

The book, *The Case of the Killer Robot* contains three articles before those available on line.

New Generation of Robots Delivered to CyberWidgets, Inc.

Robbie CX30 Employs New AI Technologies

by **Ralph Forrest**

Sentinel-Observer Business Reporter

One dozen Robbie CX30 robots were delivered to CyberWidgets Inc., last week. CyberWidgets CEO Christopher Jenkins called the robots “revolutionary tools for improving productivity on the shop floor.” CyberWidgets has made ambitious efforts in recent years to improve its market share in the area of machine tool parts and widget manufacture.

“If we are going to compete with the Japanese”, Jenkins said with an angry scowl, “then we will have to master the technologies of tomorrow.”

The Robbie CX30 is the latest version of the Robbie CX series of robots produced by Silicon Techchronics. Silicon Techchronics has placed increasing emphasis of the use of artificial intelligence throughout the corporation. Silicon Techchronics Robotics Division Chief Ray Johnson praised the Robbie CX and its development team. He participated in the dedication ceremony for the roots at CyberWidgets, Inc.

“We have the highest quality people at Silicon Techchronics,” Johnson said. “When we give them something to do, they do it, and nothing can get in their way.” He specially praised Robbie CX30 project director George Cuzzins, “who took extraordinary measures to ensure that Robbie CX30 would be ready for today’s ceremonies.”

Reporters were taken on a tour of the CyberWidgets shop floor. Several robot operators demonstrated the extraordinary abilities of the new robot. The robot has taken over several dangerous responsibilities from human laborers. Bart Matthews, a resident of East Silicon Valley, was on of the robot operators that spoke to this reporter. “I trust this robot,” Mr Matthews told the reporters as e demonstrated how Robbie CX30 could detect a certain kind of widget on a conveyor belt and could place that widget in an acid bath. He showed this reported a scar from severe acid burn on one of his arms. “No more acid burns for widget handler!” he exclaimed.

The Robbie CX30 robot uses sophisticated visual processing techniques to classify, identify, and “see” widgets so they can be processed in an appropriate way. The robot removes operators from dangerous shop floor areas and relegates them to the operation of the robot from the operator console.

One reporter asked Mr. Matthews whether there was anything he did not like about the robot. “Well, yes, the user...”

At this point Mr. Johnson interrupted Bart Matthews and said, “This is a bad time to bring up negative comments. We’re celebrating the installation of these wonderful new robots. Look no technology is 100 percent perfect.”

Robot Kills Operator in Grisly Accident

Operator Had Filed Complaints about User Interface

This late-breaking story was filed by
by **Yvette Jones, Richard Norton, and Pam Pullitzer**

A Robbie CX30 robot killed its operator today at CyberWidgets, Inc., in what police are calling an “unbelievable scene of blood and gore.” “I have covered a lot of murders, but nothing like this,” said Silicon Valley Chief of Police Jack Ripkin. In an unusual move that has been protested by the *Sentinel-Observer* reporters and photographers were barred from the scene of the accident. “There is just too much blood and tissue splashed all around and we don’t want the press making it sound any worse than it already is.”

Before getting into the details, here are the facts: At about 10:30 this morning a Robbie CX30 robot literally attacked its operator on the shop floor a CyberWidgets. The operator is identified as Bart Matthews, who is reported to have been married and the father of several children. Bart Matthews was working alone with the robot in the widget cleaning and processing area of the assembly line.

Apparently the robot’s arm motion became extremely violent, and the robot arm struck Mr. Matthews with great velocity. It is not clear whether Mr. Matthews had any means of defending himself against the advancing robot.

When asked whether the robot had an on-off switch, one CyberWidgets official said, “We are looking into that.” An insider at Silicon Techchronics told one of our reporters that an on-off switch was considered an unnecessary expense by the system designers. “There were at least ten ways to turn off the robot using the system menus,” this programmer said, requesting anonymity.

Mr. Matthews, who attained brief notoriety back in the 1970s with a hit rock single, “You Push All the Right Buttons!”, had complained to his foreman at CyberWidgets about the robot operator console. Although the shop foreman Will Addley, refused to comment, one CyberWidgets employee who wished to remain anonymous stated that the robot user interface was difficult to use.

Several experts have told the *Sentinel-Observer* that the user interface could have contributed to this incident. “But it’s much too early to say,” said Silicon Valley University professor Horace Gritty. “Computer systems are very complex.”

