VIRTUAL PET SECRETS

Magazine

HIDDEN SECRETS FROM JAPAN

TAMAGOTCHI COLLECTOR INFORMATION

LEFT   MODE   ENTER   RIGHT

300 WAYS TO PLAY · WITH VIRTUAL PETS

STUFFED MAME-CHI
HOLDING HONG KONG
COMMEMORATIVE
TAMAGOTCHI

It's A
Virtual Christmas!

VIRTUAL PET SECRETS Magazine

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Breaking News

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MEET THE EDITOR

Gary Polson lives in Stillwater, Okla., with his wife Lora. They operate a small research firm, Polson Enterprises, and a weightlifting equipment accessories firm called Strength Tech, Inc. Gary has master's degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Physical Education from Oklahoma State University. Gary has also been involved in various consulting, legal, technical and business research projects, several of them with connections to Asia.

In May 1996, Gary began pursuing an idea for creating a "virtual pet" that would live on the Internet. It would give children an opportunity to learn more about the responsibilities of a pet before they had a "real one." Gary created the Virtual Pet Home Page and began posting information about other virtual pets, beginning with the "pet rock." He was soon caught up in the whirlwind of the key chain virtual pet industry.

Gary enjoys reviewing new pets for posting on his Web site and visiting with others about virtual pets. He can be reached via e-mail at
polsong@virtualpet.com or through his World Wide Web site.
http://www.virtualpet.com/vp

GONE FISHIN'!

HERE'S THE 4-1-1!

STILL NOT TOO FAMILIAR WITH KEY CHAIN VIRTUAL PETS? THIS INFORMATION WILL GET YOU STARTED.

INTRODUCTION

In late 1996, Bandai introduced the Tamagotchi in Japan. It is a small, hand-held game that allows you to own a "virtual pet." The Tamagotchi, or "lovable egg," is a flattened, egg-shaped unit that fits nicely into the palm of your hand. It has a liquid crystal display (LCD) that allows you to see your pet, and three buttons to take care of it with. Tamagotchi also have a small speaker so they can call you when they need attention.

The game begins with the hatching of an egg. Tamagotchi grow up to be one of several different characters, depending upon how well you take care of them and which version of the game you have. This makes the game more interesting and challenging.

Just like real pets, virtual pets require feeding, playing games with them, cleaning up after them (they "poop" just like a real pet), discipline and injections or visits to the doctor. Many have a "light" that must be turned off at night. A status screen shows you how your pet is doing. You have to be very attentive to raise a "perfect" pet.

Several new key chain pets can be linked together either with a cable or by actually connecting the cases together. Some pets link to fight; other pets link to become friends, marry and reproduce. This makes the game even more fun, because you can play it with your friends.

THE VIRTUAL PET EXPLOSION

These small pets rapidly took Japan by storm. The craze in Japan created long lines, and the pets were sold on the street for as much as 20 times their list price, which is about $16.
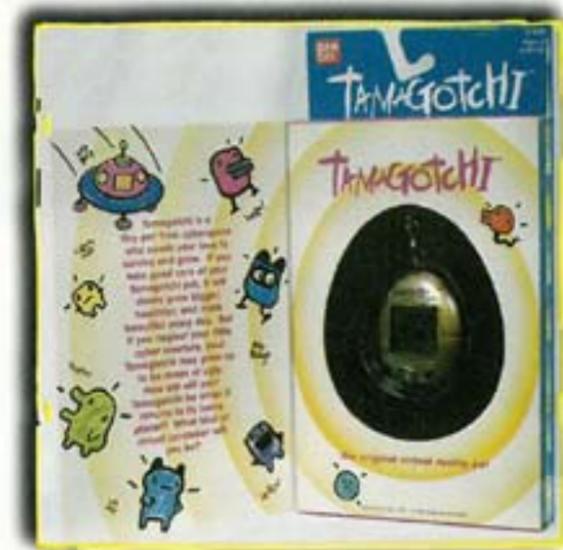
The January 27, 1997, issue of the Washington Post reported a line of almost 2,000 people in the Ginza shopping district of Tokyo, with many of them having camped out overnight in hopes of purchasing a Tamagotchi.

When Bandai introduced the Tamagotchi in the United States on May 1, 1997, at the F.A.O. Schwarz flagship store in New York City, a giant purple and pink walk-around Tamagotchi made its grand entrance to the store by Brinks truck.

On August 15, 1997, Bandai announced it had sold 4.5 million Tamagotchi in North America and 14.5 million pieces worldwide.

Now there are hundreds of different key chain pets being sold all over the world. Many people collect the pets. Manufacturers are creating special "collectors editions," and Bandai is frequently releasing new colors for the Tamagotchi.

THE TOYS-R-US GOLD SPECIAL EDITION TAMAGOTCHI

POCKET LOVE

Hundreds of virtual-pet-related sites are popping up on the Internet. It is hard to believe all of this happened in just one year.

VIRTUAL PET SECRETS MAGAZINE

Virtual Pet Secrets Magazine will help you learn more about virtual pets. It will teach you how to care for them, to understand the differences in the many pets, and help you select the perfect pet for you. This issue is packed with articles to get you interested and involved in this collectibles craze!

The "Evolution" article describes other kinds of virtual pets that came before key chain pets. The article about trends and developments regarding virtual pets will help you recognize the various features of a virtual pet. Two virtual pet collectors graciously agreed to share their large collections with you via the pages of this publication.

The "Frequently Asked Questions" article will answer many of your questions about virtual pets. Plus, this issue features a late-breaking review of the latest virtual pet from Bandai, the Angelgotchi! All this information and much more is in this issue for you, the virtual pet enthusiast. Enjoy!

COLLECTING KEY CHAIN VIRTUAL PETS

One collector shows how easy it is to get wrapped up in the virtual pet craze.

By Gloria Ulbrich Fritz

Ifirst learned about virtual pets from a newspaper article published in January 1997. The article showed a "pet" that was made with a computer chip and dangled from a key chain. This key chain toy that could "grow" a pet was on sale in Japan, and people were going crazy about it. It was to arrive in the United States in the summer.

I thought a virtual pet would be a perfect gift for my daughter, who wants to be a veterinarian and who has had just about every "real" pet possible. I knew I would have to buy one for her as a birthday present.

By June, I had almost forgotten the idea of a key chain pet, but then my daughter's key ring broke, and I remembered that newspaper article. Going to different stores and inquiring about a "key chain pet" was a frustrating process. "A what?" the sales clerks would say. "We don't have any pets hanging from a key chain that run on a battery." After a while, I just gave up trying to describe what these things were.

About a week later, I got lucky! I happened to be in one store looking for something else, and I stumbled by a display that contained key chain pets. When I looked at the long line of "potential pet owners" winding around the store, I decided I'd better stand in line, too. I was quite relieved to know that finally there was such a thing!

I waited in line for about a half-hour and was able to grab one of the last ones, a Tamagotchi. I asked if they had any more. They didn't, of course. The sales personnel said they sold all of them in a few hours. They did have another type of virtual pet, under the name Giga Pets. They had a Compu Kitty, a Digital Doggie and a Micro Chimp. The store had a limit of only two pets per person. I thought about how cute the dog was and what a perfect gift it would be for the dog lover in my family, so I bought it.

Later that evening, I searched on the Internet for "Tamagotchi." I found about 10 sites listed and visited them. They were quite informative about what the new kind of toy was, how to care for it and what it does. Little did I know that this was only the beginning! The next morning, I went back and bought the Compu Kitty and the Micro Chimp Giga Pets, planning to give them to relatives as holiday gifts.

The next day, I had an appointment with an eye doctor and noticed a sign in a toy store window as I was passing that said, "We have virtual pets." Immensely curious, my children and I stopped in and found the cutest key chain pet, a "Ganbare Inuda-kun." The store owner said he didn't have any Tamagotchi, but these were the Japanese "clone" of them. He said these pets live to be 99 years old (one actual day equals one year in a virtual pet's life) and that these pets had more functions than the other ones. It was only a clone, but the orange, egg-shaped case was bright and colorful, and the little dog's head resting on the top of the case was detailed enough, so we bought it even though it wasn't an "original" Tamagotchi.

What I found most amazing was that, a few days later, I did another search on the Internet and found that more than 100 sites had cropped up involving virtual pets! Virtually overnight the Internet was filled with news of Tamagotchi and all kinds of pets. This key chain pet idea was really growing!

The next morning, my children and I jumped in the car and got lucky again! We found two lonely little pets dangling from a rack in the store – a Giga Alien and a Bit Critter. "What a shame to let those poor pets not have a home," my daughter commented. Of course, I bought them.

What a difference several days had made! Upon visiting other stores, salespeople seemed to know what virtual pets were, unlike the situation I had encountered not long before. Store clerks were now sympathetic and apologetic that they didn't have any in stock. No one could provide any information concerning when deliveries were going to be made. It was the same story wherever we'd go. "Sold out" was an all-too-familiar phrase in the stores, and that made my quest for virtual pets even more frustrating. I was now caught up in "Tamagotchi Fever."

After visiting many stores and coming home empty-handed, I was determined to find a place on the Internet where people could buy and sell virtual

pets. To my amazement, there was a site where people posted ads for selling virtual pets, and they were trading them for other collectible items, like Beanie Babies or macadamia nuts from Hawaii.

I was tempted to buy virtual pets from other collectors I found on the World Wide Web, but it was hard to determine which sellers I could trust. Many ads offered a wide variety of pets to select from. Each seller, however, wanted a money order before the product would be shipped. Who would simply send money to a stranger? And, if I did, what guarantee did I have of actually getting the product I purchased? Trying to think this through logically and studying the ads, I decided to buy from a site on the Internet that would take a credit card. I felt more comfortable buying from an established commercial site.

The next problem I encountered was price, because by this time the costs of Tamagotchi had increased substantially thanks to the law of supply and demand. Scouring the Internet, I found an established store that was selling the pet I wanted at a reason-

able price. I used their "secure browser" site – one that allows financial transactions to be conducted with enhanced security measures – and hoped it was a legitimate site. There was a phone number on the site, so I called and placed an order. I was on pins and needles the entire time waiting for the package to arrive. It was a *very long* three days. Once the package arrived, however, all of my worries disappeared, and I was quite pleased with the pet – a beautiful, turquoise blue U.S. Tam 1.

Next, I focused my attention to the original cause of all this dysfunction in my life, a Japanese Tam. When I went to various Internet bulletin boards, the Japanese Tam I was sold out, but a Japanese Tam II was available, so I

bought that. I started acquiring a new vocabulary and was getting quite knowledgeable about the "generations" of Tamagotchi, as well as other virtual pets such as Giga Pets, Nanos and clones.

A "generation" is a particular type of Tamagotchi, determined principally by the icons on the pet screen as well as the type of game. Then came the "waves" of colors and more terminology. The original U.S. Generation 1 Tams have six colors – a translucent blue with yellow buttons, a white with blue border and buttons, red with yellow border and buttons, a lime green with yellow border and buttons, a yellow with orange border and buttons, and purple with pink border and buttons.

The second shipment to hit the United States had different colors, or "waves." To add to the collecting craziness, there was a big difference in key chain styles. A heavy link (strong key chain, as it is called) was found with some pets, while others had a "beady" key chain type. The strong key chain link is more desirable than the beady type because it was one of the first types made before Bandai (the maker of Tamagotchi) changed its production to a more economical beady type of chain.

Beyond that, certain colors were then considered "rare" and sought after even more, like the U.S. Generation 1's clear turquoise blue and the white with blue border, which were all harder to find and more in demand.

Next entered the U.S. Generation 2 Tamagotchi with a brand new game and different characters and icons. Characters are the different cyber-creatures your pet can grow into depending on the care given to it.

It seemed that every time I went looking for one color or type of virtual pet, I would find another completely different type of pet on the market. Some stores would get in only a Giga Compu Kitty or Digital Doggie, while another store would get in a Giga Virtual Alien or Bit Critter. Another store would have only the Nano Puppy or Kitty, while another place would have a human form of pet, a Nano Baby. Each of these, too, came in basic colors, with certain colors being more "desirable" than the others and thus harder to find.

Most of the pets I've acquired were discovered while I was out on another errand, like going to get a haircut. Often, I've just been in the right place at the right time. These finds were the greatest surprises because I didn't have to face disappointment at stores that were sold out of the pets I wanted.

The challenge of collecting virtual pets is that new

"breeds" of pets keep appearing in the stores. The marketplace has become a sort of "virtual pet zoo," with all sorts of animals invading the stores. Not only are there the basic dogs, cats, dinosaurs and chickens, but new animals are finding their way to store shelves, such as turtles, penguins and even bears! The buyer, if lucky enough to find one, can even select the "type" of bear, from a Koala Bear to a Honey Bear. Even the human

form of a "baby" has been transformed into a child growing up to be a worker or doctor or even a "gangster" (Rikou Rikou Chan), depending on how it is taken care of and how well it is disciplined.

Even though all of these pets have the same basic functions – eating, playing, sleeping, cleaning up, etc. – new ones are coming out with different features like clothes and temperature controls – all of it, of course, for the "comfort" of the pet.

During the past few months, while the flood of new pets was continuing, subtle changes were appearing, too. The outside shell shapes have changed even within a particular manufacturer. For example, the Gigas now have different shell and key chain styles. The Digital Doggie now has a new shape even though the color is the same, and the T-Rex Dinosaur not only has a different shape, but within the same shape case there is a different type of key chain.

Collecting virtual pets has become a family affair, and my

JAPANESE TAMAGOTCHI BOOK'S

children and I are always on the lookout for new types of animals. This has been a fun project for us, and everyone has a part in it.

Shopping on the Internet is a fun way to collect our treasures, and we've met many helpful and interesting people along the way, all using a cautious approach. For anyone shopping for virtual pets in stores or on the Internet, I have a few suggestions:

1. Do your homework! Study the sites on the Internet and familiarize yourself with general prices for a particular item. Shop around the different Web sites as well as retail stores near you that have virtual pets. Know what the product sells for and compare that to the asking price of the seller. Then you can make an informed decision.

2. Know what you are buy- ing! If you purchase from an established Web seller, then chances are you will get a mint condition product. If you buy from a private seller, ask questions! If you want a mint product, ask if the seal on the box has been broken. If it has been used, ask about the condition of it and if there are any scratches on the case or screen.

3. Ask questions! If you are going to buy from a private seller, e-mail the person first. Before you send your money, ask for the person's phone number and give him or her a call. A little time spent on a phone call is well worth it for your peace of mind.

4. Look around! When shopping at retail stores, check out a variety of places. Many times your little boutique shop will be selling the hottest new pet. Look in clothing stores, discount variety shops and even major department stores.

5. Be ready to buy a virtual pet on the spot. Chances are, if you come back later, it will be gone!

6. Start your collection with a theme. Decide which pets you want to collect, then look for them. There are many kinds of pets in the marketplace.

