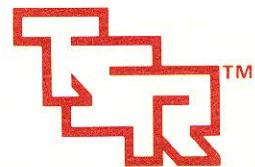


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Producers of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Games

October 24, 1989

Dr. Jeffrey S. Victor
Professor of Sociology
Jamestown Community College
525 Falconer Street
Jamestown, NY 14701

Dear Dr. Victor:

Mary Winburn has asked me to respond to your letter requesting any information we may have in regards to the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS(R) game with respect to the psychological aspects of it.

Please find enclosed several articles, including one entitled "Emotional Stability Pertaining to the Game of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS." We hope that these will be of value to you, and want to wish you good luck with your book. We would enjoy receiving a copy when it is completed. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Debbie Poutsch

Debbie Poutsch
Legal Assistant

Enclosures

*See also: book by Gary Fine
Shared Fantasy
(Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981)*

(P.D.F. 2)

intended
for publication
in a small
circular: THE GAMEVINE,
Toronto.

Get "The
Whole Loon
Catalogue"
Volume 2

THE WHOLE LOON CATALOGUE II

by Pierre Savoie

In issue #38, I wrote a long listing of anti-D&D sources.

Here's an article which "touches up" the list:

REV. JOHN TORRELL (EUROPEAN-AMERICAN EVANGELISTIC CRUSADES, formerly Christian Life Ministries; P.O. Box 41001; Sacramento, CA; 95841): I mentioned that this man wrote or sponsored several anti-D&D tracts, which were referred to in turn by others. Here's one final fact: about D&D he has been quoted as saying, "People just go nuts with it. They start living the game. They can't tell the difference between their fantasies and reality." (quoted by Pat Pulling of B.A.D.D.)

NOW, compare this with the minister's own "religious" newsletter (The Dove, Issue III, Vol. IX; Autumn 1987):

○

"From the Desk of John S. Torrell":

...This issue of The Dove will be focused heavily on the surrender of the United States to the Soviet Union...As we pointed out in the last two issues of The Dove, President Reagan signed the surrender documents at the summit meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland in October 1986. The document calls for a peaceful surrender of the United States, giving us five years to do it. Our

nation will become a communist vassal state of the Soviets. By the time you have read this article, ten months will have passed and the United States will be on its way to destroying itself.

Rev. Torrell makes much of this "secret deal." So much for confusing fantasy and reality!

"100 HUNTLEY STREET" (Crossroads Christian Communications Inc.; 100 Huntley Street; Toronto, Ont.; M4Y 2L1): This "made in Canada" Fundamentalist Christian TV show did do a few shows on the "problem" of D&D. They just did so to be fashionable among the other "Fundies." Using a friend's name, I asked for and got material on D&D--a Christian Life Ministries tract again!

Also, they have a late-night show, "Nite Lite" (Ch. 47, daily 3-5 a.m.). I once posed as a "troubled teen" and called their phone-in line about my "obsession with D&D." The operator fell over himself in his haste to get me on the air. In choking, halting phrases I explained to the host and guest how I was losing all my friends and how "the game group was taking over my life." I was playing a role, after all...

The guest started by telling me the Biblical phrase, "He came to set the captives free" (also the title of a CHICK PUBLICATIONS book on Satanism.) She then led me into a prayer with me repeating each line (unusual even for this show.) I complied, except in place of the final "Amen" I whipped out a whoopee cushion and gave 'em a rich E-flat, a very "bass"

response!

PAT PULLING, BOTHRED ABOUT DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS (B.A.D.D.; P.O. Box 5513; Richmond, VA; 23220): I finally got some of their material. B.A.D.D. puts out a 40-page booklet (US\$ 3.75) which is "designed to save educators and librarians hours of research and for them to reach a common sense decision". There's also a large scrapbook of newspaper clippings (US\$ 10.00), which is not above using articles from the supermarket tabloids of the U.S. or Australia. I have a one-hour cassette (US\$ 5.00) of a talk by Pat Pulling and Patrick Dempsey at the First Baptist Church of Orlando, Florida, hand-recorded in BADD SOUND (give 'em at least one pun per page, I always say). The tape ends with a hymn, something about "Freedom Through Jesus", from some televangelist's record (no, really Dave & Lisa, I'm not making this up!) Finally a booklet called "Witchcraft or Satanism?", about the occult (US\$ 5.00).

Pat Pulling is a "Fundie," no doubt about that. But her approach is different since she can claim personal involvement as a "bereaved mother." Her 16-year-old son, Irving "Bink" Pulling, committed suicide with a handgun. A handgun, for you Canadians, is apparently something which shoots bullets and is legal to carry by anyone in the U.S.; it is not mentioned anywhere in the D&D or AD&D game rules!

Driving back to the house late one night with her husband, Pat "sensed something wrong." They found Bink dead, and she claims she found strange books that she had never seen before

(D&D manuals.)

Her story is that Bink had been playing D&D at school under a "gifted" program, and the teacher who was the DM had put a "curse" on Bink (his character) to make him (his character) a homicidal killer. Bink took his life to keep from killing his family, and (they say) left SIX suicide notes explaining this. The teacher refused to talk to Pat, and "still won't without the representation of a lawyer."

She goes on to claim that Bink was a well-liked boy with no emotional problems. Now here is where there are difficulties. She would have to claim this to save face (hers is a Fundamentalist household) rather than to get at what the real problem was. Remember, they are the only witnesses after the fact; they could have said anything they wanted with the sympathetic compliance of the local police, faced with this strange new "suicide cause."

Also, the NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR DECENCY JOURNAL (Oct. 1984) says:

C

Sheriff's investigators found the boy's room filled with paraphernalia from D&D, and a bizarre suicide note included mystical phrases and "unexplainable-type things" believed to be references to the game.

So why does Pat claim she never saw the game before or knew that Bink was playing it? And why claim six suicide notes?

Pat then posed as a "beginner" and played AD&D for an astounding total of 30-40 hours to learn it (what we can do in less than ten weeks), with a group of college players she described as "very nice." Suitably informed, she filed a \$1 million lawsuit against the principal of Bink's school for allowing D&D there. The case was laughed out of court in 20 minutes, but the prestige of such a case "pending" for nearly a year helped her and frightened other school boards.

She gathered a few other parents who lost children in similar circumstances. Patrick Dempsey says his game-playing son Mike, before committing suicide, was researching the occult, summoning demons in his bedroom, and using voodoo to become unbeatable at backgammon!

Mrs. Pulling uses the practice of "hit-and-run" journalism to her best advantage. She includes any initial report in the news in her file as a "D&D incident" (a criminal who owns the game is sufficient) but never acknowledges the more rational follow-up articles. An example was her citation of a ban on the game by the entire Mormon church (which was since retracted.)

Because of this, her claim of having 100 cases in her files of suicides and murders "directly caused by D&D" is a little unfounded; she only cites short lists of 10 to 15 at most. The rest are "suspected" or "under investigation" and even many of her "definite" cases have been refuted. She used to start by citing the original 1979 Egbert disappearance (now refuted, see issue #38 and The Dungeon Master by William Dear.)

She cited a case of the D&D-playing Erwin boys of Colorado,

where both boys were found dead in a ravine. The older boy left a note saying, "A man without his freedom is not a man at all. Therefore this man is targeted for termination..." It turned out that the older boy was facing sentencing in an auto-theft case, and the parents denied (and probably resented) Mrs. Pulling's use of their sons in "the file."

Undaunted, Mrs. Pulling goes on lecture tours of schools, churches, associations, and even police departments (!), and she often meets with understandably irked people. Paranoid, she says, "I have physically had children try to attack me at a seminar before...They go into their character..." (?)

