TIMESHIP: Murder at the End of Time

A provocative hybrid, Timeship combines a role-playing game system with a parser-based graphic adventure. This enables you to develop characters who can be used in a running series of adventures. Adapted from a board game published by six-year-old Yaquintos Publications, it is similar in concept and structure to the public domain Eamon series and the Swordthrust system by Eamon's author.

This system facilitates creation and storage of up to ten characters on a player disk.   When "rolled up," each one's personal attributes -- Strength, Charisma, Dexterity, Endurance, and Integrity -- can be raised or reduced with bonus points (as in Wizardry and Ultima).   There are no classes or races, but you can indicate sex and whether the character is right- or left-handed.   The Time Travelers Guild Hall consists of four domes. Characters are created and examined in the Archive Dome, where you may also request hard copy of all vital statistics. From menus in the Trade area, you can visit the Equipment, Weapons, Armor and Bank Domes. One-key commands are used to buy and sell weapons and equipment or to check inventory. Weapons range from medieval maces and morningstars to laser pistols, but you'll find no magic spells in this arsenal. All such items are conveniently listed in the thorough 24-page manual.

After organizing a party of up to four explorers, you enter the Ritual Dome for a trip

You are standing near the ruins of the Carnegie Children's Library. The structure itself was severely damaged and has only been partially excavated.

Press any key!

The Trade Center

You are now inside the Trade Center dome. The center is buzzing with activity as travellers from all times and places conduct business here with the tradesmen of the guild. There are several passages here which lead to the shops of the guild. Each passageway is marked as follows:

W Weapons shop   A Armour shop
E Equipment shop   B Bank teller

Select a destination

through time. A Time Capsule is necessary. This is a program that is used in conjunction with the system.   Two types are mentioned in the documentation: adventure and task. An "adventure capsule" has no definite goals, and a party may travel to and from it at will. Included with the system is a "task capsule," Murder at the End of Time. The Mission Summary sheet explains your mission is to travel into the future and solve the first murder that has occurred in 300 million years.   When you arrive, the screen shows an illustration in the top half and an eight-line text area below. Illustrations are simple and rarely painted with more than two or three colors.

The first character you'll meet   is Bertram Trenchcoat, appointed by the Superiors (the rulers of the future) to assist on the case. He tags along as you amble through clouds of grey mist and discover Count Dracula stretched out in a coffin, a stake through his heart.   Dracula isn't the game's only monster movie character, for you'll find hunchbacked Igorr guarding an alien space ship. Then "Little Orphan Annie Oakley" shows up in the strange miniature forest, where a parrot whistles the Battle Hymn of the Republic. You'll also have to

Adventure Hotline

Macbeth -- *another* unimaginatively named piece of Macintosh software? No, it's an interactive version of the Shakespearian play, one of Imagic's forthcoming "Time Travelers" brand. The second game will adventurize H.G. Wells' classic, *The Time Machine*. As reported last month, Imagic's first adventures will be part of their "Living Literature" series. The intial titles are based on R. A. MacAvoy's *Damiano* fantasy novels and Sherlock Holmes.

Sir-Tech says two long-awaited games scheduled for Christmas, The Return of Werdna and the Macintosh Proving Grounds, will be delayed at least a month. They'll also release another role-player, The Mines of Qyntarr for the Apple.

Epyx is doing another in the Pern series, an RPG derived from Ann McAffrey's novels -- Moreta: Dragonlady of Pern (C-64). And Strategic Simulations is following up Questron with Gemstone Warrior. For Apple and C-64, it's an "action strategy" role-playing game with real-time combat.

Origin is completing a "swords and sorcerery" scenario called Mobius. It features detailed animation and a frontal 3-D view rather than the birdseye perspective of Ultima. (Number four in that series is still under development.)

