Cyclical behavior of high tech industries

During the last recession, employment declines in high tech industries were not as deep as those in manufacturing; only the group with high concentrations of skilled workers and large R&D expenditures outperformed the nonfarm sector

JOHN U. BURGAN

High technology industries are perceived to have offered good economic news during recent recessions. However, analysis of trends in these industries reveals that they are not immune from problems which occur in the economy, including the effects of the business cycle.

In the most recent recession, only the most narrowly defined of three groups of high tech industries performed better in terms of employment than the nonfarm business sector. The three groups of high tech industries are:

- Group I comprises industries with a proportion of technology-oriented workers (engineers, life and physical scientists, mathematical specialists, engineering and science technicians, and computer specialists) at least 1.5 times the average for all industries.
- Group II comprises industries with a ratio of R&D expenditures to net sales at least twice the average for all industries.
- Group III comprises manufacturing industries with a proportion of technology-oriented workers equal to or greater than the average for all manufacturing industries, and a ratio of R&D expenditures to sales close to or above the average for all industries. Two nonmanufacturing industries are also included.

This article discusses employment trends in high tech industries through 1984, updating the November 1983 *Monthly Labor Review* article which reported developments over the 1972–82 period.¹ In addition, it presents high tech employment in 1983 by State and for the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

Reaction to economic swings

Many high tech industries posted remarkable growth during the 1972–84 period. (See table 1.) For example, employment in communications services (not elsewhere classified), which includes industries involved in cablevision service delivery and home TV antenna construction, more than quintupled during this period. Computer and data processing services grew almost as fast (345 percent). Five other industries grew more than 80 percent from 1972 to 1983—surgical, medical, and dental instruments and supplies; optical instruments and lenses; office computing and accounting machines; crude petroleum and natural gas; and engineering and architectural services.

Not all high tech industries posted such remarkable growth rates. Of the 48 high tech industries, 16 had faster employment growth rates than nonagricultural employment, which grew 27.8 percent during the 1972–84 period. Sixteen high tech industries had employment reductions during this period, including radio and TV receiving equipment (-35 percent) and plastics materials and synthetics (-25 percent). Four other industries lost one job in six over these

John U. Burgan is an economist in the Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

SIC	índustry	High tech group ¹	Emp	loyment	Percent change	
code		mgn toon group	1972	1984	1972-84	
131 162 281 282 283 284 285 286	Crude petroleum and natural gas Heavy construction, except highway Industrial inorganic chemicals Plastic materials and synthetics Drugs Soaps, cleaners, and toilet preparations Paints and allied products Industrial organic chemicals	1 1 1, 10 1, 00 1, 10, 00 1, 10 1, 10 1, 10	139.7 495.1 141.2 228.7 159.2 122.4 68.6 142.8	250.8 540.6 157.1 175.8 200.7 148.1 61.7 163.2	79.5 9.2 11.3 -23.1 26.1 21.0 -10.1 14.3	
287 289 291 301 324 348 351 352	Agricultural chemicals Miscellaneous chemical products Petroleum refining Tires and inner tubes Cement, hydraulic Ordnance and accessories Engines and turbines Farm and garden machinery	1, HD 1, 401 1, 101 1, 101 1, 101 1, 101 1, 101 1, 101	56.4 90.0 151.4 122.1 31.9 81.9 114.6 135.0	61.1 93.5 150.1 101.3 26.2 67.5 113.5 115.3	8.3 3.9 9 - 17.0 - 17.9 - 17.6 - 1.0 - 14.6	
353 354 355 356 357 358 361 362	Construction, mining, and material handling machinery Metalworking machinery Special industry machinery, except metalworking General industrial machinery Office, computing, and accounting machines Refrigeration and service industry machinery Electric transmission and distribution equipment Electrical industrial apparatus	 	293.7 286.0 176.9 267.5 259.6 164.4 128.4 209.3	276.0 310.2 188.5 276.9 505.7 180.7 114.1 213.1	- 6.0 8.5 - 4.7 3.5 94.8 9.9 - 11.1 1.8	
363 364 365 366 367 369 371 372	Household appliances Electric lighting and wining equipment Radio and tv receiving equipment Communication equipment Electronic components and accessories Miscelianeous electrical machinery Motor vehicles and equipment Aircraft and parts	1 1 1, 10, 101 1, 10, 101 1, 10, 101 1, 10, 101 1, 10, 101	186.9 204.4 139.5 458.4 354.8 131.7 874.8 494.9	153.1 204.0 90.2 614.8 684.9 160.1 867.3 601.4	- 18.1 2 -35.3 34.1 93.0 21.6 9 21.5	
376 381 382 383 384 386 483 489	Guided missiles and space vehicles Engineering, laboratory, and research instruments Measuring and controlling instruments Optical instruments and lenses Surgical, medical, and dental instruments Photographic equipment and supplies Radio and rv broadcasting Communication services, not elsewhere classified	1, 11, 101 1, 101 1, 101 1, 101 1, 101 1, 101 1, 101 1, 101 1	92.5 64.5 159.6 17.6 90.5 117.1 142.7 29.7	152.7 80.2 251.8 32.1 175.5 126.0 229.8 152.5	65.1 24.3 57.8 82.4 93.9 7.6 61.0 413.5	
491 493 506 508 737 7391 891 892	Electric services Combination electric, gas, and utility services Wholesale trade, electrical goods Wholesale trade, machinery, equipment, and supplies Computer and data processing services Research and development laboratories Engineering, architectural, and surveying services Noncommercial educational, scientific and research organizations	 , , 	312.0 183.4 331.2 868.6 106.7 110.7 339.3 111.8	438.8 199.3 467.5 1,400.8 475.3 181.3 615.6 109.9	40.6 8.7 41.2 61.3 345.5 63.8 81.4 1.7	

