

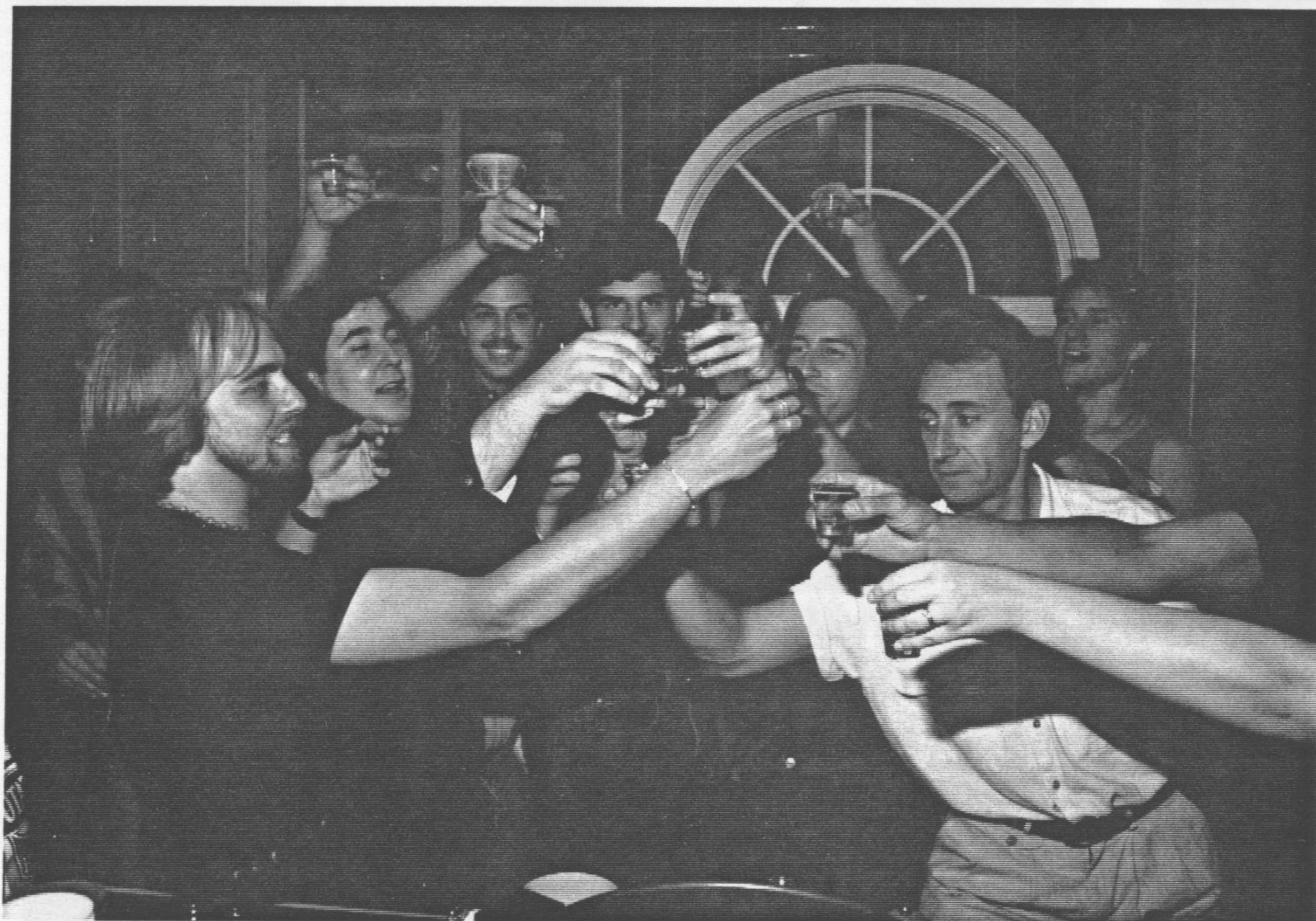
Point of ORIGIN

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❖❖ Austin, Texas

Ultima VII The Black Gate Opens



Ultima VII got a proper send off at Britannia Manor Saturday night

U7: Piece by Piece

There's been almost as much drama and suspense in the release of Ultima VII as in the game itself. Even now, unseen workers are scrambling in faraway warehouses to make sure U7's arrival classifies as a gaming "event."

The news came on Shipping Eve during an in-house verification. About 20% of the Disk 2's of the 5.25" version were no good, a bad batch from the duplicator. The call to StarPak (ORIGIN's Colorado warehouse subcontractor)

was no picnic. "They had just finished putting the last label on the last case—paperwork, shipping forms, everything was complete," according to accounting mogul Mark Chandler. That meant every order—hundreds upon hundreds of case packs—had to be re-opened and separated before the delivery trucks came.

