

Point of ORIGIN

Volume III, No. 37

Friday, April 23, 1993

Austin, TX



Busted...

Dicko examines a bag of white, powdery substance he "found" on EA Pres. Larry Probst when the formidable Badge Police raided the Steering Committee meeting.

Strike: the Campaign Begins

Right about now, scores of hard-core gamers around the country are sneaking out of the office a little early, happily clutching a small, tightly shrink-wrapped box or stopping off at the local software store on the way home. Strike is on the shelves.

Since stores put the game on the shelves at different times during the day, we don't have a strong feel yet on sell-through. But if it's any indication, the Austin Software Etc. store had a waiting list of more than 30 people.

The Bulldog Sales Cult prophecy came true. By last Friday, Strike officially shipped "gold," the first time that's happened in ORIGIN history. For icing on the cake, Europe roped in enough orders to top 50K (also the highest figure for a PC title in EAUk's history). Word from **Jennie Evans** across the pond: "This has been worth the wait for sure!"

We weren't joking when we talked about what a Herculean task it was getting this product ready to ship. The Strike rollout (including Speech Pack) required 1,110,000 disks to be duplicated. That's 30 tons of disks requiring 16,000 hours of duplicating time alone. Add on labeling and packaging 2,200

(See "Strike" on page 3)

Pulse Check

by Dr. Donna Mehnert

The Glinkmeister. Glinkster. Glink-A-Rama.

In case you thought that Donald "Everything Stinks" Glinkie was dead, well, you couldn't be more wrong! Just when you thought it was safe to open a package in the Returns department, Glinkie's name springs up bigger than life and inside is another game (this time the victim is UW 2) and another of his classic letters dissing us from one end of our world to another. As Donald so elegantly puts it: "Origin, We Create Baloney". Here is just a sampling of his letter: "Terrible Terrible Terrible...Has more bugs than a motel garbage dump. Worst game you ever put out. If I were you guys—forget about number 3, it'll never sell." Yeah, but you'll buy it Donald! This letter will be on the soon-to-be-completed Wall of Fame. Stop by and read it when you need a break.

For those of you who may be unfamiliar with Mr. Glinkie, he has been writing to us for years slamming every game we put out (and yet he continues to buy them; guess he's a masochist at heart). There are many letters written to Origin by Mr. G. They and all their insults will all be on display on our Wall of Fame as soon as we find them again. Might anyone have them? I noticed that they were removed from the Wall in our old building, so I know someone has them. We simply must have them back so everyone can fully appreciate his wrath. If you have any clues, please let me

(See "Pulse" on next page)

Interactive Movie #1

(This is the third in a series of articles dealing with upcoming products. It is intended for employees' use only and shouldn't be discussed outside the company.)

In the struggle for the most generic working title, one stands head and shoulders below the rest—Interactive Movie #1, a deceptively unexciting name for a product that looks to be just the opposite.

"We're trying to come up with something that is very movie-like, that really sucks the player in, and that looks very realistic," says Ken "I've Always Wanted to Direct" Demarest. "We're also going to slip in as many cool technology gadgets as we can. I've always championed 'figure technology.' I really think that three-dimensional figures of actors are going to be super-important to our industry. We'll never be the best in the business unless we have very strong fictional characters."

One of the keys to that strength is in movement, and the IM1 team has come up with a unique tool to accomplish it. The "Body Editor" works much like rotoscoping, except that the true video image is overlaid with a stick figure skeleton. When the skeleton is totally fleshed out, it guides the character in a surprisingly realistic manner. The technique can be applied to both humans and animals. "Oh yes," Ken beams, "the characters in this game will have more diverse movement than in any other."

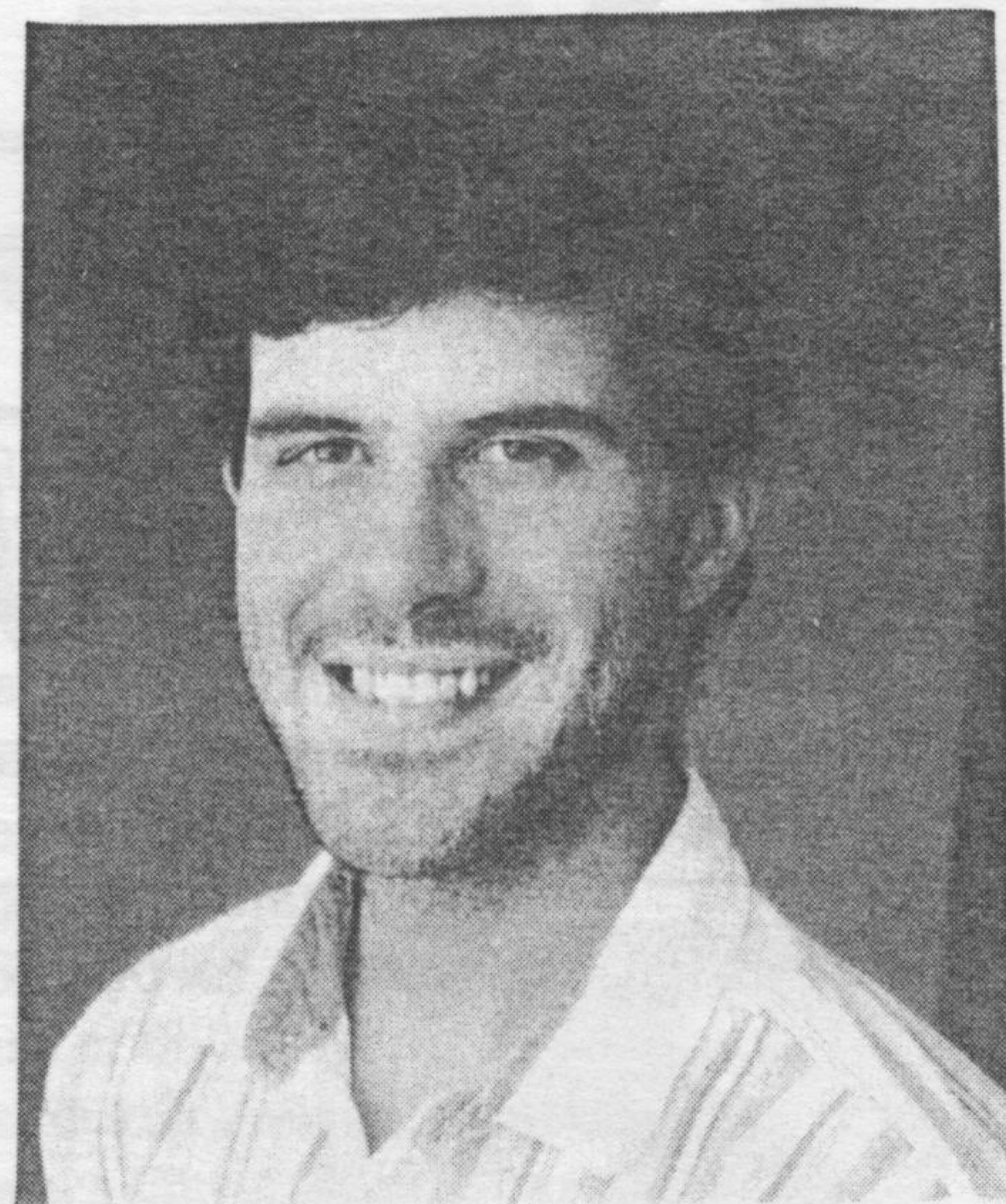
The cinematic feel will come from things like automatic switching camera

