

Suspense & Decision

FEBRUARY
2017

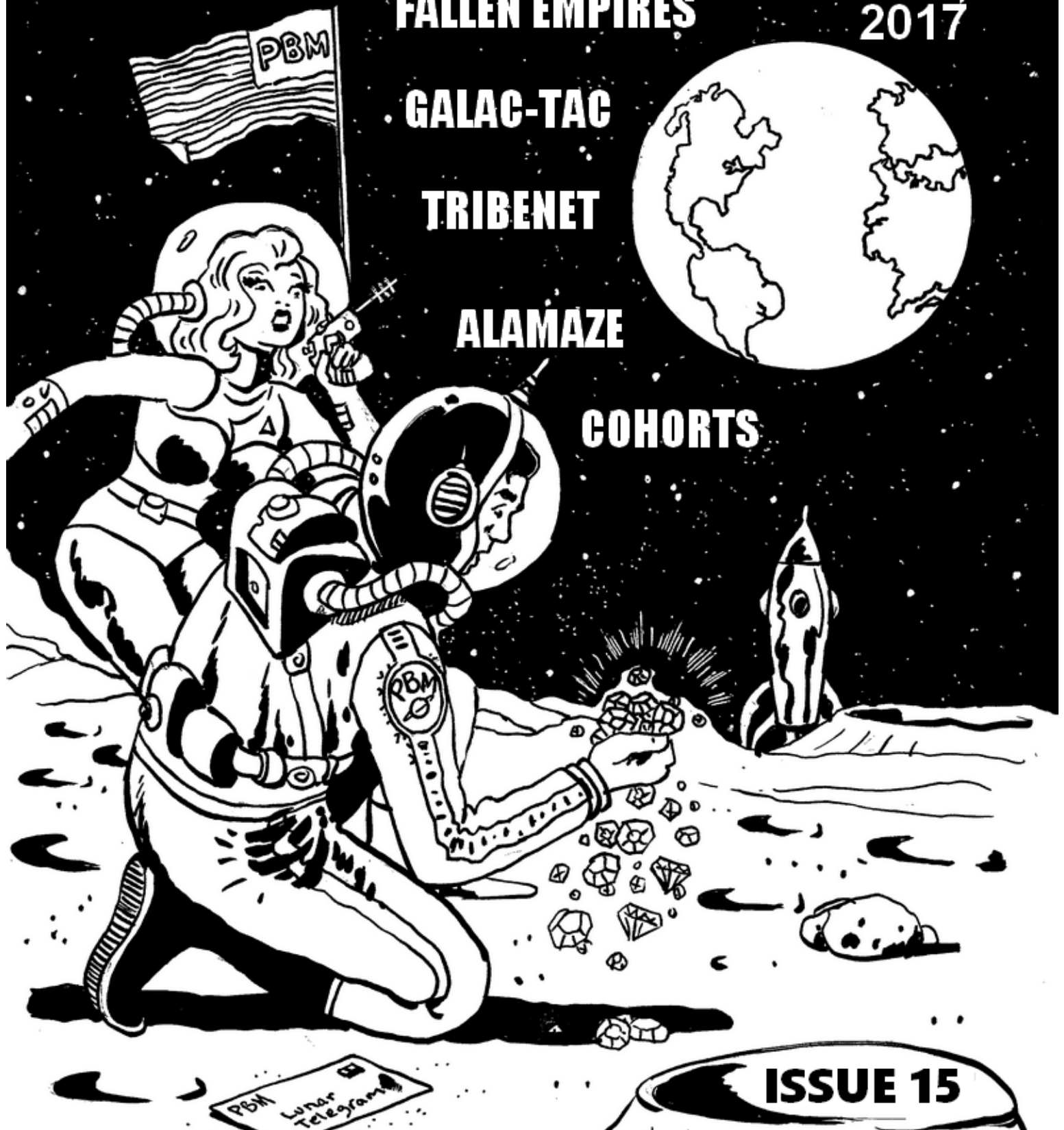
FALLEN EMPIRES

GALAC-TAC

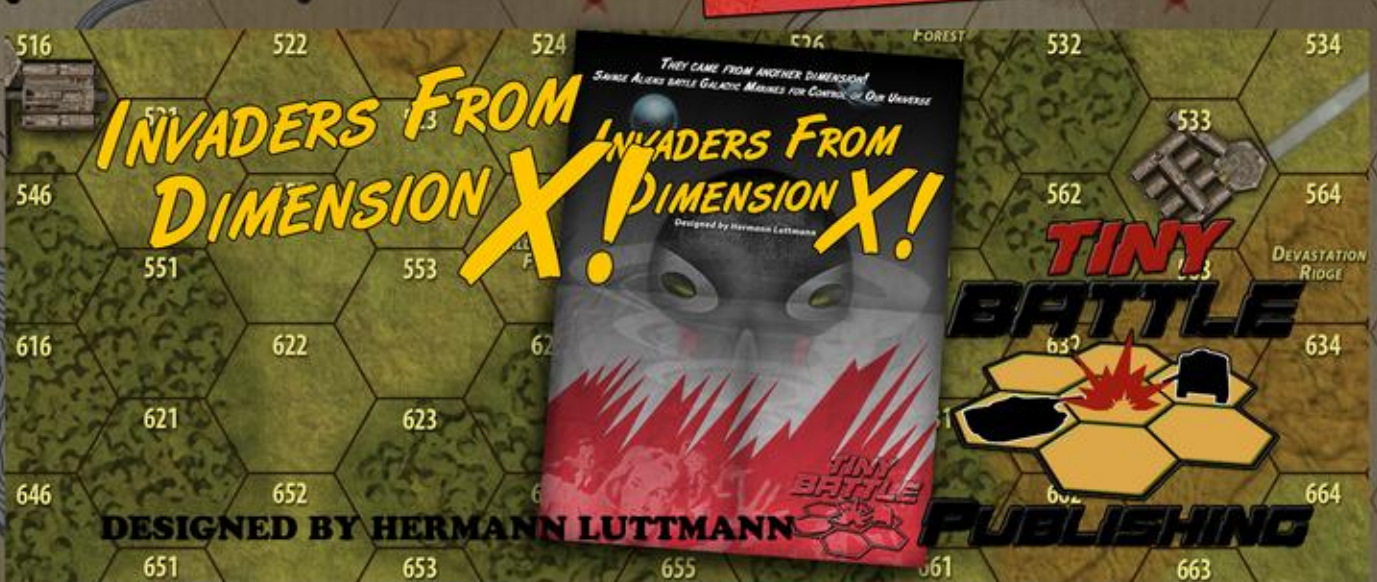
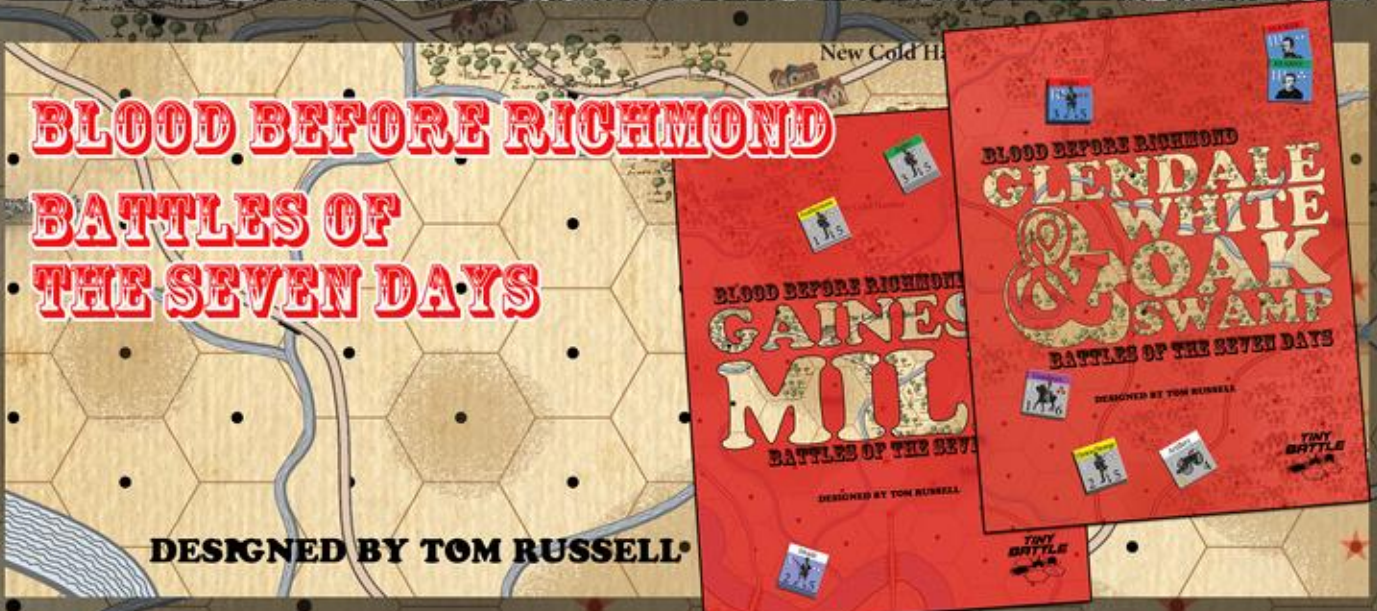
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A PBM Magazine for the 21st Century!



SUSPENSE & DECISION ISSUE # 15

February 2017

Men once walked on the moon and played games by mail. We shall, again!

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*** Dare to participate in PBM's future!**



Some things are beyond our reach. Once upon a time ago, we reached for the moon. We also reached for worlds of imagination, worlds of gaming pleasure, worlds transported to us in envelopes. We were more than astronauts - We were conquerors!

We were kings, and emperors, and aliens from distant stars and galaxies. We were transported, not just to other realms, but through time, itself. We travelled back in the past. We trekked forward into the future. We did all that - and more - with pens and pencils and envelopes and postage stamps. And we had damned fun times doing it, too!

As editor of this magazine, I reach for things, also. I reach for memories. I reach for kindred spirits. I reach out to you!

This magazine, much like envelopes that carried turn orders and turn results in bygone years, is a vessel. Its cargo may not always be what you, personally, were hoping for, where any given issue is concerned, but it is my great hope that you will find something of value in it at some point along the way.

We are captain, crew, and passengers on a journey toward something worthwhile. I salute your participation! – Charles

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FEBRUARY 20th, 2017

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SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #16 -- FEBRUARY 20TH, 2017



Fallen Empires

Marchwood – The Saga Continues

Colin Danks

As I did write Part B last year (which should now be in [Issue 14](#)), a lot has happened to my position in this game. This is just an update since my previous A & B ramblings!

