

Finding Aid to the Ralph Coppola Papers, 1980-2022

Summary Information

Title: Ralph Coppola papers

Creator: Ralph Coppola (primary)

ID: 121.350

Date: 1982-2019 (inclusive); 1982-1994 (bulk)

Extent: 3.5 linear feet

Language: This collection is predominantly in English, with some materials in Spanish and Japanese.

Abstract: The Ralph Coppola papers comprise game development papers, business records, and collected materials. The bulk of the materials are dated between 1982 and 1994.

Repository:

Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong
One Manhattan Square
Rochester, New York 14607
585.263.2700
library@museumofplay.org

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Use: This collection is open for research use by staff of The Strong and by users of its library and archives. Though the donor has not transferred intellectual property rights (including, but not limited to any copyright, trademark, and associated rights therein) to The Strong, they have given permission for The Strong to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes.

Custodial History: The Ralph Coppola papers were donated to The Strong in February 2021 as a gift from Innovative Concepts Entertainment (ICE). The papers were accessioned by The Strong under Object ID 121.350. The papers were received from Innovative Concepts Entertainment (ICE) in one box and several folders of oversized material.

Preferred citation for publication: Ralph Coppola papers, Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong.

Processed by: Nicole Pease, July 2022

Controlled Access Terms

Personal Names

- Coppola, Daniel
- Coppola, Ralph
- Willert, Jack R.

Corporate Names

- Golden Games Inc.
- Innovative Concepts Entertainment (ICE)

Subjects

- Amusement games
- Buffalo (N.Y.) [LOC]
- Chexx (coin-operated game)
- Coin-operated machines [AS]
- Cyclone (coin-operated game)
- Electronic games [AS]
- Game of skill
- Redemption games
- Schematics

Biographical Note

[adapted from The Strong National Museum of Play blog post, [“The Coin-op Industry Legacy of ICE President Ralph Coppola”](#) by Jeremy Saucier]

Born in Buffalo, NY in 1948, Ralph Coppola was one of six children whose family ran a local grocery store. He studied accounting as an undergraduate at Canisius College and earned a law degree from the University of Buffalo in 1974. Instead of practicing law, Coppola chose to follow in his family’s entrepreneurial footsteps. He served as an executive at two companies before becoming ICE’s president in 1982. Over the course of Coppola’s 36-year career in coin-op, he led the development and release of more 150 arcade games and built a one-product company into a coin-operated game industry leader.

Innovative Concepts in Entertainment’s (ICE) first product, Chexx (a “bubble hockey” arcade game), was released in 1982. Chexx drew on earlier mechanical table hockey games like the kind Coppola had played in law school. However, Chexx added new elements to the game, such as a virtually unbreakable Lexan dome, an electronic scoreboard, and immersive sounds effects, including cheering and booing crowds, organ music, and the U.S. national anthem. The game became a hit, selling more than 5,000 units in its first year, while it rivaled and often exceeded the on-location earnings of many coin-operated video games.

Coppola licensed the game concept for Cyclone from a Japanese developer before modifying and redesigning it. The result: an addictive one to three-player game that challenged players to trap a fast-moving light to score tickets. Cyclone became one of the most popular and highest-earning ticket redemption games of all time, remaining on RePlay magazine’s list of top “Quick Coin Games” for years to come.

Coppola’s strategy to diversify proved particularly important when the market for arcade games slowed in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. The company’s investments in in-house research and development, outside game development partnerships, and upgrades to its manufacturing capabilities all laid the foundations for a string of popular games. Carnival-themed tossing, throwing, and pounding games all helped fuel the growth the company in the 2010s. ICE maintains a leading role in the industry as a “one-stop shop” for redemption games,

sports games, air hockey tables, alley bowlers, coin pushers, skill cranes, merchandisers, video games, (and now even home arcade games), that Coppola began building nearly 40 years ago.

