

ADVENTURE GAMING

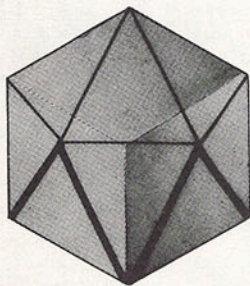
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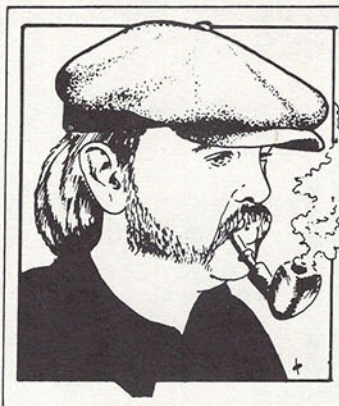
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OFF THE WALL

Tim
Kask

We had a great deal of fun with this month's issue. This "cowboy issue", as it came to be called around the office, was a new concept for us, and a new approach for a gaming magazine: an issue devoted to all the games by all the companies on a given subject.

We are rather proud of what we have done. In one issue we have touched upon games of interest to historical gamers, miniatures gamers and fantasy gamers. Before the howls of protest at that last are voiced, we need to briefly discuss the topic of fantasy games.

There exists in the gaming hobby a curious dichotomy of thought concerning what constitutes a fantasy game. Doughty fighters, fearsome beasts and puissant mages do not, in and of themselves, a fantasy game make. In literature, those elements do indeed constitute *heroic fantasy*. In gaming circles, "fantasy" has come to mean "heroic fantasy".

Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1975 edition, defines *fantasy* as "... 2: FANCY; esp: the free play of creative imagination 3: a creation of the imaginative faculty whether expressed or merely conceived ...".

By this definition, virtually *all* of the games that we call *adventure* games are fantasy. We tend to label our games according to period, e.g., "ancient", "medieval", "Napoleonic", "modern", etc. Further, we group them according to medium, e.g., "miniatures", "board-games", "role playing", etc.

It is this labeling process that is most germane. THE CALL OF CTHULHU® (Chaosium's fascinating rpg based on Lovecraft) is a "modern roleplaying" game. SQUAD LEADER®, by Avalon Hill, is a "WW II boardgame", while STRIKER® is GDW's "science fiction miniatures" rules set. Clearly, *The Call of Cthulhu* and *Striker* are both fantasy games, one based on the intricate fiction fantasies woven by H. P. Lovecraft, and the other based on speculations of the future. Neither of these is any less a fantasy game than TSR's seminal rpg, DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®. To carry my argument one step further, *Squad Leader* certainly involves "... the free play of creative imagination ...".

Of the three *groups* mentioned, role playing is the most fantastic, as it *demands* "... a creation of the imaginative faculty ...", and cannot function without it. It is not at all surprising that *D&D* would cause a stereotype to be created in the collective gaming conscious, i.e., fantasy equals heroic fantasy, as it was the first of the new generation of games, and literally took the hobby by storm and set it on its ear.

It is past time, in this writer's opinion, for us to correct and clarify our nomenclature. Too many gamers regard the word "fantasy" with the same dread and loathing as the word "cholera", considering themselves "historical" gamers, or "miniatures" gamers, when in fact they are all "fantasy" gamers.

It is the editorial policy of this magazine to try to satisfy as many of those varied tastes each month as possible within the limits of our physical size.

One of the games featured in this issue defies easy labeling or grouping. I refer to OREGON TRAIL®, which is FGU's "19th Century, role playing board-game". We can expect more crossover of this type in the future, I think, and that should herald a cleaning up or redefinition of our nomenclature.

You can't convince me that being a *pistolero* in WILD WEST® (FGU's wild west role playing game, also featured in this issue) is any less fantastic than being another Conan-clone in *D&D*. By the same token, being Lt. Cosmos in *Striker*, commanding your platoon of jump troops, is no more fantastic than being Sgt. Clark leading your infantry platoon in *Squad Leader*.

This month, we all get to be "Cowper-sons". Now that the issue is finally put to rest, perhaps I can quit humming "Tumblin' Tumbleweeds", as well as the theme musics from half a dozen old TV westerns. "Head 'em up and move 'em out ...".

Timothy J. Kask



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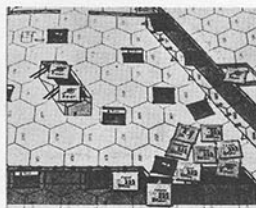
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Adventures Along The OREGON TRAIL® RPG's Meet Boardgames

by The Friday Night Irregularst

With the slap of leather, and the creak of wagonwheels, the tenderfeet moved out for the promised land. The spirit of exploring the Old American Frontier comes to life in Fantasy Games Unlimited, Inc.'s new game of *Oregon Trail*®, as each player leads his wagon train into the wilderness. Rough weather, swollen streams, landslides, prairie dog holes, stampeding bison, disease, and hostile Indians will take their toll; the weak will fall out along the way; but the skillful wagonmaster will push on until he reaches his destination.

This game is a must for any gamer who grew up on a diet of *Rawhide*, *Cheyenne*, *Wagon Train* and the numerous other Western serials that filled our childhood. It isn't difficult leading a wagon train — Ward Bond just sauntered around, giving orders, and any fool can do that, right?

Well, then, grab a few six-siders and climb aboard, Partner, we're headin' for Santa Fe. What? You ain't got the money? No, we don't need no cook, ole Chuck Waggin's doin' that, and we already got a scout. 'Course, we do need a stable hand to sling manure, but that takes trainin'. Say . . . there is one thing we need. How would you like to boss this train? The pay's horrible, the working conditions stink, but if the Injuns don't scalp ya or the greenhorns don't string ya up for gettin' 'em lost, you could have a great future. Besides, no one else knows the way to Santa Fe . . . do you . . . ?

Oregon Trail manages to capture the excitement of role playing in the Old West for arm chair wagonmasters. The game uses the concept of the players competing against the game rather than each other. This makes playing the solitaire version just as enjoyable as the multi-player game. If you are suffering from a shortage of opponents, *Oregon Trail* is a good way to spend an afternoon. Random encounters make each trip different, no matter how many times the route is traveled.

The game does possess a few minor flaws that could make play difficult. First of all, the desert areas on the map are printed in a purple ink that blends into the rough mountain areas. Unless the lighting is very good the two areas are almost indistinguishable from each other. Marking diagonal lines across the desert areas with a pen or marker will correct this problem.

The cities and forts are in small print. This can cause some confusion when trying to locate the jumping-off points and the final destinations of the various trails since there were no known state borders on the map. Also, the same symbol is used for both towns and forts further compounding the problem. I recommend you color code each jumping off point with its final destination by coloring in the hexes of both with a marker.

For example, the Santa Fe Trail starts in Independence, MO, and ends in Santa Fe, New Mexico. If both hexes are colored in red, for instance, the trail is easily determined and cuts down searching for the various cities.

The boundaries between some of the Indian zones are vague; decide at game's start.

The movement point cost should have been printed on the map, or at least on the player character sheets. It is presently on page 3 of the rule book. Until the players become familiar with the points required to cross various types of terrain, a constant flipping through the rule book is necessary.

On the terrain key, in the upper right hand corner of the game map are examples of the various types of terrain encountered. The movement points required for each hex can be written in beside the example shown, where all the players can see them.

The stream crossing table should also have been printed on the back of the rules book with the other tables. It shows additional penalties incurred during rain turns and since rain and stream crossings occur frequently during the game, time is wasted referring to the table on page 4.

There is one disconcerting printing mistake in the rules book. There is a layout error in the Travel Status table on page 7. The word under "Normal" should read "Quick-March" instead of "Large". Granted — a minor fault, that in no way interferes with the playing of the game. However, it might cause delay and confusion. Now, let's look at the game.

The winner of *Oregon Trail* is the wagonmaster who arrives at his final destination with the highest percentage of his original wagons, stock, and personnel intact. A fair amount of skill is required to handle the various random encounters. Some wagonmasters are better at talking with Indians, while others with poor Indian Lore are better off avoiding them. Developing a wagonmaster is very easy. Each player is allotted 60 base attribute points to start the game. These points have to be distributed into five attributes or characteristics of the Wagonmaster. Remember, you must leave a few extra to purchase additional rations and stock you may need. Each player may assign no less than seven points nor more than twelve points to each skill. Then a six-sided is rolled once for each attribute and the die result is added to the points already assigned. The scores will be between eight and eighteen. Record them on the character sheet.



Each attribute gives special abilities or advantages when dealing with the different random encounters:

Nature Lore — is the wagonmaster's ability to handle stream crossings, landslides, and avoid remaining lost. This skill also helps when trying to locate passes through the mountains and in passing prairie dog towns.

Hunting — This ability enables the wagonmaster to hunt successfully for rations, and handle natural predators such as coyotes, wolves, mountain lions, and grizzly bears.

Indian Lore — This skill enhances the wagonmaster's ability to identify Indian tribes. Without this skill, it is hard to determine which gifts to offer the tribes encountered to enhance trading. It also helps in determining whether to attempt negotiations or to flee — *i.e.*, get lost.

Military Skill — helps reduce losses in popularity after an Indian attack by driving them off. This is the least important skill the way the rules are set up now. The skill will help the player avoid hostile actions by the same tribe that he defeated previously and the defeat only makes a real difference if the hostiles were chastised (*severely* defeated).

Popularity — This attribute is extremely important. It determines the amount of adverse conditions that can be encountered before the party splits up. This can cause an enormous loss in victory points when the wagonmaster loses wagons, stock, personnel and rations.

Good distribution of points is a must in order to have a well-rounded character and still have a few points left over for purchasing extra stock and rations. There are some problems inherent in the way the points are assigned. It often happens that a player will get numerous poor rolls on his six-sider after he has assigned his points. This results in the player having a hard time competing fairly.

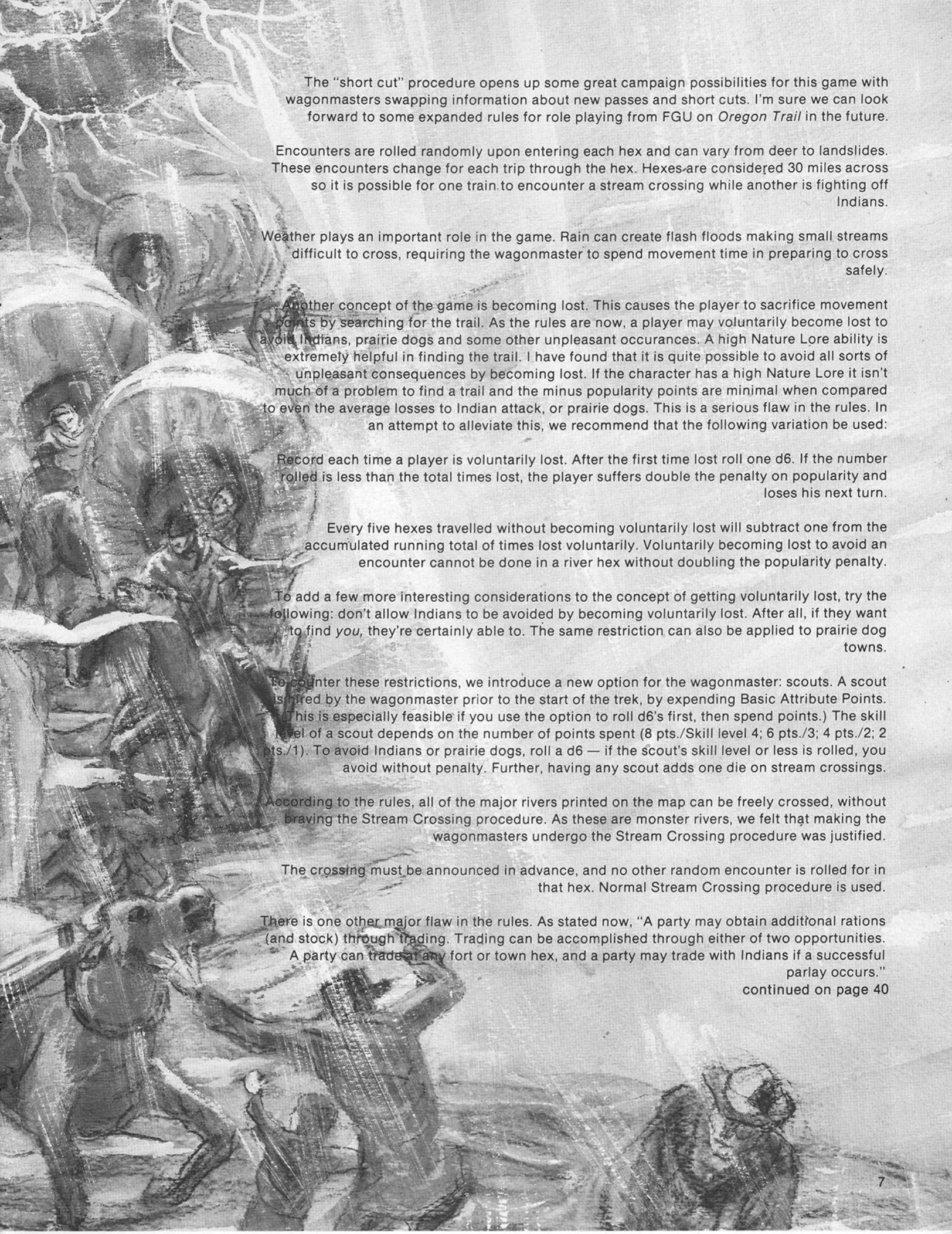
I recommend you roll the six-siders first and then assign the seven to twelve Base Attribute Points. This makes for a more balanced game. There will be some poor attributes but it gives the player a chance to offset them somewhat.

The size of the wagon train is determined by the wagonmaster selecting either a small, medium or large size train and then rolling a six-sider. Train size determines the speed of a wagon train. A small train can move faster than a large train but any losses a small train may incur will result in a greater percentage reduction of victory points; *i.e.*, a large train of 30 wagons has to lose three wagons before suffering 10% casualties, but a small train of ten wagons can only lose one before this occurs.

The base amount of stock and personnel is determined by multiplying the number of wagons in the train by a set number that varies by scenario and adding the results of a six-sider. Extra rations and stock must be purchased with leftover Base Attribute Points in the beginning.

Rations are easy to keep track of since each player's wagon train consumes one ration of food per turn of travel regardless of the size of the train.

Movement allowance is determined by the size of the wagon train, and how hard the player or wagonmaster wishes to push his tenderfeet. The faster they travel, the more they grumble. This is reflected in lost popularity points that can add up rather quickly. The movement also reflects the vulnerability of the party to Indian attack. If attacked while moving cautiously, the losses suffered by the wagon train are smaller than if the train was stretched out.



The "short cut" procedure opens up some great campaign possibilities for this game with wagonmasters swapping information about new passes and short cuts. I'm sure we can look forward to some expanded rules for role playing from FGU on *Oregon Trail* in the future.

Encounters are rolled randomly upon entering each hex and can vary from deer to landslides. These encounters change for each trip through the hex. Hexes are considered 30 miles across so it is possible for one train to encounter a stream crossing while another is fighting off Indians.

Weather plays an important role in the game. Rain can create flash floods making small streams difficult to cross, requiring the wagonmaster to spend movement time in preparing to cross safely.

Another concept of the game is becoming lost. This causes the player to sacrifice movement points by searching for the trail. As the rules are now, a player may voluntarily become lost to avoid Indians, prairie dogs and some other unpleasant occurrences. A high Nature Lore ability is extremely helpful in finding the trail. I have found that it is quite possible to avoid all sorts of unpleasant consequences by becoming lost. If the character has a high Nature Lore it isn't much of a problem to find a trail and the minus popularity points are minimal when compared to even the average losses to Indian attack, or prairie dogs. This is a serious flaw in the rules. In an attempt to alleviate this, we recommend that the following variation be used:

Record each time a player is voluntarily lost. After the first time lost roll one d6. If the number rolled is less than the total times lost, the player suffers double the penalty on popularity and loses his next turn.

Every five hexes travelled without becoming voluntarily lost will subtract one from the accumulated running total of times lost voluntarily. Voluntarily becoming lost to avoid an encounter cannot be done in a river hex without doubling the popularity penalty.

To add a few more interesting considerations to the concept of getting voluntarily lost, try the following: don't allow Indians to be avoided by becoming voluntarily lost. After all, if they want to find you, they're certainly able to. The same restriction can also be applied to prairie dog towns.

To counter these restrictions, we introduce a new option for the wagonmaster: scouts. A scout is hired by the wagonmaster prior to the start of the trek, by expending Basic Attribute Points. (This is especially feasible if you use the option to roll d6's first, then spend points.) The skill level of a scout depends on the number of points spent (8 pts./Skill level 4; 6 pts./3; 4 pts./2; 2 pts./1). To avoid Indians or prairie dogs, roll a d6 — if the scout's skill level or less is rolled, you avoid without penalty. Further, having any scout adds one die on stream crossings.

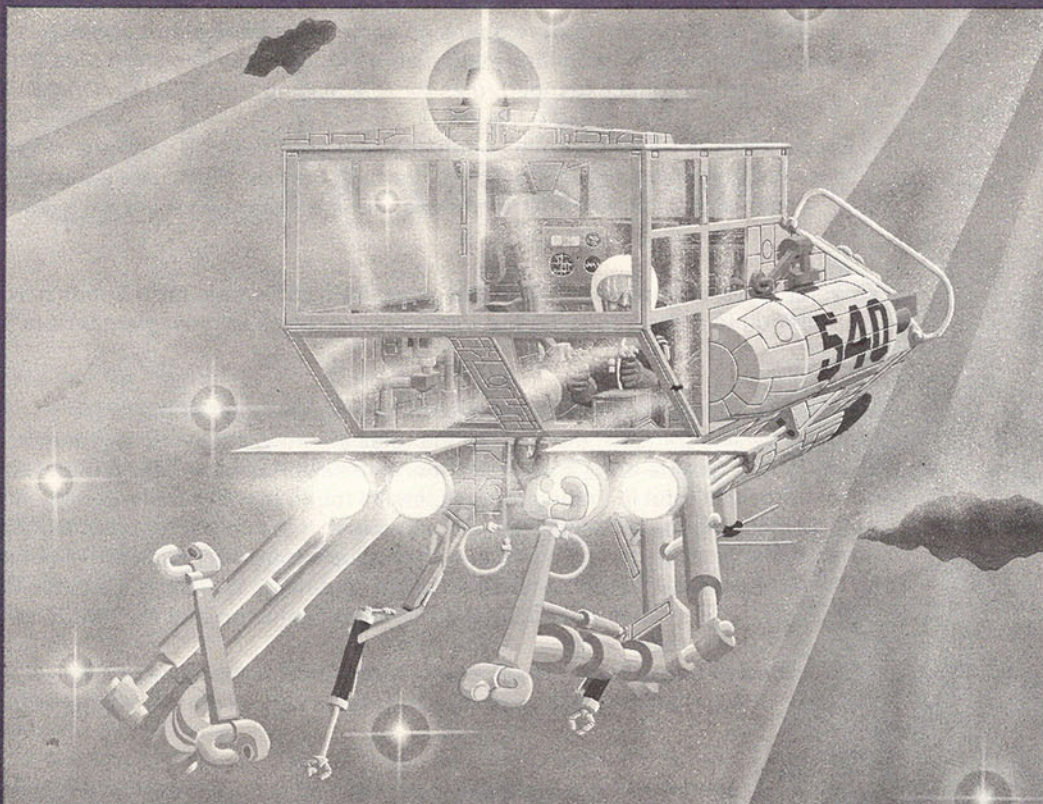
According to the rules, all of the major rivers printed on the map can be freely crossed, without braving the Stream Crossing procedure. As these are monster rivers, we felt that making the wagonmasters undergo the Stream Crossing procedure was justified.

The crossing must be announced in advance, and no other random encounter is rolled for in that hex. Normal Stream Crossing procedure is used.

There is one other major flaw in the rules. As stated now, "A party may obtain additional rations (and stock) through trading. Trading can be accomplished through either of two opportunities.

A party can trade at any fort or town hex, and a party may trade with Indians if a successful parlay occurs."

continued on page 40



Hardware Wars understanding the TRAVELLER's® tools

by Richard Williams

Introduction

Keeping up with technology can be hard for two reasons. There is more of it all the time, and it's more complicated than it used to be. The Traveller® player or referee is not always interested enough to read the volume of material required to give them a feel for the gadgets in the game. It is with that in mind that I continue with this series which I hope will explain in understandable terms just how the widgets work.

It is important for both referee and player to know the limitations of the mechanisms their characters use in the game. It can add enjoyment and realism, save time, and prevent mistakes for the player. It can do all the above and prevent the referee from being conned by someone more knowledgeable than he is.

Again, let me repeat my caution of last month: Don't ever let a mere law of nature get in the way of good clean fun.

Part Two: Seeing the Light—Lasers and Other Energy Weapons, continued.

You may have noticed that I did not say anything about the laser in space last time. That is partly because the laser's use in space evolves so easily and naturally that it almost isn't worth mentioning.

Space is the natural environment of the laser, and it is here that it finds its greatest potential use as tool and weapon. There is no limit to line of sight — little of the atmospheric interference that hampers its effectiveness on a planet — scattering is cut to bare minimums, allowing great accuracy — power is abundant, as close as the nearest star or the ship's power plant.

Like on earth, the laser will first be used for rangefinding in space. It has already allowed heretofore unattainable accuracy in measurement of the moon's distance from earth. Unlike on earth, however, it will probably skip the target illuminator role and move into communications instead. Due to its focusing ability and information carrying capability, it will become a communications source that offers low power requirements for distance covered, less scattering (and chances of hostile detection and direction finding), more information-carrying capability, and extreme difficulty in tracing and tapping the beam.

The first laser with combat capability in space will have been built that way from the beginning, and more than likely will appear before it assumes a significant combat role on earth. Initially, it will be used to disable hostile intelligence satellites, defend against hunter-killer satellites of the explosive variety, and intercept incoming ballistic missiles while they are still above the atmosphere. Very shortly thereafter, acquisition and targeting will improve to the point where short and medium range missiles can also be hit.

It's difficult to say at what point a manned spacecraft will carry a weapon laser. I venture the opinion that the "silent war" among the satellites will have been going on for some time before then. There will also have to be a semi-permanent presence in space before the war is fought by anything other than surrogates. It will be a long time, I think, before there are enough manned spacecraft aloft for them to worry about shooting at each other.

The countermeasures for the laser are the same for a starship as for an armored vehicle, though in space the target does not get the benefit of atmospheric interference. Again, nickel plating the ship's hull is both expensive and ineffective, as micrometeoroids would eventually render it useless. An ablative coating could be sprayed over the hull (it is in fact an option for shipowners in my universe) which would boil away when hit by laser fire, very effective as long as the ship didn't enter atmosphere and as long as it was resprayed after combat.

The sandcaster in *Traveller* is an attempt to provide a ship with a do-it-yourself "fog" to absorb, deflect and refract laser fire, and it works quite effectively as long as the pilot remembers the realities of maneuvering a ship — namely that an object in space, unless acted upon by an outside force, will continue to move in the same direction as it did to start with. A ship could conceivably outrun its own protection, and referees should keep this in mind. A cat-and-mouse game, with each combatant maneuvering to take advantage of the sand cloud's position, could easily develop, and there are no second prizes in this game . . .

Laser weapon development for starships will probably follow the same lines as it does on the battlefield, except that it will skip the gatling-pulse-laser stage and go directly from large pulse to large beam lasers. At first, ship lasers will be fixed-mounted, requiring that the ship be rotated to aim the laser. Once sublight drives are developed to the point where the ship is always under thrust, swivel mounts and then turrets (especially on atmosphere capable vessels) will be introduced.

There is an interesting note to the combat use of the laser, or any other beam weapon, between starships. Keeping in mind that one inch is one thousand miles in *Traveller*, the laser once fired will be "in transit" for a minimum of one second even at moderate engagement ranges. And a ship moving at near-light speed can go a long way in one second. When this is realized, a lot of research will go into the fire control computer's ability to predict course and speed of the target, and it is the reason why pluses to hit are assigned to the better computers in *High Guard*®.

Whether hand-held or ship-mounted, a laser still has the same basic components, and the same things can still go wrong with them. The major difference

is that, while the infantryman might be able to tear his weapon apart to effect field repairs, the ship's laser could conceivably have one or more of its components sealed off and accessible only through maintenance panels or extra-vehicular activity, a disconcerting thought in combat. For a detailed look at the potential problems, refer to Part One of the article "Odd Thoughts From a *Traveller* Referee" in October AG.

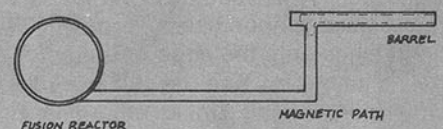
Well, now that we know what a laser eats, class, take a ten minute break, sharpen your pencils, find a fresh sheet of notebook paper, and turn in your textbooks to:

Plasma and Fusion Guns

The development of the plasma/fusion gun began with desperation. Sometime in the long ago, a nameless merchant captain did the only thing he could do — rotate his ship and shove the throttle to the firewall when the pirate had closed almost to contact range. His original intention was just to, ahem, save the insurance company from having to make settlement for the lost cargo, but when he got curious about the lack of pursuit and went back to discover a fatally damaged pirate ship, the usefulness of the idea was sure to spread until the pirates stopped approaching from the rear quarter. That was when some budding genius began to work on the idea of turning the fusion drive of the ship in any direction independent of the ship. When he finally worked out the method, he got rich and the plasma gun was born.

The first fusion gun was simply a ship's drive exhaust mounted on a pivot and hooked directly into the ship's drive. Later versions for starships incorporate only slight modifications to the original idea, since a separate fusion reactor for the guns would add weight and complication. The drawback, of course, is that if the drive quits, the gun does also.

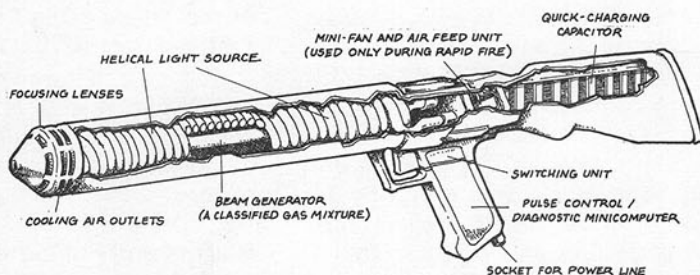
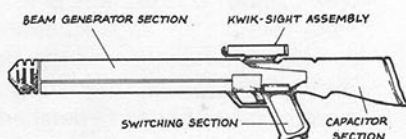
In schematic form, the weapon looks like this:



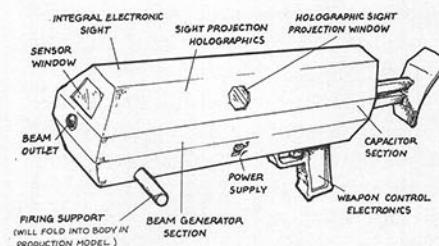
Like the laser, it has a power source (the fusion reactor), a beam generator (also the fusion reactor), and a means of directing energy to the target (magnetic fields). When the trigger is pulled, a "valve" opens in the bottle (the magnetic

Please note that these illustrations are designed mainly to present concepts, and that I do not presume to tell anyone that this is the way that the Imperium's arms are built. On the Mk. 1 Laser, for example, the light source doesn't have to be helical in shape, nor does the capacitor have to be in the stock. It just seems to me to be a good place for it to be, that's all.

Mk. 1 Laser Rifle: The Kwik-Sight is a standard non-electronic or electronic sight which puts an orange dot on whatever target is being aimed at. The electronic version offers some target image enhancement as well. It is available from Kwik-Sight Inc., a subsidiary of H & K Interstellar Arms.



