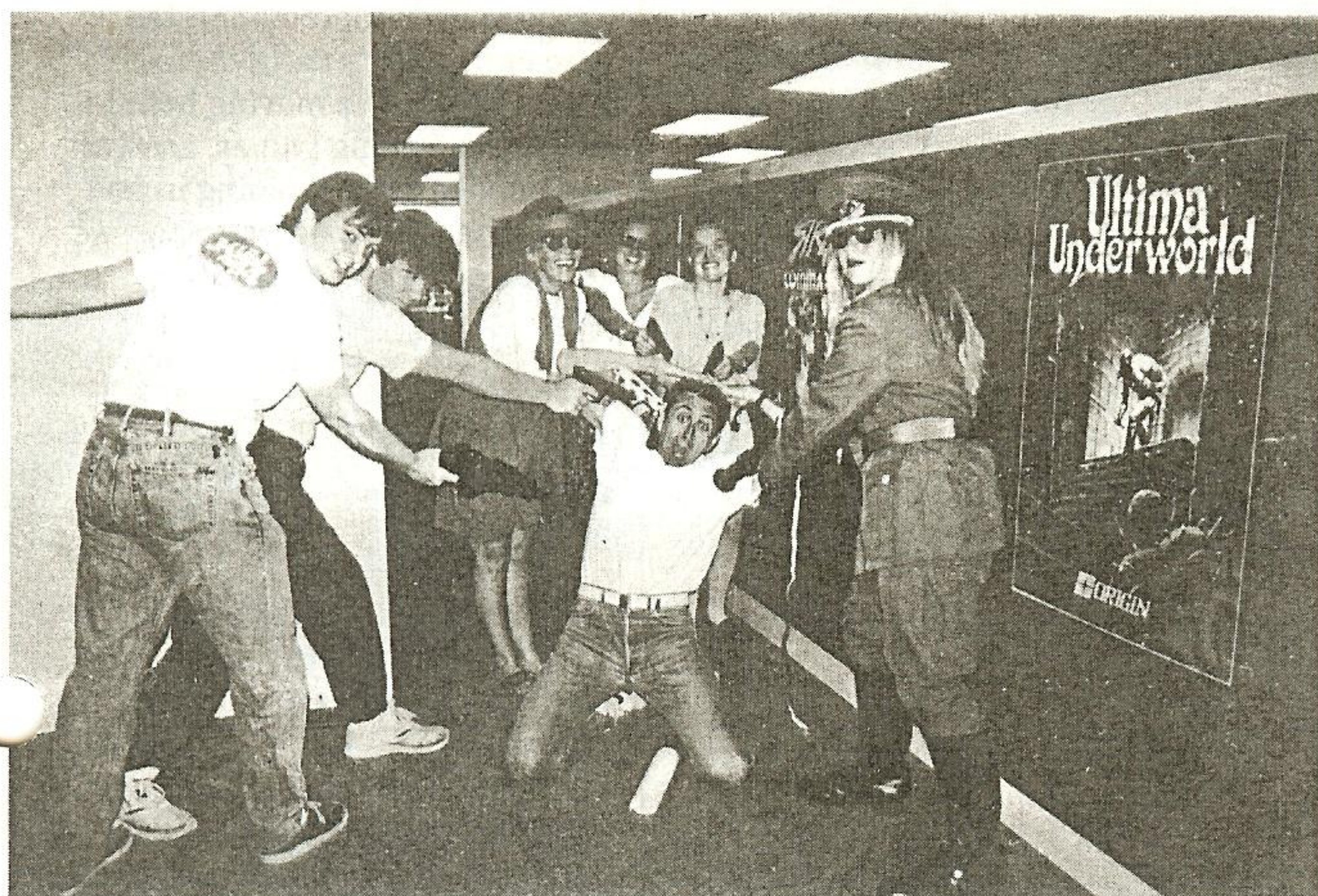


# Point of ORIGIN

Volume III, No. 42

Friday, July 16, 1993

Austin, TX



**"Don't be a Jean-Marc, wear your badge!"**

*The covert band of vigilantes known as the Badge Police apprehend another suspect.*

## Security Council Update

Although the badge police may look or act funny (*don't tell them where you read this*), the ORIGIN Security Council wants you to know that not wearing a badge is very serious business. On one day last week, 28 citations were written, and if you haven't been keeping up with the Company Notices Bulletin Board, "several citations and/or warnings can result in disciplinary action." It is important to remember that ORIGIN personnel are required to wear their ID badge in plain sight at all times while in the building. It is also important that guests are escorted while they are here. Please help out and make your guests aware of our policy and that if they are unaccompanied, they may be asked how they can be helped. If you ask to see someone else's badge and they give you a hard time, be sure to notify your manager, HR or the Security Council. As Sharon Miller states, "this is not meant to be a Gestapo tactic—This is to protect what all of you work so hard to create—ORIGIN's

