TSR's 1985 Response
to
Carl Davis's Letter

This document contains the contents of a folder with articles to combat the negative press during the 1980's "Satanic Panic"

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Producers of DUNGEON & DRAGON® Games

TSR, Inc.™

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(414) 248-3625
Telex 260050

Producers of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Games

September, 1985

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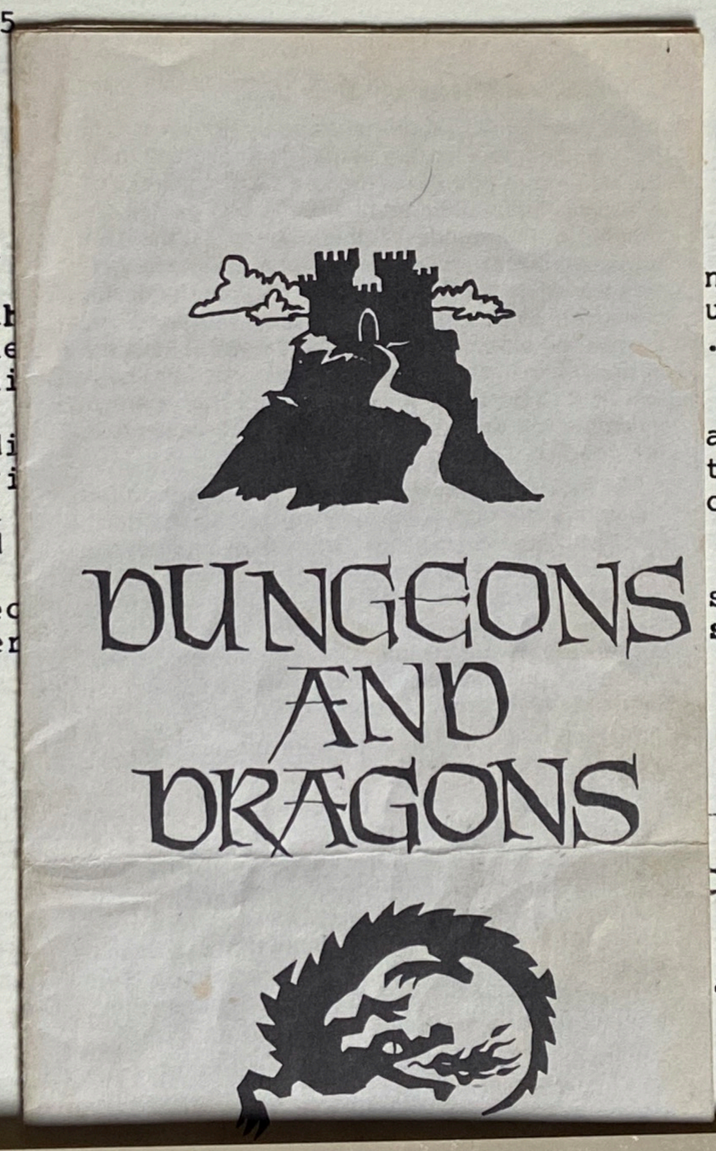

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DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

ONLY A GAME?

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What Is D & D?

Dungeons and Dragons (commonly known as D & D) is an elaborate fantasy game which evolved from the war games popular in the late 1950's. Instead of a historical battlefield and battle, D & D games are fought in the minds of the players as the DM (dungeon master, or god) sets the stage in the fantasy world. Each player assumes the identity of the character he creates. His creature is based on chance roll of the dice. Each character will have six basic abilities: strength, intelligence, wisdom, constitution, dexterity, and charisma. The manual guideline will determine whether the character will be "good" or "evil."

The object of the game is to maneuver these characters through a maze of dungeons (tunnels) filled with monsters, magic, ambushes, and adventures in search of treasures. To survive, each character is equipped with special aids — such as magical weapons, potions, spells, and magical trinkets (holy water, garlic, wolves-bane, etc.) They are also given more conventional weapons: daggers, hand axes, swords and battle axes.

The game is for "three or more players, age 10 and upward."

Each player can stay in the game as long as his character is not killed — from hours to years. If it continues long, most players identify themselves with their character, and the line between fantasy and reality tends to grow fuzzy. One authority concerning this "game" said: "The stuff that makes me nervous is over-identification with characters. I've seen people have fits, yell for fifteen minutes, hurl dice at a grand piano when their character dies."

What is D & D? Dr. Gary North, author of *None Dare Call It Witchcraft,* says, ". . . after years of study of the history of occultism, after having researched a book on the subject, and after having consulted with scholars in the field of historical research, I can say with confidence: these games are **the most effective, most magnificently packaged, most profitably marketed, most thoroughly researched introduction to the occult in man's recorded history."**[1]

What is D & D? After extensive research, the Christian Life Ministries concludes: "DUNGEONS & DRAGONS instead of a game is a teaching on demonology, witchcraft, voodoo, murder, rape, blasphemy, suicide, assassination, insanity, sex perversion, homosexuality, prostitution, Satan worship, gambling, Jungian psychology, barbarism, cannibalism, sadism, desecration, demon summoning, necromantics, divination and many more teachings, brought to you in living color direct from the pit of hell!!!!"[2]

This is strong language! But its truthfulness is established by a careful examination of the books. Look in almost any toy store or book store. You will probably find twenty or more books on how to play D & D. They are complicated, intricate, bizarre, expensive (many selling for $10.95 each) — and popular!

How Widely Used?

According to statistics released by the news media, over three million Americans are playing D & D. The industry grossed more than 250 million dollars in 1981, and expects a large increase in 1982.

Many schools are using D & D, especially in Gifted and Talented programs. Special "classroom versions" are being produced. Some state-supported colleges offer classes, while others have cancelled them at the insistence of concerned parents and taxpayers.

Parents, teachers, ministers, youth directors, and all young people should spend time in serious research on FRP (Fantasy Role Playing) games — because their use is escalating; the issue must be faced by all of us sooner or later.

Other FRP Games

New games are being created, more sophisticated and cruel than the original D & D, such as RuneQuest, Chivalry & Sorcery, Arduin Grimoire, Tunnels and Trolls, etc.

In the rule book to the Arduin Grimoire game (Vol. 1, p. 60) is listed the "critical hit table." Options listed are: "Dice roll: 37-38; hit location: crotch/chest; results: genitals/breast torn off, shock . . . Dice roll: 95; hit location: guts ripped out; result 20% chance of tangling feet, die in 1-10 minutes . . . Dice roll: 100; hit location: head; result: head pulped and splattered over a wide area."

On page 10: "The 'dread vampusa' a macho beast/man with writhing snakes for hair and a skull face, bristles with Neanderthal sexual imagery, his left hand holding a long, sharp lance sticking straight out from his genitals, dripping blood, his penis hanging limp just above it."

Arduin's creator, Dave Hargrave, defends the grisly specificity. He states: "It's deliberately gruesome. You have to blow a hole through that video shell the kids are encased in. They are little zombies. They don't know what pain is. They have never seen a friend taken out in a body bag. They've got to understand that what they do has consequences. The world is sex. It is violence. It's going to destroy most of these kids when they leave TV-land."[3]

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tioned are: "Pictures of a magic circle, pentagram, and thaumaturgic triangle" *(Dungeon Masters Guide,* p. 42). According to those knowledgeable in the occult, these symbols are commonly used in witchcraft and Satan worship.

CONCERNING "CLERICS."

"A study of the spells usable by clerics will convey the main purpose of the cleric . . . Note that all spells must be **spoken** or **read aloud** . . . Clerics can employ a fair number of magic items including most potions; clerical and 'protection' scrolls; most rings; some wands, rods, and staves . . ." *(D & D Players Handbook,* p. 20).

"Another important attribute of the cleric is the ability to turn away (or actually command into service) the undead and less powerful demons and devils" *(Players Handbook,* p. 20).

CONCERNING "DEITIES" or "GODS":

"This game lets all your fantasies come true. This is a world where monsters, dragons, good and evil; high priests, fierce demons; and even the gods themselves may enter your character's life" *(D & D Handbook,* p. 7).

In other sections the gods are referred to as "deity."

(1) "It is well known to all experienced players . . . spells bestowed upon them by their respective deities" *(Dungeon Master Handbook,* p. 38).

(2) "Each cleric must have his or her own deity . . ." (Ibid).

(3) "The deity (you the DM 'Dungeon Master') will point out all the transgressions . . ." *(Dungeon Master Handbook,* p. 39).

"Serving a deity is a significant part of D & D, and all player characters should have a patron god. **Alignment assumes its full importance when tied to the worship of a deity"** *(Deities & Demigods,* Instruction Manual, p. 5).

"Changing Alignment: Whether or not the character actively professes some deity, **he or she will have an alignment and serve one or more deities of this general alignment indirectly or unbeknownst to the character"** *(Dungeon Masters Guide,* p. 25). (In other words, in this game you serve a deity or deities whether you want to or not. Read the quote again.)

CONCERNING PRAYER AND FASTING:

"Clerical spells . . . are bestowed by the gods, so that the cleric need but pray for a few hours . . ." *(D & D Players Handbook,* p. 40)

"Cleric desires third through fifth level spells, **the minions** (angels, demigods, or whatever) **will be likely to require the cleric** to spend 2 to 8 days in prayer, fasting, and contemplation of his or her transgressions, **making whatever sacrifices and atonement are necessary** . . . Spell recovery . . . requires about the same period of time. In order to pray and meditate . . ." *(Dungeon Master,* p. 38,39).

CONCERNING DEATH:

"The character faces death in many forms. The most common death due to combat, is no greater matter in most cases, for the character can often be brought back by means of a clerical spell or an alter reality or wish" *(Dungeon Master,* p. 15).

"Resurrection" is referred to as "the revival of a character after its death, **by magical means"** *(Dungeon Master,* p. 229).

So death — with its sting and ultimate consequences — is trivialized; it can be overcome without much difficulty, "by magical means."

CONCERNING SATANISM:

"Elric (hero)" — the sign being given by his left hand means "Satan is lord" to all Satan worshippers! *(Dungeon Masters Guide,* p. 86).

In four pages (16 - 19) of the *Monster Manual* the word demon appears 106 times! And the player has been told to trust four of these demons as (lesser gods). (Ref: *Deities and Demigods,* page 105, paragraph 5).

In four pages (20 - 23) the word devil appears 94 times and the word hell appears 25 times.

CONCERNING HUMAN SACRIFICE:

"Kali (black earth mother): Her worship requires sacrifices of blood, and even an occasional human sacrifice. Her cult includes many assassins. Those sworn to defend her cult will often do so in a sort of berserk, suicidal manner, slaying all who oppose them until they themselves are slain" *(Dungeon Masters Guide,* p. 75).

"Tlaloc (Rain God): At each full moon, a priest of Tlaloc sacrifices a child or baby to Tlaloc. Once a year, there is a great festival held in his honor. Numerous babies brought or taken from the populace. These babies are sacrificed to Tlaloc, after which the priests cook and eat them. If the babies cry during the sacrifices this is taken as a good sign that rain will be abundant during the coming year" *(Deities and Demigods,* p. 35,36).

"Tyaa (winged goddess of evil birds): Only women are permitted in the high priesthood and Tyaa demands the sacrifice of body parts from her more attractive worshippers" *(Players Handbook,* p. 103).

"Orcs — Gruumsh — Greater god: To become a shaman of Gruumsh, an orc must pluck out his own

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left eye. The proper worship of Gruumsh requires blood in large quantities" *(Players Handbook,* p. 112).

CONCERNING MURDER:

"If the Assassination is being attempted by or in behalf of a player character, **a complete plan of how the deed is to be done should be prepared by the player involved,** and the precautions, if any, of the **target** character should be compared against the plan. Weapon damage always occurs and may **kill** the **victim** even though 'assassination failed." *(Dungeon Masters Guide,* p. 75). Would you call this ONLY A GAME? Or would you call it training in murder?

"Important, popular, and or noble victims will be considered as being above their actual level with respect to **fee.** For example, an elder of a town who is generous and just (thus popular) might be only 4th level, but for purposes of **payment** or **assassination** the character would be considered at three times actual level" *(Players Handbook,* p. 29).

CONCERNING CANNIBALISM:

"Non-human soldiers: The less intelligent non-human will serve for from 10% to 60% less cost, but these evil creatures will certainly expect to loot, pillage, **and rape freely at every chance, and kill (and probably eat) captives"** *(Players Handbook,* p. 31).

"The sahuagin are cruel and brutal, the strongest always bullying the weaker. Any injured, disabled, or infirm specimen will be slain and eaten by these cannibalistic monsters. Even **Imperfect hatchlings** are dealt with in this fashion. **This strict law has developed a strong race, however,"**(Deities and Demigods, p. 84)

CONCERNING DEFILEMENT:

"Defilement of Fonts: If any non-believer blesses/curses an unholy/holy font, or uses **less refined means such as excreting wastes** into a font or basin, the whole is absolutely desecrated, defiled, and unfit . . . **Note that either method of defilement requires actual contact with the font and its vessel.** Any blessing or cursing from a distance will be absolutely ineffectual and wasted." *(Players Handbook,* p. 115). Note the equal use of bless/curse, unholy/holy.

OTHER RELIGIOUS TERMINOLOGY:

If D & D is ONLY A GAME, why do the writers use Christian terms: atonement, clergy, deity, divine ascension, divine being, faith, God, healing, heaven, prayer, fasting, resurrection, soul, spirit, worship, spreading the gospel, etc.? And in a blasphemous way!

What Is Wrong with Role-Playing or Fantasizing?

Some mistakenly believe that role-playing is merely acting out a character. Much more is involved. Psycho-drama techniques (the root of role-playing) were introduced in the early 1900's by Dr. Jacob L. Moreno, contemporary of Freud. He said his objective was to develop a "positive religion." His idea was that if you can "play a role" — for instance, the role of God — and develop that role and stop its playing at will, you will begin to learn how not to be possessed of that role. He said: "The only way to get rid of the God syndrome is to act it out."

What is the "positive religion" that Moreno envisoned? The religion that man is all-powerful, capable of answering all questions and solving all problems apart from any Supernatural Being — more popularly known as Humanism. Read his statement again. Then consider its application to D & D and other FRP "games."

Although not all fantasizing is bad, Christ taught that such CAN BE EVIL: "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). This establishes conclusively that sin can exist in the heart or mind, even though the acts themselves may never be committed. Consider this principle seriously in light of D & D.

A principle laid down long ago by God is: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). We **are** what we **think.** It is ridiculous to believe that people, young or old, can absorb their minds with violence, murder, human sacrifice, suicide, demonology, rape, desecration, defecation, sadism, cannibalism, sex perversion, insanity, prostitution, necromantics, Satan worship, witchcraft, and every other form of perverted and violent conduct without being intensely — and perhaps permanently — affected adversely. We ARE what we THINK!

Several people have requested us to publish a leaflet about D & D designed for children. To this we reply: D & D, and all other FRP "games," are very complicated. If you have not already done so, examine them. Yet ten-year olds everywhere are absorbed in them. **Anyone capable of playing these games is certainly capable of understanding everything in this leaflet!**

Young person, if you want to be successful, productive, well-adjusted, and happy, then refuse to fill your wonderful mind with such garbage! Don't allow someone else to take control of your mind. Think too much of yourself to become a tool in the hands

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of those whose interest is to get your money and destroy your faith in God. The publishers of these games are not concerned about YOUR WELFARE. It is up to you to be smart enough to protect YOUR OWN WELFARE. Study the records. Learn what these games have done to others. The difference between a smart person and a dumb one is that the smart person learns from the mistakes of others, and then avoids those mistakes. So the smart person is not the one who "wins" at D & D — but rather, the ONE WHO REFUSES TO PARTICIPATE!

Testimony of Negative Effects[5]

John Torell, with Christian Life Ministries in California, received a phone call from a medical doctor in Seattle, Washington. The doctor is treating a policeman for severe depression caused by the suicide of his sixteen-year-old son. The son, who had been heavily involved in D & D for two years, shot himself with his father's service revolver.

At a private school in Southern California, a sixteen-year-old boy struggles to contain an addiction to FRP that has, he believes, led him to dangerous abuses of power which threatens to supplant real life. A brilliant and sensitive young man with a rare ability to stand outside himself and make a correct appraisal, he says: "I am the God of my world, the creator who manipulates the gods and humans. But my bossiness has extended itself into real life. I've exploited and abused people. People have hated me for it. It's hazardous. Your vocabulary, your mental quickness increases, but school seems increasingly boring and droll. Your grades drop. The more time you spend in your fantasy world, the more you want to walk away from the burdensome decisions of life . . . The more I play D & D, the more I want to get away from this world. The whole thing is getting very bad."

Some have argued that D & D is a healthy release of suppressed hostilities. But seeing the power that can be seized in games, psychiatrist Laurance Johnson cautions, "If I had a child who tended toward schizophrenia, I'd never let him near D & D. There's a danger that it would reinforce feelings of grandiosity, of omnipotence. Reality and fantasy are hard enough for schizophrenics to differentiate."

This reality distortion is frightening. A city police department in central Washington asks, "Are you a participant in Fantasy Role Games?" as a standard question . . . two people convicted of firing over three rounds into passing motor vehicles admitted that they "constantly fantasized killing someone." Other police departments have confirmed "some correlation" between Fantasy Role Playing Games and incidents showing up on their police blotter.

Many people have been innocently drawn into FRP Games. However, enough information is now available to reveal their true nature and real danger — so there's no need for wise and alert people to be further duped.

Even some Christians try to defend D & D and other FRP "games." In this futile attempt, one said: "But the game is helpful because it shows the difference between good and evil characters." To this a brilliant young player replied: "Not so. Nearly everybody would rather play evil characters because they are much more powerful."

In light of the quotes from their own literature, it would be wise to consider:

Does this "game" promote respect for the sanctity of life? Or does it rather serve as basic training in brutality and disregard for life (such as exemplified in the incredible massacres of recent years)?

Does it increase, or decrease, a player's faith in God and His Word?

Does it trivialize, and even blaspheme, Christianity?

In summary: Does its over-all influence tend to build up, or tear down, character?

Notes

1. **Remnant Review,** December 5, 1980, P.O. Box 2509, Tyler, Texas 75710
2. **Dungeons and Dragons,** Christian Life Ministries, P.O. Box 41001, Sacramento, Ca. 95841.
3. **Dungeons and Dragons, Good or Bad?** Christian Life Ministries.
4. **Answers to Common Questions about Dungeons and Dragons,** Christian Life Ministries.
5. Ibid.

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TEXANS, add 5% of total for sales tax.

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Producers of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Games

September, 1985

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your interest in supporting the D&D® game by requesting the available pro information and the information that will **present the FACTS that challenge** slanted and unjust allegations, news stories, television reports, etc. that the D&D® game is something more than... Just A Game!

Keep sending your support letters to the media, school boards, libraries, recreation directors, clergy, etc.--it's important that these groups have the opportunity to see gamers' viewpoints and the available FACTS.

TSR is receiving an overwhelming response of support from gamers all over the world. **We thank YOU for that support!**

Best Regards,

Dieter Sturm
Corporate Public Relations Director
TSR, Inc.

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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® GAME IN THE NEWS

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® GAME WAS IN THE TOP TEN BEST SELLING TOYS IN 1982? *(Good Morning America, ABC Television, Dec. 17, 1982)*

AS E. GARY GYGAX (co-creator of the game) SAID, "FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE, THE D&D® GAME OFFERS THE FIRST CHANCE THEY'VE EVER HAD TO BE CREATIVE!" *(Milwaukee Magazine/Feature/Nov. 1982)*

STARTING IN THE EARLY 1970'S WITH $1,000, THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® GAME PROPELLED THE FIRM TO SUCCESS. *(Wall Street Journal/Business Profile/Jan. 7, 1983)*

DERIVED FROM THE GAME, THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® SATURDAY MORNING ANIMATED ADVENTURE PROGRAM CAN BE SEEN EVERY SATURDAY MORNING AT 9:30 AM (EST) ON THE CBS TELEVISION NETWORK. VIEWERS ARE CHALLENGED WITH PUZZLES AND RIDDLES!

DIRECTOR STEVEN SPIELBURG USED THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® GAME IN PART OF THE CASTING FOR THE BLOCKBUSTER MOTION PICTURE "E.T." THE EXTRA—TERRESTRIAL *(People Weekly Magazine, Aug. 23, 1982)*. ROBERT MACNAUGHTON, CO-STAR IN "E.T.", INDICATED THAT THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® GAME WAS A POPULAR PASTIME ON THE E.T. SET! *(Seventeen Magazine, Sept. 1982)*

THE QUESTION WAS ASKED...WHAT WILL BE THE GREAT GAME OF THE 1980'S? JUST POSSIBLY THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® GAME...AS DIFFERENT FROM MONOPOLY AS CHALK IS FROM CHEESE! *(The New York Times, Jan. 19, 1983)*

GYGAX, CO-CREATOR OF THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® GAME SYSTEM, SAYS THAT HE'S INTERESTED IN FOSTERING IMAGINATION. *(USA Today, April 1, 1983)*

NOTED PSYCHOLOGIST DR. JOYCE BROTHERS INDICATES THAT THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® GAME IS A GREAT GAME TO PLAY BECAUSE IT ENCOURAGES A SPIRIT OF COOPERATION IN AN ERA WHERE A CHILD IS BESET BY PRESSURES AND COMPETITION ON EVERY SIDE...IT IS ALSO FUN...AND THAT IS IMPORTANT, ACCORDING TO DR. BROTHERS...IT STIMULATES THE CREATIVITY OF CHILDREN. *(Boston Herald, Dec. 26, 1982)*

LIBRARIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY USE THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® GAME FOR TEEN LIBRARY PROGRAMS. "I HAD NEVER DREAMED THAT THE LIBRARY WOULD HAVE HAD SUCH A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM", STATES ONE LIBRARIAN. *(Voice of Youth Advocates, Oct. 1982)*

ACADEMY AWARD WINNER JAMES GOLDMAN (Lion In Winter) HAS COMPLETED A SCREENPLAY FOR A POSSIBLE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® MOTION PICTURE.

ACCORDING TO JOHN ERIC HOLMES (Associate Professor of Neurology at the University of Southern California School of Medicine), THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® GAME PROVIDES A HEALTHY OUTLET FOR THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE IMAGINATIVE. *(Psychology Today, Nov. 1980)*

THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® GAME PROVES TO BE THE MOST POPULAR FANTASY GAME OF THE DECADE .....*MORE STORIES AND PROFILES/Forbes Magazine, Sept. 1980, Inc. Magazine, Feb. 1982. GAMES Magazine, Oct. 1979, Crain's Chicago Business, Sept. 7, 1981*

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WHAT THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® GAME IS ALL ABOUT

By E. Gary Gygax

The entire reason for the existance of the D&D® game system can be explained at the same time that its appeal is summed up. This can be done briefly. In fact, it can be done in a single word. The word is FUN. That single word is the key to all. FUN!

The game is an outgrowth of three interests. These interests are *history*, including the related mythology and its fantasy outgrowths, from Robert E. Howard (author of the "Conan" stories), *game playing*, and *imagination*. From a childhood fairy tale, grew an amalgam which is today the most popular fantasy role playing creation in the world, the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. It was devised because I thought that the other game players I know would enjoy playing it. They did so. It was so much fun that they preferred playing D&D® to just about any other leisure time activity, and they told all of thoir friends and associates about it. The game was and is played because it is fun, and it continues to grow in popularity because it remains fun for an indefinite period. Why so?