"What Starpak did was

(More on page 8)

In a Timely Manor

As part of the U7 launch in Europe, Richard hosted a dinner and press conference for about 30 of the top journalists at stately Moreton Hall Castle. Lord British even took a queen for the evening: Bernadette Abbott, the lead buyer of entertainment software for Centresoft, one of Europe's biggest distributors

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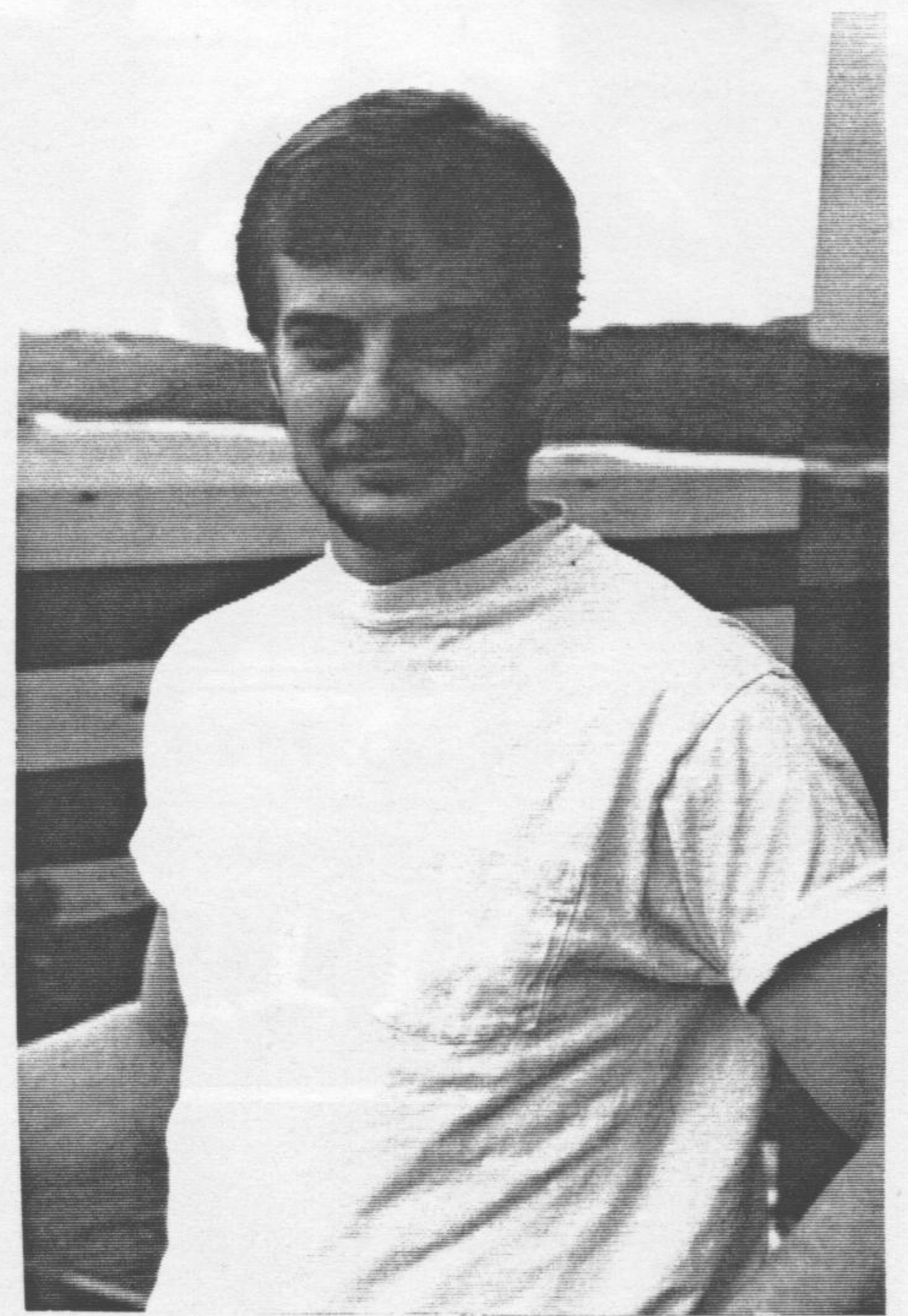
Bio Double Header

As part of our ongoing effort to make ORIGIN one, happy, first-name-only kind of family, we're doubling up on the bio section this issue. It's due to the fact that two of our very own have ascended to the ranks of the Tuesday management meeting. Here's an opportunity to get to know them better. (Better yet...seek them out at the next cookout or happy hour, introduce yourself and congratulate them on their promotions.)