angles (a la *Alone in the Dark*), cutaway close-ups and interwoven cinematics within the action. For instance, Ken describes one scene where the player must plant an explosive, then turn away and run. "No matter how fast you run, though, the explosion will blow before you get far enough away. You'll see yourself blown through the air and thrown to the ground, where you'll get up, dust yourself off, and continue."

The story takes place in an "alternate galaxy," not necessarily in the future. You have been kidnapped by an evil group known as the Mondites. They have performed some type of experiment on you and your goal is to escape and discover what that experiment is, as well as what the Mondites have planned for the rest of the galaxy. Right now, IM1 is slated as a Fall/Christmas release.

But it's not designed as a typical ORIGIN epic. Instead, Ken intentionally wants the team to stay small and the game itself is expected to take up only about 8 to 10 MB on a hard drive, doing compression and decompression on-the-fly. "We'll require 4 MB of RAM and work in protected mode, so we feel pretty confident that we can pull it off," Ken says. "We want to prove that we can have a new technology product, done in a reasonable amount of time, done by a small cohesive team, and still turn out a quality game. You can classify it as an 'adventure game,' but we're hoping it will actually create its own new genre—the Interactive Movie."

Next time around, we'll delve into the hip and hyped world of 3DO.



Interactive Movie Director Ken Demarest

...Pulse

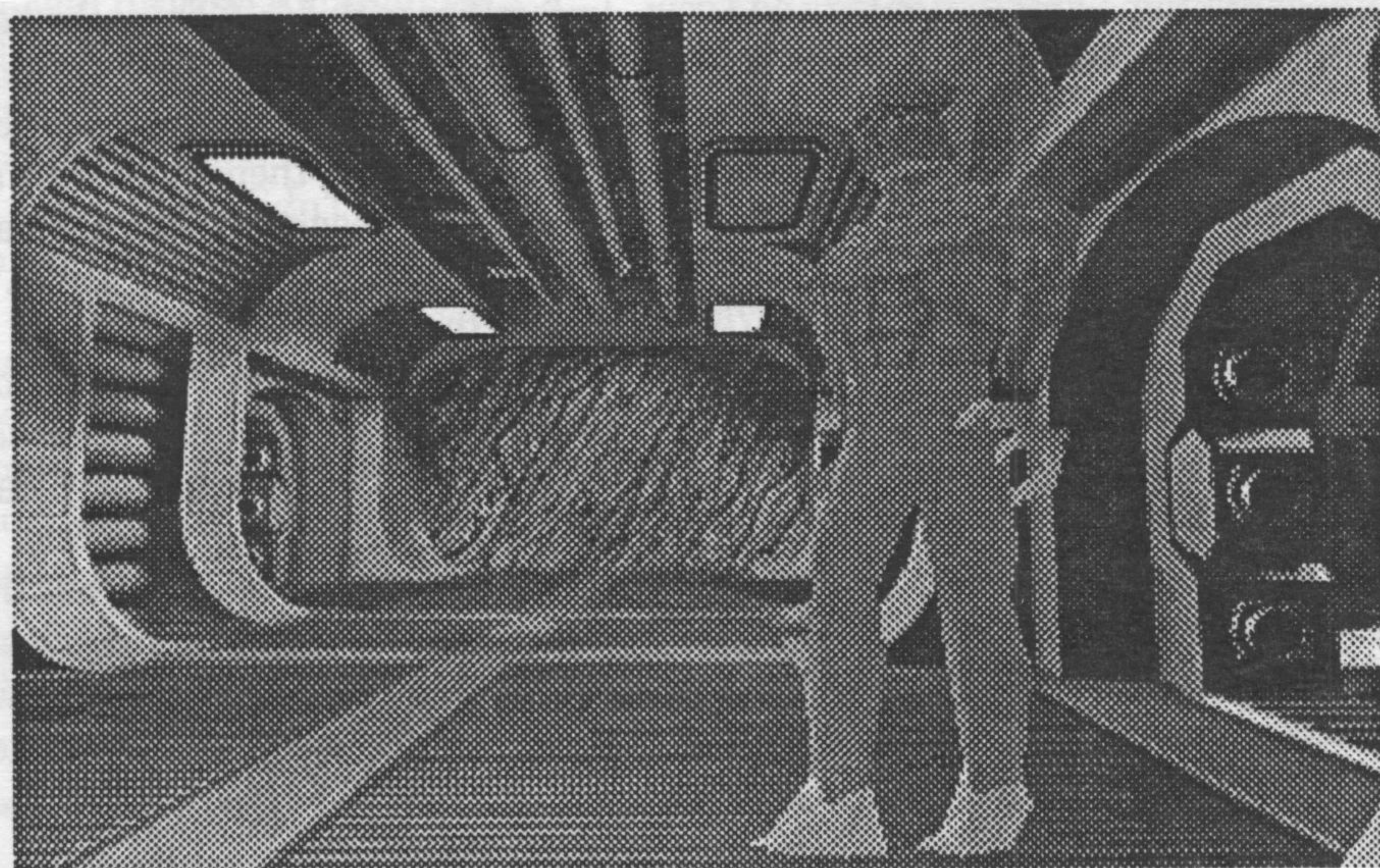
know (email is fine) and I'll retrieve them from ya.