Well, it's now turn 50 with Marchwood. I have been trying to make my army a more effective fighting force. I think the GMs like a balanced army with equal weapons. I like to try and have my army units into blocks of 500. So I have been buying weapons from the cities, and

producing as much as I can from my own Weapon & Armour Specialists. Having a block of 500 Spearmen, with a backup short sword, metal helm, Studded Leather Shield, Studded Leather Armour and Leather Gauntlets, make a nice unit.

However, what makes your units more efficient is not just their weapons. The skill points (which can be found at the top of the spreadsheet of your position) are some sort of multipliers. Training, Organisation and Experience all contribute, along with the morale of your

Lead your tribe to glory, run a mercenary company, build the strongest settlement or be a political master on the continent of Clantium in [Fallen Empires](#) - a play by email Roleplay/Strategy game.

forces. Lastly, if the Vitality of your group is low, then you'll not be able to fight, at all. Training and Vitality can be increased via your spreadsheet, but Experience can only be gained by actual

combat. I suspect that, if you have large forces, but low skill, then your forces are going to take more losses!

A further way to enhance your units all comes down to your major and minor actions, which you can conduct every turn (see previous articles, but you can conduct 1 major and 2 minor

actions). I have used these in a number of areas for my army.

- 1. To fabricate better weapons (such as giving my people better tools to make sharper weapons, etc.).**
- 2. To add Elite troops to each unit.**
- 3. Add "Special Characters" to each. This can include**

1. Standard Bearers, Musicians and Champions.

2. Also, do not forget about command and control. Make sure each unit has the maximum amount of Officers which you can afford, and add a special "Commander" to each unit. also.

Apart from the Army, what else has Marchwood been up to? Well, it's been 20 turns, since I last wrote Part B. The defensive measures of the settlement have been massively improved. I'll not go into too much details, but within the spreadsheet, make sure your masons continue to build up the city walls, as soon as possible. You need to remove the wooden walls and have them replaced with stone, as soon and as high as possible. Use your major/minor actions to add your own defensive measures. If your settlement is on a coastline, do not forget to defend your harbour. Your harbour might be outside your main defense line. There are many pirates out there (Player and GM controlled).

A further way to enhance your position is to hire any healers, wizards, makers of potions, etc.. who

What I really like about this game is the way the GMs interact with your suggestions. They must have some imaginations, to come up with what they do.

can be found in cities around the map. Not all cities have special characters (or I'm doing things wrongly!), so you just have to make and do with what you find.

What I really like about this game is the way the GMs interact with your suggestions. They must have some imaginations, to come up with what they do. I'm not too sure in their previous lives if they use to be story

tellers, but they bring a smile to your face with what they bring out, now and again. They have created a nice map, and have populated each sector with a world of themselves.

A good example is what has been created out of one sector. I carried out a scouting mission for a sector, and found a

small chapel in the woods tended by 2 sisters (this, I actually found on turn 8). I'm now on turn 51, and I have created a fully blown religious position out of this. How I did this explains a little bit in the way the GMs and the players interact.

So, once I found these sisters, I decided I would try and help them. I therefore had my troops repair the chapel, and add an annex to try and help them in their ways. They thanked me, and over the next few turns

(actually I went back to the sector on and off until turn 40), when I decided to see if they could help Marchwood.

I carried out further actions and managed to get one of the sisters to leave the chapel and return to Marchwood to carry out her religious ways inside my settlement. This has further been expanded, and now I'm playing a new religious position, with Priestess Daria as the High Priest for her Goddess.

This means I'm paying an extra £1, but gain another position, which I am able to grow and mature in a way in which I can explore the world better.

So, that's the small life of Marchwood, so far! It's such an interesting game, which you can plod along on your own pace, or join up with other players and take on a GM-controlled sector.

If you wish to take up a position, be it control of a city, settlement, Land or Sea Tribes, Land or Sea Mercenary units, or a religious position, then send an email to the GMs, and I'm sure they'll find a place for you.

For more details, contact:

fallenemp@gmail.com



Down the Whirlpool

Assorted Readers Speaking Out via E-mail, Forum, and the Web

Regarding your comments in issue #13 *"Even still, it just strikes me as an odd thing for Origins to choose to discontinue an award for a category of gaming that can't be uninvented, and which people are still active participants thereof."*

It's not odd at all. The rules set up for all games in the Origins Awards were that if there weren't ten games eligible for nomination in a category in a given year, that category was to be left out that year. And if a category was left out two years in a row, the category was dropped permanently. When we got left out one year, I tried to explain that to the PBM companies to get them to submit. I think the second year I got 6 submissions. And that was including me submitting two of my games! So we were dropped, by the rules that were set up for all game categories.

Lately the rules have changed, and there are fewer categories, that are much broader. Perhaps we could get one of those categories to be expanded a little so it could include PBM or PBeM or episodic games. But it would take a lot of work, and by my previous experience, few PBM companies would take advantage of it.

-Rick Loomis of [Flying Buffalo, Inc.](#)

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Occasionally, some feedback sent to us invariably gets lost or misplaced. I include it when I find it.*

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- John Farrell (Gaming Trend)

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- Alexander (The Player's Aid)

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- Neil Bason (Lizard Lounge)

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PBM

Reducing the “Barrier to Entry”

Paul Mouchet

The “Barrier to Entry” phrase is typically used in economics to describe the difficulty a company might have breaking into a marketplace that already has incumbents. PBM is similar in that people who have experience in PBM have a significant advantage over newbies. Additionally, the traditionally complex world of PBM games often dissuades new players from joining in because they feel outmatched.

