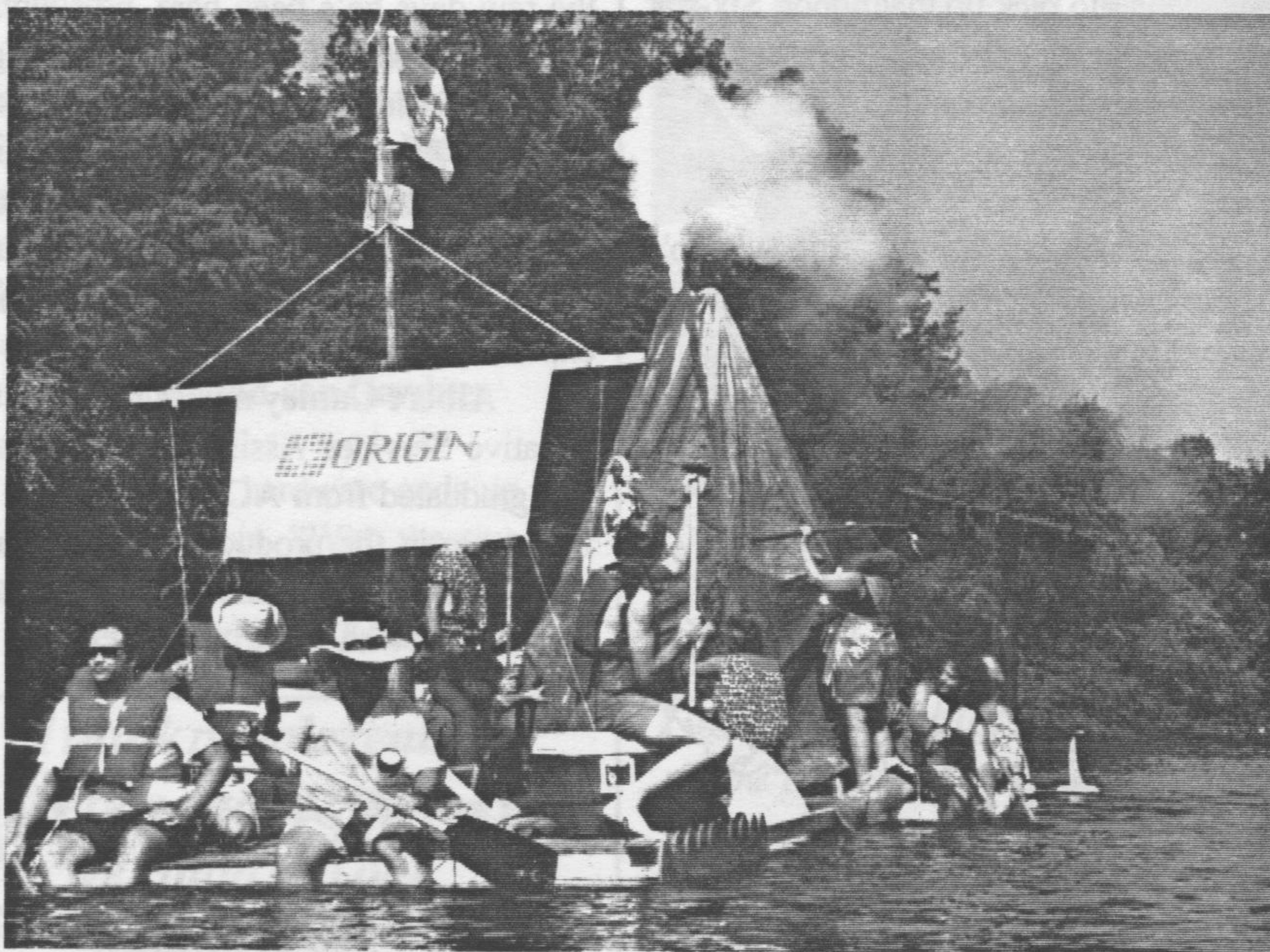


# Point of ORIGIN

Volume II, No. 23

Friday, August 14, 1992

Austin, TX



## Up the River...

*The floating "Mountain of Fury" picked up the first place trophy and a cool \$500 in this year's KHFI Raft Race. Congrats to the crew.*

## All the News That Fits

As reported here last issue, Richard's profile finally came out in People magazine. It's the one with Annette Funicello on the cover. With the exception of a few minor factual errors ("...a 1,150-foot-long suspension bridge leads over a canyon to an observation tower"), the article's pretty good. Pick up a copy this week or catch it in the Library.

