

# P o i n t



## I n s i d e

### LIFE'S A PICNIC

Volume VIII, Number 2, June 13, 1998

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## S p o t l i g h t



# Views from the Floor at E3

By Jeff Grills

*Editor's note: Several people from ORIGIN attended the E3 show in Atlanta this year. We invited Jeff Grills to share with you his perspective of the show. Our thanks to Jeff for taking the time to write this editorial. Keep in mind that this is his opinion and he's entitled to it. However, this may not necessarily reflect the views of the POINT or management. So if you have a beef about it, please bring it up with him!*

**Wow.** Could E3 possibly be more exhausting? The floor is huge, and loud. After a couple days of wandering around the show, your ears are ringing, your voice is fading, your feet are screaming in pain, and you're getting shin splints. But still, somehow, you manage to have a good time.



The EA Booth

I was amazed at the sheer number of unoriginal games that were being shown. Most games were *Quake* clones, *Tomb Raider* clones, or

real-time strategy games. While there were definitely some good ideas in these games, they were simply small twists on a theme.

I was also surprised by much space was devoted to console games. Living under ORIGIN's roof, I guess I expected that PC games were king of the hill. Hardly! PlayStation is starting to really show its age. Nintendo 64 is holding out a little better, but probably not for long. PC games definitely look a cut above all the console games. However, that too may be changing soon. *Dreamcast*, the new Sega console machine, looks like it may compete with PCs, in terms of main processing and graphics power.

The graphics quality of games has improved considerably. Almost no one was showing a game running on software rasterizers; most games were being shown on 3Dfx Voodoo2 cards, and many of



# Spotlight

FROM 1

those were using two Voodoo2 cards running in parallel. We are going to have to work hard to catch up to some of the games being shown there, like

*Unreal*, and a video of *Prey*.

*Diablo 2*, I think, was one of the hits of the show. It looks fabulous, even though (or maybe because) it uses a 2D graphics engine. The gameplay is very similar to *Diablo*, but they've made dramatic improvements in the inventory and the

skill system. After it's released, I expect to play it for at least a week straight.

*Starship Troopers* is a stunning game. The developers took the creatures from the movie and integrated more of the Marine equipment from the book. The graphics quality was fairly average for modern 3D accelerated engines. The sheer number of aliens that were on the screen, swarming towards the player, is what made the game really impressive. At one point there were around 200 aliens around the player, crawling over each other trying to kill the player. This is another game I'll be spending a lot of time with after it's released.

*Oblivion* is a massively multiplayer space combat game being built by Microsoft R&D. This game is certainly going to be competition for *Privateer Online*. They claimed that they would ship this Christmas. The graphics engine was pretty good, but their HUD could use some

work. We can certainly do a better game than this, but they are going to be on the market first.



Duke and his showgirl wait for the camera.



A lifelike mannequin of Lara threatens the crowd watching the Tomb Raider 3 Demo.

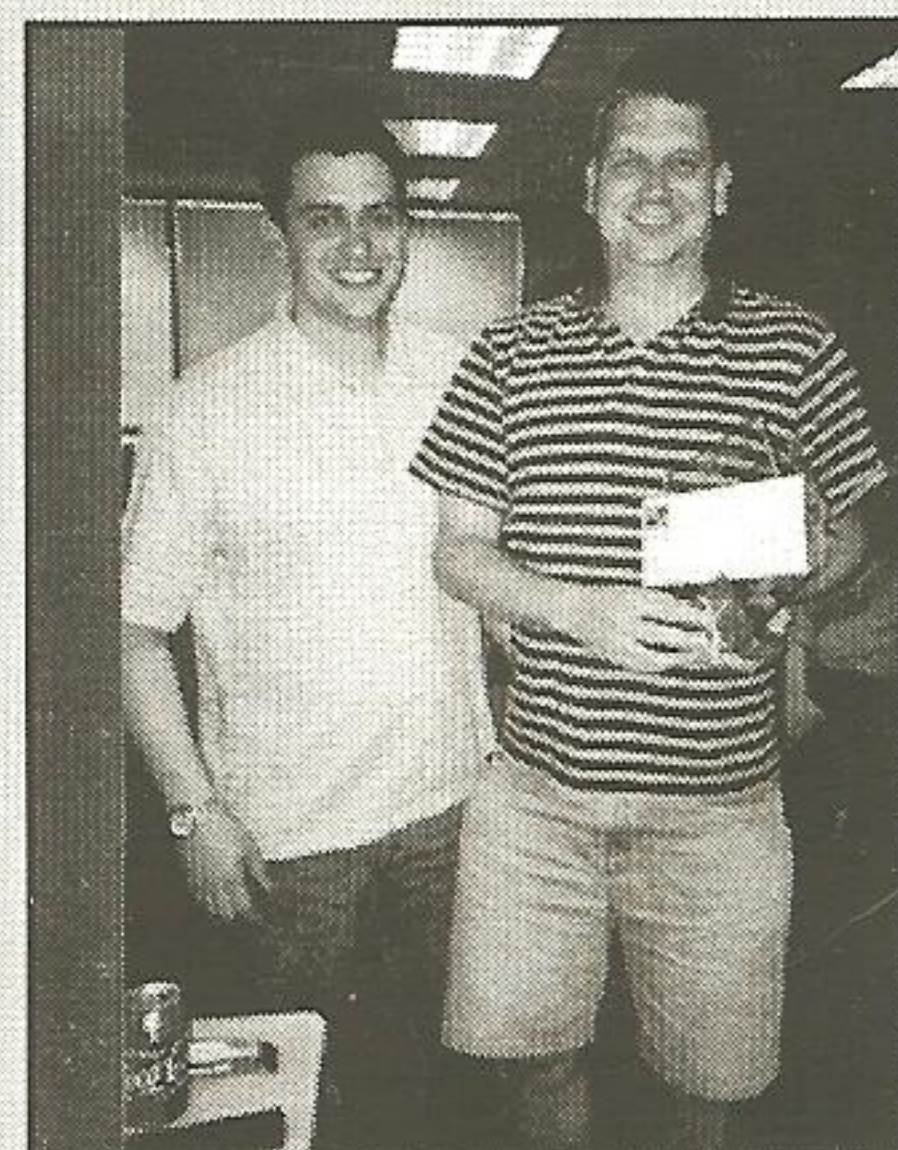
*Half-life* is a novel *Quake*-style game. One of its interesting twists is a very high level of interaction between the player and other characters. In some scenes, there was an AI controlled 'wingman' for the player, much like we were hoping to do quite some time ago for a space marine game based in the *Wing Commander* universe.

All in all, the show was very exciting, but also very exhausting. Some of the games at E3 indicate to me that ORIGIN has some catching up to do, but with some dedication and hard work, I believe we can once again become the technology leader in this industry.



Mario in a fountain -- part of the 2-football field size Nintendo booth.

At a recent company meeting, Neil presented Steven Muchow (pictured) an award for ten years in service to Origin. Some five year veterans were honored as well, including Starr Long, Dennis Byers, Brian Wachhaus and Todd Wacchaus. Congratulations to you veterans!



The Point of ORIGIN is published whenever we get around to it, usually coinciding with the Company Happy Hour. **Deadline for Submissions is the Friday before publication. Contact the editor for more details.**

Managing Editor: Teresa Potts. Editor-in-Chief: David Swofford. Copy Editor: Kristen McEntire. Staff Writer, Photographer and Clip Art Queen: Teresa Potts. Contributing Writer: Kristen McEntire, Jeff Grills. Contributing Photographers: Robin McShaffry, Tyson Culver, Anthony Sommers. Layout and Production: Robin McShaffry. Robin sez: I'll miss you people. It's been fun.





## School's Out . . .

The final grading period is up, the report cards have all arrived and it appears that Jane's, once again, is stepping up to the front of the class. *F-15* reviews are pouring in from all the top magazines and with the exception of one (we'll get into that a bit later), the scores are blowing 'em all away.