7. As you shop, be on the lookout for "rare" colors or styles (remember, you did your homework, right?). Look for certain colors that are more in demand and be observant of those decorations on the cases, along with the styles of key chains and even the packaging of the boxes.

8. Watch for special promotions, like the exclusive Toys-R-Us Gold Special Edition Tamagotchi and the Barbie Giga Pet. They have special value because other collectors want them for their sets as well.

9. Get creative! Don't be afraid to trade your collectible item for the product you want. Many people are even willing to swap CDs for a tam.

10. Above all else, have fun! Buying and trading virtual pets can be a rewarding family project. Enjoy it!

On the next several pages, you'll see photos of some of the virtual pets in my personal collection. How many of them do YOU have?

Gloria Ulbrich Fritz's
Virtual Pet Collection!

Japanese Tamagotchi Version One

Japanese Tamagotchi Version Two

U.S. Tamagotchi Version One

U.S. Tamagotchi Version Two

U.S. Tamagotchi Version One Assortment

THE FIRST WAVE OF COLORS

U.S. Tamagotchi Version Two Assortment

U.S. Tamagotchi Version Two Assortment

Nano Pets
NANO KITTY, NANO PUPPY, NANO BABY

BIT
CRITTER

COMPU
KITTY

GIGA PETS

KOMPUTER
KOALA

101 DALMATIANS
(with new clip chain)

16

GIGA PETS

101 Dalmatians
Baby T-Rex
Little Mermaid
Komputer Koala
Floppy Frog

Bit Critter
Compu Kitty
Baby T-Rex *(TEAR DROP SHAPE)*
Virtual Alien
Digital Doggie
Microchimp

17

Micropet Trans/X

Barbie Giga Pet

Giga Pet Little Mermaid
(ROUND AND CLIP-ON KEY CHAIN STYLES)

Smarty Time

DNA Fish
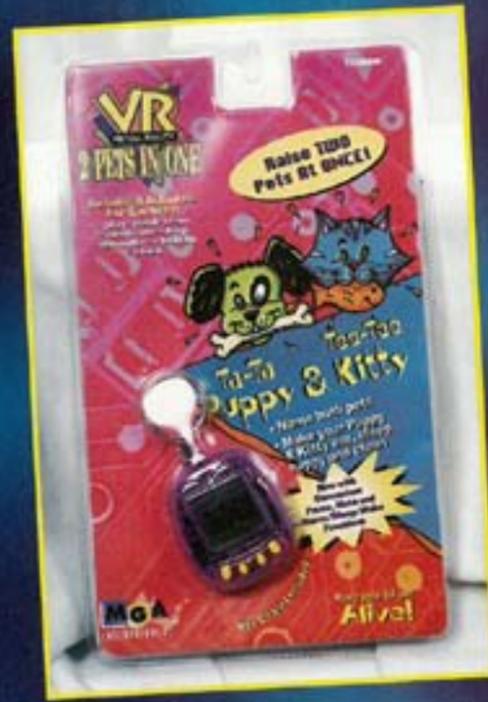
VR Two-Pets-In-One

Pocket Puppy

Dinkie Penguin

Baby Byte

Digital Monster

Virtual Reality
Pet Puppy
Game
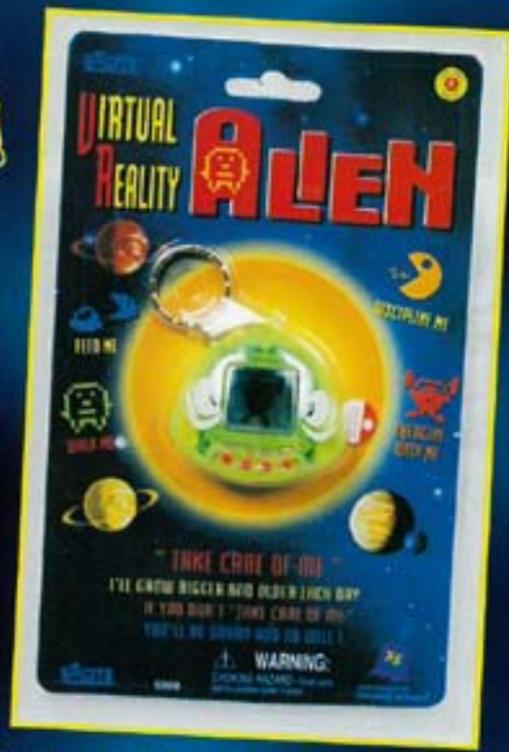
Virtual Reality Alien

Electronic Magic Egg

Perpetual
Pet

Micropet
Chicken

Poochie
Puppy Watch

Cute Puppy

(PAW-SHAPED)

Chick Pet

Electronic
Pocket Chicken

Raku Raku
Dinokun

Electronic
Pocket
Penguin
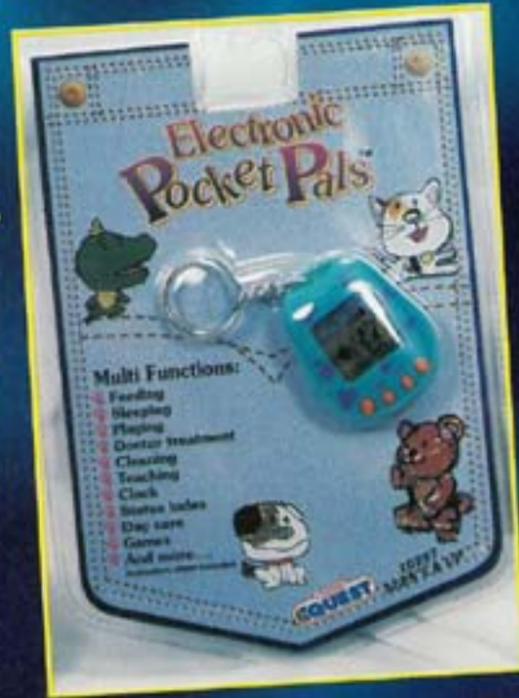
Mr. Funny

Virtual Reality
Bear Pet Game

Super
Pet

Cute Puppy

(EGG-STYLE)

Nekotcha
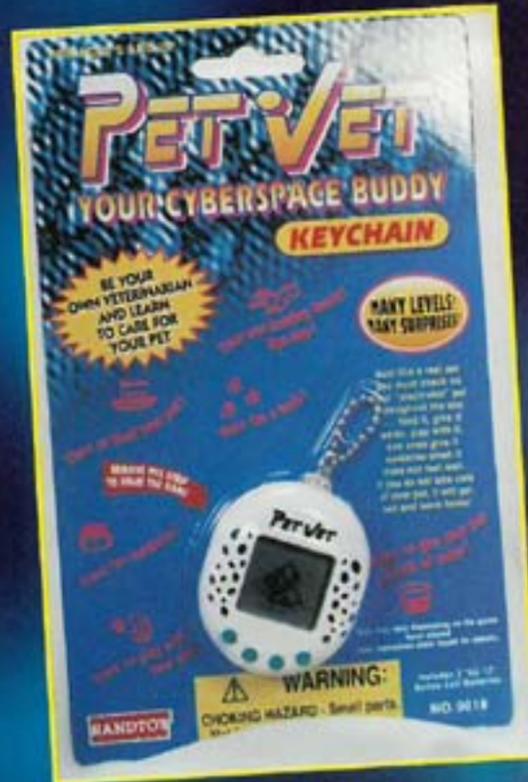
Koinu Race
Puppy Game

Pet Vet

Bow Wow

Inutcha

(DOG VERSION OF NEKOTCHA)
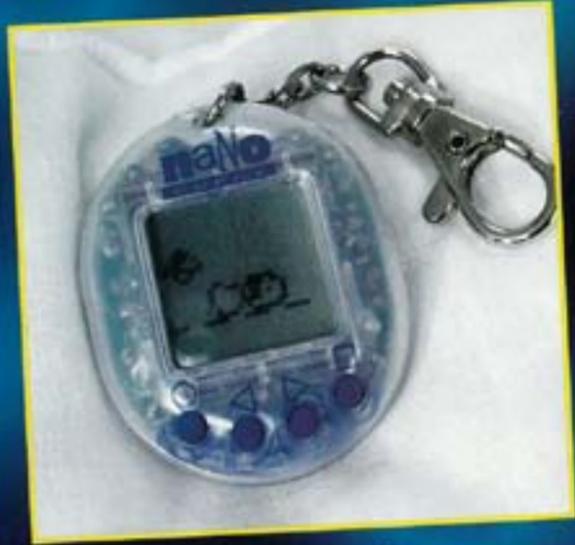
Nano Puppy

Pocket Kitty
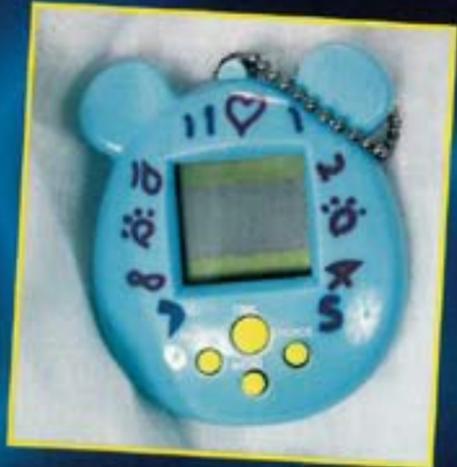
Nekotcha

Chicknoch
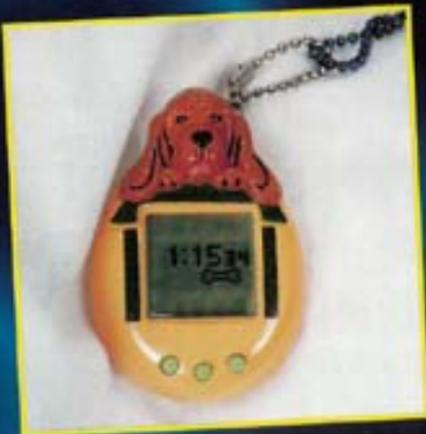
Ganbare!
Inuda-kun

My Baby Bat
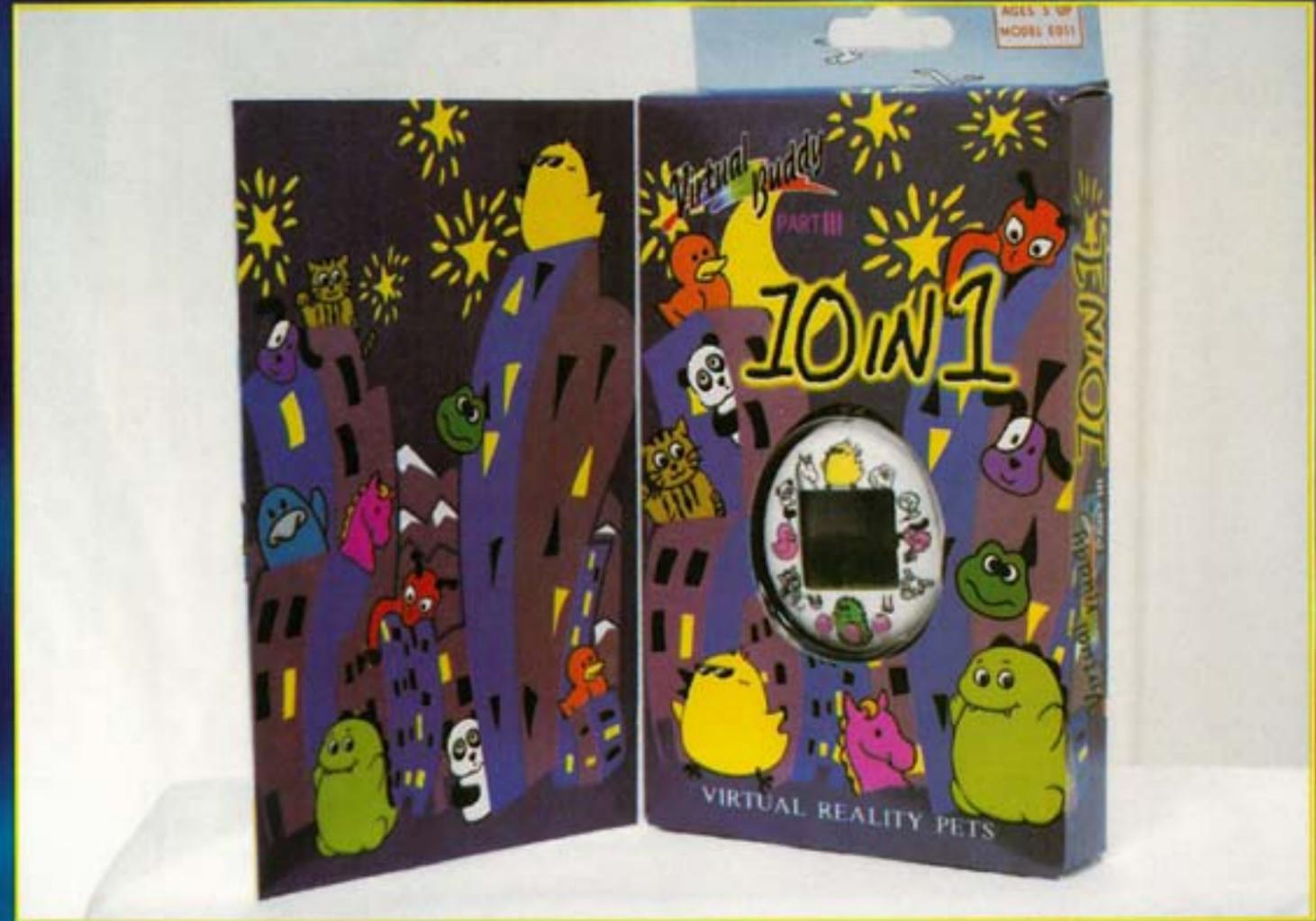
Virtual Buddy Part Three 10-in-1

24

25

Gloria Ulbrich Fritz's
Virtual Pet Collection!

Rikou Rikou Chan

Virtual Pets On The Web

The Internet is a terrific source of information for virtual pet collectors.