Her friend Patrick Dempsey came out of one talk-show convinced that the audience was "loaded" with 99 per cent D&D players. It seems the audience had laughed at his ideas of "occult spirits"!

B.A.D.D. is constantly changing its emphasis on a new myth when the old ones lose their flavour. From suicides and the occult, Pat now rides the coattails of the movement to ban "violent toys." Recently, she also denounces the "racism" in the game (because orcs, other (species) races, and a Racial Reaction Table are included in AD&D). B.A.D.D. as a whole is diversifying, away from D&D to a more general discussion of "violent entertainment," together with an organization called the NATIONAL COALITION ON TELEVISION VIOLENCE.

Nevertheless, they get around, sniffing for any "unexplained, frightening occurrence" (UFO) they can try to explain as due to D&D. They count on the fact that any well-

publicized suicide will trigger "copycat" suicides, and that if one person sees a UFO, pretty soon everyone sees UFOs. But you can be sure that Pat is just "pulling" your leg...

By the way, B.A.D.D.'s phone number in Virginia is (804) 264-0403, and Pat Pulling's home no. is (804) 273-9065. Don't call them up to razz them, but it is a quick way to get enlightening tracts mailed to you.

ARCADE (by Robert Maxxe): Not a "loony" book, but a fiction/suspense about video games from beyond which control the minds of the young players involved. I mention it because it has several good quotes also applicable to role-playing games and the people who ban them. Compare, for example, the fictional Ms. Patowski out to close the "arcade" with the woman I just spoke about earlier:

(p. 73)...Wendy Patowski wasn't quite that far gone, but she had certainly lost all rational perspective. Perhaps it came from being a bored housewife, desperate for some raison d'etre more noble than eliminating "ring around the collar"...Thrilled to discover the attention she could generate, she was driven to make wilder claims, and found a talent for reaching an audience...Wendy Patowski was a kind of fanatic, cooking up wild unsupported claims to stampede the uninformed into adopting her views. Was it such a small crime? Hitler had started out, after all,

ranting at thirty-two misfits in a beer hall. The target for intolerance might be capricious, the birthplace insignificant, but the passions aroused never were.

I couldn't have said it better myself...

SHARED FANTASY (by Gary Alan Fine, Assoc. Prof. of Sociology, Univ. of Minnesota; Univ. of Chicago Press; 1983): Not a loony book either, but a sociology study of role-playing games and their players done around 1979 (obviously a bit dated now.) This is not light reading, but an academic work. It has a few negative comments, gleefully quoted by the loonies, but these are far outweighed by its generally positive and realistic view of the games. Particularly good is a section on women players: it seems that teen girls in the study were intimidated by the "locker room atmosphere" of game groups, but also that they were even more afraid of being labelled as "tomboys" from playing what is perceived as a boy's game! Mr. Fine hints that young girls might enjoy the game--just don't tell them, before you start, what proportion of players are male!

WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING (by Marc Gauthier, 1986; from Companions of the Lamb; P.O. Box 4070; Station "E"; Ottawa, Ont.; K1S 5B1): From a Catholic bookstore I found this thin book by a Catholic Lay Preacher about cults. We're in Chapter 5! This Catholic (actually he described himself to me over the phone as a

"Pentecostal Charismatic Christian") copied from a tract by one Louise Shanahan: "GAMES UNSUSPECTING PEOPLE PLAY--DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS". As I explain in "Local Loonacy", this tract is itself a copy job from the material of anti-Catholic groups. He was displeased when I pointed this out, and hung up on me. A quote from the book:

I am so convinced that Dungeons & Dragons exists solely to undermine our Christian faith and to destroy the lives of our young people that enough can not be said until this influence is fully removed from our society. As concerned Christian adults and parents, it is our duty to band together so as to see that our children and our friends are not brainwashed and dehumanized into believing that evil is good. Whether it be direct or indirect, subtle or overt, deliberate or unintentional, Dungeons & Dragons is an introductory and initiation course in occult, (sic) violence and devil worship.

So there you have it, again! Once again, folks, if you hear of any other anti-D&D stuff out there, drop me a line at 690-6985. Anyone interested in viewing a sampler of material relating to this "controversy" should go to the Spaced-Out Library (Toronto Public Libraries' special sci-fi collection; 40 St. George St., 2nd floor) and ask to see their file on "role-

playing games."

THE WHOLE LOON CATALOGUE

by Pierre Savoie

Originally published in THE GAMEVINE (Toronto), issue #38. A follow-up article will appear concerning local anti-Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) activism in Toronto, including a humorous discovery of a Catholic/anti-Catholic alliance which banned the game from the Metro Separate School Board of Toronto. The D&D game, invented by one Gary Gygax of Wisconsin in 1974, certainly touched off a revolution in boardgames, but many people are pretending that it involves a lot more...

Long-time readers of GAMEVINE will remember Wally Hnatiw's article, "Flight of the Loons" (Aug. 1984), in which he discussed anti-D&D preachers appearing on TV, including Pat Robertson (of "The 700 Club" and now involved in U.S. politics), and Rev. Jerry Falwell. They inspired organizations which still exist, although they have since "lost the spotlight" of media attention after the "Dungeons & Dragons controversy".

Unfortunately, role-playing games also lost the spotlight, so the only news attention for the hobby was negative. Nevertheless, I discovered that anti-D&D publications exist, and for the informed public (us) they are incredibly humourous.

I have compiled addresses of such organizations, along with reviews, in order of discovery by me. The general pattern seems to be that they are in the southern U.S., are religious in nature, quote each other in circles, and have D&D material as only one of their many "concerns". The good news is that their publications have been tapering off to nothing since 1983.

Quite by chance I became aware of the first item, from...

CHICK PUBLICATIONS (Canadian distributor: CHRIST IS THE ANSWER, INC.; Box 5167, Stn. "A", Toronto, M5W 1N5): I love the name. This worldwide distributing house publishes Fundamentalist Christian books, but their main items are eye-catching (colour) comics and palm-size (black & white) comic tracts, sold at \$0.20 (CAN) each, singly or in packs of 25. Minimum order: \$5 (CAN) plus 10% postage and handling (min. \$1). Their catalogue is frightening: along with normal Christian subjects they publish anti-Catholic items in abundance (for which they are being investigated by Project "H" of the Ontario Provincial Police.) They urge people to spread tracts around or leave them in public places. One can thus speak of a Fundamentalist with a "two-pack-a-day" habit (sorry, couldn't resist that.)

All they print on D&D is the \$0.20 tract, "Dark Dungeons", a 22-frame comic about a girl initiated into witchcraft when her character (magic-user or cleric, inconsistent) reaches "the 8th

Level". She is "saved" by an exorcist and bookburner. This tract is not for those apt to confuse fantasy with reality!

A notable quote: "Gather up all your occult paraphernalia like your rock music, occult books (Ed. Note: This tract includes Tolkien's novels under "occult books"!) charms, Dungeons and Dragons material. Don't throw them away. Burn them!" (Danger: lead fumes!) CHICK also published, in their newspaper "Battle Cry" (Feb. 1984), feature articles based on a tract by...