*PC Gamer* scored the jet sim with a 93% and awarded the game with an Editor's Choice label. "It is probably the most complex piece of gaming software I have ever evaluated, and its achievement is a near-perfect distillation of all that has been learned in hard-core flight simulation design to date." Those words are from Tom McDonald who also said that *F-15* has almost everything you could want in a flight sim.

Meanwhile, *Computer Gaming World* gave *F-15* a CGW Editor's Choice honor and turned in a final report card of 4 1/2 out of 5 stars. "This Strike Eagle sim hits the bull's-eye for beginners and experts alike," exclaimed Robin Kim. "You may judge it to be one of the best air combat sims ever made."

Another award came from *PC Games*. *F-15* received an A (placing it on the PC Games A List Honor Roll). Reviewer Andy Mahood wrote, "*F-15* pushes the boundaries of flight-sim sophistication all the way to Baghdad and back. It delivers the finest flight model I've ever seen in a combat sim."

The recently-launched *Voodoo*, 3Dfx's official rag, also awarded *F-15* an Editor's Choice (can't these guys come up with some different award names???) and rated the game a 9 out of 10. "*F-15* boasts some of the most impressive visuals I've ever seen. But beneath those flashy graphics lies a significant simulation engine."

Another new magazine, *Debrief*, which focuses on sims and strategy games, had words of praise for *F-15* in the magazine's premier issue. Editor-In-Chief Tom Basham wrote, "Andy Hollis and his crew have created another great product that's sure to deliver many hours of gaming entertainment!"

The only doubter in the crowd is *Computer Games Strategy Plus* magazine. James Hunt scored *F-15* at 3 1/2 out of 5 stars. "It currently feels a bit too much like a beta test for *F-15 Gold*." Seems James got some of his facts wrong in the story, though. He apparently lowered his score on the game after writing that the *F-15* in the game had subpar performance on vertical

climbs, according to "a real F-15C pilot." Sorry, James, this is an F-15E simulation. The performance is supposed to be different from an F-15C. Go figure. ORIGIN PR has made the magazine aware of the error.

It's been two weeks since E3 in Atlanta, and it looks like the early press coverage on the show is looking pretty positive for ORIGIN. *Ultima: Ascension* seemed to wow writers and retailers alike with its 3-D engine. "Hoping to evolve the Ultima franchise past the boundaries of role-playing games, *Ultima: Ascension* is poised to push action oriented role-playing to the extreme through 3D gameplay," said Walt Moorbeck with *GameSpot*.

George Jones with *C|net Gamecenter* wrote, "Oh, my—does *Ultima IX: Ascension* look sweet. The grand finale to the Ultima saga (at least with regard to the Avatar), *Ultima Ascension* blends third-person real-time motion with the kind of intricate, plot-filled story that Ultima fans crave."

There were statements from a few people at the show that changes in *Ascension* (from previous Ultimas) would run off some of the hard core Ultima players. Some in the press picked up on those issues, but many walked away with positive impressions, like *OGR.com*. "Hard-core Ultima fans may be disappointed by the "change of pace," ORIGIN is taking in an attempt to reach a broader audience, but the storytelling aspect of the game and the richness of the game world that we have come to expect are all top-notch. Despite the change, they (ORIGIN) should have a winner on their hands."

The other good news was that *UA* is on many lists for Best of Show at E3. The *All Games Network* (an online radio program) voted *Ascension* as Best Role Playing game. That announcement may be official (via press release from All Games) by the time you read this. *Unified Gamers Online* and *GamePen* have also nominated *UA* for Best RPG at the show.

*GamePen* also nominated *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri* for Best Turn Based Strategy game at the show. Final results from *GamePen's* E3 awards will be posted on that site on June 22nd. Check it out at <http://www.e3.net/> Good luck to the nominees.



# You're just a buncha troublemakers.



**Will Kier and David Russ**

We decided to let these pics from the recent building-wide happy hour speak for themselves. ●



