March 31st, 1941... The 5th Light Division, just recently arrived in Libya, is on the attack. Its goal: to drive the fresh but green troops of the British 2nd Armoured Division out of their prepared defenses in the coastal bottleneck near Mersa el Brega. Men of the 8th Machinegun Battalion battle their way forward across the undulating sand dunes as Stukas prey on the defenders from above. Suddenly in the swirling dust they encounter minefields and wire. “Sappers forward!” comes the cry. A new chapter in the history of war is beginning, and a new legend—that of Rommel, the Desert Fox—is about to be born.

April 7th, 1941... In confused and headlong retreat, the British are falling back across the Cyrenaican bulge to Derna. But German armored cars and motorized infantry have cut the road atop the coastal escarpment, trapping those still in and west of the town. Colonel Drew of the 5th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment, organizes a breakout with a mixed bag of troops and vehicles. Surveying the situation, he knows he has no options: He must lead his men up the steep, twisting escarpment road past a huge crater blown in by overanxious sappers; and, once over the lip of the escarpment, must locate the German antitank and machinegun positions in the shimmering heat haze and blast a way through. The afternoon promises to be hot in more ways than one.

November 23rd, 1941... As part of the drive to open a corridor to Tobruk, the 25th New Zealand Battalion, supported by Valentine tanks, has just captured Point 175 atop a high inland escarpment. However, instead of halting to prepare for the inevitable German counterattack, the Kiwis continue their advance almost nonchalantly—and walk right into the sights of the veterans of the 361st Infantry Regiment “Afrika”, who at the moment happen to be under the personal command of Rommel. For many, Germans and New Zealanders alike, the bloody battle about to begin will make Point 175 their point of no return.

This is WEST OF ALAMEIN—the long-awaited British addition to the ASL system. As the title implies, it focuses on battles between the British 8th Army and Deutsches Afrika Korps in the North African desert in 1941-43. WEST OF ALAMEIN contains the entire British order of battle, including all U.S. Lend-Lease vehicles, ordnance and support weapons, thus enabling you to command every major vehicle, gun and troop type used by British and/or Commonwealth forces in every theater throughout the war. Also contained herein is Chapter F of the ASL rules, which covers the terrain types encountered in the desert and other arid regions: scrub, wadis, hillocks, escarpments, soft sand, dunes, deirs and hammada. Chapter F also provides rules for the special climatic conditions that were so much a part of desert combat, such as dust, heat haze and sunblindness. Of the five mounted mapboards in WEST OF ALAMEIN, four (#s 26-29) depict flat open desert, with the dominant terrain features on separate, moveable overlays so as to maximize flexibility. The fifth board (#25) represents a rugged hill mass as is found in Tunisia, and can be converted to a large escarpment by means of an overlay specially designed for this purpose. A Design-Your-Own system for the random selection and placement of overlays is also provided, which in combination with the vehicle and weapon point values, historical notes and DYO charts, will provide an endless variety of situations for those who enjoy creating their own scenarios. And as if all this weren’t enough, simple rules have been included to enable the desert boards and overlays to represent the steppes of the Ukraine, providing added flexibility for these components. Of the eight scenarios enclosed, four can be played using the ASL rules and BEYOND VALOR, the other four also require rules, counters and/or a board from YANKS. No other boards or modules are needed.

WEST OF ALAMEIN is now available for $45.00 from The Avalon Hill Game Company (4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214). Please add 10% shipping and handling for domestic orders; 20% for Canadian; 30% for overseas. Maryland residents please add 5% state sales tax.
Be it person, institution, or publication—anyone deserves a bit of a celebration upon surviving the trials of our hectic world to reach the age of twenty-five. That magic mark is something of a watershed in life, bringing (if nothing else) at least a certain grudging respect for one's maturity. With this issue of The GENERAL, we begin our 25th year of coverage of Avalon Hill's line of games of strategy.

This issue is the first of our expanded format. And it serves as the vehicle for our celebration—a look ahead as well as a look back. There are, as you'd expect, some articles on good games. But these are on games that are among our most recent releases, that have yet to have much ink spent on them. These games, and the many other new classics Avalon Hill has released over the past two years, are our future.

But, of course, this issue is primarily devoted to a look at some history, some concerns, and some friends of The GENERAL. When Volume 24 was drawing to a close, I realized that there were no plans to celebrate this magazine coming of age. It seemed a shame that the oldest wargaming periodical would turn silver with no one taking notice.

So, I began canvassing some of the folk who helped make our magazine the best in the business—badgering them to draft a few lines. I was amazed, a bit, at the enthusiastic responses. When asked by some what to write about, I replied that so long as it dealt with our hobby or our company or our magazine, I didn't much care for I was sure that given the abilities of these folk, anything they put down would be of interest. So the casual reader will find reminiscences and controversy, ramblings on favorite games and on "where we are going". Indeed, this issue became as much a celebration of wargaming as of The GENERAL—which given how irrevocably linked those two are, perhaps is only proper.

In these articles you'll find all the familiar names. Some are professionals; some are simply players (extraordinary players to be sure, but still primarily just wargamers). The thread that links all of them is their ability with the written word and their love of this hobby. No matter how varied the background or what they profess, scratch a wargamer and you'll find a close author. Luckily for Avalon Hill, Tom Shaw long ago tapped this natural resource. The result was The GENERAL. Today, virtually every important figure in the history of our hobby has written for this magazine at one time or another. Just looking over the contents for this issue is like reading a "Who's Who of Wargaming". And, almost surely, some of the folk whose work will appear in the next year will—someday—be the new "movers and shakers".

But it is the players themselves who have contributed most of the words that have appeared in these pages, not the "professionals". If not for the likes of Nixon, Burnett, Stahler, Medrow, Sinigaglio and the many others who have continued to find time in their busy lives to write on our games, The GENERAL would have died long ago. As I said above, "scratch a wargamer..." In fact, I firmly hold that the best of pieces on strategy and tactics come from those who have the time to play these games hundreds of times—a luxury few who labor to design them can afford. Since I have always believed that the strength of The GENERAL lies in precisely these types of articles, that means that these gamers who are willing to share their insights are the backbone of this magazine and the reason it has survived for so long. Perhaps a new cliche is warranted to describe The GENERAL—"Good gamers teaching gamers to be good". And it does, you know, become a self-generating activity. After 25 years, The GENERAL is proof of that.

This is what sets The GENERAL apart. There have been many number of publications, both professional and amateur, that deal with our hobby. Most are given over to reviews of new products or the history "behind" the games we play. It has always struck me that in that curious term "wargame", the latter syllable should be stressed. These, after all, are not meant to be exercises in the classroom or library. These games, challenging exercises for the mind; and while the history that they teach is certainly useful and engaging, I can learn quite a bit more from a well-written book on the subject. I certainly don't need a few pages of rehashed verbiage on an aspect of military history. What do I need, and cannot get elsewhere, is hints on how to play and how to play well, on how to find opponents and how to judge myself against them, on what the game covers and answers to common questions on play. And what better review is there than a Series Replay or a look at the design process of a game, its mechanics and concepts and assumptions. Some benevolent, superficial review by one who has played the game a half-dozen times isn't going to give me—as gamers—the insights that a couple of pages from other gamers who have played it hundreds of times will.

The prime ingredient in any game should be "fun" (whether you define that as the intellectual challenge involved or the amusement at strange turns of fate or the social interaction of players or whatever); we've done our best with the magazine to make sure that that operative word remains foremost. While the humorous articles are certainly part of this, more indicative is the excitement and enjoyment to be gained for a title that shows through in each author's words. Playing games is FUN false why would we spend so much time and money on our

Continued on Page 23, Column 3
Change history at the Battle of Gettysburg! The Battle of Gettysburg was the most decisive battle fought in the east during the American Civil War and the bloodiest single battle ever fought on the North American continent. Now, with this fast-moving and competitive game, it is once again July 1, 1863. The war could be won or lost in the next three days, but this time YOU are in command.

GETTYSBURG is a game played by moving blue and gray units representing the infantry, cavalry and artillery formations present at the historic battle on a detailed mapboard representing the actual battlefield's terrain. YOU can be General Robert E. Lee and command the hard-hitting Confederate Army of Northern Virginia...or YOU can be General George G. Meade and command the stubborn but unlucky Union Army of the Potomac in its greatest crisis. Will history repeat itself or can it be changed? YOUR decisions will make the difference.

Recommended for ages 12 and up, GETTYSBURG is not just a revision of the earlier titles but an entire new game intended as an introduction to the hobby of wargaming. This fifth version was authorized as a celebration of the 125th Anniversary of the battle. A "Battle Manual" helps players by introducing them to the history of this most famous campaign and battle in our history.

GETTYSBURG is now available for $15.00 from The Avalon Hill Game Company, 4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214. Please add 10% shipping and handling to your order (20% for Canadian customers; 30% for overseas). Maryland residents please add 5% state sales tax.
Given the lengthy required lead times of this publication, KREMLIN will have already been on store shelves for several months as you read this. Nonetheless, this will probably be the first review of it you’ll see (insomuch as I’m scooping the industry by writing it prior to the game’s release). I can do that because I developed the game for Avalon Hill. That certainly enables me to be the first reviewer you might say, but it doesn’t speak much for my objectivity. Agreed. I’m biased. So shoot me, Comrade—but first listen to what I have to say. I admit I’ve worked on the game, and that I generally admire my own work. This is no exception. I like KREMLIN . . . a lot. But just because I enjoy the hell out of it doesn’t mean you will. Of course, that’s true of any review. Siskel and Ebert may give thumbs up to a movie you absolutely detest. “Different strokes for different folks” as one of my more colorful and descriptive names as “Nikolai Shotemadedsky” or “Andrey Pergerenova”. To complete the satire, each Politician card and secretly records his stake in ten of them. Each politician has a total of 55 Influence Points (hereafter referred to as IP) which he may allocate to ten Politicians in declining amounts of 10, 9, 8 . . . 3, 2, 1. These IP represent his faction’s degree of control over each Politician. To control a Politician's actions you must have declared the most IP on him. You can declare IP at any time. However, by declaring them, you mark your Politicians as a target for your enemies. Therefore, the game in its simplest form boils down to a matter of timing—deciding when to reveal your IP and seize control in an attempt to gain a winning position. Along the way all sorts of events transpire to tempt players to play their IP prematurely to control events and thereby protect their interests. However, by keeping his IP secret, a player can sit back and watch somebody else maneuver his politicians to the top or suffer in silence with the demise of his favorites. As long as you keep your IP secret, no one knows for sure just who is controlled by who. The fellow who maneuver his nine IP Politicians to the top rung of the Politburo ladder is taking a chance that no one else has ten on the same guy. The uncertainty is exquisite torture. And if that weren’t enough pain, the decision whether or not to declare your IP is further tempered by the fact that the first to declare wins any tie!

You need not declare all of your IP at once. Let’s say you have ten IP written down for Viktor Wasolin but only have declared three of them. When someone else takes control of Viktor by declaring four IP on him, you can groan, utter curses and otherwise carry on in an attempt to make him think you can do nothing about it. Then, when your opponent has laboriously moved him to the top, you can reveal the rest of your IP and take over control. This is one of those social games where demeanor can be as important as a winning strategy.

The game always begins with sick, 80-year old Nestor Aparatschick as Party Chief. In the Basic Game, no one can place IP on Nestor so the trick is to guess how long aging Nestor can stay in power and to be in position to succeed him when he dies. The game is won by the first player to control a Party Chief (or Chiefs) who is healthy enough to wave from the rostrum throughout three year-end parades.

**SEQUENCE OF PLAY**

The game is played in up to ten turns of eight phases each. If no one has won by the end of the tenth turn, an 11th is played and the player controlling the current Party Chief thereafter wins.

**CURE PHASE**

During the Cure Phase, all ill Politicians are asked if they will remain at work or go to the Sanatorium in search of a cure. The decision is made by whatever player currently controls that Politician (i.e. the most declared IP showing on his card). Ill Politicians are on the horns of a dilemma. Not only do they take the chance of their health worsening if they stay at their posts, but they also age if they do so. Yet, if they seek a Cure by visiting the Sanatorium they forfeit their vote in any Party Trials and become an easier mark for purges. From such decisions are born the personnel turnovers that make room at the top for a new crop of Kremlin leaders. The Party Chief, burdened by the responsibilities of his office, always ages one each year; other Politicians do not. For game purposes, time literally stands still for those who are healthy and not involved in stressful actions.

**PURGE PHASE**

The KGB Head may now announce an attempt to purge any Politician in the Politburo. If he succeeds, he ages one year and may continue. If he fails, he ages three years and the phase ends. Purges are resolved by dice roll—the higher the standing character (in the Basic Game) is the character’s age printed at the upper right. Age is a two-edged sword. The older a character is, the more likely he will be promoted to join his cronies in the Kremlin’s Geritol set without risk. However, with the advancing years comes an increased chance of sickness, stroke, or even death.

**SETUP**

At this point, each player consults his own “Influence Point Sheet” (which lists the 26 Politicians) and secretly records his stake in ten of them. Each player has a total of 55 Influence Points (hereafter referred to as IP) which he may allocate to ten Politicians in declining amounts of 10, 9, 8 . . . 3, 2, 1. These IP represent his faction’s degree of control over each Politician. To control a Politician’s...
cians. It takes real resolve to keep your silence when one of your own is sent to Siberia and you have (or think you have) the power to stop it. The decision as to whether you should try is rarely clear cut.

**SPY INVESTIGATION PHASE**

The Defense Minister may now bring to trial any one Politician currently under suspicion of being an Imperialist Spy; but if his victim is acquitted, the Defense Minister will age three years and the victim will be cleared of suspicion. Trials are resolved by vote of the top eight Politburo slots. All those accused are convicted unless they can muster two “Innocent” votes. As the accused retains his own vote unless he is convicted, the chances for success are greatly increased by accusing someone not at his post to defend himself. Again, the situation may prompt players to reveal an Imperialist Spy; but if his victim is acquitted, accusing someone not at his post to defend himself.

**HEALTH PHASE**

The eight Politicians who make up the Politburo must each roll on the Health Table. If they roll a single cross, they age one year and lose two health points. Two crosses mean stroke (two crosses), and death. Any Politician who accumulates three red crosses dies. The Sanatorium—but no one is guaranteed life eternal. The Party Chief may now flex his muscles and release his Imperialist Spy out of the gulag. Rehabilitated Politicians return to the People with a new lease on life.

**FUNERAL COMMISSION PHASE**

This phase is resolved only if the Party Chief slot is vacant. The Foreign Minister then nominates a successor for Party Chief who is then put to a vote. Three ‘‘Nay’’ votes are required to block succession. If his nominee is blocked, the Foreign Minister ages one year and nominates one of those who voted ‘‘No’’. If this nominee is also blocked, the Foreign Minister ages another year and rises to Party Chief himself. Still more hidden IP generally find their way onto the board here to change votes or nominations.

**REPLACEMENT PHASE**

The Party Chief may now flex his muscles and stack the Politburo in what he thinks will be his favor by changing the positions of any Politician within their current levels for free. He may also promote or demote Politicians one level, at the cost of aging one year for each such move. When he’s finished, other Politicians may promote (only) others to vacant positions beneath them. Positions left vacant are filled automatically by the oldest eligible Politician at the next level.

**REHABILITATION PHASE**

In descending order of rank, each of the top eight Politburo members is asked if he will sponsor the release of any of the poor unfortunate in Siberia. As such action ages the sponsor five years for each rehabilitated Politician, there aren’t many traffic jams at the prisoner release center. Still more hidden IP are often declared here to prevent someone else from aging your Politician—usually a 2nd Level Minister with only a few declared IP—by using him to release his other people in the gulag. Rehabilitated Politicians return to the People with a new lease on life.

**PARADE PHASE**

A healthy Party Chief gets credit for a wave. Those in poor health must chance a dice roll which will age them further whether successful or not. And that is how you play the Basic Game of KREMLIN; the very essence of simplicity, yet ingeniously clever, suspenseful, and captivating.

**THE SWISS VERSION**

The Basic Game also has a “Swiss” rules variation which drastically changes its feel with what is essentially a single rule change. In the Swiss version, the game is won by controlling a single Party Chief who waves three times and if someone else has the same number of undeclared IP on that Party Chief he will win rather than the player who controlled the Party Chief during the game. In this way, players can rarely be certain that they have won the game until it is over and all IP on the Party Chief are declared. This version was very popular in Europe and won KREMLIN “Game of the Year” accolades in Germany. However, it was met with disdain by our veteran playtesters and I personally much prefer our version. Nevertheless, we’ve included both versions in the game so players can pick and choose the one they like best. Both combined take up less than three pages of rules.

**THE ADVANCED GAME**

The Advanced Game adds just two more pages of rules, but increases the depth of strategy applications greatly. I much prefer it to the Basic Game and use the former only to introduce new players to the game.

At the core of the Advanced Game is the addition of a set of 34 “Intrigue” cards which give their owner special powers to circumvent the normal flow of play (as can be readily seen from the accompanying examples). Each player receives three of them at the outset and can refer to them before allocating his initial IP outlay. In this version, players can also allocate IP to sick old Nestor from the outset. As with the declaration of IP, cards can be played at any time unless otherwise specified. Cards can also be given as bribes to other players in exchange for favors.

At the end of every three turns, all players are allowed to place an additional two free declared IP or draw new Intrigue cards instead. The first player to reach 11 declared IP on a Politician is given undisputed control of him. The opportunities for bluff and counterbluff exhibited in the Basic Game are thus multiplied many times over by this simple mechanic which increases the importance of keeping IP hidden as long as possible.

The Advanced Game also allows resolutions of IP ties by vote of all players with declared IP on a Politician rather than such control automatically going to the first to declare on that Politician. This makes every IP potentially important—even if someone else already has declared far more on a Politician than you can hope to have. It also increases the opportunity for deals, negotiations, and player interaction as you can well imagine.

Lastly, each Politician has a “Strength” and “Weakness” (i.e., a Politburo slot for which he has a particular talent or ineptness). When occupying his Strength, he is less susceptible to aging and Purges; and when occupying his Weakness, he is easier to Purge and ages faster due to job-related pressures.

I suspect veteran gamers will share my preferences for the Advanced Game once they’ve tried both. For very little added complexity, the game takes on a new character with a much greater variety of possible outcomes and sudden twists of fortune. Alan Moon, a recent同志-in-arms, differs with me in this respect. He feels that the chance cards bastardize the pure strategy aspect of the game. For my part, I feel that they increase the opportunities to formulate a strategy and, more importantly, introduce hilarious opportunities for sudden twists of fate. “Different strokes for different folks.”

In fact, I felt so strongly about the benefit of the Intrigue cards that I designed a second set of them to augment those included in the game. These are available separately with the rules for our historical variation Revolution which takes KREMLIN back to the era of Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin. Now talk about a game that plays differently! But that’s another era and another article...
BLOOD IN THE POLITBPURO
One Man's Rise to the Top
By Don Greenwood

This five-player game is being reported as seen through the eyes of one of the participants, Don Greenwood, as he played. The reader is thus kept in the dark about the resources and intentions of the other players and forced to view events through his limited perspective. By delaying your inspection of the sidebar comments provided by the other players, you can be in Don's shoes, seeing only the explanatory.

The initial number is the Politburo position in voting order (1. = Party Chief, 2. = KGB, etc.). Absence of “has won” or “on” following the age entry should be self-explanatory. The sections with declared IP are identified as Br (Brown), G (Green), B (Blue), Y (Yellow), and Bk (Black).

G RED ARMY MILITARISTS: Don Greenwood (Br) HARD-LINE STALINISTS: S. Craig Taylor (B) LYSENKO EVOLUTIONISTS: Bruno Singaglio (Y) REP. EXPANSIONISTS: Bob Coggins (G)

YEAR 1

The opportunity for the application of strategy in KREMLIN can be very subtle and is either not readily apparent to neophytes or is so mistakenly obvious that there seem to be no alternatives. Newcomers invariably allocate their IP to the Politicians dealt initially into the positions of power so as to control them from the outset. However, a heavy allocation of IP at the top commits the player to seeking an early win and if he is unsuccessful, it’s likely to relegate his faction to relative obscurity for the remainder of the game when he loses his key people to the ravages of a purge or stress-inflicted old age. While the early power play is a viable strategy which has won on numerous occasions, the frequency of its success is in inverse proportion to the number of players. The more players there are, the more Intrigue cards which can do in the leader and the more chance that somebody else will have allocated ten IP to your 99P guy and ruin all your plans. Thus, I tend to shy away from early power plays in games with more than four players.

My Intrigue cards are pretty non-descript (Siberian Oil, Assassination, and the Cuban Missile Crisis) so there is little there to base my initial IP allocations on. If I had gotten the “KGB Head’s Son Defects” and “German Teenager Lands in Red Square” cards I might have entertained the notion of an initial Power Play because Patina and Badenuff are very young for such high posts and could last a good while if their back is protected. However, the other players are likely to have made similar observations and that is reason enough to avoid them. One player in particular, Black—otherwise known as “Martin the Merciless” is famous for always trying to control the KGB from the outset. Lenin’s definition of politics “kto kogo” which is loosely translated as “Who gets Whom?” dictates that players play Patina. Let the other players waste their IP battling Martin the Merciless and I’ll bide my time on the periphery and await my chance after they turn young Patina into an old hag with a flood of purges.

When all other factors fail to bring to mind a viable strategy, the overwhelming rule of thumb is to put your IP where you think others haven’t. Nothing is quite as crippling as being out-influenced—especially on your higher IP Politicians. Of course, you may never be sure your guys are truly yours, but you can try to avoid what you think are the obvious choices to be heavily influenced. This will be the cornerstone of my strategy—avoiding Politicians who appear to be the most desirable in an attempt to control as many bodies as possible. Consistently, I’ve concentrated my influence on Politicians still in the People—trusting to the other players to block each other’s power plays and cause casualties among their ranks so that my people can rise to the top unscathed in the end game. This laid-back strategy is one which I have used effectively on numerous occasions in the past and for that very reason I should probably give more thought to an alternative rather than blindly becoming a creature of habit. However, early wins are rare in a five-player game so I prefer to husband my strength and bet on the long haul. I invariably follow this strategy if I’ve drawn one or more Flu cards—hoping to decimate the Politburo with illness before any of my people rise to that level. Even though I don’t possess those cards now, the strategy strikes me as still valid as one of the other players is likely to have and play them (as they tend to fall early in the game).

Consequently, my strategy will be to avoid the Politburo positions currently in the Politburo and concentrate on those in the People. Bungaloff (W) becomes my top choice because YZ and the youngest variably draw high IP from those following the “end game” strategy. The rest of my high IP allocations (9 through 5) proceed backwards up the alphabet, skipping those currently in the Politburo—the oldest getting the smallest IP allocations as they tend to be less desirable. A single IP on a Septuagenarian has a good chance of controlling him.

There is one very big exception to all of this. I’ll venture four IP on Aparatschik in an attempt to steal the first wave. Old and sick, the reigning Party Chief rarely draws much in the way of IP because he isn’t long in the game. But he’s well worth a few IP for a chance at a wave on Year 1. The trick is—how “few” is enough? All four other players have played at least three games so I doubt whether any will spend much on old Nestor but probably all of us will be willing to spend a couple. So, I’ll go for a lower middle-of-the-road status and hope it’s enough to steal a wave. My earliest win in KREMLIN occurred on Turn 5 of a six-player game and was made possible by stealing a first-turn wave with Nestor. He’s worth 4 IP which is a long shot to control anyone else—even though unsupported at the top he can be expected to die early anyway. So my IP allocation is:

1. Bungaloff, 10
2. Bogoodnik, 9
3. Strychnin, 8
4. Nikitin, 7
5. Zenjarplan, 6
6. Manjak, 5
7. Aparatschik, 4
8. Golferbrok, 3
9. Niewitko
10. Krakemheds

1.1 CURE PHASE: Blue declares one IP on Aparatschik. This is premature as the only thing he can decide is to send him to the Sanitorium which he declines. Why identify himself now as having a vested interest in our beloved Party Chief if he is not going to send him away for the Cure? This clumsy move only invites a purge attempt or spy investigation—something I’d rather not see. On the other hand, perhaps he had only one IP on Aparatschik and was anxious to be the first to declare on him. That’s probably it. So far, so good. The Party Chief ages two to 82. Shootemdedsky and Palavrian, occupying their weak slots, age one each to 70 and 71 respectively.

1.2 PURGE PHASE: Unbelievable! No one declares on the KGB. Usually control of the KGB is resolved with spirited bidding but now silence. Hmm.

1.3 SPI INVESTIGATION PHASE: Incredible! Again silence reigns. The two positions of power left vacant . . . no . . . they’ve got to be sandbagging. Still I wish now I’d invested a few IP on the 1st Level Ministers.

1.4 HEALTH PHASE: Talksalott comes down sick and the young Turks (Badenuff and Protzky) suffer strokes. Our beloved Party Chief holds steady with his consistent cough. Things are looking good . . . strange, but good.

1.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE: There are no vacancies in the Politburo but, even so, Blue can rearrange members within their current levels without agitating the Party Chief. He declines and sponsors no promotions/demotions. Then why show himself at all in the old fool’s camp? He must be following my strategy and, like me, has no other Politicians in the Politburo. I’ll wager that one IP is his only hold over Aparatschik. Why else show himself at all? What a bunch of sand-baggers! Nobody is giving away anything. Fine . . . I’ll oblige them by stealing a wave. Keep hiding guys. At the very least, Blue could have moved Talksalott to his Weakness in the Economy Ministry. What a non-turn!

1.8 PARADE PHASE: I declare two IP on Nestor before Blue can wave. There is no other declaration. I was right. Aparatschik waves and ages to 83. Chalk one up for Green. So far so good.

YEAR 2
1. Aparatschik, 83; 2. Patina, 58; 3. Badenuff, 53; 4. Shootemdedsky, 70; 5. Palavrian, 71; 6. Talksalott, 67; 7. Mischif, 68; 8. Protzky, 56; CAN. Schukrutoff, 75; Purgenmof, 71; Doberman, 65; Bungaloff, 54; Wasolin, 50
2.1 CURE PHASE: Aparatschik ages two to 85. Blue declares one IP on Badenuff to send him for the Cure. Shootemdedsky and Palavrian both age one to 71 and due to being in Weak slots. Talksalot ages one to 68 due to being sick. Blue declares another IP on Protzky to send him to the Sanatorium.

2.2 PURGE PHASE: There are still no declarations on the KGB. I'm convinced she is an "Orphan" to purge Badenuff and Protzky while at the Sanatorium. I might not be able to resist trying to purge Badenuff and Protzky while at the Sanatorium.

2.3 SPY INVESTIGATION PHASE: Silence again. Shootemdedsky must be an Orphan also. Who would have guessed it? The two positions of power—the most obvious and valuable politicians—left vacant by everyone. In my excitement over Aparatschik playing his Cuban Missile Crisis card and cancelling all Sanatorium visits, bring Comrades Badenuff and Protzky back to work! The State needs them (in a box). Aparatschik’s condition worsens but the old goat is still kicking. Shootemdedsky and Mischif catch colds. Palavrian has a stroke as does Badenuff. Talksalot ages one to 68 due to being sick. Blue declares one IP on Badenuff to send him for the Cure. Shootemdedsky and Palavrian both age three to 75 and ages to 87. Talksalot ages one to 55, and Mischif one to 69. I wonder if Palavrian isn’t also an Orphan. This is the last turn when he stole a wave at the outset with a single IP on Aparatschik so I’ve allocated 2IP to him to prevent that from happening again. I’ve also changed a few IP on the youngest Politburo members irrespective of their position simply because I expect their youth to protect them from the Health rolls.

YEAR 1: So much for youth... the two youngest guys had strokes. I was tempted to move Palavrian out of his Weak slot but that would have given him away as one of mine—even though I only have 1IP on him. I chose to keep them guessing instead. After all, nobody else volunteered any information.

YEAR 2: I sent both of my ill Politicians to the Sanatorium. With the KGB uncontrolled, this is the perfect time to do so, but Greenwood closed the Sanatorium with his Intrigue card. My only solace is that I’m now sure that Green has no IP on Badenuff or Protzky or he’d have allowed them to go to the Cure. I purposely promoted Bungaloff into his Weakness in Industry to see if the Party Chief shifts him and betrays any interest in him.

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YEAR 4: I sent Patina for the Cure—expecting that the 30% chance for a successful purge would discourage any attempt vs her but I didn’t reck on ‘Machining Palavrian’ running out of targets. Shereh!

YEAR 5: Yellow’s position is too strong. I fear another reign of terror could end the game but he took over my 8IP-man Satin and prevented my getting anyone out. Fortunately, Brown shares my concern and was able to free five from the gulag. Unfortunately, they are his—mine—and I’ve blown my 8IP to no effect.

YEAR 6: I could have stopped the Defense’s condemnation of Eastmush (my “10”) by playing my Alibi card but decided against tipping my hand this soon. In retrospect that may have been a mistake. What good is the card if you don’t use it? But it has been demonstrated to me that this is a game of patience and everything comes to he who waits. So, I’ll wait. My two free declared IP on Karrienko are designed to rob Black of a vote. I’m counting on Yellow having more hidden influence on Schukrutoff to prevent Black from leap-frogging him there.

YEAR 7: There were 4 candidates left. We must restock the People or Black can win by default. I hate to age my 10+IP man 15 years but what choice do I have?

YEAR 8: Losing Karrienko (10+) hurt. I’m now totally without representation on the Politburo, but I have points on the entire Candidate level. The People is empty though and now Yellow can win with a reign of terror. I need to revitalize the People to discourage Yellow from purging the Candidates but that bonehead Rex has stopped Green from sponsoring anyone with Krakhennesh and Yellow has stopped Brown with Boremodev. I better get my luggage packed for Siberia again.

YEAR 9: Argh! Bonehead play by Rex gives Yellow the game. If he hadn’t prevented Green from bringing people out we’d still be playing. More importantly, if he had reflipped the People, Yellow might not have purged at all to try to survive the Health rolls by keeping his men from aging further and trying to win by longevity. And my people would still be in position to move up. Now we’ll never know.

2.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE: What great luck—but I’m completely out of position to exploit it. Aparatschik is poised for a second wave and I haven’t lost a thing—but all my power is in the People. Nestor could promote Bungaloff out of the Candidates but that would make him a marked man. I am now clearly the leader and anyone I promote to the Candidates by age. There are still no declarations on the KGB and Defense will end this year. It’s now or never for old Aparatschik. Blue again sends Badenuff to promote Bungaloff to Industry Minister and Wasolvin to Sport—aging two to 55. I can hardly contain my delight. Goferbrok and Niewitko move up to the Candidates by age.

2.8 PARADE PHASE: Brown tries to rain on my parade by playing his Cuban Missile Crisis card and cancelling all Sanatorium visits. Bring Comrades Badenuff and Protzky back to work! The State needs them (in a box). Aparatschik’s condition worsens but the old goat is still kicking. Shootemdedsky and Mischif catch colds. Palavrian has a stroke as does Badenuff. Talksalot ages one to 85. Johnny美味之 and if any IP on him would have declared it before he waved. By playing my “4” now, I’ve warned the others that I would be pointless for them to place their two extra IP on him at the end of Turn 3 should he last that long. Stupid! I’ve also furnished any IP counters (some players keep track of what you’ve declared in notes on their sheets, a sign of calculating experts) additional information.

2.4 HEALTH PHASE: Yellow plays a Flu Intrigue card. This looks like an opportune time to add to Blue’s troubles by playing my Cuban Missile Crisis card and cancelling all Sanatorium visits. Bring Comrades Badenuff and Protzky back to work! The State needs them (in a box). Aparatschik’s condition worsens but the old goat is still kicking. Shootemdedsky and Mischif catch colds. Palavrian has a stroke as does Badenuff. Talksalot ages one to 68 due to being sick. Blue declares one IP on Badenuff to send him for the Cure. Shootemdedsky and Palavrian both age three to 75 and ages to 87. Talksalot ages one to 55, and Mischif one to 69. I wonder if Palavrian isn’t also an Orphan. This is the last turn when he stole a wave at the outset with a single IP on Aparatschik so I’ve allocated 2IP to him to prevent that from happening again. I’ve also changed a few IP on the youngest Politburo members irrespective of their position simply because I expect their youth to protect them from the Health rolls.

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3.1 CURE PHASE: Aparatschik ages three to 90. There is no point in sending him away for the Cure at his age. If he lives through the year I could win in the minimum turn span. The uncontrolled blocks at KGB and Defense will end this year. It’s now or never for old Aparatschik. Blue again sends Badenuff to the Sanatorium. Shootemdedsky ages two to 73, Palavrian ages three to 75, Bungaloff ages one to 55, and Mischif one to 69. I wonder if Palavrian isn’t also an Orphan. This is the last turn when the KGB will be uncontrolled. There will never be a better time to send him for the Cure.

3.4 HEALTH PHASE: Aparatschik worsens and dies, and with him goes my chances for an early win. Call me paranoid but I question the sincerity of the great show of remorse suddenly shown by
my Comrades. But Aparatschik won’t go to his reward alone. The Orphan Patina and the young Wasolin suffer strokes. Regrettably, er . . . thankfully, Badenuff and Mischif recover. Praise be.

3.5 FUNERAL COMMISSION PHASE: With Badenuff at the Sanatorium, the nomination passes to the ill Ideology Chief. Blue declares one IP on Palavrian but Yellow outbids him with 3IP and nominates the ill orphant Patina. No one declares on the remaining Politburo members to vote, so she rises to Party Chief unopposed. I wonder why either faction cared enough to show themselves on Palavrian. The choice was limited to an ill 58-year old Orphan or a sick 78-year old Orphan. Who cares? Or did they think both would be voted down so that Palavrian would accede? Small chance of that, but possible I suppose.

3.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE: Palavrian progresses by age to KGB Head and Schukroff does likewise to Ideology Chief, as does Krakernheads to Canididates. Everyone is still playing a waiting game. I’m not about to expose my 10 (Bungaloff) for wasting a single Candidate.

3.8 PARADE PHASE: The orphan Patina ages two for waving at the Parade but remains unclaimed.

INFLUENCE DECLARATION PHASE: As Yellow controls the highest active, controlled Politician (Palavrian), he must declare last. Blue starts by claiming ill Party Chief Patina with 2IP. She is his unless someone wants to risk a tie and trust someone else to throw away an IP to break the tie. Fat chance of that. No one wants to help anyone unless it is to put a knife in my back! Black declares one on Patina and one on Wasolin. That’s Rex. He knows no one would vote him into power, but he’s hoping to tempt someone else to tie Blue so he can accept bribes. Good of Martin the Merciless—in the end. This game has his name all over it . . . his middle name that is—"Devious". Brown declares one on Shootemdedsky and replenishes his hand with a third Intrigue card. Now it is my turn. Taylor is clever and he also loves to bide his time, so the card draw does not surprise me too much. The lone IP play on Shootemdedsky bears some thinking. I am convinced that he has been an Orphan all along, so surely Taylor knows I can beat his 1IP with two of my own. He is doubtless banking on his strength as tie-breaker to discourage my placement on Shootemdedsky because I know Yellow can match my two and Brown will never vote for me. But I have
4.4 HEALTH PHASE: Yellow plays his Miracle Drug card to reduce Palavrian's suffering and Badenuff actually cures himself at work after spending the previous year in the Sanatorium with no change. I wonder what that says about Russian hospitals?

4.5 FUNERAL COMMISSION PHASE: Blue nominates Killer Palavrian of the KGB. His election is assured... unless he is assassinated first, and I hold the card to win the game. Draft 45% chance and change the resulting accusation (45% chance), Badenuff must nominate Shootemdedsky and there aren't enough votes to block his election. I have no real choice. Palavrian will demote Shootemdedsky if he becomes Party Chief and then the KGB will nail him. Here is a chance to win the game. Draft! I miss, but so does the accusation die roll which nonetheless leaves Shootemdedsky under suspicion. Palavrian wins the resulting election over only Shootemdedsky's nay vote. Guess how long the latter will last.

4.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE: Yellow switches Shootemdedsky and Badenuff preparatory to playing an Intrigue card which breaks the new Foreign Minister Shootemdedsky to the People. Badenuff is demoted to Sport Minister and Mischif is promoted to KGB. Goferbrok is promoted to Industry. Palavrian Palavrian ages three to 89. Lech Schurkrotff moves up to Foreign Minister and Goferbrok to the Defense Minister by age. Yellow then declares IP on new KGB Head Mischif (big surprise) and promotes Strychnin, Potnicke, Satin and Zenjarplan to Candidates, aging four to 73. Yellow is not through though. He now uses new Foreign Minister Schurkrotff to promote Strychnin to Ideology and Satin to Industry, aging himself two years to 77. Yellow now declares one on Goferbrok ostentatiously to complete his promotions but Black declare two and Brown three. Brown uses new Defense Minister Goferbrok to promote Zenjarplan to Economy and then refills the Candidates with Karrienko, Nikotin and Manjak, aging four to 78. I'm actually relieved that Shootemdedsky wasn't brought up. With a hostile KGB and Defense I'd visibly hurt yet, so it should be hard for anyone to grab a three-wave hold on the top rung.

