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In This Issue

This issue's cover story is about a great new superhero RPG... Champions. Denis Loubet's cover shows a scene from our local campaign, featuring the nefarious Overlord.

For Traveller fans, we have the second in Marlosh Adams' series of pull-out scenarios: "Storm!" Aground on an alien planet, you must answer the simple question, "Where did everybody go?" Also... Bill Barton reviews the second edition of High Guard.

Fantasy gamers ought to appreciate the return of Conakar and his sword (or should that be "Wehalkhen and his fighter?"). Timothy Zahn's tale centers around a remarkable new sort of magic sword -- which is described fully for game purposes.

Rounding out the issue, we have the Origins ballot; "The Balrog and the Finger of Death"; a comparison of fantasy minatures lines; a full page of Murphy's Rules; and a "Where We're Going" column with about four months' worth of news.

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WHERE WE'RE GOING

There's so much going on this month that I could easily fill twice the usual space. I'm not even sure what the biggest news is ... but probably it's the fact that we've just acquired a new magazine.

Fire & Movement

Many of you are already familiar with Fire & Movement, which has — up to now — been owned by Baron Publishing. F&M is strictly a historical wargaming magazine, and it's a very good one; for the past three years it's won the Charles Roberts Award for "best magazine covering boardgaming." I've always enjoyed F&M, I was extremely excited when I heard it was for sale, and I'm very pleased to have closed the deal. Baron wanted to sell the magazine, not because it wasn't successful, but because they didn't have the personnel to continue all their present projects. As a result, F&M was usually behind schedule. We'll fix that.

One thing that needs no "fixing" is the excellent Fire & Movement editorial staff, under the direction of Dr. Friedrich M. Helftensch. Dr. Helftensch will continue as editor, while Nick Schuessler (publisher of the Journal of WWII Wargaming) will join our Austin staff as F&M's managing editor.

If you're strictly interested in fantasy and science fiction gaming, there'll be nothing for you here. But if you are also interested in historical games, Fire & Movement has been — and will continue to be — "must" reading. You are now, I hope, wondering how to subscribe ... Rates will be the same as for TSG. $21 for 12 issues, $39 for 24 issues. Initially, F&M will be bimonthly; we will probably try to go monthly fairly soon, so that news and reviews will be timelier. Physically, F&M will continue about the same (that is, very much like TSG). However, F&M usually has more ads than TSG, so it will probably be able to afford a few more pages per issue.

Boxed Games!! ???

In a word, yes. I've been working on this project for several months, without saying anything in this space. In the first place, I didn't want to give any good ideas away ... and in the second place, if the whole thing fell through, I didn't want to hear questions about it for the next five years. But right now, it looks very good indeed.

Up until now, there have been three ways to package mini-games: plastic bags (like ours and Task Force's); cardboard boxes (like Metagaming's and Heritage's); and transparent plastic casings (like TSR's). None are ideal. Plastic bags are cheap — but they LOOK cheap, too, and eventually tear. Flimsy cardboard boxes are far worse, in my opinion. They look good on the shelves — but collapse quickly under normal wear, leaking counters everywhere. The TSR packaging is far better, but it can still be torn or crushed.

So ... I started looking for a box that would (a) look good on the shelves, (b) hold up to continued use, and (c) still fit into your pocket. I think we've got one. The only prototype I have to date has five separate problems — but it looks as though they can all be overcome.

This means that the "new look" for all our minigames will be a black plastic box, 4½" x 7¼" x 5/8" thick. There will be color labels front and back; inside — well protected — will be the game itself. We will ALSO include a zipper bag to hold the counters.

The shininess and durability of these boxes will mean that you can actually put them in your pockets and take them with you — which suggested the name we're using, Pocket Box. I have some rather silly ideas for an ad campaign; suggestions gratefully appreciated.

The boxes will drive our standard price up to $5.00. (Actually, some of that is inflation; we're getting it all in one price increase.) But I think it's worth it — which is why I did it. For once, a game company can actually increase the value of a game (NOT just its price) by putting it into a box. We haven't had enough samples yet to test them to destruction; I don't know just how much punishment the Pocket Box will take. But I do know this — it will be orders of magnitude stronger than any cardboard box, and it'll look better, too. My prediction for the new year. By December, the other mini-game makers will have dropped their cardboard packaging and gone into something similar. These are so good, they have to be copied!

We expect Box Day — the arrival of our box and label shipments — around Jan. 30. As of now, you can order our games for either $3 or $5. $3 will get you a game in a plastic bag UNTIL Box Day (whenever that comes), $3 orders received after that will be returned. $5 will get you a Pocket Box game, as soon as they're ready. (Note: Ogre and G.E.V. will be available only in Pocket Box editions.)

Next Issue

Our March Issue will feature a special section of equipment for TRAVELLER:
"The Flinger and the Blob," two new character styles for TFF;
A featured review of the PBM game STARLORD;
And designer's notes for BEYOND THE STELLAR EMPIRE.
Looking at the Blinking Lights

We have also acquired our first computer, an Apple II+ with 48K and two disk drives. It's already at work — it sped up the compilation of our last newsletter by about 300%. Internally, the Apple will be used for computer game reviews and our own general ledger and accounts receivable. But we do plan to get into game software eventually, and the Apple is a necessary first step.

(By the way: If you are a programmer capable of doing high-quality work on a free-lance [or other] basis, and you'd like to do games, get in touch. Examples of "high-quality," to me, would be Wizardry and Ultima. If you can write a program of that complexity and graphic sophistication, we can do business. I've got the game designs; I need some people that speak fluent computer.)

Project Status

Ogre and G.E.V. are still slated for February appearance, the only limiting factor is the box and label situation. Dennis' hand-painted map masters are going to be state-of-the-art. The photo shows a map (before boxes). That is NOT sculptured terrain — just a flat painting.

The Ogre Book is coming along fine. It will feature some new art by Winch Chung, the original Ogre artist, who just showed up again a couple of weeks ago. We have these holes at the beginnings of a couple of articles — so his reappearance was most timely! Glad to have you back, Winch.

The new Cardboard Heroes are, AT LAST, at the printers.

The lead Ogre miniatures are going into production very soon for Jan. 30 availability. Right now we have the G.E.V., Heavy Tank, and Missile Tank. We have a good master for the static howitzer, and a pretty good one for the MHWZ The Mark V Ogre Master is still in Fort Worth being re-done, but it ought to be finished within a couple of weeks. Lead Car Wars miniatures are also underway — but I don't know just when they'll be ready.

— Steve Jackson

GAME MASTER

GAME MASTER exists to answer questions on your favorite games. If you have a rules question or play problem, send it in Questions to be answered will be chosen on the basis of general interest. They will be first referred to the game publisher or designer. If no response is received, GAME MASTER will offer its own interpretation of the rule. Sorry — no individual replies are possible.

Killer

GDW's Loren Wiseman points out that "one of the suggested contents of the powder bomb (TS4 46) is glitter. . . . facial powder can be irritating, but glitter can be dangerous . . . [11] is usually ground glass. Confetti sounds so much safer." Good point; thank you, Loren. Strike the glitter, people.

— SJ

Space Opera

Stefan Jones, author of the Outworlds sector atlas for Space Opera, writes with the following error:

For the Greywolff Cutoff (Outworlds p. 37) the powerplant type should read AMC, not Fusion. Astute readers will notice 40 tons of "missile mass." The unlisted systems aren't on the standard ship spec-sheet. 5 tons are allocated for workshop and parts storage. The workshop is located just port of the powerplant. 2 tons are allocated as magazine space to the hardpoint turret, allowing 80 additional rounds per turret. 3.5 tons of magazines are allocated to each main-battery turret. The remaining 20 tons are EW/ECM hardware distributed in modules outside the hull (the equipment doesn't appear on the deck plans). Scale 1:1 cm = 2 meters. The cost of the vessel is 90.5 MCR; it is definitely not a standard design. Apologies to those inconvenienced by the omission.

— SJ

The Fantasy Trip

1. What happens in HTH when you hit a figure with enough hits to knock it down? Can it attack that turn if it has not already attacked or moved or waited the next turn to attack? 2. If a figure is entangled in a net and, on the turn it tries to get up, takes enough damage to knock it down again, can it try to get up or does it have to wait until the next turn? 3. Is a regular net able to entangle a figure of 2 hexes or more in size? Do nets come in larger sizes? If so, what are the ST requirements and damage done? 4. Can a figure entangled in a net or caught by a bola, lasso, etc., fight in HTH combat? 5. Can a figure just hold a two-handed weapon with one hand, throw something with the other hand, and have that two-handed weapon ready on the next turn? 6. In Death Test 2, since the fire elemental cannot be harmed by ordinary weapons, can it be harmed by HTH?

— Michael Daly

Car Wars

1. Can passengers be active participants in combat, i.e., eleven men riding in the bed of a truck firing with sub-machine guns at a single target? 2. Can passengers riding in the bed of a truck be hidden from other drivers by means of a canopy or tarp? 3. If so, would eleven be able to get out of the truck to avoid a collision? 4. What are the chances of pedestrians expanding thunderclaps? 5. Are players allowed to neglect listing components or passengers with hand weapons on their record sheets? 6. Are armed passengers still considered passengers or do they become gunners?

— Myklos Kitaigawa

(No replies received from Metagaming.)

1. "Reactions to Injury," p. 18, Advanced Melee, states that the figure may do nothing either that turn or the next. 2. As above, if the figure may not get up, it obviously cannot get up while entangled! 3. A regular net could probably not entangle a 2x2 creature. It is unlikely that a 3x3 net could be thrown by a normal person. Nets for giants and abnormally strong characters are, of course, physically possible, their details are up to the GM. 4. Probably not. 5. No, a two-handed weapon held in one hand is not ready. 6. Logically, if weapons cannot harm it, hands can't either.

— SJ

Origins Ballot

Also in this issue is the Origins ballot for 1981. As a matter of fact, it's in twice — once on p. 22 and once on the inside back cover. (That way, subscribers don't have to worry about finding a copier.) A lot of good games appeared during 1981. At the risk of immodesty (and because I'd like to hang a Charlie or two on the wall) I will point out that CAR WARS is eligible for Best S-F Boardgame, and KILLER is eligible for Best RPG Rules. I expect that TSG may get its usual nomination for Best Professional Role-Playing Magazine, but the competition (i.e., the JTAS) is very strong. And UNDEAD might get a crack at the fantasy game category, but there were a LOT of good ones out this year. Anyway — please take the time to fill in the ballot, for whatever your favorites are. The more participation, the more the awards mean.

This ends a very long column. Tune in next month and find out what's happening with the boxes!
Symmkyn's Edge

The heavy beams holding up the thatched roof were awash in smoke from the guttering candles on the rough-hewn tables, most of the inn's customers had either left or were snoring in drunken stupors. All in all, the inn seemed a lot less cheerful than it had a few hours ago. But then, a few hours ago I'd been a lot richer, too.

"You and your brilliant ideas," I muttered, glaring across the room at the well-dressed man crossing out the door with my jewels at his waist.

"My brilliant ideas?" the sword at my side replied, his tone injured. "Who bet that twenty-weight ruby on a lousy half-tar, Conakar, you or me?"

"Okay, butjoining the game in the first place was your idea. And since you mention it, that lousy half-tar looked a lot better somehow when I was betting. You weren't by any chance creating a small illusion, were you?"

Windalken remained silent, and I knew I'd hit the roc squarely on the crest. Dunn swords can't lie; if he spoke now he'd be forced to confirm my suspicions.

I sighed, but I wasn't really angry. Ever since I'd bought Windalken from a wandering wizard two years ago I'd been winning great treasures, and as quickly losing them. The reason, I suspected, was simple: Windalken didn't want me getting too rich. Rich men, even rich swordsmen, tend to get sedentary - and a sedentary master would foul up Windalken's own plans, bring his quest to free all magically-trapped spirits to a grinding halt. I don't mind him having his own mission, I suppose, and I'm not even unwilling to cooperate. But I guess he's still afraid to trust me on that.

The lucky winner - Parclest son of Hond, he'd named himself - was gone now. A foreigner from somewhere east, I'd guessed, carrying a pair of unusual prayer sticks on his belt along with the usual swordsman's gear. But even so, he knew his way around a card game.

"We staying here for what's left of the night?" Windalken broke into my thoughts.

I got to my feet. "Nope. The innkeeper smirks too much. We'll go on to Iglf; it's not very far."

"You think it'll be safe enough? That
guy Erthis who was sitting on your left was a brigand if I’ve ever met one.

“Good — he’ll have passed the word that I’m already broke. Besides, won’t my faithful dinn sword protect me?” Whehalken was smart enough to shut up.

The night air was crisp and clean after the smoke of the inn, and I took several deep breaths as I started off down the moonlit road. Actually, even without Whehalken I would have felt relatively safe. The fourth man in the group had been the Kagan Minnners’ third son, Tormas, and I gathered the inn was a neutral area where men of diverse loyalties could safely meet. Tormas’ idea, most likely; the young aristocrat was an enthusiastic if not especially successful gamester.

I was no more than a mile from the inn, and into an edge of the nearby forest, when my cozy illusion was shattered. From beyond a hill just ahead came the unmistakable sound of steel on steel. Drawing Whehalken, I started to run.

“Very uneven fight,” Whehalken murmured, extending his senses to their limit. “Seven or eight to one. The defender... lots of jewels... it’s Parleet.”

Two thoughts flashed through my mind. One, that it served Parleet right; and two, those were my hard-earned jewels someone was trying to take. The second thought was stronger, and I kept running.

I topped the hill to a scene from swordsman nightmares. Half a furlong away stood a ring of five husky fighters, swords at the ready. In the middle, completely cut off from escape, Parleet was fighting for his life against three more. Fighting remarkably well, too — but he’d never make it without help. I considered shouting, deciding to save my breath, and started on down.

I’d gone five steps when Parleet’s blade took a particularly hard blow and shattered.

“Whehalken!” I snarled; but even as I said it I knew he couldn’t do anything. Dinn swords can create whirlwinds and illusions, but only when stationary. Running full tilt down a hill, I wouldn’t be able to stop in time for him to be able to help. Parleet was going to die.

Obviously, Parleet knew it, too. Dodging backwards, he snatched his prayer sticks from his belt. Even as one of his assailants stepped forward, sword swinging overhead toward him, Parleet struck the two sticks together in an X-shape — and suddenly a gleaming sword was in his hands.

I almost tripped over my own feet with surprise. Illusion was my first thought. But there was nothing illusory about the crash of metal as the swordsman’s blade disintegrated against Parleet’s; nor about the way the shimmering blade slashed horizontally, dropping the other to the ground in two pieces. The rest drew back with the shock of it... and someone spotted me.

Apparently they were shaken enough that even a lone reinforcement was too much for them. They dithered for a second and then broke, melting into the woods.

Parleet was still standing in the middle of the road when I reached him, his sword held in a sort of half-ready position. A reasonable precaution, I suppose, given the circumstances. Deliberately, I sheathed Whehalken. “Well met, Parleet,” I said, panting a little. “Are you hurt?”

The sword tip dropped just a bit I noticed that no blood had adhered to the blade. “No,” he told me. “Your appearance was most helpful. I am grateful.”

I shrugged. “Nothing to be grateful for — I was a few minutes too late to offer any real help. You heading to Isal?”

He nodded slowly, measureingly. “So am I,” I continued. “If you’d like, we could travel together.”

“Better,” he said cautiously. “The bandits will not return.”

“Then I do not know they were known so far west.”

“Really? I thought everyone had at least heard rumors about them.” That was probably an exaggeration, but not much of one. Symmyn’s Edges were just too good a story for most bards to pass up.

There were supposed to have been twelve of them in existence, the Master Wizard Symmyn having died — rather horribly — while creating the thirteenth. Owned currently by the royal house of Khidru, they were light, unbreakable, and sharp enough to cut almost anything with ease... but they could only use once a day, remaining in sword form for a period lasting from fifteen minutes to an hour, depending on the moon’s phase. The rest of the time each Edge existed simply as two ordinary-looking sticks about a hand in length. Whether Symmyn had intended them to have such limitations, or whether his magic simply hadn’t been capable of anything stronger, I didn’t know. As it was, an Edge was of only marginal use, little more than a weapon of last resort. But I’d just had a demonstration of how effective that last resort could be.

All this flashed through my mind along with an appreciation of Parleet’s dilemma. Before he could get to Isal his only sword would fall apart, useless until next sundown. My presence with him might ward off further attacks... but he had no guarantee I wouldn’t then kill him myself. Unfortunately for me, his safest chance would be to kill me right now and take Whehalken. Somehow, I had to convince him to take a chance on me.

Then my own sword took a hand. “Conakar, your lack of manners disgusts me sometimes,” Whehalken piped up. “Aren’t you ever going to introduce us?”

“Uh — sorry, Parleet, son of Hond, this is Whehalken, my dinn sword. Whose breeding is superior to none, of course.”

The sarcasm was wasted on both of them. Parleet was staring at the black hilt with frank astonishment, and Whehalken was waxing his usual eloquent about what an honor it was to meet someone so clearly high in the courts of
his people. Parleet, thankfully, cut him off before he could get really going 'Are you really a living spirit?' he asked, his voice not quite believing it.

"Yes — I've been locked inside this blade, which is actually pretty thin Con- akar, let him see how light I am."

Whehalken's judgment isn't perfect, but his instincts are usually pretty good. With my left hand I withdrew him, offering the hilt to Parleet. "Here — but let's hurry this up. I want to get to Isal before those friends of yours come back."

For maybe four heartbeats Parleet looked me in the eye, fingering Whehalken's hilt. Then he nodded, handed the djinn sword back to me, and reached down to retrieve the pack he'd dropped earlier. "Yes, let's go."

I sheathed Whehalken, and we headed off down the road.

* * *

Parleet turned out to be a much more interesting road companion than I'd expected. He'd been pretty tight-lipped during the card game, and it was only now that I discovered how well-educated and well-traveled he really was — less of a surprise, of course, now that I also knew he was of the royal house of Khidaw. We traded stories as we walked, tales of im- possible scrapes we'd managed to get out of. In the middle of my first story the Edge came quietly apart into its two sticks, which Parleet just quietly slipped back into his belt. I ignored the event, though I began keeping a sharper eye on the woods from then on. But we reached Isal without further incident.

Isal was a good-sized town, the major trading center of the Kagan Minaelas' demesne. I'd planned to buy a horse here, but I no longer had enough money to do so, and I had no intention of crossing the Haan Wilderness on foot. But solving that problem would have to wait; all I wanted now was some sleep. Parleet insisted on hiring private rooms for both of us at the first inn we came to. I was too tired to argue, and besides I figured I'd earned it by playing bodyguard for him. Barricading my door, I took off my cloak, boots, and Whehalken and fell across the bed. The bed was sturdy, and it survived.