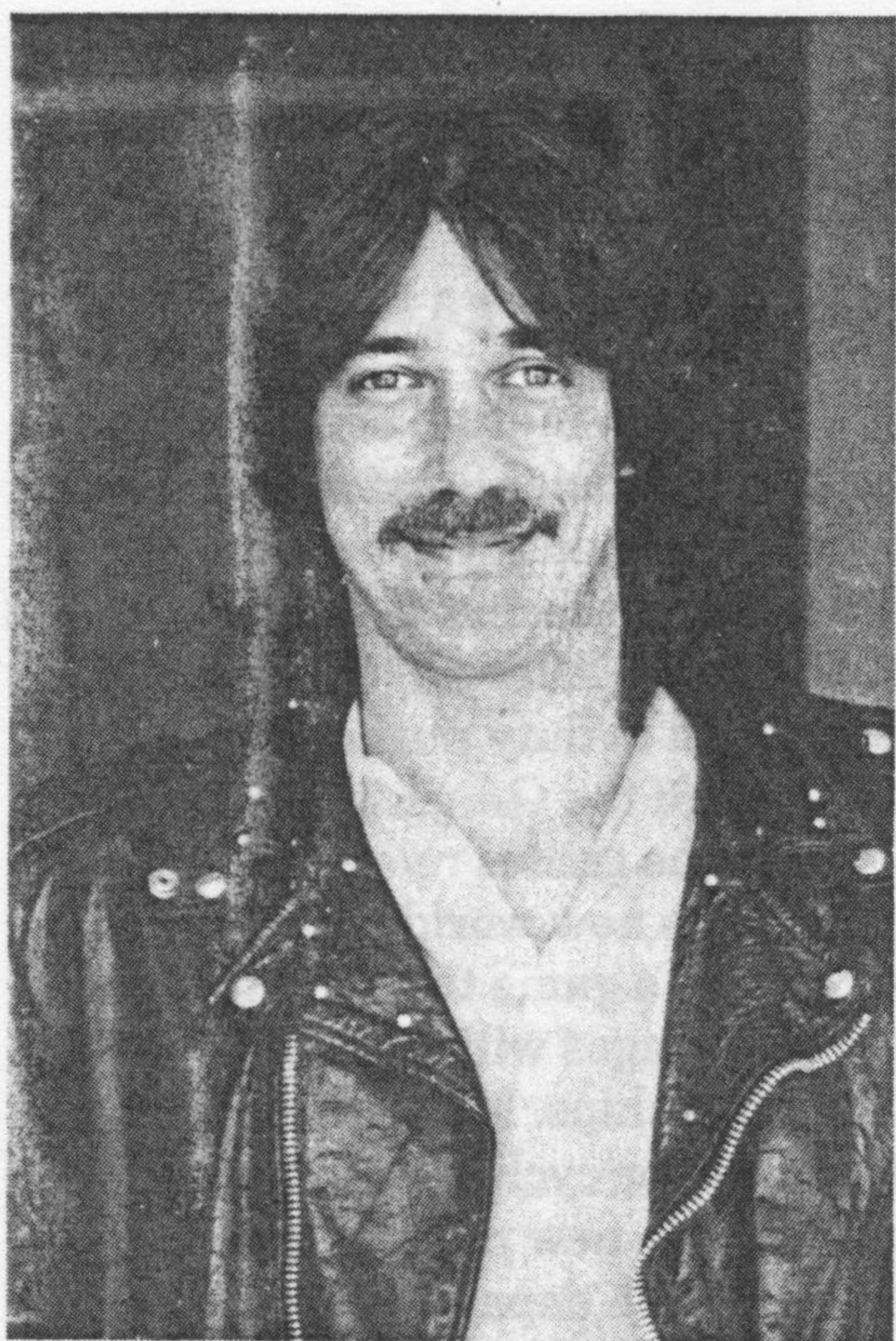
Next Subject: "Why would you admit this to the world?"

This message showed up Monday April 19 on Compuserve: "Hi All! I'm just writing this message to tell ORIGIN that there is a problem with the speech pack for Strike Commander. I do not have Strike Commander yet, but I have the speech pack. I'm using DOS 6.0 from Microsoft without the compression utility. When I tried to install the speech pack, the program checked the hard drives and stopped. I had to reboot my system...Is it the first bug?"

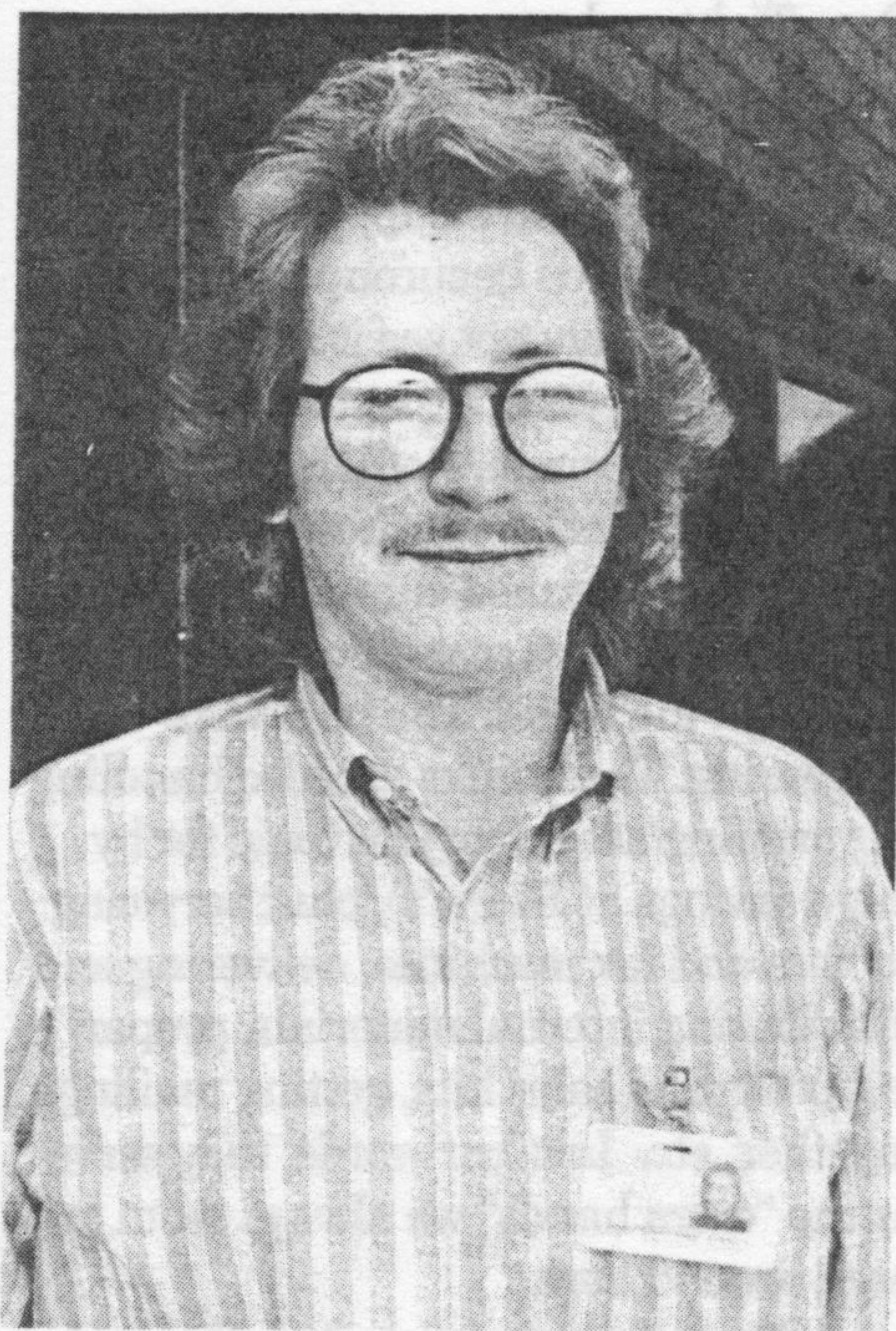
O.K., who wants to answer this question? I'm not sure where to start. Do we tell him that you have to have the core game in order for his speech pack to work properly (i.e.: read the packaging, fella), or do we tell him to change his name and move out of the country so he will avoid dying of embarrassment from the rest of the Compuserve subscribers who no doubt read this message and thought "geez, this guy is in need of professional help"? McFly, Hey McFly!