Because the D&D® game system covers the whole gamut of what is loosely grouped into what is known as Medieval European Mythology, adds authored works of heroic fantasy, and levens it all with both creativity and imagination from the participants, each game session is as fresh and challenging as the players' collective talents make it. Not only do participants have to think and use their imaginations, they must role play as well — all the more challenge. In addition, because the game is for a group, and the most successful groups are those who co-operate, playing a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game is as much a social gathering as it is a contest. Better still, as there are no "winners" and "losers", no ultimate conditions of victory, and always some new goal to reach, the game can last as long as the participants so desire.

All of that means one thing — FUN.

There are certainly side benefits to the game. It does encourage reading, thinking, imagination, creativity, problem solving, mathematical skill, conceptual skill, group interaction and co-operation, and the development of the persona through role playing. All that and more are side benefits because if D&D® game playing wasn't fun, then who would wish to participate. The educational aspects of the game, and they are more numerous than the list above, are gained because they are a part of the enjoyment of game play. It can be fun to learn. Likewise, the social benefits which are adjuncts to the game, such as the removal of age and sex barriers in a participant group, are there principally because the players enjoy playing the game.

It is indeed a great benefit that many useful things can be gained because of the D&D® game. The ability to think and to reason, various educational stimuli, as well as actual learning, come from play.. Understanding of ethics and morality is possible from participation in a campaign of this nature. Social interaction and co-operation are taught. All this occurs while the participants are having fun.

If DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game playing was not fun, then the game would not be popular. Millions of people would not be interested in playing it frequently. They would pursue some other hobby, find another leisure recreational pursuit, seek another stimulating pastime. As it is, the players are having fun with the game. Sure they tend to learn much that is useful to them in school or in life. Yes, playing the D&D® game keeps them out of trouble and at home. Of course the participants tend to spend less time watching TV — they now read a lot and know how to converse with people. All of this is done for fun, because that is what the game is all about actually. There are duties and responsibilities in the game, triumphs and disappointments, easy courses and difficult decisions, loss and gain, growth and maturity. All that experienced through a make-believe "Character" and fun in the process. Games like life, are what you make of them.

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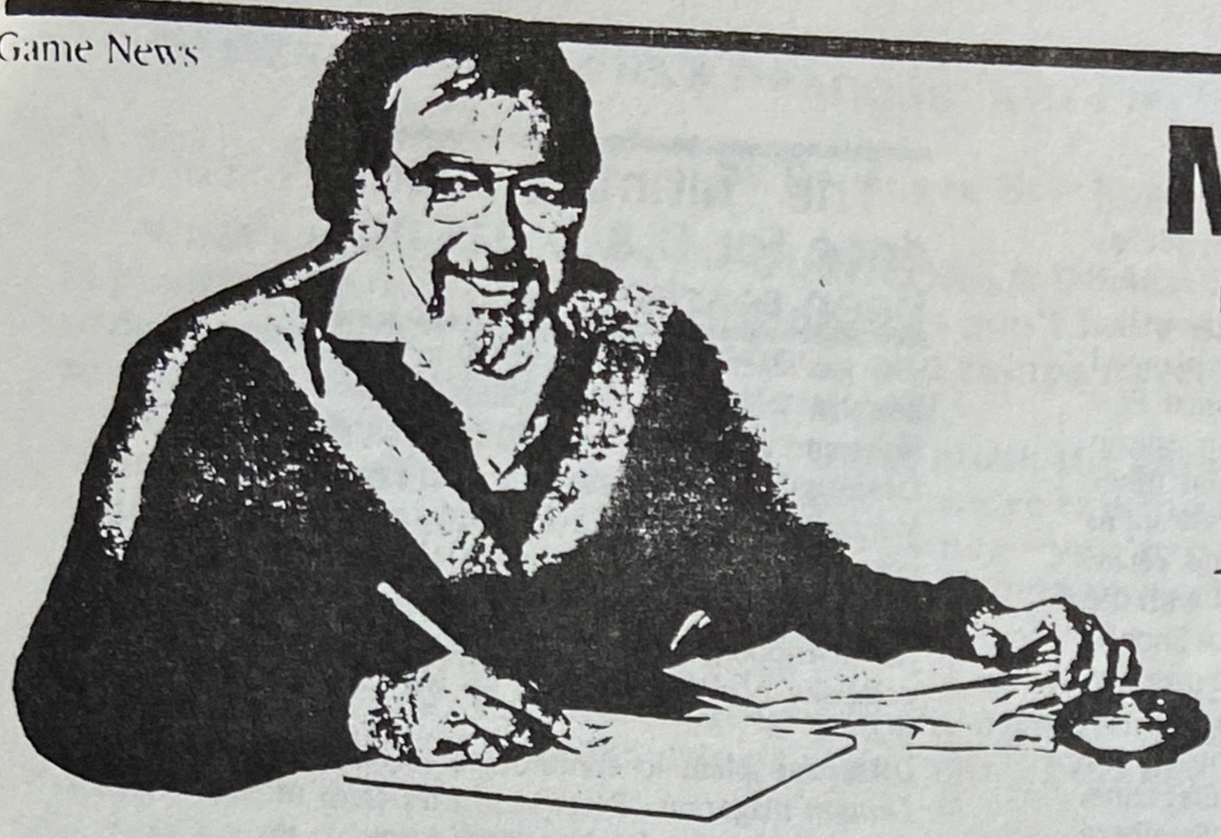


MAXIMIZE THE FUN

An Interview with E. Gary Gygax

by Anne F. Jaffe

April 1985

The man signing autographs looked up to the next youngster, asked his name, and then said: "Did you like the game? That's great. What did you like about the game?" Sounds as if a new designer was signing one of his first autographs; but this designer is Gary Gygax, co-author of the **Dungeons & Dragons®** game, and it took place at GenCon (Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, game convention) in 1984.

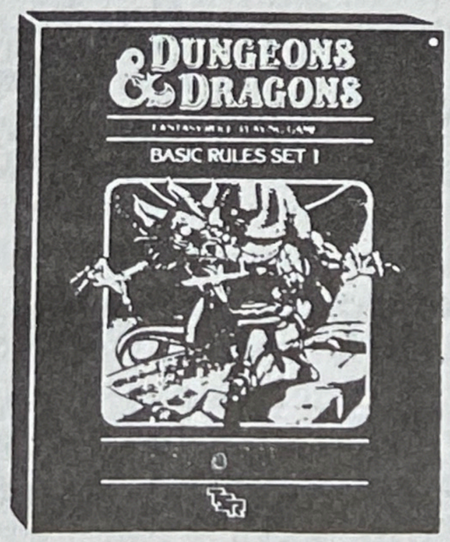
A few months later, Gygax spoke at a meeting of the American and Canadian Academies of Child Psychiatrists in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The meeting covered fantasizing in the child and adolescent. There was a lot of support for role-playing games as positive forms of fantasy, necessary to growing up, and for the **Dungeons & Dragons®** game in particular.

"In fact, I had several psychiatrists stand up and give what I thought were unsolicited testimonials. I felt I was treated as a celebrity there. I really was quite unprepared for it because these were, in fact, very respected professional men and women. And I'm just a game designer."

What the psychiatrists endorse is the cooperative, as opposed to competitive, spirit of the game. Gygax sees the competition arising from middle class values. "The middle class has got to compete. It's not what you learn and how you apply it to your life that counts. The idea is the grade." Gygax would rather see people learn because they enjoy it. "I wasted a lot of time when I was in school, and I want children today to be motivated to learn, because it can be a joy and add so much to your life."

Gygax spoke of the continued expansion of the various TSR product lines and new fields that were being investigated by his company and its subsidiary, D&D® Entertainment Corporation. Things like a feature film, a game being developed for the mass market, and the new line of 25mm metal miniatures by Citadel Miniatures (a division of Games Workshop).

> "...I had several psychiatrists stand up and give what I thought were unsolicited testimonials. I felt I was treated as a celebrity there. I really was quite unprepared for it because these were, in fact, very respected professional men and women. And I'm just a game designer."



TSR Inc. didn't always have such far-flung international activities. There was a time, in 1974, when Gygax was doing shoe repairs to earn money while designing war games, publishing miniatures rules, and marketing that "weird" new game, **Dungeons & Dragons®**. Gygax passed up an opportunity to continue to work as an insurance underwriter with a company in Tennessee because he wanted to remain in the Lake Geneva area and stay in the game design business. Prior to the emergence of the **Dungeons & Dragons®** game as its best-selling product, the Tactical Studies Group (TSR) was known for its miniatures rules such as CAVALIERS & ROUNDHEADS and CHAINMAIL. "CHAINMAIL was the progenitor of **D&D**." Gygax was known then for his board game designs such as ALEXANDER, manufactured by The Avalon Hill Game Company of Baltimore.

About this time GenCon was started as an annual miniatures and war game convention in Lake Geneva. There are still a lot of miniatures events at GenCon and loyal groups come from as far as Alabama to participate in them. TSR Inc. publishes few miniatures rules now. The release of the BATTLESYSTEM FANTASY COMBAT SUPPLEMENT in March, 1985, is the first set of miniatures rules published since TRACTICS. While Gygax is very interested in miniatures, "the market is just too small, and we're (TSR) looking to serve the most customers."

Gygax elaborated on the directions TSR Inc. is taking in the mass market. Not only

continued on page 10

Over...

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continued from page 7

is the **Dungeons & Dragons®** Cartoon Show on CBS, but Steven Spielberg's *Amazing Stories* (based on TSR's magazine of the same name) will be debuting in the fall on NBC. When asked what was planned for ABC, Gygax said, "both Lorimar Productions (television production studio known for producing *Dallas* and other shows) and Columbia Pictures TV want to option properties." Gygax would retain creative control as he does now with the **Dungeons & Dragons®** Cartoon Show.

TSR Inc. does not have control over Steven Spielberg's *Amazing Stories*. TSR Inc. owns the rights to the name through its ownership of *Amazing Stories* magazine, which it purchased in 1983. "Mr. Spielberg is buying the right to use the name and some of the material, if he chooses. He is so involved on this project that I understand he is writing much of the material himself. We have protection on our trademark," Gygax noted.

Gygax is pleased with the success of the **Dungeons & Dragons®** Cartoon Show. "We do have to operate within the children's programming standards, and we are thinking about basically an audience which doesn't understand **Dungeons & Dragons®**, per se. Within those limitations, I believe that Marvel and CBS did a very good job. My greatest fear always has been that at a certain point you lose control, and I do have creative control. I can say yes or no, but I can't necessarily write the thing. CBS says who writes."

"If it's a competitive product, I don't read it. I have enough ideas and don't want to be influenced."

There are plans for a feature film. "I think the ultimate audience for **Dungeons & Dragons®** has not been reached." The MARVEL SUPERHERO game was an attempt to "reach the younger boys market," and the response, according to Gygax, "has been favorable." A feature film would reach an even larger audience than the comic book readers. When asked what a possible example of a **D&D®** movie would be, Gygax suggested Peter (*Jaws*) Benchley's, *The Deep*, where the characters risked danger and monsters to gain sunken treasure. He's concerned with getting the proper **D&D®** "feel" in a movie. Gygax has been "working with Flint Dille, grandson of the creator of Buck Rodgers. Dille is currently writing for television shows."

"The ultimate audience for D & D has not been reached."

Gygax takes a personal interest in every line that TSR produces. He plans to oversee some additions to the **Dungeons & Dragons®** line. "I'm working with Frank Mentzer to finish the T1–T4 modules begun with *The Village of Hommlet*. Also, I'm busy with *Unearthly Arcana*, and two new hardbound books for the players. The company now has to catch up with the players."

He also plans to continue writing for *Dragon* magazine. "Every year, after GenCon, I sit down and write a lot of material. Then as I think of other things that could be added, I send it along and tell them to add it to the end of something."

Gygax is pleased that Citadel Miniatures will be producing the official **D&D®** fantasy figures, although he says there is no connection between the license agreement and the WARHAMMER rules produced by Games Wordshop, the owner of Citadel Miniatures.

On the SPI war game line, acquired by TSR Inc., Gygax sees "the need to pay more attention—things aren't followed through. The line requires two to six new releases every year. I have this historical design I did back in 1972, called DUNKIRK, and I'd like to see it revised and upgraded."

He also plans to attend conventions. Gygax was preparing a trip to Games Day in Britain this summer when *Game News* spoke with him. Overall, he found the gamers in the United Kingdom to be "more polite, better organized."

I've never played another fantasy role-playing game," Gygax admitted. "If it's a competitive product, I don't read it. I have enough ideas, and don't want to be influenced." Gygax enjoys railroad games. He plays both The Avalon Hill Game Company's RAIL BARON and Mayfair Games' EMPIRE BUILDER. In fact, "when there are only two of us available to play, we both play two players, that way we can have a four-player version. It's more fun that way."

Does he have other plans? "Sure would like to take a vacation," Gygax says. "The thing is, we end up working or discussing business, even then."

Finally, Gygax has some advice for would-be designers: "Save your 'masterworks.' Instead, do the designing or writing that the audience wants. Try to maximize the fun."

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GAMES . . . DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Role-Playing Game and Game Play

by Dr. Joyce Brothers

What's in a game? If it's the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game — a greal deal that is positive. This is one of the reasons kids don't have to sneak away from adults in order to play the game. Some schools and camps have endorsed the new trend and make no attempt to discourage its appeal.

On the plus side (and this is a strong plus), the game stresses cooperation. When we talk about a role-playing game, we're talking about a social game. With a video game — even a two-player video game — you're playing against a machine. I think that the normal child at around age 2 gets very clear in his or her mind what is fantasy and what is reality. They're not confused. The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game is a wonderful game because you are cooperating; it's a cooperative game, not a competitive one. You are making up your own story. You are role-playing, you are being the author. You're learning to read more because you want to read stories to make them up.

It's not a boardgame, it's a group game. You work around a table. You assume a mythological character: an elf, a fighter, a magic-user. You start with the characteristics that your character will role-play. Remember when we used to play cops & robbers, mommy & daddy, cowboys & Indians — we acted a character role in a play situation. In the game, you're not competing against another person; there are no winners or losers. You work out how to use weaknesses and turn them into strengths, how to build on your strengths, how to change and grow, just as you do in real life.

As Dr. Peter Schlipmann, a psychologist with the University of Wisconsin, points out in his study of the game, in most cases it's not the game itself but how it is used that determines whether it has beneficial or undesirable features.

He observed in his study that the game not only provides a context in which players can socialize but it teaches players through actual experience the value of cooperation and the consequences of non-cooperation (such as when a chaotic character decides to double-cross the rest of the group).

By letting players belong to a group, the individuals get a feeling of being a part of something. They not only get a feeling of belonging, but also have a sense of status. This is especially valuable to insecure youngsters who are uncertain of their own identity.

Everyone likes to be able to win and succeed and kids find it easier to succeed in the D&D® game than in most academic subjects. This is a pleasant sensation for some, a new feeling that can help build self-confidence and self-esteem. This may carry over into their school work, because they may feel more capable of learning in the school room. We know that expectations tend to be self-fulfilling. The child who feels good about himself and his capabilities is much more apt to succeed at anything he or she tries than is the child who expects to fail.

Is the game just another escape? It's imaginative and certainly, in this sense, it's an escape. But one highly respected California psychologist insists that it's not escapism, because in the game the kids are in real contact with themselves. Monopoly grew out of the Depression. The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game grew out of the atom. Just as Monopoly was obsessed with material security and property, the D&D game is taking us back into the cave to teach us survival in a nuclear age.

Although there's no hard data, Dr. Seymour Feshbach, Chairman of UCLA's Department of Psychology, estimates that at any one time about 15 to 20 percent of the UCLA student body is spaced out on alcohol or drugs. The D&D game players don't seem to drink or use drugs; they seem to have found an alternative.

Is the game itself addictive? Probably. Almost everything can be addictive if people are susceptible. This isn't the fault of the game, but it is an indication that adults occasionally need to observe how the game is being used.

The real appeal of the game is that it allows players to create freely. They can go wild in their imagination; they can let their imagination roam with few restric-

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tions, and this is something most of us can't do in real life. We're constantly fenc
in by rigid rules and regulations. The game has infinite variety, but the basic flow
guided by the Dungeon Master, an experienced player who maps out adventures,
sets the terrain and objectives, and acts as referee.

Each player selects a physical type (from human to dwarf, gnome or some other magical creature) and a basic role (cleric, fighter, druid, magic-user, etc.). With a throw of the dice, he determines the strengths and weaknesses of his character in terms of intelligence, charisma, strength, dexterity, constitution, or wisdom.

Of course, the player is faced with tremendous challenges. He may be stymied by paralyzing gray ooze, or he may have to find ways to escape from attacking goblins, wererats, or harpies.

What excites many players is being able to try out different roles and meeting imaginative challenges in unusual ways. The player learns to master extremely difficult situations and in doing this he is actively participating, rather than passively watching others act roles on TV or in film. He tests his behavior and his new approaches to see if they work. Will it work? Will it fool anyone? Should he have tried to negotiate? Will his strategy lead to survival?

Associate professor of sociology at the University of Minnesota, Gary Fine, reports that a typical fantasy game player is someone whose imagination takes him to distant times and places once or twice a week. This kind of person may spend seven or eight hours at one sitting, slaying dragons or seeking out strange new worlds. He or she is usually a non-conformist and proud of it. In the beginning years of the game, girls and women have sometimes chosen male characters. Now we see that boys and men are sometimes choosing to be female characters.

The person most likely to love the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game is a student with a high opinion of himself, especially of his intelligence and imagination. He's well read in science fiction and history. He's probably also unmarried and in his late teens or early 20's, according to Dr. Fine. One survey of players showed 23.2 percent of the respondents had completed more than 16 years of schooling. That figure was impressive, Fine says, because the median age of the group was about 20 years.

Gamers claim they reject American mass culture, the sociologist points out. This led some to see them as misfits, but now the popularity of the game has increased and it has so many fans (3-4 million) that it's impossible to view the players as eccentrics.

Games are always more than just child's play. Play is a way of coping. Through play we not only assimilate information, we learn to accommodate ourselves to our environment. When games, such as the D&D® game, involve role-playing, they not only help the player to learn more about himself, they help him to identify with and better understand other people. If necessity is the mother of invention, play must surely be its father.

Many people work through problems in games. They may, by working through unconscious fantasies, solve struggles that relate to sibling rivalry, oedipal problems, anger, and resentment. They may also be able to come to terms with some of their fears, such as a fear of death, fear of change, and a fear of being inadequate in emergencies.

Dr. Schlipmann discovered that the makeup of the D&D game is such that it deals with primitive fears of people. Caves, darkness, and monsters not only frighten most 4-year olds, they're also very primitive, very fundamental human fears. He speculates this may be one of the reasons some people have become upset about the game, even going so far as to fear it will lead to some kind of devil worship. He quite correctly observes that these primitive fears are very close to the surface in some people and almost anything can trigger them. Some of these fears might be dispelled if the frightened and superstitious critics could themselves participate in a game.

A brilliant Frenchman, Dr. Jacques-Olivier Grandjouan, studied games and how people play them for many years. A psychologist and linguist, he believes that the way we play games says a lot about ourselves. If you see a child at play, you will

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learn much more about him than if you see him at study. There is a wonderful temporary nature of play. There is the element of risk, of danger, and the possibility of victory and with it a sense of power. But one can always start over and have another chance. One can practice life without really having all the danger and risk. Games can be like rehearsals for living. In a game, the consequences of losing are suffered only within the perimeter of the game: in real life, it must be consequential. Once too much money and work is involved in a game, it loses this charm and it can no longer be considered true recreation.

Almost everything in life involves taking a chance and the D&D® game, like many games, uses this. With a toss of the dice, we are lifted into another world and we're ready to commit ourselves to another uncertain outcome. As Dr. Grandjouan says, there is the same urge to take a risk, the same mental commitment, when someone dedicates himself to a philosophy, a religion, or a political belief. A person may be ready to die for it, with no rational basis. Dr. Grandjouan says, "it is foolish, but beautiful, just like human nature."

In a world where so much emphasis is put on computers and on hard, cold facts, perhaps a game that encourages inventiveness, creativity, and relatedness to others should be welcomed.

Studies at the University of Chicago show that creative thinkers have five specific characteristics: sensitivity to environment, ability to produce a large number of ideas in response to a problem, ability to concentrate, flexibility of thinking, and originality in responding to psychological tests.

Can creativity be taught? There's a great deal of evidence that it can at least be fostered and encouraged. One of the ways to foster creativity in a child is to allow him to be playful, to daydream and to use his imagination to awaken his creative processes.

The creative person is less bound by cultural conditioning than others. He sees the world differently, partly because he's learned to trust himself and his intuition. This frees him to express originality that might otherwise remain locked inside. It's possible that games like the D&D® game may provide a key to unlock the inhibitions that block creativity.

We know that creative people fantasize and never lose their childlike ability to put themselves in the place of others. They are curious and they find a kind of joy from new situations and the unexpected.

For the truly creative person, life itself is a wonderful game. Like players and gamers, they are motivated to enjoy living.

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game provides an especially safe way for young people to meet their needs for excitement and adventure. As Dr. Schiipmann points out, it's just far enough removed from reality that the violence of the game doesn't promote real-life violence, but rather provides a way of draining off aggression and hostile impulses. The game is structured so that goodness rather than evil pays off.

Players learn they must evaluate strengths and weaknesses rather than judge them. Once they study the other characters in the game, they find ways to accommodate themselves to them and to turn their strengths or weaknesses to their advantage. The players begin to see people as the complex, complicated individuals that they are, rather than keeping them merely as one-dimensional stereotypes. Best of all, perhaps, players can try all the characters on for size, exploring their own strengths and weaknesses.

Play is a common human need, and man is unique in the animal world in that he plays as long as he lives. Judging from that, we can assume that games like the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game are here to stay. Everyone needs a chance to dream and explore new worlds, if only for a few hours.

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HALL OF FAME

As thousands of new games come and go, a few very special ones remain favorites year after year. These are the classics that imitators never seem to equal in quality or staying power. This year, we've created a special niche in The Games 100 for these games. You'll probably find some of your favorites here; but we have not included such traditional games as go and chess, despite their longevity and high quality, since we're likely to want to recommend different editions from year to year. Most of the games that follow, we believe, will still be played a hundred years from now.

CLUE (Parker Brothers, around $10) P 3-6 (4-6)/C 2/T 1h

A whodunit with a different solution each game, Clue creates intricate problems in deductive reasoning from a simple set of rules. Players draw subtle inferences as they take turns refuting each other's suggested solutions of a crime by revealing cards from their hands. Clue was first published in England in 1947, under the name "Cluedo." (J/F 80)

MONOPOLY (Parker Brothers, Standard edition shown, around $10; Super Deluxe edition around $60) P 2-8 (4-6)/C 3/T 2h

Probably the most often imitated game in history, Monopoly is still the best of its kind. Lizzie J. Magie patented "The Landlord's Game" in 1904, and 20 years later patented a revised version that was virtually identical to today's Monopoly. Early in the 1930s one Charles B. Darrow began home production of the game and, pretending to be the inventor, sold it to Parker Brothers in 1935 under the name Monopoly. (M/A 78)

DIPLOMACY (Avalon Hill, around $17) P 3-7(5-7)/C 3/T 5h

To conquer Europe on the eve of World War I, players must know how to make promises that others want to hear, break alliances at just the right time, and—above all—be able to tell their friends from their foes. Each player controls only a few pieces, but the fact that players move simultaneously complicates the strategy enormously. Diplomacy was invented by Allan B. Calhamer and first published in 1959. (N/O 77)

SCRABBLE BRAND CROSSWORD GAME (Selchow & Righter; Deluxe edition shown, around $28; Travel, around $16; Standard, around $12) P 2-4(2)/C 3/T 1h

The most strategic of all word games (in its two-player version), Scrabble has given rise to clubs, tournaments, a players' newsletter, and even its own dictionary. Invented by Alfred Mosher Butts, Scrabble was first copyrighted in 1948. (S/O 78)

RISK (Parker Brothers, around $14) P 2-6/C 3/T 90m

No other game of global conquest is simple and entertaining enough to be considered a family game despite its bellicose theme. Risk was invented in France by Albert Lamorisse, who was also the writer and producer of the film *The Red Balloon*. Parker Brothers altered both the name (originally *"La Conquête du Monde"*) and the play when it copyrighted the game in 1959.

