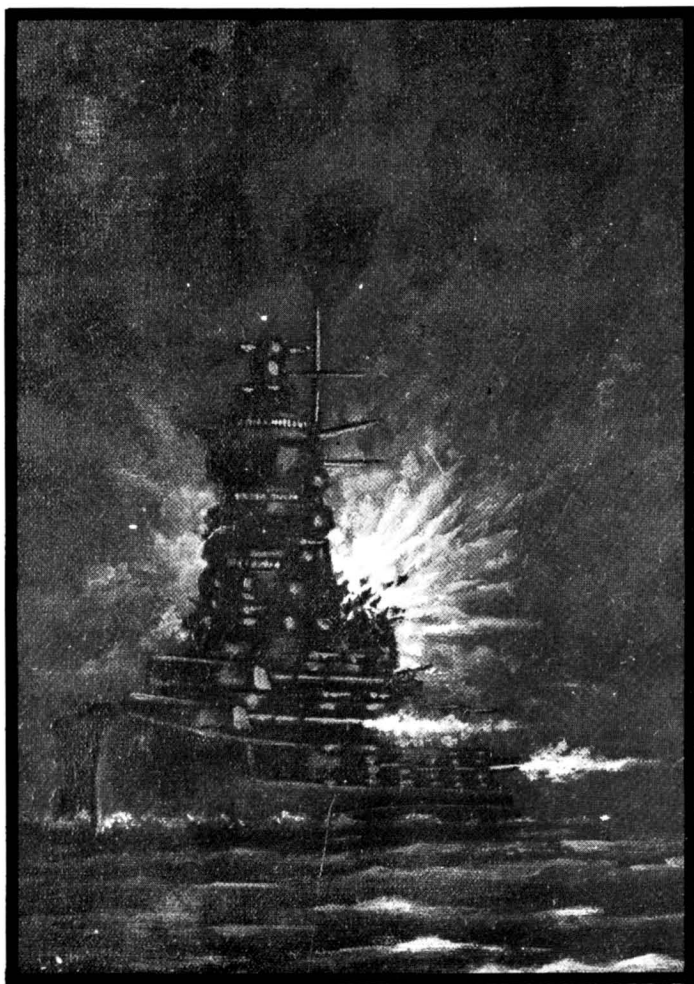# INTERPLAY ™

$1.50

the metagamer dialogues   no.4

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INTERPLAY ™
the metagamer dialogues   no. 4
november...december

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ART CREDITS

WITHIN

This issue's cover shows the fine combat art by Norman Royal from COMMAND AT SEA. We also have the CAS team's design notes and a useful errata for the game.

Aside from the usual TFT stuff, including some Priest & Theologian material, we have a nice long spaceship variant. It will be awhile before Metagaming can offer our future role-playing system. This kind of variant will help S-F buffs wait.

Aside from that there is a nice explaination of how to sell us your game design. You too may join the ranks of those sharing their imagination.

coming distractions...

UNICORN NOTES: As we go to press the Unicorn is still unfound. While no one has cracked all the clues there's been no end of rumors and guessing. Last issue's designer article predicted that many seekers would head out with only a partial grasp of the clues. This seems to be happening with a vengence.

The finder of the Silver Dragon has apparently already made one hunting trip. Calls and comments have so far named at least eight different states, as in "I know it's in Maine and I'm going to go get it". At least four different types of man-made structure have been mentioned as key clues.

One fellow even thought he'd "stumbled" across the Unicorn, or it's horn, near a nuclear power plant. It sounded like he'd found some sort of metal survey marker with a yellow plastic cap. Alas, no Unicorn horn.

There was a rumor on the West coast that the Unicorn had already been found. If that's true the finder has been keeping it secret from Metagaming.

Someone will find the Unicorn. It won't be someone whose gone off half (or sixth) cocked. This hunt is more difficult. Before you hop in the car think through some ways your hunch might be incomplete or differently interpreted.

STAFF NOTE: Kevin Hendryx, designer of FURY OF THE NORSEMEN, recently joined our staff. Kevin had been doing some free lance work for us before joining the staff of TSR Hobbies last year. We're glad to have him and his competence back in Austin. Kevin is a gamer and will be working on manuscripts for us.

NAG! NAG! We're getting reports that many stores still don't have supplies of UNICORN GOLD. There are several reasons for this. They may be late paying bills to their usual suppliers. They may be too indifferent or ignorant to stock a sure customer pleaser. Or, they may not know of the game.

NAG-EM! Tell you store that you want TFT and Metagaming products. If customers keep asking for a product the store will wise-up and order. Or, you can be sure they don't really care about you, the customer.

So, next time you're in the store tell-em about UNICORN and the other new items and why you like them. If you keep nagging the store will get the message. Your clincher arguement is, "I have to buy by mail." There isn't a store owner alive who likes to hear he lost a dollar sale.

NEW STUFF

TRAILBLAZER and MASTER OF THE AMULETS should be hitting the well stocked stores in early November. There will be an ad elsewhere for them.

Amulets is a bit different Microquest. It has no programmed paragraphs. Amulets is based on a map movement scheme with randomized Amulets. No two games will play alike. It was also revised so that encounters are fairly balanced for one to six players.

TRAILBLAZER is a good, solid game fix for those who love S-F games. It may takes days to play a game if you really want to get into it. This is a micro in price only. If you like S-F and hard competition don't miss this.

FIRE WHEN READY is a naval ship combat game. It covers the pre-dreadnought era prior to the launching of the HMS Dreadnought in 1906. It has solitaire, two player and multi-player scenarios. The basic game has two hypothetical battles, Britain vs. France in the mediterranean in 1898 and the Germans vs. Dewey at Manila Bay, plus a solitaire Manila Bay scenario.

Good Gaming,
Howard Thompson

Be A Metagaming Designer

If you have a game you've been fiddling with you just might get it published. Metagaming evaluates a large number of games each year. Most of them are from gamers like you.

This year five of our games are from first time designers. Our view is that gamers who like to game for fun are a good source of new ideas. We can't expect to have all the good ideas with an in house staff. Many of the new concepts come from gamers who put in hours of gaming. Their strong interest in games often leads them to novel, fun design.

Usually, a first time designer should try for a Microgame sized effort. It is easier to begin with a limited package and learn to make that work than starting with a larger concept. We will look at larger efforts. But, we know it's less likely for a first time designer to satisfactorily do a larger game.

Metagaming has a set procedure for evaluating designs. First, it must be submitted with the form reproduced with this article. We only consider games submitted with this form.

The form offers the design to Metagaming. We can not consider a game that is offered simultaneously to others. We need to know that we can acquire games that go through evaluation should the evaluation be positive.

1.) Type rules double-spaced. Include a table of contents. At least a two level numbered paragraph structure will be needed for most of the rules.

2.) Prepare any play map ready for play-testing. Be sure to put an explaination of all map symbols and terrain in the rules.

3.) Prepare play counters ready to play-test. Also, include a count by type of counters, ie a unit manifest. It is also a good idea to include a very brief description of unique creatures, vehicles or such.

4.) Prepare any other components in play testable form.

5.) Prepare a brief description of the game. This be the kind of material you think might help sell the game if used on the back of the box.

6.) It is a good idea to send the game to us by certified mail, return reciept requested. Some mail does get lost.

7.) Include the form.

All game submissions go through an initial screening read. If the game is deemed not of interest at that point you will get it back in three to six weeks. If you don't hear something by then it is good to drop us a card asking about the game. There is always a chance that it was lost in mailing or that it has gotten shuffled to the bottom of a stack somewhere.

A game will be screened out for several general reasons. First, we feel the designer hasn't, done an adequate job of writing the rules, and isn't likely to. Second, we feel the game lacks an interesting theme or play value, making it not a particularly fun game to play. Or, third, we feel the game simply isn't suitable in Metagaming's line or is something we'd be ashamed to have our name on.

If your design is screened out without a playtest it means any future submission will have to be pretty much different in a least one of the areas mentioned in order to be considered.

Games that pass screening will go to play testing. This can take from four to six months. A written evaluation is generated as a basis for Metagaming's decision. You will get a copy.

Our decision based on play test can be one of several.

1.) We may reject the design. This means that even a rewrite would probably not change our opinion.

2.) We may express an interest in the design if it is very heavily revised along the lines suggested in the evaluation. This means you've got a lot of work ahead of you to get a publishable game.

3.) We may accept the design, dependent on a smaller list of revisions to be done to our satisfaction. This means we do like your game but feel it can benefit from another round of changes and improvements. This is a good sign for you. You're most of the way to having a publishable game and we want that extra bit of effort from you to get your best.

4.) We may accept the design and not ask for changes. This usually means you've done a very good job on the game in all respects. Or, it may mean the game is very interesting to us, we think it will give gamers a lot of fun, but we don't think you can complete it. Any changes will be done by Metagaming staff.

FORMAT

MICROGAMES: These need to be stand alone games. Maps may be 2,4 or 6 4X7 inch panels - plan for no more than two colors (including black). Counters are limited to 84 (preffered) or 126 - plan for no more than two colors on counters. Rules should be no more than 4,000 to 8,000 words.

MICROQUESTS: These are unique little adventures based on MELEE and WIZARD, ADVANCED MELEE and WIZARD, or the UNDEREARTH series. These may be programmed or small adventures not in a programmed format. Rules should run 10-16,000 words. Maps should be no more than 2 to 4 4X7 inch panels with no more than two colors. Allow for one 4X7 inch sheet of the strip cut counters usually found with TFT Microquests.

METAGAMES: These also need to be stand alone games. Maps may be 4, 6 or 8 panels at 5 1/2 by 8 1/2 inches per panel. Counters may be 120 or 240 in number. Rules may run 5,000 to 15,000 words. You may consider including another printed component or two.

NOTE: When we speak of map panels and component sizes you can see what we mean from any Microgame, Microquest or Metagame. For example, a Micro map might be 8X14, 8X21 or 14X12.

QUESTIONS

The above is the usual data I give people in seminars at conventions. At this point I get a few questions that usually run as follows.