Experimental Packless Laser Rifle: This one sketch is all that was leaked to the press concerning a new design being developed by H & K labs for concept testing. It is expected to be offered to Imperium and some sector military research for trials later next year. It gives all of the performance characteristics of the standard laser rifle, but at a significant weight savings. It is not known whether it has any other designation than EPLR. Note the holographic sight projector, which is set to place a three-dimensional image of any of a number of sighting modes at the eye level of the firer. Using a special one-way mirror, visual sighting is accomplished through the barrel, like it is in a single-lens reflex camera. A possible breakthrough in design for H & K.



field that contains the fusion reaction and allows it to sustain itself), releasing some of the plasma which then goes down a "tunnel" of magnetic fields (necessary both to keep the plasma from cooling and solid parts of the ship it may otherwise contact from vaporizing) and out the barrel to the target. At this point two things will happen. The plasma will begin to spread and cool, which is why the plasma/fusion gun is a short range weapon, almost toe-to-toe as ship combat distances go. The plasma is a curious mixture of gas and energy and exits the barrel at a temperature of roughly thirty million degrees Fahrenheit, so cooling and dissipation occur rapidly.

Plasma/fusion guns are the "shotguns" of the energy weapons, and combine aspects of both energy and projectile weapons. They are most effective at short ranges and in a defensive role, as the spread of the beam requires less precise targeting of small rapidly-moving missiles than lasers or charged-particle weapons do. The heat of the plasma is such that any solid object it hits is vaporized (even when extremely "cool", chances are that considerable melting will occur). A man caught in the path of a turret sized cannon has no hope unless he catches only the edge of the beam, only a limb is hit, and the suit is melted shut or seals itself. Unlike other energy weapons, there is also considerable recoil associated with plasma/fusion guns, requiring either a recoil carriage or constant minor course corrections during firing. The early cannons probably generated as much thrust as the engine, and no doubt were occasionally used as such in a pinch.

Countermeasures in the case of plasma/fusion weapons are the same as with the laser, except that reflective coatings will not work. Sand clouds will be boiled away, and are actually more effective against the semi-gaseous plasma than against light beams. Ablative coatings are also effective, but will have to be thicker to withstand plasma attack. Also, plasma "bolts" are slower than light, easier to dodge, though this is nullified in large degree by the short effective ranges that the weapon is used at.

The development of the plasma/fusion gun for ground combat begins after its spaceborne brother begins service. At first, it performs defensive duties at fixed installations that have a fusion power plant handy. It will not, however, move to mobile platforms as fast as the laser. The problem is in the power source/beam generator. Fusion-powered ground vehicles do not appear for many tech levels, and lugging around even a small fusion generator could be a logistics and tactical nightmare.

It could be, that is, until someone remembers that there is another way to start a fusion reaction, especially if you don't want to sustain it any longer than is necessary to get a shot off. The method is being researched at this moment, and entails the dropping of a small, frozen pellet of deuterium and tritium (fat relatives of hydrogen) into a chamber, the walls of which are dotted with a number of lasers. When the pellet falls to dead center, the lasers fire and hit the pellet from all sides, creating heat and pressure conditions which cause the deuterium and tritium to fuse into helium. In a reactor, this would either start a sustain-

ed reaction or be the first of many pellets in a chain of ultrashort fusion reactions, the heat of which would generate steam for power. The system eliminates the need to have a magnetic bottle and all of the complex gear required to maintain it. All you need is an ignition chamber and magnetic field generators for the barrel, and the mobile plasma/fusion gun is born.

In the field, the plasma/fusion weapon is limited in some of the same ways that the laser is. It is a line of sight weapon and is affected by atmospheric conditions. It is not stopped by fog, smog, or smoke like the laser, however, merely slowed and dissipated slightly, though its range will fall short of line of sight. Ablative shielding will also be effective against it. And, unlike lasers, it will prove nigh impossible to find a beam color wavelength that is invisible to the eye, making it a hazard in night fighting (blinding nearby troops and advertising its position every time it fires).

Overall, though, it will prove a much more fearsome weapon than the laser. It is not stopped by atmospheric conditions that will kill its relative's effectiveness. It illuminates any target that it hits, at least briefly, and provides plenty of heat for IR sensors to lock onto for followup hits (or for counterbattery fire, unfortunately). The impact is hard enough at short range to unbalance or overturn light vehicles, and the heat of the plasma sufficient to vaporize anything not covered by a lot of ablative foam. It covers a larger area than the laser, making it suitable for suppressive fire or area coverage. The plasma will splash when it hits, creating some of the effect of a

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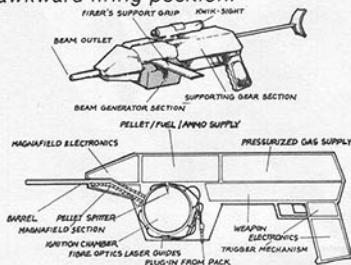


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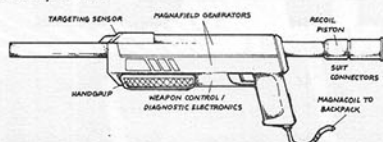
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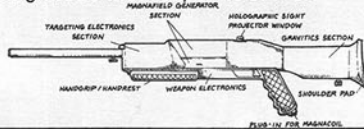
PGMP-12: Not only was the early plasma gun hard to handle, it was also ugly. This one in particular had a number of nicknames, not all of them necessarily printable. The laser and its power source were carried in the backpack, and the beam was split and carried to the ignition chamber by fiber optics guides. Note that, for clarity's sake, only a few of the laser's chamber input positions are in the drawing. In actuality, the cable from the pack would look much like a telephone cable, and the interior of the beam generator square like a switchbox. The pressurized gas is present to assure proper pellet feed under low or zero gravity conditions or when the weapon is in an awkward firing position.



PGMP-13: The decision to put the ignition chamber in the backpack resulted in a much more streamlined and better looking weapon. Note here the integral targeting sensor, which feeds directly into the Battle Armor's electronics, and the recoil piston, which can be adjusted to provide varying amounts of shock absorption.

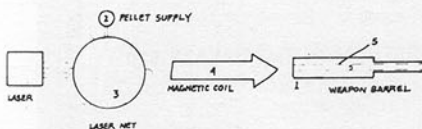


FGMP-15: This is a natural result of miniaturization of components and the introduction of gravitics. As the other components of the weapon became smaller, room for the recoil-compensator became available. Note here the holographic sight projector, which provides three dimensional images of whatever sighting mode the weapon is set for.



white phosphorous shell in the target area. And the psychological effect of a weapon that hurls bolts of fire and causes burning and flame wherever it hits can be devastating. Still, it should be noted that the plasma/fusion gun is a direct fire weapon, and that all over-the-horizon engagements will still be dominated by rockets, missiles, and regular artillery.

Once the laser-net ignition system (I take credit for coining the term) is perfected for weapon use, reducing the weapon's size is mostly a matter of reducing the size of the laser ignition system. It won't be long before this is combined with developments in superconducting magnets to result in a considerable reduction in size, eventually culminating in the production of the Plasma Gun, Man Portable, Model 12. We can get an idea of the workings of it and its descendants by looking at a schematic of the weapon.



The first question faced by the weapon designers was where to put everything. At first, they tried to put both power supply and ignition system on the weapon, but this proved so unworkable that they moved the power supply to a back-

pack and left the ignition system on the weapon, the end result being the PGMP-12. This arrangement also proved to be impractical, as it made the weapon awkward and clumsy and more vulnerable to damage and subsequent malfunction. Putting the ignition system on the weapon makes it more of a one-piece unit, but at the cost of more weight, tougher handling, and more exposure of vulnerable elements to hazardous conditions. By putting both the ignition system and power supply in a backpack, the result was an easier handling weapon, better protected against adverse elements, more interchangeable with other guns of the same class, and easier to maintain in the field.

The firing cycle is as follows: 1) the trigger, nothing more than an interrupter switch, is pulled; 2) a pellet of "heavy hydrogen" drops into the center of the laser-net; 3) the lasers fire, compacting and heating the pellet into a plasma while a momentary magnetic field forms around it; 4) the plasma escapes down an opening in the field, into a magnetic "tunnel"; 5) and down the barrel, at which point the weapon fires.

No matter how fearsome, every weapon has limitations, and P/FGMPs are no exception. For all its power, it is a bulky weapon, and the Model 12's recoil slows its fire rate considerably. It is not suited to short or contact range encounters or "social work" in heavy jungle/bush or in-house fighting, for several reasons. First, the weight of the weapon slows maneuverability (and thus rapid engage-

ment of multiple targets), though the same can be said of any large firearm. Second, at short ranges, the beam has no chance to spread, and it takes longer to assure good aim at a time when parts of a second count as casualties. The narrow beam results in better penetration, but less area covered, on the whole meaning less damage to the target. Third, at "housecleaning" ranges, or in ambush reaction, a premium is put on volume of firepower, and even the later model P/FGMPs simply don't put out enough rounds per second. Finally, the weapon generates enough heat to almost blind an IR sensor, making it and the carrier open season to any heat-seeker on the battlefield. Oddly enough, P/FGMPs can be a liability when used in a lower tech combat than it was built for. The weapon is just too obvious, and cannot survive against "primitive" machineguns and automatic weapons, not to mention the heat-seeking rounds of all types coming its way.

Still, it has advantages also. On a scaled-down level, it has the same advantages over portable lasers as its larger brethren. It also carries considerable power in a small package, giving a man the ability to cripple or destroy light-armored vehicles without special attachments or the need to carry other weapons specifically for the counterarmor role. Unlike a laser rifle, the P/FGMP can give a fighting chance against even heavy armor of lower tech levels. It can immobilize a tank with one good shot to treads or engine area, though it would still take some pounding to destroy one. And we cannot forget the psychological effect, both on the enemy and the friend, of a man who can throw flame and destruction more than a kilometer. In its early days as an infantry support weapon, I imagine that it caused a lot of relief whenever it appeared to bail the fire team out of a hot spot (consider, though, that even troops who have never seen a P/FGMP might look upon it as some new kind of flame thrower).

So when should a hard-pressed player character consider trading in his flintlock for a fusion gun? Keeping in mind that this is indeed an opinion, in my game the P/FGMP is best employed at medium or longer ranges, in fairly open terrain, as a support or anti-armor weapon. Also, the firer should have at least two men with automatic weapons to provide protection and suppressive fire for him, and, if the combat environment warrants it, provision to decoy or intercept heat-guided

rounds. Thought should be given that any fires the weapon might set will not threaten friendly troops, and maximum use of its shock and psychological value should be made. And, if you ever get caught in the middle of a tech 13 or better battlefield, it is a definite must.

Now that you've had the definitive word (snicker, snicker) on the weapon in general, let's take a brief look at its developmental history:

PGMP, Model 12 — The first. Heavy, awkward, slow to fire. When it first appeared in a unit for developmental work, the comment was, "It looks great, but what do you do with it?" The tactics of its use were worked out with this model.

PGMP, Model 13 — In one way, an attempt to increase the weapon's effectiveness by modifying the firer instead of the weapon. In another, the move of the ignition unit to the backpack and out of the weapon gave it the basic form that is unchanged from here on. Field units were happy to throw away all the tube-launched missiles and rifle grenades. Further modifications of tactics to accommodate a higher rate of fire were made, building on the groundwork of the Model 12. The Model 12 was removed from active duty and either mothballed, rebuilt as Model 14's, or sold as surplus.

PGMP, Model 14 — Somebody figured that, by putting the ignition system in the backpack, there was space enough in the Model 12 for a gravity field generator to provide recoil compensation (the subject of gravitics will be assaulted in a later article). Later models were built from the ground up that way. Light infantry finally had a good antiarmor weapon.

FGMP, Model 14 — You may have noticed that I have been using the words "plasma" and "fusion" interchangeably. That is because in the end, the weapon fires a *plasma* bolt, whether it is a plasma or fusion gun. The only real difference is that in the fusion gun the plasma is hotter, giving longer range and more damage to the target. But in the end, does it really matter if the plasma is only thirty million degrees and not forty? A more powerful version of the PGMP-13.

FGMP, Model 15 — Incorporates a gravity field unit to cut weight and recoil. The best of the lot.

Some final notes before we move on. Don't worry that I talk of a laser-net and Book 4 of a "small fusion reactor". The laser-net is a fusion reactor. It doesn't have to run all the time for plasma to be available, which save fuel and wear and tear on the machinery. And if something pierces the backpack, you don't have an


exposed fusion reaction on your hands

The term "unlimited fuel" should also be discussed. It doesn't take a lot of heavy hydrogen to make enough plasma for a shot, and there is enough space in the backpack for a *lot* of pellets. The fuel is most likely carried frozen in an insulated container, either with or without an integral freezer. Given the maximum length of time that a firefight could last and the availability of resupply, yes, there is practically unlimited fuel.

And, finally, there is the ongoing nightmare of the military man and player character that begins with the question, "What could go wrong?" The trigger could malfunction; any one of the electronic components of the weapon could go fritz; part of the laser-net could quit; the magnetic field generators could malfunction, exposing any part of the weapon to plasma; the gravity field generators could go; the sights could be knocked out of line from recoil or rough handling; on the models designed for battle armor, something could clog or break the connectors; the fuel feed could malfunction, causing the weapon to fire continuously, or flood, or create a plasma mass too big for the magnetic fields to handle; and there are doubtless many other ways to apply Murphy's Law that I haven't considered at all.

Next—particle and meson accelerators.

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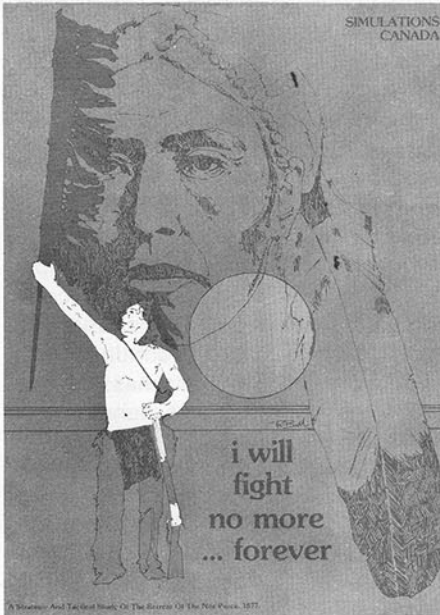


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Since this issue's focus is on the topic of old western frontier type games, I'd like to mention that the only military campaign or historical simulation currently available on the market is *i will fight no more forever*, a strategic and tactical study of the brilliantly executed retreat of the Nez Perce in 1877 (by Simulations Canada, copyright 1979).

Stephen M. Newberg is responsible for the game design and what he has done in game terms makes a startling statement on the tragic inhumanities done to the Nez Perce Indians by the U.S. government of the time.

All too many stereotypes portray American Indians as mindless savages doing tricks for booze and raping white women whenever possible, or as savage barbarians invading frontier settlements in hordes. If gold hadn't been discovered on their territory in the 1860's, the Nez Perce campaign probably wouldn't have been fought. But enough of that, and on with the game.

i will fight no more . . . forever©

i will fight no more forever comes boxed and retails for about \$15.00. The map is unmounted but printed on heavy stock and portrays parts of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and Canada. Actually, five maps are printed on the map sheet, one strategic and four tactical. On the tactical maps (one for each terrain type) are six terrain features (all readily identifiable). Basically, the U.S. Army player must search for and locate the Indians on the strategic map and defeat them on the tactical maps. Which tactical map used is determined by the terrain feature in which discovery took place on the strategic map.

The game runs for 29 turns or until the Indians get to Canada. There is an optional rule for the game to go to 30 turns. Each turn on the strategic map represents 96 hours. Turns on the tactical map represent about 15 seconds and do not affect the turns on the strategic map.

There are 255 die cut counters in the game which represent the strategic units of Indian villages, Indian warbands, U.S. Army and volunteer units. Tactical units represented are horse, foot, artillery, lodge and camp, pinned markers and randomizers. Some tactical counters are printed on both sides to designate mounted or unmounted troops and limbered or unlimbered artillery. Indian leaders and their troops are identified by name, and the U.S. Army units are identified by their commander's name, rank and regiment number. This adds a lot to the historical flavor of the game.

There are two types of movement on the strategic level; fast movement and normal movement. Fast movement may only be used if a unit was determined to be "in supply" during the turn. For the

Indians this occurs around rivers and for the Army this occurs in towns and forts. To balance the shortage of supply settlements for the Army the Indians may only use the fast movement on every fourth turn.

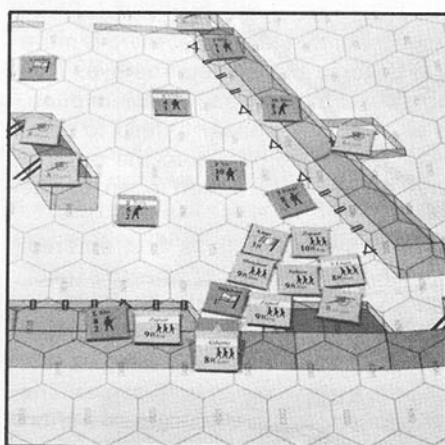
Other limitations are set for historical reasons, such as the U.S. Army reinforcements' starting hex and turns when they enter the game. Other limitations are set for historically philosophical reasons. At the beginning of the campaign the Indian leaders had no course objectives. To reflect this, the Indians cannot leave Idaho until turn 10 and cannot enter Canada until after turn 25.

Also, since the Nez Perce did not consider themselves at war with the U.S. Government, they may only make retaliatory strikes. Even after leaving Idaho, when the Nez Perce were no longer in the United States the army continued to pursue and persecute them.

Tactical combat does help to alleviate the problems the Indians encounter here. They don't have to search the hex to contact the Army and if they don't get a favorable circumstance from the State of Contact Table they may retreat and the Army must still search for them to make contact. Eventually the 25th turn runs out and the Indians must run to Canada to conclude the game.

What really impressed me was the rules booklet. In twelve small pages the entire rules for this complex game are presented with little repetition; yet they remain clear and immediately comprehensible. I find this truly refreshing and an example that a number of game manufacturers could benefit from by emulating.

by Ron Woodrum



THE ALAMO Victory In Death®

familiarity with the game and the line of sight rules included on the mapsheet should alleviate these problems.

As in most games of this type, die luck can be as important as strategy. An attacker must roll one die on the combat results table to hit an opposing unit. Should a hit be registered, the defender must roll for damage check with two dice, adding or subtracting any modifiers. So, get out your favorite dice for this game.

Besides the specter of dice luck, this type of combat frequently takes longer to resolve than moving all of your pieces, especially in the first few turns. We found that a turn averages around 30 minutes. Therefore, if the game runs the full 12 turns it will require about six hours to play.

Of course, the game may not last the full 12 turns. The victory conditions for the Mexican player require him to eliminate all Texan units. The quicker, the better, because the Texan player receives victory points for each turn he has a unit or leader still alive as well as for Mexican units that he 'eliminates'. If a Texan unit or leader survives for twelve turns the Texan player automatically wins.

Texan strategy is a bit involved, but basically you want to inflict casualties and survive. In the set-up, balance your forces with all men on the wall. The first turn you will have the greatest opportunity to inflict losses, so you want as many units able to fire as possible. When it becomes obvious that the Mexicans will have troops inside the walls at the end of

the turn it is time to get a unit in with Bowie and high morale troops with leaders into a room under the ramparts. These units will be extremely difficult for the Mexicans to dig out.

A successful Mexican strategy would seem to require assaulting two adjacent walls. This concentrates the Mexican firepower and limits the Texan response. Remember, you have no time to probe; the Mexican player who hesitates is lost. Engage in melee as soon as possible, as that is where the Mexicans have a big edge. You will probably take heavy losses on the first turn or two but they will be replaced.

I liked the Mexican replacement rule for its simplicity and economy. Mexican units which are 'killed' are not eliminated from play, as Texan units are, but reenter play via the replacement track. This holds down the number of troops to be moved every turn while still giving the Mexican player an endless supply of troops. The resulting wave effect helps the game play develop realistically.

In all, I found this to be an enjoyable game with care given to historical accuracy. While the rules are not overly difficult, they are complicated enough to warrant a caution to novice gamers. I must say though, that I did not come up with a question of any significance which was not covered in either the rules or one of the many examples. *THE ALAMO* will no doubt, fulfill the fantasies and capture the imaginations of many gamers.

by Terry Hauck

THE ALAMO® is a tactical two-player game introduced by SPI at Origins '81. It simulates the final assault against the small garrison by the Mexicans at dawn on March 6, 1836. Everything needed for play is included in the game box.

The rulebook is well written and easy to read. As the rules are somewhat complicated it will probably take one or two complete games before players become well versed in them. The result is, however, a realistic portrayal of this defense against overwhelming odds.

The mapsheet is heavy paper and includes a hex grid of the Alamo and environs along with all of the charts and tables needed for play. There are two sets of tables and charts on the map sheet which would be convenient if it were not for the fact that they all face one direction. Granted, this is a small inconvenience, but it means that one player is always reading the playing aids upside-down.

The Alamo is represented in an oblique overhead view. This makes the fortress easier to visualize, but it can present problems for novice players in regards to line of sight and such. However,



Alkemstone®, a recent release in the computer adventure gaming arena, is advertised as "The first computer adventure that has a cash prize for the winner". Unfortunately, this is probably the only incentive for playing the game. As a game, *Alkemstone* proves to be quite a disappointment.

As in their previous efforts, Level-10 has produced a physically appealing package. However, as with *Kaves of Karkhan*®, the gaming value falls far short of one's expectations. In fact, *Alkemstone* may well have been named "Kaves of Karkhan Revisited". The greatest difference between the two is that the graphics in *Alkemstone* are not nearly as impressive as those in its predecessor.

The instruction booklet actually consists of a ten page short story and four pages of explanatory notes describing how to play the game, and how to claim the \$5,000 reward. The story is reasonably well written, and even entertaining. It tells the story of the Alkemstone, and how it came to be lost. In general, the story serves to set up the premise on which the game is based. It is not made clear whether the story contains any clues as to the location of the Alkemstone, but the possibility should not be discounted.

The basic idea behind the game is to wander through a labyrinth, examining the walls, floor, and ceiling for messages that were written by the crazed youth who hid the Alkemstone. Some of the

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clues are consistently located in the same place, while others are randomly displayed, and will not necessarily be in the same place twice.

The program is very easy to use. After inserting the diskette, and being guided through the game initialization procedure (which involves flipping the diskette over, in order to use the back), play is ready to commence.

All the usable commands and options are clearly explained, and after glancing at them once, it should not be necessary to refer to them again. The available commands are rather limited, consisting of U for up, D for down, left arrow for a left turn, and right arrow for a right turn. The return key is used to move forward. An interesting, and extremely useful command, is Quiet run/Fast run, which is turned on and off by simply hitting the S key, and allows movement at about ten times the normal rate. It also eliminates the annoying beeping that accompanies normal movement. However, there is some danger in using this option indiscriminately, as it is easy to miss some clues as they are flashed on the walls.

Another option which players will find very helpful is the save game feature, which is invoked by simply typing "ConTRol Q". This will allow the game to be restarted with the same conditions under which it was left. The last of the user commands is "ConTRol P", which shows the player's position in the labyrinth at any given time. There appears to be mapping integrity, and an idea of the direction of movement can be ascertained by referring to the larger labyrinth map often, and noting the new location of the cursor on a strategic level.

Speaking of levels, there are stairs in the labyrinth, which may lead one to

suspect at first glance that there is more to this game than meets the eye. This turns out to be a misleading assumption, as all the stairs appear to lead to dead ends, leaving returning to the original level as the only option open to the player.

When the labyrinth is first entered, one really has no idea of what to expect. For those who have played *Kaves of Karkhan*, the movement system will immediately make itself apparent, as it is essentially the same in both games. The differences are made obvious in a short time. *Alkemstone* has sound effects, various sounds that appear to be random in nature, and may or may not have meaning. They are mentioned in the short story, but any clues they may contain are either well hidden or obscure.

There is also some animation, in addition to the simulated movement. The first time a snake crosses the hall, the player may be taken by surprise, and it definitely adds interest to the game. However, as the same snake continues to cross, apparently at random intervals, the novelty begins to wear off, and eventually becomes more irritating than interesting. It is important to remember, however, that the game is set up to give clues about the location of the Alkemstone, and nothing should be disregarded or ignored.

The heart of the game is the writing on the walls, which provides the most obvious form of clue. This means that it is obvious that the writing is a clue, since it is different, but it in no way means that the clues are obvious. It says in the instruction booklet that the computer randomly chooses which of the clues will be on the screen at any time. This may be the downfall of *Alkemstone* as a

game.

After reading the short story, and playing for a short time, one may still be intrigued. However, after having some clues repeated several times, and long periods of no written clues, the game begins to feel like an exercise in futility. After all, the clues are displayed at random, there are no encounters, unless finding writings can be considered as an encounter, and in short, *Alkemstone* deteriorates into running through the halls, desperately waiting for a new clue to show up. The lack of control a player has over the game, and the lack of challenging obstacles combine to make for a very frustrating experience.

In all fairness, the real challenge of *Alkemstone* is not in the play of the game itself, but in deciphering all the clues that are found, in order to locate the real *Alkemstone*. Unlike similar contests sponsored by Metagaming, with their *Treasure of the Silver Dragon*® and *Treasure of Unicorn Gold*®, there is no time limit mentioned for finding the *Alkemstone*. Metagaming started the idea of coordinating a real treasure hunt with

a game, and with some degree of success, even though the *Silver Dragon* was found only six weeks after the game was released. The difference between using a board game and a computer game as the vehicle for the clues is that even though the clues may be equally challenging, they are at least all available in the board game format. In a computer game, it is almost impossible to tell if there is something that has not been seen.

With *Treasure of the Silver Dragon*, Metagaming showed that even after the real treasure hunt is over, the game can still be fun. With *Alkemstone*, level-10 has produced a first: a real treasure hunt with clues in a computer game format. In this respect, they have added a new dimension to computer gaming. However, the game would have no appeal at all if it were not for the chance to win \$5,000.

In conclusion, one must carefully consider his motivation for buying a computer game when thinking about *Alkemstone*. If \$39.95 for a remote chance at \$5,000 sounds like a good deal, then *Alkemstone* is for you. If you are buying

a computer game for enjoyment, your money is best spent elsewhere.

Alkemstone, Copyright 1981 by Level-10, a Division of Dakin5 Corporation, Post Office Box 21187, Denver, Colorado 80221.

COMPUTER AMBUSH UPDATE

According to the latest information from Strategic Simulations, Inc., a second version of *Computer Ambush* is available (as of December, 1981). Several notable improvements are indicated, the most impressive being new assembly language programming which allows orders to be executed twenty five times faster than in the first version. Other improvements include an option to create soldiers, and the ability to exchange weapons between soldiers during play. As currently advertised, these improvements will not drive the price up — it is still \$59.95. If the first version sounded good, and the second sounds even better, the second version of *Computer Ambush* should prove to outdo its predecessor in playability, variety, and good gaming fun.

by Arthur Wilson

Gregory Von Anderson

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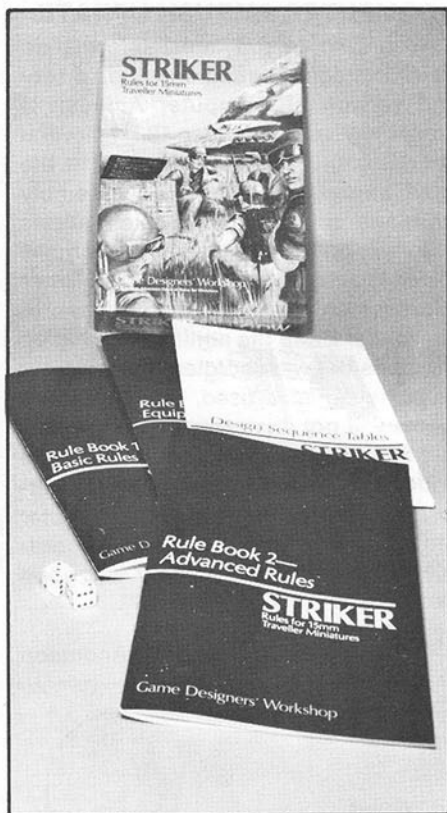


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There are those of us who can still fondly recall our feelings as we discovered the excellence of *Traveller*® for the first time. The originality, the freshness, and the uniqueness of it all elicited a response combining mild astonishment and admiration that has yet to be equaled in the five years since GDW gave its science fiction role-playing game its first debut. In those past five years a lot of good water has flowed over the dam and *Traveller* is now well-established as a RPG system with considerable merit and even greater promise of better things to come.