It had been an hour or so before dawn when we arrived in Isal; by the time I woke it was mid-afternoon. I washed up in the basin provided, then went downstairs and devoured a huge meal. Parleet, I learned from the innkeeper, had left some time earlier after securing the location of the village smith's. In an effort to conserve my few remaining coins I offered to chop wood to pay for a couple days' more lodging and meals. The woodpile out back was well hidden from view, which enabled me to use Whehalken instead of the innkeeper's much duller ax. Whehalken objected to being used for something so mundane, but shut up when I reminded him about the card game, and did the rest of his sulking in silence.

Even so, the job took several hours, and it was nearly sundown when I took the axe back inside and went to find Parleet. He wasn't in his room; and a quick check showed that none of the staff had seen him since noon.

"I don't like it," Whehalken whispered to me as I stood outside the inn, looking both directions down the busy street. "I think something's happened to him."

"He's probably just looking around," I suggested... but I was getting a bad feeling about it myself. Parleet was carrying a small fortune in jewels, with — at best — a brand-new and untarned sword to defend himself with. If he hadn't made it as far as the smith's, he wouldn't have had even that much. "Still... what do you say we take a walk before dinner?"

"Now you're talking. Let's go."

I got directions to the swordsmith's and set off. I walked slowly, looking down crossroads and alleys for Parleet's distinctive clothing, while Whehalken reached out in his own way. We'd covered almost half the town, and the stars were bright overhead, when we finally found him.

He was at the end of a cul-de-sac behind a pile of garbage, invisible from the main street. His hands and feet were tightly trussed, the swelling in his fingers indicating he'd been that way for quite a while. Above the gag his eyes were dull and only semiconscious, the hair behind his right ear was matted with dried blood. Still fastened to his side were a new-looking sword and the neatly-sliced cords of a jewel pouch.

I got his gag off, and attacked the ropes with my dagger, and it was only then that I noticed what I should have seen right away.

The two sticks of the Symknyn's Edge were gone.

* * *

Parleet took the better part of the next day recovering — an amazing display of will power, given how eager he was to wreak some vengeance.

"I will get it back, Conakar," he told me late in the afternoon, after a practice session with his new sword. If his assailants had made one mistake, I decided, it was in leaving him in good enough shape to fight.

"That's going to be a good trick," I told him, "considering you don't even know who's got it."

"There are but two choices. The thieves must belong with those who attacked me on the road two days ago. No one else would know about my Edge, or risk a daylight attack to obtain it."

"I suppose so. And next you'll tell me that attack had to come from one of the others in our card game, right?"

He nodded. "Yes. Ezrh the brigand chiefman, or the Kagan's son Tormas."

"Fine. So which one was it?"

"I do not know. I may need to con- front both of them."

I shook my head. "That's crazy. You walk into either a brigand camp or a Kagan's court with an accusation like that and you probably won't come out alive — even if the person in question is completely innocent. Why don't you wait a few days, try to find some witnesses who can give you a clue?"

Parleet stared off to the east for a moment, then shook his head. "No. The
moon is waxing now. Every day I delay will give the thief that much more use of the Edge when I face him. But I thank you for your concern."

I sighed. But there was nothing more I could do.

"I can tell you who's got it," Wehalken said.

We both looked down at him. "Who?"

Parleet asked.

"First, a condition. You have to allow Conakar and me to go with you to get it back."

I blinked, but Parleet shook his head before I could speak. "I thank you, but I cannot allow you to risk yourselves for me."

"That's silly — and it's also suicide. I'm probably the only sword around that can take the Edge without breaking, you know. Or were you planning to try and dodge around the thief until the Edge comes apart?"

Parleet pursed his lips, then nodded reluctantly. "Very well, you may come. Now tell me who took it."

"And how did you find out?" I added.

"Simple logic," the djinn sword said. "Ask yourself this: why didn't they kill Parleet when they had the chance?"

"All right, why?"

"Because the murder of a foreign nobleman would cause such a stink that the Kagan Minacles would have to root out the culprit. But as things stand now, Parleet can't even ask the Kagan for help without revealing that it was a Symmkn's Edge that was stolen, which I'm sure he'd rather not do."

"But leaving him alive means they've got to worry about him trying to get it back himself," I argued. "I agree it would be stupid to kill him in Isli, but why couldn't they just get him quietly out of town and then kill him?"

"Aha!" Wehalken said, his tone that of a teacher to a dull student who has somehow managed to get the correct answer; anyway. "My point: A Kagan-son could have done it that way on such short notice, simply by sending him an invitation to visit the manor house. But a brigand couldn't."

Parleet straightened, his eyes glowing with new fire. "Do you know the location of Ezth's camp?" he asked Wehalken.

"No, but I can infer it. I can pick up the trail from the forest road."

"Tonight?" I asked with a sinking feeling.

"Tonight," Parleet nodded firmly.

***

The sentry was trying to stifle a yawn when Wehalken whispered in to stifle it forever, stabbing through his heart and half an inch into the tree behind him. Getting a grip on the dead man, I withdrew the blade and lowered him silently to the leaf-covered ground. Beyond him, just visible through the trees, was the light of muted campfires.

"Good-sized clearing ahead," Wehalken murmured. "Four or five men sitting around one of the fires. Tents around the edge — lots of men sleeping there."

"Second sentry shift, maybe?" I whispered to Parleet. "Our timing could've been better."

"I can handle them," Parleet hissed back coolly. "It wasn't that difficult, but we couldn't afford to be caught without a plan. Keeping one ear cocked for instructions from Wehalken, I started cautiously toward the campfire.

"We didn't make it.

"I don't know what kind of creature Parleet almost stepped on, but it made an incredible amount of noise getting out of the way — and the guards caught us flat-footed at the edge of the clearing. With a howl, they charged.

Parleet and I charged, too, and we all met with a clash of swords that temporarily drowned out the noise from the wakening camp. The guards didn't have a chance; seconds later we were running again toward the center of the clearing.

"Where is Ezth?" Parleet called to Wehalken.

"I drowned out the sword's answer."

"Later! For right now, get to the center!"

Parleet didn't argue. By the time I skidded to a halt there were easily a hundred men converging on our position, swords gleaming evilly... and they were exactly where I wanted them.

I waited until the closest was thirty feet away, and then raised Wehalken to a point over my head. "Wehalken, whirlwind!"

In a desert with lots of loose sand available, a djinn whirlwind can be devastating; here in the forest, it was still pretty effective. Standing back to back, Parleet and I were in the eye of a storm that literally blew the campfires out and tumbled the brigands helplessly around, pelting them with twigs and acoms moving fast enough to draw blood. Across the clearing, I could see by the light of the moon that all the tents were still standing, apparently just outside the wind's effective range. But that was all right — there shouldn't be anyone still in them.

And then, directly ahead, one of the tent flaps opened and a familiar figure emerged.

I didn't hesitate, but charged toward him at full speed, the whirlwind vanishing the second I moved. Ezth's men would be no trouble for a while, and I wanted to get the Edge back before that changed.

Ezth had guts, I'll give him that. He saw me running toward him, saw what had happened to his army, and he still held his ground instead of trying to escape. Drawing a jeweled sword that he'd probably stolen from a nobleman, he waited — and as I trotted into range, he twitched the sword abruptly and swung.

It was a crude blow, but one with a lot of brute force behind it. He'd probably broken a lot of his enemies' blades with it in the past... but none of those had been djinn swords. I gripped Wehalken's hilt with both hands and grunted with satisfaction as Ezth's sword shattered against him.

The brigand's eyes widened momentarily, but he didn't waste time in wonderment. Quick as a cat, his hands reached to opposite forearms and came out of the loose sleeves with two staves —

And the Symmkn's Edge was acing toward my neck.

I ducked, feeling it whistle over my head, and had Wehalken ready by the time Ezth brought it around again. As I braced for the blow, it suddenly occurred to me that if the Edge's magic came from a trapped spirit, Wehalken would be releasing it as soon as the blades made contact, ruining the Edge completely in the
process. I wondered how I would explain
that to Parlelt... and then it was too
late to worry about it. Our blades met-
The shock threw me two feet to the
time. Before I could regain my balance
Ezth was on me again, sword completely
unaffected.

I don’t know how long we fought, but it
seemed like forever. Ezth was a mad-
man, wielding the Edge with a strength
I’ve rarely seen even in master warlocks.
I was on the defensive right from the
beginning, consorting my own strength and
wishing I knew exactly how much time
remained before the Edge would come
apart. Perhaps even more urgently, I
needed to know what had happened to
Parlelt and what Ezth’s men were doing.
But I didn’t dare look away. Around and
around we went — and then I stepped
into a hole and fell heavily onto my right
ebrow.

Ezth was ready; indeed, he must have
purposely forced me into the proper area.

With a howl of triumph he raised the
Edge high — and barely got out of the
way as a sword seyzed toward his side.
It was Parlelt.

Ezth instantly switched from me to
the more immediate threat. His first
return blow broke Parlelt’s blade in half.
But it thrummed off balance, and, too
late, he saw Parlelt’s second sword. The
strategy was obvious, but risky: sacrifice
one blade to get the second into position
for a killing blow. But that blow had to
succeed, because there wouldn’t be an-
other chance — and as I watched, Parlelt
missed.

For the first time, Ezth actually smiled.
Small wonder... Parlelt would be dead in
two blows, and with my sword arm still
mumb’d be less effort than that. Raising
the Edge, he stepped forward —

And the Edge became two sinks.
The brigand didn’t waste any time. Be-
fore Parlelt could react, he dropped the
useless Edge and darted back into the
clearing. But he didn’t run far, by the
time Parlelt caught up with him he’d
found a sword and was waiting.

I got to my knees, shaking life into my
arm, and looked around for the rest of
Ezth’s men. But none of them seemed to
be on their feet yet... and suddenly I
realized what Parlelt had been doing while
fought Ezth. “He killed all of them?” I
muttered out loud.

“Just the ones that got up,” Whelah-
ken answered. “About twenty of them.
The rest are still unconscious.”

“Oh.” Reaching down I picked Whelah-
ken up — and as I did so a sudden
gleam in the grass caught my eye. A shiver-
ning sword blade... The Syrnkyn’s Edge.
I had to pick it up before I believed
my senses. But it had come apart — I’d
seen it —

Seem it

I looked down at Whelahken. “Cute.
Real cute.”

“You’re very quiet today,” I commen-
tated to Whelahken as I rode out of the
horse Parlelt had insisted on buying me.

“Just thinking about the Edge,” he said.

“Yeah Look, I’m sorry there weren’t
any trapped spirits there for you to free
— and I know that’s why you invited us
along with Parlelt, so don’t deny it. But
look at the bright side! If the Edges aren’t
trapped spirits, it means you won’t have
to waste time hunting for the other
eleven.”

“Sure.” He paused. “You know, Con-
akar, it’s kind of depressing. Syrnkyn
was probably the greatest wizard that
ever lived — and this is the best he
could do? That Edge wasn’t really any stronger
than I am, when it was useful at all. No
wonder most wizards would rather trap
spirits to do all their magic. I’m fighting
a losing battle.”

There was a sadness in his voice I’d
never heard before. And he was right; if
the Edge was the best non-spirit magic
possible, then wizards would keep on
trapping new spirits as fast as Whelahken
could free the old ones. “Well... I think of
it as a quest you won’t outgrow. A sort of
lifetime job.”

He snorted. “Conakar, do you have
any idea how long a djinn’s lifetime is?”

The rest of the journey was very quiet.
LOOK!
Up in the sky . . .

by Aaron Allston

The villainous Overlord, resplendent in gold-and-green power armor, rocketed up the access hole and snarled a curse at the superheroes who had invaded his complex. Lightrune, tongue held firmly in cheek, swung a solar-powered fist and sent his enemy plummeting back down the tube. Lightrune's counterpart and ally, DarKnight, jumped down after the villain...

Meanwhile, the teleporter Phosphore reappeared fifteen stories above the street outside, Overlord's ally Megan in his grip. "Someone's got to take da fall, baby, and it ain't going to be me," he misquoted cheerfully, and dropped her . . .

Meanwhile, ShadowWalker rounded the last corner of the complex's hallway, drew his .45, and sighted on the elevator from which the inevitable guards would soon begin to pour . . .

I. Origin

The superhero campaign of Champions which I run, which is successful enough that it's been thrown out of TSG playtest sessions (it was crowding out all the other games), began as an irritation. Steve Jackson came back from Ongnas with the news that some new company in California had nabbed the name Champions; I'd hoped to use Champions on a personal game project. I could review the Hero Games offering if I wished Wonderful.

Looking over the rulebook, though, I was impressed. The game appeared clear and coherent after a single read-through and seemed to faithfully simulate the four-color stuff of comic books. Extensive solo playtesting ensued immediately, with the heroic Lightbearers waging a running war with the criminal mastermind Overlord.

In the end, Overlord's mutiny-running scheme was wrecked; the Lightbearers disbanded, with one member dead and two others unwillingly allied with the villain, and I had chosen to run Champions on a regular basis. I turned the Lightbearers into NPCs, made their story a minor chapter of this world's superheroes, and began to create an "actual" campaign.

II. The World

Step One of making a campaign entertaining is creating a world the players will actually like on a continued basis. With multiplicity of worlds a common theme in comic books, I simply created another alternate Earth, with lots of familiar faces from the comics worlds. These ground rules came into effect:

1. Practically every superhuman who had ever appeared in Marvel, DC, Quality, Fawcett, and Street & Smith publications had appeared on this world.
2. Most of them had aged at a normal rate since the time they first appeared.
3. History would deviate at times from the history we know to reflect the presence of superheroes and supervillains.
4. The history of superheroes would occasionally veer in wildly different directions from the original comic books.

So, we have a world where VE day occurred in 1943, thanks to superhero intervention; where Doc Savage was responsible for the success of the Manhattan Project in 1945 and for the destruction of Sen. Joseph McCarthy's career years later; where almost all of the members of the Justice Society are retired or deceased; where Galactus tried to destroy the world in '65 and was slain, taking with him too many of New York's costumed champions; where the original Human Torch is champion of the Avengers; where the children of Patricia Savage operate the Savage Company from the 86th floor of the Empire State Building, where Gotham is a borough of New York, where the child of Superman and Mary Marvel patrols the skies of Chicago/Metropolis as a new Capitan Marvel; and so on.

Characters can face the likes of Dr. Doom, and struggle on a more personal level against the Big Brothers of H.P. Lovecraft and Operation: Wunderkind. Brilliantly written, vicious, and mostly spotless editorials spew forth from the office of the publisher of the Daily Bugle, S*T*A*R Labs and Stark International can be consulted on technological matters.

With a sense of familiarity established, the players were at ease in this world. But, with all the changes, they found it unsafe to rely on anything they saw in the comics.

III. The Characters

From the start, the potential for violence existed between player-characters. About half of the first batch of heroes were black-clad, weapon toting avengers of the night, while the others were relatively ordinary costumed folk. In true pulp tradition, the first group tended to kill villains, and the second group tended to rescue helpless civilians.

The first weeks of play saw more than one argument on the matter of bloodshed, with bitterness growing between characters. Not so between the players — they enjoyed the clashes hugely, as the antagonists drew sides and even-thinking bullet-proof heroes stood in the middle. Would Phosphore try to hit Shiva again? Would Shiva tear Phosphore's heart out? Did Ninja mind-dragging in the grip of the pacifist Shadowfox's telekinesis? Stick around for next issue!

Within ten or so episodes, nearly twenty heroes had debuted within the hero-team
The regulars from the early Strike Force adventures included (left to right):

Swashbuckler,
Napalm,
Phosphene,
Lightnie,
ShadowWalker (rear),
Pinchus (foreground),
Samiel (rear),
Lorelei (foreground),
Ninja, and
Shiva.

\[\text{R.I.P.}\]

Strike Force:
ShadowWalker – dark-clad stalk of the night.
Swashbuckler – romantic guardian of Gotham’s streets.
Lightnie – solar hero, with command over light.
Phosphene – tough-talking teleporter.
Shiva – martial artist, presumed a part-time assassin.
Napalm – pyrokineastic master of flame (later killed in action).
Lorelei – born with her namesake’s ability to enthral.
Samuel – shapeshifter, a 6’9” beauty from another world.
Vladmir – professionally nondescript master spy.
Ninja – death-dealing high priest of Bruce Lee.
Ichiban – Japanese sorcerer and successor to a proud tradition.
Bolo – power-armored clad hero.
Man-O-War – frontline fighter, vicious in hand-to-hand combat.
Pinchus – diminutive but mighty alien.
Red Archer – sorcerous bowmen from another plane.
NightMist – half-undead and totally confused hero.
Cygnus – street punk with one difference: powerful black-feathered wings.
DarkKnight – disgruntled but immensely strong champion.
Shadowfox – subtle spy and electronics genius.

IV. The Problems

The difficulties the GM encounters in a Champions campaign are not like those of other RPGs. Keeping players in character is no difficulty; most are delighted with their roles. Divergent goals don’t crop up too often, as most characters are in the rackets for the same reasons: to fight crime and to look spiffy.

Disorganization can be a problem among characters. The early adventures of Strike Force didn’t read much like a normal hero-team comic book. Strike Force initially started out as an unnamed non-team with an unfixed cast of regulars, no team equipment, and no headquarters other than a Newark apartment rented by one character.

The GM can easily counter such a situation — by introducing an experienced “patron” hero, complete with HQ and equipment, or letting one of the characters start out as a multimillionaire — but he doesn’t have to.

Watching the characters charge out of their temporary HQ, only to realize they didn’t have enough mobility to get to Manhattan, was a kick. An even bigger kick was the sight of these heroes standing on a Newark street corner, arguing heatedly about whether to take the subway, a bus, or a cab. (Ultimately, one of the less civic-minded characters slipped away from the argument, stole a bus, and chauffeured the bemused heroes to their goal. Then he left the keys accessible and the bus was stolen from him. It’s a rough life.)

Over the next few weeks a fascinating shaking-down process occurred. The cast of characters evened out and became more regular. After one adventure, when a telepathic character nearly burned himself out trying to keep the others in communication, the heroes developed small, short-range radios. In their next adventure, they “liberated” a helicopter from the bad guys, and in the adventure after that they surreptitiously purchased a Long Island scrapyard for their headquarters.

Watching the heroes struggle to establish themselves and learn to compete with the “big boy” hero groups was entertaining. It would have been simpler to give them a wealthy sponsor, but this way the characters know that they’ve earned what they have.

The primary difficulty in the game, though, lies in creating adventures where all the heroes can participate. Early adventures in the Strike Force campaign tended to veer too far in one direction or another. When the heroes skulked in murky dens and alleys, ShadowWalker could sink confidently ahead, while Lightnie stumbled along, hoping he wouldn’t accidentally blow. Conversely, when all the action took place in a free-wheeling underwater battle, Lightnie was having a field day while ShadowWalker piloted the helicopter and chewed his knuckles.

