

# Point of ORIGIN

Volume III, No. 40

Friday, June 18, 1993

Austin, TX

## CES: The Gap Closes

(CHICAGO, IL)-The foray into fall begins with a single battle: for recognition. On the road again, ORIGIN packed up its travelling bulldog-and-pony/smoke-and-mirrors sideshow and set out for the Windy City, confident that we would once again thrill and amaze buyers and the press with the wondrous technological magic we were conjuring in Texas. We were wrong.

Not to say we didn't have an impressive lineup: Pacific Strike, Shadowcaster, Privateer and Wing Commander Academy. It's just that other game companies are coming along fast and coming along strong. Just ask PD reps **Eric Hyman** and **Jeff Everett**, who came along to hawk their products.

Take art, for instance. Whereas ORIGIN once had the unequalled respect of the industry, Novalogic (who unleashed the terrain in Comanche) is updating the submarine adventure, Wolfpack. The opening cinematics were nothing less than stunning, even though you didn't see any actual gameplay. For total presentation, Bethesda Softworks cornered the smoke-and-mirrors market with its "This-is-not-a-videotape" demonstration showcasing four of its new titles, including Terminator. It's one of a slew of first-person perspective, smooth scrolling games slated for fall, and is

*(...continued on page 4)*

## 401K CHANGES

Deadline: Friday, June 25, 1993

If you are already enrolled in the 401K plan, changes in your contribution level or your investment fund selections may be made during this period. If you have an account balance in the Deferred Profit Sharing Plan, you may also change your investment fund selection during this time. Changes and enrollments become effective July 1st. Enrollment and change forms are available from Cindy Meier in the HR department. 401k Enrollment and revisions may be made now through Friday, June 25th.

(1)



*Electronic's Arts Booth was a constant attraction for many at Summer CES.*

## Inside...

*What are all the red bows about?*

New Hires p. 3

*Better than Crimestoppers*

Security Update p. 4

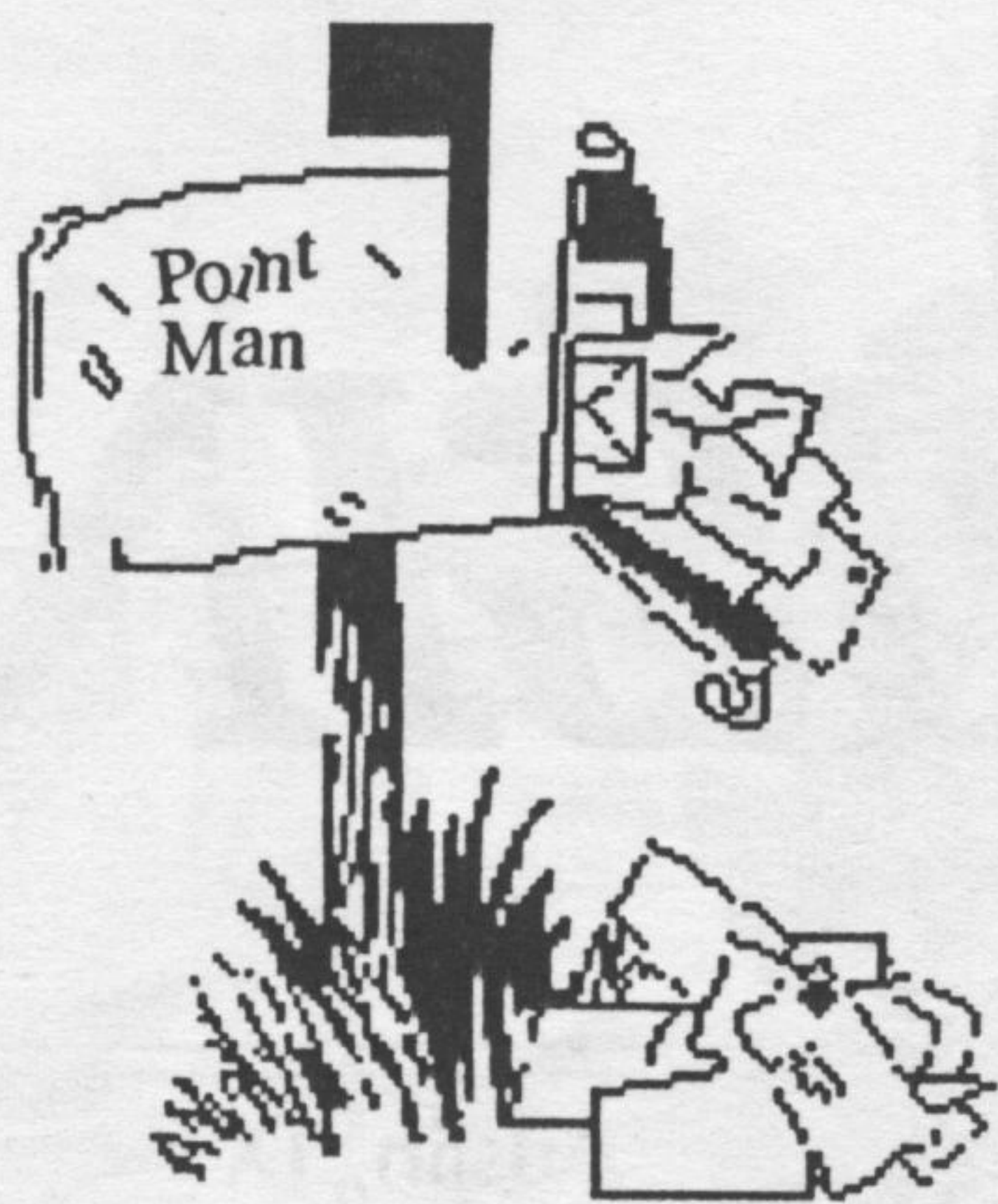
*Employee of the Month*

Jason Yenawine p. 5

*Stress on the rise at ORIGIN?*

Nuptial News p. 6





Dear Point Man,

In the survey meeting with the programmers, a point came up that I have heard before but would like the explanation behind: "EA is anal about headcount." Why is this?