Part of that promise has recently been fulfilled. Earlier this year GDW unveiled its newest creation: **STRIKER**®, a complete set of rules for 15 mm *Traveller* miniatures play. Emphasis here is on the word *complete*. To those *Groggnards* who still remember those old, hallowed days of yore, take heart! The feeling is back!

It is not without a mild twinge of nostalgia that one takes up *Striker* for

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the first time. Using the now familiar format introduced by its original ancestor, *Striker* consists of three separate booklets totalling some one hundred and forty-four pages of extensive rules designed to permit the use of miniatures in just about any conceivable science-fiction conflict.

Much of the "abstractness" found in other miniatures rules sets is simply not present in *Striker*. This is partially due to the choice of a 1:1 scale employed in the system. Players need no longer concern themselves with recognizing (or worse yet remounting!) their units every time a new set of combat rules hit the stands. Moreover, this basic scale helps the individual gamer get a better "feel" for the situation — whatever the circumstances — when the figures he has arrayed in battle order represent a one-on-one relationship rather than "x" number of people that are "supposed" to be there doing such and such . . .

But the greater sense of realism found in *Striker* lies primarily in the role of the player himself. Unlike many miniatures systems wherein the player is cast in the role of some omnipotent Godling surveying the vast panorama of carnage before him, in *Striker* the gamer takes on the role of an individual platoon or company commander with all the problems that denotes. As in real life players will quickly find it is not always possible to control events outside one's limited range of effectiveness. If this seems a bit confusing it may be easier to visualize each miniatures player as a *Traveller* player character and those units under his command as various non-player characters. Indeed, in *Striker* there is a fine line between miniatures play and actual role-playing.

All this would seem to be considerably confusing if it were not for the patient care with which the designer has dealt

with small unit command control problems as might arise. In brief let it be stated that *Striker* concerns itself with conditions of command control to a greater extent than any other miniatures system to date. While it may take the novice some time to grasp the many ins and outs of the system, once mastered, play proceeds fluidly and with minimal complication.

One word of caution is advised to the novice sci-fi gamer experiencing *Striker* for the first time. Despite the figure ratio used in this system (not just 15mm. but 1:285 scale which is *easily* adaptable) players should avoid the urge to mass large numbers of mobile infantry armed with power armor and high technology weapon types. One can make the case for the argument that *no* sci-fi miniatures game should ever try to present battles at anything over company level. Given the ranges and the tech. levels employed in most systems — and the lethality of the weapons used — there would seem to be some merit in this view. *Striker* is no exception to the rule. Pitting hordes of high tech. level battle troopers together is to invite a limitation in tactical options and the real possibility of the engagement in question degenerating into one-on-one search and destroy missions with the majority of your forces hugging ground for dear life! (Given that the standard 25 x 25mm base suggested in the system for fire teams gives the average figure the equivalent of only some 12 x 12 meters distance between his fellows, and given that with higher weapon types being used this distance would normally increase, the result will be more damage being inflicted at higher tech. levels than the player can compensate for!)

For those who like nothing better than devoting long hours to developing new types of ships, equipment, etc., *Striker*

will be very welcome. While sample vehicle types are provided, a wealth of information on armaments, power plants, etc. will enable the inventive of mind to crank out any type of home-grown AFV or APC they could possibly imagine. (OGRE® fans are going to have a field day with this one!)

As alluded to above, one of the more fascinating aspects of *Striker* is its ability to encompass a wide technological spectrum. The rules make possible engagements with forces ranging in tech. levels from "5" (ca. Earth 1914) to "15" (the best the Imperium has to offer). And if beating up on backwater low tech. natives is your cup of tea, the *Traveller Journal* #12 has weapon stats. for levels 1 - 4 currently available. Thus not only can one play out engagements at virtually any tech. level conceivable, but players with 15mm. figures in other historical periods can make use of these as well under certain circumstances. (Napoleonics players beware!)

Naturally, another important aspect of

Striker is the ease with which it can be adapted to any on-going *Traveller* campaign. It is possible, using *Striker*, to calculate the military budgets of various worlds, determine what amounts of equipment, types, etc. are available as well as what can be "imported" from off world. Moreover, rules covering the strengths and weaknesses of all the major *Traveller* races are included. GDW plans to supplement this with discussions of various key military units in upcoming issues of the *Journal* as well. Nothing is being left to the imagination here.

Striker, by all indications, will be one of those games that players are going to either love or loathe with no middle ground. On the plus side of the ledger is flexibility, adaptability, exactness of detail and good organization. On the negative side low marks have to be given for the difficulties experienced miniaturists are going to have "converting" to the *Striker* system. This is not just a miniatures rules set but rather more accurately

a synthesis of role-playing and miniatures combined. Moreover, the very wealth of information contained will present some difficulties for the novice. Not that the system is complex *per se*, but rather that considerable data must be remembered at any given time in order to get the most out of the system. This is definitely not one rules set that will be learned completely at one sitting.

In summation, *Striker* is an entirely new approach to sci-fi miniatures play. The system works and it works the first time around. Little if any supplemental material will be needed for this design which is greatly appreciated in this day of high inflation. Those who have gamed with miniatures will find much to comment on in this system — pro or con — and for those who have never gamed with figures before, there was never a better reason to start than *Striker*. *Striker* is here and it works. For better or worse miniatures play is never going to be quite the same again.

by Charles & Denise Ahner with
Rick D. Stuart

STRIKER: AN OVERVIEW

Produced By:

Game Designer's Workshop, Inc.

Designed By:

Frank Chadwick

Scale:

15mm (or optional 1:285th scale)

Figure Ratio:

1:1, 1 figure = 1 soldier or vehicle

Distance:

1mm = 1 meter, 1 cm = 10 meters

Time:

1 turn = 30 seconds

Bases:

Standard 25mm x 25mm frontage for four man fire team. Optional 12.5 x 12.5 mm for optional mountings.

Unit Base:

Standard unit is four man fire team. Optional one, two, and three man unit configurations are possible.

Rosters:

Highly Advised. Color-coding bases for information display will meet with mixed results given the scale of the standard frontage bases used.

Referee:

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LETTERS

A Fan of Finieous

I have gone into Finieous Fingers withdrawal. I need F.F.! Therefore, I wish to subscribe to AG. I don't know how much a subscription costs . . . Is \$26.00 enough? If not, please BILL [writer's emphasis] me the difference; I swear I will pay the difference PROMPTLY [writer's emphasis] . . .

name withheld by Editor

This letter is typical of many we have received lately. I had no wish to hold the writer up to ridicule — he obviously has good taste. I do hope that those of you who have written similar sentiments have found other things besides Fin' to pique your interest. Being a Finieous addict myself, I'm only too happy to feed everyone's monkey. — Editor

So, You Want To Write?

I enjoy *Adventure Gaming* very much. I am writing you to inquire about the procedure for submitting manuscripts to your magazine. I would appreciate it if you could send me a copy of your writer's sheet, and also information on pay rates and the general type of article you would be interested in receiving.

Are you planning on including any fiction in future issues of your magazine? I don't necessarily write much adventure or fantasy oriented fiction, but am interested in seeing some in *Adventure Gaming*.

name withheld by Editor

We don't get enough letters such as this one, but I feel that some of you would be interested in the information. In the case of this particular letter, letter writer has become article author in this very issue.

For those of you interested in the same route to fame and happiness, the following facts are presented.

All manuscripts must be typed double-spaced — no exceptions.

All submissions must be accompanied by SASE if you expect them to be return-

ed in the event of rejection. Publisher is not liable for any unsolicited manuscripts, although they are welcome.

We prefer thoughtful, philosophical pieces on the finer points and nuances of gaming to "More monsters for your favorite RPG" type.

Article type can vary from a review to a variant, and all the ground in between.

Any topic likely to be of interest to adventure gamers is within the purview of AG.

It is extremely difficult to elaborate on the last item. I recommend that if your instinct is that it will fit our mix, give it a try.

It takes between three and five typed pages to make up an average magazine page. We pay \$1.00 per typeset inch. The average page (arts, ads, etc., included) measures out at around 22 or 23 inches of copy.

To answer the last question, yes. In No. 12 we will be printing a brand new, never before published story by Gardner F. Fox. This is the first of a new series specially created for AG. Future plans beyond that are still flexible, depending upon how well received it is, among other things. — Editor

Tunnels & Trolls Advocate

I've been buying AG since Issue One in hopes that the quality would improve. Issue #4 is much more like it. I loved the articles, reviews, and comics. J.D. is looking as sharp as ever. My only complaint about your magazine has to do with getting to the bottom of a page and reading "Continued on page 46". The other gaming magazines seem to have avoided chopping up their articles this way.

I do have a major complaint against the authors of the *Thieves World* review (AG 1). Graydon Gorby and Ron Woodrum did a fine job describing the multi-system playing aid and telling how the game relates to each system. But when they got to the part about *Tunnels and Trolls*®, the authors did their best to perpetuate the myth that *T&T* is a sim-

plistic and worthless FRP system. Gorby and Woodrum stated that *T&T* "... lacks the depth necessary to portray the characters and situations involved." Were they referring to those mountains of charts and tables in other systems that tell you everything you wanted to know about your character but were terrified to ask?

The "depth" needed for role-playing in *Thieves World* must come from the GM and players rather than a rules book. This is true for any campaign. I find it unfortunate that system snobs must air their opinions in "objective" reviews and articles.

Ronald James, Indianapolis

Whenever there is a viable alternative to jumping an article we exercise it. We don't like doing it any more than you. Continuing articles elsewhere in the magazine is harder on the layout process. Sometimes though, for reasons of layout, we find our hand forced. If we could somehow have every writer write in exact pages, we would have it whipped.

*Messrs. Gorby and Woodrum stick by their original assertions. Of all of the FRPG's, *T&T* is one of, if not the, most simplistic. This is one of the reasons that *T&T* has adapted to solitaire play so much easier and better than the more complex and complicated games.*

— Editor

A Dragon On His Back: Round 1

Bravo?!, Rick Stuart and Ray Souder for writing, and *Adventure Gaming* for printing, *A Dragon On His Back*. As a gamer and the wife of a gamer I have become too painfully aware of some of the "addictive" characteristics of gaming; I have endured hours long monologues of various gamers' exploits, seen and experienced broken friendships and relationships over gaming, watched as some gamers ignore other responsibilities for gaming, and most tragic of all, watched gamers lose sight of the "fun" of role-playing. *A Dragon On His Back* gives gamers a gauge by which to evalu-

ate themselves, their goals, and their motives, as it is written by gamers for gamers. It doesn't tell you how to game or why. It only serves to point out the negative characteristics for which to watch and beware. As my husband has always impressed upon me, gamers take care of their own. Thank you, Rick and Ray.

Denise Hooper Ahner, Cincinnati

... Dragon ... Round 2

The piece ("A Dragon On His Back") in #7 by Rick Stuart and Ray Souder is interesting, and as you predict, bound to be contentious. But not, I think, for the reason you expect.

The biggest problem with role-playing games at the moment is that not enough people *role-play*. Maybe this is different in Ohio. But my experience, which is reasonably wide here in Toronto and spans two recent *GENCON*'s, tells me that most role-playing gamers play because of the thrill to be had in killing wantonly.

Catharsis is not an element here. These people (it seems to me) act the way they do because they genuinely enjoy being violent, and in some cases, in defeating the other players and the referee at their own games. Role-playing never enters the picture for most. A character is only good because that affords him certain privileges, and not because the player wants to run one for pleasure. A character may have 'kind and charming' written on his character sheet, but the player will tend to forget this when being charming and kind gets in the way of personal gain.

Back to Stuart and Souder. I can imagine the situation they describe happening to a very few people. But those people would already have weak personalities, it must be remembered. And more to the point, I suspect it is the cathartic or escapist element of the game, and not the role-playing that is causing the personality shift. Frequently (and here I may be wrong but I think not) psychotherapy includes a measure of role-playing to help those with weak personalities better identify with themselves.

I hope we can agree then that role-playing if properly done can be healthy (though I would be the first to agree that improperly done or imbalanced role-playing could be very damaging). The fight now is to get more players actually

role-playing in a healthy way, or in most cases, role-playing at all.

Unfortunately, I can do nothing towards this end, any more than I can prevent some people from losing their personalities to the game. But certainly the role-playing element of the game should be emphasized beyond the rules. This is the greatest downfall of *AD&D*®, I think, and of *Chivalry and Sorcery*®, *Runequest*®, and any of the other 'complete' role-playing systems. *Traveller*® and a few others are excluded here because they leave a great deal to the referee and by their very nature encourage role-playing. But the complete systems, because they have systems to repress role-playing or relegate it to the level of good/bad and prefers gold treasure/prefers magical treasure. Players relate more to the rules than to their characters, and actions are guided by books rather than well-developed personalities. Players caught in this trap (though frankly I see this as the easy way to go more than a hazard) can be picked out in a crowd by their loud expostulations on the Wonders and Marvels collected by their characters. 'Wonders' and 'Marvels' are terms used by Alexei Panshin in *Masque World* to describe the subjects of stories told; apparently interchangeably they are yarns and trophies. In role-playing terms: how I killed three dragons before breakfast, and the fact that I have a sword that kills orcs three at a time. Players are more interested in the mechanics (why the sword kills three orcs at a time or what quirk of the rules allowed a 3rd level character to kill three dragons) than they are in the reason for wanting either thing.

Do you see my point? Perhaps if the rules are simplified . . .

Andrew Dewar, Don Mills, Ontario

If we accept your first assertion, that most RPG'ers thrill to wanton killing, how did they get that way?

I tend to agree with your theory, but I wonder how it came to be that way. It would seem to me that if that were the case, the DM's of the world, as a whole, are responsible.

Could it be that many DM's enjoy instigating the wanton killing, and further encourage it by presenting nothing but "search and destroy" scenarios? Having had the opportunity to go to all of the major conventions last year, I made a couple of observations on this point of my own. All too many of the events at all of the major cons shared a distressing

similarity — they were "hack and slash"/"search and destroy" centered. I base this observation on those which I either had the opportunity to personally observe or received reports on/of by reliable sources that did participate.

Given only an endless succession of monsters to kill as obstacles in the players' paths to success, how well and efficiently one kills becomes the most valid measure of success.

It has always been my belief that presenting players with obstacles that can be "thought around" is infinitely more fun and rewarding than feeding them a steady diet of beasties to slay or be slain by.

If, indeed, your theory is correct, the only cure I can see is in the hands of the DM's. It's their world, after all. — Editor

VENTURE VENUE

May 7-9 **Niagara Gamefest**. A 2½ day con sponsored by the Niagara Gamers Association to be held at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. For more information write: Keith Siren, P.O. Box 457, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada L1R6V9.

May 21-23 **CWA Con 82**. Sponsored by the Chicago Wargamer's Association, this 2½ day con will be held at the DuPage County Fairgrounds, DuPage, IL. For more information write: CWA Con 82, P.O. Box 10397, Chicago, IL 60610.

May 30 **M.I.G.S. III**. A free, one day gamefest sponsored by the Military Interests and Games Society. To be held at the Kitchener-Waterloo Regional Police Association Recreation Center in Kitchener, Ont., Canada. For information write: Les Scanlon, President M.I.G.S., 473 Upper Wentworth St., Hamilton, Ont., Canada L9A 4T6.

June 11-13 **Michigan Gamefest 11**. Sponsored by the Metro Detroit Gamers, this 2½ day con will be held at Cobo Hall, Detroit, MI. For more information write: Michigan Gamefest 11, c/o MDG, P.O. Box 787, Troy, MI 48099.

July 23-25 **Origins 82**. The national trade show and gaming convention to be held in Baltimore, MD. For more details contact: Origins 82, P.O. Box 15405, Baltimore, MD 21220.



POWER PLAY® is a new card game published by Task Force games which simulates power politics in a hypothetical third world country. The object of the game is to collect Leader cards in the different areas of power until you have control of enough areas to declare and make a successful Power Play. Two to six players can play, and the strategies needed to win the game vary with the number of players involved. This aspect helps *Power Play* stay a fresh, fun game that can be played over and over again without becoming stale as is the problem with many card games.

Power Play comes with three sets of cards, a six-sided die, and a rules booklet. These come in a cardboard box with a brightly colored cover of a secret-agent type holding a bomb, standing in front of the words *Power Play*. While this is not the best artwork, it certainly makes the game stand out and accurately portrays it as being a "fun" rather than a

POWER PLAY©

Political Maneuver — Third World Style

"serious" game.

The three sets of cards are Area cards, Leader cards, and Action cards. The graphics on the Area and Leader cards are very good, and the faces are printed in red and black. Not only do they look nice, but it is easy to differentiate between Areas. The typesetting on all the cards is well done and easily read. The faces on the Action cards are also printed in red and black, and are differentiated by the purpose of the card printed in the upper left hand corner of each card. The only fault I have with the cards is that the finish on them is poor. After only a half dozen games, the faces of many of the cards picked up a tremendous amount of dirt from the table and fingers of the players. While this does not interfere with the play of the game, it does make an otherwise good looking game look shabby.

There are seven Area cards, and there are six Leader cards in each area. Each Leader card is assigned a value from one to four. The Areas are Business, Church, Labor, Military, Police, Politics, and Press. To gain control of an Area card, a player must gather Leader cards in that area until the point value of his cards is higher than the point value of any of his opponents' cards in that area. He then subtracts the next highest point value gathered in that area by his opponents from his own value. He must roll that number or less on the six-sided die to take control of that Area card. If he fails his roll, he must discard one of his Leader cards from the area he tried to control.

The other set of cards that comes with *Power Play* are Action cards. There are 47 Action cards of four types — Special, Event, Attack and Defense. Special cards must be played immediately upon being drawn. These cards have "Play Immediately" printed on them. The exception to this are the Sabotage cards. These are Special cards which do not have the "Play Immediately" printed on them. This may cause some confusion but the rules do state that "Special cards are always played immediately upon being drawn . . .". There is no defense against the Special cards or against the Event cards in the deck. Once they are played, they stick. The Defense cards are used when Attack cards are played on you by an opponent. Both Attack and Defense cards often have Areas printed on them beneath the words "Attack" or "Defense". In these cases, those are the only areas which those cards can affect.

In the normal play of the game, the player whose turn it is may draw a Leader card or an Action card. Unless he plays a card which allows him multiple draws, he can draw only one card on his turn. If he chooses to draw a Leader card, that card must be laid down immediately. If an Action card is drawn, it may be held indefinitely. After the player draws his card, he has the option to play or not play an Action card this turn. Notice that if he drew a Leader card and chose to play an Action card, he has in effect played two cards. If he had five Action cards at the beginning of the turn, at the end he has only four. If a player begins his turn with no Action

cards in his hand (it happens often), he may draw five new Action cards, then draw for his regular turn (that's why it happens often). After a player has played or not played his Action card, he must decide to attempt control over any Area or Areas in which he has Leader cards. When these rolls have been decided, the turn progresses to the next player.

Play continues in this manner until a player declares a Power Play. A Power Play must be declared immediately after a player makes his "control" rolls, before play passes to the next player. The first player to declare a Power Play may discard any or all of the Action cards in his hand, and draw new Action cards until he has five. No other Power Player has this option. The player to declare the Power Play must wait until the turn of play passes around the table and returns to him before he makes his actual Power Play. This gives all the other players a shot at ruining his chance of making a successful Power Play.

When it is his turn again, the Power Player gets one more normal turn. This gives him the chance to control even more Areas, or to regain control of any Areas lost. After this, the Power Player must reveal any Foreign Aid cards in his hand. These are Event cards, and each counts as one or two Areas controlled. The Areas he controls are totaled, and the total from the Foreign Aid cards are added to it. The Power Player must roll equal to or less than this total on the six-sided die to win the game. If a Power Player fails his Power Play roll, all Leader cards and Area cards that he had are removed from the game, and play continues until another Power Player makes his Power Play roll. If no Power Players make their Power Play rolls, the political situation has deteriorated into civil war. The rules have a section that deals with ending games that are apparently stalemated.

As you can imagine, *Power Play* can be an extremely dirty game, with players double-crossing, backstabbing, and assassinating each others' Leaders. This is not a game for the Lawful Good, but it's a great deal of fun and a good way to relieve some of those everyday tensions (or get some new ones). Here is a chance to "get" that guy who usually does you in whenever he gets the chance. I do have this warning — no game ever goes the same way twice, so chances are he may get YOU.

by Graydon Gorbey

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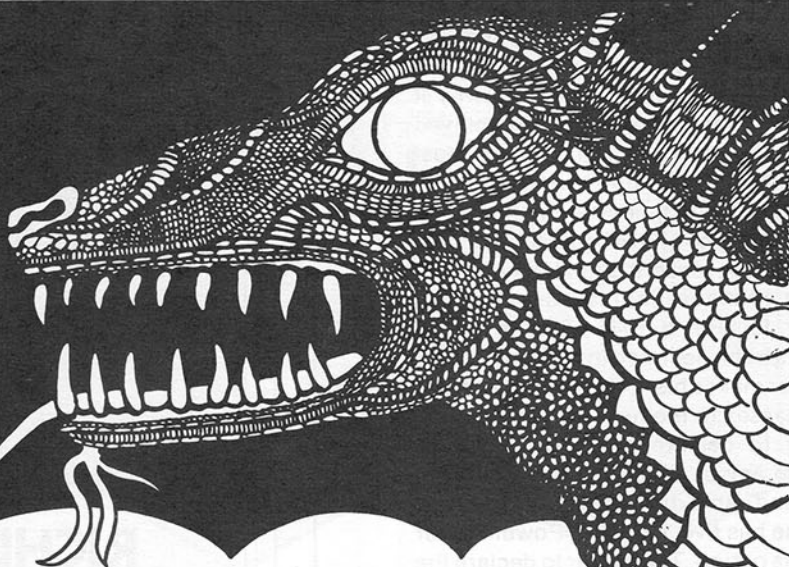
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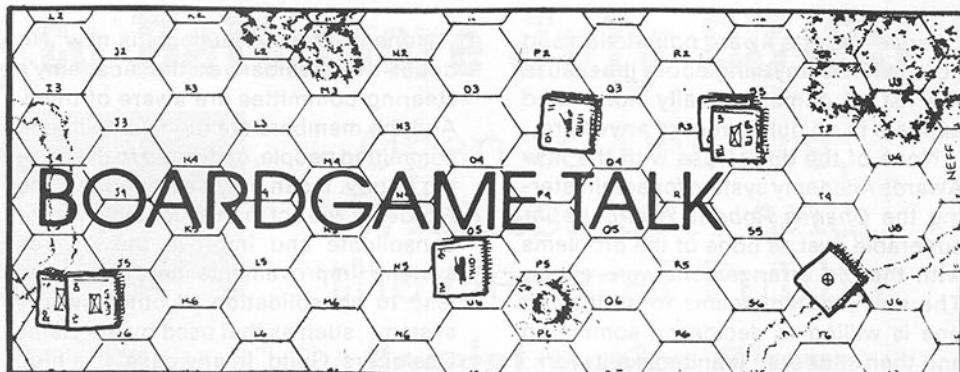
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Convention



THE CHARLES ROBERTS AWARDS



© by John Prados

Ever since the gaming hobby began to hold national conventions called *Origins*™ (in 1975), a variety of awards has existed to recognize excellence in game design, production, and quality in the hobby media. Awards are given by conventions, by magazines, and by organizations in the hobby such as the Game Designers' Guild. Probably the best known and most prestigious of all the awards are the *Charles Roberts Awards*® for boardgames (and the companion *H. G. Wells Awards*® for miniature and FRP interests). The system by which these awards are given is the subject for today's installment of BOARDGAME TALK. The column will not try to talk about all the different awards given in the hobby but will focus on the "Charlies" as the most important and representative ones.

The most notable thing about the Charlies is the fact that the awards have been subject to constant change throughout their history. Changes have been made in everything from *who* gives the awards to *how* they are administered and what *categories* of awards are given. In 1975, there were five categories of *Charles Roberts Awards*; the number expanded to six by 1978, and eight categories in 1979. The awards were more or less given by the *Origins* convention and until last year anyone who attended the *Origins* convention could vote for the winners. Games, persons, and magazines nominated for the Charlies were determined by ballots circulated through hobby magazines in advance of *Origins*.

During 1981 a series of changes came into effect that modify the whole procedure for the *Charles Roberts Awards*. These are now administered by the "Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design", which may be joined by persons who demonstrate a certain level of hobby activity. The Academy functions as a unit of the Game Manufacturers' Asso-

ciation and was originally the idea of Howard Barasch, executive of Heritage Games and a very active GAMA member. A committee of 25 Academy members oversees the awards activity but GAMA retains the right to fire the committee chairman and has some (but small) ability to restrain or veto decisions by the Academy. Nominations for the *Charles Roberts Awards* are to be made as before, through the hobby media, but voting for the Charlies will be limited to members of the Academy. (If all this sounds surprisingly like the Academy Awards of motion pictures, stay tuned, it is.)

The urge to systematize the *Charles Roberts Awards* is readily understandable. Throughout their existence the awards have undergone so many changes that this had become a major source of dissatisfaction with the Charlies and a reason advanced for belittling the credibility of the awards. Another need for a system is the haphazard way in which the awards balloting was often conducted, which in the past did not prevent certain attempts at stuffing. Yet a further reason for change, it must be admitted, was the unpopularity of the method of nominations by manufacturers that was tried one year or the opposition to certain members of the awards committee other years.

Even given the need for change, it is necessary to ask what advantage this new Awards Academy has over the previous arrangements for the Charlies? Clearly, the main substantive change is that the gamer who attended *Origins* in years past has now lost his franchise to vote on the Charlies to the members of the status group "Academy". The net effect reduces the "representatives" of the awards, since the 200 members gathered by the Awards Academy by the summer of 1981 was less, by a factor of two or three, than the number of votes cast for Charlies at *Origins* in the preceding years.

Like the old arrangement, the Awards

Academy system retains the feature of a steering committee. According to Academy spokesmen the committee is balanced for geographic representation, areas of hobby interest, etc. This endeavor to "balance" the committee is laudable but immediately opens the question of the degree to which democratic process functions within the Academy itself in the selection of its award committee. Who decides what is balanced?

Nor has the creation of the Awards Academy stilled the constant pressures for change that the Charlies have undergone. Currently, for example, there are about twenty additional proposals under consideration for changes in the awards. Among the current proposals is one to create additional categories (of *H. G. Wells Awards*) for science fiction and fantasy miniatures; another for a category of best game developer (although there is no category for best game designer); proposals that awards for magazines be dropped; that the "best initial release" of a game by a new company be dropped; and that a category "outstanding game of the year" be created. The advent of the Awards Academy, to judge by this list of proposals, clearly does not mean that the Charlies have embarked upon a period of consolidation as hobby awards, which is what many hoped would result.

On top of everything else, some "checks and balances" that were instituted by the previous *Charles Roberts Awards* system do not exist under the Awards Academy arrangement. The most important of these is that there is no check on the Academy. Under the old system actual awards nominations went to each attendee at *Origins*. If there were any problems with nominations all who were at a convention would know about it. Now the nominations go only to members of the Awards Academy. Thus, for example, in 1981, a game which had received numerous nominating ballots was arbitrarily judged not eligible for a

Charles Roberts Award nomination and no one knew anything about it because the list of games actually nominated appears in no public record anywhere.

None of the difficulties with the new Awards Academy system for administering the Charles Roberts Awards is insuperable, just as none of the problems with the old arrangement were either. The real problem seems to be that no one is willing to decide on something and then stick with it and make it work.