5.1 Strychnin, 57
5.2 PURGE PHASE: Palavrian Palavrian is through. He now uses new KGB Head Mischif (big surprise) and promotes Schurkrotff to Defense Minister, aging himself two to 95 and ending his activities. The wave attempt will send him into retirement. Yellow passes his promotion opportunities with Mischif and Schurkrotff but Black declares three on Zenjarplan to promote Bogdnok to Candidate. This touches off a bidding war with Yellow declaring three to 73. Black then ten to resend Bogdnok's promotion, allowing Potnicke to promote automatically by age to Economy. I'd say the Politburo is loaded with Yellow pigs now. The remaining five Politicians in the People all move up automatically to Candidate. Suddenly the People and Politburo are loaded. Is this like communism? I'm not at all interested in the card that can do it. If I can change. I wonder what that says about Russian
denizens of the State. Given the natural proficiency of Yellow KGB activities, it behooves the rest of us to open the prison gates lest Yellow win without a wave by decimating the Candidates.

6.2 PURGE PHASE: Brown declares one on Strychnin to sponsor rehabilitation but Yellow bids two to stop him. Blue steps forward to open the prison gates with Satin, but Yellow again wins a bidding war that goes all the way up to nine to prevent it. Brown now leads the sudden battle for possession of the keys to the gulag by opening the bidding on Potnicke. Yellow again moves to block the release but must drop out of the bidding at six and Brown takes control of the Economy Minister. Next, Yellow gets to age his new Politburo 20 years by sponsoring the release of four prisoners and frees another with an Intrigue card. The Great Emancipator Potnicke has averted the crisis.

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YEAR 5
1. Palavrian, 90, +, +, 3Y, 1B
2. Mischif, 73, ?, 1Y
3. Schurkrotff, 77, ?, 1Y
4. Goferbrok, 78, 3Br, 2Bk, 1Y
5. Strychnin, 57
6. Satin, 62
7. Zenjarplan, 60
8. Badenuff, 61, ?, 1B
9. Putschnik, 52

5.1 CURE PHASE: Palavrian ages three to 93 and Schurkrotff ages one to 78. What a disgustingly robust Politburo.

5.2 PURGE PHASE: Brown primes the purge pump by playing the Olympic Boycott card against the Sport Minister and Yellow gladly obliges with his new KGB executioner Mischif. Blue loses one IP on Goferbrok. "Beria Bob" is on a roll again—decimating the Candidates with purges of Nikotin, Manjak and Karrienko. Next, he casts bloodshot eyes on Defense Minister Goferbrok. This elicits a bribe from Black and Yellow backs off with his new Intrigue card in hand. Why did Black save Brown's Defense Minister? Does Black have more than two IP on Goferbrok? Or was he really just wary of Yellow's burgeoning power as he claims? Yellow turns his attention back to the Candidates and polishes off Niewitko before ending the phase unobstructed happening aged five years to 78. Why stop now? Could it be that Putschnik (and everybody else remaining in the Politburo) has Yellow sympathies?

6.3 Spy Investigation Phase: Brown declines the opportunity to condemn Putschnik or investigate anyone with Goferbrok. Putschnik is obviously in both the Brown and Yellow camp, and you can bet Brown's people are rife throughout the Politburo or hunt that they're not like con-

6.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE: Yellow realizes Palavrian is through so he demotes Goferbrok to Sport Minister and promotes Zenjarplan to Defense Minister, aging himself two to 95 and ending his activities. The wave attempt will send him into retirement. Yellow passes his promotion opportunities with Mischif and Schurkrotff but Black declares three on Zenjarplan to promote Bogdnok to Candidate. This touches off a bidding war with Yellow declaring three to 73. Black then ten to resend Bogdnok's promotion, allowing Potnicke to promote automatically by age to Economy. I'd say the Politburo is loaded with Yellow pigs now. The remaining five Politicians in the People all move up automatically to Candidate. Suddenly the People and Politburo are loaded. Is this like communism?
6.1 CURE PHASE: Schukrutoff ages one to 79. Yellow sends Zenjarplan for the Cure. Apparently he feels secure in his control of the KGB. Goferbrok ages one to 79.

6.2 PURGE PHASE: Mischif purges Nogoodnik and Bungaloff from the Candidates, but falls against Eatsatumch and ages to 83.

6.3 SPY INVESTIGATION PHASE: With Zenjarplan at the Sanatorium, the Defense chores pass to Schukrutoff in the Foreign Ministry who condemns Eatsatumch. Is Yellow blind? Shootemdedgky is sitting there for all the world to see with my 2IP on him and they all think I control him from my days as an Orphan. He should be a dead man. Could they possibly bungle this bad enough to let him move up into the Politburo? Schukrutoff investigates Goferbrok and Putschnik and closes the investigation of Mischif while aging five to 84. Why didn’t I cancel the investigation of myself? Could it be that he only has 2IP on Schukrutoff and is not very sure of his loyalty?

6.4 HEALTH PHASE: Mischif and Schukrutoff get sick. What a shame! Blue plays a "Release from Sanatorium" card on Zenjarplan to try to kill off Yellow’s "10" but he lives anyway. Nice try. Putschnik also comes down with a cold.

6.5 FUNERAL COMMISSION PHASE: Brown plays the "Afghan Setback" card to break the Defense Minister to the People, forcing Yellow to nominate Mischif. Black declares three on Strychnin to change his vote to "No". Yellow bids four for "Yes". Brown enters the bidding at five and finally wins Strychnin over with nine IP after extending Yellow to eight. Putschnik and Goferbrok also vote "No" and the nomination fails. Schukrutoff ages one to 85 and nominates Goferbrok as the least objectionable of the rebels. Yellow’s remaining Politicians Mischif and Satin vote no but with Schukrutoff forced to vote for his nominee, it isn’t enough and Goferbrok becomes Party Chief.

6.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE: Goferbrok demotes Mischif to Sport and promotes Strychnin to KGB, Putschnik to Defense, and Nikotin and Karrienko to Candidate and passes after aging five to 84. New KGB Head Strychnin now promotes Karrienko to Ideology and Nikotin to Economy and ages two to 59. Niewitko, Krakemheds and Purgemoff promote by age to Candidates. Why did Black allow all these promotions? I would have sworn Black had more promotions? I must have been wrong. Black rather than saving himself. Uncharacteristic generosity by Blackmail. It is now my turn. My only remaining point on Goferbrok after bribing Yellow not to promote him. Black couldn’t have agreed with all of those promotions. I must have been wrong. Black must have just been trying to weaken Yellow rather than saving himself. Uncharacteristic generosity by Martin the Merciless...

6.7 REHABILITATION PHASE: Blue declares on Karrienko to sponsor rehabilitation. Brown bids two to stop it (what a difference a year makes), but must drop out of the bidding at five. Brown has an unexpected ally in Black who takes up the bidding to nine. There will be no rehabilitation by Karrienko. I smell a rat... a Black, cigar smoking rat.

6.8 PARADE PHASE: Black declares 6IP on Goferbrok who waves and ages one to 85. Why did he wait so long? Now he has to contend with a Brown-controlled KGB and Defense Ministry, or does he?

INFLUENCE DECLARATION PHASE: With Black controlling the Party Chief, Brown must start and places two on Strychnin to go to 10+ on the KGB head. It is now my turn. My only remaining penetration of the Politburo is Nikotin, on whom I have 7IP. My 8IP on Strychnin is useless now that Brown has gone to 10+. Reinforcing my 7IP is liable to do more harm than good as it will make him a target. With two waves I am still the biggest perceived threat. I could put two on Goferbrok (even though I can’t top the Black 6IP) in an effort to fake Black into wasting his IP there also. I’d rather do something positive for my own cause so I take two Niewitko, 73; Krakemheds, 72; Purgemoff, 71; Boremtodev, 66 and prevent Blackmail from getting in the way of my 21P on him and Brown loses one. I’d be
disappointed but I can’t believe they let him float this long.

7.4 HEALTH PHASE: Young Strychnin has a stroke (C’est dommage) as does Schukroff who dies. My joy is short-lived however when Nikitin (my 7IP and only penetration of the Politburo) also suffers a stroke. Karrienko catches a cold.

7.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE: Black demotes KGB Head Strychnin to Sport and replaces him with Mischif. Yellow bribes Goferbrok to promote Satin to Foreign Minister. Goferbrok ages three to 91. New KGB Head Mischif promotes Zenjarplan to Candidate and new Foreign Minister Satin brings him up to Industry. Drat! Yellow’s ‘10’ has safely crossed the Candidate Level back to the Politburo.

THE HARD-LINE WHO??

By S. Craig Taylor

10. Putschnik
9. Strychnin
8. Nikitin
7. Zenjarplan
6. Satin
5. Karrienko
4. Eastumuch
3. Goferbrok
2. Krakemtods
1. Borentdov

Cards: Visit the Sanatorium; Setbacks in Afghanistan; Olympic Boycott

The fall of the cards nudges me into a strategy of “hold back and wait”. These cards would be of limited utility in trying for a quick win, so they’ll be used to keep anyone else from winning while I wait for the incidental promotion of my staunch but secret partisans. With the exception of Bruno, I’ve played KREMELN against everyone else here numerous times and, based on these earlier experiences in terror, fully expect the first controller of the KGB Head to perform a chainsaw massacre on the Candidate level. Therefore, with few prospects at the top and no desire to control a mob of Siberian exiles making big rocks into little rocks, my selected politicians are: Myron, with the Candidate level, with a mixture of age. Let somebody else take the heat in the early going.

YEAR 1: Nobody controls the KGB and Defense! No purges, no investigations, no fun! What kind of a chicken outfit is this? To work, my “sneak your way to the top” strategy requires more boogies in the high halls to open the dance, but no one seems to be cooperating. Could it be that everybody is holding back, or are they just shy? Hmmm?

YEAR 2: Don still controls that senile old reprobate Aparatschik at the top, so I play the “Go to Sanatorium” card on him to try to prevent a second wave. That fails and Don, that die rollin’ devil, has Aparatschik arrive again. The old crack can barely move, so somehow he manages to keep his arm going like a piston. If Aparatschik can wave again next turn, this sucker is over before it starts.

YEAR 3: That sorry rascal finally kicks the bucket. Urra, urra! Bob’s pig Palavrin is acting Foreign Minister and he takes a “stop Don” strategy—nominate that sick and unloved KGB female fatale and hope that Don doesn’t suddenly reveal that she’s been his mistress all along. Patina, dressed in her best peasant outfit and still uncontrolled, rises to the top like a balloon in good weather. To end the turn, I play one IP on Shootendesky (at Defense—I’ll either get him cheap or force someone else to use both his to top me) and draw one card (“Get One Rehabilitation Comrade out of Siberia Free”). Anyone who outbids me for the DM has bought himself a lot of trouble because I hold the “Break DM” card.

YEAR 4: Bob has his Palavrin creature at the KGB pissing like he was born to the job. He even gets Patina with a natural “10”! The man is dangerous, but this is what I wanted. The only partisan I lost was Krakemtods (with two IP, how much chance is there that I really control him). Later this same year, during the Funeral Commission (but she didn’t die, just took a long trip), Bruno has no choice but to use his Foreign Minister to nominate Bob’s crazed KGB Head to the top slot to keep Don’s Defense Minister from going up for a possible third wave. Don tries to assassinate Palavrin to prevent this, but the attempt fails. Don doesn’t know it, but even if he had succeeded, I would have used my card #2 to prevent Shootendesky from moving up in the world.

That Party animal Palavrin grasps the brass ring, and Bob uses him and his other top-ranking flunkies to run amok with an orgy of promotions and demotions. Nothing like the good clean fun of bureaucractic infighting! My prospects in the race look real good, with many of my secret admirers in positions of power. When the smoke clears, Bob has promoted my Goferbrok to Defense Minister, my Strychnin to Ideology, my Satin to Industry and my Putschnik and Zenjarplan to the Candidate level. I then realize three points on Goferbrok and promote Zenjarplan to Economy and Nikitin, Karrienko and Manjik (no points—but he’s promoted to confuse the issue about who I do control) to the Candidate level. My strategy is working, and my strength has moved up nicely.

YEAR 5: Bob controls the KGB again and foams at the mouth until five more politicians are purged (including my Karrienko and Nikitin). The man is a menace. He wanted to purge Goferbrok, but Rux bribed him with some card to go after Niewitko instead. Something smells here (besides Rex’s cigar) and I suspect that Rex is just letting me “control” Goferbrok until he’s ready to make a run for the roses. These constant purges have filled up the gulag and the game could be called due to depopulation. I hate to reveal my points and age Putschnik so much (20 years—there’s that picture in the attic to do the aging for you when you really need it, but it’s my only reliable and not trusting the loyalty of a politician available for some rehab. I use Putschnik and card #12 to bring out several folks; two have none of my points, but now everybody thinks they do—heh, heh. Bob openly controls the Politburo.

YEAR 6: Bob is still on a tear with his control of the KGB (Mischif), but missed all of my men stout and true. Since Defense Minister Zenjarplan is taking the cure (good boozes and bad women, you know), Bob’s Foreign Minister Schukroff and a candidate in the Eastumuch and there’s nothing I can do to stop it. During the Funeral Commission, I use card #5 at last to break Bob’s DM back to the ranks. KGB thugs Mischif’s nomination to be top dog gets defeated and, with Defense vacant, nominations are open. Goferbrok, who is openly my kind of guy, becomes party Chief with Rex’s blessings (I wonder why?). Although I trust Goferbrok about as far as I can throw him, I still formally control the old boy and use him to put my Strychnin into KGB, Putschnik into Defense, and Karrienko and Nikitin into the Candidate levels. Strychnin then promotes Karrienko and Nikitin into the lower levels of the Politburo, I now potentially control the Politburo but Rex reveals his six points on Goferbrok (gasp!) and the old drooler manages to wave. I end the turn adding two points to Strychnin (making a 10+) to keep Bob from possibly taking his control from me. Quite frankly, it’s starting to dawn on me, as Bob, Bruno, Rex and myself duke it out, that Don is invisible. Where the blues are Don’s slimhearts? Don sent two waves right out of the box and has hardly shown any points and has hardly said anything the entire game beyond, “Slow down so I can record what’s happening,” and “Shut up, Rex.” If it’s a wendemain.

YEAR 7: Rex got his wave, but he only openly controls two Politburo pals—Goferbrok at the top and Schukroff with the Foreign Ministry portfolio (just enough to block the people’s righteous investigations). I control the KGB and Defense and have secret allies throughout the Politburo, but I’ve got to deal with Rex’s terrible twins before they get me. Civic classes in the Soviet Union should include marksmanship and backstabbing. If they do it, I can eliminate the threat so far, let Rex get his purge that nasty old Schukroff. Opps. An “11”. That purge failed and I fear that I’ve shot myself in the foot. In frustration, I condemn Shootendesky on general principle; but that’s all I have to show for my brief moment in the sun. Stop gloating, Rex!

I can still hope that Goferbrok keels over during the health rolls, but Rex is doing the rolling. Damn! Goferbrok not only stands tall, but both my lads Nikitin and Strychnin have horses and roll down the demotion slope to Second level oblivion. Things are going terribly wrong!

YEAR 8: Bob still has Mischif at KGB and the man is another Beria. After their untimely strokes, I felt that I had to chance sending Nikitin and Strychnin to the Sanatorium, and he promptly purges both of them. This really cuts into my power base, but some remedies are required. If I hope to win now. Not wishing to give Rex another wave, my Defense Minister Putschnik investigates Goferbrok and ships him from comfortable dacha straight into the Siberian woods—although this leaves Putschnik alone in a herd of Bob’s dodging old fools in the Politburo. I can always hope for an epidemic next turn. Bob’s Mischif becomes king of the mountain, but trips over the podium and falls to waste. Still no signs of Don’s presence in the game.

YEAR 9: Bob’s Satin at KGB sends four politicians (including dear Eastumuch) to Siberia and his other terrorist at Defense contender Wasolin. My Putschnik dies of “natural cause” (sure) and we run out of politicians. It’s an easy game when you have a succession of sharpshooters at the KGB, isn’t it Bob? I still think my overall strategy was sound. Hell, it must have been—it was the same strategy used by everybody else in the game. Next time maybe I’ll just seize control of the KGB from the start and start squeezing the trigger. Or, maybe not. The nice thing about KREMELN is that you don’t have to justify your actions to future historians. If you lose, you won’t even be mentioned by the historians. “The decision was unanimous, you see.” You disappear, become a non-person, get edited out; you...
The Candidates remain at four in number due to a lack of newcomers. It is time to empty the gulag again or we could have a sudden end to the festivities.

7.7 REHABILITATION PHASE: Yellow ages Satin five to rehabilitate Z. Brown declares 1IP on Nikotin to sponsor Eaststumuch out of the gulag. This is too much. My only penetration is being aged to bring out an enemy. Nikotin is already in ill health—I'd best get some use out of him while I can. If he is going to age, let him do it bringing out my people. But the bidding war for control of Nikotin finds me on the short end of an 8-7 score. So much for my penetration of the Politburo. Fortunately, Blue has similar goals—aging Karrienko (his 10+) 15 years to rehabilitate Bungaloff, Badenuff and Manjak—two of my people. Only Nogoodnik—my 9IP—remains in the gulag. Suppress heavy sigh of relief . . .

7.8 PARADE PHASE: Old Goferek waves throughout the parade and Black now assumes my mantle of Public Enemy #1. It becomes Rex more than me. Maybe now they will be more worried about him and I can finally sneak someone to the top.

YEAR 8

1. Goferek, +, 7, 6Bk, 3Br, 1Y
2. Mischif, 85, +, 1Y
3. Satin, 68, 10Y, 8B
4. Putschnik, 76, +, 7B, 6Y
5. Nikotin, 59, +, 8B, 7G
6. Zenjarplan, ++, +, 10Y, 5Bk
7. Karrienko, 78, +, B10+
8. Strychnin, 62, +, Br10+

9. Niewitko, 73; Krakemhds, 72; Purgemoff, 71; Boremtodev, 66

PEOPLE: Five

8.1 CURE PHASE: Beloved (?) Party Chief Goferek ages three to 95. The old coot could still win it all with a wave before he retires if we let him. Putschnik ages two to 78. Then the ambulance pulls up. Brown sends ill Nikotin to the Sanatorium. Putschnik ages two to 78. Then the ambulance pulls up. Yellow follows with the equally ill Zenjarplan. Not to be outdone, Blue sends Karrienko who only has a cold! Brown likewise sends the ill Strychnin. What is this—a Blue Cross convention in Moscow? There is an awful lot of trust being shown in KGB Head Mischif. Do they all have more IP on him and think they can protect their people’s backs while they’re away? Or are they trusting in the crisis with Goferek to hold his attention? I can see why the critically ill would chance it, but Karrienko only has a cold. He’s been in worse shape following his annual inebriated New Year’s dunk in the Volga. Look at those 50+ declared IP to be harvested with a lousy Purge number of “??”. The entire 2nd Level ... what a field day they’re setting up for the KGB! I sure hope they have cards to stop this impending bloodbath. Yellow would have to be blind not to see it.

8.2 PURGE PHASE: Yellow isn’t blind. He announces a purge of Sports Minister Strychnin. I fully expect to see Brown play a card or declare more IP on the KGB to stop it. Silence. Strychnin is gone and so are Brown’s 10+IP on him. Good—now my 8IP on Strychnin are meaningful again. Brown and Blue now sound the alarm: “Black” they cry as one! What if Black has hidden IP on someone else in the Politburo (I’m suspicious of Mischif personally)? “Don’t rely on the trial to get Goferek” they moan. Is Yellow gullible enough to swallow that? Taking out the Party Chief with a purge is only a 15% long shot. He has a 65% chance against Karrienko and Nikotin and can thereby rid himself of 25+ enemy IP. I know what I want him to do—evaporate that 2nd Level and make room for my guys to move up, but I can’t say that. It would probably convince him to do the opposite. Hmm . . . maybe I should join the clamor for Goferek’s head in his absence and offer Nikotin as another victim. Too late, he’s going after Goferek. He really is that gullible. Incredible . . . I can’t fully appreciate his position obviously because I don’t know the full extent of his dispositions or the Intrigue cards he holds, but it strikes me his best chance of winning is to purge Nikotin and Karrienko while he can and destroy the power base of Blue and in Eden. While it is true that Black can possibly win this turn, there are at least three chances to stop it: bringing Goferek to Trial, the Health Phase, and whether the old coot can manage to wave again. At his age he’ll get only one shot before he must retire. Plus there is always the chance that someone will play a Visit Sanatorium card on him.

Whoa! Black may save Yellow from himself. He has bribed Yellow with an Intrigue card not to purge Goferek and Yellow has accepted to the groans of Brown and Blue. They immediately send up a hue and cry over this—trying to convince Yellow that Black has something up his sleeve besides tobacco stains. Yellow apparently agrees because now he plays the KGB Dossier card on himself forcing all hidden IP on Mischif to be declared. There were none—other than Yellow’s remaining six IP. Boy, has he been snookered! Now he looks elsewhere for revenge. Karrienko is purged and Blue lovely. It looks like the nukes were to be saved for Boris. Nikotin follows him into the cattle car with “9B” Brown and “7T” Green IP. The reign of terror ends with a try against Defense Minister Putschnik. Mischif ages six to 91.

8.3 SPIY INVESTIGATION PHASE: Brown has just lost 18+ IP and two Politicians to Yellow’s purges. Will he refuse now to bring Black’s Goferek to a Sanatorium? Black offers Brown the KGB slot if he doesn’t bring the Party Chief to trial. Good ol’ devious Rex . . . always thinking. Brown will have none of it though and brings the old bolshevik to justice. Black loses his 5IP, Blue three, and Yellow one on Goferek—who now is truly broke. Brown completes his phase by investigating the three surviving Politburo members and ages to 81.

8.4 HEALTH PHASE: KGB Head Mischif’s condition worsens and Satin becomes sick but there is no change in the others.

8.5 FUnERAL COMMITTEE PHASE: There is no intrigue here. Yellow has Foreign Minister Satin nominate Mischif. There are not enough votes to block it. The old boy rises to the top after eight straight years in the Politburo—such staying power is rarely seen.

8.6 REPLACEMENT PHASE: New Party Chief Mischif shifts Satin to KGB and Brown’s Putschnik to his Weak slot in the Foreign Ministry. Yellow’s ill Zenjarplan then promotes by age to Defense. All remaining promotions are handled strictly according to age. I wonder how many IP are left unaccounted for? Few, I hope. Maybe now at long last I can begin to make my move. I’m running out of time.

8.7 REHABILITATION PHASE: The People are again empty. With a young KGB Head, it behooves me to get people out of the gulag again. I pass up the opportunity to declare Nikotin again as another target for the KGB. All remaining promotions are handled strictly according to age. I wonder how many IP are left unaccounted for? Few, I hope. Maybe now at long last I can begin to make my move. I’m running out of time.

8.8 PARADE PHASE: Mischif ages two to 93 but fails to wave. Now only Black and I can win with a third wave. Yellow’s best chance is to purge everyone in sight and end the game while his old buzzards are still on top.

YEAR 9

1. Mischif, 93, ++, 7, 7Y
2. Zatlin, 68, +, 10Y, 8B
3. Putschnik, 81, +, 7B, 6Y
4. Zenjarplan, 60, ++, 7, 10Y, 5Bk
5. Niewitko, 73
6. Krakemhds, 72, BK, 1G
7. Purgemoff, 71
8. Boremtodev, 66, 2Y, 1Br

CAN: Eaststumuch, 64; Manjak, 61; Badenuff, 61; Bungaloff, 56; Wasolin, 50, ++

PEOPLE: 0

9.1 CURE PHASE: Party Chief Mischif goes to the Sanatorium to prevent him from having to retire. Even so, he ages two to 95. Satin ages three to 71, Putschnik three to 84. Ugh-oh! Zenjarplan, although ill, returns from the Sanatorium and ages three to 63. This can mean only one thing. As long as Yellow controls the KGB, Zenjarplan is safe to convalesce at the Sanatorium. Risking him to a Health roll at work means that Yellow is going all out to win the game this turn with a reign of terror and needs Zenjarplan to condemn a Candidate. There is little to be done to pay this year. Purgemoff and Boremtodev each age one due to being in their Weak slots.

9.2 PURGE PHASE: It begins. Manjak, Badenuff, Bungaloff and Eaststumuch are all purged from the Candidates with nary a card played to stop it. The reign of terror ends when an attempt against Candidate Wasolin fails. Wasolin! The fool! Yellow doesn’t understand that gullible is a long shot. He can’t have carried away with his own bloodbath! He could have taken Wasolin out with a condemnation by Defense.

9.3 SPIY INVESTIGATION PHASE: Zenjarplan condemns Wasolin. There are 13 Politicians in the gulag. If anyone dies during the Health Phase the game is over.

9.4 HEALTH PHASE: I play my Bee Hormone card on Mischif to reduce his age to 90. He was the most likely to die even while at the Sanatorium. I hated aiding a Yellow Party Chief but what could I do? If anyone dies the game is over. The others congratulate me on my clever play. Mischif survives the Health roll with flying colors . . . didn’t even need my Bee Pollen card. The old fool actually got better. So far so good. Satin gets sicker. Putschnik has a stroke and dies! The game ends and Yellow wins.

Reformations against Black for stopping my rehabilitation with Krakemhds fill the air but I’m too busy blaming myself. I now realize that I misplayed the Bee Hormone card. The chances were that someone would die anyway. If anyone was going to die it should have been Party Chief Mischif so we could hold a new Funeral Commission. With Foreign Minister Putschnik dead, the nomination falls to Ideology Chief Niewitko (my 2IP). I could have passed him off as an orphan and if the first nominee (by age) failed, Yellow might well have blocked the second round due to eloquent appeals to the new Party Chief so that he could win as the highest ranking controlled Politician. What a surprise that would have been when I revealed my 2IP on Niewitko as the new Party Chief. (What a bigger surprise it would have been when Rex revealed his 4IP!) I guess it just wasn’t meant to be.

POSTMORTEM:

A look back at the total initial IP of the five players provides an interesting glimpse of lost opportunities. The eight initial Politburo members are shown in italics. From this list we see that there were actually four Orphans in the game, although all but
Purgemoff eventually drew later declarations. Yellow's strong position—initial control of seven (out of a possible ten) Politicians goes a long way towards explaining his eventual win. Black was second with control of 5.5 Politicians, followed by Blue with four, myself with three, and Brown with 2.5. So much for my skill at putting 'em where they ain't, or as Lenin would say 'Kto Kogo'.

A. Aparatshchik: 6 (4G, 2B)
B. Schukrotoff: 12 (6Y, 6Bk, 3Br, 3G)
C. Goferbrok: 12 (6Bk, 3G, 3Br)
D. Niewitko: 6 (4Bk, 2G)
E. Krakhmeds: 5 (2Bk, 2Br, 1G)
F. Purgemoff: 0
G. Palavian: 4 (2Y, 1B)
H. Shromededs: 0
I. Mitch: 7Y
J. Talskals: 4Y
K. Boreng: 6 (5Y, 1Br)
L. Doberman: 2Y
M. Estumach: 15 (10B, 4Br, 1Bk)
N. Karrenko: 23 (9Bk, 9B, 5Bk)
O. Sinin: 28 (9Y, 8Bk, 6Bk, 5Bk)
P. Manjak: 12 (7B, 5G)
Q. Zenjarplan: 33 (10Bk, 10Y, 7Br, 6G)
R. Nikitin: 15 (8Br, 7G)
S. Patina: 0
T. Strychnin: 28 (9Y, 8Br, 8G, 3Bk)
U. Protzky: 4B
V. Novogodnik: 16 (9G, 7Bk)
W. Bungaloff: 15 (10G, 5B)
X. Badennoff: 11 (8Bk, 3B)
Y. Putshcik: 16 (10Bk, 6Y)
Z. Wasolin: 7 (6B, 1Y)

In retrospect there isn't much I would have done differently—other than putting IP on Patina and Shromededs from the outset—but who wouldn't. Little did I know that I actually controlled so few Politicians, and hamstring by my early lead I couldn't place more IP on Turn 6 to get more. My big guns were not particularly popular with the other players and consequently I wasn't able to sneak them to the top, although goodness knows Blue kept trying with Bungaloff. Why Rex didn't make more of an effort to move Novogodnik (this seven and my nine) up is a mystery to me. If only Yellow wasn't such an effective Purger. If only Yellow didn't want to expand their horizons with Avalon Hill. Who better to put this feature than Bill Peschel, development head of MicroComputer Games. Here Bill takes a look at some of the recent titles he'll be dealing with in future installments.

This morning found me driving through the mountains of southern Iran test-driving the U.S. Army's latest armored fighting vehicle. This afternoon I was coaching the Chicago Bulls, watching Michael Jordan shoot (and shoot, and shoot, and ...) and, before I left work for the evening, I took a quick stop in America of 1865 to go over a few strategies with Jeff Davis and Honest Abe.

So goes another typical day in the Computer Games division. We've been working like this since 1979 when the popularity of the Apple II and the TRS-80 series of computers opened up a whole new area of game play. Since that time, we've published a large number of games, some of which will be appearing in this space in issues to come. For now, in keeping with the general nature of this issue, this is a list of some of the games in the line which defines, better than any manifesto, what we're trying to do.

UNDER FIRE!
No, it's not SQUAD LEADER or ASL, but it's close. This game of WWII infantry combat received rave reviews when it first appeared on the Apple II; and with publication of the IBM-PC version, it is still one of the best games on the subject on the market.

In development for close to two years, UNDER FIRE! expanded on the IBM to take advantage of 256K of memory (translation: it runs faster) and to include a number of innovations that makes it easier to play—such as keyboard-centric menus, the ability to move units from the situation map, and controls to set events that happen in a turn. The game design itself underwent significant revisions in light of the research uncovered during the ASL design, and the game was thoroughly debugged both in-house and out. A future column will go into detail about the design and play of COMBOTS.

REVELATION
If you've played and enjoyed KREMELIN, but miss all the fun that brought Communist out of the dusty corridors of academia and into the hearts of the people, we've just the thing for you. You'll want to expand your horizons with Avalon Hill's deck of historical variant cards for the game, depicting caricatures of such lovely folk as Joseph Stalin, Leon Trotsky, Laurenti Berezina, and old Vladimir Lenin himself. In all, 26 new politicians crawl out of the pages of history to help you purge, plot and undermine your opponents. The game is full of interesting nuances, from the initial construction phase where you build your combat to the relationship between the weapons systems. Nothing was created without a sound game purpose behind it. There's a lot of flashy detail, but they're not empty details.

Take the construction phase. While pre-set coms are available, you'll want to build your own. The heart of the system is the pool of "kilocrats" you have available. With an initial fund of 250KC, careful consideration must be made in the design between speed, firepower and shields. It is possible to design anything from a speedy "scout" (one hit and it's gone) to a combat with a lot of offensive smash but barely adequate shields. The trick is to survive the early scenarios long enough to earn more KC. In addition, fallen coms can be stripped of useful devices, which can be either attached to your machine or sold back to the machine pool. The more KC earned, the more powerful and varied devices can be added.

And what devices? There's enough here to please any tech junkie. Coms can move on legs, air cushions, wheels or treads, and can have from zero to four arms. They can be armed with energy weapons, rocket launchers, or solid-shot guns; and can be defended by armor of varying thicknesses and energy shields. A sensor package can choose between enhanced vision, radar and mass sense—and these can be jammed as well. Additional devices, both human and alien, can be added, including ammunition magazines, batteries, snookel, external fuel tanks and a battle computer. A future column will go into detail about the design and play of COMBOTS.

NBA/SUPER SUNDAY
Yes, friends, the Avalon Hill tradition of sports games continues with the microcomputer, and we're planning major new products in this area for the future. We're committed to producing stats-based sports games and supporting them with season and general manager disks.

Take SUPER SUNDAY as an example. League players love it, and we felt it needed a utility program to make running a league easier. Thus was born the General Manager (Commodore 64/Apple II), a spiffed-up database manager that anyone can use. The best feature, surprisingly, is found on the game disk: a keypress to suppress the graphics in the autoplay version that allows a game to be played in about two minutes. In five minutes, a game could be played, its stats saved, and the computer is ready for another game. A full roster of games not only could be played in a reasonable amount of time, but the player could take command of whatever teams he wants and let the computer control the rest. The feeling of being involved in an active league, competing not only with other players but with computer-controlled teams, is hard to describe. It's
competitive and challenging, frustrating when you lose to a computer but a lot of fun. NBA, the basketball game licensed by the league, plays along the same lines as SUPER SUNDAY. It has an autoplay function and, with the season disks available, leagues are very easy to run. A trade and create-player program is being developed for it as well.

WOODEN SHIPS & IRON MEN

What can I say about this game to the audience that loves it already? The Commodore 64 version replicates the boardgame exactly, minus the wind effects table and the critical hit chart. It comes with 25 scenarios, and more can be constructed with the "dockyard" program. This version is limited to but 20 ships on the board at a time, but the spectacular IBM version is being tested with the full-blown Trafalgar scenario. There is no better simulation of Napoleon and Revolutionary War sail than this.

POLICE BLOTTER

This new game is an interactive text adventure combined with the paragraph system found in Victory Game’s Ambush series. As a detective in the 13th Precinct, your mission in these seven stories is to investigate and solve the baffling mysteries. Each action you take—reading reports, questioning witnesses, searching for clues—results in a paragraph number which is looked up in the book that comes with the game. If you think you know who the criminal is, get an arrest warrant and find out.

INTRODUCTION

“Dinosaurs! What the heck are dinosaurs doing in my wargaming magazine! %&&@$$!”

Go ahead, get it out of your system. There . . . feel better now? Good, because this is just the first part of an article on one of my favorite games. Although many of you are not interested in things non-military, I won’t apologize for trying to broaden your horizons. I dare say I’ve pushed more panzers and stacked more grenadiers than most, and if I can make the transformation from “wargamer” to all-purpose “adventure” gamer, then so can you! And what’s more . . . I’m glad I did. Although it’s a different kind of fun, it’s unpretentious enjoyment nonetheless and that’s what gaming—any kind of gaming—is (or should be) all about. As I’ve grown older I’ve discovered I need an occasional change of pace from the heavy-handed simulation to something more socially interactive that my whole family can enjoy. As a result, I now number such games as DINOSAURS OF THE LOST WORLD, TV WARS, MERCHANT OF VENUS, and KREMLIN among my all-time favorites. Still not convinced . . . well, chalk it up to the price you have to pay for the expanded 64-page GENERAL format; or humor me as your thanks of coverage for ASL, RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN, THIRD REICH.

DINOSAURS OF THE LOST WORLD can be played by one to four players in one to three hours (depending on the number of players and style of play). Each player represents an expedition of three explorers marooned on a plateau peopled by denizens of a world that time forgot. To win, a player must explore the plateau-earning points for filming or collecting specimens of prehistoric life. Unfortunately, the dinosaurs are intent on collecting their own specimens of modern-day life, and therein lies the crux of the adventure. The first player to amass 25 points and escape from the plateau wins.

The gameboard is actually a conventional large-hex map laid within the confines of a Monopoly-style outer track. Players roll the dice to move their
Expeditions along the outer track; the square landed on specifies what further actions the player may undertake that turn on the inner map. Each square lists an action which can be taken that turn and the hex movement allowance of that player on the inner map. However, the Expedition marker just doesn’t circle the board mindlessly as it so many roll-the-dice-and-move games. Players must score sufficient points to be allowed to pass each corner square onto the next side of the Movement Track. If they lack sufficient points to cross the corner, they must turn around and head back—dooming them to the same section of the Movement Track until they earn the right of passage. This is an interesting mechanic because each side of the Movement Track is progressively more rewarding. For example, the average hex allowance on the first Track side is only 1.6. It climbs to 2.3 on the second, 2.7 on the third, and 3.3 on the fourth. The net result is that the game’s speed escalates as the player’s score increases, and the player reaching the fourth side of the Movement Track first is at a considerable advantage. Presumably this reflects that with increased experience, our heroes are better versed in avoiding trouble.

While the Movement Track determines the flow of the game, it is on the inner mapboard where the game will be won or lost. The 60-hex map contains four conspicuous landmarks indicated by red stars where players can experience “Adventures” and earn points. In addition, there are 30 hexes with white stars which are covered with randomly dealt tiles. Where these squares are found is left to chance—unveiling the hidden contents of that hex. These include another 11 Adventure sites, three hazards, three Escape items, two bonus sites, and 11 non-discoveries.

An Expedition must stop when it enters a previously unvisited hex. If it discovers a Landmark (such as the Lava Pit or Pterodactyl Rockery) it scores a point. More importantly, however, players may trade their next movement on the outer track for an Adventure in any landmark hex they occupy. Having done so, they spend that turn trying to safely navigate a 16-part obstacle course lined with dinosaur booby traps and baited with Victory Points. Each part of the Adventure is a separately illustrated cell depicting the action taking place if the Expedition’s die roll causes it to land in that frame. Alternatively, the player may use any Experience cards he has to avoid having to chance a die roll and may then move one or more of the squares on that card—presumably to an advantageous resting place. However, it is rare that a player will have enough Experience cards—or the right combination of them—to guarantee safe passage all the way through the Adventure, and at some point he will have to reluctantly chance fate. Deciding when to take the sure thing and when to trust to luck is not always easy and adds an element of skill to the procedure. His turn ends when he either successfully completes the Adventure or is forcibly evicted from it—usually by a large, ugly, unfriendly creature of some sort.

At this point we should pause to describe the “combat” system. Dinosaurs attack with a Base Strength ranging from 2” (Pterodactyl) to 8” (Tyrannosaurus). To this Base Strength is added the power of experience at the outset, but also acts as a fresh adventure rather than a competitive test of skill. While I belong to the latter group, I can certainly sympathize with those who eschew facts, figures, and analysis ad nauseam. After all, the game is the thing. Those of you who enjoy a game less the second time around because you’ve already discerned some of its surprises will probably want to skip this trip, because I hope to lay bare the very secrets you’d choose to discover for yourself. Those of you, like me, who cherish winning, read on and prepare yourself for a victorious return trip from the Lost World.