SORRY! (Parker Brothers, around $10) P 2-6/C 2/T 45m

This race game, known for dramatic shifts in players' fortunes, carries on the tradition of the Indian pachisi. Dice have been replaced by cards, many of which offer players a choice of more than one kind of move. First published in England, Sorry! was added to the Parker Brothers catalog in 1934.

ACQUIRE (Avalon Hill, around $18) P 2-6/C 3/T 1h

In this highly competitive board game, players add hotels to the board in the form of tiles. As chains meet and merge, players speculate on the changing board situation by buying stock in chains they think will prosper. Invented by Games Contributing Editor Sid Sackson, Acquire was first published in 1963.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS (TSR Hobbies, Basic and Expert Sets, around $12 each) P 3 or more/C 4

The role-playing game that began an industry is still the best introduction to the genre, in which one player—the "dungeonmaster"—directs the others through perilous adventures in a fantastic world. Experienced players can take advantage of countless adventure modules, miniatures, and playing aids. Invented by Gary Gygax and David Arneson, D&D was first published in 1974.

YAHTZEE (Milton Bradley, around $5) P 1 or more/C 2/T 15m

In this addictive dice game, players throw five dice, rethrow some or all of them two more times, and enter the final throw into one of 13 categories on a score-sheet. As categories are used up, good scores become harder to make. The nearly identical game of Yacht appeared in books around 1940, but is probably older. The game was published as Yahtzee in 1953.

OTHELLO (Ideal, around $10) P 2/C 2/T 30m

This game has a paradoxical strategy, because the more pieces you flip to your color early in the game, the more the opponent will be able to flip back later on. The game dates back to at least 1870, when John W. Mollett, Esq. published a cross-shaped 96-square version in England, under the name "The Game of Annexation." Around 1889 a book appeared claiming that Lewis Waterman was actually the inventor of the game, which by then was played on today's 8 × 8 board and called Reversi. The game was "reinvented" in Japan in the early 1970s by Goro Hasegawa, who changed its name to Othello. (S/O 77)

Note: Games in the Hall of Fame are not available from Games Mail Order.

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GAMES

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Fantasy challenges NP scholars

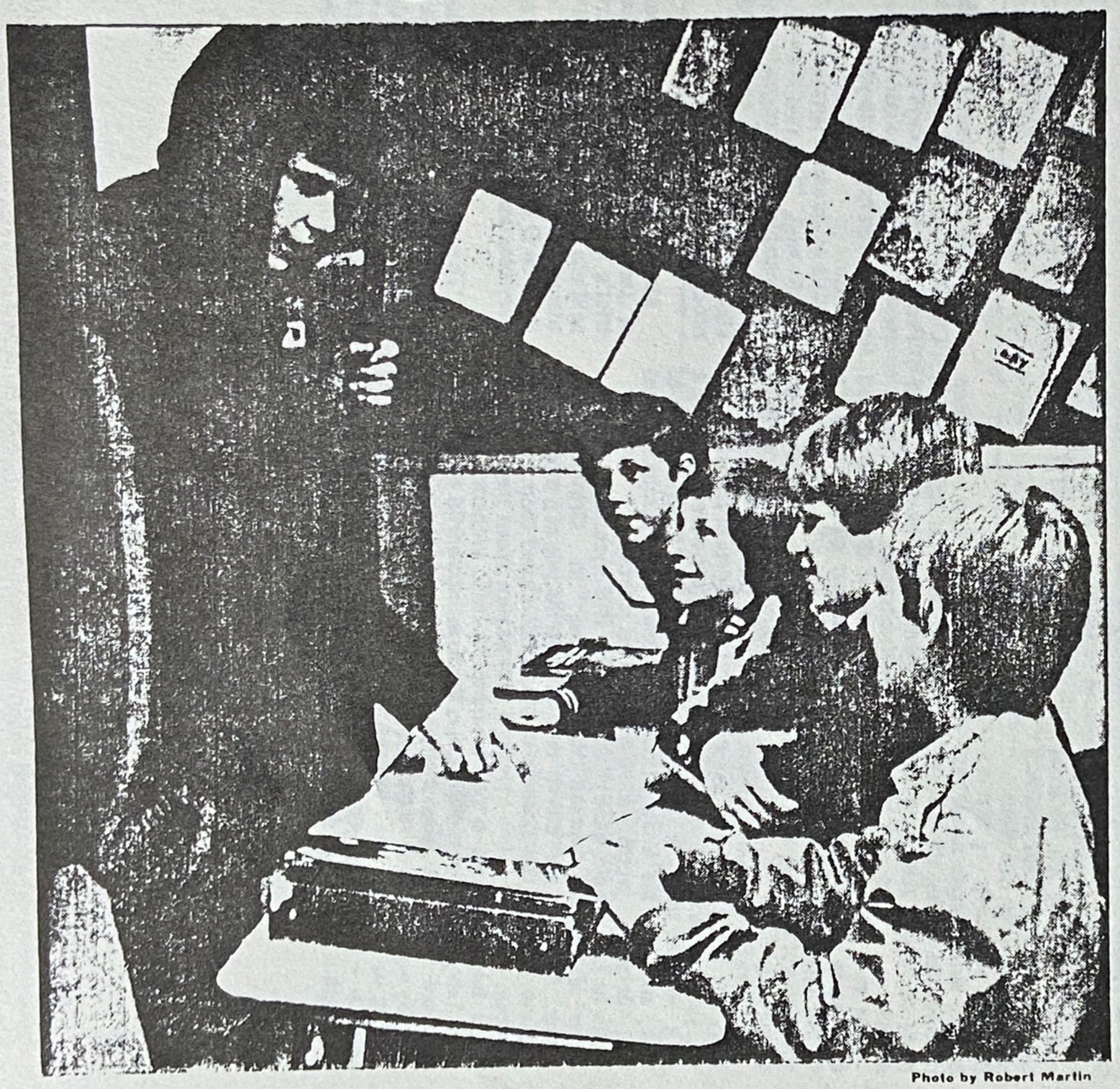

Photo by Robert Martin

North Penn student Craig Jackson plays the Dungeon Master.

By CYNTHIA RAFETTO
Staff Writer

In quest of their kidnapped comrade, the pursuers listened intently to the instructions of the dungeon master.

"There is an evil presence in the graveyard," said a voice emanating from a black cowl. Two rabbits' feet dangled from a belt cinching the black velvet frock of dungeon master Chuck Fletcher, a sophomore at North Penn High School.

Fletcher continued with the fantasy. "If you backtrack into the clearing and take the path, you see crumbling concrete and vines. Will you enter the keep?"

Fearless of orks, the students decided to enter the keep, as they participated in a game of Dungeons and Dragons at the Scholar's Festival Wednesday night at Pennbrook Middle School, Upper Gwynedd Township.

The game was one of many challenging activites at the festival, which was sponsored for all North Penn students, and their parents, by the North Penn Association for Gifted Education. The association is a non-profit group that works on behalf of gifted students in the school district and their families and teachers.

Wednesday night's Scholar's Festival was the first ever held by the district, and both parents and organizers said they were impressed with the turnout.

"This is a community where parents are very interested in anything that will benefit their children. It's an opportunity for the whole family to have fun in an educational evening," said Linda Pavlik, of Towamencin Township, whose daughter, third-grader Stacey, performed a piano solo of a Billy Joel song.

Pavlik herself joined her children in a game of Junior Trivial Pursuit. "What are the little things that they put on the hands of Spanish dancers?" asked Pavlik, reading a question to the group of third and fourth graders.

"Castanets," she said, to puzzled looks from the children.

Andy Serotta, a sophomore at the high school, consistently defeated teams of opponents in chess.

"Fifteen at a time," said Serotta, who regretted having to leave after 2½ hours. "My title is expert, by the U.S. Chess Federation. Master is next step up," he said.

"It's a challenge. Chess requires that you see all kinds of combinations. You have to be really creative," said Serotta.

Karen Krall, president of the association, said the festival was an unexpected success.

"It's the most splendid thing that's ever happened to the state of Pennsylvania," she said. "It gives recognition to able students and an opportunity to show what they can do under relaxed conditions."

One mother of three North Penn graduates, Margaret Beckett, of Towamencin, said she was overwhelmed by the students' enthusiasm.

"I went down to the lower level to see the Dungeons and Dragons. 'Where are all the teachers?' I said.

"The kids are so intense, they don't need a chaperone," said Beckett.

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APR 1985

Local group supports 'Dragons'

by Naomi Klouda
Times Writer

A recent proposal by two groups to insert labels on the Dungeons and Dragons board game warning of it is hazardous to young people has outraged a local group of D & D enthusiasts.

Four people who meet every Sunday night at an East Anchorage home are alarmed at a measure proposed by the National Coalition of Television Violence and Bothered By Dungeons and Dragons who have urged members to write congressional representatives asking the government to declare the game hazardous.

The two groups have claim the fantasy-role playing game is far from harmless, blaming it for the deaths of as many as a dozen young people.

Anchorage resident Avram Levy, 25, has played the game 4½ years. The game, made by TSR Hobbies of Lake Geneva, Wis., sharpens his imagination and develops problem-solving skills, he said. He plays the character of Magnus Avontai the monk, Darkoth the cleric or Hikura Arashio the honorable warrior.

"I find the game a relief," said Levy, who meets with Anchorage friends to play every Sunday night. "All you're doing is acting out a role — like in dramatics — and you get points for strength, wisdom, dexterity, things like that. I've never been one to get into fist fights, but in this game it can be a way to release frustration."

> "People think it brings out suicidal tendencies, but the game forces us to be survivalists. The object is to survive, no matter what happens to you."
>
> —Cheryl Tatum, a Dungeons and Dragons enthusiast

Last week the group played out a six-hour quest to find the demon Grivitt who raped Queen Amarie. Brown Main the centaur, Thryus a wizard and Darth the fighter traveled with Amarie, fighting all sorts of monsters and dragons. They were guided by a map to Gravitt's lair that one of the questors had purchased from a secret source.

The four eventually found an entrance to Gravitt's lair through the side of a mountain. A landslide closed them inside the first cavern room they entered. Mechanical archers besieged them with powerful arrows, but the questors put bags over the robots heads to blind them. They escaped into another room . . .

"People think it brings out suicidal tendencies, but the game forces us to be survivalists," said Cheryl Tatum, a bartender at the Peanut Farm who plays as Amarie. "The object is to survive, no matter what happens to you.

"It's an intense board game," Tatum said. "It's complicated. I've been playing three years and I still don't know everything about it. But I do know that it's not destructive."

Mary Cattanach, supervisor of the Anchorage School District's gifted children program, said she agrees with the game's manufacturer that putting a label on D & D sets would be an over-reaction.

"The game can become time-consuming, but that's because it's intellectually stimulating," Cattanach said. "I would say that all the children from third or fourth grade on who are enrolled in the program play the game. The few who lose perspectiv are kids having problems dealin with reality anyway."

Angel Stogher, owner of Th Game Keeper Shop, said parent and teachers have come into he store to buy D & D sets an equipment for their students.

"Some have told me it' helped their children in reading," Stogher said. "Anything can be dangerous if carried to the extreme. But then you don't put a warning label on it. Why not put a warning on cars?"

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

FEB. 1985

Dungeons & Dragons: Fantasy Role-Playing as a Coping Strategy

Rita Blocksom, Director of Engine-Uity Station, a private school for gifted, Olney, Illinois

Having worked with underachieving and emotionally disturbed gifted students, I am aware of some of their concerns: feelings of low self-esteem or inadequacy, not fitting into a pre-packed plan, frustration, and even withdrawal. These children are easily over-looked in searches for intellectually-advanced students because the focus is instead on their poor behavior. This, as to be expected, only leads to further frustration and feelings of inadequacy.

Encouraging the gifted, paving the way to heightened awareness of self, of one's value in the world, is the task of a teacher of the gifted. He/she must be adept at facilitating concepts which enhance self-worth. Even a classroom teacher inexperienced in counseling techniques (particularly as they apply to achievement or behavior disturbances of the gifted), will one day face the challenge of having to provide counsel to a student with regard to the afore-mentioned characteristics. Each teacher must develop his/her own style in handling classroom management consistent with the possible needs of the students, and their interests. These suggestions apply to all teachers, but particular emphasis must be placed on them by teachers of the gifted.

Delp and Martinson, in their book, "A Handbook for Parents of Gifted and Talented" (also helpful for educators), suggest that the real tragedy in our failure to nurture the gifted lies in the shackling of their abilities. These students are unable to pursue their talents in any truly satisfying fashion, and their capacity for doing so tends to atrophy through disuse.[1] Delp and Martinson go on to say that the gifted are not pressured to achieve, but rather to conform, and thus underachieve.[2]

Behavior problems in the gifted are often evidenced by underachievement and/or behavior problems in the school by students who (when in an environment which fosters the expression of unique, original, and creative ideas) spend perhaps hours each day engaged in fantasy role-play of the highest degree: inventing weaponry which defies adult imagination, and player-characters who possess skills and talents beyond belief, creating blueprints of castles complete with dungeons and turrets with the experience of a skilled architect. Fantasy role-play for upper elementary-age students and those in junior and senior high schools can provide a rich source of motivation (so necessary for the gifted!) to channel the negative attitudes so commonly expressed by these bored and bright youngsters who later become underachievers or behavior problems and thus disruptive elements within the classroom. Fantasy role-play, if used constructively within the classroom, can be a strong deterrent to conformity, and the problems related to it as experienced by the gifted.

Fantasy role-play can take on many shapes, but for the purpose of this discussion, we will concentrate on the game of "Dungeons and Dragons." This is often a controversial game because of the spells and wizardry and because of the demonic creatures which are an integral part of the game. Yet it is these very characteristics which capture the interest, the imagination, and the enthusiasm of students who excel. The mythical, magical qualities of "Dungeons and Dragons" make it highly attractive to capable young people who need to extend themselves beyond the mundane, beyond the redundancy of the classroom, and beyond the realm of the video-game machine.

There are many advantages to incorporating fantasy role-play into the classroom environment besides the obvious one (using it as a motivational tool). Fantasy games facilitate vocabulary development, (within the

continued on page 16...

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...continued from page 15

manual of the "Dungeons and Dragons' Player's Handbook", words such as encumbered, impaled, depleted, illumination, and edifice are found). Math skills are improved in many ways as the players must make calculations with regard to money earned and spent purchasing supplies, or the number of experience points gained. Percentages are dealt with on a regular basis to calculate strength of spells or the duration of battles. Leadership qualities are a characteristic of the player who is the Dungeon Master. This is the individual who organizes and controls the quests in which all game participants are involved. The Dungeon Master sets up the limitations or restrictions of the game, maintains the environment, and provides possible strategies for completing the quest. Mapping skills are of great importance, and can become quite refined as a result of the game. The subject of history can be approached in numerous ways in conjunction with playing the game, as can creative writing. These are only a few samples of how schoolwork can be positively affected by these fantasy games. It should be reiterated that there are many varieties of these fantasy games covering many areas of interest and subject matter which could be integrated into the curriculum, and as many ways to constructively use them. However, the real issue at hand here is the channeling of the boredom and lack of mental stimulation often present in the gifted which can lead to underachievement and/or behavior problems.

It is very important that an atmosphere be created whereby a young person can have the opportunities to use their resources, where they can feel it is safe to think independently and imaginatively, according to R.E. Myers, in his article entitled "Creatively Revisited," in a 1981 issue of G/T/C magazine.[3] This atmosphere can be created at school or at home, but preferably in both places. Fantasy games at school can be indoor recess activities, can be utilized when the faster students have completed their assignments, are suitable for creative writing endeavors, or can be used with contracts (free time earned to play if student objective is successfully completed), or in a token reinforcement system (chips or points earned may be redeemed for free time game-playing). One point to note, however, is that fantasy games, as with all positive reinforcers, should not be used punitively, but rather the emphasis should be on positive aspects. Creating an atmosphere at home where children and young adults can stretch their imaginations and extend their horizons requires very little from parents, except to invest in a few games, and could prove very rewarding if parents become involved in the gaming and actively encourage their children's involvement. This could be as limited, or as far-reaching as the parents feel they could support.

Hershey and Kearns[4] demonstrated that fantasy is a pervasive and powerful dimension of the human mind., Sharing fantasy projections in group situations can build a greater feeling of empathy, of understanding, of mutuality between the gifted and their peers as they channel their abilities into a quest, for example. The spirit of cooperation can be heightened as a result, rather than feelings of competitiveness or discord. The fusing together of the personalities of the players and their interactions as they fight demons and face battles, uniting to meet the final goal (which varies from scenario to scenario), can extend the horizons of the imagination for all involved. In almost all fantasy games, there are at least three kinds of characters: good, neutral, and evil. Evil characters are much less limited in their actions and can decide what to do and whether it is in or out of the boundaries of the law. There are many ways in which the good characters can benefit as well, for example, they gain bonuses from worshiping mythological gods such as Zeus, Thor, and Odin. Variety of the player characters available is surpassed only by the imagination of the youths who select them and their attributes. However, since a choice is available as to good or evil, the students can transfer any positive or negative feelings into their character. This coping mechanism is particularly effective with underachieving and behaviorally-disturbed gifted who can channel their fears and frustrations in a non-destructive manner during the gaming, rather than turning these feelings inward.

Imagery is a guided fantasy technique whereby images or mental pictures are organized into patterns.[5] Imagery can be used in conjunction with fantasy gaming to further develop the aspects of imagination and motivation. Details, choices, and elaborations are ways to channel creative and emotional energies. These are the extenders of the basic game format which is introduced initially (to be expanded upon as the skill level and interest builds).

Fantasy is a natural coping mechanism for children of all ages. Adults use fantasy for coping, inventing, making scientific discoveries, creative writing, achievements in the arts, and such.[6] Children who have not learned to bridge the gap between simple play and the more complex varieties of play lack an important tool or constructive coping within their environment. Fantasy role-playing can be an effective method to employ in this regard. □

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Recommended Sources for Fantasy Gaming

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Box 110 C186D2
Lake Geneva, WI 53147

Fantasy Games Unlimited
PO Box 182
Rosalyn, New York 11576

Game Designers' Workshop
PO Box 1646
Bloomington, IL 61701

Gamemaster
4627 Geary Blvd
San Francisco, CA

Iron Crown Enterprises
PO Box 1605
Charlottesville, VA

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5569 Casper
Detroit, MI 48210

Role Playing Game Association Headquarters
PO Box 176
Genoa City, WI 53128

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Gamemasters Hobby
4627 Geary Blvd.
San Francisco, CA 94
Iron Crown Enterprises
Box 1605
ville, VA 22902

GINIAN PILOT
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FOLK METROPOLITAN AREA

JUN 24 1985

Dungeons and Dragons is fun

Editor, Virginian-Pilot:

In response to your June 24 report on Dungeons and Dragons and its opponents: I am a 16-year-old male who has been playing D&D for the past six years. I am also the student-body president at Norfolk Academy.

Your report paints a selectively poor picture of Dungeons and Dragons, showing only the mortal-combat aspect of the game. There is, however, much more. True, sometimes you must "fight" to stay alive (like the Vikings had to), but I've had more fun running a princedom and trying to deal with politics, or even haggling with a merchant who has the scroll I so desperately need for the completion of my quest. The game is not all hack-and-slash. Plotting, thinking and strategy are the game's true worth. Notice that all the article's selections and descriptions dealt with fighting.

I lived in Fairfax County for three years; that's where I learned to play D&D. I started a D&D club at my school and am outraged by the proposed ban. I have never known anyone who played the game to be unstable or mentally unbalanced because of it. With the pressures of schooling today, everyone needs something for relaxation and enjoyment. From a teenager's point of view, I know that D&D is a way of standing up for something and defending what you know is "good" and "right," when in the real world very little is so clearly right or wrong. You *know* that the dragon raiding the village is no saint, and you are saving the villagers' lives by hunting it down.

The alleged "satanic" aspects of D&D are purported and untrue. Admittedly, the game sets up as opponents such creatures as devils, demons and undead (vampires, etc.). But the purpose of this is to give the players a chance to fight some creatures out of Earth's own legends. It adds flavor and enjoyment to the game if you can go after Bela Legosi as Dracula, or crush an army led by a creature from hell. Regardless, the game is structured to be blatantly biased toward good. The great majority of players are good, and the great majority of the creatures they are put against are evil. How can one say that children are being led into Satanism when they see, time after time, the players *beat* the evil, nasty, bad guys? I myself see no attraction to being beaten.

Your article gave three examples of deaths "attributed to D&D." If anyone can, from the material given in the article, connect the deaths absolutely and solely to Dungeons and Dragons, then they are the ones in need of help. The article gave no proof whatsoever that D&D caused these deaths. Yes, the kids played the game, but how about some statistics for the numbers of people who commit suicide who don't play it? Or for the vast number of D&D players who *don't* commit suicide?

Some people (including teenagers, who have a tough enough time in the teen part of their lives) are not well-balanced emotionally. Dungeons and Dragons, with its escapist vein, is attractive to these people but it does not create them. These people are going to have difficulty with any hobby with which they become deeply involved.

No religion is taught in the game of D&D. God and Satan are never mentioned in the books — they are not accounted for in the game. The devils are there — as opponents. There are no saints, angels or Buddha. The "no-religion-in-public-schools" attack by foes of Dungeons and Dragons is ludicrous.

Patricia Pulling's lawsuits against Patrick Henry High School and TSR, maker of the Dungeons and Dragons games, are ridiculous. She should sue Virginia and Ford because people die in Ford automobiles and are allowed to drive by the state.

I sympathize with Mrs. Pulling's loss of her son, but I think that her grief has led to an unjust attack on D&D, which she blames for the death.

JAMES DEANE.

Norfolk

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

NORWICH, CT
BULLETIN
D 35,022 S 38,630
NEW LONDON NORWICH SUBURBAN

In our opinion:

Putnam's tempest in a teapot

The Dungeons and Dragons tempest belongs in a teapot, not on the national news wires or television screen. This fantasy game should never have become a great question of public policy, in Putnam or anyplace else.

The game has been targeted by a corps of parents (some Putnam residents, some not) who are convinced that it strikes at the roots of both Christianity and the well-being of adolescents during their precarious passage to young adulthood.

Residents of Putnam and environs must by now be able to recite the litany of complaints in their sleep: The game is said to encourage players to entertain notions about the occult and to have a demonic influence on heavy users, desensitizing them to murder, rape, torture and robbery. Too strong a dose of the game, it is said, distorts a player's experience of reality and can lead to suicide.

The anti-D&D forces shifted into high gear after a 13-year-old Putnam boy committed suicide last spring. The boy's mother is reported to believe that the game had no bearing on her son's tragic decision. Nor, she is quoted as saying, was he obsessed by the game which he played with his friends once a week at the public library. Yet those who oppose D&D offer as virtual fact the unsubstantiated, and unsubstantiable, claim of a connection. Their documentation of the evils of the game consists of evidence that is purely anecdotal and the testimony of highly selective witnesses.