The problem with the "Academy", if it is going to work, will be to make the organization a truly egalitarian and representative body, not another "elite" which creates fears in other hobbyists that secret committees are secretly plotting mayhem with the awards. Moreover, if the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design is to expand into the large body that would lend true credibility to the new awards system, the Academy really should offer members something else besides a franchise to vote on the awards.

None of these arguments is new. No doubt the members of the Academy's steering committee are aware of them. And the members are highly intelligent, committed people, dedicated to the gaming hobby. It can only be hoped that the Academy will act in a responsible way to consolidate and improve the Awards system. Improvements here may also lead to consolidation of other awards systems, such as that used by the Game Designers' Guild. In any case, it is high time for less change and more consolidation in gaming hobby awards.

What's Your Opinion?

Do you agree, or disagree, with John's viewpoints? Both he, and ADVENTURE GAMING, would like to know your opinion on this issue. Type your comments up and share them with all of us:

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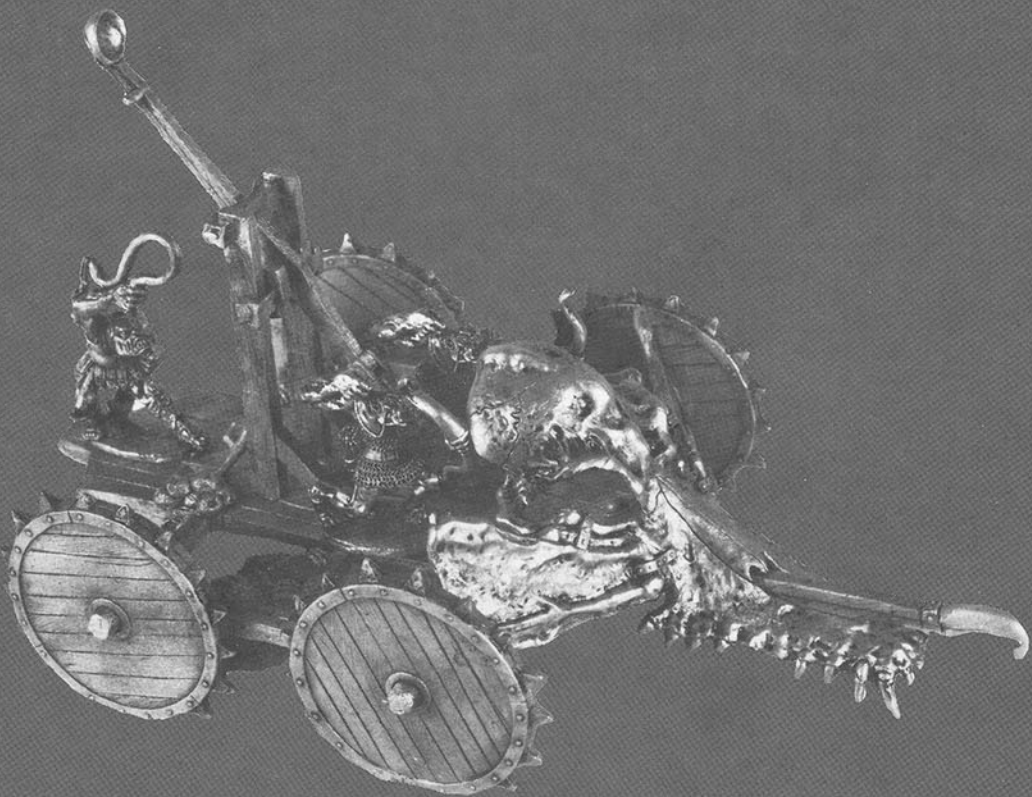
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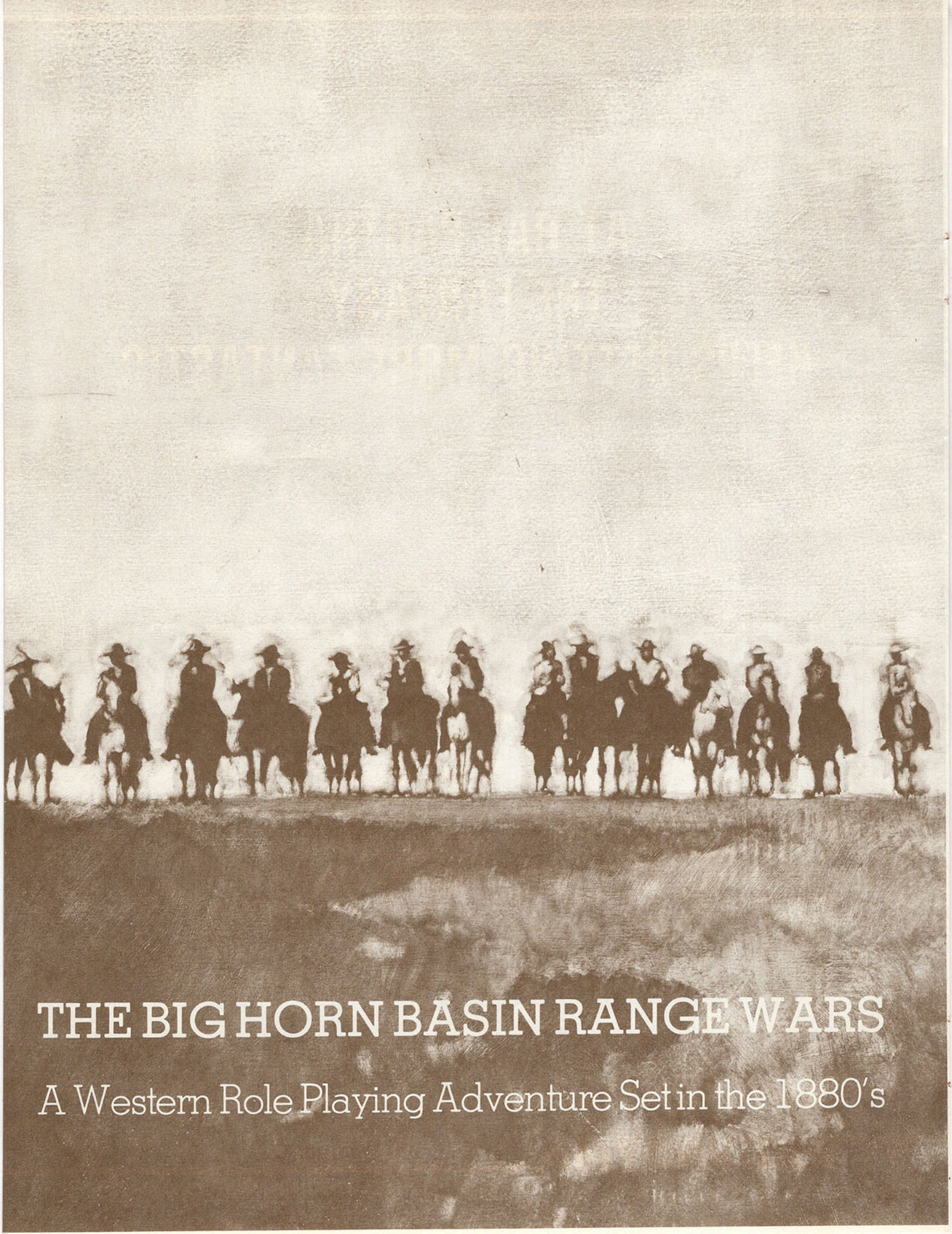
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THE BIG HORN BASIN RANGE WARS

A Western Role Playing Adventure Set in the 1880's

INTRODUCTION

This scenario was designed with a campaign in mind. It is based on the true story of Ella "Cattle Kate" Watson who was hung in Wyoming for rustling in 1889. A lot of background material has been provided on the area and inhabitants of the Big Horn Basin so that after the scenario has run its course, the GM will have an area to work other scenarios into.

The statistics provided for the NPC's in this scenario are from Fantasy Games Unlimited's *WILD WEST*®. Because of space constraints, only the most important skills known by each character are listed. The GM should feel free to add any skills to any character as he feels necessary.

For other western role-playing games, the GM will have to assign his own values to each character. For TSR's *BOOT HILL*®, for example, a character might be converted in this way:

Unless a character has Quickdraw skills, his base speed should be in the average range. For a character with Quickdraw skills, the speed of the character should be +1 for every ten experience points and +1 for every CV above 16. For accuracy, a character should be given a +1 for every ten experience points and +1 for every CV above 14.

This is just an example, but should give fairly accurate conversions. I am not familiar with any other western role-playing games on the market, or I would give other conversion examples to aid in saving the GM some time.

It's northwestern Wyoming in the 1880's, and a range war is about to break out. Not between two large cattle outfits over water and grazing rights, but between the cattlemen and the cowhands who work for them — over Mavericking. As in all ranges, when the Big Horn country first opened up to the cattle industry, if a cattleman or cowhand burnt a brand on a slick that wasn't rightfully his, nothing much was said or done about it. By the middle of the 1880's, the range has become crowded enough, and the competition between cattle outfits fierce enough, that anyone caught "Mavericking" was now caught "Rustling".

Most of the cattle coming into this area are trailed down from Oregon. These cattle are not Longhorns, but a shorthorn stock originally from the Midwest. These cattle can be purchased in Oregon for \$12 to \$18 a head. It costs about a dollar a head to trail them from Oregon to Wyoming where they can be sold for \$30 to \$40 a head. Meeteetse is a normal ending spot for those trail drives.

Most of the cattle leaving the area are trailed south to the Sweet Water Valley and the old Oregon Trail. They are then driven to Cheyenne to be loaded onto Union Pacific cattle cars bound for the East.

There are quite a few large cattle outfits in the area that can boast of running up to thirty thousand head. With such a large profit to be made, many of the outfits are owned by eastern conglomerates or foreign nobles, some of whom have never seen the land or cattle they own.

These non-resident owners, or "punkin-rollers" as the cowboys call them, are presented by agents who work out of Cheyenne and pay a visit to the ranch every few months or so. They buy and sell cattle "by the book", or by the figures represented in the ranch's accounting books rather than by actual head-count. This can cause a great deal of trouble for a foreman whose actual totals are a good deal lower than the book tally.

Whenever possible this scenario uses the actual people who lived in this territory during the 1800's as NPC's. Because of scanty information and the fact that history does not remember the common man, many of the NPC's that the PC's will be dealing with are fictional. An asterisk denotes those who actually existed.

The following list is of some of the larger outfits located in the Big Horn Basin in the 1880's, and the people who owned and ran them.

Carter Cattle Company — owned by Judge Carter*, foreman Peter McCullough (Scot)*. Peter McCullough was the first man to drive a herd into this territory. The CCC ran about 8,000 cattle and 1,000 horses and was known by the Bug brand.



Belknap Ranch — owned by Captain Henry Belknap (English)*, foreman

John Dyer*. The Belknap Ranch ran about 5,000 cattle and was known by the BN brand.

BN

Crown Ranch — owned by Count Paul de Dory (French)*. The Crown Ranch ran about 10,000 cattle and 2,500 horses and was known by the Crown brand.



Shield Ranch — owned by Billy Hore*. Billy Hore was originally the foreman, but took over when the original owner (a French Count) tired of his holdings. The Shield Ranch ran about 7,000 cattle and was known by the Shield brand.



Marquette Ranch — owned by "Uncle" George Marquette*. George Marquette was the only fiddler in the Basin and was always invited to all the social gatherings. John Dyer, foreman of the Belknap Ranch, would do the calling at the square dances. The Marquette Ranch ran about 4,000 cattle and was known by the GM brand.

GM

Hoodoo Ranch — owned by Richard (Dick) Ashworth (English)*. Ashworth was encouraged to go into the cattle business by his friend Henry Belknap. The Hoodoo Ranch ran about 20,000 cattle and 1,500 horses and was known by the Mill Iron brand.



Luman Ranch — owned by John Luman*. The Luman Ranch ran about 4,000 cattle and was known by the JL brand.

JL

Otto Franc Ranch — owned by Otto Franc (Aust.)*, foreman John Gleaver* from Texas. Franc made his money in the wholesale banana trade. He was known as the "Little Man" due to his

height. He was also the first postmaster in the Big Horn Basin. The Franc Ranch ran about 20,000 cattle and was known by the Pitchfork brand.



TL Ranch — owned by Edward Livingston (English)*, foreman George Merrill*. The TL Ranch ran about 6,000 cattle and was known by the TL brand.



Quarter-Circle-Y Ranch — owned by Angus McDonald (Scot)*, foreman was Roe Avant*. The Quarter-Circle-Y ran about 20,000 cattle and was known by the Quarter-Circle-Y brand.



SCENARIO BACKGROUND

The situation in the western section of the Big Horn Basin is currently very tense. The smaller cattlemen (those running less than fifteen hundred head) are being hit the hardest by maverick rustling. In retaliation, many of these cattlemen (some joined by trusted foremen and riders) have formed a secret night-riding vigilante group known as "the Regulators".

The Regulators keep a list of suspected rustlers (this list numbers about fifty). Often members of the group are spotted watching other outfits at roundup. This group also pays midnight visits to those whose name appear on the list. Sometimes they leave a "3-7-77" warning (three feet wide, seven feet long, and seventy-seven inches deep). Other times they leave a body dangling from the end of a rope.

Any rider on their list is considered "blacklisted" and is unable to find a legitimate riding job in the area. Some of these men leave the area, but others turn to full-time rustling to get back at the cattlemen. Most cowhands have become secretive, not trusting any but their own kind. Rumors have them forming an organized resistance to the Regulators, but there has been no proof of that as yet.

Although there are several small groups of rustlers in the area, most of the rustling that goes on is at the instigation

of the owner of the Sands Ranch — Majesty Sands. Many of the cattlemen associated with the Regulators would like nothing better than to string Miss Sands from a tree. She has strong support from the local cowhands, however, so they must have strong evidence of her wrongdoing before they can move against her.

THE RUSTLERS

The most powerful and probably the most dangerous rustler in the Big Horn Basin is a rancher by the name of Majesty Sands. Her ranch is the Sands' Ranch, but the local riders commonly call it "Her Majesty's Ranch".

Majesty Sands is an extremely beautiful and vivacious woman. When she first moved to the Big Horn Basin and started her ranch, she was courted by most of the cattlemen in the area. Majesty Sands has three weaknesses, however. The first is cowboys. Her trysts with their employees made many of the ranchers look foolish, and have caused her to incur the enmity of many of them — Buford Douglas of the Friendly R's ranch in particular. Her current paramour is a young gunfighter from Kansas named Nels Grimley. Nels is reckless and good looking, and has a tendency to drink too much when around Majesty. He already has four notches on his gunbelt, the last one because of her. She is starting to tire of his attentions, however, and would welcome someone who might rid her of him with open arms (literally).

Such is her effect on the male population in the Basin that any cowboy just looking at her has a 50% chance of falling in love with her. Any cowhand she turns her attentions upon has a 95% chance of falling for her. PC's in this predicament must roll their "Common Sense" or less on a d20 at +5 or do whatever she asks of them. Every time they do something they would normally feel bad about, the die roll modification is reduced by one for subsequent rolls. Any PC who makes three consecutive rolls is considered no longer under her influence, and no longer has to make rolls to determine his actions.

Her second weakness is for power. Not only for money and what it can buy, but power over others. She enjoys seeing how far she can push a man to make him "prove" his love for her. She is pure poison to men, but almost any cowhand in the Basin would go to Hell for her if she asked him, and many would do it even if she didn't ask.

Majesty's quest for power is what has her involved with rustling. As an easy way to increase the size of her herd, she let it be known that anyone wishing to court Miss Majesty had to come calling with a present. It soon became common knowledge among the local cowhands that a slick was one of her favorite items. To keep the beef coming in, an occasional cowpoke will be paid for his efforts with a lady's favors.

Majesty's third weakness is her temper. When vexed or frustrated, her fury can mount to a passionate rage. At times like these, she can commit almost any kind of act. In the last year she has shot a man to death on the streets of Meeteetse for trying to harangue her into marriage, and has murdered another in his sleep after he threatened to go to the Cattleman's Association with evidence of her rustling. Although the first is common knowledge, the second is a well-kept secret.

Majesty is the partner of Hugh Devlin, and is half owner of his Good Times Saloon. On the weekends she will be found there, and has a suite of rooms upstairs. She is also a regular in the big poker game held there every Saturday night. Majesty hates and fears Devlin because of what he knows about her "business" affairs. Devlin loves her with a jealous passion that is borderline hate. Each would like to see the other dead.

Hugh Devlin owns the other half of the Good Times Saloon. He plays the part of the flash gambler very well. His clothes are as fine as any of the rich cattlemen who come to Meeteetse to gamble, and better than most. He carries a pair of derringers in his vest pockets, up high and out of sight. The last two men to accuse him of cheating were carried out, feet first. This is not to say that he doesn't cheat, just that nobody presses their claim if they think so. Devlin's right hand man is Bob McKenzie. McKenzie is also a gambler and a "hide-away" deringer man as Devlin is, but not nearly as fast. McKenzie and Devlin work together at the card table, a trick which adds 5% to their base percentage of taking a hand.

In addition to gambling, Devlin is the go-between for Majesty Sands and certain unscrupulous cattle buyers at Cheyenne. In Devlin's room, beneath his mattress, is a book which contains the dates and number of cattle of each shipment he's arranged for Majesty. Also in the book are the names of two stock inspectors at the nearest Union Pacific stock-

yard and the amount of money they've been paid to not notice certain things. If the Regulators knew of the existence of this book, they would give almost anything for it.

MORE RUSTLERS

The McKinty gang works mainly on the north side of the Stinking River since Jack McKinty was shot mavericking on the Swisher range.

Hal McKinty is the leader of the gang, and the other members are Andy Lane and Daryl Barnett. All members of the gang are black-listed cowhands out to get even with the cattlemen.

The gang has a cabin up on Hart Mountain. They have also fenced off a draw on the southern slope of the mountain. Once or twice a week, they go out to a ranch and cut out six to a dozen cattle and drive them back to the draw where they work over the brands at their leisure. When this is done, they trail the cattle over to the CFC Ranch and turn them over to the Canns for resale.

AND ANOTHER RUSTLER

Nate Bowman is typical of many of the rustlers operating in the Big Horn Basin. He is a cowhand trying to maverick his way into a herd. His homestead is located at the junction of Pine Creek and the Greybull River. So far he has mavericked three yearlings, and he's starting to get cocky over his early successes which makes him more daring and reckless.

RUSTLER PERSONALITIES

All of these characters have riding skills, and all but Majesty Sands have wrangling skills.

Majesty Sands:

Pistol, CV 17, EXP 100; Cattle Trader, CV 16, EXP 90; Damage 190; Age 25(?)

Hugh Devlin:

Pistol, CV 17, EXP 120; Quickdraw, CV 16, EXP 120; Damage 250; Age 34

Bob McKenzie:

Pistol, CV 17, EXP 100; Quickdraw, CV 15, EXP 80; Gambler, CF 16, EXP 120; Damage 230; Age 30

Nels Grimley:

Pistol, CV 17, EXP 80; Quickdraw, CV 17, EXP 100; Damage 250; Age 21

Hal McKinty:

Pistol, CV 15, EXP 90; Drover, CV 15, EXP 100; Damage 260; Age 26

Andy Lane:

Pistol, CV 13, EXP 100; Bronc Buster, CV 13, EXP 90; Damage 220; Age 27

Daryl Barnett:

Rifle, CV 16, EXP 80; Demolition, CV 16, EXP 80; Damage 270; Age 24

Nate Bowman:

Pistol, CV 17, EXP 90; Drover, CF 15, EXP 70; Damage 250; Age 26

THE REGULATORS

With no law in the immediate vicinity, many of the cattlemen in the Big Horn Basin have decided to take things into their own hands when it comes to rustlers. They have formed a group called "the Regulators" to dispense justice as needed on the open range. Although the Wyoming Stock Growers' Association doesn't officially support such action, many of its members secretly support the Regulators, and several stock and brand inspectors for the Association can be found in the ranks of the Regulators. Cattlemen and trusted foremen and riders make up the Regulators.

George B. Henderson*:

Range Detective for the Wyoming Cattle Company. Lawman, 17 CV, 110 EXP; Pistol, 16 CV, 90 EXP; Rifle, 16 CV, 110 EXP; Damage 250; Age 34

Billy Smith*:

Range Detective for the Wyoming Stock Growers Association. Follows suspected rustlers everywhere they go. Many guess he does this in order to force a showdown. Quickdraw, 16 CV, 90 EXP; Pistol, 17 CV, 90 EXP; Rifle, 17 CV, 115 EXP; Damage 240, Age 28

Tom Horn*:

Range Detective for the Wyoming Stock Growers Association. Horn likes to brag about the men he's killed. Quickdraw, 17 CV, 110 EXP; Pistol, 17 CV, 110 EXP; Rifle, 17 CV, 115 EXP; Damage 250; Age 24

THE CATTLEMEN

Friendly-R's Ranch — Owner - Buford Douglas, Foreman - P. L. "Teddy" Campbell. Buford Douglas is the undisputed leader of the Regulators in the area. Teddy Campbell is also a member. Douglas holds a grudge against Majesty Sands because she refused to marry him. He won't rest, he says, until he "sees her swing".

The Friendly-R's employs eight full time riders, runs about 1,200 head of cattle and 500 horses, and is known by the Friendly-R's brand.



Swisher Ranch — Owner - Dale

Swisher, Foreman - Bobby Joe Swisher. Dale Swisher and his two sons, Bobby Joe and Paul, are members of the Regulators. Bobby Joe shot and killed a man named Jack McKinty over the disputed ownership of a slick. Swisher claimed it was in self defense and that McKinty was rustling. McKinty's brother has sworn revenge.

The Swisher Ranch employs six full time riders and runs about 1,400 head of cattle. It is known by the Lazy-8 brand.



Circle-Spike Ranch — Owner - Chuck "Lonesome" Ramsey. Ramsey and his two gunmen, Frank M. Canton* and Brazos Henderson are members of the Regulators. A rather homely individual, Lonesome Ramsey knows how to guard his herd. He's hired two gunfighters from Texas to help guard his livestock. Their orders are to shoot to wound, not to kill, because Ramsey would like to try and extract a confession from a rustler's hide with his bullwhip.

The Circle-Spike employs five full time riders and runs about 1,000 head of cattle. It is known by the Circle-Spike brand.



Bar-X Ranch — Owner - Robert Hogeback, Foreman - "Stuttering" Tom Maxwell*. Hogeback is a member of the Regulators. Having the closest ranch to the Sands' place, Hogeback spends a couple of days a week sitting in a cottonwood tree, using a spy glass on the Sands ranch. So far he has noticed nothing out of the ordinary.

The Bar-X employs seven full time riders and runs about 1,100 head of cattle. It is known by the Bar-X brand.



J-Diamond-D Ranch — Owner - Jason Distler, Foreman - Harry Knoll. Jason Distler and Harry Knoll are members of the Regulators. Jason Distler recently disowned his son Steven and sent him packing when he caught the boy leaving the ranch carrying a newly-weaned calf across his saddle. The boy refused to say where he was



An artist's rendition of Buford Douglas (top), Tom Horn (middle), and Hugh Devlin (bottom)

taking it. Distler has not said anything about the incident to the other Regulators. Seven has since hired on as a rider for the Sands ranch.

The J-Diamond-D employs ten full time riders (due to its close proximity to Arland) and runs about 1,400 head of cattle and seventy horses. The ranch is known by the J-Diamond-D brand.

J-D

Gibson Ranch — Owner - Calvin Gibson. Gibson is a member of the Regulators. Gibson started his ranch with mavericked cattle. He doesn't intend to let anyone start by mavericking off of him, so let the rustler beware.

The Gibson ranch employs three full time riders and runs about 250 head of cattle. The ranch is known by the Crazy-C brand.



Coffin Ranch — Owner - Wilbur Coffey, Foreman - "Speedy" Walker. Coffey and Walker are members of the Regulators. Coffey is the most vocal of the ranchers in the area where rustling is concerned. His ranch suffered losses of close to five percent last year due to rustling.

Coffin Ranch employs six full time riders and one gunman from Kansas named Andy Jack. It runs about 1,100 head of cattle and 200 horses. It is known by the Coffin-Cross brand.



Donaldson Ranch — Owner - Ranse Donaldson, Foreman - David Jacobi. Ranse Donaldson could care less about a range war. He claims to be neutral in the situation and states simply that he'll shoot anybody who comes on his ranch, he doesn't care why they're there or which side they're on. He was the first cattleman in the area to make use of barbed wire.

The Donaldson Ranch employs two full time riders and runs about 800 head. It is known by the U-Lazy-S brand.

U-S

Frank Cann. The Cann brothers are the front for the McKinty gang. While their operation is not as big as Majesty Sands', they manage to get their share of the stolen mavericks on this range.

The CFC Ranch employs three full time riders and runs about 600 head. It is known by the CFC brand.

CFC

Sands Ranch — Owner - Majesty Sands. In the back of the ranch buildings, obscured by some trees, is a small gate which leads to an area completely enclosed by the ranch buildings. In that area is a large pile of cut and dried kindling and some branding irons. The remains of a half dozen small fires can be clearly seen. One window looks into this area — that window being the one in Majesty Sands' bedroom.

Cowboys bringing slicks know of this area, and burning a brand in this area is safer than trying it on the open range. Besides, when you're done, just knock on the window and who knows?

Majesty inspects every brand that is burnt in this area, and if any look bad (such as the working over of another brand), that animal is butchered for its meat, and its hide is stuffed down an abandoned well near the barn, and quicklime is poured over it to destroy the evidence. Hides taken care of in this fashion are done at night to lessen chances of discovery.

Only Devlin and Grimley know anything of the man who was murdered on the ranch by Majesty; the riders know nothing, and would be shocked to find out. That man was a cowhand for the Hoodoo Ranch, whose body was hauled away and dumped on the range near the Hoodoo. It is generally thought that he was killed because he was rustling.

The Sands ranch employs nine full time riders (including Steven Distler). These men have orders to intercept any group of horsemen that venture onto the ranch, but single horsemen are to be left strictly alone. The ranch runs about 1,500 cattle and is known by the M-Circle-S-R brand.

M-S-R

CFC Ranch — Owners - Clarence and

CATTLEMAN PERSONALITIES

All these characters have riding, wrangling, and cattle trader abilities.

Buford Douglas:

Rifle, CB 13, EXP 90; Pistol, CV 13, EXP 110; Damage 270; Age 42

P. L. "Teddy" Campbell:

Drover, CV 15, EXP 110; Pistol, CV 15, EXP 90; Rifle, CV 15, EXP 70; Damage 250; Age 36

Dale Swisher:

Rifle, CV 16, EXP 100; Pistol, CV 16, EXP 80; Damage 240; Age 44

Bobby Joe Swisher:

Rifle, CV 15, EXP 70; Pistol, CV 15, EXP 90; Damage 220; Age 20

Paul Swisher:

Rifle, CV 15, EXP 50; Pistol, CV 15, EXP 40; Damage 190; Age 17

Chuck "Lonesome" Ramsey:

Drover, CV 16, EXP 110; Whip, CV 16, EXP 100; Damage 240; Age 37

Frank M. Canton:

Quickdraw, CV 17, EXP 120; Pistol, CV 18, EXP 120; Damage 250; Age 27

Brazos Henderson:

Quickdraw, CV 18, EXP 90; Pistol, CV 18, EXP 90; Damage 260; Age 22

Robert Hogeback:

Quickdraw, CV 18, EXP 90; Pistol, CV 14, EXP 70; Damage 250; Age 38

"Stuttering" Tom Maxwell:

Drover, CV 16, EXP 120; Rifle, CV 15, EXP 110; Pistol, CV 15, EXP 80; Damage 240; Age 33

Jason Distler:

Rifle, CV 15, EXP 80; Pistol, CV 15, EXP 70; Damage 220; Age 47

Harry Knoll:

Drover, CV 14, EXP 90; Pistol, CV 14, EXP 80; Rifle, CV 14, EXP 70; Damage 240; Age 26

Calvin Gibson:

Rifle, CV 16, EXP 90; Pistol, CV 16, EXP 60; Damage 240; Age 29

Andy Jack:

Quickdraw, CV 17, EXP 90; Pistol, CV 18, EXP 90; Damage 250; Age 21

Ranse Donaldson:

Brawling, CV 18, EXP 110; Pistol, CV 15, EXP 90; Rifle, CV 15, EXP 100; Damage 280; Age 29

David Jacobi:

Drover, CV 14, EXP 80; Rifle, CV 14, EXP ; Pistol, CV 14, EXP 70; Damage 230; Age 30

Clarence Cann:

Rifle, CV 12, EXP 100; Pistol, CV 12, EXP 100; Damage 270; Age 30

Frank Cann:

Rifle, CV 12, EXP 100; Pistol, CV 12, EXP 70; Damage 250; Age 27

Steven Distler:

Rifle, CV 16, EXP 60; Pistol, CV 16, EXP 50; Damage 210; Age 18

OTHER PERSONALITIES IN THE BASIN

The following personalities all lived in the Basin area during the 1880's. They might be encountered at any time, in any area of the basin.