Next Subject: "Serpent Isle Updated." Serpent Isle is cranking along, everyone is enjoying it and there aren't any signs of any 'trouble' ahead (translated: evil demon bugs). More from the pulse of the players next issue.





Steve "Hell on Wheels" Schlueter



Al "Patent Pending" Nelson

Off the Clock: Fun With the Sun

by Wayne Baker

A couple of ORIGINites are using the sun for more than tanning. Huddled within a nondescript hangar-like laboratory at the Balcones Research Center is the largest \$60,000 cockroach-looking device I've ever seen. Actually, it's known as the Texas Native Sun, the University of Texas solar-powered race car. Our own MIS technical guru **Steve Schlueter** is a member of this racing team and has helped them with the car's electronics and solar array. It's a project where even Click & Clack won't be able to help.

Steve says he's excited about this project and spends 5-6 hours a week tuning and tweeking. In June, the car will be competing in Sunrayce '93, a national competition that starts in Dallas and ends in Minneapolis. To finish the race, The Texas Native Sun will travel across 1000 miles of the Midwest on secondary highways in just 7 days. If Steve turns up missing, it must mean a solar eclipse.

Another notable in off-hours alternative energy devices is our own Art Department Manager, **Al Nelson**. Al created a solar-powered lawnmower that navigates around the yard and saves the hassle of starting up the typical gas guzzling lawn-chewer. Al is an inventor by nature and has over 150 patents pending on devices such as a thermal coupler clock that generates electricity from hot and cold water pipes, a windmill that is shaped like a tree, and auto paint that changes colors for the seasons. Al hopes someday to create an automated solar barge that will cross the Atlantic. All I can say is that I hope his girlfriend isn't planning a pleasure cruise.

So, if you happen to see Steve and Al in the hall, "geeking out" over solar power, as Billy Cain is fond of saying, just think about your energy bills and what it means to future generations. We may be looking to these guys to power ORIGIN some day.

...Strike

boxes for transportation. The shipments from Austin duplicators needed two 40-foot trailers. We had duplicators in Pittsburgh, at Starpak in Colorado and three other locations copying *.*

Getting Strike out the door has truly been a company-wide effort. To show his appreciation, **Chris "What Do I Do Now?" Roberts** has graciously decided to host a big (but private) bash tonight at his lakeside home.

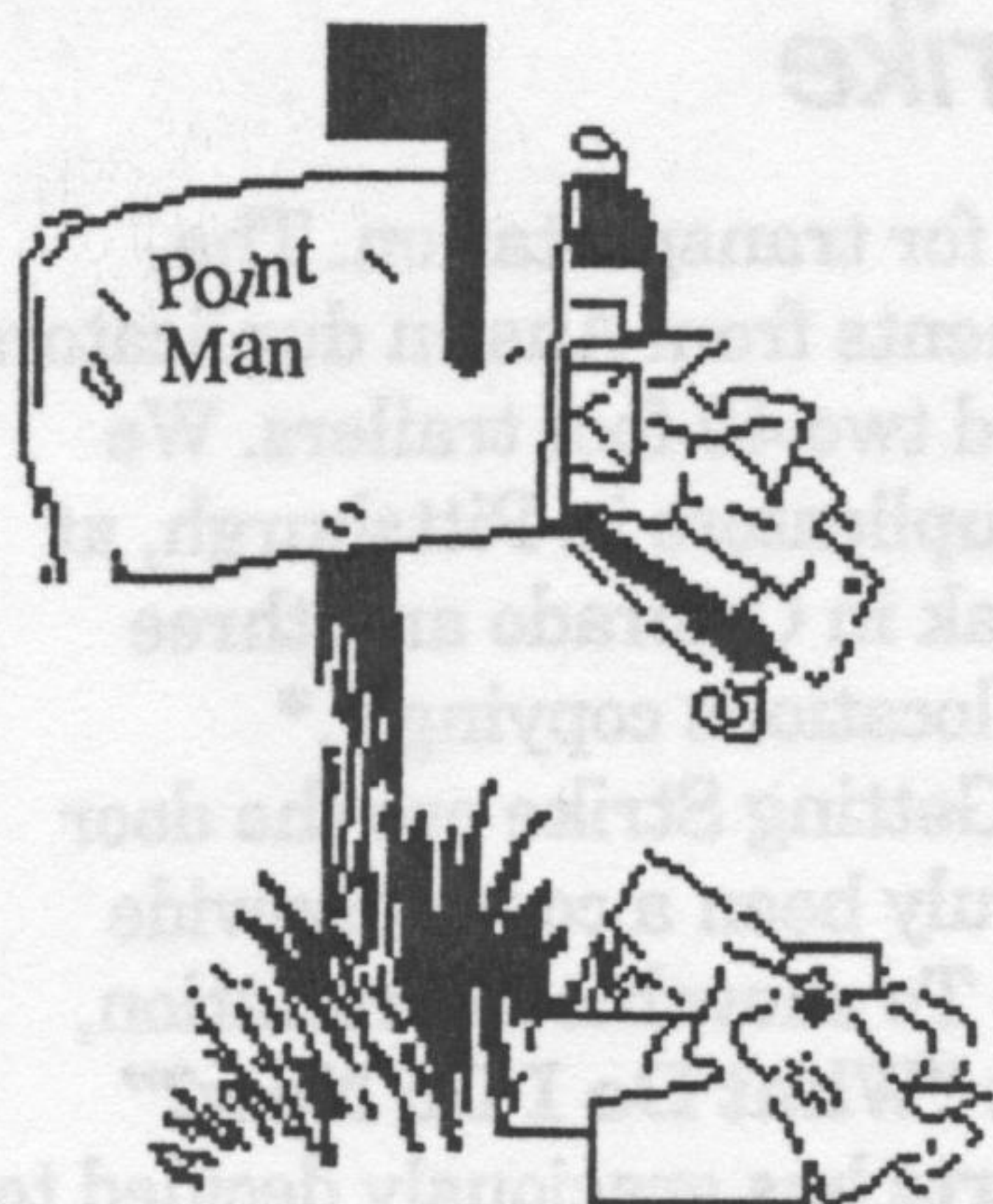
People are asked not to drive to the party (there's no parking at the house); instead, buses will run every 45 minutes from ORIGIN to Chris's house and back. They start at 6:30 p.m. and run until 3:00 a.m. Party-goers are encouraged to carpool to ORIGIN and designate a driver for the ride home afterwards. If your designated driver gets toasted, a taxi home from ORIGIN is much cheaper than the fare from Rancho Roberts (or a DWI). Lots of food and drink are on tap and all ORIGINites and spouses are invited.