The first lesson to be learned is to dispel the myth that the game is decided by luck. All too many gamers mistakenly dismiss any game in which the die determines movement as the second coming of CandyLand. Anyone schooled in probability will tell you that the die is not necessarily true. If dice are rolled every turn, “luck” should even out over the course of an entire game. If that happens, the winner more often than not will be the player who makes the right decisions based on the mechanics of the game controlled by the dice. There is no lack factor where decisions are concerned—you either make the right ones (which increase your probability of success) or the wrong ones (which decrease it). Luck can still overcome the right decisions and save the wrong one. This is the scenario in which the player ignores probability, and I will show you a loser. One can make the right decisions only by knowing the full parameters of the game’s capabilities. What is the likelihood of scoring “X” points in this Adventure as opposed to becoming a
dinosaur’s lunch? Know the answer going in and maybe you’ll come out with a dinosaur as opposed to in one.

Our analysis will be based on a four-player game. The strategies proposed become less valid as the number of players decreases. The multi-player game is very much a matter of timing. Throwing a lot of “6’s” helps you win Risk, but knowing when to make your move to topple your opponents is the real essence of that game. Here too the trick is not just to score points, but to know when and how to score them. The player who establishes himself as the leader too early, and is only in unity with the others against him, with skilled players, is very much in your interest to lose yourself in the pack and remain poised for a leap into the lead only when it will result in a quick win. Otherwise, dinosaurs will be beating a path to your door as if you were under some sort of primeval Golden Arches. For that reason, it is usually best to avoid being the first expedition to cross onto the second side of the Movement Track. Such a move paints you as the clear leader in the eyes of those left behind on the initial side of the Movement Track—a side with 40% of its squares allowing veneful players to “Move a Creature”. Do you really want to win that race? This is one instance where the tortoise truly does hold an advantage over the hare. So, if you must be the first to enter Side Two, try to exceed the 12 Victory Points required to enter Side Three in the same Adventure. Generally speaking, once you’ve been branded the leader, you must try to end the game as soon as possible or slip back to the pack bruised and battered for another try.

aren’t the leader, that won’t protect you if you are known creature hazards as long as possible while you don’t have to others, and flipping Unexplored Site completed to win and the only one of the three with appreciable points to offer in the bargain. Lastly, it will result in a quick win. Otherwise, dinosaurs will be beating a path to your door as if you were under some sort of primeval Golden Arches. For that reason, it is usually best to avoid being the first expedition to cross onto the second side of the Movement Track. Such a move paints you as the clear leader in the eyes of those left behind on the initial side of the Movement Track—a side with 40% of its squares allowing veneful players to “Move a Creature”. Do you really want to win that race? This is one instance where the tortoise truly does hold an advantage over the hare. So, if you must be the first to enter Side Two, try to exceed the 12 Victory Points required to enter Side Three in the same Adventure. Generally speaking, once you’ve been branded the leader, you must try to end the game as soon as possible or slip back to the pack bruised and battered for another try.

So how do you avoid being the first to score six points? Basically, by not being the first to enter an Adventure. Spend the early turns in movement on the Outer Track, moving dinosaurs against the bruised and battered for another try. It is of added weapon in the form of Indian Allies. Allies are even better protection than another rifle as they eliminate altogether any attack by that former “creature”. The Indian Caves are the only known spot on the map where you can go in search of them. While Apenom allies offer the same advantages, no one Tool offers the three Experience Card bonus at Apetown that Gifts do at the Indian Caves. More important, you have to find Apetown first; and even when they don’t help you escape the plateau in a later visit as the Indians can. If you do manage to get Indian Allies but have been unable to get the escape item for the Indian Caves, it may be worth your while to trade or steal it away from another player as your chances of successfully completing the Indian Caves Adventure with Indian Allies is greatly enhanced.

The Lariat is an all-purpose tool—useful in no less than six Adventures (including a two-Experience card bonus when attempting to escape from the Pinacle). Among those six Adventure sites are three of the better point producers: Iguanodon Glaide, Phorusrhacos Nest, and the Pterodactyl Rookery. The Machete is standard fare because it buys Experience cards at two of the most productive point sites: Phorusrhacos Nest and the Tree Fern Grove. The Protective Cage is only good at one site, but trying to visit the Pterodactyl Rookery without it is like trying to reach the offramp on the Santa Monica freeway. It not only buys three Experience cards but neutralizes two bad frames by voiding premature exit. Talk about the key to the city! Inasmuch as the Pterodactyl Rookery is far and away the safest and most rewarding point location extant, the Protective Cage is well worth lugging around in search of it.

The Food and Flashlight “tool” set owes its value in my scheme of things to my fondness for allies. Not only is this the principal beneficial tool at Apetown but it adds a fourth Experience card to the treasure that gifts at the Indian Caves. That amount almost to the equivalent of a hidden weapons cache that you can tap when you need it. It is a security blanket I am especially fond of. The others all have their uses but require being at the right place at the right time. I prefer to make sure I have these and trust to luck to find the rest.

Experience Cards
Before proceeding further we should take a closer look at the Experience cards. Of the 26, 20 are evenly divided between one, two, three, and four frame moves at five cards each. The other six consist of three fives and three sixes, making the larger numbers 40% rarer than the others. Other things being equal then, it is easy to conclude that it is better to save the higher numbers as they are harder to replace. Circumstances are rarely equal, however, so let’s dig a bit deeper.

The play of Experience cards is a player’s best way to decide his own fate. Neophytes tend to forget them for everything but safe advances on the Adventure charts, but they have far more uses. The consequences of each usage should be carefully weighed against the circumstances and the loss of the card. While it is often nice to land on a “Find a Tool” square for example, it may not be worth sacrificing an Experience card unless the probability of finding something you want is very high. So when is it worth playing an Experience card outside the realm of safely negotiating an Adventure?

On the Chase Track any Experience card which will deposit you on the Dinosaur Encounter space thereby ending the chase is usually a card well spent. However, if it is late in the game and you have more tools than you need, the Experience card will probably be worth more than any tools you’ll lose. In such a case, it is best to let the dinosaurs trample your excess equipment bearers and keep the card.

Decisions on when to use an Experience card on the Movement Track are less clear cut and require more consideration of the circumstances. Nevertheless, there are some situations which come to mind which warrant near automatic plays. A guaranteed “Move a Creature” which will bring a powerful attack to bear on the leader is usually a good investment. “Find a Tool” is also a worthwhile landing spot if you are short of equipment—especially if numerous tools have already been drawn and the rifle is still unaccounted for. “Find a Path” can be a game winner in the end game if other players are close to winning. Other less obvious or frequent uses also exist.

Assuming you’ve been keeping track of the remaining unexplored sites once the bulk have been found and you are close to the remaining ones, it can well be worthwhile to spend an Experience to “Climb a Tree” to improve your chances of find-

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### Adventurer Comparisons Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID. Name</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Bad</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Creatures</th>
<th>Exit</th>
<th>VPs</th>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Experience</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Iguanodon Glaide</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Apenom</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
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<td>C. Central Lake</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Lady Pit</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Tree Fern Grove</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>K. Phorusrhacos Nest</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Footnotes
1. % of frames with good results (including those which complete Adventure without battle unless escape is possible).
2. % of frames with bad results (including those requiring a specific tool [other than a camera] or ammo expenditure to gain positive effect).
3. % of frames with neutral results (including those requiring a specific tool [other than a camera] or ammo expenditure to gain positive effect).
4. The number of frames requiring a battle.
5. The number of frames requiring exit of Adventure prior to probable goal therein excluding those which can be avoided by ammo expenditure or a specific tool which are shown after the slash.
6. The maximum number of points which can be obtained assuming sufficient tools and no repeated steps.
7. The ratio of potential points to the Base Strength of the creatures to be battled. The figure in parentheses is the ratio if allied with the host “creature.”
8. The best Experience card frame movement allowance to have at outset.
9. A. Chance to gain Allies.
10. E. Escape from plateau is possible.
The “Move Extra Hexes” card is nice to have when you’ve landed on a low hex movement allowance square and can reach a promising Unexplored Site marker by playing the card. It’s also handy late in the game when you are racing to reach an Escape site or the last unexplored site. The value of the “Reclaim an Item” card is subjective. Generally, the Experience card is worth as much or more as any item it can be used to reclaim. The lone exception is when an opposing player steals an Escape item from you. Having this card then can be a game saver; but until the end game when this is more likely to occur, it is easily the least valuable of the Experience cards.

Understanding the dynamics of good Experience card play is essential to playing the game well. The game would be dock soup if you could hoard Experience cards, but you are required to discard all you have whenever you exit an Adventure and these are replaced by only one card and only if you complete that adventure. Therefore, how you manage this constant flow of Experience cards through your hand will play a large role in the eventual outcome. Circumstances will overshadow any hard and fast rules but certain situations should be watched for and acted upon.

If circumstance has allowed you to develop a hoard of three or more Experience cards, you don’t want to waste them taking an Adventure such as the Lavit Pit (which usually doesn’t yield big points). Likewise, you should avoid Adventures with a high likelihood of landing on a “premature exit” frame unless you have and use the Experience cards to guarantee avoiding them.

### Experience Card Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number % of Deck</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Add to Chase/Battle dice roll</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape from Chase</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discard for another card</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roll any/dice roll</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move extra hexes</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reclaim an item</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The additions to the Chase or Battle die roll come in pairs of one, two, three and four denominations with the highest obviously corresponding increased value. However, the fact that these cards can be played after the dice rolls they will be applied to rather than having to be predesignated makes them all successful when used.

The “Escape from Chase” card’s value goes beyond the obvious inasmuch as it also exempts the player from losing a turn. A player who has this card may easily forget any creature battle rather than use ammunition fighting it. This is especially true against a powerful creature or if the player can use the lost battle to quickly move in the direction he wishes to go anyway. Then too, the safe haven of the camp is protection from the ravages of other attackers in the interim, and offers the opportunity to trade with other inhabitants of the camp. “Losing” a battle under these circumstances can be quite a boon, aside from the loss of any potential value as a result and can be discarded when better things are not only possible but probable.

The Adams are advantageous when the pace of the game will determine which landmarks are the best choices for adventures. However, a little analysis of what you give up to the natural impulse to blindly charge into an Adventure in each site encountered. Most players who have the patience to pass up Adventures do so simply because they don’t have the required tools to earn a big Experience bonus there. Yet, there are other factors to consider, especially if you believe (as we do) that it is better not to forge into an early lead.

An inspection of the Adventure Comparisons Chart I’ve constructed will yield some rewarding, and perhaps surprising, information. The most important columns are those labeled “VP” and “SF.” These columns give you a total of the maximum available points in that Adventure to be won. The latter is the amount of danger per available Victory Point in terms of the Base Strength of the defending creatures. A quick glance shows that the Pterodactyl Rookery is easily the most rewarding site in terms of both points and the danger factor. Yet, I’ve rarely seen players treat this Adventure as any more desirable than the others—and indeed, without a Protective Cage it isn’t. As avoiding combat (and the corresponding ammo usage) is desirable, it is obviously best to visit those sites with the highest danger factor if circumstances such as weather, weather, and nearby creatures permit. Consequently, other things being equal, the Iguanodon Glade, Phorusrhacos Nest, Lava Pit, Tree Fern Grove, Stegosaurus Meadow and Central Lake appear to be the best choices. However, note what happens to the safety factor at Apatornith or the Indian Craft if you’ve already picked up Apemien or Indian Allies along the way. Both sites jump to the top of the list. We can also readily see that the Geyser and Pinnacle are easily the least productive places to generate points. Their only real value are as sources of escape. Admittedly, this is oversimplified for purposes of drawing conclusions as there are varying degrees of “bad” and “good” within each Adventure not reflected in the chart, but it is nonetheless useful as a starting point for making decisions.

Now let’s assume you are at an Adventure site with a capital “A,” which means you are in the middle of an Adventure and weighing whether or not to plunge ahead into the adventure or take another turn instead. If the Adventure contains one or more “premature exit” frames (shown in column 6 of the chart) the answer should be “No.” All adventures threaten possible premature evocation in the form of Event and Battle frame, but at least those give you a fighting chance to stay in and score some points. The thought of landing on an exit frame that will cost you your entire hoard of Experience cards for no gain should give you pause to reflect unless you can use those cards to avoid the exit frame(s).

The information in the charts also provides an interesting push for those fence-sitters undecided about which way to jump. This column lists the “safe” numbers of an initial move into that Adventure. While I do not advocate always using an Experience card to start an Adventure, it is nice to know that your first move into the abyss won’t be met with disaster. Owning a card which will at least get you off to a good start can be the deciding factor in whether you give it a try or move off in search of greener pastures. Not having one—or a chance to draw others—means chancing fate from the outset with a chance of getting stuck abroad.

There are other considerations to ponder too. If you’ve only got five points, do you really want to try the middle move of an eight point site and weigh the odds of whether or not to plunge ahead into the Adventure or take another turn instead. If the Adventure contains one or more “premature exit” frames (shown in column 6 of the chart) the answer should be “No.” All adventures threaten possible premature evocation in the form of Event and Battle frame, but at least those give you a fighting chance to stay in and score some points. The thought of landing on an exit frame that will cost you your entire hoard of Experience cards for no gain should give you pause to reflect unless you can use those cards to avoid the exit frame(s).

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Why do a science fiction game about trading? It all started out innocently: I wanted to create a fast, playable game based on skill, sort of a Scotch-and-sandwich game instead of beer-and-pretties. I even had an interesting historical period in mind, but a strange thing happened. When I focused the game on its objectives, it changed the subject and designed itself! All it left for me to do was the scutwork of figuring out the map, counters and rules to make it work. Except for my original objectives, the final result is not at all what I visualized originally. This article serves as a Cook's tour of this strange design process. It shows how the objectives designed the game, and how the game works to fulfill these objectives.

The Merchant's War

The heart of the game is the central role of money, the trading network, and the investments. To win the game a race for money, an arbitrary amount is set as the goal and the first player to reach this amount wins the game. The network consists of trading locations where various goods with different costs and profits can be bought and sold. The exact layout of the network is unknown at the start of each playing and the profits available at each location fluctuate during play. The investments are for different things that the players can buy to increase their trading profits in different ways. If the players choose to allow combat, they can also buy things to steal or destroy enemy investments and things to protect their own.

To simplify buying and selling, each type of goods has a basic cost and payoff, and special Demand markers add a bonus when certain cultures buy specific goods. Different goods pay different profits, but the range is limited to make a trade circuit more profitable than shutting between two cultures. To cause the profits in the network to fluctuate, the
goods, passengers and Demand markers are temporarily removed from play each time they pay off; they come back into play when they are picked at random from a cup. To keep the play focused on trading, each investment gives its owner an advantage that he can use in his trading. To provide differences for skill to exploit, different cultures sell different investment items with diverse advantages, and each investment is a trade-off that includes a disadvantage in another area.

The players can buy bigger or faster spaceships. To fashion a trade-off, the fast ships are small and the larger ships are slow. Each player's spaceship defines how many goods he can carry and how far he may go each turn. To minimize playing time, the fastest ships make the shortest trips in one turn. For flexibility, even the smallest of ships can carry two loads of goods.

The players can also purchase special drives to speed up their ships, and shields to reduce penalties. To create a trade-off, shields and drives both reduce the cargo space available to carry goods. However, shields lose importance when travel time goes down and profits go up, so each ship can carry one shield without affecting its cargo space.

The players can buy ports and factories to increase their profits in specific systems. Ports speed up buying of mass quantities of goods (trading at cities is limited). Factories create especially profitable new goods. To prevent diluting their value, only a few ports and factories can be built in each system. To encourage trading, everyone can use these ports and factories, but the owner collects a commission each time anyone trades at his port or buys goods at his factory.

The Play of the Game

The costs and profits of all this are carefully calculated to provide a smooth transition from exploring to trading to investing. As the players make more money and invest, they move and trade at a quicker pace, making more money, and the action and profits accelerate on a rising curve. This keeps the game lively until the high profits bring a victory.

Exploration must be profitable to make it competitive with trading, so each culture gives a "reward" to the player who discovers it, and the hidden "?" markers include various Relics that can be taken for free. The Relics have unique powers that vary in flamboyance and usefulness. The players start poor, but they can get profitable items by exploring, by picking up passengers for free and by buying cheap goods (which earn a high profit ratio, especially when Demand markers add in). Players who go broke can also use these tactics to recover. These tactics are expensive in money and ship space, and they pay well enough if they can be done quickly, so they are perfect for players with small, fast ships. After a profitable trip or two, a player can afford a faster ship, a drive, or a shield. Goods that pay higher profits cost more to buy, so as a player accumulates money he can buy more profitable goods. If he invests all of his profits in more profitable goods each trip, it takes him four trips to build up to the best goods. He can also buy factories to create even better goods. The cost of goods increases faster than the profits, so it is cheaper to increase profits by buying more goods than by buying more profitable goods. Therefore, it pays to buy larger ships and it pays to buy ports to speed up mass trading. A player must sell two or three of the more expensive goods to pay for a port or large ship.

The cost of ports and factories has been inflated to make it difficult to monopolize systems. They rarely repay this cost, so to make them profitable they count towards victory at the end of the game, like money. These facilities cannot be sold or transferred lest they be used to throw the game. To give the players reasons to follow different strategies, each player is a "friend" to a different culture; he gets a discount when he buys ports or factories from the friendly culture.

Ships and equipment are priced to recover their cost plus show a profit, so they do not count towards victory and they cannot be sold for money. They can be traded in to buy other things, for one-half their original cost. They are priced to tie for victory in an average game with everyone buying ports and playing efficiently. Items that pay high returns are hurt the most by inefficient play and fewer ports, but they gain the most when the game lasts extra turns.

The amount of money a player needs to win is set so that a game should last no longer than three hours. Optional rules suggest alternate amounts for longer and shorter games. When a player falls behind, his best chance is to obtain a high rate of return and then hope that the game will last long enough for him to catch up. A large ship, equipped with drives and choice Relics, can generate enormous profits.

Combat provides the one thing lacking in a good race: a way to slow down the leader(s). To keep the game focussed on money, combat establishes a balance between profit-taking, defensive trading, and attacking. Profit-taking maximizes trading profits; defensive trading makes less money but defends it; and attacks make money by stealing from the profit-takers instead of by trading. No matter what strategy a player uses, the other players can out-perform him, and this affects the leader the most because he is everyone's favorite target.

To create this balance, a player's combat actions interfere with his trading—and attacking interferes more than defending. Combat strength costs money and inconvenience, and each player is limited to attacking with his spaceship during his turn so aggression diverts him from trading. Attacks must steal enough from profit-taking players to paralyze them; to provide opportunities, a player can attack repeatedly throughout his turn, but his turn ends as soon as an attack fails.

To make players vulnerable to a strategy of attack, ports, factories and ships can all be attacked. To provide mobile defenses for ships, players can buy cheap temporary weapons and expensive permanent weapons. These weapons use up cargo space like shields. To provide static defenses, ports and factories have intrinsic strength (representing political influence). They can support each other during combat, and friendly cultures also add to this strength. The players can buy a limited number of forts to add to this strength; forts also interfere with the movement and trading of other players.

For simplicity, weapons and political influence are also used to attack. Weapons can attack forts, and in space they can attack enemy ships in one-to-one battles where the winner steals goods from the loser. To give weapons added value, they can also attack "?" penalty markers, and destroying a fort or penalty marker earns a small bonus. To prevent frivolous attacks, it costs money to attack with political influence, which can—if successful—steal goods off ships and can conquer enemy ports and factories. In every battle, the attacker and defender each add their strength to a die roll and the higher result wins.

Finally, I must mention the Rastur. The Rasturs are an optional, automatic enemy that can be used to play the game solitaire, or that can be added to a multi-player game. These aliens invade the map in random spurts, occupying critical locations and interfering with movement and trading. Actually, this scourge behaves much like the mercantilistic small powers of the Spice Trade days; the Portuguese, Dutch and English come immediately to mind. The number of Rastur markers used depends on the length of the game; and when all of them are on the map at the same time the Rastur wins! The combat rules must be used to fight the Rasturs; forts stop them and weapons can blast them off the map temporarily. It is hard to beat the Rastur in a solitaire game, and in multi-player games they force the players to cooperate to survive.

It's Alive: It's Alive!

MERCHANT OF VENUS has finally finished its trip from the Indian Ocean in the 16th Century to space in the distant future. Its exterior has changed mightily, but its innards are intact. It is still a trad-
As the survey showed, and at the insistence of a number of people bigger than I, there is enough interest among the readership to warrant us spending all of our increased space on a regular column devoted to Avalon Hill's award-winning line of sports games. This column should prove to be a source of information by which to judge them. For those already playing the sports games, this column might prove to be the answer to their appetites—once regularly whetted by ALL-STAR REPLAY. There is no one better qualified than Jim Burnett to pen this column. For many years he has, along with our games of war, been a superior player of the games of sport. Added to that is the fact that, despite what he says, he himself is an accomplished sportsman (long-distance bicycle marathons among others). So he knows whereof he speaks.

Since the loss of ALL-STAR REPLAY, I have searched for a way to present material concerning the large line of Avalon Hill sports games to their adherents. The increase in the number of pages available in The GENERAL has provided me with this opportunity. While to some it may seem a bit incongruous to have a sports gaming column in what is essentially a wargaming magazine, I have found through experience at tournaments and conventions that a large number of gamers with a military bent also enjoy the change of pace that comes with competition games about sporting events. If it follows that most of the players are true gamers, then the scenario is not as important as the competition. Perhaps this harkens back to the "playing fields of Eton" or to the modern analogies between sporting contests and war, but it does seem a truism that sports are just a slightly more amicable way of conflict. I will, then, try to cover as much of the Avalon Hill sports line as possible in this column.

The reasons for this are many, not the least the fact that several of the sports games (notably FOOTBALL STRATEGY) are definitely among the perennial sales leaders in the Avalon Hill line. This would indicate that many of the sports games sold are being bought by wargamers. The presence of many competitive leagues across the country devoted to the play of one of the sports games in the line indicates a detailed interest in those games. Indeed, this interest, even in "American" games such as football, extends across the world in the form of sports gaming.

Your writer's qualifications in the world of sports are meager at best. I am incompetent at the typical adult American games of tennis, golf and bowling. I manage to be poor at softball, touch football and street hockey. My niche seems to be in bicycle racing, where you can sit down and compete. As a spectator, however, I enjoy all types of events (short of professional 'rasslin'). As a gamer, I not only play ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER but FOOTBALL STRATEGY. Hopefully, I will be able to bring a balanced view to the gamut of sports games.

Avalon Hill presents to the gamer a vast line of sports games, grouped in two main categories, and "competitive" and "non-competitive". Note that this does not mean that the statistical games are not competitive and vice versa—far from it. These are merely convenient tags to differentiate the aspects of play.

The statistical games typically offer the chance to match up teams or individuals in their sport as they have performed over a particular historical period of time. Thus, it is possible to play through full seasons of team games, match up teams or individuals of various ages, or even re-create specific events in the world of sports. With the care given to accuracy in these statistics, the gamer can expect the team or individual to reflect his or her skill in actual competition, tempered by the fact that the gamer still exercises a certain degree of control of the game and still can influence the outcome by his decisions. These games are enhanced by the publication of new statistical data (usually on cards) on a regular basis, with the more popular team games getting yearly updates from the previous season and the other games having their players updated as often as changes are appropriate. The competitive sports games present the player with two or more balanced teams for the play of an individual game. While the teams perform accurately within their sports, the emphasis is on the competition between the game players themselves. Each particular type of game will have its own fans, and the line is broad enough to satisfy all.

Within these two broad categories, the various sports are well represented. While the emphasis is naturally on the "big" three (football, baseball and basketball), aficionados of most of the "minor" sports should have no gripe at their favorite sport's representation. Let's see just what is offered to the gamer we will designate as "statistical" and "competitive".

Baseball offers the largest number of games in the AH line. These games truly span the limits of simulation of the great American game. BASEBALL STRATEGY offers competition between two similar clubs at the player level. Each "manager" must use their players to best advantage within the rules of the game. While not intended to re-create a seasonal period of time, the game has its greatest interest over a World Series type of context where the rotation of pitchers and setting of lineups is more important than the play of a single game. STATIS-PRO and CLASSIC STATIS-PRO BASEBALL offer the opposite. Both of these games give the player the team's and individual's stats as they actually happened over a given season. This gives fairly accurate simulation of one game, but for a season the teams will truly reflect their real-life performance. The CLASSIC
game is a bit shorter and less involved in actual game mechanics, but both are true representations of the game of baseball. **SUPERSTAR BASEBALL** is of a similar mold, but in this game the player’s stats are a compilation of his entire career. This should appeal to lovers of baseball nostalgia and to competitive players, since the “superstars” over the years are all represented and teams can be built from them as the players wish. This game is again best when played in a series format. **PENNANT RACE** is the game for whirlwind players. Player ratings are based on the player’s performance over a year. The players are lined up in a bracket, and then the game is played as a single elimination tournament. The players may choose different strategies based on the strengths and weaknesses of their chosen boxers. This game is well suited for elimination tournaments.

Two other games which are not on the regular sports list will be covered if interest is shown: the ancient Roman games of racing and “boxing”, **CIRCUS MAXIMUS** and **GLADIATOR**. Both of these are tournament favorites and are certainly representative of a past world’s view of sport. Both are competitive type games with death in the sands of the Coliseum as a side feature.

The above gives only a thumbnail sketch of the Avalon Hill sports line. I will be presenting features on various games and gambits in succeeding issues— including commentaries, variants and rules upgrades. The column will try to reflect the taste of the readership; therefore, your input and suggestions are solicited. You may write to me directly: Jim Burnett, 606 Timbercrest Drive, Clinton, TN 37716.

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**EDITOR’S CHOICE AWARDS**

This issue marks the beginning of yet another volume year for **GENERAL**. As is our usual practice, we’d like to honor the best of the many hobbyists who submitted material for our pages last year. It is indeed time for the editors to offer their nominations for the best articles of Volume 24. A poll of the readers will determine one author from the list to be named “Editor’s Choice”. The winner receives a lifetime subscription to **THE GENERAL**, in addition to a $100.00 bonus. Please vote for only one of the nominees, and vote only if you have read all the articles nominated. Eliminating those articles written by our paid AH staff members from consideration, we offer the following articles from Vol. 24 to select from:

- **THE PACT** by James Werbaneth, No. 1
- **FIRST IMPRESSIONS** by Robert Medrow, No. 2
- **FIGHTING THE PANZER LEADER** by Steven Wheeler, No. 2
- **THE VIEW FROM DOWN UNDER** by Harry Rowland and Greg Pinder, No. 3
- **RUNNING THE GAUNTLET** by Eric Noreen, No. 4
- **FROM STURDY STOCK** by Phil Rennert, No. 5
- **THE DANCE OF DEATH** by John Hyler, No. 5
- **BY THE BOOK** by David Bieksza, No. 6
- **AXIS SOUTHERN YEARNINGS** by Mark Nixon, No. 6

The above gives only a thumbnail sketch of the Avalon Hill sports line. I will be presenting features on various games and gambits in succeeding issues— including commentaries, variants and rules upgrades. The column will try to reflect the taste of the readership; therefore, your input and suggestions are solicited. You may write to me directly: Jim Burnett, 606 Timbercrest Drive, Clinton, TN 37716.

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**CONTEST 143**

It is the end of the third turn in a four-player game of KREMLIN, and you (as the Green player) have just had a second wave from the rostrum with Party Chief Leonid Bungaloff. But he is ill and the wolves are gathering. It is now time for the declaration of additional IP and/or drawing of Intrigue cards. Without choice of action granted to you because you do not know the undeclared IP of the other three players (Red, Yellow and Blue), what Intrigue cards may they hold or the outcome of future dice rolls, there is still a “best move” most likely to get poor Leonid through the rough years ahead to a third wave and victory. Your only other Green (undeclared) IP on present Poliburo members are: three on Bungaloff, two on Palavrian, four on Manjak and nine on Karrienko. Using only this information, your three Intrigue cards (Assassination Attempt, Cuban Missile Crisis, and Visit Sanatorium), the knowledge that Red and Yellow have already lost their 8IP politicians, and the situation displayed below (code as explained in Mr. Greenwood’s article in this issue, “Blood in the Politburo” on page 8), can you outline the best course of action to save Bungaloff and win the game?

1. Bungaloff: 64; 3G, ++, +
2. Schukrutoff: 81; 8B, 7Y
3. Doberman: 74; 10R, 9Y, +
4. Karrienko: 69; 8B, 6R
5. Palavrian: 78; 2G, 1R
6. Manjak: 61; 10Y, 9R, +
7. Protzky: 64; 5R, 4Y
8. Zenjarplan: 72; 2B, 1G, +

The answer to this contest must be entered on the official entry form (or a facsimile) found on the insert of this issue. Simply indicate your actions and placement of any IP. Ten winning entries will receive a merchandise credit from The Avalon Hill Game Company. To be valid, an entry must include a numerical rating for this issue as a whole and a listing of the three best articles in the judgment of the contestant. The solution to Contest 143 will appear in Vol. 25, No. 2 and the list of winners in Vol. 25, No. 3 of **THE GENERAL**.

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**AH Philosophy . . . Cont’d from Page 4**

hobby). Articles such as Don Greenwood’s accounting of a playing of KREMLIN or Richard Berg’s look at his love affair with KINGMAKER herein are indicative of this attitude, and show our low-key approach to it over these many years. Heaven help us when playing wargames becomes more work than fun; The **GENERAL** is, in part, dedicated to making sure this doesn’t happen. If you don’t laugh, or at least smile, occasionally when reading through an issue, then we’ve fallen down on the most important part of our job.

The **GENERAL** is a rather unique thoroughbred in this wargame magazine race. In its own quiet way, it does all that is expected; it even gives the readers that touch of historical information at times, and reviews, news of the hobby, and all else that pertains to our hobby. And it does all this, we hope, in a colorful and entertaining manner. After 25 years (and with the help of an awfully lot of good people), I think we’ve gotten it right. Now, it is just a matter of keeping it right for the readers and the gamers. With your help and support, I believe we will.
SECOND FLEET EXPANSION

Bringing in the French

By Joseph Balkoski

At the start of a project, the first two questions a wargame designer asks himself are: what is the area I wish to portray in the game, and at what scale do I show it? 2nd FLEET, which is a follow-on game to the successful 6th FLEET, was irrevocably tied to the scale of its older cousin (roughly 50 miles per hex). The emphasis of the new game is on carrier operations in the Norwegian Sea; the two maps used in the game are centered on the North Atlantic, from Greenland to Norway (on an east-west axis) and from the Kola Peninsula to the northern tip of Ireland (on a south-north axis). Even using two maps, the “southern approaches” to the British Isles (that is, the sea route skirting the southern Irish coast) had to be omitted from the game due to space constraints. Since an important part of the simulation deals with the movement of convoys from the United States and Canada to Europe, the realism of 2nd FLEET can be enhanced if the NATO player is permitted to use the slower but safer southern approach to Europe for his convoys.

Using the expansion map, counters and rules included in this article, 2nd FLEET players will have more maneuver room for their surface and submarine units. (But unfortunately will have less maneuver room on their dining room tables!) As a result, both players’ strategic options will be increased. Moreover, each side will have more units to play with, since the addition of the southern approaches will also add some naval forces that had been omitted from the original game—most importantly, the powerful French Atlantic squadron.

THE MAP

The map provided with this article (on the insert) should be attached to the lower right-hand corner of the 2nd FLEET south map. The new maps overlap the original game map at the hexes listed across the add-on’s northeast mapedge. (For example, hex 4038 [Holyhead] of the original map is overlapped by the hex 4038 [Llan-yr-hydd] on the new map.) The addition of the extra map will hide some 2nd FLEET charts and displays, so the players will have to either copy the covered features or use their own mock-ups.

The addition of the extra map to the game adds a new zone, labeled “Biscay Zone”, to 2nd FLEET. This zone is adjacent to both the North Atlantic and the British Isles zones.

NEW COUNTERS

Both the NATO and Soviet players receive additional counters (which the players will have to craft) when playing the expanded version of 2nd FLEET. All the new counters are provided in the list that follows. Abbreviations used in the list are:

- MVT—Movement Allowance
- DEF—Defense Value
- SSM[a,b,c]—SSM Range
- ASW—ASW Value
- AAA—Close Anti-Air Value
- AAA—Anti-Air Value (air units)
- SPC—Special Value (Close SSM for surface units; Torpedo value for submarines)

RULES

1. Add the Biscay zone to the Zone Table on die roll results “2”, “5” and “9”. The Biscay zone may be subject to Command Failure (see 25.2) or squalls/storms (see 17.0).

2. If, during the Political Events Phase, a NATO Break-up occurs (see 25.3), all French units leave the game (along with all Dutch units) on a subsequent die roll of “6” through “9”.

3. All NATO bases in the Biscay zone may only be invaded by the Soviet player if the current Soviet strategy level is World War 3.

4. NATO air units may perform strategic air missions in the Biscay zone normally. However, Soviet land-based air units may never perform a strategic air mission in the Biscay zone.

NATO DEPLOYMENT

(All hex numbers in the following list apply to the map addition.)

PREPAREDNESS LEVEL: Low

Surface Group 3 (Free set-up): any sea hex within six hexes of Brest (2206)
Coibert (CG)
Jean Bart (DD)

France (Controlled by NATO Player)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>MVT</th>
<th>DEF</th>
<th>SSM[a,b,c]</th>
<th>ASW</th>
<th>CAA</th>
<th>AAA</th>
<th>SPC</th>
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<td>Colbert</td>
<td>CG</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7/4(2)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeanne D'Arc</td>
<td>CG</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7/4(3)</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>6/3</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Bart</td>
<td>DD</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8/4(5)</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1/2</td>
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<td>Primauguet</td>
<td>DD</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8/5(5)</td>
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<td>2/3</td>
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<td>3/5</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>4/2</td>
<td>3/3</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>DD</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7/4(3)</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>4/3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duquesne</td>
<td>DD</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7/4(2)</td>
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<td>3/2</td>
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<tr>
<td>D'Estrée D'Orves</td>
<td>FF</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7/4(1)</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
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United Kingdom (Controlled by NATO Player)

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<th>SSM[a,b,c]</th>
<th>ASW</th>
<th>CAA</th>
<th>AAA</th>
<th>SPC</th>
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<tr>
<td>Avenger</td>
<td>FF</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Charybiti</td>
<td>FF</td>
<td>same values, logistics boxes as Scylla</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIM(&lt;2)</td>
<td>RCN</td>
<td>same values as other UK-NIM air units</td>
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Soviet Union (Controlled by Soviet Player)

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<td>L.A. Gvozder</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>M.M. Popov</td>
<td>SN</td>
<td>same values, logistics boxes as YGagr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Livny</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>same values, logistics boxes as YGagr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ulyanovsk</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>same values, logistics boxes as SGcrh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Velitsky</td>
<td>SS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Air Units

Lann-Bihoué (2406)
ATL (FR/RCN) x2

Saint-Mawgan (2005)
NIM (UK/RCN) x2

PREPAREDNESS LEVEL: Medium

Same as Preparedness Level Low, but also add . . .

Cherbourg (2203)
Jean de Vienne (DD)
De Grasse (DD)
Comm. Ducuing (FF)
Comm. Bouan (FF)
Brest (2206)
Casablanca (SN)

Air Units

Lann-Bihoué (2406)
ATL (FR/RCN)

PREPAREDNESS LEVEL: High

Same as Preparedness Levels Low and Medium, but also add . . .

Cherbourg (2203)
Jean d'Arc (CG)
Primauguet (DD)
Pr. Maitre L'Hermier (FF)

Continued on Page 33, Column 1
Tokyo Express is a solitaire and two-player simulation of the naval battles off Guadalcanal, recreating the Imperial Japanese Navy's convoy runs — nicknamed the "Tokyo Express" — to supply and reinforce their troops and to bomb US Marine positions on the island. Major battles resulted when US task forces intercepted the Express.

In the solitaire version, you command the US fleet, awaiting the emergence of the Tokyo Express from the darkness. You group your ships into formations, assign them orders, and select the targets to attack with guns and torpedoes. Simple mechanisms control Japanese maneuvers and target assignment in a realistic manner. The two-player version modifies the solitaire game and pits players against each other in an exciting recreation of WWII naval combat.

CONTENTS
- 156 Ship Counters
- 520 Information Markers
- 1 22" x 32" Mapsheet
- 1 Basic Rules Booklet
- 1 Standard Rules Booklet
- 120 Gunnery Cards
- 1 Battle Movement Display
- 10 Charts and Tables Cards
- 2 Ships Log Roster Pads
- 1 10-sided Die
- 1 Counter Storage Tray

TIME SCALE: 10 minutes per Game Turn
MAP SCALE: 1500 yards per Hex
UNIT SCALE: Individual ships
PLAYERS: One or two
PLAYING TIME: From 1 hour to the Basic Scenario to 3 to 6 hours for a Standard Scenario

- Graduated in complexity to help you learn the rules as you play: Basic, Standard, Advanced, and Two-Player versions are included.
- Basic Scenario, 4 Historical and 7 Hypothetical Scenarios, Optional Japanese Missions.
- A Scenario Generation System, offering multiple variations, lets you experience the suspense and uncertainty of commanding the US fleet in combat.