When developing the *Cohorts Game System*, I’ve spent a great deal of effort trying to find a way to lower the barrier-to-entry for PBM games. It’s no small task for a brand-new player to get into the PBM genre unless they have somebody to guide them. Even then, I would estimate that most new players drop out because they simply can’t compete at a high enough level to make the long-term investment a PBM game requires.

I believe that is accomplished by providing new players a PBM game that plays perfectly well as a standalone game. Furthermore, the PBM game should feel like any other turn-based strategy game the player might have

been exposed to.

While I was building the standalone version of [Cohorts: Veil of Entropy](#) to facilitate testing, a revelation came to me about how I could use *Cohorts’* inherent game design to lower the barrier to entry for new players. This triggered a redesign of several key aspects of the *Cohorts*.

I believe the key to getting new gamers into the PBM world is to give them a way to experience PBM without even knowing it.

The first and most major change was a complete redesign of the game’s user interface by turning it into a fully graphical interface. The second change was to decrease overall complexity of the game without reducing the richness of the game design. The third change was the support for

multiple game modes. These modes are designed to teach a new player some of the key tenets of PBM gaming, slowly introducing them to the wonder of PBM.

The tenets that I targeted with each mode are:

Tenet 1 – there are no do-overs. Each action matters. Each turn matters. If you want to succeed, plan them carefully.

Tenet 2 – turns are planned, but their

outcome isn't known for certain until after you get the results for your whole turn.

Tenet 3 – your plans must be fluid. What you planned may have to change as other players help mold the landscape of the game world.

Tenet 4 – no man is an island. *Cohorts*, like most every other PBM game, is a multiplayer game. Some players will “officially” be in your Faction (team), while other players may require diplomacy to get them to help you stave off attacks from your enemies. Players who attempt victory on their own, who are often referred to as a ‘lone wolf’, rarely succeed.

The game modes that were introduced included the following:

Practice Mode: single-player standalone game that processes all turns locally on the player's computer or Xbox One. In Practice Mode, the player's turns can be rolled back and started it over if things don't go the way the player would like. *This gives players a chance to try various strategies and concepts without having to restart the whole game when they find out their*

Cohorts is a massively multiplayer game initially designed around the old-school play-by-mail philosophy. The first module for the game is called *Veil of Entropy*. It's a high fantasy world that pits seven factions against each other, vying for victory before the end of days occurs.

plans were less than excellent.

Single Player Mode: single-player standalone game that runs locally on the player's computer or Xbox One with no roll-back option. *This gives the player their first taste of Tenet #1.*

Single Player PBM Mode: a true single-player PBM game. Orders are planned on the player's computer or Xbox One and are then submitted to the server for processing. Any random outcomes are not discovered until the turn results are processed and returned to the player. *This gives the player their first taste of Tenet #2.*

Multiplayer Sequential Mode: two or more players playing the game together with no roll-back option. Each player takes their turn locally on their computer and the updated results are sent out to the other players. In this mode, random outcome actions are resolved

immediately. Players can be in the same Faction or they can be spread out over multiple factions. The player sequence is determined at the start of the game and is maintained for the entire game. Player's turns are run one at a time and the next player's turn doesn't start until the previous player's turn is complete.

This gives the player their first taste of Tenet #3.

Multiplayer Sequential PBM Mode:

two or more players playing the game together with no roll-back option. Orders are planned and submitted to the server for processing. Any random outcomes are not discovered until the turn results are processed. All players receive updated results based on the outcome of the turn. Players can be in the same Faction or they can be spread out over multiple factions.

The player sequence is determined at the start of the game and is maintained for the entire game. Player's turns are run one at a time and the next player's turn doesn't start until the previous player's turn is complete. *The player now gets to experience Tenets 1, 2 & 3 all together.*

Multiplayer PBM Mode: two or more players playing the game together with no roll-back option. Orders are planned and submitted to the server for processing. Any random outcomes are not discovered until the turn results are processed. All players receive updated results based on the outcome of the turn. Players can be in the same Faction or they can be spread out over multiple factions. There is no player sequence in this mode. Each turn has a fixed length of time in which players must submit



Race portrait for The Gigas in Cohorts.

their orders. Player orders are run in batches at the same time each day. Since many players' turns can be run in the same batch, it's possible that well thought out plans can run amok because another player's orders might run before yours, completely changing your game-world before your orders are executed. *The player gets to experience the full PBM experience of Tenets 1, 2, 3 & 4.*

The game modes described above allow players new to PBM concepts a chance to learn how the PBM world works. However, to completely lower the

"barrier to entry", *Cohorts* will also introduce a system of player ranking. Using this ranking system, players can have some confidence that they're competing with others who are of a similar skill level. Additionally, the game system will support 'closed games', where people can choose to limit who will be allowed to play within a particular game or who will be on their team.

Cohorts: Veil of Entropy will open the eyes of many new would-be PBM gamers, showing them the wonderful world that is not otherwise available through real-time game play. It's been many years since the PBM game world was popular. It's time to make what was old, new again.

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Smoking the Pipe of PBM

Don't let anybody blow gaming smoke in your face

Charles Mosteller

They've gone on to other things. They. Them. You. Me. Us. The whole darned world has just gone on. PBM has been left behind. It's become passé. Our hobby has been passed over. Time has passed it by.

We've gotten older. Some of you, much older. Myself and a few others, not so much, maybe.

Well, I did say maybe.

Postage has gone up. The Internet has been born and exploded onto the scenes of our lives. Change has proven itself, once again, to be a constant in both our everyday realities and in our gaming pastimes. What's a backwater hobby like play by mail to do, I ask you?