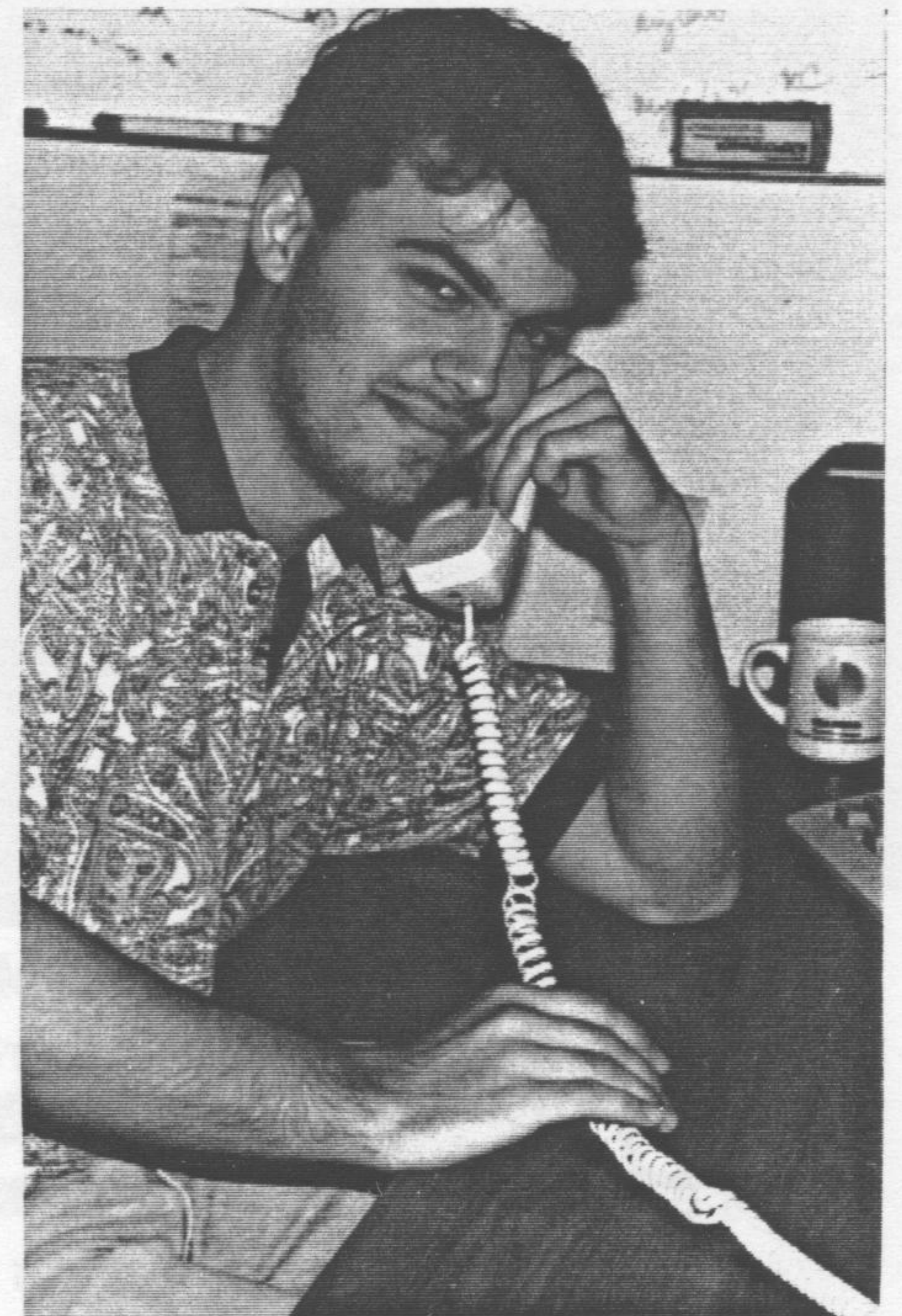
Jeff Shelton is the new Quality Assurance Manager. His gaming experience began many years ago in his youth with Pong, for which he generated a bug list of 1300. It was the first step in a long road which led Jeff to ORIGIN's Quality Control department on January 23, 1990. Eight months later, the QC department was terminated and Jeff moved into QA. Not long after that, QA and Art were stripped of their immediate manager, so Jeff began to fill the vacuum. His responsibilities were stepped up and he eventually became QA Test Supervisor. With the departure of Karen Conroe, he took over leading the department when it had a full plate: Ultima 7, Underworld, Special Ops and Amiga and foreign language translations. Now, as the new head of QA, Jeff has to fill his own former spot. He is a living example of the "fast track" to management.

Thomas Blom's taking over as the new Programming Manager. Before ORIGIN, he worked for 5 and one-half years at Texas Instruments, most recently as the lead in a software group writing C++ code for Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAM) software for Windows and DOS. While at TI, he also did some time as a Unix systems analyst and a team member working on LISP workstations for United Airlines.

He went to UT while working, and 20 hours away from his BS in electrical engineering, he decided to switch to math ("since I like the theoretical stuff the best.") He has a small 'home studio' and says, "Jake Rodgers, Art DiBianca and I pretend to have a 'band' that practices psuedo-regularly. Anyone else is welcome to join!" You can also catch TBlom—or perhaps you can't catch him—on the playing field as the organizer and captain of Exception 13, the ORIGIN soccer team, currently sporting a 3-3 record.



QA Manager Jeff Shelton



Programming Manager Thomas Blom

Notes From COMDEX

Chicago—Can you imagine a trade show where nobody understands the name? That's the case with the recent COMDEX in Chicago. As far as I can figure, it means something like "Computer

Distributors Exposition." To tell the truth, I don't know, and neither did a single person there.

Basically, COMDEX is a computer hardware show, and what Sony or Nintendo are to CES, IBM and Microsoft are to COMDEX.

"Windows World" is an entire exhibit hall unto itself and once again I was able to witness

the second coming of Bill Gates. He rode in on the wings of Windows 3.1, already being lauded as one of the best upgrades of the year. He maintained a high profile for the duration of the show, talking technojargon with the industry top dogs and econospeak with Chicago business leaders.

(More on next page)