**Greg Barwis, Rhea Shelley and Kent Raffray**



**Joe Rabbit, Ala Diaz, Jim Prescott and Eric Willmar**



**Chris Graf**



**John Guentzel and Cinco Barnes**



**Damion Schubert, Seth Mendlesohn and Matt Orlich**



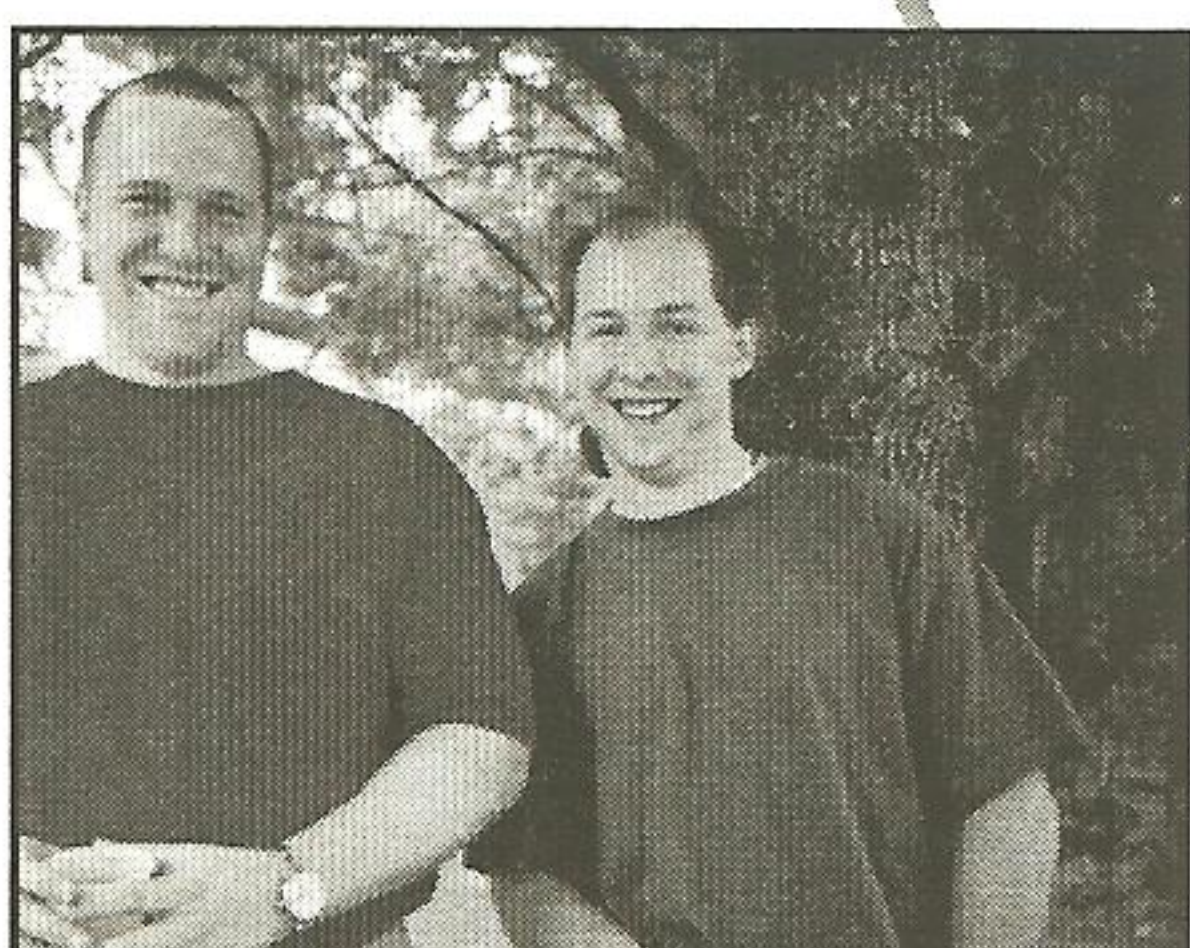
**Shane Whalley and Patricia Bouressa**



**Barton Bowers, Stacy Patterson and Mike Farone**



**Bob Frye, Pagon Short and Ed Del Castillo**



**Separated at Birth? Jeff Anderson and Richard Zinser**



**Stretch Williams and his Band**



# JANE'S PR ON ASSIGNMENT

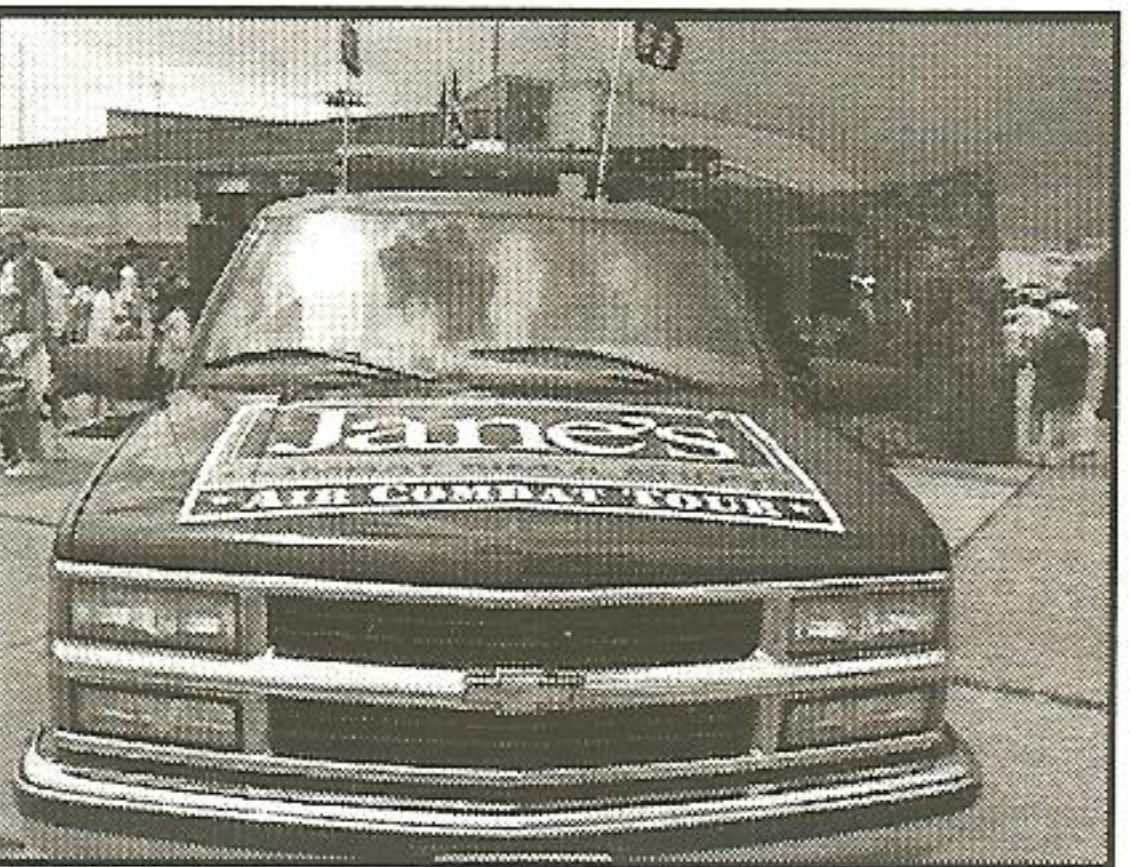
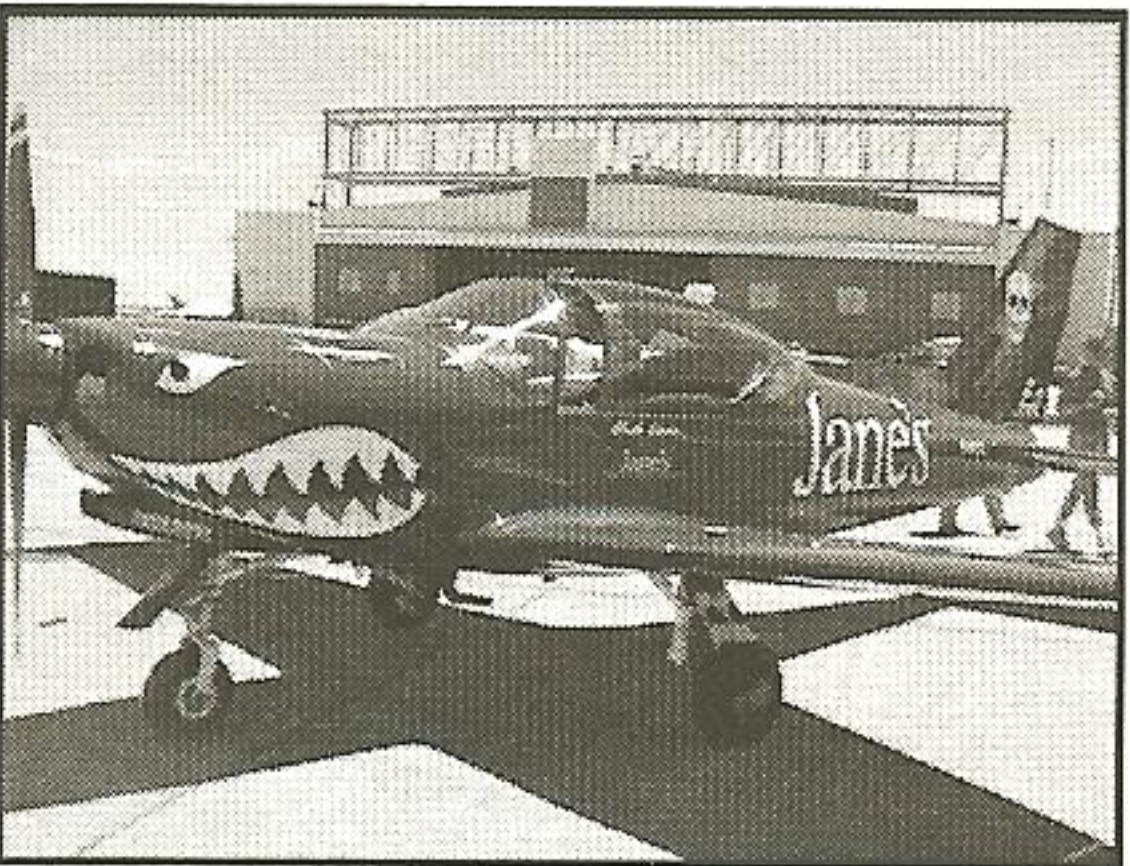
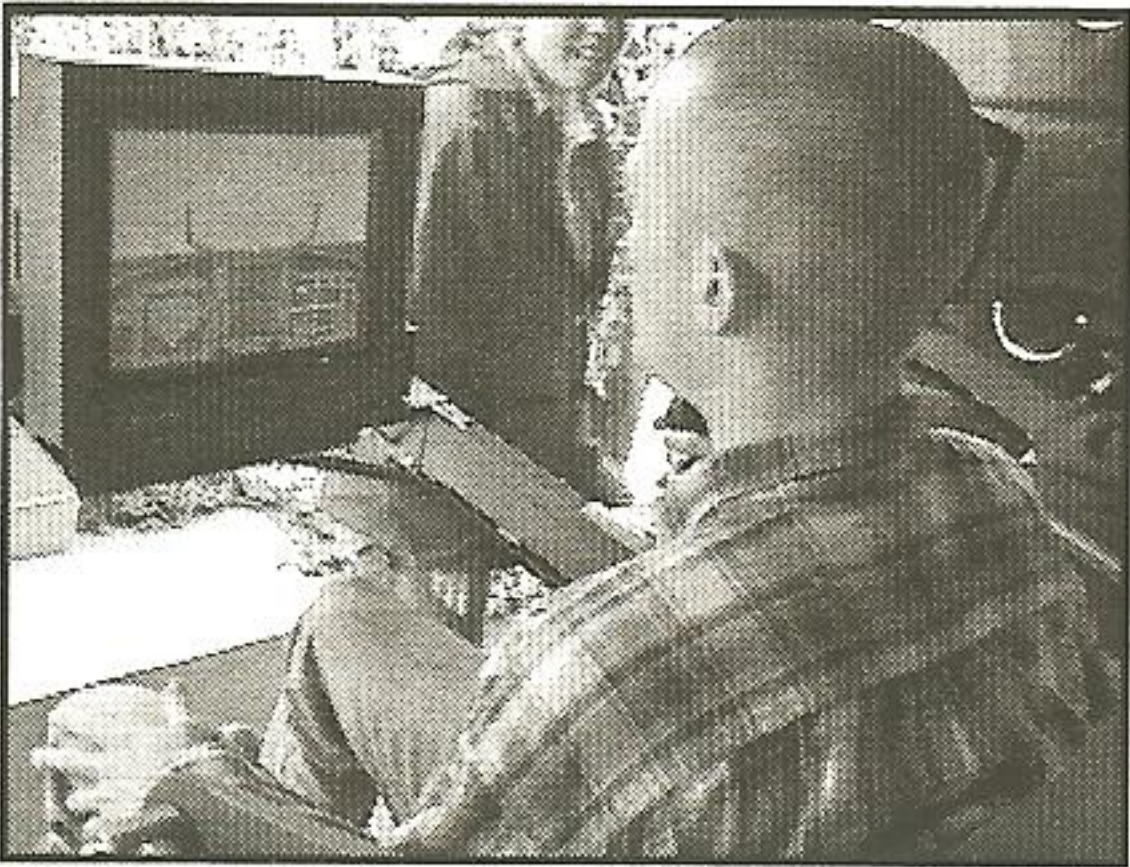
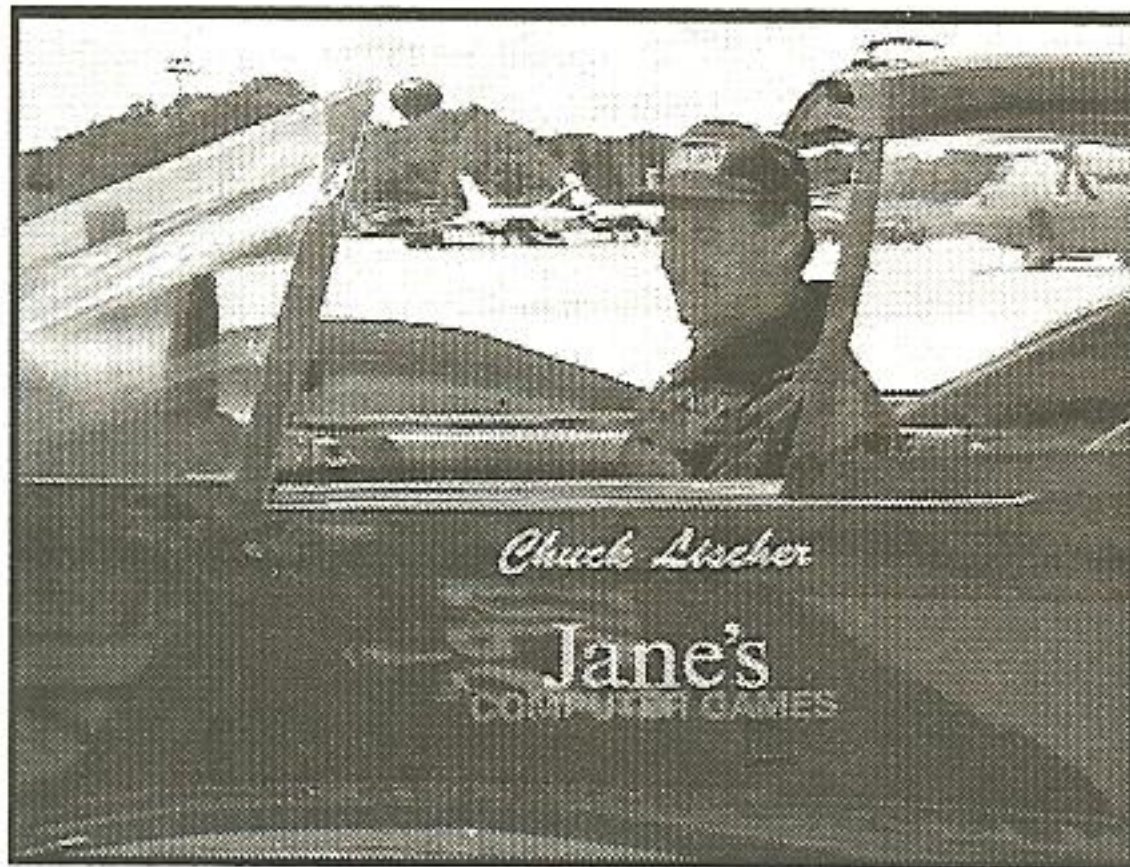
## ORIGIN Spearheads Jane's Combat Simulations PR Efforts

