



VIEW FROM THE TELESCOPE WONDERING WHICH END IS WHICH

E. Gary Gygax

It is not uncommon to read tirades in amateur press association magazines and semi-irate letters in the letter columns of "small" journals berating TSR in general and — at times, anyway — me in particular for uncharitable (to phrase it politely) attitudes regarding use of our copyrighted material by others. Shocking! What villains we are to resent infringement on our legal rights by others! After all, all these *Good Fellows* wish to do is to *steal* from us — just a few crumbs or a *small* slice which we wouldn't miss anyway. Pretty nervy, huh? What the hell do we mean by trying to protect our rights and deny some enterprising plagiarist a windfall, anyway?! Permit me to move backwards in time a ways, and put the whole affair in perspective.

D&D was designed and developed when Guidon Games was a thriving entity. As Lowry's "Miniatures Rules Editor", I urged him to immediately publish the game, for I viewed it as something really new and different and envisioned it as having great potential — just how great I must admit I did not conceive at that time. Don turned it down. When Guidon ceased active publishing, I mentioned *D&D* to Avalon Hill, but the reception was a trifle chilly. The reaction to fantasy battle reports in such magazines as *WARGAMER'S NEWS LETTER* and *PANZERFAUST* had stirred up a good deal of controversy, and one fellow had gone so far as to say that not only was fantasy gaming "up a creek", but if I had any intelligence whatsoever, I would direct my interest to something fascinating and unique; the Balkan Wars, for example. Nonetheless, I persisted, but the "establishment" was not about to jump into something as different and controversial as fantasy — neither *D&D* nor *DUNGEON* were salable commodities. Having aspirations of forming my own wargaming company anyway, rejection did not daunt me. Tactical Studies Rules was founded, and the second title published by that firm was *D&D*. Don Kaye, Brian Blume, and I staked the whole of our company on this venture, for it took every bit of capital we had to produce the game. We also spent hundreds of hours readying it to print — hours we could not spend gaming, or with our families, or in pursuit of some other form of relaxation and enjoyment. It was long, hard work done late into the night and on weekends. It was nobody else but the three of us who stood this hazard. One thousand copies of the game were printed, and it took some eleven months to sell those first sets of *D&D*. Although this was not exactly a "hot" reception, we were satisfied, for it was a start. Wargamers were not exactly flocking to fantasy role playing, but a few came into the fold, and we were "recruiting" players from outside the hobby. The next thousand run sold out in a tad under six months . . .

From then on the events surrounding the growth of *D&D* are pretty well known. We did a supplement to fill the gaps in the initial booklets, and more of them followed due to a very great demand. *D&D* became a very hot property, for the game attracted devoted players. Players were so devoted that they would buy virtually anything with the *D&D* name on it or which might be somehow usable by them to improve their campaign or playing ability. TSR is proud that it did not

take advantage of this tendency in its *D&D* players by sending forth a stream of junk products to attract more money. We have never believed that the sale of shoddy products can be justified by a fat profit. While some of the material we have produced is less than perfect, the overall content has always been as good as we could make it. Thus, more supplements could have been produced, demand was there, but we thought it better to refrain—because the content of such works would not improve the game but only tend to confuse an already cluttered system. Mind you that the profitability of additional supplements to *D&D* was never in doubt; all of them we produce make money for TSR; the object was to not do a disservice to *D&D* enthusiasts, foregoing profits was not too much to expect.

Imitation is claimed to be the sincerest form of flattery, and *D&D* has ample reason to be flattered. Foolish imitations are demeaning however, and shoddy ones are worse still in that to the extent that they are associated with the imitated, they lower its character and repute. Similarly, *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* is an entity with excellent repute, and we stringently protect it. This is done from both paternal pride and profit motivation. Not surprisingly, we take the view that the creators and publishers know best how to develop the creation. To this end we have promoted and advertised the game. Two years ago we determined to revise the whole of *D&D* in order to clean up the errors and fill in the holes. The project is a long and complicated one, a task not accomplished overnight. Some players have impatiently demanded immediate release of such material, but we are not about to step into that mess again — *D&D* originally came out as it did because of demands from those who had tested it and fallen in love with the concept. "Basic" *D&D* was the first step, and the release of *ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, MONSTER MANUAL* is the next. I am personally developing the next two volumes, and perhaps they will be ready for release in summer. So while care is being taken, TSR is by no means resting on its laurels. We, too, recognise *D&D* as a true innovation in gaming, a game which added a whole new series of vistas to the hobby. But we are by no means satisfied with what has been accomplished, and work at improvement is constantly being done. This brings me to our detractors once again.