The present danger is that the general public might become caught up by the fixation with Dungeons and Dragons on the part of a northeastern Connecticut group calling itself the Christian Information Council.

Parents of course have every right in the world to prevent their own children from so much as opening the cover to a D&D playbook. Those fundamentalist Christian sects that stress demonology, the doctrine of evil spirits, have every right to honor and argue for their own religious convictions. They do not have the right to determine public policy.

The Putnam Board of Education was unanimous in its rejection of the demand that D&D be banned from the high school building. There are many parents, after all, who are happy to see their children enthusiastic about a game so challenging to both the intellect and the imagination. The game, described by the manufacturer as a medieval quest, involves role-playing, as does the theater, although D&D is meant to be played around a table like any board game. It is make-believe, a diversion common to boys and girls everywhere in every era.

During the 1984-85 school year, roughly a dozen youngsters played D&D weekly during activity period at Putnam High. Their parents evidently have no complaint. The game was one of a number of offerings during that period. It was not and will not be part of the curriculum. And, naturally, parents who disapprove of D&D need merely to make their opinion known to school officials to ensure that their children are not exposed to the game during activity period.

One school board member, who said he would not wish his own children to play D&D, nonetheless voted against the proposed ban, realizing apparently that it is not the board's place to invert the world to suit any pressure group, no matter how ardent and sincere the group's members might be.

The problems of the world are manifold. Putnam may be perceived by visiting press as a simple New England town, something out of a Norman Rockwell painting, but beneath the surface are all the stresses of modern life.

To be growing up today is to be coping with such commonplaces in our society as child and spouse abuse, divorce, single parent families, unplanned pregnancies, alcoholism, drug addiction, cultism, unemployment, commercial messages promoting instant gratification as an ideal, rock superstars with more libido than they know what to do with, the shadow of nuclear war — a host of personal and social difficulties. Even the failure of community to be what it once was could be listed among the modern maladies. A yearning for a more cohesive society united in vision and purpose is entirely understandable. But such is not the case.

Scapegoating a fantasy game for any of the problems of our times is itself an act of the imagination; a witch hunt, after all, presupposes the existence of witches, along with a desire for a mystical villain on which to blame misfortunes that defy tidy explanation. It is to attribute to this game a power it does not have, to give Dungeons and Dragons a lot of free publicity, to stimulate curiosity and in all likelihood boost sales a bit.

Putnam's school board so far has refused to be cowed by those who would form a local chapter of the thought police here in northeastern Connecticut. May board members remain calm for the duration of the storm, keeping in mind that this too shall pass.

CARBONDALE-HERRIN, IL
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AUG 27 1985

D & D a treasure for many teens

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS broke a lot of ground in the gaming world when it zoomed to popularity among collegians and teenagers in the late 1970s. But neither the designers nor the players probably ever expected it to be the target of would-be censors.

Our Sunday story about the attempt to boot D & D from a Connecticut school notes the two main complaints against the most popular of the many fantasy role playing games on the market. One is a thin link to suicides; the other is a supposed acceptance of the occult.

To single out a game in a world of entertainment involving violent themes seems strange, but the fact that a few suicide victims have left notes mentioning D & D naturally raises questions. In the context of the national epidemic of teen suicides, however, more than a handful of anecdotes is needed to build a convincing argument that D & D is any more dangerous to mental health than the other intellectual and emotional stimulants in our richly varied society.

As for the occult, those who believe in such a thing will make of D & D what they will. The rest of society certainly shouldn't allow itself to be constrained by such an outlook.

For there is much good in D & D and other role playing games. Adolescence is perhaps the most difficult time in life; a few kids are "in" at any given time, but most of the rest suffer various social rejections whose importance is magnified by immaturity. In role playing, a youth doesn't need good looks, athletic skill or wealthy parents to succeed. For hours at a time the player can thrive on wits and imagination, enjoying the personal satisfaction and peer acceptance so difficult to find in school — and having a great deal of fun.

Role playing games teach disciplined thinking as players create and solve elaborate puzzles and riddles. They teach cooperation, because an adventuring party that fails to work as a team is likely to be eaten by werewolves. The games inspire interest in classical mythology, modern espionage, interstellar travel and other subjects far beyond a teen's normal life. They give otherwise quiet individuals a chance to act out the imaginativeness previously suppressed within them. And, when the tactics or the dice go bad for a character nurtured through months of adventures, the games give lessons in bitter disappointment and how to cope with it.

If critics would ban D & D on the basis of violence, then they'll have to remove most of the books, movies, magazines, and television programs, too. And they still won't remove the violence in the world around us.

Some teen-agers probably do spend too much time with D & D, as others do with records, telephones, alcohol and the rest. But few other activities offer such a strong combination of educational qualities and coping mechanisms for the stress of teen-age years. Let's not force too much reality on our teen-agers; they'll get enough of it as adults.

EDWARDSVILLE, ILL.
INTELLIGENCER
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ST. LOUIS METROPOLITAN AREA
MAR 15 1985

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EDWARDSVILLE, ILL.
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—D. 7,631—
ST LOUIS METROPOLITAN AREA

MAR 15 1982

Kids dispute criticism of medieval-fantasy game

By Mike Field
Of the Intelligencer

You are walking down a dark corridor, a flaming torch the only light to guide you. The elf in front of you moves slowly, peering into the blackness ahead while the dwarf behind you carefully guards the rear.

Suddenly, a giant blob of Ochre Jelly becomes visible, oozing along in that ominous fashion for which Ochre Jelly is so famous.

You retreat, but an amorphous mass clinging to the ceiling plops down on the stone floor. Your recognize it immediately as Black Pudding — that treacherous stuff known to eat away armor faster than a Carrion Crawler going up a wall.

Evil is all around! What will you do?

You never find out because just then your mother yells up the stairs that you'd better be doing your homework and not playing that infernal "Dungeons and Dragons" game.

"Crom's devils," you mutter.

It's only a game, of course, but "Dungeons and Dragons" appears to be only a few cubits away from video games in its popularity with kids and young adults.

Created in the early '70s by Gary Gygax, "Dungeons and Dragons" is riding a wave of fascination people seem to have with fantasy worlds — demons, devils, wizards, warlocks, whatever.

If you can cast a spell, by Zeus, you're a hit.

Creator Gygax has estimated that some $20 million worth of games and accessories was sold in 1981. Two years ago, that figure was a "paltry" $4 million.

The game is not like your regular board game. For one thing, there is no board. One does not move along predetermined squares all nicely arranged in geometric fashion.

The game actually lies within the minds of the players, although there are little lead figures to use to enhance the action and, naturally, to make a few bucks for the people who sell them.

The object, apparently, is to gain as much treasure as possible and not be eaten by Blink Dogs or sliced in half by ugly Orcs.

If it all sounds a bit cerebral, well, it is. One doesn't have to possess the IQ of a young Albert Einstein to play. It does help, however.

But according to some Christian fundamentalist groups, there's more here than meets an elf's infravision.

Several groups in California have mounted their own campaign to halt what they see as a growing acceptance of the occult, perpetuated by games like "Dungeons and Dragons."

Recent stories carried by the major wire services indicate that the role-playing game not only plants a demon seed in the minds of young people but also blurs distinction between fantasy and reality.

Indeed, the popularity of "Dungeons and Dragons" "is just the tip of the iceberg of what the occult is doing," according to an attorney for a group called Californians for a Biblical Morality.

"Hogwash," says a group of young sorcerers here in Edwardsville.

"I think that it's ridiculous that anybody should be against 'Dungeons and Dragons'...," said Peter Bouman, a member of the Junior Elves.

"It's only a game," the sixth-grader said. "However realistic it may seem, the 'Dungeons and Dragons' multiverse is only imaginary. And it's a release for people. Kids lead (lives in) a high-pressure, frustrating society. 'Dungeons and Dragons' is the perfect way to pretend you're someone powerful, a perfect contrast to ordinary life. And mostly, the players are questing to smite the forces of evil, like the Christian Church did in the Middle Ages."

Another, more view of the game — perhaps more practical — was taken by Charles St. John, an Edwardsville fifth-grader.

"I think it should not be banned because it is an interesting game and I have spent a lot of money on it," he said.

Still, there are those young people who agree that the game can become all-consuming. When it reaches this point, it has gone too far, they admit.

"A lot of people who play this game are real flakes," said Kurt Hofmann, an Edwardsville seventh-grader who, along with two of his friends, spends a good deal of time fighting evil.

"But not us," added Ramzi Aly, a sixth-grader.

"We aren't into the game as much as some people," said the third member of the trio, Eric Nordhauser, a young wizard masquerading as a seventh-grader. "But some people who are really into it are affected by it. They play it at school when they should be studying. Some people cut classes to play it. (Mostly at the college level.)

"And I think it does promote violence," he added.

"But the way we play," noted Ramzi, "hardly anyone dies. Kurt was killed once when he battled 30 monsters. But that's because he had to jump out of a burning building right into the middle of them."

Fire Beetles beware, lest ye be smitten by the forces of good wandering the battlegrounds of "Dungeons and Dragons."

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- Sons' deaths not tied to Dungeons & Dragons: Mother

Associated Press

LAFAYETTE, Colo.—Two young brothers carried out a murder-suicide pact last fall because the older boy feared his sentencing in an auto theft case, not because of the Dungeons & Dragons fantasy game, their mother said.

Betty Erwin's first interview since her sons' deaths came in the wake of a Sunday broadcast by CBS-TV's "60 Minutes" focusing on Dungeons & Dragons and the game's possible role in suicides by several young people. The game is a product of TSR Inc. of Lake Geneva, Wis.

Steven Erwin, 12, shot his 16-year-old brother, Daniel, with their father's .22-caliber pistol about 7:30 a.m. Nov. 2, 1984, as they sat under a Lafayette railroad trestle. He then turned the gun on himself.

The family on Tuesday discounted any connection between the boys' deaths and their interest in the popular Dungeons & Dragons game.

Daniel had pleaded guilty to auto theft and was scheduled to face sentencing Nov. 30.

The charge stemmed from Daniel's joyride in a car that ended several days later with his arrest in Colby, Kan., Mrs. Erwin said.

Although Daniel was likely to receive only a six-month deferred sentence, Mrs. Erwin said he was extremely afraid of the criminal justice system.

The boys' brother, Brian Erwin, 14, said Daniel was upset that a likely condition of probation would be that he return to a school he had dropped out shortly after his sophomore year began.

Mrs. Erwin, 43, released Daniel's suicide note Tuesday.

"Dear Mom and Dad," the note said. "I am sorry that it had to end this way, but things just came to a close. A man without his freedom is not a man at all. Therefore, this man is targeted for termination and my goodbyes are now, so shall it be. Love, Dan."

During the "60 Minutes" show Sunday, Lafayette Police Chief Larry Stallcup admitted that he said Dungeons & Dragons played no part in the Erwins' suicides after he received a letter from the game's manufacturer.

Stallcup and other officers initially said the boys' obsession with the game led to their deaths.

He later said the game had no connection after receiving the letter from TSR. Stallcup described the letter as "threatening," and said it implied legal action.

However, TSR spokesman Dieter Sturm said the letter only asked for a written assurance that the Lafayette police "investigation and news releases will be fair and careful when making any reference to our products, products which have been endorsed throughout the world."

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

mber 18, 1985/2B

THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 1985
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NEW YORK TIMES
AUGUST 22, 1985

A Suicide Spurs Town to Debate Nature of a Game

By JAMES BROOKE
Special to The New York Times

PUTNAM, Conn., Aug. 21 — A suicide by a local youth who often played a fantasy game called Dungeons and Dragons has triggered a debate in this rural northeastern Connecticut town about whether the game should be allowed in the public schools during free periods.

"It is another of Satan's ploys to pollute and destroy our children's minds," said Kathy Dewey, one of nearly a dozen parents who Tuesday night urged the Board of Education to ban the playing of the game at Putnam High School.

But the game, sometimes called "D and D," also has its defenders. "It's a harmless game — I have parents who come and thank me for having a place where kids can go and not be exposed to drugs and drinking," said Larry MacNaughton, who holds Saturday afternoon competitions at his toy store in nearby Hampton.

Board Favors Allowing Game

After listening without comment to the parents' appeals, members of the board said in interviews that they intend to allow the game to be played at the school this year.

"There are more important things on the agenda than Dungeons and Dragons — mathematics, reading or smoking, for example," a board member, Raymond B. Leduc, said. "My daughter played D and D since she was 16, and she is now happily married. There is no evidence that links D and D to suicides."

Controversy over the game sharpened here last April when a local boy, Roland Cartier, aged 13, committed suicide. Opponents of the game stressed that he had played it regularly at the Putnam Library.

In an echo of the fantasies of J. R. R. Tolkein's "Lord of the Rings," Dungeon and Dragon players become imaginary characters and, following complex rules, try to overcome traps and tricks, wizards and monsters to annhilate each other in a search for treasure.

Hundreds of Characters

Campaigns, often involving seven or eight players can last for years and characters can be reincarnated in different forms. Several of the hundreds of characters include "basilisk," a reptile that can turn enemies to stone; "black pudding," a blob that can pass through small holes and eat away armor, and "stirge," a feathered anteater that sucks blood.

Designed by E. Gary Gygax, the game became popular among college students in the mid-1970's and more recently among adolescents. In a telephone interview, Dieter Sturm, a spokesman for Mr. Gygax's company, TSR Inc. of Lake Geneva, Wis., said that eight million sets had been sold, including versions in French, German and Italian. Mr. Sturm estimated that three million to four million people in the United States regularly played the game.

Several school boards around the country have banned the game on the ground that impressionable teenagers cannot handle the violent role playing and occult imagery. Opponents of the game have cited several suicide notes as evidence that the game is responsible for some teenage suicides.

The link to suicides was repeated at the school board meeting in the Putnam Elementary School library.

"You have authorized Russian roulette," the Rev. Robert O. Bakke, pastor of the Faith Bible Evangelical Free Church, told the board. "Over the months to come there will be many thrilling and harmless clicks of the gun as Dungeons and Dragons is held to the heads of our young people. But another deadly explosion will come."

A spokesman for the Christian Information Council, a local group, said that a petition, with 450 signatures, demanding the game be banned was delivered to the board in May.

"Playing these games can desensitize players to murder, suicide, rape, torture, robbery, the occult or any other immoral or illegal act," the spokesman for the council, Thomas Riley, said. "The company, TSR, is making a profit while familiarizing its millions of followers with terms and rituals of occult forms of religion."

But the nine member school board seemed unimpressed. Several indicated that they had no intention of overturning a unanimous vote last month to permit the game during activity periods at the high school.

At a meeting in May, the state police trooper who investigated the suicide, Paul Roy, said, "Dungeons and Dragons no way killed this kid." He said the youth had become involved with drugs and had had confrontations with his mother.

The chairman of the school board, Joseph V. Pempek, said that banning the game could be construed as censorship and as violating the students' rights.

Standing on the fringe of Tuesday night's crowd of about 50 people, four Putnam students, who regularly play the game, watched the proceedings with distaste.

"I'm sick of them saying that Roland killed himself because it was D and D — it was drugs," said Erik Bergeson, 14, who used to play with the dead youth.

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

'Just a game'

Dear Editor:

I have been playing D&D and AD&D for three and half years. I have found it very enjoyable and interesting, and also quite harmless.

Yet I am constantly reading articles by people who claim that D&D gets kids into demonics, lowers their respect for life, and is anti-religious. Some of these people claim to have played D&D. One man said he was going to raise money through donations and "buy as many copies of the games as I can and then burn them." In some schools D&D has been prohbited.

Why is it that people can't see that D&D is just a game, and one of the best games around?

Nels Bruckner
Jasper, Ore.

Nels' letter is one of many on this subject that we've received over the past year or so, and it asks the same question we've asked: Why, indeed can't these people see that the D&D® and AD&D™ games are just games? Games that are meant as diversions, games that are meant to be fun, but games. Nothing more — and nothing less. What's wrong with playing a game?

We're sure you've all seen the stories in newspaper and magazines and on television. (Our criticis are good at getting attention in the media, and this issue makes for sensational headlines.) Basically, those who criticize our games say they somehow promote violence and evil, devil-worship and the occult, that they're so popular that many people spend lots of time playing them.

Well, that last accusation may be true: many thousands of people do spend a lot of time playing the D&D and AD&D games. Just as many other people spend a lot of time playing baseball or golf or tennis or watching television. Any hobby presumably carries the potential for being too absorbing and time-consuming. But that doesn't mean all hobbies should be banned, does it?

As for the other observations made by certain self-appointed critics...

"The D&D game encourages violence and glamorizes evil" — Nothing could be further from the truth. Sure, there are evil monsters and characters; otherwise there wouldn't be anything for the forces of good to defeat. Any Dungeon Master who uses the game rules in the manner they were intended to be used — and any player in that DM's campaign — will get the message loud and clear: It pays to be good. The most successful and longest-lived characters are those who disdain evil and work together, cooperating to defeat mutual foes. And, as we've said many times in these pages, the most interesting campaigns are those that challenge players to use their wits to conquer their foes. "Hack 'n' slash" campaigns exist, but neither this magazine nor this company encourages such behavior.

"The D&D game promotes devil-worship and the occult" — Only someone who takes the game materials totally out of context could make this statement (and sadly, that's exactly what some of our critics do). Sure, demons and devils can be found in the games — along with many other monsters and creatures, all on paper, as numbers and statistics, for one purpose and one purpose alone: to give the players something to battle against. They add flavor to the game, which, our critics fail to remember, takes place in a fictional world of heroic fantasy.

In this world, as in the many worlds described in the great works of fantasy literature, there are "gods" that can play a role in the lives of the mortals who make up the world. In this world, magic exists. But anyone who attempts to make more of it than that, has simply not bothered to read the rule books. The D&D and AD&D games don't encourage evil, etc., any more than the MONOPOLY games causes its players to become ruthless real-estate barons who evict widows and orphans. Nobody who wins a MONOPOLY game is deluded into thinking they can go out and spend all that lovely play money, are they?

Certainly, in our democracy, our critics are entitled to their views. But so are we. And if you know someone who has received an incorrect impression of our hobby, you don't have to let that misconception continue. Invite that person to roll up a character and see what the games are all about. We think that's the best argument anyone could make for the hobby.

And, try to remember how the games are intended to be played. We can't keep anyone from playing the game in an improper fashion, but we hope your characters and campaigns will always live up to the standards we try to maintain. — KM

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Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

WORCESTER, MA
GAZETTE
—D. 85,273—
WORCESTER FITCHBURG METRO AREA

JUN 23 1985

Dungeons, Dragons and Suicide

To the Editor:

It has come to the attention of the public that the game, Dungeons and Dragons, has been the cause of certain suicides. Really?

As a concerned parent and D and D player, one who has designed D and D modules (for my own personal use) for the past five years, I feel I have some small amount of experience enabling me to comment on the subject.

The accusation that Dungeons and Dragons is the cause of suicides has not been proven statistically. A stronger point can be made on the basis that Mother Goose teaches sadistic behavior — making "Jack" jump over a burning candlestick over and over again or having an old lady eat a fly and then die. The first I ever heard of trolls was in Billy Goat Gruff. Are we to ban Mother Goose too?

What about those educated people who have told me personally, "D and D is satanic," or "D and D is not good for your sanity." Yet when asked "What do you know about the game?" I hear "You'll never catch me learning that game." Another response: "What! And get possessed?" You call this an impartial and educated point of view?

In my psychology courses, I was taught that suicide is brought on primarily by depression. I have never found a Dungeons and Dragons game depressing.

Out of five years of Dungeon Mastering table top as well as live D and D campaigns, I have never had a player hurt or commit suicide.

I would much rather know where my children are on a given day than have them out with no supervision, possibly causing harm to themselves, someone else or someone's property.

On Saturdays my wife, 10-year-old son, 14-year-old daughter, 16-year-old son and I all go together and play. It beats watching what will happen in a nuclear attack on TV. Now, that's depressing.

No, I think the place to look for suicide causes is in the home and surroundings of an individual's life.

It is unfortunate that suicides happen. But before we judge, let us take an impartial look and know a little about what we are judging.

H. DAVID GILLILAND

Willimantic, Conn.

LOUISVILLE, KY
TIMES
—D. 138,973—
LOUISVILLE METROPOLITAN AREA

JUN 25 1985

Criticism of game is 'pure prejudice'

I am so sick of these paranoid preachers who are always looking for a whipping boy to blame for this nation's social troubles. First, they blame rock 'n roll music, claiming that people who listen to rock 'n roll are psychopathic Goths who sniff glue, sacrifice babies to the devil and a lot of other boogeyman bunk. Now, as if that is not enough, they've found a new patsy — Dungeons and Dragons.

These ministers and the "nut-doctors" who are affiliated with them claim that people who play D and D freak out and commit suicide. Well, big deal! People who play blackjack commit suicide; people who play chess and backgammon commit suicide. What has a simple game got to do with killing yourself?

These people are judging whole groups of people by the actions of a few weirdoes, and that is pure prejudice.

DANIEL CARR
2718 Alford, Louisville

GILLETTE, WY.
NEWS-RECORD
D. 6,500 — S. 8,000

MAY 2 0 1984

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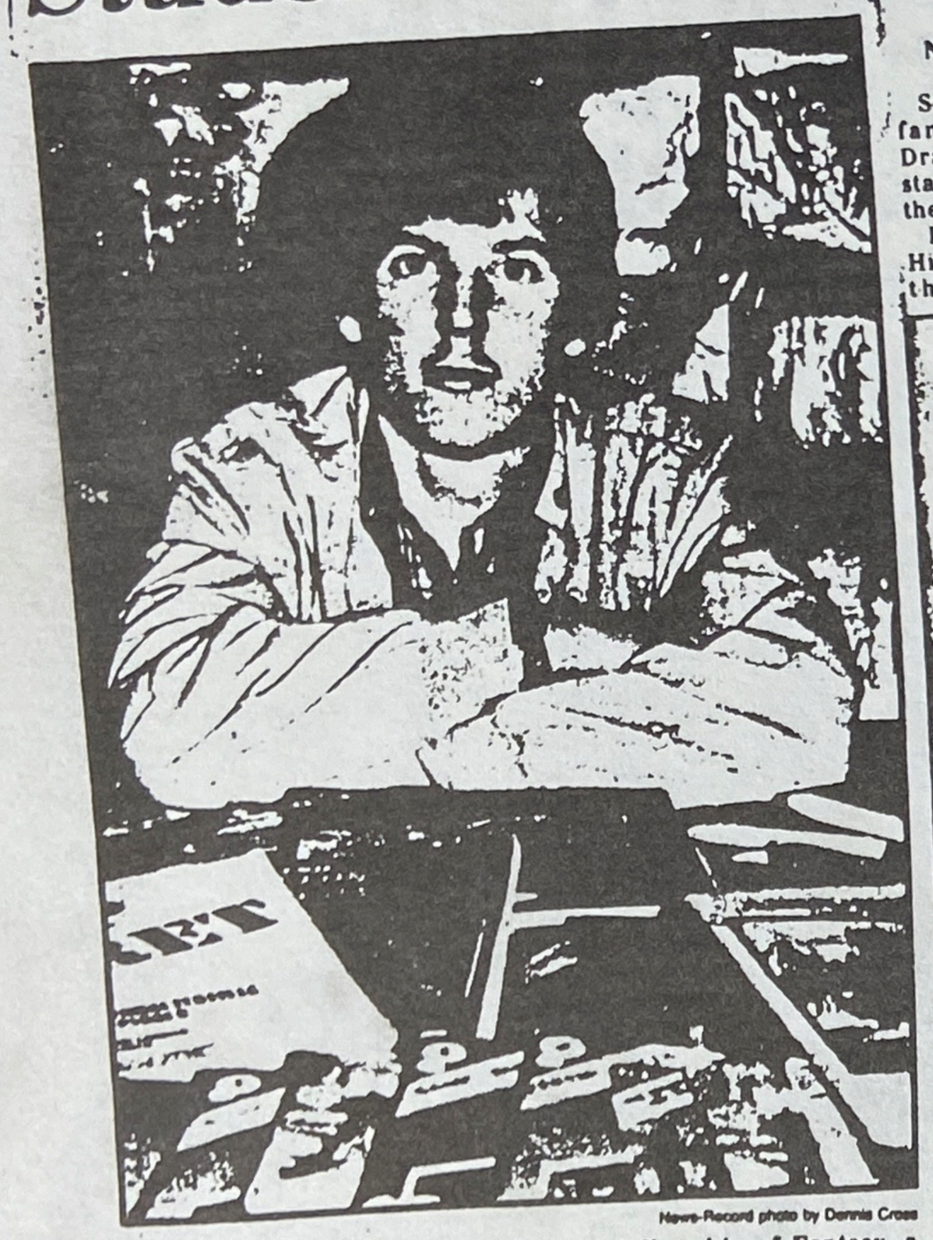
Student tries to prove fantasy game isn't evil



News-Record photo by Dennis Cross

Jim Butler, the president of the local Fellowship of Fantasy, a role-playing game club, is hoping the club will make people aware that Dungeons and Dragons isn't "evil", as some contend. There are about 30 members in the club now, but Butler sees it growing to about 100 members. Fellowship of Fantasy's first convention is tentatively set for the third week of May.