*Editor's note: As a result of EA's marketing restructuring, ORIGIN PR is now responsible for PR on the entire Jane's brand - not just the Jane's products originating in Austin and Baltimore. The transition started at the close of E3. I plan to transfer to San Mateo later this summer to work on Jane's and will continue to report to David Swofford. No offense, Austin! It's been a blast! - Kristen McEntire*

One of the coolest parts of the PR and marketing program for Jane's is the Jane's Air Combat Tour. The tour visits 25 cities across the US between April and October and features the Jane's F-260, a souped-up aerobatic plane. The plane performs an intricate airshow act including rolls, loops and hammerhead stalls. The pilot, **Chuck Lischer** has more than 25 years of airshow experience and has earned many airshow performer awards. He has logged more than 8,000 hours in 70 aircraft and has completed more than 800 performances in his career. Last year more than 4 million people attended the airshows.

Last weekend, **Tyson Culver** and I flew to Providence, Rhode Island to attend the Rhode Island National Guard Airshow '98 on a fact-finding mission. My first airshow did turn out to be quite an education. In addition to the Jane's plane, the show featured a wing walker, a stealth fighter and Shockwave, a semi truck with huge flame-throwing jet engines that tears down the runway at 376 mph. We also schmoozed our way into a priceless photo-op on the cockpit of an Air Force Thunderbirds' F-16.

We were invited to fly with Chuck to experience a typical media flight. If you're up to it, he takes media through the entire airshow routine. In the days before our trip, the ORIGINites who have flown with



Chuck didn't hesitate to share with me touching stories of parachutes and vomit. While I was anxiously anticipating my first flight in the Jane's plane, my pilot was less convinced. Strong winds had caused him to repeatedly bang his helmet on the canopy in an earlier flight that day. He explained that he'd never get me to go again if I flew in those conditions, so we postponed my little adventure in terror for another trip. Not to worry. I'm going to hold him to it!

Airshows provide a fun atmosphere for families to get out, check out the airplanes, eat like pigs and see insane people stand unrestrained on the wings of biplanes. Thanks to Jane's, they can also experience Jane's F-15 for free in the custom Jane's Airshow Trailer. The trailer features Jane's signage, two stand-alone PCs and four PCs equipped with Rock-n-Ride simulation chairs. The chairs were a huge hit. Airshow visitors waited in line to play Jane's F-15 head-to-head while the chairs dipped and dived to the choreography of Thrustmaster sticks. In the future, the trailer will host pilot autograph sessions and product giveaways and will enable online ordering of EA products from the website.