Now available at leading hobby and game stores everywhere...or call toll free 1-800-638-9292 for ordering information
Dear Sirs:

Enclosed is my subscription renewal... The GENERAL is an absolutely wonderful periodical! TANGOC games themselves have added an extra enjoyment to my life. I look forward to the arrival of the magazine and read it immediately. The articles in the magazine give me ideas for new uses for the games I own. The games allow me the "thrill" of competition when I have an opponent or just the opportunity to do something different from my everyday life, but at the same time something of interest. I always have and probably always will have an interest in military history. The GENERAL has provided me with variants, rule interpretations, strategies and sometimes series replays for my games. (It is nice to see other people I don't necessarily agree with are interested in the same hobby as I am.)

Brian Montgomery
Carrying Place, Ontario

Dear Mr. Martin,

Over the years I've been very pleased with The GENERAL and have spent many a wonderful hour poring thru the pages. I prefer only wargames and the articles pertaining to them, I can understand why non-wargaming articles appear in the magazine. But I would like to see The GENERAL become devoted totally to your wargaming line. All my other views are checked off on your survey. One idea in your brain-storming section is to have your company produce yearly die-cut variant counters and any supporting material. Also, I would like to encourage you to pursue the production of the 25th Anniversary issue.

Good luck in your endeavors to improve The GENERAL. Messing around in the air for one would be willing to pay the extra money for an improved and expanded product. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Timothy L. Gibbs
Sault, Michigan

Dear Mr. Martin:

My favorite wargame of all time is Avalon Hill's THE ISLAND DEFENSE. I have found THE ISLAND DEFENSE to be a very enjoyable game, especially for those games that I have purchased. I am sure that I have played this game at least a dozen times.

I have purchased this game from your catalog and I am very pleased with the quality of the product. The artwork, rules and quality of the product are excellent.

I would like to suggest that you consider producing a new version of THE ISLAND DEFENSE that includes some of the newer wargaming techniques and themes.

Thank you for your time.

Mike Williams
Ogden, Utah

Letter to the Editor

Dear Mr. Martin,

I am writing to express my disappointment with the game THE ISLAND DEFENSE. I have found THE ISLAND DEFENSE to be a very enjoyable game, especially for those games that I have purchased. I am sure that I have played this game at least a dozen times.

I have purchased this game from your catalog and I am very pleased with the quality of the product. The artwork, rules and quality of the product are excellent.

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Thank you for your time.

Mike Williams
Ogden, Utah
THEY'RE FIGHTING IT ALL OVER AGAIN

Baltimore, Maryland. Just about the time you are receiving this first newsletter, thousands of military buffs will be fighting the World War II desert campaign all over again. We're already besieged by letters from Rommel and Montgomerys popping up all over the country. This sudden preoccupation for Afrika Korps will no doubt be a boon to the Marshalls Baton business.

As most of you loyal subscribers know Afrika Korps is the latest in a continuing series of famous battle games. Avalon Hill has been publishing since 1958. But few know the background of Avalon Hill, itself.

Incorporated in 1958 Avalon Hill's first games were Gettysburg, Tactics II and Dispatcher (chronological appearance on the market for each game is indicated by the code number printed on the box: Gettysburg - 501, Tactics II - 502, etc.).

Preceding these, of course, was original Tactics published back in the days prior to incorporation. Tactics II was simply a refinement of the original game.

But it was Gettysburg that really caught on. National magazines and news services spread the word demanding national distribution for the game. Quite naturally, other games followed in order to satisfy the appetite of battle game enthusiasts that seemed to crop up from everywhere.

As a result Avalon Hill has enjoyed overnight success...and in just 6 short years has been forced to seek newer quarters four times since leaving the original Gun Road address.

There is no Mr. Avalon, nor is there a Mr. Hill...the very first games were published in a Baltimore suburb. Avalon, high up on a hill literally overlooking the genteel plantation land of picturesque south Baltimore. It was there that Gettysburg was conceived...labor of love in which the famous civil war battle was rehashed time and time again by admitted Confederate sympathizers (in the 'border' state of Maryland southern loyalty ran high.) One of the very first correspondents was an elderly Alabama gentleman who was having the time of his life "slaughtering those damnyankes."

Today, the battle game group numbers 8 titles not including Chancellorsville which is no longer in the line.

Because of the enthusiastic reception to realistic games in the battle area, Avalon Hill embarked on a policy of designing realistic games for subjects of all walks of life. In fact, the original Verdict was quickly followed up by Verdict II, an indication of the tremendously increasing interest in the law profession.

And because of fanatical sports enthusiasm, the Avalon Hill "formula" was carried over into the sports field. As a matter of fact, Football Strategy portrayed realism to such an extent that the leading national illustrated sports magazine said..."the best football game ever invented is Football Strategy..." in their December 11, 1961 edition.

Management, which was introduced in 1960, has found considerable favor with professional administrators. We have learned that this game has been used in various management courses around the land as a guide to designing the more complex decision-making games that are machine solved.

Avalon Hill has also applied the authenticity kick to sports car racing. Le Mans which is very, very popular with the sporty set (especially those whose driving licenses have been revoked). As a matter of fact, recently a sharp upsurge in sales of Le Mans caught us short handed and, much to our embarrassment, some of you had to wait 2 months for your copy.

We hope to continue to publish games based on real life adventures. And if reading this article has interrupted you from finishing your current game of Afrika Korps, then by all means go back to game board...for this very minute, historians are fighting it all over again.

Can the British Really Win in Afrika Korps?

Our Consumer Panel test members feel that the British have a tough time of it in this game.

We have learned that in the first several games between new opponents unfamiliar with the game, odds are in favor of the British player winning. However, as the German player becomes more familiar with the nuances of strategy open to him, the play-balance leans toward his side. Actually, this tends to be the case for many of our battle games...and I'm sure had Robert E. Lee been able to fight Gettysburg over again, he would no doubt have won all the marbles.

Lower the German Supply Capacity

For those of you wishing to balance Afrika Korps once you have played it several times, we suggest that you reduce the German supply maximum from 3 Supply Wagons to just 2 maximum. So the key to the British strategy becomes even more apparent: hold Tobruk at all costs even if the German player decides to push on toward Alamein without fighting for this Fortress. In effect, the German supply capacity is reduced 50% which means that he will not be able to attack on every Turn. He will have to pick and choose his battles carefully so as not to run out of supply wagons when he needs them the most. As a matter of fact, this was the case in the real campaign during which Rommel was not able to launch any major attack from early Summer to late Fall of 1941.
THE EDITORS SPEAK

In the Beginning
By Thomas N. Shaw

Tom Shaw is, of course, the founding editor of The GENERAL. Since those days, he has been and is a VP of The Avalon Hill Game Company, game designer, inductee into wargaming's Hall of Fame, and an all-around "swell guy". Here he reflects on those first years when he brought the GENERAL from a fanzine to respectability.

When I was a kid, there was this hubcap that rolled down the street right into my hands. From that point on, I was known as a "requisitioner" of hubcaps. I remember going to school once wearing one red sock and one gray sock. [Nothing has changed.] Thereafter, I was known as a sloppy dresser all through grade school.

When on the rifle range during Uncle Sam's Basic Training, I fired six rounds without hitting the target; so I'm branded the worst shot in the platoon for the rest of my stay in military service.

But am I known as the very first editor of the very first wargame magazine? Am I known as the originator of the uniquely innovative title, "The GENERAL"? Am I known as the pioneer of the "1-to-2" winning STALINGRAD strategy in Vol. 1, No. 6 of that same magazine? "None of the above", you'd say!

Well, here's where I set the record straight. Isn't this a discussion of commemorative issues? I've waited 25 years to wax rhetorical about how The GENERAL really got started. Actually, I would have written this at the tenth anniversary, but there were still too many people around with better memories that might dispute what I said. But after 25 years, it is unlikely I will get challenged for any of what follows—most of which should be pretty close to the truth.

I'm not even sure who actually came up with the magazine's title. It was Charlie Roberts who first broached the idea of doing a magazine. This was back in 1962. But the press of financial survival put the idea on the back burner. Then came reorganization, details of which are outlined in our Silver Jubilee company history. [Published in June 1983, copies of this book are still available in limited quantities at $5.00 each from The Avalon Hill Game Company.]

The first issue—Vol. 1, No. 1—was published on 1 May 1964. It was a mere 12 pages long; a six-issue, one-year subscription cost $4.98. This modest attempt to create a family togetherness among wargame aficionados got off the ground rather quickly. Articles, good and bad, began pouring in after just one issue had seen print. And it soon became evident to me that I was going to be more to editorship than just screening submissions.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Among my gems of editorial wisdom was the creation of "area editors". By the time the first issue appeared, already in place were "editors" solicited from among those gamers who had been corresponding with Avalon Hill on a variety of matters, giving rise to my personal feeling that these people were pretty much the cream of the game-playing crop at the time. These editors served various functions, from reporting on events in their territory to offering helpful hints on improving play in print, to screening submissions for errors.

This all began 24 years ago. Can anyone tell me where they are today . . .

Hill's own Madeja, Middle Atlantic editor and now a publisher of military books and Debuts of Plan Red. . . And finally, in the fifth issue, admitted to the folly of perfect plans with his article, "Sure-Fire Plans Can Be Disastrous." Ignoring this admonition, my sixth issue featured "Stalingrad Re-Played" in which the perfect German plan is to "tear into the Russians with reckless abandon right from the start . . . attack everybody at 1-2". This article was mercifully left unsigned.

In the early years of Avalon Hill, distribution of wargames in retail outlets was few and far between. For those subscribers who lived hundreds of miles from a game store, and in an effort to solicit new subscribers, our third issue featured the first Avalon Hill discount coupon—worth a whopping $2.25 that could be applied toward the purchase of any game bought directly from Avalon Hill. However, the small print required one to accumulate at least four coupons before they were redeemable. Still, it was not a bad idea as it effectively lowered the subscription price by 30% for our "loyal" readers.

MORE EDITORS

With the advent of Volume 2 in May 1965, additional area editors were announced: Laurence Plumb (covering the East); Marc Nicholson (the Southeast); Stan (West); Tom Bosseler (Southwest); and Myron Brundage (Midwest). Brundage's loyalty to Avalon Hill was such that he would attend shows on our behalf and help us deliver the good gaming message to unknowledgeable wholesalers and retailers. He also was among the first to organize game conventions and tournaments in and around the Chicago area. Also helping us spread the gospel in those early days were gamers the likes of Gary Gygax (of D&D fame), Len Laffoka and Bill Hoyer (DIPLOMACY buffs), Mike Carr (designer of Fight in the Skies), and S&T's founder Chris Wagner—all managing our booth's of our own free will. Early Issues of The GENERAL contained a number of gaming articles bearing their bylines.

Another member of the "Chicago Mob" was Bob Olson, an insurance executive. While undergoing temporary banishment to Baltimore, Bob flailed away at me over many a game of WATERLOO and STALINGRAD. It was Olson who put the bug in my ear that led to the development of the infamous "automatic victory" rule added to some of the early classics.

To say that I gave the future "stars" of the gaming industry their start might be presumptuous on my part. Nevertheless, Dave Arneson's byline appears in Vol. 2, No. 3 well before he co-designed D&D. And Vol. 2, No. 4 boasts the first of many Jim Dunnigan articles before he went on to fame as founder of SPI. And there's that "Terror at Tilly" article by Don Greenwood gracing Vol. 2, No. 5. It should be noted that that was the same issue we dropped the area editorships. Articles were now coming in so thick and fast that it no longer seemed feasible to maintain this routine.

EXPANSION TO 16 PAGES

With the first issue of Volume 3 in May 1966, The GENERAL was expanded to 16 pages—with color yet! Issue No. 1 also sported a "cover" featuring Admiral C. Wade McClusky, a hero of Midway, kneeling on the wing of his plane presumably trying to figure out how to get in. And we, with the beginning of our third year, now ran a cover price—subscriptions remained at the princely $4.98. The "Inflator's Column" so dear to many began in the fourth issue of that year. The next (Vol. 3, No. 5), featuring S&T's founder Chris Wagner on the cover, carried the first "Avalon Hill Philosophy" column, still a mainstay today.

The cover story of Vol. 4, No. 3 trumpeted another first—the "first annual convention of the International Federation of Wargaming (IFW), July 15, 1967." This lead article went on to state, "At last, through the hard working efforts of William Speer and cohorts Scott Duncan, Gary Gygax, George Petronis and Clark Wilson, the General Wayne Junior High School in Malvern, Pennsylvania played host in this first successful attempt at uniting fanatics from distant states to discuss the problems, ecstasies and camaraderies of this rapidly growing pastime." Among those pictured in this cover story is Henry Bodenstedt, designer of Remagen Bridge and considered the inspiration behind the creation of AHKIS (the "Avalon Hill International Kriegspiel Society").

Meanwhile, amateur and semi-professional magazines and newsletters devoted to our hobby began popping up all over. Just witness this list from Vol. 4, No. 3 of The GENERAL: "Avalon Herald", "Kamp" (by one Jim Dunnigan), "Kommandeur", "The Panzer", "Panzerfaust" (by Don Greenwood), "The Spartan" (Russell Powell), "The Stormtrooper", "Strategy & Tactics" (by Chris Wagner), "The Tank", and the Wargamer's Newsletter. Imitation was the purest form of flattery. Speaking of Dunnigan, featured in this same issue was the first of a two-part story by him relating the trials and tribulations of his very first wargame design, entitled JUTLAND, which he completed for Avalon Hill on a free-lance basis back in 1967.
FROM DULL TO SHINE

The fourth issue of the fourth year marked the conversion from dull stock to a glossy stock. And while The GENERAL didn’t exactly pose a threat to Time magazine, this upgrading of quality was accomplished without an increase in price.

A cartoon in this same issue posed the question, “When does one stop being a wargame buff and become a wargame nut?” An answer may have lain in the editor’s choice of articles appearing in this issue, bearing such deathless headlines as “Blitzkrieg for the Really Depressed”, “How to Capture Antwerp Without Really Trying”, “PM’s Hidden Movement via Cryptogram” and “GETTYSBURG Expanded” (in which the author taught us how to play the game after breaking the divisions and brigades down into units representing companies). Perhaps I stepped over that line into “nuts”.

With Vol. 5, No. 2 (July-Aug 1968), I began taking notice of the emergence of wargame clubs. This issue gave us a profile of “Boltdlands”. The next two issues featured Spartan International and the first TSR convention at Lake Geneva. Both issues ran listings of all known wargame clubs, none of which have survived to today. The preoccupation of most clubs with using German vernacular left a bad taste in the mouths of many serious gamers; happily this approach to wargaming disappeared when the hobby grew up and the club concept became more organized.

As the hobby expanded, games and gamers became more sophisticated. In fact, those of us who cut our teeth on the likes of AFRICA KORPS, WATERLOO and STALINGRAD were now intimidated by the progressive complexity levels of the newer games. Keeping up with it all was becoming a challenge for me. I needed help. And I got it from a new wave of fine contributors that kept me in the editor’s seat—possibly for four years too long. Volumes 6 through 9 featured some greatly innovative material from regular contributors—such as Alan Augenbraun, David Bell, Ed Birsan, Tyrone Bomba, James Crawford, Roy Easton, Williams Gilbert, Roger Harmon, Randy Keller, Albert Nofi, Tom Olson, J.E. Pournelle, George Phillips, Henry Robinette, William Searight, Bruno Sinigaglio, Richard Thurston, and Lawrence Valencourt.

COMING SOON—THE GREENWOOD ERA!

Nothing goes on forever! Certainly not my anonymity as editor of The GENERAL. Subscribers were beginning to ask questions that were out of my bailiwick of gaming knowledge. It was time to bring in a new editor—a “Don Greenwood” type.

Fortunately, a Don Greenwood type existed. Faced with a decision to get a job upon graduation from college in May 1972, he looked like a prime candidate. I spent about three months in a low-key chase to land my man. He may have seen the pursuit in a different light, but from my standpoint he was a sure-fire winner. I spent about three months in a low-key chase to land my man. He may have seen the pursuit in a different light, but from my standpoint he was a sure-fire winner. I needed help. And I got it from a new wave of fine contributors that kept me in the editor’s seat—possibly for four years too long. Volumes 6 through 9 featured some greatly innovative material from regular contributors—such as Alan Augenbraun, David Bell, Ed Birsan, Tyrone Bomba, James Crawford, Roy Easton, Williams Gilbert, Roger Harmon, Randy Keller, Albert Nofi, Tom Olson, J.E. Pournelle, George Phillips, Henry Robinette, William Searight, Bruno Sinigaglio, Richard Thurston, and Lawrence Valencourt.

Spirit-Master to Offset-King

By Donald Greenwood

Donald Greenwood, of course, needs no introduction. His name is synonymous with that of Avalon Hill—having been editor of this magazine for ten years, having been a fine game designer and developer for almost as long.

For more than a 25-year existence, The GENERAL has been a major force in my life. First as a source of recreation and later my livelihood. However, beyond that, it’s been something much more . . . a pseudo-fountain of youth that has enabled me to relive my boho year well into middle age. I hope this magazine carpet ride into adventure and competition never ends, although I know it must, but I’ll always be grateful for at least 25 years of enjoyment. 25 years . . . God, am I really that old? It seems like only yesterday . . . well, maybe last week . . . that I invested the then enormous sum of $5 (five weeks’ allowance) for that first subscription. I still recall the lead story, “Best Football Game Ever Invented” screamed the headline touting a favorable review by Sports Illustrated of that venerable favorite FOOTBALL STRATEGY. It sold me. It became my first Avalon Hill game—the fourth in my growing collection. They say first impressions are the strongest and it must be true because 25 years, 19 football leagues, and over 500 games later it’s still my favorite game. Of course, A.H. gaming excellence is more than just a game—it’s fine, but there’s something about the competition of a league setting that magnifies the significance and excitement of each game. Now that I’m too old and frail to actually participate on the gridiron, it’s the only way to experience those pre-game bittersweet afterglows. Whatever it is, it’s lured me back this year to the Avalon Hill Football Strategy League for yet another season following a dismal 5-11 record the last time. I said I was competitive—not good!
my first gaming convention—aboard the battleship Massachusens in Fall River. I was instantly taken by the existing hierarchy of recognized players with considerable reputations. One of my longtime postal friends whom I stood in absolute awe of was George Phillips, who through his writings was widely accepted as the grand master of STALINGRAD. Abord the battleship I discovered any number of players who claimed to have beaten him during his playing days at MIT. It seemed the reigning champion was now Dave Roberts who actually had beaten him with the RR at MIT; there were any number of other fine players who hoped to top him. Common to all of them was the ability to converse intelligently about the game, citing grid-co-ordinates and discussing intricate strategies without need to refer to the map. I came away dazzled.

A year later I met the other side of the spectrum. A traveling companion to a convention at Lake Geneva, invited me to New York. He worked for SPI and only had one day to use. We put printing out in the back seat and rates far cheaper than I could get in my hometown. While there, we were told that Jim Dunnigan—the head guru—wanted to see me. I was flabbergasted. This guy was a legend; he had already designed dozens of war-games (on his way to an eventual claim of hundreds) and was widely recognized as THE authority on wargame design. What could he want with me? It turned out that, besides meeting me, he wanted to play a game with me—Napoleon at Waterloo—his latest design. My fan 'zine had been dominated by articles on AH games and doubtless he wanted me to give his games more coverage. I felt like the kid who gets invited to be a batboy for the Yankees. I'm the sort who feels uncomfortable playing any game the first time, but against a world-famous designer at his own creation? To say that I felt like a fish out of water was an understatement. Yet, the really last impression that I carried away from that meeting was not by Jim but by the story that Jim was actually “playing” a game. It turned out that this was the first of his games that he had ever played—or so they told me. I found this totally incredulous, and to this day can’t understand how he designed games without playing them. This is not to denigrate Jim Dunnigan mind you. I believe the man is a genius and one of the best extemporaneous speakers I’ve ever heard (one of my flatest compliments). He also owes him much for his many kindnesses over the years (including an unsolicited free ad in S&T which eventually doubled the circulation of my magazine). I later discovered that it was his recommendation to Tom Shaw that got me the AH job. But his philosophy of treating games (simulation games) as historical books was about as far removed from my own preference of games as exciting tests of skill as you could get.

As my collegiate career wound to a close and I looked forward with trepidation to earning a living in the real world, who should come to my rescue but good ol’ Tom Shaw of Avalon Hill. Seems Tom was getting tired of editing the GENERAL and looking for an assistant. He liked what I did with my ‘zine and would I be interested in a job? Let’s see . . . working for a living or playing games . . . which would it be? A sillier rhetorical question was never posed.

And so began my sojourn as editor of The GENERAL (with Vol. 9, No. 1). Little did I know then that “playing games for a living!” would consist of averaging 60-hour weeks, and there would be some days when deadlines loomed that I wouldn’t even go home. The GENERAL probably showed no immediate marked improvement. I was new to the world of offset printing and my school’s printing office was a small one, which was also the case for many Master publishers but I was the rawest rookie in the offset big leagues. I concentrated on trying to improve the graphics (no small feat for a guy who can’t draw a straight line) and coercing articles out of well-known gamers rather than relying on whatever was submitted as had been Tom’s want. Actually, my biggest contribution to gaming that first year was probably founding the 26-member Avalon Hill FOOTBALL STRATEGY League which I also won that year by beating Tom Shaw 22-21 in the first of three Super Bowl wins! But there it dealt only with Avalon Hill games, and primarily how to win them. The rage of the 70s was simulation games. It was the Golden Age of simulation games and the era of S&T magazine with a historical article and related game in each issue. A burgeoning wargamer audience used to a steady diet of one or, at most, two new AH games a year hungrily embraced the simulation explosion. We enjoyed it, along with the rest of the gaming world. And we were not alone. The rest, as they say, is history. That second convention was much better than the first and the two dozen events all sold out. I remember the AH Classic 500 filled with 144 entries and a second “ghost” tournament started to handle the overflow. It was the peak of recognition for the “classics” with many of the old Grand Masters in attendance. It was a time when we would give shots ofquila to the players at the finish line. The only item that stuck out was the number of everyone vying for the players’ attention ballooned into the hundreds (until The Classics tournament could barely draw 20 participants). The FOOTBALL STRATEGY tournament was also memorable for me—winner over a full field of 64. I miss those days filled tournaments and a real sense of a national championship. Todays’ ORIGINS just don’t convey that impression—diluted as they are with the activities of dozens of manufacturers. It has led us to think once again of starting a new Baltimore convention—this time solely for competitions in AH games. It’s still under consideration and may be one of the things that we can look forward to in the next 25 years of The GENERAL.
One last remembrance on ORIGINS. I still laugh every year when GAMA annually considers a name change for their national convention. It seems no one knows why it is called ORIGINS. As the person who named it, I can tell you that the label was my creation and inspired by the fact that commercial wargaming (role-playing hadn’t yet made a big splash) ORIGINated in Baltimore—the home of Avalon Hill. It’s as simple as that.

Editing The GENERAL was not without its disappointments. It is always hard to reconcile that not everyone shares your interests. Goodness knows I’ve had to deal with countless thousands who have written me over the years that their new game was the greatest thing since Monopoly. It is one of life’s ironies that the game you think of as the ultimate experience may be somebody else’s idea of a bad joke. Surely, the simulation camp has reason to gripe with my direction of the magazine. And so it is with magazines and gaming philosophies. The continual bridesmaid status for “Best Magazine” honors in the annual Charles Roberts Awards (sic) is not without its hurt, although I’ve long since come to grips with the realization that no “house organ” will ever win an award from a voting body dominated by competing publishers. Similarly, every critical letter has cut deep, although I take solace in our record of printing so many of them. It’s peculiar that the competition never gets such letters and prints instead only tomes of glowing praise. Are they really that wonderful . . . or have we been too honest for our own good?

Perhaps the best thing I did for The GENERAL was to pass the reigns to a new editor after ten years. In Rex Martin the magazine finally got the services of a fulltime editor, and his influence is very much in evidence today and growing with each passing issue. If not overly enamored with computer games, he is at least more tolerant of them than I and thus far more qualified to lead the magazine into the 90s. For me, I’ll remain the old dinosaur that I am and stick with the more sociable and enjoyable (for me anyway) board games. Rex’s talents, coupled with the considerable artistic abilities of Charles Kibler, form a considerable one-two punch with which to continue the magazine’s evolution. Your magazine is in good hands—as any comparison of this issue with one of mine or Tom’s editorship will attest. I know because Rex and Charley are first and foremost gamers—people who go to conventions not to give seminars and lecture sound like experts but to play games and enjoy their creations. And Good Lord willing I’ll stick around to help them out.

Hoping you’ve enjoyed the last 25 years as much as I have, and that you’ll be around with me for the next 25.

The Not-so-Young Turk
By Rex A. Martin

I came to Avalon Hill with a couple of degrees in history, a varied employment record, and a great many misconceptions. Now, after seven years at the helm of this magazine, I’ve found that none of these were relevant—and perhaps that’s just as well.

When the call came on that snowy afternoon, I didn’t hesitate. The Avalon Hill Game Company was offering me the editorship of The GENERAL! I’d mentioned to Don, letters concerned with playtesting and my scenarios for the SQUAD LEADER system, that I was free-lancing (mostly articles for regional magazines and organizational contracts for the state government) at the time but was always on the look-out for an honest profession. Now Eric Dott wanted to know how soon I could be out there (I lived in Helena, Montana) and at work. So, shortly after New Year’s Day 1982, I was on the road, driving my old Fiat overloaded with books and belongings straight into a mid-West blizzard. Despite a few days spent in a motel near Indianapolis, road, driving my old Fiat overloaded with books and belongings straight into a mid-West blizzard. Despite a few days spent in a motel near Indianapolis, I came to Avalon Hill with a couple of degrees in history, a varied employment record, and a great many misconceptions. Now, after seven years at the helm of this magazine, I’ve found that none of these were relevant—and perhaps that’s just as well.

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I had hoped that there would be a smooth transfer of editorship, having been in uncomfortable situations where the exiting head has, especially if he remained with the firm, still had a proprietary interest in “his” baby. It would be understandable; after all, Don, the man who had almost single-handedly made The GENERAL what it was, and had spent ten years doing so. I needn’t have been concerned. He spent a day showing me how to paste up things (my first attempts were the ads for CIVILIZATION and STRUGGLE OF NATIONS and Kirby Davis’ article in Vol. 18, No. 5). Then he led me by the hand downstairs, proceeded to show me several great mountains of paper (half-edited articles, submissions, correspondence, and complaints), and informed me—what an evil grin—that I alone was responsible for the next issue and that it was due out in six weeks. He would write the editorial but he had a number of other projects, and I was now in charge (“Don’t bother me kid, I’m busy”). This transfer of editorship was going to be rather smoother than I’d wanted.

Actually, it wasn’t quite as bad as this makes it sound. I spent several days getting all the new organization and workflow figured out, and with a combination mostly organized so I could locate articles by subject and correspondence by date. The lead material on FLAT TOP for Vol. 18, No. 6 was already edited and simply awaiting typesetting. Having just sorted through all the articles submitted to and accepted by Don, I pulled some things out that I thought complimented Alan Moon’s pieces, and settled in to make them readable. Greenwood provided guidance and support along the way—usually limited to a grunt of assent but I would take what I could. I rather quickly, and luckily, found that Charlie Kibler was a marvel; all I had to do was inform him that I needed a piece of header art for a specific article, and he came up with the concept and polished off a masterpiece without pause. And Dale Shanks, most importantly, showed me how to use Adobe PageMaker (and methods of expressing himself would lead one to think otherwise) and set out to indoctrinate me into the more esoteric elements of layout and paste-up with a cheerful cynicism. Together, we managed to make the deadline. ‘Course, I did put in 80-hour weeks then. The magazine was truly now “my baby”.

Almost seven years have passed since then. I’ve written a lot of words, and edited a few million more, and read a few million more than that, during my tenure. I no longer work 80-hour weeks; the magazine runs quite smoothly. Indeed, being a glutton for punishment, I’ve even managed to convince the powers-that-be that we needed an increase in size since I have been too successful in encouraging submissions. Somewhere along the course of these seven years, I’ve also somehow slipped into producing a couple of ASL modules (HEDGEROW HILL and the upcoming THE LAST HURRAHY, and done a number of special magazine projects. And I’ve left my tricky find-yourself-on most every playtest here. If someone had asked this high-school kid 22 years ago what he’d be doing for a living when he was 37, this would be the last thing mentioned I’m sure. A rather torturous route did lead me to this profession (and my mother still isn’t quite sure it’s an honest living).

The offspring of a doodlebugger and a daughter of Kansas dirt-farmers, I was raised with a restless mind and soul. A ‘doodlebugger’, for those ignored, are few and don’t k’n o’ em out o’ the crew. For most of my young life, my father headed such a crew and this meant that we moved every three or four months as the crew shifted its search to virgin fields. I saw a lot of the Gulf Coast and lower mid-West, but it wasn’t a life conducive to making friends with others of my age since any budding relationship was rather quickly and abruptly terminated with familiar regularity. Through the years our family had to move. Some of the places we entertained ourselves a great deal, and games were always a part of that family time. My earliest memories are of playing cards (my mother came from a family who were all sharks) or checkers or chess or something on the order of Monopoly. Along with reading, gaming was the prime entertainment for my sisters and I—and our parents participated and encouraged us in both pastimes, something all too few do these days I suspect.

Gaming in its variety of forms was thus a significant part of my upbringing. Somewhere along the way, I also uncovered early on a love of history. I suspect that it sprang from my choice of pre-school reading material (I revelled in war comic books) and my huge sets of toy soldiers (by high school, I had graduated to the more elaborate plastic models, always of military theme). Whatever the roots, I knew early that history would be my profession. As I’ve aged, my interest in history has grown to encompass more than just the military, but it has dominated my education and work experience. Even after two degrees in history (from Carroll College in Helena and the University of St. Andrews in Scotland) and several jobs in the field (most notably with the illustrious Montana Historical Society Library and Archives), I still have a great love of the subject.

It was inevitable therefore that I would discover wargaming. In 1964, in a Hammond (Louisiana) bookstore, I saw a copy of AFRICA KORPS. Now you must understand something about my approach to historical study; I am not a specialist. Rather, my tastes are eclectic since I get fascinated by a certain period or aspect of history, and then doggedly pursue it until I feel satisfied. And almost any simple thing can set me off—a movie or TV show, a passing reference in a book I’m reading, almost anything (my acquaintance with a young Finnish miss whose father had fought the Russians led to my long interest in the modern history of this fascinating country). At the time, in 1964, I was in the midst of a love-affair with Rommel spurred by some novel. Needless-to-say, I bought AK. And, needless-to-say, I was hooked. This was the perfect blend of two interests. Over the course of the next few months, I would buy a number of those classic Avalon Hill wargames.

A few years later I had an opportunity to change careers and took on the task of teaching math in a small Louisiana high school. I was lucky enough, by dint of a few notices tucked to bulletin boards, to locate someone who was willing to play these “military simulations” with me. Up to now, my mother (who I am convinced to this day used to regularly sail the Bismarck across Ireland) and my father had been my sole opponents for my Avalon Hill collection; my sisters seemed to lack all interest in the hobby despite my admitted not too strenuous, offers to play. Now, at last, I could pit myself against a peer. Luckily, Harry and I were evenly matched and neither of us lost interest through getting the hell repeatedly beaten out of a plan of attack. And, since I lost as many games as I won, I had no delusions about my skill at these games and so never developed the will to win at all costs. To me, the prime enjoyment of the game was the challenge and comraderie. (This had found me in a few of my previous jobs that I was well known to lose on purpose just to make us kids feel good; they played to win, and when we finally would win a game—and then come to regularly beat them—they were as proud as we.) I make no bones about the fact that this experience set the tone for my love of the hobby, and my approach to it ever since.
But with graduation from high school, and departing for the wilds of New Mexico for college, my hobby had to take second fiddle to other pursuits. For the next four years, first in Santa Fe and then in Helena, my time was taken up with schooling, and working to pay for that privilege. It was not until after I was married and employed by the Montana Historical Society that I again had the time and money to indulge myself. A few notices here and there, and I surprisingly uncovered a hoard of gaming right in Helena. I was extremely fortunate to fall in with the likes of Randy Strom and Mark Mackin, two gentlemen (in every sense of that word) who had gathered together a band of brother wargamers. My evenings and weekends spent at their apartment playing games, or pushing around 25mm Napoleonic figures in Mark’s folks’ basement, became sheer delight and some of my best memories. We were all convivial (a steady flow of beer helped) and relatively competent. We even organized ourselves well enough to put on displays of our hobby at various libraries, and demonstrations of our art at local fairs, and give talks to various groups. In those heady days, we were doing all we could to promote wargaming in our “backwater”. With the exception of a short stint in Scotland taking my Masters, for some ten years my acquaintance with the Helena Gaming Society defined me more surely than my various jobs. If nothing else, my attitude that wargaming was meant to be good comradeship was more firmly entrenched than ever.

Of course, since who among us isn’t a frustrated game designer, inevitably I began dabbling with the creation of these gems. The original SQUAD LEADER provided my stepping-stone. With its open-ended structure, and its stress on small-unit action (on which I had always found most fascinating), the appeal to me was enormous. For some months I dabbled with recreating some of the Finnish actions I knew so well (for both degrees, my theses dealt with Finnish involvement in the “Big One”). At last, spurred by Mark and Randy’s encouragement and enthusiasm for my efforts, I dispatched these off to Avalon Hill, along with some thoughts on how to simulate winter warfare (skills, of course, and their deathly cold) and the perils of small units. I was sure that the appeal of local history articles, I was well familiar with rejection and frankly didn’t expect much to come of this. Lo and behold, Don not only encouraged me but told me that he thought the idea had some merit. I was involved in the playtest for G.I., and submitted a number of articles on the odd game from Avalon Hill that caught my fancy (none of which, I hasten to add, saw print). Many was the happy afternoon that I spent at “Bert & Ernie’s”, a local bar of some repute, with my books and papers. You see, B&E’s was within an easy walk, had good beer at cheap prices, all my friends congregated there after they got off work, and I had a talented wife who made a fair amount of money as a vocalist. Life was good, and I was pretty content with my lot. Then came the call offering me a job. Sandra and I chewed over the decision for awhile (neither of us being enamoured with the East), but I think the decision had been made for me years before.

Now, after 38 issues, I am nicely settled in. I get to write a lot, a task I’ve always enjoyed. And make this trite observation, The GENERAL has been more fun than most can imagine. I have met more able and gifted people than most folk are ever lucky enough to claim as acquaintances. I have enjoyed producing each and every issue (even though I can point out many mistake and oversight therein) since Don cut me loose with “It’s yours; do what you want.” I love the challenge of putting it all together in paste-up (much like doing a jig-saw puzzle without any concept of what it is supposed to look like when finished). And I beguile myself with the dream that I am actually helping the hobby in a small way, and Avalon Hill in a large way.

I’ve written often enough about what I perceive the function of The GENERAL to be, and how crucial I believe it to be to our hobby. And others in this issue will surely tell you how critical Avalon Hill has been to the growth and advance of wargaming. So, if I might, I’d like to touch on the hard work that producing a magazine entails—the nitty-gritty, you might say. At last the day comes to put it all together. Hot wax and ruler, T-square and razor blade, veloxes and negatives, proofread galley and amberlith. In a continuous stream of will all this paper and paste to produce a magazine layout. As I’ve said above, it is much like a puzzle for which one has no guide. I use hot wax to stick things down, so that they can be readily moved when I find I’ve painted myself into a corner. Revising and changing, cutting and pasting, each issue of The GENERAL comes to life on a Rickety, scarred old art table in my office. But I’ve got that table set just so after all these years, and my chair is at just the right angle, and everything is in just the right spot, that the process must work. For, if I do say so myself, I like the way The GENERAL looks.

Next, my “baby” is turned over to the tender mercies of the Camera Department. They produce a “color-key” (a four-color acetate copy laid out in the eight-eight-page signatures we now use) and a “blue-line” proof so I can see if everything is as I want it to appear. The Camera Room is staffed by long-time “blue-line experts”, which game we prefer to produce the work in a four-color process, and I shudder to think of some of the complex chores we’ve called on them to complete in the past few years. After any last-minute changes or foul-ups have been corrected, the plates are made. And the presses roll.

I’ve rambled on quite a bit about how it is done, have I not? But as for all this, isn’t that important to you readers how it happens. What is important is the result. Selection of articles, artwork, layout and production has but one point and that is to increase your enjoyment of our line of games. Look back over your collection of issues, and you can judge for yourself whether my predecessors and I have succeeded. If we have expanded the scope of your game playing, have made you more proficient, have entertained you a bit in the process, then I have succeeded.

Before I go, I’d like to make one last comparison and lavish some praise. I think, although certainly my experience is limited, that the group of fellows who make up the Avalon Hill design staff are some of the most pleasant one could hope to work with. All are talented, involved in the hobby, and enjoy themselves. Having been forged in the fire of the game industry over the past
few years, we get along marvelously well. We can be likened to a battle-tested squad of G.I.s, having been in many firefights. The survivors of these battles—Don (our grizzled and gruff, but loveable, top sergeant) Greenwood, Craig Taylor, Charlie Kibler, Bob McNamara, the new kid Bill Peschel, and myself—have withstood fatal wounds and come back for more. It’s us against the world, you see. Some companions have fallen along the way, and we occasionally recall their foibles and fabulous abilities. But those of us left are lean and mean, ready to take on yet another unplayable monster. We enjoy each others’ company, friction is nonexistent, and we work surprisingly well together (given some of the egos in this game business, I might say “against all odds”). Best of all, we all enjoy playing games, and do so at every opportunity—even on our own time! If nothing else, my tenure here at The GENERAL has given me one invaluable treasure: the friendship and comradeship of these fine gamers.