Due to a a book publisher's trademark infringement suit, Spinnaker has changed the name of the Trillium brand of adventures. In the future, "Telarium" is the name to remember when looking for Amazon, Fahrenheit 451, Rendezvous with Rama, Shadowkeep, Dragonworld, and a fleet of new science fiction games. Starman Jones, adapted from Robert Heinlein's novel, is next off the pad. Spinnaker reports that science fiction legend Alfred Bester (*The Stars My Destination*, *The Demolished Man*), is dreaming up ideas for original adventures. So is Harry

TIMESHIP

deal with force fields and other science fiction devices to solve this case, which is definitely *not* an Infocom-style mystery. The victim returns from the dead, for one thing, and there's something very odd, almost unreal, about the landscape. Are the Superiors are playing some kind of cosmic joke on you, or what? Ultimately, you must figure out exactly what is going on in this oddball environment before tackling the question of "whodunnit?".

WHICH WAY DID I GO?

Clues are found in the text, not the pictures. Some objects can be bought in the Trade Dome. Once you know what is needed, it is certainly easier to buy that piece of rope or oil can then to trek all over the place looking for it. Mapping is hampered by the mist, which acts like the spinners in Proving Grounds or the Carousel Room in Zork II. You might type "n" but wind up going east.

A full-sentence parser smoothes communication with the program. It points out words that aren't in its vocabulary as well as signalling syntax problems. The main limitation is its maximum 35-character capacity. There are two types of commands: group and character. The former include directional movement, attack, and look. Character commands lets you control a specific individual, having him examine or get an object, check inventory, ready a weapon, or talk to someone he meets. You can pose questions with the words who, what, where, when, or why. Play proceeds as in a standard graphic adventure until you bump into a pack of vicious, bug-eyed "mist dwellers."

The combat phase resembles Wizardry. A small block in the upper left corner depicts the enemy and the rest of the top part of the screen is reserved for information this foe. Below that is a text area for choosing combat options that relate to the type of weapon carried by your party. Each character's action is selected sequentially, then combat results are shown. With assorted beeps and other sound effects for each assault, combat continues until one side has been vanquished.

Instead of hit points, your characters possess two basic types of energy: Personal and Reserve. (A third, Permanent Energy, is awarded for completing a Time Capsule.) The amount of Personal Energy depends on which items a character carries on the expedition. (It may be replenished by eating, sleeping, or dropping objects purchased from the Trade Dome.) Several points of Reserve Energy are eaten up when the character is wounded in battle. After his reserve energy is depleted, further wounds reduce the character's Personal Energy . A character dies when his Personal Energy is exhausted. If your entire party is wiped out, they automatically return to the Guildhall but don't get erased from the disk. They can then go shopping in the Trade Dome if necessary before heading back into the future, where each starts with a fresh supply of Personal and Reserve Energy. You can save one game in progress, which will be automatically restarted the next time the program disk is booted.

Overall, the role-playing side of the system lacks the depth of a Wizardry or Ultima. The battles become repititious and there's little suspense. Because characters receive no experience points for winning battles, victory isn't as satisfying. The adventure is challenging, however, and Timeship offers an intriguing concept with a lot of potential, especially when more Time Capsules become available. The next one will take you into the past to track down and assassinate Hitler, and more historically oriented scenarios are promised.   SA

THE ELYSIAN FIELDS
& Other Greek Myths

Rather than attempting to devise an interactive version of a specific Greek myth, this graphic game blends many authentic elements of the legends into one tale.   According to the manual, you were reading the paper one day when a strange force suddenly teleported you to ancient Greece. The goal is to return to the present.

Bumping into one Greek god or legendary creature after another, you'll work your way through about 100 locations. With objects found along the way, you must get rid of each such character. Few remain rooted to one spot. Instead, they pop up intermittently as you roam across Greece, Turkey, Crete, Egypt and the rest of the Mediterranean region. It's impossible to talk to the gods, though you can "look" at some for clues. More clues and hints are found in the manual, which contains several paragraphs on Zeus, Aprhodite, Athena, and others.

Most problems are object-oriented and many have interrelated solutions. For example, you can't get the bow and arrow of Eros without giving the Girdle of Hippolyta to the goddess of wisdom. But the Amazons chase you away when you try to snatch the Girdle.   (No, it's not a Maidenform.) Naturally, the Sphinx won't let you pass without answering a riddle. Get it wrong and he has you for brunch. There's no reincarnation in this world. You go straight to Hades, then the game automatically reboots.