One reporter asked Police Chief Ripkin whether this incident was being treated as a crime. “Not at all,” he replied. “I am here to keep you folks at bay. This is private property. There is not indication that a crime has been committed here.”

The man on the street does not necessarily agree with Chief Ripkin. We interviewed several people at the Silicon Valley Mall. Sally Winters of South Silicon Valley was of the opinion that this should be treated as a crime. “Someone has to be held accountable for what happened. The robot did not act out of its own free will.” Jamie Winters, her eleven-year-old son, agree. “Someone could have programmed the robot to ice that guy!”

CyberWidgets has suspended use of the Robbie CX30 until the cause of the tragedy can be tracked down. A CyberWidgets spokesperson moved to quell investor fears that CyberWidgets would be hurt by this suspension. “We anticipate only a brief suspension of robot operations due to this incident,” the spokesperson said. “We will be prudent in weighing the risks to our employees against the financial cost of not getting our produce out to our customers.”

Silicon Techchronics CEO Michael Waterson refused to appear before reporters. He issued the following statement: “The Silicon Techchronics family feels the pain of the Matthews family, and it would be tasteless for us to comment on the robot and its problems at this point.”

The killer robot incident has had a chilling effect throughout the valley. This is the first known case of a robot operator being killed in the valley, although a robot operator was killed in Japan in the 1980s. People in the valley are quite sophisticated when it comes to understanding computer systems, and many feel that it will not be easy to assign blame in this incident.

McMurdock Promises

Justice in “Killer Robot” Case

At Issue Is Accountability for Software Developers

by **Pam Pullitzer**

Just one month after Bart Matthews was slain in the “killer robot” incident, Silicon Valley Prosecuting Attorney Jane McMurdock announced that she would launch an investigation into the case on the grounds that the robot’s behaviour was possibly the result of criminal negligence.

“If I do not enter this case,” Ms. McMurdock told a news conference early this morning, “then no one will be held responsible for the death of Bart Matthews. The only recourse to the immediate victims in this case and to society at large would be to file suit under strict liability. That does not bode well for the full disclosure of all factors that led to this tragedy. Only a criminal investigation will be able to uncover the whole truth.”

One reporter asked Ms. McMurdock whether she had any specific leads that suggested criminal behaviour on someone’s part. “Yes, I do!” she exclaimed. “However, it would compromise our investigation if I were to say anything further at this point. Let me just say that a bug was found in the software.”

In the month since the accident, the press has been able to determine almost nothing about its causes. CyberWidgets and Silicon Techchronics have both placed a tight lid of secrecy over the Robbie CX30 project. Because there has been no criminal investigation, Silicon Techchronics has been able to hide most details of Robbie CX30 hardware and software from public scrutiny. A terse statement issued several weeks ago by Silicon Techchronics stated, “All software components made at Silicon Techchronics are proprietary and shall not be placed in the public domain.”

Sally Matthews, widow of Bart Matthews, has told reporters that she is not thinking about a lawsuit at this time because “I am still in a period of mourning and grief. If I sure CyberWidgets or Silicon Techchronics, it will be not be to alleviate the grief but to satisfy a sense of justice.”

Silicon Techchronics and CyberWidgets have placed an especially tight lid upon the issue of the robot interface. It was reported that Bart Matthews had complained about the user interface to his foreman at CyberWidgets. That foreman has since been relocated to the CyberWidgets Canada plant in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.

One reporter asked Jane McMurdock what kind of legal theory she would apply to support a criminal indictment in the case of the killer robot. “I think that if someone was substandard in performance of their duties, for example, if they made an unusual programming error, then that would be a basis for prosecution. I am going to go much further in pursuing this than any of my

detractors ever thought possible. I am not talking negligence here, I think it is more like operating a vehicle in a reckless and dangerous manner.”

One reported pointed out that this approach would be without legal precedent. McMurdock replied, “I am trying to establish a legal precedent that will force software developers to think twice before they release a produce as dangerous as the killer robot.”

Shoppers at Silicon Valley Mall seemed to support McMurdock in her quest to hold someone criminally responsible for the incident. Sally Winters, who once again had kept her son Jamie out of school in order to get some shopping done, said, “All I know is that when innocent blood is shed, there’s got to be some kind of accounting for it.” Jamie said that his classmates at school thought that the killer robot was “real cool.” He showed this reported a sketch he had made of the killer robot using course paper and crayons. It was a graphic portrayal of a violent death to say the least.