



'Standing, left to right: Ken Arnold, Mike Ward, Laurie Thatcher, James Van Artsdalen, Helen Garriott, John Van Artsdalen Seated: Richard Garriott, Robert Garriott, Chuck Bueche.

ORIGIN SYSTEMS

As unlikely a pair as Chuck Bueche and Richard Garriott seem to be, the synthesis of their personalities is the fuel for Origin Systems.

Chuck Bueche, who prefers the moniker "Chuckles," and Richard Garriott, better known in Apple circles as Lord British, are the principal players of Origin Systems. Garriott's brother Robert, who likes to be called "Robert," handles the business end of the company.

Anyone familiar with Chuckles and Lord British only through their works would never picture the two working together. Chuckles is a cartoon; British is a fantasy hero. Chuckles is Papa Smurf; British is Kull the Conqueror. One is cotton candy and ice cream; the other is roast pheasant and ale.

Misnomer. Origin Systems can be labeled a newcomer to the computer games market in a technical sense only. It would be like putting together some veteran basketball players and calling them a new team in professional basketball; Bueche and Garriott have been around in the computer game biz for quite a while, publishing their games through other companies. Origin represents a collective effort to start something they can call their own.

Bueche wasn't always into computers; high school chum and roommate at the University of Texas, Garriott was the one who introduced Bueche to computers.

"Richard was into something called software, and I thought I'd try my hand at it, too," says Bueche.

Trying his hand at it resulted in games such as *lawbreaker II* and *Laf-Pak*, a four-game game, both published by Sierra On-Line, the same company that marketed Garriott's *Ultima II*.

The game writers' reasons for deciding to publish and market their games themselves are twofold. "We feel we have more control over our products than we did before," says Bueche.

The second reason?

"More money."

It's not just owning one's own company that will rake in the bucks, though. An industry like computer games requires innovation to keep creativity from leveling out. Origin recognizes this and plans to bring in

novation to the marketplace.

One of the areas to watch is Garriott's *Ultima* series. The soul of *Ultima* has had four incarnations, beginning with *Akalabeth* and currently existing in *Exodus: Ultima III*. Despite the apparent one-dimensional theme, each *Ultima* seems like a completely different game, since each differs so markedly from the last. The differences between scenarios isn't much by choice, but rather because Garriott keeps finding more ways to enhance the game by teaching the computer to perform more tricks. Eventually, Garriott hopes to develop the ultimate *Ultima* setup and then develop scenarios using that setup.

New Company's New Idea. One area of computer games that has been explored minimally, if at all, is Steve Jackson microgames. Much smaller than conventional strategy games, microgames involve just as much calculation and statistical consulting as their table-top counterparts. Don't be fooled by their size; microgames require just as much planning and playing time as the big ones.

What computer game powerhouses like Strategic Simulations and Avalon Hill are doing for the table-top strategy games, Origin hopes to do even better for the microgames.

Origin's first Steve Jackson adaptation is *Car Wars*, a game in which players are given a fixed amount of money that they must spend wisely to build an automotive fighting machine. Having built their cars, players then face each other (and their opponents' cars) in a car battle that would make a demolition derby look like a scene from a driver education training film. "You'll have to learn to drive offensively," says Garriott, the main force behind the project.

With the central idea behind Strategic Simulations's Rapid Fire games in mind—the combination of strategy with fast action—Origin hopes games like *Car Wars* will be a part of this emerging genre of computer games.

Not a Misnomer. When asked how they decided on a name for their company, Bueche and Garriott just shake their heads and look at one another. But if the ideas they have brewing in their heads succeed, then the name "Origin" seems only fitting.



PROFILES IN PROGRAMMING

Lord British

by David Durkee

The young reporter was assigned to do an interview with Lord British. It was his first brush with royalty. As he walked down the long corridor leading to the Lord's audience chamber, he noted with admiration the grandeur with which British surrounded himself. The reporter entered the chamber. Although Lord British spoke not, his bearing seemed to give the newcomer permission to state his business. The interview commenced.

Great lord, I seek an audience with thee that I might herald thy story in a computer games magazine."

As he spoke, the hall was filled with the strains of Rule Britannia. Lord British looked down from his throne. "Welcome, my child. Thou art greater."

Greater than what? the young man wondered. Is the king testing me? "My Lord," he said, "how should I portray thee to my readers?"

"Welcome, my child. Experience more."

"Is that it? Dost thou wish it be a more experienced reporter that tells thy tale?"