Strange things happen around you throughout the game, so it's not a totally static environment. Occasionally the ground "opens up and engulfs a tree," or "slithers about your feet." Hermes might dash by with a message, or a fire-breathing chimera or "obnoxious harpie" may materialize beside you.

You'll be working with a sketchy two-word parser and a limited vocabulary. The illustrations, though abundant, are far from inspired. Though created with Penguin's Graphics Magician, they are blocky and often crudely drawn.   There's no spot animation or sound effects, though objects do disappear from the screen when taken. You can switch into all-text mode to speed up the game or review your last actions. Obvious exits are always noted in the text, which is convenient. Getting around is pretty easy, and the manual includes a map of the Mediterranean and surrounding countries. You'll still have to construct a more detailed one, though. One of those rare graphic adventures with a "transcript" option for hard copy of the text, the game is large enough to take up both sides of the disk.

HOW'S YOUR HOMER?

As an "educational adventure," Elysian Fields is a qualified success.   The pictures are no better-looking than those in Sierra's Ulysses and the Golden Fleece, but the panorama of Greek mythology is more accurately and comprehensively depicted. Knowledge counts, for you'll have little luck in coping with Zeus and his cohorts unless you learn something about them.   The author, 15-year-old Mark Novembrino, suggests reading up on Greek mythology before sitting down at the computer -- and keeping a reference manual handy while playing the game. It's not strictly factual, however. He says some characters and events in the game are "total figments of my imagination."

This is an odd one that is best-suited for people genuinely interested in the subject. It might make an unusual aid for students who have to learn about Greek mythology. (The manufacturer has another educational adventure, Kukulkan, which is based on the Aztec civilization of Mexico.) But adventurers looking for eye-catching graphics, character interaction, or an engaging plot are likely to be disappointed on all three counts.

Computer: APPLE
Planned Conversions: C-64
Skill Level: Intermediate
Saves: 7 (on game disk)
Price: $39.95
Manufacturer: American Eagle Software

♰ RIPPER ♰

Last issue we investigated <u>Suspect</u>, a murder mystery that challenged you to deduce who killed a certain society dame at a Halloween party in contemporary Maryland. This one harks back to 19th Century England and identifies the killer right up front: Jack the Ripper. The problem here is *finding* the perpetrator.

Your search commences at the front door of Lady Wanda Millerford's Victorian mansion, Hampstead Manor. At the request of Queen Victoria, she has invited Florence Nightingale, Harry Houdini, Sigmund Freud and other celebrities to hang out at the mansion for a week. (Sherlock Holmes is the only fictional guest in the story.) It seems the Ripper intercepted an invitation and is stalking the mansion.

The all-text presentation profits from assorted audiovisual effects. On a grey screen, the old English typeface appears in a light aqua color. As you prowl the halls and rooms of the rather small house, creaky sounds and ominous bass tones intensify the eerie atmosphere of the setting. Upon entering your room, you spy a six-fingered Argentinian dwarf just before the lights flicker and go out. Footsteps patter across the room in the dark, then the lights return and you find the dwarf replaced by a mysterious locked metal box.

This contains a clue, but you'll need help to open it. Each of the other guests has a specialty, and will cooperate in the investigation if you are carrying the proper object when you enter their room and type "help." You can't "talk to" or "show object" to them, however. This introduces a curious aspect to an adventure, because you must consider each individual's historical claim to fame to determine how he or she might be of assistance.

While you're doing so, the Ripper is having a field day with the maids. A bell tolls when he strikes, and the number of victims he's killed is posted at the top right corner of the screen. This is similar to the scoring system of <u>Suspended</u>, in which you strive for the lowest score possible. The discovery of the bodies is a strikingly gruesome experience, so we won't go into any details on this scene. You can die in pursuit of justice, too. And there's no reincarnation for deceased detectives.