Q. Does Metagaming ever pay any royalties?

A. No, we don't. We buy a game design outright. This is the only way we can guarantee proper development for a game, especially if sequels are desirable. We've tried royalty arrangements and learned they don't work for us.

Q. Should I copyright my game before sending it in?

A. You can, but it takes some time and money and isn't necessary. You are already protected under pre-publication provisions of the copyright laws.

Q. My idea is so brilliant and new that I don't want to show you my game for fear you'll steal the idea. Can't I just give you an idea of it and then you can tell me how much you'll pay me, it's really neat, honest? (Or words to that effect.)

A. We have to see a complete game. Most ideas we hear about are neat sounding. It's doing a good game that's the hard part.

Q. Do you have any full-time game design staff positions?

A. No. All of our staff have otherfunctions in addition to any game design tasks. Also, you'd have to be someone we'd previously published and knew well to even be considered.

Q. Your form lists a $500 price for a game. Is that for all games, no matter how big?

A. $500 is the minimum we pay. Legally, we have to have a specific number on the form to have an agreement that can protect Metagaming. We've paid up to $1,500 for a Microgame. For a designer we usually pay $500 for his first Micro, $750 for the second and $1,000 for the third. We'd pay up to $2,500 for a Metagame, though $750 to $1,500 is more realistic for a Meta.

The better the game is the more we pay. If it is a sequel or in

some way dependent on another game, like a Microquest or TFT supplement it is worth a bit less - the hard part of rules has already been done.

Count on $500. It may go up from there depending on your writing skill and the game.

Q. I want to make a living from designing games. How hard is that to do?

A. Very hard in adventure gaming. Only a few companies pay much more than Metagaming. Some pay what seem to be large royalties. In the long run these royalties don't add up to many dollars and/or that company is weak because they overpay designers. There is a limit to what our small industry can pay for designs. The 'out-of-business' rate is high.

Q. Where is the Unicorn hidden?

A. No Comment.

I am submitting my game design titled   .
This form explains the conditions under which Metagaming agrees to examine and evaluate your game. We can not evaluate your game unless you agree to these conditions, in consideration for evaluation:

1. Metagaming will not receive any submitted material in confidence, and we will not establish a confidential relationship with you in respect to such materials.

2. You must suppy to us a complete game suitable for evalution including rules, playing map and play counters.

3. Metagaming will evaluate the game and inform you of the results of the evaluation.

4. If, at Metagaming's sole discretion, Metagaming wishes after evaluation to purchase the game, you will sell all rights, title, interest, including copyright and trademark rights to the game for Five Hundred Dollars ($500.00).

5. You must not concurrently submit this game for any purpose to any other manufacturer or publisher.

6. You must be willing to make any design and editorial changes specified by Metagaming including modification of rules, playing map and play counters.

7. If Metagaming does not purchase your game, we will return all materials provided by you within six (6) months of receipt.

8. Metagaming has the right, if we purchase the game, to modify it in any way we wish.

9. You must own all rights to the submitted materials and you must not have done any act inconsistent with selling all rights in the game to Metagaming.

10. You must be willing to prepare a magazine article about your game for Metagaming if we accept your game for publication. The article will be submitted to Metagaming no later than four months from the date of the game's acceptance for publication.

In return for the agreement by Metagaming to consider my game design, I agree to the conditions contained in this form.

Name

Address

DO NOT SIGN UNLESS YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS AGREEMENT

tft contest...

FIRST PLACE MONSTER ($10.00)

NARCOPHAGRASS
ST 0-limitless Damage due to
               toxic gases
DX 0 IQ 0 MA 0

Narcophagrass are small grass-like plants that exude a toxic narcotic mist. It obscures all sense of direction for travellers. Neither stars nor sun position can be determined through the mist.

The mist saps 1 ST point each turn for those in the mist a turn AND who fail a 4 die vs ST roll. Humanoids must roll 5 dice vs IQ, animals roll 3 dice and those with Woodsman Talent 4 dice to keep moving in the desired direction. A failed roll means random, perhaps desired, movement. Fantasy Masters may decide on larger meadow size and travel speed.

Use a WIZARD map fora standard meadow. Movement is from megahex to megahex each turn for standard 5 second turns. Some fields may be enlarged so as to occupy 1 or more hexes on the BIG adventure board. Modify ST loss, travel time, and distance moved per turn.

HISTORY: Narcophagrass is found all over Cidri, specifically in acidic swamp soil deficient in nitrates and phosphates. Animals wandering into narcophagrass fields become disoriented and wander until they collapse and die or escape. Bodies are digested by the plants for essential nutrients and chemicals. The grass is indistinguishable from normal grass (5 dice vs IQ for a Naturalist; 4 dice vs IQ for the Expert) and is inedible.
Paul Wagner

SECOND PLACE MONSTER ($5.00)

KLICKERS
ST 1 (see magic modifications)
DX 6
IQ 0 1-2D damage regular combat
MA 6 1+1 HTH   Armor = 7 hits

Klickers, named for movement noise, are huge T 4 bacteriophages which eat life forms. Coiled within the latern-like head is a single strand of DNA-dependent RNA polymerase which serves the Klicker as a kind of brain and in its one function--to reproduce.

To "hunt" prey they rely on numbers--always in groups of 12 or more--and have some form of chemotropism, vibrotropism, and kinetotropism. Klickers strike without DX adjustments through fire, shadow, mist, darkness, cold, etc.

Klickers cannot sense images or illusions. They are unaffected by spells, except those that do physical damage. The best way to envisualize what will affect a klicker is to imagine it as a large rock rolling toward you. A "stop" spell will not stop it, a "slow" spell will not slow it, a "freeze" spell will not freeze it, and a "death" spell will not kill it (how does one "kill" a rock?). Klickers cannot slip and fall (because of multiple legs) and are unaffected by sticky floors. The legs of the klicker end in needle-sharp points.

Klicker legs are hollow, serving as giant hypodermic needles through which the klicker injects its "brain" into any victim luckless enough to be struck and damaged by klicker. There is no saving roll, this is not poison but genetic material. Victims go unconscious, their metabolic processes subverted into producing klicker components--head, neck, baseplate, and legs. During the next 60 turns 3 klickers will grow

from the victim's body (six klickers from a 2-hex creature, etc.) After the 30th turn of growth immature klickers may be attacked via normal klicker statistics and cannot strike back.

The klicker has 7 Armor points due to its tough body shell protein. Any hit which cracks this armor will in turn spill out the klicker's genetic material--i.e., it loses its "brain"--and that "kills" it. Treat it as a fallen body. Being slow and predictable attacks on klickers are at +4 DX.

HISTORY: Klickers inhabit the Valley of Mog. High valley walls have nearly prevented their proliferation outside. Klickers can live in all kinds of climate, even vacuum. Klickers will not enter is water. They live indefinitely without food.

Klickers remain motionless until prey is sensed. Then they move "en mass" in the appropriate direction. They follow prey until they lose sense of it, at approximately 40 megahexes distance.

Klickers are a murky, translucent yellow color.
Paul Wagner
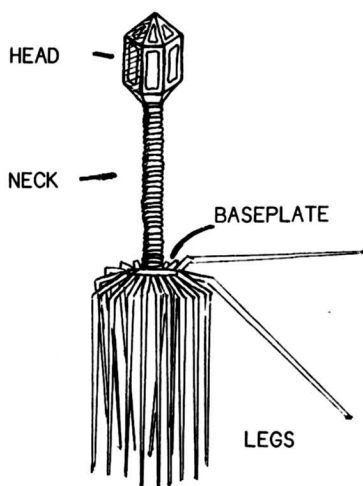
A TYPICAL KLICKER

2-2.5 METERS TALL

FIRST PLACE SPELL ($10.00)

IQ: 15 CONTROL MISSILE (T): Similar to reverse missiles except that the person with this spell on them may have any missile or thrown weapon, or missile spell that hit them to either

a) return to the sender as in reverse missiles, or

b) have them go to different targets.

If the latter then the wizard must make a DX roll to hit the new target Cost: 3, plus 1 per turn maintained.
Joe Karwan

SECOND PLACE SPELL ($5.00)

IQ 11 SPELL COMBUSTION (T): causes any 1-hex plant or animal to burst into magical flame. This flame will burn or damage all who come in contact with it (according to standard 1-hex fire rules) but does not damage the being it was cast upon!

A very effective spell for the wizard or warrior attacked by slimes or for anyone caught in a multiple HTH battle.

Costs 2 ST to cast, 1 each turn it is maintained.
Paul Wagner

CONTEST NOTE

We will continue the contest in most upcoming issues. Those that need details see INTERPLAY #3. There are Talent and other categories that were not awarded this time due to insufficient entries.

ALL ENTRIES will be kept on file for judging in future issues. You may not win this time in a close call but win later. RH

features:

tft...

CROSSROADS: CIDRI

by Kevin Hendryx

This installment of CROSSROADS marks my first as Metagaming's TFT Editor, Product Development Manager, and general jack-of-many-trades (one of the benefits of working for a small business being the opportunity to wear several hats, and often at he same time!). Though I anticipate lending a hand to many different projects and products over the coming months, my immediate responsibilities will be the coordinating and developing of a "new wave" of TFT material.

Not to imply that the TFT system is undergoing any sort of traumatic upheaval, of course, though some necessary revisions are in the making; rather, the time has come for TFT to receive the more-or-less full-time, first-hand attention it has frequently been lacking. As Howard Thompson can attest, another "benefit" (or more accurately, byproduct) of working for a small business, even your own, it that occasionally you're wearing so many hats you can't remember which one is on top at any given moment. Metagaming has progressed past the point where one individual could keep on top of every new direction or detail. A resident editor is supposed to alleviate some of these distractions. This expansion of Metagaming's staff should result in more and better products being released by Metagaming in the future. In particular, there will soon be significant additions to TFT line of games – in the pipelines are new Microquests, new Adventure Supplements, more material aimed at satisfying the needs of the Fantasy Master, and possible rules for naval and army combat. Let us know your wants – gamer feedback is important to us.