Subsequent adventures have consisted
of multiple encounters, with all characters being able to participate in most. Extended stories with many types of actions and situations tend to allow all characters to exhibit their varied abilities. It's harder work for the GM than a generic bank holdup, but it's more interesting, too.

V. Components

Although the game only requires paper, dice, and a tactical hex-grid layout or ruler, most of the players involved tended to prefer miniatures to counters. The night of Strike Force's first adventure, standard Cardboard Heroes were used to represent the characters. Faced, during the next week, with the unavailability of superhero lead miniatures in Austin, I set out to modify the Cardboard Heroes into something more appropriate.

It turned out to be somewhat easier than expected. To transform a fantasy-oriented cardboard miniature into a superhero takes only four steps. (1) Shaving, (2) outlining, (3) re-coloring, and (4) coating.

Take a Hero which, in stance, build, and cloth, somewhat resembles the character you wish to represent. Using an X-ACTO, carefully scrape away all parts of the figure which are not correct for the hero, leaving the figure's outlines intact.

Scraping off the outer color, naturally enough, turns the scraped sections white, and also roughs up the cardboard so that it will better take new ink. With a very fine-point pen, ink in the costume motifs necessary for the character; then, with colored felt-tips or crayons, color in the costume. Given that crayons tend to smear and that players tend to spill coke, you can laminate the hero with wide tape or any sort of laminating plastic.

So far, the heroes which have adapted best to superheroes have been. (Set 1) Barbarian (sans axe), Barbarian Woman (sans sword), Martial Artist, and Assassin, (Set 2) Tavernkeeper (minus mug), Strangler, and Bushwhacker (sans crossbow). It's fairly easy to get rid of all that extraneous equipment; simply scrape the area white and re-ink the anatomy underneath.

Ultimately, Steve, who had played in the campaign (he was Ninja) and had been attracted to the idea of Cardboard (Super)Heroes, decided to publish some.

These new Heroes appear under FGU's Villains & Vigilantes mark, and will carry GameMaster's Superhero 2047 label by arrangement with Lou Zocchi, but are also appropriate for Champions. The techniques listed for altering them can also be used if a figure needs to resemble more closely the character it represents.

VI. Other Campaigns

Just within the group playing in the Strike Force campaign, four other players have decided to run campaigns set up on the same alternate world. The Dread-Knights, based in Dallas, have already had several adventures. Westguard, the hero team of San Francisco, has premiered. By press time, groups in Chicago and Quebec will also have debuted. Although the rulebooks took quite a while to get to Austin, once they did arrive they began to sell quickly. It appears that the game will spread like the plague, and deservedly so.

DarkKnight missed utterly as the Overlord twisted nimbly aside; the powerful hero ineptly fell two stories to crash on a concrete garage floor. Overlord rocketed up again through the access hatch and casually pounded Lightning into a wall . . .

Outside, Megan impacted loudly on the asphalt street, stood up unhurt, and glared at Phosphene... Meanwhile, ShadowWalker drew a careful bead on the first guard to emerge from the elevator, fired, and missed by a country mile...

Will Our Heroes conquer their own clumsiness in time to defeat Overlord's minions? Of course. But come back for next issue...

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We put reality into every move you make.
The Balrog and the Finger of Death

by W. G. Armintrout

Last week I hosted an evening of dungeon adventuring at my place. I had everything on hand that an up-to-date gamemaster needs — a pre-written adventure book, carefully painted miniatures, a plastic dungeon map on which to set up the combat situations, everything that the local group can afford to buy. When we started out I read the introduction straight from the book (perhaps I droned a little bit, but it was only the second time I'd looked at the adventure). If combat was called for, I'd whip out my plastic map, stick stone pillars and unopened chests and marauding monsters just where the "x"s were in the maps in the book, and say, "OK, here's the room and what do you guys want to do?" The most impressive part of the whole evening was when I dropped down the two-inch red-painted lead figure in the doorway, and said, "Look out, it's a balrog!"

That's what happened last week. Now I want to tell you about an adventure I took part in a long, long time ago — back when role-playing was brand-new and D&D wasn't sold by Sears and J.C. Penneys. These were paper and pencil days. Miniatures were being made, but nobody I knew owned any because no store sold them locally and they weren't the sort of thing you bought "sight unseen" by mail order. Supplemental and solo dungeons hadn't been invented. The rules we played were primitive, combat systems were a joke, and the dungeon master was both moderator and game designer when new rules needed to be invented on the spot. None of this kept us from playing. In fact, we were on a fantastic lucky streak — all of us had characters nearing godhood, with magical artifacts and awesome weapons and incredible spells... so the DM decided to create one last vast and horrible dungeon that would test our mettle and (the DM hoped) kill us all off.

The scene of our last romp was an ancient and deserted temple about which many strange rumors were afloat. The local villagers called upon their lords and princes to investigate — and, since the lords and princes were our player characters, we agreed to help out. At first the adventure was anti-climactic; we slew a few hundred monsters and penetrated to the innermost hall of the temple. Then things got exciting.

First came the enraged army of berserking orcs. The sheer numbers of the assault formed the problem — we came out alive, but many followers lay dead and the pack mule expired. Then came the two evil high priests and their wolfpack; a hard-fought contest but we survived. "Is that all you can throw at us?" we jeered out loud.

The lights went out, and two balrogs entered the room. Now I doubt I can do justice to the experience, but it is all engraved in my memory — the way the creatures looked, and walked, and fought us in the swirling darkness. Suffice it to say that we almost died, but didn't, and that the one blow that saved us all — like a home run in the bottom of the ninth — was an incredibly weak little Finger of Death that shouldn't have worked but did.

To this day, whenever my old comrades from that old adventure meet again, we slap each others' backs, and recall the time that (and we start to laugh and people stare) we killed the balrog with a finger of death!

So what's the point of these stories? Simply this: last week we pushed around some lead figures on a plastic map and played a game in a dungeon, but against those balrogs many years ago I had an adventure! One was just a game, the other was an experience.

The difference lies in the very nature of role-playing games. A wargame is a contest involving cardboard squares on a paper map; if you win, you jump up and down and say, "Beat you, sucker!" A role-playing game is a different kettle of fish. It is very personal — "I am in a dungeon!" — and all of the real fun takes place inside the players' minds and not on any gameboard. Afterwards, if you survive, you have a sigh of relief and say, "Gosh, I didn't think we were going to make it!"

It's a matter of imagination. A role-playing game is good to the degree that the game, the gamemaster, and the players work together to make themselves create a "reality" within their heads.

Let's talk specific problems and solutions:

1. Miniatures. I've got to tell you, I love these little painted lead figures. But miniatures, along with all of the new accessories — dungeon tiles, treasure sets, ad infinitum — form a peril for the role-player. They are a potential hindrance to the imagination. Too often a gamemaster will whip out his plastic map, spread out the figures and walls and chests on the map, and say, "Here she is, boys, go to work! Look at that horrible red two-inch figure — it's a balrog!"

The problem is that players play the game at the level it is presented to them. The imagination is lazy — if you tell them that some tiny figure is a balrog it will dutifully believe you. That robs the players of the opportunity to really experience a balrog — by having to create and imagine it in their heads.
To have a great experience, you’ve got to force yourself to visualize the situation. That will create an intensity you can’t get by looking at a map and pretty counters. The question each gamemaster must ask himself is: Should I get rid of all the miniatures, or merely use them more sparingly? Players must find out for themselves if they can work around the miniatures, or if they get in the way of the imagination.

2. Combat Situations. There have been great advances in combat systems for role-playing games. Most are played on tabletop maps of some kind, and use either wargame-like counters or some kind of miniatures. Some games go to great detail to list weapons and their uses, along with sometimes convoluted systems for handling fatigue, dexterity penalties and wounds. There is danger here — a danger of getting too complicated.

All you really need for an FRP is a combat system the players believe in and understand. The awful rules I started with a few years back got us through without horrible problems, despite their lack of detail, because we were seeing the adventure in our minds’ eyes. In my mind I was experiencing the trading of harsh blows, and I didn’t need any “+4 DX” reminders to give me the thrill of battle.

The new combat systems are an improvement as long as they don’t get in the way of the real purpose of the game. The point is to have an adventure, not to come up with miniature rules to simulate Hannibal crossing the Alps. When does a combat system go too far?

Last week, the combat system dominated the whole experience. Players were more concerned about that attack from the rear and the special ability of pike weapons than they were about the wonder of the adventure.

The solution depends on what trade-offs you want to make between gaming and role-playing. I would not be adverse to hedging the combat map from everyone but the gamemaster — which allows the GM to know specifically what is going on, but forces the players to role-play and imagine instead of working on the best attack odds.

3. Supplements. I shouldn’t pick on supplements alone, because they are only part of the same problem that is afflicting a lot of us gamemasters today. We are becoming referees when we’re supposed to be storytellers.

A referee is a fellow who tonelessly reads everything out of some book, and pleads “Beats me,” whenever the book leaves him in an unexplained crisis. He is an unimaginative role-playing anchorman.

A GM should really be a storyteller. It is his purpose to provide the atmosphere to the adventure — to place moss on the walls, expressions on the monsters’ faces, and tension throughout the hostile underground. He is supposed to be describing things in such a way that players will see for themselves just where they are and what is happening. He should be welcoming you to his world, or at least to a pre-packaged world in which he has taken the time to master and understand — he’s not supposed to be a tour guide in a land he’s only skinned through once or twice.

In Summary:
1. Miniatures should be used in a way that fosters the use of the imagination, not to replace the imagination.
2. Combat systems should aid the flow of the game, but they shouldn’t become more important than role-playing.
3. Gamemasters must learn to create and explain their own special worlds, rather than just throwing bare bones explanations (“Here’s a room”) at their players.

My concern is that we need to watch what we’re doing, so that we know when we are creating a fantasy adventure and when we are merely playing a game. The difference lies in how well we manage to put our imaginations to work.

---

**CATACOMBS OF CHAOS**

You, Madben, leader of a party of six brave adventurers, step through the north portal of your eerie tower. There is a dark, shimmering light. The hall ahead is filled with fumes. Suddenly you find yourself in another room. As your party enters this large grim dank catacomb, they see the north wall is made of living stone. There is a strange creature with a bony head made of red gems. Suddenly from behind the statue leaps an awful shout! As one of your group draws their swords, battle for glory and riches in the CATACOMBS OF CHAOS!

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The Shattered Alliance
by David Bolduc

The Shattered Alliance, from Strategic Simulations, Inc., is far and away the best attempt I have seen to bring boardgames to the computer hobbyist's CRT. Available for the Apple II, it represents a significant advance in computer gaming.

Game Sequence

The key word here is speed. Those of you who have played Strategic Simulations' games are no doubt familiar with the excessive lengths of time that can be spent waiting for the computer to process a turn, or to make its move if you are playing a solitaire game. What Strategic Simulations has done with THE SHATTERED ALLIANCE is to cut down that time drastically -- to the point where games can be played quickly and without long, boring waits for something to happen. Another significant development is what Strategic Simulations calls its "Rapidfire" game system. In "Rapidfire," the game, rather than being divided into turns, is divided into "time points." Each unit uses a specified number of time points to perform an action, and will move again after that many time points have passed. The result is a semi-simultaneous movement system, in which you might move one unit, your opponent moves two, then you might move two or three before your opponent has a chance to move again. Because of the staggered movement, only two units fight at a given time. Attack and defense strength are computed for each unit, and losses take place immediately. Combat factors are based on the strengths, armor, and armament of each side as well as the tactical situation of the attacker. All of these are combined with a random number and combat is resolved.

The Shattered Alliance is a tactical level pre-gunpowder (i.e., swords and sorcery) combat game; it is based on the designer's experience playing ancient miniatures using the Wargames Research Group rules. Each player takes one side in a battle, or one player can choose either side and play against the computer. Once the game diskette is booted, the player may choose between playing a new game, restarting an old game, and creating a new scenario. If he chooses to play a new game, he is given a choice between one of four fantasy scenarios or one of four "historical" scenarios. The computer then displays both armies on the screen one at a time, showing each unit type, training class, weaponry, and numerical strength. The players then choose sides, in the solitaire game, the computer is assigned one side to play.

Display

There are two possible ways to display the map on which combat occurs -- the strategic and tactical displays. The strategic display shows the entire field of play, but does not show the hexagonal spaces into which the field of play is divided. The result is that movement direction and range (for fire combat) are difficult to calculate until one becomes familiar with the game. The tactical display, on the other hand, shows the hexes, but only shows a small portion of the field of play, and is further cluttered by a small strategic display which is difficult to see and on which it is almost impossible to distinguish units. It is possible to shift the tactical display, but this can only be done by leaving it. If you do this, or if you wish to see the strategic display in order to be able to tell where all the units are, it is difficult to return to the same tactical display area, as the computer does not remember where you had it. This is a serious shortcoming, which I hope SSI will remedy in the future, but is the only really major one in the game.

Movement of units is quite simple. One merely chooses a movement direction, expressed as a number from 1 to 6 (a chart on the displays shows these), and the unit moves. Movement costs vary both with terrain and type of unit, and the system seems quite well-designed. Another new wrinkle here is the limited amount of time each player may take for a move, which is set at the beginning of the game and keeps the play moving. A player must make up his mind or lose his opportunity to move. Six types of terrain, which affect movement and combat, are provided.

Two types of combat are possible -- both melee and fire combat. Six different melee weapons and three missile weapons (with different ranges for each missile weapon) are available. Both types of combat are controlled in much the same way as movement, and results are almost instantaneous. The player may choose to have a detailed description of combat displayed, showing combat and tactical factors for both units, as well as numerical strength, losses, and the results of combat on the morale of the units involved in the combat.

A note of caution here -- since the units represented are of widely varying sizes, and are affected by attrition, it is important to keep track of both the size of your units and of your opponents. A couple of attacks at 1 to 10 odds will teach you this.) Losses from combat lower the effective strength of the units (expressed in numbers of warriors), and occur from every combat -- whether attacking or defending. (Even units subject to missile fire will return fire if they can.) Each victory or defeat has an effect.
on the morale of the units involved as well. There appears to be a defect in the line of sight rules for fire combat. In some situations unit A may fire at unit B, while unit B is told that its line of sight is blocked. This situation arises infrequently, but can be frustrating.

This brings us to the morale system, which is another significant advance. There are two levels of morale used in the game — unit morale and army morale. Unit morale is affected by: Barmore, Lassell, battles won and lost, a unit's training level, and the presence of friendly and enemy units. A unit undergoes a morale check when it attacks after moving, or when a friendly unit within three hexes routes. Depending on the results of the morale check, a unit may fall its orders, halt and refuse to move, or rout.

The last two can be extremely disconcerting and affect play drastically, as a player watches his control over his army melt away. Army morale is affected by winning and losing battles, routing units, and the destruction of units. When an army's morale level reaches zero, the battle ends. This adds a new dimension to gaming and makes the game more realistic and, I believe, more enjoyable. The only complaint I have with this system is that the rout moves are not always away from enemy units, and in fact can be in their direction. I also have the feeling (paranoid, I'll admit, and probably totally unfounded) that the computer as a solitary opponent routes your units so it can win.

In fact, the computer makes a fair opponent, although it is to some extent predictable. For instance, it almost always attempts to take advantage of the rule which permits a unit to initiate fire combat and move in the same turn by moving up its cavalry units, firing, and moving away, since they move at a faster pace than the infantry units. On the whole, it's fun to play against, and plays fairly quickly, although it consistently goes over the time limits set early in the game. However, it is much faster than the computer opponent in the other SSI games I've seen and does not slow up the game to the point of boredom. I'll bet it beats you the first couple of times you play it.

Magic

The final element in the game is magic. In some scenarios, each player is allowed the use of a limited number of spells — Edge Enhancer, Shield, Haste, and Courage — which increase his troops' capabilities for limited periods of time, and add a little unpredictability to the scenarios.

The rulebook is fairly well done, although encumbered by the fact that there are actually only 7 pages of rules in a 15-page rulebook. The rulebook goes on at great length about the "Chronicles of Os-goroth," the historical setting for the fantasy scenarios. A serious problem is the almost endless errata which are contained on the diskette. This shows sloppy preparation and is nowhere near as useful as printed errata which can be referred to during a game. I hope SSI will reprint their rulebook to take care of this problem. In this vein, the novice player will probably find the sample game that is played out on the CRT and the introductory scenario more helpful than the rulebook or the reference cards which are included. The prompts and error messages displayed during play are quite useful and are a nice touch.

I'd recommend this game heartily to anyone with an Apple II. It's loads of fun to play, semi-addictive ("I'll beat that 14% & *% computer next time, I know I will!") and fast. Despite the problems with the rules, it represents a significant advance in computer gaming and is well worth the investment.

THE SHATTERED ALLIANCE (SSI); $39.95; 48K disk for the Apple. 1 or 2 players, playing time 1-2 hours. Published 1981.

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The Name of the Game Is Compromise
by Leo Christopherson

Well, no. Actually the name of the game is The Voyage of the Valkyrie. However, I believe that compromise is a word that describes the game of programming games. I have yet to find a computer on which I can do the kind of animated graphics I really want to do. In the meantime, I have grown to appreciate the meaning of the word compromise. To explain, let me give you a compromised history of the game Valkyrie.

Valkyrie began with a suggestion that I write a TRS-80 version of Space Invaders. The idea was to include some of my animated graphics to make the game more unique. But, as I began to think about the idea, I found that I just didn’t want to write another one of those Space Invaders programs. So I decided to switch the idea around and make the player be the invader. The player must capture something back from the aliens to win.

With that idea in mind, I next began to look for some sort of character to represent the aliens. “Let’s see,” I said to myself, “how about those armed troopers that would jump in from the sides to the screen and move forward and back as they shot at the player?” No, that would probably require a higher resolution graphics than that available on the TRS-80. I had already come to my first compromise. The TRS-80 has what I call medium resolution graphics. That means a great deal of work goes into finding graphics characters that convey the effect I’m after. Many things simply are not possible.

After a few more false starts, I came to the idea of bird-like creatures. They would have the advantage of being able to move all over the screen and would thus provide better targets than foot soldiers. It seemed to me that the flapping of wings would be a rather interesting sort of animation to try.

“Very well,” I decided, “bird creatures it is!”

Now I began to make the drawings for all of the various positions that would be needed to represent the birds in flight. I needed to keep it down to as few as possible in order to conserve memory. Here is another compromise. Since I wanted the program to come to as many TRS-80 owners as possible, I had to make it run on the basic 16K machine. Otherwise, I’d end up writing a different version for each TRS-80 configuration. I finally settled on fifteen positions: five front views, five right side views, and five left side views.

Next came one of the most exciting parts of programming for me. I put the graphics data into the TRS-80 and added some test lines to animate a bird. It was a thrill for me to see one of those doggone little guys flapping around the screen! At that point I felt that I actually had the start of something good.

“Good enough,” I decided, “fifteen data arrays will do.”

“Imagine it,” I told myself, “a whole screen full of birds moving every which-a-way.” Something like that would be interesting just to watch, be it part of a game or not!

