Meridian 59:
The Rise and Fall and Rise of the
First 3D Massively Multiplayer Online RPG

Zachary Wyatt
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In the summer of 1996 I spent most of my waking hours slaying Baby Spiders and Giant Rats inside the virtual world of *Meridian 59.* Generally considered the first 3D Massively-Multiplayer-Online-Role-Playing-Game (MMORPG), *Meridian 59* bridged the gap between casual graphical game players and intense role-playing enthusiasts of online text-based Multi-User-Dungeons (MUDs). Although I only played for one summer, tens of thousands of others would go on to invest years leading guilds, fighting faction wars, and essentially living a completely different life online. *Meridian 59*'s unique position as the first MMORPG meant that the it would also be the first to face problems later associated with the genre such as the technical challenges of large multiplayer interactions, social issues like player killing, and financial difficulties of continued profitability. With regard to profitability, *Meridian 59*'s publisher 3DO decided in June of 2000, after roughly four years, that the game no longer provided a significant return on investment and announced that the servers would be shut down on August 31st, 2000. The results of millions of hours of player time to build characters – all data stored on 3DO's servers – were lost. Further, without Meridian servers running, no one would ever be able to play *Meridian 59* again…

…Until March 15th, 2002, when two devoted Meridian developers released and began running the aptly titled *Meridian 59: Resurrection* under their new company, Near Death Studios. After a six-year absence I was once again – for several hours this afternoon, in fact – slaying Baby Spiders and Giant Rats in *Meridian 59.* The

unprecedented efforts of Brian 'Psychochild' Green and Rob 'Q' Ellis to buy the rights

from 3DO, fix bugs, and re-release the game are just one chapter of the storied history of

Meridian 59's rise and fall and rise…and…well, only time will tell….

History

 The founders of Near Death Studios are bringing Meridian back to its roots: two

guys working out of their houses with little cash and a big dream. The original

development began with two brothers, Chris and Andrew Kirmse. (30) A newsgroup post

by Andrew to comp.sys.ibm.pc.games in late 1993 entitled "Multi-user dialup game info"

asks a few questions regarding a multiplayer role-playing game and is probably the first

public document regarding what would eventually become *Meridian 59*.[1] (35) The

brothers, then college students at MIT and Virginia Tech, were accomplished

programmers that "knew basically nothing about the game industry" except that they

wanted to be in it. (23) Joined by designer and business leaders Michael Sellers (and his

brother Chris) from the Bay Area, the Meridian team soon grew to include now well-

known and traveled game developers including Damion Schubert (and later *his* brother

Chris), Rob Ellis II, and others.[2] (30) As text-based Multi-User-Dungeon (MUD) addicts,

each member of the early team believed that graphical 3D MUDs were the next

generation of the genre.

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[1] See Appendix A for the original Meridian inspiring posts by Andrew
[2] The original Meridian team has continued to be a powerful force in the gaming industry. The Kirmse brothers are credited with an article about "Security in Online Games" at GamaSutra (24) while Andrew works at LucasArts and Chris with Yahoo! Games. (24) Kevin O'Hara, who worked on the first two Meridian releases, now works at LucasArts on the upcoming *Star Wars: Galaxies*. (44) Damion Schubert and Rob Ellis moved from Meridian to work as designer for the popular *Ultima Online* series. (30)

Computer role-playing, and in fact online role-playing, had been around for years – but *Meridian 59* was the first 3D fully navigable world. The original *Neverwinter Nights* (NWN), released in 1991 by SSI for the America Online network, was the first well-known online graphical role-playing game – but NWN was not held in a large persistent world and still used turn-based combat. In fact, *Neverwinter Nights* utilized the same engine as the popular Gold Box series of AD&D games. (3) *Meridian 59* battles, however, were real-time – and further, the perspective shifted from 3rd person isometric to 1st person. It was as if you were really looking through the eyes of your character: you were in the game. The announcement of the upcoming shutdown of AOL's *Neverwinter Nights* in 1996 suddenly made *Meridian 59* one of the only graphical MUD projects in production. (30, 38)

Being on the edge of a new medium, the *Meridian 59*[3] team quickly expanded during the summer of 1995 from the original (sets of) brothers to include over 20 online collaborators joined under the name of Archetype Studios. The group worked intensely to build the 3D engine, client/server architecture, level designs, game art, and overall story in just over a year. (23) The original alpha test,[4] started on December 14th, 1995 held 35 people in 7 rooms with 3 monsters, 2 spells, and 1 quest – all without any player-killing control. (25) As a result the spawn point for new players quickly became "a sea of bodies." When the Archetype, "running on fumes," demonstrated its technology to 3DO in early 1996, 3DO bought in hoping to take on the upcoming *Ultima Online* and *Dark Sun Online* head on. (30)

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[3] The name *Meridian 59* originated from one of the developer's own online names, Meridian – but realizing that 'Meridian' was already trademarked the team added '59' to it and figured they could make a back story to explain it later. (30)

[4] See Appendix B for the original newsgroup announcement by Michael Sellers

3DO, founded by Trip Hawkins of Electronic Arts fame, was leaving behind the failed console hardware business (3DO's 32-bit Real Player) and utilized *Meridian 59* as a feature of the company's new 'Studio 3DO' software publishing business. On May 16, 1996 an official announcement of the Archetype purchase was released:

> Marking its entrance into the Internet area, The 3DO Company (NASDAQ: THDO) today announced that it has entered into an agreement to acquire the Archetype Interactive Corp., developers of the first 3-D graphical multiuser dimension (MUD) game over the Internet. The acquisition, representing the first component of 3DO's Internet strategy, will accelerate the company's time to market an Internet product offering and give millions of users the ability to experience true interactive gaming in a realistic graphical environment. (32)

With financial backing from 3DO the game launched a summer long beta period where players (including this author) tested the system for free. During the summer Trip Hawkins spoke at the Intel Internet Media Symposium and explained, "We are going to launch *Meridian 59*, the world's first 3-D graphical multi-user dimension (MUD) game over the Internet, and see if there is a business." (19) On September 16th 1996, four years after Andrew Kirmse had posted his original message about a multiplayer game, *Meridian 59* was alive. The 3DO press release called Meridian 59 the "First Entertainment Product for the Internet" – a bit of an overstatement, but certainly Meridian's release was an historical day. (33) Meridian had won the race to release the first graphical MUD and boasted a clear lead over *Ultima Online* and *Dark Sun Online*, both then in beta testing. (38) Developers at Origin (*Ultima Online)*, Turbine Entertainment (*Asheron's Call),* and Verant (*EverQuest*) would later say they were "terrified" of Meridian. In its first year Meridian won game of the year from Gamecenter and received generally positive reviews. (30) Meridian's inferior graphics and lag,

especially notable with the release of the prettier and more responsive *Quake*, were regularly pointed out, though.

