



In 1987, I was refusing to embrace the new generation of consoles. “You guys can have these new games that put all their focus on graphics,” I sneered to my friends at school. “I’ll stick with my Atari, thank yaverymuch.” A couple guys laughed in my face, and I heard several others snickering behind my back as I turned away. The NES was the future, and they knew it. I’m sure a lot of them wondered why I couldn’t see that.

As the months passed, I became known as “the Atari guy” around school. This turned out to be quite beneficial to me, as so many of the guys at my school were embracing the NES. They (and their families) were turning their collective backs on the systems they’d loved just a few years before, so now they wanted to be free of the games that were now collecting dust in the odd corners of their attics, closets and garages. Most were happy to find someone who would actually take these games off their hands, and none of them charged me more than a couple dollars per game, if that. This continued to be the case after I graduated from Murphy and entered Montville High School in September of 1988.

One day I was sitting in science class talking to a fellow student named Michael, whom I’d met earlier that year. I don’t recall the whole conversation, but at one point he asked me if I was still collecting Atari games. I said that I was, and he asked me if I’d be interested in a few games his relatives had left at his place. “How much?” I asked.

He shrugged and said “You can have them. We don’t want them.”

Upon hearing that, I enthusiastically agreed to take them off his hands. I didn’t bother to ask him specifics, because hey, they were free. The possibility existed that they might all be games I already had, but at that price, who cares?

A few days later, Michael walked into science class with two duffel bags. I recognized the one he always carried, but didn’t pay much attention to the other until he set it down on my desk and said “Here you go.”

My eyes almost popped out of their sockets. “You mean...?”

“Yep. Just bring the bag back tomorrow.”

I thanked Michael profusely, then unzipped the bag. There had to have been close to fifty games inside, several with their manuals. *If this is his idea of “a few games”*, I thought, *I wonder what his idea of “a lot of games” is?* I recognized

several titles immediately (*Defender*, *Asteroids*, etc.) but there were a lot I'd never heard of: *Mountain King*, *Fathom*, *Pressure Cooker* and so many others. I could barely wait to get home.

Ryan and Sharon were amazed when I walked into the house with a duffel bag full of new Atari games. We tried all of them out, and played the most intriguing ones well into the evening (our 7800 **never** got a workout like it did that night in the whole time we owned it). The best part was that well over half of the games in the bag were games we'd never seen before—and because of that, I had to build a new shelving unit in shop class just to hold our collection.



Mountain King (Atari 2600, 1983)

Since then, I've received several similar surprises during my career as a gamer. A lot of those surprises have been quite nice and worthy of discussion in their own right, but I have to admit, nothing has ever quite topped the duffel bag.

Many years later, in late 2008, I got a duffel bag-related surprise. I was talking to a friend of mine at work, Jabo, and he mentioned that he had a whole bunch of old games in storage that he no longer used. If I wanted them, I could have them. I gladly accepted his offer, then told him about what had happened to me in my freshman year. I jokingly asked him to bring the games to me in a duffel bag, if it was possible. I even joked that if he did, I'd write it up in a new version of *Memoirs of a Virtual Caveman* and call the story "The Duffel Bag II: Electric Boogaloo."

A few nights later, as we were leaving work and heading to our cars, he asked me to hang on for a second. He had gone to his storage unit earlier that day and had the games with him. We walked over to his truck, he opened the side door—and hauled out a red duffel bag full of Intellivision games. I burst out laughing as he handed it to me.

Jabo grinned and said, "Just bring the bag back tomorrow."

*Written by Rob Strangman. This excerpt from the book *Memoirs of a Virtual Caveman* is © 2008, 2014 SCAR Productions. Please do not distribute without the author's permission. Direct all inquiries to Rob at gradiusone@yahoo.com*

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