By DENNIS CROSS
News-Record Student Writer

Some people believe a popular fantasy game, Dungeons and Dragons, is evil. So Jim Butler started a club to, in part, prove them wrong.

Butler, 17, a Campbell County High School senior, said he feels there is nothing evil in role-playing games. He recently contacted TSR, Inc. of Lake Geneva, Wis., manufacturer of Dungeons and Dragons, to charter a local club, "The Fellowship of Fantasy." Butler, who is the club's president, said his organization is affiliated with the Role Playing Game Association, a TSR subsidiary.

Opposition to fantasy games such as Dungeons and Dragons has surfaced locally, primarily through letters to The News-Record. But Butler expects little or no trouble from opponents of his hobby.

"I don't really expect trouble with it because every one who is against it has, one, never played the game and, two, have been influenced into believing the game is evil, or have just joined the crowd to attack the game," he said.

TSR charters clubs nationwide, to get people interested in fantasy games and help them understand that the games aren't evil. Butler said.

The Fellowship of Fantasy has about 30 members now, but Butler would like to see it grow to 100. Most members are high school students, although anyone may join.

"We'll try to gain interest in the games, and teach those who want to learn how to play," Butler said. "We'll hold a convention the third week in May (tentatively), but we don't have a place yet." Butler said the convention will be open to the public, with an admission fee to go toward funding a tournament during the convention.

The tournament will include games like Dungeons and Dragons, Star Frontiers, Gamma World, and Top Secret, all made by TSR. There will be contests for players of various skill levels, Butler said, and people will be able to learn how to play some of the games.

Butlers said Dungeons and Dragons — set in medieval times — is simply a fantasy game in which the players devise their own "characters," which can be fighters, magic users, thieves or clerics.

One reason the game is controversial is the names given to some of the characters. Butler said the player who creates a character can name it anything he wants, but most players use medieval or fantasy names.

In Dungeons and Dragons, there is no immediate winner. The game can last as long as the players want. The goal is to gain power and continue the game.

The character's skills, such as strength, wisdom, intelligence, dexterity, constitution and charisma are determined by rolling dice. The character then sets out on an adventure, entering dungeons or other places where adventure can be found, Butler said.

"After you get your character, you go on an imaginary or fictitious adventure and encounter different forces, both supernatural and known, to gain power and experience," he said. The main theme of the game is to build up a character's power and experience so it can advance to more difficult adventures.

The adventures are called modules and the referee is the "dungeon master." He is in complete control of the game. He can follow the printed outline for the module or vary it by establishing new forces to oppose the characters.

As the characters advance, searching for treasure, power and experience (which are measured on a point scale), monsters, fighters and dragons try to stop them.

The local club held its first meeting and elected officers April 19. Other officers are vice president Mike Hester, secretary Dennis McDermott and treasurer Chris Dean. Chairmen of game committees also were named.

Experienced games players

By DENNIS CROSS
News-Record Student Writer

The fantasy game Dungeons and Dragons is nothing new to Jim Butler, president of the newly created "Fellowship of Fantasy."

Dungeons and Dragons is one of the main games to be played by the new club, which has about 30 members.

Butler, 17, has been playing Dungeons and Dragons since he was in the eighth grade.

"I consider myself knowledgeable but there are people who can run circles around me, not necessarily in town but at TSR, (manufacturer of the game,)" Butler said. He said the game is interesting because it's his "own little world" and what he says goes.

"What makes it interesting is how deep you can go into your own creation, and like any other hobby it can be as time-consuming as you want it to be," he added.

Butler has created his own scenario for a dungeon (the imaginary site of a Dungeons and Dragons game) and submitted it to TSR, Inc. for consideration. It's called Underlord of Vagel.

"I sent it in about 14 months ago," Butler said. This is his second try at submitting the dungeon for possible publication. But when he first submitted it, the written scenario was only 60 pages long, he said.

"The dungeon has to be 120 pages long, typed and double-spaced. These have to be creative and to the point," Butler explained. His dungeon has 43 rooms and it took him about six months to write the scenario.

Dungeons, D

I am an avid Dungeons & Drag... Since I... ons (D&D) player responding to the... part in a... article in the Sunday, Feb. 17, pa... yourself... per, "Is Dungeons & Dragons re... 'rolled up'... sponsible for teen suicides?"

I felt that the article failed to... How ma... state any other similar factors relat... entire num... ing to the suicides such as a great... depression from failing... breaking up with a... a job, or...

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletopgo.com

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

local club
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nris Dean. Chairmen of game
committees also were named.

Dungeons, Dragons

I am an avid Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) player responding to the article in the Sunday, Feb. 17, paper, "Is Dungeons & Dragons responsible for teen suicides?"

I felt that the article failed to state any other similar factors relating to the suicides such as a great depression from failing in school, breaking up with a girl friend, losing a job or the death of a relative which also could cause a suicide.

About the "peculiar" notes left behind by the suicide victims, I've got pages upon pages of notes about the game, a necessity for play, some of which might seem peculiar to people who don't know about the game.

The really creative usually invent entire worlds for the game. As for the drawings, when you doodle you draw what's on your mind. Reading a novel or seeing a movie on TV could make you think of gruesome things, not just D&D. Nobody has ever questioned artists like that before. Why should they now?

As for the description of the game, as Mr. Howard Witt put it, "Describing this game, whose instructions at the highest levels of play fill several weighty volumes, is difficult."

Well, I have read those several (eight) weighty volumes (all are hardback) and the ones for beginners (paperbacks).

People who relate the occult to D&D have either not read the books or just skimmed through it, reading only what they want to read.

And I also find *no* remark about Satan or occult rituals in the books. You'd have to look elsewhere for that information.

As for violence and death, cable and pay TV are far, far beyond D&D in that respect. It all depends on the Dungeon Master (DM) what they do in the dungeons, which are not necessarily monster-filled.

And about TSR's so-called "warning," I read that section, and I don't think it's a warning at all. Since it is role playing, like having a part in a play, you should not play yourself but the character you "rolled up."

How many actors, out of the entire number, have killed themselves because the character they were playing got killed?

The article also stated, "Dungeons & Dragons played by youths who are having some sort of emotional problem is dangerous. There is no doubt about this." Well, guess what! If kids with emotional problems go see an "ax" movie like *Mother's Day* or *Halloween II* they're going to get a lot more violence and killing than in D&D and in more vivid detail.

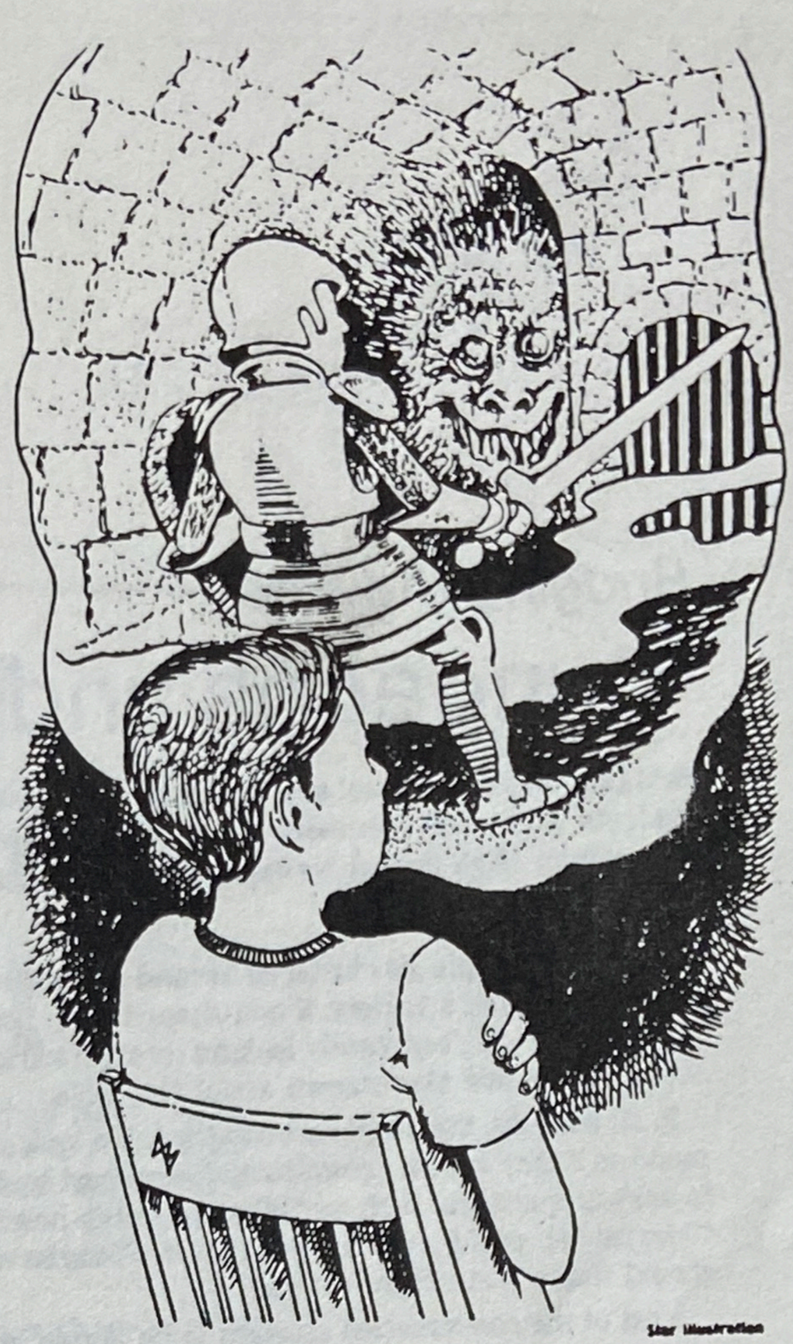
I don't know if the University of Arkansas student didn't know or failed to mention that *there are penalties for "evil" acts too!* All of which are far, far greater than the benefits of stealing. And if the DM encourages good deeds, they can become far more profitable than killing. In video games don't you score points for destroying enemy planes and killing aliens?

But most importantly, the players ultimately control how the game is played, not the other way around. If the players are playing it "evilly," it's because they want to play it that way or they think it is supposed to be played that way because of articles saying that it is. It can be just as constructive if the group (especially the DM) wants to and tries to play it that way.

A final note: I am an honor student and I have played Dungeons & Dragons for about five years now. Not once have I ever encountered anything half as bad as what this article describes, and I doubt if I ever will.

If there are people out there doing those insane things they are a very small minority, and they didn't get it from D&D.

HENRY WALDSCHMIDT
Bargersville



Star Illustration

INDIANAPOLIS, IN
STAR
D. 228,082—S. 381,175
INDIANAPOLIS METROPOLITAN AREA

Game as a scapegoat

I am a junior at Center Grove High School in Greenwood and I am very upset about your article on Dungeons & Dragons. I have been an avid D&Der for more than five years. I am an honor student and have a total grip on reality. The thought of killing myself does not really sound like a lot of fun to me.

The way the article sounded, I would say you have never played or even sat in on a session. I really do not understand why anyone would send someone who is totally ignorant of a subject to write a story as insulting as the one you printed.

The people who play D&D are from all walks of life, but for the most part are normal, not a sect or cult. The people who get into a D&D cult are not drawn by the game but by their own inquisitiveness or stupidity.

When I play, I play in the dining room with lights on. The way you describe it, it sounds more like a seance or a meeting of witches standing over a cauldron chanting. I play, but I am not obsessed with the game. Nor to I call forth demons, devils or spirits from the bowels of the earth.

What you describe as D&D sounds more like a medieval freak show or some real good science fiction movie.

As for being rewarded for killing, you can also be punished for killing. This is a game about medieval times. In the 1100-1500s it was legal to kill your enemies. Besides, in D&D you are usually on the defensive. Self-protection is legal even now.

If you wish to call D&D violent, maybe you should watch TV, cartoons or even the real world. In a five-hour period of D&D you might have a maximum of 25 or 30 acts of violence. Yet if you watch five hours of cartoons, you just try to count the number of acts of violence. Good luck! So if you wish to ban D&D maybe you should ban cartoons.

If you really want to blame something for teen suicide, maybe you should blame the pressure society puts on people. Do not use D&D as a scapegoat for problems society has caused.

TED FREEMAN
Greenwood

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

WEST CHICAGO, IL
PRESS
—W. 6,500—
CHICAGO METROPOLITAN AREA

Bridging the Gap

'Dungeons and Dragons' Game

Bridging the Gap is a column written by journalism students and staff members of the West Chicago Community High School Newspaper, The Bridge.

By David Mark

A group of people sit clustered around a table with paper, pencil and a variety of odd-shaped dice. Some of the people are desperately looking through various books, which are also strewn about the table.

In all honesty, the people around the table look and sound as if they were a committee of some sort trying to answer questions such as "What do we do now?", "Maybe we could cast a spell?", or "Maybe we should make a strategic retreat?"

Most of the conversation appears to be aimed at a person whose face is half covered by a screen which has charts and odd pictures on its cover. He is the Dungeon Master in the Tactical Studies Rules (TSR) role-playing game Dungeons and Dragons (D&D).

Dungeons and Dragons is a world in which there is a constant battle raging between good and evil. It is a make believe world where dragons (of many types), centaurs and minotaurs run free.

Many people are under the impression that the world of D&D is plagued with violent killing, demon worshipping and virgin sacrifices to alien "gods," but this is not the case.

Dungeons and Dragons is a game which involves a Game Master (the DM) providing a group of playing characters with a scenario in which they take part. These scenarios vary from traveling through a jungle in search of a treasure, ridding the land of an evil dragon, or simply plundering a castle of its wealth.

All games use a general set of rules which are found in the Players Handbook or the Dungeon Masters Guide. These books contain things such as how to create characters, a list of spells, a list of magical weapons, and charts for calculating damage, rate of movement and other necessary items to the game.

During the course of the game it may become necessary for the party to engage in combat. This is done by having the DM and the playing character roll dice to see if they are able to inflict damage. If a character is hit, another dice is rolled to determine how many points of damage is done. There is no mention of serious wounds or severing of limbs, only the deduction of hit points until the character dies.

Dungeons and Dragons is a fantasy game which can be a form of release for some people.

UTICA, NY
OBSERVER-DISPATCH
D. 36,411—S. 58,277
UTICA ROME METROPOLITAN AREA

Don't blame Dungeons and Dragons

My son and four friends have been playing Dungeons and Dragons since they were in school. He and one of his friends are in the Navy now; two others are in the Marine Corps; another in college. When they are home, they still play. Why is it that we are always so quick to blame others but never ourselves? It seems just a coincidence that a young man killed himself after playing the game, as reported recently. I am sorry for his mother, but she should have seen the signs. Whatever happened to the old adage, "Live and let live?" I am tired of people trying to shove their ideas down my throat.

Karen E. Ford
7 North St., Mohawk

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA.
PROGRESS
D. 30,000 — S. 30,000
CHARLOTTESVILLE METROPOLITAN AREA

APR 2 2 1985

Fantasy Game Not At Fault

When I read the article, "Group Says Game Tied To Suicides," which appeared in your paper on March 25, I was, to say the least, surprised. I had thought that these ridiculous claims that Dungeons and Dragons led to suicide had died off more than a year ago.

It is, indeed, a tragedy for a youth, or anyone for that matter, to die of his own doing, and it obviously leaves the family dumbfounded as they look for a reason for such a terrible thing. It seems that in this case the mother looked over her son's game notes, listened to the fanatical claims of various individuals and groups, and all of a sudden, Dungeons and Dragons was responsible for her son's death, not her son himself.

I'm sure that this is a more pleasant thought, but anyone who commits suicide has serious mental problems, and I don't believe that these can be brought on by a game. True, that particular child may have found the game as an excuse, but I am sure that, had D&D not been there, something else would have provided him with one.

D&D is designed to develop the mind. The players are explained different situations by the Dungeon Master, and they have to come up with the best answer to the situation. The more creative the solution is, the better the result will be. As a result, the mind is trained to react more quickly to situations, and its thought and logic processes are strengthened.

To me it is a shame that a few people looking for an explanation of a personal tragedy can bring so much bad publicity to a game developed to strengthen the gifted mind, not to tear it down.

Albert W. McNett Jr.
Orange

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

PROVIDENCE, RI
BULLETIN
—D. 131,042—
PROVIDENCE WARWICK METRO AREA

MAR 26 1985

Game causes no harm, library committee says

By WENDY KILLEEN
Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

PAWTUCKET — The game Dungeons and Dragons is not hazardous to one's health and should be allowed to be played at the library, says a library review committee.

The committee voted yesterday to recommend to the Library Board of Trustees next month that "there's no inherent harm in having the game available."

The recommendation came in response to a complaint from Joan M. Shea, representative of a 20-member prayer group, that the game is "a teaching on demonology, witchcraft, voodoo, Satan worship, demon summoning and Jungian psychology, divination and many more teachings brought to you in living color from the pit of hell."

Mrs. Shea, of 36 Benjamin St., said the game reinforces aggressive behavior, increases violent fantasies and causes lapses in differentiation between reality and fantasy, encouraging antisocial behavior.

She requested that the library hold no further classes on the game until it could "produce concrete evidence that the game is perfectly safe for young children."

The review committee said there's no proof that it isn't safe.

The library recently completed a four-week Dungeons and Dragons course for children 8 and older. Another course may be offered, but none has been scheduled.

Dungeons and Dragons is a complex game set in a fantasy world of good versus evil. The players take on roles, human and otherwise, assigned to them by the "dungeon master," and their fate is ruled by the roll of the dice.

Critics say the game encourages violence against others and suicide. But the review committee said that for a well-adjusted child the game is merely fun and something to play with friends.

SANTA ANA, CA.
REGISTER
D. 270,000 — S. 307,000
ANAHEIM METROPOLITAN AREA

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

SANTA ANA, CA.
REGISTER
D. 270,000 — S. 307,000
ANAHEIM METROPOLITAN AREA

FE 3 1985

Fanatics on the loose

Pseudoreligious fads come and go and on rare occasions get out of hand and turn into classics that trigger real problems for those who refuse to get sucked in.

The problems, in turn, produce such dead-serious reactions as the Clearinghouse letter from Michael Tice, "Creating hostility toward game" (Feb. 15), defending Dungeons & Dragons. This game is one of two current targets for the fanatics; the other is Cabbage Patch dolls.

Readers can get a better perspective of this craziness by looking at the claims made by the faddists who run from one "Praise the Lord and Send Your Dollar Now" TV program to another, shouting their beliefs about demonology.

They'll say: "Dungeons & Dragons figurines (used to keep track of game status, like chess pieces) are demon-possessed. They scream in terror when thrown on the fire." The screams are real. Those things are expensive. Can you imagine teen reaction when religious-fanatic parents burn them?

"If a Dungeon Master paints a pentagram on his girlfriend's stomach, a bunch of little demons will come out." I've heard children called "little demons" before, but never quite that way.

"The Cabbage Patch dolls that were made in mainland China contain poison needles that shoot out and kill the owners — 150 kids have been killed by these things and the cops are hushing it up." No comment.

"Cabbage Patch dolls are demon-possessed, levitate and choke the owners." Pardon me while I roll on the floor in helpless howls of hilarity.

My opinion of people who make statements like that in the media, right in front of God and everybody, is that they are either certifiably insane, drunk, stoned, or doing religious satire.

My friends and I wait with bated breath for the first dead-serious custody fight and child support concerning a Cabbage Patch doll.

Unfortunately, the humor is lost when these fanatics prey like emotional vultures on the families of teen-age suicide victims, getting them to file suit against TSR Hobbies, holders of the Dungeons & Dragons copyright (as reported Feb. 2, "Critics of Dungeons & Dragons blame game for teen-agers' suicides").

That has to be the most vicious thing since the Inquisition, using the bereaved families of suicides in that gross, cynical way.

Eugene Austi
Orang

Send submissions to the Clearinghouse, The Register, P.O. Box 11626, Santa Ana 92711. Letters must be signed and give the author's address and telephone number for the editor's reference. The editor may abridge. Please give headline and date if referring to a specific article. Anonymous letters and open letters to a third party will not be used. Short messages may be phoned in to the Opinion Line at 953-2256.

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Harmless game

I am a active Dungeons and Dragons player. My parents hate the thought of me playing, but I feel it is a innocent form of recreation for teen-agers. Half or even three-quarters of my friends play.

I feel that D&D is a fun game and a good form of entertainment. At least it isn't 3 to 4 more million kids from the age of 12 to 24 pushin' and taking drugs!

It wouldn't be that bad to see articles about D&D in papers if only the writer had played the game. I feel they could understand the game better and it would be easier to discuss!

I myself have been playing for around two years. Whenever I see an article like the last one in your paper I wonder if the writers know the basic rules of the game. It's like talking about something you don't know the first thing about!

JOHN NELSON
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SENTINEL
—D. 18,206—
NEW HAVEN WATERBURY METRO AREA

MAR 11 1985

Game is for entertainment

To the Editor:

I am writing to you about the recent onslaught of letters concerning the Dungeons and Dragons game. I, however, do not write as a concerned parent or onlooker, but as a player and Dungeon Master, game leader, for two and a half years.

I am appalled that people whose knowledge of the game is very limited could have the gall to write these letters.

The sole purpose of the D&D game is entertainment. It is a fantasy role-playing game in which a person plays a fantasy character in a make-believe world. It is an exciting game that is very detailed. The excerpts which have been used are such details.

These are meant to flesh out the game and make it more real, not to convert people to satanistic ways. Furthermore, these excerpts are of gods that were actually worshipped at one time in history, and the so-called demonic mind of a person.