*(see Security, page 6)*

(1)



## Kudos and Columns

It's always nice to start a column by listing a couple of awards. Apparently, David "Party Boss" Ladyman's ballot box-stuffing idea paid off. ORIGIN won big at the Origins National Game Convention in Fort Worth. (According to the Origins '93 Program Booklet, the first Origins was held in 1975 at John Hopkins University. Its purpose was, and still is, to unite both gamers and gaming

*(see Kudos, page 5...)*

### In this Point...

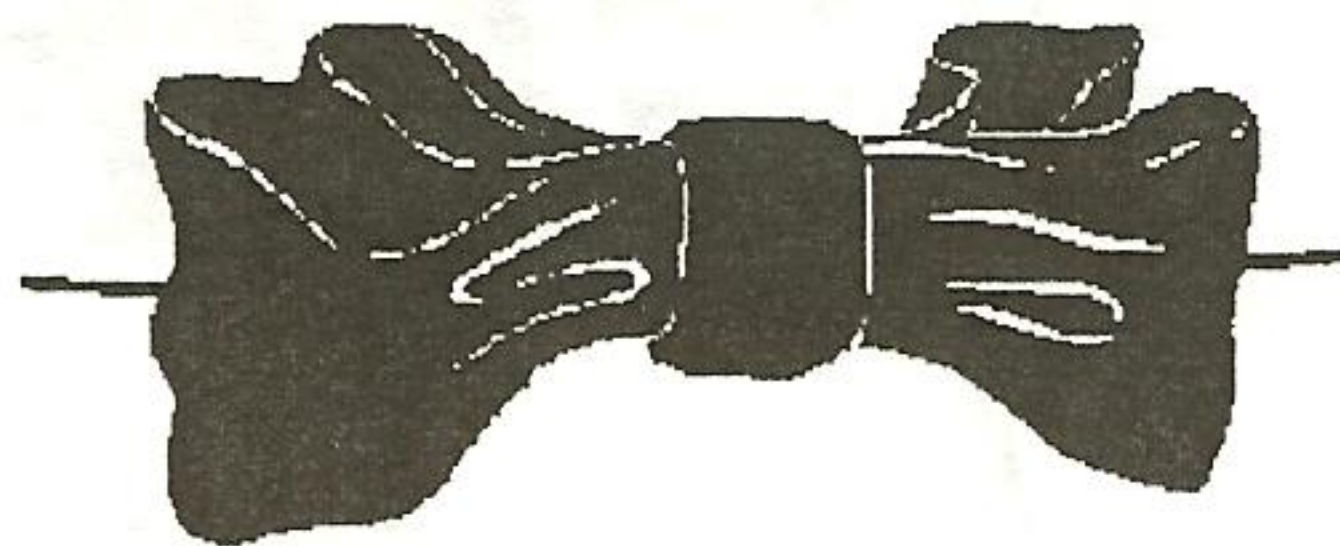
Outside help for game design  
*Bringing Things Into Focus* page 2

"Dicko's" new starring role  
*Take 5* page 6

Wayne Baker  
*Employee of the Month* page 8



## New Hires



← Laid off from Dynamix, **Mark Vearrier** decided to give us a try. Mark was hired as a Graphics Specialist and his hero is M.C. Esher.



← **Jennifer Mason** comes to us from ORIGIN Systems. Well, not directly. She went away for a while to work in Arizona but has returned. Jennifer is a Customer Service Rep and her interests include her new nephew and basketball, er, rather, the Phoenix Suns, anyway. Welcome back, Jennifer!

Not shown are **Matt Sheffield** and **Brennan Dane Priest**. They're both working for ORIGIN as temporary Artists. Matt is straight out of Westwood High and Brennan is on summer hiatus from California State Polytechnic University in Pomona. There, he actively pursues his Aerospace Engineering Degree. Brennan decided to come to ORIGIN Systems to create air and spacecraft and to visit with his dad. We're glad to have you both, especially considering how busy all of the artists are these days.

## Clarifications

Corrections need to be made to the Silver Seed article in the last issue. First, **Bruce Adams** is a writer, not a TDA as stated. He's also acting as the design/team leader. **Warren** wanted us to point out that he is actually assisting the team and not the other way around. "The team members deserve all the credit — let's make sure we recognize the folks doing the real work."