Before the reader plunges into all the other words in this issue, I would like to take a few moments and express my gratitude to those who have labored so hard to make this party possible. Surely you realize that any such undertaking as this magazine is not due to the efforts of one fellow. A host of people have lavished their talents on it, doing the hard work while we editors take the credit. Their pride shows in each issue. To Gertrude Zombro for many years, and now Richard Snider, who struggle against the tides of the Postal Service to insure that you receive your latest issue; to Dale Sheaffer and Charlie

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Units may be placed on the map when they reach the box corresponding to their Movement Allowance (MA). South-bound units may be placed in the northernmost or westernmost hex (north of hex 1801) hexrow of the Atlantic zone on the 6th Fleet map. North-bound units may be placed in the southernmost hexrow of the British Isles zone on the 2nd Fleet map.
AN ANNIVERSARY SMORGASBORD

The First Time
By S. Craig Taylor, Jr.

Craig Taylor, the old master himself, has a string of credits that would fill this page were I to start listing them. Suffice to say that he has labored for three different game companies, and we were darn lucky when he accepted the offer to come to work for Avalon Hill. He has, over the last couple of years, become our resident expert on modern warfare, although his interest in things military span the ages. And he's a demon at playing his own designs—something unique in this hobby of ours.

It was a long, long time ago in a place far, far away. To be a tad more specific, it was Christmas vacation in 1958 in a picture-postcard part of New England. Ike was in the White House; JFK had just won re-election to the Senate; and Gunsmoke was the #1 television show.

An Air Force brat, I had just returned from four sun-filled years in West Texas and North Africa and was enduring my first year of junior high school in snowy Ludlow, Massachusetts. Remember junior high? Actually, you may not; it seems to have been restyled “Middle School” many years ago. Anyway, it's a strange time in life when a man-child's hormones run amok, transforming him into a hairy beast with acne and a voice that cracks whenever speaking in public. Girls, very easy to ignore in the past, also metamorphize in various interesting ways—but that could provide a whole string of other “first time” stories. In short, it is a very impressionable time, with lots of new beginnings. In my case, one event at that time, indirectly, led to a lifetime hobby and, for the last 15 years, a career.

One of my new buddies, Ted Deckel, and I had been playing a species of miniature wargaming that can best be described as H.G. Wells’ rules with dime-store soldiers and BB guns, and our ages, interests and destructive inclinations were very similar. The morning of the day after Christmas, Ted called and excitedly announced that he had gotten a new game, TACTICS II, as a gift. “You've got to see this,” he shouted. “It's got tanks, infantry, paratroopers, written rules and everything!” Eager to see this modern wonder, I indicated that I would be right over.

“Right over,” as the terrain dictated, meant a 20-minute car ride, 45 minutes by bicycle or an hour walking using a shortcut (known only to those under the age of 20) through the woods. The car was out of the question as I was too young to drive and my parents were in their traditional post-Christmas huddle trying to determine how to pay the bills without selling me to the gypsies. The old J.C. Higgins had a flat, so by process of elimination The choice was shank's mare. On the way, I clumsily managed to slip off a fallen tree that bridged a stream and arrived with everything below the knees transformed to solid ice.

While I defrosted, Ted and his brother Kevin showed me THE GAME and explained the rules. As feeling slowly returned to my nether regions, we started to play. My, my, my, so many pieces! Yes, we're using the replacement and everything! (which included a second overnight stay) lasted only ten years before Bruce spotted yet another important misinterpreted rule that brought the curtain down on yet another indecipherable Red-Blue rhapsody. Too thick to call it quits, we passed the game and the war act together. This time, after five years of fearful slaughter, we could actually determine a winner and a loser. (For you nosy types, Ted and I lost.) My father had finally noticed that I was missing when it snowed and the driveway and sidewalk needed shoveling. He picked me up that night, in all probability sparing me another frigid dunking in that babbling brook.

So, that was my initiation into formal wargaming. Over the next couple of years, more games were published, and we learned and played GETTYS-

BURG, U-BOAT, D-DAY and CHANCELLORSVILLE in their turn. We added some additional enthusiastic gamers (Mike Carleton, Doug Thompson and Alan Hewitt) to our cadre. We played when we had the time or whenever the weather was bad (quite frequently, in western Massachusetts). We didn't realize it at the time, but in a formless manner, we had a “wargaming club” and were cheerfully participating in a “wargaming hobby.” We didn't think about the economics or implications of it at the time, or wonder if there were others like us out there. We just happened to be there, together, and wargaming was a common activity all of us enjoyed.

Believe it or not, there is a point to this whole story. In 1961, I moved to Guam and lost touch with the guys back in Ludlow. It was goodbye wargaming club and to all that, although I did “train” a gamer or two and (barely) kept my hand in. Ditto when I returned stateside in 1965, although by then my interest was really starting to wane and I was seriously considering disposing of my game collection. Two or three games a year against novice opponents doth not a hobby make.

Then, shortly after moving on to college in 1964, IT happened. I saw my first issue of The GENERAL. Wow, there were other people enjoying this stuff besides me! There were even names and addresses so that they could be contacted. I started a number of PBM games, met some other gamers (enough for another informal “wargaming club”) and generally got back to enjoying wargaming. I’ve moved many times since then and, thanks to The GENERAL, have never again had to face the prospect of abandoning my hobby due to an inability to meet other gamers. Happy Twenty-Fifth, GENERAL!

Someday I’m Going to Get a Real Job
By Bruce C. Milligan

Bruce Milligan, former editor of Avalon Hill’s quarterly ALL-STAR REPLAY and head of TAHGC’s sports game division, currently resides near San Mateo, California, where he is an advertising copywriter. He insists that rumors that ALL-STAR REPLAY was terminated because its readership exceeded that of The GENERAL are “without foundation . . . I think”.

“Tha't’s the art room. This is the art board for making your galleys. This is a pica ruler. This is a blue pencil. Your first issue is slated to appear in three months.”

That’s one way to be introduced to the wonderful world of magazine editing, and in some ways it might have been the best. Except for the fact that the right angles on my page columns always seemed to be either 94 degrees or 86 degrees. I think I figured things out pretty well. And there’s something fulfilling about rearranging words on a paste-up, “camera-ready” page with an X-Acito knife that a guy with a word processor will never understand.

“Someday it’ll really like, working for Avalon Hill!” This was the inevitable question I would always hear. “I really did leave ‘63, I’m sure it was an Avalon Hill “personality”. Of course what they really meant was, “So what’s it really like, getting paid to play games all day?” Hey, you mean we were supposed to get paid?!

Actually, as I am sure you already know, game design is very hard work and the only reason that you can enjoy playing things such as SQUAD LEADER, ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER, Super ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER, and Super-Duper REALLY ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER is because hard-working stalwarts such as Don Greenwood have devoted literally hundreds of hours (in Don’s case, this should read “ten years of his life”) to helping insure that the two-hour scenario you might play is enjoyable, realistic, challenging and comprehensible.

Rumors that you may have heard about some of the hi-jinks that go on at places such as Avalon Hill are, as is so often the case with rumors anywhere, almost entirely the product of someone’s imagination. Thus, the snowball fights that some people have alleged used to occur inside the AH design offices never happened. And, of course, the same holds true for the summer-long squirt wars which, despite the myriad rumors) a water-propelled rocket which was instead filled with Dr. Pepper as a propellant. I of all people should know this didn’t happen, because some folk claim I was the intended target of the rocket. What rocket?

Was there ever really a girl living in the apartment across the street from Avalon Hill’s art room who used to dance in her window, attired in no more than a garter belt and black stockings? What do you think? Did some AH
Spending the Bicentennial with Avalon Hill
By Jack Greene

Jack Greene has done quite a variety of things in the wargaming hobby over the years—the latest being as the one-man shop known as "Quarterdeck Games". Few know however that in his dark past he spent a couple of years as an employee of The Avalon Hill Game Company. These days Jack resides in California, the new mecca for wargame designers.

By 1962, when I was thirteen, I was already hooked. GETTYSBURG had been bought and played; I was waiting for the next game to appear on the toy store shelves. My ultimate fantasy was actually to work for The Avalon Hill Game Company (then simply called Avalon Hill). As with so many fantasies of a young man, I thought of it just as a fantasy—a dream that would never be fulfilled.

In 1975 I was working on a slowly dying Conflict magazine out in California and writing freelance articles for various magazines. ORIGINS was going to happen that year and, frankly, that event rivals one of the other great events of wargaming—the founding of The GENERAL itself. (For those too young to remember, before The GENERAL was a "fantasy" you could not attend, many games, and maybe even play with some neighbors, but you really knew of no other fanatics about wargaming. Then The GENERAL appeared. With its "Opponents Wanted" ads, you suddenly found other hardcore fanatics, and thus sprang into being the ancient wargaming clubs like SPARTA, Confederation of the West, etc.)

But, to return to the subject of ORIGINS I. This would be another "event", sponsored largely by Avalon Hill, that would bring together under one roof the "movers and shakers" of the Hobby. Several of these men and women have gone on to rule number 15! Now and then I am glad that I got that position.

But by the fall of 1975, I wanted to leave California; speaking with Randy Reed by phone, he said, "come on back". So off I went. A conference with Eric Dott and bingo, I was working full-time as a "Press Helper" upstairs from Avalon Hill, and a few months later working part-time for Avalon Hill itself after the press shut down.

So what was Avalon Hill like in 1976? Monarch Services, the firm that owns Avalon Hill, had a primary function of doing offset printing. The main plant itself was a fairly modern operation on Harford Road, while Avalon Hill itself was located in an old multi-story structure (the old "Crown Cork" building) literally on the border between downtown Baltimore and the ghetto. Heating in this old building was limited to wall heaters. I have a classic photograph of Wes Coates, Al Bisasky and myself playing BISMARCK in the old Crown Cork marbled conference room, in heavy coats in a then unheated room! This work environment was rough on a staff that saw itself as basically white-collar professionals performing an artistic function. (Shortly after I left the company, Eric Dott got a nicer building closer downtown which functioned as the HQ for Avalon Hill until just quite recently.)

The staff in those days consisted primarily of Tom Shaw (who would tell stories of being the only AH employee for several years during the "Dark Ages" of wargaming in the late 1960s), Don Greenwood (probably the best designer in the Hobby), Randy Reed, one of the most brilliant shuffling and reshuffling decks of ordinary playing cards for hours; and not—as some claimed—stuck in the position at the time—because he was slated to perform a magic trick before the assembled membership of Baltimore’s Yogi Magic Club in a few weeks time. No, Mick was simply assessing the practical effects of the "law of averages". Downstairs, Tom Shaw and Don Greenwood would be debating the finer points of one of the AH classics, games such as THE JOURNEYS OF ST. PAUL, DISPATCHER or even the legendary BLACK MAGIC. And, arriving at my own desk, I might be greeted by the cheerful representations from the Baltimore Typewriter Museum, come once again to make an offer for my classic, well-polished Smith Corona Bearcat.

The four years or so I spent at Avalon Hill were among the most fulfilling of my life, and now that I have a "real job", one which doesn’t pay my way anymore, I could meet the guys who made the "Hobby" and still haven’t quite figured it out.

Jack Greene has had a varied career in the wargaming industry, including working for Avalon Hill and creating his own company, Quarterdeck Games. His experience at Avalon Hill provided him with an opportunity to work with some of the biggest names in the hobby, and he was able to contribute to the development of many classic games. His time at Avalon Hill was among the most fulfilling of his life, and he has fond memories of working on games like ORIGINS. He reflects on the "Dark Ages" of wargaming in the late 1960s, when Avalon Hill was one of the few companies still producing games, and he speculates on why they were able to survive. He also mentions the camaraderie and sense of community that was present among the staff at Avalon Hill, and the opportunities it provided for personal growth and development. Overall, his experience at Avalon Hill was a valuable learning experience that helped shape his career and his perspective on the wargaming hobby.
What Good Is The GENERAL? 

By Richard Hamblen

Richard Hamblen is one of the most respected game designers and developers in the hobby, polishing his skills when he was employed for over a decade by Avalon Hill. Today, he continues to design innovative games, his most recent being MERCHANT OF VENUS. Second only to Don Greenwood, Richard helped make this magazine the leader in the field by drafting dozens of articles for its pages and setting standards that many contributors still fall short of. He resides with his wife Carol, once a secretary for TAHGC, in Baltimore.

What good is The GENERAL, anyway? This question has been asked by designers and customers who would rather play games than read or write about them. They would rather discover their own strategies than read replays or strategy articles, and if they want to learn about a game's subject they would prefer a book than a history article. They seem to think that The GENERAL's usefulness is limited to answering questions, issuing news releases, and providing an interesting variant now and then.

This attitude is understandable, but it misses a crucial point: The GENERAL is a special forum where the game can be used to explain its subject matter, and the subject matter can be used to explain the game. A competent game design is a uniquely coherent summary of its subject, based on thorough research with inconsistencies and trivialities removed, and with all important features organized into a system of relationships. Such a game sheds light on its subject and the subject sheds light on the game. Since The GENERAL discusses both the game and its subject, it can explain these hidden connections to provide insights into the subject and into the play of the game. This is what makes The GENERAL uniquely valuable.

These hidden connections are valuable for a variety of reasons. Discussing why some aspects of a subject were included in a design while others were not clarifies the importance of each aspect. For example, the map of VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC is limited to the areas the Japanese could supply during the period when they had an effective air force, because of the fundamental importance of logistics and air power. Usually, the meaning of the values in a game is incomprehensible until they are explained to the players: the fire-power values in ARAB-ISRAELI WARS are a combination of weapons capability, crew proficiency (which helps the Israelis), and ammunition stowage (which hurts the Arabs).

Discussing how the interactions in a game model its subject matter provides insights into the subject, such as the article that explained how the POC values in VITP reflect the importance of each area to each nation. Similarly, game strategies can provide insight into the historic strategies described in the subject matter; articles about BULL RUN can compare the different avenues of attack that McDowell and Beauregard considered, because the game includes all of these avenues. Conversely, the interaction of game and strategies in the subject matter can suggest tactics for the game. A discussion of combat and leadership in the age of linear tactics could suggest effective ways to deploy leaders, brigade markers and artillery in BULL RUN, because the game is designed to model those tactics.

Game research is also comprehensive, so it turns up interesting information that cannot be used in the game but that can be explained in The GENERAL. The GENERAL has discussed the British and Allied ships that were lost in VITP and the nearby units that didn’t quite make it to GETTYSBURG. It has compared the battles of CHANCELORSVILLE and Fredericksburg, to spotlight the differences that occurred in the few months between the battles. It has looked at the planning behind the historic RAID ON ST. NAZaire and the many options considered then.

An article in The GENERAL can have any or all of the above benefits, regardless of who writes the article. The designer can write about what he was trying to do, and other writers can write about what the game actually does. The GENERAL offers these benefits because the game is flawed, because it provides a forum for pointing out the flaws. In fact, it provides these benefits even if the articles themselves contain occasional errors, because later articles can then correct the errors.

This brings us to the last, and best, benefit that The GENERAL offers. In The GENERAL we gamers can exchange our views of the games and their subjects. By sharing our knowledge, we can learn from each other and improve both our understanding and our enjoyment of our common hobby (in case you didn’t know, we designers are hooked on playing games, too). The games provide us with the hobby, but The GENERAL is the place where we can share our hobby with each other.

So, what good is The GENERAL? Well, it is where the connections between a game and its subject matter are explained, increasing both our knowledge and our enjoyment. It is the forum where we can talk to each other and share our insights. And it is the focus that magnifies our hobby for something we can share with a few people to something we can share with thousands. And that’s without even mentioning the history articles, strategy articles, replays, questions and answers, opponent’s wanted ads, news releases, and—now and then—an interesting variant.

Retired GENERALS

By Bruno Sinigaglio

Bruno Sinigaglio is one of the premier players in our wargaming hobby, having long been near the top of the AREA Top 50 and having claimed victory in more tournaments than anyone I can think of. His association with Avalon Hill and The GENERAL goes all the way back to Volume 6, when his byline first appeared in these pages. He was also the moving force behind the revision of the game from BULLGE ’81. Bruno today labors as an advisor to the U.S. military, but still finds time to remain active in the hobby despite frequent moves (even to such “ends of the earth” as Panama and Alaska).

Unfortunately, time flies. I remember well my introduction to wargaming as a college freshman in 1963. I was soundly defeated by the Germans in D-DAY, and then I was crushed by the Allies in the next game. How do you play this here game?!!! Well, The GENERAL has answered that question, and many more, for me. As I look back 25 years, I can see only one publication that has weathered the storms of time and economics in the wargaming world. This bulwark is, of course, The GENERAL.

Things have changed a bit since 1963. With this in mind, I thought it might be interesting to recapture the flavor of issues long past. Let’s take a quick tour of the first few volumes of The GENERAL. For my contemporaries, I hope a bit of shared nostalgia is in order. For the “Young Guard”, I hope this trip will give you a glimpse of wargaming in its infancy. Of course, The GENERAL is the only medium through which we can make such a trip.

Volume I (May 1964—March 1965)

The first issue of The GENERAL was eagerly awaited by the wargaming public. Most of the articles were about AFRICA KORPS and D-DAY. About six hundred subscribers were listed in that first issue, and the first editor made his appearance—Tom Shaw (however, nowhere in the issue did this fact appear in print). The first contest was a problematic German offensive in AFRICA KORPS; the winner was one William Sayre of Rosedale, NY.

The early GENERALS featured “regional editors” from across the USA and Canada. Lou Zocchi (“Sage Sarge”) and Victor Madeja are but two whose names are well recognized even 25 years later. [Editor’s Note: See Messers. Zocchi and Madeja’s pieces elsewhere in this issue.] Perhaps the most astounding comment to appear in Volume 1 was penned by the “Sage Sarge” in #6 with his observation on MIDWAY that, “The only time I open my mouth is when I myself am burning feet.”

During the period of Volume 1, the games MIDWAY and BATTLE OF THE BULGE were first introduced to the readership, along with the American heroes C. Wade McClusky and Anthony (“Nuts”) McAlliife. These names contributed much to gaining respectability and pride for Avalon Hill, and for wargaming overall. However, some things were not well received, especially the Supply Roll Table variant for AFRICA KORPS in #2. Wargaming was still in its infancy.
The first Series Replay appeared in #5, with the Germans routing the Allies in AFRIKA KORPS. A STALINGRAD replay followed in #6. The first mention of official PBM kits is found in #6, and suddenly new vistas opened for wargamers. The names of many well-known wargaming personalities first saw light in this beginning. The admittedly incomplete list includes such luminaries as Al Noft, Bob Beyma, Jim Dunnigan, Jack Greene, Don Greenwood, George Phillips, Larry Pinski and Dale Garbutt. Many of the current traditions can be traced back to the first volume year of The GENERAL.

Above, I made mention of some of the leading hobby lights whose names appeared in these early issues. But they weren’t drafting articles, they were looking for players. For instance, in #5 this ad appeared in the “Opponents Wanted” column:

“Undaunted TACTICS II player needs worthwhile opponent. Contact Donald Greenwood.” Obviously, Don’s glory years have long passed, although he did make a strong comeback in the AH FOOTBALL STRATEGY league in the 1970s.

And this one made print in issue #6:

“Will not guarantee victory or defeat, but will assure a hard fight, well-planned game of DD, STAL, AK, etc. Call or write Jim Dunnigan.”

In the same issue, this rather unusual ad appeared in the “Opponents Wanted” section:

“San Franciscans and Peninsularians Rally!!! The dread wretches of the East Bay HQ, lead by the Purple Clod, are about to attempt the destruction of the Peninsularian Empire. Resists!! Learn how you can destroy the heathen mobs of the east, communist led, by writing to our benevolent majesty, KING Jack Greene the First. The Great Cause Calls.

Last, I can’t resist mentioning some of the weird article titles from Volume 1: “Plan Red Phooey” (by Vic Phillips); “Sage Sarge Sex” (Lou Zocchi); “Leong Romps” (Al Noft); and “Operation Stretch” (Ed Birsen).

Volume 2 (May 1965—March 1966)

During the second year of publishing for The GENERAL, GUADALCANAL and its “step reduction CTR” was introduced to the hungry wargaming world. The regional editor concept died a quick death. Medical research was conducted at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds using D-DAY and drugs. DIPLOMACY and Nuclear War were touted in these pages, even though published by rival companies. Numerous wargaming clubs were founded, and announced in The GENERAL. For some reason, BATTLE OF THE BULGE articles abounded; and Jim Dunnigan penned his first wargame article (on BULGE of course). And look at the other names that first appeared in Volume 2: Randy Reed, Richard Gutenkunst, Henry Bodenstadt and H.M. Levy. The “Avalon Hill Intercontinental Kriegspiel Society” (AHKKS) was conceived in issue #1, and details delivered in #6; Henry Bodenstadt was at the time the prime mover in this successful organization—which functions to this day. Speaking of famous folk, Pete Rose finished tenth in Contest #10; was this Pete’s rookie year?

In the second issue of the year, the 2nd Edition rules were introduced with the ill-conceived Strategic Bombing rules. The chance for a German win became near impossible. Meanwhile, TAHGC promoted Warner Brothers’ Bulge movie, which must rank as one of the most ahistorical masterpieces of all time. Richard Gutenkunst’s was the very first published complaint about the fictitious CB for BULGE.

Remember DUSK, SPECTRE, SPARTA and AGGRESSOR HOMELAND and all the hype! Those were the days—I guess. And of course long-time readers must remember some classic articles: “How to Lose at Bulge” (Myron Zocchi); “Plan Red Phooey” (Vic Phillips); “Sage Sarge Sex” (Lou Zocchi); “Leong Romps” (Al Noft); and “Operation Stretch” (Ed Birsen).

Volume 3 (May 1966—March 1967)

During the third year (who would have thought it would survive so long), the GENERAL increased its size from 12 to 16 pages, and colored covers were introduced. The last war hero to plug Avalon Hill games, Colonel Donald Dickinson, endorsed GUADALCANAL. The “Avalon Hill Philosophy, Part 1” appeared. Some new names popped up for the first time: Dave Williams, Joe Angiolio, Dave Balkulski, Gary Gygax, Gary Charboneau, Russell Powell and Fred Schater. And a new competitor, Strategy & Tactics, was introduced to the readership and given a five-star rating.

Among the best titles: “Helpful Hints for Hopeless Oafs” (Tom Shaw); “Operation Ungawa” (Eric Shiner); “St. Peter Wins PBM Tournament” (Don Greenwood); and “Alas, Realism”. Lou Zocchi. Oh you’re an amazing STALINGRAD tactic made its first showing. He may not have been the first to do it, but he was the first to describe it. Richard Shagrin explained how to retreat behind enemy lines in STALINGRAD by blocking a rearward retreat with stacks of your own units. The “Rules Lawyer” had been born.

Well, those are my memories. Things were different in the beginning. The polish was not to be applied for quite awhile, but to us hard-core gamers, The GENERAL was what we wanted and waited for. It still is.

The GENERAL as Literature

By Bruce J. Degi

Bruce Degi’s subscription to The GENERAL begins with Volume 4 and his authorship of articles for The GENERAL with Volume 17. He originated the popular “Squad Leader Clinic” series in Vol. 17, No. 6. He may be best recognized as the prime author/compiler of the GENERAL Index, published in 1980, which covered the first 16 years of the magazine.

I was delighted to be asked by Rex Martin to write a short piece for the 25th anniversary of The GENERAL. Over the years I have subscribed to many, many different magazines in our hobby, but I have complete collections of only two—F&M and The GENERAL. The latter has not just complimented wargaming over the years, it has, in many respects, made the hobby what it is. I must also agree. A five-year-old child playing with his (or her) toy soldiers in the backyard sandbox is not the same as the 35-year-old parent playing SQUAD LEADER on the kitchen table. But why? Most answers you could come up with would not satisfy the most ardent critic—cost, motivation, etc. The only legitimate explanation for wargaming not being a childish play at toy soldiers is that wargaming has a literature”. Intelligent (for the most part) participants in the hobby have written intelligent (for the most part) articles that have been published in a formal medium for others to read, ponder, disagree or agree with, and generally keep as reference material. That creates a common bond, a community of gamers, and that is what makes the hobby legitimate. Absence of such a literature would render even SQUAD LEADER as nothing more than mere play.

Didn’t realize The GENERAL played such a critical role, huh? It does. And, in fact, it is the reference value of this cornerstone of the hobby that I’d like to say just a few more words about. Obviously, timely articles on games I like to play right now are useful. But there’s more. An early feature of The GENERAL was the rules questions and answers column—a feature that I still most often turn to first upon receiving a new issue. The folks at Avalon Hill not only publish games but, unlike publishers of mass-market games, they actually play them—and so keep everyone current on changes or corrections.

Less obvious, but equally important, is the value of the articles on games I’m not currently playing. My collection of board games has grown over the past twenty-five years to almost one thousand! Of those, I probably play twenty or thirty on a regular basis. Every now and then, however, I discover (or more often, re-discover) a game I haven’t played in years. A good case in point happened after the release of BATTLE AT CASABLANCA. That game woke lurker memories of STORM OVER THE RHINE. A quick flip through the rules, and a quick flip through the articles and Q&A on SOA from past issues of The GENERAL and I was back into the system like I’d been playing it all along.

That’s what I celebrate in this GENERAL. The philosophical musings, the advertisements for new products, the contests, and what-not all make The GENERAL an exciting and enjoyable publication. But it’s the accumulation of twenty-five years worth of articles and errata that makes possible a tangible and, for the gamer, a most useful history of wargaming that simply has not been equalled by anything else—not even The GENERAL as a prime source of quotes and corrections.

After such lofty words of praise, however, I can’t resist the impulse to offer two mild criticisms as The GENERAL starts its next quarter-century. First, I was able to find quickly all the articles and such on SOA because I maintain a complete index to The GENERAL on note cards. To be useful as a reference work, you must be able to find the information you’re looking for, thus the publication of The GENERAL Index many years ago. I have since offered to update that index but was told by your illustrious editor (yes, Rex, you did) not to bother because he was going to do it. He did in 1984, but we now have four years worth of material not indexed since that publication. If you too agree that the primary value of The GENERAL is in this establishment of a useful history, please write Rex. Perhaps the management will listen if the cries are loud enough.

I preface this final criticism with the admission that, as some of you have already suspected, I am an aged curmudgeon. I do not like the recent inclusions of such as the “G.I. Jane” pictures. They seem to me greatly out of place, though again I realize that money—not philosophy—is driving this decision.

Some of you may remember the problems The GENERAL had with the so-called “Nazi glorification” clubs in early issues. That was an indication of benign but very real pre-pubescent fantasies that the hobby had to grow out of. And it did. Now a different pubescent fantasy seems to have generated the excitement for a different generation (the move from death to sex is significant, I think). I guess I’ll just have to wait for the hobby to out-grow this one also.

I think it’s a requirement in a retrospective publication to also muse on the future. I have no doubts that twenty-five years from now there will still be an Avalon Hill GENERAL, and that I will still be reading it. Let’s see, 2013 will probably be the year of publication for the Pacific Theater module for ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER. Yes, I’d better keep that subscription going.
First Impressions for 25 Years

By Robert Medrow

The fall of 1988 marks the end of Bob's 30th year in this hobby, stretching back to his purchase of TACTICS II at a photo shop in Champaign in 1958—just as he was starting his senior year in college. Today, he's an associate professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Missouri-Rolla, married and father of two kids. During the past 12 years, he has been involved with the production of 15 games, along with part of his work on the second of these, the original SQUAD LEADER, he began writing for The GENERAL. Since then, his ten articles have totaled some 100,000 words and he has been honored with the Editor's Choice Award three times. Quite frankly, I can't imagine what we would have done without him.

Ever since I began writing for The GENERAL, I've longed for the opportunity to sound off on things in general, and envied the way editors get to express themselves. Well, this is my opportunity. Rex Martin, your kindly editor, said that I could write what I wanted—so long as it dealt with The GENERAL, the Avalon Hill Game Company, or the hobby. However, I've found this to be a lot harder than I thought it would be.

But part of it is easy. I'm convinced that, without The GENERAL, there'd be no TAHGIC, and nothing like the diverse adventure gaming hobby that now exists. If you haven't been around wargaming for as long as I have, that might sound like an extreme statement. If, as some historians do, you believe in historical inevitability, then you probably wouldn't agree. But I hold to the idea that people, and the institutions they create, do have an impact. To show you how I've come to this view, let me share some of what's happened to me during my relationship with this magazine.

My first issue was Volume 2, Number 6—although I didn't become a regular subscriber until Volume 6, Number 3. That first issue was one I'll always treasure since it included the calendar of battle information for each of the five neutral BLITZKRIEG countries. Among my few recreational activities during the long days of working on my Ph.D. dissertation were many solitary games of BLITZKRIEG, including those additional units that I'd manufactured with such care. But, more importantly, in that first issue there's a letter from Don Greenwood and an article by Jim Dunning.

In order for a hobby to exist there must be a means of linking like-minded people together. In the beginning, in the boardgaming area, there was only The GENERAL. Greenwood and Dunning were there because that's where the action was. In what was then a much smaller hobby, there was no other forum connecting so many of the faithful. Oh, there soon were other publications, but in those early days none of them had The GENERAL's circulation—and all but one of them have vanished.

The first magazine I subscribed to besides The GENERAL was Don Greenwood's PANZERFAUST. That was the fault of The GENERAL. In the old days, the "Infiltrator's Report" column was filled with mention of various gaming groups and amateur publications. Spartan International and the International Federation of Wargaming (IFW) had their publications and various individuals produced others such as D-Elim, Der lage, Gamer's Guide, and Strategy & Tactics. When I started playing serious wargames in Don's favor was my purchase of a copy of PANZERFAUST at the IFW-sponsored convention in Lake Geneva, an event I had learned about in the pages of The GENERAL. In addition to helping me start down a path which has caused me to support many magazines, that IFW convention gave me my first chance to appear in The GENERAL. In Volume 7, Number 4 there's a picture of part of the crowd. That's me, right there in the smoke cloud!

Being a "house magazine" (and we'll get to that topic later), The GENERAL has never carried paid advertising. However, and of enormously more value, it has supported those fledging endeavours by making their existence known. Of those publications I mentioned, only S&T grew up to become a major force in the hobby, under the direction of that same Jim Dunning who once wrote for The GENERAL. I know that I subscribed to S&T because I read about it in The GENERAL, and so did most of those I've worked with.

My own, vastly more modest, involvement with the creative side of the hobby came about because of The GENERAL. In 1976 I saw an ad for RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN in what was then Avalon Hill's "mail-order only line". I ordered it, played it, loved it, but found enough problems with the rules that I was moved to write a letter with several pages of questions. By then, Don Greenwood and I were "mongers" after hearing us discuss campaigns during lunch or seeing us draw up battle plans on a map. And I'm sure you know what happened. I bought was through the mail (like most of us from my generation of wargaming, the mailman was quite annoyed with me because each Saturday—and every day in the summer—I sat with intense anticipation on the porch at 10:30 AM waiting for my new games to arrive), Avalon Hill games meant "quality" while the other companies only offered quantities of diverse titles. To give you some idea about the mystique of wargaming for myself and my "little friends", when we found a bunch of back issues of Playbook and a 1958 edition of TACTICS II hidden among the junk in a neighbor's garage, we ignored the other games and played TACTICS II. When we discovered that we might feel that youth was wasted on the young, wargaming certainly is not. When I was fifteen I wrote my first wargaming article for Don Greenwood's old magazine, Campaign, then edited by Don Lowry (one Jack Greene wrote the other feature piece that issue). Naturally, it was my doctoral thesis on THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN, which began by asking the insightful question, "Is This Game Really Necessary?" The article was well written and so I awarded my editor a "This article really encouraged me to do more for my hobby and not just with it." (Ask not what your hobby can do for you, but what you can do for your hobby . . . .)

Wargame Bonding

By Alan Emrich

Alan Emrich began gaming at the age of thirteen in 1972. Two years later he was an established writer for various wargame magazines, and would go on to help found the Orcon game convention in January 1977. Through these conventions, he has remained an important figure in the hobby. Although Alan was an "S&T brat" of the 1970s, in 1984 he founded Diverse Talents, Inc. and he has served as publisher of F&M and Battleplan. He was convention manager for ORIGINS '86 in Los Angeles—acknowledged one of the best run in the series. Premier convention organizer, he is still, when he finds the time, an avid player of THIRD REICH, RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN and EMPIRES IN ARMS.

I may have only been in the hobby about half as long as The GENERAL, but I remember the earliest wargaming joke from my teens being, "If you want to take 'the Hill', call The GENERAL!" (This joke was, of course, much funnier to neophyte wargamers in junior high school and does not translate well to grognards.) Even in my early days of wargaming, when virtually every game I bought was through the mail (like most of us from my generation of wargaming, the mailman was quite annoyed with me because each Saturday—and every day in the summer—I sat with intense anticipation on the porch at 10:30 AM waiting for my new games to arrive), Avalon Hill games meant "quality" while the other companies only offered quantities of diverse titles. To give you some idea about the mystique of wargaming for myself and my "little friends", when we found a bunch of back issues of Playbook and a 1958 edition of TACTICS II hidden among the junk in a neighbor's garage, we ignored the other games and played TACTICS II. When we discovered that we might feel that youth was wasted on the young, wargaming certainly is not. When I was fifteen I wrote my first wargaming article for Don Greenwood's old magazine, Campaign, then edited by Don Lowry (one Jack Greene wrote the other feature piece that issue). Naturally, it was my doctoral thesis on THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN, which began by asking the insightful question, "Is This Game Really Necessary?" The article was well written and so I awarded my editor a "This article really encouraged me to do more for my hobby and not just with it." (Ask not what your hobby can do for you, but what you can do for your hobby . . . .)

In high school, when other lads were off in pursuit of a rousing game of softball (and a good opportunity to show off to the girls), we gaming buddies would head over to one of our houses and try the latest variants and scenarios found in The GENERAL. Misunderstood from the beginning, our non-wargaming friends would (only sometimes) jokingly refer to us as "war-mongers" after hearing us discuss campaigns during lunch or seeing us draw up perfect plans in the library. In fact, as humor among ourselves (which today might be called "wargaming bonding"), we ignored the games and played TACTICS II. When we played wargames we were "grognards" (to be kept at a safe distance) and when we played war-games we were "mongers" (to be kept at a safe distance). Even in my early days of wargaming, when virtually every game I bought was through the mail (like most of us from my generation of wargaming, the mailman was quite annoyed with me because each Saturday—and every day in the summer—I sat with intense anticipation on the porch at 10:30 AM waiting for my new games to arrive), Avalon Hill games meant "quality" while the other companies only offered quantities of diverse titles. To give you some idea about the mystique of wargaming for myself and my "little friends", when we found a bunch of back issues of Playbook and a 1958 edition of TACTICS II hidden among the junk in a neighbor's garage, we ignored the other games and played TACTICS II. When we discovered that we might feel that youth was wasted on the young, wargaming certainly is not. When I was fifteen I wrote my first wargaming article for Don Greenwood's old magazine, Campaign, then edited by Don Lowry (one Jack Greene wrote the other feature piece that issue). Naturally, it was my doctoral thesis on THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN, which began by asking the insightful question, "Is This Game Really Necessary?" The article was well written and so I awarded my editor a "This article really encouraged me to do more for my hobby and not just with it." (Ask not what your hobby can do for you, but what you can do for your hobby . . . .)
Greater Los Angeles Simulations Convention held at Cal State Northridge, where two game clubs still meet regularly to this day. An organizer from that convention told me a gaming buddy of mine, John Myers (whom I met through an "Opponents Wanted" ad which I placed in THE GENERAL) that he should run a similar wargaming convention down in Orange County. John enlisted my help, and OrcCon was born. Since then I have assisted with or run over thirty game conventions (we currently run four per year in the LA/Orange County area which average around 2000 attendance each). It seems that I was a born salesman and a natural auctioneer, so my talents were found to be well suited to the task of running game conventions. I've even written a book on the subject for GAMA (the Game Manufacturers' Association).

Naturally, at game conventions, many Avalon Hill games get played. Someone early suggested that our big tournament should be "The Avalon Hill 300", which later evolved into our longest continuous regular event—"The Avalon Hill Classics Tournament". Our convention listings in THE GENERAL helped put us on the map, and the Avalon Hill games were being played back to each and every show. It should be noted that Avalon Hill has what we at DTI consider to be the best "track record" for supporting new game conventions with prizes that we have ever seen. We the hobbyists owe much to Avalon Hill, not only for their support of local wargaming conventions everywhere, but for their founding of ORIGINS, the National Game Convention. By unifying our hobby around a national convention, we have moved from a "silly pastime" to a serious hobby and industry.

While I've tried to quell the fears of my seniors in the Adventure Gaming industry that this "upstart kid from California" was, in fact, a representative of the "next generation" of gamers who would one day be running this industry, it has not always been easy. While most of the industry leadership today is in the "over 40" age group, I am a brat from the "under 30" generation of gaming. Thus, I had to begin all my relationships with them a victim, to varying degrees, of a generation gap. The positive side to all this was the mass of almost "parental" advice I have received from many of the persons writing columns for this very issue of THE GENERAL. To all of these great people who helped me get where I am in the game industry today, I would like to say "thanks". (My parents, however, would like to tell you that you've ruined their plans for their son's life as a doctor or lawyer.) So while I have enough of my colleagues' (gamers and co-workers in the industry) respect to keep my conventions well attended, magazines bought, articles read and to serve as Vice President of GAMA, the thread that has run through it all has been my association with THE GENERAL magazine.

