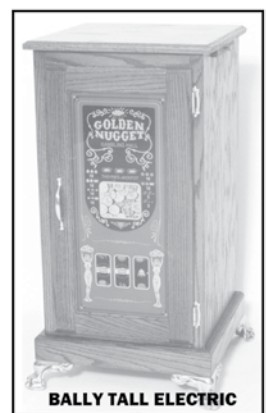


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