

GARY GYGAX

On a recent visit to TSR Hobbies, Inc., the Editor had the opportunity to interview the man responsible for thousands of gamers' shadow worlds of men and monsters.

WD: How long have you personally been interested in playing games as a hobby?

GG: I began playing strategy games at the age of six when I became interested in chess — I already had a large collection of lead soldiers by then, but play utilizing them was a bit informal, shall we say. At about 14 I began to search out obscure varieties and national variants of chess. At about this same time we structured some rules to govern play with miniature troops and AFVs of WW II — unfortunately, they involved firing exploding missiles, so the game became rather costly in replacements, for by then we were using 54mm castings. At 21 I purchased my first board wargame — GETTYSBURG. Some five or six years later I became heavily involved in table top miniatures. (The photographs of games in CHAINMAIL and TRACTICS were taken on my sand table.) Play moved from pure medieval to fantasy c. 1970, although we still gamed in the Napoleonic Era, WWII, etc. as well.

WD: What are your interests outside of gaming?

GG: I personally enjoy reading, classical music, writing, and walking — but there isn't time to devote to active pursuit of any not connected to my work these days. I also enjoy painting (but I do so badly), fishing, stamp collecting, tropical fish, and a few other odds and ends which I never have time to get involved in these days. I am a boxing fan and follow the Chicago Bears and Green Bay Packers football teams.

WD: What is the history of TSR Hobbies, Inc?

GG: *Tactical Studies Rules*, the parent company of *TSR*, was formed by Don Kaye (1938-1975) and myself in October 1973 as an equal partnership. Brian Blume joined us as a full partner in December 1973. All three of us were members of a local gaming club, the Lake Geneva Tactical Studies Association, whose membership list included Rob and Terry Kuntz, Jeff Perren, Mike Reese, and Leon Tucker. *TSR Hobbies, Inc.* was formed in July 1975, and first did business in October of that year. I am the president of *TSR*, and Brian Blume is V.P. and Secretary. The corporation employs some 20-25 persons now, and by this time next year that figure will certainly have grown to over 30 — possibly as

many as 40, for we expect to grow considerably.

WD: What was the original inspiration for D&D?

GG: CHAINMAIL, then Dave Arneson's campaign and Dave Megarry's game DUNGEON!

WD: What made you apply the concept of role-playing to the novel game theme of fantasy?

GG: Role-playing is common in wargaming, and even in our medieval table top games, we often played 1:1 games where participants had command of a single leader and a handful of men. Original D&D took the 1:1 concept from CHAINMAIL, along with the fantasy aspects which about 90% of those who tried liked, and melded them quite logically into a single form. Most of us, after all, are raised on fairy tales, fantasy, and myth. With that background, I actually don't view fantasy gaming as a novel idea, really, and I marvel that it wasn't done before D&D!

WD: Nevertheless, a fantasy role-playing game as a concept was so revolutionary at the time, what made you decide to set up a company to publish D&D?

GG: When *Guidon Games* folded and *Avalon Hill* was (at best) lukewarm to suggestions about fantasy, Don Kaye and I decided to go ahead and form our own publishing firm, for we envisioned a good reception for miniatures rules, fantasy, and role-playing.

WD: Traditional gamers, especially wargamers, initially gave D&D a bad reception and condemned it as a childish, temporary anomaly. Obviously they were wrong, but where have all the D&D players come from?

GG: Incorrect! Almost all of the initial testers and buyers of D&D were wargamers; Arneson, Kuntz, Blume, and I included. Some of the less imaginative (or perhaps I should say less adaptable) wargamers downed the game, but it was generally well received by many wargamers. D&D/AD&D players come from the ranks of wargaming, science fiction/fantasy readers, and just plain ordinary folks with active imaginations and an interest in myth. Many players have not read in the fantasy genre. Similarly, many play no other games regularly.

WD: Is it possible to define a good D&D player?