We reinvent ourselves. We've done it before - or at least, some have tried to. Big plans. Lots of schemes. Yet in spite of it all, in spite of our hopes and our dreams and our ambitions, hundreds upon hundreds of PBM companies have fallen by the wayside of time.

Dashed. Decimated. Defunct.

It's a Hell of a mess that PBM has gotten

itself into, isn't it? Not only have we been fighting technology and progress and change, we have been fighting all of the 'bad things' that come with aging along with our hobby.

Wargaming **was** dying. Boardgaming **was** dying. Play by mail gaming **has been** dying. We live. We die. The games that we play live and die.

Or at least, it seems that way, sometimes.

People attached themselves to PBM gaming back in the day for a reason - *for many different reasons*. Those reasons never died. They remain as intact and as valid and as relevant,

today, as they ever did.

Play by mail gaming, or postal gaming as it is known to some, was never the number one gaming pastime to everyone, but for quite a number of people - for thousands of people - it was.

So, why did PBM gaming attract a following in the first place, and why has it managed to retain a following (albeit admittedly smaller) up through to today?

Well, I suspect that it was because somebody chose to lead the way. Take

Yet in spite of it all, in spite of our hopes and our dreams and our ambitions, hundreds upon hundreds of PBM companies have fallen by the wayside of time.

Rick Loomis of Flying Buffalo, Inc., for example. He led the way for the commercial aspect of PBM gaming. Oh, to be certain, he wasn't the only leader that play by mail gaming had back in the day, but he certainly planted the flag in what would become a new frontier - a frontier of gaming, albeit one that came at a price. Turn fees, anyone?

You pay a fee when you go to the cinema to get entertained by a movie, so why not pay a fee to get entertained with a game? Makes sense to me.

Play by mail games were an escape from reality. They also pushed the bounds of imagination - namely, YOUR imagination. They were a social activity, as they grew one's circle of friends and acquaintances that one socialized with - albeit through the mechanisms of envelopes and postage stamps. And telephones.

Oh my God! How much money got sunk by people supposedly playing games by mail into the pockets of the telephone companies. That was back in the day of long distance charges. These days, people take an awful lot for granted.

Similarly, PBM gaming gets taken for granted, also. To some, it is little more than an anachronism. For some, it is only a curiosity, or a mere speck on the big map of all forms of gaming worldwide. To many in this day and age, it is what it

always was to many, even during the heyday of play by mail gaming - an unknown.

STOP! Let's stop right here. Let's pause long enough to ponder what that word is, what that word means.

Unknown.

If something is unknown, which is to be not known, then how does something that is unknown or relatively obscure become known to a wider mass of

people, to a broader swath of society?

By letting other people know about it. By telling people. By informing others. By getting the word out. By sharing bits and pieces and this or that about it to other people.

Play by mail games were an escape from reality. They also pushed the bounds of imagination - namely, YOUR imagination.

One of the things that happens to both people and things with the passage of time is that they can and will begin to fall into obscurity. For all of the talk about PBM being dead, and for all of the predictions about play by mail dying, the actual reality is that PBM is not so much dead as it has fallen back into obscurity.

Or put another way, play by mail gaming has returned to its roots. Obscurity. Being unknown. The more that things change, the more that they remain the same. Things come full circle. We're right back where we started (or nearly so).

Irony has not seen fit to spare PBM gaming. Indeed, irony has swung its mighty sword directly at the hobby and the industry that are PBM. In what should come as a surprise to no one, irony's aim was true, and its blade has become firmly lodged in the head of play by mail gaming.

Rather than decapitate us, irony's goal was to merely instill within us a more healthy appreciation for good old common sense.

Now, some might say that common sense says that postal gaming's time has passed. Some might say that this is the Age of the Internet, and that PBM gaming's fate is sealed. Some might ask, why would people in this day and age pay to play a game via the postal service? They would chalk all of that up to common sense.

Common sense, however, is not so easily pigeonholed. It is not quite so lacking in versatility or applicability. No age, no era, no time frame holds a monopoly upon common sense.

Once upon a time ago, waiting for weeks between turns for one's turn results to arrive was normal. These days, many might consider such to be an insane or inefficient approach, when there are quicker - vastly quicker - ways to obtain

results from games.

Quicker is not always better, though, but it can take time to gain a better appreciation for things - including things related to play by mail gaming. A microwave oven can cook meals faster than a traditional oven, but that doesn't automatically translate into food cooked faster actually tasting better.

Common sense, however, is not so easily pigeonholed. It is not quite so lacking in versatility or applicability. No age, no era, no time frame holds a monopoly upon common sense.

One of the things that PBM gaming got right was that it delivered a gaming experience that was bigger than the envelope that one's turn results arrived in. PBM gaming provided people who didn't know one another a way to 'meet' each other - and that way was in the setting of a game. PBM gamers bonded because of shared experiences,

because of mutually fun gaming experiences that played themselves out not just on paper, but in the vastly larger spaces that were their imaginations.

Those are the very kinds of things that never grow old, that never go out of date, that never become obsolete.

Compare those things to the clickfests that many modern Internet games visit upon the masses. People quickly tire of games that do not challenge their thinking, that do not expand the boundaries of their imaginations, that fail to build a sense of anticipation.

Ultimately, the true measure of any game is whether the gaming experience of playing it is larger than the sum of its individual parts.

Just as throwing money at a problem typically does not solve things, likewise, just throwing technology at games doesn't typically fix things. This is why, I believe, that the key to keeping play by mail games relevant and thriving in the face of the coming of the Internet never lay in just giving PBM games a technological makeover. Their core strength, after all, was never rooted in technology, at all.