"Seek ye the mark of kings."

"The mark of kings? Would that be this mole on your arm, here?"

"Welcome, my child. No more!" Lord British made an expansive gesture to indicate that the interview was at an end.

"Huh?"

Richard Garriott shares with Alfred Hitchcock the tendency to put himself into his own work. His alter ego, Lord British, as portrayed in *Exodus: Ultima III* and the preamble to this article, is spare on words but generous with the hit points. Garriott matches his persona with a generosity of spirit but is far more outgoing. Lord British just sits on his throne throughout an entire game, but Garriott, if his true self actually appeared in the story, would be out there vanquishing villains and quaff-

PROGRAMMER DATA SHEET



NAME: Lord British a.k.a. Richard Garriott

BIRTHDATE: July 4, 1961

BIRTHPLACE: Cambridge, England

TURN-ONS: Technology toys, real life adventures, spontaneity

TURN-OFFS: Mornings, speeding tickets

GOALS: To write the game of total escape

FAVORITE LANGUAGE: 6502 machine

FAVORITE COMPUTER: Apple

FAVORITE ASSEMBLER: Lisa

FAVORITE GAME: Caverns of Callisto

HIGHEST SCORE: 268 930

FAVORITE RESTAURANT: Les Trois Mousquetaires

FAVORITE MUSICIANS: Beatles, Supertramp

ing brews with the best of them. People from all over, whether they meet him at Applefest, a medieval event, or remember the summer he taught at a computer camp, seem pleased and proud to be able to call him a friend.

Garriott is one of the oldest faces on the Apple game scene and one of the youngest. When he published *Akalabeth* and the original *Ultima* through California Pacific, he was still a teenager. The teenage success story is a popular myth in microcomputerdom, but one that is actually not true as often as you would think. Steve Wozniak and Bill Budge, although traditionally thought of as boy geniuses, were both in their twenties when they first made names for themselves. Richard Garriott, however, is the true article.

His story has another interesting twist: Though his father, Owen, is an astronaut, some of Garriott's strongest interests go in the other direction. He is a member of the Society for Creative Anachronism, a nationwide medieval club, and he writes swords and sorcery games. Lest that seem an unseemly avocation for a true product of the space age, Garriott frequently reiterates that he would drop everything for the chance to go into space.

As even boy geniuses are wont to do from time to time, Garriott got a little older. He is now twenty-two. But as childhood fades slowly into the west, the story continues, as does the success. As a young adult, he has gone into business for himself, forming Origin Systems with his older brother Robert and his friend and former college roommate Chuck "Chuckles" Bueche. In the general run of programmers, there are those

who thrive on the creative freedom of owning their own companies and there are those who discover that they prefer programming to running businesses. And there are those who aren't as good at running businesses as they are at programming. Garriott and company are well aware of the pitfalls, and they have initiated their joint enterprise with forethought and enthusiasm. (This issue's New Players tells that story.)

Cosmonauts Courageous. Being the son of an astronaut has its temptations. Garriott wants to go into space but doesn't see it happening in the predictable future. His father will be the mission specialist on the next flight of the space shuttle *Columbia*: STS mission 9, Spacelab mission I. The Spacelab is a cooperative effort of NASA and the European Space Agency (ESA). Like Skylab, in which Owen Garriott orbited the earth ten years ago, Spacelab's goal for this and future missions is to conduct a series of experiments in chemistry, life sciences, and other sciences in an orbital situation.

The younger Garriott told *Softline* of plans for his father's mission that are so secret that even NASA doesn't know about them. He has frequently joked with his father about stowing away on a spaceship, and recently his speculations have been sounding uncomfortably realistic. Garriott figured that, if he were to succeed, public sentiment would prevent NASA and the government from taking any action stronger than having him followed by Secret Service agents for the rest of his life.

Having decided that stowing away was a good idea, Garriott speculated that, with his father aboard, an extreme reaction on the part of the crew would be less likely. The addition of his mass to the overall mass of the mission equipment and personnel apparently falls within accepted limits. He did briefly consider the possibility of being jettisoned by the satellite launching arm. ("Houston, this is *Columbia*. We will be effecting course change by ejecting approximately seventy kilos of mass out the bay doors. Please calculate new reentry vectors. Over.")