GG: That, Good Sire, is a tough question! Perhaps naming a few qualities will suffice. Imaginative retentive memory, competitive, co-operative, thorough, bold (but not rash), and quick thinking come to mind immediately. Slightly suspicious can be added, and logical and deductive reasoning powers are most useful too.

WD: There are probably 30,000 D&D players in the UK, how many are there in the States?

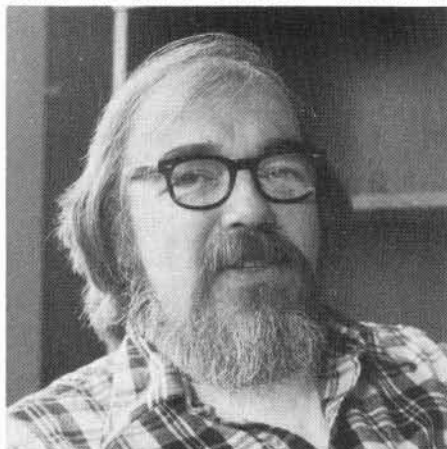
GG: In the US and Canada we estimate there are currently between 250,000 — 300,000 players.

WD: Why do you think D&D has become so popular?

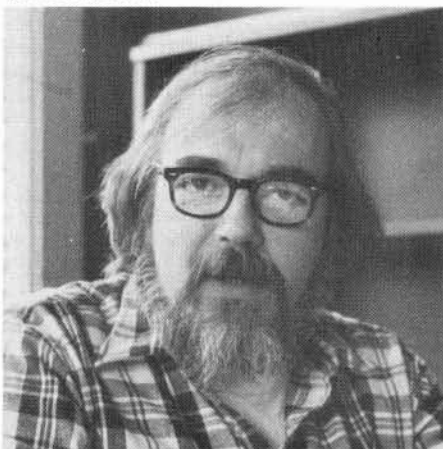
GG: D&D/AD&D allows players to have adventures. In a world where these aren't likely — at least without risk of life and limb — this is a real boon. The game form also allows each group to tailor the campaign to their own likes. The game form additionally allows all participants to freely use imagination to the fullest. Participants can create and develop personal heroic fantasies. Mistakes are rectifiable — or at worst a new start can be made. Wealth abounds. Good and evil are easily distinguishable. Roles are clear, and soul-searching basically unnecessary. Each and every player is competitive and self-sufficient. DMs, in turn, are the creators and orderers of universes (in short, gods). Instead of a limited and restricted actuality, D&D/AD&D offers boundless realms where real success is quite attainable. Finally, the game form offers various challenges, group co-operation, and is open-ended, so that one player isn't clearly a winner, the rest losers. Sorry that I cannot be more brief or concise!

WD: Do you think D&D has universal appeal which will necessitate it being translated into other languages?

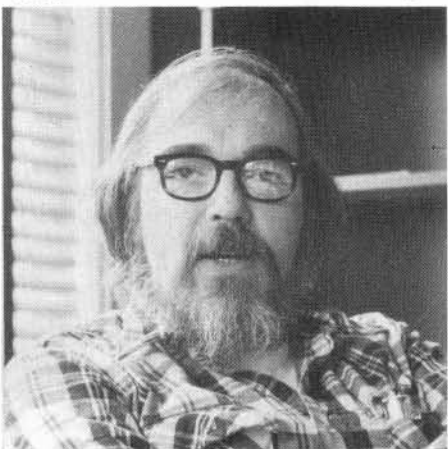
GG: D&D/AD&D sell just about worldwide, despite the fact that only English language versions are available. In my opinion there is sufficient appeal to translate the game into two or three other languages eventually — possibly within two or three years. Ask me about its universality sometime after it is done. ▶



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WD: *D&D* is now regarded as a classic game alongside such games as *Diplomacy*, etc., due to its original concept. How do you feel about this?