I think if anyone wants to criticize the game, they should first fully understand it. If people are so hot to save the world, why don't they pick on some real problems, like drugs and crime, and leave the role-playing games to the players!

DAVE STONER
Ansonia

Dungeons & Dragons and its 'dangers'

DEERFIELD—Your article entitled "A fantasy game turns into a deadly reality" on Jan. 27 was a biased, error-filled, sensationalistic piece of trash.

Howard Witt and his editors obviously made no attempt to verify the "facts" in the article. Anyone with any experience with the Dungeons & Dragons game would know, for example, that there is no such thing as an "insanity curse," nor does it supply the means to "dabble in the occult." He would also know that the demons "from the game" are almost all from earthly myths. Furthermore, the pathetic attempt to supply the other side of the story was tiny and hidden in the overwhelming testimony against the game.

Using Mr. Witt's logic, reading fairy tales should cause children to kill themselves for fear of being baked in ovens by witches or eaten by wolves. Dungeons & Dragons, no matter how complex, is still fantasy, and any person who is sane to begin with realizes this. Those who are crazy will inevitably do crazy things and if these things include mistaking fantasy for reality, it's the result of nothing but their own crazy minds.

Mr. Witt and the editors of The Tribune should be taught the meaning of the phrases "verification of facts" and "unbiased reporting," and how to apply them.

David Silvian

DES PLAINES—Your Jan. 27 article on Dungeons & Dragons and its effect on the young mind seems to imply that the game seduces young people into a lack of regard for human life that leads to mass murder and suicide.

I strongly disagree with this concept because of the six years' experience that I have in playing Dungeons & Dragons. In that time, the worst display of abnormal behavior that I ever encountered was one gentleman who was attempting to monetarily bribe the other players in order to enhance his character's position in the game. Such actions are extremely rare and are results of personal problems acquired outside of the game which would manifest themselves whether the young person plays Dungeons & Dragons, checkers or basketball.

Doug Newcomb

We invite our readers to share their ideas in these columns. Please write us at Voice of the people, Chicago Tribune, Chicago, Ill. 60611. Include your name and address. The more concise the letter, the less we will have to edit it to fit our space.

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VB MAR 01 1985

Role-playing games are not to blame

To The Editors:

As players of role-playing games such as "Dungeons & Dragons" (D & D), we are concerned about the recent negative publicity these games have received in connection with teen-age suicides. The recent article "Teen tragedies linked by intricate fantasy game" (Jan. 30 *Herald*) is a good example of such negative publicity.

We represent a group of gamers called the Role Players' Guild in Ocala. We have about a dozen regular members ranging in age from 14 to over 25. On occasion, attendance at our monthly gaming sessions has reached 20 people. None of our members, present or past, have had the emotional problems described in the article.

While we sympathize with Pat Pulling on the loss of her son, we find her contention that, "you do not casually play this game, just as you do do not casually take heroin" to be greatly exaggerated. In fact, we do "casually" play D & D, as well as many other role-playing games. We also think Dr. Thomas Radecki of the University of Illinois overstates the case when he says "it is quite clear . . . that this game is causing a *lot* of young people to turn to violence against others and themselves," and, "in a *lot* of cases, the kids start to live in this fantasy world. Unfortunately, a *lot* of these kids are not finding their way out of those dungeons." We do not believe that the nine cases Radecki has been able to link to the game constitute "a lot" of the nearly four million people playing D & D alone.

We are not saying there is no danger. Whenever the imagination is used to a great extent, as it is in role-playing games, the risk of an already emotionally disturbed youngster shifting into the fantasy world exists. But we believe this risk is slight and can be totally eliminated if the parents of young people playing these games would take the time to learn more about them and about the depth of their child's involvement. After all, becoming so deeply involved in games like D & D costs money, and the children must get that money somewhere. While we realize that parents cannot be omnipotent, we do believe that a child affected deeply enough to commit suicide or murder will show noticeable signs, some of which are mentioned later in the article.

If any parents want to know more about role-playing games, we would be happy to answer their questions. They can write to us at P.O. Box 4558, Ocala, FL 32678.

RICK SUAREZ
TIM SUAREZ
BILL HIRSCH
The Role Players' Guild
Ocala

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Reflections of a real-life Cleric

Rev. Arthur W. Collins

Even though clergypersons are supposed to teach people how to be a "light to the world," there are times when one is tempted to go incognito and hide one's light under the nearest bushel basket. I am an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church, and yet there are times when I prefer not to be known as one.

And why should a minister ever wish not be known as one? For instance, when one is playing DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® fantasy role playing games. It's difficult enough to explain my hobbies to my congregation — but then, most of them figure that ministers are kind of spaced-out anyway. After a while, they come to accept me as "normal," because they see in my life the fruits of a healthy mind and heart, and we establish a relationship which enables us to appreciate each other.

However, when one is happily talking about fantasy gaming with a group of fellow hobbyists, sooner or later one is bound to ask you what you do for a living, and it's then that things tend to get awkward.

Like, after the initial shock, one will tend to say to you, "I bet all your characters are Clerics (or Lawful Good, or whatever)." In order to disabuse them of this stereotype, I generally tell them about the group of ministers and theologs I play with: My specialties are Bards and Druids; one fellow plays the most astounding Assassins you have ever seen; another is enamored of weaponless combat ("watch me pummel that displacer beast!"); and so forth.

Others assume that playing a fantasy game with a minister would be a crashing bore, and thus would feel awkward sharing their hobby in my presence. Again, this is stereotyping. In fact, I find the reverse is often true. The men and women I play with are of varying ages, all very well-read, with a breadth of imagination, a contact with real life with its sorrows and raw deals (and also its triumphs), and a feel for fantasy that I find very hard to duplicate elsewhere. After playing with them (or people like them), I find other groups less sophisticated and harder to get used to.

Another problem is that for many people, clergypersons are seen as *inhibitors of fun* rather than *sharers of fun*, and this brings me to the point of this essay. The non-churched population generally views the Christian faith (and religion in general) in terms of a body of rules and regulations designed to keep one from enjoying oneself. This is a false view, but a prevalent one, and voices in the Christian community have been raised of late saying that such things as DUNGEONS & DRAGONS games are questionable at best (damnable at worst). The double effect of misunderstanding and misguided righteousness on either hand have made fantasy role-playing games a hot topic in the religious community. It is my purpose to lay out a Christian understanding of the uses of fantasy, and then speak from a pastoral perspective on the value of role-playing games. Others may disagree with me, and they are welcome to do so. But for all those who feel that the real-life Clerics are after them, the bubble of fear and resentment needs to be burst.

The Uses of Fantasy

When I was in Seminary, I heard endless exhortations from accomplished preachers on the art of preaching. And one of the most oft-repeated statements I heard was "You gotta preach with the Bible in one hand and today's newspaper in the other." Now, I understand what these princes of the pulpit were trying to say, and I have tried to heed their advice. They were basically saying that the task of one who preaches is to address the very real concerns of very real people and connect their needs with the resources that the Christian faith offers: matching hatred with love; corruption with justice; brokenness with healing; sin with forgiveness; turmoil with peace; apathy with commitment. But what was often left out of their exhortations was the need of every human being to not only manage his life well, but to find fulfillment in it. And where fantasy comes in is when we realize that fantasy is part of a very level of the human soul — a part of us that also aches filled with the wholeness offered by religious faith.

In his magnificent essay *On Fairy-Stories*, J.R.R. Tolkien spoke a definitive word about *why* human beings contrive make-believe. He writes,

> *The magic of Faerie is not an end in itself, its virtue is in its operations: among these are the satisfaction of certain primordial human desires. One of these desires is to survey the depths of space and time. Another is...to hold communion with other livings things."*

These desires are part of what make us human, and if they find not their object in God, then they will seek satisfaction elsewhere. Likewise, a faith that does not touch these deep recesses will fail to really satisfy human beings and cheat them of their hope for wholeness.

For Tolkien, fantasy is a natural imitation of God, and the gospel a realization of the dim longings of countless generations. On the one hand, he views the making of fantasy milieux as a part of what it means to be made in the image of God. He is the Creator, we are Sub-creators, given the grace to enrich his world with imaginary worlds; to add to his creatures creatures that never were. As Tolkien writes.

> *"Dear Sir," I said — "Although now long estranged,*
> *Man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed.*
> *Dis-graced he may be, yet is not de-throned,*
> *and keeps the rags of lordship once he owned:*
> *Man, Sub-creator, the refracted Light*
> *through whom is splintered from a single White*
> *to many hues, and endlessly combined*
> *in living shapes that move from mind to mind.*
> *Though all the crannies of the world we filled*
> *with Elves and Goblins, though we dared to build*
> *Gods and their houses out of dark and light,*
> *and sowed the seed of dragons — 'twas our right*
> *(used or misused). That right has not decayed:*
> *we make still by the law in which we're made."*[2]

And on the other hand, Tolkien sees the natural bent for human fantasy caught up, epitomized, and redeemed in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. As usual, he puts it best:

> *"The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories... But this story has entered History and the primary world; the desire and aspiration of sub-creation has been raised to the fulfillment of Creation...There is no tale ever told that men would rather find was true, and none which so many sceptical men have accepted as true on its own merits. For the Art of it has the supremely convincing tone of Primary Art, that is, of Creation. To reject it leads either to sadness or to wrath."*[3]

In the same essay, Tolkien also notes three particular functions of fairy-stories (and by extension, of fantasy games): Escape, Recovery, and Consolation.

Escape is a legimate exercise. Too many "realists" condemn fantasy as "escapist." But what is wrong with escape (or vacation, if you will)? Life presents us with certain hard facts, such as a limited amount of money, a comparatively short lifespan, and our social environment. Why should one be condemned for experiencing second-hand, as it were, things that he cannot afford, stretches of time he could not live to see, or a mode of living impossible in 20th-century America (such as fighting with edged weapons in real combat)? And if Life has dealt you a weak hand, who says it's your duty to *enjoy* it? Can't a person

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living in the depths of a ghetto fantasize about drinking from a pure mountain stream he cannot realistically get to?

Recovery means seeing things from a new angle, recovering a proper sense of things. Fantasies and faery-stories of undying love help us to suddenly see our spouses and sweethearts in a new light, recovering a fresh appreciation for who they really are, and for what they mean to us. Fantasy vehicles involve moral implications that also sharpen our focus: Fantasized nobility helps clean out the shabbiness and cheapness which often clothes the world and its inhabitants for us. fantasized villainy awakens us to the potential Faust in each of us.

Consolation centers on the Happy Ending: not as a contrived, gimmicked, sugar-coated result with no bearing on reality or relation to previous events; but rather, fantasy vehicles involved us in joy through the resolution of their conflicts. And the greater the terror, the dreariness of the hassles, the greater the joy that uplifts us when the moment of triumph arrives. I always try to make my dungeons as challenging as possible. That way, when a player character emerges victorious, he has really accomplished something. And more than that — more than the satisfaction of having played well — he or she has experienced a joy that belongs only to those who have faced great odds and hopeless situations, and then seen deliverance won by a hair's-breadth. *That* is what keeps bringing 'em back to play again and again.

Thus, for me (and for many others) fantasy is an important and natural human activity: It is a function of the human soul which brings me fully alive. The pleasure I get from walking out of doors is greater because I have walked in the sweet shadows of Lothlorien and upon the high valleys of the Fixed Island on Perelandra.

Pastoral Perspectives

Of course, I do not mean to make this essay one long paean to fantasy. Fantasy heals the mind; it can also be used to rot the mind. Humanity is a two-edged sword: Nothing that can be used for good cannot also be used for evil. And so, let me lay a few patented pastoral profundities on you.

First, as to role-playing as a gaming device. Role-playing is fairly new to gaming, but it has been around in the counselling room for quite a while. Many self-destructive patterns in behavior and emotions can be linked to early psychological conditioning in the family, so often a person in counselling will be asked to assume the role of a parent or someone else deeply involved with his own psyche, and speak to "himself" in an empty chair, telling himself the healing messages that he needs to hear. For instance, a person with workaholic tendencies instilled by his upbringing might assume the role of his "parent" and tell his "child" that it's okay to have fun, too, and that you're important for who you are, not just for how much work you can crank out.

Role-playing is also used to train people in the caring professions. When I was doing clinical work in a major hospital, we seminarians would take turns playing ministers and patients with various concerns and personalities. Then we would evaluate how we had perceived each other, and both the "minister" and the "patient" would emerge with a deeper knowledge of the dynamics of the situation.

Role-playing is a liberating exercise. It frees you from the pretense of trying so hard to be what you want others to think you are. Instead, by assuming a role, you can be whatever you want to be, and in the process you grow in your understanding of human behavior (your own, not the least). One of the geniuses of D&D® and AD&D™ games is the identification of a player with a continuing, developing character. A good character, well played, involves particular aspects of your self-image and allows you to plumb their depths. Each of my most-favored characters contains within his personality some seed of myself. I get a different enjoyment and grow in different areas from playing each one.

Second, as a pastor, I find that playing D&D® games with others is an incredible tool for informal diagnosis. I am trained to understand the motives and makeup of people: It is part of my calling to understand what makes them tick, in order to understand and affirm who they are, and minister to them. I have never found anything like fantasy role-playing for revealing who a person really is. And that enables me to effectively care for that person and affirm him or her even more.

Third, role-playing gives us a sanity break. People ask me why I play DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® games. One reason is for my emotional health. Aggression and anger, for instance, can be dealt with constructively or destructively. Destructively, you unload on people, or yourself. Constructively, you have the option of unloading on objects (e.g., a racquetball), or you can assume a role and unload on a bunch of hapless orcs with no guilt and no retraints.

Unfortunately, the fourth note in this chord is a sour one. I said that fantasy, like all that is human, is a two-edged sword. Each of these benefits of role-playing games has its pathological counterpart. It is possible to become obsessed with fantasy vehicles and lose contact with the real world, rather than returning to it refreshed. It is often seen that player characters are used as a means of relating to people dishonestly: Rather than assume a role, a player with emotional problems merely changes his name to "Siblfurd Yorgenmiddling" or whatever and plays out his destructive behavior in a non-healthy way, inviting rejection and disrupting the enjoyment of others. There are those for whom magic and demonology cease to be conventions of the game and become real-life pursuits. The list of possible perversions is endless.

It is this which elicits the questioning response to fantasy role-playing games on the part of the religious community. Healthy people fear their kids/friends will become unhealthy; responsible people fear their charges will become irresponsible; believers fear that fantasy role-playing games produce non-believers, or at least provide a seductive arena for unhealthy commerce with hostile values.

On the whole, I think these fears are ungrounded. It is possible to misuse fantasy, role-playing, and any other hobby, but the great majority of people who dabble in them are healthy persons. And almost always, what comes out of a person who plays games like D&D® adventure games is merely a distillation of what that person brought to the game to begin with.

C.S. Lewis made a useful point in his book, *An Experiment in Criticism*. Rather than calling a book (or in this case, a game genre) *good or bad* on the basis of what we think of it, we ought to judge it by how it is used. Any book (or game) which can be used for healthy enjoyment (what Lewis called *healthy castle-building*) is a good work, even if poorly written or conceived, and even if some do misuse it. On the other hand, only those works which can *only* be used for what he called *morbid castle-building* should be condemned by critics.

As a pastor called to care for people and help them to find wholeness for their lives through God, I am as deeply concerned as any about those who misuse fantasy vehicles. As a convinced believer in the supernatural (and in the supernatural conflict between good and evil), I am a vocal partisan for my Lord against all other claimants to primacy in life. As a Christian, I believe the statement, "Bad company ruins good morals." [4]But at its most fundamental core, I find that games such as DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® games provide immense enjoyment in a healthy way, and are even useful in personal growth. A healthy group of gamers can be a tremendous environment for a person to thrive in. It is not for everybody, of course: Some don't have the taste for it, and some should not play it if they are going to become compulsive about it. But on the whole, I say "Roll those dice!"

Notes

[1]"On Fairy-Stories," *The Tolkien Reader*, Ballantine Books, New York 1966, p. 13
[2]Ibid., p. 54
[3]Ibid., pp. 71-72
[4]I Corinthians 15:33

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Adventuring With Shaky Hands

Where there's a will, there's a way to play

by Judith Sampson

If you've attended large gatherings of D&D® game enthusiasts, you've very likely met at least one handicapped or disabled player. Have you ever wondered how they conquered their limitations and became "just one of the players"?

I'm one such player. Here's what my problems are, and how I overcame them.

I have choreo-athetoid cerebral palsy, which sounds like the name of a creature from the AD&D™ Monster Manual. This means the motor control centers in my brain don't work properly. My body is gripped by writhing, dancing motions that interfere with my sense of balance, the use of my hands, and my reflexes. I can't drive a car, walking is a dangerous chore, and everyday life is a constant battle against a balky body. But I've achieved enough independence to maintain my own apartment, and I work parttime as an English composition coach at the Unviersity of Arizona, from which I have bachelor's and master's degrees in creative writing.

I wanted to play in a D&D adventure as soon as I heard about the game from players in the Society For Creative Anachronism, of which I am an active member. It took a long time to get a toehold in a game, though, primarily because I can't just hop in a car and drive to someone's home when that person says, "We're playing tonight, wanna come?"

One of my fellow SCA members, Kurt, rolled up my first D&D character at my request one afternoon during a long break between classes at the University of Arizona. I carried the statistics card on the is character for over a year before any opportunity arose to actually play her.

Later I learned that the university had a Strategic Games Club which meets every Tuesday night. Although I attended several meetings, I never felt welcome there. Playing the D&D game turned out to be a passing fad for this club, and I searched again for several more months and years without finding a group of genuinely friendly players and DMs.

At last, I met Joubert, an ex-Navy frogman, a pre-law student, a genial man with whom I shared a keen interest in science fiction, fantasy literature, and playing the D&D game. Week after week, while we ate our lunches or waited for classes, he regaled me with tales of his exploits as D&D player, past and present. I told him one day, "If you ever set up your own campaign, I want a spot in it!"

About six weeks alter, Joubert announced his dungeon was ready. Not only did he invite me, he arranged transportation to wherever his games were held. During those early games. I developed the methods of play and ways of bringing equipment I've used since.

I always tell a DM and other players my problem, and ask for the aid of their more nimble, willing fingers to write down the data and monetary information, hit points, or experience point changes on the score sheets. I also have other players move my character's miniature figure as needed, and if I must convey a secret message to the DM, I don't try to write it down; I go to him and whisper in his ear.

Like most other D&D players I've met, I feel better tossing dice in my bare hands — but when I do, the dice land anywhere but on the game table, which can invalidate a roll. I have found it best to handle one die at a time, tossed from a cup into a deep container used to catch the die as it falls.

Over the almost three years I have played in Joubert's campaign, I have accumulated a capacious canvas bag full of D&D and AD&D books, other game manuals, miniatures (some of these painted for me by player-friends) in a storage box, five different dice, a dice cup, a dice-catching box, and the record sheets for my characters.

After my player characters' statistics are finalized and recorded. I type up the record sheets myself, photocopy them on legal-size paper, and store them in my canvas bag.

I have tried playing games by computer, but all the terminals I have played on have very sensitive keys, and when I strike them, I have no control over the heaviness or lightness of my touch. Hence, a computer usually beeps or screams at me instead of showing game data. To play successfully I must tell a comrade at the console which keys I wish to be punched.

Aside from playing Joubert's campaign "by hand," I also play in a D&D game by mail. For me this is ideal; every 10 days or so the DM, Clif, informs me of what's happening to my character in is dungeon, and I respond what I hope is the proper action (usually I am able to write to him promptly). I need to roll no dice, I have no paraphernalia to carry; it's just me, my typewriter, and letter paper. The DM does all the rest!

But there is one problem, and it's a major one. not everyone in the play-by-mail game has my compulsion to answer Clif as swiftly as possible, and sometimes Clif's other duties interfere with is promptness in sending new data. This makes for a long, drawn-out playing time for each adventure, and much attrition of players who lose interest or no longer have the time to commit.

The D&D and AD&D games are attractive to handicapped or disabled players for the same reasons that other people enjoy them. But to someone like me, hampered by hands and body that refuse to be reliable, running a fearless fighter, a nimble thief, a graceful elf, or a powerful paladin offers the opporutnity to be resourceful and quick on one's feet for while, which never happens in my all-too-mundane real world. Free, agile, and daring in spirit I play, but I can never forget that when the game's done, I face a much greater adversary than any a DM can dream up: my balky body.

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INTERNATIONAL FALLS, MN.
JOURNAL
D. 5,500

Games: Dungeons and Dragons offers intellectual stimulation

By STEVE HOBLIN
Staff Writer

Grab a rope, lantern, some free time — and maybe a magic spell or two — and meet Bob Monahan.

Monahan, a self-professed games fanatic, claims to have the most extensive collection — 200 games — in the Falls. He likes intellectually stimulating games that are mentally challenging.

ONE OF THOSE games is Dungeons and Dragons (D & D).

As director of nursing at Falls Memorial Hospital, Monahan heads a large staff and its everyday activities. He is also known to some as a dungeon master and is pretty spry when it comes to dealing with dwarves, vampires and gargoyles.

"Dungeons and Dragons is designed as a paper-and-pencil game where all the action is verbalized," Monahan said. It's really a role-playing fantasy where much of the action is in the participants' minds.

The game appeared about 15 years ago and really has no ironclad rules, Monahan said. Rules that do exist serve only as a framework from which a game player can weave intricate adventures from his own imagination.

Hang on now because here is a quick explanation of the game — sort of.

The game consists of make-believe characters adventuring in strange places, trying to stay away from weird situations and fatal encounters with, well, anything imaginable.

There is a game director, someone who calls the shots and makes up the rules. That person, called a Dungeon Master, does not play in the game when directing it. He or she is the one who determines how complex the game is and who will play.

The object of the game is to survive, Monahan said. To do that, a player has to be pretty witty — and lucky in some cases.

Players can easily get lost, fall in holes or traps, get eaten by dragons, shot by arrows or hacked up by some ghoulish-looking fellow dressed in green slime. It's all on paper, remember.

MONAHAN SAYS the game requires an imagination and a willingness to participate. There are between six and eight people in his normal circle of players. They all enjoy making up and directing game scenarios which can take from a half hour to months to complete, Monahan said.

"I prefer it to watching television," Monahan said about playing D & D, "although I do watch TV." Monahan calls TV a more passive entertainment and says he likes to be a little more involved in his entertainment than TV allows.

Dungeonmaster Bob Monahan consults a Dungeon and Dragons handbook to help him determine the fate of one of the game's mystical characters.

Staff photo by Steve Hoblin

Curiosity is probably the main reason anyone gets involved in the complex game that involves using six, eight and even 10-sided game die and some heavy thinking, Monahan said.

Monahan, 40, does not feel self-conscious about his game playing, although some might think him a bit old to like playing games so much, he said. He enjoys getting together with his contemporaries during the cold months to match wits in some adventure of the mind.

He also prefers playing with his peers instead of younger players, he says, because the young dungeon masters and players seem more prone to hack-and-slash scenarios. The players he games with seem more willing to use their wits and think their way out of complex situations instead of fighting all the time.

He is not as wrapped up in D & D as some, he says, but he enjoys spending his spare hours puttering in areas connected with the game, such as reading about the game or planning strategy.

SOME PEOPLE have criticized the game, Monahan says, because it recognizes other beings or forces such as evil and magic in its play. That is contrary to fundamentalist beliefs some people have.

There are some good applications to present day situations besides the fun of getting together and talking while the game is played, Monahan said.

D & D is especially good for preparation, problem solving and creativity skill, he said, because the game emphasizes all those things.