When virtual pets became extremely popular in Japan in late 1996, the Japanese turned to the World Wide Web to find where they could purchase the pets, to tell others about their pets, to find "foster care" for their pets and even to find a place to bury their pets (virtual pet cemeteries). As the craze sprea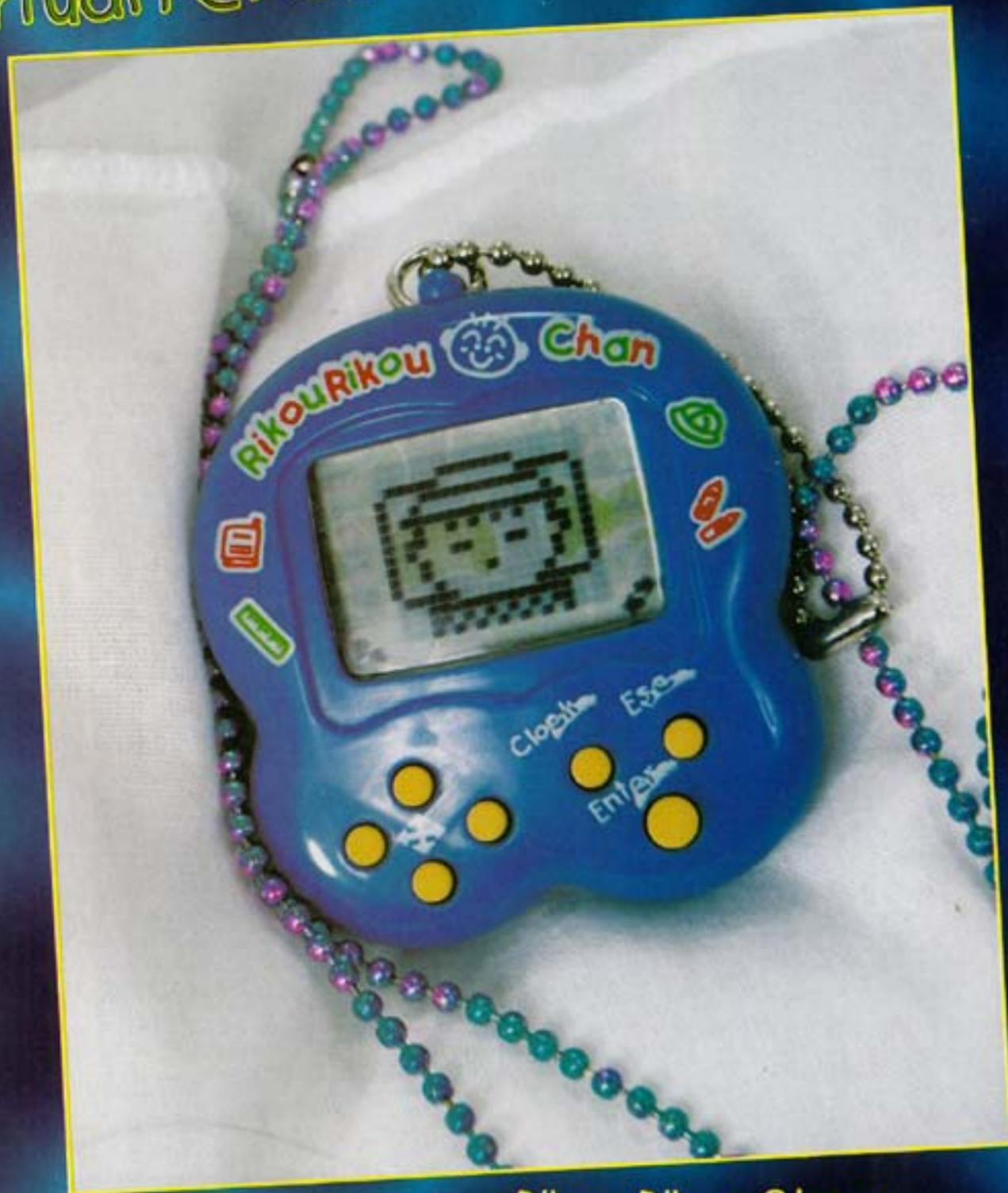d to the United States, more and more people turned to the Internet for virtual pet information. Now, virtual pets are sold, traded, written about, simulated and even designed using the Internet. The

Internet has been a major participant in the rapid spread of virtual pet collecting, providing an easy way for those initially interested in the hobby to find others with similar interests and communicate with each other.

Collectors can read about the latest pets and post images of their pets on Web sites. They can learn where certain hard-to-find pets are for sale and how to better play the game. As these virtual pet pioneers found others with similar interests, their ranks grew rapidly.

The World Wide Web links listed are good places to start in you're looking for more information about virtual pets. Of course, parents should supervise their children as the youngsters surf the Net.

Key Chain Virtual Pet Internet Links

NAME: CyberVet for Tamagotchi
URL: http://www.badrise.u-net.com/cybervet.htm
DESCRIPTION: A very interesting Tamagotchi Web site in England

NAME: Robert's Classic Collector's Museum Web site
URL: http://www.primenet.com/~rworne/feature.shtml
DESCRIPTION: Robert Worne was a major contributor and technical consultant for this issue of Virtual Pet Secrets Magazine.

NAME: Tamagotchi Fever (see photo, left)
URL: http://www.maido.to/tamahome.html
DESCRIPTION: A very popular Tamagotchi Web site

NAME: Virtual Pet Home Page
URL: http://www.virtualpet.com/vp
DESCRIPTION: The editor in chief for this publication, Gary Polson, is the Webmaster for this popular site. It covers all types of virtual pets and developments in the virtual pet industry.

Manufacturer Web Sites

NAME: Bandai American Inc. (Tamagotchi):
URL: http://www.bandai.com

NAME: Nano Pets
URL: http://www.playmatestoys.com

NAME: Giga Pets
URL: http://www.gigapets.com

Newsgroup

alt.toys.virtual-pets

DESCRIPTION: This newsgroup allows virtual pet enthusiasts to visit with one another and to share information.

VIRTUAL PET FRENZY!

SERIES PETS

By Gary Polson

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS INVOLVING KEY CHAIN VIRTUAL PETS REVEAL THE CRAZE SHOWS NO SIGNS OF SLOWING DOWN.

A s Webmaster of the Virtual Pet Home Page, **http://www.virtualpet.com/vp**, I have seen hundreds of new key chain virtual pets over the past year. As I observed the industry, I noticed new pets often have new or additional features that build upon the characteristics of earlier pets. The features of these new pets are then rapidly copied by other pets.

With considerable assistance from Japanese key chain game collector Robert Worne, I began to keep track of these new features and trends on my Web site. What follows is an extension of that project. The order in which trends are listed in this report approximates the order in which they occurred from late 1996 to November 1997.

WHAT CAUSED THE TRENDS?

Many enthusiasts were no longer captivated by the basic three-button, egg-shaped dog, cat and dinosaur pets. So, in an attempt to sell more pets to existing customers and to attract new customers, manufacturers began adding new features to their virtual pets. As pets entered the market with new characteristics, they battled it out in the marketplace. The "survival of the fittest" in the marketplace resulted in the best features being copied by the next generation of pets. Pets with unsuccessful or boring features were withdrawn from the market. As hundreds of new pets were being introduced during the first year, the trends occurred very rapidly.

1. At First There Was ONE, Then There Were NONE

Bandai's Tamagotchi took Japan by storm in late 1996 and the rest of the world in 1997. Even with proven suppliers, a large distribution system and sound financial backing, Bandai was unable to meet the demand for Tamagotchi. Everywhere you went, there were "sold out" signs. Stores announced when their next orders would be received, and long lines formed with people waiting for the pets. Some people believe Bandai may have taken on the U.S. and European markets before meeting the demand in Japan in order to keep the excitement and media attention going in Japan.
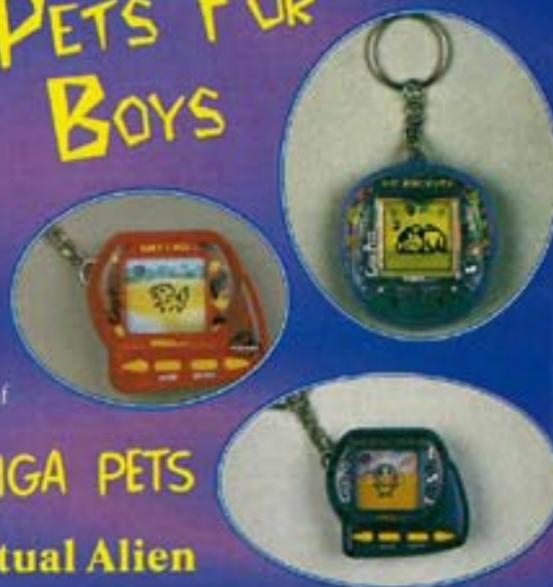
2. Pets For Boys, Too

The Tamagotchi was designed for girls. It was a big hit with Japanese school girls and, surprisingly, also was used by boys and men. The success of
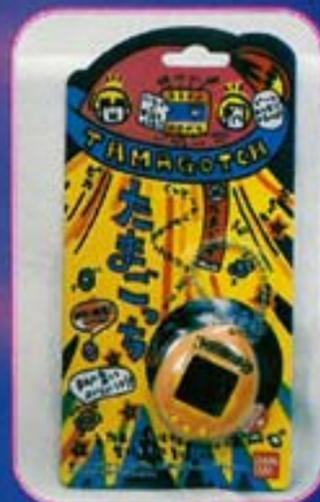
the Tamagotchi among boys encouraged other manufacturers to design new pets specifically for boys. Tiger Electronics' Giga Pets (T-Rex, Alien, Bit Critter and MicroChimp) were the first to target U.S. boys.

3. Rapid Proliferation

The word "rapid" cannot be given enough emphasis. New models were introduced almost daily in what may be the fastest toy introduction ever seen. The basic components (chip, display, speaker and plastic case) can be produced in large volumes very quickly. The strong electronic manufacturing environment of China and Taiwan, with their weak intellectual property protection (patents and copyrights), also contributed to the speed of the movement. Virtual pets were basically unheard of in the United States before March 1997. By September, I had well over 150 models displayed on my Virtual Pet Home Page.

This quick proliferation of pets seemed to come from every direction at once. Manufacturers with one pet turned it into a whole series of pets. Other manufacturers "cloned" the existing pets. Pets representing additional types of animals, including life forms that do not exist (monsters and aliens), were soon available. Even humans became pets. Many pets originally intended for sale in Japan flowed into the United States. Each of these methods is discussed briefly below:

A. "Series" Pets: The Tamagotchi was a single pet, but new manufacturers began to enter the market with two to five pets. This "group of pets" used similar cases, the same electronic chip and followed the same basic "life map." Initially, they were often a cat, dog, dinosaur, chicken and baby. The earliest series pets were kitty and puppy pets designed for use in Japan.

THE FIRST ONE!

JAPANESE TAMAGOTCHI

PETS FOR BOYS

TIGER ELECTRONICS' GIGA PETS

Baby T-Rex, Micro Chimp, Virtual Alien

NANO PETS

Nano Kitty, Nano Puppy, Nano Baby

CLONES

NEKOTCHA AND PERPETUAL PET


CUTE PUPPY AND PET VET

Giga Pets were the first series of virtual pets designed for U.S. use. They were followed by Playmates' Nano Pets, which in turn were followed by many others. In October 1997, Radio Shack entered the market with another basic dog, cat and dinosaur (PC Puppy, Data Cat and Micro Dino).

B. Clones Of Original Pets: The basic Tamagotchi and other early kitty and puppy pets built for sale in Japan have been "cloned" by many manufacturers. Even some clones appear to have been copied again by others. Now dozens of the basic dog, cat, dinosaur and chicken pets differ very little from the original pets. Nano Pets resemble early Japanese kitty and puppy pets. Some pets appeared to be identical except for the packaging.

C. Pets Represent A Wider Variety Of Animals: As the original pets were being cloned, manufacturers also added many new animals as pets, including bats, fish, frogs, lizards, monkeys, pandas, parrots, penguins and turtles, to name a few.

MICROCHIMP

MICRO PET TRANS/X

A L I E N S

BABY BYTE
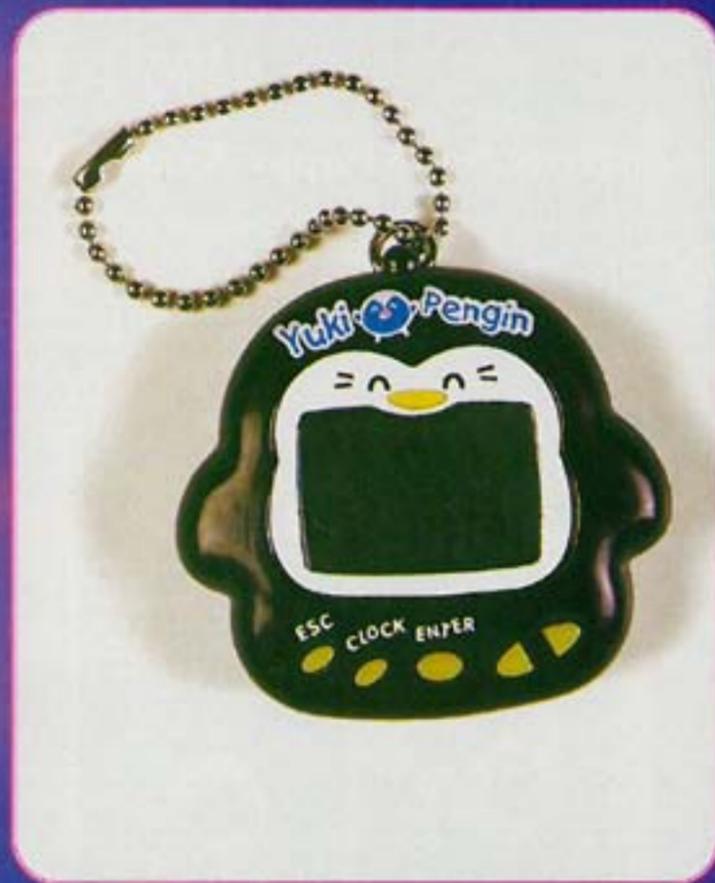
D. Pets Represent Non-Existing Creatures (Aliens And Monsters): "Soyadeto Grey" (an alien) in Japan and Giga Pet's Virtual Alien in the United States launched the Alien category. In Japan, the Gyaoppi was an early "monster" pet that was "sort of" a dinosaur. Many other aliens and monsters soon followed.

E. Human Pets: While the pets were making the rounds as various animals, human pets began to appear. First they were simple baby pets, then girl pets and boy pets. Additional pets representing people were Nano Baby, Venus, My Beauty Baby, Baby Byte, Rikou Rikou Chan and My Baby.