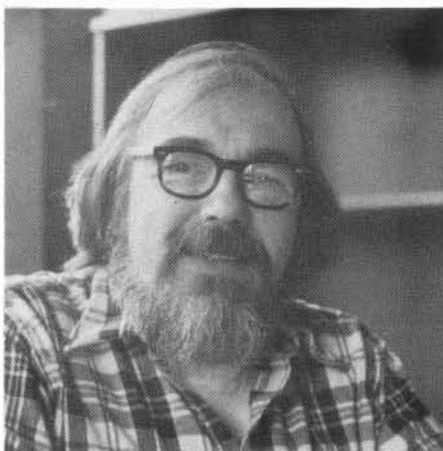
GG: Very nice indeed! It is a very real pleasure to receive letters thanking me for my efforts in designing *D&D*, and I get them quite often. *D&D/AD&D* is quite likely to continue to be far more widely played and talked about than *DIPLOMACY* is too, and that is also nice, as I know Al Calhamer, and I can have some fun with one-upmanship when I next see him...

WD: Its popularity soon led to a host of other role-playing games following in its wake. What effect have these had on *D&D*?

GG: None to speak of. *D&D/AD&D* have established themselves in the market place to an extent that will make it very difficult for any imitator to successfully compete. To mention the *MONOPOLY* analogy again, how many game companies attempt to compete by publishing similar games? Of course, the answer is few, and these have done dismally. Applying the principle is something else again. There well might be uses of the role-playing adventure concept which will develop into substantial entries in the hobby gaming field. These will be more likely to help sales of *D&D/AD&D* than they will be to lessen its market, I believe, for such games will heighten the interest in the role-playing adventure theme. By the same token, I must mention, *D&D/AD&D* are now preparing the market for the entry of such games.

WD: There are now a multitude of *D&D* zines on both sides of the Atlantic printing additions to, and criticisms of the game. Do you think this helps or detracts from *D&D*, taking into consideration the nature of the game?

GG: Nothing will absolutely spoil a campaign as quickly as some of the material offered in the various adventure gaming magazines — and this applies to material published in *DRAGON* too. The major difficulty lies in being able to distinguish in what is a minor addition to play and what will radically alter play-balance. Most DMs are not experienced game designers, and they cannot easily distinguish beforehand. Nobody would take seriously an article proposing that there be the addition of eight pawns, or a leaping move for the queen, or that land mines be added to chess. This sort of rubbish is commonly suggested for *D&D/AD&D* however. While there



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might be a few who enjoy aberrations, the majority find that they ruin at least a part of the campaign, and eventually require back-tracking and removal. Discussions of the game in general, and commentary and criticisms are perfectly fine — just as are carefully thought out and tested additions which arise from time to time. The fan magazines should educate as well as inform readers; then additional material could be properly judged in the light of each individual campaign, and DMs would be capable of intelligent and correct selection.

WD: From its original format of three rulebooks in a box expanded by four additional supplements, *D&D* underwent a major revision to the present basic set and advanced rulebooks. Are there any other changes, revisions or expansions in the pipeline for *D&D*?

GG: *AD&D* is not simply a revision of *D&D*, it is a completely different game — as any DM who has attempted to adjust a *D&D* campaign to the *AD&D* format will tell you! *D&D* will be augmented with playing aids, but it will remain otherwise unchanged. *AD&D* will be likewise augmented; a *GODS*, *DEMI-GODS*, & *HEROES* will be done for it, and new monsters will be added from time to time. A very basic instructional form is certain to be

offered in the not too distant future. I have already mentioned the likelihood of computerized versions of *D&D/AD&D*. Of course, at very great intervals we will consider revising portions of *AD&D*, expanding it possibly, and then issuing new additions as appropriate. But do I foresee a *REVISED ADVANCED SUPER-DOOPER D&D* in the offing? Not likely!

WD: We understand that your own game-world of *Greyhawk* is to be published on which the *Modules* are to be sited. What will this consist of?