All in all, the airshow tour is a creative way to reach out to potential customers with a fascination for flight. It's a grassroots effort to extend PR and marketing for Jane's and reach millions who probably don't read gaming magazines. As EA explores the possibilities for expanding the Jane's brand, consumer outreach is key to the success of the products in the pipeline. We will continue to maximize the results of this sponsorship and are open to suggestions and ideas to increase the impact of the project.

| 1998 Jane's F-260 Airshow and Trailer Tour |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| Date                                       | City, State       |
| June 13-14                                 | Batavia NY        |
| June 20-21                                 | Oklahoma City, OK |
| June 27-28                                 | Willow Grove, PA  |
| July 3-5                                   | Battle Creek, MI  |
| July 11-12                                 | Wilkes-Barre, PA  |
| July 25-26                                 | Pasco, WA         |
| Aug 1-2                                    | Santa Barbara, CA |
| Aug 8-9                                    | Medford, OR       |
| Aug 15-16                                  | San Diego, CA     |
| Aug 29-30                                  | Omaha, NE         |
| Sept 12-13                                 | Syracuse, NY      |
| Sept 19-20                                 | Norfolk, VA       |
| Oct 11-12                                  | San Francisco, CA |
| Oct 17-18                                  | Muskogee, OK      |
| Oct 24-25                                  | Jacksonville, Fla |



# The EC Wants You!



Your favorite Easter Bunny and ours, Jennifer Davis hides eggs for the EC Easter Egg hunt this spring.

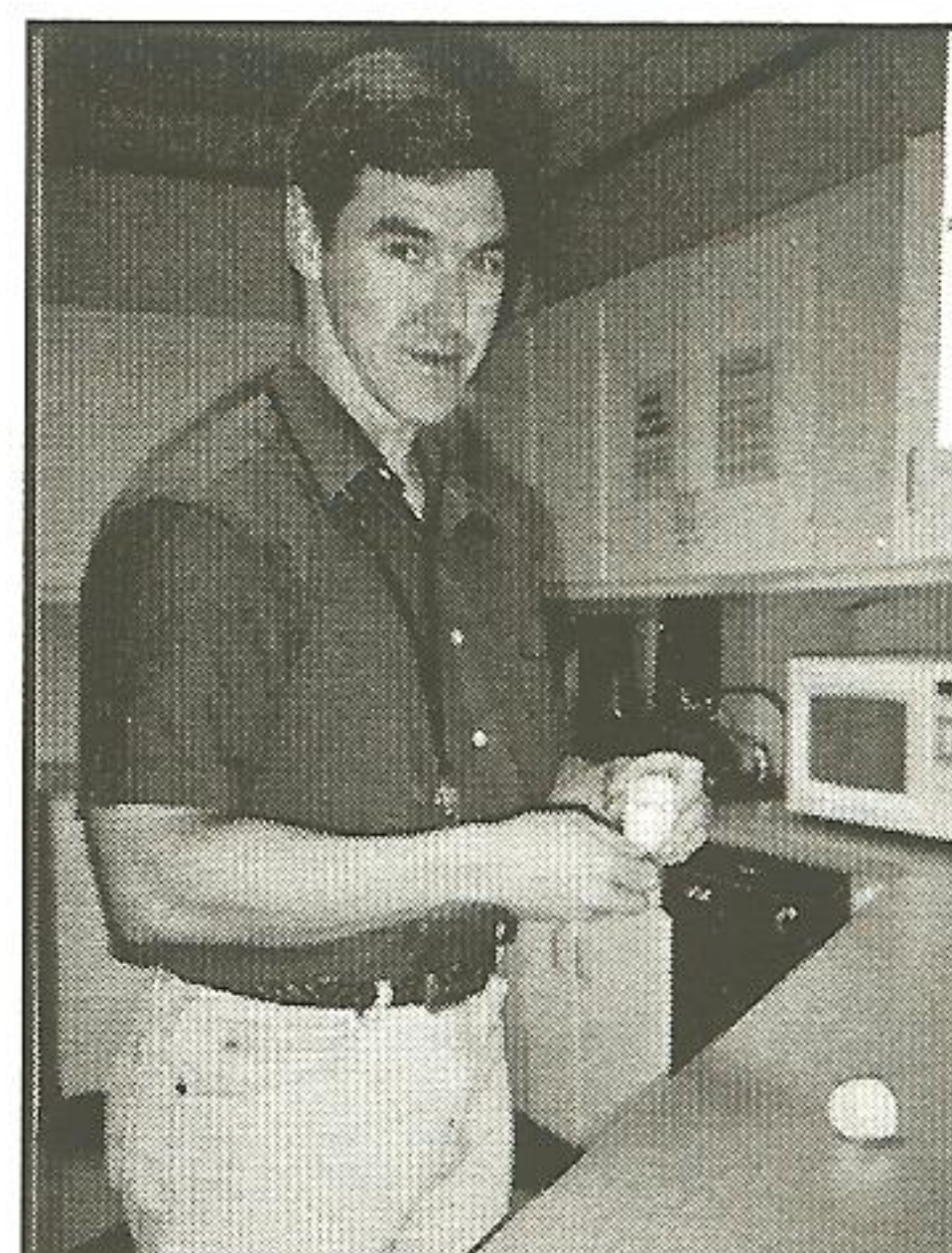
Contrary to popular belief, the candy-stuffed eggs hidden around the building in the spring are NOT from a mythical bunny (unless you count **Richard Garriott** in a fuzzy bunny suit). Instead, they are the results of the ORIGIN Entertainment Committee (EC). The EC is made up of a group of dedicated fellow-workers who revel in organizing fun things to do for the rest of us to enjoy. In the past several years, EC has been responsible for a variety of events ranging from cookouts to Play-Doh competitions.

As you can imagine, it's an engaging process to decide on venues, themes, menus, music and logistics for these events. In fact, several months of strategic planning, budgeting and organizing go into the EC's two biggest annual events, the Holiday Party and the Summer Picnic. But it's not all fun and games, the EC also orchestrates good-will in the community by sponsoring blood drives and the 'adopt-a-family' during the holidays.

Serving on the EC is a unique opportunity to provide input and get involved within the company. Besides that, it's a fun way to meet your fellow ORIGIN-ites. The EC meets generally once a month, depending on what things are in the works, and membership is open to all regular full-time employees. The EC is always looking for new volunteers, especially folks in PD, CS and QA. If you would like to find out about the next meeting, or would like more