Some might beg to differ - and they are free to differ. There is always room for difference of opinions on such subjects. Hopefully, there always will be!

When postal gaming first came into being, it was faced with the unknown. When the Internet appeared on the scene, it was a big unknown. Early attempts to transition PBM gaming online were frequently clumsy. Game companies and game moderators were feeling their way - sometimes blindly - and trying to adapt technology to serve their respective visions for the future of their games, as they saw them in the light of that time.

In hindsight, would any of them have done anything differently? In hindsight, could anything have been done

differently - done better, yet differently?

Hindsight is a wonderful thing, and much common sense is erected atop it. However, hindsight isn't good for simply reflecting upon mistakes made during such transitions. Rather, it is only through hindsight that some of the greater aspects and more profound innovations of a gaming form can be more fully appreciated.

Ultimately, the true measure of any game is whether the gaming experience of playing it is larger than the sum of its individual parts.

Anticipation. Depth. Imagination. Fun. On those four counts, PBM gaming has always been a success. Those are cornerstones for a solid foundation of gaming to be built upon.

Put that in your gaming pipe and smoke it!



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Ridin' Out the Storm

A Galac-Tac Chronicle – Episode 4

Douglas Neman

Weather Report: 3500-04

We have met the enemy, and the enemy is...*bad at cards*.

We have officially had our first encounter with someone from another empire. That's what happens when you get sent as deep into space as possible, as fast as possible. You make new acquaintances.

In this case, it was a scout ship a lot like ours, from the empire Still Standing. (Really, what is it with emperors? Is it a *rule* that they have to come up with stupid names? Instead of going to war, why don't they just have a naming contest and leave the rest of us alone?)

Regulations forbid us from charting the system when a foreign empire is present. The brass is terrified that the enemy will capture one of the survey bots and hack it for intel, or steal our superior surveying technology. And yes, that was

sarcasm.

Regulations also forbid us from consorting with the enemy. If we do, we'll get tried for treason and shot, and maybe not even in that order.

Rex and I both know that. So of course, the first thing we did was dock with the other scout ship and have a party. And when I say party, I mean we had a few beers, swapped stories, and gambled for the galaxy.

There was only one pilot on the other ship. His name was Vance. He was a Gerandlian, the first I'd ever met. Gerandlians have four feet, four hands, and deep purple skin. His extra hands meant that he didn't need a copilot, which

in turn meant that he was lonelier than we were.

Just like us, he didn't want to be out here. He was drafted. Said his passion was ballet. All he really wanted to do was dance.

I blurted out, "So *Vance* likes to *dance!*" and gave him my patented Big Stupid Grin. He just stared at me and said, "Yeah, I've only heard that a

Galac-Tac is a single unit level, science fiction war game. 10 to 15 players start equally. Turns are processed on any schedule the players agree to, and all players move simultaneously. Each game is computer generated, no two games are alike. You can design your own ships. Only your economic and military decisions will decide your fate in the game.

few hundred times in my life.”

Vance had just finished charting the system when we arrived, and he was basically twiddling his four thumbs. He didn't receive any new orders after sending his survey report. "I think they forgot about me," he said. (He didn't offer to share his survey report with us, and we didn't ask.)

He told us what was going on back on his homeworld, and it's even worse than ours. Instead of a toddler in charge, his emperor is a psychopath with a bloodlust. I honestly don't know which is better. On his homeworld, the people now line up for food rations, work in the weapon factories, and sleep. Someone attempted a revolution, but it didn't get very far.

When we mentioned that the only thing we had to do on our ship was play checkers, Vance told us that he has decks of cards! And he even gave us one! Woo hoo!

So we all shut out the universal madness, got drunk, and played blindside for a while. But we didn't

He told us what was going on back on his homeworld, and it's even worse than ours. Instead of a toddler in charge, his emperor is a psychopath with a bloodlust. I honestly don't know which is better.

play for money, we had higher stakes. We each started with a third of the galaxy and played until one of us (that would be Rex) had won all the star systems. Rex even got a royal fizzbin in the third hand, the lucky bastard.

I hope Vance is great at ballet, because he was terrible at blindside.

I also hope Vance rides out the storm. He seemed like a good guy. He tried to hide it, but I could tell that he was really, really scared. I think he doesn't expect to survive this. If he's like me and Rex, he probably does everything in his power to avoid thinking about it.

We each reported the other's presence back to our respective homeworlds (I didn't want to, but we had to, because CC would have found out anyway when they downloaded the automatic logs). CC was furious that we hadn't charted the new system. The fact that it was their own regulations which prevented us from doing so was completely lost on them. Vance laughed and said his CC behaves the same way.

Rex dropped his pants and sent CC a video of his hairy butt, along with the words, "Survey report: all we found

was this moon." Vance howled, and I laughed so hard I almost passed out.

Vance received orders to get to his next star system. We wished him well and he took off.

Once he had gone, we ordered our survey bots into action, but they didn't move. When we politely asked the computer why the survey bots wouldn't deploy, the computer politely informed us that it had detected another foreign scout ship in the system.

Then the computer told us that it had no way of knowing if this new ship had just arrived...or if it had been there watching us, all along.