Quite a few individuals and firms have sought to cash in on a good thing by producing material from, or for, *D&D*. Others have parodied the game. For most of these efforts TSR has only contempt. For saying so we are sometimes taken to task quite unjustly, but I suppose that is to be expected from disgruntled persons prevented from making a fast and easy buck from our labors — or from those persons responsible for cheap imitations whose work we rightly label as such. This is not to say that we resent inspirational use of *D&D*. A notable example of such inspiration is *EN GARDE* by Game Designers Workshop. It is an excellent game, and I personally admire the application of role playing which they devised. Likewise, *TRAVELER* is an imaginative game, and if it was inspired by *D&D*, it can be considered an imitation by no

possible stretch of the imagination. TSR respects GDW as an ethical concern which simply saw the possibilities inherent in role playing and went on to devise unique and interesting games from this concept. In fact, there can be no doubt that *D&D* in particular, and the success of other fantasy and science fiction games from TSR in general, was the prime motivation for many miniatures firms to begin production of figurines in the genre. The appearance of fantasy and science fiction games in the title lists of Avalon Hill and Simulations Publications Inc. can also find its proximate cause in the *D&D* success story as well. TSR is quite willing to face competition. We founded our company with a bit of money, a lot of ideas, and no outside help. Our growth has been because we furnished products which gamers found desirable, not because we got any help from anyone else, and possibly in spite of suppression of what we were doing by actively ignoring all we did. These days TSR is too big to be ignored, *D&D* is too popular to pass by. We feel that competition will only sharpen our collective face, and because of it we will furnish better products which will be more popular still. By no means do we desire suppression of fair and genuine competition!

Are we suppressing competition when we turn down schemes to compile or rehash copyrighted *D&D* material into some form which will be printed and sold by another firm? Not hardly. First, it is *our* material. Second, the proposed works have been of questionable value to players anyway — although their profitability to their publishers is unquestioned. Is it surprising that we do not wish to lend our name, or the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* name, to "supplemental" books which have little or no merit? Which further confuse and diffuse the methods of playing *D&D*? TSR desires to maintain quality and consistency of play in *D&D*. We know the limits of the game and how best to expand its parameters without sacrificing uniformity from campaign to campaign. Imagination and variety are desirable, but a thousand variant games are anathema. Furthermore, we will not lend our name to accessory products which we do not find to be of high quality. We have spent thousands of dollars advertising the game, thousands of hours have gone into its development, handling, and growth. We are entitled to a just profit from such expense and effort. Recognising the need for certain playing aids and accessories, TSR took steps to license certain firms to produce accessory materials; furnishing art work and careful consultation to *Miniature Figurines Ltd.*, for example, so that what we considered to be the best figures for *D&D* miniatures gaming would be produced. Also, *Judges Guild* products now have TSR approval, for we review all material which bears the *D&D* logo before it is published by them. These products add to the enjoyment of playing the game and are helpful. Products which confuse things, which we do not view as falling within the game system of *D&D*, product offerings which rely upon our copyrighted material to sustain them — or attempt unauthorised use of our trade name for sales appeal — will meet with a jaundiced eye from us. Should it be otherwise?

I cannot resist the analogy of a lion standing over its kill. The vultures scream, and the jackals yap, when the lion drives them off without allowing them to steal bits of the meat. Perhaps a hyena will manage to successfully grab off a mouthful, but that is all. Other lions may also prey upon the same herd and make even bigger kills, but that is the law of the land. Pardon me, please, if you find the picture not to your liking. From my end it seems most *apropos*, for I hear a good deal of screaming and yapping. TSR was the lion which brought down the prey, and we intend to have the benefits derived therefrom. If we share with anyone, it will be on our terms. The hunter which fails to bring down its kill dies itself.

So to restate our position, TSR does not object to honest competition. We will not praise our imitators, but neither will we try to drive them out of business. Frankly, we are too busy running our own affairs to worry overmuch about competitors. TSR co-operates with certain firms in order to produce *D&D* associated products, offerings which add to the game. For this co-operation and for the right to display the *D&D* logo, we receive a small royalty to compensate us for our past and present expenditures in time and money. Under no circumstances will we permit individuals or companies to make unauthorised use of our materials. If changes or additions are in order, we believe that we are more capable than any other of handling the matter. Help in the form of ideas, suggestions, or even actual work such as J. Eric Holmes did for us is always welcome. We desire first and foremost to produce the best possible game for *D&D* enthusiasts, and in this regard we maintain

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Judges Guild

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APPROVED FOR USE WITH

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WILDERLANDS OF HIGH FANTASY includes five 17x22" Wilderness Campaign Maps of the lands around and beyond the City State. Drawn from issues K, M & N of the Guildmember Sub, also included is 32 pages of description on the villages, castles, ruins and many campaign guidelines, \$8.50.

CAMPAIGN HEXAGON SYSTEM is an 8½x11" booklet of 60 light hex grids. The hexes are numbered and enclosed by a large five mile campaign hex outline, making each small hex .2 mile wide (approx 360 yards) and .3" in size. Handy for many other mapping uses also, \$2.50.

FIRST FANTASY CAMPAIGN retells the background and history of the original 'dungeon adventure' campaign by Dave Ameson. The ninety-two page booklet includes campaign notes, the dungeons below Blackmoor Castle and many never before published rules & guidelines (Special Character Interests, Lair Generation in the Wilderness). Also included are Judge's & Players' maps of the Wilderlands of Blackmoor, \$7.98.