There are about three dozen locations in the main part of the house. As in any bona fide Victorian mansion, secret passages may be ferreted out by the determined gumshoe. The parser is of the verb-noun variety. It does identify words not in the vocabulary. The verbs "try" and "use" draw the response "on what", enabling you to string commands together for a more complex sentence. Multiple commands are accepted, and useful for moving about the house. Inventory management is a major obstacle, as you're limited to carrying only four items. (Try carting everything to a central location to save time when backtracking for the crowbar, ladder, or that sinister-looking flask of green fluid.) The save option is odd. You can save but one game in progress, and only do so a few times before the program announces that "no more are available." Like <u>Robots of Dawn</u>, the game loads entirely into RAM, minimizing response time after a command has been entered. (The disk is accessed a few times for special audiovisual effects.)

Ultimately, this case proves more demanding than <u>The Witness</u>, but easier than <u>Deadline</u> and <u>Suspect</u>. While not as sophisticated as the Infocom mysteries, <u>Ripper</u> is quite charming. It makes the grade as genuine interactive fiction, for character interaction is mandatory and things are going on around you throughout the story. (That South American dwarf scampers from room to room, a delivery man passes by.) <u>Ripper</u> induces a strong impression of "being there," the hallmark of a good adventure game.   SL

Computer: COMMODORE 64
Planned Conversions: None
Skill Level: Intermediate
Saves: 1 (on game disk)
Price: $25.00
Manufacturer: Avalon Hill

MINDSHADOW

Activision, best known for <u>Pitfall</u> and other Atari videogames, has a new line of adventure games, and this one is actually better-looking than graphic games from some of the traditional adventure houses. <u>Mindshadow</u> also embodies a more substantial plot than a lot of interactive entertainment. Marooned on a desert island -- and not Gilligan's, either -- you don't remember your name or how you got there. The goal is to recover your memory by escaping the island and traveling to Europe, where you encounter a string of characters from your mysterious past. One little man screams, "It wasn't me who betrayed you on the Tycoon," and other people say and do things suggesting you were involved in some sinister scheme. It's a well-structured story, revealing the plot in bits and pieces the way Robert Ludlum did in *The Bourne Identity*. This pulls the player into the tale, which would be termed a real "page-turner" if it were a novel.

Though dubbed an "Illustrated Text Adventure," <u>Mindshadow</u> is really a standard graphic game: full-screen illustrations and a five-line text window at the bottom. ("Illustrated Text Adventure" is just another new marketing term for graphic adventure.) The detailed hi-res art employs various colored patterns that are quickly splashed across the screen in the same manner as <u>The Quest</u> and other Penguin adventures. A stylistic sense of perspective distinguishes the illustrations and qualifies them as true computer art. Another feature from Penguin games is available: you can hit the return key to toggle between the picture and a screenful of text showing the most recent commands and responses. Spot animation kicks in intermittently. Sea gulls flap their wings in the sky; when a sleeping bum snores, a trail of "z"s spirals to the top of the screen. Drop an object and it is displayed in the middle of the screen. No sound effects are heard.

The geography is extensive. Mapping proves necessary at times, especially in the island's mountains. After exiting the island, your goal becomes escaping the next set of locations, and so on through a series of escapades in England, Luxembourg and across the Continent. Assassins enter the picture as you get closer to unravelling the mystery, and there's no instant reincarnation. Problems are all object-oriented, with rocks, ropes, and of course, the mandatory cave. Inventory is limited to eight items, but most are used only once. Clues are hidden in the pictures, and hints sometimes appear in the text. None of the problems are exceedingly hard. There aren't many red herrings to throw you off the track. On three occasions, you can request help from the Condor, a bird who offers general or specific advice on the situation. Sometimes he'll just tell you to think for yourself.

THINK POSITIVE

The word "think" is even in the game's vocabulary. You may say "think about (a particular subject)", but usually find out that you don't remember anything important. The vocabulary isn't large, but the parser is above average. You can use multiple commands, direct objects ("tie rope to vine") and pronouns. If you try to "Get (object)" and the word isn't in the game's vocabulary, the parser points out the problem word; but if you "look" at the same object, the parser simply says, "You see nothing unusual." Still, it's smarter than parsers found in most graphic adventures.