...COMDEX

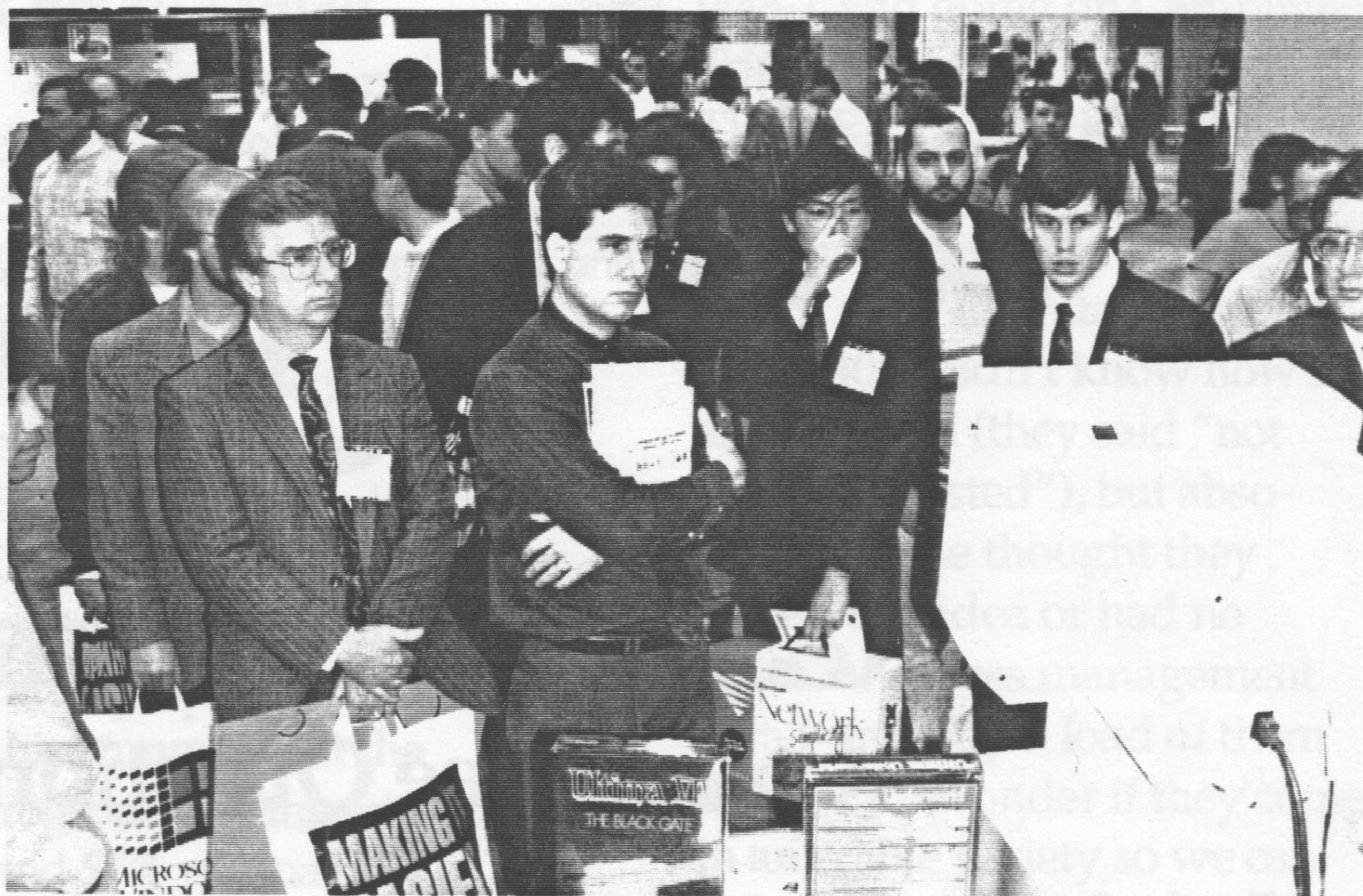
Meanwhile, tucked away in the Multimedia Showcase, Underworld was making some noise of its own. ORIGIN latched on to a comfy spot offered to us in the MediaVision booth. If you're not familiar with MediaVision, it makes a new sound card called the Pro Audio Spectrum Plus. It's 100% Sound Blaster compatible and therefore 100% ORIGIN compatible.

The attack plan was exquisitely simple: draw in a crowd with the U7 intro sequence, laughing off the "Coming Christmas 1991" as a typo. Then, with the ice broken, load up the Underworld demo. To a person, the crowd found the technology spellbinding. You have to remember, these are people who had been wandering aimlessly for hours looking at WordPerfect and Fox Pro. Underworld running smooth as glass on the 486/33 proved to be just as addictive as it was at CES.

Some attendees had already bought, played and finished the game. "I want to thank you," one bleary-eyed guy said, "I got Underworld two days ago and I haven't slept since." Another lamented as to how Ultima VI strained the relationship between him and his fiancée and Underworld would probably finish it off.

The anticipation for U7 was running high as well, even though some people still looked skeptical when told it would be shipping this week. What cynics!

Strike Commander continues to hold the top spot as Most People Ready to Play game. Due to limitations with the Pro Audio



COMDEX attendees are mesmerized by Ultima Underworld

Spectrum Plus and the configuration of the demo, Strike wasn't shown at COMDEX. As they say, "You have to dance with the one who brung ya." Several people expressed their disappointment, especially those from competing software companies.

Results from these shows are hard to measure immediately. Karl and Anita drummed up plenty of excitement with ORIGIN's current distributors/retailers and knocked the socks off of some potential customers. From a press standpoint, COMDEX draws different journalists than CES. Some magazines (like Business Week, to drop a name) are looking at entertainment software in a new light and thinking about upcoming feature stories.

There wasn't much truly ground-breaking technology to be seen at COMDEX. Pen computing is gaining momentum as the next consumer craze. Apple did not have its voice-recognition technology in plain view, although it was probably lurking behind closed

and locked doors somewhere in the exhibit hall.

The Fall COMDEX (a much larger show) takes place November 16-20 in Las Vegas. While CES is geared toward Christmas retail sales, COMDEX is timed to coincide with businesses' fiscal years, most of which end in January or February. Point of ORIGIN will be there as well and back here with another full report.

Wing 2 Wins Again

Wing Commander 2 picked up two more awards at the prestigious European Computer Trade Show: Best Sound and Best Graphics.