Sim Roberts*:

Roberts was a gunman and suspected rustler although he was never convicted of either. Quickdraw, CV 15, EXP 100; Pistol, CV 16, EXP 110; Rifle, CV 16, EXP 100; Damage 260; Age 26

"Liver-Eating" Johnson*:

Johnson was the Town Marshall of Red Lodge, Montana. He once shot an Indian who was causing trouble, and ate portion of his liver to show "that he means business". Quickdraw, CV 17, EXP 110; Pistol, CV 17, EXP 120; Lawman, CV 15, EXP 100; Damage 270; Age 34

Pat O'Hara*:

Pat O'Hara was a trapper in this region long before the cattle moved in. He was once captured by Indians, so he acted as if he was crazy. The Indians thought he was possessed by the Great Spirit, and set him free. Trapper, CV 18, EXP 130; Rifle, CV 16, EXP 120; Damage 230; Age 50

Jim Dahlmann*:

Livestock Inspector for the Wyoming Stock Growers' Association. Quickdraw, CV 16, EXP 90; Pistol, CV 16, EXP 100; Lawman, CV 16, EXP 90; Damage 250; Age 33

THE TOWNS

Corbett —

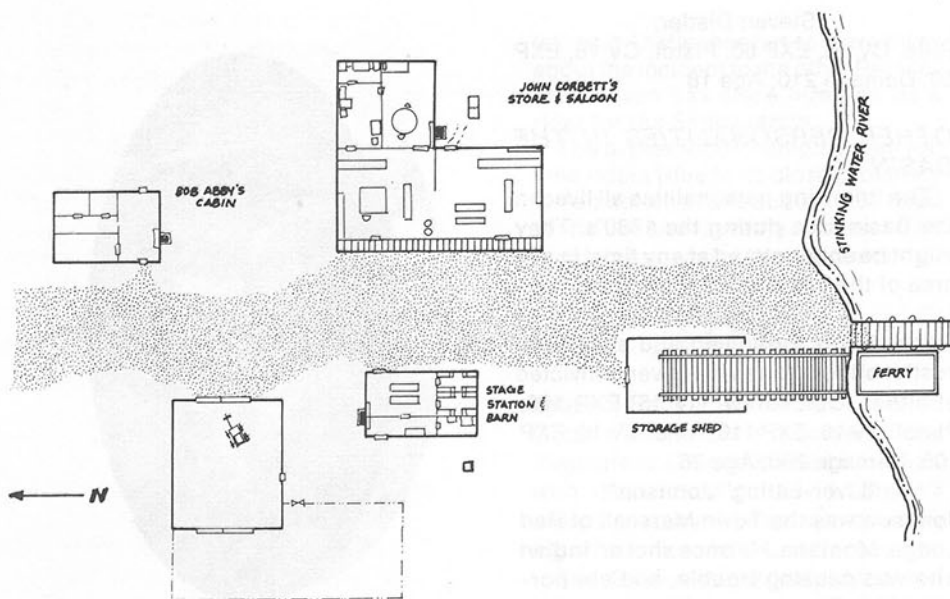
Corbett is located on the Stinking Water River (named that by the Indians because of hot sulphur springs that feed it). Corbett was founded by trapper John Corbett* who hung up his traps and opened a store when the herds began trailing into Wyoming from Oregon. Corbett is the main thoroughfare and freight crossing from Montana to Central Wyoming. It is made up of about thirty inhabitants plus transients.

State Station —

Stages comes through Corbett on their twice-weekly run between Bozeman, Montana, and Meeteetse, and weekly between Meeteetse and Ft. Smith (where the Bozeman Trail crosses the Big Horn River). Tickets to Ft. Smith are \$3.00, to Bozeman \$4.00, and to Meeteetse they cost 50¢.



An artist's rendition of "Liver-Eating" Johnson (top), Majesty Sands (middle), and George G. Henderson (bottom)



The stage line is owned and operated by the Patrick brothers out of Buffalo, Wyoming. The station is run by Rolf Johansen and his wife, Gerta. They are stolidly honest. Rolf is quite strong but keeps a shotgun close at hand "just in case". The station has a strongbox for travelers to keep their belongings in. Unless the stage is in, it is empty.

Johansen also serves as the local blacksmith should the need arise. The station acts as the local hotel and restaurant providing there is room.

Store & Saloon —

John Corbett owns both the store and the saloon. He keeps both of them himself by going between the two as the need arises. Don't try to steal from John if he's in the other room, he has an 80% chance of noticing that extra bulge in your outfit that wasn't there before. John keeps a scattergun behind the bar and a buffalo gun behind the store counter.

John is helped in his chores by a young Crow Indian boy who was orphaned as a small child. Although he often pretends not to understand what is being said, Bear Paw can speak English as well as John. He is also very handy with a hunting knife.

The store cash box usually has between \$2-\$25. The rest is buried (\$2,250).

Cable Ferry —

The cable ferry across the Stinking Water is owned and operated by Bob Abby*. His two sons, Scotty and Freddy, help him run it. The ferry is large enough to haul a dozen four-legged animals, or a wagon with a team. During the winter and during floods, the ferry is stored in a

large shed on the bank of the river. A heavy, knotted rope stretches from bank to bank, and the ferry is winched across.

Bob crosses the river three times a day (provided there is someone waiting to go across) — in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. Anyone wanting to cross at any other time must pay double. For a horse and rider the rate is 25¢, for a wagon it is 50¢, and each animal without a rider is 20¢. Bob never has more than \$10.

PERSONALITIES OF CORBETT —

John Corbett:

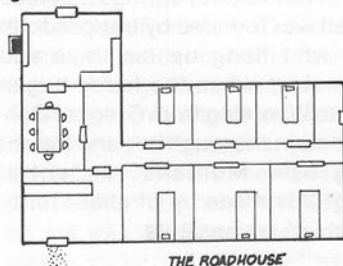
Trapper, CV 17, EXP 130; Rifle, CV 15, EXP 120; Damage 250; Age 37

Bear Paw:

Knife Fighter, CV 12, EXP 80; Knife Thrower, CV 17, EXP 110; Damage 130; Age 13

Bob Abby:

Roping, CV 15, EXP 100; Damage 220; Age 27



Rolf Johansen:
Drover, CV 17, EXP 100; Blacksmith, CV 18, EXP 90; Damage 270; Age 30

ARLAND —

Arland was started on the ranch belonging to Vic Arland*. He owns half of everything in the town. Arland is easily bored, and loves to gamble, so although the people who hang around Arland are pretty unsavory (its reputation is such that local cattlemen will not take their womenfolk there), they keep things lively. Half the town is on the Regulators' suspect list, but Arland is careful to have no involvement with rustling.

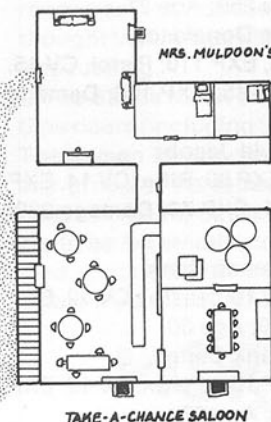
Mrs. Muldoon's —

This little "social club" is one of the busiest places in the territory. Mrs. Muldoon is a very large woman (about 200 pounds), and she uses a six-gun to keep the rowdies in line. Her girls are not extremely pretty, nor are they particularly clean. These fine points don't exactly ruin their popularity, however, as the male-female ratio in the territory is 6 to 1. When they aren't busy with other things, the six girls who live here work in the saloon.

Take-A-Chance Saloon —

The Take-A-Chance is operated by Terry "Locoweed" Howck. Cheap whiskey and card games are big draws, and as it is connected to Mrs. Muldoon's, it stays fairly busy all the time. Peak business hours are from dusk to dawn.

Locoweed is drunk more often than not, and sometimes is too stoned to even run the saloon. At these times his helper, Kyle Gregory (a tenderfoot from the east), will push him over into a corner to sleep it off. The regular patrons of "the



Chance" delight in pulling practical jokes on Gregory, and he falls for them every time. The safe in "the Chance" contains \$300, but Locoweed is the only one with the combination.

The Roadhouse —

Rooms at the Roadhouse are 75¢. Things left in the rooms have a tendency to walk off if valuable enough. A PC has a 20% chance of noticing that his possessions have been gone through if looking for it. The Roadhouse owner, "Jolly Tim" Casquette appears to be a happy-go-lucky kind of fellow, and he is — as long as you don't come back early and surprise him with his hands in your belongings. "Jolly Tim" has \$650 worth of cash and jewelry hidden beneath the floorboards in his room.

Also located in Arland are a half-dozen cabins populated by men with no apparent means of support. They nonetheless seem to have a fair amount of money at odd intervals. It doesn't pay to appear too flush when visiting Arland. Many of these men are just waiting for easy pickings to come along.

One of these men, Pug Moran, left Kansas in a hurry rather than face hanging for horse thieving. Any PC from that area has a 25% chance of recognizing Pug from a wanted poster that was offering a \$50 bounty for him.

"One-Eye" Stevens is the type of character who will kill a man for 50¢. Of course, for that price, don't expect anything fancy. He has never been known to meet anyone face-to-face in a shootout — a bullet in the back is more his style.

PERSONALITIES OF ARLAND —

Vic Arland:

Cattle Trader, CV 14, EXP 105; Gambling, CV 14, EXP 110; Quickdraw, CV 14, EXP 85; Damage 20; Age 35

Mrs. Muldoon:

Pistol, CV 13, EXP 80; Brawling, CV 14; EXP 120; Damage 230; Age 45

Terry "Locoweed" Howck:

Bartender, CV 14, EXP 130; Gambler, CV 15, EXP 90; Damage 220; Age 34

Kyle Gregory:

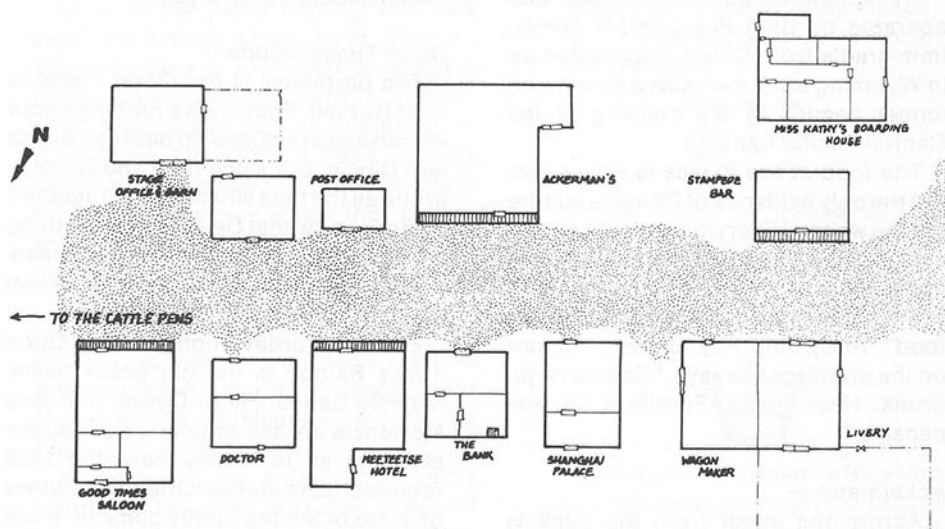
Bartender, CV 16, EXP 60; Map Maker, CV 16, EXP 90; Damage 210; Age 29

"Jolly Tim" Casquette:

Con Man, CV 17, EXP 120; Brawling, CV 18, EXP 110; Damage 280; Age 32

"One Eye" Stevens:

Pistol, CV 16, EXP 110; Quickdraw, CV 16, EXP 90; Damage 220; Age 27



Pug Moran:

Rifle, CF 17, EXP 110; Pistol, CV 17, EXP 100; Damage 230; Age 24

MEETEETSE —

Meeteetse is the largest town in the Big Horn Basin — almost two hundred people live there. The town has been in existence for about three years, primarily because of cattle herds that started coming into the area from Oregon. It has a stage station, a general store, a hotel, a restaurant, two saloons, a church, and a bank. The bank is the only stone building in town. Meeteetse also has the only Post Office within 100 miles.

U.S. Post Office —

Meeteetse has a small Post Office next to the stage station. Mrs. Margaret Wilson* is the Postmistress. If you leave your name at the Post Office and where in town you are staying. Mrs. Wilson will send a boy around to notify you if any mail arrives for you.

Stage Office —

John Barker runs the stage office in Meeteetse. He's not a very pleasant man, but as he's married to the sister of the line's owners, a replacement isn't likely. He is not well liked in town.

Two of the stage drivers that come through Meeteetse are George Ryder* and William Scott*. Both men are pleasant to ride with, being knowledgeable of the events in the area and willing to talk with passengers.

In addition to the northern routes, a stage goes south to the Oregon Trail and South Pass, Wyoming, once per week. Tickets to the South Pass are \$4.50.

Doctor —

Doctor R. W. Hale* is the only doctor in the Big Horn Basin. He also acts as

dentist. Hale is very careful about treating his patients. He is good at everything from setting bones to removing buckshot. His ministrations give a +5% against infection.

Meeteetse Hotel —

The Meeteetse Hotel is located across the street from the stage office. Bob Gates is the manager. The hotel has a kitchen, dining room, twelve rooms, and a suite that is normally reserved for important visitors.

Rooms are \$1.50 a night. Meals and baths are a dollar extra. If a herd has just trailed into town be prepared to share your room with one or two others. The suite rents for ten dollars a day and includes a bath.

The hotel has a strongbox in the manager's office that contains \$20-\$100.

The Bank —

The Bank is small in size, but solidly built. There is only one door to the building and that opens up onto the main street. The two windows are barred. Inside, there are two teller's windows.

The money on deposit is kept inside a 60 cubic foot combination vault. The only person who knows the combination is S. C. Pemberton, the bank president. (In case of his death, Mrs. Wilson, the Postmistress, has a letter for his son that contains the combination.)

The bank normally has between \$7,000 and \$14,000. There are times when cash sales of cattle in the basin increase that amount by \$100,000 or more. If this occurs, Mr. Pemberton arranges to have Michael and Jonathan Clay guard the bank from the roof of the hardware store across the street. Both men are expert shots with the rifle.

Shanghai Palace —

The Shanghai Palace is owned and operated by Bing Poy and his family. Immigrants from China, they ended up in Wyoming after their services were no longer needed in the building of the Central Pacific Railroad.

The food at the Palace is very good, but the only evidence of Chinese culture are the waiters! Everything else is American, from the mashed potatoes to the apple cobbler. When asked why, Bing Poy says, "Cowboys no appreciate good food". Also, Bing Poy allows no liquor on the premises. He says, "Cowboys get drunk. Have fights. Furniture too expensive."

Ackerman's —

Across the street from the bank is Ackerman's Hardware and Dry Goods. Robert Ackerman owns it, and stocks most things people have a hankering for. He has two helpers, Morris Harvey and Roscoe Wilson. Ackerman does about \$50-\$75 worth of business on the average day, but the days on which freight arrives can be busy, indeed.

There are often large amounts of cash (\$300-\$1,000) in the store as he puts off going to the bank for many days at a time (he doesn't like Pemberton). If asked about Majesty Sands' shopping habits, Ackerman could tell you that she buys

more quicklime every month than most people could use in a year.

Good Times Saloon —

The bartender at the Good Times is Fred Russell. Fred knows nothing about the business relationship between Sands and Devlin, but since they and Grimley argue all the time when they're together, he does know that Devlin has something which he is hanging over Majesty's head. It would take a little money to make him divulge this information, however.

Every Saturday night at the Good Times Saloon is the big poker game. Majesty Sands, Hugh Devlin, and Bob McKenzie are the regulars, but anyone else can sit in if they have the \$100 required table stakes. Often the owners of some of the big outfits come in. It has been said that over \$5,000 has been seen on the table at one time!

The front room on the main floor is the bar. The back room is for gamblers. On the second floor is a suite of rooms belonging to Majesty Sands. Toward the back are rooms for Devlin, McKenzie, and Grimley.

Stampede Bar —

This used to be called the Lazy Daze Saloon until a group of cowhands drove a dozen head of cattle through the building one Saturday night, wrecking the

place. The bartender is Bob Rollo, and he'll sit behind the bar and tell interminable stories to anyone who'll listen. Of course, none of the stories he tells have any basis in truth.

The main attraction at the Stampede Bar is their singer and dancer, Lila LaBron. Lila speaks with a French accent and claims to be from New Orleans because it makes the cowboys go ga-ga. She's really from Brooklyn, however, and anyone from Louisiana has a 20% chance of detecting her phony accent.

Wagons —

Ron Woody is the local wagonmaker. He's also the local undertaker. He likes to joke, "I get 'em if they're comin' and I get 'em if they're goin'." Old Woody's sense of humor is a little on the weird side.

When it comes to wagons, Woody can repair or replace any broken wheel, axle or tongue. He can also modify your existing wagon to specifications, or out and out build a new one from scratch.

When it comes to burials, he can plant you in a pine box for \$20, or an oak box for \$50. If those prices are too high, he'll tell you that he has a nice assortment of burlap bags in the storeroom. When a gunfight is rumored, Woody likes to measure the opponents before the fight. He does it, he says, because they just don't lay natural when they're shot.

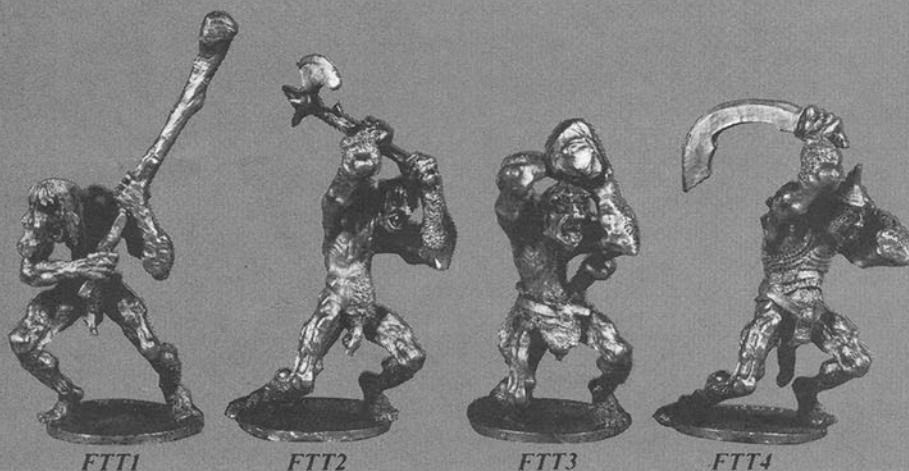


The Good Times Saloon

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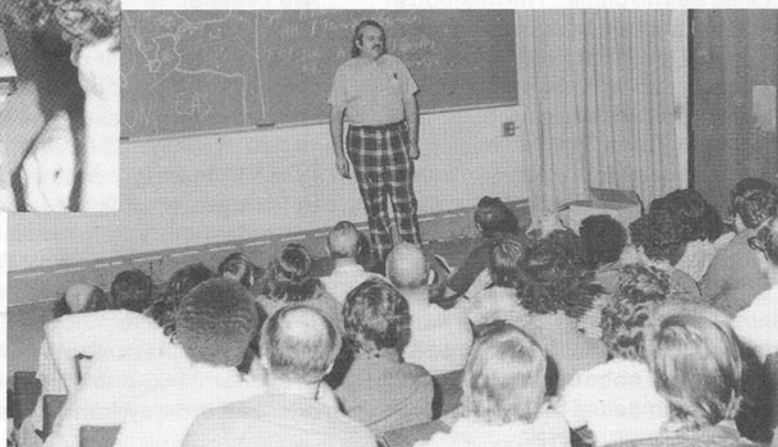
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This rule enables a player with a good Hunting Skill to collect a large amount of rations and trade the rations for stock units. Since victory points are determined by dividing the number of wagons, personnel, and stock units at the end of the game by the number the player started with (remember the calculator?), it is possible to end the game with a greater number of stock units than the player started with. Rations aren't counted towards victory, so if a player doesn't starve, he can trade almost all his food for stock units near the end of the game. This tactic almost ensures that the player will have a better than perfect stock score. I will admit that the end of one game resembled a trail drive instead of a wagon train, since I had more stock units than wagons and personnel put together. This was not the intention of Fantasy Games when they developed *Oregon Trail*. Therefore, I strongly recommend the following options to stop this practice:

A player can never amass a greater number of stock units than the maximum number needed to pull his wagons, plus 5 additional units. In order to trade for stock in a city hex, the player must make a successful roll on his popularity.

In order to trade for stock in a fort hex, the player must make a successful roll on his Military Ability. (This roll is necessary since dealing with the Army was often difficult, and spare stock was at a premium.) This makes the Military Ability much more useful.

In order to trade for stock with the Indians, a player must make a successful roll on his Indian Lore after a parlay. This makes Indian Lore much more valuable.

The horrible winters were another aspect of the trip west. I don't feel that enough attention was devoted to this in the present rules. A winter trip through the Rockies was no picnic. The infamous Donner Party bears witness to what can occur when a wagon train is caught in the mountains during a snow storm. The following options are suggested:

During snow turns, ration consumption is doubled. (People require more energy.) Movement through the mountains is at double the normal cost, and the player is still required to follow the Short Cut procedure. In rough terrain a Rockslide becomes an avalanche with all penalty rolls doubled. In clear hexes the prairie dog encounter becomes Wolves. In rough hexes the snakes be-

come mountain lions (treat the same as a Grizzly Bear, due to hunger). All stream and lost encounters become a Blizzard.

When struck by a blizzard, a roll must be made on the Disease Table for exposure, with result of "1" meaning a Stock Loss; if "wintering over" (explained later), "1" is a Stock Loss, "5" is Personnel, and "6" is Personnel roll twice. Further, ration consumption is tripled.

Indian encounters occurring in winter are at -2 during Blizzards. A town or fort hex will negate all Blizzard penalties, but if a Disease encounter is rolled it becomes an epidemic with all losses doubled and two rolls must be made for each component of stock, rations, and personnel (Popularity penalties are normal since people tend to get somewhat irrational when struck by Plague).

In the event the wagon train elects to "winter over", the player must still make two encounter rolls for each turn he sits tight. Ration consumption is normal.

These options are merely suggestions on my part. I hope they will serve to make a great game better. *Oregon Trail* is a fantastic way to spend an evening, even if it's just you, Ward Bond, and the wagon train.

Oregon Trail sells for \$12.95 at better game stores everywhere, and is definitely worth the price. The game includes: a gameboard map of the Old West; dice (two d6, and one d20); character sheets (to record your character); plastic counters representing the wagontrains; rules book. (The box is free if you purchase all of the above). The player must supply scrap paper, pencils, and enthusiasm. I also recommend you keep a calculator handy for a few of the calculations needed during the game. You can make do with a pencil, but calculators always impress your friends, especially if you know how to use them.

We came up with an idea for a "campaign" that can be used for this game. Simply pick a number of trails that must be traveled by each player. As long as each player must travel the same trails, and half are traveled in each direction, i.e., two from west to east, and two from east to west, the players can keep an aggregate Victory Point total, with high man being recognized as "Top Dog". The trails themselves can be travelled in any order the player chooses; he starts each trail with the same attribute scores.

Well, Partner, I don't believe that we made it all the way from Independence

to Santa Fe. Nope, I think you look sort of distinguished without hair. Say, me and some of the boys was talkin'; you remember Insane Gray? Yeah, he's the one that stampeded the buffalo herd through the train; well, we all decided we wanna push on to El Paso and maybe head for Los Angeles. What we need is a rough, tough, experienced, wagonmaster like yourself to . . . Hey where you goin'?"

† *The Friday Night Irregulars* is a collective pseudonym used by Graydon Corby, Terry Hauck, Hal McKinney, Ron Woodrum, and myself. Hal did most of the writing, and I did the rest, but all of the aforementioned made contributions to this effort, and deserve some kudos. There are other Irregulars in our merry band, and you'll undoubtedly hear from some of them in the future.