The technical problems associated with *Meridian 59*'s new features were as incredible as the features themselves. That they were able to complete the game in such a short time made their achievements even more amazing – although not without problems. Even as the original client discs went gold the development team was fixing bugs on the server, setting the precedent of post-release server side patching by MMORPGs. (30) Server side game play problems were eventually ironed out – but some problems inherent with the medium were more difficult. Negotiating Internet delays, known as 'lag', in the early days of the dial-up 14.4k modems was a major problem for online games. Since *Meridian 59* used real-time combat lag could mean the difference between hitting a monster before he hit you: it could be as deadly in Meridian as it was in first-person-shooters like *Quake* where the entire game is based on reflexes. Since Meridian servers were centrally located lag was more of a problem for Meridian than the distributed customer run *Quake* servers. Also, unlike those first-person-shooters, where graphics were a key focus, *Meridian 59* was built for the varying power of mid-nineties PC systems and used a modest – or a reviewer called it, "rudely basic" – 3D engine. (9) Without cutting edge graphics keeping the game-play and role-playing unique and fun became a key goal. Computer generated quests, monster artificial intelligence, and perhaps most important, the features built to foster the online community like guilds and in-game mail, more than kept tens of thousands of gamers happy for millions of hours.

The pricing scheme of *Meridian 59*, however, did not keep fans happy. Originally the game used a flat $9.95 per month fee for unlimited game play. Coupled with the

initial price ($30-$40) to actually buy the game from a store the total cost of the game

soon became daunting to players, especially since the cost of an Internet connection was

already around $20 to $30 a month. To make matters worse, 3DO, with – as Damion

Shulbert mocks "a cunning grasp of the economics of the internet" – modified the pricing

scheme against the developer's objections and shortly before *Ultima Online* was released.

(30) The old flat fee system of $9.95 per month was changed to a roundabout '$2.49 per

day, not to exceed $10 per week, not to exceed $29.88 per month' policy. Essentially the

price of the game was tripled before its first major competition was about to be released.

Perhaps 3DO expected *Ultima Online* would steal Meridian players away when it was

released anyway or maybe just wanted to see if people would pay whatever they dictated;

in any matter the price increase caused many players to quit. To the dismay of the

developers, the game actually made more money in the short term despite all of the

cancelled accounts. (30) Finally, with the release of the *Liberation* update two years later

in July of 1999, 3DO restructured the pricing scheme to a flat monthly rate of $14.95 for

unlimited access – likely in a move to try and compete with *Ultima Online*, *EverQuest*

and *Asheron's Call* – who charged flat rates. (34) The move was certainly too little

(Meridian was still more expensive than the competition), too late (many players had

already left).

A little less than a year after this pricing change 3DO announced that "the time

has come for the curtain to fall on Meridian 59." 3DO, to their credit, did provide three

months of free unsupported play for players (even old accounts) until the US servers were

permanently shut down.[5] (45) Many sources had speculated that the end of Meridian was

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[5] Officially licensed German and Korean servers were allowed to remain online until their contracts
expired.

imminent after Brian Green had left the Meridian team at 3DO – especially since the 'team' had pretty much only consisted of him. (21) Despite the warnings and time to adjust, the Meridian's close still came too soon for many players. One of the new owners of Meridian at Near Death Studios, Rob Ellis, explains his experience of the closing best:

> On August 31, 2000 a group of the original developers gathered on the most popular of the 3DO game servers to be together, thank the fans, and say goodbye as 3DO shut down the servers. … I was pretty happy to be there together with the old team, and so incredibly honored that so many players were online for the closing. Of course, at the same time, it was tearing my heart apart that our game couldn't be played anymore. I sobbed heavily for hours in front of my computer staring at the "Lost Server Connection" notice when the game was finally shut down. (16)

Clearly there was still an emotional attachment to the game – but it was apparently not enough to continue running the servers profitably. While it was true that *Meridian 59* was losing to *EverQuest*, *Asheron's Call*, and *Ultima Online*, it was unclear if the game was still at all profitable for 3DO. Rumors speculate that Meridian was always profitable – and simply had too low a return on investment. A general consensuses by 3DO executives that online gaming was not profitable – despite the incredible success of several games – lead to a generally negative sentiment against *Meridian 59*. (14)

Up until a few months ago, 3DO's shutdown of the *Meridian 59* servers would have marked the end of the game's history. However, a persistent Rob "Q" Ellis – one of the original developers – finally convinced Trip Hawkins to sell Meridian to Brian "Psychochild" Green and himself. (16) After taking out loans to cover the costs of starting their new company, Near Death Studios, Rob and Brian officially announced their purchase on November 29th, 2001 and planned an aggressive schedule to release the game as soon as possible and allow people "back to your favorite online game." After working with old members of the development team including the Kirmse brothers and

Damion Schubert, Ellis and Green were able to quickly build a new stable release. (25) In January of 2002 a select Beta period began, and on March 15th, 2002, the official pre-launch period started for paying customers -- $35 for a special edition CD plus $11.95 per month. As a participant in the launch day, I can attest to a large number of heartfelt "Hail Psychochild! Hail Q!" messages being broadcast.

Yet despite my own and other players' excitement – most people don't seem to understand why Near Death Studios is reviving a six year old game without any major improvements. My roommates laughed at the old graphics and gameplay – and were dumbfounded to hear that I was paying to play this game when "better, newer" games are available for less. Indeed, why would anyone still play *Meridian 59*, let alone devote a large portion of their savings betting that people will come back?

Why will players come back?