When you backtrack to a previous location, an innovative feature saves plenty of time. Just type the directions -- N.E.S.S.W, for example -- and you're transported directly to the destination without having to view every picture along the way. One quirk: if a command is appended to the directions, the program executes it first. This means you can't go "N.W.Get hat." The Commodore and IBM function keys have been reconfigured to execute common commands such as save, restore, talk to, look at, get, drop all, and others. (The IBM version of Datamost's <u>Earthly Delights</u> also incorporates the same device, even using some function keys for indicating movement.) Another

key enables you to "quicksave" the current position without assigning it a number, then "quickload" it later. Apple users can press "shift" and the appropriate number for the same effects. These features, plus fast-loading graphics (five seconds on the Commodore), make Mindshadow a pleasure to play. They also make it an admirable entry- or novice level game. It's highly recommended for beginners. The other side of the disk even has an on-line "Tutorial" on solving adventures. A sequence of all-text screens explains the concepts and offers an illustrated sample problem. Anyone who is really stuck can order a $1.00 clue sheet from the manufacturer. Skilled adventurers will force their way through the game in a day or two, but may enjoy the story and attractive graphics.

Computer: APPLE, IBM PC & *jr*, C-64
Planned Conversions: None
Skill Level: Introductory/Novice
Saves: 10 (on game disk)
Price: $31.95, C-64; $39.95, others
Manufacturer: Activision, Inc.

TRACER SANCTION

Like Mindshadow, this one was designed by Interplay Productions. It recruits you as an agent of the S.I.A. (Stellar Intelligence Agency) on the planet Mongo. The chief says your job is to track down an intergalactic outlaw, Wings. This entails zipping through space back and forth between Earth and eight other planets with names like Jubilex and Sonex. Sometimes another agent will tell you which planet to visit next, but often you'll just have to wander around.

A chart shows the distance between planets, which tells you how much fuel is neccesary for each trip. One of the main problems is finding or earning more money to buy the necessary fuel. You can get killed or stuck in some places, and the tools

required to solve certain problems will occasionally be found on remote planets. Again, it's not a difficult adventure, and the Condor provides more specific help.

The graphics look blockier and more one-dimensional than those of Mindshadow, but the spot animation is jazzier and a few sounds effects are tossed in. The parser and assignment of function keys are identical to the first game. In brief, Tracer plays a lot like Gruds in Space. The big differences are that you spend more time hopping between planets, and this one is much easier. It is less involving than Mindshadow because the plot isn't as well developed. **SL**

Computer: APPLE, IBM PC & *jr*, C-64
Planned Conversions: None
Skill Level: Introductory/Novice
Saves: 10 (on game disk)
Price: $ $31.95, C-64; $39.95, others
Manufacturer: Activision, Inc.

CYBORG

Michael Berlyn's second adventure, and the last one he wrote before joining Infocom, has been converted for the Macintosh. (The original all-text game is still available for other systems.) It exhibits the most inventive use of the Macintosh's exotic features in an adventure to date. It's the kind of story in which figuring out what's really happening forms an overall problem, as in Starcross. You are a cyborg: half-human, half machine. Besides high-tech mechanical parts, you've got an electronic brain that offers help when asked for an opinion on the current location or an object. The first thing it explains is that your power-units are low on energy and your memory cells have been damaged. Though the longrange goal is elusive at first, you quickly realize that a fresh battery and some food would be nice.

Instead of looking at objects or locations in previous versions of the game, you asked the cyborg part of your brain to "scan" things. Similarly, it provides a "bio scan" of your medical condition and "body scan" for inventory, and an "area scan" that describes the location. A "full scan" shows all three. On the Mac, a window on the right half of the screen holds the text while the left depicts a set of cyborg controls.

