

How Dr. Evil Labs found Bear Electronics
As remembered by Rick Washburne

Once the first version of the SID Symphony circuitry had been designed, it was time to get printed circuit boards designed and manufactured. In a wonderful coincidence, I was working a part-time job at an engineering firm where I designed printed circuit boards, and was given an assignment of driving to Chicago and visiting a half-dozen PCB houses to pick the best vendor to order from. I went with the #2 guy (huh huh huh – I said “Number Two”) (and that is very fitting in this case) because the owner of the firm wanted my input (#2 was on the chopping block after a multitude of screw-ups that he was convinced he spun into proof that he's smarter than Einstein AND Tesla) and the owner also needed #2 out of the office for a day.

At each shop we saw boards being dipped, boards being drilled, and boards being dried. We smelled awful smells. And we saw employees who might have been from foreign lands, who *might* have been legally in this country, or who might have been ill from inhaling all the horrific chemicals in the plant...

...or who may have just simply been ugly.

The first shop brought us into the Computer Room, where the Big And Shiny Model 5000 computer was in prominent display, including a plaque boasting of the Silver Supreme Support level that they were paying Big Blue for. If the computer turned into a pile of goo, they would only lose a maximum of 24 hours no matter what. Impressive.

The second shop brought us into the Computer Room, where the Large and Reflective Model A98734+ computer was in prominent display, including a plaque boasting of the Golden Guarantee Support level that they were paying Convex Computers for. If the computer turned into a pile of goo, they would only lose a maximum of 12 hours no matter what. Quite Impressive.

The third shop brought us into the Computer Room, where the Huge and Gleaming Model 1-D-10-T computer was in prominent display, including a plaque boasting of the Permanent Platinum Support level that they were paying Cray Computers for. If the computer turned into a pile of goo, they would only lose a maximum of 8 hours no matter what. Very Impressive.

The fourth shop brought us into the Computer Room, where the Gigantic and Blinding Model Ω computer was in prominent display, including a plaque boasting of the Five Diamonds Support level that they were paying Bang & Olufsen Computers for. If the computer turned into a pile of goo, they would only lose a maximum of 4 hours no matter what. Extremely Impressive.

The fifth shop was on fire. This is an irony based on what happened later.

The sixth shop brought us into the Computer Room, where there was a small, black, generic converter box hooked to a Commodore 64 which was running the show. Number 2 bolted with Olympic-level eye rolling, but I had to be the smart-alec to hang around and mock. Which is strange considering that I was also there for boards for a...um...what was it...on the tip of my

tongue...a...errr...OH! COMMODORE 64!!

While standing there awkwardly, the owner came back into the office and saw a look on my face he must have known. “So, young man, I bet you're laughing at me. You've been to places who have servers from the biggest companies with the best reputations, and they're spending all kinds of money on support contracts to minimize their downtime, right?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And you've heard about 24, 16, 12, 8, and maybe even 4 hour guaranteed downtime limitations, right?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And you're thinking I must be some kind of amateur idiot for running this shop with a kid's toy, right?”

“Well...”

“So let me show you my support.” He opened up a school locker in the corner of the room, and inside were dozens of Commodore 64's, Power Supplies, and some more Generic Black Boxes. “So, if I go down, and we all do, I grab another computer that I bought at a garage sale for \$20, plug in the cables, and I'm back online. FIVE MINUTES! So, who's the idiot?”

He had a point. And he got Dr. Evil's business.

And every time I called, they had just had a fire and were one week behind. Oh well...