Finally, it will be noticed that the name of this column – which will hopefully become a regular feature of INTERPLAY – has remained unchanged. This is to emphasize the essential continuity that is a part of the TFT system. TFT has now reached the point where its future as a game does not depend on any one designer or editor. Many peoply have played part in its history up to this point, each making a greater or lesser contribution, and this process must inevitably continue. Likewise, it is my hope that the CROSSROADS column will serve as another forum for individual expression by those who wish to air their views on TFT or other gaming concerns. (Note: this is not intended to be another outlet for TFT variants – these should be directed, as in the past, to the INTERPLAY editor.) I would like to see CROSSROADS emcompass such things as advice for FMs on how to expand or improve their compaigns, hints on how to be a better TFT player, observations on the current TFT state-of-the-art, the future of TFT, and other such related topics. I encourage those who have written on or for TFT or Metagaming in the past to consider doing some installments of CROSSROADS, and I likewise invite submissions from the rest of the gaming community. I will review all articles submitted to CROSSROADS and forward those deserving of publication to the INTERPLAY editor, who must make the final decision. Please mark such submissions to my attention, c/o INTERPLAY/Metagaming.

In closing, let me say that I am looking forward, to working again for Metagaming after what has been an overly-long hiatus. Good Gaming indeed.

GLIMPSES THROUGH A MURKY CRYSTAL BALL

by William D. Gustafson

Greetings and salutations. As you have probably noticed in the pages of INTERPLAY, there are some shuffling of people who are doing things for TFT. It looks like I will do the second edition for the ITL rulebooks.

The first book to be produced will probably be a book of monsters. So any of you who have come up with new nasties, new races, and new other things should be submitting them. When you do submit them, put them on seperate sheets with the following information:

Your name. (so we can credit you)

Where you got the monster. (so we can head off copyright problems)

What is the value or range of ST, DX and IQ.

What is its MA and can it fly, swim or burrow?

What is its natural armor (don't overdo it)

What size is it:
weak nuisance (rat)
clumsy nuisance (slime)
tiny (house cat, dragonette, - DX to hit)
small (up to goblin sized)
normal (human)
large (lizardite)
multihex (how many and what shape)

Basic description (what does it look like, sound, smell)

Specials

What would a summon spell be for this creature?

For races:

Specify ranges for ST, DX and IQ, also give range for total attributes (usually just minimum). Include in description any cultural info appropriate.

NOTE: Lets not keep seeing these super powerful races that are showing up in magazines. Also, design the race from the view of a refree (FM) for use by players.

In future installments I will give some specifications for spells/items and other things. The new books will be supplying all these pieces of information so that the refree will not have to guess them.

I am also planning on passing sections of the new rules through the magazine so that everyone can see where things are going, and also be able to point out problems, mistakes, and make suggestions.

Not that I am going to create a new set of rules, rather I see my job as finding loose ends and nailing them down as well as integrating your inputs.

---

unofficial tft variant...

EXPANDED PRIEST AND THEOLOGIAN TALENTS FOR IN THE LABYRINTH

by Paul Manz

A conversation overheard in The Running Rock.

Father Green: Barkeep, the sign on the wall says that Sumarc Enterprises is looking; for adventurers. Could you possibly direct me to that organization?

Bartender: Sure Father, see those two dwarves sitting with that human at the center table? The human's name is Lobo. You'll want to talk to him.

Father Green: Thank you kind sir...err - I mean dwarf...

Father green walks over to the table with a glass of wine in hand.

Father Green: Excuse me, which one of you is Lobo?

Lobo: Moi, mon ami..What can I do for you?

Father Green: The sign on the wall says you're looking for adventurers.

Lobo: Oui, but what could a priest do down in a a dungeon?

Father Green: I might be able to affect a die roll or two if the fantasy master lets me.

Lobo: I'm sorry, that's too unreliable. I can't use you...

Have you never played a priest because it was a waste of two IQ points? Because you never get a chance to go adventuring? Now your worries are over, the priest and theologian talents have been expanded.

The IQ costs for both these talents remain the same. Once a player chooses the priest talent, he must select a religion to follow. Five different religions are listed below, though others may be thought up.

The first religion is Christian. They are exactly like those of the Roman Catholic church in the 1300's. Christian priests have one cure light wounds spell per day at no extra IQ cost. Christian theologians have an extra cure light wounds spell per day and the Bless spell at no extra IQ cost.

The second are the Stygians. The Stygian worship the great snake god — Set. They are a mystic cult that deal with the darker magical arts similar to those found in Conan. Stygian priests have one cure light wounds per day at no extra IQ cost. Stygian theologians who already know the Staff or Staff of Power spell may know the Staff to Snake spell at no extra IQ cost.

The third are the Torenstines. the Torenstines are a military "Christian" religion who believe that they can rid the world of evil by the edge of a sword. Torenstine priests have one cure light wounds spell per day at no extra IQ cost. Torenstine theologians have the priest abilities as well as one cure serious wounds spell per day at no extra IQ cost.

The fourth are the Tanzaurins. The Tanzaurins are demon worshippers. They are hated by most other religions including the Stygians. Tanzaurin priests have one cure light wounds spell per day at no extra IQ cost. Tanzaurin theologians can try to invoke the wrath of god. After five turns of uninterupted concentration, the theologian rolls three dice. On a roll of 4, a lesser demon appears. On a roll of 3, a greater demon appears. These demons will remain for six turns to do the commands of the theolgian at no ST cost. For a wish to be granted, a battle of will must still be fought.

The last religion is the Terrestal. The Terrestals are elemental worshippers. A Terrestal must choose whether to worship the Air, Earth, Water, or Fire. Terrestal priests have one cure light wounds spell per day at no extra IQ cost. Terrestal theologians may know the Control Elemental spell at no IQ cost. If an elemental of the right type meets a Terrestal it will always have a good reaction. Therefore, it might be advantageous to know the Calling spell so the theologian can summon an elemental.

The cure light wounds, cure serious wounds, and bless spells are listed below.

CURE LIGHT WOUNDS: (S) The cure light wounds spell is used to cure physical damage on oneself or someone else. When used, the caster rolls one six-sided die. The number rolled, is the number of hits that are cured. ST cost: zero.

CURE SERIOUS WOUNDS: (S) The cure serious wounds spell is used to cure physical damage on oneself or someone else. When used, the caster rolls two six-sided dice. The number rolled, is the nuber of hits that are cured. ST cost: zero.

BLESS: (S) The Bless spell affects one hex. When cast on a figure, it can affect the die roll made by that figure during the figure's next course of action. At that time, it can add or subtract one from a single dice roll. ST cost: 2 ST.

Example: A fighter normally needs a 12 or less to hit an opponent. If blessed he would only need a 13 or less.
Cure light or serious wounds can only be used if the caster is conscious (i.e. the caster has a current ST of 2 or more).

These new expanded talents give priests and theolgians a new flavor. Fantasy masters may wish to think up new religions and give them their own special characteristics. Thanks to Dave Wuethrich and the Union Fantasy Gamers Association for the comments and playtesting. Good Gaming!

tft: questions & answers...

by Ron Hopkins

Q. Is it possible for a non-wizard thief to detect a blast trap (set on a door, for example, by the Blast Trap spell)?
-Anthony Affrunti
A. No. Detect Magic would tell a wizard that the item had a spell upon it, while Reveal Magic, Spellsniffer, and Detect Enemies would identify the spell as a blast trap.

Q. Is lightning the only thing that can destroy a wall created by the Create Wall spell?
-Anthony Affrunti
A. A created wall can also be removed using the Destroy Creation or Open Tunnel spell.

Q. In the codex, a question concerning the two-weapons talent is not answered clearly. Simply, can a ST12 character with the two-weapons talen and the fencing talent apply both talents in an attack if he is using two broadswords (as opposed to two rapiers)?
-Anthony Affrunti
A. Yes, he can use any one-handed sword.

Q. Also concerning the two-weapons talent: I know you can hit with your normanl DX for the first attack, and at DX -4 for the second, but are there any DX adjustments if you parry, or is that automatic for those with this talent.
-Anthony Affrunti
A. No, DX adjustments for parrying.

Q. In ADVANCED MELEE (flying targets, p. 15) it states that the DX- for missile/thrown weapons/spells is -1DX for each three meters of vertical distance. Elsewhere (cliffs, walls, etc., p.19) it states that

you should treat a hooked grapnel as a thrown weapon at -1DX for every one meter up. Which is the correct DX- for throwing something a vertical distance?
-Anthony Affrunti
   A. The DX adjustments on p.15 should apply only to missile weapons and spells. Grapnels, thrown weapons, and thrown spells are attempted at -1DX per verticle meter of distance.

   Q. If the players are unemployed and are living at an inn, do they have to pay rent to the innkeeper in addition to normal living expenses?
-Peter Caron
   A. No, living expenses cover food, shelter, and miscellaneous items.

   Q. Will a reverse missiles ring affect thrown weapons?
-Mike Collins
A. Yes.

   Q. Can you make illusions of inanimate objects, like a sword or door?
-Mike Collins
A. Yes.

   Q. In DEATH TEST 2 it said you can't wear that guy's iron/stone flesh belt around your armor. Why did you ay you could in the 1st INTERPLAY?
-Judd Price
   A. According to ADVANCED WIZARD, p.14, a Stone or Iron flesh spell is cumulative with armor, but not with another Stone/Iron flesh spell. The magic item in DEATH TEST 2 was also enchanted with a limiting spell (AW, p.33) in addition to the Iron flesh, Sleep and Freeze immunity enchantments. The condition attached to the limiting spell was that none of the enchantments would work is the user was wearing armor. Otherwise, the object would have functioned regardless of the presence of any armor. If that limiting spell was removed, the belt would work under all conditions.

unofficial tft variant...

This article outlines a set of variant rules which transform TFT from a medieval to a futuristic space-travelling setting. The author lists some new talents, jobs, and describes a spaceship in detail. He states that this is just a sketchy outline of a fully developed system which is fully compatible with TFT.

None of the TFT mechanics have been altered, as far as I can tell.

I think this compares favorably to similar material currently on the market.

It must be stressed that this article is not official and is not meant to be compatible with Metagaming's upcoming STARLEADER S.F.R.P.G.

