

QUESTBUSTERS™

The Adventurer's Newsletter
June, 1986

Vol. III, #6

OO-TOPOS

Oo-topos was the first adventure of science fiction novelist Michael Berlyn, who went on to Infocom where he created games such as *Suspended*, *Cutthroats* and *Infidel*. He and Muffy Berlyn wrote the story line, he programmed it, and *Oo-topos* was released in 1981 by Sentient Software in Colorado. Now Penguin has illustrated it, making this the only all-text adventure to be adapted into a graphics game (unless you count the early Scott Adams' stuff). In addition to outstanding double-resolution graphics, the reincarnated *Oo-topos* profits from Penguin's fluent Comprehend parser. It also runs much faster than the original, which was in BASIC.

In the first scene, you find yourself in a familiar situation: locked in a cell. You can't proceed without solving this puzzle, but it's a pushover. Outside, you'll prowl the halls of an alien complex on the planet Oo-topos, where your space ship was forced to land. (Documentation includes a computer printout describing the events that led up to your being taken prisoner.) Your first goal is to escape and collect the parts of your ship, which are scattered from one end of Oo-topos to the other. There are also assorted treasures to acquire -- especially the cargo of medicine you were taking to earth to save the planet from certain doom -- before you load the ship and get it in shape to blast off again.

The game unfolds in four geographic settings: the alien complex, a cleverly designed maze and a set of rooms that are reached from inside the maze, the jungle surrounding the complex, and the interior of your ship. At last count I was up to 70 rooms, many of which yield several illustrations. (You can choose

regular or hi-res graphics, and the program uses any extra RAM to load in most of them so there's less disk access.) There's no music or sound effects.

Until you escape the complex and find your ship, the game doesn't seem to add up. But if you say "status" to the ship's computer, it tells you which parts have to be found and installed before you can take off, and everything falls into place. Actually, this is like playing *Original Adventure* -- find the objects and store them in a specific location. At least here you know what to look for: a navchip, an energy converter, and the usual equipment necessary to run an "Astro Mega Class" space ship. A booklet (the Operator's Manual) describes each item and shows the ship's floor plan.

It's not linear at all, allowing you to roam the complex freely (after you find the mandatory light source, of course), wander off in numerous directions, and track down the initial problems and objects. Mapping is important but never taxing. The most important item you'll need will be the space suit, which is found in a place you can only reach by using the grav-tube. (See last month's issue for the precise answer.) Thankfully, the original game's maze in the hydroponics garden was omitted from this version.

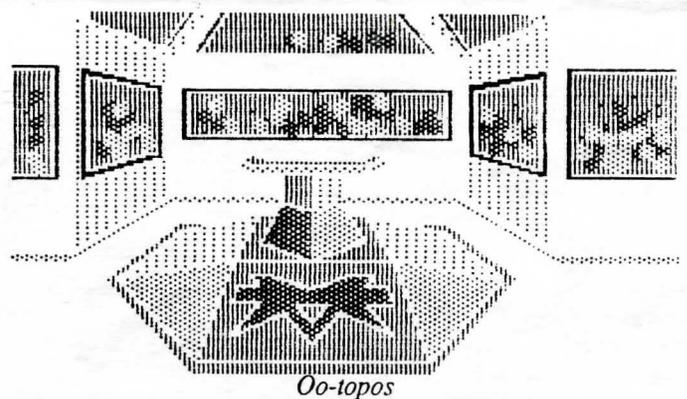
I always enjoy a Berlyn adventure because the puzzles are truly logical -- based on the physical laws of cause and effect, not the logic of the individual who writes the game (as is too often the case). Many of the original puzzles remain in place, but elements have been jumbled so even people who played the all-text version will find this one challenging. Inventory management isn't as much of a

problem with this version. Most of the problems revolve around the "greed factor" as you attempt to obtain objects (a good adventurer can never have too many objects, you know). One might be guarded by a robot, another by deadly radiation, a third by a bizarre alien. There's no character interaction in terms of talking to creatures or robots, but you do interact with them by

using the correct objects.

You've got alien machinery to figure out, but nothing overwhelming or more complicated than a microwave oven. The maze is not as hard as it looks and can be mapped in under an hour; just take at least three objects and drop them in different rooms. Last issue we

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Best Quests of 1985

After months of vote-counting, we're proud to announce the official "Best Quests of 1985." The results are based on several hundred responses from subscribers, members of the Apple Pi gamesig, and our contributing editors. When the choice for a particular category was hard to call, we consulted our mystic orb. (Ferdinand Marcos volunteered to help count the votes, but couldn't get here in time for the final tally.)

The winner of the Best All-text Adventure Award was *Spellbreaker*. In the graphic adventure category, *Crimson Crown* was number one. Best Fantasy Role-playing game was no surprise--*Ultima IV*. Origin Systems was also first across the finish line in the Best Non-fantasy RPG category, with *AutoDuel*.

The next category was Most Innovative. *Mindwheel* took it for All-text game, while

Nine Princes in Amber captured the graphic adventure slot. *Adventure Construction Set* walked away with Fantasy Role-playing; the Non-fantasy winner was *Universe II*. Best Music in an Adventure Game went to *Treasure Island* (Commodore version). *Ultima IV* won again as having best music in a Role-playing game.

At the last minute, we added three more categories, whose winners were selected solely by Shay Addams: Best Adaptation from Another Medium -- *Perry Mason: Case of the Mandarin Murder*. Best Shoot-'em-up-in-a-Maze Game -- *Gemstone Warrior*. Hardest Quest of the Year -- *Bard's Tale*.

And the winner of the most coveted award of them all, Best Quest of the Year for 1985, was Richard Garriott's *Ultima IV: Quest of the Avatar*.



ADVENTURE HOTLINE

Rollin' on the River

Activision's *Murder on the Mississippi* is out for the Commodore; an Apple version is next. As a famous British sleuth steaming up the river on the Delta Princess, you discover a body and must nail the killer. It's a graphic game that is played with a joystick-directed parser, no typing at all. Activision's running a related contest, giving away a trip on a real Mississippi riverboat. *Cross Bones*, a graphic adventure about pirates, is set for the fall.

Thanks, Infocom

We're finally getting around to saying thanks to Infocom for the 20 games we gave away in the recent contest. Most winners asked for *Spellbreaker*, but some requested older games like *Cuthroats*, or the latest one, *Ballyhoo*. The winner of this month's contest is Timothy Walsh of Ontario, Canada, who won a copy of *Wizard's Crown* from SSI.