Signed,  
Anonymouse

Dear Anonymouse,

"Anal" is an overstatement, according to former EA bean-counter Mike Grajeda. "We budgeted our company growth with a 50-60% planned headcount increase," Mike explains. "As the second quarter started looking tougher and the market slowed down, EA decided to slow down head count to match. And I think that makes sense." Salaries are the single biggest line of our budget, so keeping an accurate count of what we have and what we'll need is important. That's why EA periodically implements a hiring freeze (like the one right now) just to say, "Whoa, hold on a minute. Let's stop and make sure the growth's not getting away from us."

Dear Point Man,

Why is it that we get these messages all the time, instead of on the public bulletin boards? We were told that it is not acceptable to mail things to all, and then UM (Upper Management) does it and it's ok. Why is that? I don't like the excuse that some people won't check those boards, because that only makes the problem worse. There should be an across the board rule that affects UM and the rest of us. And people should be educated to look in the proper place for these type of messages.

Signed,  
Box Full

Dear Full,

Although I agree that some of those "To All" messages push the limit in

terms of pressing urgency, mail monitor Fred Schmidt says he hasn't seen anything that violates the integrity of the policy ("And I get those 'To All' messages, too," Fred says). As for an across-the-board rule that affects UM and the rest of us: forget it. After all, that's what makes them UM.

In any case, it's not an excuse; many employees do not check the boards, even though they've been told which to check on a regular - if not daily - basis. (For those who don't know, they are: Company Notices, Company Policy Statements, EA World, Education & Training, ORIGIN Entertainment, and Sports & Fitness if you're into extra-curricular.) Some company communications can't take the gamble of being missed, things like mandatory meetings and even last week's trip to Jurassic Park. Steve Morris and Kathie Lambdin act as the electronic gatekeepers and check with Fred, Dallas or Rob if there's a question about mass distribution of a particular message. Just so you know: HR has the broadest discretion to mount a mass assault when they see fit.

Dear Point Man,

What are we to do about the lamination coming off our really cool, new, expensive badges? I've noticed it coming off of a lot of people's badges, not just mine.

Signed,  
Lackluster

Dear Lackluster,

In the words of non-ORIGIN employee Ed McMahon: "You are correct, sir." The shine's really worn off for a lot of people, so we're talking to our vendor about some other type of coating for the badges. Meanwhile, anyone needing re-sealing should check with the ever-glossy Kai Stringer.

Dear Point Man,

Do we use recycled boxes when we put out a game? Also, how much trouble would it be to print our manuals on recycled paper with some safe (soy?) ink? If we use enough recycled materials, we could slap a recycle stamp on our boxes to let people know that our games are eco-friendly (or whatever the current hip term is).

Right now, we're not using any recycled materials. But it's not for lack of trying. "I thought (recycled materials) would be cheaper," says Friend of the Earth Jeff Hillhouse, "but I guess that shows how naive I was." In reality recycled paper costs upwards of 10% more. Curtis "Save the" Woods adds,

"Actually, that's a pretty conservative estimate. As the demand for recycled paper has gone up, so has the cost, because it takes much more to process the paper so it's usable again. And it limits you creatively, because the paper won't hold colors very well." Curtis says we will be watching recycled paper prices, though, and we'll try to make the switch, if it becomes economically as well as ecologically feasible. While we're on the subject, thanks to everybody who's been recycling the aluminum cans. Keep making sure that cans only go into the recycle bins. In the near future, the cans (and all of the recycled paper placed in the boxes around the building) will go to ACCO for recycling, and we'll actually get paid for them, with the proceeds going to good causes via the Entertainment Committee.

Yo, Point Man,

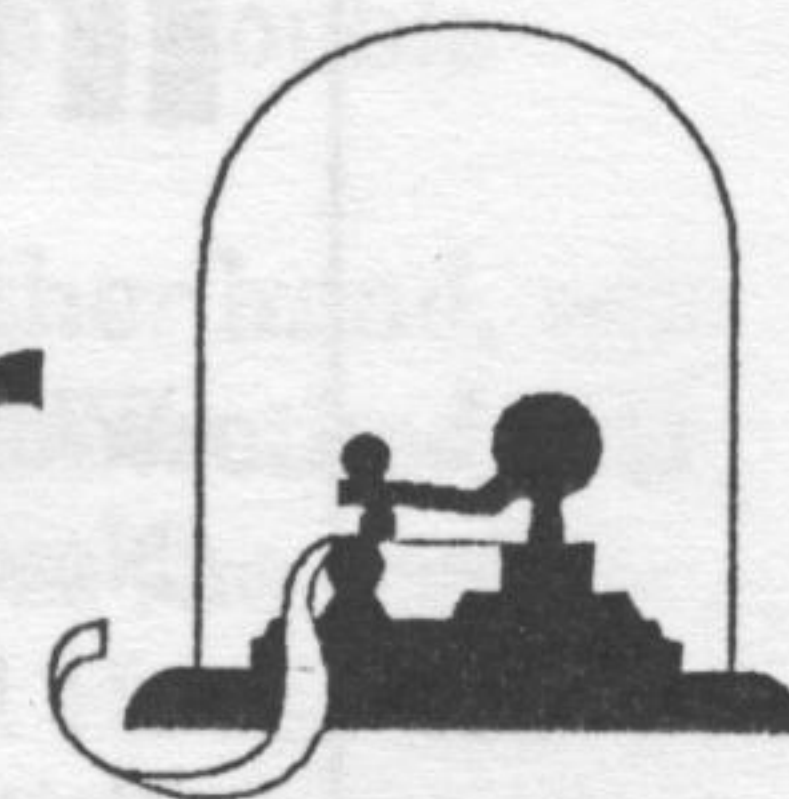
Why does Fred always end his messages with 3 #'s?

###

For the same reason that Mike Harrison ends a lot of his messages with "-30-." These guys are from the old school of print journalism, where story copy and press releases officially ended with one of those two symbols. I, however, come from the cutting-edge industry of television news, and do not cater to the same habit. [CUT TO COMMERCIAL].

(Just a reminder: even though the notorious ORIGIN thief has absconded with the Point drop box, you can still send Dear Point Man letters to the Point of ORIGIN address on e-mail. Anonymity will be exploited.)

