

We Solved 8 Infocoms

(. . . 4 of them in a single week)

by BETT LONG and CHUCK LANDGRAVER

*Bett Long wrote **Antic** a letter after reading the adventure game article in our August issue (p. 44) and mentioned that she and her son had solved eight Infocom all-text adventures. We were fascinated, never having heard of anybody who had actually completed that many adventures. So we promptly wrote back to Bett and asked her to send us an article about her experiences in time for the deadline of our annual adventure issue . . .*

This story arrived in three weeks under a double byline. Here's what Bett Long wrote us about herself. "I was hooked on Infocom by Chuck Landgraver, my bachelor son who does something in experimental nuclear power in the Idaho desert. I am a retired Ohio widow who does grandmotherly things when I must. Last month Chuck and I spent six days in Infocom and five days gambling in Reno. We can't decide which part of the visit was better."

—ANTIC ED

During a six day visit we finished **Deadline**, **Infidel**, **Planetfall** and **The Witness**. We had previously done **Zork I** and **Zork II**, **Starcross** and **Enchanter** by mail and phone.

We spent eight to 50 hours on each program, including studying the

print-outs and talking or thinking about a problem.

Zork I was our introduction to Infocom. Despite previous text adventure experience, this took about 50 hours. Mapping the maze was almost impossible because the thief stole articles we dropped as markers. Draining and filling the reservoir was satisfying while we were stuck badly and needed *something* to do. We knew we were making progress when we got in and out of the Machine Room. Zork II was more of the same, but it was easier and not quite as much fun. Going up the volcano was worth the trip. Getting in and out of the Bank Vault and into the workshop were the biggest headaches. Zork III awaits on the shelf.

ZIFMIA GOD

Enchanter was like reading a fascinating book and having the power to make it end well. Some enchantments were easy to control, some took much time and thought. The "kulcad" scroll was the most difficult and satisfying to get. We passed the "Guarded Door" repeatedly for comic relief. Be sure to "zifmia" God. Remember your dreams and speak to everyone, including the animals. There are 17 ways to die and at least one is vital to the solution. This is one of our two favorites. Our peek into the sequel, **Sorcerer**, shows promise it'll be equally good.

The authors (in sunglasses) amid some of the friendly folks they met while solving eight Infocom adventure games.

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Deadline and The Witness are mysteries where we became the detectives. We had to be in the right place at the right time. Events that took place out of our sight were lost. We "saved" endlessly and had good luck. Deadline was more complex but we appreciated the hard-boiled "Philip Marlowe" flavor of The Witness. Talk to everyone and examine everything for clues. You will be surprised at what people will tell you under different circumstances. The backgrounds are detailed and realistic.

Flying across the center of the "Artifact" in Starcross is a real adventure. We had some serious holdups in this game so it took nearly as long as Zork I. The hardest part was making the round trip to and from the weasels' vessel alive. A large part of the game was deciding what to do with all the rods. The most satisfying puzzle was learning to follow the compulsively neat maintenance mouse into the mouse holes. Another problem was persuading the bored

Gurthark to accompany us. Being rewarded with the title "Galactic Overlord" pleased us sci-fi buffs.

Planetfall is probably our all-time favorite. We had a lump in the throat when Floyd the robot sang "The Ballad of the Star-Crossed Miner". Floyd was entertaining and surprisingly helpful. The giant microbe was our worst pitfall. It took an embarrassing amount of time to get rid of that big bug.

Infidel was an old-fashioned adventure. We became an unscrupulous selfish second-rate archaeologist. (It might be slightly uncomfortable for nice people.) We spent about eight fast-paced hours on Infidel. One of us anticipated Egyptian technology and the other is a cryptology fiend who decoded the hieroglyphics. The program was very orderly and ended suitably.

OUR ADVICE

Our best advice is to map and document carefully. A printer makes solv-


ing a little easier.

Study the packaging thoroughly before beginning and refer back occasionally for hints which become obvious.

Most items you take have one purpose but in one game we needed a piece of equipment in three different locations.

Try anything. Read *everything* the computer tells you. An answer may amuse or insult you, or be just what you hoped for. A slight variation in computer response is usually an important clue.

When you begin, explore only. When you can gather what you think you will need and are ready to be serious, make a "good save" in as few moves as possible. Don't save over this because some of your later choices are irrevocable. After that, save frequently as suggested in the instructions.

If you are lucky you will find an imaginative friend who is willing to give up a normal life to adventure with you. 

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