Tunnels & Trolls *was one of the first role-playing games. This issue Ken St Andre, creator of* T&T, *explains a bit about himself and the background to* T&T.

1: In the beginning. . .

Greetings! I want to thank the editors of *White Dwarf* for providing this opportunity to get together with you. I intend to write one or more essays for this magazine that are a cross between a gaming column, an article, an editorial, and a personal chat. In the future, if this series lasts for long, I'd like to think we're all sitting around a blazing fire eating popcorn and talking about whatever interests us.

First, I'd like to describe myself a bit so you can feel that you know me. I am 34 years old. I live in Phoenix, Arizona with my wife Cathy and daughter Jillian Charmaine. Gaming is not my major source of income — *T&T* and the other things I have done have not made me rich. In my everyday mundane identity, I am a lowly cataloguer for a great metropolitan library system (Phoenix Public).

I own a house in an older section of town. It has a huge and ill-kept lawn with a giant pine tree in the back. The popular image of Phoenix as the capital of Arizona is probably of stinking desert with sagebrush growing on the streets, cowboys swaggering in and out of the bars, and coyotes howling to the moon every evening. Although it does get to be 120 degrees Fahrenheit here every summer, you can forget the rest of the image. Irrigation has made Phoenix surprisingly green, and air-conditioning makes it very comfortable. The only coyotes I know about are in the zoo, though my neighbour's dog seems to have a wild streak in him — Spot has certainly awakened me in the wee hours with his howling often enough. Behind my house is a large redwood room stuffed with hundreds of books belonging to me and my wife. Pride of place goes to my collection of Robert E Howard, J R R Tolkien, King Arthur material, and books about the pre-Columbian civilizations of America, notably the Aztecs, Toltecs, and Mayans. I have a moderately huge collection of science fiction, fantasy, mythology, folklore, ancient history, comic books, fanzines, and amateur publications of all sorts. There are several shelves full of games. The fantasy role-playing games that I keep on hand are: *Tunnels & Trolls* (of course — both American and English editions), *Monsters! Monsters!*, *Rune-Quest*, *Traveller*, *Stormbringer*, *The Fantasy Trip*, *Empire of the Petal Throne*, *Space Opera*, *Villains and Vigilantes*, *Land of the Rising Sun*, *Bushido*, the *Thieves Guild* stuff, and the old *Arduin* trilogy. Conspicuous by its absence is any form of *D&D* or *AD&D*. People often ask me if I play *D&D*. The answer is no. I have only the vaguest idea of the actual mechanics of the other game system. Games that I like to play and sometimes do are *T&T*, *RuneQuest*, *Stormbringer*, *Traveller*, and *Villains and Vigilantes*. There isn't time to play and understand everything.

People often ask me what is the difference between *Dungeons & Dragons* and *Tunnels & Trolls*, assuming that my game is just a poor man's variant of *D&D*. The difference is basically one of viewpoint between E Gary Gygax and myself. *T&T* was deliberately designed to be simpler in its basic concepts and game mechanics, less expensive, faster to play, and more whimsical. *T&T* is often blasted because the spell names such as *take-that-you-fiend!* or *poor baby* sound silly, but I feel it is better to sound silly than to be dull. Spell names like *fireball* and *heal* don't show much imagination, do they? You absolutely need a good sense of humour to play *T&T*. Otherwise, you just aren't going to understand why berserkers get extra combat adds for chewing on their shields.

Back in December of 1974 I began to hear rumours of this game called *Dungeons & Dragons*. It sounded fabulous — something that every true fantasy lover would need to own and play. In April of 1975 I finally saw a copy of *D&D*. A couple of hours later I put down the *D&D* rulebooks

(and I have never looked at *D&D* rules again) and said, 'What a great idea! What lousy execution! Nobody can play this. I'll write my own rules that my friends and I can play.' And I stalked out into the night, went home, sat down and started writing. One thing I decided at the beginning was that I didn't need funny many-sided dice — good old six-siders would do. Another thing — the game didn't need to be dominated by some pseudo-Christian religion. Out with clerics! There were a lot of decisions made rebelling against what I remembered of the *D&D* rules. Who needs hit points — Constitution will do. At the end of my first day of writing the two systems were already radically different.