Underworld and U7 are hanging on to print space. As expected, in the September issue of Computer Gaming World, Underworld has taken over the #1 spot in the Readers' Poll with a .07 point lead over Civilization. It trailed Civilization by .03 when it debuted in the prior poll. Meanwhile, U7 makes it maiden debut in the ratings at #7. Wing 2 still has a stranglehold on the #3 spot.

In the same issue, reviewer Charles Ardai raves about U7: "Gamers who stay away from Ultima VII because they think they know what's in it will be missing something wonderful. ...When it comes to suspense and a strong, unified plot, Ultima VII delivers as none of its predecessors did." Ardai goes on to say that U7 is *so* good that perhaps the series should end right here, rather than tempt fate by continually trying to top itself. He'll just have to wait and see the new perspective in U8; then we'll ask again.

Both Underworld and U7 are reviewed in the August issue of Computer Shopper. While Barry Brenesal had problems with a couple of bugs, he still writes: "Ultima VII has

(See "News" on next page)

## License To Travel

A different kind of road show this week: **David Ladyman** is in sunny San Diego at the Comic Book Expo. His mission is to try and find companies interested in licensing the Wing and Ultima lines for comic books. Early reports claim that Harris and Marvel have shown some interest.

Next week, David's off again, this time to the combination GEN CON/Origins show. Don't let the name fool you. We don't have anything to do with organizing the show, but we are sponsoring four seminars: ORIGIN's Wing Commander II + More, ORIGIN's Ultima VII and Beyond, An Audience With Lord British, and Careers in Computer Gaming. If you haven't guessed by now, **Richard** will be there, not to mention **Warren Spector** and his wife, **Caroline**, and **Andrew Morris**. **Paul Lidberg** plans to be there as his own exhibitor. He's launching his new game for science fiction miniatures called **Star Corps**. An apres-show report will be in the next Point.

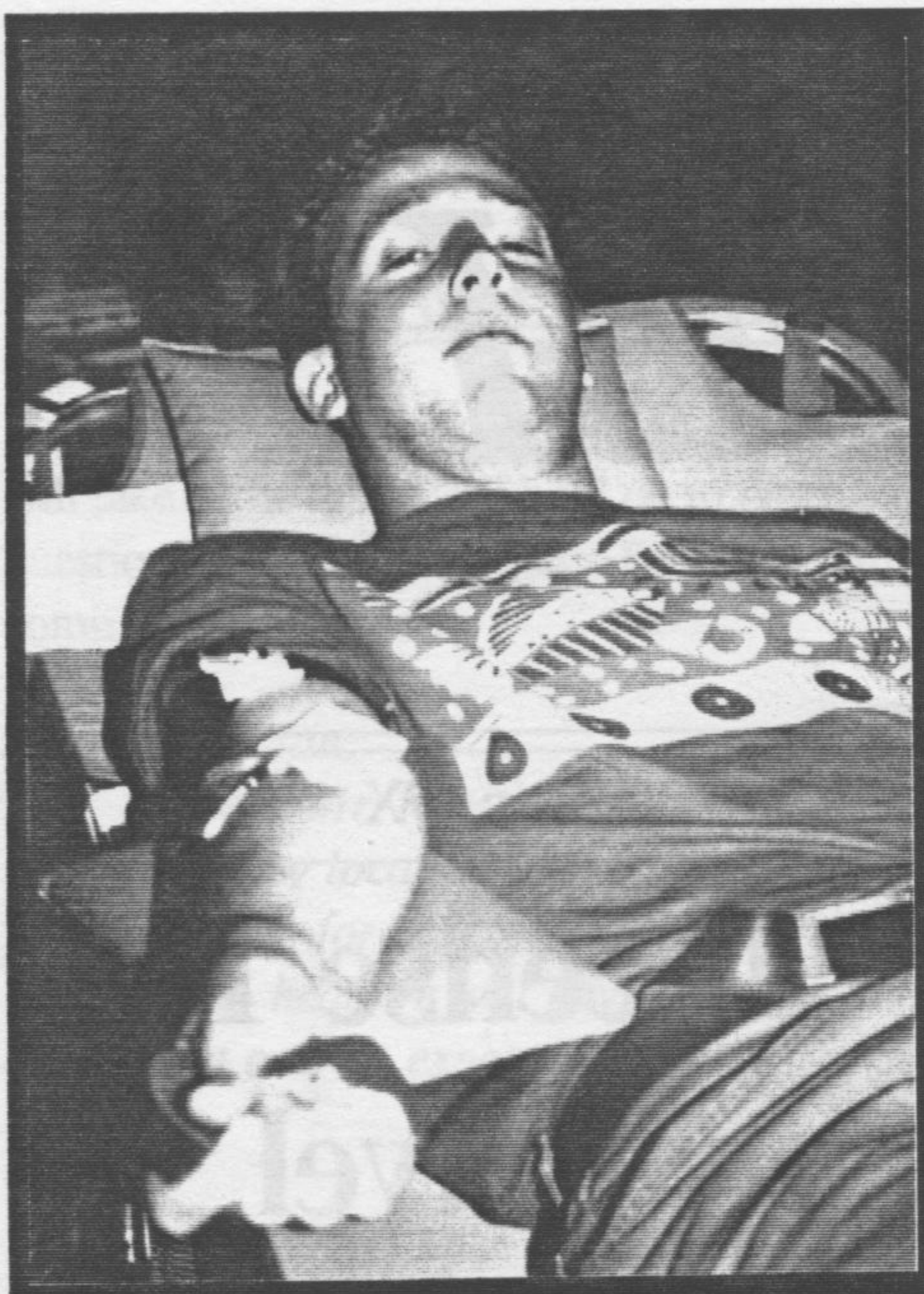
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### *You're so vein..*