In the newly-resurrected PC Entertainment (formerly Game Players PC Entertainment), Wing 2 picks up an Excellence Award but loses Game of the Year to Chuck Yeager's Air Combat (EA) and Best Arcade/Action Game to Hoverforce (Accolade).

Party Poll



Results of the Entertainment Committee Questionnaire

For the first time, the Entertainment Committee has some raw data to work with — supplied by y'all a few months back in the form of an E.C. Survey — in mapping future activities. The only drawback: there are so many new employees that the "never attended" category was often checked. In fact, a whopping 34% of all respondents never even attended ORIGIN's Christmas party just a few months ago because most of those folks were not on board at that time!

Here's a rundown of some of the most salient highlights of the survey:

Food for Thought

The Wednesday Cookout was a winner: 76% of those who responded rated the cookouts "good, very good, or great." These weenie roasts garnered the single highest "great" vote at 30%, and it was the only item that absolutely not a single soul graded as "fair or poor." So, for that 24% of

you who indicated you had "never attended," ya really oughtta consider cancelling those calorie-balanced snob lunches at the Metropolitan Club downtown and hang with the ORIGIN gang at its mid-week fat feast. It's the place to be! Check the "Entertainment" BBS for dates, times and costs.

Is Everybody Happy?

Happy Hours did pretty well, too, (61% positive rating) with sandwiches and veggies (62% positive) and pizzas (63% positive) being the current food favorites. 30% actually rated Happy Hours "fair or poor," so the E.C. is trying to think of ways to make them better.

One thing that's been done is to cut WAY back on speeches and announcements in this setting, favoring Point Of Origin as a preferred vehicle for "broadcast" communication with employees. Except for periodic special occasions, management has agreed to make Richard the sole/primary spokesperson at

these events, and even limit him to one significant 5-10 minute topic per gathering. Hopefully this will put more of the "happy" back into Happy Hours.

At the time of the questionnaire, all Happy Hours had traditionally been held somewhere on office premises, so that's the only type rated. However, enough people (41%) expressed some interest in trying to stage Happy Hours at area clubs and restaurants, that the E.C. figured they'd give it a try. In a future E.C. opinion poll, you'll be able to further rate the experimentation with these fun-and-funky off-site locales. But since quite a few employees said they were either "not interested" (33%) or off-site places were a "bad idea" (14%), don't expect this to be the usual fare.

So-So-Social

Social Hours clocked in with a less-enthusiastic 53% favorable response, which is

why they got axed from the lineup until/unless a more popular angle can be thought up. (Any votes for a "Stars Of The Watering Hole" DEBATE HOUR pontificating the essence of religion, politics and corn flakes? Nahhhh...)

More offbeat activities, like decorating contests, thus far have proved to appeal to a more discriminating clientele (50% enjoyed Halloween dress-up day; 45% dug the Xmas door deal) compared with the clearly mass-employee appeal of FOOD events. In response, the E.C. now has formed a task force to investigate using edible clothing or materials in future such lunatic-fringe events (use your imagination).

Feelings about other current or possible "social activities" produced a mixed bag of responses. People seemed about equally split over whether the suggested events were "good-to-great" versus "fair-to-don't care." Even FOOD-oriented ideas like Ice Cream Sundaes and Pizza Parties got a ho-hum response. Birthday Banners and Ship Parties mustered the most enthusiasm with 50% and 54%, respectively, saying they were good or better. And it was clear that folks would rather "ship" than "crunch" — even with FOOD at steak!(sic) — as 25% said Ship Parties were "ggggreat!", compared with only 15% saying the same for Crunch Mode Parties.

Out to Lunch

Hot summer picnics were definitely cool stuff among those folks who've been here long enough to ever attend one. Well over two-thirds of our family picnickers rated these events highly, with Westlake Beach slightly edging out Bull Creek as a "great" outdoor party setting. Enthusiasm for other proposed picnic locations this summer sent the YogiBearometer spinning: 55% and 57% wanna play at Lake Travis or Zilker Park, respectively! About 30% said they were "not really interested" in picnics. No one thought they were a bad idea; the rest just "didn't know" or had "no opinion."