Lord British's Gameplan

Origin has big plans for the next year, including a game tentatively titled *Space Rogue* in which your character pilots a combat ship through space to meet merchants, fight pirates and explore the far reaches of the universe. A potential sequel will put you in charge of a multi-character crew. Fred Saberhagen's *Book of Swords* novels will become a role-playing game or three sometime in '87. Chuckles is doing *Robots*, set in a futuristic city ruled by robots whose misguided actions threaten humanity. Origin is also planning a hybrid graphic adventure/role-playing game with a science fiction theme. Other Origin releases on the agenda include *Undead*, based on a Steve Jackson board game, *Ultima I and II*, and their first graphic adventure, *Ring Quest*. Formerly published by Penguin, *Ring Quest* will have some reworked graphics and new puzzles. Oh, and Lord British is working on something called *Ultima V*.

Neverending Names

Datasoft, which recently changed its name from HP, Inc. to Intellicreations, has released an "adventure/fantasy" based on the book and film *The Neverending Story*. For the Commodore, Atari and Apple, it's only \$29.95. For the same machines and prices, their *221 B Baker Street* will offer 30 illustrated cases for Sherlock Holmes to solve; look for it in July. Follow-up disks will have 30 cases each and go for \$14.95. *Alternate Reality* is being converted for Mac, IBM PC and jr and ST. They will feature new activities, such as joining

guilds, casting spells, and getting a job. Part two of the series, *The Dungeon*, is being readied for a fall release.

Clues Update

If you bought a copy of *Book of Adventures II* and noticed the map and answers to *Crimson Crown* only covered the first half of the game, you can write the company for a complete map and solution. Future editions will include it. Simon & Schuster will send a "Kobayashi Alternative Procedures Manual" to warranty holders. Those who haven't already sailed the disk out the window may find the manual's tips helpful. Sierra now sells clue books to *King's Quest I and II* for \$7.95.

The Berlyn Wall

Mike and Muffy Berlyn, when not busy brainstorming new games and other products at their company, Brainwave, Inc., will be teaching a course on writing science fiction at Harvard University this summer.

New Releases and Recent Conversions

ST: *Essex* and *Brimstone* (Broderbund), *Phantasie* (SSI), *Sword of Kadash* (Penguin), *Apschai Trilogy* (Epyx)
IBM: *Crimson Crown* and Comprehend version of *Transylvania* (Penguin)
Mac: *Phantasie* (SSI)
Atari: *Wizard's Crown* (SSI)
Commodore: *The Ultimate Wizard* (Electronic Arts)
Amiga: *Apschai Trilogy* (Epyx)

More From England

Firebird's *The Pawn*, an ST graphic adventure, is being converted for the Mac, Amiga and IBM. Mindscape has imported *Spell of Destruction*, an action-style game with some magic spells, from England. A three-game disk, also from England, delivers *Brian Bloodaxe*, *Revelation* and *Quo Vadis*, which are similar games.

Free QuestBusters

Now you don't even have to pay for this newsletter. Beginning this month, every time you order a game from our "Passport to Adventure" Department your subscription will automatically be extended for three more issues [one issue for book orders]. If you don't see the game you want listed on page eight, just write for a price and we can order it for you. We won't be sending renewal notices with this issue, so check the expiration date on the mailing label. For those who don't want to order a game right now, we'll still take \$15 -- cash, money order, check or gold -- for renewals.

OO-TOPOS

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said it was six rooms, but it turns out the maze is actually one room: a cube in which you can walk on the walls and ceiling. It's still easier to map if you think of each wall as the floor of a new room. No hidden exits to worry about either.

Artwork is more consistent than in Penguin's most recent game, *Crimson Crown*. The style is completely different, each scene depicted with realistic perspective and solid colors that reminded me of a cover off a copy of *Analog* or some other science fiction magazine. No spot animation. You may toggle to an all-text display, handy for mapping purposes because there's no pause while graphics are displayed. The Comprehend parser remains top of the line for graphic adventures, understanding multiple sentences, pronouns, prepositions and complex commands. It's also speedy, a major problem with some graphic games. The Comprehend parser is even superior to parsers found in most text adventures. The one thing missing is the Berlyn sense of humor. I seem to recall laughing a lot more when playing the original game.

Recommended for all space-faring adventurers, *Oo-topos* doesn't promise anything revolutionary in character interaction, plot, or game mechanics -- it is simply that rarest of things, a good old-fashioned adventure in the classical style of "find the stuff and grab it," a collection of clever and legitimately logical puzzles that open the gateway into a stimulating romp through the corridors of your own mind. Science fiction adventures haven't been as common as those with fantasy themes, and it's interesting that this one appeared just as Halley's Comet made its closest approach to earth. Hopefully we won't have to wait another 76 years for *Oo-topos II*.

Computer: AP (64), C-64/128
Planned Conversions: IBM, Mac, Amiga, AT XL, XE & ST
Skill Level: Intermediate
Price: \$34.95
Manufacturer: Polarware/Penguin

QuestBusters

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PHANTASIE II

by dwp

If you loved *Phantasie I* then you will probably like *Phantasie II*, particularly if variety disturbs you. You won't even have to read a new manual, since only the old one is included -- along with the same reference card and another two-sided card explaining the new plot. Here is an exhaustive list of the changes in the game:

1. *Phantasie II* has "approximately 15" informational scrolls scattered about the landscape instead of the 20 found in its predecessor.
2. Instead of collecting 9 rings and an amulet, the player must collect 8 amulets and an orb.
3. A new combat feature allows anyone to toss rocks at monsters, thus giving your entire party the capacity to strike at the 2nd and 3rd ranks of monsters in a relatively insignificant (1-12 pts of damage) manner.
4. There are 3 new graphics tiles, one of which resembles the emperor's new clothes, another of which is lava and damages players traveling across it.
5. There are a couple more undocumented spells and "features."

For those who have played *Phantasie I*, you will be allowed to keep your old characters -- in a manner of speaking. What you get to keep in actuality is their names, a couple of hundred gold pieces and approximately 2,000 experience points. This was small consolation when transferring my wizards who had over 50,000 gold pieces, all of the possible wizard spells, and well over a million experience points. . .

If you have not played *Phantasie I*, you are probably better off playing it than this game -- the documentation seems to be slightly more relevant. Other than that, the proverbial blind taste test would reveal no difference whatsoever between the two games. Those who played the first one will grit their teeth upon learning that the time-wasting, tedious routine for distribution of weapons and other objects was not upgraded for the sequel.

