

RPGA INTERVIEW with...

E. GARY GYGAX

We present the conclusion of our April interview with E. Gary Gygax, President of TSR Hobbies, Inc. and inventor of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® fantasy role playing game. The interview series will continue in the next newsletter; if there's someone you'd like to hear from, let us know!

RPGA: In looking over what little I could find from the past on the origins of the D&D game and its development, I ran across a mention from you that some of your associates at TSR were somewhat concerned about getting so far away from wargaming, and going so heavily into role playing gaming. Are there any plans for the future of getting away from role playing, and getting back into wargames - to any extent?

EGG: I don't think that we want to do that directly. Role playing has a broader appeal than wargames; there's just no help for it. Wargames usually demand more specific knowledge at the onset than do role playing games. You can start role playing in a period you know virtually nothing about. Hopefully, the game itself will generate sufficient interest to make you want to learn. But I don't believe that wargames, historical simulations, and the like will ever have the level of popularity that role playing does. So, while we're interested in doing good battle games and conflict simulations, our company will never become primarily an historical game company.

RPGA: One seemingly notable lack of TSR's products is figures, figures used in virtually every role playing game and of course through the wargamers. Why TSR *doesn't* make figures is almost irrelevant; but are there plans to do so?

EGG: Well, right now we license two firms to make figures for us, of various sorts: Grenadier Models and Miniature Figurines, Ltd. We have no immediate plans to begin manufacturing figures on our own. It might be in the cards in the not too distant future, but again perhaps not. It is a difficult area to get into, because of a great amount of expertise required to make little figures.

RPGA: We have received a lot of requests and questions about what

has happened to T2 (AD&D™ *Dungeon Module T2: The Temple of Elemental Evil*). Is it soon to come?

EGG: It's about half finished, and I've done a complete revision of the old "Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth" (AD&D *Dungeon Module S5*), which were played at a Detroit WinterCon - oh, I don't know, three, four, five years ago, whenever it was - and I've finally gotten around to adding these, and putting a complete outdoor adventure on the front end to get to the Lost Caverns, and I'll finish those and then I'll get back into T2, and then do the plane modules I want to do. I want to do the elemental planes, para-elemental planes, demi-planes, and semi-planes, and demi-semi-planes, et cetera....

RPGA: Et cetera.... Well, as president of a multi-million dollar international corporation like TSR Hobbies, I'm sure you have very little free time; but is the Greyhawk campaign still running?



EGG: It runs sporadically, with basically what you'd call a group of new players - some of my younger children play, and some of their friends and associates. Occasionally we'll get some of the old-timers in there. As I got busier and busier, and the demands of work kept me from playing Greyhawk, I began to merge my profession with my avocation, and cheated a lot by creating the village of Hommlet and the temple of Elemental Evil to test some ideas I had about random dungeons, and outdoor terrain so forth. That got going with a number of the old original players, like Ernie and Brian and so forth, and now that that's pretty well quieted down, the old original Greyhawk is back in play again, now and again. One of these days I swear I'll extensively revise it, fill in a lot of the areas that I only have one-liner notes on, and maybe even attempt to publish it.

RPGA: Do you play any other games in your spare time?

EGG: You mean other than, like, the heroes and villains game that I play now, or Pit, such as at the convention (*Spring Revel*), or Rail Baron? Yeah, I play backgammon, and chess, and Shogi; I'm a game player, I'm sure. Whenever I have time, I try to slip in a game I play with my youngest son. We play the electronic game of Generals, occasionally, or Go-ban, or - yeah, whatever's going, I'll take a shot at.

RPGA: You have mentioned communication among gamers being helped by Gen Con events, and also clubs and things like that. What else is being done for communications and clubs and the hobby as a whole?

EGG: Well, that's why the RPGA network is so desirable. An interchange of ideas and a communications network is necessary amongst role playing game en-

thusiasts in order that they don't go off in tangents, or that they don't become isolated and lose touch and kind of lose interest in the whole hobby. It's active and growing, and we need communications, we need information: a free exchange of ideas, a training ground, maybe, or at least an education ground for Dungeon Masters and would-be Dungeon Masters, or game masters in general. And also perhaps some means of bringing the play of each type of role playing game into a more standard - I can't say *method*; to define the parameters of play a little bit more. So that if you go from group to group, whether it's locally or in other regions, that the games will resemble each other. The bigger the audience for a game, the greater the opportunity to excel and to enjoy the game.