F. U.S. Availability Of Pets Intended For Sale In Japan: Most of the early pets – except the U.S. Tamagotchi, Giga Pets and Nano Pets – were originally designed for sale in Japan. These pets first appeared in the United States in areas with high concentrations of Asian people, such as Los Angeles. Business travelers brought them back from Japan, family members in Japan sent them to family members in the United States, and a few Japanese stores began selling them. Most were sold

YUKI PENGUIN

MY BABY BAT
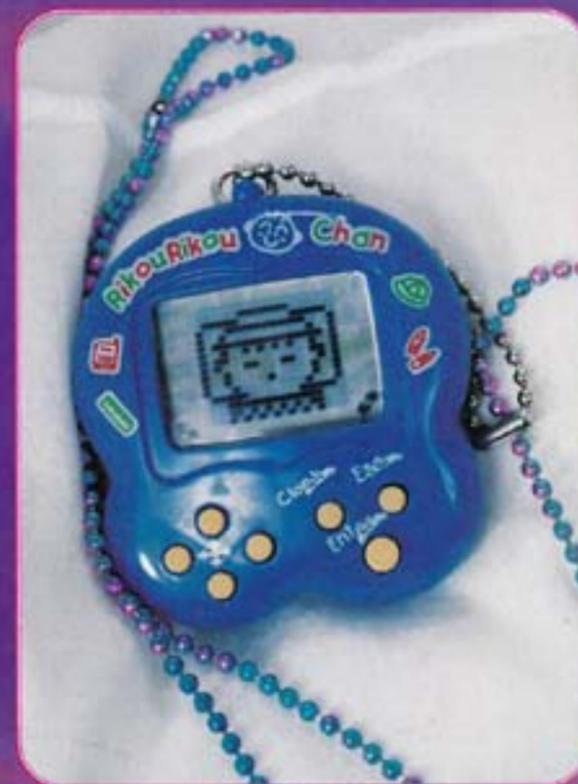
RIKOU RIKOU CHAN

in Japanese packaging with Japanese instructions. The pets were bright, colorful, pretty, interesting and economical.

As interest spread beyond the Japanese population, small vendors began to sell the pets to a much wider audience. Sales soared, large stores began to sell the pets, and even more Japanese pets made their way toward the United States. Some Japanese pets even began to appear in U.S. packaging.

4. Death And Dying

Japan's Tamagotchi ended its life by dying. The Giga Pet kitten and dog ("Digital Doggie") were among the first traditional pets represented by virtual pets that "died" in the United States. Several pets showed angels on the screen when they died. Many users were startled when their pets died. Others wondered if the game was over and could not be replayed. Some pets run away or go to "outer space" at the end of the game. Web sites acting as virtual cemeteries for virtual pets allow beloved pets to be properly laid to rest.

5. The Pets' Complexity Is Increasing

More buttons and functions were added to the pets. Making your pet comfortable in the rain, snow and sun with coats, galoshes, scarves, hats and sunglasses was a new challenge. One penguin even had a thermostat control. New pets have many more activities and possible life paths than early versions. Several pets can be "named" by selecting letters one at a time. They play more exciting games with you (tag, a guessing game, shaking hands, fetch, reading and many others). Several pets change into different characters and roles in response to how you care for them. Most new pets have five buttons:

PETS THAT DIED

DIGITAL DOGGIE (NOTE ANGEL ON SCREEN)

PETS INTENDED FOR SALE IN JAPAN

RIKOU RIKOU CHAN

(NOTE THE INCREASING COMPLEXITY OF THE BUTTON ARRANGEMENTS)

SMARTY TIME

(THE U.S. VERSION OF RIKOU RIKOU CHAN)

SAMPLES OF PETS WITH SPECIALLY SHAPED CASES

DNA FISH

POCKET LOVE

POCKET PENGUIN

mode/select, enter, left, right and reset (often on the back). Some pets have additional buttons for other functions, such as muting the sound or linking with other pets.

6. Better Displays

As more functions were added to the pets, the viewing screens were made larger to better observe all the activities and needs of the pets.

7. Specially Shaped Cases

Early clones copied the flattened egg-shaped case of the Tamagotchi. Then minor variations such as a textured dinosaur egg appeared. Some added a dog- or dinosaur-shaped head to the top. Then the basic flattened egg shape itself began to change. Some became much flatter and took on the shape of the face of a pet or a basic geometric shape. Dog houses and fish tanks appeared. Now, many cases assume the shape of the pet itself.

GUAPPI

SEVERAL IN ONE

EIGHT-IN-ONE MINI PETS

GYAOPPI

GIGA PET 101 DALMATIANS

GUAPPI

8. "Several in One" Virtual Pets

In an effort to appeal to more users, manufacturers created "several in one" virtual pets. Some early 8-in-1 pets include a chicken, dog, cat and five other forms. Then came 9-in-1 pets, 10-in-1 pets and "Octo-Pets." Even pets in cases shaped like the pets themselves began to appear as "several in one" pets.

9. Reality No Longer A Necessity

Early on, the pets held somewhat close to reality. As specially shaped cases evolved and manufacturers tried to expand their product lines, reality tended to be overlooked. Dinosaurs found themselves living in dog houses, wearing scarves, drinking tea and using toilets. One dinosaur appeared in a heart-shaped case. Ganbare! and Gyaoppi were early examples of dinosaurs that wore scarves and took

showers. The recently released Wedding Pet dinosaur has a baby-sitter. Many of these abnormal situations resulted from rapidly incorporating new characters into existing games and housings. Others came later when it became apparent that reality could be sidestepped.

10. Virtual Pet Names Sound The Same

The names of virtual pets often contain words selected from two groups. It begins with a selection of one or two words from the following: Pocket, Little, Virtual, Electronic, Cute, Lovely, Sweet and My. This is followed by a word description of the pet: Kitty, Kitten, Puppy, Doggie, Dino and Baby. The name is sometimes ended with the word Pet. Some Japanese phrases that appear in virtual pet names are: tamago (egg), chan, gotchi and yuki (snow). Many pets originally made for the Japanese market have names that "lost a little" in translation. Love Chu (for Love You) and Romi &

Julie (Romeo & Juliet) are examples.

11. Pets Banned from Schools

Many Japanese and U.S. schools banned the pets due to the noise and distractions. Some children had no place to leave their pets to be tended. Many left their mom or dad in charge of their "little friends." Some businesses opened "Virtual Pet Day Care Centers" to care for pets belonging to their employees' children on school days. Others opened independent day care centers.

In Japan, you could search for "foster care" on the Internet. Pause buttons, hibernation buttons and mute buttons began to appear. The "Wedding Pet" has a "baby-sitter" that puts the pet to sleep (pause mode). These developments helped children care for their pets while they were in school.

12. Copyrights

As virtual pets expanded to many different shapes and applications, some Asian pets began to resemble well-known copyrighted characters (Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, 101 Dalmatians and others). China is often challenged for its disregard for patents and copyrights. I do not know if these pets were actually in violation of copyright laws, but I assume that several pets of this nature were. Major U.S. manufacturers began to produce licensed pets.

13. Cases With Built-In Covers

Several pets now sport a flip-down cover. Some have controls in one half and a display in the other. Others just have a snap-down cover like a woman's compact. VR Creatures' T-Rex Dino has a closing cover that makes the entire pet egg shaped.

14. Colors, Transparent Colors, Stripes, Spots And Camouflage

Many pets are now available in several colors. Transparent colors (see-through cases with some color in them) have become very popular. This may have been due to Bandai limiting production quantities of the Tamagotchi transparent cases, which made them more rare. People began to think transparent colors were more rare and therefore better. The U.S. Tamagotchi Version Two introduced several striped units, one with leopard spots and even some with camouflage. The many variations and themes appeal to collectors and youngsters as well.

15. Who Has The Instructions?

Several children do not have a good set of instructions for their pet. They either lost them, never received them or the instructions are in Japanese. Some instructions posted on the Internet are poorly scanned in and very difficult to read. I encourage manufacturers to include legible, easy-to-understand instructions with their pets. I also encourage them to post them on the Internet.

16. Pets With Bad Habits

Just as pets can be used for good, they can also be used for evil. Some human-based pets have occupations or characteristics that might not be viewed as the best choices by parents. Rikou Rikou Chan can grow into a less-than-perfect youth if you do not take good care of him. A Tamahonam Gangster Pet was announced that drank beer, smoked cigarettes and stabbed people. It was toned down before release after a public backlash.

17. Linkable Pets

Some pets can be linked together either physically with their cases or with a cable. This allows the pets to interact, fight, play games with each other, develop friends, mate, reproduce and do all kinds of neat things. It opens up a whole

BUILT-IN COVERS

POCKET BISCUITS
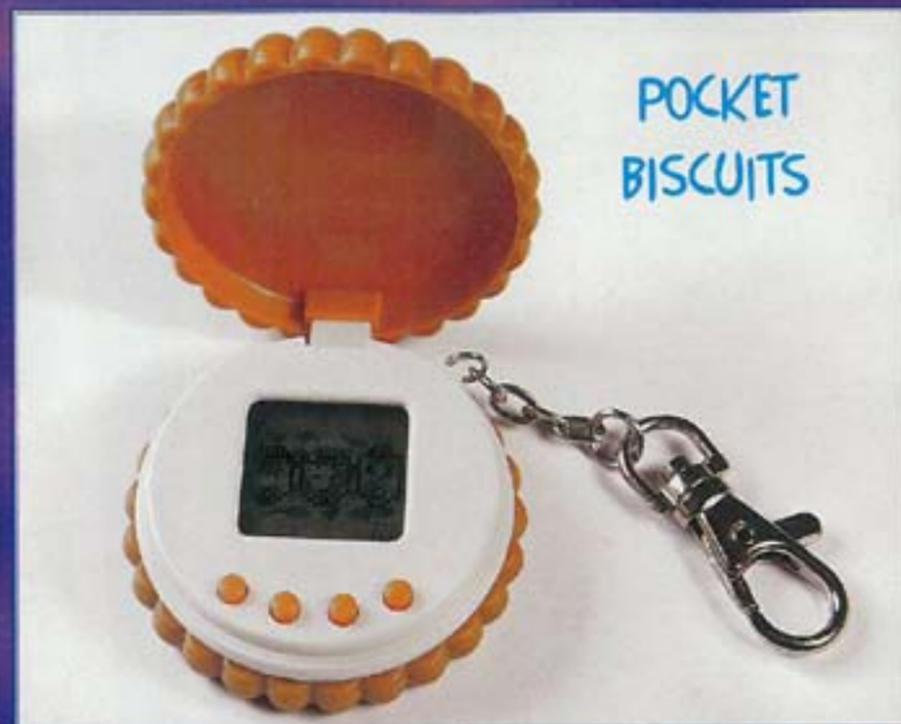
TRANSPARENT COLORS!

COMPU KITTY

DIGITAL DOGGIE

DIGITAL MONSTER

LINKABLE PETS

MULDER AND SCULLY

new dimension to the pets. Early virtual pets were one-person devices. Now you can interact with your friends and their pets. Love-Chu was an early linking virtual pet. Bandai's Digital Monsters link to fight each other. Mulder and Scully are a pair of cats that link and become friends, lovers, have a wedding and become pregnant. The "Wedding Pet" released in October 1997 is a dinosaur pet that links its case to other units to mate.

Bandai is bringing out a pair of new linkable pets called "Osu-chi and Mesu-chi." They are Tamagotchi-shaped with a cap near where the key chain is located on other pets. This "cap" pops off and the two pets "plug together." We can expect to see many more linkable pets soon.

18. Collectible Editions And Key Chains

As more children began to own several pets and many adults became involved as well, collector's editions began to appear. Bandai was the first to capitalize on this by limiting the production of certain colors of the Tamagotchi. This resulted in those colors being rare and more prized. Many pets were "issued" to those standing in long lines, so colors could not be

DIGITAL MONSTER BOOK

selected. Others were sold by mail order or over the Internet, so the buyer was unable to select the color. Some vendors began offering the rarest colors at premium prices. The Hong Kong Commemorative Tamagotchi actually comes with a numbered certificate of authenticity.

Many people collect pets in "unopened boxes." Tamagotchi boxes require you to "rip off" part of the top of the box to get the pet out. Originally, this may have been an "anti-theft" device for stores, but now it also helps collectors know if a box has been opened or not.

Bandai released several special Asian Edition Tamagotchi for the collectibles market. The units represent the culture of certain countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines). They appear to be built for sale in the

United States because the packaging is in English. Bandai also recently introduced a Tamagotchi in a white case with red buttons and green accent around the screen just in time for the 1997 Christmas season.

Some collectors focus on changes in the key chains themselves. Link-type chains, beaded chains and clip-on type chains have been introduced. Giga Pet changed the general body shape of its Baby T-Rex to a "tear drop" shape and added a clip-on key chain. Collectors add changes like these to their collections.

19. Improved Sound And Clocks

Some of the early pets had very loud sounds. More recent pets still make plenty of noise, but they don't require

earplugs. Sound quality is improving from "Beep-Beep" or "Peep-Peep" to much more life-like sounds. Romi & Julie (Pocket Love) may have been the first pet to have "meowing sounds" in July 1997. Mulder and Scully are another example of life-like kitten sounds. Most of the original Japanese pets used 24-hour clocks, so American children were a little confused. Recent pets, such as the VR Creatures series, use 12-hour clocks with A.M. and P.M. labels.

20. "The Sun Never Sets On Virtual Pets"

Many pet packages now bear the CE mark (indicating conformity to the legal requirements of the European Union Directives) and instructions in several languages. The Virtual Pet Home Page receives thousands of visitors daily from more than 30 countries. Special models are being built for sale in many countries.
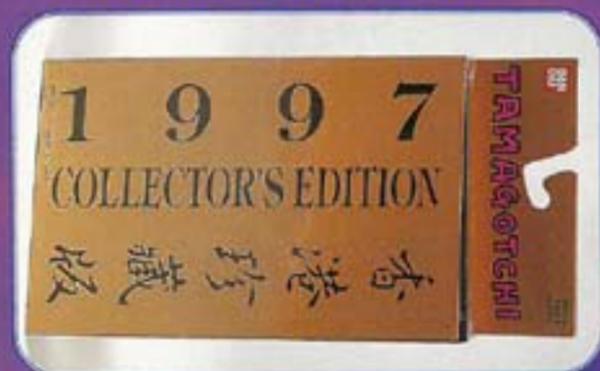
21. Virtual Pet Accessories

Bandai launched several accessories for the Tamagotchi. They included fobs for the key chain, carrying cases for your Tamagotchi, lunch boxes, stickers, books, memo pads, pencils, tissue boxes, towels, hats, T-shirts, socks and even underwear. I recently spoke to their licensing agency, The Beanstalk Group of New York, and they reported more than 20 companies are involved in the licensing efforts.

COLLECTIBLE EDITIONS AND KEY CHAINS

1997 HONG KONG COMMEMORATIVE

1997 HONG KONG COMMEMORATIVE BOX

BABY T-REX
(CHANGES TO TEAR-DROP SHAPE AND CLIP-ON KEY CHAIN)

GANBARE! INUDA-KUN

TAMAGOTCHI ACCESSORIES

(BOARD GAME, STUFFED CHARACTERS, BOOK, CLEAR PROTECTIVE CASES, ERASERS)

TAMAGOTCHI COFFEE MUG

TAMAGOTCHI BOARD GAME

22. Expansion Of Virtual Pets To Other Media and Forms

Tamagotchi games and characters have expanded to a CD-ROM version, a Nintendo Gameboy version, a board game and now Cybies (small bean bag stuffed animals). Java versions of the Tamagotchi game run on the Internet. In Japan, you can even play the game on mobile telephones called Tamapitchi.