Oh, the name . . . ? Well, we try to get together on Fridays, but not everyone makes each meeting; nor are they always on Friday, some are even on Wednesdays! — Editor

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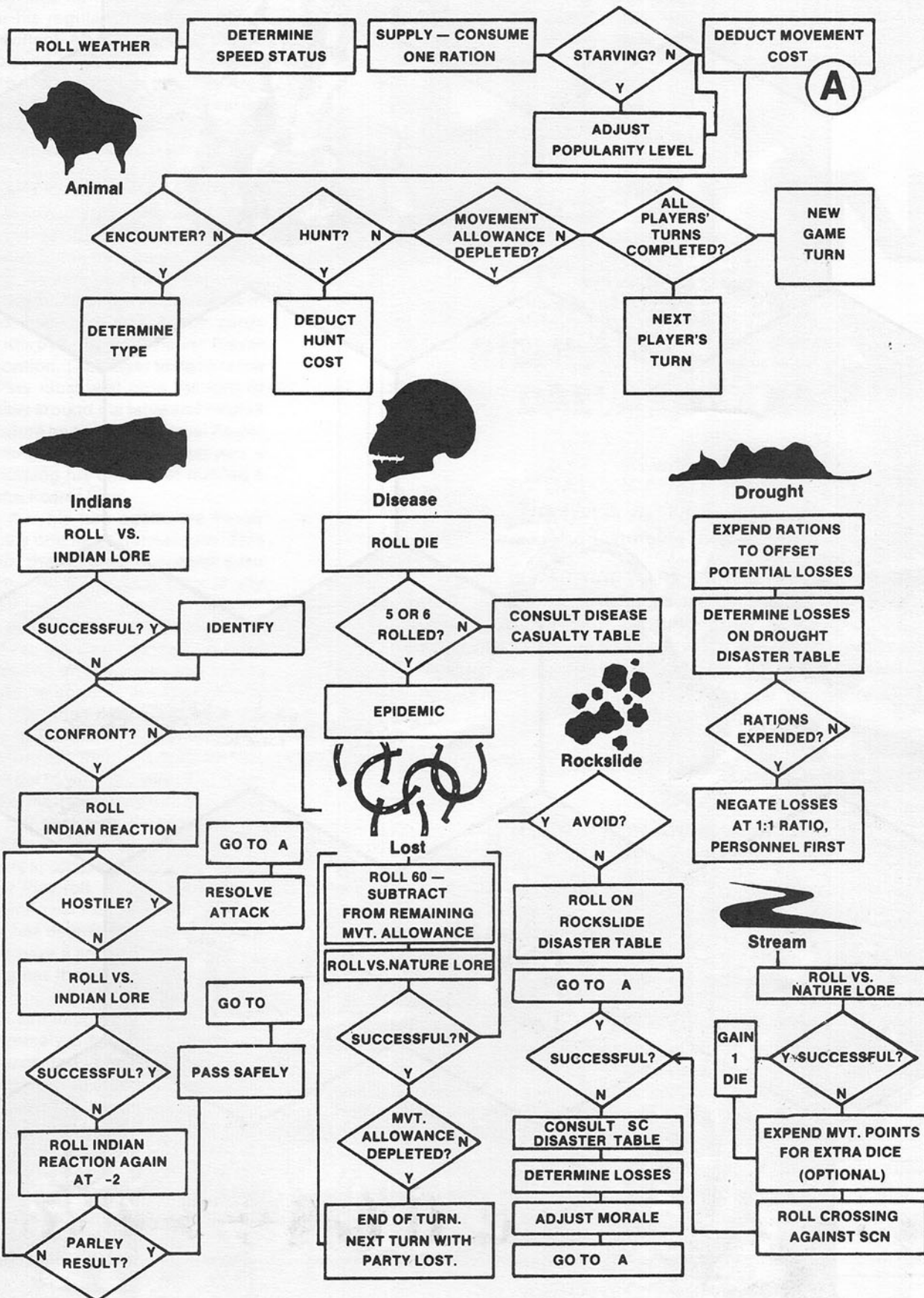
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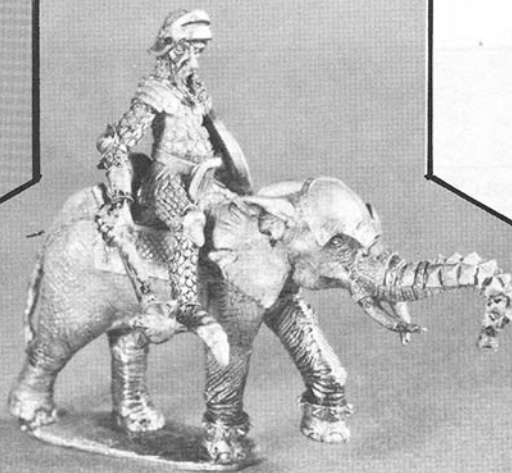
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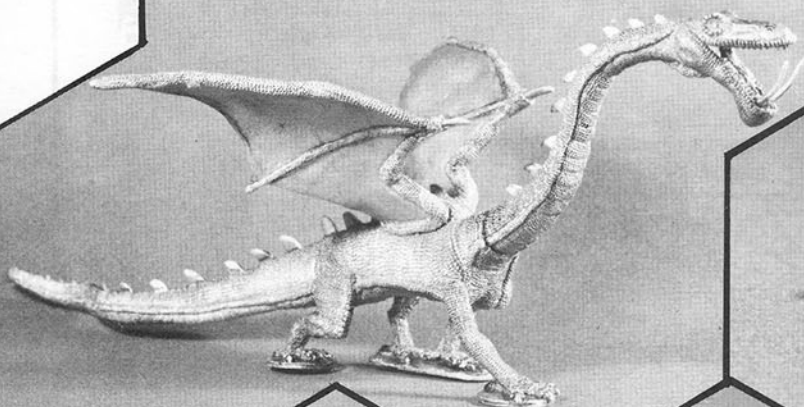
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by Terry Hauck

Strap on your six-shooters, partners, Pennhurst is distributing a new board game by Rimbold Enterprises called *Frontier-6*. Two to six players can act out their fantasies by becoming either law-abiding landed gentry or outlaws being chased through the badlands by a group of would-be Josh Randalls.

This family game for ages eight to adult is an excellent "beer & pretzels" game for hard-core gamers, reminding them vaguely of *Monopoly*® at first. A drifter can become a land baron, buying unowned farms, ranches and towns while riding the Main Trail which borders the playing board. However, possession of property and the accumulation of money is not the victory condition for this game.

Frontier-6 comes complete and ready to play. The molded plastic pieces are very well done and add a nice flavor. The players ride around on horses, which resemble knights on a chessboard. And, as property is purchased, miniature buildings, oil derricks, cattle herds and sheep herds sprout up.

The rules are easy to read, brief and self-explanatory. But it is the design of the rules book itself which deserves the praise. The pages have been cropped so that each succeeding page is a bit longer than the preceding one. The main topics of each page are printed on the resulting surplus, producing a quick-reference table of contents. This is a true boon to all of us who have rifled through rules trying to find a passage and moaning, "I know it's in here somewhere".

All players begin the game with a grubstake of gold certificate replicas (sorry, non-legal tender), a horse, and a small claim board which matches the larger playing board. With the claim board, players keep track of the properties they own (colored pegs) or control through political power (white pegs).

FRONTIER-6©

Wild West Fun For The Whole Family

While playing the game, we found it helpful to set the claim board in front of you facing the same direction as the game board. This makes it easier to keep track of where you are in relation to your properties.

The starting circle is in the center of the board, connected to the Main Trail by dotted lines called the Outlaw Trails. Players can follow any trail they want out to the Main Trail which lessens the chance that everyone will be bunched up in one area of the board as they try to acquire property — a welcome touch for those of us used to seeing our dreams of empire go up in smoke as we follow others around the board, landing on only those properties which have just been purchased.

By entering the Main Trail anywhere it connects with the Outlaw Trail, strategy can play a part from the beginning. The low percentage play is to pick a property you wish to own and head for it. For this strategy I would recommend heading for either a town or the gold field as they have the most income potential.

The high percentage play is to head for Texas and try for any property you can land on. I say Texas because movement on the Main Trail is counter-clockwise, and you pass over more properties before reaching Mexico. Using this logic a bit reversed, a case can be made for heading for the gold fields of California. Not only does it have one of the best income potentials but, if you do overshoot it, you should be able to get through the barren lands of Mexico the next turn.

Once on the Main Trail you acquire properties by landing on unowned ones and paying the price stated in the square. The property you land on is, of course, determined by the dice but, in certain situations it is important to keep a few things in mind, such as, if you purchase an oil producing farm right away you may want to wait until next time around before drilling for oil, because it will drain your treasury at a time that there are still many unowned properties.

Owning a regular farm is a straight-up proposition. It costs \$200.00 and you receive \$200.00 for landing on it after that. A good return on your investment but, let's face it, how many sodbusters got rich in the 1800's? The saving grace is that after becoming a property owner, you can choose to use less than your total movement to stop on your property, instead of passing it by. Of course, you have to forego the remainder of your move.

Some farms contain a circle marked "Oil" where you can attempt to become J.R. but it can be expensive. After buying the farm you can try to find oil by paying the bank \$100.00 for each time you try for a total of six on two dice. You can try as many times in your turn as you can afford. Be forewarned though, that a friend once sank more than \$1,800.00 in exploration fees into his farm before he found oil. So, if the dice aren't with you be prepared to pay.

If you do find oil, you get a miniature oil derrick for your farm and \$400.00 from the bank. From then on you receive \$500.00 for landing on it or \$300.00 for just passing it. So, it is generally worth the cost. As a rule of thumb, I only spend \$500.00 a turn trying to find oil because I'll get that back right away if I succeed.

Prospecting for gold in the gold field works exactly the same as drilling for oil but the rewards are much better. You receive \$1,000.00 when you find gold and \$500.00 when you pass it; you don't even have to land on it. The catch is that the \$500.00 comes from a stack of 10 \$500.00 bills and once that is gone you no longer own the claim and the next player who lands on it may prospect again. So, there is the potential for earning \$6,000.00, which is exactly the minimum for a Power Play.

The Claim Jump can throw sand in the gears, though. If another player lands on one Claim Jump space (there is one on either side of the gold field) he takes \$500.00 from the claim stack. If a player were to land on both Claim Jump spaces in successive turns (low probability) that

player then owns the claim to the gold field and takes the claim peg from the old owner. This adds realism to the game. The gold field remains one of the best investments overall.

The cattle and sheep ranches cost a bit more than the farms, but you can raise herds on them. You can buy herds when you land on your ranch, including the purchasing turn. You can sell the herds the next time you land on your ranch or anytime you land on it after that. Both cattle and sheep provide the same return on your money, 500%, but the sheep are cheaper, \$100.00 versus \$200.00 for cattle.

Sheep cannot be rustled, but any cattle rancher landing on a sheep ranch can chase any herds there away, scattering them to the four winds. The lowly sheep herder does collect \$100.00 from any non-cattle ranchers that pass through his property. Sheep ranching can be tricky business but, in a game in which there are a number of people who do not own cattle ranches, sheep ranches can be money-makers. In a game where most or all of the other players are cattle ranchers, forget it; unless it's the only thing you were fortunate enough to buy.

Cattle ranchers must worry about rustlers. Any other player may end their movement on your ranch, providing they have at least a die roll sufficient to do so, and rustle your cattle. Since you can raise up to three herds on a ranch, it stands to reason that the more herds you raise at one time the more the likelihood that rustlers will strike. Of course, the rancher must gauge the other players' need or greed, but generally one herd is not a target, two herds bring attention and three herds bring a high price in Mexico.

Players must remember that, besides the sheep herder's toll, buying herds is the only way to earn money from ranches. It takes capital and at least two stops at the ranch to collect money. Coupled with the potential risks just discussed, ranches are only slightly better income producers than regular farms.

Towns are the safest investment and have the greatest income potential. For \$500.00 you can own your own casino and bank. When a player, other than the town owner, lands on the poker space in the town he picks up a card from the poker deck supplied with the game. He either pays or receives the amount stated on the card. Since the casino belongs to the town owner, any rewards or liabilities

are his. The casino, as always, has the edge with a two-thirds chance of coming out ahead.

Each time the owner lands in his town he collects \$100.00 from each of the other players and \$500.00 from the supply box. Also, \$500.00 is taken from the supply box and put in the town bank. The money in the town's bank is not the owner's but, belongs to anyone willing and able to take it. Because of the income potential, and since the poker game is the only liability of the town owner, a town becomes the best property in the game.

In a five or six player game the promise of easy money for a town owner is so great that you may wish to use a rules variation that we came up with. Our variation deletes the \$100.00 collected from each player when a town owner stops in his town. Further, the bank receives the monies from the rooms and stables, and the supply spaces in the town. It seemed logical for the "town" to collect this money. Of course, the town owner still collects the \$500.00 from the supply box and \$500.00 is put in the town bank as before.

Now, if a player has a zest for life and dreams about being another Jesse James, or if the cowpoke is simply down on his luck, he can take to the Outlaw Trail. For the player who has the misfortune of not owning any property this is the only option open but, in certain situations taking to the Outlaw Trail makes good sense even to the law-abiding property owner. Outlaws come in two categories in this game; the rustlers and the bank robbers.

Rustling is the safest strategy to use for a player taking to the outlaw trail. The risks are short term and, depending on the size of the herd, the rewards are good. Cattle rustlers should look for the largest herds, of course. Then all you do is open the back gate and mosey them on down to Mexico.

In order to rustle cattle, the player stops at the ranch, regardless of excess movement capabilities, and moves two dots along the outlaw trail, taking the cattle with him. A posse is then formed on the dot behind the outlaw, consisting of any other players wishing to join the bounty hunt. From then on its all dice luck in a race to Mexico with the outlaw rolling first. All regular movement is suspended until the Bounty Hunt is resolved.

Should a bounty hunter catch the

outlaw, that is, land on the same dot or pass him, a shoot-out takes place. The high roll on two dice wins. If the bounty hunter wins, the outlaw goes to jail and the bounty hunter collects a reward. If the outlaw wins he moves ahead one space and the chase continues.

A caution should be added for all potential outlaws. If you are caught on the Outlaw Trail, you may be lynched. One of the History Cards allows its possessor to lynch an outlaw the player catches on the Outlaw Trail. Statistically, the chances are slim but, the results are that the outlaw loses all property and returns to start with \$600.00 to begin as a new player.

Bank robbers may have a potential for making more money than do cattle rustlers but, there are long term risks in the form of a Wanted Poster. A bank robber goes through exactly the same procedure of bounty hunting as the cattle rustler, trying to get to Mexico with his ill-gotten gains. Unlike the rustler however, the bank robber is still in jeopardy after reaching Mexico. If a bank robber successfully makes it to Mexico, a Wanted Poster for him goes on display. Thereafter he may be sent to jail if another player lands on the same space as the outlaw on the Main Trail and wins a shoot-out. In this case, the bank robber does get to keep the money but, it means the loss of three turns cooling your heels in jail.

Potential outlaws should then watch for opportunities. When other players are engaged elsewhere so as to be unable or unwilling to join the posse, you should strike. In one game I played, I found myself to be the only player not in jail for one reason or another, so I promptly robbed the wealthiest bank. No one was able to Bounty Hunt since all were in jail. I did wind up with a price on my head in the form of a Wanted Poster but, it was the easiest money I made that game. The other side of the coin of course, is that at least one player should Bounty Hunt to "keep the outlaw honest".

The final phase of the game is the Political Power Play. As stated earlier, the accumulation of property and wealth is not the victory condition. To win, a player must control all of the properties of the other players through the Political Power Play.

This introduction of the concept of political power is in keeping with the intent to parallel life in the Wild West. Who among us has not seen a Western

where wealthy ranchers or bankers control towns or whole territories? It also serves to pep up the end of the game. Too often in games where wealth is the object, the winner becomes obvious long before the end. In *Frontier-6* it is not impossible for the most destitute player to win.

To play political power you must have at least \$6,000.00 and land on one of the three spaces marked "Political Power". The Power Play is at the player's discretion, and it is usually a good idea to build up your war chest past the \$6,000.00 minimum before challenging someone.

When a player decides to make a Political Power Play all regular play is suspended until it is resolved. The challenger puts \$2,000.00 in the supply box and \$4,000.00 in the center of the board. The challenged player must match the \$4,000.00 or, if he does not have that much, put all of his money in.

The challenger can then increase the amount in the center in increments of \$1,000.00 which the challenged player must match as before. The challenger should do this in order to draw out the rest of the money the challenged player has on hand, because you can not con-

trol a player until you win all of his money.

It is not a good idea to challenge a player wealthier than yourself unless forced by circumstance. Should the challenged player still have money, he can increase his dice total before the Power Play dice roll by purchasing pips on the dice for \$1,000.00 each. The challenger can negate this by putting up \$1,000.00 for each \$1,000.00 the challenged player puts up. But, the challenger may not increase his dice total in this manner.

Then each player rolls two dice with all of the money going to the winner of the roll. High roll wins. The challenger also wins if he rolls a total of "6" or if there is a tie. With luck even a person with one property and little or no money can win. I have even heard of a player who was lynched and came back to win the game.

After winning all of a challenged player's money the challenger gets a white control peg for each of that player's properties. Should the challenged player win the dice roll he receives only the money in the center of the board; he does not control the challenger's properties. The winner of the game is the first

player who has all of the white pegs corresponding to the properties owned by all of the other players.

If the Political Power Play sounds involved and difficult, don't worry. Included in the rules is an "Easy Guide To Playing Political Power" which takes you through it step by step and is very easy to follow.

We found that, in general, when the Political Power Player won the first dice roll it began to snowball because if he wins he can continue to challenge players until he either loses or beats all of the other players, *i.e.*, wins the game. As he wins more money he can pretty much do away with the threat of the challenged player adding to his dice total, thus becoming harder to beat.

All in all, *Frontier-6* is a fast-paced game easily learned. Cattle-rustling, bank robberies and lynchings add color and keep the game from becoming routine movements and purchases. Each new situation calls for a new strategy which can all be brought to naught by the roll of the dice. So, for a light-hearted 2-4 hour jaunt through the Wild West I suggest you pick up a copy and enjoy yourself.

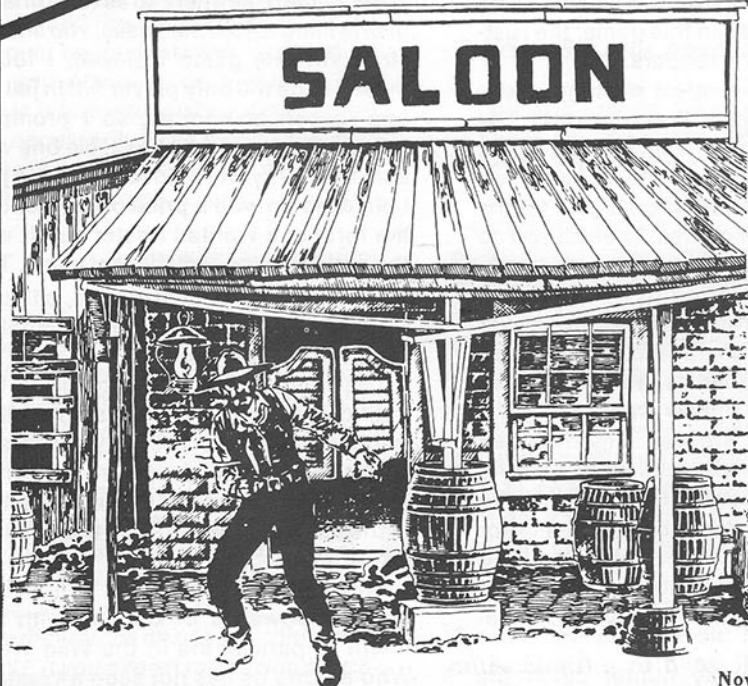
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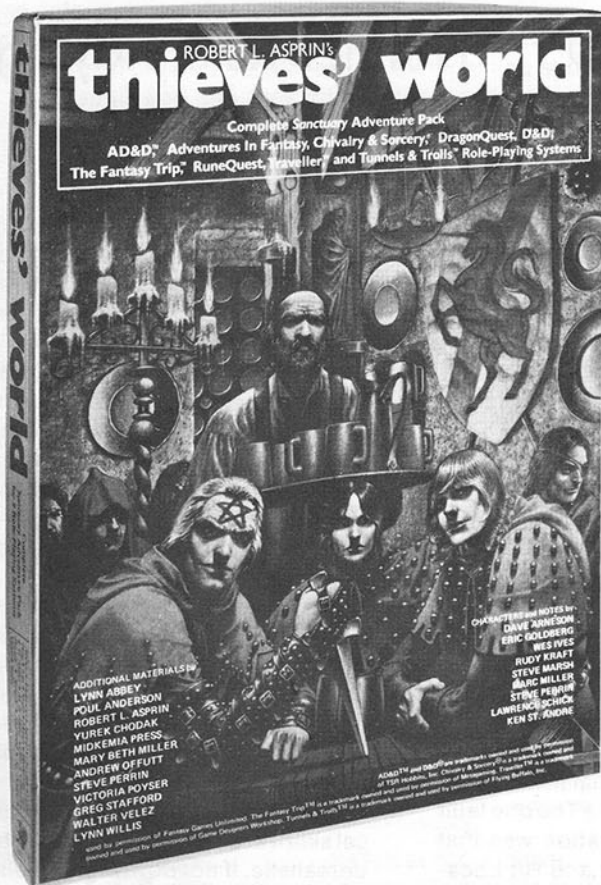
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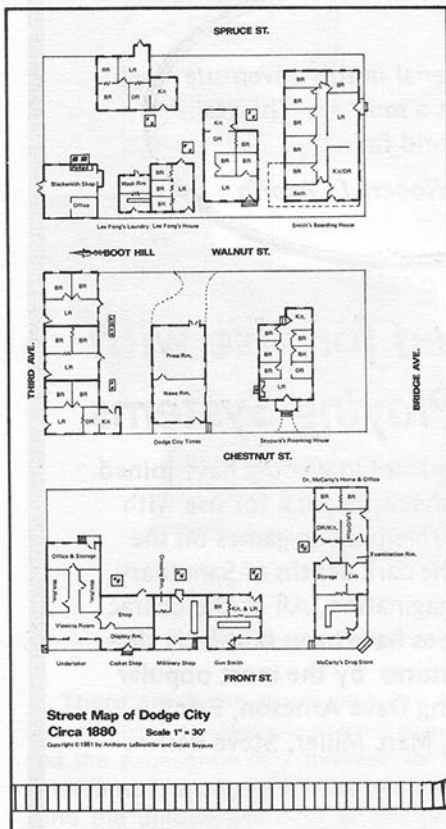


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WILD WEST®

Frontier Role Playing



Until recently, TSR's *Boot Hill*® role playing game of the "Old West" has enjoyed a virtual monopoly in this field. Well, this monopoly is no longer, for Fantasy Games Unlimited's *Wild West*® will give *Boot Hill* some serious competition. *Wild West* is written by Anthony P. LeBoutillier and Gerald Seypura. It is available for \$11.00 retail.

The game includes a forty page rule book, seven charts on heavy stock for copying (including a character sheet), and a map of the West. The map covers the area from the Mississippi River west to the California border. The reverse side of the map sheet is a map of Dodge City, Kansas circa 1880. The map of the West includes railroads, rivers, towns, forts, cattle trails, and the areas where the major tribes of Indians lived. The

map of Dodge City includes only the business district, but with a couple of the more important residences present also.

Physically the game is very appealing. There is a very good picture on the box cover, which is bright, colorful, and reminiscent of an old Smith & Wesson advertisement. The interior art is also quite good. It consists almost entirely of ink drawings of men of the Old West engaged in various actions. The drawings are good, but a little numerous. Probably three to four pages could have been saved if the artwork had been cut some.

The rules are edited and organized very well. There are no apparent typos, and everything is clear and easy to follow. (This is a rarity for FGU, but I have seen a tendency in their recent releases which suggests that their editing techniques are improving.) The one fault I found with the organization was that the Wound Effects Chart and Hit Location Table are on page seven, while the Firearm and Missile Fire Adjustment Table is on page twenty-one. This makes for some unnecessary page flipping, and can slow down the resolution of combat.

Whereas *Boot Hill* gives characters their speed and accuracy with guns and knives, and little else to go on, *Wild West* has a number of characteristics. These include physique, accuracy, agility, and strength. Characteristics are rolled randomly on three regular dice, giving a range from three to eighteen for each one except strength, which is figured from the character's height and weight. The characteristics determine the mastery of skills, which are very important in *Wild West*, as well as the amount of damage the character may sustain.

The game system is based on the mastery of the character in his chosen skill areas. There are forty-five skills available for the players to choose from, including Marksmanship, Sign Language, Archery, Mining, Medical, and even Civil Engineering. The level of mastery in each skill is determined by the required Characteristic Value (CV), which is usually an average of two of the character's abilities, and the number of experience points the character has obtained in the particular skill.

The character begins the game with ten skills, and rolls a random number for the amount of experience points he has obtained for that skill in his pre-game life. Certain skills may be learned after the start of the game. One problem I have noticed with the choosing of skills is that every player will choose the Medical skill if at all possible. This is extremely unrealistic, if not downright unplayable. There just is not any logical reason to believe seven doctors or former doctors are travelling around the Old West together, especially if they become train or bank robbers.

Virtually all of the actions a character may do in the game are controlled by his skills. *Wild West* employs a revolutionary new system for resolution of combat, and any other situation, called the Role Playing Probability Chart. This chart consists of a vertical line numbered from one to one hundred forty for Experience, a line numbered one to twenty for CV, and three lines, A, B, C, labelled with percentages. When a character wishes to perform an action he consults the appropriate skill. He then determines his experience points in that skill, along with his CV. A straight ruler or string is

then laid between the Experience number and the CV number, continuing across the chart to the three percentage lines. The number shown on the appropriate percentage table is the percent chance of successfully completing the task. The A line is for difficult things, the B for less difficult things, and the C line for relatively easy ones.

For example: Mad Pete wants to shoot his rifle at the Indian riding away on his horse. The Indian is at long range and moving, obviously an A line task. Pete consults his experience — 100, and his CV—12. The straightedge is then laid across this line to the A line, and Pete ends up with a 37% chance to hit the Indian. Of course the Firearm Adjustment Table has adjustments for Pete's position, the movement of the target, and other things which will change his percentage to hit.

The concept behind the Probability Chart is not new, but the way in which the chart is used for virtually all important actions, and the way the lines are related, thus incorporating it all into one, easy to use chart, is very new. I believe this system has very few, if any, disadvan-

tages and that this incorporation of many things into one chart could possibly be the new trend in role playing games. I hope it is, for it works very well. It speeds up resolution, is very playable, and does not hurt realism.

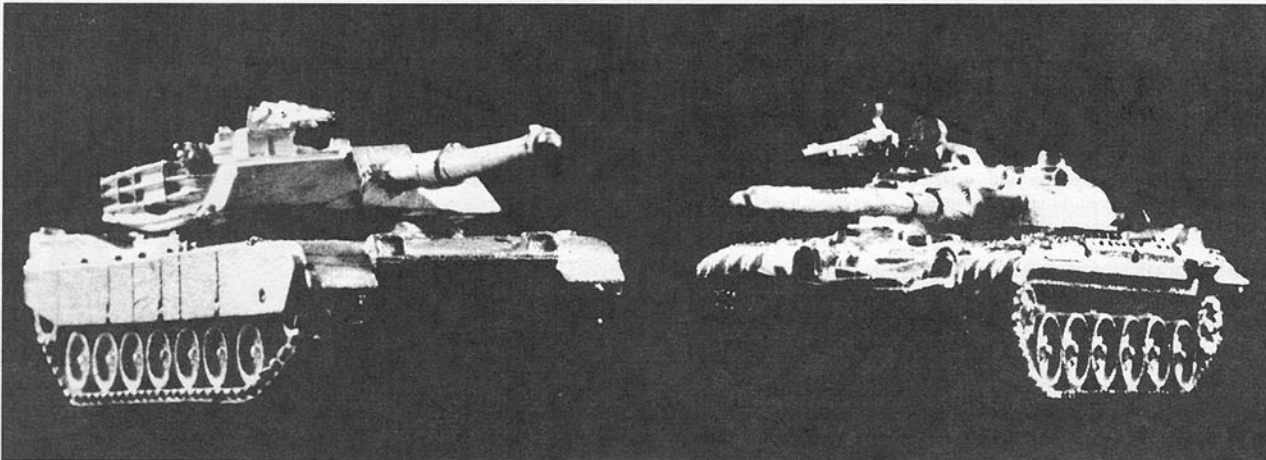
The combat system employs turns of two seconds each. Each turn is divided into six segments, and each action during the turn takes up a certain number of these segments. This system is similar to Yaquinto's *Swashbuckler*®, but there are many more actions possible. The different actions possible in one turn could range from firing a pistol twice, to firing once, running, falling prone, or starting to reload. If an action takes up more segments of the turn then are left, then it may be carried over into the next round. There is an Abort rule, which allows the character to change actions at a cost of two segments, so he does not have to shoot his rifle at the opponent whom he can no longer see, because he ran around the corner of the general store. He can instead begin to follow him, switch targets, or anything else.

The turn sequence and combat are a little hard to get used to using, but once

the players and gamemaster get acquainted with it, it flows very easily and is very playable.

It seems that when TSR published *Boot Hill*®, they took it for granted that every pistol and rifle used in the Old West was a Colt .45 calibre or else that every calibre of bullet does equal damage. Neither of these assumptions are true. *Wild West* lists many different fire arms. Each type of pistol or rifle is described, the ranges given, the damage it does, the speed, and the cost — all on one table. Weapons which are lighter and faster are usually of a smaller calibre, so do less damage than something like the Peacemaker. This pistol is slow, but does more damage. This leaves the choice of weapons up to the player and his personal preferences. He can carry small, fast guns, all rifles, all pistols, none of either, a mix, or any other combination. Players I have known have developed a favorite style, as a player of any role playing game does, and their weapons will match this style. This adds to the variety of the game, the fun, and also the realism.

Shotguns are broken down into sev-



If these tanks were any more realistic, they'd have to be included in disarmament talks.

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eral types, also. The guns of this variety include twelve, twenty, and ten gauge types, along with full and sawed-off barrels. The shotgun ammunition includes bird shot, buck shot, and slugs, each with different damages and ranges.

Hand to hand weapons are not all lumped together under the single heading of "knife" either. Statistics are given for knives, throwing knives, machetes, hatchets, tomahawks, axes, and others. Again, this leaves the choice up to the player's personal preferences and style. Some knives are quick and do one to six damage points, but an axe will do one to one hundred points of damage — if you can get it around in time.