The biggest noise I ever made in THE GENERAL was my article "Total War" (Vol. 21, No. 3), which consisted of well-thought out revisions and major changes to THIRD REICH. At the time, the fourth edition had been out for a while, and some of the concepts were instantly taken as hag sacrfice. To the true 3R devotee, however, the points I raised were seen as valid, and my solutions good. It was on the basis of that article that the 3R Workshop was formed (its members consisting of the hardest core THIRD REICHers to ever appear in the pages of THE GENERAL). This group has ever since been working on what we call the "5th Edition" THIRD REICH, with years of constant playtesting and development going into the project. We anticipate that in these very pages of THE GENERAL (see the insert survey in Vol. 24, No. 4), Avalon Hill will feedback the idea among you, brother readers, as to the worth of producing this next generation of their classic game. This shows, yet again, that my gaming duty always finds The GENERAL at every nexus.

In closing, just so everyone doesn't go around thinking that life in the gaming industry is a bed of roses, I'll leave this note from a long-time reader of THE GENERAL to its Managing Editor:

Dear Rex,

I like wargame variants and new scenarios. The strategies I can figure out for myself, but new ideas for my old games are always welcome. See what you can do. Your buddy,

Alan Emrich

Lounge Lizards at War

By Craig F. Posey

Craig Posey came to our hobby when he discovered the original GETTYSBURG game in 1960, and has been "with" Avalon Hill ever since. He has been primarily involved in the PBM scene, and has lately discovered the joys of gamemastered multi-player games. For some years now, he has also found the time to be one of our most prolific authors.

We happy few will never know the thrill of pacing the quarterdeck of a '74 as she clears for action. It would be safe to say that we never served with Caesar at Alexandria, let alone with the Third Legion. Perhaps some of us can trace our ancestry back to the forces that fought with or against Napoleon, many to the Civil War period, and almost all of us to the Second World War. Yet, few of us can lay claim to ever having participated in any but the Vietnam conflict. Still, we readers have managed, vicariously, to—on one level or another—participate in all the past wars we can possibly imagine. Some folk do so through the reading of diaries, histories or fiction; but our select group has chosen to approach the problem primarily through historical simulations...wargames. With the advent of the commercially viable and mass-produced wargame, a new hobby was born, from which we were spawned.

What catalyst creates a wargamer from out the general public, setting him apart from society—and to some extent condemning him in the eyes of that society—into a potentially paranoid loner with a fascination for history? And unless things have changed quite a bit, an interest in the Second World War seems paramount (though I came into the hobby when the Civil War centennial had just begun to fester). From this starting point comes the reading of books on the period and, if he is lucky, the prospective wargamer receives a game as a present or meets someone looking for an opponent. We must remember that this is still an elitist hobby—and that distributors of wargames, as well as well-advertised clubs and gamers groups, are still rare.

Once the gamer becomes properly introduced (addicted?), we generally can discern their abilities in the hobby fairly rapidly. Why? It seems to take an above average intelligence level to stay with the hobby and to stay abreast of the changing tide of technology and complexity that has crept into wargame design over the past thirty years. Those who have been with the hobby from the beginning realize that these changes have, themselves, been a type of 'programmed instruction" for those of us who grew with it.

Remembering that the '50s and '60s were the heyday of Monopoly and canasta, it would be difficult to imagine AL as a full-blown game system succeeding in that time frame; yet TACTICS II and GETTYSBURG melded well with the society and its level of sophistication. While the society of gamers was less sophisticated in those balcyon days, we were no less receptive to innovation—and that is what these games were! As we grew with Avalon Hill, we both suffered growing pains. From the standpoint of the players, the biggest problem was always the lack of selection. This scarcity of titles was, in itself, not such a bad thing as we became "experts" at every offering. For the company, the major problem was a change in the production and distribution system (in the '50s they had relied heretofore—one they overcame in stirling fashion. The result was to be an improved company, and eventually an improved product mix.

While the '60s were the days of the "Classics", this was also an explosive period of innovation. We have only to look back at some of the now defunct titles to see where we have been. Perhaps two of the more interesting offerings were 1914 and GUADALCANAL, both of which met early ends—but not without leaving their marks upon the industry and us. Both of these systems contained less sophistication in those balcyon days, we were no less receptive to innovation—and that is what these games were! As we grew with Avalon Hill, we both suffered growing pains. From the standpoint of the players, the biggest problem was always the lack of selection. This scarcity of titles was, in itself, not such a bad thing as we became "experts" at every offering. For the company, the major problem was a change in the production and distribution system (in the '50s they had relied heretofore—one they overcame in stirling fashion. The result was to be an improved company, and eventually an improved product mix.

While the '60s was this periodical, a magazine noted more for its irregular schedule than for its periodicity. Still, it allowed our small elitist group to gain strength through mutual communication. Prior to its advent, only the appearance of new offerings in stores and the annual receipt of advertising literature straight through mutual communication. Prior to its advent, only the appearance of new offerings in stores and the annual receipt of advertising literature straight...
Fueling the Future

By Jim Burnett

Jim Burnett has been a gamer for 30 years or so, and a wargamer since news of our hobby penetrated the hinterlands twenty years ago. He enjoys all types of gaming, and specializes in World War II tactical simulations (ASL, UP FRONT, AIR FORCE, SUBMARINE, etc.). He also enjoys sports and multiprayer political games. When not playing games, he trains for ultra-marathon bicycling races and the “Race Across America”. In his spare time he earns a living as an electronic/software design engineer and takes care of a wife, a house, and two cats.

Happy 25th Birthday to The GENERAL. Considering the state of the war-gaming hobby over the past 25 years, this is indeed an enviable record of outstanding service to the Avalon Hill customer. We readers can but hope that there will be more in the future.

Reflections on a hobby can be equated to the musings of the senile on the “Good Ol’ Days”. But, as with anything we care about, we must be able to look both backward . . . and ahead. Just as for anything that reaches 25, the years have added a certain maturity to the hobby in general, and with it to this magazine. I first became a subscriber in its ninth year, and the intervening years have seen it grow from a 16-page issue with a few line drawings and black-and-white photos to a full-blown 64-page magazine with inserts and full-color illustrations. The articles have progressed from the one-page “perfect plans” to detailed historical and analytical articles on an Avalon Hill line of 200 games. Our hobby, too, has grown.

There have been, over the past couple of years, a tendency to decry the glut of games on the wargaming market as increasing complexity, and to endlessly debate the merits of playability versus simulation in what are, after all, games. In a certain sense, all these accusations are true. But, let me point out, that doesn’t mean these trends are bad.

Product lines have grown to an extent that the person who can boast of owning every title has become almost non-existent. We must remember, however, that the sales of each game are what fuels the development necessary to produce the next one. Certainly, the consumers voting with their dollars are what drives the market, and the popular titles will increase in numbers to the detriment of those less favored, but the bottom line is that every purchase of a game (which may be used only for study or collection) is still an assistance to the production of a future product (which may turn out to number among the most played). This is especially true of the more complex, and therefore more costly-to-produce, games.

Complexity, then, is the second major issue to confront the industry today. We “old-timers” remember the days of AFRICA KORPS, MIDWAY and STALINGRAD when all games had about the same degree of difficulty involved (and none too tough at that). The current list of games available runs the complexity gamut from NAVAL WAR to EMPIRES IN ARMS. I cannot but help think that this alone is of great benefit to players. The list of games currently available from Avalon Hill that are suitable for beginning players is at least twenty titles long by my last count. This should be noted by those who claim there is no way to introduce new players into our hobby. At the same time, however, that the sales of each game are what fuels the development necessary to produce the next one. Certainly, the consumers voting with their dollars are what drives the market, and the popular titles will increase in numbers to the detriment of those less favored, but the bottom line is that every purchase of a game (which may be used only for study or collection) is still an assistance to the production of a future product (which may turn out to number among the most played). This is especially true of the more complex, and therefore more costly-to-produce, games.

The game market has also been driven by quality in graphics, presentation and rules. There is a world of difference in the quality of a STALINGRAD of yesterday and an ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER of today. ASL is surely worth its price in graphics and rules commentary systems alone. The GENERAL also has been a force in the progress of quality in the market. Even though it is a common pastime to criticize imperfections and shortcomings in games, the pages of this magazine are replete with errata, new scenarios, and variants to double the usefulness and enjoyment of all the Avalon Hill titles. To examine the value of this, consider where and how newspapers and television display their mistakes. And newer editions of rulebooks for popular games allow the buyer to obtain an updated game at little or no cost. Some of the favorite older titles such as BULGE and THIRD REICH have been recently updated and improved. At Avalon Hill, they don’t “publish and forget!” and The GENERAL plays a key role.

The game “system” concept pioneered by Avalon Hill has been of great benefit to the consumer. The SL/ASL system alone has given us ten games with over 100 scenarios to play, with only an incremental learning process with each new game. This allows us gamers to spend more time playing and less time learning new rules sets. TACTICS books and the “Classics” were themselves essentially a game system, with only a very small number of differences between AFRICA KORPS, STALINGRAD, WATERLOO and D-DAY. This fact alone contributed much to their early popularity, and later caused problems with the advent of “simulation consciousness.” The difference in today’s games lies in the fact that systems are used where there is commonality and integrity in the material, rather than an attitude that this is the way all games are played. It also allows us to judge the effective-ness of simulations, since it may be contended that within its period and scale, any system must be universal in application or it possesses a serious design flaw.

This naturally leads us to the confrontation between playability and simulation quality. This can be, but need not, a problem. Too often, the perceived differentiation is read as “simple” versus “complex.” A look at the current list of games in the Avalon Hill line will serve as my counter-illustration. There is little doubt that ASL and EIA must rate high in both complexity and simulation value. Both are also very playable, though not to be taken lightly. The UP FRONT/BANZAI pair are certainly among the most playable games ever published, but they also present a very fine simulation of their subject. PLAT TOP is another game of this type which, to my mind, has been given too high a level of complexity in its simulation value. There is a game with excellent simulation qualities. The “Classics”, however, were all both simple in play and low on simulation value. (That is, they were games!) The point is, again, that now there is a choice in all levels of presentation, with ever more types of games for specialized interests such as tournaments, solitaire and multi-player options.

What we have then is a maturing industry with increasing emphasis on the consumer, providing the vast differentiation in products that are demanded in today’s market, with greater quality, better attention to detail, and at a cost which has but kept pace with inflation. We have, as a result of our own experiences in gaming, a greater appreciation for the history behind the subjects of our games. Today’s player has grown in sophistication and education along with the industry, resulting in more and better games for all. This, then, is what we have from our hobby. What can we give it in return?

Within our economic means, support for favorite games and product lines, subscriptions to magazines and newsletters, and attendance at conventions. These all benefit us, as well as the hobby industry. On a different level, we can write articles, playtest new games, and voice our opinions to aid the manufacturers and publishers. On a more personal level still, we can support our local gaming organizations, and introduce new players into our hobby. These are all necessary if our hobby (and ourselves with it) are to grow. What, then, can it become?

As I see it, wargames will continue to be produced in about the same numbers as now, but with ever better quality. Economics dictates that the one-game-a-year days are gone forever. The differentiation of the market will continue and games will continue to be specialized within their interest areas. In attempts to capture greater sales, however, I think publishers will issue some “cross-over” types of games to combine markets. Even though they cannot approach printed games for graphic quality and opponent interaction, the continued proliferation of home systems with better displays will gain computer games an increasing portion of the market. The attractiveness of solitaire play as well as the ease of storage of a partially finished game adds to their attractiveness. In addition to this, we should see more game aid programs for board, role-playing, sports and miniatures games. Whether public domain or published, these programs will speed play, decrease the “workload”, and increase the enjoyment of many of our favorites. Computer DIPLOMACY is an excellent example of an initial entry into this field. Other innovations and changes in our hobby can only be imagined, but they will only come about with the help of us all.

In summary, our efforts in the promotion and development of this hobby is very important to its success. With such efforts, The GENERAL will celebrate the next 25 years as an even better representative of what we all enjoy.

The Past as Future

By James F. Dunnigan

Jim Dunnigan is, of course, one of the most famous names in the hobby of wargaming. He is best known for his long association with SPI; indeed, he eventually came to be so closely identified with that company that folk still utter “Dunnigan/SPI” in one breath with reverence. He also, it should be noted, designed some of the best games in the early Avalon Hill line and left his imprint on design techniques here. Now he has turned his mind to writing, having seen several books into print on a intriguing variety of subjects. He was kind enough—after some badgering I admit—to turn his attention to a drafting a few words on the hobby for our anniversary.

Twenty-five years ago, commercial wargames didn’t have much of a past. The future loomed larger and that’s what most of us gamers looked at. I came across wargames in 1961, while doing my military service. I stumbled across two titles published by SPI entitled “AFRICA KORPS” and “D-DAY”. I have been hooked ever since. The “Classics” have been a mainstay of our hobby since that first edition. And classics they were, an exhilarating insight into history that far surpassed books or films. Like many other history oriented gamers, I was irritated by the lapses in accuracy found in many of those early efforts. I came across A. W. Price’s “AFRIK 40” in late 1967 and immediately became a fan. I was imitated by the lapses in accuracy found in many of those early efforts. I came across A. W. Price’s “AFRIK 40” in late 1967 and immediately became a fan.
But historicity and innovation seemed to be what the customers wanted. In 1969 I teamed up with Redmond Simonsen and founded SPI. We published 300 games under that imprint. Yet, in 1972, over half of Avalon Hill's new titles were designs I never got the chance to work on. Never forget who helped you get started.

Of the three hundred games we published, I designed over a third myself. Most of those were "you have no choice designs," where there was one else willing to do it. For many years most gamers stood in awe of anyone who could design a game. I intended to dispel that myth, and did so. Many gamers could design, and this was the basis of the designer/developer system that I created in 1968-69. I derived a great deal of satisfaction from the success of the designers who got their start in our SPI pressure cooker. Making a market out of products that a true user-friendly form off by the impossible trade-offs between realism and complexity in manual games. While I didn't have access to the old SPI feedback system anymore, I do continually ask questions. I always did that in the past and developed a good sense of the relative position of the face-to-face responses and mailed-in responses. Believe me, people would get into industrial-strength wargames if they were available on computers in a truly user friendly form.

Oh, I was asked to comment on the current state of wargaming. Well, it looks pretty good. Could be better, but then that's an attitude I've never been able to shake. It's also nice, after all these years of listening to those "why don't you" comments, to be on the other side for a change.

Confessions of a Rules Junkie
By Mark C. Nixon

Mark Nixon is one of those multi-talented fellows that our hobby seems to attract—luckily for us. His first article for The GENERAL appeared in Vol. 5, No. 2 and he has written thousands of words for us since. He is certainly one of the STRATEGISTS and ASL players around, and I know he was involved in numerous playtests. It is a wonder that he has found time to also be husband, father of three, earn a BA from BGSU (1975) and make a living in industrial equipment sales in Ohio.

Awareness of The GENERAL came to me on a flyer in my first wargame purchase, MIDWAY, in about 1965. I had been reading some grade-school level accounts of the battle, and while walking through a department store was amused to see a game on the subject. At that tender age of twelve it was tough to part with the five odd dollars the game cost—dollars earned over long hours of delivering papers and (child labor laws begone) working in my father's construction business. But I knew I would buy the game the instant I saw it. It was as though it appeared on the shelf at the end of a long, misty tunnel. How could it be true? How could something so totally unexpected appear before my eyes? I had no previous knowledge of such games. If there was ever a wakening moment of my life when I was afraid I'd awake from a dream, that was it. That, at least, is how I remember that moment now.

Of course, there was no one to play the game against in Lebanon, Ohio; and once my brother had declared the thing a waste of his time after only one game, I was left with a lot of solitary play. Curiosity finally got the better of me, and I began a progression of by-mail purchases of the entire Avalon Hill line from STRALINGRAD and AFRIKA KORPS to BISMARCK and BLITZKRIEG. I finally took out a subscription to The GENERAL in 1968, and was soon one of the many devoted readers and even buying used games through the "Opponents Wanted" column.

Of that first volume year of my subscription I remember only two things without going back to search. I remember Bruno Ninigaglio’s article in which he described how he was playing over 100 games a year by-mail, in his eyes making him either a Wargaming God or at least my first vision of what would eventually become known as the true Wild Man of wargaming. The second outstanding event was an Opponents Wanted notice from a club called “The Strategists”. Their ad claimed they would take on all comers in STRALINGRAD and, more or less in these words, “Mop up the entire earth, sun, moon and the stars” (and so on) with the lot of us. For some reason clear only to a few dozen Wild Men, I answered that ad. I was a.I. to the wargame community—there are not many of us. In the end, it appeared almost an act of faith. I was eventually joined by the Wild Man known as Dougbo, who said he could play Russia. It wasn’t long before Bruce, who usually played the Axis, was steamrolling Dougbo

workout and then get put on the shelf or given away. There’s hope, but progress has been excruciatingly slow in coming. For example, ease of use never gets as high a priority in computer wargames as it should. Computer users expect computer games to be easy to use. I don’t mean easier to use than their manual versions. That isn’t enough, because there has been an epidemic of poor trade-offs between realism and complexity in manual games. While I do not have access to the old SPI feedback system anymore, I do continually ask questions. I always did that in the past and developed a good sense of the relative position of the face-to-face responses and mailed-in responses. Believe me, people would get into industrial-strength wargames if they were available on computers in a truly user friendly form.
on a regular basis, and the two of us had to go back to playing against each other without him. I had never gamed face-to-face much, and had certainly never played anyone who could manhandle a game like Bruce. If there are two interpretations to rule a trick, Bruce will see it one way while I see it the other. Working together, we identified so many problems with THIRD REICH rules that a few years later, after Bruce had moved to Massachusetts and we were relegated to THIRD REICH by mail in dreadfully fitful bouts to match my lifestyle, Don Greenwood and Larry Bucher selected me MVP of the THIRD REICH playtest. Much like the credit in the AI section of the THIRD REICH rules, it was the strength of our mutual rules busting which generated most of my playtest input. (But I kept the lifetime subscription to The GENERAL for myself all the same!)

I will never forget the final proofread of the 3rd Edition rules for the THIRD REICH playtest. This was sent out very near "press time"; I had only two days or so to complete this final read. The day I received it, my wife gave birth to our first child. I had a flat tire on I-75 while driving home from work to take her to the hospital. The delivery was exciting, and I returned home at 3:30 A.M. to a trail of printed-out THIRD REICH that I completed all my jobs and sent off my edited version of the proof. But it proved a great embarrassment for me, for when I mailed it back to Don I mistakenly sent it to Monarch Printing, the address on the envelope it had come in. Don never received it, which I didn't know until much later, after the game had been printed. A xerox copy of my final proofread still sits useless in my files, a haunting reminder of my ineptitude.

As for playing THIRD REICH, I remember one MichiCon tournament in which my Germans invaded England, built themselves up for several turns, and finally delivered a devastating 2-1 attack on London. But I rolled the dread "6" and lost 110 BRPs and a whole year's worth of effort. Also high on my list of memorable occasions were the three consecutive games against Bill and Dave Stein, in which my Germans drew the Spain Variant!

Imagine what a load of work those groups ranked above us must have submitted. It's no wonder Avalon Hill hired the MVP of that playtest, Bob McNamara. He draws the Spain Variant!

the punk can't win unless McNamara.

My motto is, "I'd rather be lucky than good" now.

By the way, I find it interesting to note that those two modules are favorites of mine, which might say a great deal about the virtues of playtesting. I find the HEDGEROW boards beautiful. Their colors actually match that of the summer countryside. However, the new WEST OF ALAINE has to be my current favorite, and we tested it extensively, so maybe I just tend to favor whatever is hot off the presses.

That final thought leads to what may be a new concept for wargaming. "Rules Lawyer" is common language, and the idea of "Rules Nut" is not difficult to fathom. But I think Rules Junkie also has a meaning of its own. I'm afraid I must claim to be both. The playtest version of the Rules Junkie because I worry about the time when all rules for ASL will be completed. (Is that maniacal laughter I hear from Bob?) But what will it be like when there are no more new rules to anticipate to enliven our play, to toss back anew into the ranks of the novice, to grant us once again the joy of revising and relearning new tactics to handle the changing battlefield milieu? Will the system grow stale? Will we drift from ASL to something else? I can only wonder, but I am confident that our group possessing the wherewithal to supplant ASL in my personal arsenal will bear the logo of Avalon Hill. Not that the Rules Junkie drives on without hesitation. Oh no, far from it. During the YANKS playtest we became so burnt out that our production dwindled to a pittance and we immediately took a break from HEDGEROW HELL and PARTISAN! But guess what? There were no new rules in either of those two modules. We didn’t miss a single rules debate. And don’t think that the Rules Junkie can play the game without referring to the rules. If anything, I have to look up more rules during a game than a beginner. ("Let's see now, was that just a playtest rule; did it make the final game; and what did the original say?"") The more I try to do, the less I find I know. I tend to forget a lot. (Child of the 60's.) I forget how to FPF! You say two Heroes can do what in a check? AFV? Do vehicle crews get PF? Do I get Multiple Hits on a non-CH Impossible Hit? AAAaaaarrrggghh!!!

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The Games I Played

By Friedrich G. Helfferich

Fred Helfferich is a bright, spry gentleman in his 70's now. And in his life, more adventures than most, games have played a large role—from the simple games of his childhood in Germany to his editorship of F&M for some six years. Too, he is one of the few who truly understand the reality that our games only simulate, for he was drafted into the German Army in 1941, and served in Russia and Italy while rising to the rank of lieutenant. Perhaps it is this understanding that has made him such an effective spokesman for our hobby for so long.

My wife used to say it was on our honeymoon—but then you know wives' memories tend to be true more to the spirit than to the letter of events. It really was on our first anniversary, in Carmel-by-the-Sea, that I saw in a toy store window a game that intrigued me: MIDWAY. I had always been a great naval history buff and had found Midway one of the most fascinating and miraculous naval battles (remember, that was well before we got to hear about ULTRA), so I just had to see whether a few cardboard pieces could in any way recreate a carrier battle, would reward proper tactics. My poor wife had to serve as my first opponent. She did so grudgingly, and only provided the MVP if I won. Imagine what a load of work those groups ranked above us must have submitted. It's no wonder Avalon Hill hired the MVP of that playtest, Bob McNamara. I don't even want to think how much work he must have contributed to GI!

But the most amazing thing for me was the fact that GI was printed without a Nixon leader! "Hey, where's my personal ETC—Ego Trip Counter?" The other members of the group (Hall, Stein, Nicely, Fuchs, and McEwen) were all Heroes, but nothing for poor Nixon. We were due another Nixon to kick around; it had been years since the last one reared his head. Well, of course it was merely an oversight and I shouldn't have complained because now there is a "Sgt. Nixon" and he manages to get totally gunned-up on a regular basis. My younger brother, the real Sgt. Nixon, plays in an army band, so any of you gun-ho types who expect outstanding feats of heroics from Nixon should not be too surprised if you fall on the battlefield. Back at base camp, give him a trumpet and he's dynamite.

My second hiatus from wargaming came after the GI playtest when I moved to Cleveland. New job, new house, and no chance to game for quite some time. My GI article languished midway; Rex and Don probably figured I'd never complete it, and I was in danger of never returning to wargaming. It had been the first game of the Peanut gang that I could resist the playtest lure and eventually went in search of SL pros in the Cleveland area to work on the upcoming ASL. I'm afraid I got everybody worked up about it, and when the playtest didn't materialize for quite some time, interest flagged. But two gamers I had met, Bill and Dave Sisler (read "Siscer" in BV counter lingo) kept ringing my phone asking whether the materials had arrived, had I heard from Don, when would the thing start, and so on. All I can say is that perseverance paid off, and when the campaign got underway I was a Regular Junkie because I worry about the time when all rules for ASL will be completed. (Is that maniacal laughter I hear from Bob?) But what will it be like when there are no more new rules to anticipate to enliven our play, to toss back anew into the ranks of the novice, to grant us once again the joy of revising and relearning new tactics to handle the changing battlefield milieu? Will the system grow stale? Will we drift from ASL to something else? I can only wonder, but I am confident that our group possessing the wherewithal to supplant ASL in my personal arsenal will bear the logo of Avalon Hill. Not that the Rules Junkie drives on without hesitation. Oh no, far from it. During the YANKS playtest we became so burnt out that our production dwindled to a pittance and we immediately took a break from HEDGEROW HELL and PARTISAN! But guess what? There were no new rules in either of those two modules. We didn’t miss a single rules debate. And don’t think that the Rules Junkie can play the game without referring to the rules. If anything, I have to look up more rules during a game than a beginner. ("Let's see now, was that just a playtest rule; did it make the final game; and what did the original say?"") The more I try to do, the less I find I know. I tend to forget a lot. (Child of the 60's.) I forget how to FPF! You say two Heroes can do what in a check? AFV? Do vehicle crews get PF? Do I get Multiple Hits on a non-CH Impossible Hit? AAAaaaarrrggghh!!!

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of a game with so simple rules; towns, forests and rivers provided terrain good for defense and were bitterly fought over. Surprised? But then, who would have thought the cardboard pieces of MIDWAY could catch the flavor of a carrier battle? Sometimes I wonder whether a new Schlachtenspiel is not what this hobby needs to become attractive again to the pre-teen crowd.

Later, in high school, my friends and I graduated to "The Game," a monster entirely of our own making. We had taken the idea of a wargame and out of the Midwestern prairie brought with it a fantasy land that could have evolved instead. We drew maps, carefully researching climate, vegetation and nature's riches. Each of us was assigned a piece of land, a small population, and appropriate industrial base. The rest of the globe was presumably uninhabited. In this world of ours we created our various societies and political parties, drafted constitutions, conducted diplomacy, explored, colonized, and launched military empires, all of which unfolded to a successful conclusion. We invented our own languages, composed national anthems, staged car races (with models), conducted Olympic Games. We had an international patent office in which to register our inventions! We had arms production quotas in accordance with our industrial base, with "extras" allowed for self-built small-scale tank and ship models whose reliability in combat was judged by their workmanship and faithfulness. We had no rules books or victory conditions; events were decided by consensus and common sense, or a knowledgeable elder was prevailed upon to act as umpire. Battles were fought with miniatures. For torpedo attacks, for example, we rolled steel ball bearings over a long, smooth table at a tiny model of the target ship placed at proper distance and angle. Effects of gunfire were judged by marksmanship with an air-powered rifle. I'll never forget my being accorded victory in a naval battle against all odds. (The deadly deception: a 1/2-inch enemy tin general, at a hundred and twenty feet. We covered about two hundred years of time, events evolving much as when in DIPLOMACY the players gang up on whoever threatens to become too strong, or resign themselves to a role of faithful ally to a mighty neighbor as the only remaining chance of survival. The final showdown between the two giant coalitions was imminent but never took place, for a real war started that was to teach me more about battle than I cared to learn, and that only two of our band of players were to survive.

Playing soldier in a war is no game, yet it has its aspects of gamesmanship you can learn. For instance, there is a good bit of psychology to small-unit tactics, of physics to marksmanship with an automatic weapon. But they don't give you the rule book; rather they largely let you find things out for yourself. Well, even our great institutions of higher learning, the universities, have their share of indifferent teachers, so what can you expect from the Armed Forces, whose instructors are selected for qualities other than their didactic skills? The stakes are high, and to be good at catching on will certainly increase your chances of getting through in one piece. I got ripped a couple of times but, thanks more to luck than the Irish, I made it.

My next game—in a POW camp—was "poker." None of us had played before, but we had got hold of a deck of cards and the authentic rules for five-card stud. Here, my practice in inventing strategies stood me in good stead. And with some ingenuity, I managed to take about half my winnings out with me when I released myself, enough to live on for a year or so in relative comfort.

There are games to be played in sports and professional life, too. I was never any good at tennis, though, when I picked up competitive track-and-field, skiing, sailing, and an academic and industrial career. Yes, I relished formulating strategies—such as the optimum one for a manager being recruited to surround himself with underlings that are marginally inferior to him (with disastrous consequences for the enterprise once an intellectual underachiever parleys his inferior mind into a position of authority)—but could never get myself actually to use any of them. My only success in this respect was when in dinghy racing at MIT I devised a way to use the free end of the main sheet in lieu of the outlawed tiller extension, winning me a couple of hard-wind races before the competition caught on and copied me.

When suddenly arthritis put a stop to most of my sports, there was a void to be filled. So, that toy store window in Carmel-by-the-Sea came my way just at a strategic moment in my life, bringing me back full circle to games AFRIKA game collection recently, but surely it must contain more than 1500 games—and I have played most of them.

So, for you youngsters, from one of the world's oldest living wargamers, does it surprise you then to hear he got hooked on MIDWAY in mid-life? How Avalon Hill Changed My Life

By Lou Zocchi

Louis Zocchi hails from the Chicago suburb of Maywood, and makes Mississippi his home these days, as owner of one of the prestigious game distribution companies (GameScience and Zocchi Distributors) in the country. His roots in our hobby are deep. His design credits include such classics as LUFTWAFFE and Battle of Britain, in addition to being one of the firstGuidance and revised editors, he wrote for most all of the other early magazines. In 1987, Lou Zocchi was named to the Charles Roberts Adventure Gaming Hall of Fame—an honor to top all the many other awards he has won for his efforts in our industry over the many years.

I never suspected that the GETTYSBURG game I had ordered from the Sears catalogue, back in 1959, was going to change my life forever. While waiting for its delivery, I wondered how anyone could make a game about any famous battle—and who would want to play the South, since obviously it should lose every game. When it arrived, I was delighted to discover that there was not your typical "roll-the-dice and go the indicated number of spaces" format. Instead, it was a game which featured simulated, scaled-down forces which marched at realistic rates over a scaled-down battlefield to re-fight a historical battle—one the South could win if properly commanded. I was absolutely thrilled with the innovative design breakthrough and its many features. To my continued delight, I also discovered that there were four other titles in the line, and all carried forward the premise that good tactics and solid strategy are more important than good dice rolls. When I wrote for rules clarifications for the advanced versions of these games, the humorous replies I received from Tom Shaw made me wish I could work for Avalon Hill.

I discovered that the LEMANS game had been "consumer panel tested and approved"; I asked to become a panel member and was delighted to find that BISMARK was to be my first playtesting assignment. The playtest version of this game, as I remember, was far more interesting than the version which went into print in 1962. I went on to playtest others—STALINGRAD, AFRIKA, a large-hex version of GETTYSBURG and several other titles that were never published. By now, I was truly hooked; I was witnessing wargame history in the making. In fact, Tom Shaw challenged me to playtest his new play-by-mail system with a game of D-DAY so I had a hand in that bit of innovation as well. Yes, as we tested his system, he methodically destroyed my German army.

Then, when Tom asked me if I'd like a chance to write for the new gaming magazine, The GENERAL, I jumped at that chance. I wrote articles during the next 11 years on many topics, and through my association with Avalon Hill I contacted many others who shared my enthusiasm for the new hobby. (One of those new friends was a Carl Knafe, one of the original regional editors who lived in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. While transferring to Keesler AFB in Mississippi, I stopped off in Ft. Wayne to meet Carl—and we gamed non-stop for three days.)

While vacationing in Baltimore the following summer, Carl himself visited the Avalon Hill offices and noticed that the rivers and cities on the new BLITZKRIEG mapboard had grid coordinates rather than names. He phoned out that naming the easier routes rather than naming the roads so the River Knabe and River Zocchi came into being. Eventually each terrain feature on the map was named for someone associated with the company—except for the desert (since this was the year Sandy Koufax pitched a no-hitter in the World Series, Tom named it for that baseball legend... because it was so "sandy").

While stationed at Keesler, I continued to write for The GENERAL and to playtest: JUTLAND, 1914, B&B CO/CO, STOCK MARKET and others. But the itch that all gamers had come upon me. I had been gathering data on the Battle of Britain for several years, all the while hoping that Avalon Hill would bring out a game on the subject. In 1965, I decided to design the game myself; by 1968 I had several working prototypes. When SSgt. Chris Wagner started publishing S&T, I first read about it in The GENERAL and contacted Chris. He playtested my game, imaginatively entitled "Battle of Britain," and it made the grade. It was then a bright young college student who was publishing his own game designs under the GameScience label. Phil liked my prototype and arranged to publish the game. I joined the ranks of "professionals". Although Avalon Hill had shown no interest in my design, the editor generously published a favorable story about it in The GENERAL and greatly boosted its sales.

Tom Shaw always pointed out that if I'd be willing to design a game on the Luftwaffe for Avalon Hill. After about a year of work, I felt that the game needed more development, but its publication deadline had arrived. When Tom learned about my views, he told me that he would wait until the game was ready. I was very pleased that they chose to publish finished games, instead of storing something out the door simply because a deadline had arrived. This made the two 50-page rulebooks and the four large-scale Avalon Hill games worth waiting for. Those who have ranted and raved because, say, ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER failed to appear on schedule, always eventually discover that instead of some half-baked rush job, they get a very sleek, sophisticated gaming simulation which functions properly. You
The Wargame as Sociology

By Witold Victor Madej

For that first year, Victor Madej's writings on topics as diverse as AFRIKA KOPRS and MIDWAY helped draw people to this struggling little periodical. Since that time, he has retained his interest in our hobby, even as he has built his own book publishing firm in Allen town, Pennsylvania—Valor Publishing.

When I started writing for The GENERAL, my interest in wargaming was fueled by the study of history. The first book I ever bought (with money saved from a paper route) was War Through the Ages (by Lynn Montross) in an effort to get a true view of warfare. In particular, I sought to reconcile the historical story with what had been witnessed by my own family.

In a way, I am a product of war. The Nazis seized my parents as slave labor during World War II and we lived in Warsaw. My mother, at age 14, was taken from East Poland to the Dachau concentration camp. They married in devastated Munich after the war and came to the United States after I was born in 1948. Communism held their native Poland captive. My interest in wargaming stemmed from a desire to learn about my refugee roots and the unique version of history that was presented at school. The classroom story, that our excellent armed forces had won the war, did not seem to match the reality of an enslaved central Europe. After all, the West had gotten involved in war because Hitler had invaded Poland... joined by his ally Stalin the same month.

Avalon Hill games portrayed history in several dimensions. They provided a great way to learn about the geography and relative strengths of different countries. I was attracted by how the games provided a "walk through" a historical event at improving realism at a time when it was still subjugated to playability.

In the battle against sacrificing realism in wargames, I had the good fortune of meeting John Madegan, who was writing letters to Avalon Hill also complaining about the accuracy. At the time, John lived in Brooklyn and was working towards a business degree at Pace College. He was also involved in game design. I spent hundreds of hours working with him. Some of this involved testing game ideas; but most of it was on a publishing project—the creating of Kampf magazine (a name Jim did not like), which led to publication of a monograph on the Ardennes Offensive (Dec 1944). It wasn't much of a product to look at, but the information was sold.

This was probably Jim’s first publishing endeavour. My contribution was mainly limited to illustration, especially a frustrating effort to reduce large, complex, four-color maps to two 8.5x11 inch sheets of line art. The project was an outgrowth of correcting the gross lack of realism in Avalon Hill’s original BATTLE OF THE BULGE game. It was certainly a learning experience for both of us. Without question, knowing Jim changed my life. He went on to write several issues of Kampf, design JUTLAND and 1914 for Avalon Hill, and starting in 1967 became involved in Mr. Wagner’s S&T.

I believe SPI grew because of a similar emphasis on realism, thus raising gaming to the level of simulation. The realism involved such things, through dozens of titles each year, was central to the educational attraction of their products. From 1975 to 1978, SPI sold over seven million dollars worth of games. (Avalon Hill apparently followed a similar, but safer trend while remaining diversified and holding down costs.) In 1978, SPI tried to shift from marketing by direct mail to retail distribution, while at the same time increasing its product line into the fantasy and science-fiction areas. It had grabbed too many cats by the tail and this unbalanced the business. Increased costs failed to generate adequate profit, and Jim Dunigan failed to retrace.

In 1980 a frustrated Dunigan gave up and returned to writing books. Two years later, after venture capital firms rejected “art” without substance, SPI collapsed. Meanwhile, the saturated market was changing.

As the computer becomes more pervasive, there is no question that the better games will move to a software mode. Those companies who want to stay in this market will do well. There are opportunities to support solid material to support the relatively cheap software components. This is still a time of transition because appropriate computers have not permeated the market in sufficient quantity. Simulation players, as opposed to fun-seeking gamers, are intelligent and know quality and will wait for the right product. It would be wise to get their feedback. Meanwhile the “gamers” can gorge themselves on a variety of ‘junk food’ products in a fragmenting industry.

The articles I wrote for The GENERAL paved the way for acceptance of my game design, LUFITWAFFE. The royalties from LUFITWAFFE paid for the GameScience name and its unsold stocks of games. The sales of those games financed the publication of this magazine and selling them led me in game distribution. I am very grateful to Tom Shaw and The Avalon Hill Game Company for helping all of us in the game industry to prosper, and for changing my entire life. We should all salute your historic achievement and hope that there are many more milestones of progress and success for Avalon Hill.

Both Mr. Zochi, who penned the piece above, and Mr. Madej, whose words were early “regional editors” that first year of publication of THE GENERAL. Unfortunately, in preparing this issue, we found that we’d lost track of most of these fellows—Hilary Smith, Jon Perica, Carl Knabe II, Thomas LaFarge, Daniel Hughes, Walter Green III.
Confessions of an ASL Fanatic

By Jim Stahler

Jim Stahler has been involved in the hobby for quite a few years, and has certainly participated in his share of playtests and competitions. But, it seems, he has at last found a game to capture his heart. When asked for a few words for this special issue, he responded with a question—“Can I write about ASL?” One would think, after having penned some few scenarios and Chapter K, he would have exhausted all his words. But, lucky for us, that seems to be far from true.