Finally, the photo caption should actually read Warren Spector and **Marshall Andrews**. Sorry for the goof.

## Farewells

As always, it is sad when our employees leave the nest, but with our growth and many changes, this is a natural part of the cycle. **Ana Moreno** has flown away to be part of a jetliner design and consulting team here in Austin. **Carolyn Cutler** departed to N.Y. with her husband, who has a teaching job at the university level. It is unknown where **Jason Templeman** and **Phil Sulak** have gone, although word is that Jason will be working with his dad and Phil went to Dallas. They will be missed and we wish them success in their future endeavors.

## Pulse Check

by Dr. Marie Williams

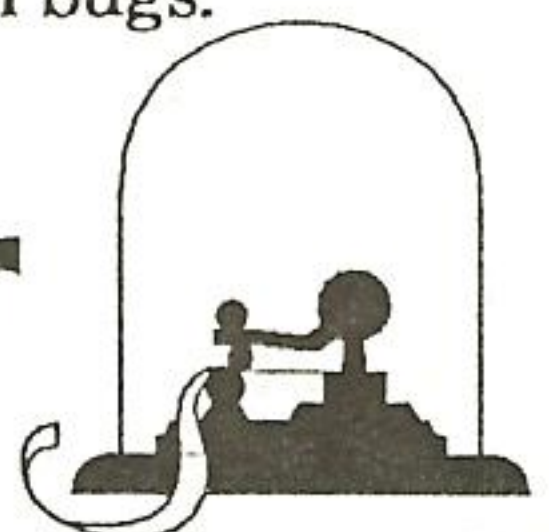
### Together Forever

The Customer Service and Quality Assurance departments are now even more integrated into each other's daily chores. There are people moving here and there testing games, answering phones and swapping in and out of the two jobs faster than we can keep track of them. It's working out very well. Each department has brought a fresh outlook to the other to help improve different aspects of our games, documentation, cluebooks and quality of service we give to our customers.

Since Customer Service Reps are the ears to the outside world, we get to hear all of the customer suggestions about what they want to see in our games, cluebooks and documentation. Because of this, we are currently working closely with **David Ladyman** and the Creative Services Department. There will now be one Customer Service and one Quality Assurance person working with Creative Services on each new product. We'll give 'em what they want!

Last week Customer Service "lost" **Donna Mehnert**...to Quality Assurance! She has moved on to be the Quality Assurance Supervisor, where she'll be handing out the Raid and tracking down bugs.

## Ticker



Stock prices at press time (2:45pm)

ERTS	28	-1.25
BROD	36.25	-.75
SIER	14.5	-.5
THDO	27.75	-.75



# Richard's Birthday Bash

July 3-4, 1993

Once again, Richard shared his home with ORIGIN employees, SCA members and friends alike to bring in his 32nd year.

If you like what you see on this page or the next, talk to **Wayne Baker** or **Galen Svanas** about reprints.