People usually start playing *Meridian 59* for the monsters, weapons, and role-playing-experience but continue playing because of the community aspects. Slaying Baby Spiders and Giant Rats by myself is fun – the first ten or so times I do it. Slaying Baby Spiders and Giant Rats along side other players generates cooperation and competition between the players. The persistent nature of the world means that even if you aren't playing, other people are. One of the original Meridian advertisements claimed that "Meridian is waiting" – a constant feeling for players who can't stop thinking about the game. (46) Knowing that friends are improving their characters when you're offline draws you back in. The addictive nature of Meridian even spawned a humorous 'You know you're abdicated to Meridian IF…' list, including "Not tonight, honey! I have a

guild meeting to attend!". (20) A poll on *EverQuest* players noted that over two-thirds of respondents "definitely" or "probably" considered themselves addicted. Meridian's addictiveness (31) – and really any MMORPGs' – is built on the features that enhanced the feeling of cooperation, friendship, or competition.

Meridian 59 implemented a unique system to facilitate communication between users. Players can 'tell' messages to specific players, 'say' things to people in their immediate proximity, 'yell' to players further away, or 'broadcast' to the global chat channel. Meridian's per-server player limit of roughly 200 players allowed for global chat ("broadcasts") that some new games, like *Dark Age of Camelot* and *Asheron's Call*, decided against because of their larger numbers. While the constant chatter on the global channel can become annoying, it helps lighten up the game and meet other people. Further, players can chat with user-defined groups of players (like a 'hunting party' or guild). In addition to chat, Meridian runs in-game bulletin boards and is one of the few online RPGs (only major one) to implement in-game mail for players. Like email, players can send messages to other players via the in game mail system. This preserves the privacy of player's real email addresses and allows communication even when not online at the same time. One developer of Meridian was logged onto *EverQuest* using his Meridian name and received some 'buffs' from another player "because your chat system didn't suck like this one does." (30) Many players, and the developers themselves, still consider the chat system one of simplest and best features of Meridian. (14)

Meridian also helped foster the community using with an excellent guild system. As the official feature page says, "Most people find that playing the game becomes much more enjoyable once you have found some friends to share your experiences with, and

joining a guild can introduce you to a lot of new friends." (26) The guild system emphasized the camaraderie among players and meaningful impact that they could make to the virtual world. Guilds could customize shields (and create quests to find the shield), have in-guild political battles with the built-in hierarchy system, or even buy their own guildhall, complete with a bulletin board system for communication. (26) Many guilds also created websites to chronicle their history and provide member profiles. (12, 13) By far, though, the most popular and memorable activities of guilds involved large-scale guild-wars that would encompass servers for days. Fighting monsters remained interesting for only so long; guild wars provided a convenient excuse to battle other players.

Player vs. Player killing (Pking or PvP) features in *Meridian 59* exploited the bloodlust of many participants. Generally noted as having one of the most balanced PvP systems of MMORPGs, Meridian protected 'newbies' by allowing only those with a minimum number of hit points to attack/be-attacked. For advanced players, the available spells, weapons, and skills provided enough variety to broaden Meridian over simple first-person-shooters. Guilds could declare war on other guilds to instantiate a player killing frenzy or lone Pkers could work alone and target anyone who crossed their paths. The PvP system is touted as one of the best features of Meridian: "Thousands of the game's players agree that the balance in PvP combat has not been matched by subsequent games." (27) Brian Green, one of the NDS co-founders, candidly said that in a review of the game's features its quest system and monster artificial intelligence were not very well done: the server side questing language was hard to use and player progress in quests was difficult to gauge because of an ineffective response system to certain actions. Although

other games have succeeded in more complex quests and monster AI, the PvP balance of Meridian is still unparalleled. One of Green's most interesting insights to replay-ability of Meridian was that players need to have friends for camaraderie *and* enemies – whether individual Pkers or competing guilds – to provide more incentive to play. Building your character so you can defeat your arch-nemesis in the clan that just stole your guildhall is much more interesting than just playing for wealth or items. (14)

Yet the PvP combat also dissuaded and frustrated many users. While the players were the biggest asset for Meridian, they were also its biggest liability. Powerful players would abuse their status to kill recklessly, cause wars, and disrupt the game for others. Denise Harrington, writing an article about Meridian's rebirth, noted that "Human nature" and "egos run wild" ruined the game for others:

> When you have to worry every day that all you have worked, saved and bought would be taken from you without recourse...you quit the game. Wasn't worth the frustration. If I had wanted to play Doom with 200 people...I would have bought the game. (22)

In one interesting episode, an all male guild rounded up and killed all of the females on one server for entertainment. Several women quit out of disgust. (30) In my own experience Pking is one of the most frustrating aspects – but probably only because I have never been able to win a battle. During the recent re-launch several international players have loudly complained about international shipping delays that are giving American players an unfair headstart in the game by a week or so:

> The whole point for me of ordering a pre-release version would have been to be able to get on the servers AT THE BEGINNING so I could build a character up to a relatively safe level before there were lots of people strong enough to murder me in front of Tos. (41)

Although several players have tried to dissuade this poster that he will be able to build his character as successfully as others, his insistence on the importance of building a strong character to avoid being murdered highlights that many new players will probably become quite frustrated by aggressive Pkers.

Despite these problems, many *Meridian 59* fans will continue to play despite the availability of games with better graphics, cheaper fees, deeper storylines, more intelligent monsters, more quests, larger worlds, and more subscribers. Why? Meridian offers what those newer games cannot: previous time investment. People have played this game for thousands of hours, know every little secret and loophole, and are considered knowledgeable and powerful in the *Meridian 59* world. With such a small player/server limit, every player can easily become well known and personal attention from the Gods (developers) is accessible: making your voice heard is as simple as broadcasting. Moving to another game would require starting at the bottom of the scale, a 'newbie.'

While that familiarity is likely an important aspect for many, the more resounding response is that players simply have fond memories unique to *Meridian 59* and are eager to create more. One recent post on the in-game bulletin board best expresses the heartfelt excitement:

> Well, here we are. I'm sitting in the adventurer's hall of Tos, much to my amazement. Theres over 120 people on right now, and that number will probably continue to grow. New faces, plus a few familiar ones, flood the streets. I've walked around, visited every town, and all I can think is "its great to be back". I really can't thank Q and PC enough for making this possible.
>
> […]
>
> I am so happy that Meridian is back. I hope to make many new friends, and find old ones. I hope to again one day have a character that I'm proud of, maybe even

do all the stuff I never got the chance to do before. I hope to have a grand guild war in due time, but for the right reasons. I hope to do all the things that I used to take for granted. This is going to be a very interesting first few weeks, hopefully it will be a time of reflection and revelry--Hooray, Meridian is back!