I have been totally swallowed up by ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER recently, but it wasn’t always that way. I remember other times and other games, with “games of the year”, “games of the decade”, and “games of the century”. I remember back in 1961, when Life magazine had a series of articles on the centennial of the Civil War. The final article in the series included a game, 1863 (since published by Parker Brothers for a brief span), that captured my imagination. Could that have been the very first wargame? Other simulations reveal that Poland, Austria, and Russia were bad games, but most of them are no longer published and I don’t know many people who played them. The one shining exception was PANZERBLITZ. That was the first true innovation in wargaming since TACTICS was created. It opened the door for a host of World War II and modern tactical games, including PANZER LEADER, ARAB-ISRAELI WARS, and of course SQUAD LEADER.

This period I did most of my gaming at the MIT Strategic Game Society on Saturday afternoons, sessions often stretching into Sunday morning with a short break for a movie and dinner. We played a lot of the classics, PANZERBLITZ, and a lot of home-grown efforts. Our favorite was Tactics Pi, which had a giant board (bigger than TLD) with BLITZKRIEG-style fictional terrain plus swamps and rivers. I remember the board designer put an islet inside a pond inside an island in a lake on the continent. We all knew wargamers were mad. My military organization is not driven by strategy. Instead, the sub-organizations and political considerations typically dominate strategy and weapon design. Until this changes, the stark realism of simulations will not be allowed to permeate military evaluation. If the simulation makers keep pushing at realism however, instead of sacrificing it to playability—there may be a chance to break this barrier and move into the next century of wargaming with a new agenda.

Wargames and simulations have affected my life by providing insights not otherwise available. I have not played more than twenty games in the past twenty years, but the thought processes of examining assumptions and presenting information concisely has never left me. From the point of view of education and decision evaluation, good simulations offer invaluable benefits. It is cheaper to make mistakes on a computer or paper playing field than to pay the price of actual conflict. I feel this is a concept worth selling.

wargamer, but once you did it was not too difficult to find a game you had in common since there were so few. Today there are many more wargamers—but no two play the same game it seems.

I have a very soft spot in my heart for those old classics. They may not be “realistic” compared to today’s games, and I have not played any of them in at least a decade; but they were excellent games, very good competition, and much faster to learn and play than most current games. Looking back, my favorites were GETTYSBURG ‘58 (the basic game), D-DAY ‘61, WATERLOO, BISMARCK, STALINGRAD, BULGE & BLITZKRIEG. I can still remember my excitement when I bought BLITZKRIEG and first opened it. I ended high school in 1966 and went on to college at MIT. About that time, wargaming entered a second phase—which I consider its “Dark Age”. Avalon Hill came out with a lot of games that I didn’t care for. I won’t say they were bad games, but most of them are no longer published and I don’t know many people who played them. The one shining exception was PANZERBLITZ. That was the first true innovation in wargaming since TACTICS was created. It opened the door for a host of World War II and modern tactical games, including PANZER LEADER, ARAB-ISRAELI WARS, and of course SQUAD LEADER.

I consider the next phase of wargaming to have started in the early 1970s. By this time, lots of other wargame companies had sprung up, led by SPI and their magazine. Avalon Hill no longer had a monopoly, and had to invest in excellence to compete. They did. The quality of Avalon Hill games took a giant leap. This is the period when Avalon Hill produced such great games as 1776, PANZER LEADER, THIRD REICH, WOODEN SHIPS & IRON MEN, WAR AT SEA and RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN. This renaissance began when AH hired Donald Greenwood and Randy Reed and started Interest Group Baltimore. Since I lived in Maryland, right outside Washington and not too far from Baltimore, I was invited to join. I went up there on Saturdays and became a “regular”. It was a thrill to meet the creators of the games that I had been playing for so long, and to see future products being developed. There was fellowship and lots of gaming.

It was at this time that I began my subscription to THE GENERAL. Being at Avalon Hill often gave me the confidence to try to write an article myself. How good was my senior English teacher? My first article was “A Question of Balance” (Vol. 13, No. 3) in the Sept-Oct 1976 issue. As payment, I received a copy of STARSHIP TROOPERS. I wasn’t interested in the topic at first, but after getting into the game I fell in love with it. That led to a string of articles, several of which I would write during my time at Avalon Hill. I remember spending over several years, working with Chester Hendrix updating the rules to STARSHIP TROOPERS, correcting some of its problems. (Similar to my updating of D-DAY). Unfortunately, Avalon Hill decided to drop the game from their line before we finished; it would have been wonderful.

In the spring of 1976, I volunteered to be an assistant judge for the Avalon Hill 500 Tournament (which awarded the princely sum of $300 in prizes, had 128 entrants, and was based on the classics). The tournament was being run out of the company offices of Avalon Hill, in Northampton, MA. I was one of a number of the classics to “train” for the tournament, because we would have to answer a lot of questions and adjudicate games, not yet complete. We got along very well, and we have been good friends ever since—something else I have Avalon Hill to thank for. (I was even an usher at their wedding).

My first playtesting experience was for ARAB-ISRAELI WARS, which Richard was developing. His ideas for updating D-DAY found their first audience what third, and Richard and I worked closely to develop and playtest them. I have had a hand in playtesting all of Richard’s games, to a greater or lesser extent. Perhaps the strangest experience was with MAGIC REALM. I played the game a number of times at Avalon Hill, and every time it was radically different from the time before, and only Richard knew the rules! I couldn’t wait to get my playtest copy of the finished product, so I could find it. 1977 was an important year for me, and for wargaming. That was the year D-DAY rules were published. Also, my first playtest game (AWH) published, along with VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC, Richard Hamblen’s first original design.

Of course, 1977 was the year that SQUAD LEADER appeared. I had play-
Then, of course, there were the rules. They were about as simple (at least they are understandable) nor its graphics (which, even 12 years later, are state of the art), but in its incredible ability to pull the player right into not only the game but into the setting as well. And new with the 15th edition, the rules and off-the-wall systems. They simply circulate, so to speak. The rules are simple (at least they are now), and there are no charts, lists, sequences, or the dreaded “if-A-does-this-then-B-does-this-but-if-C...”. The player simply plays, and all of the game’s complexities are in its situations. It is truly elegant.

A hacker? No game—on any subject—has so intimately and succinctly captured its subject. For those of you who are familiar with the wild and woolly York versus Lancaster conflict, The War of the Roses, you are aware of how accurately it portrays the high/low lights of that extended family squabble. To point out just a few: The nobility changed allegiances during the wars like sides in a sandlot stickball game. Warwick fought for everybody (but mostly himself), while his own brother John (sometimes Earl of Northumberland when the Percys were in disfavor but often Marquis of Montagu) fought both with and against him. The Beaufort Dukes of Somerset, while nominally being loyal Lancastrians (it was Somerset’s intriguing but disastrous plan of battle that led to ultimate Lancastrian defeat at Tewkesbury), still managed to find time to spend at the side of the Yorkist Edward IV. And the game captures all of this, with ears and dukes popping up everywhere, but without extended rules and off-the-wall systems. You are able to make the world of your imagination come to life.

And what of the fact that each of the king’s nobles was out for himself, more or less? Simple. Random Events manage to spread these dukes and earls around the place (I had a German 9-2 leader named after me; quite an honor, but what is a nice Jewish boy doing in the Wehrmacht in World War II?) for Don Greenwood, my first impressions of war for the first scenario was that it was much too complex for most wargamers, and that it would never catch on. How wrong can you be? It has become a phenomenon, one of Avalon Hill’s most successful products. Over the years I have playtested all the SL gamettes, CROSS OF IRON to ANYVIL OF VICTORY. Of course, I was heavily involved in the ASL rules. I wrote Don Greenwood over 150 pages of comments on the rules, not to mention the playtesting of the modules. For this I was “promoted” to a 10-3 leader! I have since then spent the majority of my gaming time playtesting BEYOND VALOR, STREETS OF FIRE, PARATROOPER, YANKS, HEDGEROW HELL, PARTISAN! and now WEST OF ALAMEIN. One of my prime concerns about ASL was that it was hard to learn. That led me to the “Squad Leader Training Manual”, which I wrote for inclusion within PARATROOPER.

The irony is that when there were only a few games available, I played them all. Now that there are thousands of games available, I have settled down to mainly playing one. I guess that the reason for this is that SQUAD LEADER, and now ASL, has just the right tactical feel to it. It has beautiful components, interesting and unusual things happen every game, and it has such enormous depth in at least four dimensions. The rules are massive, but many of them only apply to certain terrain, units or situations. There are always new rules to master. The second dimension is the boards. There are now 30 mapboards (with more to come soon), plus eight deluxe boards, with vast possibilities when put together in various ways. No matter how often you play ASL, you are always running into new terrain, or old terrain approached from a new direction. The third dimension is the counters, the Order of Battle. ASL includes a vast array of infantry, ordnance and vehicles. It is not to hard to find a scenario that includes units you have not seen before. The fourth dimension is the scenarios. Counting the modules and the scenarios published in THE GENERAL, there are now 70 ASL scenarios. If you play once a week, as I do, and play each scenario twice each side, this will keep you going nearly six years! By that time, there will plenty more published. ASL cannot be “played out”, and if you do run out of scenarios you can always design your own. By the way, besides the playtesting, I have actually only played two or three published scenarios.

But, perhaps the appeal of ASL is that it takes us back to those earlier days of wargaming. Once again, we are a select few, who speak the same language. It’s not always easy to find opponents, but when we do we can play. We have a common interest. And the game will never grow stale. When we get together to learn. That led me to the “Squad Leader Training Manual”, which I wrote for inclusion within PARATROOPER.
As a game player, I love it. It’s fast, it’s brutal, it’s involving and, at times, it’s almost all-consuming. Then again, how can I complain about a game I have never lost? Maybe I should change my last name to Neville.

Getting Off My Duff
By Terry Alan Baney

Terry Alan Baney is a professor of history in real life, and has for some years been an interested observer of our hobby. He has, if the term has not become passe in this world of ours, a true love for the hobby. And he is ever seeking to better it. Having written for The GENERAL in the past, as well as for quite a few other hobby periodicals, I asked him to put some of his suggestions on how the gamers themselves can expand our common pastime down on paper.

For the past several years it has hardly been possible to page through a boardgaming periodical or attend a hobby convention without encountering topics of concern. As boardgaming evolved from an amateur pastime to the status of a hobby industry, the range of concerns has oddly narrowed. Where once we debated whether our games should emphasize realism of playability, history or fantasy themes, paper versus mounted mapboards, today’s discussion has shifted to survivability.

If one can measure boardgaming’s longevity from the days of TAHGC’s TACTICS II during the late 1950s, some thirty years have transpired, giving the hobby a considerable past as well as an uncharted future. The track record of The GENERAL has been all the more remarkable in comparison to other, less stable enterprises within the hobby. The GENERAL has marched along this sometimes bumpy hobby terrain, keeping the faithful informed and entertained. Given its central position in the hobby’s developmental process, it is perhaps not surprising to note that The GENERAL’s staff have been seeking ways to foster growth. In fact, it is this question of “growth” which dominates the concern voiced by today’s hobbyists throughout the industry.

The question of growth has centered upon the changing nature of the hobby’s demographics. Despite an increase in the number of publishers, the range of game topics, and the level of public awareness, the hobby is concerned about the “graying” of the membership. The youthful audience of the 1960s and early 1970s has become gamers in their thirties, forties and older. While many such veterans have continued to pursue their pastime, and could be said arguably to have more disposable income, these gamers are also inclined to have other distractions (e.g., families, jobs, even other hobbies). Although the hobby was never as vastly populated as participants sometimes imagined, the declining youth population of our society further reduces the prospects for entry-level youngsters. The citizenry’s average age now hovers between 30 and 31 and, while it may indeed be possible to teach older dogs newer tricks, it is a matter for concern in a hobby which has traditionally emphasized youthful enjoyment.

Like many gamers who have been with the hobby for years—and plan to continue for the duration—I cringe at such unpleasant realities. I much prefer to read articles about the games, the history upon which many are based, and advertisements for terrific new boardgaming opportunities. I do not wish to learn that my hobby seems itself to be in some jeopardy, and I take such information to be detrimental to the enjoyment I am seeking. If I wanted prospects of doom, I would read the latest figures on the national debt or my own bank balance.

Still, as a devoted gamer who wants to see his hobby endure, I am inclined to look inward for answers as well as to the game and magazine publishers. While certain hobby products and personalities have broken through to the mass market, much of what we enjoy is provided by individuals and firms with limited resources, serving a limited clientele. These producers can be expected to do whatever is within the reach of their abilities to serve the hobby’s best interests as well as their own desire to earn a reasonable living. Yet little has been done by the hobby’s rank-and-file members to assist in this process.

There are those, of course, who write for the magazines on a frequent basis, submit potential game designs for publishers’ consideration, and attend the annual conventions. In addition, one should note that the funds which hobbyists dispense for games, magazines and related incidentals are contributions of fundamental value. However, the typical hobbyist remains relatively content to play his or her games, read the magazine and otherwise expect the pleasures of the hobby to come to them.

Perhaps the hobby has not occurred to the hobby’s members to give something back. Such a viewpoint is based on the assumption that, in the final analysis, the hobby belongs to its devotees more than it does to those individuals and firms who view its marketing opportunities. This is not to suggest that the producers and writers of the hobby are not themselves avid hobbyists. Rather, it is an invitation to gamers to discover ways in which the hobby might be served as well as enjoyed. I have my own thoughts on how this might be done, although my hope is that other hobby comrades will contribute their ideas.

One suggestion is that gamers make a concerted effort to interest others in their communities. Local schools and public libraries can be surprisingly accommodating in this regard, offering space and bulletin boards for meetings and demonstrations of the hobby. Many communities also have local newsletters which accept free ads for area gatherings. Once a location is established, the initial meeting should be held. Once it was eleven, some of my old friends (they were 12 or so) were playing TACTICS and GETTYSBURG. I got to watch because I was only 11 and the boxes specified that these were games for “adults 12 years and up”). When one of these friends went away to camp that summer, he let me borrow his Civil War game. HEAVEN! I played it every day by myself. It was a simple game, insofar as wargames go, but it was interesting and challenging at the time. (Wargamers’ Rule #1: the hobby needs some games that will appeal to the kids just starting out.) Later that summer, I turned 12 and got promoted to D-DAY.

A Wargame Book of Lists
By Robert Beyma

Mr. Beyma is best known in wargame circles as the designer of GUNS OF AUGUST, the best grand strategic simulation of the First World War on the market, and author of many an article for our pages on that and other games. Now 38, he labors for NASA in Virginia and resides in Forest Hill, Maryland. Besides wargaming, he finds the time to enjoy chess and bridge and softball as well.

I always liked to play games. I learned to play chess when I was seven, and later spent many hours playing Monopoly and Risk. My Mom and Dad gave me my first wargame, U-BOAT, for my tenth birthday. At the time, I thought of it as just another game. After all, it had metal replicas of submarines and destroyers and it had dice! When I was eleven, some of my older friends (they were 12 or so) were playing TACTICS and GETTYSBURG. I got to watch (because I was only 11 and the boxes specified that these were games for “adults 12 years and up”). When one of these friends went away to camp that summer, he let me borrow his Civil War game. HEAVEN! I played it every day by myself. It was a simple game, insofar as wargames go, but it was interesting and challenging at the time. (Wargamers’ Rule #1: the hobby needs some games that will appeal to the kids just starting out.) Later that summer, I turned 12 and got promoted to D-DAY.
I ushered in my “Classics Era” in the Spring of 1963 when STALINGRAD arrived by mail. I began my set up by placing a 7-10-4 in Brest-Litovsk; it didn’t help much since the Germans took Stalingrad on the fourth turn. AFRIKA KORPS continued to hold the city until the Spring of 1964; my box top still bears the knife scar of my eagerness to get to the game. AFRIKA KORPS played a lot like D-DAY and STALINGRAD except that it introduced an “automatic victory” rule and a simple supply rule. (Wargamers’ Rule #2: wargamers like games with similar game systems; they get variety without having to learn a whole new game, prime examples in the 1980s being ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER and Europa.) The arrival of BATTLE OF THE BULGE in 1965 marked the end of the classic era for me. I moved on to... 

I also enjoy going through the exhibit hall and taking a look at such things as miniatures demonstrations. I always look forward to meeting old friends, remembering how many games I played against them, and thinking to myself that there really were other people I knew who enjoyed playing games! The “Opponents Wanted” column enabled players in play-by-mail games. These PBM games, and the articles in The Wargamer, were the first “tactical” game and the forerunner of the justly famous SQUAD LEADER games. It departed from the classic analogy with such features as ranged fire, no ZOCs, and an entirely different sequence of play. DINO ushered in a new era, emphasizing functional differences among unit types, such as armor and engineer units, and introduced a fairly detailed air system. It was also the first, large, multi-player wargame—later to be called “monster-games”. D&D began the entire branch of our hobby known as “role-playing”. While I personally do not care much for them, very much, they are undeniably popular with many. Finally, Eastern Front—though dated now—was the first quality computer wargame; the number of computer wargames is increasing daily as more and more folk acquire home computers.

Besides those listed above, I must note three other major milestones in the growth of our hobby:

1. The publication of The GENERAL in 1964.
2. The rise (and subsequent fall) of SPI in the late 1960s.
3. ORIGINS I in 1975, sponsored by Avalon Hill.

I remember receiving my first issue of The GENERAL in the Spring of 1964, and thinking to myself that there really were other people all over the country playing these games! The “Opponents Wanted” column enabled players in different regions of the country to get to know each other and match their skills in play-by-mail games. These PBM games, and the articles in The GENERAL, improved the overall level of play and made wargamers more knowledgeable about the games and military history. Since 1964, the hobby has seen a proliferation of magazines and newsletters featuring articles on military history, game strategy and hobby news. Readers should do well to remember that The GENERAL was the first (and arguably still the best) and pioneered all these features.

The late 1960s found me in college studying to be an engineer. A good friend of mine for the past 20 years, Lee Tenney, first introduced me to SPI games. They weren’t very pretty, nor even very good games, but they had some fresh ideas. I remember Kursk where the armor got to move again (exploit) after... 

I see a slowly-growing hobby over the next decade. I believe interest will remain undeniably popular with many. Finally, Eastern Front—though dated now—was the first quality computer wargame; the number of computer wargames is increasing daily as more and more folk acquire home computers.

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As a student, I often played wargames to pass the time between classes or to relax after a long day. One of my favorite games was... 

Some of my fondest wargame memories are from games I have played at conventions. My most memorable game was my first tournament win at ORIGINS 1980 in RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN. Since we ran out of time Sunday afternoon at the convention, the championship game was actually played in Rich Hamblen’s office at Avalon Hill! A close WATERLOO game I played a few years back against a young kid. He won the die roll for sides and immediately picked the PAA (for those readers unfamiliar with the game, the Prussian/Anglo-Allied player has a decided edge in the game—if played well). The kid began explaining to his buddies that he had gotten the PAA advantage and that he was all but assured of advancing to the next round. I explained to him that neither he nor his side had more than 12 men on the board and there were only 10 left standing (I picked off his delay units). The kid apparently had never seen the French played in this manner; after about ten turns he panicked and made a bunch of 1-1 attacks. He didn’t win any of them. And then there was the 13-hour BULGE game I played against Bill Salvatore and the... 

At the risk of overloading someone, here is a list of my toughest opponents:

1. Phil Evans
2. Bruno Sinigaglio
3. Dave Tarkabutt
4. Lee Tenney

I have had the pleasure of playing against Phil in the finals of THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN tournament three times in this decade. Bruno, also known as “Santa Claus” for his generosity at the gaming table, is always a worthy opponent regardless of the game.

Most wargamers at some time in their lives fancy themselves as a “designer.” Who hasn’t thought they could improve a game or design a better one on some subject? I started a strategic-level European Theater WWII game my sophomore year in high school; I’m still working on it (“I shall complete no game before its time”). But I was always interested in the strategy employed in World War I. Since there was a void of games in that particular area, I designed GUNS OF AUGUST which, to date, is my only published game. Being from Virginia, the Civil War has always been of special interest to me as well. I decided to design a strategic-level Civil War game that not only had a lot of historical flavor but that would also be fun and playable. Jon Southard and his playtesters did an excellent job on it. (Wargamers’ Rule #3: playtesting is a lot of work but is very rewarding for both the wargamer and in the long run for the publisher.) Unfortunately, most of the major wargame companies either already have a strategic-level Civil War game or for some strange reason seem to think that Civil War games are unmarketable—so it remains unpublished.

The hobby has come a long way in the past 30 years. I have had the pleasure of growing up with the hobby. I am in my late 30’s now and have two young future wargamers (my boys). I still enjoy wargames immensely and expect to be involved in the hobby for many years to come. I am lucky to have a very understanding wife. There are quite a few companies and many, many games these days. However, I find my available wargaming time more limited...
Infomaniac
By Jon Mishcon
Jon, for those who may have spent the past seven years in the wilds of Borneo and not known, is the pre-eminent ASL player. A doctor in New England, he spices up an already busy life by drafting the regular "SL Clinic" and updating the original SL scenarios. Too, you'll find him at most all of the East Coast conventions hosting an ASL tournament. Despite this, however, he gives a different view of what the future of our hobby may hold.

I am NOT an adventure gamer. I am a WARGamer. How can you tell the difference? No, it's not spelunking in dungeon chambers. Wargamers wield eleven blades as well as the next. No, it's not visions of being hose-high behind the open turret of a Panther. Adventure gamers can be found pushing cardboards across eras and types of WARGames are, to man (yes, yes, I know there are women WARGamers too), "infomaniacs".

Infomaniacs. Those odd dudes who enjoy looking at vast arrays of data and trying to make sense of it all. Think about the amount of information you have to assess in your first turn of the average wargame. Tons of units, each with varying capacity, dozens of terrain types, thousands of potential moves, and then project forward all this for at least ten turns. Did someone mention rules? Most of the good ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER players know 50+ pages of rules intimately.

"Now hold on," someone at the back shouts, "that's not enough. There are lots of weird guys with glasses and multicolored pens who revel in stacks of trivia and never heard of Avalon Hill."

True enough; what I'm talking about here is the difference between a WARGamer and other gamers. Many gamers have an interest in history and technology. Many gamers are competitive and have enough "Walter Mitty" in the blood to see themselves as "being there." But this can apply equally to chess players. Scratch one of our anachronists and you'll likely get a discourse on shield use in the Middle Ages. WARGamers are a breed apart.

"OK," that same guy in the back calls out, "but what? Wargamers are dinosaurs. A blip in history. Starting with H.G. Wells and ending with Jon Mishcon in some nursing home fifty years from now. Isn't the hobby imploding? Aging, balding men in business suits too busy to spend an evening a week romping from Berlin to Stalingrad and back."

Precisely wrong. There are more infomaniacs out there than ever before. Kids raised with clever games. More potential wargamers than ever before. Wargamers aren't gone. They're just hard to find. Why?

Well, what attracts players to wargames? Challenge and beauty. Look at the high-schooler who analyzes Monopoly and starts to win regularly. Then he sees some game with a map of Europe layered with aircraft or castle festooned with gleaming knights. He gets a real visceral pleasure in laying out the board and pieces. He reads the rules, tries to make a move, tries again. Even if he can't find an opponent, he's got the itch. Something he knows will really be interesting.

Why isn't our high-schooler playing a wargame today? Four reasons. First, computer games are waylaying the novices. Computers won't let you screw out the board and pieces. He reads the rules, tries to make a move, tries again. Most of the good WARGame players know 50+ pages of rules intimately.

Second, advanced wargames are having to become computer games. Computers were made to store, sort and compare the huge piles of data that make a wargame "advanced." Advanced wargames don't have to be as visually enticing as entry level games, but they still have to avoid nausea. The ideal computer advanced wargame should have: quick-play instructions with an appendix that gives complete rules of play (just as if you were writing the rules to a board game); good graphics at the detail level with ability to switch back and forth to an overview map; rapid ability to display unit type, readiness, mode and any other essential characteristic of play; ability to be saved at any time, and to save more than one game; the computer must be able to play either side, or both, and to switch sides; the computer opponent must have the ability to give you a run for your money (if the algorithm isn't good enough to beat you fair and square, then give the machine a progressive handicap); simultaneous movement and combat for both sides; hidden units; automatic handling of the scout work of unit rebuilding/repair and supply; and onscreen help for commands.

Spanning the Ages
By Kevin Barrett
Kevin Barrett began earlier than most, and has done more than most, in this hobby. Now he makes his way with Iron Crown Enterprises, pushing the frontiers of the industry into new realms. But, as for so many, our magazine brought him one incaulcable bonus—a close friend. In summation, his short article speaks of all of us who love The GENERAL.

In 1971, I was eight years old, in grade three, and living on 12th Street in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. In that year, comfortably straddling out on the Canadian prairies, I first got my hands on a copy of PANZERBLITZ. At first, all that I was interested in were those black silhouettes on the horizon. They looked cool (I think I would have said "groovy" at that time), but what waited inside? Certainly more than I ever could have imagined—at any age. I remember that the introduction to the fold-out rules read something like, "'... go through all these rules carefully because PANZERBLITZ is unlike any other wargame you have played before."

No preconceptions here; I didn't even know that other wargames existed.

Though it took me five years of weekends and evenings to learn that one game, several others were to follow: RICHTHOFEN'S WAR, LUFTWAFFE, TOBRUK, and others. Remembering this makes me now think back to my public school days, to Mathew Watkins and the Sophy Dolphin he preferred, to Dean Coldham and the Fokker Triplane. Good times I will never forget.

By 1979 I had supplemented my growing interest in the wargame and adventure gaming industries with a GENERAL subscription. Struck by the magazine's physical quality, debate and insight, I was catapulted ever deeper into this strange and wonderful world and "strange" it is; just hang out for a while at your local convention.

Now what has The GENERAL magazine meant to me? Well, to put it simply: a lot. It was through The GENERAL's Opponents Wanted column that I would eventually meet one of my greatest and fastest friends. I cannot remember now exactly how his ad went. Was it, "... new opponents needed to be trampled...", or "... friendly gamers meeting every weekend..." (Really, only two types of Opponents Wanted ads ever appeared in The GENERAL.) Regardless, I drummed up my courage and made a phone call to "Art". That Saturday I showed up at his house in central Etobicoke, not half an hour away from my own. There, five guys all much older than me (they must have been at least 21!) were wrestling out a strategy over a Terrible Swift Sword display. Art turned out to be a second year university student, while I was just in my second year of high school. Only five years difference, but at that age, half a lifetime of experience separated us. I guess I was intimidated. However, after some surprisingly friendly introductions (these guys even shook my hand), we broke out the SQUAD LEADER game. Before the day was done, they designated me the group's SQUAD LEADER "rules lawyer" and I became one of them.

How this could have happened, I wonder. Under any other set of circumstances, Art and I would never have had occasion to talk with one another as adults, let alone meet in the first place. The GENERAL and Avalon Hill games had the strength to break down age barriers and social stigmas while building an everlasting bond between two people who would have otherwise passed on the street and been totally oblivious to one another. To think, it all came to us through the simple power of play.

Almost ten years have passed since that first great day. Art has married and I have moved far away. However, we know that walls could never be built high enough to make us forget those lazy afternoons and long evenings spent over THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN or THIRD REICH. But that is the way of good friends sharing our hobby.

So, what have Avalon Hill games, and their magazine, brought to all of us? Competition, non-destructive (indeed, constructive) conflict, comradeship, great memories and friendship. If you were to ask me, I'd say that the price of years of subscribing to The GENERAL stands infinitesimally small when measured against the value I'm sure that we have all derived from it, and the games it supports.
THE TOP TURRET GUNNER DOESN’T ANSWER

The Long Goodbye

By Paul A. Rivas

Amidst this celebration, it is wise to remember that The GENERAL isn’t for everyone . . .

It’s a sad fact of life that almost all of us face, at one time or another, the loss of a close friend. Someone with whom we’ve shared many happy and entertaining hours. Sometimes the loss is due to death. Sometimes to an unexpected cross-country move. Or, sometimes, as in my case, there comes the realization that there is no longer the shared interest that once was there. I guess that’s what happened to The GENERAL and me.

To begin with, I’m a 53-year-old, semi-retired, one-man ad agency who has been writer/photographer/designer for the past three decades. Sometime during the early 1960s I was introduced to Avalon Hill’s TACTICS, GETTYSBURG and U-BOAT. It was a new concept to me, and one that greatly appealed to my historical curiosity. I had grown up during World War II in one of the Arsenal of Democracy’s most important cities—Detroit. The war had made a lasting impression on me. There was one incident just after the war that I will never forget... but more on that later.

From these first few simulations, my library grew with the addition of LUFTWAFFE, PANZERBLITZ, RICHTHOFEN’S WAR, PANZER LEADER and other great games. Along the way I began subscribing to The GENERAL because of the in-depth articles on the simulations I was interested in and, more importantly, for the additional scenarios, counters and variants that were offered within its pages. I probably read about 20-25% per issue back in those good old days. I can still remember the excitement of the past when I first read “Pieces of PanzerBlitz” and some of the other great articles, or when I discovered a new set of scenarios and counters for PANZER LEADER.

In spite of the fact that many of the articles in The GENERAL were becoming statistical dissertations worthy of an advanced math class, I continued to subscribe to the old “Commander”, mostly out of habit and because I didn’t know there was anything better out there. Sometime in the spring of 1977, I discovered S&T and began to realize what a difference there was between The GENERAL and a publication devoted to historical simulation. I had found a magazine that I could actually read almost cover to cover. Here was history, photographs, orders-of-battle, interesting sidelights to well-known events—plus a game and all the history behind what it depicted.

As the percentage of Avalon Hill titles in my collection began to shrink dramatically in favor of others, I began to have a better understanding of the real difference between S&T and The GENERAL. One publication was devoted to enabling the history buff (such as myself) to step back in time and relive the event simulated with much of the tension and excitement that surrounded the real event. The other publication was interested in history and historical simulations available in order to help the reader beat his opponent through strategy based heavily on probability and gamesmanship.

Like high-priced lawyers, The General articles probe every numerical nuance, every minute probability no matter how remote in order to present the most probable winning solution for each game. Probabilities are often carried out to hundreds of a percentage point. Volume 21, Number 4 has a good example of what I mean:

... a full-strength panzer division overrunning a single Soviet unit on clear terrain has a 23% chance of winning or better odds, 35.9% of 2-1 and 41.03% of 1-1... With an unreduced motorized division, they show a 23.8% chance of 3-1 or better odds, 16.67% of 2-1 odds, 44.87% for 1-1 odds and 15.39% for 1-2 odds."

Please, give me a break! After spending a few (and I mean a very few) minutes skimming an article such as this, I always felt a strong twinge of pity between the waves of “reader nausea” for the poor opponent who did not read or properly grasp the significance of these probabilities (expertly projected to the hundreds of a percentage point) of achieving a certain odds advantage when playing an Avalon Hill game against his well-read, number-crunching opponent mentally armored by numerical odds projections and complex probability tables. I often wondered what type of individual could find satisfaction in such a hollow victory?

Having spent more than two decades in conflict simulation—I didn’t say I played wargames—I find it difficult to imagine what type of person would dedicate such a large portion of his life to memorializing probability tables and preparing statistical analyses for all his favorite games. The answer became apparent—the typical reader of The GENERAL. Now don’t get me wrong. I’m not saying that it’s bad; it just seems like a waste of time unless you’re an ardent “game” whose main interest is in the “win/loss” column rather than the experience of the experimenting of the unexpected in the simulation. Let’s face it. The purpose of most of The GENERAL’s coverage is to eliminate the unexpected through careful analysis of all the variables that might impinge on a certain hoped-for outcome.

The GENERAL attempts to smooth out the variables in the Avalon Hill games through mathematical dissection, thereby increasing the avid reader’s odds of winning what is now nothing more than a game much like blackjack or Monopoly. History and strategy—and the unexpected—are relegated to footnotes as the proper mathematical equations are presented to the number-hungry readership. A famous advertising man once said that you sell the “sizzle” and not the steak; but The GENERAL’s readership seems to disprove that creative theory with demands for more and more beer and forget the “sizzle.”

Before I purchase a conflict simulation, I want to know if it’s accurate in its portrayal of what actually happened—or could have happened. And when I play it, whether in a solitaire format or against a friend, I want to experience the pressures of command and the unexpected. I want to learn what happened at that particular time and place. Could I have changed history had I been on the “cut-off”? Could I have changed history had I been on the “cut-off”? Could I have changed history had I been on the “cut-off”? Could I have changed history had I been on the “cut-off”? Could I have changed history had I been on the “cut-off”? Could I have changed history had I been on the “cut-off”? Could I have changed history had I been on the “cut-off”?

At the beginning of this farewell article, I mentioned an event that happened to me just after the end of World War II when I was about ten years old. My parents and I were taking a pleasant summer’s drive in the country heading away from the hot, crowded streets of Detroit. For some reason my dad had pointed the old DeSoto toward the city of Ypsilanti not far from where Henry Ford had built his famous B-24 bomber plant at Willow Run—the one that cranked out an bomber an hour (one every 63 minutes, actually) by 1944.

As we turned a corner, we came face to face with a huge grassy plain that seemed to stretch as far as my eyes could see, from one end of the horizon to the other. And on this sun-baked field squatted hundreds of huge four-engined bombers—B-17s and B-24s. These were not just-completed, impotent ungunned planes no longer needed in a war that had just ended. No, these were honored warbirds that sat proudly wearing their battle colors and unit markings that had recently dominated the skies over Europe, or maybe even the Pacific. From every gun port andruled the long, black snouts of 50-caliber machineguns. And there were the holes and patched holes in many.

For some reason, the field was open to the public as was access to all the planes. Men and women walked among the close-parked bombers as young children (by now this group included me) climbed on, around and into the patient warriors. I remember to this day the smell of the plane’s interior, the scorching heat acting as a catalyst for the smells of the plexiglass enclosed turrets, the oiled machineguns, the rubber and plastic hoses, and the painted aluminum. All combined to create that special scent found only in a warbird.

The bomber I chose to explore was much too hot for my dad to crawl around in, but for a 10-year-old boy who grew up during the war years, it was paradise. I made my way up to the top turret and squeezed into the gunner’s position. Overhead, the sun beat down from a cloudless blue sky, and the huge guns and belt feeds seemed to fill the small hot turret as I tried to squint through the gunsight. I quickly found the manual turret traverse and soon the guns and I revolved crazily as we swept the skies clean of imaginary fighters. I never forgot that day, and I probably never will until I take my last breath here on earth.

Although it had been many decades since I experienced that rather memorable Sunday afternoon in 1945, it was suddenly and vividly brought back to mind when I sat down and played my first simulation of B-17. Like it was only yesterday I could smell the paint, plastic and oil of the Willow Run bomber; and as the FW-190s and Me-109s made their firing passes as they swept past my limping bomber, I could see that 10-year-old boy of my distant past manning the twin 50s in the top turret swinging the guns to meet each challenge. To me, the smell of the gunsmoke, the mechanical simulations, or wargaming if you choose, is all about.

It’s history relived in less painful form. A way to discover the past, and what it must have felt like to the frightened, teen-aged Marine wading from the reef toward Bette’s shore, ablaze in a fiery hell, 500 yards away; or to the battle-weary Company Commander or the federal soldier running across the open field into the screaming mouths of Union cannons and rifles on Cemetery Ridge; or to be that tense fellow up
Following the overwhelmingly favorable response that came with publication of a preview in Vol. 24, No. 5 of Don Stahl's book THE LAST HURRAH, and in recognition of the large majority on our survey who indicated that they wanted news on works in progress, the editors decided that a new regular column might be in order. Even with the small design staff these days—every one a demon at creating games thought Avalon Hill still releases some dastardly titles a year. Publication of something new is always just around the corner. This short column is intended to give readers a short peek at one of these in each issue.

When Bob McNamara got sand in his eyes and turned his attention to the ASL desert, I decided that I'd stay home. Figuratively speaking of course. Bob is breaking new ground with the system having spent half a year to see the British and combat in North Africa brought to the fanatics with the release of WEST OF ALAMEIN. Now he labors on the Italian; and soon he will be sweating with the Japanese. I, on the other hand, felt that finishing the update of nationalities that appeared in the original system was equally important. At the strident insistence, the Axis Minors infantry OB and a couple of scenarios featuring them were included with PARTISAN! Realizing that Bob wasn't going to be able to devote time to continuing this trend of bringing out the "lesser powers" in small modules, I brazenly volunteered. The first result of my labors will be THE LAST HURRAH, an ASL module that should see print before the end of 1988.

THE LAST HURRAH will be the sixth ASL module, and much similar to PARTISAN! in content. The single counter sheet will carry the Allied Minors infantry OB, some 260 half-tracks, and 183000 men. As before, these encounters of nations quickly over run by the invaders—the Poles, Norwegians, Dutch, Belgians, Yugoslavs and Greeks. All the infantry weapons are included, including the various models of MGs and ATVs with which they struggled to stop the onslaught. The two mapboards include the revised #11, featuring a couple of small hills broken by extensive hedges, and the new #33, open terrain dominated by an extensive (85x50) gralnfield. Together with the original four SL mapboards, they can provide a fair approximation of the terrain over which the early blitzkriegs rolled.