PRO-FAMILY FORUM (P.O. Box 8907, Ft. Worth, Texas 76124): This group puts out tracts and books, less pictorial than CHICK, and started out as one woman lobbying to defeat the American Equal Rights Amendment (women's rights.) Their only propaganda is their book, "Playing with Fire", by John Weldon and James Bjornstad (Moody Press, 94 pages, \$4.95 U.S.), and their tract "Dungeons & Dragons--Only a Game?" (4 for U.S. \$1, 50/\$5.50, 100/\$10.00). Postage and handling is U.S. \$1.50 for orders under \$10, 8% of the total otherwise. Here's a quote from the tract:

"Young person, if you want to be successful, productive, well-adjusted and happy, then refuse to fill your wonderful mind with such garbage! Don't allow someone else to take control of your mind. Think too much of yourself to become a tool in the hands of those whose interest is to get your money and destroy your faith in God." The tract is a detailed "argument", and in turn quotes heavily from...

CHRISTIAN LIFE MINISTRIES (P.O. Box 41001, Sacramento, CA, 95841): This organization, you may notice, seems to serve as a source of "information" for others. Apparently it is now called

EUROPEAN-AMERICAN EVANGELISTIC CRUSADES, led by Rev John Torrell, and offers a lot of short info sheets on D&D, a larger "position paper" and even two cassette-tapes! Ask only for their catalogue; they will bill you automatically if you request anything in particular.

One of their six-pagers opens with:

"DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS instead of a game is a teaching on demonology, witchcraft, voodoo, murder, rape, blasphemy, suicide, assassination, insanity, sex perversion, homosexuality, prostitution, Satan worship, gambling, Jungian psychology, barbarism, cannibalism, sadism, desecration, demon summoning, necromantics, divination and many more teachings, brought to you in living color (sic) direct from the pit of hell!!"

Whew! They then offered point-by-point "proof", deliberately confusing players with characters. They left out bestiality (Hosea 12:12), extortion, and tax evasion! Enough said.

Probably the best compilation of anti-D&D material is "Handbook #23" by EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ANALYSTS (The Mel Gablers, P.O. Box 7518, Longview, Texas, 75607-7518). This Christian couple compiled items from many sources, mostly negative. It is available for a U.S. \$5 "contribution" (\$7 for foreign, i.e., Canadian, orders; \$10 for airmail delivery). Well worth getting, the sources are varied, biased and, in general, way off base. It includes material from the above-mentioned groups (not the CHICK tract). The latest revision is dated July 1982--a significant fact. Also significant is their admission (in small print, last

page,) that the famous Egbert "D&D Disappearance & Suicide" was not due to D&D at all.

A major source of anti-D&D activism is from Mrs. Pat Pulling, who started B.A.D.D. (Bothered About Dungeons & Dragons), P.O. Box 5513, Richmond, Virginia, 23220. No publications were reviewed at the time of this writing.

Mrs. Pulling got involved and made TV appearances when her son committed suicide after a disappointing game of D&D (not suicide with a 20-sider, but a six-shooter). She blamed D&D nonetheless. She was winning in the media but losing badly in the courts with her lawsuits. (Ed. note: For more info on this case see "A Letter to the Toronto Star", Oct. 1984 or thereabouts.)

Finally, there are popular novels, only moderately "loony". "Mazes and Monsters" by Rona Jaffe (Dell, fiction, \$4.25 CAN), also a TV movie, is very loosely based on the story of James D. Egbert III and events at Michigan State University. The true story is "The Dungeon Master" by William Dear (Ballantine, biography, \$4.95 CAN). The title is a misnomer; this famous "D&D incident" is shown in the book to be due to other causes--this boy was messed up! (Both books are for mature readers.)

So there it is! If you send a polite letter to the above groups, you may get a free sample of these enlightening tracts. Only, if you do not live alone, explain to others why you got a strange letter or they will think you have gotten into a weird cult (again!)

I will continue my mail-order investigations and try to find

out what these people really believe in. I have a sinking suspicion that they believe Satanic aliens invented the Dungeons & Dragons game and sent it to Earth using ancient astronauts, to be dug up thousands of years later in Gary Gygax's back yard. Look for a possible future article entitled "CHARIOTS OF THE LOONS?"

Further details can be had by phoning your humble narrator, at 690-6985, evenings or weekends (if you're lucky!) I would appreciate learning of any other, similar items. See you in the pit of hell.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Since this article was printed, I discovered that the late, great Jim Bakker may also have been involved in anti-D&D propaganda. He called it a bad moral influence on children. Also, it seems that the Rev. John Torrell and his EUROPEAN-AMERICAN EVANGELISTIC CRUSADES states in his newsletter, "The Dove", that the U.S. was secretly taken over by the U.S.S.R. at the Iceland summit between Reagan and Gorbachev. Oh, well, so much for confusing fantasy with reality!

Dungeons and Dragons' Banned by Arlington School Board

By Leah V. Lattimer
Washington Post Staff Writer

The popular game of medieval fantasy "Dungeons and Dragons" was banned from Arlington schools last night by School Board members reacting to complaints from parents and recent reports linking the game with bizarre incidents and deaths involving youngsters.

The five-member board voted unanimously to exclude the game from the school system's list of extracurricular activities after member Margaret Bcock said studies she has made of the game showed that the negative effects outweighed any benefits.

"I have enough information on my own that I can confidently say I don't want it in the schools," she said before last night's meeting.

Arlington schools spokesman Dennis Smith said the game has been played for several years as an officially sanctioned extracurricular activity of gifted and talented students at Swanson Intermediate School. About 10 students were involved in the game last year and 10 had been expected to participate this year, he said.

Bcock said last night that other students in the system may also have played the game as a part of school activities. "I have heard teachers say it is played in other schools," she said.

The parents of a Hanover County, Va., teen-ager recently filed a lawsuit for more than \$1 million against a public high school there charging that the boy's suicide resulted from playing the game, which court

peers called "an organized school activity."

Reading from a Washington Post article, Bcock told her colleagues that 16-year-old Irving Lae (Bink) Pulling shot himself in the chest hours after playing the game at school. According to court papers, a case, "intended to inflict emotional distress," had been placed upon the teen-ager by another player.

Police investigators found "Dungeons and Dragons" paraphernalia in Pulling's room, along with a suicide note that they believed included references to the game.

"I don't know if we have any horror stories" related to the game, Bcock said, noting that teen-agers can be seen in local shopping centers sporting the medieval-type clothing of the game's characters.

One of the top-selling games in the country with an estimated 3 million to 1 million players, "Dungeons and Dragons" relies upon an intricate fantasy world in which players take on the roles of mythical characters such as monsters, wizards, dwarfs and dragons.

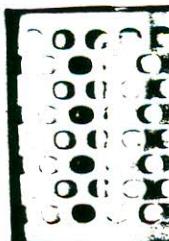
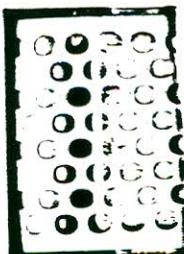
"It's a very fanciful retreat from the routine of school, homework and home-life," Bcock said.

She said complaints last year from the parents of students who played the game once a week at Swanson led her to begin looking into the effects of the game.

Much of the criticism from parents surrounded the idea of involving students in role-playing or portraying characters in which students take on the attributes and actions of their

characters. Advocates of the game contend that the role playing and complex series of instructions sharpen thinking and mathematical skills about young adolescents getting involved in the psychodrama "without their own emotional development taking place."

In other action last night, the board voted to lease Clarendon Elementary School, closed in due to cause of low enrollment, to Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Academy. The board also aggregated ask the County Board to set aside \$1 million in unspent school appropriations for computer labs in high schools, a word processing system, community cultural arts center, and for a fund towards increasing teacher salaries.