R.H.

MARTIAN VANGUARD CLASS MRAV

by Chad Brandt

A project of several people in our wargaming group has resulted in a Science-Fiction role playing game fully compatible with ITL:TFT.

This game includes:
  new talents
  rules for robots and androids
  a new job table
  psychic talents
  starship construction, pro-
    pulsion systems, and pricing
  rules for interplanetary and
    interstellar (warp) travel
  starship combat system
  rules for automatic weapons
  various ST weapons and armor,
    including personal energy
    sheilding
  alien race development system

We have play-tested this game to a degree and feel that it is far superior to other SF-RPGs.

As a sample we are sending "Martian Vanguard", intended as an article for INTERPLAY. This has a section of our job table, lists a few sample talents, and shows a basic type of space vehicle that may be used in a programmed adventure. Note that the "Martian Vanguard" is not intended to be a programmed adventure but an introduction to our system entailing only sample and introductory material.

A great deal of people in our area are anxiously awaiting a game such as the one we have here to go on the market. With the popularity of Metagaming's TFT:ITL, it is logical to assume that a game such as this would be a fast-selling, hot item in the wargamer's world.

"Sir, sensors detect four unidentified spacecraft, bearing four-six point zero-one by zero-five. ECM co-ordinator indicates that they have not yet detected us."

"Thank you very much, Lieutenant. Sound General Quarters. Bring all combat systems to operational status and arm all warheads," replied the Captain.

Major Gray Atkinson of the the fourth MRAV (Multi-Role Attack Vessel) squadron tensed in his couch. These ships were probably the Network terrorists that had been wrecking havoc on the commercial traffic in this cube for the past month. Maybe, finally, a Federal vessel will be able to end the needless violence that these terrorists have been instigating.

"Sir, deflectors activated. Ion gas field is at seventy-five percent expansion. According to our instruments, that's about all we're going to get out of it."

"Damn," Major Atkinson thought out loud. His ship, the Cygnus Vanguard, had seen combat in the Network skirmish off of Titan. In that battle, his ion field had been damaged. 75% effectiveness might not be enough to stop the Network missiles.

"Sir, they are tracking us," the Electronic Warfare Officer stated. "Scanners have confirmed two vessels of the type encountered by the collier S.S. **Agile Voyager** out of Antarctica

two weeks ago. Anti-ECM indicates the other two vessels are unmanned drones disguised as larger ships."

"Prepare to intercept. Have they idenified us as a Fed' yet?"

"No, sir."

This was good. the Cygnus was eminating signal of a merchant ship of the same type as the Agile Voyager. On sensors or scanners it would appear as only a commercial ship, instead of the lethal war craft it actually was.

"Sir, they've detected our defenses. They're going to run."

"Go to max acceleration. Fire a warning shot." The Major knew that Network vessels were only capable of 5 g acceleration. The Cygnus, with its high-pressure fusion reactors could pull up to six. Slowly but surely, it gained on its adversary.

The lead Network ship turned about and brought its laser turrets to bear several shots were fired, but these were absorbed by the deflectors. The other fired two missiles. One missile was picked off by the Cygnus' forward dorsal particle turret. The other could not be hit, for the rest of the turrets had already been locked on to the enemy vessels. Now the faulty ion field would be put to test. The missile entered the outer limits of the field, and immediately the ions began to react with it, corroding its hull. The friction of the field began to also take effect, and eventually the missile had disintegrated befor it could reach the Cygnus.

The Network vessels were no match for the smaller but more powerful Cygnus. Within seconds they were in shambles from particle weapon hits, and another cube sector had been made safe from the radical terrorists.

The Cygnus Vanguard is a Martian Vanguard class Multi-role Attack Vessel. It falls under the Offensive Command of the United Star System Federation. Initially it is armed with five medium paricle turrets, and is capable of engaging from one to five targets at a time. It also capable of carrying an assortment of weapon and stores in two weapon bays. In this case, the Cyngus is carrying an array of sophisticated electronic counter measures (ECM).

The Captain of the vessel is Major Gray Atkinson, Executive officer Captain Bruce Carter. Both are natives of Sol-Earth. Ship's complement is thirty-one.

The ship is about the size of a Boeing 747 and is capable of landing in planets with atmospheres that are dense enough to support its airfoils. It lands and takes off like a airplane. It is powered by high-powered fusion engines which are fueled by deuterium, and are capable of bringing the ship to 6 g acceleration.

The Ship's defenses consist of deflectors, highly sensitive sensorand scanners, and an ion gas field. The ion gas field is a gas contained aboard the ship. In a combat situation, the gas is

passed through a section of the engine compartment and heated to the point of ionization, giving it a negative charge. The ship has a powerful positive source on board which controls the gas field's concentration and size. This results in a very large artificial atmosphere around the vessel. It counters incoming missiles by 1) Reacting with the shell of the missile, and 2) burning up the missile with friction. This may sound a little far fetched, but it is quite plausible and possible, provided you have enough power to maintain a field of this immense size. The fusion reactors aboard the Cygnus provide more than enough energy. The ship is teflon-coated to keep from reacting with its own ion field.

The Martian Vanguard MRAV's have no warp capability. Being small ships, they take advantage of warp platforms for star travel. Endurance is one month, shipboard time. Acceleration for cruising usually never exceeds one g. Combat situations are times when acceleration mau exceed six g's. The Ship cruisees in free fall on typical patrol and convoy missions.

The ship was designed for maximum practicality, but crew comfort was not neglected. The reason that the hallways are perpendicular to the direction of movement is that this ship was designed for freefall in the majority of its mission. There are handholds for movement within the ;ship during periods of acceleration, but everyone is expected to stay put during this time, and no one should have any reason to move during general quarters. Food is stored in two food service centers, and there is a varied selection. It is heated by microwaves and served in squeeze tubes (One of the drawbacks of eating in free fall). The lounge doubles as an aid station and surgical room.

Entertainment is provided by a large color viewscreen linked to the computer with a terminal. Various video games are provided or can be programmed in. The ship can pick up interplanetary broadcasts when conditions allow, and a variety of movies and productions are stored aboard. Also provided are periodicals and weight machine.

There are four pressure suits of the "one-size-fits-all" type in addition to the suit which each crewman has issued to him. Pressure suits are worn at all times by on-duty personnel. The ship operates in three shifts.

There are certain modifications for certian personnel. Gunners, for instance, are always on duty. Their couches and essentials are kept in their turrets. They are expected to maintain the turrets and their proficiency, but are only on call during general quarters. Thus, gunners get a great deal of free time, but are also expected to get a specified amount of rest so that they will be alert when an emergency arises. There is one pilot on duty at all times. The Chief Pilot is also the second officer, and takes command during his shift. Pilots double as scanner operators.

There is one navigator on duty at all times, and they double as sensor operators and electronic warfare officers. Including the Chief Engineer, the ship has six engineers, five of them enlisted men, the Chief usually being an officer. During a regular shift ther is one engineer in the bridge and one in the engine room. During general quarters, two more go to the engine room, usually those who were on the shift before last. Engineer crews rotate who goes on the bridge during their shifts. Engineers sometimes double as general technicians.

There is a medical officer on duty only when he is needed, and two frame and hull technicians on duty as needed. There is a Firing System officer and a Defense Systems Officer who are on duty much the same as the gunners. There is also a Computer specialist on duty as needed. There is a communications officer on duty at all times, and a cargo specialist who may be anything,

depending on what the cargo/ordnance is. Finally there is a Crew Chief on duty as needed. The Crew Chief is usually the senior enlisted man, and knows the ship like the back of his hand.

The Crew chief of the ship is an extremely important person. He supervises the loading and unloading of cargo. He is responsible for enlisted morale. If necessary, he could probably take command of the ship. There is any number of positions that the Crew Chief may have held as a subordinate before becoming a Crew Chief, but most were gunners or engineers. No matter what they were before, they will usually be able to function in their former capacity.

The crew is as follows:
1 Commanding Officer
1 Executive Officer
1 Chief Pilot/Second Officer
2 Pilots (officers)
3 Navigators/EWO's (officers)
3 Communications Specialists
   (usually officers)
1 Firing Systems Officer
1 Defensive Systems Officer
1 Medical Officer
1 Medical Assistant (usually
   enlisted)
5 Gunners (enlisted)
6 Engineers (one officer, five
   enlisted)
2 Frame Technicians (enlisted)
1 Computer Specialist
   (enlisted)
1 Cargo/Ordnance Specialist
   (usually officer)
1 Crew Chief (enlisted)

Total crew 16 officers and 15 enlisted: 31

Quartering aboard the ship removes sex as a factor. Crew members are expected to maintain a degree of self control, and this is aided through psychological conditioning that is geared toward restraining emotions during times of stress, such as voyages of extended duration or general qarters alert. When possible, crews are integrated without any bias toward race, religion or sex. The United Star System Federation tries to maintain a high degree of moral fiber and dedication to duty in their crews. Many ship pilots are women, for various reasons, such as reaction time, etc., whereas many fighter pilots are men because of reaction to stressful situations and basic "killer instinct". The vast majority of the personnel in the Federal Armed Forces are male simply because more males are attracted to and sign up for military service than females.

This article has a basic purpose: to introduce the beginning of a system compatible to the fantasy role playing system in Metagaming's THE FANTASY TRIP on the science-fiction/space fantasy level. At this writing, Metagaming is working on a system such as this called STARLEADER, but it has not been published yet.

We will start with a typical character; Major Atkinson.

A character begins with ST=8, DX=8, and IQ=9, and 8 points to distribute. The extra IQ point is optional, and it takes into consideration the cheap or free education available to a modern society. In this case, the extra point is almost alway taken up by literacy. You would be in trouble in this type of world if you could not read or write!