Table 1. Employment in high technology industries, 1972 and 1984 annual averages

¹Group I comprises industries with a proportion of technology-oriented workers (engineers, life and physical scientists, mathematical specialists, engineering and science technicians, and computer specialists) at least 1.5 times the average for all industries. Group III comprises manufacturing industries with a proportion of technology-oriented workers equal to or greater than the average for all manufacturing industries, and a ratio of R&D expenditures to sales close to or above the average for all industries. Two nonmanufacturing industries which provide technical support to high tech manufacturing industries also are included.

Group II comprises industries with a ratio of ${\tt Rad}$ expenditures to net sales at least twice the average for all industries.

years—tires and inner tubes, hydraulic cement, ordnance and accessories, and household appliances.

Each of the three groups of high tech industries is composed primarily of manufacturing industries. Only in group I do nonmanufacturing industries make up more than 10 percent of total employment of the group. The prevalence of cyclically sensitive manufacturing industries in these groups has important consequences when their performance during recent recessions is evaluated. According to some, high tech employment is relatively secure from the effects of the business cycle because it is characterized by high growth industries. However, as chart 1 demonstrates, high tech industries have been affected, to some extent, by economic downturns. Only the industries in group II have managed to weather a national recession since 1972 without an absolute drop in employment, and that experience occurred during the short 1980 downturn.

Chart 2 provides a closer look at the employment performance of the three high tech industries during the most recent recession and the recovery to the end of 1984. Only group II, with the most restrictive definition, performed better than the total nonagricultural sector during the 1981– 82 recession, although all three groups outperformed manufacturing industries. The broader the definition, the more the effects of the recession are seen. Group I—with the broadest definition—had the worst performance of the three groups. This group contains such cyclically sensitive industries as auto manufacturing, heavy construction, and electrical and nonelectrical machinery.

The extent to which the performance of the three high





tech groups were affected by the most recent recession is demonstrated in table 2. Note that for each group, employment declines ended at about the same time—January or February 1983, after total nonfarm and manufacturing employment troughs (December 1982). However, the industries in group I experienced employment declines before the other two groups, at about the same time as the total nonfarm prerecession peak in midsummer of 1981. Group I industries were also the last to regain their prerecession employment levels in June of 1984, 19 months after the recession's end. Group II, the most narrowly defined group of high tech industries, shows a different pattern. Employment did not begin to decline until December 1981, and the prerecession employment level was regained in July 1983, 11 months before the industries in group I. Group III displays a recession pattern which lies between groups I and II: its employment downturn began before group II, but after group I; its prerecession peak was regained after group II but be-