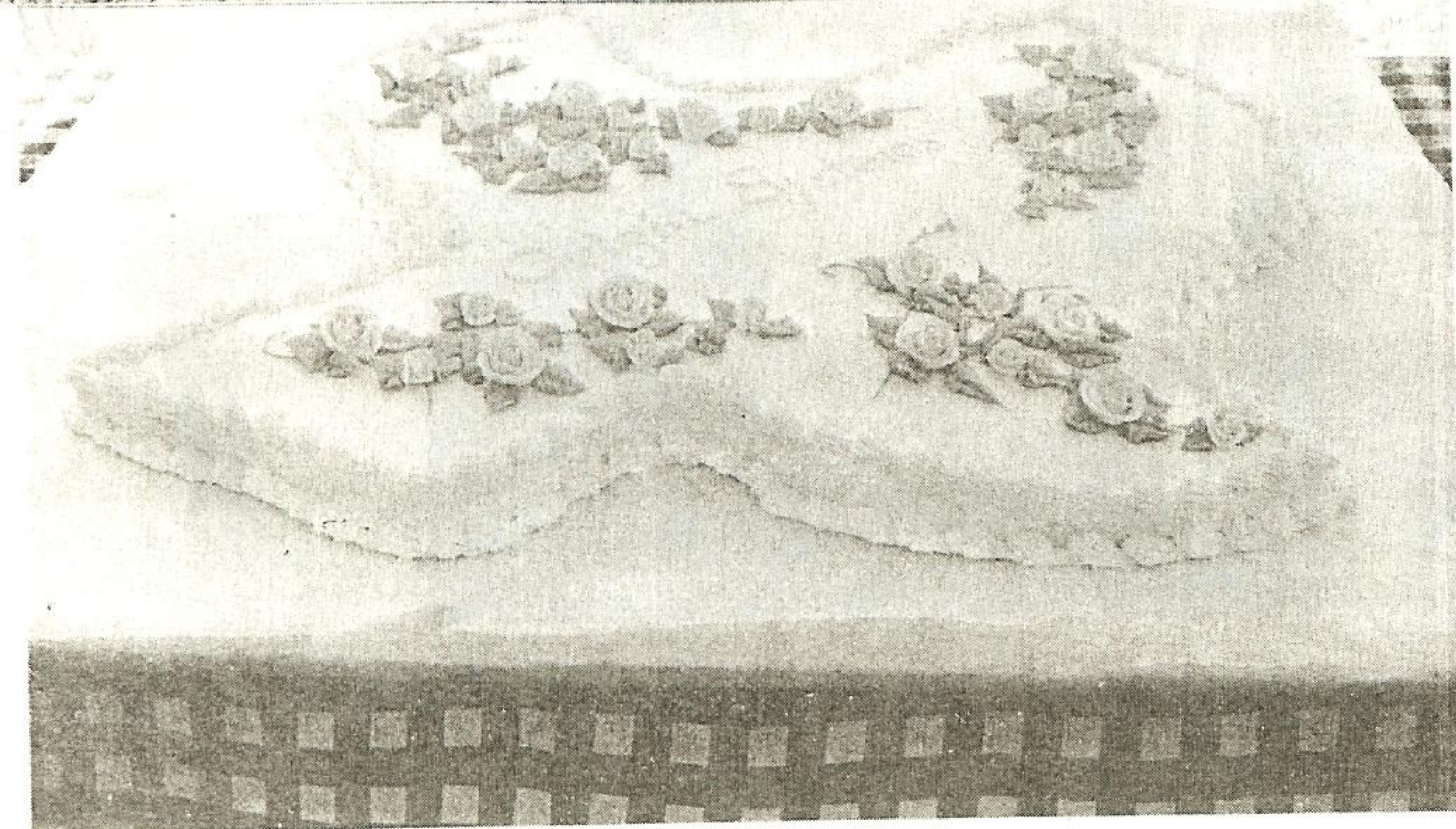


## ORIGIN Company Picnic a Success

If you had fun, like all the people on this page, you certainly know it already. According to **Fred Schmidt**, **Sharon Miller** and others, this year's picnic was terrific, and a special "THANKS" goes out to the Entertainment Committee and everyone who helped out. "Of course everyone knows that this picnic was not the normal sit under the tree in the heat for two hours and leave kind and we really appreciated it," says Sharon Miller. "This was really well planned and fun!"

But, of all the people who said that this past company picnic was the best, the winners of the various prizes and awards should be heard above the rest. Following are the winners, not including the Employee of the Month which is mentioned on page 8:

(...see Picnic, page 6)