Just a Reminder...

"SMiles" Lewis would like to issue a public plea for all materials that were recieved through purchase requisitions for project research to be rounded up and returned to the Library for cataloging (you know who you are)...

And in what's quickly becoming a regular Point of ORIGIN feature, we got a call from NBC that the Today show piece has once again been re-scheduled. This time, it's set for next Wednesday (April 28) for 7:45 a.m. Jennifer Stearns says she's more confident it will air now that other stories are calming down. We'll see...



Point Man

Dear Point Man,

At least once a day, I see one of the poor, hapless MIS Tech guys roaming around asking, "Do you know where So-and-So is?" or "Where is So-and-So's office?" With all these new people, I don't blame them. In fact, sometimes I need to know where these new guys are as well.

Would it be possible for someone to start a real directory of this place which would keep everyone updated as to just where the heck everyone else is? The phone list doesn't help; it usually has too many mistakes. I'm talking about either a directory with room numbers, or even better, maps like when we moved in.

Signed,
Where Am I? Who Am I?

Dear Where/Who,

That's a good idea whose time hasn't quite yet come again. Right now, we're in the middle of reallocating team members from Strike and Serpent, not to mention adding about 5 employees a week. When the dust settles, we'll try to put together a new map with names and insert it in a Point of ORIGIN.

Dear Point Man,

It seems ridiculous to have 'runners' get our stuff. We need it when we need it, and this just seems to be a waste of money hiring these people for a job that is unnecessary in the first place. I just don't think the whole idea of part-timers was completely thought out. We are supposed to be saving money around here.

Signed,
Mr. Tightwad

Dear Tightwad,

Au contraire! (Anybody who needs help with that should ask **Jean Marc**.) The "Administrative Support Group" is already saving us beaucoup du bucks. Those in PD may not see it as much, but in Publishing, we are constantly sending things to printers, law offices, copy centers, etc. Until now, those and other errands were farmed out to Quicksilver—not the most cost-efficient delivery service in the world. The bills were staggering. Those folks are also handling big printing/assembly jobs (paid for by huge savings at Kinko's), plus: servicing copiers and fax machines, delivering and distributing internal materials, preparing press and sales kits, getting mailings together, etc. In other words, they serve as the "extra hands" we always seem to need around here.

Now, the Administrative Support Group is taking care of those chores, freeing up those of us who make \$120K a year to devote all of our talents to important projects like sending out e-mail about the Today Show. Heck, one of those 'runners' will probably be doing door-to-door duty, taking names of people in offices for the directory mentioned in the letter above. Requests for support should be directed to **Mindy Stringer** on the third floor.

To All ORIGINites,

The Point Box by the back door has mysteriously disappeared. I can only conclude that the thief who stole all the cash, stereos and CDs has now discovered an item of true value. In any case, you can still send Point Man letters electronically to the Point of ORIGIN address. As usual, anonymity and animosity will be respected. Meanwhile, a new, 5-ton iron Point box is being spot-welded as we speak.

On a more serious note, **Sharon "Have A Nice Day" Miller** wants everyone to know that some new security measures are taking effect next week which will help to end the ORIGIN theft problem. You may have already noticed one such measure in the placement of the security guard. He/she will now be sitting at a smaller desk across from the elevators so that he/she will have a better view of both doors.

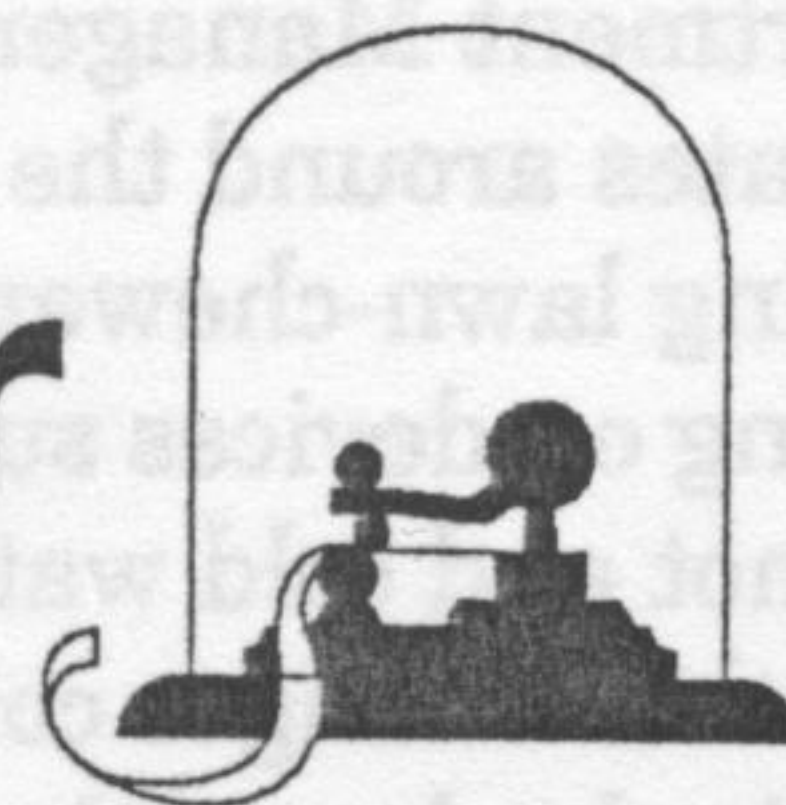
Special Operations

Through mutual osmosis, the QA and Customer Service departments are gradually coming together. In the grand scheme of things, it only makes sense. After all, CS reps have been called to duty during the testing process and the QA gang has assisted CS after the games release.