r Date	Number	Date	peak regained	(in nercent)	
h 1001			peak regained	(in percent)	
) June 1981	11,897	January 1983	June 1984	8.7	
1 December 1981	2,504	February 1983	July 1983	2.2	
3 September 1981	5,626	February 1983	February 1984	5.3	
1 July 1981	18.041	December 1982	(1)	11.3	
) July 1981	88,646	December 1982	November 1983	3.1	
(1 December 1981 3 September 1981 1 July 1981 0 July 1981	1 December 1981 2,504 3 September 1981 5,626 1 July 1981 18,041 0 July 1981 88,646	1 December 1981 2,504 February 1983 3 September 1981 5,626 February 1983 1 July 1981 18,041 December 1982 0 July 1981 88,646 December 1982 of these series has shown that the trend cycle. Nonfarm data have been series has shown that here been series has shown that here been series has shown that here been series her	1 December 1981 2,504 February 1983 July 1983 3 September 1981 5,626 February 1983 February 1984 1 July 1981 18,041 December 1982 (1) 0 July 1981 88,646 December 1982 November 1983 of these series has shown that the seasonal component is qu trend cycle. Nonfarm data have been seasonally adjusted. See ta See ta	

manufacturing and pontarm industries during the 1981-82 recession

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fore group I. The post-recession performance of all three groups outpaced that of manufacturing industries, which has yet to regain its prerecession peak.

The percentage of total employment lost during the recession (as measured by the percentage difference between prerecession peak employment and trough employment) also varies by definition with group I losing the most (-8.7 percent); group II the least (-2.2 percent); and group III again in the middle (-5.3 percent).

From the experience of the three high tech industry groups in the recent recession and in the two other post-1972 downturns, several observations can be made. First, high tech industries are not isolated from the business cycle. In fact, during the 1981–82 recession, only group II, the most restrictive (and smallest) group, lost a smaller proportion of prerecession employment than did nonfarm industries. The other two high tech groups lost more than nonfarm industries, with the broadest—group I—losing 8.7 percent, compared with nonfarm's 3.1-percent loss. High tech industries, although comprised largely of manufacturing industries, performed better than total manufacturing during this period.

Thus, the degree to which industries defined as high tech were influenced by recent recessions depended, in part, on the definition. Industries included in the narrow definition

Table 3. Employment in high technology industries for all States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, 1981, 1982, and 1983 annual averages