# Bringing Things Into Focus

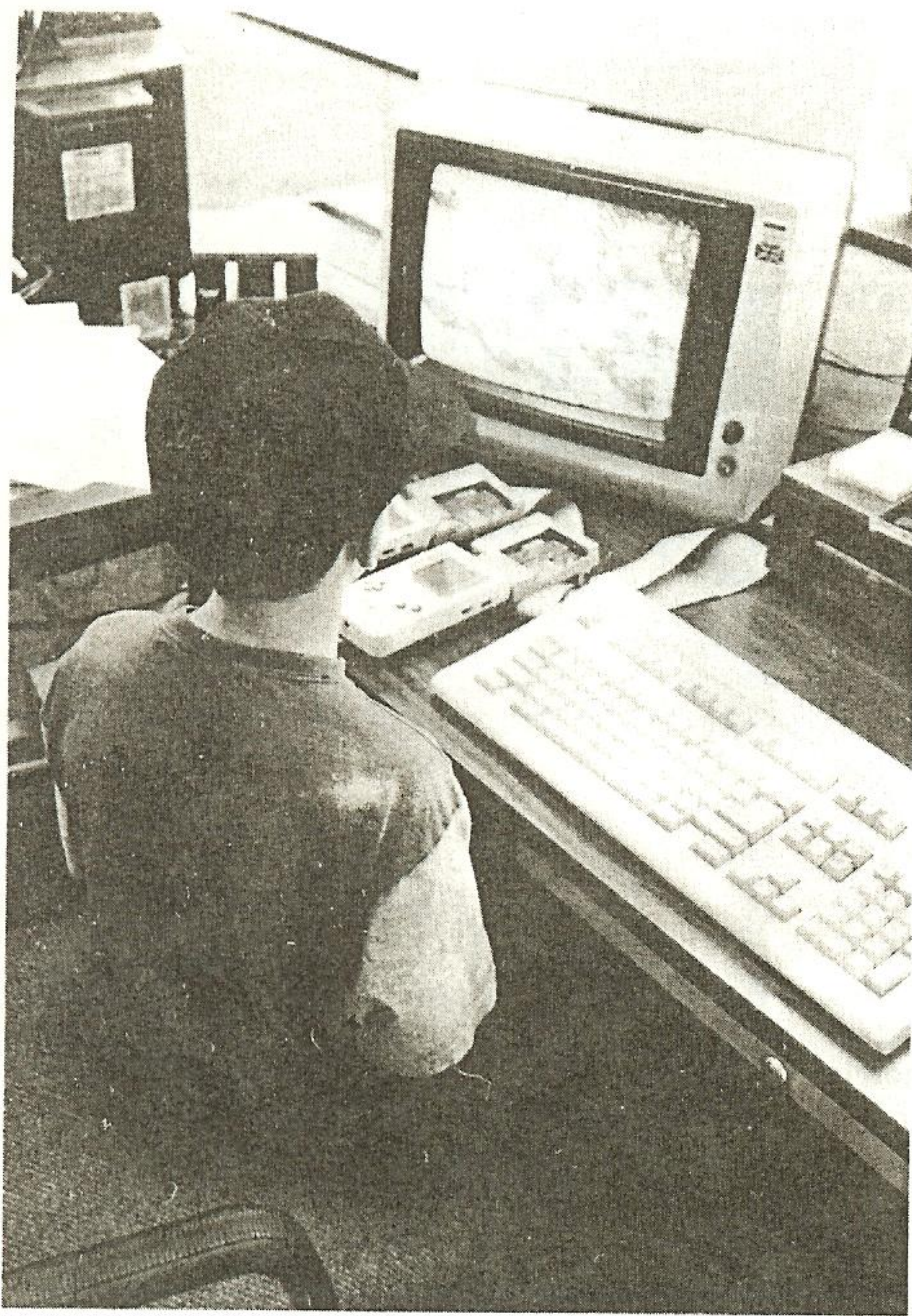
## New Groups Benefit Design, Marketing

In the cross-corporate pollination that takes place in a merger, good ideas become shared ideas. That's how ORIGIN glommed onto the concept of focus groups. Long a fixture at EA, focus groups are finding a home in the hallowed (and tilted) halls here.

Focus groups may be organized by either producers or the Marketing Department. Often, they are no larger than 4-6 people. As the name implies, these groups bring focus to individual projects. But the feedback goes far beyond "Would I buy it or not?" Experienced gamers—whether members of the local PC User Group or the reclusive 12-year-old who never leaves his SNES machine—are offering up tips and suggestions that could greatly increase the playability (and salability) of each new product.

For example, TDA Billy Cain sat in with some kids who took a look at Cyber Morph (the Space Commander game for SNES). Billy believes the groups can be a valuable

(see Focus, page 8...)



Josh Kabler evaluates *Runes of Virtue* during a focus group session

### ...Kudos, from page 1

manufacturers under one roof. Origins is run by the Game Manufacturers Association, GAMA.) Wing Commander II posthumously took the title for Best Fantasy/Science Fiction Game of 1991. (They didn't have the awards last year.) Following in those footsteps, Underworld I snagged the same title for 1992. Belated congrats to everybody involved in both projects. Ain't it a shame when awards slip worse than ship dates?

Moving on to reviews....Serpent Isle has a veritable lovefest in Germany's ASM magazine. The editors call it "ORIGIN at its best" and say: "All RPG-fans with a PC meeting the minimum hardware requirements of this knockout game, should most definitely buy Ultima VII: Part 2. Not only are they in for one of the most innovative programs available, but also one of the most mesmerizing games in this genre." They gush on: "Lord British has gathered the best artists, musicians and programmers around him at his

company stronghold in Austin."

The new Computer Gaming World finally has a review of Strike by Tom Basham. CompuServe regulars will recognize his name as the SYSOP on the Flight Sim forum. In CGW, he comes across as another one of those "sure-it's-great-but-it's-just-not-what-I-expected" types. Instead of pointing out the breakthroughs in technology, he ends up pointing out the shortcomings. He calls SC "an action-packed, disk-space consuming, CPU-demanding cross between an action/role playing game and a flight simulator." He does throw one bone, though, saying, "Rendering of aircraft in flight may be the most detailed I have ever seen." Great, thanks. No wonder his name is "Bash-'em."