*Russell Byrd gets a full frontal phlebotomy at ORIGIN's Blood Flood '92. In all, 55 donors were tapped.*

## Miscellany

The **Alan Gardner** family just bought a new house in Georgetown. He says he's planning a party in a few weeks after he finishes painting. Meanwhile, the **Scott Russo/Heather Barclay** duo's raising a roof in River Place (on 2222 near 620). They hope to close later this month. And **Anita Lockamy** just closed on her new abode this week. (She's still looking for moving help, by the way.)

**Rebecca Heidt** and **Chuck Zoch** got a surprise in the mail the other day: a 10-pound box of candy from a more-than-satisfied customer.

We now have our first customer mailing list generated from game registration cards. The Marketing Department is starting to brainstorm ideas for a 12-16 page customer newsletter to send out this Fall. The idea's to put out something a little lighter than last year's technology report, maybe something with humor, trivia about our people and products—you know, the "inside scoop." If you have any ideas, pass them along via cc:Mail to Publishing Prince **Mike Harrison**.

Apologies go out to ORIGIN's soccer team, Exception 13, which finished the season at 4-4, as opposed to the 3-5 record reported in the last Point. **Carol Cipolla** also wanted to see her name in bold type spelled correctly. There you go, Carol.

## ...NEWS

extraordinary visuals, excellent sound, an intriguing storyline, clever observations and surprising depth." Jim Freund says of Underworld: "Ultima Underworld is addictive, and given the amount of time you're likely to devote to the game, it's a fine value." (Whoa, Jim! Take it easy!)

Keep an eye peeled for the next issue of Dragon magazine. Word from the editors is that Underworld has garnered a six-star review (above and beyond the five-star limit of "excellent"). That will make it only the fifth game ever to pick up that honor. Six-star reviews didn't even exist until the magazine came across a game it couldn't resist creating the new category for: Wing Commander.

We've also been given a "heads-up" for the next two issues of White Wolf. Jim Trunzo has reviews of Underworld and U7 in them and he says he was very impressed with each game, so it should be some good copy.



## Picnic Time

Don't forget the company picnic Sunday at Westlake Beach starting at 1:00 in the afternoon. Once again, the Entertainment Committee's gone all out to make sure everybody has a great time.

Some of the activities planned are: jet skiing, water skiing, water- and land-based volleyball, frisbee and swimming. There should be plenty of hamburgers and hot dogs to go around. If you'd like to go and haven't checked in with one of the EC members yet, contact **Carolyn Cutler** or **Norma Vargas** or **Wayne Baker**.