I invite anyone and everyone to stop me, talk to me, tell me a story about days gone past. I want to hear it all. Thanks everyone, we're gonna rewrite history.

Just glad to be back,
　　　　Spiritshadow
(40)

Spritshadow's comments echo the sentiment of many other players who never expected to play *Meridian 59* again. The quite appropriate tag-line throughout Near Death Studio's re-launch efforts has been "Welcome back to your favorite online game." Indeed.

Whether the game will attract new players remains to be seen. Meridian offers a unique experience – but at a premium price ($10.95 per month). A completely new player to the MMORPG genre seems much more likely to pick up a readily available copy of the thoroughly established *EverQuest* or heavily promoted *Dark Age of Camelot* from their local software retailer than hunt down information on the Internet regarding a little known game re-released by a small startup who may not still be around in a year or two. Still, new players will join. Text MUDs continue to gain members despite their outdated technology – and so will *Meridian 59*. Meridian has no hope of competing with the heavyweights of the industry – but hopefully they can find a self-sustaining niche.

Why did the developers re-release *Meridian 59*?

If *Meridian 59* was deemed a bad investment once, why did Rob Ellis and Brian Green "pour a significant amount of personal money" into trying to run the game again? (27) Meridian has stood still for more than a year (and its graphics for several) as other

games have grown and improved. There is simply no chance that the Meridian will pose a threat to the current generation, let along the soon to be released 3rd generation MMORPGs. And interview after interview note that Near Death Studios is *not* trying to compete with these games: "Although they are all online multiplayer fantasy RPGs, they offer different features to players." (15) Meridian is simply trying to make a living and survive. Similarly, there is no chance that Green or Ellis will become rich running Meridian; their own website clearly notes "Let us be clear that we are NOT doing this to get rich." (15) They do believe and plan to succeed, however, taking the steps that 3DO did not to make the game a moderate success in its own niche market.

The relationship between 3DO and *Meridian 59* was tenuous throughout. Studio 3DO's philosophy of buying game development companies instead of simply publishing their work (akin to Trip's old Electronic Arts) lead to Archetype Studio's move to the Redwood, CA offices of 3DO. Although the developer's salaries increased the creative freedom of the team was hindered by publisher demands. Further, since Meridian was one of the first titles for 'Studio 3DO', the software spin-off of 3DO's hardware business, the assistance and budget for titles was minimal. The art department was constantly overworked and could not meet Meridian requests while even the information technology infrastructure had to be created by the Meridian team. In addition to technical deficiency, 3DO's "aggressive on-line and print advertising campaign" (33) during the launch did not particularly help the game with catchphrases such as:

> *Next time someone tells you to get a life, tell them you've got one already.*
>
> *Meridian 59. Online.*
>
> or

Engage in thousands of exciting relationships with total strangers without

wearing anything made of latex. (46)

These slogans were certainly attention grabbing and funny – but self-deprecating humor

apparently does not sell computer games. Another original advertisement is in black and

white, with speech bubbles, no screen shots, and touts the included Netscape Navigator

2.0 nearly as much as *Meridian 59*.[6] (46) Further, the initial launch of the Meridian CDs

was supposed to see the games displayed on the end-caps of all CompUSAs – but when

the development team went to find the game it was "behind a pole." (30) After the initial

lackluster numbers for *Meridian 59*, 3DO's distaste for the game increased. The eventual

pricing scheme fiasco, overworked staff teams, and 3DO's reorganization of key

Meridian developers to other projects left the game without direction or support. (23)

Brian Green, co-founder of Near Death Studios, took over the development team and

worked hard to maintain and improve the game – but the writing had been on the wall for

years that 3DO felt Meridian was a burden. (21)

Near Death Studios, however, certainly doesn't feel Meridian as a burden. Brian

'Psychochild' Green and Rob 'Q' Ellis are passionate players of the game who know the

ins-and-outs (almost) as well as the most dedicated players. PC and Q (as they are known

in the game) are simply excited to have the opportunity to run Meridian in their own

vision. As quote after quote from their own company website and a number of interviews

re-iterate: "We did this primarily because we love the game." (27) In an interview with

Green the day before the official pre-launch he was tired, overworked, and still very

excited. When he wakes up after 6 hours of sleep and goes back to fix a few more bugs,

Green's attitude is "I can't be unhappy – I'm working on computer games!" (14)

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[6] See Appendix D for advertisement reproductions.

Notably, pleasing the fans – something 3DO never quite accomplished – is a main goal of Near Death Studios, and large reason for a re-launch. The appreciation is helpful, too: the only advertising Near Death will use to sell Meridian is the word of mouth among its community. Still, while many fans will certainly be appreciative, how many will really pay to return to the game?

Meridian 59: Resurrection is entering in the MMORPG market in probably the most competitive time in the genre's history – especially compared to the near empty market of 1996. (38) But Near Death Studios sees a niche for Meridian. Green compares the major online RPGs to "fast-food" restaurants, with – as I imagine the analogy – adequate food, impersonal service, and an experience replicated for anyone who walks through the door. *Meridian 59*, however, is a fine bistro tucked in the corner of an old building, with a sign so small you have to know it's there to find it. Meridian is a gourmet restaurant with a smaller clientele who recognize each other easily; the chef is accessible for personal requests and the service is top-notch – all for a slightly premium price for nourishment that is more filling than the competition. A well prepared rare Inky Cap Mushroom (vigor +50) compared to some common Edible Mushrooms (vigor +5) in terms of the *Meridian 59* universe of edibles, if you will. Green and Ellis understand that they are not going to become the next McDonalds (*EverQuest*) but also believe there are enough people who will loyally frequent their small establishment for a good meal. With essentially no overhead – helped by "[a surprising] number of ways you can fix Ramen Noodles" – Near Death Studios believes they will be able to survive with "only a very small subscriber base to keep the game running and consider this endeavor a success." (18) Green, the day before the launch, was optimistic and said the number of customers

had actually exceeded his expectations. (14) One good sign: the servers are still up as I write this, at least.

What happens in the next chapter of *Meridian 59*'s history is unknown. Near Death Studios hopes to independently develop new and original online games provided the Meridian project succeeds. Perhaps in a few years we'll see *Meridian 60*?