In the new world order, someone who tested a game through its alpha and beta stages will then follow it into CS after it ships. Meanwhile, some others will be cycling back from CS into QA as a new product goes into testing. "Both departments will be under the direct control of **Kay Gilmore**," according to Operations Overlord **Jeff Hillhouse**. "She'll be hiring supervisors for each department who will be responsible for day-to-day scheduling and personnel-related issues." Jeff says the new departmental configuration will also allow for better career opportunities with ORIGIN.

From a different operational standpoint, you may see some tiny changes in Point of ORIGIN over the next few issues. That's because some restructuring is going on there, too. **Dr. Donna Mehnert** is making the rounds regularly with "Pulse Check" for a feel of what's going on with the players. **Wayne Baker** makes ORIGIN a 24-hour job with his regular column, "Off the Clock." He'll also take over editing and layout, allowing **Galen Svanas** to be canonized to Editor-in-Chief.

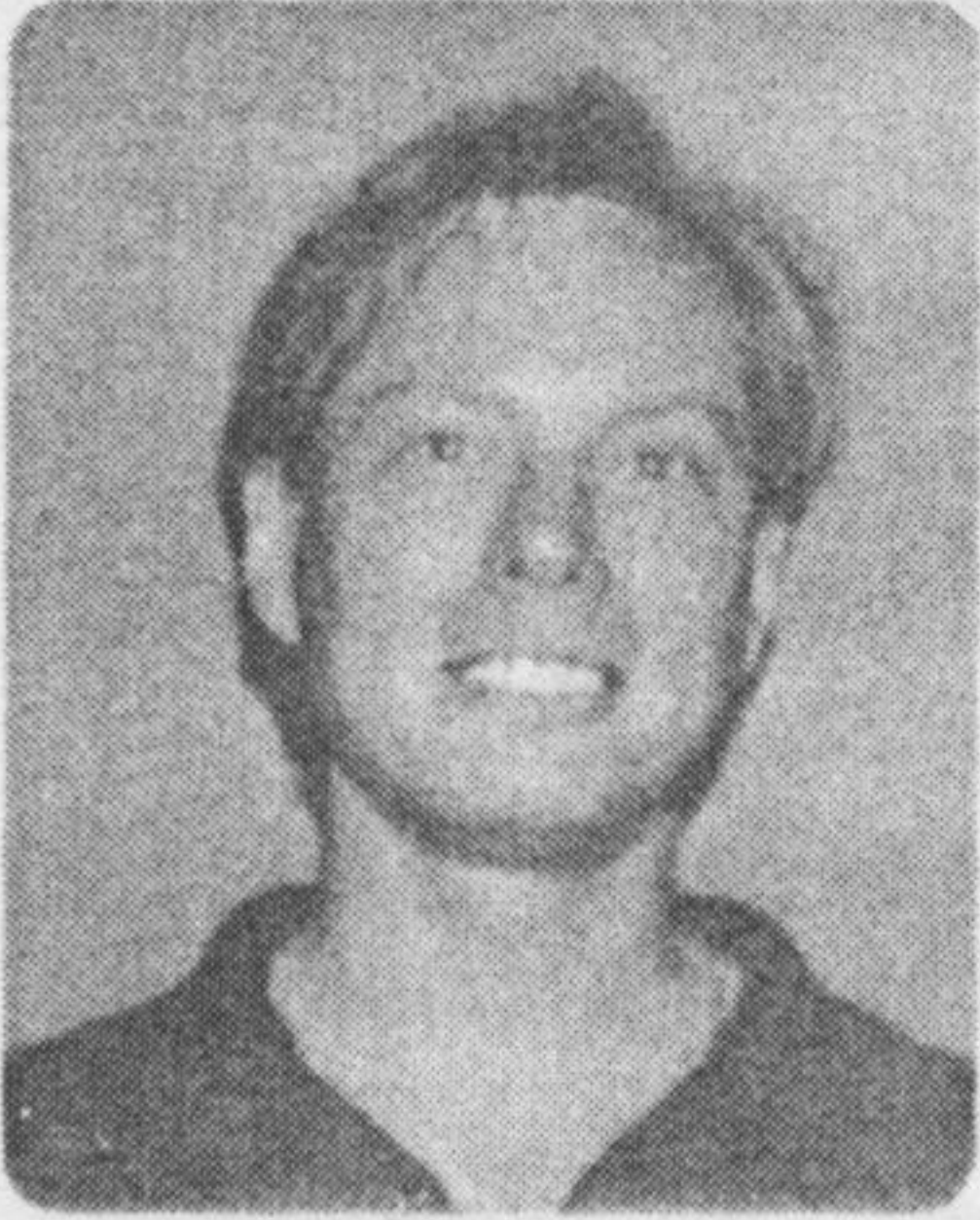
Ticker



Stock prices at press time (2:45pm)