To get to Westlake Beach, take 360 to Westlake Drive. Make sure you veer left when the road does or else you'll end up on Westlake Pass. The beach is right next to the old Jazz on the Lake. See you there!

## All Aboard

**Suzanne Taylor** is a new Project Administrator. She comes from Texas Instruments, where she procured "everything from the tiniest screw to the largest mainframe cover." **Warren** and **Scott** will be duking it out to see who gets Suzanne for his project.

**Kay Gilmore's** bringing in some seasoned Customer Service reps. **Jeff Miller** has three years of CS experience backed up by his playing experience with Ultima V. In the few days he's been here, he's already been able to help other reps with that game.

**Jerrold Harrington** starts next Monday. Jerrold also has three years of CS experience and reports having "messed around" with Wing and having played Ultima III. All we need now is a Windwalker expert.

**Albert Canley** makes his debut as Creative Services Assistant on Monday. He just graduated from ACC and also did an internship in the production department at Texas Monthly magazine. Happy to have all four of you with us.

## PC Research Top-Selling Software (May, 1992)

1. *Ultima VII*
2. *Aces of the Pacific* (Sierra)
3. *Civilization* (MicroProse)
4. *Sim City* (Maxis)
5. *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary* (Interplay)
6. *Rick* (Mastertronic)
7. *Secret Weapons/Luftwaffe* (Lucasfilm)
8. *F117A Stealth Fighter* (MicroProse)
9. *Carrier Strike* (SSI)
10. *Lost Treasures/Infocom* (Activision)
14. *Ultima Underworld*

*Based on sales data received from Software Etc., Babbages, Waldensoftware and Electronics Boutique.*



# Super Mario Bros. (and Sisters)

## Conversion Team Brings Games to the Masses

Tucked away in a few ORIGIN offices, a dozen people are doing the impossible: putting Ultima VII on a diet that will slim it down to 1MB. Having to work with cartridges, slower processors and fewer colors makes Nintendo conversions kind of like trying to drag a Chrysler through a garden hose.

The team doing the pulling is **Heather Barclay**, **Nathan Daughty**, **Steve Muchow** and **Bill Ivey** (all programmers), **Mel Green** and **Sam Laskowsky** (TDAs), **Paul Lidberg** (writer), **Martin Galway** and **Marc Shaefgren** (music and sound effects), **Dicko Mather** (artist), **Ana Moreno** (project administrator) and **Alan-san Gardner** (producer).

"In a way, the hardware ends up helping us," says Alan. "With the size limitations, the data need for graphics and sound is inherently smaller. I still think

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***"I think people realize there's a good chance we could sell one million units."***

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there's a lot more we can do with the Nintendo hardware—things like scrolling and rotating that has to be written on the PC—but we're still learning as we go along. The sound capabilities are actually superior. The eight operator channels are like having eight Sound Blasters. Martin and Marc are looking at ways to tap into that."

The data diet requires re-writing puzzles, downsizing dialogue options and reducing art, but all of the Nintendo games still bear an almost twin resemblance to their PC siblings. Is there any "snobbery" to deal with? Alan believes "programmers respect us from a camaraderie standpoint, since most of them are self-taught themselves. Plus, I think they realize there's a pretty decent chance that we could sell one million units."

Ultimas III and IV are out for the NES and Ultima V should release around Christmas. Ultima VII for SNES (Super Nintendo) is in the works and should be out next Spring. Plans call for Martian Dreams and Savage Empire for SNES next year, too.



### ***Yoshi's Handlers***

*The Nintendo Team consists of (l-r): Heather Barclay, Bill Ivey, Martin Galway, Sam Laskowsky, Steve Muchow, Marc Shaefgren, Paul Lidberg, Dicko Mather, Melanie Green, Nathan Daughty and team leader, Alan Gardner. Not shown is Ana Moreno.*

In the Game Boy arena, Runes of Virtue is finished and packaged; now it's up to Fujisankei to decide whether to release it now or hold it for September. Runes 2 is already in testing.

Meanwhile, Pony Canyon's been converting Ultima VI to SNES for a hopeful Christmas release (probably). Software Toolworks also wants to get a yuletide Wing Commander out on SNES (probably not). Look for Wing on Genesis sometime between Christmas and the end of time, converted by Sega.