Thumbing to the back of the same issue... In the Top 100 Games listing from the latest CGW Reader Poll, it looks like nostalgia time. Underworld (I) checks in at #2, following Links 386 Pro. What's after World Circuit at #4? None other than Wing 2. The rest of the list includes: Underworld II (#16), Serpent Isle

(tied at #19), U7 (#33), and U5 (#65). When you break down the list by categories, ORIGIN has a stranglehold on RPGs, with: Underworld(#1), Underworld 2 (#2), Serpent (#3), and U7 (#6). In the action game category, Wing 2 remains firmly entrenched in the #1 spot. (note: Wing I was moved over to the "Hall of Fame.")

Looking to the future... The August issue of France's Joystick magazine has some nice things to say about our Fall lineup. Shadowcaster: "Thanks to the beauty of its graphics, the speed of its animations and the ambience it creates, Shadowcaster was one of the best games at CES. Once again ORIGIN has a fantastic hit." Wing Academy: "It is possible to play any side, therefore you can be a Kilrathi and waste the Confederation. This option by itself should bring a hell of a lot of joy to those who, on a regular basis, regret to only play the good guys when, deep down, they feel bad & nasty." Privateer: "Another stone suited to make ORIGIN even more monumental."



## ...Picnic, from page 5

Everyone got a special beach towel with a design by **Jake Rodgers**. If you didn't get yours, see the EC, even if you didn't attend.

\$100.00 Winners: **Bart Hosier, John Watson, Aaron Martin, Sean Murphy**.

\$50.00 Sound Warehouse Gift Certificate Winners: **Shelly Hollen, Rob Cunning, Brian Smith, Dennis/Beth Loubet**.

Trophy and Movie Passes for Tug-of-War: **Scott Hazle, Shelly Hollen, Karl Kabler, Josh Kabler** (Karl's son), **Peter Lambdin** (Kathie's son), **Craig Miller, Lee Moore, Scott Russo** (!?!), **Dee Starns, Paul Steed, Kathy Walker, Don Webb, Kirk Winterowd**.

Trophy and Movie Passes for Volleyball: Team-Unstoppable, **Ken Demarest** (Captain), **Jean-Marc Chemla, Michelle Demarest** (Ken's sister), **Carey and Nye Galloway** (**Jim Franklin's** friends), **Gary McElhaney, Kirsten Vaughan, Tony Zurovec**.

Movie Pass for Kids' Gunnysack Races: **Christie Hollis** (Andy's daughter), (Honorable mention: **Nikolaus Gardner** (Alan's son) and **Bart Hosier, Jr.**)

Movie Passes for Adults' Gunnysack Races: **Wayne Baker** for the first race and **Sam Laskowski** for the second. Sam then edged out Christie for the coveted grand champion Spud trophy; "Guess I'll put it in my microwave."

Movie Passes for Balloon Race: **Brett Wiley** (Lori's son).

Movie Passes for Three-Legged Race: **Billy Cain** and **Kristi Gardner** (Alan's wife).

Movie Pass for Balloon Toss: **Paul Steed** and **Robert Barbour**, his brother-in-law.

## ...Security, from page 1

cutting edge technology. We are growing at such a fast rate that it's hard to know or remember who everyone is."