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

DS

DS SEP 12 198

HERALD-ARLINGTON HEIGHTS ED.
CHICAGO, IL
D 59 571 S 57 359

KANSAS CITY, MO.
TIMES
—D. 290.210—
KANSAS CITY METROPOLITAN AREA

AUG 23 19..

Why blame dragon?

I am writing in regard to the Aug. 13 article in The Times concerning the youngster who committed suicide after playing in a Dungeons & Dragons game. I have been a D&D player for a number of years. In that period of time, the coverage given to the game by the news media has been predominantly negative. There have been stories on evangelical ministers labeling the game "devil worship" and stories concerning misguided teenagers who start acting out their character's exploits in real life.

And now, yet another story, this time on a teen who shot himself after his D&D character had a "curse" placed upon it. What if, instead of playing D&D, the boy had been playing baseball, struck out in the 9th inning and then committed suicide? What if he had killed himself because he had lost money in a poker game? I seriously doubt the story would have been printed, let alone on page two.

I am tired of being lumped together with emotionally disturbed youngsters who obviously had problems long before they began playing D&D. It would be nice to see an article depicting the average D&D player for what he or she is: a person who enjoys playing a very interesting and innovative game.

Christopher Vargas

Kansas City

HUNTSVILLE, AL.
TIMES
D. 55,000 — S. 59,000
HUNTSVILLE METROPOLITAN AREA

Blaming the Game

We had thought the recently popular role-playing "swords and sorcery" game, "Dungeons and Dragons," had slithered back into its dark den, dragging its controversy behind it. But then we read Monday that the parents of a 16-year-old suicide victim in Virginia have filed a $1-million lawsuit against the principal of the boy's school for allowing the game to played at the school.

Actually, the boy died in June of 1982 of what was determined to be a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the chest, although the suit wasn't filed until this past July 18. The suit contends that the youth shot himself after a "curse" was placed on him by another D&D player.

And, because the game was allowed to be played at the high school since 1978, the parents are charging that the principal is responsible for their son's death. The principal, for his part, argues that as a public official he is immune from such a lawsuit. A hearing date has yet to be set.

The manufacturer of the game, in which weapon-wielding warriors, potent potions, spell-spouting sorcerers, monsters and curses are commonplace, reported that some 3 to 4 million people play the game. He says it is widely used in schools and libraries to develop reading and math skills, problem-solving techniques and imaginations and is especially popular on college campuses — or it was, the last we heard.

The death of the teen-ager was a tragedy and one that any parent would have great difficulty dealing with. But this lawsuit should be thrown out of court — it is absurd to try to place the fault on the principal. The irony is that, by filing their suit, all the parents have accomplished is to give free national publicity to "Dungeons and Dragons." An increase in sales of the game can logically be expected to follow.

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

SEP 12 19

CHICAGO, IL
HERALD-ARLINGTON HEIGHTS ED.
D 59 574 S 57 359
CHICAGO METROPOLITAN AREA

Just a game

We have played many, many role playing games, including Dungeons and Dragons. These games have dealt with everything from aliens to cartoon characters.

We enjoyed The Daily Herald's recent article on D&D. We feel that the people who think D&D is "satanic" obviously don't know what they're talking about. How many of them have actually played D&D? We are not devil worshippers, but rather actors.

The people who committed suicide could have been mentally unstable to begin with. The idea of someone killing themself over a game is absurd.

Mark Woolfington
Palatine

CHICAGO, IL
HERALD-ARLINGTON HEIGHTS ED.
D. 59,574—S. 57,359
CHICAGO METROPOLITAN AREA

FEB 9 198

Label real killer

I am a teenager who has been playing Dungeons and Dragons for four years. And in my opinion, The Daily Herald's recent article was completely wrong.

Only a small number of players have committed suicide, and they are apparently mentally disturbed. Only someone unbalanced would take D&D out of the context of the game. These teenagers have trouble separating life from fantasy; which indicates something is wrong.

The National Coalition for Television Violence claims Dungeons and Dragons was responsible for eight deaths, so it wants warnings on all game-related materials that they can cause deaths. How may warnings are there on a bottle of whiskey? Alcohol kills 25,000 people annually. Shouldn't we first examine the more deadly killers, then wonder about a minor problem?

Scott Tendring
Palatine

BRYAN, TX.
EAGLE
D. 20,000 — S. 24,000
BRYAN-COLLEGE STATION MET. AREA

D&D defended

Recently I read an article concerning the "evils" of role-playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons. Despite being an oft-times player of such games, I can safely say that I am mentally sound and do not plan on hurting myself or anyone else.

Dungeons and Dragons, for the benefit of the apparently uninformed author, contains more good than evil; the whole point of the game is that the good guys win. Furthermore, players do not only kill and maim; they must use wits and imagination to conquer evil, not promote it. D&D does not lead anyone into anything; they go by their own choice. The unfortunates in this case were obviously mentally disturbed and their deaths, as well as those of their victims, very well could have been caused by drugs, violent books and movies, and/or bad childhood experiences. It should be pointed out that most role-players probably watch football, drink milk and take part in many other "normal" activities besides D&D.

It is my opinion that we should focus on more urgent, major issues such as war, famine and disease and leave the games and the gamers alone.

Gregg L. Leissner
Bryan

LEXINGTON, KY
HERALD-LEADER
D 103,000 S 121,108

It's just a game

I have been a Dungeons and Dragons player for six years. During that time I have never had the urge to kill anyone; I have never participated in any satanic rituals, and I have never contemplated suicide. I lead a productive life, attending college and living and loving just like everyone else. To me, Dungeons and Dragons is a hobby, a pastime, a harmless diversion.

That those who don't understand the game attribute to it a variety of social ills is laughable; that people actually believe that is not.

I have no doubt that some of those suicides mentioned in your Jan. 28 article where influenced by Dungeons and Dragons. I also have no doubt that those same suicide victims would have killed themselves over the loss of a girlfriend or some other incident, had they not been Dungeon and Dragon players.

Those of us who play the game regularly are simply people who are sick of the real world and who desire to get away from it for a few hours a week. Although we blend fantasy and reality, we are quite aware of the distinction. I am not so sure that those who condemn four million people due to the actions of the lunatic fringe are aware of anything except their own hypocrisy.

RICHARD FERGUSON
Richmond

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

SOUTH BEND, IN
TRIBUNE
S 103,732 S 123,347
SOUTH BEND METROPOLITAN AREA

FEB 16 198-

The fad that didn't fade away: D & D

By CHRIS HARRIS
Culver Jr Sr. High School

Dark halls, strange noises, trolls, ogres and elves, these are the components of "Dungeons and Dragons."

Ten years ago, in 1975, Dungeons and Dragons ushered in the age of role-playing games. Role-playing games take place in the imaginations of the players. Each participant assumes the role of an imaginary character. The game is run by the gamemaster. The gamemaster is impartial and acts as a referee.

Dungeons and Dragons, called D & D by those who play, was created by Gary Gygax and David Arneson. The game was bought and published by the TSR Hobby Company.

Originally, the game was published and marketed in the form of a boxed set of three rule books. These books were poorly written and very difficult to understand. In all, a product that should never sell, but it did.

The game sold so well, in fact, that in two years several other hobby companies created their own versions of D & D.

In 1978, TSR Hobbies began marketing a revised edition of the D & D rules. The shortcomings of the rules had been corrected and greatly simplified.

Along with the revised edition of the game, TSR came out with a line of accessories for Dungeons and Dragons. Among these were miniature lead figures, used to represent the player's character, and the special polyhedral dice used to determine random events in the game.

This year TSR expects to make a lot of money from the game and accompanying paraphernalia. This includes Dungeons and Dragons coloring books, action figures and even a Saturday morning cartoon.

What makes Dungeons and Dragons so popular?

"That's a hard question to answer," said one avid D & D player, "I guess it's just the freedom the game allows. You can do almost anything you can think of."

Dungeons and Dragons, however, requires a great deal of time and paper. Though time consuming (D & D sessions can last anywhere from about four to 10 hours) and difficult to master, the game which most thought to be a passing fad, has turned into a big business with millions of avid players.

ATLANTA, GA
JOURNAL CONSTITUTION
-S.543,253-
Atlanta Metro Area

FEB 17 198-

Dragons game doesn't lead to violent acts

MARIETTA — In a recent Sunday Atlanta Journal-Constitution, you ran an article concerning the game of Dungeons and Dragons and players who had, after playing the game, committed various types of violent crimes. Having played several different role-playing systems for more than six years, I feel that I can speak as an informed source on the subject.

Although it is true that a few players get so involved with role-playing games as to be unable to separate fantasy with reality, I believe these cases are unique and that other emotional problems are at the roots of these violent acts.

In the years I have played these games, I have seen players develop healthy social attitudes through interraction with other players. Players learn the skills of diplomacy and compromise. They expand their vocabularies and imaginations as well as learn of medieval history, culture, and architecture as well as physics, chemistry, and biology, depending on the game being played and the quality of the Dungeonmaster. I have never personally seen nor heard, of anyone being drawn into occult activities or summon demands outside of the game.

The game rewards the successful player. One does not have to "steal" and "kill" to be rewarded. Many of the roles offer positive moral outlooks which concentrate on the traditional Good vs. Evil theme with the players trying to defeat the minions of Evil. The key to the game is the Dungeonmaster. The entire setting of the game is designed by him and it is his mentality that is projected into the game. . . .

JIM POLAND
President, Georgia Gaming Society

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

NAPERVILLE, IL
SUN
—S.W. 17,000—
CHICAGO METROPOLITAN AREA

MAR 25 1985

Ramblings ... around Naperville

With The Editors

THE DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS game has come under fire lately, being blamed for several teen suicides across the country. The Park District, which offers a Dungeons and Dragons class instructing players in this fantasy game, recently received a letter from one concerned resident, asking that it be dropped from the District's schedule. The Park Board, however, refused last week to delete the class, after staff reported that there have been no indications of any problems created by the program.

AT MONDAY'S CHAMBER OF COMMERCE luncheon Council hopeful Toby Hayer got off the best quip. She did so when she introduced her two guests — Francis "Persh" Doran "my political advisor" and her brother, Sheldon Hayer, "my political liability."

Candidate Wally Ansburg also got a laugh with his one-line answer to solving the problem of determining what streets should be one way. Tongue-in-cheek, Ansburg said the City should "have them (one-way streets) all center in on one corner and then you don't have to worry."

PAWTUCKET, RI
TIMES
—D. 26,864—
PROVIDENCE WARWICK METRO AREA

MAR 1 1985

MARCH 1, 1985

Monopoly is a man-killing game

I'm opposed to Monopoly.

The world's most popular game appeals to the ruthless money-grubber in all of us: the idea is to become the richest player in the game. And if you send some of your opponents into hopeless poverty in the process, so much the better, it cuts back on competition.

But that's not why I'm against Monopoly.

I'm against it because it's dull.

I can recall two feelings about the game: disappointment when I was a little boy and my big brother wouldn't let me play because I wasn't old enough to understand it; and since the game got easy to understand, boredom is all I can remember.

Bob Campbell

Managing editor

The game called Clue is about murder. I like it.

The game called Trivial Pursuit is about completely useless information. I played it once to be polite; it was slightly more enjoyable than twiddling my thumbs.

The second time I played it, I drank perhaps a trifle too much. In between trips to the bathroom, people asked me about every useless fact I ever knew. It was a blast. I'd still never spend a nickel to buy the game, but if you have it and invite me over, I'll buy the wine.

It's a question of values, you see.

—

I'VE NEVER played Dungeons and Dragons, but I understand the feelings of the prayer group members at St. Teresa's Church who want the Pawtucket Public Library to stop holding classes on the game.

I've seen a few news stories that went something like this:

A brilliant young student at X University died in an apparent suicide Sunday. Friends said his life had been increasingly dominated by the game Dungeons and Dragons and he had seemed depressed since he lost a crucial game in a fraternity tournament Friday night.

The facts and game rules have been ignored in this sample story, but the part about suicide is accurate. Young people have killed themselves because they were upset over Dungeons and Dragons.

But is this grounds for banning the game? Or dropping the local library's class on it?

Of course not.

Kids get in trouble all the time. Should we ban computers because brilliant young hackers get in trouble by breaking into bank computers?

A small boy hanged himself last week because he got a poor report card. Should we ban report cards? Why not get to the root of the problem and ban school?

—

BETTER STILL, why not make our kids feel loved and wanted and important?

Like a lot of people, I'm an expert at two ways of treating children: ignoring them and disciplining them.

When I smarten up, I practice the methods of the best man at dealing with children I ever saw: good ol' absurd, easy-to-mock Mister Rogers.

Fred Rogers is easy to mock because, in the words of his own song, he likes to take his time. And he's oh, so gentle; how can any real man be so gentle?

But he tells children this great thing every day: I like you *just the way you are.*

I think the rest of the world is constantly telling kids: I'd like you if you'd just be quiet, wash your face, stop making such a mess, eat everything on your plate, stop asking questions, go to bed...

We don't have to protect our kids from the games they meet as they grow up.

A person who grows up feeling special, liked and loved will never kill himself over some game. He'll know that a game is either fun or else it's a complete waste of time.

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

Trend

By Julie Liesse Erickson

The category is Sports & Leisure.

The question: *What demographic group, initially ignored by Trivial Pursuit's US facturer Selch*

its own set of t versity, Miami, O lays claim to the assembled to play suit game. I

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

Trend setters play winning games

By Julie Liesse Erickson

The category is Sports & Leisure.

The question: *What demographic group, initially ignored by Trivial Pursuit's U.S. manufacturer Selchow & Righter, currently accounts for 15% of that game's primary players and is credited with spreading the word on Trivial Pursuit?*

The answer: *College students.*

The next category is Entertainment. The question: *To whom was Dungeons & Dragons inventor E. Gary Gygax referring when he said, "They made us who we are today"?*

The answer: *College students.*

Both Selchow & Righter and TSR Inc., maker of Dungeons & Dragons, can testify to the marketing importance of college students, trend setters who not only revel in initiating fads on campus, but also bring those fads home to parents and younger siblings.

Games, especially, find a welcome home in college dorms. Students generally have more time to play games than do their elders; they are in an environment that thrives on competition; they often are forced to create their own entertainment, and they are attracted to the social nature of games.

"I'll tell you honestly, our original Trivial Pursuit marketing plan did not include colleges at all," says John Nason, vp-marketing, Selchow & Righter, Bay Shore, N.Y., the U.S. licensee of Trivial Pursuit. "We thought college students were too young to *have* trivia—they are living their trivia right now.

"We were very mistaken—the game has been a dynamite hit on campuses."

The popularity of Trivial Pursuit on campus even has yielded its own set of trivia. Ohio University, Miami, O., for example, lays claim to the largest group assembled to play a Trivial Pursuit game. Lawrence University, Appleton, Wis., also sponsored a Trivial Pursuit weekend.

The longstanding love affair between college students and trivia is one reason S&R executives cite for the unexpected popularity of Trivial Pursuit on college campuses. Another is widespread disillusionment with videogames.

"There has been a strong reaction, and not only among college students, to videogames, which are essentially solitary things," Mr. Nason says.

John Moore, vp at S&R's public relations agency, Pezzano & Co., New York, agrees.

"Trivial Pursuit is a party in a box. It's a $30 guarantee of a good time. Even if you don't get a single question right, you have a ball."

"Trivial Pursuit is the antithesis of videogames," Mr. Nason says.

Videogames, however, lent S&R's game a helping hand. "Trivial Pursuit might never have made it if videogames hadn't broken the price barrier," Mr. Moore says. "No one had ever tried to sell a $30 to $35 board game before Trivial Pursuit."

Although high price has kept some college students out of the Trivial Pursuit purchasing group, "We're sure a lot of their parents are buying the game for them," Mr. Nason says.

He says he believes the new 6,000-question Baby Boomer edition, which appeared on store shelves in mid-June, will boost further the game's popularity on campus. And a young players' edition, scheduled for a fall debut, is targeted to 7 to 14-year-olds.

Partly because of the excitement over Trivial Pursuit, the entire board game industry is experiencing something of a renaissance on college campuses.

"Students are staying on campus and looking for entertainment," says Douglas Thompson, president of the Toy Manufacturers of America, New York. "And when games like Trivial Pursuit come along, they stimulate interest in other games as well."

Trivial Pursuit, in fact, arrived on college campuses on the

(Continued on Page 48)

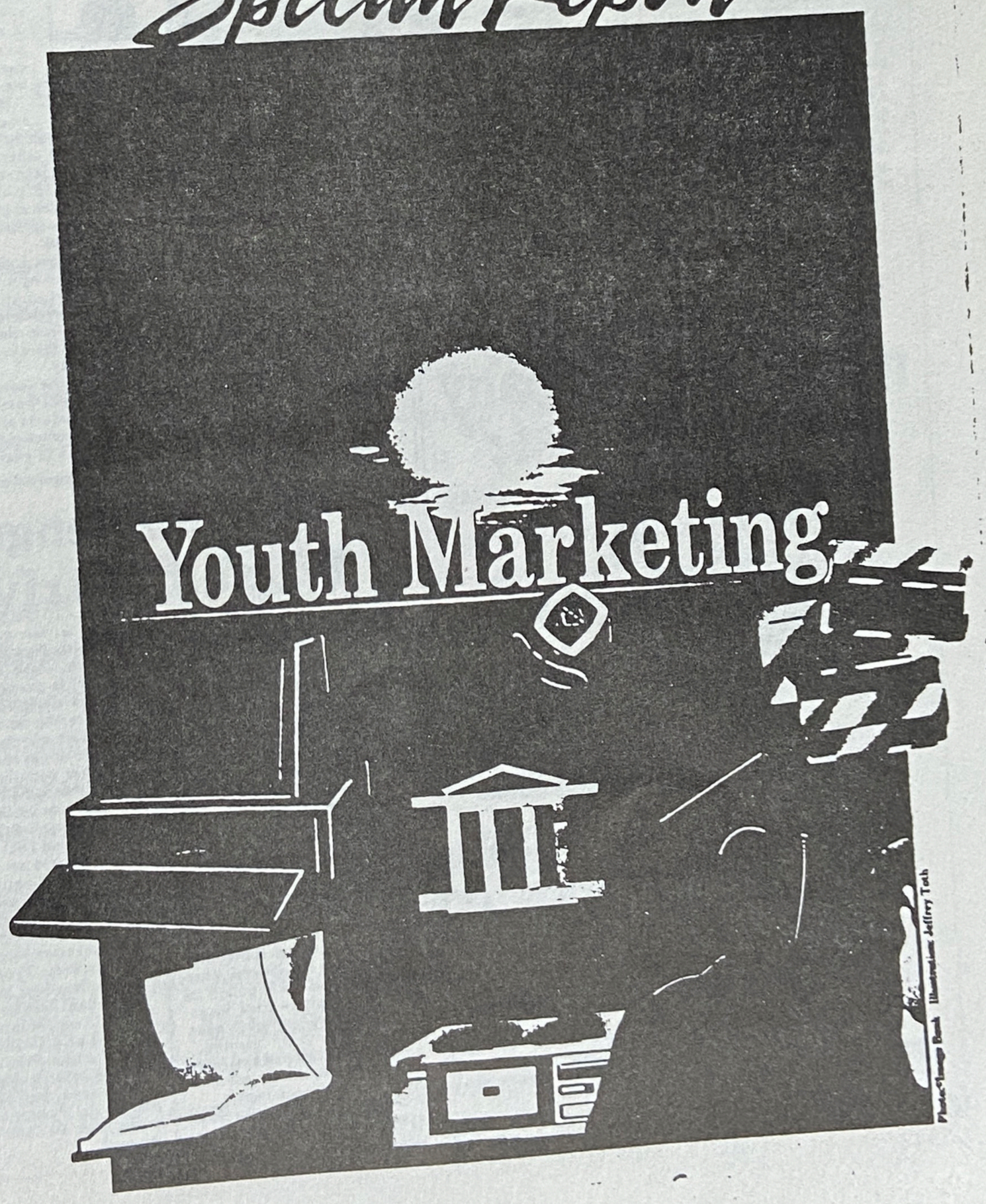
"We thought college students were too young to have trivia—they are living their trivia right now."

—John Nason
Selchow & Righter

and is well-known for its limited parking space. To combat this, the store provides parking in university lots nearby and emphasizes proximity to public transportation.

And, as an attempt to project its desired upscale image, the store provides Sunday afternoon chamber music and conducts special promotions, including photography contests, and face painting for children.

Special Report



Photo/Image Bank Illustration: Jeffrey Toth

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

Games

(Continued from Page 47)

coattails of another popular game, Dungeons & Dragons, which stands as the best testimony to the college market's ability to build a small game into a big deal.

> **"The underlying basis of a hobby game is finding people who are willing to devote a large amount of time to the games."**
>
> *—E. Gary Gygax, TSR*

"D&D is a hobby game, not a pastime game," says Mr. Gygax, now chairman of Lake Geneva, Wis.-based TSR. "The difference is that you make time for a hobby game; you play a pastime game when it's raining.

"Thus the underlying basis of a hobby game is finding people who are willing to devote a large amount of time to developing the games. And, for D&D, originally most of those people were in colleges."

Mr. Gygax, who received his war game aficionado as a college student during the 1960s. He was part of a small group, called Tactical Studies Associates, that met on weekends to reenact historical battles using military miniatures.

Mr. Gygax began "throwing fantasy" into those games, an addition appealing to those who loved J.R.R. Tolkein and other fantasy writers.

Soon the first set of Dungeons & Dragons rules appeared. Aimed almost exclusively at experienced war gamers, they were "hard for the novice to understand because of all the assumptions we made," Mr. Gygax says. In 1973, Mr. Gygax sent out rough drafts of his D&D rules to college friends—both students and professors—across the country.

"It caught on strongly," he says, "because the group was bright and imaginative. But college people also simply have more free time—and D&D is highly time-intensive."

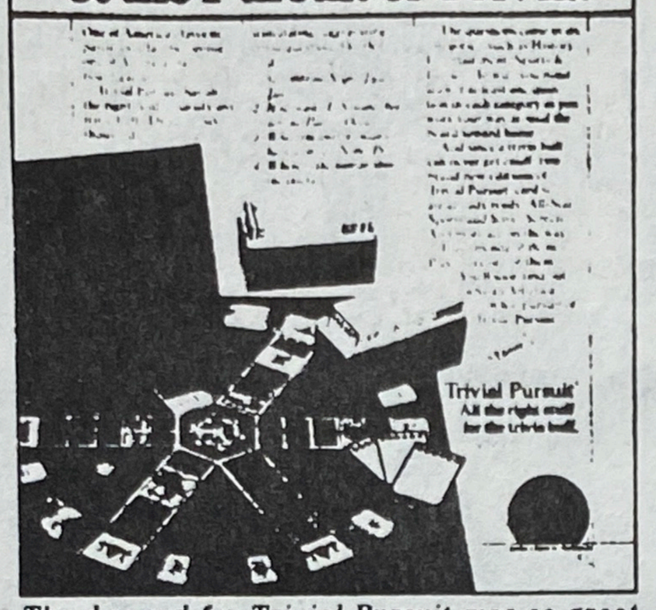
That original hard-core group of players and the ones who followed, Mr. Gygax says, "became

Success—and a large dose of word-of-mouth advertising—bred success. It took Mr. Gygax nearly a year to sell the first 1,000 official copies of D&D, printed in 1974. The second 2,000-booklet order disappeared in just five months. By the third printing, the $10 game had begun selling at the rate of 1,000 a month.