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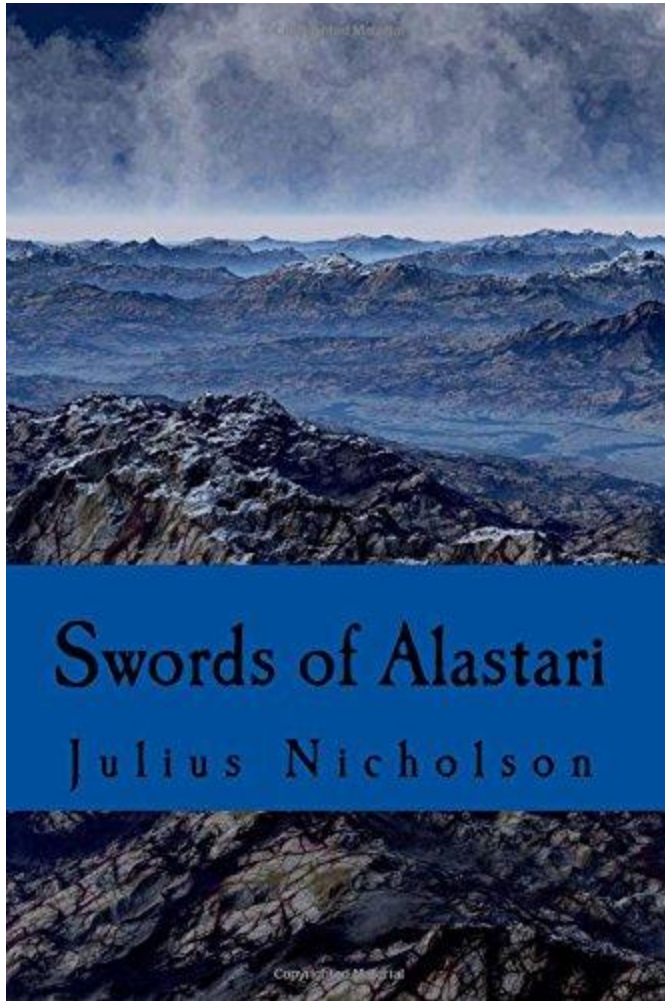
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[Available on Amazon.](#)

Tribenet

A Player's View of the Game

Chun-gah

Of the innumerable simulations in the world, most can be easily classified. There are wargames, there are diplomatic games, and there are games of civilization. And among these games there are obvious trade-offs. The wargame has the war already going while the civilization game treats war as an abstraction. Very few games have managed to merge the three types and still kept the flavour of each fully intact. [Tribenet](#) blends the best and essential features of these three genres.

In Tribenet a player operates his Tribe to the point of micro-management. He assigns people to feed the Tribe, make weapons, make tools, and scout the land. He has no information other than what he can gather himself. He is limited in his knowledge of terrain. He is limited in his knowledge of the reality of other Tribes. The fog of war can be truly of Pea Soup proportions. Decisions have far reaching consequences. Assign too few people to hunt or farm or fish and your people start starving. Fail to arm and they are vulnerable to bandits and outsiders. Fail to improve their ability to

The drive is always on to find minerals and coal, and to protect your supplies once you find them. And you must balance the work of your people.

perform tasks and they remain primitive and inconsequential.

The Tribe's abilities are categorised by certain tasks, make armour, make weapons, farm, hunt, herd, etc. And to allow these task abilities to be simulated they are graded on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being the most basic. The higher the skill the more difficult to attain it, and skills are obtained sequentially. You must have Farming-5 to go to Farming-6.

Tribes contain animals, goods, and people. All are precious and useful. You must have horses for your cavalry and your scouts; you must have elephants for transport. Cattle and goats are food on the hoof. You need traps and spears and bows for hunting. You need hoes or plows for farming. And all this stuff has to be made. Furthermore you have to locate the materials to make the stuff. The drive is always on to find minerals and coal, and to protect your supplies once you find them. And you must balance the work of your people. You have warriors, who can fight and work, Actives who can work. And Inactives (women and children) who do no work

but are essential for reproduction. And all of them eat.

Operating a Tribe, getting it to grow and to become more powerful, may seem to be a worthy end in itself.

But this is only the tip of the iceberg.

Where TribeNet makes its greatest deviation from the run-of-the-mill civilisation game is that the player determines what his

Tribe is actually like, and interacts freely with the rest of the continent over E-mail. This is diplomacy in its purest form. Your knowledge of your colleagues is extremely limited, and the power that you can project can be real or illusory. You can chart your course as a lone wolf and speak to no one, or become a major player and be involved heavily in the discourse of the game. The

diplomatic traffic is intense, and the impact is great. Through this a player can inject as much or as little colour into the game as he wishes. The only limitation being those that the player imposes on himself. There are evil Tribes and peaceful Tribes, slavers and freemen, religious blocs and xenophobic loners. Those Tribes who make the effort to speak up and involve themselves in the game find it rich and complex.

There are evil Tribes and peaceful Tribes, slavers and freemen, religious blocs and xenophobic loners. Those Tribes who make the effort to speak up and involve themselves in the game find it rich and complex.

In the days before nationalism (and indeed in many places in the world today) it is the by which the person identifies him or herself. Getting this to be realistically simulated can be almost impossible, but TribeNet has managed to do it.

When first entering the game a player will get a mentor if requested. This is an experienced player who volunteered for

the job and takes the time to work the player through the initial set-up and moves. The Mandate rulebook is freely available for players, but the Mentor is the one who makes clear the statements in the book and instructs the player how to translate the often bare descriptions into meaningful gameplay. The mentor can also instruct the player in what skills they should need right off since the mentor has learned that

already, often the hard way.