## Take 5

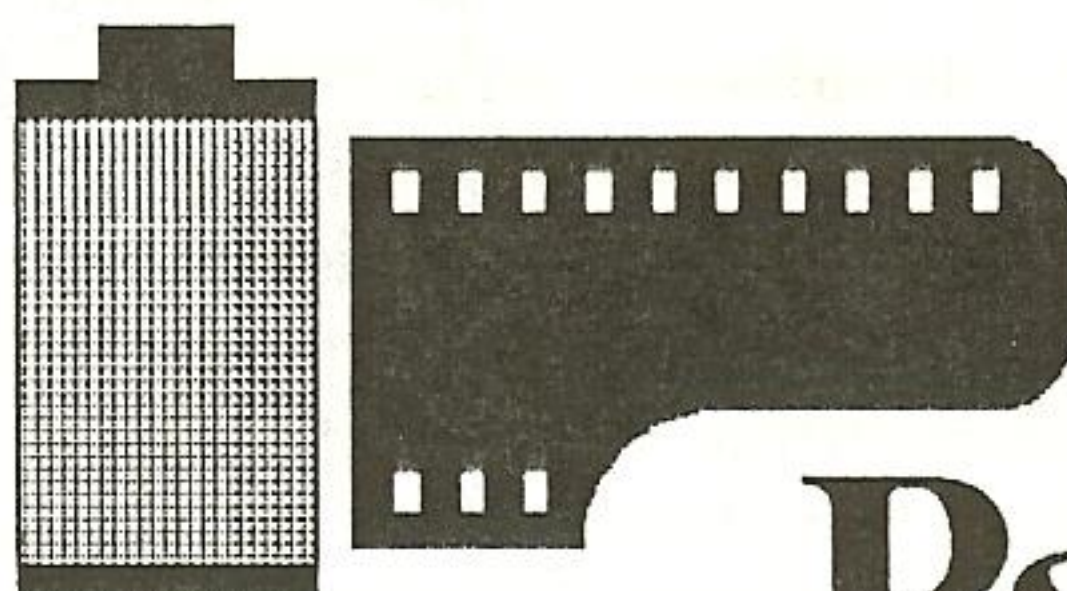
Tell us this could happen to you! The scene is downtown. You and your "tattoo buddies" are hanging out on a street corner. You're doing nothing useful, just hangin' out, when you are approached by a timid-looking movie producer (movie producer – where'd he come from?) who asks you to be the star in his movie. "No way!" you exclaim with disbelief. So he hands you his business card and walks away. You laugh it off and put the card in your pocket. I know, I know, you're thinking that this is beginning to sound like a beer commercial

("in a can but tastes like it came out of a bottle"), but for Richard "Dicko" Mather, a popular ORIGIN artist, this is what really happened.

"So, a few days later," Dicko recalls, "I phoned this guy, Christian Moore, who's an independent film producer from New York University, and he tells me to come down to read for the part of the lead character, Zach." Dicko gets the job, and in a few days is shooting a movie. The movie is called *Shady Grove* and is about a talented Blues guitarist whose girlfriend wants him to move to New York City to become famous. Instead, Zach wants to hang out in local downtown Austin, live in a trailer park and remain where all his friends are.

Dicko worked about a week and a half on this and says that his 12 hour days were real interesting. Although Dicko received no pay at all for this project, Christian is flying him to New York to finish the movie in the fall.

Dicko's movie credits to date include various projects at U.T. that were never released and a movie called *Her Dog Satan* in which he plays "the victim." Although *Shady Grove* may not appear at a theater near you, we'll see what we can do about arranging a private viewing. (Now where did that auditorium go?)



## Party Pics!

Always want to remember that special ORIGIN event? Do it with pictures! Crack photographer Galen Svanas has worked out a deal with a local lab to produce quality keepsake reprints, each with the name and date of the party printed right alongside or underneath. The first two offerings, Richard's Birthday Bash and the ORIGIN Company Picnic, are ready for orders. A 4" x 6" costs just \$2. See Galen for the contact sheets and page 8 of this Point for order forms.





# Dear

# Point Man,

Dear Point Man,  
Why are the flags out front so  
tattered?

Signed,  
Betsy R.

Dear Betsy,  
Our first foray into full-blown  
flag flaunting has been a learning  
experience. Apparently, the 183  
corridor is basically a wind tunnel.  
That's tough on flags to begin with.  
Second, we bought what we thought  
were expensive flags (\$60-\$70 each),  
only to find that the *really* expensive  
flags (almost twice as much) are  
rumored to be much more durable.  
The options right now seem to be  
repair or replacement. Both are being  
considered.

Dear Point Man,  
Any idea when the next profit-  
sharing checks will be in?

Signed,  
Anxious in Austin

Dear Anxious,  
"We hope to have them ready by  
the end of July," says **Mike Grajeda**.  
Remember, though, that the first  
quarter is usually slower than the  
immediate pre/post Xmas period, so  
profit checks will likely be lower than  
the past couple you received for Q3  
and Q4 of FY93. The slowest time of  
the year for entertainment of every  
category (TV, records, games) is now  
upon us — indoor fun temporarily  
replaced by summer outdoor recre-

ation — so plan on probably even  
lighter pockets come the next install-  
ment in October.

Dear Point Man,  
How can I buy a copy of the 2nd  
ORIGIN music CD? Please, please say  
this can be done.

Signed,  
Discless

Dear Discless,  
Yes, it can be done. In fact,  
hopefully by the time you're reading  
this, you'll already have a free copy of  
the CD in your hand, courtesy of the  
fabulous ORIGIN Marketing Depart-  
ment. The gang on the second floor  
has purchased a CD for each and  
every ORIGIN employee on the  
payroll. (Don't forget to thank your  
favorite Marketing rep.) If you missed  
this happy hour, see **Wayne Baker** to  
get yours. Please remember that it's  
only one per customer.