D&D sold especially well on college campuses. "When the student is out of the close confines of high school and experiences the liberation of a college environment," Mr. Gygax says, "he begins to think, examine and reason; he tries to learn, not just accept what he's told.

"D&D is the kind of game that says just that. We don't set any boundaries on players' imagina-

Every American is entitled to Life, Liberty & the Pursuit of Trivia!



The demand for Trivial Pursuit was so great that Selchow & Righter pulled its advertising.

work for the game. For the first time, here was a game that required you to use some imagination, that required you to think. I think that's why it took off so quickly on campuses."

Mr. Gygax had been taking out small ads in war gamers' magazines; after D&D's success began to build, the company used its entire advertising allotment to buy page ads in hobby and toy trade magazines. "We figured we didn't have to create a market," Mr. Gygax says, "we just had to inform suppliers so they would put them on the shelves."

And put them on the shelves they did. In just the past four years, TSR has sold about 2.5 million D&D rules sets alone—not including paraphernalia to augment game-playing.

D&D's success has enabled TSR to branch out, not only into more than 100 other games, but also other businesses, including books and product licensing. Game sales alone have amounted to more than $150 million since 1980.

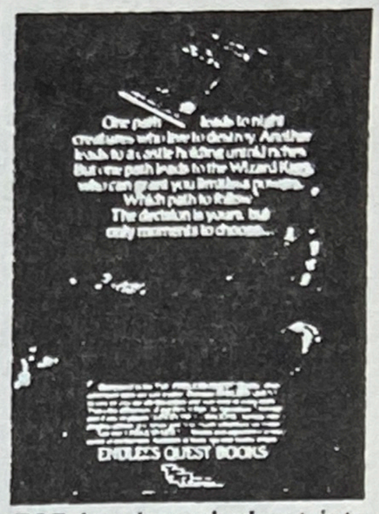
D&D has continued to flourish, spawning a Saturday morning tv cartoon show, home videogame cartridges and products ranging from sleeping bags and puffy stickers to modeling clay and candy.

Even the least informed observer will note that most of those products are not ones generally purchased by D&D's original 17-to-21-year-old devotees.

popularity has grown, its has shifted

What happened?

"The students who originally played D&D on campus also would go home and play," Mr. Gygax says. "Their younger siblings—always eager to imitate big brother and attracted to fan-



TSR has branched out into other businesses, such as Endless Quest books.

tasy—would play, too. Then when big brother went back to college, the young kids would form their own groups."

As a result, D&D's primary audience today is children 13 to 15 years old—an age group that is more traditionally supportive of lucrative merchandising campaigns. For example, two sets of TSR adventure game books—Endless Quest and Heartquest for Girls—are aimed at young teens. A third set, Fantasy Forest, is targeted to children 5 to 8 years old.

Have these mass marketing efforts and children's products diminished the game's appeal to college students? Mr. Gygax says no.

"I guess if they were playing D&D for its snob appeal, I suppose the answer is yes," he says, with a touch of anger in his voice. "But if the presence of younger players in the market does take those people out, I really don't care."

Why is one college marketing company growing so fast?*

*American Passage has been ranked by Inc. Magazine as one of the fastest growing private companies in the U.S. for the past two years—85th and 152nd in 1982 and 1983.

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The challenge: Pursuit of trivia

In the nine months following Trivial Pursuit's U.S. debut in April, 1983, the game sold 1 million copies. This year, Selchow & Righter, U.S. manufacturer of the game, is using five factories to produce an estimated 24 million copies.

Trivial Pursuit's 1984 sales, which could hit $700 million, will exceed and possibly double the total board game industry's 1983 sales. "If we had sold half a million copies, it would have been a very big hit," S&R vp-marketing John Nason says. "To have doubled that in its first nine months is incredible."

The demand for the original Genus edition and subsequent question sets has been so overwhelming that S&R pulled its only advertising—page magazine ads during the fourth quarter of 1983—after 2½ months.

Executives believed that when games were so scarce, advertising only teased consumers.

"It sure is frustrating for an ad agency," says David Hauer, account supervisor at Jordan, Case & McGrath, New York.

Jordon, Case & McGrath, however, is preparing a print campaign designed to comfort customers who cannot find Trivial Pursuit during the anticipated Christmas rush.

Another completed but as-yet-unpublished ad features the line "Every American is entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of trivia"; it is on hold until advertising is deemed necessary.

S&R is banking on the durability of Trivial Pursuit, despite the rash of competitors—a group currently estimated at 30 that includes such notable names as *Time*, *People* and "Ripley's Believe It or Not."

Canadian licenser Horn Abbott will continue to produce new card sets. Coming soon are popular music, Who's Who and Genus II editions. New S&R research shows that 93% of current Trivial Pursuit owners plan to buy more card sets as they are released.

—J.L.E.

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Next week ADVERTISING AGE will present a Special Report on **Liquor Marketing.**

Carl Davis - webcommando.com - tabletoptango.com

CBS NETWORK
SUNDAY MORNING

6/17/84

KURALT: It says in the Bible that the truth shall make you free. That seems a good text for Ron Powers' commentary today. Ron?

RON POWERS: Charles. Okay, let's admit it. Television slants the news. Correspondents stack the evidence in their stories. Anchormen tell you what to think. Example? Let's take one of the biggest and wealthiest television news organizations in America, CBN, the Christian Broadcasting Network: founded and directed by Pat Robertson; 23-million households in cable; 150 broadcast stations; revenues of nearly $85-million a year in tax-free donations.

Last Wednesday, CBN broadcast a report on the impact of the popular young-people's game, "Dungeons and Dragons". I can't show you this report; CBN refuses to release tapes of its programs. So I'll tell you. Pat Robertson introduced the piece by citing "news reports of murders, suicides, fantasy mental changes. Young people who are going totally crazy as a result of this game." Cut to a correspondent standing in front of a house. He told of the 16-year-old boy who had lived there, a boy who had killed himself after having a curse placed on him while playing Dungeons and Dragons at school. The incident happened in 1982. Two other teenaged suicides were mentioned and linked with the game. A mother appeared on screen. She told the correspondent, "This is evil. No doubt about it." A psychologist was interviewed. She defended the game, pointing out that millions of young people play it without harmful effects. Back in the studio, Pat Robertson attacked this expert as a paid consultant for Dungeons and Dragons. He told the audience she was not to be trusted. The report ended with Robertson holding up a copy of the game's rule book, pointing to the illustration on the cover and asserting, "This creature, no question about it, is a type of demonic spirit." Robertson urged parents to keep their children away from the game. I should add that a cartoon version of Dungeons and Dragons appears on CBS.

This story was not slanted; it was almost vertical. It suggested, using anecdotal evidence and selective witnesses, that a children's game is inherently evil.

Now, evil is not a concept that journalists routinely try to define. It's a term of theology; and, of course that's what CBN is really all about—theology, not journalism. And that in itself is perfectly fine; no one should try to restrain Pat Robertson or CBN from advancing any doctrine or point of view that they choose.

OVER

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So why even criticize CBN? Well, two or three reasons. One, no group in America cries more loudly about slanting the news than the religious right-wing; sometimes, they make valid points, but it seems fair to suggest that they play by the same rules that they demand of others. Two, in copying the forms of secular television news—correspondents, anchors, graphics, and the rest—CBN is borrowing symbolic credibility from the very institution it opposes; in that sense, it is wearing a disguise. The third reason for examining CBN has to do with Pat Robertson's larger agenda. Robertson's aim is not just to compete with other voices, even other Christian voices. His aim is to be the only voice. Robertson describes himself as a prophet of God. One of his less-publicized projects is something called the Freedom Council. Its mission: to establish a, quote, "Christian government" that would return America to what Robertson claims is its "Christian heritage".

Now this is the kind of absolutism that is at the center of the large and powerful Christian Broadcasting Network. It helps to remember these factors, when one watches CBN and sees a news report linking a child's game to murder, suicides, and fantasy mental changes. It gives you a different slant.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

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SATURDAY NIGHTS AT THE PARSONAGE

By Mark Acres

Fantasy literature and fantasy role-playing or "adventure" games are immensely popular with young people. In three years as pastor of a Friends Meeting (Quaker) in a small town in southern Indiana, I was lucky enough to learn that this interest could be a valuable tool for the church in both its recreational programs and its more didactic efforts.

Imagine six or eight people sitting around a large table. Each person pretends to be a hero of some sort; perhaps a noble, righteous knight, or a powerful wizard, perhaps a religious leader, or maybe just a good-hearted rascal with skills at larceny which he is willing to use for the benefit of a noble cause. These heros plan how to use their special abilities to destroy a horrid dragon who has terrorized the countryside. After a few minutes of discussion, they explain their plan to the referee of the game. Amid a great deal of shouting and laughter, along with some rapid changes of plan as the dragon reacts to their assault, some dice are rolled, results are obtained, and in the end the evil nasty is defeated.

These people are playing a fantasy role-playing game, esentially a slightly advanced version of the "let's pretend" or "make believe" every young child plays. Scenes like this became a common one at our Quaker parsonage, and the fun we had and the lessons we taught during these sessions were an important part of our ministry to both young and old.

It all began shortly after I came to the church. One of our young members "adopted" us as his second family, and began spending a great deal of time at the parsonage. Eventually his birthday came around, and we learned that one thing he particularly wanted was a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, a fantasy role-playing game produced by TSR Hobbies, Inc. My wife and I purchased the game for him at a local hobby shop, and within three days pastor Acres was doubling on Saturday as "Dungeon Master" Acres, the man who was in charge of the D&D® game.

At first, I thought the game was just good fun and nothing more. My pastoral instincts were aroused, however, when I noted that the number of players, especially teenagers, were increasing. Within six months, we had several games going, with several Dungeon Masters, and the whole Saturday night event had been moved to the church basement to accomodate the crowds of up to 40 teens who were coming to play.

The first feedback we received from this "rcreational program", (as I quickly dubbed it), was from the parents of the youngsters involved. They were delighted our town was small and located in an economically depressed area. There were few opportunities for wholesome recreational for the teenage population. The result was an unsavory situation on the town square, periodic arrests by the police, an increasing alcohol and drug problem, and parents who were worried sick about what their kids were doing out on Saturday nights. The parents who called us were ecstatic; their kids were in a church, of all places, having supervised fun they enjoyed more than the other activities prevalent in the town.

Now, there was nothing particularly shocking or new about any of this. Churches attract young people with fun in one form or another all the time. What I found exciting was the fact that the "fun" paid off for me as a pastor by providing a number of other benefits for the teens.

The D&D® game provides every player's character with certain unique abilities or skills. If the Dungeon Master is on his toes, the players quickly learn it requires the efforts of the entire grou to succeed in an adventure. Rather than encouraging competition, the game demands cooperation. Cooperation requires certain social skills. Our players, who often came from very different if not hostile "cliques" in the local schools were forced to learn to get along with one another. Because the game was adventurous fun, the learning was relatively painless.

In life: Kids who cooperated in the game eventually became good friends despite their different social backgrounds. Barriers, often painful ones for those how were not in the "popular set," were broken down.

The age barrier began to fall, too, as parents became more interested in what we were doing. They began coming to watch and ended up staying to play. Eventually we had several score players ranging in age from 10 to 47 years. Both teens and adults were sometimes surprised and usually delighted to learn that almost everyone had moments of extreme creativity when it came to solving the dilemnas posed by our fantasy adventurers. The lesson: Everyone has something to contribute.

Most pastors recognize that teenagers, regardless of their upbringing, often face difficult decisions. Sometimes the decisions are more difficult than they would be for an adult, simply because the teen has not yet had enough life experiences to guide himor her in making the right choice. I eventually found I could structure our fantasy adventures to provide a chance to make hard moral choices in the fantasy setting. I could then use the fantasy experience to provide examples and principles in discussion groups, Sunday School classes and counselling sessions.

At this point I should emphatically mention that the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game is neither un-Christian nor Christian. Like chess, or checkers, or any one of hundreds of other games, it is religiously neutral. The game can provide a chance for players to make hard moral choices in a harmless fantasy world. The choices made during the adventures can then be used as springboards for discussion of real choices in the real world.

For example, in one adventure a group of players were

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wandering deep in an underground labyrinth, being hotly pursued by a horde of evil monsters. They discovered a large number of prisoners, helpless individuals, many of them needing aid. It was within the power of the characters to free these prisoners and help them, but doing so would drastically decrease their own chances for survival. This adventure provided the "extreme case" which was used for a general discussion of self-sacrificing behavior; where do Christians draw the line — or are there any lines to be drawn?

Our fantasy adventures also provided a number of vivid object lessons which emphasized basic teaching of the church. Of course, these object lessons were no different from those taught by the large numbers of exemplary stories in the Scriptures. The fantasy role-playing, however, allowed thses lessons to "come to life" for the young people in a way that simply reading a story would not.

For example, I once had a group of players who wanted to play mainly evil characters. I told them this was fine with me. In time they gained control of a large area, and in time, through the *natural consequences* of their activities, the area was destroyed. The main towns were sparely populated empty shells; the peasants were fleeing the area, leaving a shortage of food; merchants would not longer carry goods into the area, fearful for their own welfare, etc. As they surveyed the ruin about them, the players turned to me and asked, "Well, that's really bad. What can we do now?"

"Not much," I replied. "I guess that's it."

This proved to be a tremendously vivid, lived object lession which illustrated one of the great truths of Scripture: Evil is self-destructive. In later discussions, I was able to bring this point home by explaining what the land they controlled could have become had their own decisons been different.

In summary, I would say that in my three years as a pastor, I found the D&D® game to be a valuable tool for building a successful recreational and instructive youth program that attracted young people from a variety of backgrounds and eventually a good number of adults as well. The game appears to be increasing in popularity, and other pastors or youth leaders might want to explore the possibility of making it a fun and instructive party of their own programs.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® is a registered trademark of TSR Hobbies, Inc.

Mark Arces served for three years as pastor of the Paoli Friends Meeting (Quaker) in Paoli, Indiana. He is now employed as a game designer for TSR Hobbies, Inc.

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A Minister Responds

By Escoe L. Robinson III

Being not only a Dungeon Master, but also an ordained minister, I feel somewhat qualified to answer many of the criticisms involved in the relationship of role-playing games to religious involvement. While I must confess this list if far from complete, I feel that it will provide many of the answers to some of the most common criticisms concerning the AD&D game.

Criticism number none: "The AD&D game is a tool of the Devil."

This is, without a doubt, the most difficult comment to answer concerning the game. It presupposes a fact without any basis of proof. It shifts the burden of proof from the positive to the negative. Instead of having to prove that AD&D is a tool of the Devil, one has to prove it is not. It has, in effect, made an official Biblical pronouncement where there is no Biblical precedent. Satan's, or as you might prefer, the Devil's, tools are not inanimate objects, but men. Therefore, an object takes on the attitude of the person who is using it. If this is the case, then it becomes possible for the game to be used for either "good" constructive purposes or for "evil" destructive purposes, depending, of course, on the individual. The question must then be asked, "Does an individual's misuse of the game reflect on the game in general?" The answer is no. The answer to the AD&D game being a tool of the Devil is also no. The game will be either constructive or destructive depending upon its usage by the individual.

Criticism number two: "The AD&D game is a game of violence."

Yes, it must be conceded, there are elements of violence involved in the AD&D game. There are also, however, elements of violence in many games. Chess, for example, is a game of violence. It is based upon conquest by the "killing" of pawns, knights, and bishops. We have come to the mistaken belief that all forms of violence are inherently evil. I do not believe this to be true. Fantasy, or make-believe violence, does not disturb me nearly as much as the real violence found in the world today. I also do not believe that the AD&D game, television, or any other scapegoat is responsible for the number of violent actions rampant in the world today. Murder existed before the AD&D game was even conceived. Cain did not kill Abel because of an infatuation with role-playing games. Acts of violence are indeed present in the AD&D gaming system. Its nature, however, is not evil, but merely an expression of the struggle to survive in a difficult age.

Criticism number three: AD&D books are filled with demons and sorcery."

This argument cannot be disproved. It happens to be true. Those who are familiar with the scriptures will recall many verses that deal with the evil of witchcraft. Those who condemn the AD&D game on this basis feel they have the backing of both the Old and New Testaments. However, one must realize exactly what the Bible states about sorcery. It is the practice which is condemned by the scriptures. Literature from Shakespeare to C.S. Lewis contains numberous instances of witchcraft. Do we then denounce as being witches or warlocks, those who enjoy fantasy tales? The supernatural of the AD&D game fits into this category. It is not intended to be practiced as legitimate forms of the occult. It is used merely to enhance the enliven a superb game. It is sheer folly to assume that those who play the AD&D game, or any other fantasy role-playing game, are condemned by the Bible as practicing witchcraft.

Criticism number four: "The AD&D game is and encourages Idol Worship."

Exodus, chapter thirty-four, verse fourteen states. ". . . for you shall not worship any other God, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God . . ." (NAS version.) Their claim is based on the fact that the AD&D game has a system of Clerics who worship different mythological gods. If this is the basis for their claim of idol worship, they are sadly mistaken. J.R.R. Tolkien, a devout Christian, was an expert on mythology and incorporated many aspects into his classic, *Lord of the Rings*. Do we, therefore claim that since his characters were not Christians that he was guilty of idol worship? Likewise, the individual who plays the role of a cleric in the AD&D game is not guilty of idolotry.

Criticism number five: "People have become addicted to the AD&D game.

The dictionary addiction as being a "condition of being a slave to a habit; a strong inclination." The term addiction has become a some what overused word in the English language. People are now addicted to "Video" games, television, the AD&D game and smoking plus many other things. If we allow for the defination found in the dictionary, addiction can be used to mean just about anything we desire. An argument can even be made for being addicted to breathing because the majority of the people have a "strong inclination" to continue the process. The question then becomes, not a matter of the AD&D game being addictive, but is it harmful. I must confess to having my own personal addiciton. I am an insatiable reader. I also make full use of the facilities of the local library. I do not, however, consider this a harmful addiction. On the contrary, I believe that it has many beneficial aspects. I also believe that the AD&D game contains many of these aspects. It broadens the imagination and therefore enables us to use of God-given faculties to a greater advantage. The AD&D belongs in the harmless "addiction" category.

As I stated previously, ths list is far from complete. It is merely my own personal way of atoning for the mistaken beliefs concerning the AD&D game by those in positions of leadership in the church. I sincerely doubt that this article will have any effect upon those who believe that the AD&D game is demonic in nature. Too often, we are guilty of following after the saying, "Don't confuse me with the facts, my mind is made up." Those of you who play and enjoy the AD&D game or any fantasy role-playing game my advice is simple: Do not become angry at the critics. Pity them instead. They are denying themselves an opportunity to enter the magical realm of make-believe, a land inhabited by wizards, hobbits, dwarfs, elves, and all good fantasy gamers.

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MORE ABOUT

Game teaches

Controversial game teaches cooperation, mental agility

By NELSON PRICE
The Indianapolis News

A clever pickpocket, a dwarf, a magician and a brawny knave confront a fire-breathing dragon.

The setting is a dank, dark dungeon — the floor plan of which bears a striking resemblence to Perry Meridian High School.

Sound bizarre?

Consider this.

Some students at Brebeuf Preparatory School are "inputting" fantasy game strategies in their personal home computers.

The common denominator in both cases is Dungeons & Dragons, a complex role-playing game in which participants assume the identities of medieval characters.

Popularity of the fantasy game has transformed science fiction clubs at high schools across the state. Teachers report that youths play the game during lunch hour and free periods as well as at home.

A middle school in Tell City even offered a noncredit mini-course in Dungeons & Dragons until this year.

"One of the most obvious appeals (to teen agers) about the game is that it is something which, by and large, parents do not understand," said Jerry Hunter, owner of The

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Boardroom game shop in Broad Ripple.

"It is an 'in' group thing. I have an awful lot of parents who come in either literally or figuratively shaking their heads. They say they just don't know what's going on.

"As a former kid, I can certify this (parental reaction) makes anything more attractive."

More than 100 fantasy role playing games have hit the market in the last five years. They range from Boot Hill — a game set in the Old West — to Aftermath, Twilight 2000 and Gamma World — games set in the "near future" following World War III.

But Hunter and other game shop operators estimated that Dungeons & Dragons continues to account for 75 percent of the fantasy role-playing games sold.

Manual dexterity

"It's kind of like the video game craze," observed Patrick Leonard, a physics teacher at Brebeuf. "The difference is that, instead of manual dexterity, Dungeons & Dragons requires mental agility. It appeals to some of the brighter kids more than sitting in front of a TV screen (at video arcades)."

Manufactured by TSR Hobbies Inc. of Lake Geneva, Wis., Dungeons & Dragons has drawn objections from fundamentalist Christians and various parent groups.

Ministers in Tell City, for example, launched a protest about three years ago. They contended the game was "satanic" and featured characters linked to devil worship.

Pamphlets objecting to Dungeons & Dragons also have been distributed recently at Indianapolis schools, including Brebeuf.

"We told them (ministers who objected) that we would not allow infringement on our selection of materials by outside groups," said Tell City School Supt. William Wilson.

The noncredit class — offered along with other mini-courses such as typing, aerobics and sex education — was dropped this year, but not because of public pressure, Wilson said. He attributed the move to the fact that the instructor left the school to take another job.

At Perry Meridian, a Dungeons & Dragons tournament raged for about three years during homeroom periods when extra-curricular activities met. The tournament ended this year after the high school eliminated most homeroom sessions as a result of new state requirements on instructional time.

Games continue

Even so, students at the Southside high school continue to meet in homes to play the game, said Beverly Hollandbeck, an English teacher.

Mrs. Hollandbeck is sponsor of the Parallax Club, a science fiction organization at Perry Meridian that has formed the nucleus of the Dungeons & Dragons games.

"I think it's the logic involved that appeals to the kids," she said. "It's creative problem solving."

The role playing game involves wizards, warriors, sorcerers and other characters who are thrust in various dilemmas. Like the other role playing games, it does not involve a board or tokens. Instead, the Dungeons & Dragons "kit" consists of a rule book for "adventuring."

One player is designated as the "Dungeonmaster" who oversees the rules. Depending on the "quests" involved, one game can last an evening or stretch over months of hour long sessions.

Dungeons & Dragons made headlines in 1979, when the disappearance of a Michigan State University student was attributed to the 16 year-old "going over the edge" with Dungeons & Dragons and embarking on a real-life quest.

Some antiviolence groups have joined fundamentalists in denouncing the game. They link it to various self-destructive or abusive acts by teens.

At Perry Meridian, Mrs. Hollandbeck noted that students softened the game by deducting points accumulated by players who kill other characters.

One of her students a few years ago designed a special "dungeon" for the game. Laughing at the memory, Mrs. Hollandbeck noted that the torture chamber was based on the high school's floor plan.

At Brebeuf, Leonard said, "We've got a couple of kids who pride themselves on being (computer) hackers. They are trying to adapt (the game) to their personal computers."

"I have talked to thousands of people who play Dungeons & Dragons, and I can think of at most half a dozen cases where I thought the person could get carried away," commented Hunter at the Boardroom.

"There are certain flaky people in the world — adults and children — who are not mentally sound. These people should not be playing Dungeons & Dragons, but they should not be doing a lot of other things as well, including carrying knives or driving cars."

He and others noted that the game can sharpen logic skills and teach cooperation.

"Working together, these people can do a great deal more than they possibly could accomplish if they were all wrapped up in themselves," Hunter said.

"Strip away all the swords and shields and stuff that primarily appeals to the 12- and 13-year-olds, and you've got a game in which each of the players is a character who is not all-powerful."