## Ticker



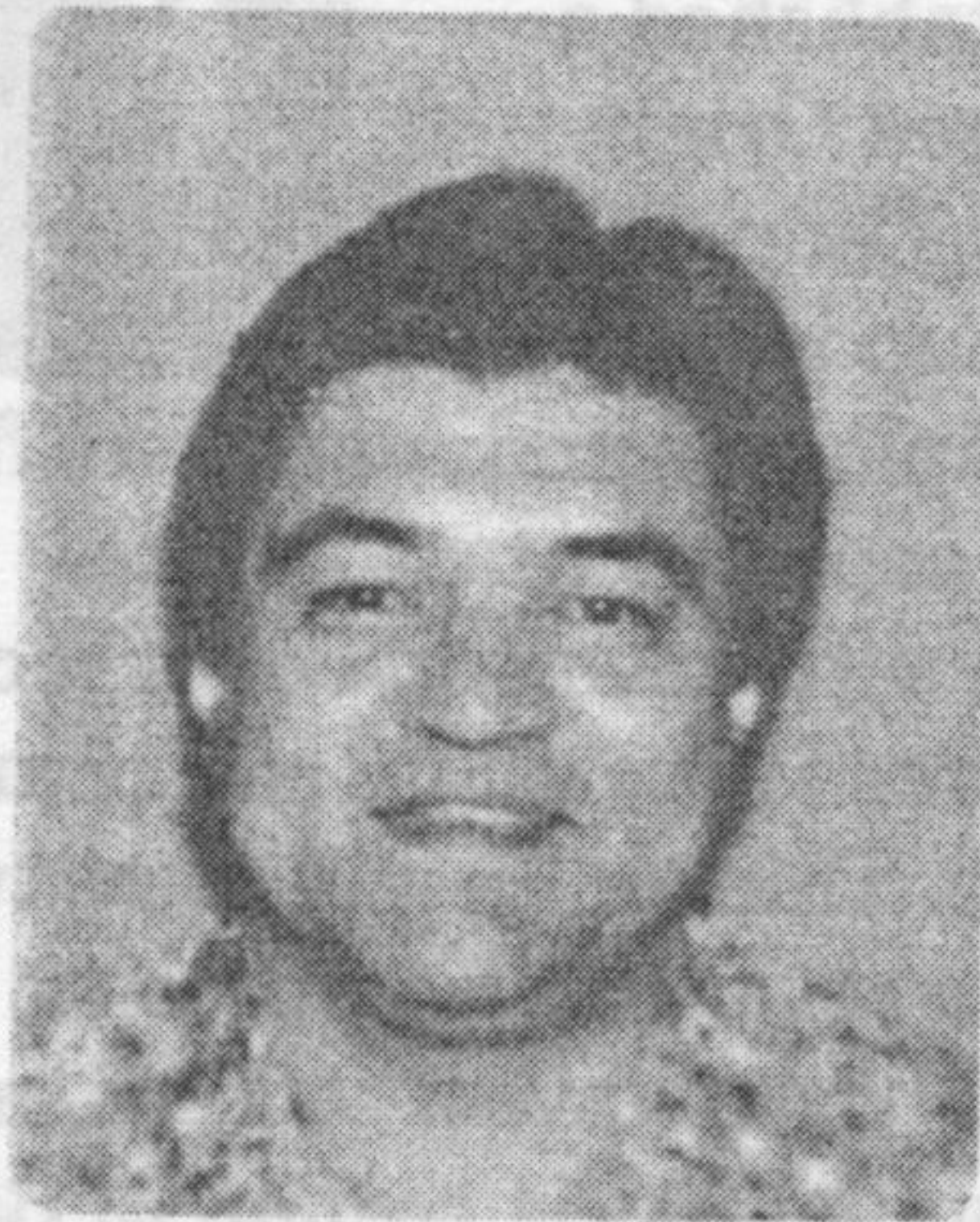
Stock prices at press time  
(12:00 noon)