Golden Games Inc. was founded in December 1985 by ICE executives Ralph Coppola and Jack R. Willert to direct resources from the coin-operated game industry into the consumer toy and game industry. Products were meant to appeal to a wider audience and included Pharaoh, a two player board game, and Pen Puppy, an autographable fabric-covered puppy which went into testing by Syracuse University. Far Away Friends, designed by school teacher Vicky Swanson, were dolls dressed in sportswear and sneakers featuring national colors of England, France, Ireland, Israel, Spain, West Germany, Japan and the United States. The dolls came with a membership application for a pen pal from the corresponding country represented by the doll and letter writing tips. A licensing agreement with ICE allowed Golden Games to make a home version of Chexx – SlapShot (\$lap\$hot), an electro-mechanical hockey theme bank. It is unclear whether these products actually made it to store shelves or whether the continuation of the company continued past 1987.

Collection Scope and Content Note

This collection contains materials from Innovative Concepts Entertainment (ICE) and Golden Games, Inc., with the bulk of materials dated between 1982 and 1994. Materials within this collection include correspondence, marketing papers, game concepts, photographs, instruction manuals, articles, catalogs, serials, financial papers, drawings, graphic design papers, and schematics.

Contents are comprised of business papers, product-related materials, collected materials (mainly marketing and press), and game development papers including schematics, concepts, and graphic design work.

The Ralph Coppola papers is arranged into two series, one of which has been further divided into subseries. The materials are housed in one archival document box and two flat file drawers.

Related Materials

Materials transferred to the Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong include serials originally part of this donation.

System of Arrangement

Series I: Innovative Concepts Entertainment (ICE), 1980-2022

Subseries A: Games, 1980-2019

Subseries B: Collected materials, 1982-2022

Series II: Golden Games Inc., 1986-1989

Contents List

Series I: Innovative Concepts Entertainment (ICE), 1980-2022

Scope and Content Note: This series contains materials related to Innovative Concepts Entertainment (ICE), including game development and marketing papers as well as collected business papers. Materials include articles, marketing papers, business papers, correspondence, photographs, printed material, schematics, drawings, and designs.

Subseries A: Games, 1980-2019

Scope and Content Note: This subseries contains materials related to the development and marketing of ICE games and are arranged according to material type with concepts, product sheets, catalogs, manuals, and photos grouped together; additional materials arranged by game title; and generic game papers at the end of the subseries. Contents include marketing papers, photographs, printed papers, drawings, and schematics.

Note that Turbo Drive and Ice Cold Beer may have been by Innovative Creations in Entertainment, possibly ICE or related. Innovaciones Recreativas, S.A. may also be a denomination of ICE, which created Olympic Hockey.

Box 1

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| Folder 1 | Game concepts, n.d.
[2 minute Drill Football (c. 2005), Centipede, Fire It-Up] |
| Folder 2 | Game product sheets, 1983-2019, n.d.
[All In, Bozo's Grand Prize Game (1997), Centipede Chaos (2019), Chexx (1983), Deal or No Deal (2008), Fire Escape (1984), Frantic Fred, Full Court Fever, Full Court Fever (Frenzy II), Humpty Dumpty, Iceball, Kixx (1984), Mini Dunxx, Mouse Attack, Super Chexx (1982), Tickets 'n' Tunes, Turbo Drive (1988)] |
| Folder 3 | Game catalogs, n.d.
[ICE (cranes), Kasco (a.k.a. Kansai Seiki Seisakusho Co.)] |
| Folder 4 | Game manuals/instructions, c. 1983-1988 and n.d.
[Cyclone (1994), Full Court Frenzy (c. 1980), Olympic Hockey (c. 1983), Chexx Hockey Game (1983), Turbo Drive car motor installation (c. 1988)] |
| Folder 5 | Game photographs, 1983-1984 and n.d.
[½ Pint Frenzy (c. 2005), Chexx (1983), Cyclone (1994), The Flintstones (c. 1994), Full Court Frenzy (c. 1980), Hungry Hungry Hippos (c. 1991), Lunar Tron: Spacey Racers, Rock 'n Moon Rally, Street Fever, Super Chexx (1982), Pixy Prize, Wheel of Fortune (c. 2004)] |
| Folder 6 | Ice Hockey/Chexx articles and statistics, 1983 |
| Folder 7 | Iceball mechanism images and descriptions, n.d. |
| Folder 8 | Marketing papers – distributor price list, game descriptions, Cyclone testing, Dunk N' Alien press release, 1995-2004 |