For example, imagine trying to have a golf tournament if the rules for golf differed from state to state or golf course to golf course. In one, you could pick up the ball and throw it if you desired, in a given situation, rather than hitting it with a club. Or somewhere, the green wouldn't have to be closely manicured, or if the cup that you were shooting for could be a foot in diameter, or not much bigger than the golf ball, and so forth... it would be CHAOS. As it is, the rules for golf are pretty well set by the PGA structure, and you have interesting competitions and a large following, and lots of fun. I think the RPGA structure, in this case, will help to stabilize and bring a little more... a little higher quality of game play to our hobby. Hopefully it will also be a vehicle by which we can begin to reward players who really play well, and want to excel in tournaments, want to be rated, by giving them chances to go to various parts of our country, or overseas, perhaps, to play others. The UK branch of TSR has its own organization which is called - what are they called?

RPGA: The *D&D Players Association*, and more about that later in this issue.

EGG: Okay. So perhaps we can have an exchange. One year they'll be able to send somebody over here, or a team over here, or whatever it is, and the next year we can send a team over to the UK to play. There are lots of interesting possibilities with this thing. We'll also hopefully not



only spread the hobby and make it a little easier for enthusiasts to find more and better opponents or associates in a lot of games, but also to air their opinions and make the games better. If enough of the members feel that some game could be improved by some rules change, or addition or deletion or whatever it is, we'll certainly give that a lot of weight in what we do, because they're active, and the most informed segment of the hobby. So that's for certain.

RPGA: With a gamers' organization as important as the RPGA network, why not get an old-time gamer to run it?

EGG: What we wanted to do - and we did look at some old-time gamers, too - is to get someone who's interested and excited, and has lots of energy, who can get their ducks in a row, and who can create a synergism. Somebody who's going to approach it with a great amount of energy and creativity. And we also like to offer a chance to get involved for everybody. Y'know, it's not just the old-timers; it's a growing hobby.

RPGA: To jump ahead to the present and the future a bit: What have you done since the *D&D* game, Gary?

EGG: Rested on my laurels (*sighs*).

RPGA: We're all familiar with the many modules you've come out with, but do you have any plans for any more role playing games? Or any other major products of this type?

EGG: Well, after the *Dungeons & Dragons* game was done, Brian and I worked on a game called

Warriors of Mars, which is now out of print. I did *Classic Warfare*, *Swords & Spells*... What else? The *Boot Hill*™ game, with Brian. Let's see, what else have I worked with? Not much else beside that, other than modules and the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* game.

RPGA: A monumental task in itself. Do you have plans for anything, or germs of ideas for the future?

EGG: Yeah, we have some pretty gummy ideas here (smiles). Well, yeah, I'm working on a game with Brian right now. In fact, as I'm talking, I'm shuffling through cards, as you can see... and it is yet another game, which is different from any. It's a rather simple but fun card game.

I was thinking about the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* game, and how I should have done characteristics - and it's different from the way I handled it. If I ever do another role playing game - and I've thought about it - there will be a slightly different character generation, and a slightly different list of abilities, shall we say. A different but similar method of character generation, and so on. So, yeah, I've thought about it; I haven't opted for anything.

RPGA: We'll look forward, of course, to anything you produce in the future, but -

EGG: You'll have to look quite a way forward.

RPGA: There has been a rumor that a *D&D* movie is to come. It would seem a natural development. What's going on?

EGG: We have been dealing for almost two years, off and on, with the entertainment media industry, regarding some sort of a *D&D* production. Whether it would be a television movie or a feature film was first debated; whether an independent producer would do it or a major studio was then covered. We finally began serious negotiations something over a year ago with Twentieth Century Fox films, to do a major motion picture based on the *Dungeons & Dragons* game. After considerable negotiations, TSR has broken off further discussion because we felt that we wouldn't maintain sufficient control to assure a film which was true to the game. And we didn't want to end up with the rather disastrous type of movie that Tolkien's ring trilogy ended up with - something that was totally unsatisfactory for both those who had no idea what the Lord of the Rings was

all about, and to those who were aficionados of it. Spell that right!

RPGA: Well, thank you. To wrap up somewhat, what's ahead for TSR? Are there more *D&D* products coming out?

EGG: Let me speak just a little further, there....

RPGA: Oh... sure; sorry.

EGG: We have not *totally* dismissed the idea of doing a full-length feature film based on the *Dungeons & Dragons* game - with imagination, and creativity, and excitement, and adventure, and not some sort of a Hollywood epic which takes the name and then perverts everything else.

What's happening with the *Dungeons & Dragons* games? They are going to be expanded by the *D&D Companion Set*, which is a pickup of the three supplements to the original game - Greyhawk, Blackmoor, and Eldritch Wizardry - revised, expanded, edited, and improved, to be 99 and 44/100 per cent pure. With regard to *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* works, we have the *Fiend Folio*™ book coming out fairly soon, and then - I hope next year - a third book of monsters. Perhaps there can be some editing and expansion of the game to include new spells, new magic items, for *Advanced D&D* games.