ERTS	27	+ .125
BROD	34.5	+2.0
MPRS	6.875	+ .875
SIER	13	+ .25
THDO	30.5	+ .75

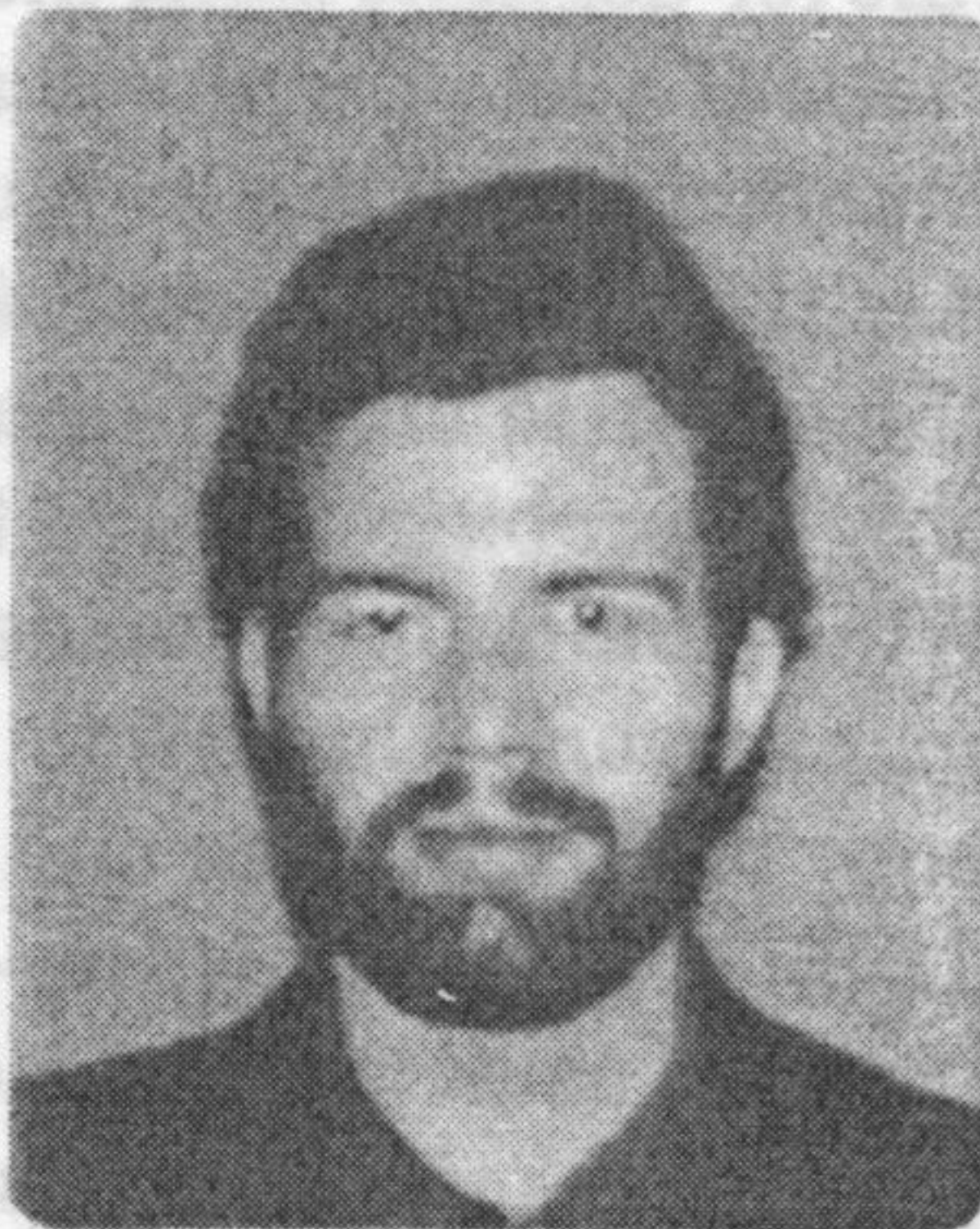


# New Hires

Sometimes we wonder at the Point where all these new people are coming from and why so many of them are male. Well the answer to this became apparent when Mark "Accountable" Chandler brought us an invoice to the Austin American Statesman. It lists the abbreviated caption for our latest classified ad as "PERFECT FOR STUD." What are they thinking in the HR department and what does this mean, anyway? By the way, in case you wanted to know, the total on this invoice is \$39.78, which proves that we are bringing them in cheap. (Now, for what you really want to know: the caption was short for "student." (continued on page 6...)



▲ **Joe Basquez** may be joining ORIGIN Systems for the first time as a composer, but he is returning to his love of music. For the past 13 years, Joe was a systems analyst for General Dynamics, but in his spare time he composed music. Joe's claims to fame include collaboration on the movie soundtrack for "Ninth Life" with Johnny Reno, a stint with a record label in the late 70's, and work with a gospel singer out of West Texas named Dave Cave. Joe also collects baseball cards.



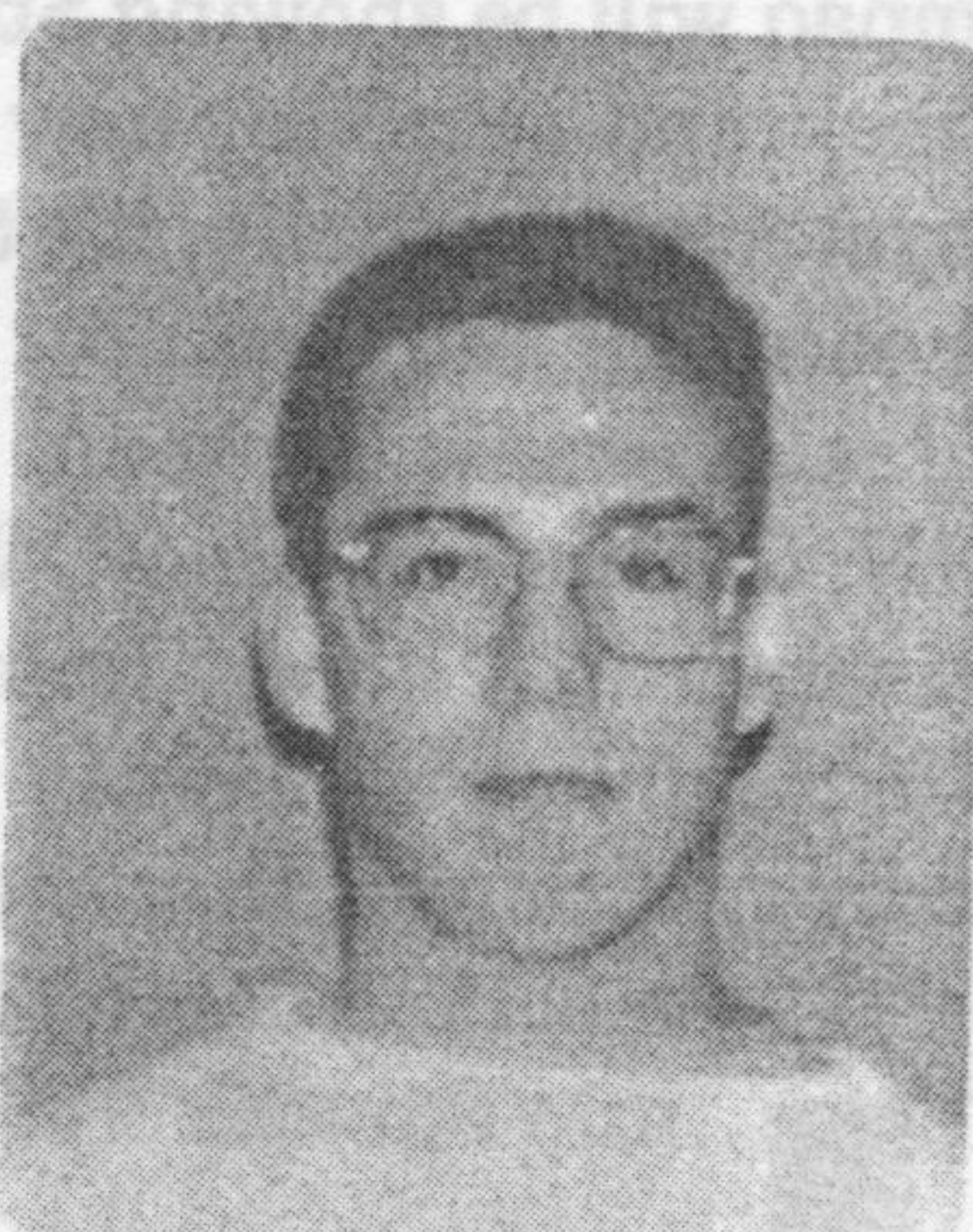
▲ Although we thought that **RON KERWIN CAPPED** this market, it looks like we have **ANOTHER ONE**. On his Point of ORIGIN New Employee Form, **CHRIS "CAPITALIZED" TODD** has started as a new **SOFTWARE ENGINEER**. He is from **TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY**, which may excite a few of you out there, especially **Brian Wacchaus** (see his tattoo). Chris' interests include **POOL, KENDO, and MARGARITAS AT SUNSET. WELCOME TO ORIGIN, TODD.**



▲ And just when we thought there couldn't be any more Sheltons in Austin who didn't work for us, **Tobin Shelton** (no relation to the other Shelton's) begins in our QA/CS department. Obviously a man of great imagination, his favorite color is clear.