So I set up the program to run nine birds and ran right into another problem. The birds moved so slowly that they became much too jerky in their movements. I cut back the number of birds. The computer could handle up to four birds well enough, five maybe marginally, but no more. This compromise involved the
Operating speed of the Z-80 balanced against the amount of graphics to be dumped to the screen and the amount of computation needed to change each bird's position. I couldn't seem to find a faster way to do the job.

"OK, OK, for God's sake," I decided, "I'll settle for a maximum of four birds."

By this time I knew that I wanted the game to involve going from one place to another, searching for castles where the birds would be found. "This is going to be sort of like an adventure game," I figured. "There will be thirty or forty castles to be found!" But this plan was thwarted both by the size of the memory and by the amount of information that can be displayed at one time on the screen. For the game to play smoothly, I wanted all castles' names to appear on the screen at once, along with information about the status of the game.

"Well, what the hell," I decided, "I guess ten castles should be plenty, at that."

I suppose you get the idea by now. There were compromises when I set up the part where the birds fly at the player. There were compromises when I set up the part where the player fires at the birds. Here, it was mostly a matter of running speed. Every addition to the program now caused it to run a little bit slower.

As the game neared completion, the major problem became memory space. The selections from Wagner were added. I felt that such music in a program like this one gave the program a lot of class, made it well-rounded.

The game was finally done. I turned it over to my students at school for playtesting. The inevitable bugs turned up but were quickly exterminated. Watching the kids play the game indicated to me that the game was a good one.

**Conversion to Apple**

The next step was to write a version of Valkyne for the Apple computer. I suppose most people would say, "Since the Apple has high-res color graphics and lots of memory to work with (most Apple owners seem to have 48K machines with disk drives), it should be a cinch to write Valkyne on that machine." But I had written high-res color graphics for the Apple before and I knew that just wasn't so.

One of the first problems one comes up against is the much greater amount of memory needed for high-res. One can fill the TRS-80 screen by dumping about 1000 bytes to it. The Apple takes about 8000. Not only does this mean lots more memory space is required to store graphics, but lots more time is involved in dumping it to the screen memory.

My kind of graphics is called "cartoon graphics." The usual Apple shape table approach is not suited to this type of graphics. So I worked out the fastest way I could find to put graphics directly from memory to the screen. I knew that it would really have to be fast in order to counter the slowing effect of high-res. Then, pattemming them after the TRS-80 versions, I drew up the fifteen bird positions.

My troubles started when I put the first front view on the screen, using only white for color. In high-res, the bird had color splodges and odd-colored edges, though on the black and white monitor, the bird looked about as I had planned. I understood the problem; I had had to deal with it before. The Apple uses a rather odd "7-bits-to-a-byte" color code. But also, it uses 2 bits to define a color. This causes all sorts of problems when one wants certain colors to be very close to certain other colors. Some combinations are simply impossible. I'm not trying to explain why this happens. I just bring it up as an example of still another area of compromise.

In order to get stable graphics and color, I needed to use two bits per graphic dot on the screen. That meant the horizontal resolution was now 140, rather than 280. (That's not a whole lot better than the TRS-80's horizontal resolution of 128, by the way.) This, in turn, meant cutting back on the vertical resolution so that the figures on the screen wouldn't look all "punched up" vertically.

"Very well," I decided, "I'll have to use less than the highest resolution. But this will still give much better vertical resolution than the TRS 80 has."

My next step was the fun one. I animated one bird and prayed that I had found enough ways to speed things up to counteract the high-res problems. I had! That little fellow zoomed around the screen like a hummingbird, wings almost a blur!

But could the Apple control at least four birds quickly enough? Yes, it could, with room to spare! Great!

**Dumping Color**

However, by the time I began to add background, it was apparent that four birds should still be the maximum number. No problem.

"Good enough," I decided, "the program is still at least as good as the TRS-80 version."

So far, the birds and the background castle were white; no color yet. Now I modified things to add color and was dismayed at the result: The whole thing looked pretty bad on a black and white monitor, but then most people buying the game would be using color sets, I presumed. But there were nasty things happening on the color screen, too.

For example, when a bird figure moved one byte to the left or right, it changed to another color! Well, of course, I had seen that before, too. It meant that I would have to have an "even byte" version and a completely separate "odd byte" version of all fifteen bird arrays — a total of thirty arrays! That's double the bird memory requirements.

Not only that, but there were problems at the edges of the colored figures. They didn't quite always start or end where I had planned for them to. This problem results from that "7-bits-to-a-byte" business. The effect was that the birds' edges moved in and out as they flew. Have you ever seen a bird breathe with its head? Well, even if they are aliens, that's going too far for me!

Another truly ghastly effect of adding color occurred when a bird crossed over a castle or across another bird. The color bit patterns really got tangled up there! The whole overlap area became a technicolor nightmare.

It became obvious that Valkyne as I knew it wouldn't be possible on the Apple with color. Do I sacrifice color, or do I give up having four birds that can move freely throughout the screen? Having the birds and background in white would solve all these color difficulties and also save memory space.

"Alright, already," I decided, "who
The Graphics Finch

The next important compromise centered around the amount of memory available in a 48K disk Apple. One might think that a 48K Apple has to have much more user memory space than the 16K TRS-80. It's not as good as it looks at first. In fact I've found that they're pretty close to being equivalent in this respect. The TRS-80 has its screen memory set apart from user memory. Not so, the Apple. The Apple's high-res memory is generated from 8K of user memory. To make matters worse, animation can require the programmer to use both high-res memory areas in the Apple. That's 16K gone from the user memory! And then there's the disk operating system. That takes about 10K more. About 2K at the start of the memory is gone for "housekeeping." So we have about 20K left. But wait, remember graphics in high-res take more memory space to store. So, as I say, I find the two machines roughly equivalent when it comes to user memory space.

Would I be able to get the program to run quickly without the loading-from-disk delays that occur in so many large scale Apple adventure programs? I needed to allow the player to travel quickly from place to place. It had to think of having to load the graphics data for each new background from disk every time one moved to a new location. And yet, a high-res background could require so much memory (up to 8K each) that the data for all sixty locations couldn't possibly be stored in the machine at once.

The problem was to try to store the castles' data in the machine in arrays as small as possible, and then to work up some way to generate a variety of backgrounds from a certain few background data arrays. My answer was to develop a way to add more extra horizontal lines for each data array horizontal line. Thus, a high-res mountain background could be drawn as if far away, or closer, depending upon the added number of horizontal repeated lines. The unfortunate effect of this was to make the mountains appear to be less and less high-res the more the vertical magnification. But I figured I could live with this compromise since it saved space, gave me more variety per array, and made the program play faster.

"So, what the hell," I decided, "these background areas are not where the action usually happens, anyway. Most players will be moving quickly through these locations looking for birds and castles."

Though more compromises were necessary, I did, at last, finish the program for the Apple. It included some features not possible on the TRS-80: game paddle or joystick control, the ability to save a game to disk, stereo sound output using the tape out as well as the Apple's own speaker out, and a few other lesser touchstones to enhance playing the game.

I am pleased with the final results. I have a real time game which plays fast and gives arcade action with an adventure background.

Conclusion

I have purposely given the impression of increasing frustration as the two versions of the game were developed. There's no doubt that programming can be very frustrating! But, in fact, I think that it is this very sort of thing that keeps me doing it. I enjoy the challenge! I have found that if I am willing to compromise, I can always end up with a program fairly close to what I envisioned at the start. Some people ask me why I would bother to write for the TRS-80 with its poorer graphic capabilities. Well, it's the challenge, you see!

"Thank God," I decided, "I've finished another game!"

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STORM

by William H. & J. Andrew Keith

In "Flare Star" (December, 1981), adventurers discovered a derelict alien ship, crewed only by corpses of two radically different alien races. Lacking jump drive, the ship had apparently travelled below lightspeed to reach the unsettled double star system where it was found. The ship used advanced technology—fusion power and gravity drives—but had no computers or other microelectronics components on board.

A clue from the ship's lighting system pointed to a nearby blue-white sun as the home of the vessel's builders, Caledon Ventures, a mercantile firm, sensing profits in the chance of selling computer systems to the aliens. The adventurers, a trade pioneer team in Caledon's employ, have been sent to investigate the system and discover the feasibility of contacting—and selling to—the shipbuilders.

Referee's note: The star, a blue-white giant, is a young, hot star with a single planet—possibly captured—in an eccentric orbit. The planet has been named "Storm" as a result of the unusual number and violence of severe weather patterns observed from orbit. Planetary code for the world is currently E774800. Information on physical aspects of the UFF are available to players.

This folio adventure is designed for characters of almost any background attached to a Trade Pioneer Team aboard the Type A2 Far Trader Scotican Huntress, beyond a ridge that rose some 30 km to the east. The team, including two expedition scientists, set out to investigate the ship's air/raft, hoping to make contact with friendly natives.

The ridge. On the crest overlooking a wide, shallow valley, the adventurers discovered buildings surrounded by a low wall. The buildings commanded a view of the valley proper, and the alien city that stood there. A pall of black smoke rose from countless fires burning uncontrolled among the city buildings. Beyond, half hidden by the smoke, they glimpsed a huge, squat shape looming on a cliff, a massive, brooding structure with the look of a fortress or mausoleum.

An urgent call from the ship interrupted speculation and discussion among the party. The air/raft was needed to move heavy equipment at the ship. But the expedition xenologist had discovered two domestic animals—the first species of native animal life found on Storm—in a "stable" among the cluster of buildings. Much could be learned here . . . so the team leader made a decision. The air/raft pilot returned to the ship, leaving the rest of the team to assist the scientists in investigating the buildings and the two animals. Later, the air/raft could return.

Before long, everyone in the party would regret that decision . . .

Referee's Notes

The buildings. The floor plan shows the layout of the small complex of buildings on the ridge. The largest building contains various implements and furnishings that lead to the conclusion that it is a dwelling. Furniture—half meter tall
The Alien "Farm"

- Low stone wall
- Niche in wall .5 to 1 meter above ground

The aliens are a mob, without clear organization or leadership. They carry clubs, crude spears, rocks, and torches. Attempts to communicate with them will fail; they are interested in nothing but destruction and finding food — anything living. They will attack the party at the farm by rushing the buildings or by setting fire to them. Captured or killed adventurers will be dragged off and eaten.

Attacks are made in waves, consisting of 5x10 natives in each wave. Before each wave attacks, the referee rolls 1d5 to determine the number of casualties they will take before fleeing. Once they have fled, they will reorganize for another attack 1d hours later. During this period, players will be able to move around the farm area, but if an attempt to escape cross-country will be met by renewed assaults.

For game purposes, assume an unlimited supply of aliens (several hundred). These will continue to attack until they win, or the adventurers are rescued by the air/raft.

The animals. Within hours of being discovered (before the first native attack), the two animals found in the stable will become sick, lying on their sides, panting, and licking at a number of basketball-sized swellings developing on their bodies. The expedition xenologist will venture the opinion that they are suffering from some parasitical disease, but can do nothing to help them. Eighteen hours after the sickness develops, they die within minutes of each other. The swellings, though, continue to grow. If one is opened, a slender, B-legged animal will be discovered within, snake-thin, with a toothy mouth with which it is busy eating its way out of the larger creature.

Four hours after the animals die, ten swellings on each carcass burst, releasing a total of 20 animals (less any released previously). Each is .5 meter long and quite vicious, attacking the nearest available adventurer, and continuing to attack until it is dead.

After careful study of both life forms, the xenologist will conclude that the two are actually the same species, in adult and juvenile forms. An as-yet-unknown trigger causes the growth of the offspring as buds within an animal. The adult eventually dies, furnishing food for the young as they emerge. The two forms are different enough to suggest that some unknown stimulus eventually causes a metamorphosis from juvenile to adult.

Conditions on Storm. Breathing masks must be worn at all times. Other equipment may be selected from the ship's locker before the adventure begins. The referee should decide what gear can be carried, based on the needs of the adventure and the experience of the group.

Short, violent storms are the chief natural danger on Storm. They may appear at almost any time (at the referee's discretion) with about 5d minutes' notice. When a storm hits, visibility is reduced to medium range, persons outside have all stats reduced by half for the duration of the storm (or until they reach cover), and lightning becomes a severe danger. Each individual not under cover during a storm will be struck and killed by lightning on a roll of 12. Roll 2d6 every 5 minutes. Air/rafts will be hit on a roll of 9+; during a storm it is impossible for an air/raft to fly. The storm will last for 4d minutes, then disperse as quickly as it began.

Animal encounter information for creatures encountered in this adventure is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal Type</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Hits</th>
<th>Armor</th>
<th>Wounds +</th>
<th>Weapons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Intermutants</td>
<td>50 kg</td>
<td>17/6</td>
<td>Cloth</td>
<td>3 homes</td>
<td>A9F952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Killers</td>
<td>.5 kg</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4 teeth</td>
<td>A0F053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunters (Natives)</td>
<td>100 kg</td>
<td>20/9</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>A0F052</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ending the adventure: The air/raft has been delayed by a severe, lingering storm around the ship, a storm which has also cut all communications. Massive, swirling thunderclouds over the landing site will be visible to the adventurers, but there will be no way of telling how long the condition will last. After 20 hours, the referee should indicate that they detect a gradual clearing over the ship. 2d hours later the air/raft will arrive. Gunfire from the air/raft will disperse any native attack long enough for the adventurers to get aboard. Once an escape has been made, the adventure is over.

Continuing the campaign: On returning to the ship, the adventurers will find that repairs have been made, and the ship jury-rigged enough to make limited maneuvers. The adventurers can choose to leave Storm, carrying the information they have gathered so far back to Caledon. Ventures so that a better-equipped expedition can be sent later. In this case, they will be rewarded a commission of CR 500,000 apeco 3d months later.

If they prefer, however, the adventurers can choose to continue exploring Storm, hoping to complete their mission themselves. This allows further adventuring. Future issues of The Space Gamer will carry additional material as the trade team seeks to solve the mysteries of Storm and find the civilization that brought them here.

Final notes: The discovery of the unusual life cycle of Storm's native life is a key to the overall campaign. Players must survive the native attacks to bring word of their discoveries to the ship. The "fortress" sighted beyond the burning city should leave an impression of great size and technological prowess, and should suggest itself as a natural place to seek further information on the natives in later adventures.

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TSG BACK ISSUES

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No. 15. Wizard and Olympia design intro; Robotics in Traveller; Floating Hulks; Ogre Update; Orca and their Weapons, computer gaming.
No. 16. Warship article. Classics Simulated in Male, Alpha Omega, Desmond (Motes in Mole), 1977 game survey results – and a LOT of reviews.
No. 17. GEV designer’s intro; strategy for Chitin 1; variants for Imperium, Mela, and a combination Ogre/Rivets variant, Warship fiction.
No. 18. Ice War designer’s intro; variants scenarios for Invasion. American War of the Ring, additional equipment for Traveller, mounted Mole; "Raferon, Declare Thyself!" (role-playing GM techniques).
No. 19. POND VAR: variant units and scenarios for GEV; combining Imperium and Warship; Battlefleet Mars variant, reviews of Swords & Sorcery, RuneQuest, and Ramage; Microgame design article.
No. 20. Odyssey tactics; Sionius in Traveller; TARTARS & MARTYRYS: Reality in Mela; designer’s optional rules for Ice War, designer’s article on Starships & Spacecraft, “Rip-Off Blues” (wargaming frauds).
No. 21. Interview with Dave Arneson; running a Microgame tournament, tactics for Ogre and GEV, spaceship miniatures, Black Hole variant rules, putting the Derya into Mole; more reviews.
No. 22. Ice War tactic; Black Hole physics, PARTY BRAWL, 1978 SF, fantasy game survey results, Fantasy Trip short story.
No. 23. Invasion of the Air Estates, designer’s article, Ogre meets Ice War, Sticks & Stones expansion; Vikings and Valde in The Fantasy Trip.
No. 25. Stella Conquest issue... designer’s article, tournament tactics, and variant scenarios—also—strategy in Traveller; benefit-cost analysis for Ice War; “Everyday Life in the Fantasy Trip.”
No. 26. One-world designer’s intro; tactics in GEV, variations on Wizard, computers in wargaming, Life-sized Melee, and a variant that puts human forces into Rivets.
No. 27. Hot Spot’s designer’s intro; Thia Travel; Nuks the Air Estates (gaming atomic war); Weapons for Hobbits in TTT, Muskets in TTT, Game Design Part 1, 5 pages of game reviews.
No. 28. 1979 Game Survey results, Ormepen in TTT, A Guide to SF/ Fantasy Game Publishers; Task Force Game report; Writers and Artists’ guides; 7 pages of reviews; Game Design Part 2, Deus Ex Machina.
No. 29. Fantasy Trip design intro; Printing Fantasy Miniatures, Fantasy and SF game magazines surveyed; Game Design Part 3, more Deus Ex Machina; 7 pages of reviews.
No. 30. KUNG FU 2189, "Wing Chun Fantasy Miniatures Part II, Index to Game Articles, Game Design Part 4, Programmed Calculators, 10 pages of reviews.
No. 32. Traveller issue Alternate Character Types, reviews of play aids, scenarios, and variants; also Game Design Part 6; Deus Ex Machina, “Midas Two Reaction,” software survey update, Yakuza Games report; 9 pages of reviews.
No. 33. Play-by-mail issue Feature reviews of four PBM games, a Warp Campaign Survey of PBM companies, also, Contest Report, Company Report from Schubel and Son, “End Game,” GEV scenario, Game Design Part 7, Deus Ex Machina, The Good Guys, Part 1; and 10 pages of reviews.

