

the

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AN INTERVIEW WITH LORD BRITISH

On Wednesday, May 9, we at the Wizards Journal spent the afternoon with Lord British. While there we conducted an interview with him.

Wizards Journal: How old were you when you started programming?

Richard Garriott: I was a freshman in high school. What happened was my father, who is a NASA astronaut, got a fellowship from NASA to go back to Stanford University to take some updated business courses since he has been out of school for a while. The whole family moved out there for nine months, which is basically a whole school year, and I attended a school which was right adjacent to Stanford University campus. The high school that I went to, called Gun High School, was mainly students of the professors of Stanford University. The school had a really high demand for engineering and technology oriented careers. That one school district had three large computers, what this meant was that almost every classroom in the school had a computer in it, it was almost impossible not to get involved in computers to some extent. I took some basic computer courses there and they even encouraged you to play around with the computer and I wrote some little Star Trek games. When I came back to the high school in Texas that I was at they no longer had all the nice computers around, in fact, the whole school district had one computer terminal. I knew the faculty pretty well and they let this girl and I have a class all to ourselves. They didn't have any teachers that could teach us anything beyond first year of programming. All

we had to do was work on projects and we would have a guarantee premium credit A grade for the remaining years of high school that we work on them.

W.J.: Where did you get the idea for Ultima I?

R.G.: To explain that I have to go back to my three years of high school. In the summer of my sophomore year I went to the University of Oklahoma for a summer program in math, science and computers. While I was out there I learned how to play Dungeons & Dragons and it was kind of natural that from that point on my projects in school would be fantasy games.

W.J.: Was Ultima your first fantasy game that you published?

R.G.: No, one came before that. It was called Akalabeth. The way I got started in these was like I said in high school. I was writing these programs, actually what they were called in school were D&D1, D&D2 and in my senior year, I wrote D&D28. In the summer of my senior year, I went to work for a Computerland store and suddenly was exposed to Apple computers which all of a sudden had graphics. The games I did in high school were teletype text so every time you moved it had to reprint out the view. I spend a lot of time researching what perspective view graphics would be like. With the Apple graphics I rewrote D&D28 and called it D&D28B and made what eventually became Akalabeth. Before I actually went to a publisher with it the owner of the Computerland store convinced me to go ahead and try to publish it. I invested a grand total of about \$200.00 to get started and sold a total of five

games. When the owner of the Computerland store was ordering some software from California Pacific and mentioned that one of his employees had written this nifty game and would they be interested and sent them a copy. A few days later I got a call from California Pacific saying that there were plane tickets waiting at Intercontinental Airport. I flew to California then signed a contract and started to make money. I didn't even intend to be published. I kind of stumbled into it.

W.J.: Were your parents supportive of your ambitions?

R.G.: Very, very much so. My father is in a very highly technical area and my oldest brother is now a doctor and Robert has more degrees than you can name, so I've come from a very college oriented family. I was attending the University of Texas in electrical engineering but my real desire was in programming and I spent a great deal of time on programming which interfered with my studies. To consider doing something like playing games for a living over getting a college degree in my family, even though they didn't say it, it was a taboo. But as it turns out I finally did make the decision to go into programming full time.

W.J.: Where did you get the name Lord British?

R.G.: I got it when I went to the University of Oklahoma. Some people came to my dorm, let themselves in and said "hi". I said "hello". They said "hello? nobody says hello, you must be from Britain." So they ended up calling me British. This made no sense to me at all since I don't have an English accent, I

come from Texas. It turns out though that I was born in Cambridge, England. Since that time all my D&D characters were named British.

W.J.: Where did you get the name Ultima?

R.G.: The original name for Ultima was not going to be Ultima it was going to be Ultimatum but it turns out that when we did a trademark search there was already a product out called Ultimatum. We went through a number of different variations and eventually arrived at Ultima and once Ultima II came out people started to comment that there was a cosmetic line out called Ultima II. Almost any name you choose is going to be something somewhere that will be similar.

W.J.: How long does it take you to program each Ultima?

R.G.: Each Ultima takes me almost a

year although the first one, Ultima I, really only took me nine months. Ultima II took me almost a year and so did Ultima III. Ultima IV is a much, much bigger game than I have ever done and has a lot more details. So I'm not a hundred percent sure I can make it in the same year but that is our goal.

W.J.: Were you surprised at the popularity of Ultima?

R.G.: Oh, very surprised because when I first started with California Pacific there were the days when Bill Budge and Bob Clardy were the original really big names and there was no one else publishing. So I really got into programming right at the tail end of the first round of people. I was suddenly one in a dozen people in the world doing it and it was kind of like instant success. Ultima became a top thirty program making substantial amounts of money and good ratings. I had never really planned on it or expected it.

W.J.: Why did you leave California Pacific for Sierra On-Line?

R.G.: I left for a number of reasons actually, California Pacific was getting into financial trouble internally. This caused them to delay paying me my royalties, this was only for a short period of time at first, then they just stopped paying. So, mainly for the reasons of security, I went to the first company that offered me a good deal that I liked which happened to be Sierra On-Line. The reason I went with Sierra On-Line was that they allowed me to program Ultima II the way I wanted. They even included in the contract that they would let me put a cloth map in with the game along with the documentation. Since no other company was willing to put that on paper I went with Sierra On-Line.

continued in the next issue of the Wizards Journal

FILING OUT THE NPC SHEET

NAME: The name must be 16 characters or less. Remember, no historical references.