▲ **Aaron Martin** joins us as a programmer from The University of Arizona. **Martin Galway** actually recruited this one. Aaron, whose hero is **Lord British**, says that the best piece of advice he ever received was "it will pass," so I guess he'll be over it soon.



▲ **Frank J. Roan II**, no relation to **Ken Demarest III**, used to work for **Dynamix and Sierra-On-Line**. Now he's an ORIGIN programmer. One of Frank's heroes is **Gumby** and a claim to fame is that he cut a Coke machine in half with a circular saw in college. Who says the college curriculum is on the decline?



## Red Bow Welcome

As many of you should have noticed, there have been many "red bows" popping up on temporary paper name plates attached to doors and cubical walls in the past several weeks. This is part to our newly hired employees' "get started" bucket of office supplies carefully wrapped in their new trash can, and topped off with a big red bow. This is the reward they get for listening to Sharon for two hours in orientation. The red bow is also a signal for all Origin employees to stop in and introduce themselves and welcome our eager new employee to the exciting world of Origin. So, the next time you see a big red bow, drop in that office or cubical and tell the owner how glad you are to have them here as part of our Origin Team!



## (...CES Wrap-up, from front cover)

probably destined as competition for Shadowcaster. Look for Wing Commander Academy to be compared to X-Wing's Rebel Assault, while Aces Over Europe will square off against Pacific Strike.

Rumors of Strike Commander's death have been greatly exaggerated. The first wave of Strike reviews and the next wave of Serpent reviews hit gaming magazines at the show. There were so many, we had to split them off into a separate publication. The long and short of Strike coverage is: the domestic press would not have been satisfied with anything less than the second coming of Christ, while the foreign press believes ORIGIN delivered everything it promised. The Sour Grapes Award goes to soon-to-be-former MicroProse President Bill Stealey, who was interviewed for England's PC Format magazine. Major Bill says: "We saw Strike Commander at CES (in January) and said, 'Wow, gouraud shading. We've seen it before. It's called Harrier.' And a lot of the people at OSI used to work for me at MicroProse, and that really pisses me off." Yo, Bill. Take a Valium. Fred, Mike H. and Andy can only hang their heads and shrug, saying: "That's Bill."

So what did everybody think of our products? The most anticipated game still seems to be Privateer. We made a conscious effort to position it between Wing Commander and Strike in terms of technology, but the press seemed a little leery of the fact that we were once again showing just the opening cinematics.

Shadowcaster was very well received when the press learned about how it will differ from Underworld, Wolfenstein and Doom. In Shadowcaster, you have the ability to dive underwater and swim (the entire palette takes on a bluish haze). That really turned on a couple of

prospective reviewers.

Many of them were also happy to see Pacific Strike. That team made an incredible effort to get a flyable mission ready for the show and Eric made a good pitchman. The undocumented but very evident bias in the domestic press is that they prefer the older aircraft for dogfight sims, mostly due to the lack of a lot of sophisticated computer weaponry and the in-your-face aspect of the air-to-air combat.

But the surprise hit and what could possibly be our biggest seller this year was Wing Commander Academy. To a person, everyone who saw it wanted a copy of it right then and there. And talk about positioning - WCA was pitched as a non-traditional ORIGIN game: "Less than 5 megs on your hard drive and runs great on a 386."

Sega and Nintendo continued to duke it out. Noticeably absent was Sega's Virtual Reality gear scheduled for this Christmas (and shown in USA-Today's CES coverage). Konami had a primitive VR setup, and also had a line winding around its booth. People really want to see that stuff. Jurassic Park-licensed games and items were everywhere. It's going to be a long holiday season.

The next stop for the travelling road show is a high-profile stint in the Big Apple. Later this month at PC Expo, Compaq will be showing Strike on one of its brand-spanking new Pentium systems. Hopefully, it's the beginning of a long and beautiful marketing relationship between

ORIGIN, Compaq and Intel. We'll have a wrap-up of all the impressions in the following Point (providing, of course, that the machine doesn't burst into flames).

## Security Update



Due to the continuation of thefts here at Origin, we have established a specialized Origin Security Council. This group is made up of employees and managers from various departments. They are charged with development of security procedures for personal safety and property. This group will meet twice a month to cover topics of present concern. If you have a concern or idea, please submit it via cc:mail to **Bart Hosier** or **Sharon Miller**. All information will be kept confidential.

One project which has been undertaken is to search out the thief. A database has been set up to help in this matter and the idea is to feed the names of the people who were in the building when these thefts occurred, and then look for a pattern and name. Some interesting facts have already been found. The security video tapes have been pulled and are presently being reviewed. "We are very serious about finding the culprit(s) and we will continue our efforts to resolve this matter," says Bart Hosier, Security Council Chairman. "We appreciate everyone's help and cooperation. We realize that being stopped and asked to see your badge or maybe having to open a package is inconvenient, but judging from the reponse so far it, seems that everyone would rather put up with it and catch this criminal."

The present members of the council are: **Bart Hosier** (chair), **Beth Loubet**, **Tim Little**, **Miles Lewis**, **Tom Kassebaum**, **Suzanne Taylor**, **Al Nelson**, **Kathy Lambdin**, **Warren Spector**, **John Ward** and **Marten Davies**.





# SAM'S

# CLUB

M E M B E R S O N L Y

A DIVISION OF WAL-MART STORES INC.