Don't Blame 'Dungeons and Dragons'

I find it difficult to express how incensed I am over articles like the front-page story about the boy whose death was linked to "Dungeons and Dragons," the role-playing game ["Game Cited in Youth's Suicide," Aug. 13]. I have been playing "Dungeons and Dragons" since I was 8 years old (I am 15 now), and in that time I have seen many newspaper articles, pamphlets and books all on the subject of youths who have committed suicide or some such thing over these games. In general, I laugh them off because the people who are writing them are so obviously wrong that the articles don't even bear comment (for example, the pamphlet in which I read that "Dungeons and Dragons" promoted devil worship was also the pamphlet in which I read that the scream in killing rule releases a demon that strikes your opponent). The Post's article, however, was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.

Next year I will be a junior at Yorktown High School in Arlington. Much like the boy in the article, I have an avid interest in science fiction, and I play role-playing

games within school (during lunch primarily). In my years of experience as a player in these games and as a "Dungeon Master" (the person who sets up the fantasy world that the players play in), I have never seen a crisis like the one described in the article. With this background, I would like to make some points:

- While there has been a lot of negative press about these games, I cannot think of just one article where anybody bothered to investigate the rumors.
- "Dungeons and Dragons" does not promote devil worship! In fact, in 99 percent of all cases demons and devils are creatures to be destroyed.
- Consider the number of incidents like the one described in this article and then consider the number of people who are playing "Dungeons and Dragons." In recent years this game has had a huge surge in popularity; there are literally millions of people playing it. Now I can only call to mind three incidents that were in any way connected with "Dungeons and Dragons." You can work out the percentages yourself!

• Role-playing games are not purely the domain of children. I know people 30 to 40 years old who play them.

- Most of these alarmist views are circulated by people who obviously know very little to nothing at all about "Dungeons and Dragons." For example, in the Post article the police were stated to have found a suicide note that contained "unexplainable type things—mystical phrases that the police believed were references to the name of mythology." The police believed? I don't suppose they bothered to check it out. (I also noticed that these "mystical phrases" were not repeated in the article.)
- In all the articles like The Post's, the people involved were reported to be under psychological or emotional distress at the time the event occurred. So while "Dungeons and Dragons" may have been the catalyst, it was certainly not the direct cause.

—Harold Pomeranz

Washington Post, Aug. 20, 1983

SEPTEMBER 3, 1983

Washington Post,

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Don't Blame Dungeons & Dragons

Have we regressed to the days when some people were thought to be possessed by demons? It seems farfetched, but consider: the parents of a young Virginia suicide victim blame a board game for his death and sue his school for allowing the game to be played; the Arlington County school board subsequently bans the game.

Why is there this hysteria about an innocent game played with pencil, paper and dice, a fantasy role-playing game in which players control imaginary characters in a magical, medieval setting? Contrary to popular belief, Dungeons & Dragons is as harmless as chess. If a chess-playing teen-ager killed himself, would anyone say it was because of his obsession with the game? Of course not. But people treat D&D like pool in River City.

MICHAEL B. SMITH
Washington

Past! I have a confession. Yes, I am a D&D mother. Oh, I don't mean I play the game with my sons and their friends, but I am guilty of chauffeuring them to the library and the Strategy

and Fantasy bookstore for their research (I vaguely remember titles like "Armor Through the Ages" and "Strategy in Medieval Times"). I've bought them graph paper for their scale drawings. I've served cookies and milk to happily engrossed groups in our rec room.

When I gave my older son a surprise birthday party, six boys spent nearly all day playing D&D. I saw them twice: for as long as it takes to eat a pizza and when they emerged for a half-hour of basketball.

My sons have played D&D on and off for some four years. They are top students, they have both won awards as musicians, they are interested in sports—and they are great kids!

At our house and at our school, D&D has never been a problem. I regret that some people (probably uninformed) are going to make it one. As for linking it to youth suicide, I demand substantiation. When young football players die during summer practice, do schools ban football?

JOAN S. MASON
Arlington



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Washington Post, Sept. 6, 1983

By Tom Zito

Last Wednesday night, under flickering fluorescent lights, a group of eight men gathered as they do each week in a second-story Alexandria toy shop called The Little Soldier to do battle in a mythical realm created by Randy Campbell, a 27-year-old government attorney in the Veterans Administration.

For the past six weeks, Campbell has been the Dungeon Master, or D.M., in this ongoing saga of Dungeons and Dragons, the fantasy role-playing game that became front-page news last month when two Virginia parents filed a suit against the principal of their late son's high school, alleging that the boy committed suicide after a player in a game at school placed upon

In This Fantasy Land Of Power and Treasure, You Don't Play Around

their son a curse "which intended to inflict emotional distress."

The only emotional distress expressed in D&D, they think you're crazy," he said, "and I'd rather not give anyone ammunition."

Although D&D has been in existence for a decade, it was not until 1979 that the game caught the attention of the nation in a spectacular way: a Michigan State University student disappeared for almost a month in a 10-mile network of steam tunnels under the campus where he and some friends would act out rounds of the game in an atypical fashion (it is normally played indoors with paper and pencils). This rather bizarre example of fantasy role-playing seemed all the more weird a year later when the student, James Egbert, committed suicide.

But, in general, D&D seems quite a bit

Soe INGERS-B6 Col 1

Fantasy game ruled honor student's life — and death



laughed
out of
court in
20 minutes

Straight-A student Irving Lee Pulling II put a loaded gun to his heart and pulled the trigger — because he'd been cursed by a wizard in the eerie game of Dungeons & Dragons.

That's the contention of his grieving parents, who blame the controversial fantasy game for the 16-year-old boy's tragic death. They've filed a \$1 million suit against a high school principal for permitting students to play Dungeons & Dragons during school hours.

"The Pullings told me their boy killed himself after another student at the school put a curse on him," said the Rev. John Torell, a minister and head of a Sacramento, Calif., citizens' group that opposes the top-selling game.

"They said they have no doubt the game drove their son over the brink. He left suicide notes referring to it. He was possessed by the demonry and black magic used by players of the game."

The Montpelier, Va., schoolboy had been playing Dungeons & Dragons with his schoolmates at Patrick Henry High School's Talented and Gifted program, the Pullings' suit contends. They claim that his English teacher allowed pupils to play the game as a reward for finishing their lessons.

"We didn't know he was involved," Mrs. Pulling told Torell. "We would never have permitted it."

Dungeons & Dragons, marketed by TSR Hobbies, Inc., of Lake Geneva, Wis., is a complex fantasy adventure that requires players to assume the roles and powers of wizards, magicians, druids, warriors and dragons.

"People just go nuts with it," Torell told The NEWS. "They start living the game. They can't tell the difference between their fantasies and reality."

"The game uses all sorts of mystical spells and witchcraft. We've documented hundreds of cases where people's lives were ruined by it — and a number where it actually led to death for the players."

According to the Pullings, their son

See
Torell's
publication,
THE
DOVE



shot himself in his home on June 9, 1982, a few hours after he was hexed by a fellow student during a game session at school.

The curse was "intended to inflict emotional distress," their suit claims, at a time when young Irving was already under "extreme psychological stress and emotional pressure" from playing Dungeons & Dragons.

The Pullings contend that the principal of their son's school is responsible for his death and have asked for \$1 million in damages and legal expenses in their suit.

School officials claim the principal, Dr. Robert A. Bracey III, is immune to prosecution because of his post.

"It's shocking to think that educators would knowingly permit the use of such a dangerous game in the schools," fumed the Rev. Torell. "What are these people thinking of?"

