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TANDY 1000 PERSONAL COMPUTER



Amarillo Slim's Real Poker

Five-Card Stud the Amarillo Way

When I was a young boy, my father and a few of his buddies would get together every third Saturday of the month for a friendly game of cards. Of course I was too young to be a participant in such antics, but I would sneak out of bed after they had been playing for a while and hide behind the kitchen door to watch. This was my first introduction to the game of poker.

As I got older, I was allowed to stay up and watch these friendly games and from over the shoulder of my father learned how to create a good poker hand — and how to put on a great poker face. Some nights I was even allowed to sit in on a few hands. In fact, I remember my first game very clearly. A chair was moved up to the table, my allowance was forked over, poker chips were placed before me, and the cards were dealt for a game called five-card stud.

It's been many years since my first poker game, and if I were to add up all of my winnings, it would seem to be quite a bundle. Although now that I think of it, if I added up all that I have lost, it would surely amount to more than I have won. Taking that fact into account, it is a good thing I discovered playing poker on the computer — it doesn't cost a thing and I can play to my heart's content. I've played several different computer poker games in the past and have even played online poker on Delphi. Now I have discovered *Amarillo Slim's Real Poker: 5-Card Stud*, a poker entertainment program and tutorial from Villa Crespo Software.

If you know the game of poker even remotely, then you will enjoy sitting down at your computer for a game of five-card stud with The Kid, Dirty Dan and Lady Jane. But before we look at the game, let's find out just who this "Amarillo Slim" character is.

Amarillo Slim is a living legend. In 1972 he won the World Series of Poker and went on to become known as one of the world's greatest professional poker

players. A world ambassador for the game, he hosts the Super Bowl of Poker at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas and the Australian Poker Championship. With that kind of reputation — spanning 18 years — it is not surprising to find his name on this software package. However, let it be known that he was instrumental in the creation of the Villa Crespo version of electronic poker, contributing his vast experience and knowledge of the game. His input is evident — especially in the tutorial.

As you take your seat at the table, ante up and watch the screen as the cards are shuffled and dealt, you soon become aware that this is not a run-of-the-mill electronic poker game. The first thing you notice is that your input is controlled entirely with

the game, I was able to increase the speed to a more realistic level. Other selections allow you to set the betting limits as well as the amount of money each player starts with. Imagine sitting down to play poker with \$10,000 worth of chips in front of you in a game where the minimum bet is \$500.

Of all the game options you can set the one I found most entertaining was that of being able to select the names and characteristics of my opponents. There are three settings for the computer-controlled players: Aggressive, Moderate and Conservative. I didn't stand a chance when I selected three aggressive opponents; however, playing against conservative-minded players offered no challenge. I found that a mixture of

Poker for many hours (it is very addicting, a characteristic of any gambling-type entertainment), I must point out that the tutorial alone makes this software unique. And after seeing the picture of ol' Amarillo Slim on the pamphlet inside the box, I can almost imagine him standing over my shoulder, giving me little hints now and then.

The tutor has three modes of operation — Show, Warn and Ask — that are configured on the main menu screen. The Show mode is the most basic; it steps in at every turn and offers you advice on whether to bet, raise or fold. In the Warn mode the tutor does not offer help unless it disagrees with the selection you have made. (You then have the option of reconsidering your play or sticking with your original decision.) In the Ask mode the tutor offers suggestions only when you press the Tutor key.

The tutor also has a fourth mode of operation in the guise of the Replay key. Once the hand is finished, pressing this key automatically replays the hand with the tutor jumping in on your turn and informing you what Amarillo would have done if he were playing the hand.

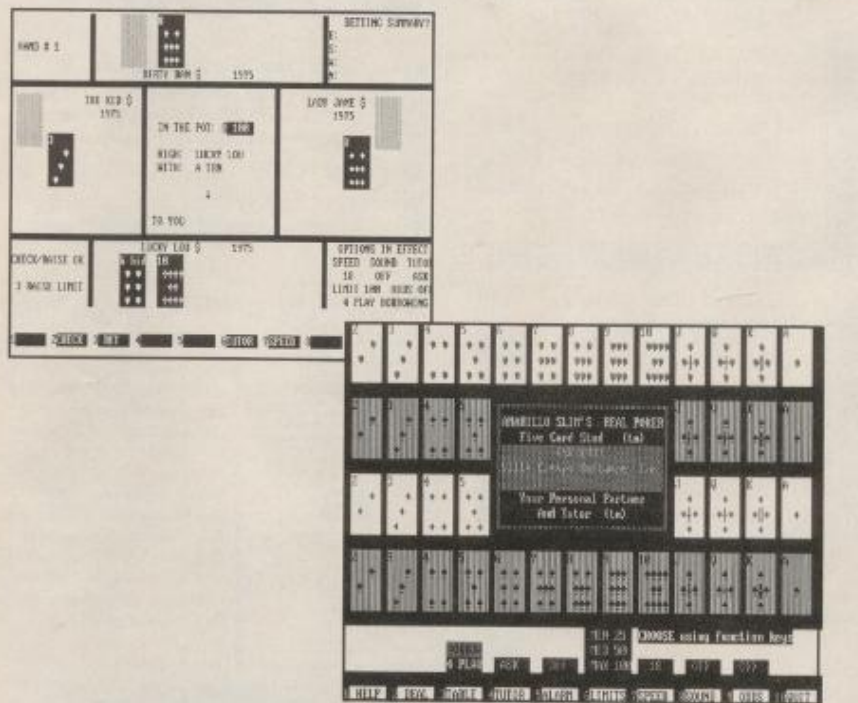
Another intriguing feature is a statistical evaluation of your play available after each hand. Here you see your Strategy index rated on a scale of 1 to 10, a rating of your expertise, a review of the hands played so far, and even detailed suggestions on how you can improve your play. Again, you can imagine Amarillo sitting next to you as you read the information presented on this screen.

I found that having the tutor in any mode other than Ask was rather annoying; however, I can see the benefit of having the three different levels of help available, especially for those who may not have played the game to any extent. Actually I think I learned more from the tutor in the Replay mode. Watching hands that I lost played over again really pointed out my mistakes and taught me some interesting strategies. The real test will come this weekend when my father and some of the guys come over for a poker game and I get to try out the strategies I picked up from ol' Amarillo.

Amarillo Slim's Real Poker: 5 Card Stud will run on any Tandy/IBM compatible with CGA, EGA or VGA graphics.

(Villa Crespo Software, 1725 McGovern St., Highland Park, IL 60035, 708-433-0500; \$49.95)

—Greg Shultz



the function keys that correspond to a menu at the bottom of the screen. I found this to be an excellent feature as I was able to begin playing the game right away rather than spend my time learning complicated keystrokes.

From the main menu's configuration options you can control just about every aspect of the game, including the speed at which the game is played. At slower speeds the cards are dealt more slowly, allowing time for you to study your opponents' table cards, see how your opponents bet and then decide what you are going to do.

As I became more comfortable with

opponents provides very interesting games.

A help system is also included in the menu: The help system, the five-page manual and the function-key interface get you up and running quickly. In fact, within five minutes of unwrapping the package I was involved in a high-stakes game and getting my pants beat off by Dirty Dan — watch out for this character.

OK, now let's look at the tutor. I know by now you are probably very curious about this aspect of the game since I have mentioned it twice in the previous paragraphs. After playing *Amarillo Slim's Real*