One final note. Despite the claim on the new information card that *Phantasie II* is not copy-protected, neither this reviewer using Apple's COPY utility nor one of my fellow reviewers using half a dozen different nibble copiers was able to make a backup copy of the program...oh well, I couldn't really transfer my characters either. [Ed.: SSI says Copy II will work, but it didn't.]

For those who missed Ron Wartow's review of the original *Phantasie*, here are some highlights: Besides the usual races and classes, you can generate a random creature such as an orc or minotaur. Your party of up to six can also bring along an earth, fire or water elemental for fighting purposes. The arsenal of weapons and spells

includes 54 spells, some progressive (like Mindblast 1 through 4), and 60 weapons. Each character can cast magic. All spellcasters and attackers are slightly animated and there's a running text commentary.

In combat, your party is shown side-to-side on the bottom of the left half of the screen, with the creatures above them. The right half depicts dungeon or terrain, which is seen from an aerial view. These 50 x 30 single level dungeons come alive because they are all separate locales (e.g. town, castle or cathedral), which your party unmasks with each step. Each square entered is accompanied by a short text description. The dungeons contain little dots that, when stepped on, could be a person who talks to you and gives you valuable information, a teleport or other things with which you must interact. The 11 text-screen towns contain guilds, banks and so on. There is no temple. Only a resurrection spell can help.

The real strength of *Phantasie* is the story, which unfolds as the game progresses. You must meticulously travel the land because the "people" with whom you are constantly interacting and the information and items you find are needed to make progress further down the line. You must solve puzzles by carefully acquiring valuable items, information and the scrolls to reach the end game. Multiple choice questions are given throughout the game during encounters.

One huge flaw detracts from the game: a mandatory, cumbersome and lengthy distribution and selling routine you must go through upon entering a town. The program takes what could be well over 100 items being carried and dumps them into a pool for you to redistribute to individual party members or sell. This turns the usual simple matter of trading items between characters into torture.

The game is entirely menu-driven, employing single key presses (Commodore versions also offer joystick control). A 16-page manual is excellent, including numerous useful charts and a handy reference card of all the spells. Highly recommended.

Computer: I: Apple, IIC, III, C-64/128, Atari, Macintosh. II: Apple, C-64/128

Planned Conversions: I: Amiga, ST.

II: all the above

Skill Level: Intermediate

Price: \$39.95

Manufacturer: Strategic Simulations

Next Issue:
Murder on the Mississippi
Spell of Destruction
Quo Vadis
Adventure Construction Tips
Haunted House
and more!

BRATACCAS

Action adventures crossed a new threshold with *Brataccas*, which is more like playing an animated cartoon than a computer game. Psygnosis' team of British programmers and designers has finally given Sierra some competition in the field of animated adventures, though the latter can get *King's Quest* into a 128K machine while *Brataccas* requires 512K.

The story begins when Kyne is teleported to Brataccas, an asteroid, in search of evidence that will clear him of "The Crime Against Humanity." (Say, this sounds serious.) The asteroid is honeycombed with corridors leading to a variety of rooms that contain bars, control rooms and outlaw hideouts. Most are guarded by the ABP (Asteroid Belt Police) or droids that hover in the air. Graffiti on the brick walls shouts "Kyne is guilty!" (and some of it trumpets the programmers' initials), but fortunately you've assumed an alias and won't be arrested unless you slip up. As you move through the halls and ride the elevators, you will pass other characters whose intricately detailed cartoon faces soon become recognizable on sight. By dealing with them you will learn who you can trust and who's out to get you.

The cast includes the sinister Kol Worpt, a pot-bellied Mr. Big of Outer Space; his henchmen, with heads like snapping turtles; and a half-dozen snitches who may provide useful information if paid for their trouble. There's also Lash, Kol's hit-man, five dispatchers who sit behind control panels directing the droids, communications, and other aspects of life on an asteroid, and the ABP's chief, Commander Stopp, who floats around in a funny little hoverdish.

It's science fiction, but most combat is done with swords. (The manual says energy-based weapons are banned to protect the atmospheric integrity of Brataccas.) Kyne's battery of defensive and offensive moves don't take long to learn, and there are just enough fight scenes to keep the story exciting. This usually happens when you enter a room guarded by droids, or a guard sees you walking around with your sword drawn, a capital crime on Brataccas. Energy bombs are also strewn about, but I haven't figured out how to use them yet.

After killing a dispatcher, you might get to use his control panel. Your thought balloons will offer several messages: send cops to Calypso Bar, put cops on Red Alert. I like to run amok right away and see how much havoc and chaos I can create in a minimum of time. There are also wall switches to turn on and off, and it's fun experimenting with them.

TV surveillance cameras swivel, the p.a. system blares out news of what's happening in other parts of the asteroid, video screen news reports give tips -- these are just some

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Described on the box as a game of "Strategic Space Trading and Combat Adventure with Flight Simulation," *Elite* plays like *AutoDuel* in space: a combination of shoot-'em-up action, making money in a variety of ways so you can buy more weaponry for your Cobra Mk III trade-ship, and a trace element of role-playing. [The latter simply means that your character has no attributes, just a name.] The emphasis is on waging dogfights in space, but strategy and a few logical puzzles await those who survive long enough.

At the outset you're docked in a space station orbiting the planet Lave, where menus enable you to spend your initial 100 credits on products such as food, textiles, machinery, slaves and other things that can hopefully be sold for a profit on another planet. Other menus are provided for buying weapons, selling goods, checking your status, examining star charts and setting a course. The star map is dotted with over 2,000 planets sprinkled among eight galaxies, enough to keep even the most footloose space adventurer busy for eons.

Most of the action takes place in space as you shoot back and forth on trade runs. Across the top of the screen unfurls a first-person view of the stars, and you can hit a key (some actions are also joystick-controlled) to look left, right and behind your ship as well. A bizarre 3-D radar display on the bottom is meant to help you determine the position and distance of other ships, but the manual doesn't explain how. It doesn't offer much on how to fly this ship, either, which is unfortunate -- it doesn't handle like any space vessel I've ever flown. It's easy to dive or climb, but turning left or right requires a weird combination of rolls and banks while moving up or down -- you can't just move the stick to move left or right. It takes hours to figure it out, and the manual's no help: "Pitch and yaw manoeuvre requires bi-digital play on keyboard" is not my idea of explicit instructions.