But the heart of the new module will be, as always, the new scenarios. These eight focus on historical situations involving the early German Blitzkriegs of World War II and the many nationalities that fought desperately against the invaders. Paratroopers, armor, air power, audacity and courage were the tools with which the German panzers ran the neutral states of Europe. And in less than two years, in actions as far apart as Norway and Crete, the German military accomplished all they set out to do. For the most part, the invaded neutrals were defended by hastily-mobilized reservists stiffened by a few elite units. The actions depicted in THE LAST HURRAH will hopefully challenge veteran ASL players to match the tenacity, audacity and victories on both sides in these scenarios recreating in a small way the German march of conquest. Whether commanding German armor, Polish cavalry, Greek infantry, Belgian paratroopers, Danish resistors or Yugoslavian fighters, if you're an ASL grognard you're bound to find something of interest in the wide spectrum of scenarios included.

The playtest of THE LAST HURRAH began in mid-summer with eight scenarios I'd drawn from various sources. With a bit of effort, I managed to locate at least one covering an action by each of the Allied Minor powers. For instance, the Greek scenario simulates a small portion of the fighting around Kastelli in Crete, where a poorly-armed Greek regiment—survivor of the flight from the mainland and their homeland—plunged into the hills to hunt down German paratroopers during the airborne invasion; my research for this one included such esoteric studies as the Australian Official History, a book written in 1943 by an American lady who survived the fall of Greece to flee to Crete and then North Africa, a German pamphlet, and some war crimes testimony about alleged German atrocities on the island presented during the trials in Athens after the war. In fact, I had to do a great deal more digging for these scenarios than I'd had to for the previous ASL module I'd overseen (HEGDEROW HELL). And I rediscovered my enjoyment of shifting through dusty old tomes in dank libraries and tracking down elusive bits of information needed to bring a scenario to life.

The playtesters have often felt like orphans I'm sure, since due to the press of other projects (notably this magazine) long periods occasionally pass between contact. But all of them—lead by Russ Hall, John Anderson, Kurt Nordquest, Dan Huberman, Jim Stahler, Mitchel Balicki and Chris Gammom—have contributed mightily. In formal, the playability and challenge of these scenarios will be due more to their efforts than mine. Why, Brian Martzus even devised a scenario pitting the Poles against the Russians in 1939 that I thought so clever it would bump one of the others in the module. (Never fear, the "ninth" scenario dealing with the Allied Minors will appear in The GENERAL at some point).

These scenarios, numbered 43 through 50 (a landmark of sorts for the system) with one to appear later, encompass quite a range of actions. I had originally hoped to concentrate on cavalry actions (as Mac had on partisan ones in the previous small module), but soon found that was impossible. Even with the best of intentions, I couldn't cram horses into every scenario. After that, my self-set task became simpler—locating little-known actions and tracking down as much information on each as I could. Along the way, I was pleased to discover that most of the elements that marked the startling German method of making war came into play in one or more of the scenarios: Sukha support, fast armored drives against disorganized defenders, attack from unexpected quarters, and all the rest. These scenarios then play a vital role in refining the raw scenarios, and even though there are disagreements on a host of small points, all seem to have had fun with it. We've together done our best
BEST FANTASY BOARDGAME EVER!

That's what people are saying about *Magic Realm*, now that it has the Second Edition Rulebook. Why? Judge for yourself:

*Magic Realm* is a game of fantasy adventuring where the players explore a vast forest that contains the remnants of a lost magical civilization. Hidden in this forest and its caves are ruins that hold treasures with wonderful powers, but monsters guard these ruins and prowl the forest, searching for intruders. The only safe havens are a few scattered dwellings where native humans can offer a little help—for a price. The players start at these dwellings and venture into the wilderness in hope of finding fame and riches.

Unpredictable Game Full of Surprises

*Magic Realm* creates a complete fantasy world that changes each time the game is played. The players actually start each game by constructing a new *Magic Realm*: they assemble twenty oversized hexagonal tiles to create a new map; they place markers to secretly define where the treasure sites, human dwellings and monster spoor are located; and they pick cards to secretly define exactly which treasures are at each treasure site and dwelling. This creates a realm so large that the players cannot explore it all in the course of the game, so they cannot predict exactly what monsters, natives and treasures will come into play in any game. And, finally, most of the monsters and natives roam the map; they can emerge from the forest in a variety of locations; once they have appeared they can move around the map; they can even vanish back into the forest and reappear later, and it is impossible to predict exactly when and where they will appear. The result is an extremely unpredictable game full of surprises, that plays differently each time it is played.

Each player takes on the role of one of the sixteen major characters who are represented in detail in the game. Each character has a full range of strengths and weaknesses: he has his own starting equipment, his own special abilities, his own list of natives who are friendly or unfriendly to him, and his own set of “action chits” that define his strength, speed, endurance and magic. In the course of the game he can acquire additional weapons, armor, horses and other equipment. The objective is to accumulate fame, notoriety, wealth, magic and legendary treasures during the game; he secretly chooses what he is after before the game begins.

The game includes moving, searching, hiding, caves, mountains, different types of horses, trading with natives, hiring natives, fatigue, resting and combat. The combat rules cover a variety of weapons, armor, horses and spells, and it allows individual combat and mass melees between characters, monsters, natives and hired natives. Combat is treated in detail: the characters choose the speed, strength and direction of each blow and maneuver, and each monster and native changes its blows and maneuvers randomly whenever it fights. The results of combat include wounds, damaged armor and fatigue.

NEW, 2nd Edition Rules...

Features Solitaire Play

The Second Edition Rulebook explains the rules in detail, with many examples, diagrams and charts that summarize play. In addition, the rules have been divided into four sections to allow the players to learn one section at a time and play a simplified game each time they finish a section: the first section explains hunting for treasure, the second explains how to fight monsters, the third explains combat between characters and the last explains magic. The old rules are completely rewritten and many new optional rules have been added, including optional rules for playing the game solitaire.

What other boardgame gives you this richness of detail in a game that is new each time you play it? What other boardgame gives you such a complete fantasy world that you can play alone without a gamesmaster?

If you can't find *Magic Realm* at your local store, don't despair. Cast an AT&T spell by calling 1-800-838-9292 to order your copy by direct mail with any major credit card. *Magic Realm* costs $20. Add 10% for postage and handling (20% to Canada/Mexico, 30% overseas). MD residents, please add 5% sales tax.

The Avalon Hill Game Company
DIVISION OF MONARCH AVILON, INC.
4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214
A HISTORIAN’S GUIDE TO AVALON HILL WARGAMES—PART II

More of One Man’s Views

By Seth Owen

Back in Vol. 19, No. 6 of The GENERAL I rated the Avalon Hill wargame line from the point of view of the amateur historian. Since my original essay, some new games have come and some old ones have gone. Some have even come and gone! I haven’t caught all the changes, but the reviews that are past when a single gamer could hope to play all the games on the market. Undaunted, let me share my views and update “The Historian’s Guide.”

My inspiration for the original article was Jon Freeman’s The Complete Book of Wargames (now out of print). In it, he labeled and described the motivations of seven distinct types of wargame players. For those of you who haven’t seen it, I’ll summarize his typology, because it’s still the best I’ve seen:

The Historian considers realism and fidelity to historical fact the most critical elements in a wargame design. He is likely to most prefer the term “simulation.”

The Military Enthusiast finds tactics, technology and regalia fascinating. Contemporary and near futuristic wars of particular interest. He too likes the term “simulation.”

For The Assassin winning is the only thing. A challenging contest is the prime attribute of a “good” game for The Competitor. Play balance is a must in all of his favorite games.

The Hobbyist is the collector and philosopher of the hobby. He likes to write for wargame magazines.

The Gamer... “just likes games.” For him, playability and social interaction are the most sought after qualities in a game.

For The Specialist games are just a facet of his interest in some particular historical subject.

My rating scheme (explained below) is biased to the perspective of The Historian. These ratings don’t address how good a game a particular title may be, only how well it suits the special tastes of the player looking for an history book in game form. And, of course, these are my views only.

Only wargames are rated. Fantasy and sci-fi games are obviously of no interest to our “Historians.” Also excluded are several games that deal with wars that never were (BLITZKRIEG) or haven’t happened yet (TAC AIR), unless they happen to have at least one historical scenario (FLIGHT LEADER). Also not included are historical games of a non-military nature (GUNSLINGER or 1870). Unlike the last time, I have included some out of print game titles; they’re all still available in the back pages of the Avalon Hill catalogue, so if the Historian wants them he can still get them.

The Rating Scheme

ORDER OF BATTLE: This rates the accuracy of the OB, taking into consideration the level of abstraction in the design. This category includes such things as correct unit identifications, correct unit types, accurate unit strengths and capabilities. If machines are present (ships, aircraft, AFVs), the realistic portrayal of their abilities and limitations is reflected here.

1—A rating of “1” indicates that the OB borders on fantasy. A serious student of military history will gain no information—only misinformation—from this game.

2—The order of battle gives a rough feel for the forces involved, but there are serious errors or omissions.

3—The OB is not completely inaccurate, but only adequate for game purposes. It’s not so bad that it detracts from good ratings elsewhere for the game.

4—Good solid OB that provides satisfactory data for the amateur with an interest in the period and subject.

5—Professional quality OB work, equal to or better than that found in most books on the subject.

TACTICS: This category rates the how of fighting the battle. How well does the game recreate the mechanics of battlefield events. The forte of tactical games of course, but a strategic game can also be informative in this area.

1—Any resemblance to the actual event is purely coincidental.

2—You get the historical results, but for the wrong reasons.

3—An adequate treatment for a game.

4—A good study which gives some insight into how the event unfolded.

5—Accurate enough for military instructional purposes. This game recreates how the battle (war, campaign, firefight) was fought and illustrates the tactics of the period.

STRATEGY: The final category, this one covers the why of the historical event. Does the game present the player with the same problems as history did the actual commander? Are the historical solutions or reasonable alternatives available? Do events happen as they happened in history or as they did, but little insight into possible alternatives.

4—This will give you the alternatives as well.

5—If you can do well in this game, feel free to criticize the historical commanders. This game is as close to being in command as you can get without dodging bullets.

The Ratings

The final rating for each game is a report-card-like letter grade. This is derived by simply adding the four ratings, multiplying the raw score by five, and assigning the letter grade to the percentile found: 90-100=A; Excellent military history. 80-89=B; Good historical treatment. 70-79=C; Fair history. 60-69=D; Passable history, better be a good game. 50-59=E; Poor treatment of the subject. Less than 50=F; Forget it.

A grade below “C” will indicate to the Historian that there’s little to interest him here. Even if there happens to be a good score in a particular category, the entire effect is wrong. A “C” rated game might interest the historically minded gamer if he has a special interest in the subject; look at the specific ratings. A game that achieves a “D” will probably interest the Historian. There might be a flaw or two, but you probably know enough to compensate; look to the specific ratings to see where the weakness lies. An “A” game will definitely interest the Historian and it may even be fun to play.

In each game, all historically based advanced, optional and experimental rules are assumed to be in play. The true “Historian” won’t let playability stand in the way of history.

Continuing the format I established last time, the games appear in rough order of publication. A final caveat. The ratings do not rate the game as a whole. No attempt is made to consider how much fun it is, only whether it can be called “History.”

The Ratings

STRUGGLE OF NATIONS
OB—5 Tactics—5 Strategy—5 Grade—A

Last time I noted a void in Avalon Hill’s wargame line; there was no good historical treatment of a Napoleonic campaign. This void was briefly filled by this game, but its appearance on the discontinued parts list the void comes again. Historians would be well advised to pick up a copy before they become too scarce or costly.

LITTLE ROUND TOP
OB—5 Map—5 Tactics—4 Strategy—4 Grade—A

Another bargain. The system for ordering units around is a little too restrictive. Telling two companies that are in line together to advance 40 yards does not take four times the command effort of telling a single company to advance 20 yards. See DEVIL’S DEN for an improvement and refinement on this system. All in all, this is a good little study of the 20th Maine’s famous fight. (The original OSG title better describes the focus of the game.) For the
Historian interested in the whole fight for the height, DEVIL'S DEN is a better choice.

**BATTLE FOR ITALY**

OB-4 Map—4 Tactics—4 Strategy—4 Grade—B

Using a simple version of the STRUGGLE OF NATIONS system, this game loses quite a bit as far as the Historian is concerned. Not a bad system at all, a "B" is certainly a good rating. It’s just that the Napoleonic fan who’s already tried SON will miss all the fine details.

**HUNDRED DAYS BATTLE**

OB-5 Map—4 Tactics—4 Strategy—4 Grade—A

The OB here is more informative than BATTLE FOR ITALY’s, though otherwise the game shares the same system with all its good and bad points. Another game that Historians should grab before it disappears into the collections maintained by Hobbyists. The price is so low that any wargamer can hardly go wrong on this one.

**BULL RUN**

OB-5 Map—5 Tactics—3 Strategy—3 Grade—B

The good terrain analysis and OB arc hurt by the simplistic combat system. The “classic” CRT has a lot of good points (simplicity, PBM usage and speed come to mind), but it’s only a passable representation of Civil War combat. The worst sin of this game is, however, the lack of morale rules. It is impossible to have the historical rout take place. That may be fine, perhaps even necessary, for the Gamer or Competitor, but no good for the Historian.

**UP FRONT**

OB-5 Map—3 Tactics—1 Strategy—3 Grade—D

This was a tough one! No map; playing card system; great “fog of war” — all this makes this a game hard to fit into neat pigeonholes. The OB stuff is fine. In a “generic” type of tactical game such as this, the OB score represents how well the weapons, men and vehicles interact. This game does very well with all of them. The “Map”, on the other hand, is a little too chaotic. The game works best if you don’t think about what’s happening too hard. If you try to imagine it as a reality, you will be confused and disappointed. Consider it the gaming equivalent of the nomenclature of naval warfare used to add flavor to the game. The Historian finds it interesting. Almost every scenario is either historical or taken from a historical “what-if”. This is one of my personal favorites because it can appeal to just about every type of wargame equally well. Even the Assassin can have his fun. The Historian will try gaming the historical version of the Sortie incident with him: the Historian flies the SU-22s and the Assassin can fly the F-14s! Common ground. We need more games that give us such common ground. This game (and the next) get a ’5’ for the map because both are so much better looking than blank hex sheets; and they even have a small effect on play.

**FLIGHT LEADER**

OB-5 Map—5 Tactics—5 Strategy—5 Grade—A

The original, Air Force, version of the game would have been of marginal interest to the Historian (though perfect for the Military Enthusiast). The addition of all those 1950s and 60s jets turned this into a fantastic game for the Historian. Almost every scenario is either historical or taken from a historical “what-if”. This is one of my personal favorites because it can appeal to just about every type of wargame equally well. Even the Assassin can have his fun. The Historian will try gaming the historical version of the Sortie incident with him: the Historian flies the SU-22s and the Assassin can fly the F-14s! Common ground. We need more games that give us such common ground. This game (and the next) get a ’5’ for the map because both are so much better looking than blank hex sheets; and they even have a small effect on play.

**KNIGHTS OF THE AIR**

OB-5 Map—5 Tactics—5 Strategy—5 Grade—A

In Vol. 19, No. 6 I asked if there was a “Tom Oliver” out there who could do for RICHTHOFFEN’S WAR what Tom has done for ANZIO. I guess KOTA can be considered the answer to my query. I suggested a “complete rules rewrite, some simulative movement and the maneuver cards included as a standard.” While the movement system is not exactly simultaneous, it accomplishes the same thing. In any case, the rules have been rewritten and a type of maneuver card included as standard play.

Am I satisfied? As a Historian, I’d have to say yes. The planes perform more accurately, I’ve got Zepplins to shoot down, and spotting does take its effect. Fate plays a large role in the Historian’s experience. The Historian sees the battle from the perspective of the aircraft commander, and hence the lower ratings for OB--4 Map-4 Tactics-1 Strategy-1 Grade-F

**B-17, QUEEN OF THE SKIES**

OB-5 Map—4 Tactics—5 Strategy—4 Grade—A

Another solitaire game that captures that peculiar feeling of being a target. Fate plays a large role in war, but for bomber crews it loomed especially large. There were very few decisions you could make (even as the pilot), though these few often meant life and death. Most stuff (fighter attacks, flak, equipment failure) just happened to you, and you simply had to deal with the results.

**RAID ON ST. NAZAIRE**

OB-5 Map—5 Tactics—4 Strategy—4 Grade—A

While a solitaire game, RSN doesn’t focus on the player as “target” but rather on the player as “octopus wrestler”. The Commando’s commands were facing heavy odds and slim chances. Against a thinking defensive player, they would have no chance at all. Here the British player can coordinate his units better than was historically possible, whereas the actual boat commanders and commando teams were really on their own once the action started. It’s hard to overcome being the omniscient player, and hence the lower ratings for Tactics and Strategy.

**THUNDER AT CASSINO**

OB-4 Map—5 Tactics—3 Strategy—4 Grade—B

This is the game that Historians wanted. WAR & PEACE, the official story of the Allied invasion of Italy, was a long time in coming. This game captures it very well. The tank commander makes decisions appropriate to his ground-level viewpoint. Only the Historian may appreciate the subtle differences between models, but they are there. Some cards are identical in terms of the game. The Historian, on the other hand, cares that he’s riding in an M4A3, not an M2—even if no one else does. I think my favorite touch is that every unidentified enemy tank is a Tiger and every ATG an ‘88. In a strict sense it wasn’t true; but to the individual tankner, it had to be “truer than true”.

**HITLER'S WAR**

OB-2 Map—3 Tactics—3 Strategy—3 Grade—E

The game is full of compromises that distort history but improve balance and play value. The interplay of production decisions, research and combat will quickly make the OB close to fanciful. The map is not detailed enough to differentiate between plausible strategies and implausible ones. It’s just as easy to invade the rocky coasts of Spain or Greece as the beachhead. It is meant to be enjoyed as a good game. The Historians among us will much prefer THIRD REICH.

**ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER**

OB-5 Map—5 Tactics—5 Strategy—4 Grade—A

What, even ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER doesn’t rate a perfect score?! Well, no it doesn’t. I made my bias clear the last time, but I doubt that many readers have the previous article in front of them right now. So, I’ll restate why I didn’t give SL, the gamettes or ASL a perfect 100. It is a very good

system, but warfare at the level of a battalion or company commander is very foggy in the extreme. The only place it gets worse is at the level of platoon or squad leader. SL, and ASL, just don’t have much fog of war or command control problems reflected. Because the system fails to really address these things, it can’t be considered the “perfect” tactical game system.

**PATTON'S BEST**

OB-5 Map—4 Tactics—5 Strategy—5 Grade—A

A Battle is a very personal thing for a tank commander.
around the proper play of cards, not the principles of military art. The map gets a "4" only because I promised that naval games would at least get that. There is no map, of course, nor anything that resembles the concept in the game. (Even UP FRONT has terrain cards!) No matter, it is still rated an "F" for the guy/gal who likes simulation detail. It is great fun to play though.

**Conclusion**

I gave a quick biographical sketch in my last article, so I won't repeat it here—except to say that I'm up to 19+ years of active gaming now. I've been around longer than most, I guess, though certainly not all. I consider myself, on the "Free-man Scale", a Game First, followed by Military Enthusiast, Historian and Hobbyist (in that order). I've got a little bit of the Competitor in me too. I'm only an Assassin on bad days. The categories overlap. Most of us are all of them to some degree.

Five years ago, I gave the line an average score of 13.7. The games I've examined this time average some 16.5 points. As a group, I see the newer games as much closer to what historically inclined age some 16.5 points. As a group, I see the newer game titles are expressly designed to this group of games were expressly designed to appeal to gamers for whom history takes a back seat to the game play. This is in contrast to the earlier list, where some games ended up with a "C" and below due to design flaws rather than by intent. The designers at Avalon Hill have never done their jobs better.

**Recapitulation**

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**Last Hurrah . . . Cont'd from Page 51**

to balance the scenarios, and make them a challenge for any true ASL devotee. I think you'll find that, once again, you will learn a bit once you've mastered these, for they certainly play different from those rather "regular" ones found in BEYOND VALOR, PARATROOPER and YANKS.

I've mentioned only a couple of the scenarios thus far. Everyone involved has their favorite, of course. Every ASL-er I've ever known will regale you with tales of which they consider the best of the published scenarios; I'm no different. For my money, the very first in this module is the very best, wherein the Polish "Pomorska" Cavalry Brigade clashes with German armor. But your favorite might well be different, and you've quite a range of situations to choose from: the above-mentioned Greek scenario; an attempt by German paratroopers to crash through a Norwegian roadway; German SS playing hide-and-seek in the Ardennes with elite Belgian troops; a desperate battle between mobilizing Yugoslavian reservists and the lead elements of a hard-driving panzer division; Dutch defense of their fortified line against a German assault from the rear; a Belgian attempt to retake a bridge near Eban-Enmael in which Stukas play a role; and a Polish charge to break through Russian lines to freedom in the last days of the fighting there (the scenario contributed by Brian Martuzas). Together, I think these actions give an excellent cross-section of the heroism and frustration of those early days of World War II.
WHITEYE THE BANDIT STRIKES AGAIN!

APPLE LANE, SARTAR — In a particularly vicious pre-dawn attack, the notorious bandit Whiteye and this trollkin gang raided several farms in the Apple Lane region — without warning or apparent cause.

Whiteye has long been a nuisance to merchants, farmers, and travelers-at-large. Despite previous attempts at his capture, the wily bandit always has eluded Sheriff Dronlan’s men, retreating to his secret hideout located among the numerous hills in the region.

The sheriff, vowing “This time, that loathsome troll has gone too far,” is assembling a posse, and offers a sizable reward for Whiteye’s capture, dead or alive!

APPLE LANE is a book of adventures for the RuneQuest roleplaying game. It contains two adventures (Gringle’s Pawnshop and The Rainbow Mounds) written especially with the new RuneQuest gamer in mind, though sophisticated enough to enthrall even the most experienced gamer. APPLE LANE includes an 11"x17" center-stapled, pull-out floorplan of Gringle’s and a pull-out digest of all necessary character and creature game statistics.

APPLE LANE is written for Standard Edition RuneQuest. All materials used from Deluxe Edition are reproduced in this book. Of course, APPLE LANE can be used with Deluxe Edition RuneQuest.

BROO GANG AMBUSHES CARAVAN!

TRADER’S VALLEY, NEAR GLASSWALL — In an incident which bodes ill for Sartar trade and the towns of the Alda-Chur region, a voracious gang of broos apparently attacked a merchant caravan camped beside The River. Sartar patrols report that the wreckage has been located and quarantined, to prevent the spread of the virulent diseases carried by chaos-worshiping broos.

Long-known as a center of chaos activity, Snake Pipe Hollow in recent years has remained relatively quiet — with none of the mass migrations of chaos horrors which earned the Hollow its gruesome reputation. That peace has ended.

SNAKE PIPE HOLLOW contains one massive adventure designed for experienced RuneQuest players running tough adventures (good skills in weapons, and at least one priest in the party). This book includes an 11"x17" center-stapled, pull-out plan of the Caverns of Snake Pipe Hollow, and a pull-out digest of all necessary character and creature game statistics.

SNAKE PIPE HOLLOW is written for Standard Edition RuneQuest. All materials used from Deluxe Edition are reproduced in this book. Of course, SNAKE PIPE HOLLOW can be used with Deluxe Edition RuneQuest.

APPLE LANE and SNAKE PIPE HOLLOW are now available for $10.00 each from The Avalon Hill Game Company (4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, MD 21214). Please add 10% for shipping and handling to all orders (20% for Canadian orders and 30% for overseas orders). Maryland residents please add 5% state sales tax.
Area rated player desires contact in AF/and or "D" Games can be rated or not, as you wish. Will play any scenario. All inquiries answered.

Charles Gregg 252-1 McCullough, Apt. 1, Lake Hauasa City, AZ 85640.

The East Valley ASL Club wants you! Now playing: West of Alamite. Pieree O'Neared, 5546 Decatur St., Mesa, AZ 85206, (602) 885-4505.


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**READERS BUYER'S GUIDE**

The following games are ranked by their reader-generated Overall Value rating. Further aspects of reader response to our titles are indicated by the ratings in other categories. By breaking down a game's ratings into these individual categories, the gamer is able to discern for himself where the title's strengths and weaknesses lie in the qualities the reader values highly. Readers are reminded that ratings take the form of a numerical range from 1 to 9 (with "1" equalling "excellent" and "9" equalling "terrible"). However, the Game Length category is measured in multiples of ten minutes (thus, a rating of "18" equates to three hours). A "+" following the year of release indicates that the game is continued or complemented by additional modules in successive years (for instance, the ratings for SL reflect expansion systems—often additional add-on modules). Game Type is broken down into three broad categories: SO = Solitaire; MP = Multi-Player; 2P = Two Player. Finally, it should be noted that a minimum requirement of 50 responses (see the "Sample Base") was judged necessary for a valid representation; additional titles that garner such will be added to the RBG in the future.
Our long-overdue look at some of the “ancients” games brought a gratifying surge in mail to our offices. Many complimented us for at last granting them some coverage again, while others complained about the “waste of space.” Still, enough seem pleased for Vol. 24, No. 5 to gain it a respectable Overall Rating (3.09). Of course, Mr. Rennert’s article on the featured game of BRITANNIA dominated the polling on the various articles, a fine introduction to a fine game. Based on a random sampling of some 200 responses from readers, the ratings for all the articles are as follows:

FROM STURDY STOCK .................. 369
THE ROMAN INVASION OF BRITANNIA ...... 231
A CIVILIZED RACE ........................ 112
BREAKING THE RING ................... 88
WARRING AND WINNING .................... 78
THE COMING SIEGE ....................... 59
AH PHILOSOPHY .......................... 53
LOST IN THE WOODS .................... 44
SWORDS OF THE REPUBLIC .............. 37
THE DANCE OF DEATH .................... 34
THE KING’S CASTLE ....................... 32
THE BLOODY KING ....................... 22
DESIGN ANALYSIS ...................... 22
MONSTER MASH .......................... 16

The STALINGRAD AREA PBM championships have finally staggered to a close with Frank Preissle’s concession to David Koop making David the winner by virtue of overall rating points over Frank and Greg Smith. The three battled to a three-way tie in the final round, with identical records of 3-1. Mr. Koop won by virtue of his better overall rating: 1887 to Mr. Preissle’s 1850 and Mr. Smith’s 1826. Challengers for the STALINGRAD crown should send their gauntlets c/o Don Greenwood at TAHGC. Eligible challengers for the title will be decided by virtue of their AREA ranking.

Along with all the other changes in store for The GENERAL, a new binder has been designed for those who may wish to preserve their collections. Larger than the older model, it no longer uses metal rods (which could deface the center of an issue) but instead has a patented “Max-Text” post lock mechanism. Too, with the expanded format of the magazine, the binder has been designed to hold only six issues of The GENERAL. The new binders are available from Avalon Hill for $7.00 each.

Still another overseas amateur periodical makes its debut. For those who may read Norwegian, Jagdpanzer! is devoted to all types of wargames and historical simulations. For example, the first issue carries “official” errata for BISMARCK and a variant for that popular game. A mix of reviews and new scenarios and hobby news gives it a broad appeal. Price for an issue is 15 kroner; for subscrip-

It is with sadness that we hear that Glyn Roberts, editor of the British amateur magazine Cut & Thrust, died suddenly after a brief hospital stay. Derek Wilson, his friend and co-editor, dedicated the recent issue to his memory and gave us a look at the gamer and the good man that Glyn was. For some years I had maintained a lively correspondence with Glyn, keeping him informed of the many new products from Avalon Hill and Victory Games in exchange for his reports of hobby events across the world. He was invariably courteous, gracious, and witty. His dedication to furthering our hobby in the United Kingdom was impressive. Our condolences to his friends and family; he will be missed. Derek Wilson now assumes the editorials of Cut & Thrust and we assume that it will continue to maintain its normal quality content and policy as an independent forum for game reviews. Issue #66 certainly appears to be cut from the same cloth; among others, Victory Games’ Open Fire is given a long look. For more information on the ‘zine, contact Mr. Wilson (6 Caldbeck Drive, Woodley, Reading RG6 4LA, UK).

Fans of KREMLIN, our satiric look at the Cold War, may be interested in the first world championship for the game to be held at the Essen Toy Fair in Essen, West Germany on 29 October. Using the original Swiss version (it is hosted by the designer, Urs Hostettler), it should bring the best European players together to face each other. For the first prize is a one-way ticket to Moscow from wherever the winner may live. (Actually, according to M. Hostettler, they had some troubles with the Soviets in ordering a one-way ticket, so they will pay one-half the price of a round-trip ticket.) For those who may not be enamored of visiting Moscow in the winter, an alternate first prize is a weekend for two in the Swiss Alps instead. If you think you’ve mastered this game yet, you may want to catch a quick flight to Essen. If not, you can start practicing for next year’s championships.

Contest 141 proved tougher than we’d expected for BRITANNIA players, with the trick of throwing William on an Angle sword overlooked by every respondent but one. To Mark Pasquini of Edmonds, Washington, our congratulations. Many folk had moved the Angles with exacting precision, matching perfectly our preferred positions. And some had even had the Normans grasp the Saxons in mutual death. But everyone else seemed loathe to see the “Conqueror” eliminated simply to insure a tidy victory; only Mr. Pasquini displayed no such weakness.

The Allies could not guarantee a win in Contest 142, but they could be reassured of at least a draw and had a 57% chance of scoring an outright victory—96% were it not for the German’s possession of the Tactical Advantage (which gives him a roll of any unfavorable die or dice roll). Although there are many ways to approach the problem, any that drops the Allied guarantee of at least a draw is not worthy of consideration. For the Allied player in this playing of THUNDER AT CASSINO is assured of gaining at least one Victory Point by simply leaving the tank in Area 19 and reinforcing that area with one other unit, which will insure elimination of the German unit during Close Combat. With control of Area 19 thus assured, it would be wasteful to fire at the doomed German unit therein, so the tank will open the Allied move with a 5:3 attack on Area 31 in hopes of drawing the .0976 chance of a +5 or better DR superiority that would empty Area 31 (and thereby possibly convince the German to use his Tactical Advantage). Even if this attack did vacate Area 31, the Allies could not reach it unless the Germans in Area 19 or 27 were also eliminated—a poor percentage alternative. Similarly, an attack against 27 could do more harm than good if it resulted in a retreat into Area 28. Clearly, the tank’s best usage is this attempt to draw the Tactical Advantage from a foolish German player.

The next step, and the last one for which the order of resolution has any significance, is to place Smoke in Area 27 with the Observer unit—requiring a DR of “5” or more (83%). If the artillery was used to attack Area 27 instead at 9:2, it would require at least a “2” or better DR (a 76% chance) to eliminate the two German units. Merely retreating the German MG in Area 28 would further decrease your chances of gaining control of 29. By smoking Area 29, the Gurkha unit can now move around the MG unit in Area 27 through areas 26 and 28, and into 29—where, with the MG unit from 28, it will have an 83% chance of eliminating the enemy unit in Close Combat and taking control of this area. The 3-3-5 MG must enter 29 not only to increase the Allied Close Combat attack by 16%, but also to insure that a German “6” CC dr doesn’t eliminate the only Allied unit in the area. In summation, this move guarantees at least an Allied draw and will result in an Allied win if the Allied player can avoid both of two DRdr failure possibilities—each a 16.6% likelihood, or a 69% probability. The German Tactical Advantage chit could force one reroll, thus lowering the odds to 57% unless the tank attack can draw an unwary German's advantage.
A CONSULTANT MIGHT CHARGE YOU $2,450 OR MORE FOR THE INFORMATION IN THIS BOOK!

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That's all you're going to pay for this SPECIAL ISSUE of The General.

What makes it "special?"

It should be called the "Best of The General." Because it is 64 pages of the very best articles ever to appear in The General magazine over the past 24 years. This special "Best of The General" issue is a celebration of the 25th anniversary of wargaming's oldest professional magazine (the first 6-issue set now commands over $100 at game convention auctions).

Among the many fine pieces that have graced our pages over the past 24 years range from Craig Taylor's original article on Wooden Ships & Iron Men (Vol.13-No.2) to a recent Squad Leader Clinic (Vol.24-No.1), from a Midway Series Replay (Vol.11-No.3) to Titan Design Notes (Vol.20-No.2); by a famous author (Jerry Pournelle) to infamous (Richard Berg). These "best of the best" are intended to show the great scope and range found in the pages of regular issues of The General, as well as being fun and informative reading for any dedicated wargamer.

Subscribers to The General have found the magazine to be invaluable to their improvement as game players. Move-by-move illustrated replays of many games tell you what not to do before you do it. In-depth analyses give you hints on strategy you must employ to beat your opponents. Convention tournament winners who have accumulated cash prizes and trophies over the past years swear by The General. That's why we say the information in this special issue is worth thousands of dollars to all gamers, beginner and aficionado alike. It's not just another purchase—it's an investment! It's available wherever wargames are sold. If your local dealer doesn't carry it, you may order directly from us. Use the coupon here or call our TOLL FREE number (1-800-638-9292)!

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WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN PLAYING?

Top ten lists are always in vogue—be the subject books, television, shows, movies or even games. The public seems never to tire of seeing how its favorite way of spending their leisure time stacks up against the competition. So, to cater further to your whims (and to satisfy our own curiosity), this is THE GENERAL’s version of the gamer’s top ten. From the responses to this form the editors produce the regular column “So That’s What You’ve Been Playing” found elsewhere in this issue.

We aren’t asking you to subjectively rate any game. That sort of thing is already done in these pages and elsewhere. Instead, we ask that you merely list the three (or fewer) games which you’ve spent the most time playing since you received your last issue of THE GENERAL. With the collation of these responses, we can generate a consensus list of what’s being played by our readership. This list can serve both as a guide for us (for coverage in these pages) and others (convention organizers spring immediately to mind). The degree of correlation between this listing, the Best Sellers Lists, and the RGK should prove extremely interesting.

Feel free to list any game of any sort regardless of manufacturer. There will be, of course, a built-in bias to the survey since the readers all play Avalon Hill games to some extent; but it should be no more prevalent than similar projects undertaken by other periodicals with special-interest based circulation. The amount to which this bias affects the final outcome will be left to the individual’s own discretion.

CONTEST 143

Indicate your actions in the hypothetical situation in the KREMLIN game, in order of action:

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Issue as a whole (Rate from 1 to 10, with “1” equating excellent and “10” terrible).

To be valid for consideration, your contest entry must also include the three best articles, in your view:

1.

2.

3.

Name

Address

City State Zip

50¢

Opponent Wanted

1. Want-ads will be accepted only when printed on this form or a facsimile and must be accompanied by a 50¢ token fee. No refunds. Payment may be made in uncanceled U.S. postage stamps.

2. For Sale, Trade, or Wanted To Buy ads will not be accepted. No refunds.

3. Insert copy on lines provided (25 words maximum) and print name, address, and phone number on the appropriate lines.

4. Please PRINT. If your ad is illegible, it will not be printed.

5. So that as many ads as possible can be printed within our limited space, we request that you use official state and game abbreviations. Don’t list your entire collection, list only those you are most interested in locating opponents for.


Name

Address

City State Zip

The GENERAL
...nuts! Here comes Laimbeer with his great Rebound rating of 29, a Block rating of (gasp) 3, and he's (shudder) minus 3 on Defense!

Jabbar's no dummy! He's obviously studied the latest set of Statis Pro Basketball Player Cards and knows he'll be lucky to get one shot in against Laimbeer. For an investment of just $12, Jabbar got the book on every NBA player. Frankly, we think Jabbar could afford to buy the entire game—only $26 at better game stores around the U.S.

Here's What You Get in Statis Pro Basketball...
You get to coach all of the NBA teams. Which means you can re-create an entire season! We give you individual Player Cards of every NBA player—approximately 12 to 14 per team—the stars and the bench-warmer. Every player has been computer-analyzed so that he should perform just as he did last season. YOU pick the starting lineups...YOU send in the substitutes...YOU call all the plays...YOU call the fast break and full-court press...YOU call the slowdown...in short, YOU do everything an NBA coach has to do.

We have rated every NBA player to display his real abilities in: field goal shooting, free throw shooting, rebounding, fouls, foul drawing, blocking shots, stealing the ball, assists, defense and stamina. The only difference between Statis Pro Basketball and the real thing is that now YOU are in charge. Maybe you're a great coach and don't know it, but you can find out for sure playing Statis Pro Basketball.

Ideal for Solitaire Play...The quick play of the "Fast Action" system ensures you can have just as exciting a game by yourself as with an opponent. You'll find yourself playing two, three or more games in a single evening; that's how exciting the game is.

Slam Dunk With the Pros!
If you're a computer buff, you'll enjoy NBA—the only statistics-based computer game licensed by the National Basketball Association. This game comes with the "20 GREAT TEAMS" disc that lets YOU re-create dream all-star teams using great players past and present. YOUR brilliant play calling is re-enacted by all 10 players on the screen. NBA comes complete for the Apple, IBM and C-64 computers—$39.95 at better computer game stores everywhere.

Season Discs Also Available...Available separately—only $20 (with a $5 rebate coupon)—are season discs that let YOU re-create the latest seasons of your choice.

Solitaire, Head-to-Head or Autoplay...NBA is actually three games in one. You can play against yourself, against a live opponent, or watch the computer play against itself. Small wonder it's the game chosen by the NBA licensing association!

See Statis Pro Basketball and NBA now at your favorite game store. If not available, order directly from us. For quick credit card purchasing, call TOLL FREE 1-800-638-9292.