Major Atkinson began as a beginning character with the following attributes and TFT talents:

ST=10	Literacy
DX=10	Charisma
IQ=13	Alertness
	Diplomacy

In addition to these talents, Atkinson had the following SF game talents:

Pilot (2) The ability to operate a flying vehicle of atmospheric type, from your own homeworld. To operate alien air vehicles, you must make a saving roll against IQ set by the Game Master. Failure means crashing, as you would have to operate the vehicle to attempt to figure how it is controlled. Crashing is (1) damage for every 10 mph (16 km/h) you are going at time of impact. Same saving role is required to

try and save yourself in a belly landing. In the presense of a instructor these saving rolls are un-necessary. To become a pilot requires about ten hours of instruction, at about 20 to 50 credits an hour. (IQ 11)

Sidearms (2) Here we have taken the GUNS talent and broken it down into two seperate talents: Sidearms and Shoulderarms is the ability to use various sidearms (pistols) from the gas-action to energy categories. (IQ 8)

Driver (1) The ability to operate a motor vehicle. This usually connotates possession of a valid operator's permit, which costs about 10 credits and must be renewed every four years. (IQ 9)

As you can see, there are a great deal of talents that I haven't mentioned yet. Some others include Engineer, which advances in levels, and advancing levels in the Computer, Mechanic, and Technician Talents.

In the SF game we call a Physiker a medic, and a Master Physiker a Doctor. For several internal injury and illness such as heart disease, cancer, etc., ther is a surgeon talent. Need-less to say, on a table such as the one above, a surgeon would rake in the credits.

Atkinson becomes a pilot. He works his way through a civilian career, adventuring in his spare time. Then he joins the military, works his way up through the ranks, and is eventually in command of his own (though small) vessel.

Let's take a look at the internal layout:

a) The bridge, 2 MH in size. On a typical shift the control crew consists of a command officer (unless the Chief Pilot is the pilot on duty), a communications officer, a pilot, a navigator, and engineer, and two empty stations, the Firing Systems Officer's and Defense

Now he had to find a job, so we go to our table of jobs;

JOB:	REQUIREMENTS:	PAY:	RISK:
Unskilled/etc.	None	25	3/18
Spacecrew	Spacemanship	30	4/17
Laborer	None	10	3/18
Artisan	Literacy	\ 2 X IQ	3/18
Weaponsmith	Weaponsmith	100	3/18
Mechanic	Mechanic	100	3/18
Electrician	Electrician	100	3/18
Plumber	Plumber	100	3/18
Technician	Technician	150	3/18
Computer Operator	Computers	75	3/18
Merchant	Business sense/Assess value	75	3/18
Teacher	Scholar + talent to be taught	50	3/18
Professor	Scholar, IQ 16+	100	3/18
Scientist	Scientist	175	4/17
Priest	Priest, Charisma	25	3/18
High Priest	Above, plus Theoligian, Business Sense, Detection of lies.	150	3/18
Animal Handler/ trainer	Animal handler; Alien Followers; Vet	100	4/17
Actor	Bard; Charisma; Sex Appeal, etc.	15 X # of talents	3/18
Pilot	Pilot	100	4/17
Senior Pilot	Senior Pilot	150	4/17

Systems Officer's stations. It is a collage of complicated equipment, CRTs, warning lights, and scanner and sensor screens. The viewpoints look out and give a good all around (except 180 degree) view. At the rear of the bridge is a locker with a first aid kit, a signal flare (four + four is used as a weapon) and an inflatable rubber raft that inflates when the key on the CO_2 capsule us pulled. The raft can hold six people, no more. Also are emergency rations (enough for six people for a week) a crowbar, and a crash (small) axe.

MAP KEY

Bulkheads

Light Door (ST30)

Heavy Mechanical Door (ST150)

Particle Turret

Engine Compartment

Access Panel

One-Hex Hallway

Hatch Down (ST 100)

Hatch Up (ST 100)

CANARD (P/S)

port wing

stbd. wg.
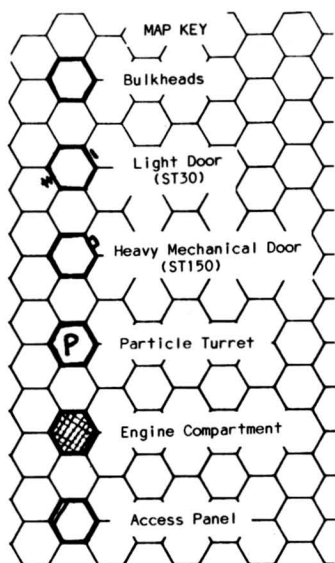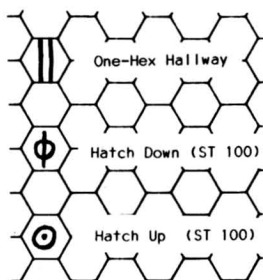
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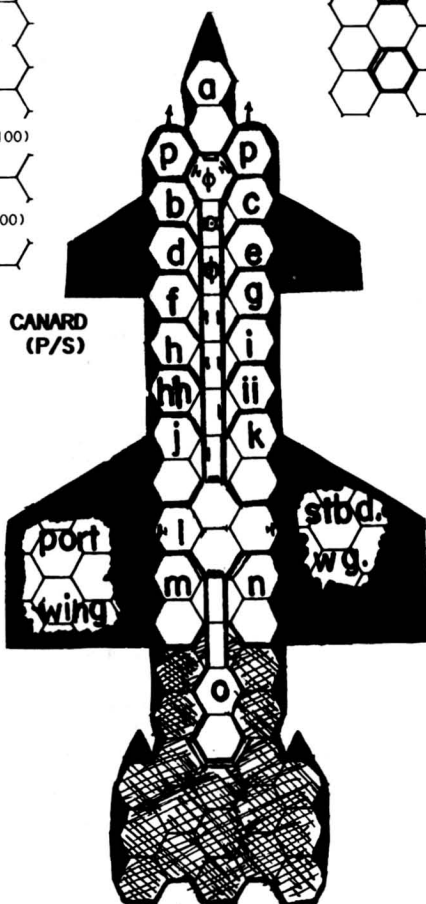
MAIN DECK

HIGH DECK

b) Commanding Officer's room. There is a locker, a flip-out wall desk with a computer terminal, and an acceleration couch on tracks; it can be used as a desk chair and folds out into a bed for sleeping. Also, on the arm of the couch is a command intercom.

c) Executive Officer's room. Same as the CO's.

d) Chief Pilot's and Chief Engineer's room. A cramped cabin with twin berths, which fold into acceleration couches, and two lockers.

e) Firing and Defensive Systems Officers' cabin. Same as above.

f) Medical Officer and Cargo Specialist's cabin. Same as above.

g) Navigator and Pilot's cabin. They share this cabin because they have the same shift.

h) 3 Communications Officers cabin. Crowded, with three fold-out berth/couches and three lockers. These are usually the junior officers on the ship.

i) Three in this cabin, also. With a pilot and two navigators, it has the same layout as above.

hh) Bath and facilities for five.

ii) Same as above.

j) Enlisted quarters for the five engineers.

k) Enlisted quarters for the Medical Assistant, Computer Specialist, Crew Chief, and the two Frame Techs.

l) This is the lounge. On the port forward wall is the viewscreen and a computer terminal. On the opposite wall is a weight machine that folds out and has three stations. On the rear port and starboard bulkheads are food service terminals and access panels to the machinery. On either side directly over the wing are emergency escape hatches. Below each hatch is a locker exactly like the one on the Bridge. On the ceiling is a surgical light. There is a locker containing various surgical equipment designed specifically for zero-g surgery, as the lounge doubles as an aid station during

emergencies.

m) Food service center storage locker. The machinery in here is accessable via access panels.

n) same as above.

o) Engineering. On a typical duty shift there will be one Engineer in here, and he'll probably be reading a magazine or doing some similar activity to pass the time away. During general quarters there will be three Engineers in here paying strict attention to the readouts. The Engine room is a cacophany of guages, both digital and meter-type, pipes, wires, and control panels with CRTs and keyboards; in some respects it resembles a bridge with no windows. Engineering can be sealed off by the radiation shield hatch to prevent contamination of the rest of the vessel in an emergency. There is a locker with a first aid kit, and another locker with a variety of equipment and machinery necessary to repair and maintain the fusion engines.

p) This is a medium particle turret. All turrets are fully independant of each other, and have their own fire control computers. The central firing systems computer co-ordinates the turrets so that they do not need-lessly lock on to the same targets. The turrets are heavily armored. They are also jet-tisonable. In the turret is the snug but not uncomfortable gunner's section. There is a couch and a locker beneath it, and no more. If you have claustrophobia, don't become a gunner.

q) Weapon bay. Almost anything can be carried here. Missiles, bombs, and Electronic Warfare components are the most common. Also sensitive scanners and sensors, or just plain cargo. A different specialist accompanies each load.

Author's note on sensors and scanners:

Sensors work on the theory that every object in space has a given electromagnetic field. Each gives off a sound on a speaker that can be distinguished by a computer and identified. Sensors

emit no signals; hence, they are a passive detection system. To the layman, on sensors, a missile would sound like a high pitched whine. A group of fighters would sound like a swarm of bees. A large ship would sound like a very low, continuous tone. Add static, and it indicates the presence of energy sheilding such as deflectors. Loud static would indicate an ion field.

Scanners are an active sensing system. They are much more sensitive than sensors, but have limited range. They are capable of detecting tiny objects and ships and objects veiled by electronic counter measures. On sensors, a ship using scanners emits a pulsing tone.

r) Landing gear bay. Here is housed the main gear. The tires are of a high impact resistant polymar, filled with nitrogen to keep them from expanding a great deal in a vacuum.The gears are maintained by the Frame Techs and the Crew Chief.

s) Same as above.

t) Foward gear bay. The access panel leads to a permanently affixed ladder attached to the gear. This is the means of entering and exiting the ship when it is on the ground. The gear bay is also used as an air lock.

u) This is the lower cargo bay. Up to ten metric tons of cargo may be carried here. Some of the usual stuff includes subsistence, spare parts, miscellaneous supplies, munitions, etc. Unusual cargo includes a couple of chunks of uranium, twenty Star Marines, VIPs,etc. There is a locker with four pressure suits, a first aid kit, three flares, and two six-man rubber rafts, and a weeks rations for twenty people. There is another locker with three laser rifles (which do 6 dice damage) and three pistols with 9 rounds each (do 3+3 damage, two shots per turn if adjDX is 11+). The laser rifles are charged to fire five shots each. There is also six flak vests lined with shielding that reduces die rolls from energy weapons by three dice. (i.e., a laser rifle would only do three dice damage) The vests also stop ten hits, are made out of titanium, and reduce dexterity by one.