Mouse up to the "body" icon and click the button once, and a window opens up to reveal the desired information on your current energy level, bio level, and cyborg level. (Let them fall too low, and you die. If you sustain a lot of damage in a brief interval, reincarnation becomes impossible.) The same technique is used to elicit an opinion and for the other scanning functions. An eight-pointed compass rose enables you to move around without typing in directions. The "?" icon replaces the opinion command. Little lights blink and indicators move back and forth on the panel throughout the game. The simple sound effects of previous versions have been enhanced. These can be switched off, but the volume can't be changed.

That's because programmer Harry Wilker, in allocating so much memory to this elegant player interface, had to omit access to the control panel. Therefore, the unique Macintosh features that make an adventurer's life somewhat easier are also inaccessible. You can't pull down the notepad, scrapbook, or any other desk accessory. But you can still copy and paste frequently used commands. There's no scroll bar for reviewing previous text as in Priority Software's Forbidden Quest. Though

you can save up to 40 games in progress on the game disk, the program does not display a directory when you elect to restore one. Other Mac adventures allow you to name each one and offer the list in a dialog box, but here you can only number them. There's also no "transcript" option for obtaining hard copy.

Back to the story: the landscape is vast, so careful mapping is necessary. It's been deviously designed to confuse even veteran adventurers. This is especially true in the first phase, which occurs in a bizzare forest of cloned trees and holds the first of two mazes. As in all of Berlyn's work, an offbeat sense of humor prevails. You'll meet up with some strange characters. There's a little lizard in a spacesuit, a two-headed snake, a Togram -- and watch out for that Smada. It's possible to talk to most of these refugees from another planet. If you behave properly, each says you may ask four questions. These are numbered, and you select a question by typing in the corresponding number.

The situation becomes clearer as you explore the area and communicate with more creatures. A mini-droid is the funniest and is reminiscent of Planetfall's Floyd. He even assists in one predicament in exactly the same manner. (Cyborg is a 1981 game, while Planetfall was released in 1983.) There are also some interesting parallels between this scenario and Dave Lebling's Starcross (1982). No scoring system is involved. You either finish the story or you don't.

The parser accepts complex sentences with indirect objects, and multiple commands are permitted. You can't say get or drop "all," for the word is missing from the vocabulary. This is annoying, because inventory management is important. There are numerous objects, and you can only tote six at a time. Commodore people will view yellow text on a red background, and may change the text color. (Brief pauses were occasionally observed while the program processed input in the C-64 version, even after disk access.) All others get a monochrome presentation. The first adventure with a real plot and meaningful character interaction, Cyborg could be called the Colossal Cave of interactive fiction. Science fiction fans will definitely enjoy it, regardless of which computer they play it on.

Computer: MAC, ATARI, APPLE, C-64, EPSON
Epson QX-10, IBM PC & *jr*
Skill Level: Advanced
Saves: 40 (on game disk); more on other systems
Price: $39.95
Manufacturer: Broderbund (MAC); Sentient
Software (others)

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SERPENT'S STAR

This conversion of a 1982 Apple program is a "prequel" to Ultrasoft's Mask of the Sun. Once more you wear the boots of Mac Steele, an Indiana Jones-style explorer. The setting is Tibet, where your goal is a fabled gem called the Serpent's Star. To find its resting place in a mystic city that reappears on earth but once a year, you'll first have to locate the three missing Lhasa scrolls. Most of the characters are monks, some of whom pose riddles before allowing you to advance or offering assistance. There are a couple of simple animated scenes, including a deadly avalanche that requires eye/hand coordination for survival. The story's the thing here, and you don't get points for solving problems.

Written in a graphics language called Ultracode™, Star offers unique "cinematic" effects created by showing a series of landscape scenes that produce the effect of moving through the snowcapped Himalayas or inside monasteries. You can opt for "quick travel" to speed up these sequences. The boldly colored illustrations are top-notch. You'll hear a few simple sound effects. Nothing like those in the Trillium games, though, especially their C-64 versions. The parser understands full sentences with multiple commands and does so very promptly. It's a bit-for-bit translation from the Apple version, and an entertaining tale.