— JANE STEWART

(2)

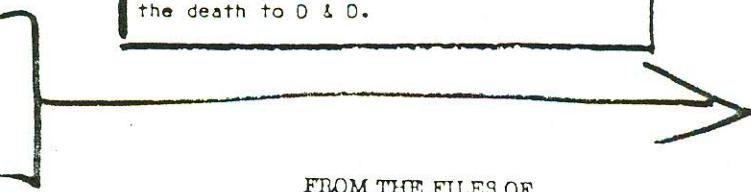
the
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press

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS

September 20, 1983

(sim. to The National Enquirer)

STEVEN LOYACANO, 16, October 14, 1982,
Castle Rock, Co. Suicide by carbon monoxide
in an automobile. Police reported
satanic writing and a suicide note link
the death to D & D.



FROM THE FILES OF
B.A.D.D. INC.
P. O. BOX 8813
RICHMOND, VA 23220

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

Associated Press

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

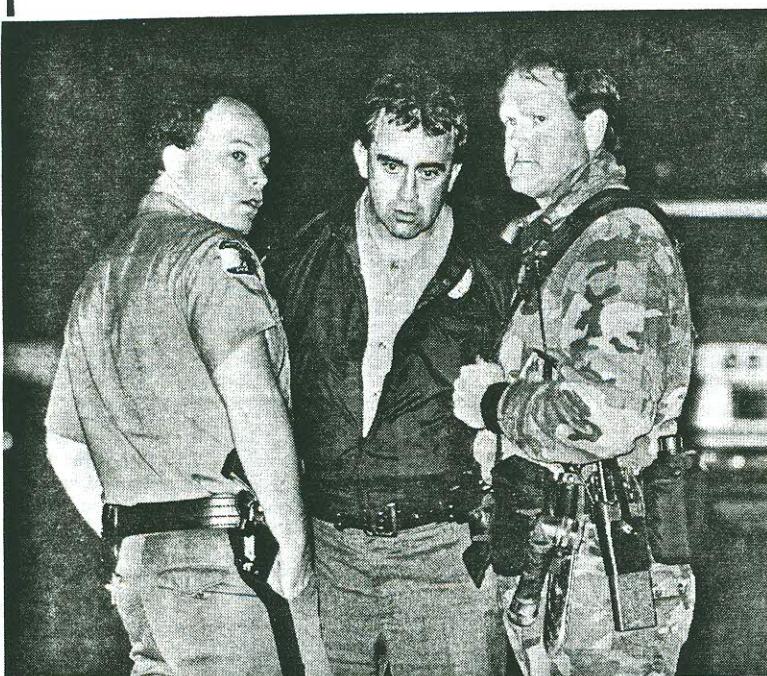
Stallcup and other officers initially said the boys' obsession with the game led to their deaths.

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

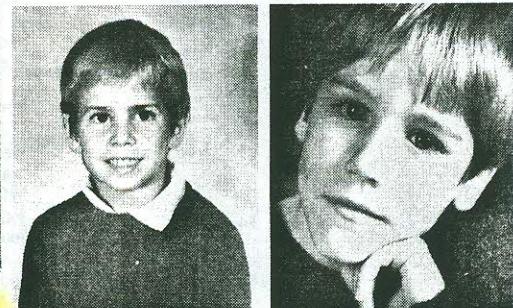
However, TSR spokesman Dieter Sturm said the letter only asked for a written assurance that the Lafayette police "investigation and news releases will be fair and careful when making any reference to our products, products which have been endorsed throughout the world."

The Toronto Star's
Mar. 3, 1985
article claimed
this was a
D&D suicide!

get



Virginia Beach police officers Dennis E. Free, Charles P. Pumphrey and Glenn Edmonson; top right, Shawn Novak, charged with killing Daniel Geier, 9, near right, and Christopher Scot Weaver, 7.



BY STEVE EARLEY

WASH. POST
4-26-91

Dungeons & Dragons & Death

For the Children of a Virginia Beach Navy Community, a Fatal Escape

By Laura LaFay
Special to The Washington Post

Three kids sitting around, talking about their friend in jail.

Shrugs. Who knows what happened? Shawn always acted normal around them. A little intense, sometimes. But *you* try being 16 here.

"He's still our friend and stuff, but it's weird," says John.

"I keep on having nightmares," says Mike.

As they talk, Mike, John and Chris lean back in their chairs, arms folded, and look down at their laps. Heads are raised only to light cigarettes and to blow long, dramatic smoke sighs at the ceiling.

They're sitting in the kitchen at John's house. On the table before them is a scattering of plastic butane lighters, the only splash of color in the room.

Half a block away, Shawn's house stands vacant and curtainless. Someone pelted it with rocks and bottles after Shawn's arrest in March, so Shawn's family—his mother, father and two little brothers—have moved away. Nobody seems to know where.

This is Wadsworth Homes. Adjacent to the Camp Pendleton State Military Reservation, it is a Navy housing development founded so emphatically on function rather than appeal that the centerpiece for each cluster of identical brick-and-aluminum-siding tripleplexes is, more often than not, a Dumpster. The trees, anemic saplings braced by wire and old pieces of garden hose, were clearly an afterthought.

Mike, John and Chris hate this place.

"If someone told you to go to hell in Wadsworth," observes Mike, "it would be redundant."

"Yeah. You can't get much lower than Wadsworth," says John.

The talk returns to Shawn. How imaginative he was. How creative. How he used to wear a dead bird's head and a cat's paw around his neck, and how his parents were so religious they made him go to church three times a week. How, after moving into the neighborhood from Missouri a year and a half ago, he had a hard time fitting in with them, and with the other "scrubs" of Wadsworth.

The scrubs are a group of bored metal heads who hang out, smoke, rag on Wadsworth, lose themselves in Nintendo and occasionally play Dungeons & Dragons. Shawn took a while to catch on. But finally, he be-



Wadsworth teenagers Chris Stead, top, and John Cleapor in the "Kenders" tree.

came one of them, listening to Aerosmith, chain-smoking obsessively, showing off scars.

Scars?

Shyly, Mike pulls back his sleeve, revealing a circle of nickel-sized burns on his left forearm. He got them playing chicken with the scrubs, heating up a lighter and seeing who could hold the hot metal and flame against his flesh the longest. It was their "self-mutilation period," explains John. It was something to do. Plus, it was a strategy:

"People thought we were crazy, and they'd leave us alone," he says. "They'd think what we did to ourselves we might do to them."

John's scars are less pronounced—some burns, some razor slashes. The self-mutilation period, he says, was actually just a phase that ended around last Christmas, when everybody's parents started making a big deal about it.

"My parents were like, 'If we happen to see another one of those, you won't have any arms to worry about,'" John says.

Seditiously, Chris bares a triceps. On it is a tiny upside-down cross, still glistening with blood. Uncertain smiles all around.

In some ways, the boys say, Shawn was more together than the rest of them. Shawn never cut himself deeply enough to scar. And, unlike a lot of the kids in Wadsworth—sons and daughters of career Navy enlistees—he was never sent to counseling at any of the local psychiatric centers.

"He was like Mister Rogers," says John. "He loved little kids."

Which is why it would be really weird, they agree, if Shawn actually did what the cops say he did. Butchered two little boys with a hunting knife and left their bodies in the woods.

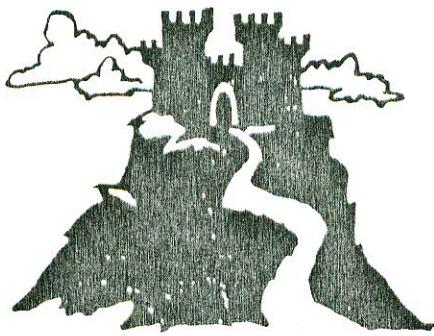
How could it happen?