When pirate or police ships show up in the viewscreen, they are depicted with what looks like the vector graphics used in the *Star Wars* arcade game. Good 3-D effects typify the visuals, especially when you watch through the rear-view as a ship or asteroid recedes in the distance. Unless they happen to be pirate ships, which will wheel about and blast you out of space repeatedly until you've adequately mastered combat tactics. (If you get wiped out or decide to start over, the game automatically reverts to your last saved position without disk access, so this isn't as devastating as it sounds.)

Strategy comes into play when you decide where to take your cargo. The amount a planet will pay for products depends on its economic status; the inherent danger (the likelihood of meeting up with pirates)

hinges on a planet's political status. There are agricultural and industrial planets, some rich and others poor, some advanced and others primitive. Each is also rated by tech level, and the most powerful weaponry and other gear is sold at planets at the upper end of this scale. The eight kinds of government range from relatively safe Corporate Worlds to Anarchies, the riskiest but most lucrative planets to visit.

Around each planet a similar space station orbits, and you must negotiate a tricky docking maneuver unless you've made enough to buy an auto-docking computer. You can view data screens describing each planet, but can't land on them. The chief drawback to trading is that the inventory screen doesn't tell how much you paid for each item, so you've got to do extra paperwork in order to be sure you don't sell something at a loss instead of a profit.

Elite is also like an action-oriented *Universe II*, since you can do many of the same things to earn a living: mining, space piracy, trading goods. There is no apparent plot, however. As you become more proficient in combat, your status is upgraded; you begin as "harmless," advance through several more levels to become "dangerous" and ultimately attain the "elite" status that represents the game's goal. As you progress, special missions are offered via incoming messages. If accepted, these high-paying cargo runs trigger unexpected events in the form of logical puzzles that must be solved. I'm not wild about action games, but have to admit I played *Elite* far more than I needed to before (and after) writing the review.

The 64-page manual packs plenty of background material as well as thorough information on everything except the most crucial and frustrating part of the game - how to fly the ship. (It does give a few useful tips on combat tactics.) A reference sheet shows all keyboard commands, a color poster shows the silhouettes of the 22 kinds of space ships, asteroids and other things you might see in the viewscreen, and a mini-novel is included to set the stage. The program resides in RAM, so there's never any disk access. Technically, it's the best British computer game I've seen: excellent animation and a smooth effective interface.

If you detest action games, there's not much for you here. But if you're the kind of space trader who likes to blast your way through the universe, *Elite* is the most dynamic game of its kind, probably the most expansive. And since the space ship handles so differently from any other I've seen, joystick jockeys looking for a new frontier will find this a stimulating challenge.

Computer: Apple, C-64/128
Skill Level: Intermediate/Advanced
Saves: Limited only by disk space
Price: \$34.95
Manufacturer: Firebird

Elidon & Golden Flute

by Ken St. André

It's a lucky thing for the software sellers of the world that I'm such a sucker for a certain kind of packaging. If they include some kind of fantasy theme in the cover art or sales pitch, I'm more than half-sold already. If the price falls below an arbitrary cut-off point in my mind, I'm a goner. I'd like to warn you about a couple of products that seem to be aimed directly at adventurer gamers, but which proved a bit of a disappointment after I booted them up.

Elidon

The ad makes it sound like a hi-res adventure with a twist -- just the kind I would like. It says, "This intriguing game will capture your imagination in many ways. Unlike the repetitive nature of most computer games, *Elidon* is forever challenging, forever changing. Set in a secret forest, you must seek seven potions to make magical flowers bloom. You will meet dark places, evil spirits and other unknown perils in your hazardous quest, where secrets are not revealed easily."

"A breakaway hit in Europe! Thousands of Commodore 64 users in England alone began the *Elidon* quest in its first month of distribution! The incredible graphics and its intriguing, changing nature have challenged the best minds. To date, no one except its designer has solved the mystery! A substantial cash reward is offered to the first person completing this game! Other prizes will be allotted as well. Full details are enclosed with this remarkable game!"

Sounds like an adventure game, doesn't it? Despite the ad, depicting a Tinkerbelle-type fairy in a field of flowers, I envisioned something like Spenser's Faery Queen--perhaps my character would be an Elfin knight exploring the wilds of Faery. I should have looked at the pictures more closely. You guessed it--my character is Tinkerbelle!

As for the contest details being enclosed, they weren't. Obviously some kind of contest is in progress, because after completing the game you are given a secret 12-digit number. What you're supposed to do with it I'll never know, because the game's one card of documentation barely tells you that, in order to return summer to the forest, you have to find the seven potions that are hidden in it. I've seen more documentation on postage stamps! (Just kidding, but not much.)

It's an arcade game, folks. Your Tinkerbelle persona has four wands full of fairy dust to keep her flying. When you run out of fairy dust, the game is over. After

each game you are told what percentage of the forest you have seen and your score. My best so far is about 19% and 1900 points. Judging from percentages and number of rooms, I'd say there are about 200 rooms in this forest.

As in any arcade game, there are menaces to keep you from winning: twinklies, bubbies, sparklies and moths, all of which will knock your butterfly out of the air and waste precious fairy dust. In the lightless cavern lurk yellow-eyed beasts that you never see but for their eyes. Don't get trapped by a vampire butterfly, or it will drain all your power, and if you should meet a floating will-o-the-wisp, your very wings might burn off. Bumping into flowers, trees, walls, mushrooms, vines, or hanging, skyborne islands will cause your sprite to come fluttering down to earth in a spin. Talk about menaces! I'm the worst thing the hunting fairy has to face, as I slam her head into walls time and time again.

Let me give the program its due. It has the finest hi-res animation I've ever seen. The fairy and butterfly foes are exquisite, and they move--the fairy only moves her feet when walking and wings when flying, otherwise she maintains a stiff but graceful pose. The flowers are so well-drawn that you can recognize them even though they're less than 1/4" wide on the screen. I'm not much of a botanist or gardener, but I can pick out roses and sunflowers and morning glories and bluebells. And the music is superbly chosen for the program -- a haunting fairy-like theme on flute and cello.