CHARACTER CHRONICLE CARDS are small (2 5/6 x 3 ½") cards with spaces for characteristics and other character details. Handy for players, they can also be used for maintaining a file of NPCs. One hundred cards for \$1.98.

CITY STATE OF THE INVINCIBLE OVERLORD PLAY AID includes a huge, detailed map of the City State and a players' map. Hundreds of NPCs, shops, rumors and guidelines are listed. Also included is Thunderhold, the Dwarven Castle and Sunstone Caverns. Rules include crimes & trials, social level, ads, beggars, poison, witicisms and much more, \$9.00.

JUDGES SHIELD is a reference screen detailing attack matrices, monster statistics, player levels, phantasmal forces & more, \$1.98.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

JUDGES GUILD JOURNAL SUBSCRIPTION, the newsletter included in every Guildmember sub below, is available separately for 4.50/next six issues (sent bimonthly). Recently expanded to 16 large (11x17") pages, the journal includes much general fantasy material and news.

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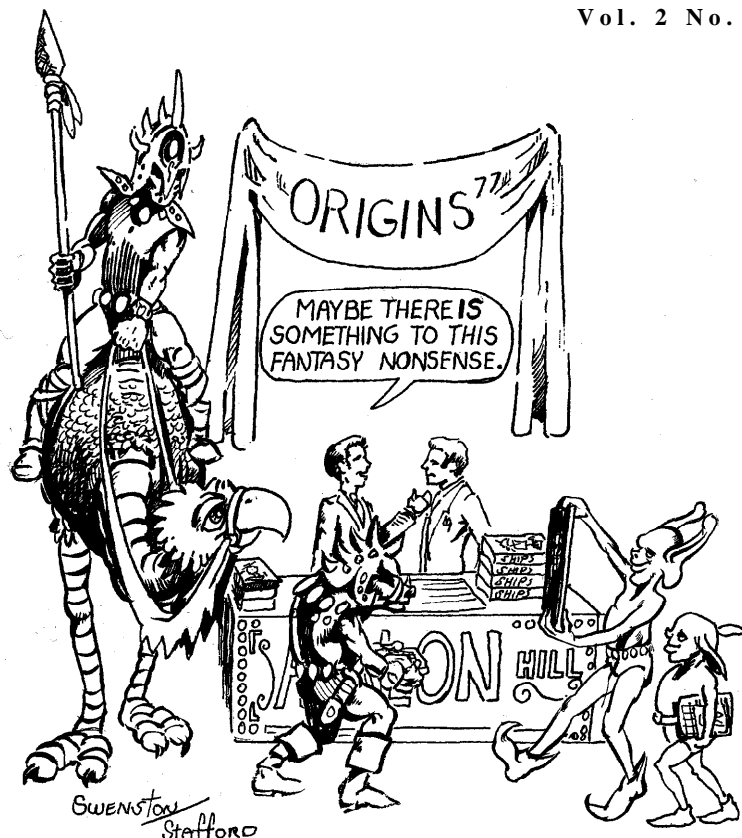
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at Bilbo's house, is a nifty innovation, but fell short of its intentions.

Some serious liberties were taken with the story. Some of these were necessary to get a 90 minute production; some were unforgivable. Beorn is one of the more interesting and mysterious characters, yet the writers excised all traces of him. Gandalf is depicted as calling up the dawn, rather than tricking the trolls into arguing until dawn. Not even the most vociferous of Gandalf's defenders have ever made the claim that he was powerful enough to summon the dawn. Gollum didn't look anything like the former Hobbit that he was. Instead, we had some oversized frog-like creature that seemed to bellow; a far cry from Tolkeins whining, sniffing wretch. The Arkenstone, that fabulous Dwarven treasure around which the entire confrontation between the men of Dale, the Elves, and Thorin's dwarves is resolved was also completely excised, along with all the attendant morality.

In summary, what we got was an inaccurate, poorly developed rehash of one of the finest fantasy novels ever written. Xerox, the sponsor, did not get its money's worth in material. They did, however, get great Neilsons. Pity . . . TJK.

an open mind. On the other hand, as the persons who pioneered the whole fantasy role playing game concept, the designers and developers of *D&D*, the best selling game in its field, we hold to our rights and also believe in our ultimate ability to maintain our premier position with respect to new fantasy and science fiction role playing games. The test of all this, however, will come with the release of *ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*, *GAMMA WORLD*, and various other projects still some time off as of this writing. The final arbiter of all such matters is the consumer, for if people do not buy, there is no appeal of the decision. Meanwhile, we will continue to be innovative and create our own material and designs. It is not too much to expect that others do the same. The next time someone complains about TSR not allowing them to publish or produce some *D&D* related item, perhaps you should ask that individual why he or she doesn't create their own game instead of trying to steal what is the property of another.



THE WESTFINSTER WARGAMING SOCIETY

"A GAME UNDER THE "LIGHTS" ON FRIDAY NIGHT"

BY Tom Wham