The following statistics are on the Martian Vanguard:
Type: Multi-Role Attack Vessel
Length: 76 meters.
Mass: app. 150 metric tons.
Crew: 16 officers and 15 enlisted men, total 31.
Thrust: 1000 metric tons...6 g's
Armament: Five medium particle turrets, assorted rockets, missiles, and warheads.
Defenses: R10 Deflectors, ion gas field.
Detection Equipment: Type IV sensors, limited discerning ability; highly sensitive type V scanners, great discerning ability.
Hull strength: 200
Warp capability: None.

Guidance System: Type IIIM (Military/Interplanetary Nav Comp)
Main Computer: Type X (IQ 200)
Endurance: One Month (Shipboard time)

Hatch doors take two turns to open.
Mechanical Hatch doors open in one turn, and can be secured from the inside.
Access panels take two turns to open and have a strength of 50.
Light doors have a strength of 30 and can be locked (L5).

There is a fire suppression system in all sections of the ship that vents in foam from capsules. This eliminates the need for causing a vacuum and endangering the possible crewmembers in the area.

There is an intruder alert and suppression system controllable from the Defense Systems Officer's console that vents sleep gas similar to that found on the TFT: Advanced Wizard Chemist's Table into any area of the ship.

In the event of a power failure, the mechnical doors may be cranked open in five turns. An

automatic backup system powered by batteries will keep the lights and life support system running for 12 hours. This system may be activated at the Bridge Engineer's console if it does not kick in automatically.

At various locatins are lockers with rations and flares. The rubber rafts are not space rafts; they are the sea type. Turrets are jettisonable and can serve as space rafts for two people under emergency conditions for six hours.

Pressure suits are connected to bulkhead jacks for electricity and oxygen; seperation of the jacks will cause them to kick in their own systems which will sustain the wearer for one hour. The suits have minimum shielding necessary to protect from cosmic rays. They stop five hits and cause the wearer a -4DX. Engineers wear an additional amount of shielding that will also reduce die rolls from energy weapons by 2 dice. Cosmic ray shielding reduces by one die (R 1).

The main particle weapons will do the equivalent of 60 dice damage.

For more information write to:

Chad Brandt
Project Manager,

West Richmond
Wargame Group
8423 Freestone Ave.
Richmond, VA 23229

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NEW MICROS

TRAILBLAZER

TRAILBLAZER is the space trading game of free market exploration and exploitation. The productive and efficient thrive beyond the reach of government. Players build commercial dynasties with fleets, factors, products and skill. A Turn includes Product Purchase, Fleet Movement, Star Exploration, Product Sales and Maintenance. Victory goes to the best trader and financier.

TRAILBLAZER is not your usual Microgame. There is some record keeping. Games may last for days. TRAILBLAZER is for the aquisitive and competitive. It applies free market economics to the freedom of the stars. TRAILBLAZER is a challenge you won't want to miss if you know the true value of wealth. Libertarians will love it.

PLAYABILITY: Above average complexity for 2 to 4 players age 16 & up. 4 hours to days per game.

COMPONENTS: Star Map, Rules, Counters & die.

MASTER OF THE AMULETS

Dirringar was the Black Council's most powerful Wizard. Yet he wanted more. Dirringar created cursed amulets for enemies and mystic amulets for himself. When Dirringar activated the Great Amulet he'd gain power over all. But, the Black Council's conjuring exploded the Great Amulet, scattering lesser amulets across Dirringar's Lost Valley.

Legend holds that Dirringar's mystic amulets may still be sought by the brave or foolish. It's even said that Dirringar's gates can be controlled and the valley's entrance gained by his amulets. The brave may seek, the clever find and the lucky escape. Power awaits, can you take it?

MASTER OF THE AMULETS is a Microgame from THE FANTASY TRIP role-playing game system. It requires the Microgames MELEE and WIZARD to play. Advanced gamers may use ADVANCED MELEE, ADVANCED WIZARD and IN THE LABYRINTH.

PLAYABILITY: Beginning or Advanced age 12 up. Solitaire or group play for two hours or more.

REQUIRES: MELEE and WIZARD Microgames.

COMPONENTS: Rules, Map, Die and Counters.

SECURITY STATION

Jas N'orn was Cidri's most reknowned collector of the wierd and bizarre. He had the most, yet wanted more. Mnoren gates to a ruined Earth gave Jas his chance: nuclear genocide had rained down on the world's green hills. Burrowing in the rubble, Jas' searchers found a functioning remnant. Its technology was strange and its secrets dangerous. Jas knew he must have it. Such was the way that the mystery and death of the SECURITY STATION came to Cidri's past. With the Mnoren gone, it now kills on alone.

SECURITY STATION is a programmed fantasy adventure that can be played solitaire or by a group. You become a treasure seeker in a menacing relic of Earth's atomic demise. Great secrets and immense wealth await the brave invaders of this strange place. Create and equip your character and with a group of friends, you will step into the pulsating curtain of multi-colored lights. There is no turning back, an adventure of fear and intrigue has begun.

SECURITY STATION is a supplementary publication of Metagaming's THE FANTASY TRIP role-playing game system. You cannot play this adventure unless you own the MicroGames MELEE and WIZARD or the ADVANCED MELEE and ADVANCED WIZARD rules modules.

PLAYABILITY: Introductory fantasy gaming for 1 to 6 intelligent players age 12 and up. Suitable for solitaire play.

REQUIRES: MELEE and WIZARD or ADVANCED MELEE and ADVANCED WIZARD.

COMPONENTS: Includes rules booklet, die, map and play counters.

Each Micro is $3.95. Minimum order is $10.00 with $1.00 mailing and handling charge. INTERPLAY subscribers take a 10% discount on products. Also, we can only mail to U.S.A and Canada. Get'em Now!

COMMAND AT SEA: Design and Development

by

Joe Gibson, Glen Preston, and Dan Reynolds

COMMAND AT SEA is a 1:4800 scale naval miniatures game system from Metagaming's Metahistory series. In COMMAND AT SEA, each player acts as the commander of one or more warships taking part in historical or hypothetical engagements. Each game turn consists of three basic phases: fire combat, movement, and damage assessment, representing one minute of real time in battle. Fire combat is performed by targeting your ship's guns on an enemy vessel using range estimation. Hits are scored when your range estimate is correct. Next, each player executes his plotted movement and, lastly determines damage to his ship from enemy shells. All movement, counters, and ranges are actual 1:4800 scale. The scenario ends when one side fulfils its victory conditions. COMMAND AT SEA is a fairly complex simulation at a very tactical level. We recommend it for experienced gamers, although the basic game rules are simple enough to be learned in about two hours.

COMMAND AT SEA began with a very simple idea: we wanted a set of miniatures rules that more accurately reflected tactical naval combat for the period 1898 to 1945. We had gamed with other systems of rules but discovered historical inaccuracies or peculiarities in each of them. Like many gamers, we started to tinker, adding rules of our own and discarding those that no longer fit. That was three years ago; COMMAND AT SEA gradually evolved into a superior yet still playable simulation. In this article, we shall contrast the COMMAND AT SEA game system with other systems of rules, concentrating on the aspects of fire combat, defensive capabilities, and movement.

COMMAND AT SEA uses a range estimation fire combat system, i.e., to score hits on opposing units, you must guess the distance between your ship and its target. Other systems assign attack factors to ships and roll dice on a probability table to determine hits. We chose range estimation because we felt that it gave a better feel for the problems encountered in naval gunnery. Range estimation also encourages players to develop a skill necessary to excel at the game.

Historically, the ability of a surface warship to inflict damage on her enemies rested with the ship's gun and torpedo armament. The effectiveness of the ship's armament depended on four principal factors:

• Number and size of the guns
• Rate of fire
• Range
• Gunnery control efficiency

With this in mind, we formulated the basic game gunnery system: the number of hits scored on an enemy ship is

determined by the number of guns times the maximum sustained rate of fire per gun. Range is accounted for directly: you can't shoot at a ship that is too far away. Gunnery control efficiency depended on essentially three factors: stability, training, and technology. Stability has to do with the steadiness of a particular ship: the larger the ship (particularly with respect to beam) the steadier she was, and the more accurately the guns could be aimed. For example, battleships in **COMMAND AT SEA** generally have larger sighting ranges than cruisers or destroyers, due in part to higher spotting tops but also due to steadier performance. Crew quality from training and tradition shows up in the different rates of fire on a gun by gun basis. Navies like the Royal Navy with its centuries of sea-faring usually produced crews able to get the most from their weapons. Lastly, basic technology in the form of better equipment gave some navies distinct superiority over their enemies (e.g., the German stereoscopic versus the British coincidence range finders). Probably the most striking example of a technological advantage was the advent of radar detection and control systems during World War II. With radar, the US Navy was able to overcome the tremendous edge possessed by the Japanese in the night battles of 1942-1943.

The basic game gunnery system was purposely kept simple to reduce complexity but it is not realistic to assume that ships could fire their guns at maximum rate all the time. For one thing, the crews could not stand up to the strain. For another, the requirement for aimed fire (i.e., fire a salvo, observe shell splash, apply correction, fire next salvo, etc.) implied lower rates of fire at longer ranges simply because it takes longer for a given shell to go from firing ship to target. The tournament version of **COMMAND AT SEA** (still in preparation) uses an effective SRM calculated from the shell's time of flight to control the number of rounds which may be fired per turn per battery. Using this effective rate of fire produces more historical hit rates, and vastly increases the simulation value of the game.