Tiger Electronics recently introduced "Friends." These key chain games are very close to virtual pets, but different. Based on TV and movie personalities such as Star Wars characters, Sabrina's cat and Babe the pig, they come in small cases similar to virtual pets.

"Friends" play several new games but do not require the constant care and attention of virtual pets. They are more of a "friend." than a pet.

RECENT OBSERVATIONS

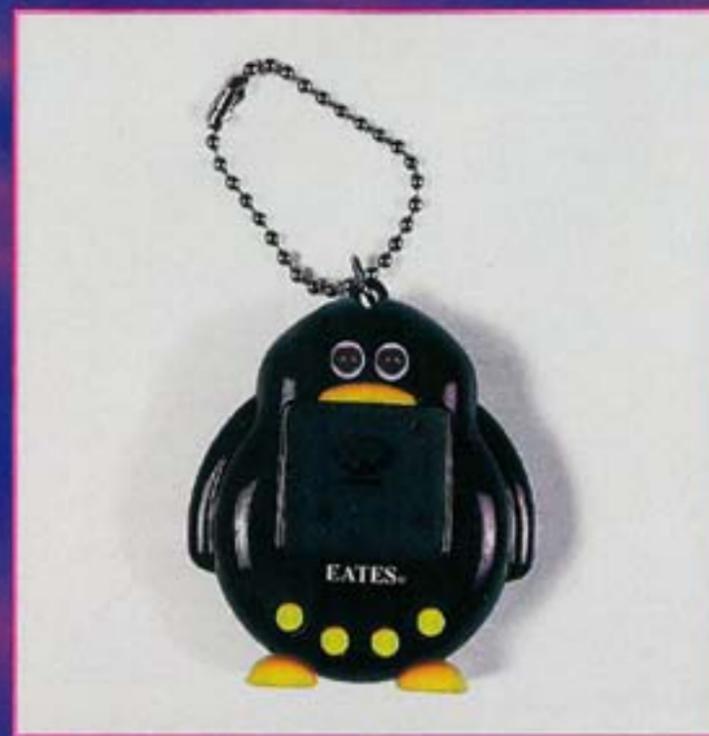New functions and utilities just beginning to appear include:

A. LEDs: O&K Industrial Company's "Mini Tyranno" has a night light feature. Pocket

JAPANESE TAMAGOTCHI GAME BOY CARTRIDGE, BOOK, MAP AND INSTRUCTIONS

POCKET PENGUIN

(USES HIS LED EYES AS AN INDICATOR THAT HE NEEDS ATTENTION)

Penguin uses his LED eyes as a silent indicator to tell you when he needs attention.

B. Fast Aging / Fast Raising: Some users do not want to have to go through the pet's growing stages each time to reach the adult stage. Octo-Pets has a function that turns seconds into minutes. Once the pet reaches the desired age, you can return to normal timing.

C. Pets Used For Teaching: I have had inquiries from several firms developing pets for teaching and instructional purposes. Virtual pets can be used to teach children certain tasks and the consequences when they either perform or do not perform those tasks. They get your point across in an entertaining and non-threatening way. Pets can be used in adult teaching situations as well.

D. Infrared Beams As A Communication Link Between Two Pets: This method is already being used in some Japanese key chain games, and I expect it to enter the key chain virtual pet industry very soon.

E. Sensitive Cases: Bandai's Angelgotchi's case is sensitive to tapping. You tap it on the side to call the pet or scare away an evil bat that tries to take your pet's candy.

F. Long-life batteries: These last for one year.

SUMMARY

The explosion of these new toys upon the marketplace was almost unprecedented. The variety was even more unbelievable. New key chain virtual pets tended to copy the best features of existing pets and add more of their own. The rapid entry of hundreds of pets into the market resulted in several industry trends. Recent developments may become the "trends of the future."

"ANGELGOTCHI"

A LAST-MINUTE REVIEW FOR A HOT, NEW PRODUCT!

By Robert Worne

I just received a pearl-white "Tenshitch no Tamagoteh" (Angel Tamagotchi) a few days ago. Here are some of my initial observations:

The Angel Tamagotchi is the same size as the original Japanese Tamagotchi, but that's where the similarities end. On each side of the screen is an angel wing, and the egg is covered with silk-screened artwork.

There are functional differences as well. When you first pull the battery tab and set the clock, you wait five minutes for the Obake-chi (ghost) to transform into the baby angel. After the transformation, you need to max out the various meters: TP for Tenshi Power (Angel Power), Shiawase (Happiness), Onaka (Stomach) and Ganbaru (Confidence).

Happiness is increased when you praise the Angelgotchi every time it prays for you. The stomach is filled every time you feed it (the Angelgotchi eats

ANGELGOTCHI

pie). Chocolate is used to replace the Tamagotchi's snack, and every so often a bat will appear to try to steal the Angelgotchi's chocolate. The bat can be scared away by repeatedly tapping on the side of the Angelgotchi case with your finger. If you are not successful in scaring away the bat, the Angelgotchi will become sad and the Happiness meter will drop.

Confidence is increased by playing the game. The Angelgotchi game features the Angel jumping over shooting stars. If you time the jumps correctly, you will hop over the stars and the Confidence meter will go up. A perfect score will award two hearts instead of the normal one. Unlike the regular Tamagotchi, the Angelgotchi has no weight, and the idea is to keep all the meters as maxed out as possible at all times.

The Angelgotchi is less demanding than the regular Tamagotchi. The Tamagotchi will immediately start beeping frequently for attention after it is hatched, while the Angelgotchi will beep for attention much less frequently. It rarely gets sick (in my case) and matures quickly, changing form each day for the first four days. Since it matures very quickly, it is as demanding as an adult-stage Tamagotchi after the first transformation. It does not relieve itself very often (once or twice a day), and it will pray approximately once a day, so the user must watch it carefully and praise it while it's praying.

There are a variety of secret characters, including a set of twins (contrary to popular rumor, the Tamagotchi does *not* have twins), a Cactus, an Otono-ten (Samurai's Boss), a Devil and a Lucky Unchi-kun (a living pile of poop). There are also secret screens, and the Kuri-ten angel actually sits on the Omaru (Duck Toilet) when it does its duty.

Angelgotchi features a redesigned LCD display, where the check meter is the first to be selected, instead of the sixth on the Tamagotchi. Screens also scroll faster, such as when you check the clock.

Models made after September 1997 feature redesigned icons instead of the traditional

Tamagotchi icons; the check meter is a heart-shaped scale, the fork and spoon are replaced with a heart-handled spoon, the bat and ball are replaced by a star, the duck is replaced with an angel-winged butt, the "punish" icon (praise in the Angelgotchi's case) is replaced with a bell, the injection icon is replaced with a cupid's bow and arrow, and the "call" icon is replaced with an angel-winged happy face.

The Angelgotchi is a very well thought-out redesign of the Tamagotchi and will not disappoint collectors or virtual pet keepers.

ANGELGOTCHI KEYCHAIN FOBS

VIRTUAL PET FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS SECRETS AND TIPS FOR VIRTUAL PET LOVERS

Question: When my pet dies, is the game over, and do I have to buy another one?

Answer: No, you just press a reset button and start the game all over again. On the Tamagotchi, when your pet is "gone," you can also just press the "A" and "C" (left and right) buttons together. The game will restart and you will not have to reset the clock.

Q: How do you pronounce Tamagotchi?
A: Tah-mah-GO-chee.

Q: How rapidly does a pet age?
A: Most pets age one year in one day.

Q: How can I rapidly age my pet?
A: Some pets can be rapidly "aged" by setting the clock to just before the pet's bedtime. Then let the pet go to sleep. Now set the clock to just before the pet wakes up. When the pet wakes up, it will be a year older. You can repeat these steps several times

to rapidly age these pets.
Some pets now have a feature that allows you to change seconds into minutes. This will rapidly age the pet to the desired age. Then you can resume normal timing.

GANBARE! INUDA-KUN

Q: How can I pause my pet?
A: Not all pets can be paused. The U.S. Tamagotchi Version 2 units can be paused by pressing the "B" (middle) button to bring up the timer, then pressing the "A" (left) and "C" (right) buttons

simultaneously. The word "SET" will appear on the screen.

To resume play, reset the timer to the correct time (using the "A" and "B" buttons). Then push the "C" (right) button to "set" the new time, and then the "B" button to resume normal operations.

Q: Which virtual pet is best?
A: Different people like different virtual pets, just like different people like different real pets. No one pet is the best pet for everybody. Read the "Trends" article in this issue to understand the various features of virtual pets and help you identify the characteristics that you want in a virtual pet. You can also consider if you want a basic pet (cat, dog, dinosaur, human baby) or perhaps a "several-in-one" unit. As you learn more about virtual pets, you will be able to select the best pet for you.

Q: Where should I buy my first virtual pet? Which pet should I buy?
A: You should start out by purchasing a name-brand pet in a

store near where you live that has a liberal return policy. When virtual pets first hit the United States, many people bought them while traveling or on vacation. When the pet "broke" or the person found out the instructions were not in the box, they were hundreds of miles from where they purchased it. Once you become a veteran virtual pet-master you can move up to more exotic pets.

Q: I am having trouble keeping my pet healthy. What should I do?
A: First, read the instructions. Make sure you are doing everything they ask you to do. Also be sure to turn the light out at night, "clean up" promptly, play with your pets to make them happy and give them treats. Most pets have a "status meter" that will help you determine what your pet needs. If your pet is sick, it may need medicine or an injection. Some pets need discipline.

Q: How long do virtual pets live?
A: The pets usually live for a week or two with good care. Bandai prints a "care-taker rating" chart on the U.S. Version 2 Tamagotchi instructions that indicates a rating of "good job" for 11-16 years, "excellent" for 17-22 years and "amazing" for 23 or more years.

Q: How can I raise Tamagotchi twins?
A: This is a common question. There have been many "twin codes" posted on the Internet, but they never seem to work. Some pets do have twins. The

Angelgotchi has twins, and Pocket Biscuits has three band members that you must address individually. You will probably have to live with just one Tamagotchi right now. Imagine trying to meet the needs of two of them!

ORIGINAL U.S. TAMAGOTCHI SET WITH STUFFED TAMAGOTCHI CHARACTERS

Q: Where can I purchase a specific pet?
A: Different stores carry different pets. The most well-known pets are carried by many major stores. The less well-known pets are more difficult to find. Trying to find a specific pet is part of the "experience," just like hunting for a real pet. You can ask your friends if they have seen them in your area. Some pets are sold by mail order or over the Internet.

Q: My pet is broken. Where can I get it repaired?
A: If your pet fails to work, the first thing to try is replacing the batteries. Most pets use two LR44 batteries. Batteries should be replaced by adults.

If your pet is really "broken," it cannot be repaired. Pets are considered "throw-aways." Most are built in Asia, and it would cost far more to return them than they are worth. You may be able to take a malfunctioning pet back to the store where you purchased it and get a refund.

Q: What is the age record for the oldest pet?
A: An August 1997 Bandai press release says the current age record for the Tamagotchi is 26 years. Because many of the pets can be "paused" or rapidly aged, it is difficult to confirm actual ages of the pets.

Q: How many different key chain virtual pets are there?
A: That is a tough question. Part of it depends on what you call different (i.e., colors, same pet with a different name). At any rate, there are several hundred kinds of virtual pets.

Q: Who invented key chain virtual pets?
A: Several reports credit the invention to a woman named Maita Aki, who works for Bandai.

Q: How can I turn the sound off on my Tamagotchi?
A: Press the "A" (left) and "C" (right) buttons simultaneously. To restore the sound, press "A" and "C" again.

Meet Eiki Satomi, a virtual pet collector and Webmaster from Sapporo, Japan

H i. I'm Eiki Satomi.

I would like to discuss virtual pets with you. I had my first experience with "Tamagotch" in February of 1997. A couple months later, fake Tamagotch were the talk of the media. From then on, I had some interest in fake Tamagotch and began to collect virtual pets. In May, I started to manage my virtual pet Web page. The contents of my Web page includes about 180 kinds of pets, information on virtual pets and my diary of observing the growth of a new pet called "Osucci/Mesucci" (which means male or female pets).

The most popular subject is my virtual pet collection. I now own more than 220 different virtual pets (I show only about 180 on my Web site). Still I am trying to find more attractive virtual pets. I hope I can have more than 300 kinds of pets by the end of this year. My Web page is targeted at virtual pet collectors. I purchased my virtual pets at toy shops in Japan (Tokyo, Kobe, and Sapporo). Sometimes, I used mail order or traded through the Internet.

Nowadays, my favorites are "JAL Original Tamagocci" (the prize of Japan Airlines), and "Doraemon" (Japanese cartoon character, but made in Hong Kong). Southeastern countries produce Japanese cartoon characters without a license and export them to Japanese market.

Next year, Bandai will begin to sell a new virtual pet "Osucci/Mesucci." I already have a sample, and its growth chart is on my Web page. I think "Osucci/Mesucci" is going to catch on. Recently, the boom of virtual pets has stabilized in Japan.

Most schools prohibited students from carrying the virtual pets to school. However, their parents allow them to take care of virtual pets at home. Both boys and girls do it.

Even though the boom of virtual pets is on the wane in Japan, some people have recently begun to collect various virtual pets.

In Japan, we see two kinds of Internet virtual pet Web pages. One is used for the sale or trade of virtual pets, the other one is for collectors' news. Both Web pages are very popular.

As for my company, Media Magic produces games, CD-ROMs and software for businesses. It was established in September of 1995, in Sapporo, Hokkaido prefecture of Japan.

My virtual pets Web page is just my hobby and is not used for making money. If I had an opportunity, I would produce my Web page in English to help show off my collection. I would like to ask for your help in collecting all kinds of virtual pets from around the world.

Thank you,

Eiki Satomi,
Media Magic Inc.

Japan

THE PETS GET READY TO TEE IT UP!