Computer: C-64, ATARI (48K), APPLE
Skill Level: Advanced
Saves: 1 (AT, AP); 4 (C-64)
Price: $39.95
Manufacturer: Broderbund

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NEW & PLANNED CONVERSIONS:

COMMODORE 64
Expedition Amazon, Xyphus (Penguin)
Sherwood Forest, Masquerade (American Eagle)

IBM
The Quest (Penguin)

MACINTOSH

Amazon, Fahrenheit 451, Dragonworld,
Shadowkeep, Rendesvous with Rama (Trillium)
Ultima II (Sierra), Ultima III (Origin)
The Quest, MacXyphus, MacCoveted Mirror
(Penguin)

ATARI
Transylvania (Penguin)

SWAP SHOP

Will trade Sorcerer for complete copy of either Starcross, Suspect, Robots of Dawn, Amazon, or Fahrenheit 451. (Apple only.) Mark Fujimoto, 1646 Komo Mai Dr., Pearl City, HI 96782.

I have the following games for sale: The Wizard and the Princess ($30), Ulysses and the Golden Fleece ($30), a complete Eamon set ($5), Prisoner and Prisoner II ($15 each), Sheila ($10), Galactic Revolution ($35), Wizardry ($35), and ET Phone Home Adventure ($10). All are for Apple. Scottie Freeman, Knott Route, Big Springs, TX 79720.

I'm looking for Infocom games for CP/M 8" disk. Will buy or trade.   David Aultfather, 13209 Dessau Rd., Austin, TX 78753.

BOOK REVIEW

SORCERERS & SOLDIERS: Computer Wargames, Fantasies and Adventures; by Brian Murphy, Creative Computing Press, $9.95

This should have been called Soldiers & Sorcerers, for only five pages are devoted to "Elementary Adventuring." Wizardry, Ultima and Excalibur are the only ones covered in-depth. Useful tips are offered, but no maps. Murphy's expertise is in war games, and he uses classic titles like Tanktics to illustrate strategic and tactical lessons in ground, sea, and air warfare. Novice war gamers will get the most from Murphy's well-written manual. Pure adventurists should look elsewhere.

ADVENTURE HOTLINE
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Harrison, author of *The Stainless Steel Rat*, who is working from Ireland.

RUMOR OF THE MONTH
Showcased at the recent Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Synapse's "Electronic Novels" should finally be on the market soon.   They're all-text games, programmed with a proprietary language and development system called BTZ. It packs a powerful parser that rumor says is the source of the acronym BTZ: "Better Than Zork." The games rely heavily on artificially intelligent and   independent   characters.   Enigma and Mindwheels will be the initial releases, and they'll be available for most computers.

MEANWHILE, BACK IN CAMBRIDGE...
The Infocom crew is reportedly working overtime on a highly advanced parser, and 1985 may well be remembered for the "parser wars" that appear imminent. Though no one will discuss its scenario, the next "world of Infocom" promises to be bigger than anything seen this side of Arcturus.
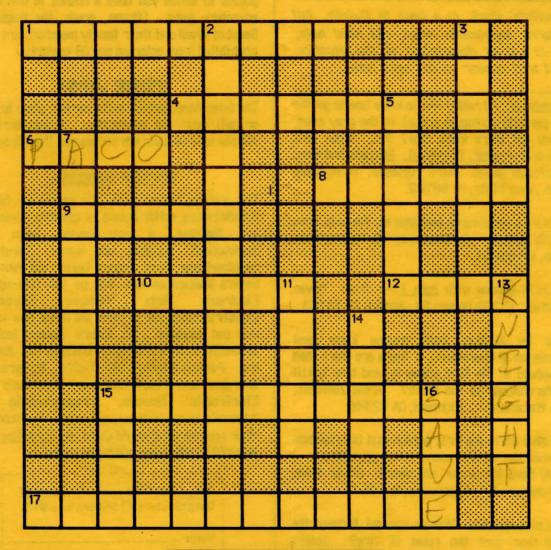
BACK TO BASICS?
We've looked at Hulk, the first game Scott Adams' new QuestProbe series, and it does not have a full-sentence parser as mentioned in the November issue. Watch for a full review next month.