In addition to determining the number of hits obtained, it is also important to know what part of the ship the shells strike because certain areas of the ships were armored for protection. The thickness and distribution of the armor plating varied: critical systems such as engine rooms and magazines were usually heavily armored while superstructures and other topside structures were lightly armored at best. Thus, the effect of a particular shell depended largely on what part of the ship it struck. The vitals of most period warships were protected from vertical shellfire by a waterline belt running from the forward to the after magazines, covering the machinery spaces and enclosed by armored transverse bulkheads on both ends. On top of this sidebelt sat an armored

deck which provided horizontal protection as shown in Figure 1. Critical damage usually occurred when shells penetrated the armored citadel and exploded in the vitals.
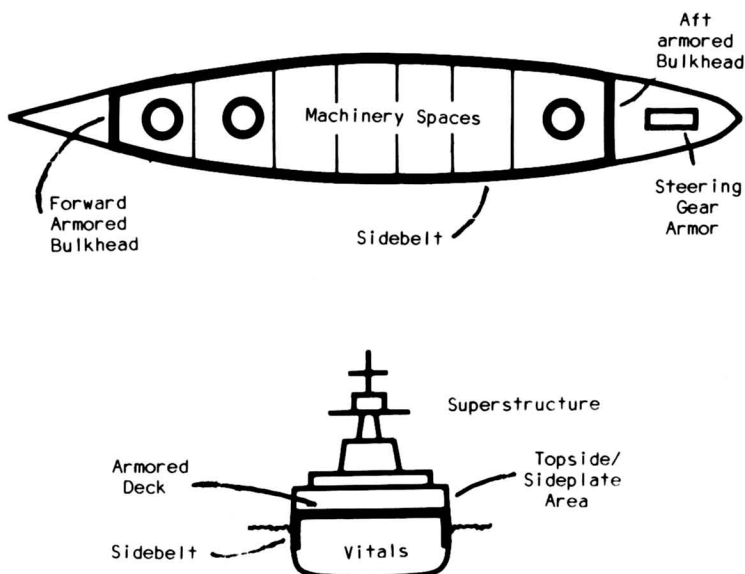
Figure 1: Idealized Armor Layout of a Typical Warship

COMMAND AT SEA uses an average probability distribution system of hit location based on relative areas. In other words, the percentage chance of a hit against a specific area depends on the size of that area relative to the rest of the ship. The basic game uses one distribution chart and a single dice roll suffices to determine hit location and critical damage. But this simplification ignores a basic fact about shell trajectories: at long range, shells have a high trajectory and plunge steeply, tending to strike horizontal armor; at close range, the trajectories are flat and the shells tend to strike vertical armor. The tournament version of **COMMAND AT SEA** varies hit location as a function of range to account for this behavior. The tournament game uses ten different hit location charts: at long range, shells are more likely to strike deck armor but, at close range, they are more likely to hit the side armor. The basic game hit location chart corresponds to a medium range distribution.

The armor system in **COMMAND AT SEA** revolves around two points: (1) up to 24 armored locations are given for each ship; (2) armor effectiveness is rated according to time

period. Even 24 armored locations are not enough to completely describe some ships but we have chosen the most important ones. Each armored area is either <u>vertical armor</u> (sidebelt, turret face/side, armored bulkheads, steering gear belt, casemate, and conning tower) or <u>horizontal armor</u> (decks, turret top, steering gear top, and conning tower top). The penetrating capability of a particular shell is <u>critically</u> dependent upon which type of armor it strikes.

Earlier games either ignored the problem of horizontal versus vertical armor or used a composite penetration that assumed the shell struck horizontal armor at long range and vertical armor at close range. The problem with the composite penetration scheme was the discontinuity near the so-called "critical range": beyond the critical range, the shells struck deck armor, and inside it, they hit belt armor. Suppose you were maneuvering just inside the critical range with your side armor protecting the ship from damage. On the next game turn, if your movement took the ship past the critical range, you might well be blown out of the water because the deck could not keep the shells out. Result: one turn, your battlewagon was fine and the next, sunk! Furthermore, who said that shells do not strike horizontal armor at close range or vertical armor at long range? **COMMAND AT SEA** solves the problem directly by supplying both components of the penetration and letting the hit

location system take care of placing hits on the ship.

Central to the **COMMAND AT SEA** damage system is the concept of using vertical penetration against vertical armor and horizontal penetration against horizontal armor. This idea arose from the immune zone concept developed by the US Navy after World War I. The immune zone of a particular armor system against a specific shell was determined by two ranges: the outer limit is the maximum range at which the shell just fails to penetrate the armored deck; the inner limit is the minimum range at which the shell just fails to penetrate the sidebelt. Between the two limits, the ship was said to be immune to the effects of the shell. The immune zone concept was important enough that the US Navy used it to design warships in the 1930's. We have used recently-published immune zones for specific ships as a cross-check on the penetration tables and armor ratings.

During the time span covered by **COMMAND AT SEA,** armor effectiveness increased considerably as the armor manufacturers improved their product. We chose Krupp-Cemented (KC) armor as the standard: all penetrations are calculated against KC armor and all effective armor thicknesses are expressed in terms of KC armor. Thus, on each Ship's Data Card, there are two values for each armored location, the first an actual thickness in inches, and the second an effective thickness. Always use the effective

armor thickness when determining if a shell penetrates.

When the ship's armor fails to keep the shells out, the ship suffers damage. COMMAND AT SEA expresses the effects of this damage in two ways: (1) critical hits which knock out weapons and machinery; (2) structural damage which causes flooding. Critical hits are embodied in the hit location system. In the basic game, the dice roll that specifies hit location also determines the critical damage effect of the shell. The tournament game is very similar except that two rolls are used: the first generates the location and the second specifies the critical. Structural damage effects are accounted for by using the compartmentation damage diagram. This system subdivides the underwater volume of a ship into an arbitrary number of compartments. Explosions from shells or torpedoes destroy the structural integrity of the individual compartments and flooding results. Moreover, this loss of structural integrity makes the effect of subsequent hits against destroyed compartments even more destructive.

Other miniatures systems typically assign each ship a point rating that reflects its defensive capabilities. For each shell or torpedo hit, you subtract a certain number of points and, when your ship has no points left, it sinks. That's fine as far as it goes. But suppose you suffer two hits: in one case, widely separated, and in the second case,

in the same spot. The various point systems merely deduct the points for each hit and go on. In COMMAND AT SEA, the effects depend on placement: if the hits are far apart, the ship may well survive (albeit with damage), but if they are close together, the damage inflicted by the second explosion will be magnified due to the effect of the first hit. Putting in an abstract representation of the ship's machinery followed from much the same reasoning. A shell exploding in an empty compartment is not nearly so bad as one that detonates in a boiler room. The effects of partial flooding (listing, speed loss, etc.) and loss of machinery due to structural damage are neatly handled as well.

The amount of damage caused by a particular shell or torpedo in COMMAND AT SEA is based on warhead weight. Each compartment can sustain 1000 points of damage before it is destroyed, with each pound of shell weight worth one damage point. Other miniatures systems express the destructiveness of naval shells in terms of the shell's diameter (e.g., a 6-inch shell does 6 points worth of damage). This scheme implies that two 6-inch shells are just as effective as one 12-inch shell. In real life, quite the opposite was true: the destructiveness of a particular round was dependent on the amount of explosive carried (which in turn depends on the shell weight). The relationship between increasing gun bore and damage potential (explosive charge) is not linear

but cubic. Continuing with the above example, a 6-inch AP (armor-piercing) shell might weigh 105 pounds, but a 12-inch round weighs 870 pounds. In **COMMAND AT SEA**, it takes eight 6-inch shells to equal the effect of one 12-inch round. Coupled with the fact that the larger shell has much higher penetration, this makes the 12-inch gunned vessel much more effective offensively than the 6-inch armed ship.

The compartmentation scheme was eventually extended to the topside and superstructure areas of the ships as well. Historically, the topside areas of the ships grew in importance as communications and electronic systems became more numerous. While it is unlikely that shell hits in these unarmored areas would sink the ship, the destruction of the ship's topside caused the loss of communications, impaired gunnery and damage control, and reduced crew efficiency. Thus arose the concept of topside/superstructure compartmentation in **COMMAND AT SEA**: shells or bombs which strike the sideplate area of the ship or hit the armored deck but do <u>not</u> penetrate still inflict damage against topside compartmentation.

We discovered another thing about the compartmentation system: it allowed for the improvements in warship design and construction. For example, World War II era battleships were exquisitely designed to resist battle damage, far more so than their World War I counterparts. By a simple variation of the compartmentation formula, we could easily express the increasing resistance of later period ships. Note that the compartmentation scheme is an abstraction: <u>in no way does it represent how warships were actually laid out internally.</u> At one time, we toyed with the idea of using actual deck plans, but with more than a thousand different classes of ships in the game, we could not get the requisite information for all of them.

The tactical movement system used in **COMMAND AT SEA** is also an improvement on those used by previous systems. Earlier miniatures rules used a point-to-point movement system in which the ships always moved in straight lines. If a ship wished to turn, you simply changed the facing and then moved the model/counter straight ahead. In real life, ships don't turn by moving in straight lines. Rather, they have distinct tactical diameters that depend on ship size and hull form. From US Navy publications on ship handling, we derived idealized tactical diameters parameterized for ship size and speed. The resulting turning gauges give the **COMMAND AT SEA** movement system a natural feel: larger ships have larger turning circles than smaller craft and the turning circles vary with speed.

In conclusion, **COMMAND AT SEA** began as an attempt to correct deficiencies in other miniatures systems and gradually evolved into a system of its own. While the game concentrates on the simulation aspects of tactical naval warfare, it's also enjoyable as a game (It's a blast to blow the other guy out of the water!). The biggest problem right now

is the lack of adequate ship data to allow you to re-enact battles on your own. We're working on it. In addition to the tournament version of the game, we have in preparation three national navy packs of ship data cards and a scenario packet to go with them. The national navy packs will each contain 20-25 ship data cards and compartmentation diagrams along with the appropriate penetration tables. The three packs will contain information for WWII US and Japanese battleships, cruisers, and destroyers. The accompanying scenario packet will continue with the 1942 Guadalcanal campaign started in the basic game packet. Response to the initial release of the game has been good, but we would like to get more feedback as what you would like to see in **COMMAND AT SEA**. Write us in care of Metagaming, P. O. Box 15346, Austin, Texas.