"CATCH" A VIRTUAL PET!
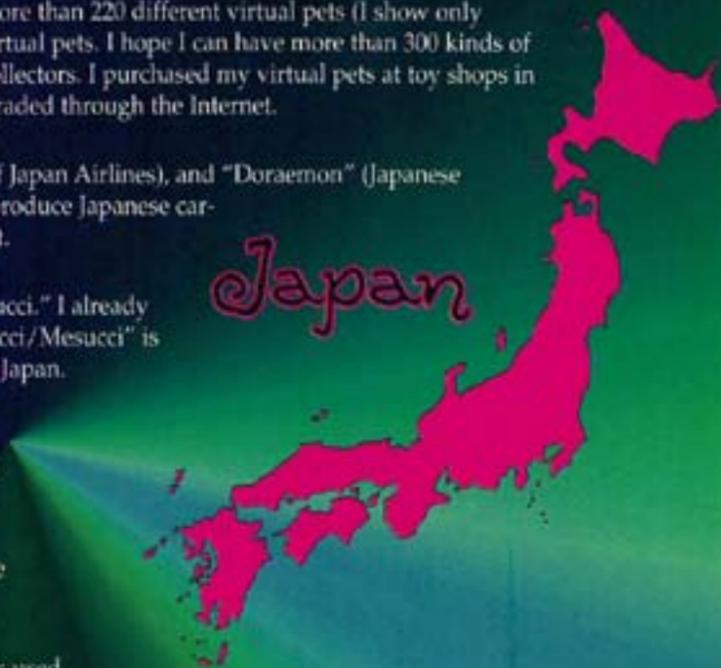
EDITOR'S NOTES

• Eiki Satomi runs a great Japanese Web site about virtual pets. Even if you do not read Japanese, which takes special software to display properly on an American computer, you can still see the beautiful images. His Web site is at:

http://www.mediamagic.co.jp/Tamagotch/Collection.htm

• Sapporo is a large city on the southern end of the island of Hokkaido, the northernmost large island of Japan.

• In Japan, the word "Tamagotch" is often written in English as "Tamagotch."

• A "prefecture" in Japan is similar to a state in the United States.

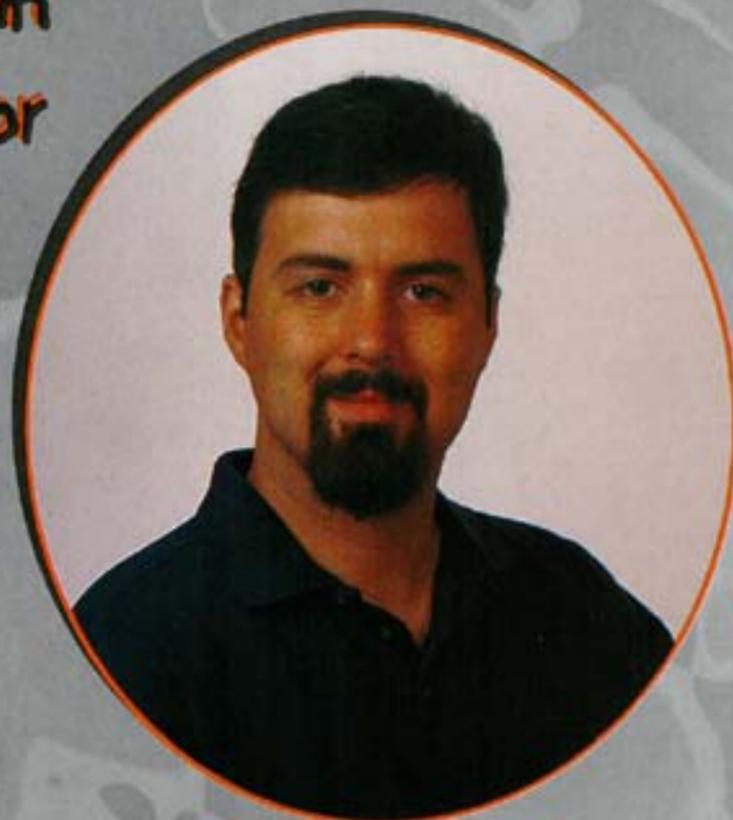# Meet Robert Worne, Japanese Key Chain Virtual Pet Collector

H ello, my name is Robert Worne.

I have been collecting Japanese key chain games and virtual pets as an extension of my classic video game collecting hobby. I've been collecting for nearly two years now, but I started adding virtual pets to my collection in February 1997.

The first virtual pet I found was a Gyaoppi, which turned up in Little Tokyo in Los Angeles. I later found my first Tamagotchi (a clear blue) in April at a local toy store.

Since then, I have been collecting various Asian models of key chain games, pets, and their related merchandise for most of the year. I've never been a "color" collector – I basically have one of each item, and tend not to pick up minor variations or copies of other virtual pets. The more unique items are the better.

I usually keep track of what is coming out in Japan by reading the various books and maga-zines and keeping up with the pop culture there or by browsing various Japanese Web sites. While adding items to my collection, I add scans and descriptions of them to my Web site for public display, answer questions for those who bought Asian pets and cannot read the instructions, and occasionally point out where to find some items.
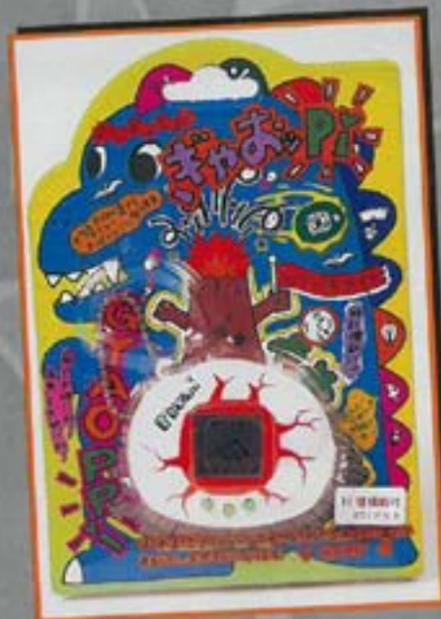
Robert Worne

E-mail: rworne@primenet.com

Web site:
http://www.primenet.com/~rworne
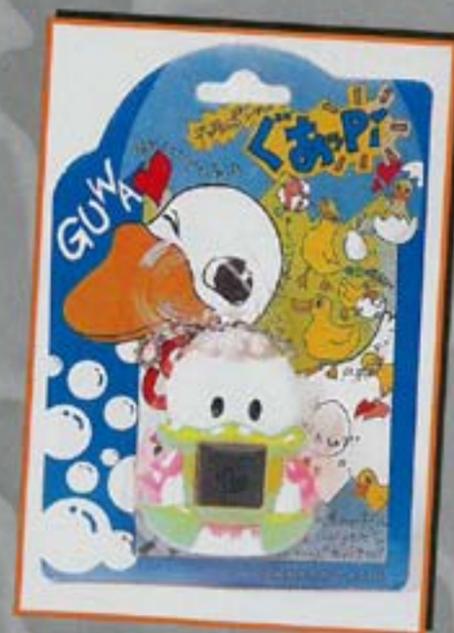
Robert Worne

Robert Worne's Collection

Gyaoppi

One of the first imitations. Raise a dinosaur pet (final type depends on care).
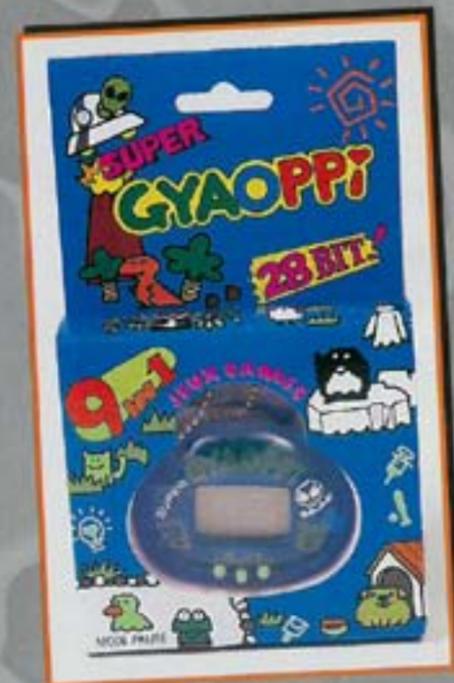
Gyaoppi II

Expanded version of Gyaoppi, with soccer game and enhanced informative display.

Guappi

Raise a virtual duck from an egg.
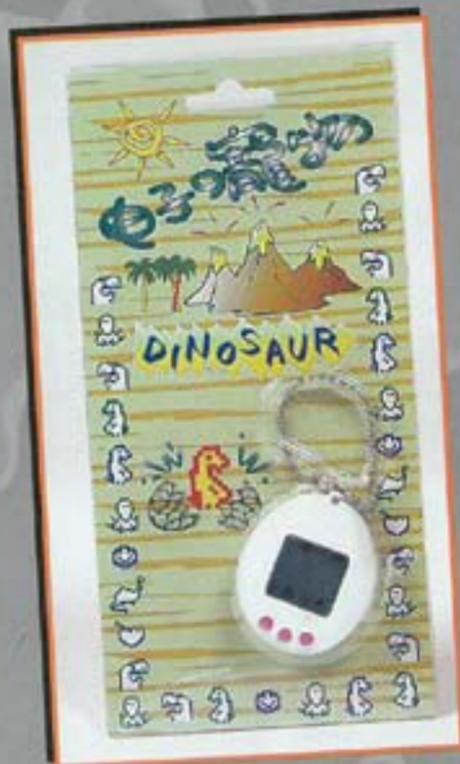
Super Gyaoppi 9 in 1

Raise one of 9 pets: dog, cat, dinosaur, panda, chicken, penguin, frog, duck, or alien.
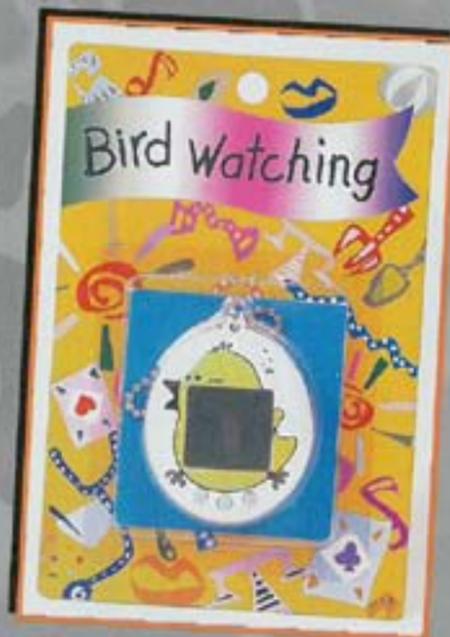
Chuppi

Raise a virtual bird.

Kyouryuu Game Gyao

Raise a dinosaur pet.

Moshigo no Choubutsu

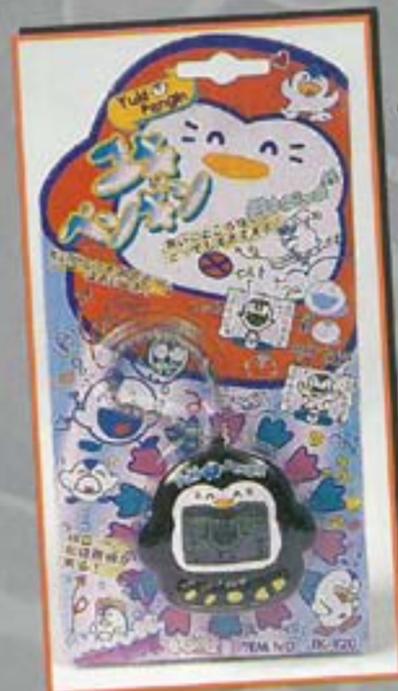Raise a dinosaur pet. Very similar to the Tamagotchi in function.

Bird Watching

Also known as Chicknotch, raise a virtual chicken pet. Comes in a variety of similar case designs.

Raku Raku Dinokun

Raise a pet dinosaur and teach him to read. This type has a short (a week or so) life span.

Yuki Penguin

Raise a pet penguin. This type has a short (a week or so) life span. Basically the same thing as Raku Raku Dinokun, with different character graphics.

Tako Seijin

Raise a pet alien. This type has a short (a week or so) life span. Basically the same thing as Raku Raku Dinokun and Yuki Penguin, with different character graphics.

Rikou Rikou Chan

Raise a small boy in the hope that he grows up to become a professor or doctor. Treat him poorly and he joins a gang. Many menu options and buttons.

Pocket Turtle

Raise a baby turtle. Identical in function and appearance to a Tamagotchi, yet slightly larger. Turtle tends to poop a lot.

Choubutsu

This is a Chinese virtual pet. Raise a pet dinosaur. Features, case, design, etc., are identical to the Tamagotchi.

Nekotcha

Raise a virtual cat. Comes in either a heart- or mouse-shaped case. Has different electronics than the other cat virtual pets. Very difficult to keep alive and happy.

Virtual Pet

Same electronics as the Nano-Puppy. Comes in yellow, blue, and red.

Ganbare! Ryuuta-kun

Raise a dinosaur as a child/pet. Teach him to read, shower and put on pajamas before going to sleep. Very loud speaker.

Ganbare! Inuda-kun

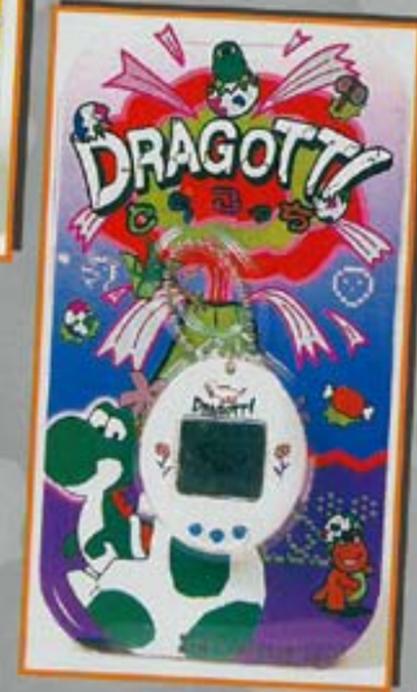Raise a dog as a child/pet. This is pretty similar to the Ryuuta-kun.

Smart Chick

Raise a chicken as a virtual pet. Same electronics as Bird Watching.

Baby Chicken

Raise a baby chicken. With a nice, large LCD screen. Has same electronics as Bird Watching.

Doragotchi (Dragotti)

Raise a dinosaur as a virtual pet. Features inappropriate use of Nintendo characters on the package.

Tanoshi

This pet has the same electronics as the Nano Puppy.

Pocket Love

A very unique "relationship simulator." Try to get two cats to date, fall in love and get married. "Meows" when the male or female cat is being mistreated.

Kero-Pet

Raise Keroppi or one of his friends in this virtual frog game.

Pocket Penguin

Raise a penguin pet. Features red blinking eyes to alert user if the speaker is muted.

Pocket Biscuits

Based on the Japanese pop trio created by the Uchan Nanchan comedy show. Manage the band for a week and try to get them to climb to No. I on the charts.

8-in-1 Minipets

Raise one of eight pets: bird, chicken, puppy, fish, crab, butterfly, kitten or dinosaur. "Dance" with your pets to make them happy.

Metcha Esuta

Hello Kitty's got a hot date in one week, and you need to manage her diet so she can get in shape!

Japanese Tamagotchi

These are the Japanese Tamagotchi 2a, nearly identical to the U.S. Tamagotchi 2.