Feeling less than knowledge-  
able about certain topics? Check  
the Education Bulletin Board for  
the latest ORIGIN U class schedule.



## NEWS.TXT

ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO  
STEPS BACK—Microsoft has intro-  
duced Microsoft Arcade, an entertain-  
ment package available in August for  
a list price of \$39.95. Microsoft Arcade  
replicates five of the most popular  
arcade games from Atari: Asteroids,  
Centipede, Battle Zone, Missile  
Command and Tempest. Specially  
designed software using recordings of  
the original arcade machine sounds  
allows multiple noises to be played at  
one time using standard sound  
hardware.

NOW, *THAT'S* MARKETING—  
In an unprecedented move, Computer  
Associates is giving away 1 million  
copies of its Simply Money financial  
management package free of charge.  
The strategy is to immediately have a  
large installed base of users in an  
attempt to unseat Intuit's Quicken  
program, which has a commanding  
control of that market. After the 1  
million free copies of Simply Money  
are distributed, the package will retail  
at a price of \$69.95.

NOW, *THAT'S* MARKETING,  
PART 2—Lightning Computers is  
inviting computerists to send in any  
working '286 or '386 system and  
receive a Pentium-upgradable i486-66  
MHz local-bus SVGA system for  
\$1,395. In a statement from San  
Francisco, Lightning President  
Richard McCabe said, "We'll build  
your dream machine to your specifica-  
tions, at our manufacturing cost, with  
trade-in of any '286 or '386, regardless  
of brand, speed or architecture." The  
unit offered, the Lightning Omniflex  
486/66, comes with 128K of cache,  
expandable to 256K, six ISA, two  
VESA local bus slots, AMI BIOS,  
P24T Pentium ZIF socket, 4MB RAM,  
expandable to 32MB, 170MB hard,  
1.2MB 5.25-inch or 1.44MB 3.5-inch  
floppy disk drive, local bus SuperVGA  
card with 1MB RAM and 14-inch  
monitor with .28 dot pitch.





Galen awards the new Employee of the Month.

## Employee of the Month

### Wayne Baker

Humility keeps the July Employee of the Month, **Wayne Baker**, from writing his own bio. Wayne picked up this month's trophy for his unending efforts to squeeze cool employee bargains out of nearby businesses and his new-found responsibilities with Point of ORIGIN.

Wayne has a long and varied career with ORIGIN, starting as a temp working the 800-number for Consumer Sales. That led to a front-line phone job in Customer Service. "When I was in college, I worked a suicide hot-line number," he remembers, "and I can tell you...there isn't much difference between people who are ready to kill themselves and people who are ready to kill you because their computer don't work."

Now, Wayne's official title is Marketing Coordinator, a position he describes as "diverse, all-encompassing and unpredictable." He helps with advertising schedules, handles on-line marketing communications in places like CompuServe, America Online and GENie, and juggles logistics for trade shows such as CES. Off the clock hobbies include biking, solo camping, writing and water painting.

What does the future hold? Wayne's got that wanderlust. "I'd like to travel and see more of the world. But it's really a matter of getting off my ass and actually doing it." Who knows...maybe there's a hara-kiri hotline in Japan.

### ...Focus, from page 8

part of the development cycle "If you get a real good group, then you do gain a whole lot of insight," Billy says. "They come up with their own wish lists of what they'd like to see in the game, and usually, one out of ten ideas is do-able. The kids in our group thought it would be great to be able to turn off the moving platforms, and we thought, 'Yeah, that would be great.'"

Likewise, a recent group looking at Shadowcaster had a few thoughts. The members noted that too many trees were a pain to negotiate as they tried to fight their way through to the next level. These types of design suggestions can certainly improve word-of-mouth after a game releases, because they de-fuse potential complaints.

On the marketing side, focus

groups can clear up some pre-misconceptions. EA Producer **Victor Penman** expected Shadowcaster's "mega-view" (which allows the play area to expand to 70% of the screen) would be a big hit with gamers. Instead, the focus group preferred to play in normal mode and offered reasons as to why. "Mega-view was going to figure prominently in our advertising," says Marketing Director **Mike Harrison**. "Now, we'll probably emphasize the features the group said it liked more than mega-view, namely the artwork and morphing ability."

Focus groups will figure into each product development cycle. Anybody interested in listening in should check with project producers or **Wayne Baker** in the Marketing Department.

### Party Pic Order Form

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Event name \_\_\_\_\_

Picture #

Quantity (\$2 each)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_