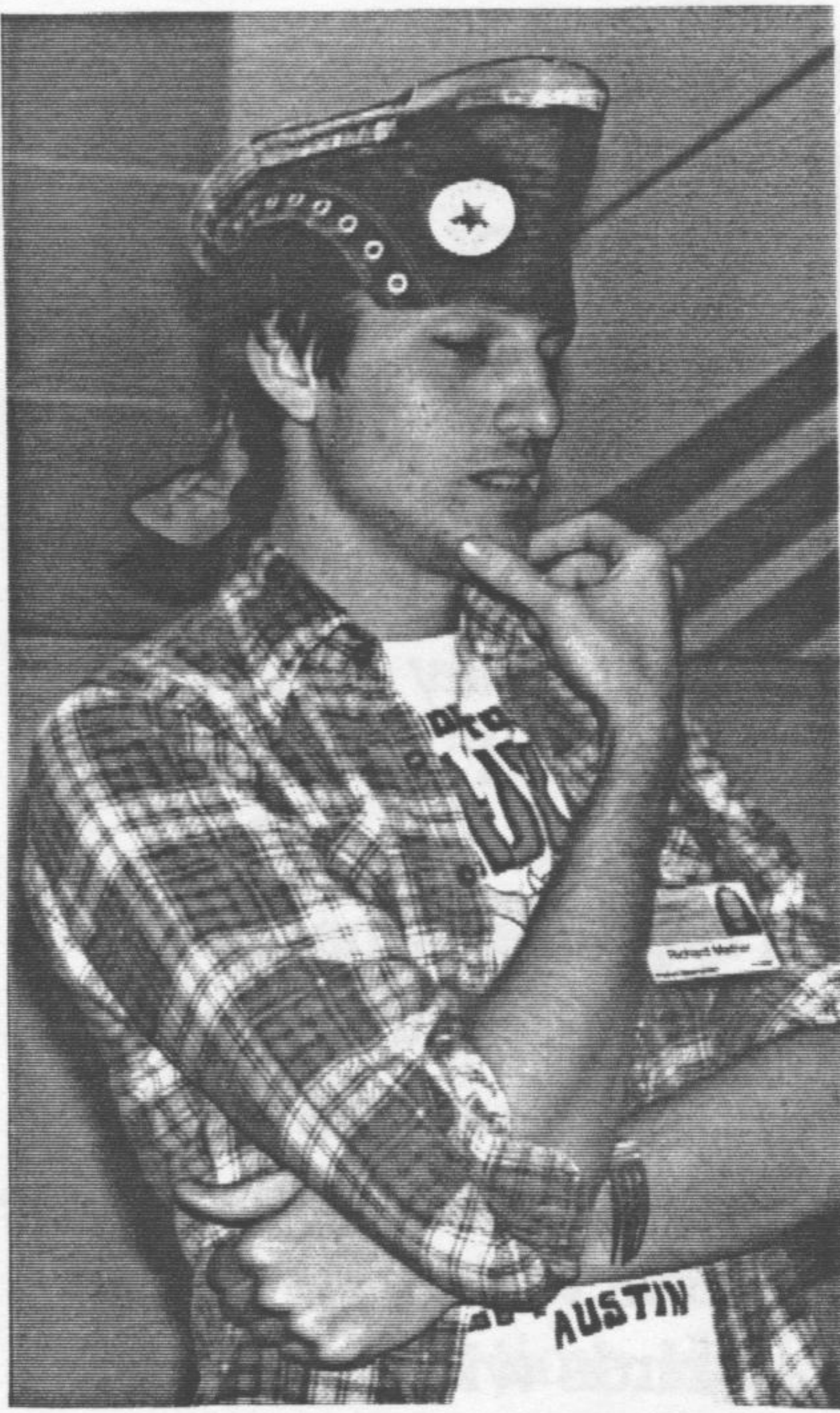
Misc., Etc.

On the subject of other types of future outings, responses were splattered all over the countryside. Organized group Movie excursions captured the fancy of 74%, followed by Concerts at 64%, a Halloween Party at 61%, and Plays at (57%). Sucking wind on interest were: St. Patrick's Day and Valentine's Day parties (notice we didn't have any), attending Aquafest or the Pecan Street Festival as one big family, Mexican Border Shopping (never said for WHAT), and Eeyores Birthday (go figure!). Floating gently in the middle with more split-decisions were: River Rafting (50% interested), constructing an ORIGIN flotilla for the Town Lake Raft Race (47%), invading Six Flags (46%) and Sea World

(44%), and going on Camping Trips together (41%)...now THERE's a scary thought.

Probably the most popular item on the list was ORIGIN T-Shirts. 60% definitely wanted them, 40% didn't know how to ask for them (they said "not really interested"), but absolutely no one thought they were a bad idea or had no opinion! Guess management better order up a load of them Beefy-T's! Wonder if they come in an edible variety so we can kill two birds with one stone?

If you'd like a more detailed look at the survey results, ask any member of the Entertainment Committee and they'll hunt you up a copy. Currently, those members are: Wayne Baker, Michelle Caddel, Alan Gardner, Melanie Green (new...welcome!), Paul Isaac (just joined, too!), Mike McShaffrey, Donna Mehnert, Norma Vargas, Marie Williams, Curtis Wood, and the bosswoman, Kay Gilmore. Tell them YOUR thoughts!



Sparkles a Shoe-in

With his Converse high-topper, Richard "Dicko" Mather picked up First Place and a case of athlete's scalp in the April Fool's Day Hat Contest.

M&M (&M)

Notes from Mary Margaret and Sharon Miller

(This is from Mary Margaret)

Sharon and I have been working on Training Program evaluations and the set-up of a Library for the last few weeks.

We have primarily been talking to ACC and UT's Industrial Education Department to create an ongoing relationship to meet ORIGIN's training needs, now and in the future. We are looking into a variety of seminars and other outside sources of training. In-house training will be another possibility in our training program.

If anyone has any suggestions or resources regarding training for ORIGIN, please contact us. Training program segments are being designed to benefit employees throughout the company. Your suggestions will benefit everyone.

The ORIGIN Library will be located in my office: upstairs in ORIGIN East next door to Sharon Miller. We are currently in the process of creating a database and collecting in-house resources as well as compiling lists of resources to acquire. The library will have copies of all of our games as well as various competitor's games. It will also include manuals of in house software and manuals and

(More on next page)

Random Notes

For those of you who didn't read the ccMail, Bob Cook is going to be a new Daddy. In a totally unrelated development, Marie Williams is expecting her first baby. Congratulations to both and their obviously significant others.

Alas, we must bid a fond farewell to Joye and Will McBurnett, heading off to sunny California to try their hand at fame and fortune with a start-up software company. We wish them the best. Meanwhile, Jeff George call-blocking is currently being installed.

