

Wargaming

Alternative mirror

A column by Roy Parkhurst

Last week in PART I, I asked the question "What?" I tried to define what wargames were and this week I would like to explore the reasons behind the recent surge in the popularity of wargames.

A good starting place is to give some gaming types. I am borrowing the terms from an excellent book on the subject called "The Complete Book of Wargames" by the editors of Consumer Guide and Jon Freeman. I highly recommend this book to interested readers.

The "Complete Book" categorizes gamers into seven main groups: the historian; the military enthusiast; the assassin; the competitor; the hobbyist; the gamer; and the specialist. Briefly, these can be described: 1) The Historian: someone who is a history buff, uses games to enhance and replay actual historical situations. Role games, for example, couldn't interest him in the least. 2) The Military Enthusiast: someone who is fascinated by war and battle but prefers to be completely removed from the reality of war and satisfies this interest with games. 3) The Assassin: aggressive war-monger who wishes to destroy, to be a merciless hero, who hates to lose and loves to be imaginatively cruel; Mr. Kurtz is alive and well. 4) The Competitor: someone who loves the challenge of wargames, plays lots of games as long as they are authentic tests of skill and ability. 5) The Hobbyist: someone addicted to games, a collector, who has everything and spends more time acquiring and gawking over games than playing them. 6) The Gamer: someone who loves games in general, thinks that all good games are exciting and likes wargames for their "game" novelty. 7) The Specialist: someone who is a fanatic in some subject. A spy buff who collects spy novels, subscribes to True Detective, has seen every James Bond film 10 times over and loves games in his field like TSR's "Top Secret" (TSR also publishes Dungeons and Dragons.)

These are generalities or stereotypes but they point to a certain psychology that fits the types of people who play wargames.

Culturally, the game explosion is most significant in the area of role-playing games. In my research, it has become clear that "Dungeons and Dragons" is the single most important factor in the growth of other games which in some ways follow the pattern set by D&D. I have been told by various toy stores that they sell as much or more piece by piece product in Dungeons and Dragons than all other role and strategic games combined. So what is it about D&D that is so appealing?

Well, there are various factors. D&D has grown out of a general popularity in fantasy fiction initiated in recent years by the acclaimed work of J.R.R. Tolkien. It can not be overstressed that Tolkien's Middle Earth has had a tremendous impact on young people from Junior High through college and much beyond as well. The fascination in Tolkien is related at the root of things in the same way as D&D. It satisfies some inner need, call it archetypal or whatever, of the rejuvenating power of light and fantasy and adventure. The fascination with Voyager in the last few days reflects this just as "Star Wars" or the currently running PBS show "Cosmos" does.

There is something of an escapist, an incurable romantic urge in us that wishes to burst out against the tensions of the modern world. There is an inner need for adventure, for fantasy, to have the idea of the hero made possible to us. I believe D&D has succeeded so well in capturing all these essential elements in one playable format and that this factor has made D&D so overwhelmingly popular.

D&D makes a character that each player can "live" through, set in an existing imaginary world which stays relatively consistent and has certain predictable and recurrent monsters and in some cases even geographical locations which one can count on just as we can count on New York being there when we arrive at the correct location. It is a complete and generally logical system which imitates life in incredible detail. The laws of physics hold (except when utilizing magic of course) and other "realistic" concepts allowing you to acquire great treasure or get yourself killed. It is a romantic escape into a safe yet wonderfully magical realm.

As you might suppose, D&D is very complicated, it take maybe 3 or 4 hours for a beginner to even get a character. Adventures can be endless or like every day life, having temporary conclusions, such as escape from the dragon's lair. D&D enthusiasts spend much of their free time playing games or designing dungeons for other players. I have seen it become an obsession, bordering on the destructive. But, as you know, there's a Bridge club in your neighborhood and a chess column in the NY Times. Games are a big part of human kind's leisure history, it allows many forms of primal satisfactions, violence, competition, escapism and so on, and D&D is no exception. Whether D&D will survive time is not as significant as the fact that games of all forms and at different levels persist. Recall Monday Night Football?

Alice in Registration land

[A tale of a Rabbit and Others, with Fond Apologies and True Admiration for Mr. Lewis Carroll]

By Constance Irving

Alice was beginning to get quite tired of sitting in the library working on her paper. There was so very much to be done, she despaired of ever finishing all, or even most, of it.

So she was considering (as well as she could, for she'd been up all the night before as well and hence felt very sleepy and stupid) whether the pleasure of eating lunch would be worth the trouble of ploughing through the mob at Founders, when suddenly, a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran by. There was nothing so terribly odd about this, nor did Alice think it queer when the Rabbit said to itself, "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!" As this was Guilford College, and everyone was always concerned about being late with something or other. But when the Rabbit took a small brown paper-bag from its knapsack with a label that read:

17271

REC: 4650 Rabbit Albert W

CLS: 3 MJR: Bio

ADV: Bryden

looked at it, then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it occurred to her she'd never seen a rabbit with either a paper-bag or a knapsack before, let alone one in the library. Burning with curiosity, she ran through the stacks after it, just in time to see it disappear into the book elevator in the far corner.