GENDER: You know, male or female.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION: This should be a SHORT vivid description of the non-player character.

SELF DESCRIPTION OF OCCUPATION: This would be what he/she might say when you first talked to him/her. Again, keep it short!

For Use By Lord British:
Player Number:

Town:

Misc:

N.P.C. SAMPLE DATA SHEET

Name: Chuckles Gender: Male
Visual Description: You meet a tall slender gent.
Self Desc. of Occup.: I am a jester, I love to jest.
Self Desc. of Health: I am fine, thank you.
Key Word #1: jest
Specific Knowledge #1: My favorite jest is to juggle.
Key Word #2: juggle
Specific Knowledge #2: Juggling is fun
Y/N Question #1: Do you like to jest?
Response to answer Y: Me too.
Response to answer N: Too bad.
Y/N Question #2: Do you juggle?
Response to answer Y: Fantastic
Response to answer N: Too bad, I was hoping we could play
Monetary threshold: 10
Response to Money: Here, watch me juggle for you.
Action Response: None
When to Question: Health: _____ Question 1-Y: 2
Occupation: _____ Question 1-N: _____
Knowledge #1: _____ Question 2-Y: _____
Knowledge #2: 1 _____ Question 2-N: _____

SELF DESCRIPTION OF HEALTH: Each NPC may be asked about their health; this would be the response.

This next part is tricky. Each NPC is allowed two fields of knowledge they can be asked about; the trick is that a player playing the game MUST be able to guess or deduce what the field of specific knowledge is; therefore in her/his "self description" the NPC must make direct reference to that field and somehow clue in the player to the one word specific knowledge.

KEY WORD 1&2: This is the ONE word key that a player must type to ask the NPC to reveal her/his knowledge on that subject.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE 1&2: This is the short statement the NPC make when asked about her/his "Specific Knowledge".

Y/N QUESTION 1&2: Each NPC may ask the player two yes or no questions and make a response based on the players acknowledgement of Y or N. Again, SHORT!

RESPONSE TO Y or N: These are what the NPC will say after the player responds to her/his question.

MONETARY THRESHOLD: This is the amount of money (if any) the NPC requires the player to give for a special response.

RESPONSE TO MONEY: What the NPC will say should the player give him/her money equal or more than his/her Monetary Threshold.

ACTION RESPONSE: This will most likely be determined by myself only; but, you may indicate a preference i.e., the NPC should leave, give you an object, etc.

WHEN TO QUESTION: The NPC will not ask Question 1 or 2 until the point indicated in this table. Only one 1 and one 2 should be found on the table, and they indicate when to ask that specific question (i.e., a "1" adjacent to "Knowledge #1" would mean ask Question #1 after the NPC is asked about his/her "Knowledge #1", or a "2" adjacent to "Question 1-Y" would mean ask Question #2 only if the player responds Yes to Question #1.

NEW PRODUCTS

We now carry the "Secrets of Sosaria" from Origin Systems which is a player's guide to the world of Sosaria. All maps of the land, towns, castles and dungeons are included plus valuable playing tips. We also carry the first and official Ultima III poster which would look great on any wall.

CREATION OF AN ULTIMA IV NPC

One of the many new features of Ultima IV (according to current plans) will be that each and every person found in towns and castles will be a truly unique individual capable of carrying out a complete conversation. This will be accomplished by a simple tree format of questions and comments each of these people can say. Since there will be many hundreds of these characters within the game, I thought it might be fun to allow others to submit characters for consideration to be used within the game.

The objective in creating an Ultima IV NPC (non-player character) is to

create a vivid interesting person one might meet in a medieval town. These people should not be drawn from historical or fictional references but may be named after some of your own favorite fantasy names and personalities.

When I choose which characters to use, I will try to pick an accurate cross section of personalities (i.e. a good balance of merchants, peasants, adventurers, brigands, beggars, farmers, children, etc.); therefore, when you are creating characters try not to create too many of one type.

You may wish to draw upon the NPC's race and profession in the descriptions. The races and professions I currently plan to use for Ultima IV are: Human, Elf, Dwarf, Bobbit, Fuzzy, Fighter, Magician, Tinker, Paladin, Lark, Alchemist, Ranger, & Serf.

Feel free to create as many as you like, but I cannot guarantee that any will actually be used within the game, nor can I acknowledge any credits to the creator. All submissions become the property of Origin Systems; some I may change slightly to better fit the game concept if used.

For Use By Lord British:

Player Number:

Town:

Misc:

N.P.C. DATA SHEET

Name: _____ Gender: _____

Visual Description: _____

Self Desc. of Occup.: _____

Self Desc. of Health: _____

Key Word #1: _____

Specific Knowledge #1: _____

Key Word #2: _____

Specific Knowledge #2: _____

Y/N Question #1: _____

Response to answer Y: _____

Response to answer N: _____

Y/N Question #2: _____

Response to answer Y: _____

Response to answer N: _____

Monetary threshold: _____

Response to Money: _____

Action Response: _____

When to Question: _____

Health: _____

Question 1-Y: _____

Occupation: _____

Question 1-N: _____

Knowledge #1: _____

Question 2-Y: _____

Knowledge #2: _____

Question 2-N: _____

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