**5107 S. IH 35, Austin, Texas 78744 (512)444-0363\*FAX(512)444-9888**

As employees of Origin Systems you qualify for the "Advantage" membership in SAM'S CLUB. The "Advantage" card cost just \$25.00 per year and allows you to buy at the posted wholesale prices; the same prices as our business members pay for re-sale items! One secondary card is available to anyone you designate for only \$10.00 per year.

If you want to buy at wholesale prices, join the club! Just bring this sheet to the membership counter in the South Austin warehouse to pickup your card. Also bring along a recent pay stub or a company ID and a valid driver's license. See you at SAM'S CLUB!

✂

**SAM'S CLUB #8259**

**5107 S. IH 35**

**AUSTIN, TEXAS 78744**

**(512)444-0363\*FAX(512)444-9888**

Mem#	Qual. Org.: Origin Systems		
Last:	Frist:		
Address:			
City:	State:	Zip:	
Phone:( )	Date of Birth:	-	-
Driver's license #:			

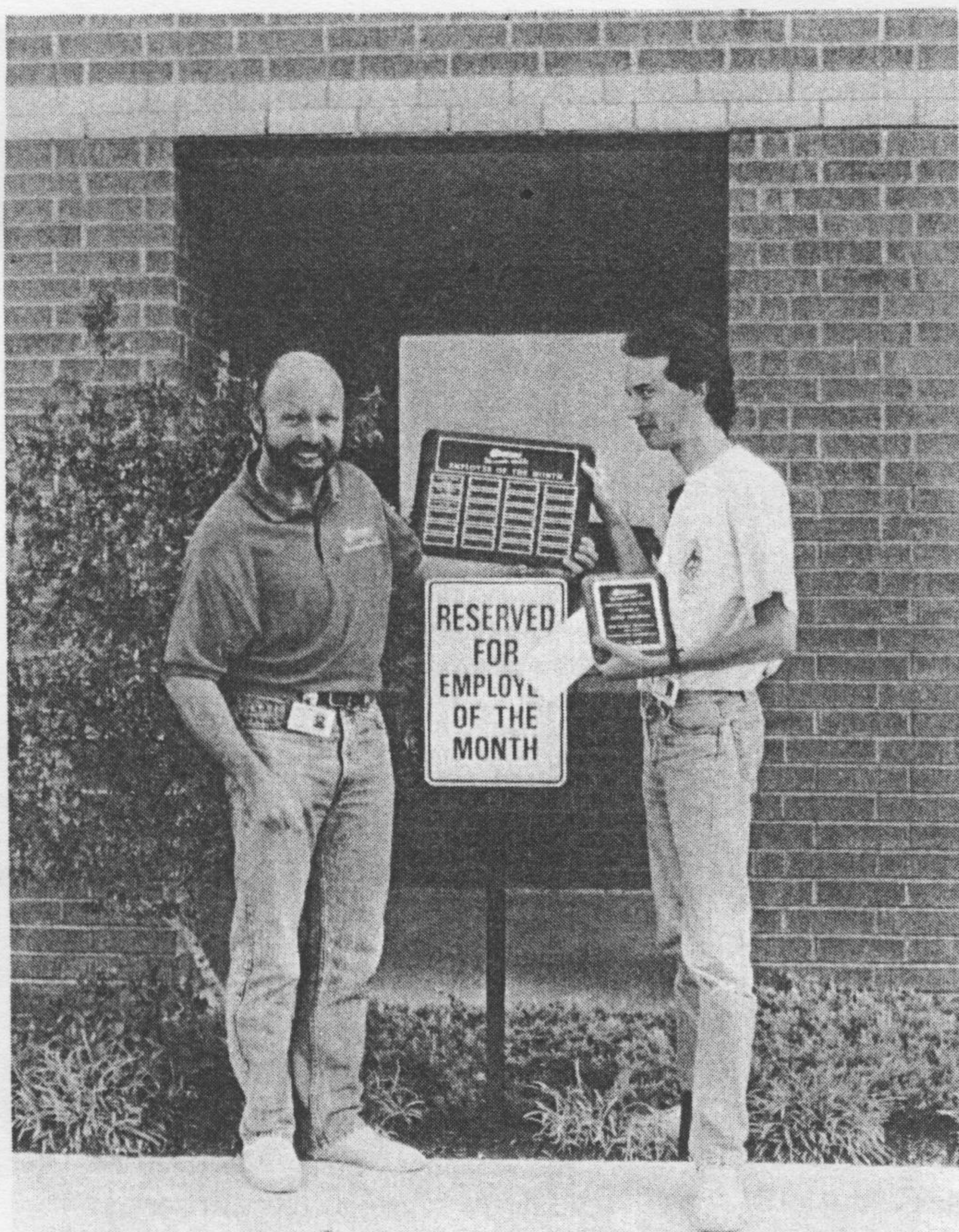
2nd Last:	2nd First:		
Address:			
City:	State:	Zip:	
Phone:( )	Date of Birth:	-	-
Driver's license #:			

CASH

CHECK

Amount Received: \$ \_\_\_\_\_





Employee of  
the Month

**Jason  
"JEMM"  
Yenawine**

Jason "JEMM" Yenawine is ORIGIN's Employee of the Month for June. Jason was hired 1 year and 1 week ago to help out on Strike Commander AI (artificial intelligence), but ended up working on his specialty, memory optimization. JEMM, incidentally, is "Jason's Expanded Memory Manager" and has been a true savior to the Strike engine. Jason is currently also going to UT and will graduate in two semesters with a Bachelors in Computer Science. He's basically modest about his work at ORIGIN and has only one piece of advice for aspiring employees of the month: "Try not to get noticed." Well, Jason, this seems to have worked. Congratulations!

## MicroSpec?

*For those of you who missed it on the Industry News bulletin board...*

HUNT VALLEY, MD (JUNE 17) PR NEWSWIRE - MicroProse, Inc. (NASDAQ: MPRS) today announced agreement on a term sheet with Spectrum HoloByte, Inc., a privately held company. The term sheet, which is non-binding, contemplates a merger of the two companies preceded by a cash infusion of \$10 million by Spectrum HoloByte into MicroProse.