But frobotz it all, I'd rather be bashing orcs and outwitting dragons than twinkle-toeing through the tulips, running away from butterflies and searching for bottles of foggy, foggy dew!
[by Orpheus, for C-64]

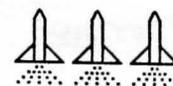
Golden Flutes & Great Escapes

This is a combined software and book package from Dilithium Press. I bought it for \$29.95 at a Walden's bookstore. It comes in versions for virtually every home computer -- I saw it for Apple, IBM and Commodore. What sold me was the lurid cover showing a semi-Barsoomian scene with hero and princess riding green mini-dinosaurs across a red desert toward a futuristic fortress, a lumpy space ship waiting off to one side. The premise is that not only do you get two or three adventures, but you will also learn how to write adventures for others (in BASIC, of course).

Well, maybe you will, but don't think this one book is going to take you into the big time! Delton Horn, our author, is going over tried and true techniques from 1977. The games you will learn to write in this

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Psi 5 Trading Company



This game's title led me to expect a *SunDog*-like scenario: buying cargo on one planet and selling it on another while pursuing a long-range goal. But I didn't get to do any trading at all, so don't be fooled by the name. Gameplay revolves around running a Space Freighter as it rockets across the galaxies to deliver a load of perishable cargo. You are the captain of a five-member crew that may be composed of a mix of aliens, humans and robots.

First you choose one of three cargo runs, which determines the difficulty level. Then icons display the faces of six potential crewmembers who are available for duty on the first job, navigator. You can use keyboard or joystick control to view a resumé describing each one's training, experience and personal quirks such as how well they handle stress and communicate with others. This process is repeated for the other four positions -- weapons, engineering, repair, and scan, so you've got a total of 30 characters from which to form your crew. There are no hit points or attributes as in a standard role-playing game, though a lot depends on having a well-balanced crew.

As captain, you can gaze out on the stars, space ships, and various interstellar phenomena through a viewscreen on the top left of the screen. On the right, a similar window shows the crewmember you're currently dealing with. Lights and gauges indicate when someone wants to tell or ask you something. A single-line command menu runs across the middle of the screen. To talk to navigation, you press "n" and his picture fills the right viewscreen. Then you can use other one-key commands to get data or messages from him (or her or it) or to give orders. If you don't act quickly enough, some crewmembers will often act independently. "Heh heh, I just attacked a ship," the trigger-happy robot might inform you. This might be good in some instances, while in others it could lead to catastrophe.

Unknown ships soon show up as you zoom through space, and you've got to get the scan officer to determine whether they're friendly or must be engaged in combat. The weapons officer has blasters, missiles and other weapons to fire at the foe, and success often hinges on figuring out which one to use against a specific ship. Damage to ship systems such as port shield, life support and engines must be repaired by assigning droids to them on a case-by-case basis. You can determine the priority of each repair job, and this is another vital factor in victory.

As the number of attacks increases, so do the damages and the number of reports you

must check on from each crewmember. Things escalate rapidly from busy to frenetic to nervous breakdown -- this is a high pressure game that rarely gives you time to think. Sure, you can pause the action at any time, but doing so blanks out the data screen so you can't use the time to study a scan or repair report in order to make a more informed decision. A more significant drawback is that you can't save a game in progress. This makes it impossible to save during a battle, then try different strategies with the same situation to find an effective strategy.

If your ship suffers too much damage, the cargo may be destroyed or looted by pirates. In either case, the ship automatically returns home. The score is displayed with an invoice telling how much money you made or lost in terms of number of enemy ships destroyed, damage to your ship, and other factors. You can also see the status of each department in the last moments of the game, but there's insufficient feedback that can be used to formulate strategy.

And the emphasis is definitely on strategy, not hand/eye coordination or logical puzzle-solving. The role-playing aspect lies in culling the prospects to organize a capable team and offers extensive replay value. How will an all-robot crew work out? What about a woman weapons officer? An alien? Some people may find this intriguing, but I found myself wishing for more to do with the characters *after* the trip was underway.

The sound effects and animation are top-notch. When the pressure is on, some crewmembers literally sweat, others move their eyes, and they're all fun to watch. The music changes to fit the action, providing a sense of drama. One advantage is the lack of disk access during play, for the program loads entirely into RAM. You won't even have to reload it to start a new game (if you choose to keep the same crew and mission).

If not for the lack of a save game feature, *Psi 5* would get a higher recommendation. As it stands, this is an decidedly different kind of space game recommended only for starcaptains who like to experiment and who work best under pressure -- lots of it. If you really want to engage in extensive space trading as well as flying the ship, get *Elite*, *Sundog* or the *Universe* series.

Computer: Apple, C-64/128

Skill Level: Advanced

Saves: None

Price: \$34.95

Manufacturer: Accolade

Brataccas

Continued from page 3

examples of the use of animation used to enliven the background. Kyne is a remarkably animated figure, as are the other characters. He can run, jump, duck, turn sideways, and each of his dozen or so actions is executed with fluid, smooth and detailed animation -- and color except on the Mac. Sometimes you don't have to do a thing, for the game kicks into automatic if a pair of Kol's henchmen decide to take you to see him -- you can lean back and watch the scenery for a spell. The only time the animation slows down noticeably (on the Mac, anyway) is when the screen gets crowded with people.

The interface for interacting with people and things is ingenious and original. When someone says, "Hey creep, come here," his words appear in a balloon over his head, just like in the comic strips. Then Kyne's balloon says, "Mmm, shall I" as he thinks over possible replies, which appear one by one in the balloon: "ask for info" is replaced with "ask about evidence," which is followed by "ask where skweel was last seen?" You hit the space bar, fire button or mouse button to select the current reply.

Inventory is even simpler: you just grab one of the items in sight, such as a security pass, money bag, or a scroll, with mouse or keyboard controls. (But the controls themselves are not so simple.) Kyne can carry several at once, and can identify his possessions by seeing them named in his thought balloons.

To direct Kyne's movements, you can use keyboard or mouse control; the Atari also uses a joystick. The manual does a poor job of explaining the controls, which encompass three "modes" and the odd concept of "implied actions." This means you "imply a movement to the computer . . . which allows you to control Kyne in an intuitive way." Essentially, this means "fool around with the controls and you'll learn how they work." It was frustrating for a few hours. Kyne kept running headfirst into walls (the word "OUCH!" appears in big letters), falling down and dropping everything.

I had more luck using the keyboard than the mouse [which is virtually impossible to use], and soon graduated from fleeing in terror from the Asteroid Belt Police or Kol's henchmen when they threatened, to seeking them out and killing them -- out of sight of TV cameras, of course. The offbeat interface differs for each of the three computers, so Mindscape made things even more confusing by trying to explain them all in the same few pages. Individual reference cards for each system would have made more sense.