**Map Case 8,
Drawer 4**

Folder 1	Alley Roller – schematics and drawing, 1995
Folder 2	Bozo’s Grand Prize Game – game marquee design (Bozo and baskets) and cabinet drawing, c. 1997
Folder 3	Buster Bubbles – cabinet designs and drawings, 2007
Folder 4	Chexx – schematics, 1982, 1987 [possibly some for Super Chexx]
Folder 5	Cyclone – schematics, 1994
Folder 6	Deal or No Deal – cabinet drawings, 2003
Folder 7	Double Trouble and Triple Threat – cabinet designs and drawings, 2002
Folder 8	Dump the Ump – schematics and cabinet drawing, 1991-1992
Folder 9	Frantic Fred – image/text design, 1998
Folder 10	Free Fall Cabinet designs and drawings, n.d.
Folder 11	Full Court Fever – text/font drawings, n.d.
Folder 12	Full Court Frenzy – text/font drawings, c. 1980
Folder 13	Ice Cold Beer – cabinet drawing, c. 2003 [possibly by Innovative Creations in Entertainment]
Folder 14	Jack ‘n’ Jill – schematics, 1992, 1994

**Map Case 8,
Drawer 5**

Folder 1	Mouse Attack – schematics, cabinet drawings and design, 1996
Folder 2	Pro-Ball cabinet – drawing, n.d.
Folder 3	Soccer Bank – schematic, 1990
Folder 4	Super Chexx – Main PCB schematic, 1988
Folder 5	Tickets ‘n’ Tunes – text/font drawings, n.d.
Folder 6	General game/cabinet schematics, 1991-1994
Folder 7	Game schematics, 1991-1994 [Razzle Dazzle, Mother Hubbard, Old Lady that Lives in a Shoe, Pro Pitch, Panda Pitch, Dump the Ump, Humpty Dumpty, Lil’ Dump the Ump, Lil’ Hoopshot, Piggy Pass, 3 Lil’ Pigs]
Folder 8	Game cabinet drawings, 1996 and n.d. [Cobra Hunt, Humpty Dumpty, Street Fever]
Folder 9	Untitled game schematics and drawings, 1992-1994 and n.d.

Subseries B: Collected materials, 1982-2022

Scope and Content Note: This subseries includes collected materials and business papers of ICE and are arranged by material type. Contents are comprised of articles, business papers, correspondence, photographs, printed material, and designs.

Box 1

Folder 9	Articles (copied), 1998-2014 [some photocopied July 2022]
Folder 10	Advertisement for Bud Light featuring Chexx, 2000 [original newsprint; copy in box 1, folder 9]

- Folder 11 Business papers – account listing, license agreement addendum (for Cyclone), 1995
- Folder 12 Correspondence, 1982-1983
- Folder 13 Correspondence to I.C.E., 1984-2014
- Folder 14 Photographs – manufacturing, office, convention display (Innovaciones Recreativas, S.A.), 2003 and n.d.
- Folder 15 Souvenir ad journal honoring Ralph Coppola, 2019 [2019 American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA) lifetime achievement award]

**Map Case 8,
Drawer 5**

- Folder 10 Designs – weld shop, convention enclosure, electronics lab, 1991, 1993

Series II: Golden Games Inc., 1986-2022

Scope and Content Note: This series contains materials related to Golden Games Inc., including business papers, marketing papers, photographs, articles, and designs. Materials are arranged by type.

Box 1

- Folder 16 Business papers, company background, 1986-1989
- Folder 17 Product sheets, 1986
[Far Away Friends (1986), Pharaoh (1986), \$lap\$hot [SlapShot] (1986)]
- Folder 18 Photographs - \$lap\$hot, Far Away Friends, Ralph Coppola, Larry Griffiths, Jack Willert, Vicky Swanson, n.d.
- Folder 19 Articles, 1987 and n.d. [photocopied July 2022]

**Map Case 8,
Drawer 5**

- Folder 11 SlapShot – “purchase layout design,” 1990