

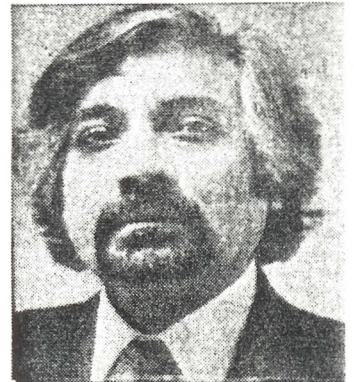
# Chicago Tribune

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## Computer in the cards



Tribune photo by Anne Cusack

Sam Pitroda: Inventor of a deck of computer-oriented cards that were designed to keep his electronically astute son content.

It had to be in the cards

## Computer-coded game hits the deck

By Christine Winter

**I**F YOU ALREADY feel like a hostage in the computer revolution, just wait until you see what's heading your way next. No, not some exotic new form of high tech, such as voice-activated computers or 1-million-byte bubble memories; the average member of the unplugged generation can go on living relatively undisturbed with that kind of technology swirling above his head. It's those subtle little changes, such as computerized Scrabble and electronic Monopoly and binary card decks that really have an impact on the average fuddy duddy.

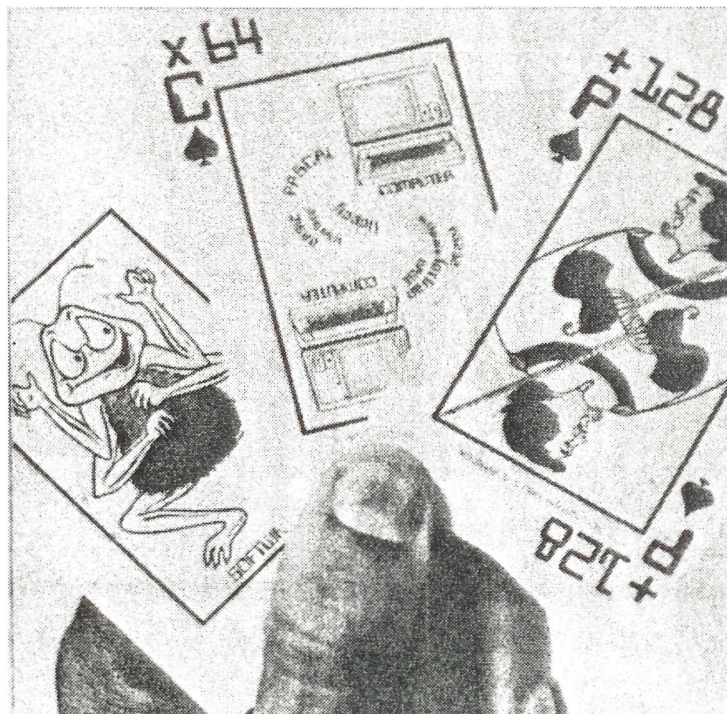
Later this month, what is probably the world's first binary card deck will be showing up next to those old-fashioned, traditional 52-card decks that have served civilization so well for 600 years. The new deck, known as Compucards, is an update of those old feudal characters and decimal numbers for the *techie* generation. No more one-eyed jacks, no more aces high, no more 5s or 10s or even 52-card pickup games.

The 64-card deck was designed by an Indian-born inventor of telecommunications devices, Sam Pitroda of Downers Grove, and his 8-year-old son, Salil.

Salil, it seems, could not be prided from his home computer to play cards with his dad.

"Who cares about kings and queens," he complained. "I like computers and programmers much better."

**L**IKE ANY doting father with master's degrees in both physics and electronics and a background in digital electronic switching systems, Pitroda sat down and invented a deck of computer-oriented cards that would keep his electronically astute son content.



Tribune photo by Anne Cusack

Compucards: The world's first binary card deck contains 64 cards.

Because the deck is based on the binary system, the cards are numbered 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64 and 128. There are two of each card in each of four suits, one a + card representing addition, the other a \* card, using the computer symbol for multiplication.

[A \* beats a + if the denomination is the same, which is only logical in that multiplication is more powerful than addition. The rule holds, for the sake of consistency, even for the 1 cards.]

The old royalty cards are gone, with the 64 card taking on the face of

a "computer" instead of a queen. The computer card has a friendly little terminal on its face, and all sorts of computer buzzwords, like ROM and software and interface buzzing around.

There are a couple of small ties with tradition: A terminal appears at each end of the card, much like the old double-faced royalty cards, and the four suits (4 being a binary number) remain intact. The resemblance ends there.

**T**HE KING, number 128 (the high card in this deck), is a programmer, dressed rather nobly and brandishing a sword bearing a binary number design of 0101. The Jack is gone, and the Joker has been replaced with a "Software Bug."

That's all you need to know—that and that overtrumping has become "dynamic," as Pitroda puts it, making use of the addition and multiplication signs. If, say, the game is contract bridge and the trump suit is spades and an opponent trumps your partner's 16 of hearts with a +32 of spades, you can overtrump by playing a \*4 of spades, 4 times 16 [64] being greater than 32 plus 16 [48].

Pitroda says that any card game can be played with this deck. In fact, he has designed no new games specifically for Compucards.

Blackjack, for instance, is played to 56, rather than 21. In poker, a full house would be something like \*8 \*8 \*8 +4 +4.

This card deck of the '80s, which will retail for about \$5.99, is to be ready for distribution later this month. Pitroda hopes to persuade computer manufacturers to put their logos on the back and use the decks as promotional devices. They will be available through mail order at P.O. Box 4745, Oak Brook, Ill. 60521.