Both companies develop, publish and market entertainment software. Spectrum HoloByte, Inc. is a privately held company specializing in computer, video, virtual reality and multimedia interactive entertainment software.

Under the term sheet, Spectrum HoloByte today advanced MicroProse \$1 million and will invest an additional \$9 million by June 21, 1993, in exchange for a \$10 million subordinated note due 1998. In connection with the \$10 million subordinated note investment, the number of directors in MicroProse's board will increase from four to eight with Spectrum HoloByte appointing four new members.

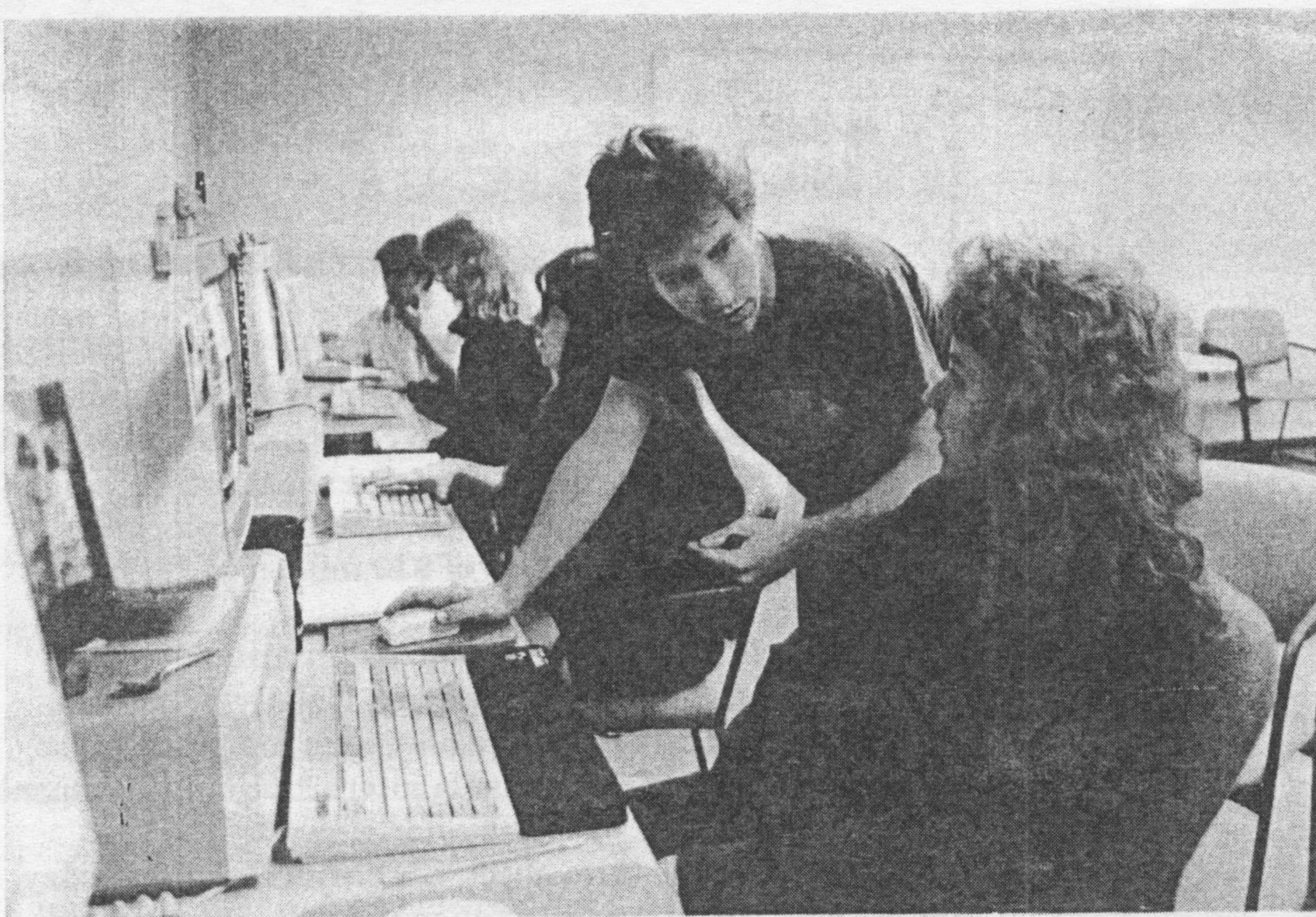
John W. Stealey, Sr., MicroProse's co-founder and principal stockholder, will resign as president and CEO, and Spectrum HoloByte will have the right to appoint a replacement acceptable to MicroProse. Mr. Stealey will remain as chairman until the merger is complete.

### *(...New Hires, from page 3)*

Although we like to honor new full-time employees with their photo and caption, there are also some temporary employees and interns roaming the halls that you should know about. In the art department we have the following: **Steve Austin**, who boasts of "flipping the bird at George Bush at a banquet," **David Lawell**, who was inspired to apply at ORIGIN after encountering "Paul Martian and a case of beer," **Jonathan Price**, who has been known to babble and is related to **Joye McBurnett**, and **Joaari R. Templin**, whose heroes are the comic characters that he creates. In programming, we introduce: **Peter Shelus** whose hero is Mr. Whipple of the Charmin commercials, and **Oliver Z. Yu**, who comes to us after winning a national programming contest. The Audio Department also brings us two new temps: **Jack "Stretch" Williams**, who heads the fine local band with the same name, and **Britt Daniel**, who is a geek --at least that's what he said on the form.

Other notes regarding ORIGIN personnel include the departures of **Kevin Armstrong**, **Diane Corcoran**, **Rick Demyen**, **Glenn Garvey** and **Scott Russo**. They will be missed.