"Better Check the Cargo Bay, Dad," After a certain amount of this kind of talk, even a trained astronaut with an average amount of the right stuff begins to worry about mission security. Finally, Owen Garriott put his foot down: "Richard, I do not want to see you on my flight." The younger Garriott couldn't resist the potential of the situation. He has arranged with Robert Parker, one of the other astronauts on the flight, to act as stowaway in his stead. As of this writing, Garriott has prepared a series of notes to his father to be placed in strategic locations aboard *Columbia* during the flight. Whether this extraterrestrial practical joke will be carried off, or whether its perpetrator will be, is speculation, but soon we may all be in on the punch line.

"Drive Offensively." Garriott's most immediate project on the ground is *Car Wars*, which he is working on with Bueche. The game will be based on an award-winning microgame by Steve Jackson Games, which won the 1982 Origins award for best science fiction board game. Steve Jackson approached Garriott two years ago to translate some of his microgames to microcomputer games.

Because of the success of his fantasy games on the Apple, Garriott has been approached by the producers of *Lion of Ireland*, a movie to be based on the historical novel of the same name by Morgan Llywelyn. For the setting of the movie, a replica of a medieval village will be constructed in a rural area of southern Ireland, and the cast will spend two weeks soaking up the medieval lifestyle and giving the set a lived-in look before filming begins. Garriott will join them on this outing next April. This is the perfect vacation for a medievalist, but it will be a working vacation for Garriott. He will be doing research for a computer game to be based on the movie and scheduled for simultaneous release.

Ultimate Wizardry. Garriott also plans a collaboration with *Wizardry* coauthor Andrew Greenberg sometime in the near future. It's not definite what the game will be yet, except that, according to Garriott, "it will be the ultimate fantasy role-playing game."

Garriott is best known for his *Ultima* series of games on the Apple II. (He's not necessarily best known for getting them out on time. But he's improving. *Ultima II* had been advertised for six months by Sierra On-Line before it was finally released a year ago, but the Apple version of *Exodus: Ultima III*, released late last August, was only about two months behind the projected date. Versions of the game for Atari, Commodore, and IBM computers are on the way.)

Garriott says that *Ultima IV* is already in the works, and we can expect it to be the biggest and best *Ultima* yet. "I'm expanding my maps from 64 by 64 to 256 by 256 with a new system that won't use any more memory than the old one." That's pretty remarkable if you think about the fact that at one byte per square that map would take up all of the memory of a 64K machine. "The map won't all be in memory at once, but the loading routines will be fast enough that you won't notice them swapping." He also plans more detail in the animation.

The scenario will go beyond the reaches of his past works as well. *Ultima III* proclaims, "From the depths of hell, he comes for vengeance." Of course anyone can tell you that the villain came from hell, but in his next epic Garriott plans to take you there to see for yourself. The planes of hell will require a completely different style of graphics from anything he has used in the past. "I think that that's part of the strength of the *Ultimas*. I've created not just new scenarios for each new release, but whole new gaming systems."

The player's goal in *Ultima IV* will be to develop a character into an avatar. According to Garriott, an avatar in Eastern religions is one who has reached a state of oneness with God. To attain this level of enlightenment, the initiate must acquire sixteen attributes. Fifteen attributes represent powers over forces of nature and life, and the final attribute is clairvoyance. Many have attained partial avatar status-yogis who are able to exert a certain power over normally involuntary functions of mind and body-but few have gone all the way.

In the game, the first fifteen attributes may be obtained through certain great deeds in the physical world: areas like those portrayed by all the previous *Ultima* games. For the final attribute, the adventurer must make a quest into the ninth plane of hell (presumably through all the lesser planes as well). Garriott, who claims that the number of books he has read in his life can be counted on two and a half people's hands, has read Dante's *Inferno* for ideas and inspiration for *Ultima IV*, so we can expect the depictions of the planes to be vivid and graphic.

The projected release date for *Ultima IV* is the Christmas season of 1984, so we can probably expect it somewhere around the following spring if Garriott remains true to form. Maybe he'll make it on time; he's made some progress on the game already, but starting a company and dealing with his other projects take up a considerable chunk of his time. The imperative to make each game significantly better than the last is time consuming too. "Sometime I'll have an *Ultima* playing system that I can use for a few different scenarios. It won't be *Ultima IV*; how many times can you quest into hell? The trick is to create several plots that are interesting and different but can be enacted in a similar environment. Maybe *Ultima V*."

So *Ultima III* may not even be the penultimate. When it will end is anybody's guess. Garriott has only just begun to write the scenario to his personal *Ultima* quest.