In two days I had produced a dozen pages of notes towards a rule system — there was no thought of making something to sell and compete with *D&D*. I just wanted something I could play with my friends. I called over Steve McAllister, Bear Peters, and Mark Antony, showed them how to roll up characters and open-

According to St Andre

Illustrations by John Barnes, Chris Carlson and Liz Danforth.

at the WesterCon science fiction convention. I didn't have a room there and was trying to stay awake for 3 days. Steve had brought a few extra copies with him, to show me, and to try and sell some at the convention. We sold about 4 copies. It was at this same convention that my path first crossed Liz Danforth — I saw her and some of her art, never dreaming that within a few months she was going to become one of the most important elements in the continuing evolution of *T&T*.

As it turned out, I couldn't sell 100 copies of *T&T*. My friends took about 30 or 40 copies and I got my printing costs back. But in November I met Rick Loomis at TusCon I, a small science fiction convention in Tuscon, Arizona. He told me about his game company, *Flying Buffalo*, and I told him about *T&T*. I asked him if he'd try selling it for me on commission — after all I already had coast-to-coast sales — one friend in Florida and 4 sales at Oakland. Rick took the game with him — my 60 remaining copies — to a few conventions and quickly sold out. At $2.00 a copy it was 5 times less expensive than *D&D*. It occurred to him that there could be money in this fantasy gaming and he came back and made me an offer to produce and distribute *T&T*. It was settled with a handshake, and the second fantasy role-playing game was launched.

The current fifth edition is almost completely different from the original first edition, but the philosophy of play has never changed, nor has my intention to bring you players the best possible game for the least amount of cost. New things continue to happen and I'm beginning to think that a 6th edition is inevitable. Right now I can only advise you to subscribe to *Sorcerer's Apprentice* if you want to find out what the new developments are for *T&T*. And just possibly, *White Dwarf*. If you wish to do your own *T&T* articles, dungeon designs, variants, commentary, what-have-you, now is the time to send such material to *White Dwarf*. They have told me that they are interested in seeing and publishing more *T&T* material, but the truth is, I, Mike Stackpole, Liz Danforth, and most of my friends are too busy to try and produce a lot of new material for *White Dwarf*. This is your chance. After all, it really is your game.

If you care to write to me, I'm always interested in comments from players, though I don't promise to return all letters received — that could mean constant letter-writing and no time for design work (and I have lots of projects I'm working on). You can reach me through the editors of *White Dwarf*, or by writing to *Flying Buffalo*, or by writing to me directly at 3421 E Yale, Phoenix, AZ 85008 USA.

—Best,

Ken St Andre

Next issue: A T&T solitaire scenario, devised by Ken St Andre. ∎

ed the gates of Gristlegrim for them. The first thing that happened was a ghostly hand grabbed the leading character and dragged him into a hole, eventually dumping him into a cell with an amorous lady troll. Fortunately for him, his comrades leaped into the hole and got there in time to rescue him. The players had numerous other adventures — I killed half of them by dropping the roof of the tunnel on them. I made them all wealthy by letting them exit through a room whose floor was strewn with uncut diamonds. That was incredibly, extravagantly generous, but I had no models to go by back in April 1975. They went ape. They loved the game. Photocopies of my original hand-written rules began to proliferate with people always begging me for more. Others began throwing in their ideas. It didn't take more than a week for McAllister to come up with as many different spell names and powers as possible. I clarified the theory of saving rolls. I got Rob Carver and Mark Antony — the only artists I knew at the time — to do some illustrations for

me. The name *Tunnels & Trolls* was chosen by a popular vote at a meeting of people who were playing the game. Everybody had been calling it *Dungeons & Dragons* though we knew it wasn't really. I wanted to call it *Tunnels & Troglodytes*, but I was shouted down overwhelmingly.

By mid-June I had a 41-page book of rules and Robin Carver had given me a couple of pieces of art to use for covers. I took it all to the print shop of Arizona State University and laid out $60.00 to get them to do 100 copies by photo-offset. That was a lot of money for me at the time, considering that I had been unemployed for half a year and was living off my wife's salary. The day after I got it to the printer, Cathy and I went on vacation to Lake Tahoe, San Francisco, and parts in between. Steve McAllister was left with the responsibility of picking up the finished product, collating it, and getting copies of it to all our friends who wanted some at $2.00 per copy. When next I saw him and *Tunnels & Trolls* it was the 4th of July in Oakland at the Hotel Leamington