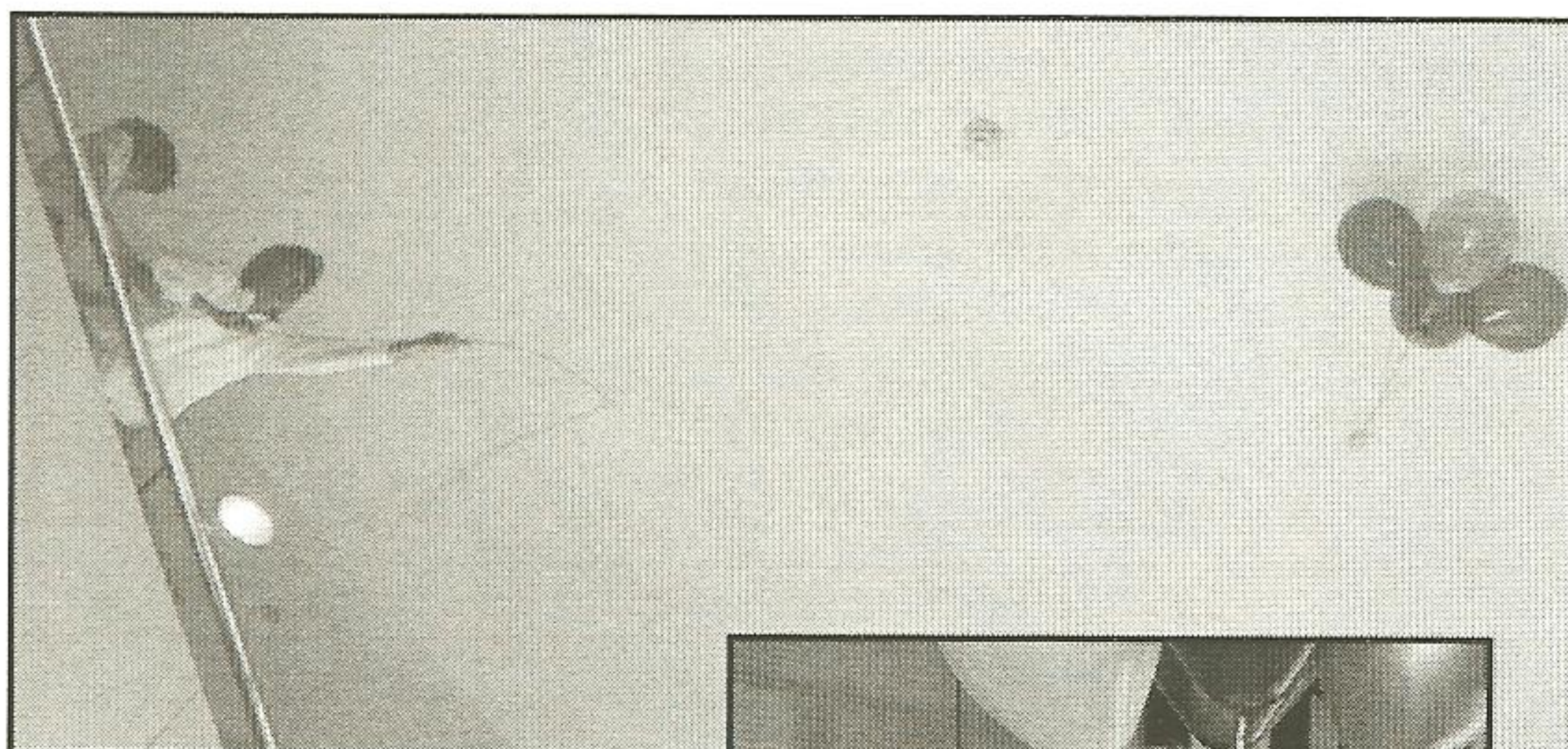
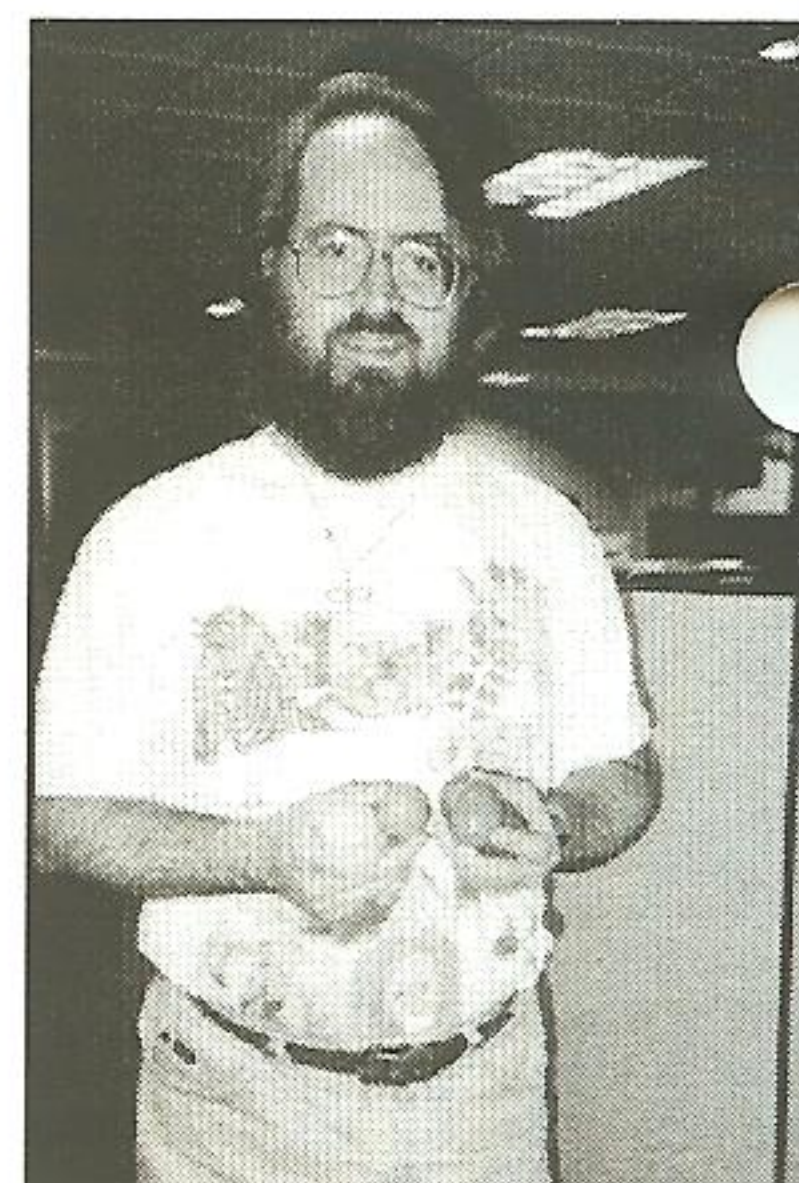
information, please contact **Angela Lyons** at x789.

Coming up: the 2nd Annual ORIGIN Grand Prix. Be on the lookout for more details from your friends in the EC. ●



Bryan Walker harvests the candy out of his Easter Eggs.

10-year veteran Herman Miller is an old pro at gathering eggs



Coat hangers at the ready, Kay Gilmore is determined to get that Easter Egg hanging from balloons there in the lobby.



Success! What did you win?



HAVE A GOOD  
TIME AT THE  
PICNIC!