Until then, back to the Baby Spiders and Giant Rats…

Appendix A: Pre-*Meridian 59* Newsgroup Postings

Andrew Kirmse posted several messages related to developing multiplayer online games years before the actual release of *Meridian 59*. Also, a message by Michael Sellers hinting at the game he was developing with Kirmse during the summer of 1995.

Posting 1: Andrew's first post regarding possible multiplayer MUD development.

From: Andrew Kirmse (ark@athena.mit.edu)
Subject: Multi-user dialup game info
Newsgroups: comp.sys.ibm.pc.games
Date: 1992-07-10 09:51:42 PST

I am interested in writing and marketing an adventure game for the PC which would handle multiple players logged in and interacting simultaneously via modem. Can someone who knows about such things tell me about the competition, issues involved, or the hardware/software/game/time requirements involved in creating such a thing? Are such systems out there, and are they any good?

Would people be willing to play such a game, and what sort of functionality would you expect? How much graphics or animation do you think is necessary? How much would you be willing to pay (either per hour or a flat fee per month) if you enjoyed the game?

Please send comments to me via e-mail.

---Andrew Kirmse
ark@athena.mit.edu

http://groups.google.com/groups?q=author:ark%40athena.mit.edu&hl=en&ie=ISO-8859-1&oe=ISO-8859-1&selm=1992Jul10.211322.8228%40athena.mit.edu&rnum=8

Posting 2: Andrew displays more interest in MUD design – though more along the lines of a bulletin board type system with modem users calling the server directly.

From: Andrew Kirmse (ark@athena.mit.edu)
Subject: 8 modems? 16???
Newsgroups: comp.sys.ibm.pc.hardware.comm
Date: 1993-11-03 12:19:19 PST

I'm planning on writing a multi-user game for PCs, and I want to allow 16 players at a time. How can I do this?

- Is it possible to get a 16-serial port card like one of those things from Digiboard?

- The game will probably be written under Windows NT--can I get software drivers?

- How do BBSes do this sort of thing?

- Are there other alternatives?

Thanks,

---Andrew Kirmse
   ark@mit.edu

http://groups.google.com/groups?q=author:ark%40athena.mit.edu&hl=en&ie=ISO-8859-1&oe=ISO-8859-1&selm=2b91kl%24e6b%40senator-bedfellow.MIT.EDU&rnum=5

Posting 3: Andrew continues to display an interest in MUDs.

From: Andrew Kirmse (ark@athena.mit.edu)
Subject: MUD sources
Newsgroups: alt.mud
Date: 1994-03-01 10:17:59 PST

I'm interested in writing a 16-user PC game, and I'd like to see how MUDs work
and what they're capable of. Can someone tell me where I can get source code +
info on building MUDs? Thanks,

---Andrew

http://groups.google.com/groups?q=author:ark%40athena.mit.edu&hl=en&ie=ISO-
8859-1&oe=ISO-8859-1&selm=2l00sn%2460s%40senator-bedfellow.MIT.EDU&rnum=2

Posting 4: Michael Sellers builds suspense for Meridian which will be released in slightly less than a year.

From: Michael Sellers (sellers@teleport.com)
Subject: Re: 3 questions about MUDs.
Newsgroups: rec.games.mud.misc
Date: 1995-01-31 18:51:56 PST

Frank Crowell (frankc@netcom.com) wrote:
: degrood7826@cobra.uni.edu wrote:
:   [...]
: :   3. Eventually, will MUDs have graphics and be fully illistrated;
: :   like a SNES or Sega video game?
: Abosolutely yes. Text-based won't go away; MUDs will probably
: branch into three major groups (MUD, MUD+Web, MUD+DOOM+(Quake)).
: [no, I didn't forget Ultima-style, its part of the MUD+DOOM group]
: -frank

You forgot one group. No, I can't tell you what it is. Watch.

--
     Michael Sellers   New World Designs   sellers@nworld.com
     (503) 538-2745   2913 N. Aspen Way, Newberg, Oregon 97132
     User Interface Analysis, Design, Evaluation, and Training

http://groups.google.com/groups?hl=en&ie=ISO-8859-1&oe=ISO-8859-
1&frame=right&th=7a07bfbcb2cd5869&seekm=D3DJ7I.3K8%40news.cern.ch#link3

Appendix B: Original Alpha Announcement

Meridian 59's original newsgroup call for alpha testers.

```
From: Michael Sellers (sellers@teleport.com)
Subject: ANNOUNCE: *FREE* 3D Graphical MUD Available 12/15
Newsgroups: comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.adventure, comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.misc,
comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.rpg, rec.games.rpg, pdaxs.games.rpg, pdx.games,
rec.games.design, rec.games.frp.misc
Date: 1995/12/09


Terra Nova Interactive Corporation is pleased to announce the upcoming
alpha release of its new 3D graphical MUD, "Other Realms: Meridian 59."

This game will for the first time enable you to interact with other
players and with the environment in full 3D: talk with other players,
explore the countryside (alone or with a group), slay monsters, find
treasure, learn skills, solve puzzles, and take part in the political
intrigue that's bubbling up (word has it the king is insane, and may
even have killed the queen... but this is just rumor) -- all in fully
animated, first-person 3D.

Players use fully animated avatars with a wide range of appearances
(millions of unique appearances possible), and can communicate with
others using text, gestures, facial expressions, ...or the point of
a sword.

It's not just a shooter, and it's not just chat.  It is a multi-player
gaming experience like no other.

A free alpha version of the Other Realms client program will be made
available for downloading beginning December 15, 1995.  This will be a
limited alpha version; we will be adding many capabilities and areas of
the world in the coming weeks.  The client will be available via our web site
at http://www.terranova.com/~sellers.  The full version of the game, with a
greatly expanded world and expanded features, will be made
available on CD-ROM in 1996.

The game requires a 486/66 with 8Mb of RAM to run (and this will run
it well -- you don't need a Pentium to really play).  It runs under
Windows 3.1, Windows NT, and Windows 95 (Mac version coming soon!),
and requires a SLIP/PPP connection to the Net.  Additional technical
information is available at our web site.

In the meantime, please visit our website (www.terranova.com/~sellers)
for additional information and clues into the workings of Other Realms.
We're also giving away Cool Stuff to a random selection of people who
fill out the survey on our page.

See you in Other Realms!

--
 Michael Sellers    Terra Nova Interactive Corp.    mike@terranova.com
(503) 625-4385    http://www.terranova.com/~sellers (New and Improved!)
   Interactive entertainment software like you've never seen before.

http://groups.google.com/groups?q=+%22meridian+59%22&start=140&hl=en&ie=ISO-
8859-1&oe=ISO-8859-
1&scoring=d&as_drrb=b&as_mind=12&as_minm=5&as_miny=1994&as_maxd=18&as_maxm=9&as
_maxy=1996&selm=4adch9%243b4%40kelly.teleport.com&rnum=142
```

