



What's ahead for TSR?

The course of TSR Hobbies' development has been rather like a D&D campaign. When we finished our first fiscal year back in 1975, we were pretty much a low-level-character sort of company, with gross sales of only about \$50,000. We had excellent experience the next year, with a \$300,000 figure, and in 1977 we doubled that to \$600,000. TSR didn't quite double again in fiscal 1978, ending the year at a gross of near \$1,000,000, but in '79 we did a bit better, finishing at a gross of well over \$2,000,000.

From the way 1980 is shaping up, there is no reason to doubt that we'll at least double in size once again. It is possible that we'll be the largest hobby game company—and ready to start toward the really high-level game producers such as Milton Bradley and Parker Brothers—by 1982. (To those who doubt, think about the relative size of TSR and Avalon Hill, for example, in 1975 . . .)

There is no question but that we owe most of our success to *Dungeons & Dragons* and *Advanced D&D* too, of course. The *Basic Set of D&D* is now a best-selling game—and that means it is competing with *Monopoly*, *Scrabble*, and the rest of the mass market games! The other games in the line are generally keeping pace, but it is a one-horse race as of now. There are some 500,000 or more *D&D* players busily converting their friends to the game. All we can do is say "Thank you" and try to keep producing good games in hopes of matching the success of *D&D*. Of course, we aren't ignoring *D&D* and *AD&D* meanwhile; don't misunderstand. In fact, that's what this column is all about!

It was just over a year ago when Kindly Editor Kask and I sat down and discussed the possibilities for more *D&D* and *AD&D* features in *The Dragon*. My contribution was to be this column, and the project was given the green light, on the condition that I provide at least three articles initially and always stayed at least one ahead of publication. I tend to work in spurts, and it was no problem to dash off a couple of batches of articles, and then a couple of fill-in pieces, during the first few months. All of my pieces for this column were actually written well over six months ago, all save this very one you now read.

Why? Well, those dozen-plus months seem more like a decade, so many things have happened since "Sorcerer's Scroll" began. (Even this article was delayed a few days when my faithful old clickbox, the elderly machine which has seen me through *Tractics*, *Chainmail*, and all the rest down to date, suddenly refused to perform!)

So as I relate to you what has and will happen with *D&D* and *AD&D*, I'll also fill you in on some of the things taking place at TSR and my own activities. Meanwhile, please take note, Gentle Reader, that this column does invite the contributions of others. Failing some such, it will most assuredly be missing from these pages more often than not from now on, for my schedule is, shall we say, crowded.

TSR has a reasonable share of long range plans. Some involve the corporation, some consider products. We anticipated a growing demand for our games, and a gradual expansion of the corporation and its products accordingly. We began working toward the establishment of subsidiaries in Canada and the United Kingdom early last year. We also moved toward expanded distribution. Last, but not least, we laid firm plans for development of different forms of existing games as well as new games.

Things were moving apace, not at all unlike what we had planned, when news of the missing university student began to break. It was given nationwide coverage, and *D&D* was prominently mentioned in most of the stories. All hell broke loose at our offices—a veritable barrage of phone calls and personal calls from reporters from newspapers, radio stations, TV and magazines. When the chap turned up relatively safe and sound, the stories on *D&D* didn't stop; they just no longer mentioned him. Hectic, but great. It did things for sales you wouldn't believe. It also took up about 75% of my time, and in the meanwhile, our long-range planning was beginning to bear fruit.

The Canadian operation began to take shape, and I took a trip to England and the Continent in order to help frame that subsidiary. Talks with several major New York publishers grew serious, and after several visits to that city, and a sojourn to Bermuda for a sales conference, TSR signed an agreement appointing Random House as the exclusive distributor to the book trade for *D&D*, *AD&D* and certain playing aids. There have been trips for TV and radio interviews. There has been a series of meetings with entertainment media people. And, at long last, some really serious interest from a couple of reputable firms who think the concept of adventure games is right for TV games and home computers after all! (Aren't you all surprised to hear that?)

All of this has pretty well conspired to keep me from doing some of the things I should be—such as this column, modules like *The Temple of Elemental Evil*, and some half a dozen other manuscripts piled away in various stages of incompleteness. Luckily, we do have a great Design Department at TSR. More about their efforts later.