Hong Kong Tamagotchi

Mistakenly referred to as "Asian hybrids," these are Tamagotchi released for Hong Kong. They feature Japanese Tamagotchi cases with U.S. version electronics.

Hong Kong Commemorative

Released after Hong Kong reverted back to Chinese rule, this is a Tamagotchi (same as the U.S. version). Some units come with a numbered certificate, but others do not.

Hong Kong Commemorative (closed box)

Robert Worne's Collection

Complete Set of Three Tamagotchi keychain fobs.

Oyajichi Pocket Watch
(unopened at left, opened at right)

Japanese Tamagotchi Books

Complete Set of Four Plush Tamagotchi Toys
(6 inches high)

"Fake" (non-Bandai) Tamagotchi wristwatch

The Evolution of Virtual Pets – From 1970 To 1996

BY ROBERT WORNE

The term "virtual pet" is a fairly new one, and has gained popularity with the recent Tamagotchi craze. However, virtual pets existed long before the debut of the Tamagotchi. Computers and mechanical electronic toys have represented virtual pets for at least 11 years. This review of the origin of the virtual pet is not meant to be a complete history, but rather to touch on significant events or products that were released relating to virtual pets. For the sake of clarity, these are not called virtual pets, since the term was not in common use when these items were developed.

The earliest examples were called Cellular Automata, and the most widely known version was "Conway's Game of Life." Conway's Game of Life was popularized in Scientific American in late 1970 and early 1971. It featured a checkerboard type "field" in which cells grew or died depending on how many neighboring cells they had. While "Life" was then a mathematical and computer science curiosity, it continues to have quite a following on the Internet, and free programs can be downloaded for experimentation. Since "Life," not much was developed for the home market until the mid 1980s. This was probably because until the end of the 1970s, computers were generally not available to the general public, and when they finally were, the initial offerings were extremely limited in function.

The next examples came out in the mid 1980s with the "Petster," an "electronic pet" by Noland Bushnell's Axlon, Inc., and "Little Computer People" written by David Crane for the Commodore 64, a popular home computer at that time. Petsters were sold in 1985 and 1986 and were the brainchild of Bushnell (founder of Atari, Inc.). According to an article in the October 9, 1986, edition of the San Diego Union-Tribune, the Petsters were a series of robotic pets (cat,

Axlon Inc. "Petster"

dog, hamster, spider) that were sold as high-tech toys at that time. One of the Petsters, the Catster, used four "C" batteries to power its wheels and brain. It came in two varieties. One retailed for under $50 and simply homed in on the owner by following the sound of clapping hands. The high-end model of the Catster retailed for about $90 and was far more intelligent – it could be "trained" to perform various actions, such as moving or "meowing," based upon clapped commands. The petster distinguished commands based upon the number of claps and their rhythm. The market at this time was flooded with electronic "interactive" toys, the most famous of which was World of Wonder's Teddy Ruxpin and A.G. Bear, another Axlon product. Shortly thereafter, the fad of interactive pets and toys wore off, and little else was seen in interactive pets.

The computer market at that time was booming. David Crane's Little Computer People was released for the Commodore 64 by Activision, Inc., and was unique since it didn't seem to do anything useful compared to the utility programs and games of that time. LCP was not so much a "virtual pet" but a "virtual human." When you loaded this program on the computer, a three-story house similar to a dollhouse appeared on the screen. A man and his dog then inhabited this house and performed a variety of
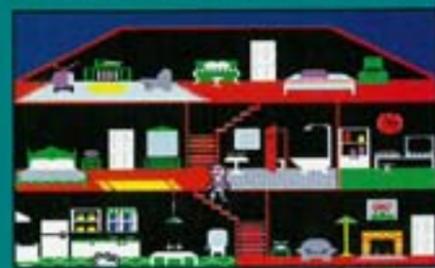
Little Computer People

activities. You communicated to the man via typed commands on the keyboard, and the man periodically wrote letters to you on his typewriter. You could play card games with him, solve anagrams, watch him read the newspaper or talk on the phone. If you didn't find ways to interact with the man, he would find ways to entertain himself, roaming around the house, reading the newspaper or talking on the phone.

Other life-simulating programs followed. Maxis released the "Sim" series of programs that simulated large multifaceted organisms, such as Sim-City, Sim-Farm, Sim-Earth, or Sim-Ant. In the case of Sim-Ant, you helped an ant colony thrive, take over a yard, wipe out the competing ant colonies, and finally overrun the house and drive out the humans. Poor management always led to disaster in these simulations. Maxis also distributed a program called El-Fish, which was developed by AnimaTek. In El-Fish, the fish were genetically manipulated to create new and unusual varieties and then live in a virtual tank on a PC.

Then came the Norns, imaginary animals in "Creatures" in which you got an "Egg Disk" and populated an imaginary world with these troll-like creatures. These creatures played, reproduced, aged and died. Finally, P.F. Magic's Dogz came on the scene. You could choose between several dogs and, after paying an adoption fee, let one run loose on your screen to feed, play with and discipline. Dogz was highly successful, and was followed up by the feline version, Catz, and the imaginary pet version, Oddballz.

Not all the developments came from the United States or, in the case of Creatures, from England. Japan has been the most active in more recent developments. Japan is quite small compared to its large population; so space is at a premium. Unlike in the United States, pets are considered a luxury for city dwellers and are more difficult to care for. Apartment owners in Japan also take a dim view of pets, rarely allowing tenants to own them. This led to a strong demand for some sort of pet replacement that would offer companionship and yet solve the problems a real pet would create: a real pet demands time and attention, can make too much noise, and needs cleaning up after. Neglecting these problems can make the pet ill or get the owner into trouble with neighbors. But an artificial pet that could simulate a real pet's interactivity and not require the "high maintenance" of a real pet would be

PF Magic DOGZ

extremely popular.

To meet this need, several stuffed animals were released by Takara Co. in 1995 as the "Riso Petto" (Perfect Pet). According to the May 2, 1994, edition of Nikkei Weekly, it was a hit among middle-age Japanese women. Priced from 10,000 to 12,000 Yen ($90-$100), these were dogs and cats that whined or meowed when spoken to. If they were petted, they wagged their tails. Bandai, Inc., released a similar
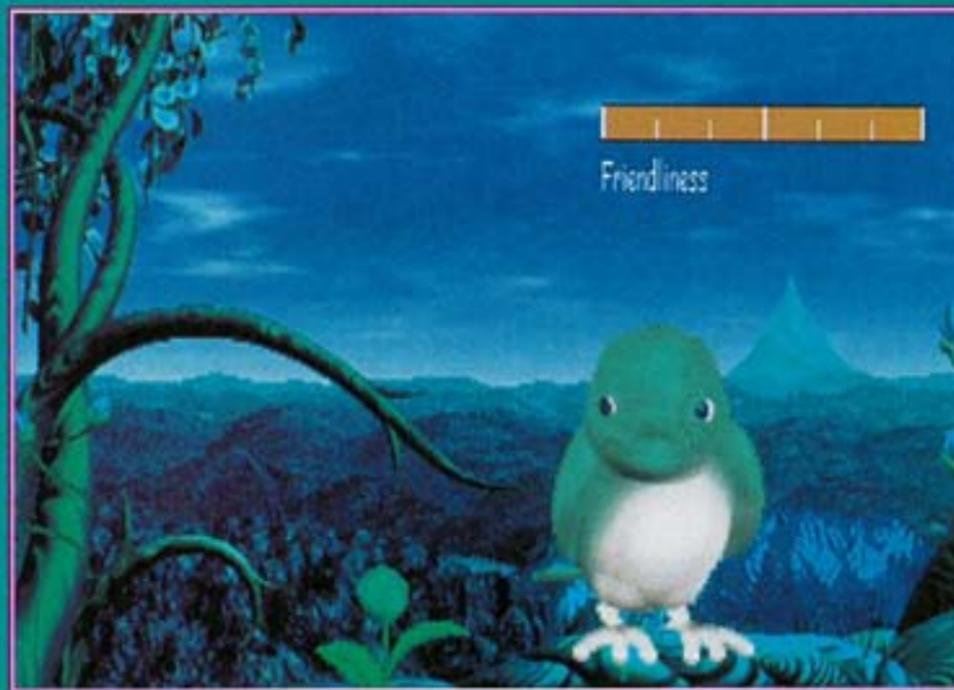
Fin Fin

series, "Trente Ans" (Thirty Years) which were miniature versions of either the Japanese Shiba Inu or Siberian Husky.

These pets, like the Petsters in the U.S., failed to get beyond the fad stage. The Petsters and the Riso Petto were interactive but sterile – they did not simulate any of the problems of pet ownership. They didn't require or simulate any of the care a real pet needs; they did not require feeding or cleaning up after; they did not get sick, grow old or die. Their continued operation only required a fresh set of batteries.

Development of computerized "animals" also took place in Japan. Fujitsu Interactive worked

Pocket Monster accessories

on the "Charlotte," which were odd-mushroom-shaped creatures with long antenna which responded to the user waving a baton. After Charlotte, Fujitsu began the TEO Project, resulting in a program linking a PC to an imaginary computer-generated world where the user communicated with "Fin-Fin," a dolphin-like creature. This communication was made with sound and gestures via the "TEO Antenna," a device that transmitted sounds and motion to the computer. Another Japanese software publisher released Aquazone, a virtual aquarium in which you raised neon tetras and leopard catfish. This game was unusual in that it attempted to closely simulate the conditions of raising aquarium fish. These fish ate, fought, and died – sometimes all too readily. Both Fin-Fin and Aquazone introduced the concept that time passes even when the computer is shut off, so that the user must power on the computer, even if only to feed the fish. Aquazone also added one more feature: once your pet fish died, they could not be reused, which increased the burden of responsibility. Aquazone was a huge success in Japan, and both it and Fin-Fin were recently released in

the United States.

At about the same time, Sharp and Casio were capitalizing on the sudden popularity of pocket electronic organizers among Japanese girls. These pocket organizers had several features such as encrypted secret messages, the ability to "beam" messages across the room, fortunetelling, and a "virtual pet." In 1995, the "Pet Telepathy," was released by Casio. According to the April 24, 1995 edition of The Nikkei Weekly, it featured a computer-animated dog or cat that could be told to perform up to 10 different actions by simply waving a hand in front of a sensor in a particular pattern. The dog would then, for example, actually wave back to the user.

While the girls had their electronic diaries, the boys had their video games. Starting since about 1995, one could go on a virtual safari collecting "Pocket Monsters." Released by Nintendo Japan and Game Freak for the Game Boy, this role-playing game featured the adventures of a young boy who traveled around a virtual world capturing and

cataloging wild Pocket Monsters. These monsters were then either stored or released, or actively used during the game to fight other monsters or bullies that the character ran into from time to time. Sending your monsters into battle or feeding them certain items would cause their abilities to increase or their shape to transform. There were two, soon to be four, different versions of this cartridge released. Each has monsters located in different areas, or some monsters that appear in only a particular version. Those features, combined with a link capability, enabled two players to link their Game Boy units together and trade monsters, or to have them fight each other. The increased possibilities provided by linking helped make Pocket Monsters wildly successful in Japan.

The most recent development was the key chain game. The key chain game is approximately 2 to 3 inches high and 2 to 3 inches wide and features an LCD screen and tiny buttons. These games were entirely self-contained and played various block-type games, one of the most popular being Hiro's Tetris Jr. Other key chain games were released that were portable versions of arcade games. Bandai released a series called the Mame Game (Bean Game), portable versions of Pac-Man, Space Invaders, and Bomberman. These games became popular in 1995, particularly among Japanese salariman (salary men) and students who used them during their daily train com-

mute to and from work and school.

Tamagotchi was released in Japan in 1996 as an extension of the key chain game. While it was wildly popular among teenage girls, almost anyone could be spotted with one. Since imitation follows success, countless knockoffs have joined in the fray. These knockoffs are probably responsible for keeping the interest alive. Not satisfied with simply copying Bandai's latest efforts, new imitations are pushing the envelope in capabilities: multiple pets, more varieties, and "linking" for either fighting or for breeding pets.

The virtual pet evolved with technology, from simple "cells" on mainframe computers to robotic pets, and from home computers to portable key chains and video games. There were three main developments. First, the interactivity with a single user evolved to multiple interactions with friends and their pets. The second from the simple Petster and Riso Petto gave way to the more realistic scenarios such as Aquazone or Fin-Fin which required a great deal of responsibility and the use of a home computer. The current union of portability with just enough responsibility allowed interaction with other users and their pets. What comes next will depend on current consumer demands for virtual pets and accessories and how the companies responsible answer those demands.

Virtual Pet Timeline

| Year	Event
1970	Conway's Game of Life published in Scientific American
1985	Axion Inc. releases the "Petsters"
	Little Computer People released by Activision
1990	Fujitsu established the "Human Interface Laboratory" to study artificial creatures.
1992	Fujitsu creates the "Charlotte" virtual creature
1994	Key chain LCD games appear
	Aquazone released in Japan by OPeNBooK9003inc.
1995	Takara Releases the "Riso Petto"
	Sharp and Casio introduce pocket diaries with virtual pets
	Pocket Monsters released in Japan by Nintendo
	Fin Fin test marketed in Japan
1996	Tamagotchi released in Japan by Bandai
	Dogz is released in the U.S. by P.F. Magic.
	Fin Fin released by Fujitsu in the U.S.
1997	Tamagotchi Released by Bandai in the U.S.
	Aquazone released in the U.S. by 9003inc.

1985

1996
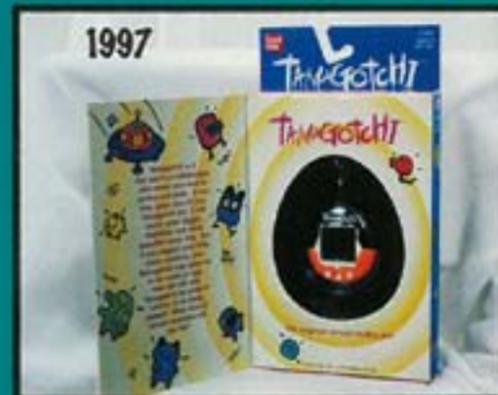
1997

Test Your Knowledge of Virtual Pets

Take this test to see how much you learned from the previous article about the evolution of virtual pets. Some questions are easy; some are hard. Write the numbers 1 through 10 on a piece of paper. By each question number, write the letter of the answer you select. When you have finished, compare your answers with the correct answers. Have your friends, parents, and teachers take the test, too. It's fun to compare scores! Good luck, and no peeking at the article or the answers is allowed! (The answers are at the bottom of the next page!)