*Zack guides his students through the new world of C++*

## ORIGIN U

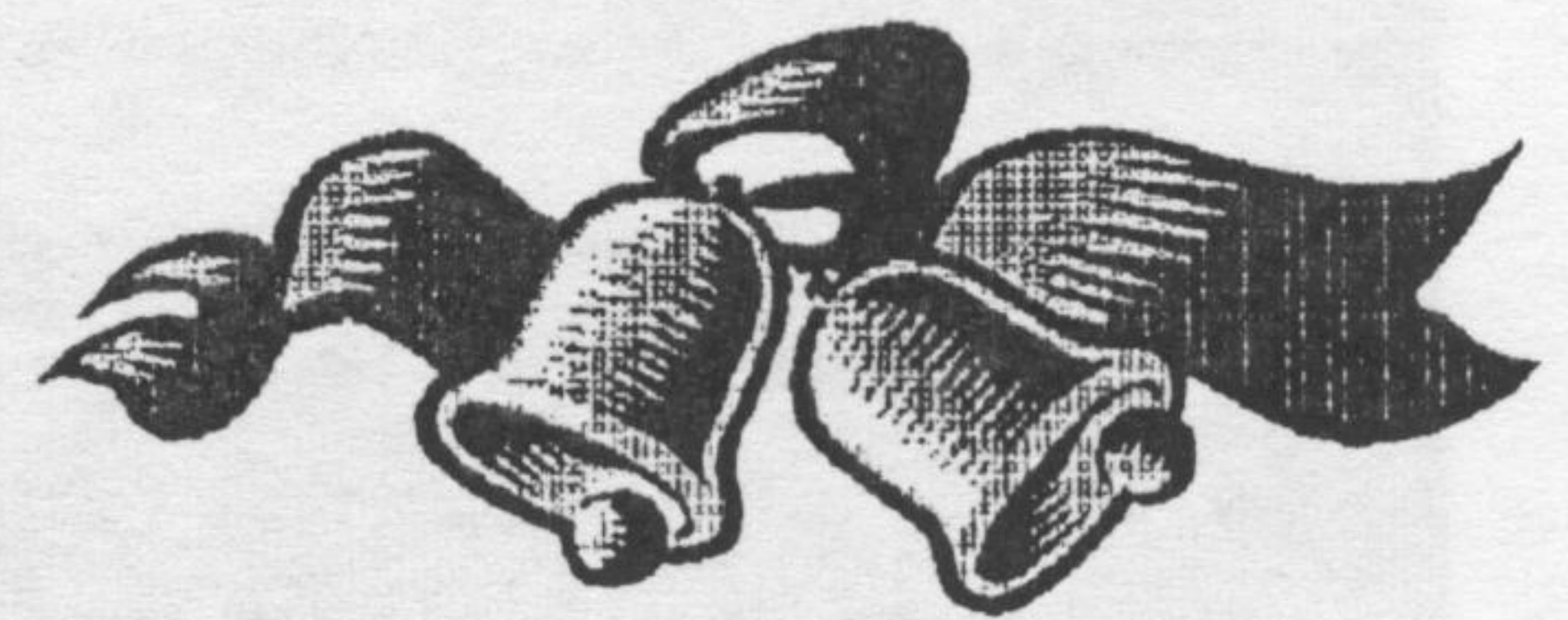
Most of ORIGIN central is quiet and asleep after a full day's work, but in the Schmooze Room on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings from 6 to 8 pm, the keyboard clatter continues. Once again, the ORIGIN University has begun its informal after-hours and brown bag lunch seminars. The first of these is **Zack Simpson's** programming class. Teaching C++ is a volunteer effort for Zack, 2-1/2 year veteran of ORIGIN Systems, who says that although teaching is a lot of work, it's also a lot of fun. The first assignment for the initial class of 16 was to program a text adventure game. When asked how long it would last, since 50 people originally signed up who would like to begin lessons, Zack said that "this first class is like a guinea pig for me that will tell...how long this type of class can last." The second class will begin in 2 to 3 months and its duration will be determined by the longevity of the first.

"Zack Simpson is a wonderful teacher," student and Customer Service Rep. **Rebecca Heidt** remarks. "He puts programming on a level that everyone can understand." Rebecca is taking Zack's C++ Programming Class to improve her understanding of our product. "As a Senior Customer Service Rep, it's important for me to know our products from inside out," says Rebecca, "and Zack's class was the big

turning point in my head." Writer **Beth Loubet** is also taking Zack's class: "Zack notices when people are lost and his organized thoughts help to keep the class moving." Beth is taking the class primarily to understand the way code is set up because the conversation systems used in her job are similar.

The only prerequisites for this class are a computer and a basic understanding of how it works. The class is supplemented with a lab session which is aided by two experienced programmers, **Rob Corell** and **Mike McShaffry**. Since there are no extra computers at ORIGIN, participants must, with explicit instructions from MIS, drag their own down to the Schmooze Room on class nights. "This class won't make you a C++ programmer," says Zack, "but in time you may have a better understanding of the way it all works."

Future ORIGIN U sessions will include **Sheri Graner's** Grammar Class and a basic DOS Class. If you or anyone you know would like to teach an ORIGIN U class, please contact Dean Sharon Miller. Since these classes are voluntary, participation is favorably reflected in each person's personnel files and in progress reports to managers. Look on the ORIGIN BBS in the Education & Training News Forum for more information.



## Nuptial News

If you attended the Employee Assistance Program meeting yesterday (and if you didn't, don't admit it: it was mandatory), you saw that marriage ranked #3 on the Stress-O-Meter. In typical ORIGIN fashion, some employees have decided to push the edge of the anxiety envelope.

First, **Brian Martin** and **Jason Ely** managed to survive an unbelievable bachelor party on wheels to Houston one recent weekend, where a squirting tequila bong and unspoken debauchery were the order of the day—and night—and following day. Right now, **Thomas Blom** and his lovely newlywed wife, **Deidre**, are wrapping up an international honeymoon in Norway. **Rik Packham** will have to put customers on hold while he gets married next weekend to his fab fiancée, **Cindy**. And now, **Jennifer Davis** and **Shelly Smith** have announced their intention to wed. Not each other, though...

Shelly and her fiancé, **Gary**, will tie the knot in September on an island in a lake in Lincoln, Nebraska. And they'll share the cake and napkins with Gary's brother and his fiancée. That's right, it's a double ceremony.

Jennifer, on the other hand, will be landlocked with her betrothed, **JB**. They plan to say "I do" at the beautiful and historic Caswell House in an elaborate turn-of-the-century wedding. Since Jennifer and JB met in the Society for Creative Anachronism and most of their friends are SCA members, everyone will be dressed in costume from Edwardian England.

Congrats to all employees and their dependents-to-be.