No theories are offered, here at the kitchen table. Smoke hangs above their heads.

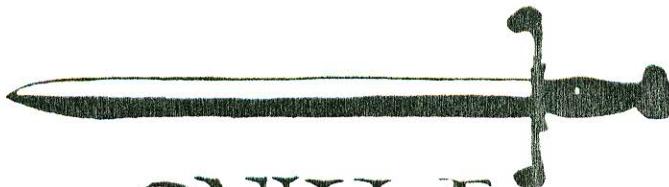
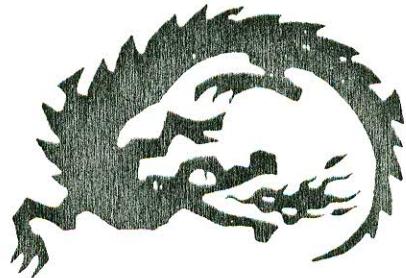
It seemed beyond comprehension.

Two Wadsworth second-graders bike into a nearby woods and never come home. The next day, they are found stabbed to death, their bodies stacked like cordwood and hidden under a pile of leaves and sticks. When the discovery was made March 5, even the police in this sprawling military town of nearly 400,000 were shocked. Police Chief Charles R. Wall ordered ev-

See CHILDREN, B2, Col. 1



BUNGEOONS AND DRAGONS



ONLY A
GAME ?

What Is D & D?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How Widely Used?

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

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

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

Other FRP Games

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

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

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

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

So Hargrave admits that the game is designed for kids! Supposedly to equip them for the "reality" of life!

Witchcraft Is a Religion

In the greater Sacramento (California) area there are some 1000 practicing witches, divided into a number of covens. Several covens are recognized by the state of California as bona fide religions, given tax-exempt status as churches.

George Marsh, member of the Cardova Park School Board (California) stated in a letter to the editor (July, 1981) why he voted to remove D & D from the school district's summer program: "The Supreme Court has already barred religious activity from public facilities. Dungeons and Dragons is clearly religious in content."⁴

Although D & D is not a religion per se, it is teaching religious principles and familiarizing its three million devotees with terms and rituals of occult forms of religion. What does God say about this?

When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

(Deuteronomy 18:9-12)

Quotes from Their Own Books

(emphasis added)

CONCERNING MAGIC AND SPELLS:

"Swords and sorcery best describes what this game is all about for those are the two key fantasy ingredients. Advanced Dungeons and Dragons is a fantasy game of role-playing which relies upon the imagination of participants, for it is certainly make-believe, yet it is so interesting, so challenging, so mind-unleashing that it comes near reality" (*D & D Handbook*, p. 7). As you know, sorcery refers to the use of magic and witchcraft.

"Most spells have a verbal component and **so must be uttered**" (*D & D Players Handbook*, p. 40).

"Magic users draw upon arcane powers in order to exercise their profession . . . He or she must **memorize and prepare for the use of each spell**, and its casting makes it necessary to **reabsorb the**

incantation by consulting the proper book of spells . . ." (*D & D Players Handbook*, p. 25).

"The spell caster should be required to show you what form of protective inscription he or she has used when the spell is cast." The three forms mentioned are: "Pictures of a magic circle, pentagram, and thaumaturgic triangle" (*Dungeon Masters Guide*, p. 42, referring to instructions for the Aerial Servant spell, 6th level). According to those knowledgeable in the occult, these symbols are commonly used in witchcraft and Satan worship.

CONCERNING "CLERICS."

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

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

CONCERNING "DEITIES" or "GODS":

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONCERNING PRAYER AND FASTING:

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

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

CONCERNING DEATH:

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

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

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

CONCERNING SATANISM:

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

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

CONCERNING HUMAN SACRIFICE:

"Kali (black earth mother): Her worship requires sacrifices of blood, and even an occasional human sacrifice. Her cult includes many assassins. Those sworn to defend her cult will often do so in a sort of berserk, suicidal manner, slaying all who oppose them until they themselves are slain" (*Deities and Demigods*, p. 71).

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

"Tvaa (winged goddess of evil birds). Only women are permitted in the high priesthood and Tvaa demands the sacrifice of body parts from her more attractive worshippers" (*Deities and Demigods*, p. 88).

"Orcs — Gruumsh — Greater god: To become a shaman of Gruumsh, an orc must pluck out his own left eye. The proper worship of Gruumsh requires blood in large quantities" (*Players Handbook*, p. 112).

CONCERNING MURDER:

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

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

CONCERNING CANNIBALISM:

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

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

CONCERNING DEFILEMENT:

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

Other quotes that indicate a need for serious concern about the game:

"Release of word/sound-stored energy is not particularly debilitating to the spell caster, as he or she has gathered this energy over a course of time prior to the loosing of the power. It comes from

outside the spell caster, not from his or her own vital essence. The power to activate even a first level spell would leave a spell caster weak and shaking if it were drawn from his or her personal energy, and a third level spell would most certainly totally drain the caster's body of life" (*Dungeon Masters Guide*, p. 40, 1979 edition).

OTHER RELIGIOUS TERMINOLOGY:

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

Every character must have a character class assigned to him or her. In the *D & D Players Handbook*, p. 20-33, the five character classes are explained: the Cleric, Fighter, Magic-User, Thief, and Monk. There are also five sub-classes: the Druid, the Paladin, the Ranger, the Illusionist, and the Assassin. All five of the character classes involve either magic and spells, or violence, or both. It seems that it would be impossible to play this game as it is designed without involvement in either magic or violence.

What Is Wrong with Role-Playing or Fantasizing?

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

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

A principle laid down long ago by God is: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). We **are** what we **think**. It is ridiculous to believe that people, young or old, can absorb their minds with violence, murder, human sacrifice, suicide, demonology, ape, desecration, defecation, sadism, cannibalism, perversion, insanity, prostitution, necromancy,

Satan worship, witchcraft, and every other form of perverted and violent conduct without being intensely — and perhaps permanently — affected adversely. We ARE what we THINK!

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

Testimony of Negative Effects⁵

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Does it trivialize, and even blaspheme, Christianity?

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

What Can You Do?

1. Distribute this leaflet to young people, youth directors, ministers, teachers, school administrators, school board members. Place them in tract racks, waiting rooms, etc.
2. If you lack time to do this, send a donation of \$10.00 or more to the address below, to help distribute the leaflet to the above-mentioned groups.

Notes

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

REVISED PRINTING Note: If page references differ from your book, remember there are different editions of D & D books - for instance, at least two versions of *Deities & Demigods*, the original with 144 pages and a newer version with 128 pages.

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VIRGINIA

Friends say teen held in deaths played fantasy games

By The Associated Press

VIRGINIA BEACH — A teen-ager charged with killing two boys was the popular leader of neighborhood children who played the medieval fantasy game Dungeons & Dragons, acquaintances of the youth said.

Shawn Paul Novak's fantasy world revolved around the playgrounds and woods of Wadsworth Homes, where Daniel Geier, 9, and Scott Weaver, 7, lived.

The boys' bodies were discovered March 6 in woods near their home. Their throats had been slashed. Novak was charged with their murderer's several days later and police affidavit said Novak confessed to the crimes.

Daniel took part in Novak's fantasy game, playing a dwarflike creature with pointy ears, and Novak's friends said he was a popular leader of neighborhood children who played the medieval fantasy game Dungeons & Dragons, acquaintances of the youth said.