There are four new faces in Artland: Beverly Garland, a former ORIGIN intern who has

also done some set and scenery design; Brian Smith, whose portfolio work was so big he brought it to the interview in a 15-foot truck; Robert Frye, who helped Micael and Danny paint the murals at La Zona Rosa; and Paul Steed, who comes from the ranks of TDA. The Art department's so big now that it's also commandeered the old lobby.

We finally have a full-time, honest-to-goodness German translator. Her name is Roswitha (Ross-vee'-tah) Shumake. She's been in the States for about a year and a half now, and she says her only reservation about ORIGIN is the potential of succumbing to the dread GA syndrome (game addiction).

Since there is a dearth of "Dear Point Man" letters, that must mean that everyone is

perfectly happy and well informed. So I'll take this chance to comment on the *excellent* "Watering Hole" dialogue of recent weeks. Apparently, the old stand-by's of religion and politics still work. I'm still not sure about this whole "is-Kirk-Winterrowd-really-Richard-Garriott" thing, though.

As a fine, upstanding member of the Austin Chamber of Commerce, ORIGIN and its employees are entitled to a discount on business-building seminars at Austin Community College. Some available sessions include Intro to Professional Business Writing, Time Management, Stress Management and Going International. Each seminar runs between \$15-\$65, the perfect price for budding entrepreneurs. Just ccMail Sharon if you'd like more info.



The Road to Runes

Runes of Virtue for Game Boy, ORIGIN's most scrutinized game of all time, officially signed off two weeks ago at Nintendo's USA office in Redmond, Washington, roughly one year after our own signoff.

Perhaps the deciding factor was Alan Gardner and Gary Scott Smith sitting just outside the test room. "They told us we should know something by 11:30 in the morning, so we were sitting there watching the clock and counting down the minutes," Alan recalled. "Then, at 11:27, they just walked in and said, 'Y'all are done.'" A rather unceremonious end to a fairly lengthy process. "But I didn't care," Alan said, "we were just happy that it was over and FCI (ORIGIN's publishing license for

this product) would finally be able to manufacture and ship, because it's really a great game."

Making the trip to Redmond worked so well that it will be the modus operandi for ORIGIN's next round of work-in-progress Nintendo development projects like Ultima V, first submitted to Pony Canyon for videotaping and evaluation about 5 months ago. After that, Runes of Virtue 2 and Ultima 7 for SNES will be steaming down the pipeline.

Look for the current Runes game to hopefully hit American shelves in about 3 months. One last final-final-final signoff by Nintendo in Japan is not expected to be a problem, Alan says, since Runes has already been in release there for several months.

...Timely Manor

(what a coincidence!). Word has it the Lord and Lady lounged in a huge canopy bed at the head of a large table where the journalists—also attired in medieval garb—feasted with their bare hands. At about 3:00 am, LB led the group on a candlelight expedition through the castle's dungeons and secret passages.

Richard said the entire affair was fantastic. It apparently went

well enough for Bernadette Abbott to send a fax which reads:

Dear Richard,

Thank you for the best software launch ever!

The Queen and her Subjects

That's high praise coming from someone who's been to more than a few big product launches! Watch this space for a full wrap-up of the Lord British 1992 European tour.

(7)

...M&M

reference books for commercial software. The library will participate in our training program by having a variety of books, videos and training discs for various training needs such as DOS, C++, Art and Graphics programs, management issues and more.

The ORIGIN library is for everyone. Resources will be available for programmers, writers, customer service, management, QA, TDA's, Artists and Sound. If you have any ORIGIN materials that are not frequently used, we would very much like to have them so the entire company may benefit from them. We are also accepting donations of personal materials no longer needed, as well as suggestions for resources that would be advantageous to acquire.

As a facet of the library, I have also acquired the task of resurrecting and administrating a "Software Exchange Program" with other companies. If you think ORIGIN should acquire a particular game from another company, please tell me. If you already have a contact with that company who is responsible for their exchange activities, I would appreciate their name and number. ORIGIN's policy on software exchange requests is that only one person represent ORIGIN. That's me now, so if you somehow wind up with a call from some other company wanting ORIGIN products on trade, please forward them to me. This will help us to attain as many games as possible for the library and eliminate the possibility of not being able to trade with a company because they think they already have sent

(More on back page)

...M&M

some product to us.

Sharon and I are looking forward to successfully implementing the training program and the library at ORIGIN over the next year. We hope ORIGIN and all employees will benefit from these programs. We would also like to thank John Onorato and Joye McBurnett for all the help in compiling the questionnaire.

Thanks,
Mary Margaret

(This is from Sharon)

Note: Ongoing information on the Library, Training Program, Software Exchange Program, company job openings and promotions will be posted on the "Company Notices" bulletin board in CC:Mail. Please make a daily habit of checking this bulletin board for information. We will soon be placing four wall-mounted bulletin boards for additional details on the categories mentioned in the company break areas in the East building and near the coffee machines in the West building. The break room bulletin boards will be for authorized Company Notices only. Please pass any notices you think might be appropriate to post on these boards to Mary Margaret or me for handling.

Thanks and have a great day!