Appendix C: Announcement of 3DO's Purchase of Archetype

The press release of 3DO's Archetype purchase.

```
From: Chris Papademetrious (st92j0gw@dunx1.ocs.drexel.edu)
Subject: Re: 3DO Acquires Internet Gaming Company
Newsgroups: rec.games.video.3do
Date: 1996/05/17
```

3DO Enters Into Agreement To Acquire Archetype Interactive

Delivers First Component In Internet Strategy

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. - May 13, 1996 - Marking its entree into the
Internet area, The 3DO Company (NASDAQ: THDO) today announced that it
has entered into an agreement to acquire the Archetype Interactive
Corp., developers of the first 3-D graphical multiuser dimension (MUD)
game over the Internet. The acquisition, representing the first
component of 3DO's Internet strategy, will accelerate the company's
time to market an Internet product offering and give millions of users
the ability to experience true interactive gaming in a realistic
graphical environment.

Under the letter of agreement signed today, Archetype will become part
of 3DO's newly created Internet division, which boasts expertise from
the company's architecture, systems software and content creation
areas. Archetype's product, Meridian 59, reveals a dynamic 3-D visual
environment where thousands of users will be able to play
simultaneously across the Internet. Already, more than 10,000 users
across the globe have played an early version of the game. A final
version with expanded capabilities and game play is planned to be
available through the retail channel in the fall. This is expected to
be followed in the first half of 1997 by new Internet products
currently being developed at 3DO.

"The Internet is the first medium ever to provide a unique connectivity
between computing resources and people across the globe, ushering in a
new era of 'social computing'," said Trip Hawkins, chairman and CEO,
The 3DO Company. "Today's announcement demonstrates 3DO's commitment to
be a leader in this new era of computing by delivering truly engaging
entertainment, and gives users a hint of products to expect in the
coming year."

"We represent the next generation of gaming where the compelling
graphics of CD-ROM games and connectivity of the Internet meet, " said
Steve Sellers, co-founder and executive producer, the Archetype
Interactive Corp. "Meridian 59 is a revolutionary title that will
propel gamers into an entirely new world and way of entertainment."

Archetype was started in 1995 by two sets of brothers and is run
through four remote locations across the country. Mike Sellers,
creative director, works out of Sherwood, Ore. and his brother Steve
out of Berkeley, Calif. Andrew and Chris Kirmse, the company's chief
technology officers, operate out of Vienna and Blacksburg, Va.
respectively. The company has ten employees focused on engineering,
programming, art design and marketing.

```
Meridian 59
===========
```
Unlike on-line games available today, Meridian 59 was created from the
ground up specifically for the Internet. Players enter a medieval-like
setting where they create their own character for the game from
thousands of different attributes. One could be a strong warrior from

another era where key skills are the ability to wield a weapon and move
quickly. Players traverse different worlds - such as the metropolitan
Barloque or the pastoral village of Marion - interacting with other
characters. Players can kill monsters, solve puzzles, seek hidden
treasure, barter precious commodities, gain personal skills and chat
with other characters. Skills and power are obtained throughout one's
journey. Users can also band together with other characters on-line to
form guilds for interaction on common activities. Already, more than 15
guilds have been created, many of which have their own Web sites.

Characters can act with honor, betray friends or ally with one another.
Evil actions, such as killing another player, have long-term
repercussions that are visible to all players in the game. If one faces
an untimely death, the Underworld presents its own microcosm of
challenges and obstacles to overcome. The world continuously evolves
based on players' choices and activities, creating a different world to
be encountered every time players log on.
Meridian 59 will be demonstrated at private meetings at the E3 show in
Los Angeles, May 16-18.

The product requires a minimum configuration of an IBM-PC compatible
machine with a 486-DX66 processor, 8 Mb of RAM, SVGA monitor, 14.4 bps
modem, SLIP/PPP Internet connection and Microsoft Windows 95 or
Microsoft Windows NT.

Except for the historical information contained herein, the matters
discussed in this release are forward looking statements that involve
risks and uncertainties. Potential risks and uncertainties include,
without limitation, market demand and acceptance for the company's
current and future products, the company's ability to develop and ship
future products, and the consequences of competitive factors in the
marketplace. Further information on potential factors which could
affect the company's financial results are included in the company's
filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission, including the
company's Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended December 31, 1995,
the company's Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended March 31,
1995 and the company's report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended
March 31, 1996, which the company anticipates will be filed with the
SEC on or before June 30, 1996.

The 3DO Company, headquartered in Redwood City, Calif., designs,
integrates and sells advanced interactive technology and software
titles for the mass market. With offices in North America and Europe,
the company licenses technologies and creates entertainment software
for 32-bit and 64-bit video game platforms, the personal computer
market and the Internet. Additional company information is available on
the World Wide Web at www.3do.com and on America Online (keyword: 3DO).
Product information on Meridian 59 is available at www.bestworlds.com.

# # #

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The 3DO Company. All other product names are trademarks and/or
registered trademarks of their respective owners.

Neal
Director, 3DO Customer & Production Services

http://groups.google.com/groups?q=g:thl805313424d&hl=en&ie=ISO-8859-1&oe=ISO-
8859-1&selm=51ncrq%24lj1%40nadine.teleport.com&rnum=1

Appendix D: Announcement of Meridian Release

The original announcement of Meridian's commercial release.

From: Michael Sellers (sellers@teleport.com)
Subject: Meridian 59: It's here! First graphical commerical MUD
Newsgroups: rec.games.mud.misc, rec.games.programmer, rec.games.frp.misc
Date: 1996/09/17

We've all been wondering for a long time how the first commerical
graphical MUDs would be introduced. Here's the first one, I'm proud
to say. What follows is the official press release from 3DO. Look for
this game at places like Egghead, Computer City, CompUSA, Babbages, etc.,
in the first week of October. Note too the flat, unlimited play time
pricing.

