

Mosaic



Marc Garneau

Marc Garneau. Canada's first astronaut will be going into space three weeks earlier than was originally planned. This October 1, Garneau (a naval commander from Quebec City who was working as Head of Communication and Electronic Warfare for the Department of National Defence in Ottawa), will join an American crew on the space shuttle *Challenger*. From thousands of applicants across Canada, 6 candidates were chosen (5 men and 1 woman) and now Garneau has been chosen from among them to be the first into space. Bob Thirsk, a medical doctor, was named as the back-up astronaut for the flight.

TECHNOLOGY

Mailboy Robot. Place Bell Canada has a new employee. His name is Troid, he's 4 feet high, weighs about a third of a ton and looks more like a runaway filing cabinet than a mailboy. He is the first of his kind in Ottawa and currently is lumbering along on the sixth floor complete with flashing lights, beeps and warning signals. He follows a chemical path around the office and stops for 21 seconds at each specified place. Should anyone get in his way, his bat like radar

system allows him to politely stop. Described as "very, very dependable", it seems that Troid has passed the test and made it into a "term" position with the Public Service.

The Digital Revolution. Radios tell us the time. Cars tell us to "buckle up" and now our kitchen and laundry appliances are going to start talking to us. Appliances already beep, blink and flash messages to tell us that doors are ajar, cycles are over and motors have burned out. Manufacturers are now tinkering with appliances that will listen and speak. They have experimented with both male and female voices but admit that most people feel uncomfortable with both. Products that respond to verbal commands, it seems, have some benefits, but having them talk back is altogether different. Although surveys have shown some dislike for digital technology, the manufacturers feel that as long as they are able to keep the operations simple and manageable, that digital technology is here to stay.



HEALTH

The Health Act has now become law. It is retroactive to April 1, 1984, but the most controversial sections won't come into force until this summer. As of July 1, provinces

that continue to sanction extra charges stand to lose one dollar in federal grants for every dollar patients are forced to pay out of their own pockets. Any money withheld by the federal government will be paid later only if extra charges are banned within three years. British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario account for all but a small amount of the money collected, so they stand to lose the most.

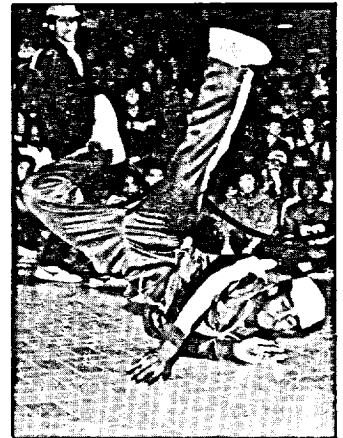
B.C. has decided to replace its hospital user fee (now about \$50 million) with an income tax surtax based on family size. Alberta says it will accept the federal penalties as the price of running medicare its own way. (It is talking about making extra billing harder for the doctors though.) Ontario hasn't as yet decided what it will do. We are all awaiting its decision.

Babies. Two new tests are now on the market to assist couples in planning their families. One, the LH test, determines the exact time of ovulation by the woman. By dipping a plastic stick into a urine sample and seeing if the stick turns blue, the couple will be able to determine whether ovulation has taken place or not. The test identifies the presence of a chemical called luteinizing hormone, or LH. Small concentrations are common in a woman's tissue 24 to 36 hours before the egg is released, but the LH dramatically jumps once it is released. The test should be in the hands of physicians by the summer and available to consumers over-the-counter by next year.

The second test, the chorionic villous biopsy, can now identify birth defects in the 7th or 8th week of pregnancy (7 to 9 weeks earlier than amniocentesis). It has already been used on 30 women at the Civic Hospital and by this summer should be offered as an alternative test to women over the age of 35 to detect any abnormalities such as Down's Syndrome.

CHILDREN AND TEENS

The latest crazes for the young folks are friendship pins (safety pins with beads on them), sticker collections, Cabbage Patch Kids and Care Bears. For the pre-teens and teens, it's Michael Jackson (winner of 8 Grammys), Boy George and break dancing (a combination of gymnastics and dance).



Break Dancing

More than a thousand people of all ages recently packed the new Rideau Centre to watch 40 local break dancers go through their energetic routines of headstands, flips, leaps and spins all to accompanying rock music.

FASHIONS

The Unsuit — a semi-transparent swimsuit that lets the sun shine in for an all-over tan — is reporting record sales in Ottawa since it hit the market in March. Invented by nutritionist, Hans Buhninger, the Un-suit comes in maillot or bikini styles for men and women. Held up to the light, the material is semi-transparent, but clever construction, a distracting pattern and open weave permit 45% of the sun's ultraviolet tanning rays through, while still allowing the person to feel comfortably clothed.