1. Petsters were:

    A. Early key chain pets

    B. Robotic pets that responded to claps

    C. Virtual humans

2. Why have virtual pets been such a success in Japan?

    A. The mountainous country's elevation is too high for real pets

    B. Their religion does not allow them to keep real pets

    C. Space is at a premium

3. When did mechanical electronic toys first begin to represent virtual pets?

    A. 1995

    B. Before 1987

    C. Has not happened yet

4. Teddy Ruxpin was:

    A. One of the most famous interactive toys in the U.S.

    B. A computer game with a bear as a pet

    C. One of the first linkable pets

5. Sim-Ant allows you to manage:

    A. A single ant

    B. A fish tank

    C. An entire ant colony

6. Which one of these came first?

    A. Catz

    B. Pocket Monsters

    C. Conway's Game of Life

7. One of the first computer game programs to allow interaction with a virtual human was:

    A. Conway's Game of Life

    B. Little Computer People

    C. Risso Petto

8. Tamagotchi was released in Japan in:

    A. 1994

    B. 1996

    C. 1997

9. One of the first products to allow linking with another virtual life form was:

    A. Mulder and Scully

    B. Tamagotchi

    C. Pocket Monsters

10. Fin-Fin is a:

    A. Dolphin-like creature

    B. A key chain pet

    C. Linkable fighting pet

Answers:
1. B
2. C
3. B
4. A
5. C
6. C
7. B
8. B
9. C
10. A

Tamagotchi Collector Information

A comprehensive guide to available virtual pets and related products

U.S. Tamagotchi

The U.S. Tamagotchi retail for about $15 at many well-known stores. Tamagotchi collecting is a fun hobby for many people because they're colorful, economical and easy to store. You can search for them in stores, by mail order and over the Internet.

Key chain variations are also collected (beads vs. link type). Certain Tamagotchi colors are prized for their rarity. The Tamagotchi (Version 1) transparent turquoise with yellow buttons (often called clear blue) is the rarest U.S. unit and often sells for more than $100.

Original Tamagotchi, available May 1, 1997:
- Apple green accented with yellow
- Yellow accented with orange
- Pink accented with yellow
- White accented with blue
- Purple accented with pink
- Transparent turquoise with yellow buttons

Available mid-June 1997:
- Teal with purple trim and yellow buttons
- Orange with yellow trim and pink buttons
- Purple with blue trim and pink buttons
- Pink with lime-green trim and blue buttons
- Blue with pink trim and yellow buttons
- Transparent green with blue buttons
- White accented with black
- Apple green accented with blue
- Teal with purple trim and pink buttons

U.S. Version 2, available mid-August 1997 (Special features include new game play, a pause feature that suspends the life cycle, a new medicine icon, a Tamagotchi logo imprint, and bright blue package background replacing the original purple background):
- Silver with black buttons and black logo
- Black with gray buttons and gray logo
- Green-tone camouflage with brown buttons and brown logo
- White with gray buttons and gray logo
- Yellow with black zebra stripes, and black buttons and logo
- Translucent pink with yellow buttons and gold logo

Available mid-September 1997:
- Red with black trim and black buttons and logo
- Blue with black trim, yellow buttons & white logo
- Black and orange with white trim, buttons and logo
- Black-tone camouflage with gray trim, buttons and logo
- Green with yellow tiger stripes, black logo and buttons
- Translucent yellow with black buttons

Available mid-October 1997:
- Leopard Spots
- Orange
- Gold Camouflage
- Transparent
- Clear Yellow
- Navy Blue accented with Black

1997 Christmas Tamagotchi:
- White with green screen accent and red buttons

Japan Tamagotchi

(NOTE: The currency exchange rates fluctuate, but 1 Yen is typically worth a little less than a penny. Thus, 1980 Yen would be a little less than $19.80.)

Original Tamagotchi, available November 23, 1996:
Price: 1980 Yen
- Light blue with pink numbers
- White with black buttons
- Clear blue with yellow buttons
- Orange with yellow buttons and "Tamagotchi" banner across the top
- Blue with yellow buttons and clock face
- Red with blue buttons and clock face

Silver and Gold Tamagotchi, available December 1996 (these are rare, with only 5,000 produced):
Price: 1980 Yen
- Gold with black buttons
- Silver with black buttons

Available December 1996:
Price: 1980 Yen
- Clear red with blue buttons and clock face
- White with powder blue buttons and pink and blue spirals on the case
- Mint green color with yellow buttons and "Tamagotchi" banner across the top

Second Generation Tamagotchi (Japanese Tamagotchi 2a), available February 1997 (this series has the dog character and the sumo as the secret character):
Price: 1980 Yen
- Yellow with orange buttons
- Light blue with yellow trim, Tamagotchi characters on the case, and "Tamagotchi" written in Japanese down the side
- Clear green with blue buttons
- White with blue buttons and Tamagotchi characters on case

Second Generation Tamagotchi (Japanese Tamagotchi 2b), available May 1997 (this series replaces the dog character with a cat, and the sumo with a Chinese person on a bicycle):

Price: 1980 Yen
- Red with white buttons and "1997 Tamagotchi minna tanosiku asobimashou" lettering
- Clear yellow with yellow buttons
- Dark purple with yellow buttons, UFO on the top
- Translucent white with pink buttons

Tenshicchi no Tamagotchi (Angelgotchi), available August 1997:
Price: 1980 Yen
- Pearl white
- Pearl pink
- Pearl blue

European Tamagotchi

European Tamagotchi (Tamagotchi 1), available May 1997:
- Red with yellow buttons and clock face
- White with blue buttons
- Clear blue with yellow buttons
- Yellow with orange buttons and clock face

***Note that the U.S./European secret character is referred to in Japanese documentation as "SAM." It's used by third-party book manufacturers and Nintendo. Bandai does not document it because it's "secret."

Coming Soon

Tamagotchi (Forest version):
- Yellow with ivy trim
- White with yellow buttons and brown character designs
- Brown with yellow buttons

- Yellow with leaf designs

Tamagotchi (Ocean version):
- Clear amber with yellow buttons
- Clear purple with pink buttons
- Sky blue with blue buttons and trim
- Clear with wave designs

Mothra Tamagotchi, available in Fall 1997 (a limited edition Tamagotchi tied into the release of the "Mothra 2" movie in Japan):
- Variations of a white case with wave designs

Osu-chi Mesu-chi (a linking pet):
- Blue (male)
- Pink (female)
- White and green (male)
- White and red (female)
- Dark gray and light gray (male)
- Dark gray and light gray (female)

Other Related Products

Game Boy Tamagotchi:
Available June 27, 1997 (Japanese edition): 4,500 Yen
Available October 10, 1997 (U.S. edition): $29.99

Tamagotchi CD-ROM (Japanese):
Available June 16, 1997 for PC: 2,800 Yen
Available August 8, 1997 for Macintosh: 2,800 Yen

Tamapittchi (cellular phone with Tamagotchi built into it):
Available June 14, 1997: 45,000 Yen

DO THESE PETS LOOK ALIKE TO YOU?

As the virtual pet world virtually exploded with new pets, many were "clones" of existing pets. Some were the same pet being sold by a different name by another company. Others were the same pet in "packaging" for another country. This resulted in the same pet, or a very similar pet, being available by several names in different packaging. It all added to the variety and color of the "virtual pet explosion."

CUTE PUPPY AND PET VET

NEKOTCHA AND PERPETUAL PETS
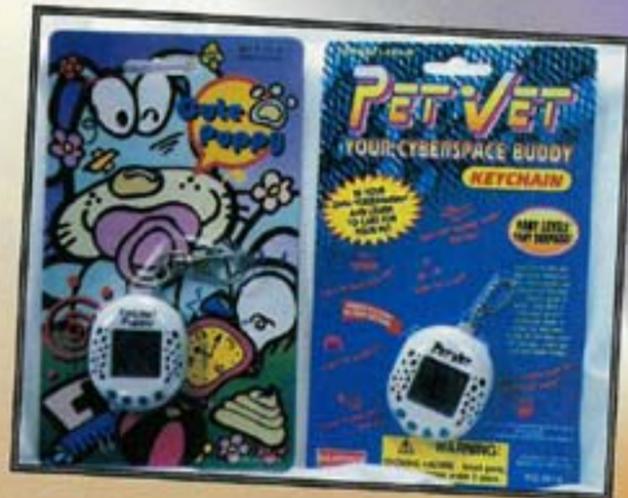
SMARTY TIME AND RIKOU RIKOU CHAN
(SMARTY TIME IS AN AMERICAN VERSION OF THE JAPANESE RIKOU RIKOU CHAN)

YUKI PENGUIN
(JAPANESE VERSION OF DINKIE PENGUIN)

DINKIE PENGUIN
(ON A SQUARE CARD WITH EUROPEAN CE EMBLEM)

DINKIE PENGUIN
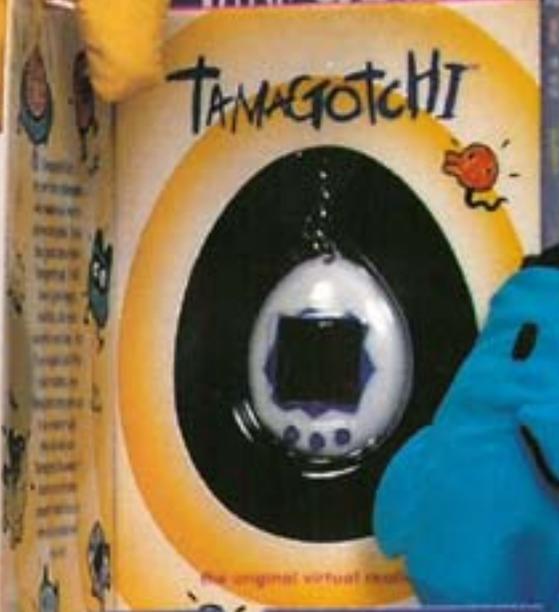(NOTE NAME PRINTED ON PET: "DINKIE PENGUIN")

DINKIE PENGUIN
(NOTE NAME PRINTED ON PET: "YUKI PENGUIN")

TAMAGOTCHI ACCESSORIES

TAMAGOTCHI the game

TAMAGOTCHI

THE OFFICIAL
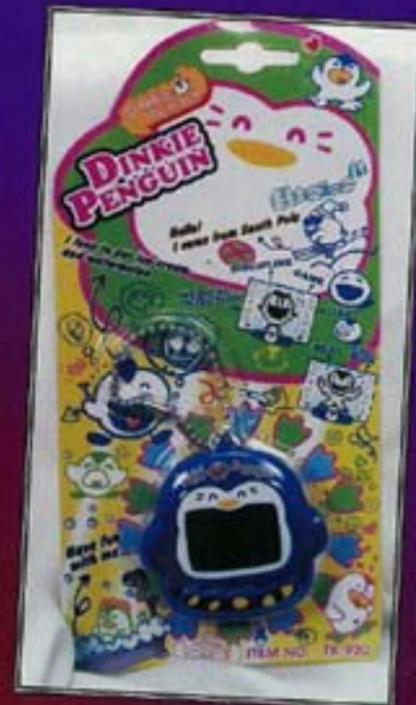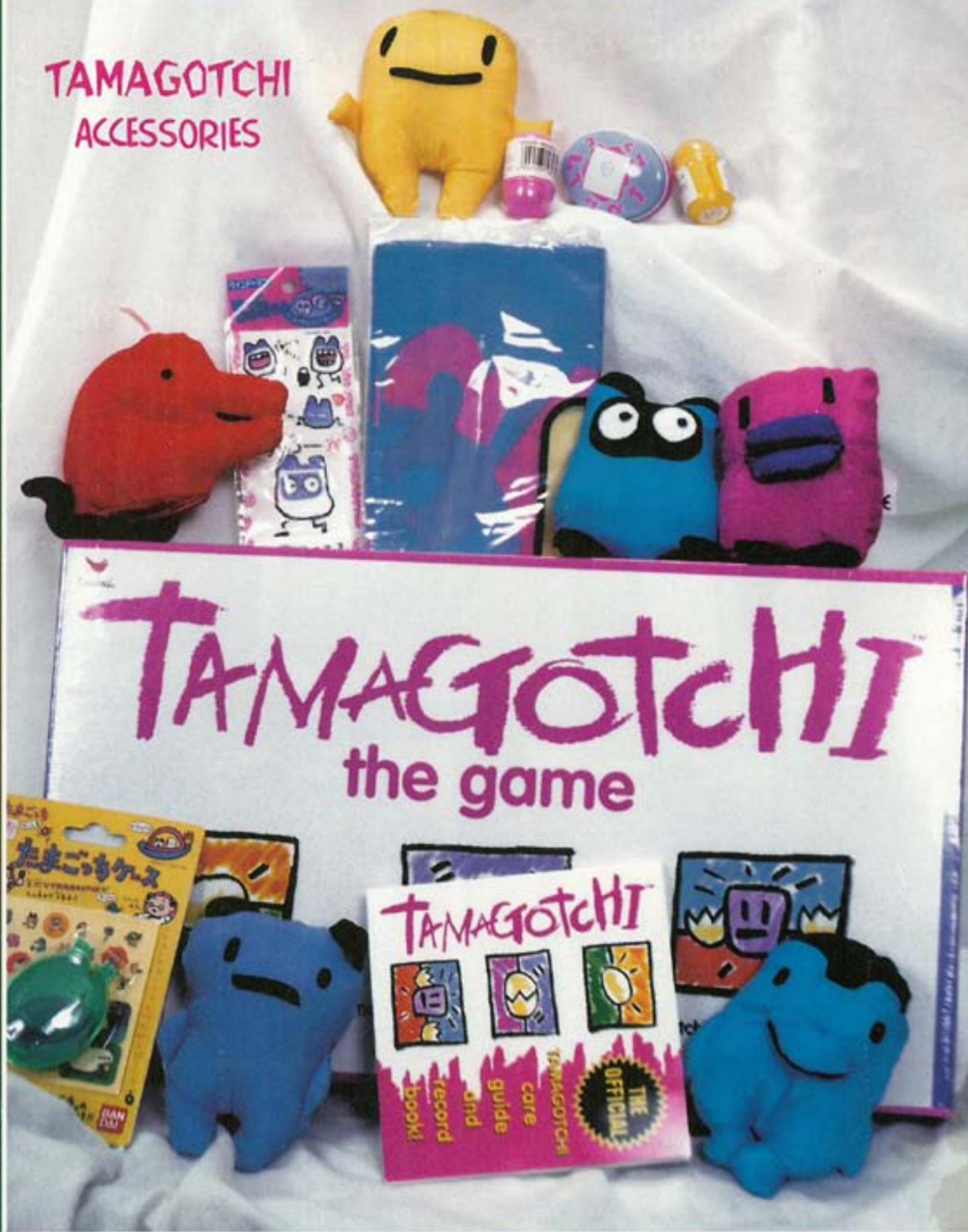
VIRTUAL PETS GET IN THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT