

Point of ORIGIN

Volume II, No. 27

Friday, November 6, 1992

Austin, TX



Hair Raising...

Kirk Winterrowd and Heather Barclay buddy up before opening night of Britannia Manor's 1992 run.

Fright Nights

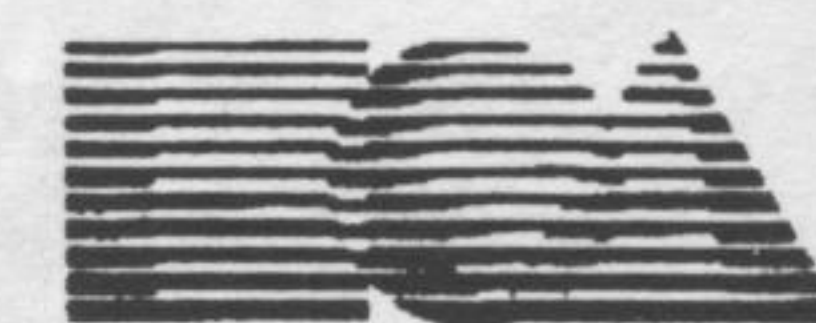
The lands of Britannia and Austin are safe for at least another couple of years. Fifty times a night over a four-night run, the Guardian met his demise at the hands of real-life Avatars in Richard's Haunted House. According to the crew, it was the most successful run in House history.

This year's event boasted some staggering statistics: more than 10,000 volunteer hours, \$85,000 worth of lights and lasers, \$50,000 in raw construction materials, \$30,000 in audio equipment, \$20,000 in pyrotechnics, and perhaps up to 10,000 would-be visitors who had to be turned away. The House picked up national attention due to a satellite news feed as well as CNN picking up the story from its local affiliate, KTBC, and running it all day on Halloween. Local TV stations said they were swamped with calls from people all around the country wondering if there was any chance to fly in to Austin for the day to go on the tour. No chance, they were told—guests had started camping out Wednesday evening for Thursday's tours. By Thursday at noon, slots were filled all the way through Saturday. Some people made City Park Road their home for three days.

The Austin American Statesman fanned the fire with, not one, but *two* front-page stories. Reporters asked the first guests to go on the tour (and who

(See "Fright" on page 4)

(1)



ELECTRONIC ARTS®

Electronic Arts and ESPN have patched things up, so to speak. As we told you a couple of issues ago, they were suing each other. ESPN claimed EA was infringing on its trademark by creating EASN (the Electronic Arts Sports Network). EA turned around and sued ESPN, trying to keep ESPN from using its marks in the interactive entertainment business. Under terms of a settlement, both organizations have agreed to drop all suits.

Piper Jaffray has downgraded EA stock from "buy" to "accumulate." In a report, PJ analyst Robert Kleiber said the change was partly based on the valuation of the stock price. "As

(See "EA" on page 3)

In this Point...

"Euro-Journos" wowed by visit
In Print pg. 2

One-stop shopping at the Library
Big Changes pg. 2

The inside scoop on Mike Sims
Bio pg. 3

EA orientation sessions scheduled
Human Resource pg. 4

New plans for 401K
Dear Point Man pg. 5

The latest from Wall Street
Ticker pg. 6

Big Changes in the Library

The Library hours have been extended from 12:00 till 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Reason bein', we have found more things for Miles Lewis to do. Miles, our "Chief Librarian", is now in charge of the new-hire Sega machine program, the "Company Store", office supplies, software trades, and of course, the library!

All newly hired employees will go to Miles to requisition their Sega machines. He will process all of the paperwork required. The "Company Store" will be explained to everyone during their orientation next week (and won't be open until that time).

Norma has "sadly" relinquished the ordering and dispersing of office supplies to Miles, so after these purchase recs are signed by your department managers and VP, or Director, they go to Miles for processing. He will be ordering office supplies once a week and he will contact you when your order comes in.

Starting Monday, November 9th (if all goes well), a new check-out policy will be in effect. All items to be checked out, *excluding periodicals*, will have a library card pocket with the ORIGIN address on it. In the pocket will be a library card with information regarding all pieces that should be kept with the item to be checked out.

The clipboard will not be used, except for the checking out of *periodicals*. The periodicals will have no cards. When checking out an item, you will remove the card from the pocket and check to make sure that all pieces listed on the card are with the item to be checked out. This should help keep track of all the parts to the library's games, etc. Next, write your name and the date in the appropriate columns on the card. *Do not put the card back with the item to be checked out.* Place the card in the slot of the wooden file on Miles' desk marked "Recent Check Outs."

This new system should help the library keep track of materials more accurately, allowing better use

of its management software for all types of reports, etc. The check-out time limit will be two weeks, with the option of re-checking items for another two weeks. People needing items for a longer time should get in touch with Miles.



In Print

First of all, thanks to all the teams who put demonstrations together for the "euro-journos" and Stephen Poole, editor of PC Entertainment. The immediate response (and the long-term possibilities) are overwhelming.

"They had the most wonderful time," according to Jennie Evans, our European Brand Manager. "Didier Latil (from France's Generation 4) said it was the best trip he'd ever been on. Volka (from Germany's Power Play) agreed. All of the others looked "shattered" (which is good in euro-talk). Remember, these are guys who go on press tours all the time. Jennie says that they were all par-

***"The quality and reputation
of ORIGIN's Wing
Commander games are
beyond reproach."***

ticularly impressed with Privateer and ORIGIN FX Screen Saver. She said they were also blown away by their visit to Richard's Haunted House on Saturday night. "They all thought it was indescribable." She thinks the trip will result in about 30 pages of editorial coverage in Europe over the next few months.

Speaking of Gen 4, it awarded Ultima VII/French its Gold Award for Excellence. "Friends of interactive games, rejoice!" write the editors. "This should definitely turn Ultima VII into one of the very best interactive adventure games, with a great screenplay and a quasi-unmatched playing time expectancy." Congrats to the Translation Dept.

Back in the U.S.A. now, Stephen Poole was here to do PC Entertainment's exclusive on Strike (actually, it's a continuation of the exclusive from *last* year). He really liked what he saw, especially the incredible artwork for the manual cover put together by Craig Halverson and Chris Douglas. In fact, it will grace the cover of PC Entertainment in January, since we already used the poster art on the cover last November.

ORIGIN really hit paydirt recently with the Austin American Statesman, scoring two front-page stories on the Haunted House (see "Fright Nights"). By coincidence, business writer Kirk Ladendorf also did a boffo profile piece on ORIGIN with a huge sidebar on Strike, calling it "a work of computer software art."

Stretching the definition of "news," the trade press lead times have finally allowed stories about the EA acquisition to hit print, namely in PC Entertainment and Electronic Games. The best rumor has to go to Megagaming, a newsletter which suggests the downturn of Nintendo sales in Japan certainly had something to do with the deal. Go figure...

As reported here last issue, the December issue of Games magazine is out. Underworld and Wing 2 both make the famous "Games 100" list. Last year, Wing 1 won Best New Action/Arcade Game and U6 also made the list. "WCII is edge-of-the-seat, role-playing, space battle action," the editors write. They go on to call Underworld "the finest dungeon adventure ever produced," but it still doesn't win Best New Adventure. The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes and Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis tied for the honor. To add insult to injury, they put the Guardian's picture with the story. Keep going and keep figuring...

Wing Commander I & II Deluxe Editions get nice mentions in PC Entertainment in an article on CD games. Thomas McDonald says, "The quality and reputation of ORIGIN's Wing Commander games are beyond reproach." Maybe that's why Wing 2 is still #13 on the Slovenian Entertainment Chart. (Absolutely true.)

...EA

smooth as 1992 has been," Kleiber wrote, "we suspect that next year will not be as favorable an environment as platform transitions, competition, new technologies and the outcome of the Sega/Nintendo market share battle all promise to make the sailing more difficult." Kleiber predicts near-term results to be "very strong," fueled by "booming sales" of 16-bit hardware systems. At current prices, EA shares trade at about 22.5 times his calendar 1993 estimate of \$1.42 a share.

That outlook isn't reflected in a recent report from Digital Information Group, which shows Electronic Arts as a third-quarter leader in the software industry in terms of stock-price growth. After adjusting for the stock split earlier this year, EA shares have increased 62.1% in value since January 1.

Miscellany

EA's General Counsel spent a day with us on Tuesday answering questions on stock options and stock purchases. About 12 aspiring financial wizards showed up for this Q&A session. There will be another session like this offered sometime after the first of the new year with EA's stock administrator, **Barbara Wallace**. She will enroll ORIGIN employees in the stock purchase program (which we are eligible to join in February) and answer any questions people may have about stock options and purchases. **Sharon Miller** can also help with answers to some basic questions or direct you to an appropriate person at EA.

While we're at it, Sharon has a few words to say about the stock option forms: "I have about 40 people that have not returned their signed stock options to me or Norma. You know who you are. If you have any questions, come by and let's talk. This will only hurt *you* if you haven't turned them in and you decide to exercise these options as they become vested. It will slow down the process

(See "Misc." on last page)

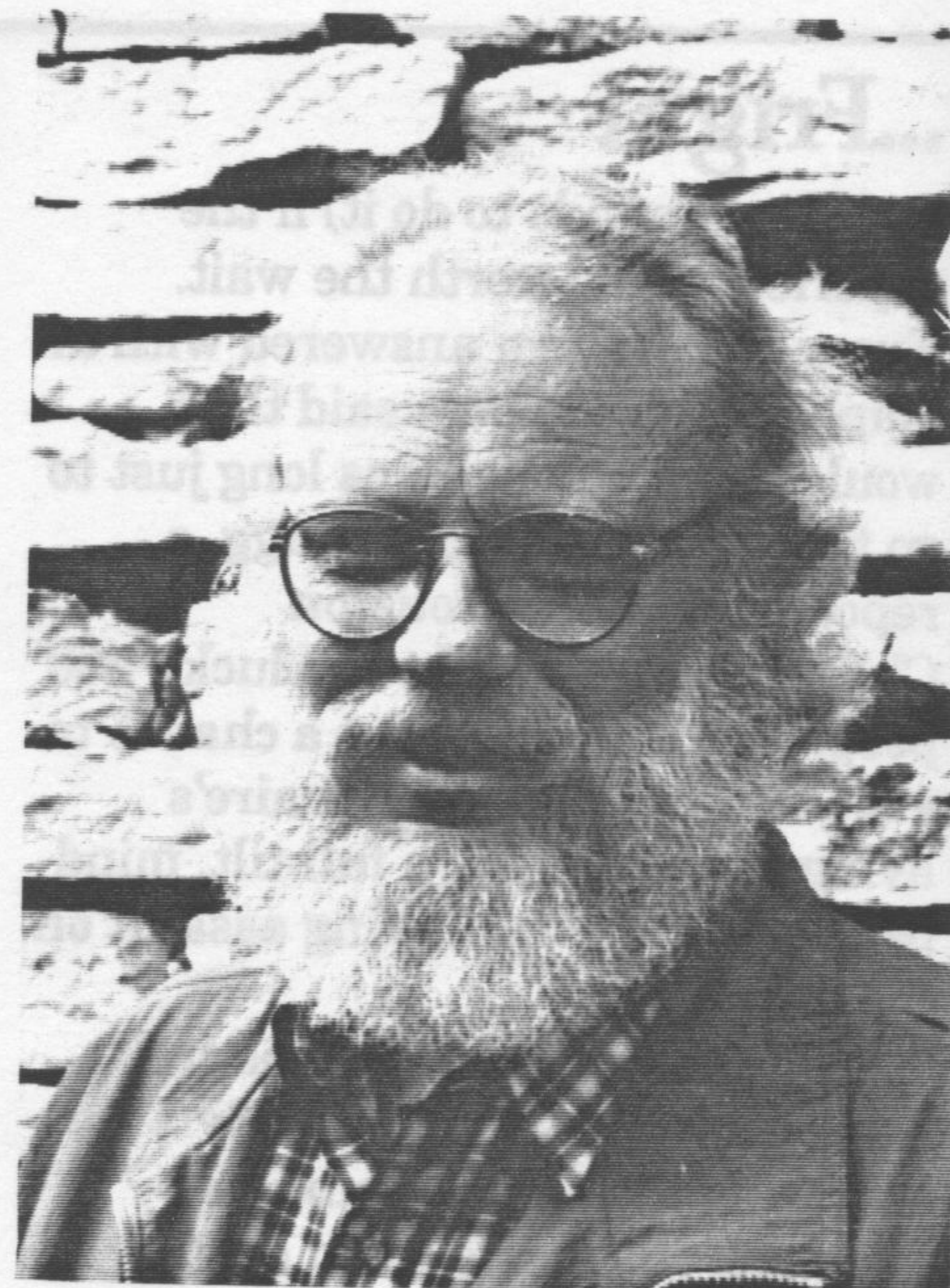
Bio: Mike Sims

Xmas Year Round

Mike Sims has been both blessed and cursed with a resemblance to Santa Claus since his late 20's. That's when his reddish beard began to turn to snowy white. One particularly weird experience sticks out in his mind, though. Mike was a Russian linguist working with the Navy Security Unit during the war in Vietnam. He was already being discharged as a CO ("conscientious objector") but agreed to a commander's request to play Saint Nick at the Navy Christmas party.

It's just a snapshot from Mike's career which includes a lot of freelance writing, primarily in video production. He taught screenwriting at U.T. for about five years and a couple more at A.C.C. His resume would make Lena Guerrero drool: a bachelors degree in journalism, a masters in radio/television/film, and a Ph.D. in communications.

As Writer/TDA Manager at ORIGIN, Mike allocates resources and oversees personnel in both departments, but he says he's looking for a separate manager to take over the TDAs and to handle technical questions. "If anybody in product development needs to test something that can supposedly be installed by an 8 year-old, they bring it to me," Mike admits. He has long-range plans for the word smiths: "One thing we can do is to further develop characters that are marketable in ancillary



"The more I look like Santa Claus, the less inclined I am to play him."

markets (places like comic books, fiction, etc.)."

As we head into the hectic Christmas season, trying to get products out the door, Mike's love/hate relationship with Santa Claus will continue. "It seems like the more I look like Santa Claus, the less inclined I am to play him," he laughs. But he's not ruling it out, either. Mike has written a 60-page story titled *The Legend of Young Claus: How Santa Earned His Magic*. Can you imagine a better person to do the book tour?

NEWS.TXT

(NEW YORK, NY)—Sega of America took over the huge Jumbotron in Times Square to unveil its new CD system. Scheduled to hit American markets any day now, the Sega CD will cost around \$300 and attach to the current Sega Genesis game system. Nintendo announced Sony Corp. would be making a combination CD/cartridge player which will be compatible with its 16-bit game cartridges and future Nintendo compact discs. Nintendo plans to unveil a 32-bit CD peripheral in August, 1993. Both Sega and Nintendo claim to have more than 60% of the 16-bit market. (Good thing neither company makes calculators.)



(See "News" on last page)

...Fright

had slept outside to do it) if the experience was worth the wait. Every one of them answered with an emphatic "yes." Some said they would camp out twice as long just to go through *again*. Roy Bragg, a reporter with the Houston Chronicle, wrote, "For the lucky 200 people a night who'll get a chance to visit, the eccentric millionaire's living playground is a full-tilt, mind-bending, heavy-breathing assault on the senses."

The storyline for the trek was faithful to Ultima VII. By acquiring the sphere, cube and tetrahedron, guests could destroy the Black Gate and watch the Guardian explode in a multimedia mass of lasers, sound and strobes. To get there, though, they had to cross dangerous rivers, crawl into open crypts, and deal with an array of demons and gargoyles. The hour-long adventure was capped with a passage that sandwiched its inhabitants, then completely fell over.

Richard and his volunteer



Life imitates art...

Eric Brown as the Guardian

army are packing it all up now. He says he's not sure he'll be able to host another House in two years; it all depends on the status of Ultima VIII and Bounty Hunter. If/when he does, the House, just like Ultima itself, will be hard-pressed to top itself next time around.

News from the Human Resource

EMPLOYEE BENEFIT ORIENTATION

Jim Guiney, EA's HR Director, will be here next week to give a benefit orientation to all ORIGIN employees. Everyone will find out about all these great EA benefits they keep hearing about. We are going to do it by department; each orientation is scheduled for up to two hours, but should run much shorter. Time has been built in for questions and answers. This will be your chance to find out "what's in it for me." The schedule is:

WEDNESDAY Nov. 11th

4:30 Programming Department

THURSDAY Nov. 12th

8:00 Publishing, Sales, Customer Service and MIS

10:00 TDAs, PAs and Writers

1:00 Art Department and Sound Department

3:00 QA Department, Receptionist (Andrea), Norma, Accounting, Miles and Producers

5:00 Anyone we missed, or that couldn't make it to the previously scheduled orientations.

These orientations will be held in the concretatorium in the Execucom building next door to 110, and yes, we will have chairs for everyone, unless, of course, you prefer the cold concrete. I hope I didn't miss anyone. If I did, please let me know. The employee handbooks will be handed out and all applicable benefits will be explained. You know, I'm really likin' this EA "stuff."

Sharon Miller

WANT ADS

Customer Service Rep (temporary: 6 weeks-2 months)

German voice talent (4 positions)

Technical Services Administrator/
Purchasing Agent (MIS)

Project Information Analyst (schedule creation, evaluation and tracking)

TDA Manager

TDA

Junior Department Head
(programming)

Technical Liaison (programming)

Programmers

Sound Manager

Artists

Information about these positions can be found on the cork and electronic bulletin boards. Interested people already working at ORIGIN should contact Sharon Miller. All others should contact Western Personnel at 328-6693 and ask for Molly or Lorrina. If you refer someone for a position, make sure Western knows about it and that person will get preferential treatment.

More From the Road...

Jet-setter Anita Lockamy just returned from a North American tour that was reportedly a huge success. In Virginia, she dropped in on Circuit City and Office of America. Both said they'd like to carry more of our titles, especially when Strike ships.

At the Walden Software show, Serpent Isle was the big hit. Store managers said they're eagerly awaiting Privateer's arrival next year.

Joshua, a midwest distributor just outside of Chicago, was pumped about Serpent Isle, too. Anita says they were curious about Underworld 2 and think Privateer will be a good seller. Needless to say, they have cornered the market

(Continued on next page)

on drool buckets in anticipation of Strike's release.

Same goes for Fretters in Detroit. They agree that Serpent also has a bright future. Moreover, they were impressed that ORIGIN even came to visit. It was the first time they've ever been approached by an entertainment software company.

On to the Great White North. Multimicro in Montreal had a one-day show for its franchisees from all over Canada. The ORIGIN booth was never empty and the store owners were blown away by all our planned releases. Anita wrapped things up with a swing through Toronto to meet with some other distributors and to visit a few stores before winging her way back home.

Comings and Goings

This may seem a little confusing at first, but **Robert Herrick** is no longer an ORIGIN employee. He decided to quit so that he can work on the yet-to-be-definitively-named Traveller's Series of electronic phrasebooks. They will be published under an equally-yet-to-be-definitively-named label. Robert can fill you in.

Who says those classifieds in the Statesman don't work? They're responsible for two new playtesters. **Jonathan Einsig** just came back to Austin after spending some time at home in central Pennsylvania where he was doing some landscaping work. He says he'd been playing computer games for the last 3 or 4 years, so the job here sounded like a perfect fit.

Meanwhile, **August Goodman** had been working with Goodman Architects as an apprentice drafts-"person" (gotta be politically correct) and saw the same ad. Coincidence? Not quite. Jonathan and August are roommates. Both of them also like mountain biking and outdoor sports.

Point of ORIGIN wins the Gender-Bender-Foot-In-Mouth Award for its characterization of **Starr Lane** in the last issue. Contrary to the Editor's reference, Starr does indeed have both the X and Y chromosomes. Our apologies.

Dear Point Man

Dear Point Man:

Whatever happened to the 401K money we were supposed to get from the company?

In the June 19 issue of Point, we answered the same question, but a few things have changed in the meantime. First of all, don't worry—ORIGIN's contribution to your 401K will be made as planned before November 15, when our corporate tax filings are due for last fiscal year. The difference is that it will not go directly into the QUADS system; instead, it will go into a money market-type account. The plan is for ORIGIN to switch over to EA's 401K plan by January 1. Since the EA plan differs somewhat from QUADS, the accounting gang wants to put the skids on additional funds getting spread all around and instead redirect them toward our future investment options via the EA plan. The switch will hopefully result in better communication between plan participants and administrators—a criticism that's been leveled at QUADS quite a bit. You'll find out much more about the plan during next week's orientation sessions (see "News from the Human Resource"). Also, keep your eyes peeled for a more comprehensive commentary from "401 Fred" in the next day or two on e-mail. That'll name names and spell out dates for the merger of the two plans over the next 60 days.

Dear Point Man:

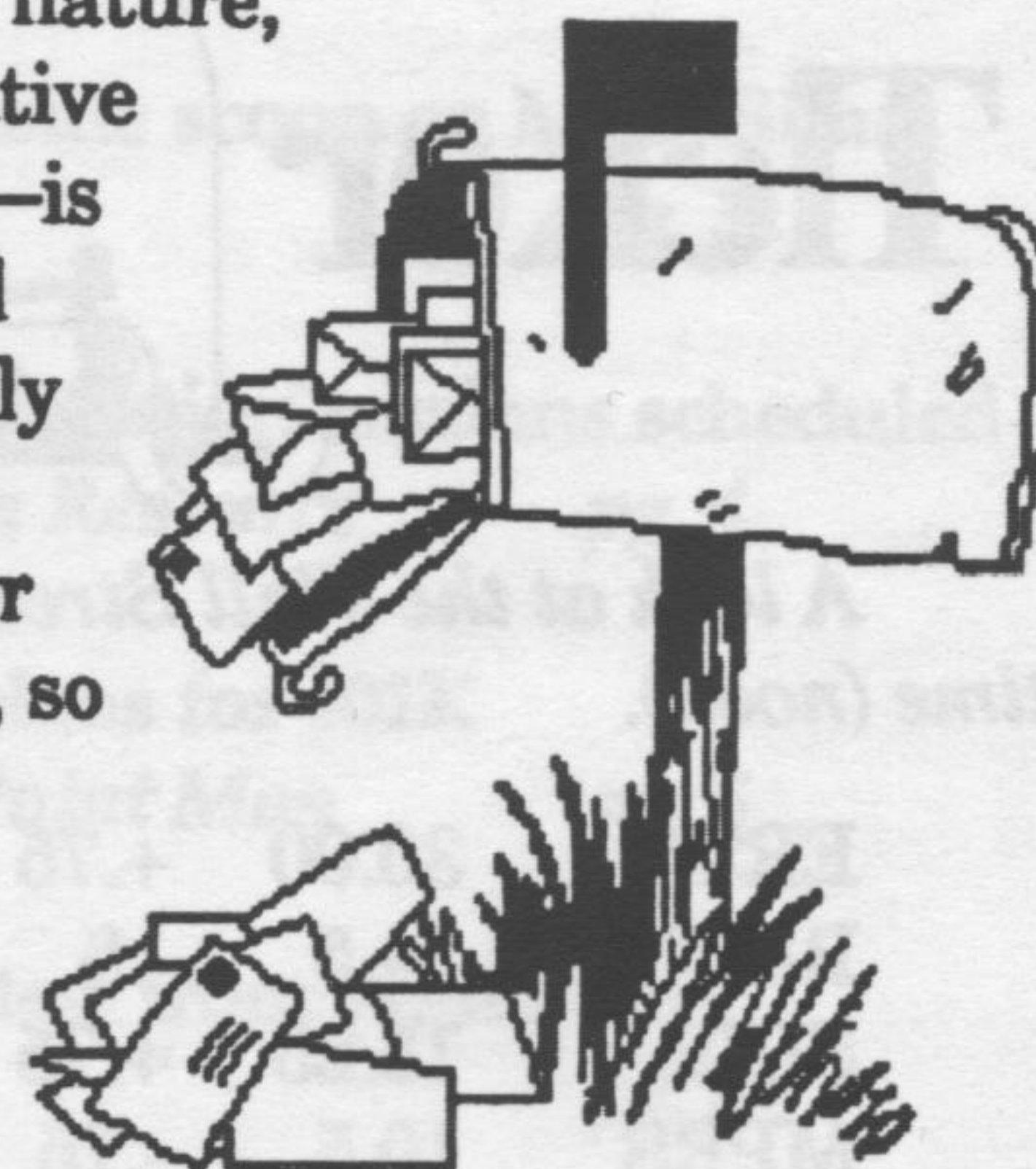
I could not help noticing the inequities of recognition at the happy hours. It seems that since the meetings are run primarily by marketing folks, people from those departments were liberally singled out for praise, while it was only vaguely implied that there might be real humans behind the fine products currently claiming such good percentages of market share. ...Granted, it's difficult to recognize all the key personnel who make these games possible, but perhaps an entire team could be asked to stand for applause. Public recognition of excellence is a primary element in the fostering of individual intrinsic motivation.