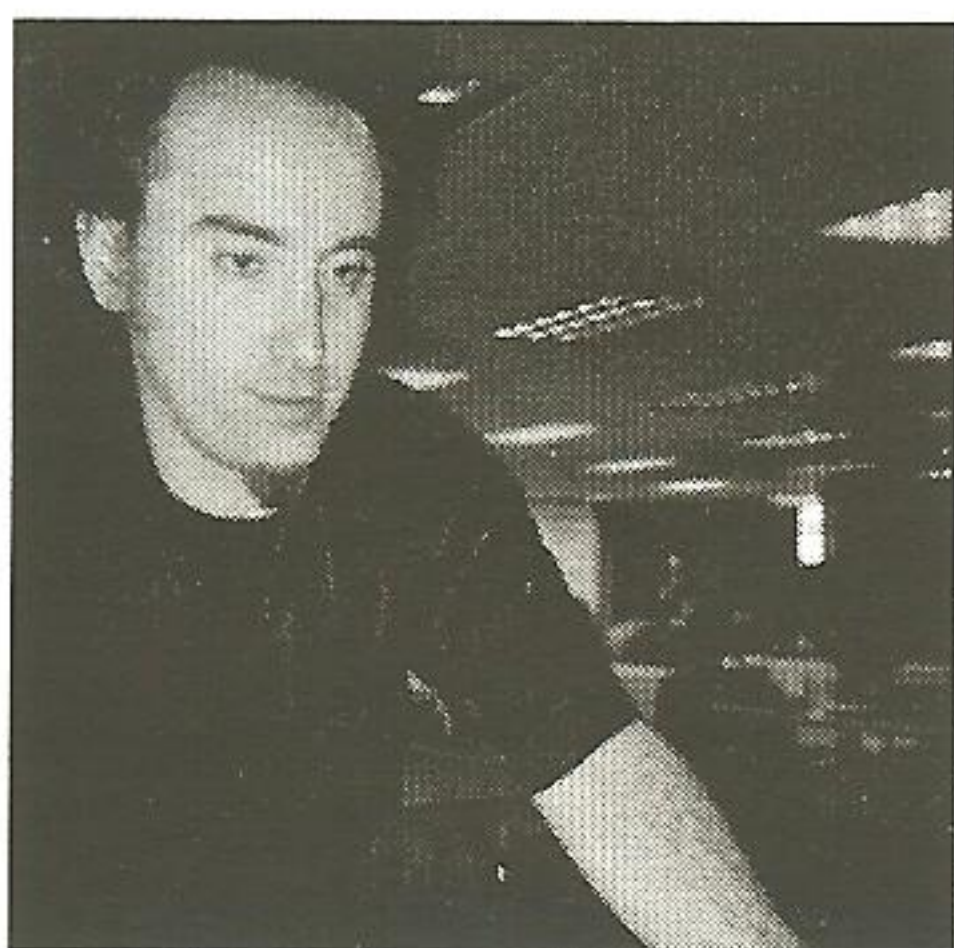


## EAT YUMMY CHOW, PLAY THE FREE GAMES, GET BACK TO WORK!

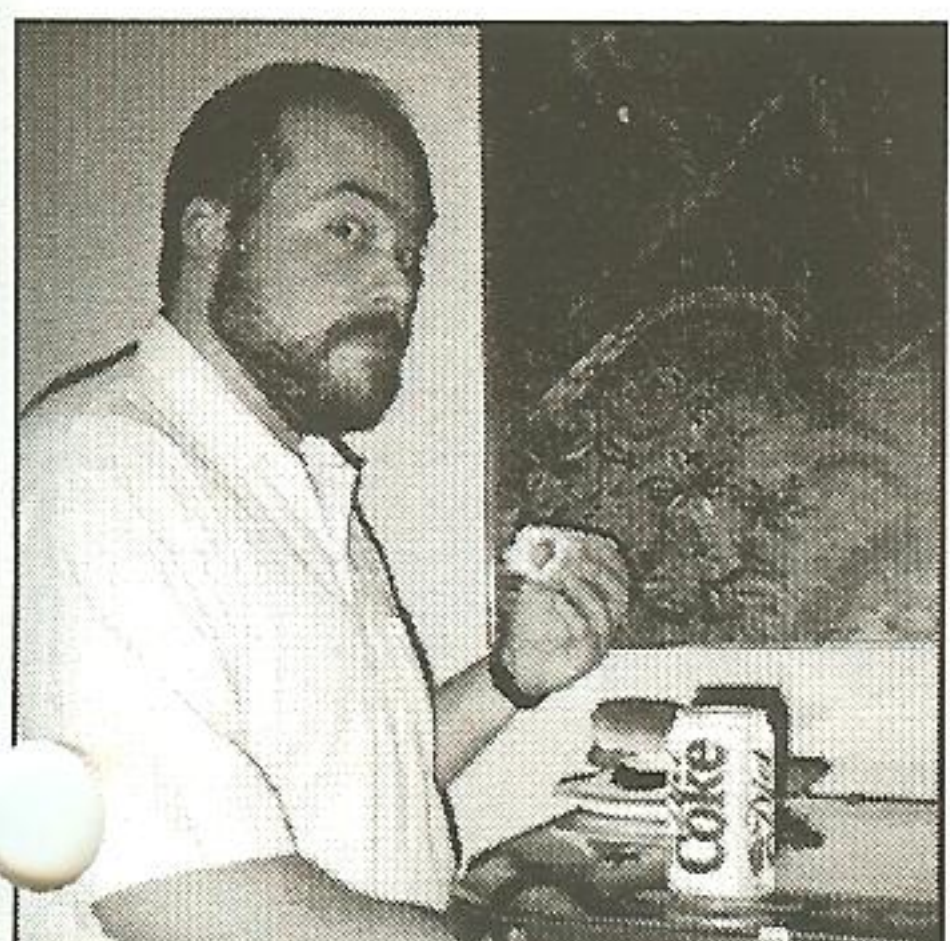
Recently, ORIGIN had a cookout lunch and here are some of the people who partook! ●



Mike Francis and Paul Stankiewicz



Scott Wetterschneider wills the pinball to obey



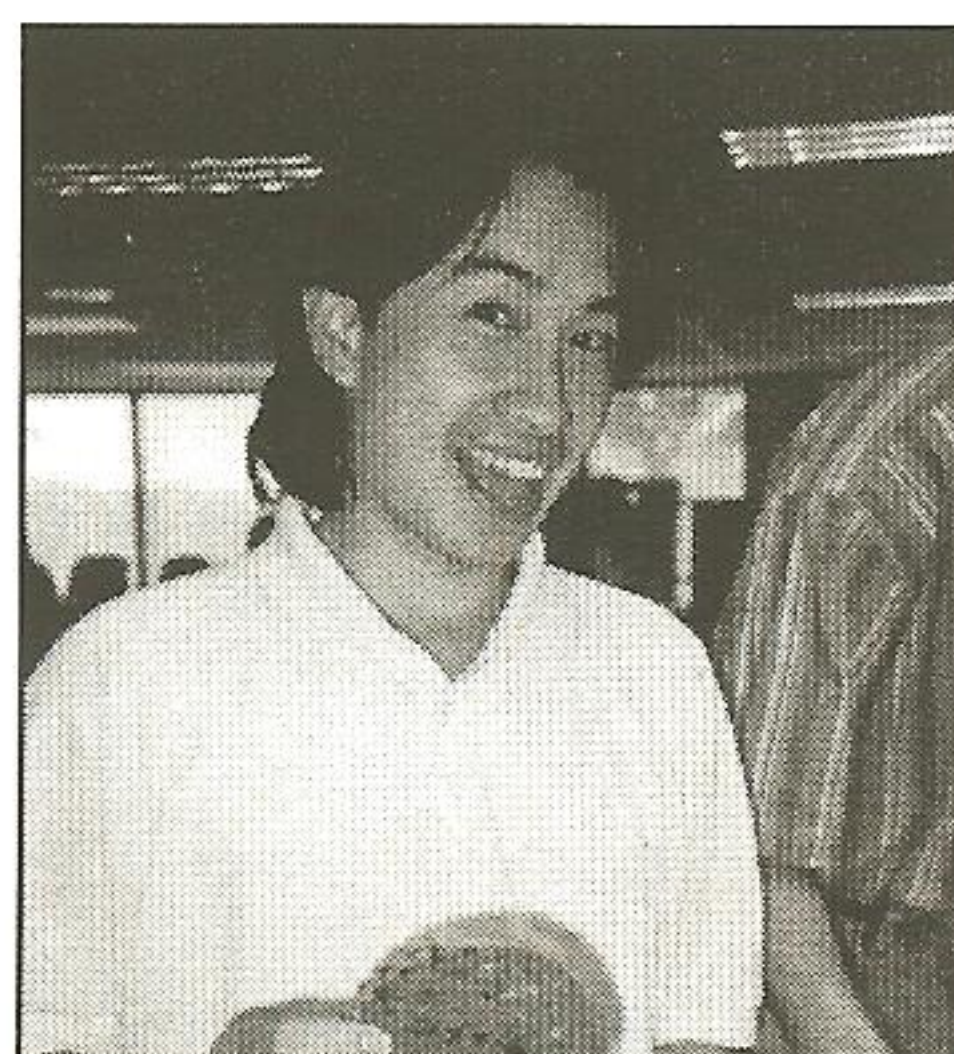
Brian Martin and Ms. Pac Man chow down



Cari Oberstar and Jeff Grills



Mark Rizzo makes a gooooooal!