I mentioned earlier a new way to generate characters. I've even thought about that, but I don't want to go back and try to change that system, because it's not really necessary; it works very well as it is now. I'm not going to get involved in any more changes than are absolutely necessary to make the game more playable; I don't think there *are* many things to make it more playable. More detailed combat systems tend to drag the game out, rather than speed it up.

The fun of an adventure is *the adventure*; it's not the book-keeping, or hits, parries, and so forth, or getting more realism into a *fantasy* game (*sighs*). I'm not sure what else is in the cards with respect to *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* games; I think that'll come as it comes. We're certainly going to have lots more modules and playing aids for both systems.

RPGA: Well, we'll all be looking forward to them.

EGG: Well, I *hope* so... (chuckles) Buy them now! Now's your chance to take advance orders. Send your contributions to....

NOTES FROM OVERSEAS

The RPGA Network is not just a big club in the United States; we have many members at various places around the world. At this time, there is one major organization affiliated with RPGA-USA; the D&D Players' Association, whose headquarters is in the United Kingdom. Members of the PA have full reciprocal privileges when visiting the USA; they can pick up our latest newsletter and attend all RPGA-only events, such as meetings and tournaments at conventions. As an RPGA member in good standing, you are entitled to all the benefits of PA membership when you visit the UK.

If you wish to become an International Member (holding full members' rights in BOTH organizations), you may do so by sending a check or money order for \$10.00 to RPGA HQ. We'll transfer the funds, and you will thereafter receive a PA membership card, button, and newsletter. [The price fluctuates with the value of the dollar vs. the British pound, so you might be billed for a slight extra amount, or receive a small refund.]

You may contact the D&D Players' Association at:

TSR UK, Ltd.
The Mill, Rathmore Road
Cambridge, CB1 4AD
United Kingdom
Attention: D&D PA

Some members in Australia have asked where to get D&D and AD&D supplies for their games at reasonable prices. If they have to buy by mail from this country, their costs can run up to \$30 for a DM Guide alone! So we looked into the matter, and found that TSR games and accessories may be purchased through:

JEDKO
18 Fonceca St.
Mordialloc, Victoria
3195 Australia

Note that this company has no connection with TSR or the RPGA network; the information is provided for the convenience of our members.

NAME THAT NEWSLETTER!

Many readers of newsletter #1 found the "hidden contest" formed by the words at the top of the pages very quickly, and sent in their suggestions. Apologies for lack of clarity in the phrasing, but we only had 16 words to play with; the contest really is to find a name for the newsletter, and the answer is NOT "RPGA News".

We've received lots of good suggestions so far, but not one really grabs me. You see, we need a name that reflects our many interests: not just D&D or

SPELLING BEE

Ever since the creation of the original *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* game (see the Gygas interview for details on that momentous occasion), players have been confused. The original set was written for folks who already played a lot of games, and it hasn't been until recently (the appearance of the *D&D BASIC SET*, Box 1) that a good, understandable version could be found. Even the AD&D system has inconsistencies, although it is the most detailed, completely usable system we've found. This is quite understandable; though written by one author, there were many editors, and the job of cross-referencing and double-checking would have taken a few years to result in a perfect job.

But the AD&D system works. I use it in my campaign with no variants, although I have created many subsystems to handle other details not covered in the books. It has served me well for over six years now, and my players have not complained about using a "by-the-book" mode. In fact, it gives them stability; they can be sure that I won't bring in non-standard monsters, spells, or other nasty surprises. It does force me to keep coming up with thought-provoking combinations of existing spells, items, traps, creatures, and so forth; but the harder I work, the more fun we all have.

I have been fortunate to have observed AD&D games in most parts of the country, clarifying some misunderstood points as I went and answering many questions about game details and rules. One thing has stood out, above all; there are as many ideas for using magic spells as there are players. Some spells are thought to be almost useless; many are misused and misunderstood. I think it's time to clear some things up, and share some of the ideas I've heard for using various spells.

In this column, I propose to examine each spell, one by one. If you have questions about the use of spells in AD&D games, and/or comments on the interesting applications and combinations of spells, please write to "SPELLING BEE", care of this newsletter.

AD&D games, but the science fantasy of *GAMMA WORLD* games, the intrigue of *TOP SECRET* games, and the historical excitement of *FIGHT IN THE SKIES* (soon to be *DAWN PATROL*) games.

Therefore, the contest has been extended until December 31, 1981. The winner will receive one of the new RPGA modules and a two-year membership extension. So start thinking; we need a good name quickly. As usual, send your suggestions to "RPGA News", at the RPGA HQ address.