There is no disk access at all, and a utilities menu lets you save games or even reconfigure the keyboard controls. The sound effects, mainly doors opening and

shutting, can't be turned down or off. When you get killed you start over automatically, or you may can reload one of five saved games. It will help to map the asteroid's rooms, and you can call up the utility menu to pause the game while scribbling away.

A certain amount of dexterity is required for success, but ultimate victory will hinge on determining what you can do with the things you find -- and figuring out the best time to do them. The manual has lots of hints. I found the evidence the first night of the game, but haven't figured out what to do with it yet, so there's more depth to the game than suggested by the simple plot. (There is no score.) A brilliant game system, *Brataccas* is the future of computer gaming -- well, one of them, anyway.

Computer: ST, Amiga, Mac - 512K

Skill Level: Intermediate

Saves: 5

Price: \$59.95

Manufacturer: Mindscape, Inc.

Elidon/Golden Flute

Continued from page 5

book, whose final versions are on the disk, are about the least sophisticated adventures I've ever seen. And forget about graphics! What you learn about graphics is how to move a few letters around on a 10 x 10 grid of points. I think we can all do a lot better with *Adventure Construction Set*.

I may be able to force myself to finish reading the book someday. It would be a lot easier if I were a twelve-year-old and this the text for a computer course in BASIC, since that seems to be the age level the author has aimed for. I'll admit I could learn a little bit to improve my programming skills--I'm not the greatest master of BASIC, but to tell the truth, I don't have that much time to spend programming anymore. When I'm not writing something, there are plenty of superb adventures to play. Who wants to program?

The disk contains four programs. *The Golden Flute* is a magical quest to kill the goblin and recover the whatzis. *The Great Escape* is a treasure hunt in a hostile castle. Although this is supposed to be contemporary, it shows typical irrationality by mixing gold coins, robots and good fairies in the same adventure. *Treasure Hunt* is a very simple program. You the skipper have six simple-minded but loyal crewmen who must go ashore on various islands and hunt for a buried treasure. There they stumble around until either finding it or killing themselves. They kill themselves by stepping into quicksand, or by bumping into too many rocks or trees. Probably the cleverest of the programs on the disks is *Mars*. I'm sure I've seen this one, or an earlier version of it, sold commercially through the computer mags three or four years ago. It's the classic type of puzzle

where you must juggle an enormous number of items in the right sequence to find the treasure, repair your ship and return to earth. I walked outside without my space suit and died immediately. Intentionally. I don't care for this type of mind puzzle, but some of you might like to try it.

After you've read the book, done all the programs, improved on them about 1000%, you might think you're an adventure game writer. Chapter 11 give 2 1/2 pages of elementary advice on marketing your designs, with nine addresses of software publishers. The book is copyrighted in 1984, so some of them have probably moved since.

The package does come with an excellent plastic container suitable for mailing up to six disks. I try to see the redeeming virtues in even the most disappointing of products. But next time I see a low-cost piece of software with a fantasy cover, will someone please restrain me--with a net if necessary.

THE HOBBIT

I can't imagine a better basis for a children's adventure than J.R.R. Tolkien's novel of hobbits and elves on a quest for the One Ring of Power. But I can't recommend this adaptation, which suffers from several design and implementation flaws.

For one, it's a graphic game that often refuses to let you look at the pictures. An illustration slowly fills the screen, then instantly disappears and is replaced with text informing you that "Elrond" or another character has entered the scene. Even the graphics that stay on-screen till you press a key are below-average in quality. And often they don't even depict things described in the text, such as the trolls. So it's better to play this without the pictures right from the start. (You can't toggle between all-text and graphic modes during a game.)

The problems are hardly logical, so you won't get far unless you use the coded clues in the manual or have read the book (a paperback copy is included). Those already familiar with Tolkien's story will miss many of the charming characters, for only the main ones such as Elrond, Thorin, and Gandalf are in this version; you play the part of Bilbo the hobbit.

For the top score of 100, you must return the Ring, accompanied by Thorin, to your hobbit home. You can obtain hard copy of the text as you play; the manual lists the vocabulary; the parser is adequate. But most young adventurers will get far more entertainment from the novel than this game, and it's certainly a lot cheaper to buy a paperback book.

Computer: Apple 64, C-64/128, IBM

Skill Level: Novice

Saves: 8

Price: \$34.95 (A, I), \$29.95 (C)

Manufacturer: Addison-Wesley

KEYS TO THE KINGDOMS

BARD'S TALE

[1] If you've just found a lot of magic items or earned mucho experience & a character dies, go to Inn & remove all the other characters. Exit, then reboot: the other characters keep all the items and experience & the dead one is still alive. [2] After finding Mad God's name in the sewers, tell it to temple priest & he'll let you enter catacombs. [3] Mangar's Tower can be entered from sewers if you have the onyx key from Kylearan's Amber Tower, which is entered from Harkyn's Castle. [4] When advancing a character, save him first. Reboot, go to review board - if you don't like number of spell/hit points he gets, reboot & try again: the amount of points is random.

"His nib, the Mad God, you'll find in the castle; it seems he's missing an eye.

It behooves you to find him and soundly defeat him, if ever you hope to fly.

He resides near the barracks; persevere and pay attention, and not least of all take heed.

For he'll resist your intrusion where corners are dangerous and spells they do recede."

Michael Loftus

SPELLBREAKER

Oubliette: Tinsot the outflow pipe twice and wait for the water to rise. Don't bring the spell book in here or it will be ruined. When room is full, use same spell on water and stand on the ice to reach trap door. Guard Tower: drop blue carpet and sit on it. Fly up to scare the Roc away. Now you can get cube in nest, but watch out for baby Roc. Grouper's Nest: to get the cube, Snavig yourself into a fish and swim down. When you turn back, grab all and you will have just enough time to get back up. Water Room: you make four separate trips here, two for each exit from it. Rodent-idol: it isn't necessary to blind rodent, since the opal is an alternative to the gold coin for folks who don't want to bargain with the merchant.

WIZARD'S CROWN

Don't enter dungeons without a foxfire spell on and a thief with high search ability, or you'll miss important items.