Novak called a Kender, called a Kender, neighbors said. He encouraged the boys to behave like the race of creatures depicted in Dungeons & Dragons, which Novak played with an obsession.

"Shawn had like his little group of Kenders and the little kids would be in it," said John Cleapor, 16. "They'd run around just goofing off. Daniel was in that group... It was pretty much normal everyday life, but he gave a name to it and made it more interesting."

In the literature of D&D, the impish Kenders are playful, curious, fearless and independent. They wear their hair in braids and ponytails, often festooned with wild flowers and feathers.

Novak is in the city jail awaiting a March 28 hearing before a Juvenile Court Judge. The judge is expected to turn Novak over for trial as an adult in Circuit Court, where the city's chief prosecutor has said he probably will seek the death penalty.

Early reports about Novak portray an odd youth who turned a dead bird into an ornament on a necklace and wore it to school, a loner who bragged to classmates falsely that he discovered the boys' bodies, an intense teen-ager who rebelled at regular church attendance.

est in girls, computer games and heavy-metal music.

To his band of Kenders, he was a big brother, a pled piper whose imagination could turn an ordinary walk in the woods into an action-packed mountain-conquering adventure.

To his older "D&D" playmates, he often presented himself as Robin Hood, a brave and agile woodsmen who could disappear in the underbrush under a coat of camouflage branches and observe others without being seen.

"When the group of us played after the game was over that's where it ended till the next game," said Cleapor, a D&D regular. "He took it further, he started acting out his character's role though not to the full extent."

"The Robin Hood in the woods was not

really Dungeons & Dragons, but it came from it," said Mike Sims, a close friend and former D&D player. "He took stuff from real life and put into his games, but sometimes he takes stuff out of the game and puts it into real life."

For the most part, the Kenders games were harmless — make-believe, practical jokes, mischief and silliness. But once, the Kenders doused toads in gasoline and set them on fire, friends said.

"Some say Dungeons & Dragons is really evil. I don't see why people say that," said Sims, noting that his mother has taken away his D&D books and game materials. "But another point is that kids get too involved. Shawn was too involved. Aside from Kenders and his funny songs, that was all he'd ever talk about."

I D E A S

29 May 1991

gill

ID 9190

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

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Lister Sinclair

"Toward night, as the sun declined above that tumultuous, darkening ocean, it seemed that a great bank of thunderclouds arose from the West, long and low-lying at first, but surging rapidly skyward with mountainous domes. Ever higher it loomed, revealing the menace of piled cliffs and somber, awful seascapes; but its form changed not in the fashion of clouds. And Yadar knew it at last for an island bulking far aloft in the long-rayed sunset. From it, a shadow was thrown for leagues; and in the shadow, the foam crests flashing upon hidden reefs were white as the bare teeth of death."

Imagine yourself in a world like this—a world of dark, fantastic characters and supernatural forces. On *Ideas* tonight, we'll enter this world, playing the game called "Dungeons and Dragons."

Thomas Radecki

Based upon my own personal examinations in the eight trials I've been involved with, there's just no doubt in my mind—the evidence is really quite impressive—that there's a cause-effect relationship between an involvement in Dungeons and Dragons and an increased tendency towards violence. There's no doubt that this game and similar fantasy role-playing games have caused dozens of murders and suicides that we know of and undoubtedly dozens more that we don't know of.

Joanne Clarke

My friends all know I play D & D, but I know other people, they're afraid to say it because people have this distorted view of what D & D is. People who've never played or who are listening to this guy and they think it's just oh, you know, it's the occult, or they have a really negative image of it. So a lot of people don't talk about playing.

Lister Sinclair

I'm Lister Sinclair. Our program on *Ideas* tonight is itself something of a game, a fantasy directed by Shelley Solmes, who, when she's not trying to sort out good versus evil, is host of the CBC Radio program *Music Ottawa*.

Shelley Solmes

Here's a definition: "Role-playing games like Dungeons and Dragons are enjoyable, complex, challenging social

activities. Gamers work together for a common end. There are no winners and no one loses either."

maybe
That's one definition. But this one sounds more familiar: "Role-playing games provide a teaching on demonology, witchcraft, voodoo, murder, rape, blasphemy, suicide, insanity, sex perversion, homosexuality, Satan-worship, gambling, Jungian psychology, barbarism, cannibalism, sadism, demon-summoning, necromantics, divination, and many more teachings brought to you in living colour direct from the pit of Hell."

This isn't me being funny. I'm quoting the Reverend John Torrell of the European-American Evangelistic Crusades. And he's not the only one who says things like this. Sounds like Dungeons and Dragons could be really bad for kids—and even grown-ups. Because it turns out the majority of the more than five million Dungeons and Dragons players are over eighteen.

Tonight you'll meet some of them, men *and* women. We'll sit in on a session and we'll hear the people who, like Reverend Torrell, think Dungeons and Dragons is a very bad idea.

One of those people is Pat Pulling, who started an organization with the acronym BADD, which stands for Bothered About Dungeons and Dragons. She's speaking here at the First Baptist Congregation in Orlando, Florida.

Pat Pulling

To date we have over fifty murders and suicides that have been documented in the media as related to the game of Dungeons and Dragons. We, in our organization, and the National Coalition on Television Violence, chaired by Dr. Thomas Radecki, have others. But because suicide is so sensitive, many of the records *can* not be made available to the public.

Thomas Radecki

I'm Dr. Tom Radecki. I'm a psychiatrist and research director of the National Coalition on Television Violence in the United States and the co-ordinator for the International Coalition Against Violent Entertainment. We first became concerned about Dungeons and Dragons when we noted the considerable violent imagery connected with Dungeons and Dragons material way back in 1983, when we were working on war-toy issues.

We noticed that it was really a type of a fantasy war game. As the deaths began to be reported and began to mount, we saw it as part of our mission in working in the area of violent entertainment to keep track of these, to tabulate these, and, as the information became quite clear, it became more and more evident that there was a causal relationship between many of these deaths and these violent, fantasy role-playing games.

Shelley Solmes

How many deaths do you link to D & D to date?

Thomas Radecki

We have at least a hundred and twenty-five murders and suicides—about one quarter suicide, three quarters murders—that have been linked by police investigations, new reports, family interviews, psychiatric examinations, to various fantasy role-playing games. Of course, Dungeons and Dragons is the most prominent.

Shelley Solmes

Now, you've been called as an expert witness in some murder trials linked to D & D. I wonder if you could give me an example of the type of trial you were involved in.

Thomas Radecki

Well, one trial in Wisconsin: A young man of fifteen years of age planned out ahead of time to steal the family guns and jewellery and to escape with a friend to another state, planned to murder his foster father, whom he actually liked quite a bit, before stealing the car and hitting the road. It really fit very much into a Dungeons and Dragons format: He carried out the murder as planned, did flee. And I was involved in that trial.

Another one, St. Louis: An older man, about twenty-one years of age. He and his friend killed a female companion that they were—their housemate. They actually played Dungeons and Dragons together. They weren't playing Dungeons and Dragons at the moment of the murder but he actually signed his FBI confession, after again stealing belongings, jewellery, and such, and fleeing to another state, signed his FBI confession with his Dungeons and Dragons player's name.

That's what I found in each of the trials that I participated in is that the criminal offences parallel closely to the type of character that they've had in their

various games—everywhere from the type of weapons used, the type of crime committed, things of that type.

Shelley Solmes

For D & D to be detrimental to a person's mental health, wouldn't there have to be something psychologically wrong with that person *prior* to their involvement in the game?

