

Video Game News

The hottest gaming news on the planet

Farewell, Game Boy

The man behind many of Nintendo's biggest hits passes away

On Oct. 4, gamers lost one of the industry's most influential creators. Gunpei Yokoi, the man behind many of Nintendo's biggest successes in the video game industry, was driving with an associate when they hit the car in front of them. The two got out of their car to inspect the damage when another car sideswiped the two. While his associate suffered only a fractured rib, Yokoi was pronounced dead two hours later at a local hospital at the age of 57.

Yokoi was one of Nintendo's most talented designers, creating their first toy - the "Ultra Hand" - in 1970. Through his early days at Nintendo, Yokoi created several more toys in the Ultra series and headed up Nintendo's first steps into the electronic games market with the hugely successful Game & Watch series. When the Famicom (a.k.a. the Nintendo Entertainment System in the U.S.) came out, Yokoi's R&D + development team at Nintendo Co. Ltd. came up with some of the system's best games under his direction. Metroid, Kid Icarus and others went on to be some of Nintendo's early hits.

The biggest success in Yokoi's career at Nintendo, of course, was the creation of the Game Boy. Small enough to fit in a pocket, the Game Boy was an instant success in Japan and the U.S. Launched in 1989, the Game Boy is still popular worldwide, eight years later. Driven by the success of games from all of Nintendo Co. Ltd.'s R&D divisions, Nintendo rereleased the Game Boy in 1996 as the Game Boy Pocket. Today, the system is beating even the Nintendo 64 in sales in Japan and continues to be strong worldwide.

After creating the Game Boy, Nintendo president Hiroshi Yamauchi called once again on Yokoi to create another machine for the company. Called the Virtual Boy, this machine would not mimic the Game Boy's success. A not-so-portable "virtual-reality" game system, the Virtual Boy was a market failure due to its high \$200 price tag and its red-and-black screen. The VB died despite software support from Nintendo's best.

When the Virtual Boy turned out to be a flop, Yokoi split from Nintendo after more than 30 years to form his own company, Koto Laboratory. Koto was designed as a haven for toy designers, and already the company was hard at work to produce LCD keychain games and other items. At the moment, their only product is a keychain game called "Kunekuneccho." It's not known how his death will affect the future of the small company.

The staff of EGM would like to extend their condolences to Yokoi's family.

www.nintendo.co.jp
www.koto.co.jp



Gunpei Yokoi's Achievements With Nintendo



1966 - Ultra Hand
1968 - Ultra Machine
1969 - Laser Tester
1971 - Ultra Scope
1973 - Laser Kure
1974 - Wild Gunman
Shooting Trainer
1980 - Game & Watch Series



1981 - Donkey Kong (Producer)
1983 - Famicom Controller
Donkey Kong Jr. (Producer)
1984 - Mario Bros. (Producer)
1985 - ROB Robot
Metroid (Producer)
Kid Icarus (Producer)
1989 - Game Boy



1990 - Metroid II (Producer)
Dr. Mario
1992 - Super Scope
1993 - Super Metroid (Producer)
1995 - Virtual Boy
Panel De Pon (a.k.a. Tetris Attack)
1996 - Game Boy Pocket