

"With any fictional character you borrow things from your own personal experiences or from the people around you. When developing the character's personality traits," Justin explained, "This is how I developed Zero—kamikaze with a bull-headed nature."

Getting a game character from an image on paper to the computer of a programmer is not an easy chore. It took one year from the time the Zero proposal was submitted until the first sprite was drawn. First Justin had to submit the initial proposal to Sunsoft, outlining the game concept. After approval from the company's selection committee, Zero was slated to go into production.

Justin's father, David Siller came up with the original plot for the game. Justin took the plot and added some things he thought were necessary. Neil Glancy of Iguana Entertainment in Texas did the code for the game, added some input, and worked on some level environments.

Plot elements were derived from character animation designed by Mario Zavala, a character designer for Sunsoft.

The plot is one thing, but playability and overall play mechanics of the game were a major concern to Justin. Whether you're an experienced gamer or picking up a controller for the first time, Justin made Zero appeal to gaming enthusiasts of all ages and skill levels.

"When playing the game, Zero has different ways of attacking and methods of flying. You have total control over all of his movements, both on the ground and in the air," Justin continues. "Everyone will play the game differently. Some will enjoy mastering his flying techniques, others will enjoy collecting stuff, and still others will want to find the many hidden areas of the game. Others may just want to go through the rounds as quickly as they can. My goal when making this game was to have it suited to as wide a range of gaming interests and particular styles of



play as possible."

Zero has 15 levels of fun in seven different zones. The Beach, The Cliffs, The Forests, Toxic Waste, and The Factories. The Boss rounds are built in and many of the devices Zero uses, the vehicles, and some of the Bosses were rendered in 3-D studio and have a Donkey Kong Country feel.

"It doesn't matter how many



levels a game has, how long you make it, or how hard it is. The mark of a good game is, even when someone has completed the game, how often do they go back and play it to find the hidden areas that he or she missed or to master a technique used in the game," Justin said.

When coming up with an idea for a game, the concept is much larger than what your final product becomes. Zero is a 16-Meg game, and although Justin and the Iguana programmers were forced to leave some of their ideas on the programming-room floor, they would not sacrifice game play.

"The game is the way I want it. We spent a lot of time tweaking the game and even if Zero doesn't have his own audience just yet, he will appeal to the Sonic and Mario crowd. Even fighting fans will find something they like, as many of the Bosses have different hit points," Justin added. "Zero the Kamikaze Squirrel has elements of Aero, Sonic, and Mario built in to the game, but we've taken their abilities a step further."

Zero is not a puzzle game but there are different techniques you must learn to make Zero swoop, crash through obstacles, and bowl-over enemies.

Study his flight patterns and master his many intricate flying capabilities to be able to maneuver him into the hidden areas and tight spots that are so prevalent in this game.

Zero the Kamikaze Squirrel is a very innovative game that is fun to play. Even the music is in tune with the gaming times.

The music is an important part of the evolution of the game. Rich Fox worked on the music and took the traditional Japanese melodies and sounds and added a theatrical rock 'n' roll direction on the Super NES version. The Genesis version has a rock 'n' roll soundtrack.

Everything from game design to marketing is in the works on this tremendous project, and the wheels are in motion to make Zero a familiar squirrel in everyone's backyard. The advertisement for the game says it best, "Guard you nuts, Zero's coming." The game is being released just when most squirrels are finishing up gathering their store of food for the long winter.

At the same time gamers are compiling their lists of games they'd like to add to their collections to keep themselves from going nuts over the long, cold winter. Zero can keep you occupied and make you forget all about the weather.