COMMAND AT SEA

ERRATA

by Joe Gibson

Here is a listing of the known errors in COMMAND AT SEA. Some of these errors were caused by our rush to get the game ready for Origins '31 and others by human frailty. There are also some clarifications and minor rule changes. We thank those who have called some of these problems to our attention.

1.4 Scale is not one inch equals 400 yards but one inch equals 400 feet.

2.1 The last word in the paragraph should be "required"

7.3 The last sentence should read "...the torpedo has hit the ship;"

Addition: If the target ship's speed exceeds the torpedo's speed then the percentage chance of a hit is equal to 1/2 the target ship's target size.

7.31 Add:
Torpedo Warhead Weights;
Before 1910 = 150 lbs.
1910 - 1929 = 250 lbs.
1930 - 1945 = 750 lbs.

8.0 In the last sentence the word sisnks should be sinks.

Add:
8.15 A ship is sunk whenever the number of flooded flotation compartments equals 1/2 of the total number of flotation compartments. (round fractions down)

9.2 Add:
Torpedo tubes may be reloaded in combat at the rate of one tube per mount every five minutes (turns). None of the tubes in a mount may be reloaded until all of the tubes on that mount have fired. The

ship data cards list torpedo tubes as follows:
TT # of tubes - size of tubes (total # of torpedoes) # of mounts x # of tubes per mount

Add:
9.35 Any time a ship changes targets, its rate of fire (SRM) will be 1/2 of normal for 1 turn.

11.1 Delete the last sentence and replace with:
Any shell that strikes the superstructure and has a penetration, P(v), greater than 4.99 will only cause damage points equal to its diameter because it will pass completely through the ship without exploding. Ex. A Japanese 5.5L50 shell penetrating P(v) 5.31 strikes a destroyer in the superstructure. It does 5.5 points of damage plus the associated critical damage.

13.0 HIT LOCATION/CRITICAL HIT TABLE
16. Midships Deck: Torpedo Fire Control destroyed; torpedoes may not fire.
18. should read "...1 boiler compartment floods;..."
30. battern should be battery
52. omit "flood 1 engaged side compartment"

LEGEND FOR CORRECT SHIP DATA CARDS

P = Primary Magazine
S = Secondary Magazine
T = Tertiary Magazine
+ = Torpedo Magazine
B = Boiler Room
E = Turbine/Engine Room
* = Screw
R = Rudder

The maximum range in feet and inches printed on the ship data cards are for 1:2400 scale. Players should divide by 2 to obatain the correct range for 1:4800 scale.
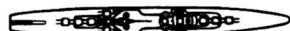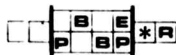
SHIPS' DIAGRAMS BY CLASS:

Aoba Class:

Atlanta Class:

Bagley Class:

Benham Class:

Furutaka Class:

Kamikaze Class:

Kent Class:

Modified Benson Class:
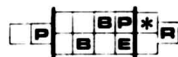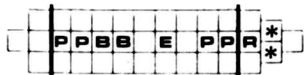
Modified Leander Class:
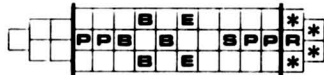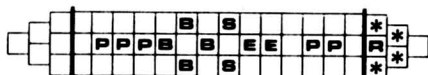
New Orleans Class:
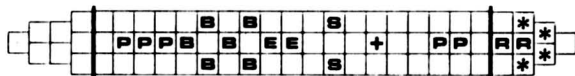
Northampton Class:
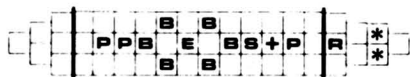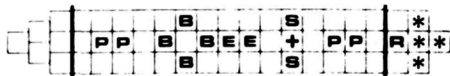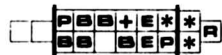
Takao Class:

Tenryu Class:

Yubari Class:

3 2

letters...

In studying your illustration in OMNI for over an hour, I believe I have found the golden unicorn.

The unicorn is on the left hand side of the illustration, it is standing in the grass by a very large rock, ideally looking over his shoulder to the right.

I am a faithful reader of OMNI and I had alot of fun looking for the GOLDEN UNICORN.

Please keep me informed if I am the lucky winner.

Richard A. Galvani
Richmond Hill, NY

About two weeks ago I deciphered the message in paragraph XXX. I did not write anything until now because of Miri's statement "Only act on it if you really accept."

After reading Howard Thompson's article in INTERPLAY #3 a lot of things came into light.

Two weeks ago I only sought the treasure for its monetary value. Now I also seek it, that is Etherion's answer to ending the Toltec's power, because I feel it can be used to help the problems we have here on our planet, Earth.

I was brought up to not choose sides in conflicts, that is what my parents believe is best although they never honor that belief. I now believe in not choosing sides until you're sure which side is acting for Good. I find that believing that has its advantages and disadvantages, you just have to learn to live with both.

The only goal I have settled on so far for my life is to seek all the knowledge I can, and use it for Good. To get back to the subject of this letter. I ask you to please tell me what is Unicorn Secret XXX, and if possible the truth and reality behind it.

Sean Thorpe
Ann Arbor, MI

In reading your advertisement on finding the GOLDEN UNICORN, I would like to make guess on where it is located. I ran across an advertisement which has a 24 K gold unicorn with a silver horn. I is located at CALHOUN'S COLLECTORS SOCIETY.

I don't think this was what you were looking for, but I took a chance!

Craig A. Hartpence
Orlando, FL

I recently purchased THE FANTASY MASTER'S CODEX as the owner of the Compleat Strategist was stocking his shelves. This booklet is definitely a must for all FM's. The index in the front was worth the purchase of the booklet alone. The other subclasses are gravy on the meat. As I read through the CODEX I wrote down any mistakes I saw. The seperate sheet enclosed gives the location and correction of all those that I found.

I have been playing TFT ever since MELEE and WIZARD. I belong to both the Jersey Wargamer Assn. and the Union Fantasy Gamer Assn. UFGA also has three other FMs and numerous non-FM TFT players. We're all in favor of the proposed Fantasy Master's Guild.

I think the first step in forming the guild would be to collect a membership fee. Each member would receive a directory of all other FM members (name, address, telephone #, and other pertinent information like years of experience, etc.). From this listing, local FM's could get together for both gaming and promotion of TFT activities.

THE FANTASY MASTER'S SCREEN was also another welcomed addition to the materials of TFT. Keep the supplements coming!

TFT system is converting alot of D&D players. I've already got fifteen new players in another club that I belong to called The New Jersey Institute of Technology's Fantasy and Wargamer Assn. As an old Space Gamer said, Metagaming is coming of age. Keep up the great work!

The following list contains most of the spelling errors found in the 1981 CODEX. Each error is located and corrected with five columns. The first column indicates the section. The second column lists the section page number. The third column list the line which the error is found on the page. Note: section title and page title are not included in the count. The fourth column gives the correct spelling. The fifth column gives a local area on the page where the error was found.

Paul Manz
Union, NJ

Section	Page	Line	Spelling	Area
TFT INDEX	13	23	Night-gaunts	--
TFT INDEX	19	36	Veteran	--
TALENTS	1	5	Refers	All sub-sections
SPELLS	1	8	Refers	All sub-sections
SPELLS	1	3	Different	All sub-sections
SPELLS	1	5	As many	All sub-sections
ITEM	3	17	Attack	Worn
ITEM	4	32	Worn	Worn
EQUIPMENT	1	22	Brigand	Low class clothes
COMBAT	2	23	Grabbing	Pick up weapon
COMBAT	4	35	Intermediate	Environment
COMBAT	4	43	Maximum	Multihex status
COMBAT	6	23	Dropped	Roll of 17
COMBAT	8	13	Explicitly	Paragraph
COMBAT	11	5	Neutral	Reaction rolls
SAVES	1	25	Obvious	Copying book
SAVES	2	31	Glancing	Looking at scroll
SAVES	4	29	Broken	Run on ground
JOB	1	29	Minstrel	Skilled work
RACE	1	30	Maximum	Gargoyle
RACE	1	40	Maximum	Giant
M1	1	46	Penetrates	Spider
M1	1	57	Penetrates	Wasp
M1	2	10	Cumulative	Bats
M1	2	21	Cumulative	Rats
M2	2	12	Dragon	Crocodile
M2	3	4	Dragon	Snapping turtle-7
M2	3	17	Dragon	Snapping turtle-3
M2	3	29	Cumulative	Piranha
M4	2	38	Carrying	Worker
Q.SPELL	1	10	Maintenance	Question 3

~~~~~~

I suppose that the letters column will eventually be used for the same thing that I would like to use it for--response to other comments. As I was reading INTERPLAY #3 I saw a letter from Tim Prokott on my micro-micro-trip, Vagabond Thief! Unfortunately, he had the same complaint that a lot of the playtesters voiced, the 32-point characters do not last long.

I will give Tim, and those who might be a little puzzled, reasons as to why things are so though in that little money-changer shop on the seedier side of Canigli...
When I sat down to design Vagabond Thief! it was to create a setting in which a thief could use cunning in order to defeat the denizen of the moneychanger shop and come out fairly rich if

news...

successful. I both succeeded and failed.

I succeeded in the fact that the wolves can generally be defeated because the thief is smarter and can do things that the wolves could not hope to do. I failed in the fact that only one of the wolves can be "removed from the area" without a fight. Tim, to tell you the exact means would take away the challenge, but it has to do with "maverick options" and knowing when to fight and when not to. It also helpts if you can get a few comrades to join you in your sacking of the place...regardless, you will still be rich and there is no honor amongst thieves (heh, heh, heh).

The wizard is tough, but again he can be defeated. In fact during playtesting his 32-point counterpart was upgunned because he was being butchered badly.

To wrap things up, if you find that Vagabond Thief! was too difficult for your 32-point character, that's great! After all, if ripping a moneychanger was easy, they wouldn't be in business for very long, now would they?

Jerry Epperson
Omaha, NE

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    Rock Falls, IL, 61071.

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    Union Fantasy Gamers Assoc.
    470 Whitewood Rd.
    Union, NJ 07083
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