In another moment, down went Alice after it, never once considering where she was going, how she might return, or how she'd ever explain her injuries either to Dr. Doolittle or to the insurance company.

Down the elevator shaft she fell, much further (she thought) than the library's three floors, and further still.

Down, down, down. Would the fall never come to an end? (A curious rumination, she thought, and one she'd been considering all that season.)

"I wonder whether this is what they call a free fall?" she said out loud. "But is it truly free? I mean, I suppose my path downward is unhindered by stray objects, but that doesn't mean

I'm free to fall whichever way I please." (For you see, Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the school-room, and though this was not a very good opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her nevertheless it was good practice for her oral report to say it over.) "But I wonder whether or not to follow the rabbit, or he to go or not to go down the hole?"

Down, down, down. "I'll never finish my paper at this rate," she chided herself, "but perhaps I can triple-space and make do with what I have . . ."

When suddenly, Thump! Thump! Down she came over a heap of old newspapers, and her fall was over.

Alice was not hurt, and she leapt to her feet in a moment. She gazed down the dark passageway ahead, and there was the White Rabbit. There wasn't a moment to waste. Alice rushed after him, hearing him chatter, "Oh my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!"

She ran to him, but he paid her no mind, muttering, "Oh my Advisor, my Advisor, my won't he be vicious if I've kept him waiting." And he ran off into the darkness again.

"Dear, dear! How queer things are today," exclaimed Alice, "and how confusing. I shall try to say 'How doth the little busy bee.' I'm sure I can still say that." And in a voice that sounded to her rather strange and hoarse, she began:

"How doth the Ronaldreaganite
Improve his shining land
And snatch the bucks for needy folks
From every outstretched hand.
How blithely he shouts, 'Nuke Iran,'
How gaily boosts defense,
While touting cuts in budgetland
Against all common sense."

"I'm sure those aren't the proper words!" exclaimed Alice, "and what am I to do about the White Rabbit and his peculiar paper bag?"

[To be continued next week: In which Alice encounters a Most Unhelpful Senior, meets the I.D.S. Duchess, her Cheshire Advisor, the Imperious Red Registrar, and the White Dean, among Others.]

Vital juices flow at cocktail hour

The Cocktail Hour, a bi-weekly gathering at 4:30 p.m. on Monday afternoons in Dana Lounge, is a time for sharing ideas about college life and personal growth. It will be a refreshing hour in which we will share a pre-dinner appetizer and good zesty talk on such subjects as "The High Price of Long Distance Love," "Thriving not Just Surviving: How to Live with Stress." Some of our talks will concern important academic matters such as "How to Read a Textbook You Hate" and "How to Survive (even Enjoy) The Process of Writing a Paper."

These meetings will give you a chance to speak your mind and to learn from other people's ideas and feelings. It can be a way to make your Monday a real start. Join us on your way to dinner for a few ideas your brain and spirit can munch on.

THE COCKTAIL HOUR DISCUSSIONS
Sponsored by the Academic Skills Center,
the Counseling Service, and the Housing Interns
Monday Afternoons, 4:30 p.m., Dana Lounge

NOVEMBER	24	THE HIGH PRICE OF LONG DISTANCE LOVE
DECEMBER	8	HOW TO LIVE WITH STRESS
JANUARY	19	HOW TO LIVE IN THE SAME ROOM AND SURVIVE
	26	ENHANCING ETHNIC DIFFERENCES: HOW CAN WE LEARN FROM EACH OTHER
FEBRUARY	2	DEPRESSION: COPING WITH THE BLUES
	16	HOW TO SURVIVE (EVEN ENJOY) THE PROCESS OF WRITING A PAPER
MARCH	2	IS YOUR PERSONALITY ON ACADEMIC PROBATION?
	16	SENIORITIS: WHAT IN THE HELL AM I GOING TO DO?
	30	HOW TO GET HIGH WITHOUT DRUGS
APRIL	6	SEXUALITY — INTIMACY — CELIBACY
	20	HOW CAN YOU LIVE WITH DIVORCE AND SEPARATION IN YOUR LIFE?

Pizza Hut

College Night!

Mondays and Tuesdays 5 to 10PM

ANY PIZZA 25% OFF
WITH COLLEGE I.D. 600 College Road

SCHOLARSHIPS -- Vanderbilt University invites outstanding seniors to compete in its 1981-82 MBA Scholarship Program. Write: Office of Admission, Room 601, Owen Graduate School of Management, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn. 37203.