Sharon

On the Tube

Here's the news you've all been waiting for: Telerep in New York has informed us that "Lifestyles of the Richard and Famous" will air the weekend of May 8th. Locally, you can catch

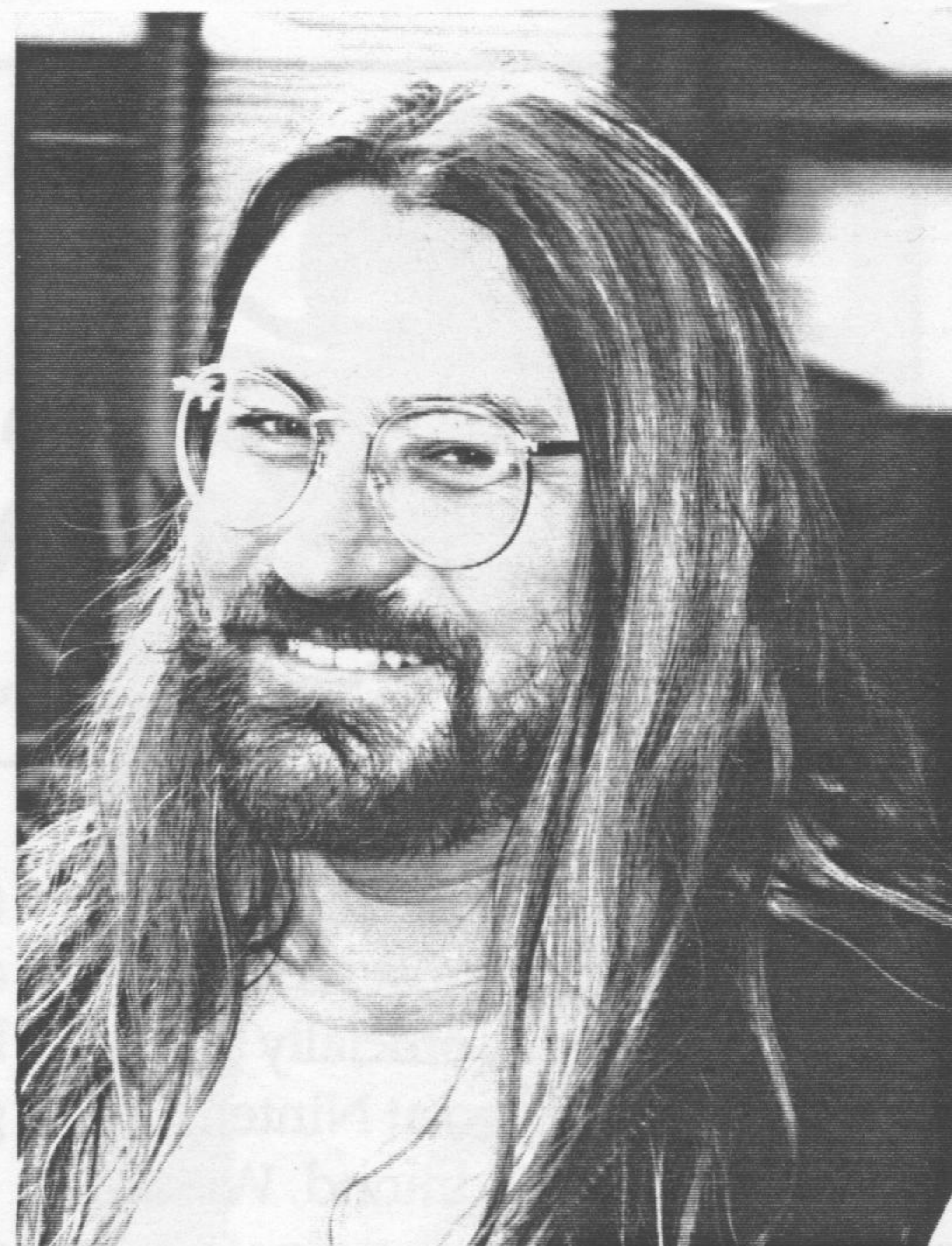
it on KVC, the independent cable channel 13, Sunday night at 10 pm. For those of you who might not know, Richard will be one of the *featured* profiles in that segment. It was filmed at Britannia Manor (Rich's house) way back last April 26! We can all see if Richard has aged any as a result of his pressure-cooker U7 wrap-up schedule. Of course, we'll capture it all on videotape, too, for those of you who don't have cable. A copy will be available for checkout from the new OSI library.

...U7

nothing less than spectacular," Mark said. "(StarPak President) Mike Morgan himself was on the line at 7 in the morning opening packages, along with dozens of staff and temporary help."

StarPak's herculean effort managed to salvage 60% of the original 60,000 rollout. *All* of the 3.5" units headed out the door right on schedule. The 5.25" version will ship this week. Meanwhile, all of the major retailers—Software Etc., Egghead, Electronics Boutique, Babbages and others—have the 3.5" versions on their shelves and report brisk sales. Sales titan Karl Kabler has already heard from one store in New York. "They got in 24 copies first thing Thursday morning and sold half of them in the first 30 minutes."

Of course, most stores already had loads of customer backorders, so all they had to do was ring these folks up and let them know U7 had arrived. We'll bring you updated sales news as the numbers come rolling in.



Local Hero:

In case you missed it last week, April 16 was "Micael Priest Day" as proclaimed by the Austin City Council in 1989. No word yet as to whether ORIGIN will observe the holiday with a paid day off. (Shyeah, right!)

What Next?

In an effort to keep readers confused, the next Point of ORIGIN will come out May 8. COMDEX threw everything off-kilter in terms of publishing. Holding the next issue back one week means every Friday will be special; you'll either get paid or have Point of ORIGIN. We'll leave it up to you to decide which is better.

Meanwhile, don't forget to fill up those boxes with "Dear Point Man" letters.

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