Dave Sutherland is at work with Tim Jones to bring you the long-overdue *Queen of the Demonweb Pits* (soon, I trust). Rob Kuntz is helping me with a revision of *The Lost Caverns of Tsojacanth*, a WinterCon tournament scenario which I based in part on one of his dungeon levels). The two new game designs I was fooling around with will have to be set aside for a time, but there is a long-desired and oft-worked-on project which I am desperately trying to save. This is what goes with the *World of Greyhawk* campaign map and gazetteer (Feb.-Mar. release date), a huge map of the City of Greyhawk, modules based on the original Castle Greyhawk, and a series of offerings which depict the Elemental Planes of Greyhawk. Parts of some of this have been done by me.

Stalwart Steve Marsh also sent me reams of absolutely superb conceptual material for the Elemental Planes, and in a moment of weakness, I proposed a collaboration, melding his and my ideas into a whole campaign series "Approved For Use With *Advanced D&D*"!

Connected to the *World of Greyhawk* project is a set of miniature rules for large-scale battles there, and to get ready for that, I had to complete rosters for the "Armies of Greyhawk." It is all in the capable hands of Steve Carpenter of Miniature Figurines now. Steve is going to do an excellent set of rules, I know, and MiniFigs will do a special line of *Armies of Greyhawk* miniature figurines soon. This brings me back to *D&D* and our Design Department.

Most of the personnel at TSR took part in design and development in years past. As we realized that "Original" *D&D* (the first three booklets and the supplements) wasn't anywhere near adequate for the

needs of the readership it was attracting, it was decided that a simplified, clarified, introductory piece was needed. Shortly after this was decided, as if by divine inspiration, J. Eric Holmes got in touch with us and actually *volunteered* his services for just such an undertaking. All of you know the result, of course.

All of you also know why something had to be done. The "Original" work had been aimed at a small audience, one (wrongly) assumed to be highly conversant with military miniatures and basically non-critical. The booklets were hastily put together in late-night and spare-time hours, by and large, with little or no editing. Each supplement furthermore reflected development and evolution of the game, so there was contradiction, duplication, and vast areas of ambiguity and non-direction.

I saw this as a second problem, one well known to you also. *D&D* was too flexible and unlimited, in my opinion. The game was actually unrecognizable as played from group to group in the same locale, let alone different regions of the country! As plans of reorganizing and rewriting *D&D* were developed, I began my own work on *Advanced D&D*, and this kept me busy for some three years, more or less. By the time the final manuscript from Eric was in our hands, the rough of the *Monster Manual* was also finished, rough outlines of *Players Handbook* and *Dungeon Masters Guide* were typed up, and several portions of both works were likewise in manuscript form. We had two choices to consider with the new *Basic Set*: As it took players only through three experience levels, they could thereafter be directed to the "original" works, or we could refer them to *AD&D*. This put us on the horns of a real dilemma. Sending them into the morass of "Original" *D&D* put us back on square one, with all the attendant problems of rules questions, misinterpretations, and wildly divergent play. Yet there was no time to undertake a revision of the remainder of the "Original" works immediately—that was a project to take place sometime in the distant, dimly perceived future, when TSR could actually afford the luxury of a staff of designers!

On the other hand, *Advanced D&D*, even then obviously a different game system, could be offered as a stop-gap measure. Its classes, races, characters, monsters, magic, spells, and so forth were similar to, but certainly not the same as, those of *D&D*. Was it better to send enthusiasts into the welter of the "Original" material and let them founder around there? Or would it be better to direct them to *AD&D*, even if it meant throwing out what they had begun with the *Basic Set* and making them start afresh? Faced with a choice between chaos and a clean slate, we opted for the latter. (Although there are occasional letters from irate *D&D*ers who refuse to move into the new system, that is far preferable to what would have happened had we directed readers to the "Original" volumes!) After we selected what was actually the lesser of two evils, things went into high gear.