*Signed,
An Observer of Human Nature*

Dear Observer:

You're right—everybody loves even a little public recognition. And I think everybody at ORIGIN realizes in their hearts that it's the blood, sweat and tears of the Product Development teams that fuels the engine that keeps us in business. But I also think we're always going to have a problem with individuals' perceptions. We actually made a conscious decision some time ago (see Point from May 22) to "de-orchestrate" the happy hours and let Richard do all of the talking. If Marketing folks were indeed running the meeting, it wasn't by design. Lately, it's been because Richard has been tied up with EA, then Spook House stuff. By nature, whenever anyone—in PD, Marketing, Sales, Creative Services, Operations, Administration, or whatever—is singled out for praise, someone else is going to feel slighted. That's because ORIGIN products are truly company-wide efforts. In effect, everybody should feel proud when anybody is recognized. Thanks for bringing it out in the open, as we often need to do, so that everyone keeps sight of the "bigger picture" together. (The team applause idea sounds good, too.)

(More fascinating correspondence on back page)



...Point Man

Dear Point Man:

With only 7 weeks to go, do the builders really think they can get the office built out in time for Christmas? Or will we be walking around on concrete and dodging the girders and power tools, shivering in our thick clothing and waiting for the heating to be installed? The only people I know who can get work done that fast are the staff at ORIGIN, and they're all busy getting games ready!

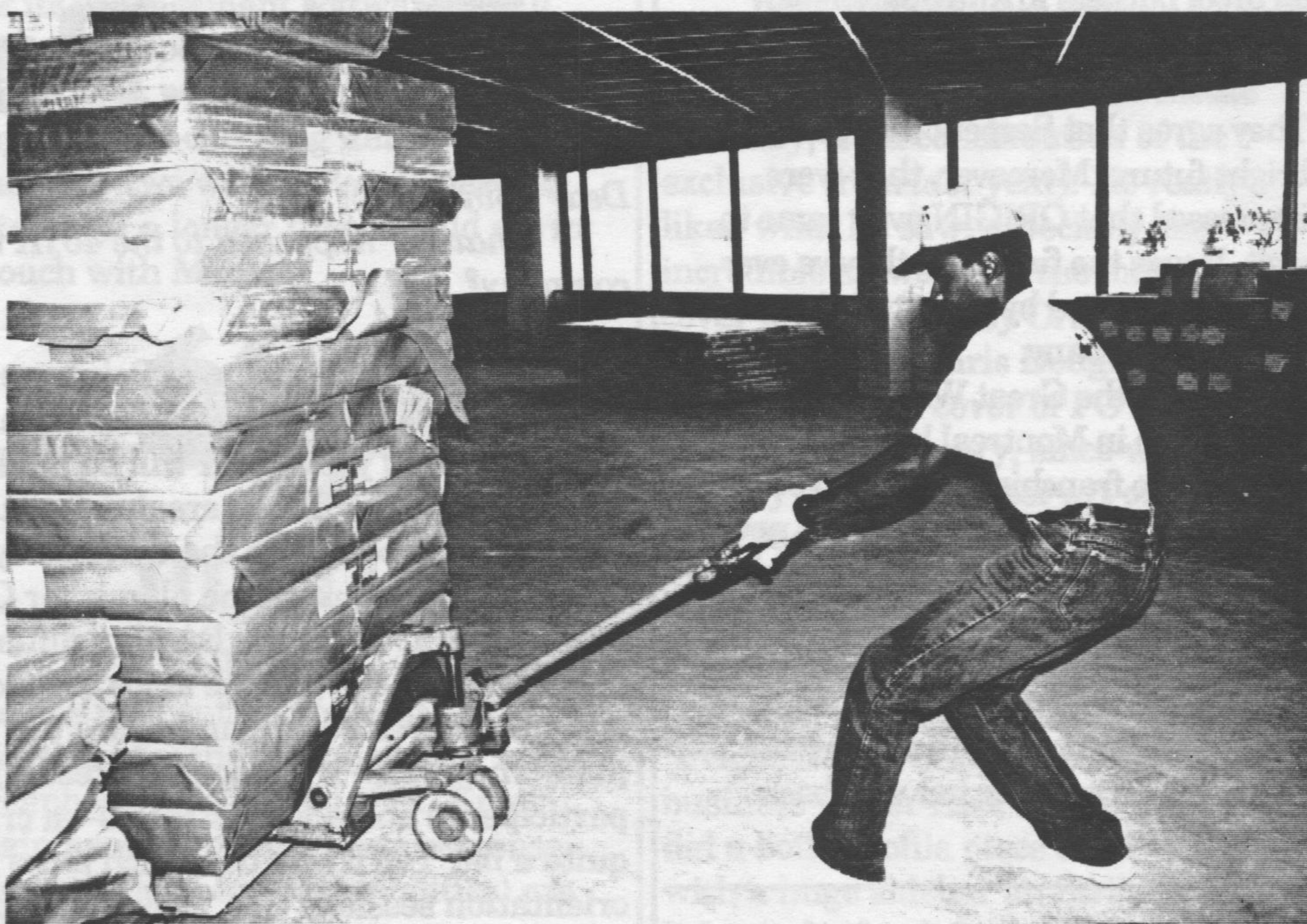
According to Jeff "Hard-Hat" Hillhouse, construction ideally should have started about two weeks ago, but a couple of design decisions had to be put on hold because Richard and Robert were tied up with the EA merger, the Haunted House, etc. Now, all of those decisions have been made and construction (actually destruction) has begun. Crews are removing existing walls, doors and materials that are not a part of our final plan. Both the construction company and our hired project manager out there still feel that a Christmas move-in is possible. A lot of this is up in the air since we've never totally fit-out a building before. In any case, our current lease runs through the end of February '93. XMAS week would just be more convenient. If we miss that by a week or two, backup plans for the migration are under development. *(One thing is certain: we will not, under any circumstance, shut down or disrupt the development network prior to completing critical work on all of our top priority Fall products. We do still have to pay for this fancy new building, you know!—Fred)*

