

## On Vault Boy and Pip Boy

I'm not very good at remembering people's names. Sometimes I'll meet someone whom I went to school with or had sex with, and we'll say hello and have a chat and wish each other the best of luck, but once that person has left, I'll be asking myself the same old question: "What was that person's name again?"

The name a person is given at birth is often so arbitrary, that I feel lucky that I manage to remember my own.

It's only when a name really suits a person or character, that my brain stores it. The characters that wander around in the novels of Charles Dickens, for instance. Or cartoon characters like Mickey Mouse or Daffy Duck or Tweety. Those are names that make sense to me. They are names that stick. And that's because the creators of fictional characters have a huge advantage over normal parents: they've already figured out what their brainchild is going to look like and how it's going to behave and react. They can plan ahead and pick a name that will fit like a glove. Calling these characters by any other name than the name they were given, seems impossible. Or is it?

### Vault Boy

One day, when Leonard Boyarsky was working on Fallout, he came up with the idea to create a little mascot that would grace the "cards" in the character creation screen. He asked Tramell Ray Isaac to draw something that would evoke the feel of Monopoly cards and this is what the artist came up with:



A slicker version of T Ray's design, courtesy of BIS artist Brian Menze

All self-respecting Fallout fans know and love this character, but it is amazing how few of them actually know its correct name. Most of them wrongfully refer to him as Pip Boy, so let me make it clear to you for once and for all: the above mascot is called Vault Boy. That's not only the name Leonard Boyarsky gave him, it's also the only name that makes sense.

When you watch the intro movie of Fallout closely, you will notice that Boyarsky's mascot is associated with The Vault Of The Future franchise. The Vaults (and some of the Vault equipment like the G.E.C.K.) are Vault Tec "products" - Vault Tec being only one of a number of corporations in the Fallout universe. In the intro movie of Fallout 2, the little fellow in the Vault jumpsuit features yet again in a Vault Tec Production: a promotional

movie about leaving the Vault. Seeing that the manuals are Vault Tec publications as well, it should begin to dawn on you that the little blond fella in the Vault jumpsuit is simply the mascot of the whole Vault Tec franchise. Hence the name: Vault Boy. Makes sense, doesn't it?

Vault Boy's appearance is based on Rich Uncle Pennybags, the rotund old man in a top hat who serves as the mascot of the game Monopoly. The artist who designed Pennybags has remained a mystery, but it is believed that whilst designing the character, he was partially influenced by the stature and dress of financier and banker J.P. Morgan. Rich Uncle Pennybags (or Milburn Pennybags for the connoisseurs) was rechristened Mr. Monopoly in a Hasbro marketing effort in 1999.



Pennybags compared with an unused card for the character creation screen

## Pip Boy

Then who is Pip Boy? Pip Boy is another mascot in the Fallout universe, yet a mascot that doesn't play as huge a role as Vault Boy. You can see what he looks like on the game's personal computer: the PIPBOY 2000. The PIPBOY 2000 is not a Vault Tec product. It was made by RobCo Industries.



Pip Boy, the little red-haired fella in the yellow outfit, is another one of Leonard Boyarsky's brainchildren and was based on the mascot of Big Boy, a restaurant chain started in 1936 by Bob Wian in Glendale, California. The Big Boy mascot is a chubby boy in red and white with suspenders holding a double decker hamburger:



The inspiration for the Big Boy mascot was Richard Woodruff, a 6 year old kid who walked into the diner as Bob Wian was attempting to name his new hamburger. Wian said “Hello Big Boy” to Woodruff, and the name stuck. Ben Washam, an American animator who worked at Warner Bros. Cartoons from 1941 until 1962, sketched Woodruff’s caricature and this became the restaurant’s trademark.

If you think that the red-haired Pip Boy bears no resemblance to the black-haired Big Boy, then think again. The Big Boy mascot would eventually also be featured in a comic book, a promotional giveaway for children visiting the restaurant, and this is where things get interesting. Of many of the early issues of the comic, there are what are called Western and Eastern variants. The familiar black-haired Big Boy would appear in comics in the Western chains, whilst for the Eastern chains, every scene with Big Boy was redrawn, depicting him as a blond or even red-haired and somewhat thinner boy. Although I have no confirmation of this, it is quite possible that the artist who drew Pip Boy based his work on the Eastern variant.



Western (left) and Eastern (right) version of Big Boy

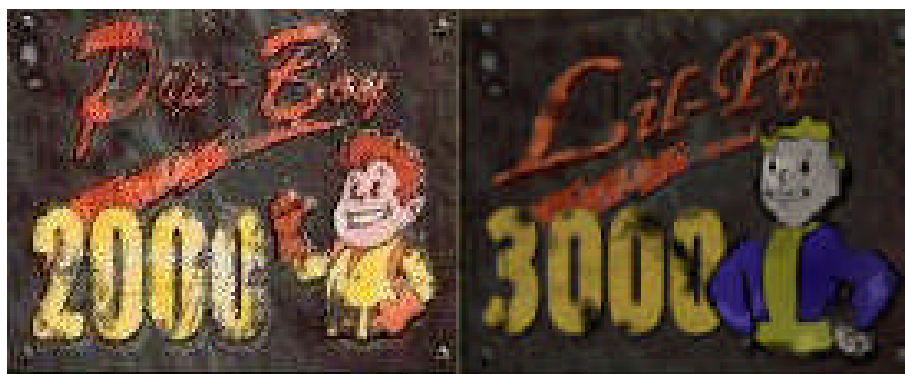
### Stop the confusion

Referring to Vault Boy as Pip Boy isn’t a small mistake. It’s about as bad as referring to Calvin as Charlie Brown. You shouldn’t use an incorrect name just because two characters look “a lot” like each other. It only creates confusion. And it would be a disservice to Leonard Boyarsky, who created both characters. Nevertheless, it’s a mistake that happens all the time.

I've often heard that one of the reasons why Vault Boy is mistaken for Pip Boy is probably because of the game Fallout Tactics. In one of the special encounters in that game, you can actually recruit Vault Boy, but the game of course refers to him as Pip Boy:



It's easy to blame a game that was developed by a group of designers who didn't quite grasp Fallout's retro-futuristic setting and made tons of unforgivable mistakes, but I doubt they are really responsible for the confusion. Especially when I see that even Chris Avellone uses the name Pip Boy in his Bible and even more so when I see that the very capable Van Buren team made the "same" mistake:



The RobCo PIPBOY 2000 wasn't just upgraded in Van Buren, it also used a "new" mascot

My two cents? For a long time, the fans just didn't know any better. The name "Vault Boy" isn't mentioned in the games nor in the manuals. Leonard Boyarsky and Tim Cain dropped the name in a couple of interviews, but that was it. You had to be a really big fan to put two and two together, so to speak. Let's just hope Bethesda has one of those really big fans within their ranks.

-- alec