Pieces and parts of the various components of *AD&D* were grafted into the *Basic Set* rules manuscript so that *D&D* would be more compatible with the *Advanced* game. Readers were directed to *AD&D* throughout the *Basic Set*, with muttered prayers accompanying these directions, I am sure, as our production people had no idea then just how well it would all work out in the end, because much of the *AD&D* system was still on rough notes or in my head at the time. It turned out to be relatively acceptable as an interim measure, too.

With the usual stream of new designs submitted, the manuscripts for *Players Handbook*, *Dungeon Masters Guide*, and the many modules needed to help new players to get into the game, even our rapidly expanding Production Department and the brand new Design staff were bogged down. The usual series of deadlines, foul-ups, delays, and disasters kept all concerned working to the limits on what was immediately at hand or needed immediately. *D&D* had languished as first *PH*, then the series of modules, then *DMG*, and then more modules were demanded. Other new games were in the works also, and for a time it seemed that outside of an occasional module, *D&D* would remain on the back burner for many months to come.

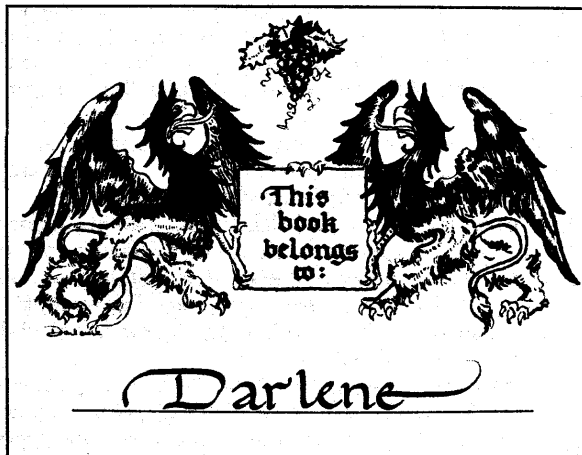
Then the publicity hit, and as *Basic Set* sales soared, so did our plans. *D&D* moved into the forefront once again. Design is now hard at work on the second boxed *D&D* game, the Expert Set. It will take players through at least 12th level of experience, tie in the best of the "Original" material, and actually add some new classes, spells, magic, monsters and so on. That should satisfy all those fans who prefer the

complete flexibility and open form of *D&D* over the more controlled and formalized structure of *AD&D*. In addition, Design is working on a number of modules for *D&D*—and I recently finished a new one for the *Basic Set*, as sales demand that we change the module every six or so months. Finally, we are investigating the possibilities for foreign-language versions of the game.

This is not to say that *Advanced D&D* has been abandoned. It is an excellent game in its own right (ahem!). TSR has developed a rating system for those who play in *AD&D* tournaments, and we will publish standings regularly. This should not only help to improve the quality of tournament offerings, but it is also a major step towards those national tournaments with big prizes I wrote about in a past column. *AD&D* is also being edited and revised from time to time, and if any meaningful new ideas or systems come up, new editions will reflect such material. A second book of monsters is probable soon, and an eventual third volume of monsters is possible. *Deities & Demi-Gods* will be released at GenCon 80, thus virtually completing the whole of *AD&D*. There will certainly be more new modules done in the months to come. Troubador Press is doing a licensed *Official Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Coloring Album*, complete with a simple game to introduce the uninitiated into the mysteries of fantasy gaming. What more could be asked?! Well, there's a Masters Set of *D&D*, perhaps, to take play from 12th level all the way to at least 36th (remember, this is *D&D*, not *AD&D*), and how about some modules with real variation which can be played solo? How about a truly introductory *D&D* or *AD&D* game for the totally uninformed novice? Wouldn't *AD&D* adapt well to home computers? Then a movie or TV series about fantasy adventuring might be fun....

Wherever *D&D* and *AD&D* eventually go, you can be sure that TSR has considered the possibility, discussed what it presents, and made plans to exploit it in a way which will offer the most and the best to our fans and customers. After all, planning is necessary, but without you, Dear Reader, TSR would be going nowhere. We recognize and appreciate your loyal support and will do our best to justify your continued patronage! We can't actually tell what awaits us behind the next door, but as long as you're in our party we'll advance, bust it in, and take a look! We're ready, how about you?

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