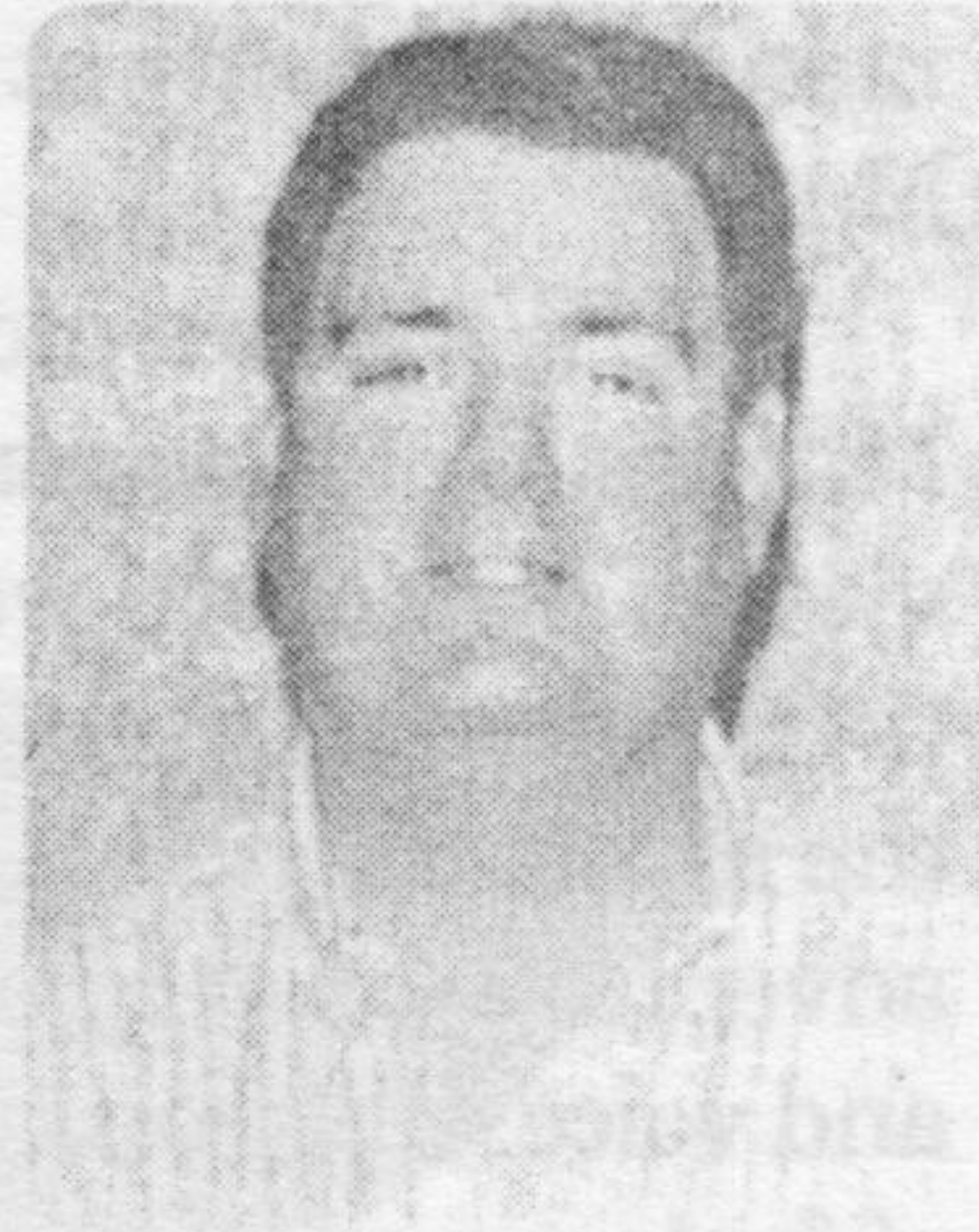
ERTS	29.5	-1
BROD	32.125	-.875
SIER	11.625	-.125
MPRS	5.75	-.75

New Faces: Alumni Reunite!



◀ Big news in the new hire department: **Andy Hollis** is joining us as a producer. Andy was a founding member of MicroProse and has more than ten years of game design experience. In fact, Andy's had a hand in just about every military flight sim MP has developed, up through the current Strike Eagle III, on which he was producer, lead designer and lead programmer. SE3 had the largest rollout in MP history—130K worldwide—a number now surpassed by our own Strike at 150K. Andy will probably be working on a non-flight sim product with fellow MP alum, **Mike Harrison**, for starters. Andy's also an accomplished drummer and is a winning driver in autocross racing (as is his wife, Ann!) They are in the process of relocating from Maryland to Texas right now.

Lee Moore has moved into his new digs in the Sales Department, filling the sales rep vacancy. Before ORIGIN, he was in computer retail store management with CompuAdd and had also previously once worked for another CompuAdd alum, **Karl Kabler**. Both of them just got back from the EA Sales meeting in San Mateo, and according to Karl, "Lee never met a vending machine he didn't like." ▶



◀ Also in the Sales arena, **Shelly Smith** is on board in the newly created position of Sales Administrative Assistant. She'll will be working with **Carol Cipolla**. Shelly says the search for "a challenging position in sales" led her here from SymTek Systems and the University of Wyoming.



"The great Sierra beat is dying and I was a casualty," says new programmer **Paul Masters**. He worked at Dymanix and went to school at SWTSU before signing up with ORIGIN. ▶