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No. 34. Miniatures issue: Cardboard Heroes Designer’s Notes, LOTR Miniatures, Printing Fantasy Miniatures Advanced Techniques, Survey of miniature manufacturers, also "The Challenge," Artifact Designer’s Notes and Expansions Rules; 3-D Displays II; Game Design Part 8, Witch Contest winner; and 8 pages of reviews.
No. 35. The 1980 Game Survey: Sellibrie Ogre; Notes for Novice D&D; The War of the Worlds featured, Imove Variants on Stompl; Character Contest results, More Fantasy Traveller, Game Design Part IX, Deus Ex Machina, and 9 pages of reviews.
No. 38. 1980 Game Survey Results; Designer Notes for The Lords of UnderEarth; Used ships for Traveller; Selling Your Game Articles, Expert D&D and Time Telbar reviewed; Combination Game Contest; The Complainant Department and 7 pages of reviews.
No. 40. Traveller issue: Planet of Adventurers: Taclav, a new Traveller contest system, Non-Human Races contest winners, Account the Lenten; also Character Index to Game Articles, Game Design RPGs; Deus Ex Machina, and 6 pages of reviews.
No. 41. D&D issue: Tips for Thieves, Alternate Races for D&D, DM Don’ts, (Your Name) and the Holy Grail, also Tips for TPT Players; more Non-human contest winners; Game Design (last of the series), Deus Ex Machina, and 9 pages of reviews.
No. 42. Star Trek issue: Designer’s Notes, Official Errata, Star Fleet Battle Manual reviewed, programming dialogs in Trek computer games, also Metamorphosis Alpha Notebook; glossary of game terms—and what they really mean; combined arms in D&D; more nonhuman races; GEV contest winners, and 8 pages of reviews.
No. 43. Origins Report, Expanded Combat for Traveller, Designer’s Notes for Swordburst; Diplomacy Variants; More Killer, “Sword & Man” by Gary Gygax and Zahn; Deus Ex Machina, and 9 pages of reviews.
No. 44. Special feature: AVFs in Traveller, Beware the Uranium Dragon, Fantasy Demogorgon, another scenario for Killer; Featured review of Universe; Deus Ex Machina, and 8 pages of reviews.
No. 45. Computer issue: Automated Simulations company report, Play-By-Phone computer gaming; also winning strategies for StarWeb, Designer’s Notes for Grimtooth’s Traps and Car Wars; reviews of Robot War and Nebul 19, Glossary contest results, Murphy’s Rules, and 11 pages of reviews.
No. 46. Traveller issue: Artillery in Traveller, Expanding Traveller, Traveller Supplement – Farse Star, also the "FBI Affair," Constellation contest results, Featured Reviews of Wizardry and Fifth Frontier War; Deus Ex Machina, and 9 pages of reviews.

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11. Best 1981 Pre-20th Century Boardgame


13. Best 1981 Science Fiction Boardgame

14. Best 1981 Fantasy Boardgame

15. Best 1981 Initial Release of a Boardgame
   (referring to the first release of a boardgame by a new company)


17. Best 1981 Adventure Game for Home Computer

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Miniatures for FRP Games

by Spalding Boldrick

Chances are, you've already shelled out quite a few bucks for the basics of your role-playing game, and would like to get the miniatures best suited to it, without having to file for bankruptcy. Everywhere you look you see miniatures packs labelled "Official D&D Miniatures" or "Approved for use with Advanced D&D" or "Suitable for all fantasy role-playing games." So which ones are best for you?

There is no simple best answer. "Official" figure lines are frequently over-priced, and often less suitable than those without official approval. The answer really depends on what is important to you in a miniature and what best suits your style of play. I'll try to deal with these factors company by company, concentrating mainly on character types, since they will be the first concern of anyone just beginning to acquire FRP gaming miniatures.

Ral Partha, Superior and Broadword miniatures constitute a class by themselves in terms of quality of material and casting, detail, and anatomical accuracy. They are frequently available as individual figures, thus enabling you to select exactly the figure you need without being forced to buy others you may not want. They are, however, expensive. Character figures tend to run around a dollar, even in multipacks. Ral Partha does offer a larger boxed set of eight wizards and clerics for $6.49 and another of eight adventurers for $6.98. This works out to around $ .80-$ .85 per figure, and the two sets would meet most of your character needs, if the style appeals to you.

That style is another factor to be considered. While virtually faultless otherwise, the figures from all three of these manufacturers are sometimes static-looking, almost as though they were posing for a portrait. They often seem to be designed more as collector's items than as gaming pieces. This tendency is less notable in the newer releases, however, and is not really much of a drawback unless you're specifically looking for action poses.

Ral Partha also puts out what are, with very few exceptions, the only really convincing female character figures. Finding believable women characters has been a problem in fantasy miniatures for some time now; a legacy, I think, of the attitude toward women in the earlier FRP games. Ral Partha, at least, seems to be making a serious effort to address the problem.

Of the three companies mentioned so far, only Ral Partha offers a sizable number of monster types. Their humanoid monster types (gnolls, imps, giants, etc.), especially the newer releases, are the best available. They are much more action-oriented than the character types, and are a good, extensive (and expensive) line. Broadword has a beautiful Harryhausen-type cyclops that's hard to resist once you've seen it.

On the other hand, if your most important criterion in selecting a miniature is low cost, then Grenadier may have what you need. They offer a nicely boxed set of ten characters, all the same type (wizards, thieves, etc.) but different poses, for $6.98. An even greater savings is available in their boxed assortment of twenty different character types for $13.50. This works out to less than $.70 per figure, and is not inconsiderable savings over the most expensive figures, especially if you intend to buy a large number of figures to begin with.

Grenadier miniatures are more variable in quality, and tend to be chunky-looking. The characters are frequently cursed with faces that only a mother (or a DM) could love, and sometimes sport anatomical anomalies seldom seen outside medical textbooks. There are exceptions, though, and occasionally a Grenadier figure is really first rate. The poses of the figures are more action-oriented and less static than the more expensive figures. The metal used in Grenadier miniatures has a slightly higher tin content than those already discussed (with the exception of Superior), and are more brittle and thus harder to modify or animate. This is not necessarily a drawback in a gaming miniature, since it means a dropped figure is only likely to chip some paint rather than bend all out of shape.

Grenadier also offers an extensive line of less expensive monsters, the best value being a boxed set of twenty monsters for $13.50.

Citadel miniatures are in roughly the same class as Grenadier, being a little more expensive at about $.85 per character figure. They are frequently available singly, are usually better cast than Grenadier, and offer a good variety of characters and poses, although they, too, tend toward the ugly side. The best thing about Citadel figures is something that's
almost entirely missing in fantasy miniatures and FRP games generally, a sense of humor. They manage to produce a product of reasonably good quality without taking themselves or their subject matter too seriously. If a lighter style of play and a touch of whimsy appeal to you, then you ought to take a look at this line. Citadel also has a fair variety of monster types, including some highly unusual ones, that share the good qualities and reasonable prices of the character figures.

The only other company notable for an occasional sense of humor is Archive. Their product is extremely variable in every respect, varying from sometimes excellent to downright bad. Their character figures tend to be very large, and almost always stand out in a group of figures from different manufacturers, not always to good effect. They sometimes go on using molds long after they have become too badly damaged to produce a good casting, and can be very variable in quality that it is difficult to recommend them. Their figures do have a certain charm, or style, or even, or whatever, that's difficult to describe and is sometimes very effective. Their monsters are often very good, and they turn out some most unusual types: they have the biggest damned mantis I've ever seen, and offer the only line of such character types available.

Their prices are moderate to expensive. Martian Metals is another moderately priced line of figures which almost invariably offers good quality materials and casting. The style and pose of the figures are also good, if unremarkable; a few of their wizard figures are exceptionally good. Martian Metals also offers a line of pirates if you're looking for a swashbuckler type. In addition, Martian Metals has an excellent line of 15mm fantasy characters and monsters, if you are interested in gaming with smaller (and much less expensive) miniatures. And while we're on the subject of swashbucklers, Gray Cat Castings has a small, new, and reasonably priced line, including several swashbuckler types of the Three Musketeers variety.

Minifigs is another company with a variable product. The quality of casting is always first rate, and detailing is always clean and crisp, but the style and imagination of the figures varies so much from line to line that it's almost as if they were being produced by different companies. For example, I've always found their old "Official D&D" line to be dull and unimaginative, but their Valley of the Four Winds series is excellent in both imagination and execution. The Greyclaw series is somewhere in between, but largely quite good. One drawback to almost all Minifigs figures; everybody tends to look alike, as though the entire world suffered from a high degree of inbreeding. Minifigs fantasy figures are usually available only in multipacks, and are moderately priced.

Heritage is something of a mixed bag, also. The older lines, such as Fantastiques, are usually pretty good, comparable to Grenadier in price, and a little better in quality and sculpting. Some of the newer lines, like the Lord of the Rings miniatures, are fairly well done, if a bit overpriced. But a few of the newer lines, like the Dungeon Dwellers, are not only overpriced, but cast in metal whose tin content is so high that you're apt to break them while trying to clean up the mold lines. Generally not worth it, as far as I'm concerned. Hinschlife miniatures, distributed by Heritage, are similar in appearance and quality to the Heritage Fantastiques line, and are not a bad buy when you can find them.

A short survey of this sort cannot hope to cover all the myriad of manufacturers around today. Some of them aren't worth the effort to review, others, especially some of the British companies, are almost impossible to find, anyway. The main thing to remember is that no one manufacturer is the last word in all types of miniatures. Weigh the factors that are important to you in a gaming miniature, and shop around.
Many of the flaws of the first edition of High Guard are corrected in High Guard 2. The combat system has been overhaul and considerably improved, though it is more complex now. Black globes are handled in a more realistic fashion. Weaponry is limited by the amount of energy consumed. The use of “batteries” of weapons makes it much simpler to calculate the overall weapons factors of each ship. Other changes include the number of batteries that can be in combat and the conversion of several tonnage-based components to percentage bases) either streamline the ship construction rules or add more realism to the combat system.

Of course, some items had to be condensed—or dropped altogether—in order to fit the new information into the same amount of pages. Thus, in the introductory section, the weaponry descriptions are much briefer than in the 1st edition, and show some changes. Particle accelerators, for instance, have been removed from the anti-missile role here and elsewhere in the book (odd in light of current military thinking). Several options have been dropped from the combat section, including the two damage rolls for pulse lasers (though they do get a DM on the damage table), the use of fusion drives as weapons, high intensity missile fire and orbital combat rules. Some optional components for starships—missile magazines for planetary bombardment and jump governors for Book 2 ships—seem no longer to be available either. (Those of you who still have your 1st editions will probably want to make use of some of these rules in your individual play, for those with only the second edition, I suggest finding someone with the first if you want to do any planetary bombardment, etc.)

There are other items that were rather important that seem to have been overlooked, too, in this edition—and not by design I would guess.

High Guard I failed to tell how many pilots were needed aboard a starship to fly the vessel itself. The 2nd edition overlooks this point as well (though the new Trillion Credit Squadron enlightens the perplexed fleet commander on this.). The 2nd edition also apparently assumes that no one is ever going to get stuck aboard a starship, as the medical section of the crew no longer exists. An even more serious omission is the lack of information on the new coding system for fighters carried. In the breakdown of the USP on page 52, there is the notation that the number of fighters is the number of fighter squadrons carried. There is no further information on this anywhere in the book, no tables for determining codes, no explanation of how many fighters make up a squadron. However, from the Trillion Credit Squadron, it can be deduced that the typical squadron consists of 10 fighters and the coding system figured from there (or from the old table if you have the 1st edition).

In edition 1 a starship could carry a wide variety of vehicles, including such exotics as fixed-wing aircraft, dirigibles, helicopters and submarines. Now, vessels are limited to ground cars, ATVs, hovercraft and air/rafts. Of course, the missing items are not overly important in starship battles or in most campaigns, but their loss is another reason to hang onto your 1st editions, especially since skill in these vehicles is still available in the character generation system.

Another problem that the 2nd edition should have cleared up but didn’t is the crew factor codes. The jumps between the numbers of crewmen from each code number to the next are far too great, especially considering that a crew hit drops the crew factor by 1. Thus if I have a crew of 99,999 (code 5) and take a crew hit, I’ve lost at least 90,000 crewmen in order for my factor to be dropped to a 4. A second hit will take the lives of 9,000 more crewmen, a third 900 and on down. Perhaps this is a realistic loss of life with such heavy weaponry, but then why would the same weapon hit a ship with 9,999 crewmen only kill 9,000 men when it killed 90,000 on another ship?

One confusing change was that of the fuel purification plants. A plant cost a straight 200,000Cr and weighed 50 tons, cost and weight decreasing a set amount per tech level. Plants processed a ton of fuel per minute. In the new edition, a table shows the same decreases but, along with the text, says that the price is per 1000 tons of fuel. The text further states that ships with large tanks need more than one plant, presumably one per 1000 tons of fuel tank. How long fuel processing takes is not said in HG2. So, based on this, a ship with a 10,000-ton fuel tank that needed one plant which took approximately a week to refine its fuel (a long time admittedly; but a statement elsewhere in the book led one to believe that military ships could use unrefined fuel anyway) now would need 10 plants which do the job in an indeterminate amount of time. The problem is compounded by the percentage-based purification plant table in Trillion Credit Squadron, which is described as merely restating the table in HG2 in different terms, but which gives decidedly different values than the HIGH GUARD tables if both are followed exactly. The answer, provided by GDW's John Harsman, is that the TCS table is off by a factor of ten! A ship with a 50-ton plant designed with TCS actually needs a 500-ton plant.

There are some other questions I have with HIGH GUARD, 2nd Edition (why, for instance, the DM given the particle accelerator at short range was switched over to the meson gun, yet the particle accelerator still was listed as being most effective at close range in the text). But before anyone gets the wrong impression, let me go on to say that the improvements in the new edition far outweigh the faults.

The construction process has become much simpler and more realistic. One great improvement is the grouping of all the important tables (with the exception of some grouped on page 36) on the middle four pages of the book. Not only does this

**FEATURED REVIEW:**

*High Guard,*

2nd Edition

by William A. Barton
make the tables more accessible than those spread throughout the book in the 1st edition, but you can even pull them out for easy reference. Drives and power plants generally cost less now; there are lesser jumps in tonnage code for ship hulls (size jumps from 50,000 tons to 75,000 rather than 100,000 as in the 1st edition.) Particle accelerators are now included on the turret weapons table, along with the new barbettes. Streamlining is now available — at least partially — for all ship configurations except dispersed structures and planetoids. Computer models are now available up to model 9, though big models are limited to models 1 and 2. Armor is handled in a much more realistic fashion. Cost and weight are based on a percentage of the ship's overall tonnage rather than on straight figures. It can also be applied to more ship configurations.

Perhaps one of the more useful improvements is the ability to design your own small craft. In High Guard 1, all possible ship's boats (fuel shuttles, life boats, fighters, etc.) were standardized. Now you can design your own small craft just as you design your starships. If you want fighters that can serve unusual functions, all you have to do is design them. If you want gunboats, you can create them. If you want transport shuttles, draw them up. (This section should eliminate some of the comments I've heard regarding the uselessness of Traveller fighters, based on those in H1G1.)

Combat has been greatly expanded. The turn sequence has become somewhat more complex. Whereas the 1st edition had only four steps to combat, the 2nd includes nine. The ship allocation and combat steps have been combined into one combat step and individual battle formation, precombat decision, damage, breakthrough, pursuit and terminal (boarding, damage control, etc.) steps have been added. The really new step is the pursuit step in which ships breaking off may not automatically escape, the enemy has a chance to catch such ships, provided he has vessels whose agility matches or exceeds those escaping.

Combat is a lot different now, too. Instead of ships "squeaking off" and fighting one on one, each ship in a fleet is put forward (attacker exposing himself first) and any batteries on any ships in the enemy's fleet may fire on the ship put forward (though all batteries may only be fired once, offensively or defensively, in a turn). The section of the combat system that governs hit determination has been greatly streamlined, making this phase of battle much easier to deal with. The attack tables are all contained on three pages. All beam weapons — lasers and energy weapons — have been combined on one table.

Several tables have been dropped totally. All weapons now have a to-hit table, based on weapon factor. After that is determined, they must roll on the penetration tables to see if they have gotten through the active and passive defenses.

Particle accelerators are more deadly now, needing only to roll for a hit. And the damage tables give greater possibilities for damage, more critical hits, etc. They also allow for the possibility that a hit will have no effect. The old miscellaneous effects table has been incorporated into the regular and critical hits tables, dropping that rather nebulous effect, "streamlining shattered." The modifiers for the damage table are different now. Another deadly addition is that spiral mount weapons get extra damage rolls depending on their code, and any battery with a factor greater than the size code of the ship it hits suffers automatic critical hits equal to the difference (a good way to discourage piranha tactics). The block globe rules are now more rational and complete.

While HIGH GUARD 2nd Edition still has several faults that GDW should address in the future, it is far superior to the 1st edition in almost every way. I'd advise all you fleet commanders to pick up a copy if you haven't already. But do hang on to your 1st editions for ship's vehicles, etc. You'll be glad you did.
Capsule Reviews

THE SPACE GAMER reviews board games, role-playing games, computer games, video games, and game supplements. We review play-by-mail games if a reviewer is enrolled. We will review any science fiction or fantasy game if the publisher supplies a copy. We do not guarantee reviews of historical wargames. TSG may publish a review of a game we are not sent — IF a reader submits a review.

The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine.

Games for which reviews have been received or assigned include: Adventure Chess, Ships, Adventure in Time, Catacombs of the Bear Culti, Character Role Playing, The Corsairs of Cythera, Dungeon Floors, Empire I: World Builders, Federation Space, Interstellar Skirmishes, Journey to the Center of the Circle, Legend of the Sky Racers, Marmaga, Forts of Ironloth, Power Play, Soldier's Compendium of Starcraft, Simba Safari, Southern Command, Space Opera 2nd. Ed., The Sultan's Pearl, Tarlink's Landens, and Uny Plaza of the Seven Pillars.

Games for which we are currently seeking reviewers include: Empire of the Overmind, Grand Master, and Space Ace 21.

DOWN WITH THE KING (Avalon Hill), $12.00. Designed by Glenn and Kathleen Rahman. 32-page 8 1/2" x 11" rulebook, 450 cards, record sheet pad, and 2 dice. Boxed. 2-4 players, playing time about three hours. Published 1981.

DOWN WITH THE KING is a fantasy political game, set in the mythical kingdom of Fandoria under the benign rule of King George whom everyone wants to overthrow. Each player takes the role of a Fandorian noble. The object is to build a powerful political faction and eventually place a member of the royal family, loyal only to you, on the throne.

DOWN WITH THE KING gives the players a wider variety of activities to choose from than other political games. There is constant player interaction. Players can go from rags to riches and back again several times in the game. The winner will never be certain until the game is over. Voting, assassination, scandal, wrong-doing, hiring, travelling, romance, marriage, excommunication, trial, banishment, imprisonment, execution, death, civil crisis, and usurpation are a few of the things that can happen during a game of DOWN WITH THE KING.

DOWN WITH THE KING can be somewhat confusing the first few times it is played. Players should be advised that things will go quite slowly until they are very familiar with the game.

DOWN WITH THE KING is a pleasant change of pace, and a very enjoyable group game — Paul Monte

INVASION: EARTH (GDW), $11.95. Designed by Marc Miller, Frank Chadwick, and John M. Astell. 8 1/2" x 11" 14-page rulebook, four 8 1/2" x 11" chart sheets, two counter sheets, 17" x 22" full-color map, two dice, boxed. 2 players, playing time 4-6 hours. Published 1981.