Horses played an integral part in the life of the man of the Old West, and *Wild West* emphasizes this. The horses of *Wild West* are similar to the characters, in that they have characteristics and personality. A horse in *Wild West* has six characteristics, including strength and intelligence. Horses are also trained to acquire certain talents like jumping, and letting a rider shoot a gun from their back. The true worth of a horse is an involved process using the horse's age,

strength, intelligence, and talents. Thus, a character is always buying an individual horse, like no other at all, and priced like no other. This system is very realistic, but not wholly playable. The game master must set up a number of horses prior to beginning the game, so there will always be some on hand. Otherwise, he would have to spend about an hour of playing time selling horses every session one was needed.

The authors have a problem with the time frame of the game. The game is set up in the time of the 1880's. This is the time of the cattle drives, the train and bank robbers, the ranchers, and the gunfighters. The characters range from eighteen to thirty-six years old, but all of them are supposed to have not only had a chance to serve in the military, but to have had a chance to have served in the army of the CSA. True, a thirty-six year old man in the year 1880 could have fought in the Civil War, but a man eighteen years old in the same year could not have. True also, is the fact that only fifty percent of the characters have actually been in the military, and only fifty percent of these could have been in

the CSA army. This is only a small thing, and easily fixed, but the consistency found in the rest of the game was lacking.

Women are not discouraged from playing the game, but, still hung up on the idea of all player characters being Civil War veterans, the authors state that many women disguised themselves as men and served in the armies of both sides during the Civil War. This is just not so. Again, the consistency is lacking.

The authors also try to make the player believe he is not playing the Hollywood West, but the "Real West". The game does well in bringing about the "Real West", but slips into the "Hollywood" mold on repeated occasions . . . thank God. People who play *Wild West* are looking to play the most glamorous and exciting parts of the "real" West and of the "Hollywood" West. We want to be Clint Eastwood, John Wayne, Eli Wallach, and James Garner of the Hollywood West, but also Bat Masterson, Wyatt Earp, Jessie James, or Butch and Sundance of the real West. I strongly recommend *Wild West*. In America, our heroes have always been cowboys. Luckily, *Wild West* lets us be our heroes.

by Mike Gardner

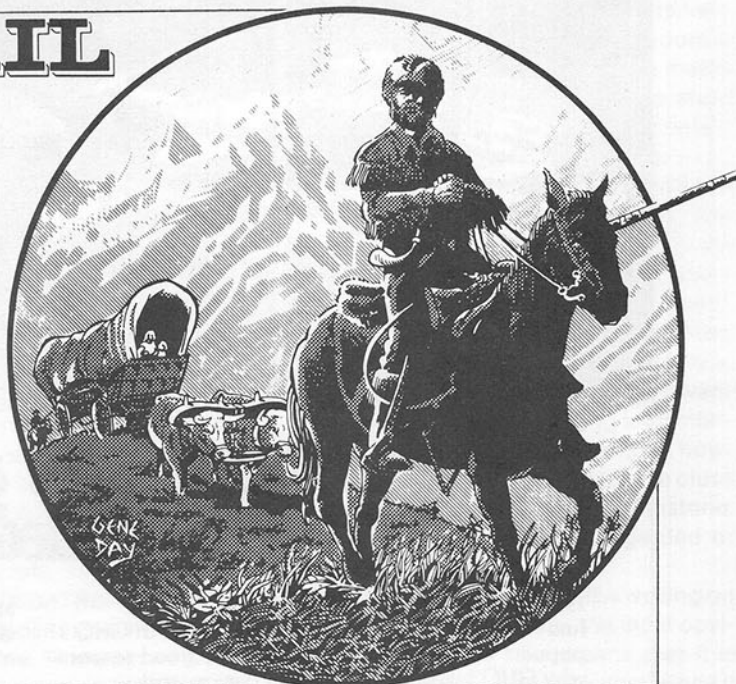
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Highly playable solo and including a point scale for victory conditions, OREGON TRAIL is ideal for tournament and club use. This fast-paced new game even includes systems for dealing with the various aspects of the hostile environment and encounters with the various Indian tribes. Each Indian encounter can be met and dealt with in several ways, depending upon the abilities and choice of the wagon master/player. Peaceful relations and trade or hostile action are all possibilities. Even weather, disease, river crossings and exploring for new mountain passes play important parts in this game of travel and exploration where speed must take second place to concern for survival.

OREGON TRAIL is available from better shops or direct from: Fantasy Games Unlimited Inc., P.O. Box 182, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576. The price for these many hours of enjoyment is \$13.00 postpaid.



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BOOKS

THE HISTORY OF BOARD GAMES by Robert McConville. Paperback \$7.75 via U.S. mail, \$8.75 via air mail or UPS Blue

Label, postpaid, from Creative Publications, P.O. Box 10328, Palo Alto, CA 94303. Published 1974. 104 letter-size pages, ca. 25,000 words plus many illustrations, one page bibliography.

This book invites comparison with the Provenzo's *Play It Again* and R. C. Bell's *Board and Table Games From Many Civilizations*. Like them, it is concerned with the history of board games and, more importantly, with descriptions of old or abstract boardgames. But *History* — a misleading title since the history section is very brief — is aimed at the educational market, with directions for making wooden boards and advice to teachers who wish to use the games to stimulate young students' problem-solving abilities and mathematical analysis. Limited copying permission is given, and all pages are perforated for ease of removal. Board diagrams and complete rules are presented for 56 abstract games.

Although the rules never amount to more than 3-400 words, some games are quite complex in play. Others, such as variations of *Tic-Tac-Toe*, are about as simple as one can get. A number of the "games" are actually one-person puzzles resembling in some ways the well-known

Solitaire. Others are essentially paper-and-pencil games, such as *The Web* and *Joining Points*. Others, such as the *Game of Hex*, have a perfect strategy or otherwise have been mathematically analyzed, though the analysis is not included here.

The "history" of board games is a boiled-down version of material found in Bell and earlier works, while the notes to teachers, though vague, could not be much improved. The instructions for making the boards, using equipment found in any school woodworking shop, are comprehensive but probably irrelevant to most gamers, since the paper boards are big enough to use.

The book includes about two dozen games not found in Bell, while the duplication between McConville and *Play It Again* is minimal. But excepting some schoolteachers, perhaps, the book offers little to readers that *Board and Table Games* does not provide. The Provenzo's book includes games of greater complexity and interest to the average gamer than *History* . . . , yet costs no more in paper and is more handsome to boot. Consequently, I have to rank *History of Board Games* as third among the three books of this type I have reviewed, which are still in print. — Lewis Pulsipher

BUSHIDO

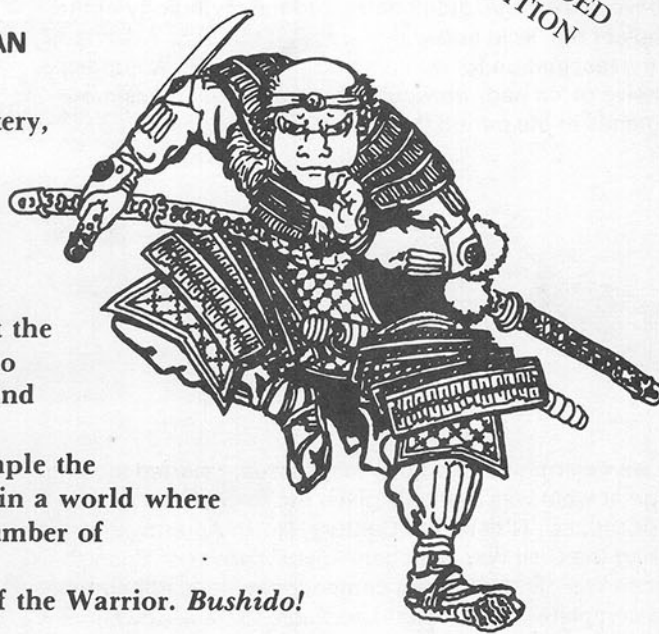
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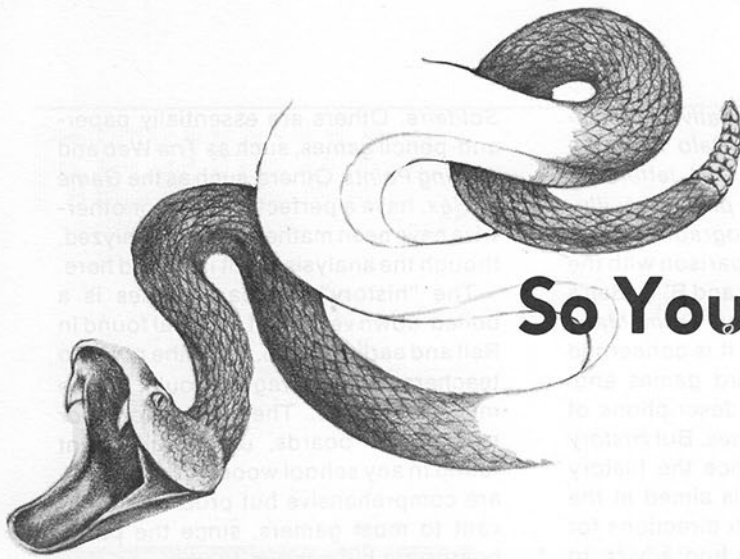
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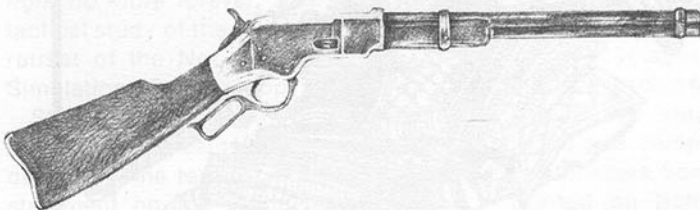
So You Wanna Play Cowboys

by T. J. Kask

For a genre that so fascinated us in the infancy of television, I found it strange that so little has been done in gaming *vis a vis* the Wild West.

Granted, our treatment of the native Americans was a black stain on our Nation's past, and that may have much to do with why there are few games dealing with the Indians and the many wars fought. Most combat of the type comprising the Indian Wars is difficult to simulate, at best.

This still does not explain why so few games, out of so many that have been done, didn't delve into the mythology of the cowboy of the "wild and wooly west". If the Wild West had half the fascination for gamers that the German Ardennes Offensive of '45 had, we would have had many times more games in the period than have been done to date.



When we determined to do this focus issue, I started looking around at what was available given the restrictions we had imposed; *i.e.*, Nineteenth Century, North America, not counting the Civil War, Mexican-American War or Spanish-American War. The following compendium does not pretend to be complete, merely what I was able to track down in a couple of weeks time. Some of the games are out of print, but worth watching out for at auctions, while others will be of interest only to those who are fans of this period or setting. For obvious reasons, I have left off of this listing those games already dealt with in longer articles in this issue.

APACHE® is the name of Yaquinto's offering in the field. Part of the players are Indians, part are "white-eyes". The game involves settling and pacifying a portion of the west. This is accomplished by building a railroad, towns, ranches, *etc.* To thwart this, it is incumbent upon the Indian(s) to destroy same. To further complicate things, the white player(s) must watch out for wagon trains that occasionally pass through, and see to their protection. Part of the **ALBUM GAMES™** series, **APACHE** should be available wherever Yaquinto games are sold.

THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH GAME is a relatively new release by the Arrowhead Gold Rush Co. It owes a lot to **Monopoly®** and sports a board that can only be described as "primitive" in the sense that Grandma Moses painted primitives. Grandma was better, though. The playing pieces are unique and worthy of note: semiprecious stones for player pieces, and bits of ore and pyrite for mine improvement symbols. It is not available through mail order.

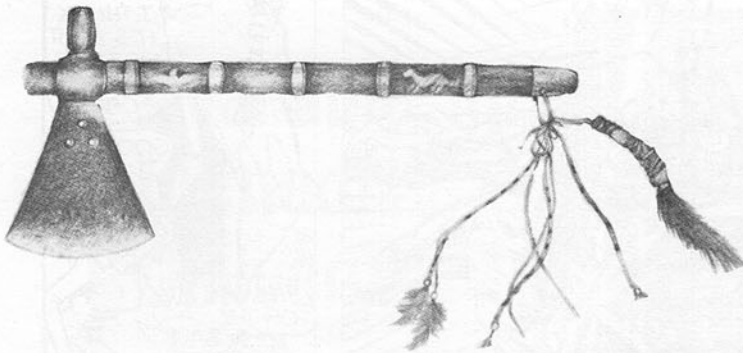
Custer, surprisingly enough, has been the subject of at least four games in the past six years. (That makes him the "Bulge" of Wild West games.) Of the four, the three American offerings have all gone out of print; I have only *seen*, not *studied*, the European entrant.

CUSTER'S LAST STAND was put out by Battleline Games, before they were Yaquinto, before they were Battleline/Heritage. The game had promise, and some interesting ideas; it seemed to suffer from incomplete development. For fans of the period, its worth spending a few bucks on at auction.

LITTLE BIG HORN was the third Custer game to be published in '76, this one from TSR. Of the three, I felt that this was far and away the best. It was flexible enough that either side could win the campaign, given the use of better sense by the cavalry player than Custer exhibited. It had many interesting gimmicks and features. Certainly worth obtaining *via* auction if you get the chance.

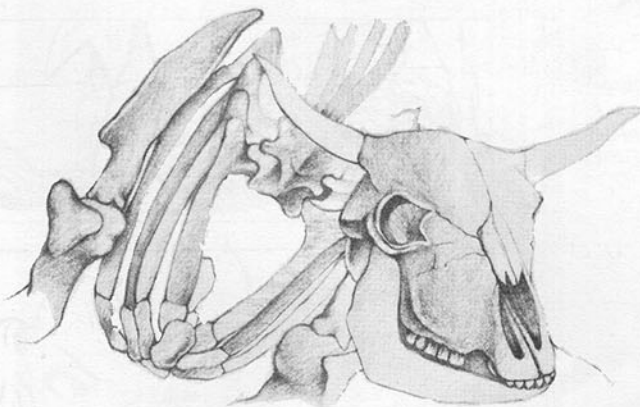
There is a fairly new release from International Team that I believe is also called **LITTLE BIG HORN**. As I remember, the graphic quality is on a par with the rest of their line, which is to say they are stunning. I have no idea how the game plays.

and Indians?



7th CAVALRY was a loser. I believe that it was put out by Attack Wargaming, a disreputable firm that also seems to have disappeared. If you see it at auction, and they want more than 75¢ or \$1, save your money.

O.K. *CORRAL*®, from Discovery Games, is essentially a card game, with special cards, hung on the premise of challenging other players to a draw. It is fairly fast, the rules are simple and yet the game can be quite enjoyable. "Backshooting" takes on new meaning and dimensions. It is priced at \$6.00, and available at many stores or direct from Discovery Games, 936 W. Hiway 36, St. Paul, MN 55113.



KLONDIKE®, from Gamma Two of Canada, is a parlor/beer&pretzels game dealing with the gold rush in the Klondike, sort of. Each player starts out as a hardluck miner, hoping to strike it rich and find the Mother Lode. If the dangers of the wilds are not enough to make a person think twice, the perils of civilization should be. The town in this game is designed to part the miners from as much of their poke as possible. Gamma Two games are distributed by Penn-Hurst Dist., and available in many stores.

There are two new games that should be available by the time you read this.

BOUNTY HUNTER® is from Nova Game Designs, and uses the popular "Picture Book" approach that was so successful in *ACE OF ACES*®. From what I have seen of the prototypes, it promises to be every bit as innovative, challenging and fun as its Nova predecessors. Further, *BH* is supposed to be the first of a series of interrelated games of the period, with each new addition adding one or more buildings or areas to the town setting. Watch for it, as it promises to be a winner.

GUNSLINGER® is Avalon Hill's entry into the field. All I know about it is that they have been working on the project for a couple of years now. In the past, the gamer could always count that as a sign that a good game was going to be forthcoming. I see no reason to think otherwise on this one, but only time will tell.

There is a scant handful of other games that deal with the period in question. In some cases, I have only been told about them, in others I have seen an ad or publicity of some sort on it.

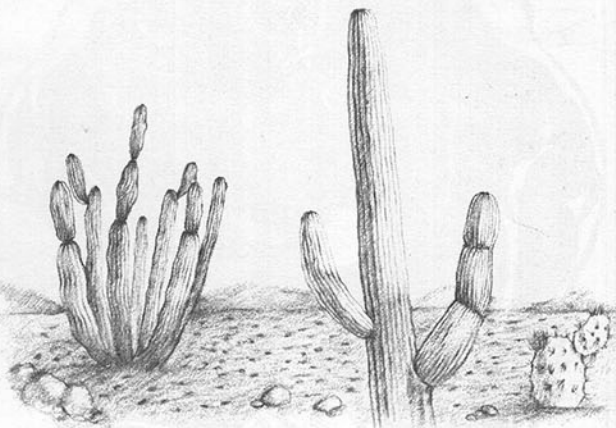
LAST SPIKE® is another product of Gamma Two Games, that involves building a railroad across Canada. From what I know of it, it qualifies as beer&pretzels.

TEXAS REVOLUTION® is a game from Austin, from Ming Enterprises, I think. It is about the efforts of Texas to throw off control by Mexico.

RAILS THROUGH THE ROCKIES® is a new product from Adventure Games in St. Paul. It involves competing to complete the first narrow gauge railroad through the Colorado Rockies in the late 19th Century. The players compete more against the terrain and physical obstacles than against each other.

WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE® is a card game from R. Sartore Games. It was formerly known as *Gunslinger*, until AH bought the rights to the name for their game.

I guess that it was inevitable that RPG's should be the spur to interest in this period for gaming. I'd say it was past due.



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STEVE SWENSTON
CONCEPT & ART

ALPHA ALIENS

ALLIED LEAGUE OF INTELLIGENT EXTRATERRESTRIAL NAVAL SERVICES



THE ADVENTURES OF SPACE TRADER VIC

STORY BY BRUCE WHITEFIELD & RON TALBOT.

ART. BY BRUCE WHITEFIELD.

#5

TRADER VIC HAS PURCHASED THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE AND IS NOW ON ROUTE TO THE DISNEY PLANET WHERE HE HOPES TO UNLOAD THE BRIDGE ON THE ARCHAIC STRUCTURES CURATOR. BUT FIRST A QUICK STOP FOR FUEL AT A STATION OPERATED BY A FRIENDLY RODENTINE RACE

OL' DOC DISNEY SHOULD LOVE THIS BRIDGE!

BUT, UNKNOWN TO VIC, HE STILL OWES SALES TAX TO THE DREADED EARTH IRS WHICH HAS SENT THEIR CRACK AGENT-RONNY RAYGUNS TO TRACK THE WOODEN NICKEL DOWN!

EVERYONE HAS TO PAY TAXES.

EXCEPT THE RICH, LARGE CORPORATIONS AND CHAOTIC PRESIDENTS.

STEP ON IT, JAMES. WE MUST BEAT THEM TO THE GAS STATION.

© BRUCE WHITEFIELD 1992

PERHAPS THEY CAN BE PREVENTED FROM REFUELING.

LATER, WHEN TRADER VIC ARRIVES ...

THIS IS THE PRIVATE TRADER WOODEN NICKEL CALLING NUTTREE STATION. REQUEST PERMISSION TO LAND.

NUTS TO YOU!

WE GOT NO ROOM FOR YOUR TYPE HERE!

BROM & ARYLLA

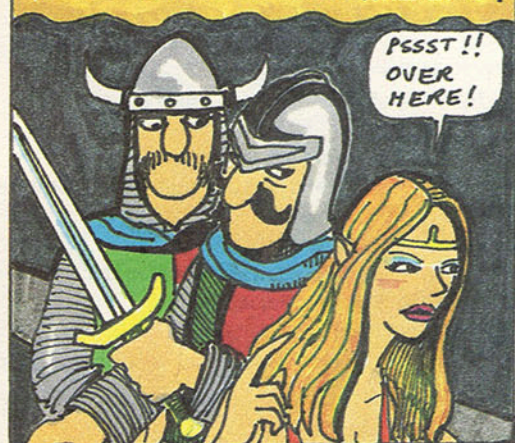
BY
STEVE SWENSTON



SHORTLY BEFORE FINIEOUS CAME TO AG, HE AND HIS PALS CLEANED UP A NASTY HOBBIT CONSPIRACY. NOW IT CAN BE TOLD,

THE TRUTH BEHIND THE HOBBIT PLOT TO RULE THE WORLD!!!!!!

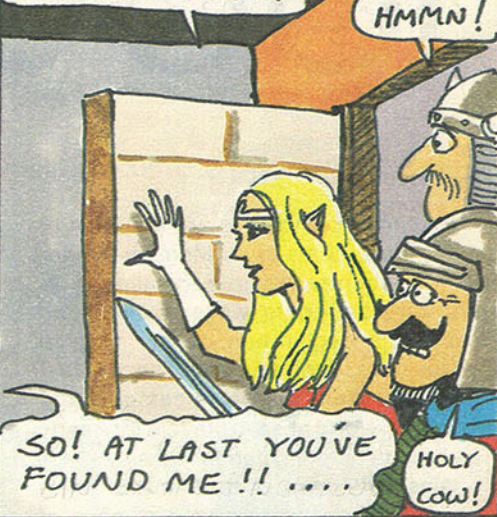
THE BATTLE FOR SAPHID STILL CONTINUES... WE FIND FRED, CHARLY, AND THE CUTE ELF MAGE IN HOT PURSUIT OF A HALFLING!



I SEE ONE OF THEM!



HE WENT THROUGH THIS SECRET DOOR.. AND... OH!



NO! IT CAN'T BE! GASP! NOT YOU!!



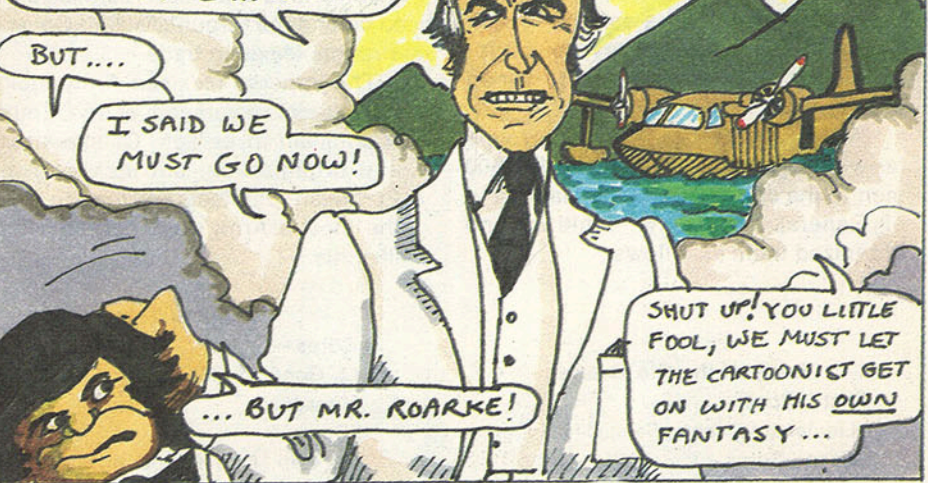
YES! I GOT TIRED OF THAT STUPID ISLAND AND YELLING "BOSS, DE PLANE... DE PLANE" SO I CAME TO THIS WORLD WHERE I CAN ORGANIZE US SHORT PEOPLE INTO A BIG POWERFUL FORCE!



... WHAT!.. NO! NOT NOW!



I'M SORRY TATTOO... BUT YOUR FANTASY HAS RUN OUT OF TIME... WE...



©BI JDW

1880 ■ THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS AND THE MEXICAN EMPIRE ■ GO TO WAR!

by Samuel Gill

Extended campaigns are the ideal of many a wargame club. Members yearn to lose themselves in a detailed, cut-and-thrust struggle, waged by land and sea, from declaration of war to final peace talks. Such an enterprise may last through several wargame campaigning seasons — and absorb players for nearly as long in actual calendar time.

Alas, fulfillment of that kind of campaign is about as rare as a glimpse of the Holy Grail. Lack of troops, maps, and ships, petty squabbles over rules, faulty initial organization, inadequate refereeing, and (most of all) fluctuating levels of player interest usually combine to scuttle such efforts somewhere along the way. The Heart of America Tactical and Strategic Order of the Followers of Featherstone (HATSOFF) thus felt quite pleased to complete the epic Rio Grande War of 1880, or Second Mexican-Texian War. (For an episode from the preceding conflict, see AG No. 6.)

The rivalry between Texas and Mexico goes back, of course, for quite a ways. In 1880, the Alamo had not been forgotten in Texas, nor San Jacinto south of the border, so it was easy to postulate a war of mutual revenge. In HATSOFF's scenario, a Confederate victory in the Civil War allowed the French puppet Maximilian of Habsburg to succeed in setting up his Mexican Empire, while a second secession movement re-established the Texas Republic. After 15 years of provocation, these two powers went to war on 22 May, 1880.

HATSOFF matched the contestants fairly evenly. Texas called about 180,000 men to the colors, under the leadership of General Thomas W. Whiting, and organized them as follows:

Army of the Rio Grande

First Corps —

Lieutenant General Samuel H. Anderson

Second Corps —

Lieutenant General Hiram W. Maxwell

Third Corps —

Lieutenant General Michael A. Hogan

Fourth Corps —

Lieutenant General Austin D. Marshall

Fifth Corps —

Lieutenant General Joseph M. Douglas

Sixth Corps —

Lieutenant General Marcus F. Tyler

Seventh Corps —

Lieutenant General James R. Bruce

Cavalry Corps —

Lieutenant General David C. Butler

Each corps was composed of three infantry divisions (each of two brigades) with an attached cavalry brigade and supporting artillery. There were three two-brigade cavalry divisions under General Butler.

The Texas Navy comprised three sea-going ironclads (*Sam Houston*, *President Jones*, and *Mirabeau B. Lamar*) fit to lie in the line against any vessel afloat. Supporting this first line was the big second-line ironclad steamship, the *Commodore Moore*, three powerful coast defense vessels (*Sibley*, *McCulloch*, and *Dowling*), a trio of armored steam frigates fitted for commerce raiding (*Ranger*, *Republic*, and *Lone Star*), and the 18-knot torpedo ram *Longhorn*. Vice Admiral Caleb C. James, a young flag officer renowned for dash and sagacity, commanded this fleet. His mission was to defend the Republic's Gulf Coast and strangle Mexican trade.

The Imperial Mexican Army took the field under command of the Emperor Maximilian in person. Of like strength and organization, but including many European volunteers and foreign legions, the Imperial Army's order of battle looked like this:

Army of Tejas

I Corps —

Lt. Gen. Don Mariano Reyes, Count of Managua

II Corps —

Lt. Gen. Don Felipe Arista, Duke of Cozumel

III Corps —

Lt. Gen. Don Manuel Bravo, Count of Panama

IV Corps —

Lt. Gen. Don Alfredo van der Smissen, Duke of Nicaragua

V Corps —

Lt. Gen. Don Miguel Miramon, Duke of Honduras

VI Corps —

Lt. Gen. Prince Carlos Luis (Maximilian's younger brother Karl Ludwig)

VII Corps —

Lt. Gen. Don Octavio Alvarado, Count of Roatan

Cavalry Corps —

Lt. Gen. Don Cesar de la Vega, Count of Fonseca

The Imperial Navy mustered three first class ironclad turret ships, the *Emperador Maximilian*, *Matehuala*, and *Bazaine*, of which the last named was at the time the most powerful man o' war in the Western Hemisphere. In addition, there were available four older broadside ironclads of the second class (*Balboa*, *Cortez*, *Panuco*, and *Principe Carlos Luis*), three armored steam frigates (*Torbellino*, *Regenerador*, and *Lanza Plata*), and the old turret ram *Vencador del Alamo*. Admiral Don Pedro de Portales commanded the Mexican fleet, with his flag on the *Bazaine*.

With a larger standing force already under arms and a fleet better adapted to deep-water operations, the Mexican Empire held all the cards for an opening hand. Texas' Navy was designed for coast defense and her Army needed more time to recall reservists to the ranks. The drama of the initial campaigns, therefore, would take place on the soil of the Republic.

