**SUSPENDED**

*Infocom*

*Commodore 64*

*Disk*

"M my systems are failing" was the message. I knew that it was serious: as screwy as the enigmatic little robot was, he wouldn't send an Interrupt Alert without good reason. Still I was busy elsewhere; several hundred citizens were dying, seismic eruptions were playing hob with the complex and it was my responsibility to repair the damage.

"That robot is no longer functional!" the filtering computer coldly informed me when I got around to asking for a location report. Dead. The little fella was gone.

The dysfunction of a solitary conglomeration of metal, wires and high impact plastic should not have disturbed me as much as it did. But this was Poet. No longer would I be treated to his nonsensical ramblings punctuated with dollops of common sense, his robotic wit, and his slightly skewed way of viewing the world.

Losing Poet was bad enough, but, in addition, Iris was blind and Waldo was not sure how to repair her. Auda was sensing intruders in the Sterilization Chamber, and breaks were detected in the Maintenance Access. Whiz might have been able to help me solve my mounting problems . . . if only he were plugged into the correct pedestal.

In grief and despair I quit the game. Cyro-life was not worth living without Poet. Perhaps he could be repaired; but did Bambi repair his mother? It was just a warm-up round anyway; winning Infocom's *Suspended* is a marathon that requires conditioning.

Unless you've been in cryogenic freeze yourself for the last year or so, you're aware that Infocom's games are totally textual, or "participatory novels" as some have dubbed them. We're fortunate that the first practitioners of this new art form are polished, intelligent, witty, and imaginative as, for example, Michael Berlyn is. Berlyn is the author of *Suspended*, and he has lavished a good deal of complexity and eccentricity into his game. I recommend it. Further, in my judgement, no intelligent gameplayer's collection is complete without at least one Infocom game.

In *Suspended*, you take the role of the central mentality of the Contra Complex; you have been lifted into a state of limited
cryogenic suspension, half-awakened into a world in perpetual collapse. Your immediate objective is to keep the underground complex running smoothly; your overall objective is to reset the all-important filtering computers.

To help you overcome the rapid-fire problems that come your way, you have been given six robots to command. You have also been given a game board with pieces that will help you keep track of the complex and your robots.

The robots all have different functions, specialties, and quirks. Auda monitors all auditory stimuli. Sensa reports on the seismic and vibrationary patterns of flux in the city. Iris' function is to keep tabs on the various control and weather monitors. Whiz, the brains of the outfit, is able to plug into the various advisory pedestals. The Heinleinian Waldo is the workhorse; with his multiple extensions he can do most anything. Then there is Poet. As his name suggests, Poet is slightly more playful, though no less rational, than his peers. With comments like "I'm Zen on Inventory" and "As much as anyone can be anywhere, I'm here," Poet relieves tension and frustration, a walking martini.

The other robots are not complete stiffs either. Waldo, when asked to perform a task he considers difficult, will reply, "You have just entered the zone whose boundaries are those of the wishful thinker." Meanwhile, Iris might be plaintively sending, "It would be real nice if I got repaired."

Speaking of Iris, a hint or two: at the beginning of the game, Iris is isolated from the others (because a crucial corridor is blocked) and is blind. The first order of business is to repair Iris. With Iris functioning, the game is, well, playable. To get to her, pass the impassable, a wedge is required. I will say no more.

The player has a vocabulary of six hundred words with which to communicate with his or her robots; the text itself, of course, contains a much wider vocabulary. We'll close with Poet's reply when asked to describe Iris: "Iris is the personification of petite beauty. As the old timers say, The young lady always wore mink while her visual circuits went 'blink.'"

—Robert J. Sodaro

HOMETAX
Learning Source Inc.
C-64 (CP/M Capable)
Learning Source, Inc. is a California firm that has begun to launch an operation that they hope will completely revolutionize the retail computer field. It is their intention to set up nationwide franchises which will in effect make them, as they put it, "to the computer field what MacDonalds is to burgers."

What they have in mind is not the ordinary franchise operation. Their plan goes something like this. The retail computer business, according to president George Hoss, is filled with people who do not necessarily know anything about computers. How many times have you gone into a computer store and asked a salesperson a question that (s)he was not able to answer? It is Learning Source's concept to thoroughly train its franchises before turning them loose in the retail computer world.

Another aspect of their operation is something that should be of tremendous interest to anyone who has a personal computer which is CP/M compatible. They have created a new income tax program which was given a thorough checkup and imprimatur, as it were, by Price Waterhouse; it was also given a benign nod by the IRS.

An extremely powerful program created by accountants and geared to the 1040 form, Hometax has been written in such a way as to make it quite simple for anyone to