TIMEQUEST
Speaking of quests and new series, Hayden Software is introducing the TimeQuest Adventure Series for the Apple, IBM PC and *jr* , and Macintosh. The first will be The Holy Grail, followed by Inca. They'll feature a full-sentence parser, some graphics and other special effects. Hayden is also hammering out a Computer Novel Construction Set that lets users build their own all-text adventures. (Electronic Arts missed the Christmas shipping date for their Adventure Construction Set.)

Win a Free Adventure!

The crossword grid contains some handwritten letters: "PACO" at 6 across, and "KNIGHTSAVE" / "SAVE" in the right column, with "SAVE" near 16.

ACROSS

1 Wrote Transylvania: Antonio _____
4 Password in Critical Mass
6 The parrot in Trillium's Amazon
8 Suspended's planet
9 Magic word in Wizard & Princess
10 Created Eamon: Donald _____
12 Look behind the _____
15 Rungistan's travel agency
17 First graphic adventure

DOWN

2 Hayden's all-text mystery
3 The "evil force" in Sorcerer
5 Questron's evil wizard
7 Murder victim in Suspect
11 Go _____
13 Sir-Tech's _____ of Diamonds
14 _____ the disk
15 Magic word in Wizard & Princess
16 restore game (antonym)

⚰ WAITING FOR DUFFY ⚰

Duffy's stuck in a cave in Duluth, but if you're hopelessly stuck and need help, send in a brief description of the situation and it will appear in the next issue.

In <u>Hitchhiker</u>, I'd really like to know how to get the black particle (common sense) in the grey maze. Anybody out there know how? P.S. I can help people on <u>Sorcerer</u>, <u>Planetfall</u>, <u>Witness</u> and some non-Infocom games. Mark Fujimoto, 1646 Komo Mai Dr., Pearl City, HI 96782.

I'm a novice adventurer and need all the help I can get with <u>Zork I</u>. C. Raudonis, 45 Pelham Rd., Hudson, NH 03051.

I can help anyone with <u>Zork I</u> -- free! David Aultfather, 13209 Dossau Rd., Austin, TX 78753.

Zapped by <u>Xyphus</u>: Does anyone know best combination of characters, if there are more than one Xiphoid in the first scenario, and how to kill the Werefalcons to the south? Duane Zumwalt, 7216 Wakefield Ct., Highland, CA 92346.

I will give $5 to the first person who tells me how to finish the second scenario of <u>Wizardry</u>. I already have the armor and sword. Oliver Pike, 1150 Johnson Dr., Naperville, IL 60540.

<u>Castle of Darkness</u>: How do you get through the locked door past the room of fire? Scottie Freeman, Knott Route, Big Springs, TX 79720.

Need a clue on how to drain the pool in <u>Sands of Egypt</u>. Don L. Zeiders, R. D. 2, Box 169-B, Millerstown, PA 17062.

FREE GAMES!

Every issue of <u>QuestBusters</u>™ features a contest or puzzle in which you have a chance to win a new adventure game. (Grues, gruds, the Bugblatter Beast of Traal and their family members are *still* prohibited from entering any QB contests.)

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The Swap Shop section is the perfect place to trade or sell your old adventures. Subscribers can simply send in their ads and we run them free.

NEXT ISSUE:

Two science fiction titles are poised for takeoff: **Rendezvous with Rama**, a graphic adventure, and **Sundog**, a role-playing game with ZoomAction™ windows and icons. Teralium's **Shadowkeep**, Scott Adams' **Hulk**, and American Eagle's **Kukulkan** are also on the line-up. If Electronic Arts releases **Adventure Construction Set** in time, we'll see how well it was put together. In future issues, look for in-depth reviews of Origins' **Ultima IV: Avatar** and **Penultimate**, Sir-Tech's **Return of Werdna** and **MacWizardry**, Synapses's new **Electronic Novels, Transylvania II,** Infocom's latest Interactive Fiction, and scores of other new adventures. As usual, <u>we'll review them</u> *months* <u>before any computer magazine.</u>