The logical line of defense for Texas lay not in the dusty chaparral barrens along the Rio Grande, but in the fertile valley of the Nueces River, where the fortresses of Uvalde, Cotulla, and Agua Dulce protected the major crossings of that river and the breadbasket of the

Republic. General Whiting would have preferred to organize his raw levies behind this fortress belt, but fire-eating public opinion compelled him to attempt a risky forward concentration and carry the Lone Star banner all the way to the Rio Grande. Worse yet, he was likewise forced to hold Anderson's First Corps in reserve far to the rear in anticipation of a not altogether unlikely Mexican amphibious landing on the Gulf Coast.

It was, therefore, with his under-strength army stretched in a thin cordon along the Rio Grande that General Whiting had to face the Mexican onslaught. Tyler's Sixth Corps anchored the Texian right at Eagle Pass. The Fifth and Seventh Corps were concentrated in the Brownsville area, and only Hogan's Third Corps and Butler's Cavalry Corps were available to hold the center at Laredo, with the rest of the Army of the Rio Grande many marches to the rear.

But before the soldiers could complete their mobilizations and come to grips, naval war erupted in the Gulf. Commerce raiders of both navies were at sea within a few days of the declaration of hostilities, inaugurating cruiser warfare from which Mexico particularly was to suffer. The battle fleets were slower off the mark, but on 30 June, 1880, Admiral Portales put to sea from Tampico with his whole strength and orders to harry the Texas coast. On 3 July Portales' squadron lay to off Port Isabel, dropping mines to close the South Padre Island Channel and shelling the port. This provocation drew the Texian battle squadron from its fleet base at Corpus Christi like a swarm of hornets and a major fleet action was fought off Port Isabel on the hazy morning of 4 July, 1880. After some initial confusion, Admiral James was able to dash in with his inferior fleet and catch Portales napping. The Mexicans lost the ram *Principe Carlos Luis* and the armored cruisers *Regenerador* and *Torbellino*. Both the *Emperador Maximilian* and the *Matehuala* sustained heavy damage and Admiral Portales was lucky enough to be able to tow the crippled *Vencador del Alamo* back to Tampico with her decks nearly awash. The Republic had altered the balance of naval power in its favor, at least temporarily, in exchange for the loss of the central battery ship *Sam Houston* and the *Longhorn*. The Texian coasts were safe for the moment and Admiral James was able to devote his full attention to commerce raiding.

The glad news of victory at sea was,

however, soon followed by tidings of defeat on the Rio Grande front. By the first week in July, General Whiting had concentrated some 35,000 men at Laredo under "Fighting Mike" Hogan of Third Corps. Reports showing massive Mexican forces converging on the middle Rio Grande were discounted, but on 5 July the Imperial Army began bridging the river under cover of a heavy bombardment and two days later the Emperor fell upon Hogan with four *corps d'armee* and three divisions of cavalry. After a stiff fight the Texians were routed with the loss of 10,000 men and driven up the line of the Rio Grande Northern Railroad toward Cotulla, abandoning all their stores at Laredo. It was a severe tactical defeat and a strategic disaster of the first magnitude, from which Texas was not to recover.

While the Emperor was thus smashing in the center of Texas' first line of defense, General van der Smitten, commanding IV Corps on the Mexican left, had also scored a signal success. General Ortega's brigade of dragoons had forded the Rio Grande at El Moral on 9 July, burned the railhead at Spofford, and raided the supply line of General Tyler's Sixth Corps. Although General Dennis' Texian cavalry brigade chased Ortega back across the river in a hot little clash at Jimenez, Tyler's vulnerability had been amply demonstrated. The Sixth Corps began withdrawing toward its base at Uvalde on 11 July. Van der Smitten followed closely and seized Eagle Pass the next day.

With his left and center thus cleared the Emperor was free to turn his attention towards his right flank. Two Texian Corps (Douglas' Fifth and Bruce's Seventh) based on Sarita still blocked any Imperial advance along the line of the Texas Central Railroad. Leaving the troops which had done most of the fighting at Laredo to refit, the Emperor marched east with his II and III Corps, plus the cavalry divisions of Valencia and Orantes. Maximilian intended to effect a junction with the Mexican right wing under his brother Prince Carlos Luis, cautiously advancing northward from Reynosa and Matamoros. If successful this pincers movement could entrap the 50,000 men of the Texian left.

General Whiting contemplated making a stand at Rudolph, but soon realized the peril to his outnumbered forces. Before the jaws of the Imperial nutcracker could close, the Texians burned their stores at Sarita and retreated across Los Olmos

Creek on 16 July. Mexican cavalry pursued as far as Ricardo. In a campaign lasting only eleven days, the Emperor had substantially cleared the area between the Rio Grande and the Nueces, and pushed his columns deep into Texas.

The next phase of the war would see the Republic trying to concentrate its forces and recover the initiative, while Mexico strove to crack the fortress line of the Nueces.

By the waning days of July General Whiting had concentrated five *corps d'armee* around the powerful fortress of Agua Dulce to oppose the Mexican right. On the middle Nueces, General Hogan was to maneuver his shaken Third Corps and Butler's cavalry to cover the fortress of Cotulla, while Tyler and the Sixth Corps operated against Mexican supply lines.

The Emperor, meanwhile, had consolidated his left wing and center (I, IV and V Corps) under General van der Smitten, the Duke of Nicaragua. The Duke's mission was to take Cotulla and open the way to San Antonio. By 27 July, van der Smitten had closed up to the line of the Nueces and was preparing to bridge the river, Hogan having dynamited the crossings there earlier.

The Mexican right wing was under the Emperor's own hand. Composed of the II, III, VI, and VII Corps, plus de la Vega's Cavalry Corps, the Imperial right had established its forward base at Rudolph, poised to strike at either Agua Dulce or the main Texian naval base at Corpus Christi. Whiting was thus forced to detach General Maxwell's Second Corps from his field army in order to secure the naval base.

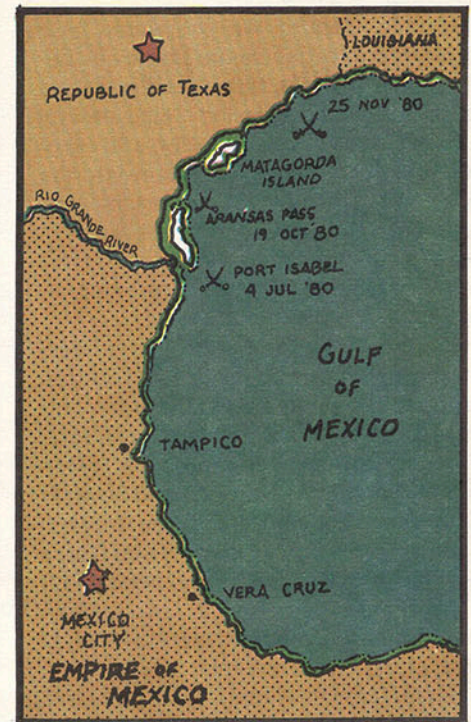
The Texians were able to open their offensive first, however. On 28 July, General Tyler, thrusting from Uvalde, pushed Dennis' cavalry forward to Carrizo Springs and Asherton, thus compromising van der Smitten's supply lines running back along the Rio Grande Northern to Laredo. On the 29th Dennis repulsed General Rinaldo's brigade of lancers in a sharp skirmish at Asherton, maintaining the Texian threat. Accordingly, on 1 August, the Duke followed with stronger forces. Placing himself at the head of his own IV and Miramon's V Corps, van der Smitten advanced through Asherton, Carrizo Springs, and Crystal City, driving Dennis across Elm Creek, until he brought Tyler's whole force to battle at La Pryor on 3 August. In the ensuing action, the Texian Sixth Corps was heavily defeated and forced

to scramble across the Nueces to regroup. The Imperial left was thus secured. Two days later, the Emperor crossed Los Olmos Creek with the Imperial right wing and marched north, seeking a decisive battle.

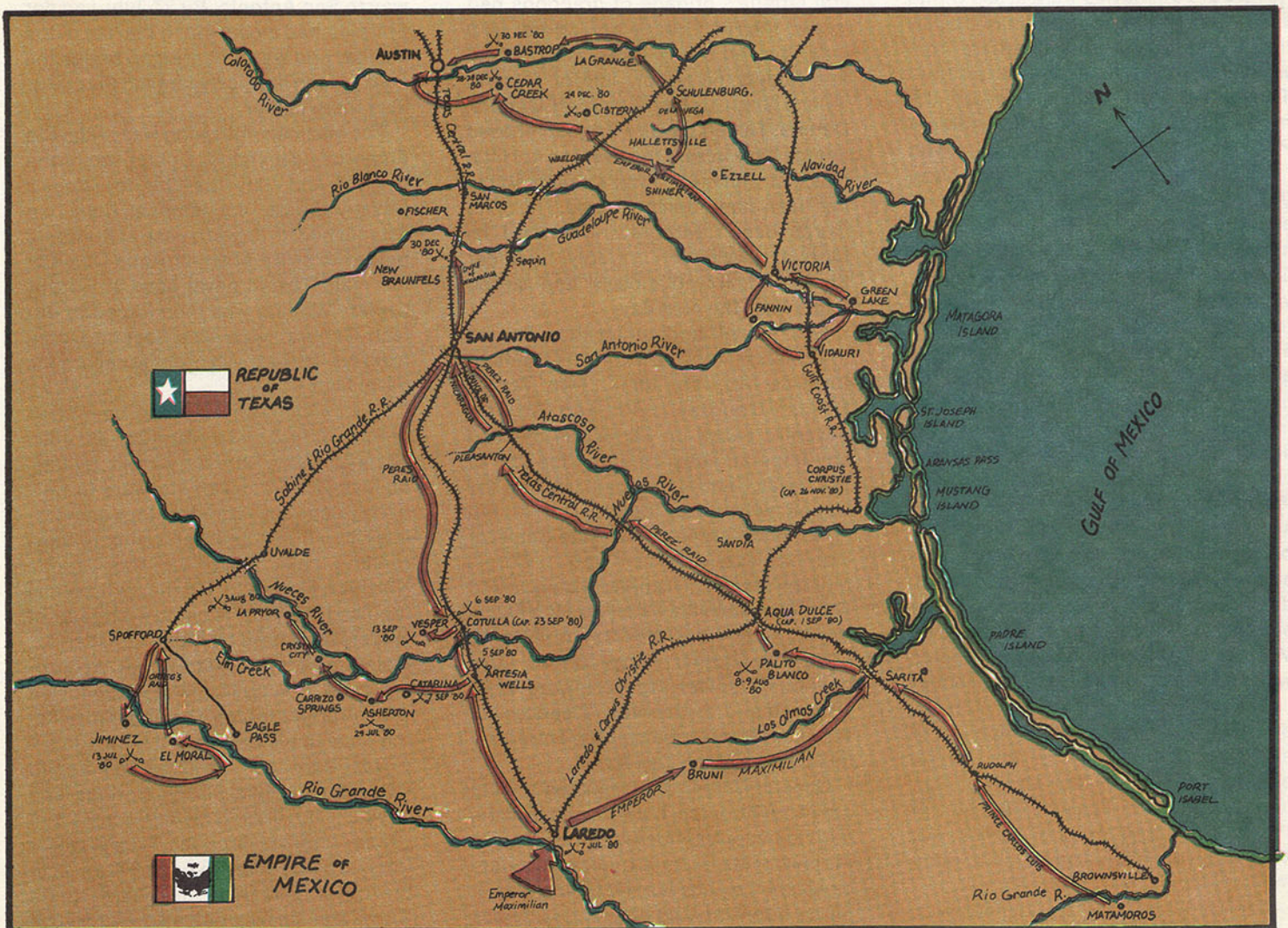
The clash came near the hamlet of Palito Blanco. In a hammer-and-tongs battle lasting two days (8 and 9 August, 1880), General Arista's II Corps turned the Texian right while Prince Carlos Luis delivered a pulverizing attack on their center. Casualties were heavy on both sides, with Imperial losses totalling nearly 12,000 men and the Republic's topping 17,000. On the 10th General Whiting retreated behind the Nueces on Corpus Christi, which had already beheld the dust of raiding Mexican cavalry. The Emperor moved immediately on Agua Dulce, threw up siege lines, and summoned his battering train. Mexican cavalry picketed the south bank of the lower Nueces from Sandia to its mouth. General Whiting now began constructing

already outmaneuvered and beaten in the field, lay pinned to the Gulf Coast and shackled to the defense of the vital naval facilities at Corpus Christi. Hard-marched and out-numbered detachments — the Third, Sixth, and Cavalry Corps — clung to the line of the upper Nueces and the fortresses of Cotulla and Uvalde. The loss of supply depots at Laredo and Sarita had seriously affected Whiting's battleworthiness as well, and squarely between the unsupported fragments of his army stood the mass of the Imperial Mexican forces. Only lack of supplies and distance prevented their march directly on the Republic's capital city at Austin. It was at this perilous stage of the war that the Texas Congress earthworks to defend Corpus Christi. The naval base was well protected by Forts Bowie, Travis, Crockett, and Fannin from attack by sea but it lay entirely open on the land side.

The Texian crisis was now very serious indeed. The bulk of the Republic's army,



MAJOR SEA BATTLE



MAJOR LAND BATTLE

relieved General Whiting of his command and appointed one of their number, Senator H. H. Bradford, to the post of General-in-Chief.

At sea, however, the tides of war still flowed in favor of Texas. By the first week of August, Texian cruisers had taken 19 Mexican prizes and so seriously damaged the Empire's credit that overseas purchase of arms, military stores, and warships had come practically to a halt. The Imperial Navy was forced to adopt a convoy system and the first such convoy of ten merchant vessels left Vera Cruz bound for Panama on 9 August. Six days later Admiral James intercepted this convoy off Cape Catoche in the Yucatan Channel. The Mexicans fought their way through and reached Colon on 27 August, having sunk the Texian steam frigate *Ranger*. But the action cost the Imperial Navy the fast, powerful cruiser *Lanza Plata*, and the *Bazaine* was so badly damaged that she was practically knocked out for the duration of the war.

Mexican ill fortune at sea was, however more than balanced by the surrender of Agua Dulce on 1 September, after a siege and bombardment of 18 days. This success freed the Emperor's hands for his next moves. While continuing to gather supplies for a final, war-winning stroke at Austin, the Mexican army kept close watch on Bradford's lines at Corpus Christi and along the lower Nueces, preventing Bradford from detaching troops for other threatened sectors.

On 2 September, General Perez' Guard Cavalry Division cut loose from the Imperial right wing for a raid on the undefended railhead at San Antonio. Two days later, General van der Smisssen crossed the Nueces and summoned Cotulla, shooing Hogan's dispirited Third Corps away from its covering position in a sharp skirmish on 6 September. To compel the Duke to release his grip on the fortress, General Butler launched his cavalry on a massive raid on Mexican supply lines. But the Texian horsemen were repulsed at Artesia Wells and barely cut their way back across the Nueces after a gruelling saber-and-carbine battle at Catarina on the 7th. Perez put San Antonio to the torch on 8 September, after completely destroying the rail yards there, and marched to join the rest of de la Vega's Corps, already on the middle Nueces with the Duke of Nicaragua.

The exhausted Texian right wing was now in desperate straits. The Third, Sixth, and Cavalry Corps effected a junction and attacked van der Smisssen's

lines at Vesper on 13 September. The outnumbered Texians were defeated with a loss of over 7,000 men. Ortega's dragoons, supported by General Iturbe's fresh squadrons, harried the retreating Texians mercilessly until they took refuge under the guns of Uvalde. Cotulla capitulated ten days later and the line of the Nueces was fatally breached.

This chilling news compelled General Bradford to begin a drastic strategic redeployment of his forces. On 26 September, leaving the Fifth Corps and the defense of Corpus Christi in the determined hands of General Douglas, Bradford led the remaining four *corps d'armee* of his left wing in a lugubrious retreat on San Antonio. He hoped there to halt the Imperial Army's inevitable lunge at Austin. The beaten Texians huddled on the upper Nueces were to leave Uvalde to its fate and march to join the General-in-Chief. The fought-out Third Corps was to be disbanded and a new militia formation, the Eighth Corps under Lieutenant-General Hoamer P. Winslow, raised in its stead.

The Imperial Army failed to fall upon Bradford's retreat and force a decisive battle. The Emperor opted for the safer course of first eliminating Corpus Christi as the primary Texian naval base and as a fortress flanking any further advance northward. On 29 September the investment of Corpus Christi began. Against all odds, General Douglas put up a remarkable defense. After an initial probing of his earthworks, the Emperor concluded that the Army of Tejas could not bear the strain of an assault and must settle down to a regular siege. As the weeks dragged by, it began to look as if Texas might yet reorganize and again take the field with new forces and every hope of success.

However, on 17 October, 1880, Admiral Portales arrived off Mustang Island with his refitted squadron to begin a close blockade of Corpus Christi. Mining operations began off Aransas Pass, and on 19 October Admiral James sailed out with six ironclads to break the blockade and drive off the Mexicans. The battle was an unprecedented and scarcely credible catastrophe for Texas. Barely five minutes after opening fire the breastwork monitor *Dowling* blew up when a shell from the *Vencador del Alamo* detonated her torpedoes. Before the confused naval dogfight was over, the *Ben Milam*, an old turret ram recommissioned under the stress of war, had been torpedoed and sunk, the *Sibley* had struck her colors un-

der a hail of shot from the *Panuco*, the *Lone Star* had been run down after a short stern chase and shot to pieces by the *Matehuala's* big guns, and the *Emperador Maximilian* had rammed and sunk the *Mirabeau B. Lamar*, sending Admiral James and most of her crew to the bottom. Only the coast defense ironclad *McCullough*, badly battered, escaped to anchor dejectedly under the guns of Fort Travis. The "Chickenhawk" (as Texian sailors had nicknamed the Habsburg double-eagle superimposed on the Mexican tricolor flag) had swept the Lone Star banner from the Gulf in an hour's cannonade.

After this paralyzing blow the Empire's final triumph seemed only a matter of time. Yet the Republic grimly refused to concede defeat. Portales tightened his grip on the Texas coast, detaching two ironclads to blockade Galveston, while the Emperor's siege guns relentlessly pounded Douglas' trenches and bombproofs. Still, another five weeks passed before the stubborn garrison reached the last extremity. On 24 November Douglas informed the Navy that he must soon ask for terms, and on the 25th the remaining Texian vessels in Corpus Christi attempted to break out toward Galveston.

Led by Captain Gideon F. Willard of the *President Jones* (promoted Rear Admiral on the eve of the sortie), the Texians steamed out through the St. Joseph Island Channel with the *Jones* and *Commodore Moore*, trailed by the hastily patched-up *McCulloch*. Portales' squadron (*Matehuala*, *Panuco*, *Vencador del Alamo*, and the newly-launched *Almirante Jurien*) gave chase and caught up with the Texians off Matagorda Island. By skillful ship handling and the sacrifice of the *McCulloch*, Willard succeeded in crippling the *Matehuala* and beating off pursuit. His two remaining ships eluded the Mexican blockaders off Galveston and slipped into port in the pre-dawn gloom of the next morning.

Douglas surrendered Corpus Christi and the 25,000 men of its garrison on 26 November, 1880, after holding out for an incredible 58 days.

General Bradford meanwhile, finding the ruins of San Antonio useless as a base, had drawn his dispirited army closer to Austin and was attempting to refit in the fertile country between the Guadeloupe and Rio Blanco Rivers. His six remaining *corps d'armee* were disposed in a 50-mile arc astride the line of the Texas Central Rail Road, covering

the crossings of the Guadeloupe near Seguin, New Braunfels, and Fischer. The Cavalry Corps and Headquarters, Army of the Rio Grande, were located at San Marcos.

The Emperor, meanwhile, had boldly divided his larger and more confident forces into two unequal wings, intending to employ a hammer-and-anvil strategy. The Imperial left wing, II and IV Corps, assembled at Pleasanton under General van der Smitten, the Duke of Nicaragua. Van der Smitten was to threaten an advance directly on Austin along the line of operations San Antonio-New Braunfels-San Marcos, and act as anvil for the hammer of the Imperial right.

The right wing, five *corps d'armee* plus de la Vega's cavalry, commanded by the Emperor in person, was to concentrate at Vidauri, cross the lower San Antonio River, and sweep up the valley of the Navidad towards Austin. The Emperor planned to cut Bradford's communications and force a decisive battle on him south of the Colorado River.

On 10 December, 1880, the Imperial Mexican Army of Tejas opened its last campaign of the war. At first light, the Duke of Nicaragua crossed the Atascosa River in full march for San Antonio. The Duke's advance guard, General Lopez' brigade of lancers, brushed aside Texian home guards there and the whole Imperial left wing occupied San Antonio on the 13th. For several vital days, Bradford's attention had to be firmly focused on this most likely and dangerous line of Mexican operations.

At the same time, the much stronger Imperial right was passing the lower San Antonio River at Fannin and Green Lake. De la Vega's Cavalry Corps, screening this movement, reached Victoria on the Guadeloupe on 15 December and had marched as far as Ezzell by the 17th. The dusty, crimson columns of Mexican infantry were close behind.

However, even as late as the following day, Mexican intentions were not clear to General Bradford. Feeling that the main Imperial thrust would be delivered in orthodox fashion along the line of the Texas Central, and unwilling to take the offensive due to the unreliable state of his forces, Bradford was compelled to concentrate four corps in defensive lines at New Braunfels. To observe and contain the unknown strength of the Mexican right wing, he sent Butler's Cavalry Corps to Waelder, where the Second and Eighth Corps reinforced them on 21 December.

The five corps under the Emperor —

125,000 men — were by then closing up to Shiner and Hallettsville, while the Imperial Cavalry Corps had reached Schulenburg, within striking distance of the intact bridge over the Colorado at LaGrange. The Emperor was drawing his net tightly around the unsupported left wing of the Army of the Rio Grande, while de la Vega's troopers were camped only a few days march from the Texas capitol at Austin.

By the 23rd of December General Bradford had realized and correctly assessed the relative strengths of the Mexican wings. On 24 December he ordered a general withdrawal toward Austin, leaving only the Fourth Corps as a rearguard to dispute the passage of the Guadeloupe at New Braunfels. The two corps at Waelder retreated rapidly through Cistern, pushing aside the dismounted dragoons of General Orantes' cavalry division, which attempted to bar the road there in a crisp little firefight on Christmas Eve. General Butler's Cavalry Corps crossed the Colorado at Bastrop and entrenched in position to protect the capital city against a threatened Mexican raid north of the river.

The Mexican right wing was now in hot pursuit of the Army of the Rio Grande, racing to force a battle south of the Colorado before the Texians could gain the safety of the north bank. On 27 December, Bradford saw that he could not escape without a fight and ordered a concentration of his First, Second, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Corps at Cedar Creek. The Emperor attacked him there on the 28th with Reyes' I, Miramon's V, and the VI Corps of Prince Carlos Luis. The hard-marched and disheartened Texians held their own bravely until General Winslow's shaky Eighth Corps militia broke late in the afternoon. At dawn on 29 December the Emperor threw in the fresh troops of Bravo's III Corps and Alvarado's VII Corps to complete his victory. The two-day Battle of Cedar Creek was the swan-song of the gallant Army of the Rio Grande, which suffered losses of 13,000 killed and wounded plus over 10,000 prisoners.

De la Vega dispersed Butler's exhausted troopers in a battle at Bastrop on 30 December, the same day that van der Smitten routed General Marshall's Fourth Corps at New Braunfels. The remnants of the Texian forces, utterly beaten, fled across the Colorado in confusion or scattered for their homes, every man for himself.

On New Year's Day, 1881, the Emperor

entered Austin at the head of his Army. A *parlementaire* crossed from General Bradford's lines two days later to propose an armistice.

The terms of the peace settlement need not concern us, but the strategic lessons of the conflict are clear. The Republic of Texas lost the war because:

- 1) slower mobilization and a weaker battle fleet compelled it to adopt a defensive strategy;
- 2) forward concentration of troops resulted in defeat at the Battle of Laredo and a loss of strategic initiative which the Army of the Rio Grande never recovered;
- 3) the Imperial Mexican Army of Tejas was able to operate with the advantage of interior lines during most of the war;
- 4) the Army of the Rio Grande was too small to cover simultaneously both the Republic's capital at Austin and its primary naval base at Corpus Christi.

Given these conditions, hindsight shows that it was unlikely that anything but Imperial blunders or marked tactical superiority on the battlefield could have saved the Republic. The Emperor, however, made no significant mistakes, and the crimson-jacketed Mexican *soldados* were as redoubtable fighters as their blue-coated Texian opponents.

Strategically, the Texian commanders might have massed their armies initially behind the Nueces fortresses, or abandoned Corpus Christi immediately after their defeat at the Battle of Palito Blanco. However, any Texian general who proposed giving up a foot of the Republic's soil without a fight was not likely to remain in command for very long, and it would have been a forceful general indeed who could have persuaded the Texas Navy to tamely surrender its main fleet base at the height of a successful naval campaign.

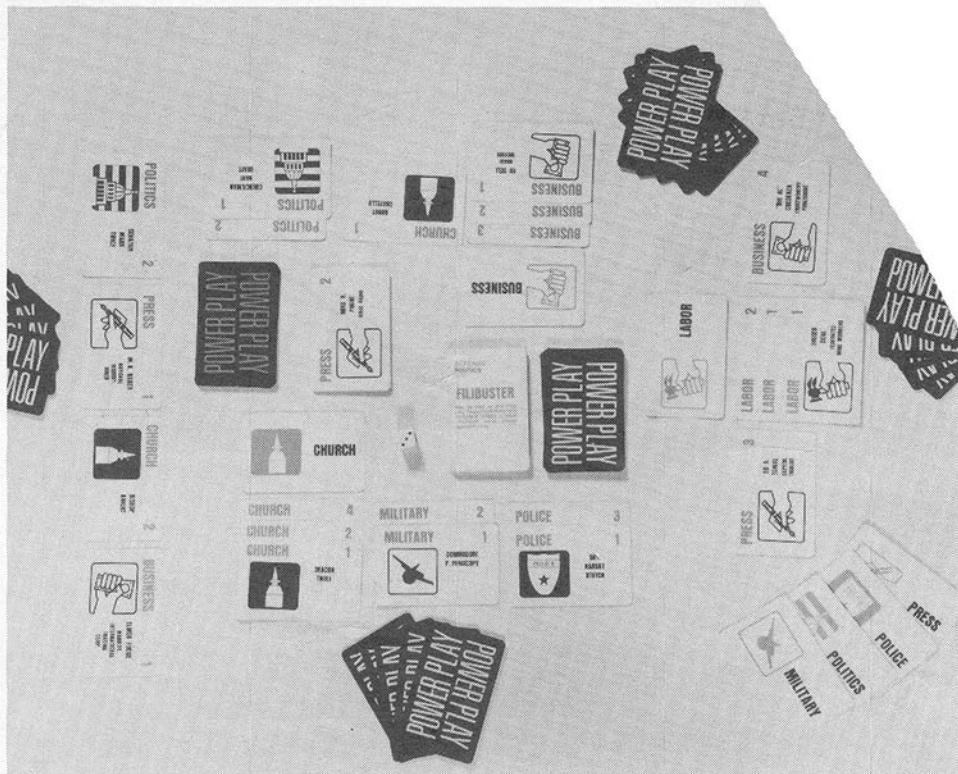
The Republic had more "bottom" than the more fragile Imperial war machine, and in any prolonged "killing match" would have bled the Empire white. But the shattering naval defeat at the Battle of Aransas Pass, coming after an uninterrupted series of dismal defeats on land, crushed even the Republic's confidence in final victory. Honor alone sustained her ragged armies and despondent sailors so long.

But Texas had made a hell of a fight, and HATSOFF agreed that, all in all, the 1880 campaign had been "a splendid little war".

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