

## Designers Forum

# GARY GYGAX ON DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

## Origins of the Game

The most frequently asked question at seminars which I have given on DUNGEONS & DRAGONS is: "How did the game originate?" Because of the frequency of this question, and the involved nature of the reply required, I thought it a good idea to once again put it in writing. The Forward in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS contains most of what follows, but I will go into greater detail here.

When the International Federation of Wargaming was at its peak, it contained many special interest groups. I founded one of these, the "Castle & Crusade Society". All members of this sub-group were interested in things medieval and I began publishing a magazine for them entitled **Domesday Book**. In an early issue, I drew up a map of the "Great Kingdom". Members of the society could then establish their holdings on the map, and we planned to sponsor campaign-type gaming at some point. Dave Arneson was a member of the C&C Society, and he established a barony, Blackmoor, to the northeast of the map, just above the Great Kingdom. He began a local medieval campaign for the Twin Cities gamers and used this area.

The medieval rules, CHAINMAIL (Gygax and Perren) were published in **Domesday Book** prior to publication by Guidon Games. Of course, they were in a less developed state, and were only for a 1:20 figure scale. Between the time they appeared in **Domesday Book** and their publication by Guidon Games, I revised and expanded the rules for 1:20 and added 1:1 scale games, jousting, and fantasy. Rob Kuntz and I had acquired a large number of 40mm figures, and many of them were so heroic looking that it seemed a good idea to play some games which would reflect the action of the great swords and sorcery yarns. So I devised such rules, and the Lake Geneva Tactical Studies Association proceeded to play-test them. When the whole appeared as CHAINMAIL, Dave began using the fantasy rules for his campaign, and he reported a number of these actions to the C&C Society by way of articles.

I thought that this usage was quite interesting, and a few months later when Dave came down to visit me we played a game of his amended CHAINMAIL fantasy campaign. Dave had taken the man-to-man and fantasy rules and modified them for his campaign. Players began as Heroes or Wizards. With sufficient success they could become Superheroes. In a similar fashion, Wizards could become more powerful. Additionally, he had added equipment for players to purchase and expanded the characters descriptions considerably — even adding several new monsters to the rather short CHAINMAIL line-up.

The idea of measured progression (experience points) and the addition of games taking place in a dungeon maze struck me as being very desirable. However, that did not really fit in the framework of CHAINMAIL. I asked Dave to please send me his rules additions, for I thought a whole new system should be developed. A few weeks after his visit I received 18 or so handwritten pages of rules and notes pertaining to his campaign, and I immediately began work on a brand new manuscript. "Greyhawk" campaign started — the first D&D campaign!

About three weeks later, I had some 100 typewritten pages, and we began serious play-testing in Lake Geneva, while copies were sent to the Twin Cities and to several other groups for comment. DUNGEONS & DRAGONS had been born. Its final form came over a year later and consisted of nearly 300 manuscript pages which I wrote during the wee hours of many a morning and on weekends.

The first D&D (as opposed to variant CHAINMAIL) dungeon adventurers were: Ernie Gygax, Don Kaye, Rob Kuntz and Terry Kuntz. They were soon joined by Don Arndt, Brian Blume, Tom Champeny, Bill Corey, Bob Dale, Mary Dale, Chip Mornard, Mike Mornard, and Tim Wilson. All of these gamers — as well as the other play-testers — contributed to the final form of the game.

There were then three character classes, with players beginning at first level (rather than as 4th level Hero-types or relatively powerful Wizards), and each level was given a heroic or otherwise descriptive name. The actions that they could follow were outlined. Spells were expanded. The list of monsters was broadened again, and a complete listing of magical items and treasures was given. The reaction to the manuscript was instant enthusiasm. DUNGEONS & DRAGONS differed

considerably from Dave's "Blackmoor" campaign, just as the latter differed from CHAINMAIL: but, based on the reception given to the game by the others testing it, he had to agree that it was acceptable. Although D&D was not Dave's game system by any form or measure, he was given co-billing as author for his valuable idea kernels. He complained bitterly that the game wasn't right, but the other readers/players loved it. In fact, the fellows playing the manuscript version were so enthusiastic that they demanded publication of the rules as soon as possible. Thus, D&D was released long before I was satisfied that it was actually ready. I am not sorry that we decided to publish then instead of later, even though I've often been taken to task about it since, and I hope all of you feel the same way too. You can, however, rest assured that work on a complete revision of the game is in progress, and I promise a far better product.

## MAPPING THE DUNGEON

*All listings are for D&D, unless otherwise noted.*

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