GG: *THE WORLD OF GREYHAWK* will be released this summer, if all goes well. The package will consist of two large colour maps and a "Gazetteer" of the world. The history is given briefly, and most states are only outlined generally so as to allow as much personal input as possible from DMs who decide to acquire and use it. The various modules will be sited on WG in order to make it easy for DMs to plug them into the campaign. Eventually *THE CITY OF GREYHAWK* will be published, and I'm seriously considering release of some portions of *CASTLE GREYHAWK* — but both are a year or more away.

WD: Being 100% involved on the creative side of *D&D*, do you still find time to play it?

GG: Not too often lately — about once per month. I try to play at least once per week, whether it is a boardgame, miniatures, or some sort of adventure game. During conventions I do nothing but talk about or play games, so that makes up for it a bit. Likewise, during play-testing of modules, I get in quite a bit of DMing.

WD: How do you see the future of *D&D*?

GG: Sales are still climbing, and interest is certainly rising too. *D&D/AD&D* will very likely be offered in various forms in the years to come — family and introductory packages, highly sophisticated "expert" versions, computerized forms, you name it. Eventually it will reach a peak. After all, not everybody plays *MONOPOLY* either...

WD: Finally, do you have any plans to visit the UK to see how the game has developed over here?

GG: I have long had a desire to visit the UK, but I am not certain when time, and finances, will allow. I certainly hope that I will be able to do so within the next year or two, however!



... *Origins '79* recently held in Chester, PA yielded a host of new releases. GDW had *Kinunir*, a complete adventure for *Traveller* in booklet format; *Snapshot*, a boxed man-to-man combat aboard starships game which includes ship plans and counters. Can be played with or without a referee and part or not part of *Traveller*, GDW also released two SF board games, *Belter* and *Double Star*... FGU released *Gangster!*, a boxed role-playing game of cops and robbers set in the 1930's; *Villains and Vigilantes*, super-hero role-playing rules; and *Colony Delta*, a boxed two-player SF colonisation war game... TSR released the *Advanced D&D Dungeon Master's Screen*, *Divine Right* and a revised *Boot Hill*... a new company trading as *Task Force Games* released four games in similar format to *Metagaming's Microgames*. They were *Starfire*, *Asteroid Zero-Four*, *Cerberus* and *Star Fleet Battles*... another new company, *Yaquinto Publications* released eight boxed games and *The Beastlord* should appeal to wizardry and warfare fans... *Avalon Hill* finally released *Magic Realm*, and also *Dune* which was designed by *Eon Products* of *Cosmic Encounter* fame who themselves just missed the *Origins'* deadline for release of their own new game *Darkover*, a two to four player game based on the SF novels of Marion Zimmer Bradley... *The Chaosium* released *Snow Pipe Hollow*, a new set of *Runequest* scenarios in booklet format and whilst *Authentic Thaumaturgy* was seen back in print, *Runequest* itself is now temporarily out-of-print... *Invasion of the Air Eaters* and *Holy War* were the two new *Metagaming Microgames*... *Judges Guild* released a compendium of *The Dungeoneeer* issues 1-6 and also the aptly named *Survival of the Fittest*, a solo *D&D* dungeon... *Phoenix Games* released *The Lost Abbey of Calthorwey*, a ready made dungeon scenario for use with most fantasy role-playing games, *Spacefarer's Guide to the Planets Sector Two* and a *Spacefarer's Guide to Alien Races*... not to be outdone by the games companies, the miniatures companies showed many outstanding new releases. Of particular interest were the 15mm *Fantasy 15s* and *The Fantasy Trip* micro-figures for use with *Metagaming's* game system of the same name. These two excellent ranges are made by a relatively new company, *Martian Metals*. *Grenadier*, *Ral Partha* and *Dragontooth* also had superb new releases... altogether there were a record 71 companies exhibiting at *Origins '79* occupying 128 booths...