[In thousands]	[In thousands]										
State	Group I			State	Group II		State				
UIBIE	1981	1982	1983		1981	1982	1983		1981	1982	1983
United States	12,876.5	12,413.0	12,181.8	United States	2,562.5	2,555.6	2,578.7	United States	5,859.9	5,736.5	5,701.0
California	1,534.8	1,522.9	1,537.6	California	592.7	609.3	624.5	California	929.1	940.1	960.3
Texas	1,055.6	1,039.8	968.0	New York	201.8	202.4	202.9	New YORK	375.8	366.8	363.3
New York	917.5 722.1	905.4	634.9	Texas	160.5	155.0	155.6	New Jersey	316.9	312.6	313.9
Michigan	691.4	631.4	627.4	New Jersey	113.3	115.4	118.6	Massachusetts	300.9	299.9	306.5
Illinois	716.0	652.7	615.6	Florida	102.0	106.3	107.7	Beoggyhyapia	287.0	269.7	259.7
Pennsylvania	628.6	598.5	571.2	Connecticut	99.0	97.0	97.4 89.8	Ohio	258.0	239.5	232.4
New Jersey	441.9	435.3	442.8	Illinois	98.4	93.7	86.1	Connecticut	182.4	178.5	175.6
Florida	359.2	362.7	367.9	Washington	90.5	87.6	78.1	Florida	164.0	167.6	170.9
Indiana	367.2	336.5	326.0	Ohio	73.5	70.1	69.6	Indiana	169.1	153.2	148.3
Connecticut	285.7	276.1	270.6	Arizona	61.8	59.4	59.7	North Carolina	120.5	119.5	122.2
Missouri	200.1	262.3	260.6	Indiana	65.9	61.7	57.8	Minnesota	119.5	119.0	120.0
Wisconsin	283.1	260.8	250.6	Minnesota	53.3	54.7	54.7	Michigan	128.4	121.2	119.0
Virginia	222.3	224.3	234.0	North Carolina	44.8	44.9	47.8	Washington	129.3	121.7	114.2
Georgia	212.1	215.5	225.3	Manuand	39.5	42.0	43.0	Virginia	97.7.	99.8	103.0
	233.2	219.3	217.4	Kansas	50.9	40.4	37.2	Wisconsin	110.9	103.3	97.3
Louisiana	219.4	209.2	198.0	Georgia	. 25.7	27.4	29.5	Maryland	85.9	87.0	91.0
Maryland	191.6	191.0	196.0	New Hampshire	. 26.6	26.8	28.8	Colorado	81.4	87.1	89.3
Washington	213.6	201.1	188.2	II Michigan	. 30.4	26.0	20.3	Georgia	68.1	70.2	74.0
Olorado	192.6	187.3	170.5	Virginia	20.2	21.7	25.5	South Carolina	70.4	70.6	69.2
South Carolina	146.7	144.2	144.9	Alabama	. 19.9	21.8	25.0	Louisiana	66.4	64.3	60.1
Arizona	150.1	144.3	143.9	Utah	21.1	22.2	23.9	Puerto Bico	54.0	51.9	52.2
Alabama	137.7	139.6	139.5	Tennessee	17.9	16.4	16.3	Aiabama	49.2	50.2	52.0
Kansas	153.8	138.1	133.6	Oregon	14.5	15.3	15.9	New Hampshire	44.2	44.1	45.1
lowa	153.8	134.8	126.8	South Carolina	14.0	14.8	13.9	I Kentucky	48.5	43.4	42.9
Arkansas	. 90.9	85.2	87.0	vermont	14.0	12.5	12.5	Oregon	42 0	40.8	39.5
Oregon	. 96.4	89.4	80.3	Wisconsin	12.1	11.6	11.2	Delaware	38.6	38.4	37.8
New Hampshire	70.2	72.6	73.5	Nebraska	11.5	10.6	10.4	Utah	32.2	33.5	35.7
Puerto Rico	73.5	69.8	70.1	Kentucky	. 10.7	9.4	9.6	Arizona	34.8	32.3	33.3
Utah	65.4	66.9	58 1	II LOUISIANA	. 9.7	7.7	8.0	Mississippi	28.5	26.3	28.5
Delaware	56.7	55.8	56.2	Maine	7.8	7.9	8.0	West Virginia	. 28.1	27.4	25.4
Nebraska	58.9	55.1	53.4	Rhode Island	. 7.8	7.8	7.7	New Mexico	. 19.2	20.6	21.6
New Mexico	. 49.7	51.8	51.4	Arizona	. 5.4	5.5	6.2	Vermont	19.8	19.9	19.7
Idaho	. 30.4	31.3	31.1	Idaho	4.4	4.7	5.5	Rhode Island	. 17.9	17.4	16.6
District of Columbia	33.1	31.4	31.1	South Dakota	3.5	3.0	3.2	Idaho	. 13.9	14.1	14.9
Vermont	32.3	31.2	30.1	Nevada	2.7	2.8	2.6	Maine	. 13.6	12.9	12.6
Maine	. 29.8	29.3	28.7	Delaware	1.8	1.3	1.2	Nevada	. 10.6	5.8	6.0
Nevada	26.2	26.4	27.5	North Dakota	1.3	0.6	.5	District of Columbia	3.8	3.4	3.5
	20.0	20.6	19.6	District of Columbia	3	0.3	.3	Montana	. 2.4	2.3	2.3
Wyoming	25.4	25.2	19.5	Wyoming	2	0.2	.3	Wyoming	. 2.7	2.5	2.2
South Dakota	. 20.1	18.2	18.4	Montana	3	0.3	.3	Hawali	. 2.3	2.1	2.1
Alaska	14.5	16.4	18.0	Hawaii	1 8	1 8		North Dakota	1.4	1.3	1.3
Virgin Islands	3.4	2.9	2.7	Virgin Islands] (ť) Čí	(ť)	Alaska	9	1.1	1.1
¹ Fewer than 100 workers. Note: States are ranked by 1983 high technology employment. See table 1 for definition							for definition				

(group II), which have relatively large concentrations of highly skilled workers and relatively large R&D expenditures, were less affected by general economic downturns than industries in groups I and III, which include industries with lesser concentrations of highly skilled workers and lower R&D expenditures.