Thomas Radecki

No, no. That's not...true. People learn from what they're being exposed to and people can change. Many times we see people's personalities change dramatically as they get exposed to something quite different. If you want to have a major personality change, one thing that is helpful is to have an immersion in a particular area and Dungeons and Dragons very much lends itself to that because of the many hours required to get into this game and because it is a type of an obsessive type of game that pulls you in, involves you more intimately. And because it is a fantasy role-playing game, you're really putting yourself into the game.

Pat Pulling

You do not just sit down for one hour and play. The game just doesn't end like Parcheesi. Some people have said, "What can possibly be wrong with just a fantasy game? You're sitting around a table, there is nothing real, there are no weapons. How can anyone possibly get into harm or trouble from this?"

[1982]

Well, I too wondered about three years ago how anyone could get so wrapped up in a game that they could commit suicide, or murder, but I only wondered that after my teenage son committed suicide. I said he couldn't possibly have done this because of a game. However, the reason I thought he might have done it because of a game is basically because he said so in his suicide letters of which he left six. We also found what is called a curse in the game—this may be written or it may be spoken. In his case, his curse was written. I began to think about the curse he had received and I said "Nobody would do that." The curse said, "Your soul is mine. I'll choose the time. At my command, you'll reave the land. A follower of evil, a killer of man."

Now, the word *reave* means to plunder, to pillage, to destroy. It's archaic, mediaeval. So I thought that's very interesting. In his suicide letter to us he said that he

could not kill my husband, myself or my daughter, or the world. Therefore he must end his life as he had been so summoned to do.

Shelley Solmes
Sociologist Gary Fine:

Gary Fine

It strikes me that finding any one single cause for a suicide would be very problematic. Most young people who take their own lives have many reasons for doing so. What this debate has typically come down to is a game of moral football in which those people who dislike the game attempt to run up the score to find as many possible suicides as they can, whereas those who defend the game try to block these attempts. It strikes me that every parent should have the right to decide for themselves and to claim for themselves why their child committed suicide. For me to come in and suggest that the parent is really to blame is far too cruel. On the other hand, in terms of making public policy, I think we have to be very careful that we don't take these parental expressions as a grounding for actually banning something that many people enjoy and which may prevent suicides in many cases.

Shelley Solmes
Before we get on with the satanism, the psychoses, the suicides, and the social science, you'll need to know how the game works. Let me introduce you to three Dungeons and Dragons players. Two of them are also game referees called "dungeon masters."

Lorna Toolis
My name is Lorna Toolis. I'm a librarian. I work for the Toronto Public Library as collection head for the Merril Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy. I play what are called "campaign games," which go on for years. We would meet every other week for—I guess we met every other week for three and a half years before we left Edmonton, and I would still be playing if we hadn't.

Shelley Solmes
Can you describe a bit the dynamics? What happens to a group that works together over a number of years, say, two to three years?

Lorna Toolis

Oh, they come to understand each other very well and it becomes much harder for me, as referee, to surprise them. If you become used to what they will do under pressure situations, they start to recognize the unpleasant surprises that are likely to be coming from the direction of the referee. So you're trying to out-think each other more or less constantly.

Andrew Nellis

I'm Andrew Nellis. I'm twenty-four years old and I'm dungeon master as well as a player of role-playing games, and I'm founder and president of the Downtown Gamers Club.

Shelley Solmes

When did you start playing Dungeons and Dragons?

Andrew Nellis

Well, that would be years ago now. I started in grade five in an experimental class at the Ottawa school board, where there was an educational version of a role-playing game used in class for teaching.

Joanne Clarke

My name is Joanne Clarke. I've quite a varied background. I started off in—I did a bachelor of arts in history, I have a B.Ed., a bachelor of education, I've taught high school, and I did a graduate diploma in international development at the University of Ottawa. I'm currently working on a diploma in addiction counselling.

Shelley Solmes

When did you start playing D & D?

Joanne Clarke

I started playing about seven years ago. A friend of mine—I was in university and a friend of mine was going out to play and he asked me if I'd be interested. He thought I might be. So I went with him and I had a ball. It was wonderful. They showed me how to—they told me the intricacies of the game and I started playing that night and I met a lot of great people. I love the camaraderie. The challenge—I love mental games. I love games that stimulate me intellectually, that make me think. It's like puzzles. I love puzzles, trying to figure something out. And you're also trying to think how you can work with your fellow players because you all have

different skills and different abilities, and you have to learn how to work with those different skills and abilities and combine them to overcome obstacles, because the game is built in such a way that one person alone can't survive. You need to rely on your friends and companions within the story.

Shelley Solmes

My introduction to Dungeons and Dragons was at the Dalhousie Community Centre here in Ottawa on a Sunday morning at ten. I'd obviously been reading too much anti-D & D literature because I expected the game would be played in some hushed and darkened cavern by flickering candlelight. What I found instead was a bright, sunny room, about thirty feet long, with the noise of two dozen young men and boys—and one girl—all in high spirits setting up a fantasy war game called *Battletech*.

Across the room was my dungeon master, Andrew Nellis. He was sitting at a low, wooden table, with a few large, comfortable chairs round it. On the floor, and on the chair beside him, were books, and notebooks, and notes, and more books. These would be consulted from time to time during the game. Over the next few minutes, Carl, Eric, and Peter came in to join Andrew at the table.

Referee (Andrew Nellis)

As I remember, you were on the road to Frankfurt, I guess. No, you weren't on the road. I believe you were going cross-country.

Player 1

Cross-country. Sure.

Referee

Here's the map. You're at Weisenheim now. Actually, you're just outside of Weisenheim. You bungled the Weisenheim caper. Want to give up now?

(Protests from players)

Well, don't forget, you've got an injured cleric. The cleric can't cast spells, can't memorize spells...

Shelley Solmes

There are now more than five hundred fantasy role-playing games, but the granddaddy of them is Dungeons and Dragons, first marketed privately back in 1974 in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, by Gary Gygax—a name right out of science fiction, eh? Gygax wrote down and

published the rules that a friend of his, David Arneson, had developed over the years.

Andrew Nellis

And they went to two different cities. They moved away from each other and started two separate groups and they both had the rules, the initial, original rules, and they thought, well, let's see how it develops with the two groups, we'll get back together and see which one is better.

And they found that they were both equally as good but utterly different in concept. One was very simplistic. The rules could be done in a single magazine-size book and play was very quick and dirty, could be learned in a half hour, anybody could do it, but it was very low on detail.

The other game took five large tomes—massive rules, tables coming out of your ears that you have to memorize—and it was very heavy on detail, and it tended to slow down play but it was very descriptive. You could imagine things much better in your mind what was going on. So they published both. It's kind of a misnomer. Basic Dungeons and Dragons and Advanced Dungeons and Dragons are actually two different games. You don't graduate from one to the other.

Shelley Solmes

In both, players sit around a table and play not with chess pieces or toy soldiers, but with imaginary characters they've created. The game is best with no more than six players, plus a dungeon master. Players create their characters partially by choice and partially by the roll of the dice. These dice come in various colours and shapes, from six-sided to hundred-sided. Players roll up their characters at the first session of a game, and games can go on for years.

Players choose the profession and the race of their character, from dwarven to human, and they also choose their sex. In the game I recorded for *Ideas* tonight, one of the young men's characters was a female cleric.

Players use the dice to determine the level of such qualities as intelligence, strength, and charisma. Even a character with low numbers on intelligence or strength can be amusing to play and usually a dungeon master will arrange things so the weak and the stupid are