Art Wong and his cookie



Scott Jones and Calan Thurow

## Product Support Hijinx

Being a Game Master for *Ultima Online* is often a thankless job. Sometimes though, it can be rather humorous. Here is a sampling of some of the pages players have sent to the GM queue in search of help:

- ⚓ This guy still killed me even though I asked him nicely to stop.
- 🐎 I'm stuck in a river, I cannot move, and well....it's bad.
- 🐎 I swear I'm being attacked by an invisible ghoul with a bow!!!
- ⚓ My pick disappeared. Also, less important, I never smelt right.
- ⚓ I was kicked out and rebooted and this is NOT my hairstyle!
- 🐎 Somebody changed our guild name to "We blow goats for a living."
- 🐎 I'm stuck--the chicken wasn't worth it.
- ⚓ Please send monsters into the Trinsic swamp to kill me, thanks.
- ⚓ My wife and I are going through a divorce and she deleted a character I spent months on.
- 🐎 Please.... what do I do with a brain? ●



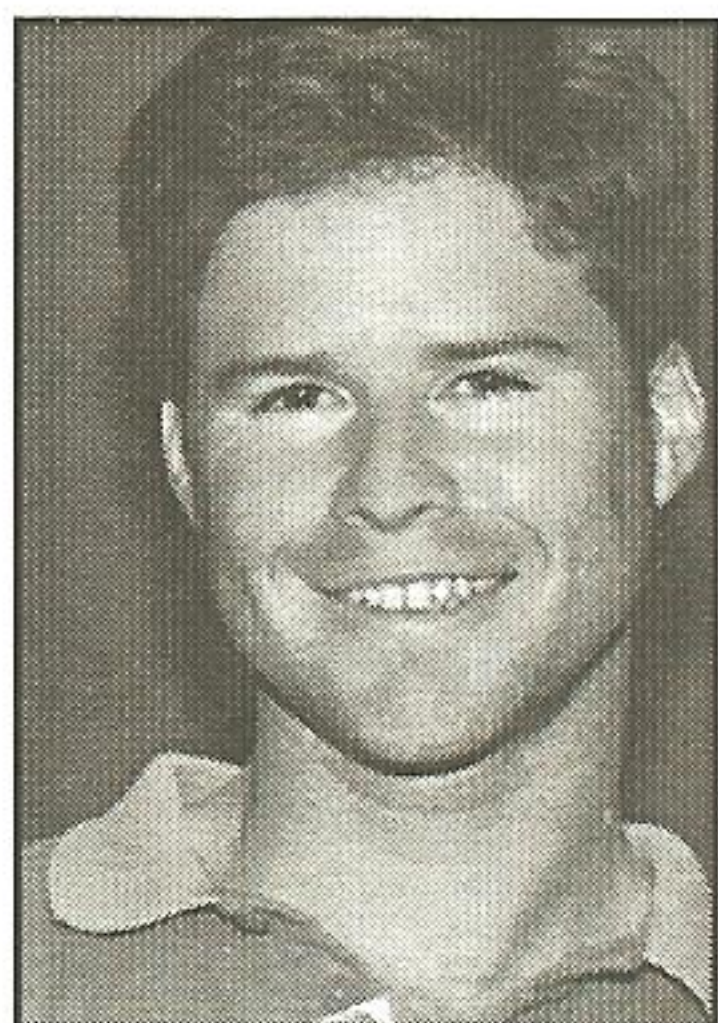
At the Mardi Gras happy hour in February, the Skunkworks folks gave Will McBurnett this sculpture, which many believe he posed for.





# Who's the New Guy??

**Chris McKibbin** officially joined the ORIGIN management team in June as the Chief Operating Officer. Originally from New York, Chris holds an M.B.A from Columbia University and a BA from Princeton. But don't assume from his impressive list of degrees that he's a paper-pushing kind of guy - he's not. With an extensive background in finance and hands-on production, Chris brings to ORIGIN a unique and diverse set of talents.



**Chris McKibbin**

Chris began his career in the multimedia division of IBM, in part acting as a liaison with outside businesses, including a LA based special effects company, Digital Domain. Chris later joined Digital Domain as an original member of the senior management team. As the chief financial officer and vice president of new media, Chris wore many hats while the company worked its magic on more than 30 high-end commercials and such movies as *True Lies*, *Interview With a Vampire*, *Apollo 13* and *Titanic*.

In 1995, Chris joined the EA family, moved to Vancouver and served as the chief financial officer and director of digital production of EA Canada. Gradually growing from a staff of 100 people to more than 550, Chris was plugged into all areas of the company including motion capture libraries, 3D tools group, advanced animation group, post production, audio studio, PC and UNIX networking as well as finance and business affairs. He even helped design the new facility they are currently building.

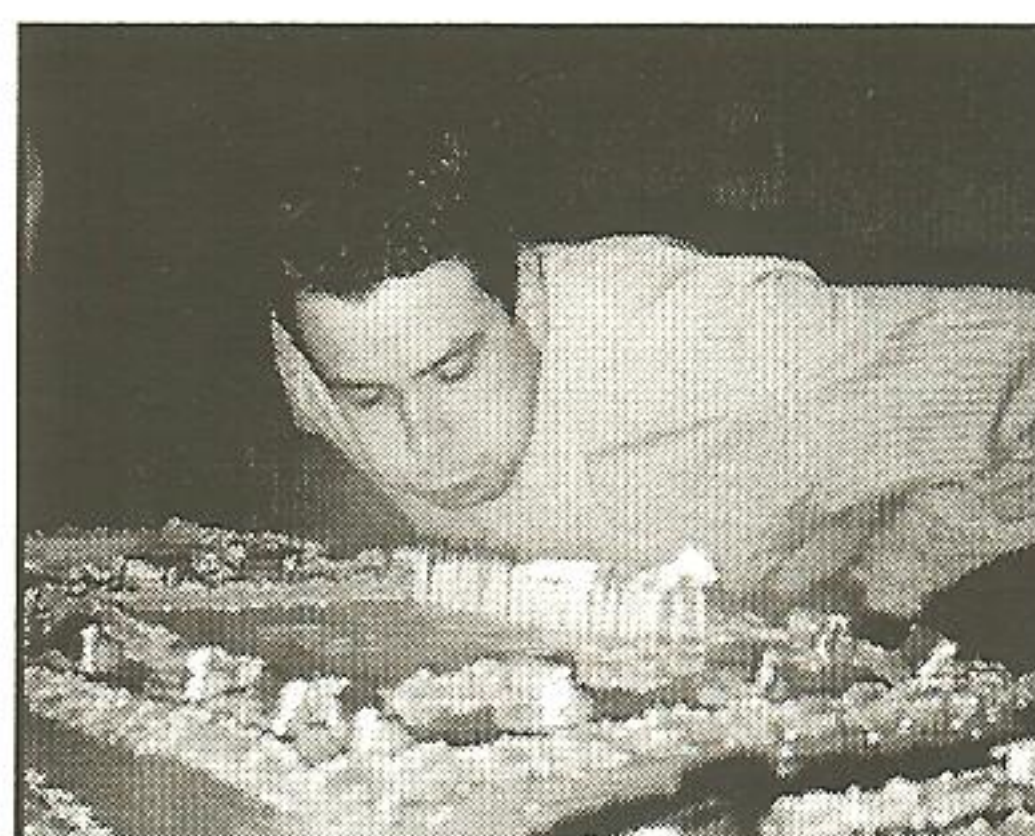
While he enjoyed the challenges of EAC, it is the creativity of the ORIGIN brand that eventually lured him to Texas. Chris respects ORIGIN's proven track record in the PC market, as well as the defining role it has played in the technology field. "Clearly, ORIGIN is the leader in the online market," said Chris, "and it's an exciting place to be."

Congratulations and welcome to ORIGIN, Chris!



**Marie and Stretch Williams' latest addition, James Gideon.**

**Happy Birthday, Neil!**



## t h e F u t u r e



### June

21st

Father's Day

22nd

AFS Out of Sight Premier

26th

Blood Drive

### July

3rd

Company Holiday

4th

Independence Day (Happy Birthday, Richard!)

17th

Company Happy Hour

19th-24th

Siggraph in Orlando

30th

Ultima Online Gold public beta begins

### August

10th-14th

2nd Annual OSI Grand Prix

28th

Company Happy Hour

### September

7th

Labor Day

28th

ESPP purchase

**Woo hoo!**  
**KGSR Free Lunch winners:**  
**Karol Roberts,**  
**Gary McElhaney,**  
**Alison Rogers,**  
**KGSR's Kevin Connor, Brian Smith and Terrence Hodge**