INVASION EARTH, GDW's newest board game for Traveller and the first to be released in the new bookshelf box, is here at last. And it appears the war was worth it. INVASION: EARTH continues GDW's tradition of well-conceived, playable SF games. Centered around the Imperial invasion of Terra during the Soleman Kim Wars of the Traveller universe, INVASION: EARTH utilizes — and builds upon — the basic games of Fifth Frontier War and is almost completely compatible with that game. IE uses the same space combat systems with only minor differences. However, INVASION: EARTH greatly expands surface combat, taking into consideration factors of movement across a planetary surface, gives special rules including weather effects, supply, planetary defense bases, hidden and mock SS8, and shows more detailed problems with landing troops on enemy territory. System defense bases are now represented by actual counters rather than abstractly. Instead of the fleet composition charts of FFW, IE features troop display charts. INVASION EARTH is designed to serve not only as a game about a Terran assault, but also as an example of how such action can be applied to any world under attack. Those who are skilled in tactics for a greater complexity and detail could easily integrate the IE system into FFW to replace the more abstract ground rules in that game. Yet, overall, INVASION EARTH is a much easier game to learn and play. In fact, those who have not yet played either game or who found FFW a bit too involved would be well-advised to try IE first as an introductory game to FFW.

There are a few problems in IE, however. While the rules allow for the set-up of an Imperial advance base on the moon, the Soleman apparently — at least according to the rules — cannot garnish Luna at all to prevent such an Imperial attack. This seems highly unrealistic and unlikely to me. I'd allow at least a Terran planetary defense base on the moon to give the Imperials a rougher time of it (but then, maybe, that's my Terran chauvinism). There seem to be a few ambiguities in the SS8 rules, though these aren't serious. The victory conditions, while a bit unsatisfactory, are workable.

Overall, for its merits as a two-player SF board game and for its direct applications to Traveller role-playing, I can recommend INVASION EARTH to all Traveller enthusiasts as well as all those who have enjoyed GDW's other fine SF games — William A. Barton

RESCUE FROM THE HIVE (SPI), $8. Designed by Nick Karp. Boxed, with 11" x 17" map, 100 counters, 8-page rulebook, 2-page solitaire rules, 2 4" square maps, and one die. 2 players, one with solitaire variant); playing time 1-2 hours. Published 1981.

Ambassador Hlistrom(1) and his daughter Ahtek have been taken hostage by radical Zonans. (Zonans are "humanoid aliens with insecticidal communal instincts and values") Earth decides that a show of force is in order, and a squad of darters, full of space maneuvers, are dispatched to attempt a RESCUE FROM THE HIVE. The hive is a Znon ship, complete with hydrelizers, lasers, heaters, and command posts for six queens.

RESCUE FROM THE HIVE has accomplished a difficult goal: opposing forces, with greatly differing abilities, advantages, and drawbacks, have been drawn up into roughly equal balance. The Terrans have the usual characteristics of space marines everywhere, including in their number engineers and scouts. The Zonans, in addition to your standard workers and soldiers, have a number of unique, which improve Zonian movement and combat, control Zonian moods, and reinforce each other's command abilities. They also have a number of traps. The rules system in RH is relatively simple, but SPI doesn't make the mistake they have made on other occasions, and assume that a simple system means no loopholes. They have taken care to remove every loophole, expanding 4 pages of rules into...
The extra reading is worthwhile. It was especially pleased by the explicitly worded definition of terms — it answered difficult questions several times. The reviews scenario is more than a brief addendum. It seems to play well as the basic game, its best point being the list of ordered strategies, depending on the situation, for the non-player Zion. Components and graphics, while not outstanding, are up to SPI's standards.

The negative points I found indicate that final changes on RFTH were being made as it was rushed into production. Some rules just don't mesh well. Zion (as well as Terrans) may be incapacitated, rather than killed, but an unincapacitated Zion has next to no worth, why is the distinction made? The first turn of the game gives the Zion a 10% last chance at all unengaged darts. This leads to a chance of knocking out anywhere from 0 to 75% of Terran strength. Play balance is fairly good, but why bother with balance if the first move in the game is an attempt to upset that balance with a series of mindless dice rolls? Granted, 75% mortality is pretty unlikely, but 30% is highly likely. If the game runs pretty evenly between 0 and 30%, the game could well be won or lost before a bit of strategy unfolds. This may reflect reality, but it's not very satisfying to the gamer who just invested $8 in having a good time.

SPI continues to produce an attractive, playable game every other month, AEC. None of these games is likely to set the world on fire, or even produce lasting interest, but so far, they tend to be consistent drossmen. RFTH is another from that mold. On the other hand (and I offer my apologies to Nick Karp if I'm wrong), I get the impression that no one had his heart in this game. SPI has committed itself to cranking out an SF/fantasy game every two months, whether it has one ready or not. Having said this last, let me repeat that, for the most part, they have succeeded with RFTH. If you enjoy the premise, you'll probably enjoy the game.

—David Ludmian

SUPPLEMENTS

ALIEN BASE (FGU); $5.00. Designed by Larry Smith. 8½" x 11" 29-page book. 2 or more players; playing time 1-2 hours. Published 1979.

ALIEN BASE is FGU's second published adventure for Space Opera and is a vast improvement over the first SO adventure, Martian Belt. Whereas Martian Belt was more of an outline for an adventure, leaving out large blocks of vital information, ALIEN BASE is far more complete, with almost everything the Starmaster will need to run a mission that could prove exciting. The basic premise of the adventure is a search by the player-characters for the missing survey ship Thimothy, which takes them to the barely surveyed planet Thome. Here they learn that the native have been invaded by alien Slavers who now seem to have master plans for the human race. The players must find and penetrate the secrets of the alien base of the inhuman slavers as they attempt to locate the missing crew of the Thimothy. The adventure includes plans for the base, planetary map and descriptions, new animals, three new alien races, plans for a submarine "submarine" for swimming the seas of Thome, and NPC stats, which introduce the concept of psionic "inhibitors" (anti-psionic powers).

ALIEN BASE is notable for its overall completeness. It presents an interesting situation and carries through for the players without leaving vital answers for the poor Starmaster to have to puzzle out himself. It also includes a point system to tell players how well they did in the adventure after completion. Plus the adventure allows opportunities for players to both shoot and think their way out of various situations.

Unfortunately, some things were overlooked in the adventure. The location of the important alien NPC Chembles in the base is not given. The chance for routine robot encounters is overlooked, too. Two animals are listed as described elsewhere in the animal section, but the only other place they are mentioned refers the reader to the animal section for a full description. Fuller stats could have been given for the Thome and no extra except Chembles' description were given for the psionic. And the maps symbols and text description don't tally in places.

Most of these omissions, however, can be easily glossed over by the GM, leaving ALIEN BASE a relatively complete and satisfying adventure for SO, either as a one-off scenario or as the first in a planned series. If you enjoy Space Opera, I recommend ALIEN BASE.

—William J. Barton

THE BURGUNDY PIT (Wilmarrk Dynasty, 501 Duran Dr., Newark, DE 19711); $5. Designed by John M. Corradin. 18-page FRP supplement. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

The reduced typewriter script is quite legible and reasonably attractive at about 60 characters per line. There is little artwork, and that purely amateur. The maps are drawn freehand, without the benefit of a straightedge, on unlined paper. Because there is no square grid to give a distance scale, nor even a one-size measure such as those on geographer's maps, the reader/GM must consider other descriptions for size, and for distances between rooms or points in separate rooms he is lost. Moreover, most of the room descriptions don't state the size. This is inexcusable, and alone is enough to put off some GMs.

The introductory documentation is extremely poor. A few lines state that an illusionist has discovered the whereabouts of an old enemy, and has hired the party to regain a magic staff. But no description of the outside or location of the dungeon is given, nor is there any indication of where the party starts; the GM is not even told that the dungeon begins at the bottom (fifth) level and rises to the first and toughest level. (I deduced this from the descriptions, with the assistance of a friend who played the scenario at Origins '80.) Not only is there no scale, the maps are not all printed in the same orientation, and stairs apparently turn 90 degrees and change width between levels.

The treasure is extremely rich, though there are few magic items in non-player hands. The adventure itself is mostly a matter of hacking, though a party such as the one provided is going to get into trouble if it fights too much. I've seen worse scenarios in magazines. Four pages of descriptions of a party of ten characters (average under sixth level) are provided. The personalities are interesting and probably the best aspect of the module.

Wilmarrk didn't respond to two queries about retail prices; the $5 fee is my recollection of prices at Wilmarrk's booth at GenCon East, confirmed by a wholesale price of $2.70 for small quantities. The module is grossly overpriced. There is not much here, nor is the semi-professional nature of the production an excuse for astronomical price.

—Levus Pfalsipher

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HAZARD, IPS/ISIS OFFICIAL MAP 7
Judges Guild], $2.00. Designed by Robert Brigham, approved for Superhero 2044, 22" x 34" map, backprinted with text. Published 1981.

HAZARD is Judges Guild's foray into supplement-approved for use with GameScience's Superhero 2044 role-playing game. It is a map of the Pacific area around Superhero 2044's Ingura Island, from China and Japan in the north, the Indonesian islands in the west, the southwest coast of North America and a new "subcontinent" in the east to Australia in the south, showing various hazards, such as politically unstable and hostile areas, radioactive zones, and "unknows." One whole side (the cover illustration) consists of a two-color hex map of the area. The reverse side is text covering descriptions of the area, the dangerous mutant animals of Australia, the various local organizations that may aid superheros, and a new superheros and their bases. It has been used to start a Superhero 2044 campaign.

HAZARD is useful in that it provides a much fuller, more comprehensive campaign areas for Superhero 2044. The map shows problem areas, obstacles, and hazards to throw in the way of the up and coming superheros, providing a wealth of ideas for a GM. Among the more interesting entries are those for the mutant Australian animals, particularly the dangerous rockbunnies (eat through solid stone with their acid salve), and the dread land parabuchus (mutated killer wallabies). Since no specific stats are included, HAZARD could easily be adapted to any of the other superhero role-playing games - Williams & Van Develde, Champions, etc. - as a campaign background.

The map is rather bland in pale blue and yellow, the yellow-marked politically unstable areas are very difficult to see under most lighting conditions. The text is a bit shaky in places. At one point it seems to jump from a description of Australia to that of the newly new Rent Asia continent with no transition at all, making it difficult (until further on) to determine what is being described. The text seems to give two completely different descriptions of two unknown areas of the planet.

Overall, though, those of you who haven't gotten off on Superhero 2044 for other, more playable, superhero role-playing games will find much of interest and use in HAZARD.

William A. Barton

LOMODO IVA (Group One], $5.95. Traveller supplement. One 8 1/2" x 11" 18-page booklet, 17" x 22" color map, bagged. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

LOMODO IVA is another in Group One's series of planetary "adventures" set in their upcoming Theda Borealis sector. As with most of Group One's supplements, it is actually an adventure setting, with no scenarios provided, describing the planet Lomodo IVA. It includes a description of the planet, a world on which two intelligent races have died off, leaving the planet in the possession of a semi-intelligent jellyfish-like species, the Op, its history, geography and population, its weather, the effects of the survivors, the ruins of the Op's city, and maps and descriptions of the vegetation, plants and animals of the planet.

As usual, the most interesting aspect of LOMODO IVA seems to be the descriptions of the animals that may be encountered on the planet, accompanied by drawings of representative types. The beasts of Lomodo IVA seem to be a bit less bizarre than some in G1's past adventures, and could easily be borrowed for use on other planets if the ref is reluctant to use the nundus in Animal Encounters. Some points of the underground labyrinths are interesting, particularly those in the tomb which prove the most challenging of the whole book.

Unfortunately, all the typical G1 problems are present in LOMODO: the sloppy production, misprints and errors, the omission of information that should have been included, etc. Particularly annoying is the table in the encounter section on geophysical encounters - not only are there no guidelines at all for its use (when, why, how, but it includes rows of puzzling facts. The table is incomplete, and is only useful to those who know how to read the columns. In other words, the table is completely useless. The descriptions of the animals in the encounter tables seem to contradict those in the text on several points. And, unlike some of G1's planetary settings, this one has almost nothing to suggest a reason for players to want to go adventuring on the planet, unless they just want to poke around in the ruins or hunt the animals.

All in all, LOMODO IVA, while having its points of interest, seems the least inspired of any of Group One's adventures thus far. If you haven't thought much of their past products, you'll really hate this one. Unless you're a collector of all Traveller items. Or have hard up for a place to adventure, pass this one up.

William A. Barton

MAROONED ON GHOSTRING (Judges Guild], $5.95. Designed by Walter and Dorothy Bledsoe, Traveller supplement. One 8 1/2" x 11" 8-page booklet, 17" x 22" map. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

MAROONED ON GHOSTRING is Judges Guild's latest adventure for Traveller, one taking
place in the yet-unreleased fourth sector of JG's Gateway Quadrant. The title is somewhat deceptive in that players are not marooned in the same sense as in GDW's Marooned/Marooned Alone. Characters will be marooned on Ghost

ing only until they can repair their spacecraft, damaged in a mishap, and as long beyond that as they wish to stay on the planet gathering information to sell to the Imperial government - or the black market - on the previously uncharted intelligent life form of the planet. Much of the information in the scenario book covers the inhabitants of Ghosting - data on the three warring factions, maps and areas of interest in the capital cities, military organizations, etc. - and of the planet itself, its flora and fauna and so on. The inhabitants, by the way, are called Hawlings and are - you guessed it - intelligent, flightless "humaoid" birds.

The data given on Ghosting is fairly detailed in most instances, specific city locations are described briefly, yet usually well enough to give a referee ideas for situations in which to place his players. The scenario book includes, along with the city map locations, a full-color planetary map, descriptions of certain notable animal forms and animal encounter tables for all terrain types: encounter tables for cities, military encounters, gangsters (yes, gangstas!) and others, an outline of the various military organizations, and travel times by the various modes of transportation. The separate sheet includes a large map, a map showing terrain and naming names and smaller ones showing terrain and political alignments.

Unfortunately, GHOSTING has several flaws. Encounter information is often far too brief to be of use, particularly annoying is the military table which lists encounters with flame-thrower troops, biplane corps, and Naval groups as possibilities, yet provides the referee with no guidelines on how to administer such items. The travel time table is marked by the failure to list what terrain type each value refers to. The big map is unnecessary, its political alignment section, the only unique item above the map in the book, is marred by a mistake, and the aliens are so anthropomorphized they should have been made human in the first place. No obvious alien could actually travel freely on a world at war.

While better conceived than the average Group One planetary adventure, MAROONED ON GHOSTING falls short of past Guild efforts, though an enterprising ref might be able to make use of its basic situation with some careful modifications.

-William A. Burton

MASTERS OF MIND (Judges Guild), $7.95

Designed by Charles Wilson. Supplement for any role-playing game. 8 1/2 x 11" 78-page rulebook. Published 1981.

In MASTERS OF MIND, characters roll for basic psychic abilities (e.g., telepathy), and use them to develop skills (e.g., illusion). Abilities and skills can be used outright, or in special mind-to-mind psychic combat. Psychic abilities can be an adjunct to magic or technology in any role-playing game, or the psychic characters can be a class unto themselves. The rules will work for almost any role-playing game, although the terminology is appropriate to D&D. This isn't surprising, as the system was obviously inspired by the D&D system.

MASTERS OF MIND is far better than its inspirational progenitor. There are extremely hand descriptions of exactly how the powers operate, there's a sophisticated psychic combat system offering a believable "Feel" of psi-ops as a unique force. That feel is markedly enhanced by inclusion of concepts from science fiction, notably Mason Zimmer Bradley's Derk-Hor, and Zenna Henderson's People stones. Concepts such as group link-ups, psi-cybernetics, and sentient networks translate well into gaming. The designer has done his homework, creating an entertaining set of rules.

He hasn't escaped a problem common to attempts to use literary concepts in gaming. The game characters must start at the beginning of their lives, relatively powerless, and either take years to acquire the interesting, useful powers, or acquire them too quickly and thus unbalance the game. Also, psychic combat is a lot more interesting to read about than to laboriously roll with dice. The system does work, it's just that the system deliberately distinguishes itself from the mechanics of whatever game you're playing and so requires a lot of extra dice rolling and page turning. However, the worst problem was the rulebook itself. Proofreading was nonexistent. Maybe the game should be judged on ideas, not typesetting, but with that many typos - from such an established, professional gaming company - I was seriously tempted to simply fling it away untested. ("Come back when you've got it right!")

If you can forgive the sloppy physical presentation, and want a coherent, unifying set of rules for including psychic powers in a role-playing game, MASTERS OF MIND works, and works well. If you don't like the psi-ops rules you're using, or aren't using any, MASTERS OF MIND is definitely what you need.

-Ronald Pelke

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SWORDBEARER

FROBE NCG 8436 (FRC) $3.00. Designed by Stephen Kintzley 8½" x 11" 21-page book 2 or more players, playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

FROBE NCG 8436 concerns a survey mission to an uncharted system some 57 light-years from the Marigian system in the Procyon subsector, and thus can be played as an extension of Marigian Belt. Players are crew members or part of a survey team serving on the 20,000-ton cruiser Outreach. The mission of the Outreach is to bring back a full survey of NCG 8436 (tentatively designated Grithib), contacting and establishing relations with any sentient life forms that may be discovered. Rather than that basic goal, the scenario is primarily designed as a setting for whatever actions the players wish to undertake. To that end, the adventure includes complete plans for the Outreach, character generation guidelines and some new equipment. There are also statistics for all eight planets in the Grithib system, encounter information for Grithib I and II, and stats and descriptions for the native Grithib, an amphibious alien race, including guidelines for generating Grithib player-characters. A section of encyclopedic information and additional scenario ideas complete the book.

FROBE NCG 8436 features several outstanding ideas. The new equipment is rather useful, particularly the sensor probe and survival kit. The Outreach is an excellent addition to the SO line of starships. Most of the planet, marauders, and events are well-drawn out, though a couple seem a bit too Tarzan to be alien creatures. The Grithib and their religion are well-conceived, too.

There are few problems in FROBE NCG 8436. There are some minor typos, and the location of the Grithih undersea city was left off the map. The main problem may be, as with many "setting" scenarios, that unless the players or the StuntMaster devise more specific goals, play may tend to founder.

Overall, though, FROBE NCG 8436 has enough potential to provide some intriguing adventure scenarios for Space Opera play. While not as exciting an adventure as the recent Alien Base, it is far superior to the earlier Marigian Belt.

—William A. Barton


ROGUE MOON OF SPINSTORM is a follow-up to Amynus Probe. It takes the crew of the vessel Hrunta to the Spinstorm system in the Blackedge subsector of the yet-to-be-released Maranath-Alkhash sector in search of the builders of the alien base discovered in Amynus. Players will face the navigate hazards of Spinstorm, a system consisting of a black hole and white dwarf circling a red giant star, with rocky planets and debris and two gas giants, and the defenses of more alien bases. Maps, encounter tables, pregenerated characters with equipment and ship stats, and referee and player information make up the basis of this supplement. A section on tournament play and scoring is also included.

The navigational hazards of the Spinstorm system are promising, though not as much was done with them as could have been. The idea of listing performance information (range, speeds, damage) for the various items of equipment and weaponry is admirable and quite helpful (especially with the nonstandard items used). And the installations presented here should be more challenging to players than that of Amynus Probe.