Employment by State

As noted earlier, high tech industries were not immune from the effects of the 1981–82 recession. Of 53 States and territories, only 11 had over-the-year increases in group I employment between 1981 and 1982, and only 14 had increases under group III definition. Even under group II, the narrowest definition, fewer than half (23) had over-the-year increases.³ (See table 3.)

Seven States—Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Virginia—had annual average increases under all three high tech groups during the 1981–82 period. Most of these States are in the Sun Belt, an area that has been characterized by high growth rates in both population and employment in recent years. Four of the States—Colorado, Florida, Georgia, and Utah—were also among the eight States that had over-the-year increases in total nonagricultural employment for that period. Colorado and New Mexico had the highest percentage increases under each of the three high tech definitions.

The general economic improvement in 1983 affected the performance of each high tech group. High tech I employ-

Table 4.	High technology employment	as a percent of total popearicultural	employment in all States	the District of Oslum
bia Duar	Pice and the Virgin Islands	1002 entruel evenence	employment in an States,	, the District of Colum-
via, ruei	to nico, and the virgin islands	, 1965 annual averages		

Group I		Group II	Group III
Delaware 2 Michigan 1 Connecticut 1 New Hampshire 1 Massachusetts 1 Indiana 1 New Jersey 1 Texas 1 California 1	1.1 9.7 8.8 6.6 6.2 6.1 5.7 5.5	New Hampshire 7.1 Connecticut 6.8 Arizona 6.4 California 6.3 Massachusetts 6.3 Vermont 6.3 Washington 4.9 Puerto Rico 4.3	Delaware 14.2 Connecticut 12.2 Massachusetts 11.5 New Hampshire 11.1 New Jersey 10.0 California 9.7 Vermont 9.6 Arizona 8.1
Ohio 1 Vermont 1 Kansas 1 Oklahoma 1 Colorado 1 Illinois 1 Missouri 1 Wisconsin 1 Arizona 1	5.5 4.7 4.6 4.6 3.7 3.6 3.6 3.6	Utan 4.2 Kansas 4.1 New Jersey 3.8 Colorado 3.3 Minnesota 3.2 Missouri 3.1 Indiana 2.9 United States 2.8	Puerto Rico 8.1 Indiana 7.4 Washington 7.2 Minnesota 7.0 Colorado 6.7 Kansas 6.5 Missouri 6.5 United States 6.3
United States 1 Minnesota 1 Louisiana 1 Pennsylvania 1 Tennessee 1 Iowa 1 South Carolina 1 New York 1 Utah 1 Menter 1	3.5 3.4 3.0 2.7 2.6 2.6 2.4 2.3 2.1 2.0	Florida 2.8 New York 2.8 Texas 2.5 Maryland 2.2 North Carolina 2.0 Pennsylvania 2.0 Rhode Island 2.0 Aiabama 1.9 Illinois 1.9 Maine 1.9	Utah 6.3 Utah 6.3 Tennessee 6.1 South Carolina 5.9 Illinois 5.8 Ohio 5.7 Pennsylvania 5.7 Maryland 5.4 Wisconsin 5.3
Washington 1 Arkansas 1 Kentucky 1 Maryland 1 North Carolina 1 Puerto Rico 11 New Mexico 11 Virginia 11 Alabama 11 Mississippi 11	1.9 1.8 1.7 1.5 1.0 0.9 0.7 0.7 0.6 0.5	Idaho 1.7 Nebraska 1.7 New Mexico 1.7 Origon 1.7 Oregon 1.6 South Dakota 1.4 Georgia 1.3 Iowa 1.2 South Carolina 1.2	Virginia 5.1 Virginia 4.8 Idaho 4.7 Arkansas 4.5 New Mexico 4.5 Virgini Islands 4.5 Florida 4.4 West Virginia 4.4 Rhode Island 4.2 Oregon 4.1
West Virginia 11 Georgia 1 Idaho 1 North Dakota 1 Wyoming 1 Florida 1 Rhode Island 0 Oregon 1 Nebraska 1	0.0 9.9 9.8 9.7 9.6 9.5 9.2 9.0 8.8	Arkansas	Alabama 3.9 Louisiana 3.8 Kentucky 3.7 Michigan 3.7 Mississippi 3.6 Oklahoma 3.6 Nebraska 3.4 Georgia 3.3 Iowa 3.1
Alaska	8.5 7.9 7.4 7.3 6.8 6.8 5.2 4.1	District of CCBmbia 2 District of CCBmbia 1 Montana 1 Wyoming 1 Alaska (1) Virgin Islands (1)	Maine 3.0 Nevada 2.8 South Dakota 2.6 Wyoming 1.1 Montana .9 District of Columbia .6 Alaska .5 Hawaii .5 North Dakota .5