Ticker



A look at the Wall Street at press time (noon).

ERTS	30.00	+.75
BROD	34.5	-.5
SIER	15.25	+.75
MPRS	10.5	-.75



Hammer time...

Crews start the big build-out at ORIGIN North. The schedule is still tracking for a Christmas move-in.

...News

(SAN JOSE, CA)—IBM plans to enter the 486 chip fray. Big Blue will be demonstrating its new microprocessor at COMDEX in two weeks. The new chip features a 99 MHz internal and 33 MHz external clock speed, in effect a "clock tripler" chip that is equivalent to a 100 MHz processor. AMD and Cyrix are already planning to unveil their own 486s later this year. Industry analysts say this could signal the beginning of another bloody price war.

(FORT WORTH, TX)—Tandy Corp.'s direct marketing division has teamed up with Streetgard, Inc. to co-market an automatic vehicle ticketing system. For less than \$5,000, a police officer could do everything with a 2.8 pound belt-attached pen-based computer. It would upload and retrieve information from the police department's main computer regarding unpaid parking tickets, stolen vehicles and outstanding warrants as officers write in a license plate number.

Did You Know...

ORIGIN games are currently distributed in Hong Kong (English), Israel (Hebrew), Singapore (English) and Brazil (English) with future plans for Mexico, Argentina and Venezuela.

...Misc.

considerably." Nuff said (and have a great day).

UM (Upper Management) is clamping down on I.D. badges again. Wear them at all times or get with Norma "Trust But Verify" Vargas if you need a replacement. As we go into crunch mode once more, security needs to be as tight as possible. Likewise, all visitors must sign in and sign out.

Marketin' Mike Harrison says we'll be taking part in a combined EA/OSI direct mail piece in late November. Info on Strike, UW2, Serpent and ORIGIN FX will be going out to 100,000 EA PC users and 75,000 ORIGIN PC users (culled from our respective registration card databases).

In two weeks, the next Point of ORIGIN will come to you from Las Vegas and the 1992 Fall COMDEX. ORIGIN will be a big (and loud) part of the MediaVision booth and Underworld will be running at Intel city. Hopefully, the magic of telecommunications will enable us to bring you the latest in news and trends live from the show floor.