There are several problems with Spinstorm, however. Much of the information is repeated from the first adventure—eight whole pages, plus half of two others! Yet the two surface maps of the installations, which the ref is instructed to show the players when they get close enough, were left out altogether! Information on the system given at the beginning is repeated verbatim later in the book, and the table for describing various alien junk seems to be the same as in the earlier Draku're Nacrons. One item reported from Amynus Probe is the Type A Security Robot—which doesn't even appear in this adventure! This shows poor planning on JG's part, as does placing the maps of the moons on the backs of two of the player-character sheets. If the idea was to make this a stand-alone adventure, more should have been reported (such as the deck plans of the Hrunta) as part of a series. Duplications should have been omitted in favor of new material or a lower-priced adventure.

Overall, if you have Amynus Probe, you'll probably want to get this one, too. As a stand-alone, ROGUE MOON OF SPINSTORM is too much in the mold of past "investigate alien installation" scenarios to be worth most ref's time and money.

—William A. Barton

SALVAGE MISSION (Marshcal Adventures), $2.00. Designed by Andrew Keith. Approved for Traveller, One 8½" by 11" 4-page folio. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

SALVAGE MISSION is the third of Marshcal's foil adventures. This adventure differs from its companions in that it is less concerned with combat than with searching and possible diplomatic complications. It concerns the hunt for a disabled transport carrying an Imperial payroll of 275,000,000 credits, lost when a Zhodani attack forced it to make a jump to the planet Winston in the neutral Darran Confederation. The transport, the Pax, never reported in again and the close escort Stag is sent in search of it. The adventure includes a description of the Stag, the Winston system, the background of the mission, encounter table, and a rundown of the diplomatic situation in the area.

Though SALVAGE MISSION lacks the excitement of the chase found in Flight of the Stag and Electrowatch, it contains some interesting possibilities for diplomatic intrigue, especially between the players, the Winston port authority, the Darran Confederation, and the nearby Sword Worlds. The course of this adventure is more open-ended than that of its companions, and the players' actions can have a very real effect on the outcome of the war in this area.

SALVAGE MISSION, being more of a set of guidelines for adventure than its companions, puts more responsibility on the referee to make it work. It seems less suitable than the others for a single one-time scenario and should probably be used in conjunction with at least one of the others. Overall, it is a most enjoyable adventure. A couple of types have crept in, too, and I have a few questions about the availability of refueling and resupplying the Stag at the Type E starport on Winston, but these are minor considerations, I might have liked more info on the Pax, but again, such isn't actually necessary within the confines of the adventure.

Overall, SALVAGE MISSION is a worthy companion to the other Marshcal adventures. I look forward to more adventures in this series.

—William A. Barton
SAPIES (Group One), $6.95. Designed by Dorothy Bledsaw. Traveller supplement. One 8½” x 11” book, 17” x 22” map, bagged. 2 or more players playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

SAPIES may be considered a landmark in Group One’s series of adventure settings on alien planets in the Theta Borealis sector, in that it is the first that actually names a designer. Other than that, it is routine Group One—less in fact, in that it simply relieves old ideas on a different planet. Sapies is a medium-high tech level world with two warming species, the nomadic barabons and the tribe and the advanced mitekese race. Both races are described and illustrated, as are several species of animals on the planet, the flora and terrain, the mitekese culture and their barbarian stronghold—a labyrinthine cave complex. And, of course, there are encounter tables for terrain type and a full-color geodscape map, perhaps the most garish yet—a plethora of pinks and dark oranges. Don’t stare at this one too long.

While SAPIES has little to recommend it above previous GI offerings, one might find the markings of an interesting situation in a commando mission in an unknown stronghold or perhaps one of the mitekese cities (they are apparently supposed to be the “good guys” of the planet, but they are so grotesque in comparison to the cygmans, I find it hard to sympathize with them at all). A couple of the animals are interesting, if slightly unlikely, too.

SAPIES is not as grim as usual with a GI adventure. In one place a false start to a paragraph was left in the text and the paragraph began anew two lines further on! Too many improbabilities around here, too, not adequately explained. The pink photosynthetic vegetation, the two-pupiled eyes of the mitekese, the suggestion that the mitekese evolved from the chiropteran class of animals in one place and the “clue” of the wrecked colony ship in the paragraph on their race and origins, the concept that animals from the same class (homodragon) can look like four-winged lobsters and pseudo antelopes, depending on whether they fly or walk, the use of sandstorms as a defense in the mitekese stronghold and, of course, the barabons vs. the more civilized race is just a repeat of the idea used in Warlord Farm.

Unless you’re just completely knocked out by GI’s adventure settings and have to have every one published, you can easily find much better than SAPIES even among GI’s own products.

—William A. Barton

THETA BOREALIS SECTOR (Group One), $6.95. Approved for Traveller, One 8½” x 11” 16-page book, 17” x 22” map, bagged. Published 1981.

THETA BOREALIS SECTOR is Group One’s newest approved-for-Traveller release. It outlines the various worlds and subsectors that make up the Group One Traveller universe, much along the lines of GDI’s own Spinnward Marches, Paranoia’s Press’ Beyond and Vanguard Reaches and Judges Guild’s Gateway Quadrant releases. THETA BOREALIS has many of GI’s previous supplements together, showing the locations of those planets in their adventures—Pen-Lato’s World, Port Eonaron, Wabor-Farm and the mysterious Phoenix Corelan and Ventura “Quadrants”. In addition to the sector map and the individual world stats listed by subsector, the supplement includes two pages of library data concerning the dominant race, empires and confederations, and shipping lines, a page of encounter tables keyed to individual subsectors, and a two-page alphabetical planetary index.

The overall look of THETA BOREALIS SECTOR is far superior to past GI efforts. Gone is the garish, often nearly unreadable covers of the adventure; TBS displays a standard Traveller black-and-red cover, quite subdued and quite sufficient. The ragged-edged look of the text has been replaced by an even right margin—a great graphic improvement.

The sector map, too, is a plain red-and-white on black functional map, similar to the Paranoia sector maps and GDI’s Spinnward Marches map (though not as elaborate)—much nicer to look at than past planetary maps.

Even more important, though there are things I might have liked to have seen included that weren’t, nothing vital to this supplement is missing—a fault that has plagued GI’s efforts from the beginning.

I’d have liked to have found more information about the history and developments—the eccentricities—of the THETA BOREALIS SECTOR, something in the line of what was found in Paranoia Press’ sector supplements, the library data here is a bit skimpy. The book looks a bit bare in other places, too. Some of the world names are a bit whimsical—Furrowland, Fakwolf, etc.—but then that’s almost unavoidable when naming some 382 worlds. And, of course, the price is still higher than

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33
There are several nice features in the **ISS SHIP FILES**, not the least of which is the variety of the ships themselves. The Hennant trading vessel is the first set of Vargh deck plans anywhere, and the only other Zhadani plans are those of FASA. The assault carrier adds a new dimension to mercenary operations, being capable of transporting troops as well as AFWs. And the interdiction satellite should prove quite useful to any referee whose players like to visit red zones repeatedly. The plans themselves are especially useful — even more than GDW's own — in that they show the locations of consoles and control chairs.

The problems in **ISS SHIP FILES** are minor. The tech level of the **Taffs** has been omitted from the USS files. The **Tybor** plans and drawing don't quite seem to match its designated configuration. Some of the control chairs and console lines are faded and difficult to see. The Britisch spellings may seem a bit odd to American gamers. Also the role of the reactor aboard the Zhadani frigate has been left undefined, unlike that of the later **Star-class** patrol frigates of **Levathan**. The price might seem a little steep to some for a supplement, but as this is an imported item, extra cost can't really be avoided — and the quality of the book makes it worth the extra cost, too.

**ISS SHIP FILES** is a strong first offering from Game Workshop's Traveler folks.

—William A. Barton

**PERSONAL BASE LOADS** (Timeline), $7.95. Play aid for _The Morrow Project_ 66 8½" x 11" sheets, 3-hole punched, in envelope. Published 1981.

**PERSONAL BASE LOADS** contains three sheets each of the 22 basic issues of equipment, weapons, and ammunition that player characters may receive as part of a Morrow team. Each sheet outlines the content of the standard base load — all that characters receive, plus one of the special weapons loads or, in some cases, the special items such as a medical issue. On the reverse of each sheet is the player's individual data file, giving room for the character's attributes, maximum weight he can carry, the breakdown for his structure points, and other information. Having the data file on the back of the basic loads is quite convenient. A row of stars shows exactly how much ammo each weapon (and many of the special items) can carry, the breakdown for his structure points, and other information.

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—Lewis Pulsipher

**ISS SHIP FILES** (Game Workshop), $5.98. Designed by Bob McWilliams. Approved for Traveller One 6" x 8" 40-page booklet. Published 1981.

**ISS SHIP FILES** is a book of deck plans for six new ship types, written up as though taken from the files of the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service. In addition to four Imperial ship designs, two civilian and two military, the book is notable for including deck plans for a Zhadani and Vargh vessel as well. Ships featured in the FILES are the freight Tractor Vessel _Huyan Rose_, the Excelsior-class Express Packet Boat (actually a starship), the Zhadani Navy Taffs-class Patrol Frigate, the Imperial Standard Automated Interdiction Satellite, the Tybor-class Imperial Navy Light Assault Troop Carrier and the Hennant-class Vargh Tradeboat (also a starship). Complete deck plans, statistics, comments, crew roster, and High Guard USF are provided for each ship, along with an illustration and any special rules notes needed. An introductory section showing how to read the symbols of the deck plans completes the package.

—William A. Barton

**PERSONAL DATA FILES** (Game Workshop), $5.50. Approved for Traveller One pad of 50 8½" x 11¾" sheets. Published 1981.

For those Travellers who sometimes have trouble keeping track of all their skills or exactly what equipment they have, Game Workshop has entered the field of Traveller data sheets with its PERSONAL DATA FILES. These come in a pad of 50 sheets (more than enough for most players), each printed with

—William A. Barton
spaces for personal data, skills, funds, palanques, service history, equipment, optional combat factors and notes.

The PERSONAL DATA FILES are nicely drawn and set up in an easy-to-use fashion. Each section is comprehensively divided into items that are either necessary for play or that help flesh out a character. The personal data section, in addition to player and character names and UPP, has spaces for referee name, title, birthdate, homeworld, race/sex, age and Travellers’ Aid membership. While lacking some of the specifics of Paranoia Press’ personal data sheets (religion, marital status, etc.), it nevertheless covers most items that will come up in a campaign. The equipment section includes a space to note where each item is located and includes room for DMs and character reductions due to encumbrance. The service history includes room for the character’s Mercenary mobile rating, and the optional combat section is for recording Snaphoot action points and Azhanti High Lightning factor. Nice. And, of course, 50 sheets to a pad is more than with any other data sheets available.

Problems include the nonsandard size of the sheets. They’re nowhere near as easy to store as gigantecards. Some sheets are only 8 1/2” x 11” en even the regulation 8 1/2” x 11” sheets in Judges Guild’s Traveller Logbook. The space for notes is awfully small, but the blank is big enough, so it can be used, too.

Overall, if you can locate this import item, you should find it quite useful.

—William A. Barton

UNIVERSE GAMEMASTER’S SCREEN & SYSTEM, WORLD AND ENVIRON LOGS (SPI), $8.00. Four 8 1/2” x 11” section screen, 8 1/2” x 11” 96-page logbook. Published 1981.

SPI has released its first Universe game accessory, a gamemaster’s package containing the official UNIVERSE GAMEMASTER’S SCREEN and a book of SYSTEM, WORLD AND ENVIRON LOGS. The 96-page logbook contains four system logs for mapping the worlds of a particular star system, 12 world logs (divided among the various world sizes of the Universe system) and 12 environ logs for detailed mapping of specific areas on a planet. The four-sectioned screen folds out to hide the GM’s notes, rolls, etc., from the players. On the GM’s side, it displays the charts, tables, and text the designers felt most useful for refereeing Universe; on the players’ side, two sections contain charts for their use. Charts are colored to differentiate one from another.

The GAMEMASTER’S SCREEN could prove useful since it will save GMs at least some time they’d have to spend flipping through the rules. The logs will alleviate somewhat the necessity of photocopying those provided with the game. Unfortunately, since Universe has been out for several months, most GMs will already have copied most logs they’re going to need, making those in this package superfluous. And with only four system logs and 12 environ logs (barely enough to map some single planets), they’re going to have to be copied anyway. That greatly reduces the cost-effectiveness of the package.

Since the screen still requires reference to the rules in places (particularly on the skill summaries), some GMs may wish to use something else as a screen and forget the $8 altogether. One more big gripe I have about the screen is that one GM screen seems to share some charts that appear on the player side are absent from the GM’s side (such as the Hit Table), yet are just as necessary for the GM as for the player. Still, if you don’t have enough photocopies of the logs—or just want some connected in a book—and can’t stand the thought of using anything but a Universe screen for Universe (and the $8 price tag doesn’t deter you), you might find this accessory of some value.

—William A. Barton

VEHICULAR BASE LOADS (TimeLine), $5.95. Play aid for The Morrow Project, 36 8 1/2” x 11” 3 hole punched sheets, in envelope. Published 1981.

This gaming accessory for Timeline’s The Morrow Project is a revised version of the original gamemaster’s package of vehicular base loads. It contains 3 sheets for each different vehicle type which may be in use by Morrow Project teams. Each sheet lists the various types of weaponry and the amount of ammo for each vehicle on the front, except for the Mars-Onc vehicle and the Scientific-Onc vehicle, both of which are so heavily armed that weaponry covers front and back. On the back of most of the vehicle sheets are the basic stores and supplies carried. The listing for the Mars vehicle supplies is on the back of the HAAM surf sheet and the Scientific-Onc and Albacore supplies are back to back on separate sheets.

The base load sheets are especially handy for use for the Morrow vehicles. Every weapon listed has a series of stars, each of which represents a single shot or burst to show exactly how much ammo the gun has before it becomes necessary to reload. The sheets are 3-hole punched, too, and can be fit into a notebook for use, avoiding a lot of flipping around in the rulebook to find out just what each vehicle can do.

The only problem I see with the sheets is the minor inconvenience of having the acreage and Scientific-Onc supplies listed on the same sheet, with the HAAM surf weaponry listed a second time with the acreage supplies. Since the back of the acreage weaponry sheet is blank, supplies could have easily been listed there.

If you’re a Morrow Project GM, you should find these VEHICULAR BASE LOADS sheets of use in your campaigns.

—William A. Barton

MINIATURES

TRAVELLER MINIATURES (Citadel Miniatures), $2.95/set of 20 figures, 15mm miniatures for Traveller released 1981.

Citadel Miniatures-UK has released their own approved-for- Traveller 15mm miniatures. Five boxed sets of Traveller figures have been released initially—Adventurers, The Mercenary, Ship’s Crew, Citizens, and Aliens. All figures in a set are different and all are excellently molded. The figures look real and make games visually attractive.

There is something for everyone and in these five packs, from mercenary troopers and aliens to robots and from patrons to aliens. Actually, the aliens are probably the best buy, especially if players regularly play alien characters—Vargr, Aslan, and Droyne. No Hivers or Centaurs are available yet, but I hear those are on the way.

Compared with other Traveller lines I’ve seen, Citadel easily leads the field. These figures are excellent additions to a Traveller collection, particularly as they come in Traveller-sized boxes and include foam padding—essential, considering the way many people treat their miniatures. I heartily recommend these figure packs to all science fiction miniature enthusiasts.

—Robert McElhiney

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DRAGON'S EYE (Automated Simulations), $24.95, Dos/Apple for Apple. One player; playing time 1-30 minutes. Cannot be saved. Published 1981.

DRAGON'S EYE is a computerized fantasy role-playing game. The player takes the role of a fantasy adventurer named "Oshad" to find the legendary Dragon's Eye. The player is given 21 days (three weeks) to search throughout the 40 sectors of the seven provinces of the land of Oshad. The search procedure is fairly simple and straightforward. The adventurer moves from one sector to the next, stopping for a rest or to shop, etc. The game can be saved at any time, and the adventurer can return to any location already visited. The game is not simple, but the simplicity is deceptive. A sector might have to be searched a number of times before something is found, or it might be searched forever without revealing anything of use. Furthermore, the adventurer may be frequently attacked by monsters. The first few times the game is played the monsters seem deadly, but with experience, most of them become easy to kill. Thus, the sequence of play is movement to a new sector, search for a few minutes, fight off any monsters which appear, and move on. But things are really not so simple. Before the game starts there is a choice of 4 weapons and 16 names. Each weapon affects the adventurer's combat ability and tactics selection while the name affects a variety of things (especially initial selection of spells) in a subtle and unexplained fashion. Then there are three spells which affect various aspects of the game. For example, the Town Spell allows the adventurer to travel up to seven days forward or backward in time. The Knowledge Spell increases the efficiency of search. The all-important Locate Eye spell specifies in which of the seven provinces the Dragon's Eye is located. The game has far too many strong points to include them all in a capsule review. This is not a game in which it takes a great many games to master the game. After playing the game well, it is written in a strange and pseudoarchaic style, which I am not sure about. When I first read it I was annoyed; later I decided that it was a good thing. The game's weak point is that a first-time player will find the game extremely frustrating due to the strange rulebook and the apparent difficulty of the object. After playing the game, I understand the format and I put the game away for several weeks before giving it another try. When I did, I became hooked and I spent the next two weeks playing the game whenever I had any spare time. Overall, this is a very good game and I recommend it. I do think that it is overpriced, but I feel that way about all computer games. —Rudy Kraft

EPOCH (Sirius Software), $34.95, 48K disk for Apple. One player; playing time 1-30 minutes. Cannot be saved. Published 1981.

EPOCH is a game answer to Atari's Star Raiders. The object of the game is simple; the galaxy is being overrun by enemy ships, and you are to destroy as many of them as you can. Unlike many other space games, you must destroy enemy ships before they strike you. The game is limited by three factors: fuel, time, and ammunition. Running out of any of these will end the game. Fuel and ammunition are replenished by docking at a friendly base; time can be restored by running the gauntlet of a time warp. The graphics in this game are what make EPOCH stand out. Players are presented with a three-dimensional display of space, moving through this space causes the starfield and enemy ships to scurry past. Ships also gain larger as one approaches them, this adds to the 3-D effect. Motion on the screen is extremely smooth, among the best I have seen for the Apple Sound effects, especially opening and closing music, add to the gameplay.