¹Fewer than 100 workers.

NOTE: See table 1 for definition of high technology industries.

ment increased in 18 States and Puerto Rico, compared with 11 States in 1982; high tech II employment increased in 26 States and Puerto Rico, compared with 23 States in 1982; and high tech III employment increased in 21 States and Puerto Rico, compared with 14 States in 1982. Thirteen States and Puerto Rico had employment increases during 1983 under all three definitions; three of these States— Alabama, Georgia, and Virginia—had increases which placed them in the top six in each high tech group.

A total of 14 States had employment decreases under all three high tech definitions. Many of the declines occurred in Great Lakes States—Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and neighboring Pennsylvania and Iowa. Two small New England States—Vermont and Rhode Island also had declines. The largest job losers under each definition were Iowa, Louisiana, and Washington.

The importance of high tech industry to a State's economy is readily seen by observing employment in high tech industries as a percentage of total employment. (See table 4.) Employment in high tech industries is more concentrated than in manufacturing. For each group, there were fewer States with above-average proportions of employment in high tech industries as a proportion of nonfarm employment than those with below-average proportions. This is in marked contrast to the distribution of manufacturing employment among States, in which about half the States have proportions above the national average and half below. Only about one-third of the States, under each definition, have higher proportions of employment in high tech industries than the U.S. average.

There is little change in the rankings of the 10 States with the highest proportions of high tech employment since 1982.⁴ The New England States still are predominant. The addition of Puerto Rico to the rankings does cause a surprising result, however. Puerto Rico appears in the top ten under groups II and III.

Puerto Rico's economy includes considerable employment in pharmaceutical manufacturing and in electrical and nonelectrical machinery manufacturing. One reason high tech companies have located in Puerto Rico may be the Federal income tax advantages given to firms there. Drug manufacturers such as G. D. Searle, Upjohn, and Schering-Plough, plus electrical equipment manufacturing firms such as General Electric, Motorola, and Prime Computer have taken advantage of these tax benefits and established high tech manufacturing establishments in Puerto Rico.⁵

-----FOOTNOTES-----

¹Richard W. Riche, Daniel E. Hecker, and John U. Burgan, "High technology today and tomorrow: a small slice of the employment pie," *Monthly Labor Review*, November 1983, pp. 50–58.

²The industry employment statistics cited in this study are from two Bureau of Labor Statistics payroll employment programs—the Current Employment Statistics and ES-202 programs. The industry classifications are taken from the Office of Management and Budget, 1972 Standard Industrial Classification Manual, as amended in 1977.

Employment estimates for the Nation were compiled from the Current Employment Statistics survey. These data are produced from employer payroll records reported to the Bureau on a voluntary basis each month. Self-employed persons and others not on a regular civilian payroll are outside the scope of the survey.

Industry detail within the high technology groups, as well as national

historical data, may be obtained from the Bureau's Division of Industry Employment Statistics, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20212.

State data were compiled from the Covered Employment and Wages Program, which collects information on the employment and wages of workers covered by unemployment insurance programs. Each quarter, covered employers submit mandatory reports of employment and wages to the appropriate State Employment Security Agency. These reports are edited and summarized by county, State, and detailed industry, and forwarded to the Bureau. Self-employed persons are not included.

³State data are usually available for internal (Bureau) analysis approximately 9 months after the reference quarter. Hence, 1983 data are the most current annual averages available.

⁴See Riche and others, "High technology," table 7.

⁵See Richard Greene, "Drug Abuse," Forbes, Aug 16, 1982, p. 36.