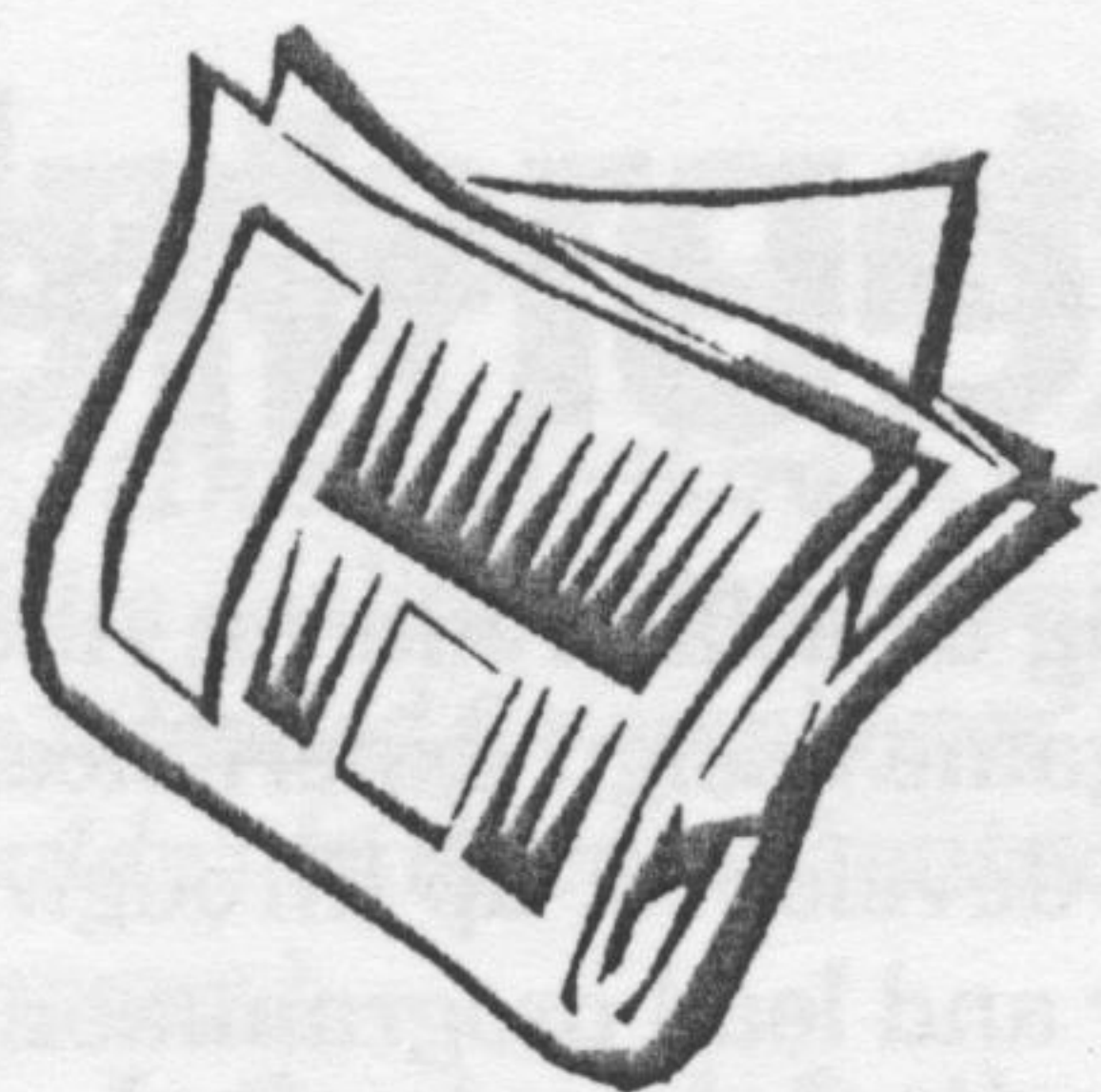


◀ Finally, **David M. "Call Me Dave" Brandt** is a recent graduate from UT to TDA. His hobbies: "Gaming, camping, blood drinking and ritual sacrifice." Perfect fit.



In the Library

dBase IV for DOS
Paradox for Windows
Software Publishers Association
Membership Directory for 1993
Rise of the Dragon - Dynamix
Space Adventure - Knowledge
Adventure Inc
Harpoon Challenger Pak - Three
Sixty Software
Power of Things to Come - Borland
video featuring Philippe Kahn
Inside Sega CD - video on sega cd
Mantis XF5700 Experimental
Fighter w/speech pak - Microplay/
Microprose
Jump Jet - Microprose
World Circuit - Microprose (racing
game)
Challenge of the Five Realms -
Microplay/Microprose
Mars Explorer - Virtual Reality
Laboratories
Make Path/Flight Path - Virtual
Reality Laboratories
Distant Suns (for Windows) -
Virtual Reality Laboratories
Campaign - Empire / ReadySoft
Dragon's Lair 3 - ReadySoft
Battles of Destiny - QQP
Conquered Kingdoms - QQP
Solitaires' Journey- QQP
X-Wing - LucasArts
Shadow President - DC True
Four Crystals of Trazere -
Mindscape
Koshan Conspiracy - UBI Soft
Maelstrom - Merit Software
Populous 2 - Electronic Arts



NEWS.TXT

I'M FROM THE GOVERNMENT, AND I WANT TO COPY YOUR DISK: The Office of the Inspector General recently dropped a bombshell on Washington when it published "Controls Over Copyrighted Computer Software," the results of a survey of 22 Department of Defense sites. Despite advance warning to each site that it was going to be inspected for software piracy, more than half of the 1,000-plus PCs contained undocumented and possibly illegal software. The average computer with an apparently illegal program had two such programs, so, based on the survey, that means there is one illegal or potentially illegal copy of commercial software for every PC in the Department of Defense. A DOD official agrees that there is some unauthorized use of copyrighted software, but the Pentagon feels the problem is due mostly to mistakes—improper accounting, computers being transferred among employees, etc.—than willful copyright violations.

22,000 MILES FOR A GAME: Nintendo plans a satellite version of its game machine service next year through a satellite-based radio firm. Nintendo will drop 782 million yen (\$6.5 million) for an equity position in Saint Giga, originally created to broadcast digital music via space satellite. Saint Giga didn't attract users, so the Mario Brothers moved in. With a 98,000 yen (\$80) decoder hooked up to the Super Famicom, subscribers will get games, text based news/information and game hints. Nintendo's schedule calls for the service to be up and running early next year, and the company projects that some 4.7 million users will link up.

In Print

A prediction: by the time 1993 is over, ORIGIN will own the computer gaming press. First of all, UW2 is cleaning up in the review arena. Serpent is being lauded by players as a great step forward in the Ultima line. Strike is one of the biggest events in entertainment software history. People are already drooling at the concept and promise of Privateer. In the middle of it all, we're going to throw some unexpected gems like Shadowcaster, Interactive Movie #1 and Wing Commander Academy at them out of the blue.

UW2 gets a nice write-up in the May issue of Electronic Games. Reviewer Al Giovetti writes: "Like its predecessors, Ultima Underworld II is the ultimate game—a state-of-the-art adventure with exquisite sound, music and voice. One comes to expect this kind of fantasy game, considering its maker."

Believe it or not, there's already a Strike Commander review out there. A couple of editors from Computer Gaming World got a pre-release copy and put their thoughts online on Prodigy. "One would expect some very detailed landscapes and terrain. Well, they are there! ...It would be hard not to be impressed with the astonishing graphics, realistic feeling flight model, fine sound support and engrossing storyline—all wrapped up in a well-designed interface." Really, guys, don't try so hard not to be impressed.

Our favorite Strike preview comes from France's Joystick magazine, which says, "First, the game asks whether you are 18 years old. Unless you are 18, you won't be able to access the erotic scenes, hardcore tendency of this software... During take-offs, you will experience airsickness...The bombing raids are awesome, so realistic. Right after releasing some bombs, the computer displays the number of the square you need to scratch off to sniff the smell of charred bodies. Strike Commander is the first scratch-and-sniff game in the world." The preview appears in Joystick's "Poisson d'Avril" (Fish of April) issue, the French equivalent to our April Fools. One other nice touch: the screen shots were altered to look 16-color and blurry.

Corporate

SAN MATEO, CA (APRIL 22) PR NEWSWIRE - Electronic Arts today announced its fourth quarter and fiscal year 1993 operating results. Net income for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 1993, was \$30,858,000, compared to \$18,688,000 for fiscal year 1992, an increase of 65%. Earnings per share for the fourth quarter of fiscal year 1993 were 65 cents, compared to 42 cents earned in fiscal year 1992, an increase of 55%.

Revenues for the fourth quarter of fiscal year 1993 were \$86,581,000, compared to \$47,999,000 in the fourth quarter last year, an increase of over 80%. Revenues in fiscal year 1993 were \$298,386,000, up over 70 percent from fiscal year 1992 revenues of \$175,094,000.

On the people side, EA Corporate announces the hiring of Jeanne Golly as the new Director of Public Relations. Talk about crisis communications, Jeanne was the mouth that *really* talked through the Milli Vanilli lyp sync scandal. She most recently was the VP of Corporate Communications at KMart, the nation's second leading domestic retailer. It looks like ORIGIN isn't the only one bringing in acclaimed professionals.



Get Outta Here!

Here are the official paid holidays for Summer:

Memorial Day	May 31
4th of July	July 5 (Figure that one out!)
Labor Day	Sept. 6