The problems with EPOCH are minor, at worst. If you use a 4K disk, it is hard to distinguish enemy and friendly bases, at least at far range. Also, it is strange that it is easier to destroy a ship at long range than at close range. Overall, though, this is an excellent game. If you like space games, EPOCH is a must, it's among the best out for the Apple.
You pilot the ship Valkyrie on its mission to subdue the ten castles of the island Fugloy. Your ship is defined by an energy level and a location on an 8 x 10 grid. Both movement and combat drain energy, mandating frequent trips to base (near the center of the grid) to refuel. The length of a grid location is either land or sea. Mountains may or may not intercept movement between any two given locations. Fog obscures portions of the grid, causing fatalities as you fly into the mountains or ocean. When the Valkyrie enters a location which includes a castle, there is combat with a varying number of "birds," which flare across the screen. There are five kinds of birds, but they will not attack on the monitor. Besides the birds defending the castle, there is a Fugloy Air Force which can pounce on you in any seemingly vacant location. Selections from Wagner enliven the Valkyrie's convoluted progress.

This is one of the few attempts I have seen to combine a strategy game with a strategy simulation game. It is definitely the most successful. The birds flap around quite gracefully. The music is appropriate. The single-pannel targeting takes a bit of getting used to, but I prefer it to the usual, double-pannel system. The documentation is flawless.

VOYAGE OF THE VALKYRIE was designed for the TRS-80, and the limitations of that machine are apparent. The graphics are 2-D, and there is no color. As a compromise, VOYAGE is not as exciting as Missile Command, nowhere near as challenging as The Shattered Alliance.

VOYAGE OF THE VALKYRIE is a novel approach to the TRS-80 scene than those who play on the Apple. (For more on this game see Deus Ex Machina, p. 16.)

FORRESTER JOHNSON

PLAY BY MAIL

STAR CLUSTER ONE (The Buchanan Company), $3/tum, $4/subscription, $3 rulebook. Designed by Steve Jackson. Between 50 and 300 players in each game, game continues until one player owns 10% of the game, which may occur. Begin in 1981.

A star cluster is just recovering from a supernova blast. Each star starts out with a star with a color and type. The star is also have a list of known stars and their x-y-s coordinates plus a supply of stored-up build points with which to build modules. Modules are the heart of the game. There are two kinds, base and ship, and these come in a variety of types and energy, which produces new energy, which stores energy, which runs up the ship, and a host of others. Players start with a random assortment of these modules, which may be arranged (and rearranged) into the ship or other modules. Modules can be arranged in general, bases provide and store energy and build new modules. Modules use energy to power their drives; drives limit how far they can move per turn, while total energy on board determines how many turns a ship can move before its energy runs out. The sequence of the play moves movement before module transfer — thus you must have your ship ready the turn before you want it to move.

This game has some solid innovations. It has a three-dimensional universe. Modules are not onlychronic — they make a player's fleet very flexible if he needs it. The sequence of play allows players to plan ahead. Factories are worth build points, while modules have a build point cost. The nice touch here is that modules may be partially built (say, 8 out of 10 build points) and completed at a later date. Lastly, the relationship between energy production at bases, storage at bases, and storage and energy use on ships is fascinating.

Buchanan is having trouble at present: turn-around time is 6 weeks, and output is now hand-typed rather than computer-printed. There have been two drastic rules revisions. There have improved the game substantially, but are unsettling. Some players will dislike the way the stars are handled (basically, parking places for bases and that's it). Others will be disappointed. The ship design only goes as far as weapons and screen modules, without worrying about armor thickness, missile replacements, or tactical fighting. I am not happy with the way the orders must be coded — remembering that 145AA is my ship while 145A2 is my base does not come naturally. Lastly, the game is too slow. Starting players have two options: scouting for new stars, 10% chance per ship per turn at best, or striking out for one of the known stars two or more turns distant. Since the first turn is also actionless (remember the sequence of play and the build point limits until turn four. This is added by the setup, since players will be hard put to get three ships into space at the same time.

I'm not particularly pleased with STAR CLUSTER ONE. In my opinion it could use a bit of action (for instance, doubling ship speed and setup modules), and better handling by Buchanan. Right now it is a slow game with a long turn-around time — hardly the perfect combination. Not recommended.

W.G. ARMINIGHT

PUBLICATIONS

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD (1919 E. Sycamore No. 203, Anaheim, CA 92805); single issue $2.75; 6 issues (1-year subscription) $11; Russell Sipe, editor. First published 1981.

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD is a brand new publication aimed at those gamers who read The Space Gamer and Creative Computing and are satisfied with neither. It pursues all the computer angles to a degree that TSR really can't (and shouldn't) while maintaining a wargaming flavor usually lost in the computer magazine. Topics pursued include video arcade games, computer wargaming, and reviews of all that software available for your Apple/Atari/ Radio Shack/IBM.

I was generally impressed with the first issue of CGW. The lead article was on computer wargaming and was written by Chris Crawford, author of Eastern Front. (a slick WW2 wargame for the Atari) There were a number of reviews, both full-length and capsule A Robotwar campaign was announced, and there were the usual news-and-rumors sections. The physical quality, layout, and artwork are about a dead-even level with The Space Gamer, and there were (of course) lots of ads for computer games.

My only criticism of the magazine is the paucity of honest-to-goodness articles, outside of the one by Crawford, there just wasn't much. However, that is understandable for a first issue, and Russell Sipe, the editor, is actively soliciting manuscripts (payment is 2 cents/word).

On Sunday, December 6, approximately $15,000 worth of computer equipment was stolen from the Camgog Park, CA office of Edu-Ware Services, Inc. The equipment was valued at $2,000,282.15. 3AMM 00325, A2M3 23514, A2M3 139070, A2M3 214443, A2M3 (unknown), A2M3 (unknown). One Hitachi/Amdek 13" color monitor One Pacacolor 11" color monitor (Japanese markings) serial no. T9i 5626. One Video 100/Amdek B&W color monitor One Sanyo green screen monitor (model no. DM3120C) serial no. 65002370. One Sanyo 13" color TV serial no. 19588. One Sanyo TRC 8010A memo-eroler serial number T86130222.

Anyone with information about this stolen equipment is encouraged to contact Steven Pederson at (213) 706-6666.
I strongly recommend this magazine to computer gamers, and just one reason alone will (in my opinion) suffice. You can now start getting from just one publication the information that you've been having to dig out of three or four or five (or six . . .). Get it.

-Bruce F. Webster

Unfortunately, the flavor is amatureux. Although the new game listings are the best I've seen in any magazine, the follow-up reviews are plain bad - leaving out major details (including, on one occasion, the name of the game being reviewed) and taking a superficial look (many seemed to have been written by players who hadn't received their first turn yet). Sweet's discussion was adequate (forcing players to drop out of the game, using the W4T line at work to make long-distance calls). The Letters column has a tendency to be dominated by snarkoats who think some game company is out to get them. Lastly, I was dismayed to find a 4-page short story in a 16-page magazine (and that was just Part I).

This magazine is a disappointment. NUTS & BOLTS needs contributors who have something to say and know how to say it. I can't recommend this magazine until it shapes up.

W.G. Armbourne

THE TRIBES OF CRANE (Schubel & Son)

Company News We are in the process of developing a new second generation, fully computerized, play-by-mail space battle game. We expect it to be completed around April, 1982. We have a new edition of The Tribes of Crane rule book available to all players of the game for $1.00 mailed first class.

Game News Both Crane I and Crane II have seen several small outbreaks of plague among the large herds of some tribes. Fast action by the chiefs of most of the tribes prevented the losses from being too great.

On Crane I the First Empire attacked the city of Istor in an attempt to recapture it from the Horde which had taken the city in October, 1980. By the end of the battle, the First Empire held only a portion of the city. The western half of Istor to the city leader's palace was held by the First Empire. The eastern half was still held by the Horde and the brave female city leader, Catahula. Their troops had thrown up street barricades on all major roads to the eastern half of the city. This direction the battle will take is yet to be seen.

Two other cities on Crane I fell without bloodshed. In the city of Alab, the Councilman Sterner and his court were successful in a coup against the caravan merchant Shamon Remlock and the wandering Shamosa Rebek. The city of Bec surrendered without a fight to a large Grand Union force led by its previous Kinglord Lyredd. Lyredd had escaped the city before it fell to a large Horde Army nearly a year earlier. Since that time the Horde had lost much of its previous strength after the death of its greatest leader, Mud'dil'Nob. Now, after a long naval blockade of its port and weak Horde city leadership, the city was ready to return to the Grand Union. As Lyredd entered the city, he claimed the honors of all those who remembered his face and just rule.

On Crane II the small southern polity of Rinda was overwhelmed and plundered by a force called the Southern Clan. There is a rumor that the Valorius Ice Army is marching to retake the city.

-George Schubel

PBM Update reports on professionally moderated play-by-mail games. Notices are monthly. Copy deadline is 60 days previous to the first of the month, for the issue in which the notice is to appear. Deadline for the July issue is May 1. All copy should be typed and double spaced. Notices should not exceed 200 words in length. TSG reserves the right to edit copy as necessary.
LETTER

Just saw your review of Wizardry, and would like to thank you for publishing it. At the same time, I would like to ask and answer some of your questions/critiques.

First of all, the Wizardry system is a lot more than “Hack ‘Em Kill Kill Loot Loot Map Run Over.” However, “Proving Grounds” is an introductory scenario, and is designed to teach you the basic skills needed to conduct expeditions, and so has only a few puzzles. “Knight of Diamonds,” the forthcoming scenario, has as many puzzles as any adventure.

Secondly, while there are some things that sentence parsing can do that single key option cannot, one of the things I cannot stand about adventures is that you are always searching for the right word. Wizardry always lets you know what you can do at any point, and is capable of allowing just as many branching options as any adventure, except usually you have to type less.

You are correct that there were some minor datfile bugs in the program, and as these are reported, they have been fixed. As for thieves, they can’t be used in this particular game, but can use magic shields. There was a typo calling the +1 shield large. The two rooms that had no exits have been fixed, and all the other open spaces were intentional (with one-way doors out).

Now for the interesting news — we are releasing a new version of “Proving Grounds” with many improvements, including a major scenario suite — full backup and recovery — no 10 year aging — ability to disable a party in the maze and rescue them with another party — ability to update old versions to the new one! We are the first software house to develop and implement a way in which the owners of the new version of our game can upgrade old disks for owners of old versions. Stores are very pleased at this and are cooperating in letting their customers know of the service.

As to your crashing problems — with 4000 disks in the field, we have had occasional people with problems like yours. In some cases it was the fault of a marginal diskette, in other cases it was hardware, it most it was hardware glitching a disk. In not one case has the program crashed due to a bug! And in all cases, we replaced the disk (usually free) and got the customer going again.

Robert Woodhead
Sirtech Software

The latest from Strategic Simulations: Napoleon’s Campaigns, a cross-level game with maps and counters, $39.95. Also Southern Command, a battlegroup-level simulation of the Israeli attack across Suez in 1973, $39.95. Both games available on disk for the 48K Apple II.

New computer games from Discovery Games: Down Patrol and Chainmail’s Flying Tigers. Upcoming: a character generator for Traveller and a game assistance package for Time Tripper. Discovery’s Guns of Fort Defiance has been sold to Avalon Hill.

Dwacaster games scheduled for release in late March: Star Smuggler (by Dennis Susare), Dragon Rage, (by Lewis Pulipher), Grem Armor (by Arnold Hendrickx), and Goblin (by Howard Barash).

The Middex Press has published the second edition of Offer, which is much more professional-looking than the first.

Wind Warrior Co. (P.O. Box 231, Short Hills, NJ 07078) offers the marital arts card game Grand Master.

Rex has produced a Continental Stamps Unit for their Space Opera miniature line, weighing 21 ounces. Price: $15.00.

Flying Buffalo has published its Tunnels & Trolls 1982 Calendar. Price: $5.00.

FGU is planning a magazine about Space Opera. First issue is scheduled for early 1982.


Gray Cat Castings has merged with Task Force Games, and plans a line of Star Fleet Battles miniatures for release in March.

A character generation program for T&T is available on cassette for the TRS-80. Price: $10.00. Also from Flying Buffalo A second edition of The Dungeon of the Bear, at $6.95.

TSR is not renewing its membership in the Games Manufacturers Association, and will no longer attend the GAMA-sponsored convention Origins. Company officials say GAMA has not been productive, and has failed to promote the gaming hobby, as it was chartered to do.

Future and Fantasy Games has changed its name to Game’s Guild. It will continue to sell Hyper Battle, but its main business will be distributing discount games to Guild members.
CALENDAR

February 5-7: GENCON SOUTH VI, Wargaming con. Contact at P.O. Box 16371, Jacksonville, FL 32216
February 5-7: VIKING CON III SF con with RPGs and computer games. Contact the Science Fiction & Fantasy Club, Viking Union 22, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA 98225.
February 5-7: WARCÓN, RPGs, boardgames, etc. Contact David (Kong) Hellmagg, Chairman - Warcon '82, P.O. Box J-1, College Station, TX 77844, 713-845-1515.
February 12-14: MAINECON '82, RPGs, boardgames, historical miniatures, etc. Contact John Wheeler, Mainecover '82 Director, 245 Water St., Bath, ME 04530.
February 12-15: MANNHEIMER-CON '82, Miniatures, board games, Mannheim Middle School in Mannheim, West Germany. Contact Granatschützerei Kriegspiel Society, 181st Trans Rto, APO NY 09166.
February 13-15: DUNDRA CON VI SF & RPG con Dunfey Hotel, San Mateo, CA. Contact at 386 Alcatraz Ave., Oakland, CA 94618.
February 13-14: GAMES FAIRE, Family games, boardgames, computer games, etc. Contact the Book and Game Company, W 621 Million, Spokane, WA 99201.
February 13-15: ORCON '82, Strategy games. Sheraton-Anaheim Hotel near Disneyland. Contact @ Oregon, PR Dept., P.O. Box 2577, Anaheim, CA 92804.
February 19-21: KAWARTHA CON, Contact c/o def.bby's hobby Emporium, P.O. Box 1552, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada K9J 7H7.
March 12-14: FANTASYLARK '82, RPGs, boardgames, war simulations, fantasy ball. Contact Northern Oklahoma Dungeoneers, P.O. Box 241, Ponca City, OK 74602-0241.
April 2-4: MCVON '82 SF&F, wargaming Contact @ P.O. Box 19348-50 University of Texas, Arlington Station, Arlington, TX 76014.
April: 8-11: SCIENCE FICTION WEEKEND, ST con with RPGs and computer games. Contact @ Fantasy Publishing Company, 1855 W. Main St., Alhambra, CA 91801.
April 23-25: CONTRAFETMPS SF con Contact Contromps, P.O. Box 12373, Omaha, NE 68112.
May 26-30: CONQUEST III SF&F con with D&D and T&T tournaments. Contact @ P.O. Box 32055, Kansas City, MO 64111.
May 28-31: GRIMCON IV, RPG con. Contact @ P.O. Box 4153, Berkeley, CA 94704.
June 5-6: GENGHIS CON IV, Games, miniatures, auctions. Contact Denver Gamers Association, Box 2945, Littleton, CO 80161.
June 11-13: MICHICON. To be held in Detroit Contact @ P.O. Box 757, Troy, MI 48099.
June 16-20: HOUSTONCON '82, Nostalgia, SF&F. Contact L-5 Society, P.O. Box 713, Stafford, TX 77477-0713.
August 5-8: TEXCON 1982, D&D, Car Wars, etc. For more information, send SASE to Texcon 1982, 8028 Geissler No 1905, Austin, TX 78753.

CONTEST

This month's contest is an exercise in creative (possibly very creative) writing. Send us a vignette - a story or incident, 500 words or less - based on a game. It doesn't have to be humorous but that's probably the best way to be effective in so little space.

For an example of some very short vignettes, see issue 45, page 40: Aaron Allston's "Derby of Death" pieces. Another example came from Donald McNally along with his entry to an earlier contest. We take you now to the bridge of a Bug ship from the universe of Starship Troopers.

RESULTS FROM MURPHY'S RULES CONTEST

The winner of our Murphy's Rules contest was Joseph Miranda, of North Hollywood, California; he submitted no less than 21 suggestions, for which he will receive a 12-issue subscription. Second place (6 issues) goes to Stefan Jones, of Locust Valley, NY. Honorable mention goes to Joe Cavann, of Woonsneck, Rhode Island. Rather than print their suggestions here, we'll run them (appropriately credited, of course) in the "Murphy's Rules" cartoon over the next few months.

For those of you who had suggestions but didn't get them to us in time - fear not. We will continue to accept readers' suggestions for "Murphy's Rules." Each suggestion we use will be good for a two-issue extension to your subscription. (If you're not a subscriber, you will be... for two whole issues... thrills!)

Aboard the Warp Cruiser, Mandible Destiny

On the darkened bridge of the warp cruiser, a chittering hand clicks response lever 371 of the main computer control panel. The overhead screen glows red and purple with the messages: "Subterranean scan complete. Median force resistance: 89.1. Bolt requirement: 36.75."

"Oooooee, we'll geet those troopers now, my sweety."

"Yes, the universe wheelch thank us. Hee, hee. The troopers wheel bee so surprised to see our lowlee breeches. We'll make them run away and hide. Wee are so scareee, hee, hee, hee. Beegeto cuntown. Readeeet planet born.

"Yes, sweety."

"15...14...13..."

"Eengage tractor beams three and seven."

"Eengaged, sweety."

"9...8...7..."

"Launch back hoe torpedoes."

"5...4..."

"Torpedoes launched."

"3...2...1..."

"Commence boring activities."

***

All entries will become the property of TSG. The winner will receive a 12-issue subscription; second place will win a 6-issue subscription. We will also print as many of the runners-up as space allows. Entries will be judged on a wholly subjective basis - i.e., how hard they make us laugh, cry, or groan in anguish. As always, we reserve the right to award fewer prizes if no entries of publishable quality are received. All entries must be postmarked no later than Mar. 15, 1982.

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"YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY!"

Original D&D gives a "% in liar" for each monster listed. That's a typographical error, the correct word is "liar." However, the creators of the *Arduin Grimoire*, in imitating D&D, gave a "% liar" for all their monsters.

"BOOTLEGGER REVERSE, MR. SULU!"

A starship can go from Warp 6 to a dead stop simply by turning around, according to the *Star Fleet Battle Manual*.

SIZZLING SIMULATIONS

NATO includes the following: "To simulate the use of strategic nuclear weapons simply soak the map with lighter fluid and apply a flame."

*Joseph Miranda*

PROMISES, PROMISES...

The moderator of the play-by-mail game *Lords of Valetta* considers the game active, though few if any turns have been processed in the last three years.
NOTHING CAN STOP IT...

It's a hundred feet long and programmed to kill. It's covered with guns, missiles, armor. It's as smart as a man. And it's coming back!

OGRE

OGRE and G.E.V. — the classic games of future warfare — are coming back. The new editions will have, not only updated rules, but greatly improved components (double-sided counters, full-color enlarged maps, and reference sheets for each player). The new editions of OGRE and G.E.V. will be available in early 1982, along with The Ogre Book (a reprint of the best OGRE articles from the early days of The Space Gamer) and the Charles Roberts Award-winning OGRE miniatures. They'll all be coming from the original designer of both games — Steve Jackson. Watch for them!

STEVE JACKSON GAMES