ULTIMA IV

Spells: for Gate Travel, you need Ash, Black Pearl and Mandrake. For Undead, Ash and Garlic. Three parts of the key: Bell of Courage, found at Lat. N'A", Long. L'A"; Book of Truth, at A'G", A'G" [Lycaenum]; and Candle of Love, at A'B", B'G" [Cove temple]. Balloon is found at P'C", O'J" [Klimb, then use wind spell to control it]. Mystic Armor A'E", B'G" in oak grove. Mystic Weapons A'P", A'T" in academy. Silver Horn: K'N", C'N". Skull of Mondain, P'F", M'F" [during new moon]. Mandrake root, D'G", L'G" search during new moon. Nightshade: J'F", C'O" search during new moon. The Word: ask kings in Empath Abbey, Lycaenum and Serpent's Reach about Word. White stone: F'A", E'A" [fly over Serpent Spine in balloon]. For a sextant so you can read these coordinates, go to Thieves Guild in Vesper or Buccaneer's Den and ask for item D.

This month's help came from Stephen King, Michael Loftus, the Apple Pi gamesig group, Ron Wartow, Aaron Chou and Timoty Walsh. If you have any clues, answers and strategies to new games, send them in. We are especially interested in publishing complete walkthroughs and clear maps to NEW games not yet covered in hint books and will give you your choice of any adventure or role-playing game if we use your walkthrough.

Waiting for Duffy

Duffy's stuck in a gorilla suit, so send in a brief ad if you need help.

Will give free hints for King's Quest 1 & 2. Send SASE to Jennifer Shulman, 12 Ardmore Rd., Scarsdale, NY 10583.

Essex: Regenerated engine & got to computer shaft but can't get safely to ledge there. Can give graduated hints for many games, including Spellbreaker, Fraktured Faebles, Below the Root & Alice. T. Walsh, 116 Homestead Cr., London, Ont., Canada N6G 2E8.

Bard's Tale: Would like general hints on last 6 mazes :

Kylerean's Tower & Mangar's Tower. M. Amorin, 2955 N. 400 W., Aptl 2208, Layton, UT 84041.

Novice needs help! All Zorks, Spellbreaker, even Wishbringer! Also Fahrenheit 451 & Amazon. Need both maze directions in Original Adventure. G. Casey, 319 Longbranch, CA 92621.

Bard's Tale: Need lots of help. How do I get past the locked gates? Can help with any Ultima, Deja Vu, Questron, others. Tracie Hines, 104-40 Queens Blvd., Forest Hills, NY 11375.

Need help with Sundog and Suspect. Can help with Infocom and others. Chris Muller, 514 SW 34th St., Apt 6., Gainesville, FL 32607.

If you have more than 330 points in Spellbreaker, please write. Free help on all Infocom games, Ultima 3, some Ultima 4 & Mindwheel. Send SASE to M. Friedman, 108 Lewis Lane, Oak Ridge TN 37830.

Can help with Ultima 2, 3, 4 & Masquerade. Michael Gathers, 1419 Heathwood Dr., Houston, TX 77077.

Ultima 4: What is pure axiom and the word? Nine Princes in

Spellbreaker: Have 330 points & key, no idea what to do next. I'm just wandering around. Someone please help! Can help anyone with Ultima 2, 3 and 4, Enchanter, Sorcerer, Zork 1,2,3, Hitchhiker's, Mask of Sun, Serpent's Star, Deadline, Suspect, Planetfall and some of Spellbreaker - free! Send SASE to M. Kim, 10425 NE 124th St., Kirkland, WA 98034.

Amber: How can I win both Bleys & Gerard to my side, or meet Llewlla, Fiona, Caine or Brand? Spellbreaker: have 330 points & can't find anything else to do. Send SASE. Aaron Chou, 7032 Stratford Rd., Woodbury, MN 55125.

Need help on Bard & Ultima 4. Can help with Ultima 3, Hacker, Zork 1 & Phantasie. J. Trice, 6417 Oakbrook, Corpus Christi, TX 78413.

Zork 2 & The Quest - can you help me? I can help with Enchanter, Ultima 3 & 4, Questron, Hitchhiker, Infidel, Sorcerer. J. Reihl, 1005 Normandy Dr., Moose Jaw, Sask., Canada S6H 3G8.

Fraktured Faebles: Said what the note said to say to bees but still can't remove them. Or kiss frog, get to tea party, or stick letter on sign. Can help with many game, including Spellbreaker. T. Walsh, 116 Homestead Cr., London, Ontario, Canada N6G 2E8.

Can help with Asylum. Send SASE: Brian Smith, 3035 Montego, Plano, TX 75023

Need maps for Bard's Tale dungeons. Can help with Zork 1 & 2, Phantasie, Enchanter, Sorcerer, Hitchhiker, and many others. Ba Ha, 4111 Sunset Dr. #4, Los Angeles, CA 90027.

Ultima 3: How do I get exotic arms and a +2 plate? How do I get past the earth snake? Can help in Zork 1 and Hitchhiker's Guide. Send SASE to John Paul Pontaoe, 826-D S. May, Chicago, IL 60607.



Got a houseful of old adventures? Trade 'em off with a free ad.

APPLE

Wanted: 550-point version of Adventure. Write first. T. Walsh, 116 Homestead Cr., London, Ontario, Canada N6G 2E8

To trade: all four Ultimas, Hitchhiker's Guide, Zorks, Transylvania, Deadline, Starcross & more. Looking for ACS, Questron, Crimson Crown, Sorcerer & others. Write 1st: Paul Berland, 4430 N. Francisco, Chicago, IL 60625.

Discs for sale. Write for free list. Frank Lee Linne, POB 45, La Vernia, TX 78121.

Will trade games and utilities. Send list of your programs. Also will sell solution to Zork I for \$2.50. Jon Champlin, Moffat Rd., Nelsonville, NY 10516.

\$20 each: Amazon, Deadline, Cutthroats, Hitchhiker's Guide, Rendezvous with Rama, Zork I and II. \$18 each: Blade of Blackpoole, Gruds in Space, Murder by the Dozen. \$15: Wizard and the Princess. All original with docs, packaging. Call or write Karen M. Lee, 444 Bridgton Rd., Westbrook, ME 04092. (207) 797-7985.

Ultima II original with box, maps, manuals for \$25. Michael Gathers, 1419 Heathwood Dr., Houston, TX 77077.

Interested in trading all types of adventures and FRPs. Send list of what you have to trade and games you want. Ba Ha, 4111 Sunset Dr. # 24, Los Angeles, CA 90027.