Woohoo! Here we go -- it's going to be an interesting year!

3DO DELIVERS FIRST ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCT FOR THE INTERNET

Meridian 59 Is World's First Internet 3-D Graphical MUD Game
Netscape Navigator Bundled Free

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. (Sept. 16, 1996) The 3DO Company today announced
worldwide availablity of its first entertainment product for the
Internet, Meridianª59. The company also entered into a bundling agreement
with Netscape Communications Corporation and will be offering Netscape
Navigatorª Personal Edition client software free of charge with Meridian
59. Meridian, a fantasy role-playing game set in medieval times, is the
world's first 3-D graphical multi-user dimension (MUD) game designed
specifically for the Internet to be widely distributed through the retail
channel. Meridian 59 is expected to be on shelves in some 9,000 store
fronts across the United States and Canada in early October. The product
will also be available in Europe and Asia and through 3DO Direct Sales.

The 3DO Company today unveiled a pricing scheme for Meridian 59, which
includes a retail product with an estimated street price of $39.95 and
an ongoing monthly subscription fee of $9.95 for unlimited play. The
retail product comes with Netscape Navigator 2.0 Personal Edition client
software, 30 days of free game time, and a special edition map of the
Meridian world. The game, which surpassed 25,000 player accounts in more
than 65 countries during its beta trial, is the first product to ship
under 3DO's newly developed Internet operation. The company is currently
creating several entertainment products for the Internet space that are
expected to become available in 1997.

"Entertainment will be the driver behind the growth and acceptance of
the Internet as a mass market consumer platform," said Trip Hawkins,
chairman and CEO, The 3DO Company. "Meridian 59 bundled with Netscape's
client software offers a glimpse of the new genre of games being created
for the Internet where the best of today's technology and game play is
combined with the community of the Internet."

"As the Internet moves into the consumer realm, we are seeing a
tremendous interest from our customers for solid entertainment content,"
said Mike Homer, senior vice president of marketing, Netscape
Communications Corporation. "Today's announcement combines the world's
most popular client software with the Internet's leading-edge 3-D game,
ushering in a new era of entertainment on the Internet."

In conjunction with the Meridian launch, 3DO has embarked on an
aggressive on-line and print advertising campaign. Meridian 59 banners

will be featured on popular Web sites such as Yahoo, Lycos, and Infoseek, and game sites including Happy Puppy and GameSpot, which are expected to attract more than one million impressions per month. Advertising will also appear in top gaming and Internet magazines worldwide. In addition, Meridian 59 will be featured on Netscape's highly-trafficked Internet sites.

Meridian 59 players enter a rich and complex medieval setting populated with thousands of players from around the world engaged in adventure, exploration, and social interaction. Characters can act with honor, betray friends, or ally with one another. Evil actions, such as killing another player, have long-term repercussions that are visible to all players in the game. Current players spend an average of three hours a day in the world of Meridian, with the maximum continuous time logged by a single player at almost 26 hours. Users have also banded together with other players on-line to form over 60 guilds for a variety of purposes including protecting new players and acting as bank depositories for player possessions. More than 20 weddings have taken place with a few divorces and even one reconciliation, all on-line. In addition, players have established over 35 Meridian-specific Web sites.

Configuration Requirements
3DO's Meridian 59 requires the following minimum configuration:

- 486/66 Mhz or higher processor machine
- 8 MB RAM
- 35 MB hard disk space available
- 2X CD-ROM drive
- SVGA monitor
- 14.4 bps modem
- SLIP/PPP Internet connection
- Microsoft Windows 95/Windows NT

Meridian 59 carries a "Teen" rating. Additional product information is available at www.3do.com/meridian/ and through 3DO Direct Sales at (800) 336-3506.

Except for the historical information contained herein, the matters discussed in this release are forward looking statements that involve risks and uncertainties. Potential risks and uncertainties include, without limitation, market demand and acceptance for the company's current and future products, the company's ability to develop and ship future products, and the consequences of competitive factors in the marketplace. Further information on potential factors which could affect the company's financial results are included in the company's filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission, including the company's Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1996 and the company's Report on Form 10-Q for the fiscal quarter ended June 30, 1996.

The 3DO Company (NASDAQ: THDO), headquartered in Redwood City, Calif., designs, licenses and distributes advanced interactive technology and software titles for the mass market. With offices in North America and Europe, the company licenses technologies and creates entertainment software for the 32-bit and 64-bit video game platform, the personal computer market and the Internet.

# # #

3DO, the 3DO logos, and Meridian 59 are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of The 3DO Company. Netscape, Netscape Communications, and Netscape Navigator are trademarks of Netscape Communications Corporation. All other product names are trademarks and/or registered

trademarks of their respective owners.

Appendix E: Original Advertisements for *Meridian 59*

A few of the original print advertisements published in PC-Gamer.

Fig 1: Original print advertisement for *Meridian 59*.
(13, http://sumarius.net/m59ad.html)

Fig 2: Original Advertisement for *Meridian 59*.
(13, http://sumarius.net/m59ad3.html)

Fig 3: Original Advertisement for *Meridian 59*.
(13, http://sumarius.net/m59ad4.html)

Appendix F: Original Game Reviews

Original reviews of Meridian 59

Meridian 59

Rule the world (or at least, a world)

By Peter Olafson

ONLINE

Hillary's right: It really does take a village. And I can think of no better illustration than my recent experiences in Meridian 59.

I guess I should start at the beginning. A few days ago, my review of this Internet-based 3D multi-user dungeon (MUD) was shaping up as a rather mixed bag. After a few hours online with the inviting game engine—Doom-like movement with role-playing features and a text parser—the actual game seemed daunting.

Its strong points were obvious. The engine is an utter delight; a standalone RPG would be hard-pressed to top the features. Detailed descriptions are a click away. The automap can be annotated, and key locations in the five cities are already identified. The parser is rich and flexible: you talk to people in your immediate area or "broadcast" Meridian-wide messages. The graphics aren't up to the best 3D games, but they work with smooth movement. The sound is atmospheric.

Ready your weapon—danger could spring from anywhere.

It was easy to install, and almost as easy to get up and running. (Netscape Personal Navigator 2.02 is bundled.) And latency? What's latency? For all intents and purposes, Meridian played as if it all resided on my machine. Even building a character—a pleasant, graphically oriented procedure in which you customize your face, stats, and skills—was a breeze.