Of course, the big question mark remaining is for Nintendo CD-ROM. After the big, top-secret presentation a few months ago, ORIGIN was reportedly at the top of the list and Nintendo was still looking at final specs for the machine (even though Virgin Games made a media splash at CES by signing on to do 7th Guest). If the big deal comes through for ORIGIN, Nintendo will pick up the tab for development costs. As soon as we know, we'll let you know.

### ***Did You Know....***

***Nintendo is actually more than 100 years old and started as a playing card company.***

***Some worlds on the Super Nintendo, if proportionally enlarged to life-size, would cover 20,000 square miles.***

***To date, Nintendo has sold more than 600,000,000 games around the world and has assets totalling \$3.2 billion.***





# Dear Point Man

## Finally, all your questions about the new building answered

(Since answering the following letters will take some doing, I'll hold on to other questions until the next issue. But keep 'em coming nonetheless.)

Dear Point Man,

*The evil Mr. Rumor told me that ORIGIN's new location may be designed with partitions for offices, rather than real walls. I also hear we will have a workout area. What can we expect when we get there?*

Signed,  
Mr. Curious

and...

Dear Point Man,

*What's the latest news regarding the build-out of the new office, or schedule for moving in or who will move in next, or any cool items worth mentioning—anything, ANYTHING will do! Tell us SOMETHING, P-L-E-A-S-E!*

Signed,  
Exhausted (after that)

Dear Curious and Exhausted:

Okay, here's the very latest scoop, direct from the lips of **Richard "Frank Lloyd" Garriott**. "First of all," he says, "I prefer the term 'workstations' to 'partitions.' The truth of the matter is that we have both workstations and offices, as deemed best by each individual department head." The way Richard explains it, PD teams will be "producer-anchored," and some members will work in modular areas. (If you want to see a sample of one style of the modular units, check out Customer Service.) Richard goes on: "We're expecting that PD people will change offices about once a year as they move from project to project; non-PD people will move a little less frequently. I, myself, have had five offices in five years in this building. I don't think that's going to change."

Each floor will integrate parts of both product development and publishing. Each floor will also have what Richard calls a "show-off group," something to make an impression on visitors touring the building. Kitchenettes will be sprinkled throughout. So whaddya say...let's go on a tour!

The first floor will have a diamond-shaped lobby with the receptionist in the middle. The latest plans call for a jungle theme with tropical plants, fake squawking birds and monkeys, and a working suspended foot bridge that dangles overhead between two second-floor offices. The presentation theater will be on the first floor as well, but it probably won't be fully equipped from Day One. The cafeteria will have a full kitchen and rotoscoping area and will be large enough to hold the entire company at once. Regular professional foodservice (a la catering) is not part of the start-up plans. There is an exercise room that has showers and bathroom facilities; equipment at first will probably be limited to what the company already owns (Life Cycle, Stair Master, weight set, ping pong table, etc.).