Trade or sell: Original copy of Dragonworld, \$15. Perry Mason, \$25. Want original of Ballyhoo or Crimson Crown. Must be originals with docs and boxes. Aaron Chou, 7032 Stratford Rd., Woodbury, MN 55125.

To trade (all originals): Enchanter, Nine Princes in Amber, Perry Mason, Fahrenheit

451, Rendezvous with Rama, Below the Root, Swiss Family Alice in Wonderland. Write for list of these & some strategy games like Rails West, Scott Huang, 14 Equestrian Ct., Huntington, NY 11743.

Will trade for Ultima III, Fahrenheit 451, Ring Quest, Mindshadow, Witness, Transylvania, Wishbringer, Sherwood Forest. Write first. William Hall, 1110 44th St., Sacramento, CA 95819.

Planetfall, Deadline, Serpent's Star, Cutthroats and Seastalker. Will sell or trade, have hint books for all but last. Want any Infocom or Telarium, Mask of the Sun, Time Zone or Adventure. Write first. John Lema, 431 Alphabet St., Holbrook, NY 11741.

Will trade complete copies of Sorcerer or Gruds in Space for same of Fahrenheit 451, Shadowkeep, Dragonworld, ACS, Robots of Dawn or Timeship. Mark Fujimoto, 1646 Komo Mai Dr., Pearl City, HI 96782.

Will trade first 12 Infocom games, all three Wizardrys, Ultima II and more. Send list of what you want and I'll try to fill order. Thomas Blake, 3002 Pendell Lane, Ft. Smith, Arkansas 72901.

Will trade or sell originals of Zork I, Enchanter & Starcross w/docs, maps and hint books but no boxes. Interested in original adventures. Phil Christensen, BANFES Project, Dept. of State, USAID/Lesotho, Washington, DC 20520.

COMMODORE 64/128
Want Ultima 1, 2 & 3. Have Spellbreaker, Amazon, Fahrenheit 451, Dragonworld, Zork 1-3, Suspect, Sorcerer, Hitchhiker, Planetfall, Suspended, Infidel. Will give hints to any of above (except Spellbreaker). D. Bromby, 14723 Bluebell Dr., Chino Hills, CA 91710.

Games for sale or trade: Write for free list, new adventures, old adventures, anything! Kevin Kraus, 33 Fox Hill Rd., Shrewsbury, MA 01545.

Sell or trade: 64 boot (for C128), utilities disk. Want any Ultima (with docs), any Infocom but Hitch or Zorks. Mike Basnall, RD #1, Box 95, New Freedom, PA 17349.

New adventures available from Adventure Construction Set Club. Magic & The Caiston Quest, by Michael Shapiro \$5 each. 1st club newsletter, \$1. New "Wild West" construction set by Ted Mayes, \$4. ACS Club will support new Atari version. For these & more details, write Ken St. André, ACS Club, 3421 E. Yale, Phoenix, AZ 85008.

For sale or trade: Deadline, Zork I, Hulk, Mask of the Sun, Amazon, Indiana Jones, Transylvania, Dragonworld. J. Wright, 2341 Charbonneau, Waco, TX 76710.

Want Serpent's Star, Infidel, Sorcerer, Blade of Blackpoole, Gruds in Space, Planetfall and Cutthroats. To sell or trade: Amazon, Dragonworld, Tracer, Sanction, Starcross, Suspended, Deadline, Mask of Sun & all Zorks. T. Fox, 734 Strobel N.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504.

Will trade or sell Planetfall, Enchanter, Sorcerer & Blade of Blackpoole. \$15 each, with hint books & maps except Blade. Looking for Gemstone Warrior, Sword of Kadash, Shadowkeep or The Quest. Dale Angelotti, 600 Primrose St., Haverhill, MA 01830.

Want to buy Suspect, Suspended, Planetfall, Hitchhiker, Infidel, AMF Voyaging, Cutthroats, Fooblitzky, & hint books. H. Whitley, 4701 Anderson Rd. L, Houston, TX 77053.

Numerous games to trade or sell. Send \$2 & SASE for list. G.M. Shearer, 1500 Iceplant Rd., Suite 7F, North Versailles, PA 15137.

Want to trade my adventure games, hints, etc., for yours. C. Raudonis, 45 Pelham Rd., Hudson, NH 03051.

IBM & Quest-Alikes
Trade or sell (\$25 each): Apsahai Trilogy, Sherlock Holmes, King's Quest 1 & 2, Black Cauldron, Hitchhiker, Planetfall, Suspect, Enchanter all Zorks, Nine Princes in Amber, Rendezvous with Rama, The Mist. Will trade for The Quest, Ballyhoo, Sorcerer, Amazon, Star Trek, Infidel & many more. Write to Byron Byrd, 5160 Verdun Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90043.

Will trade Ultima 2 & 3, with docs. Also Zork 1 & King's Quest. Want any good adventures. Write or call (not

collect) before sending game. Thane K. Sherrington, RR #2, Port Hood, N.S., Canada B0E 2W0. (902) 787-3387

To trade: 7 Cities of Gold, King's Quest 1 & 2, Transylvania, Ultima 2 & 3, Wizardry, By Fire & Sword, Gato, Zork 1, Archon, Mindshadow, Zinderneuf. R. Reid, 404 Shelley Pl., Goldsboro, NC 27530.

ATARI

To sell (for AT 800) Cosmic Balance 1 & 2 (these also run on Apple), Universe 1, all Infocom titles, many others. Chris Muller, 514 SW 34th St Apt. 6, Gainesville, FL 32607.

Want adventures for either 800 or 130XE. Write if you have games for sale. B. Smith, 3035 Montego, Plano, TX 75023.

Will trade Gruds in Space for any Infocom but Starcross, Zork 1 or Hitchhiker. Write 1st: John Kalstrom, 6237 Cumberland Dr., Goleta, CA 93117.

Will trade Ultima 1, Zork 3, Adventure Creator, or Questron for any Infocom title except Zork trilogy. Have 64K Atari. Brent Dollins, Rte. 2, Box 157, Powderly, TX 75473.

PASSPORT TO ADVENTURE

For a 10-20% discount on new games, order from QuestBusters:
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Adventure Construction Set.. C and AT64, \$35.95; AP64, 42.95
Book of Adventure I or II..19.00

< Others available on request >
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C = Commodore 64/128. AT = 48K Atari. AT+ = 64K Atari. PC = IBM PC, jr, quest-alikes. M = 128K Mac. M+ = 512K Mac.

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