The problem was, I couldn't get anywhere. My first day went something like this: I went out of town to find adventure. I got killed by a large insect. (A baby spider, no less.) Sans worldly goods, I had to negotiate winding staircases leading from the Underworld to one of Meridian's inns. I fell off several times before I reached the top. I went out of town to find adventure. I got killed by a large insect...

And so on. I felt like a country boy who gets mugged on his first night in the big city and staggers out of an alley in his underwear. When I logged on for a final go, I wasn't expecting much—except maybe to help feed Meridian's arachnoid population.

But then, something unexpected happened: I met someone. I don't know why he took me in hand, but he did. He gave me armor, a better weapon, and 2,000 shillings, and escorted me to the bank to stash it for safekeeping.

Now I'm killing baby spiders and worse, and I don't feel as though I'm wearing my mortality on my sleeve. Of course, there's a catch: My friend wants me to join his guild once I reach a certain level of proficiency. "Think of it as grease," he told me mildly.

Hey, I can live with that. The lesson is that the engine is just a facilitator, and that any online game is only as good as the people playing. I'm still a stranger in a strange land, uncertain of my

standing, and small hairs on the back of my neck still stand on end when I see movement on the horizon. (There are some real villains lurking out there. I've seen three reports of cold-blooded murders while online.)

But now I know someone, and I feel as though I have a future. And that makes all the difference. You see the world differently when you're not staring into the abyss. Possibilities are emerging, and the potential of Meridian is vast. This online village has done its job.

Some characters require convincing before giving you a position.

Simple, easy-to-navigate maps help the exploration process.

MERIDIAN 59		
GAMEPLAY:	A−	
GETTING STARTED:	B−	**A−**
GRAPHICS:	B	OVERALL
SOUND CHECK:	B+	
MULTIPLAYER:	A−	

A sense of community makes this great game even better.

Publisher:	Studio 3DO 800-336-3506 www.3DO.com
Platform:	Win 95 CD
Requires:	486/66, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, 2X CD-ROM drive, PPP/Slip Internet connection, 14.4Kbps modem, mouse, sound card
List Price:	$49.95; first 30 days free (then $9.95 a month)

TIPS ▼ Don't carry cash; use the bank. If you die, you'll still have your loot. ▼ Don't take on anything larger than a giant rat or baby spider at the start. ▼ Stay out of Tos' cemetery at night until you've reached a fairly high level. ▼ It's regarded as bad etiquette to steal someone else's post-combat loot. (If it appears unattended, ask first.)

January 1997 • PC GAMES

Fig 4: A January 1997 PC Gamer Review (13, http://sumarius.net/m59_review1.htm)

Appendix F: Screenshots of *Meridian 59*

Fig 5: Old Screen Shot of Original *Meridian 59* interface
(18, http://www.gamespy.com/asp/image.asp?/20q/october00/schubert/59a.jpg)

Fig 6: Screenshot of me slaying Baby Spiders and Giant Rats in *Meridian 59: Resurrection*. Not much has changed with regard to the graphics. (1)

Appendix G: Announcement of Closure of Meridian Servers

```
Greetings Meridianites,


It is with a heavy heart that we announce the time has come for the curtain to
fall on Meridian 59. On August 31, 2000 at 4 p.m. PDT, the Meridian 59 servers
will cease operations permanently. To thank you for your loyalty and past
support of Meridian 59, we are planning to provide you the final three months
of play at no charge, from June 1 through August 31, 2000. This should allow
you plenty of time to say your fond farewells, exchange contact information
with your friends, and even have one last grand blowout of a guild war if you
choose.


New account creation has already been disabled, so if you do not already have
an account of your own, you will not be able to create one. (Please do not call
us; we will not create new accounts for any reason.) Please also understand
that we will not be providing support for the servers during the remainder of
the period of free play, nor will we be providing technical support for
customers. If the system experiences any bugs, glitches, crashes, or other
unforeseen events or circumstances, it will not be repaired.


We thank you for your dedication and devotion to this pioneering effort in
online gaming. The first chapter of Meridian 59 went live October 1, 1996, and
less than fifteen months later players had collectively logged over one million
hours of play time. Meridianites were making friends, getting married online
and selling high-level characters long before anyone had even heard of eBay.
When the stories are told, it will be the essences of the characters created by
you that will be the spice of the tale. It was truly an epic adventure!


Signed,
The Guardians of Meridian
```

http://www.google.com/search?q=cache:w2qQMYB42lEC:www.punkerslut.com/articles/for108.html+%22It+is+with+a+heavy+heart+that+we+announce+the+time+has+come+for+the+curtain+to+fall+on+Meridian+59%22&hl=en&ie=ISO-8859-1

Bibliography

Properly cataloging Internet resources is fairly difficult – finding last-modified dates and real owners of pages is near impossible. For most specific pages I simply tried to include the hyperlink and basic information. For sites which I used many internal pages, I simply listed the top-level homepage. Not all of the sources were used directly in this paper.

Also, while likely unacceptable by the MLA and other authoritative citation guidelines, I've simply used parenthetical numerical citations within the paper. A '(2)' reference indicates I used the MobyGames *Meridian 59* page, for example. Since so many sources came from the same authors or sites, actually including "MobyGames, *Meridian 59*" parenthetically became distracting.

Also, I've split the resources used into related groups to make things easier.

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42) 'Mustaphina.' Near Death Studio Online Forums. "Oh well, there's no real point in ordering the pre-release version any more then :("
http://forums.neardeathstudios.com/showthread.php?s=adf7d2babf2b2343df9d4853ccaef778&threadid=555

Miscellaneous:

43) Green, Brian. Resume.
http://www.psychochild.org/personal/gresht.html

44) O'Hara, Kevin. Resume.
http://home.san.rr.com/krohara/resume.html

45) 3DO. "URGENT POST!!!!" In game message regarding the upcoming close of US. Meridian servers.
http://www.google.com/search?q=cache:w2qQMYB42lEC:www.punkerslut.com/articles/for108.html+%22It+is+with+a+heavy+heart+that+we+announce+the+time+has+come+for+the+curtain+to+fall+on+Meridian+59%22&hl=en&ie=ISO-8859-1

46) PC Gamer Advertisements:
    http://sumarius.net/m59ad3.html
    http://sumarius.net/m59ad.html
    http://sumarius.net/m59ad4.html