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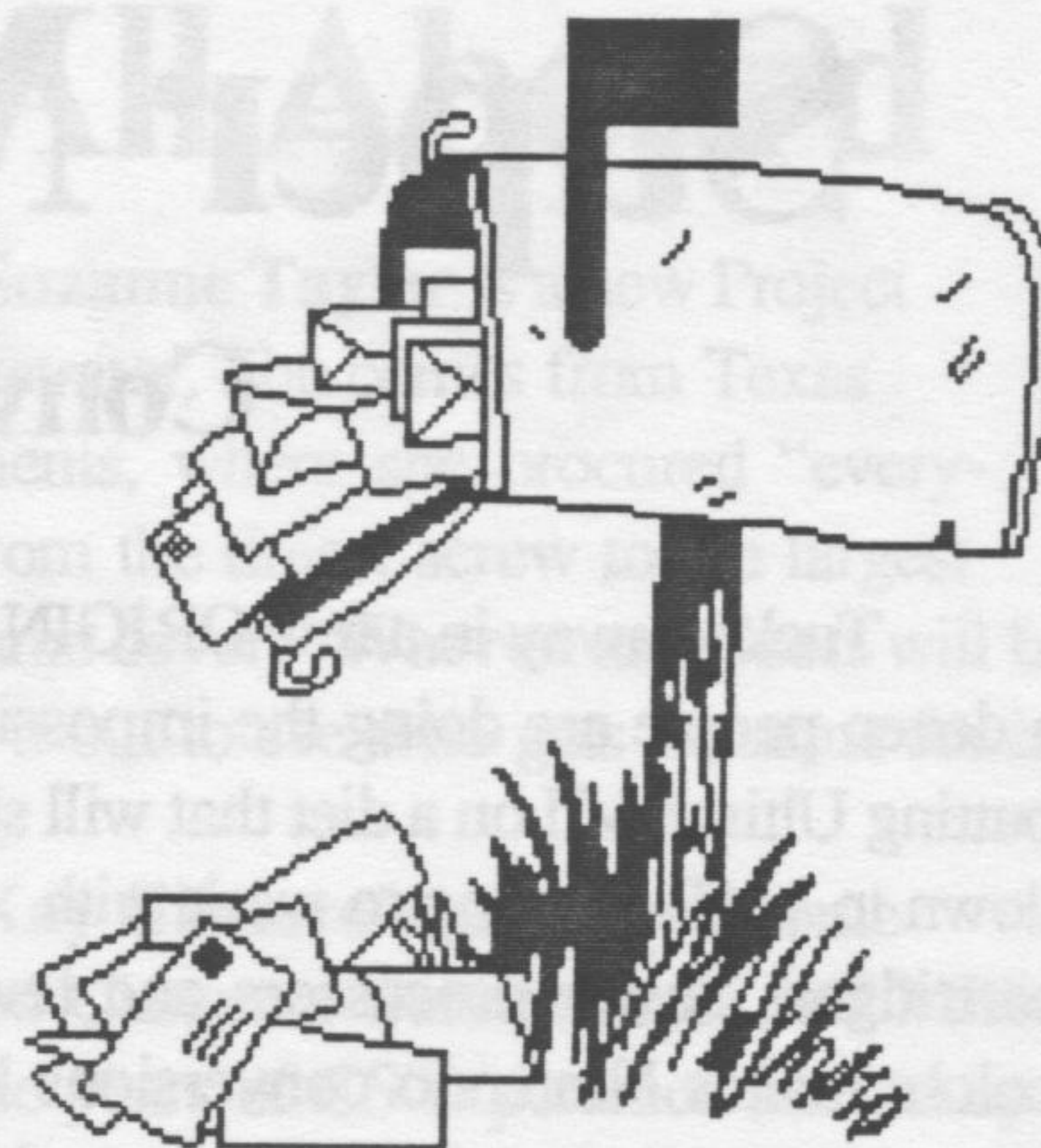
***"We expect that PD people will be changing offices about once a year."***

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Operations, the pioneer tenants, will have shipping/receiving/disk duplicating and the warehouse on the first floor. That's also where you'll find the Nintendo gang, with space for their artists, producers, programmers, directors, TDAs and writers. MIS will take up the northern corner of the building with network servers and the like. The "show-off" will be the Big Audio Dynamite suite with its studio, control room and sound room. Too tired for the stairs? Let's take the elevator to the second floor.

Here you'll find the diligent, hard-working Marketing and Creative Services folks right alongside three more of those producer-anchored PD groups. As if that's not flashy enough, the show-off will be the Graphic Arts Department in the southwest corner.

Going topside to the third floor, Customer Service will be conveniently located next to QA. A large, slanted fortress wall (the show-off) will mark the professional suites, where Sales will be raking in the money and Accounting will be sending it out. **Robert's** office will buttress the Wall, too.



If you were out there for the open house, you saw the endless stream of traffic that cuts across the lot as a short-cut to the residential area. **Martin Galway** reports that he just moved into the apartment complex adjacent to ORIGIN North, and the complex's monthly newsletter screams: "Red Alert: be warned that one of our residents was recently given a \$60 ticket for driving through the empty car lot of the large office building." Looks like the Austin Police Department should have that problem weeded out that problem by move-in time.

There you go. Construction's slated to begin within the next few weeks and should go right up to Christmas. Moving should take place just before, during or after the holiday week when ORIGIN shuts down. Remember: even these plans are subject to last-minute changes, but at least now you have an idea of what's ahead.



### Ultimate VII...

*Dicko Mather shuns the advances of Jake Rodgers in Ultimate Frisbee.*