The turn cycle is 1-month game time every 2 weeks. A player sends in his move, which details the activities of the Tribe and their skill attempts for that turn, and within a few days the gamemaster sends back the Report via E-mail. The report is the record of the consequences of that turns and its decisions, and the full status of the Tribe entering into the next turn with a full

inventory of people, goods, and animals. The player then has about one week to send in his move for the next turn. The cycle is as dependable as the sunrise in TribeNet, and Peter is remarkably error free, especially considering the volume of information coming at him every week.

Most players of TribeNet could easily live with a faster turnaround, but the 2-week period seems to work out best. Since diplomatic intercourse is fluid in TribeNet the turn sequence and the player interactions rarely get disjointed.

Players may have to have tighter communication if they are trading with each other or conducting joint manoeuvres in war, but this has proved easy to accomplish. The speed of E-mail can be truly amazing.

Players know the rules insofar as they know what they have to do, and what they have to have to accomplish something, but the mechanics are a mystery like the continent. A player will know to make bows, and know to make metal arrows, and know to have sufficient skill to use them correctly, but when he fires them at an enemy the only person who really knows what is going on to resolve combat is the gamemaster. Practice has shown this to be sufficient, though many players work hard to figure out the systems in order to better their chances in a given situation. Common

As the Tribes search out their surroundings it becomes quickly obvious that no matter how far they go, there is more farther on.

sense most often reveals the same results as the best calculations.

The map that TribeNet operates on is probably awesome. As the Tribes search out their surroundings it becomes quickly obvious that no matter how far they go, there is more farther on. The theories on the shape of the continent are as varied and widespread as the theories on the shape of the world were in the actual year of 900 AD. Mapping is a precious commodity.

Tribes are identified by a unique number. This allows the gamemaster to keep track of the Tribe with no misdirections. Players, however, name their Tribe whatever they want. Some have changed the name of their Tribe more than

once (prompting a validation of the GM's use of numbers, they cannot change the number). Tribal names can be rich with meaning, or humorous. There are Tribes like the Hailong, the Chinese name of the Black Dragon. Yamato, a poetic term for Japan and a word embodying the Japanese Spirit. Kung Sah, the name of an infamous Malayan drug lord. The Oxwind, the Heck'r'we, the Sbaras, the Grossartig Bastarde. Where a reference to "Tribe 449" inspires little, the same reference to "The Velvet Glove" tells you something about what you are facing.

But again, that is in the hands of the

players.

Player interaction and effect is the hallmark of TribeNet, and nowhere is that more apparent than in the research subjects. When a player achieves a 10 in a given skill that player may conduct research into something in that field. For example the player researching in Farming may research potatoes, which when planted are harvested in the fall and provide an efficient and readily utilised food source for the winter months when hunting is lean. The player with Herding 10 may research Pigs, which have litters rather than single or paired offspring and thus will reproduce like mad providing the herder with an inexhaustible source of food and leather. A new weapon, war-horses, war-dogs, a player is limited only by his imagination. And the GM has shown himself to be very helpful and cooperative in working out research subjects.

A game with this many facets runs a high risk of being addictive, and it truly is. With its long time span and need for thorough planning and persistence it has tremendous appeal for the player who wishes to immerse himself in the game. But for the very casual player it will have little appeal. The game will return effort abundantly, but if little effort is made then the player simply drifts at the mercy of those players who do involve themselves. It can then be about as much fun as being a tennis ball. In order to get the most out of the game the player must involve himself in it, and the more involved the player is the more fun

the game becomes. So if a person is a casual gamer, who likes beer-and-pretzel games that can be picked up and completed in a single hour or two then TribeNet is not a good idea.

But if a player likes to immerse himself in a game and thinks that real-world simulations are for them, then TribeNet would be a good investment.

Now pardon me, I have some goat to cook up.

Chun-gah
Hetman of the Kung Sah
Proud Member of the Mighty Host of Ushko



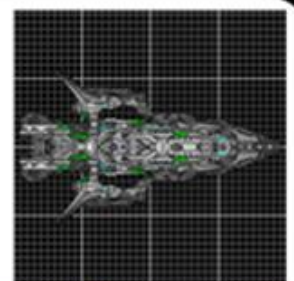
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Galac-Tac

The GTac Assistant

Davin Church

Galac-Tac is an old-fashioned game, of course, since it was originally designed for play-by-mail. But that original environment imposed some limitations on the way players' turns could be accepted and their turn results returned to them. In particular, players must write up turn sheets with minimal information as unambiguously as possible (to facilitate data entry) and the reports returned were simple text printed on paper (in color, no less). (The earliest version of Galac-Tac also included 17"x22" color-plotted hex maps with your position drawn on it. As far as we could tell, these were the first ever color-drawn turn maps in the PBM industry.)

Managing these paper-based turns was a chore for players, but we did such things willingly in those days because it was the best option we had. Over the years,

Managing these paper-based turns was a chore for players, but we did such things willingly in those days, because it was the best option we had. Over the years, though, personal computers were becoming more common in homes, and it made sense to see what use could be made of them to help us play these paper-only games.

though, personal computers were becoming more common in homes and it made sense to see what use could be made of them to help us play these

paper-only games. In the beginning, we entered the most important information off our turn sheets into the PCs of the day and had them keep track of our information in a slightly more manageable form. As technology and communications between these PCs improved, more options became available.

By the time modems were more commonplace and made direct

computer-to-computer communications feasible, I started working on a full-scale program to help me play Galac-Tac. I called it the GTac Assistant (or just GTac), and it has grown and helped my friends and me play Galac-Tac ever since.

Goals

The primary design goals of GTac were to:

- Download turn reports directly from the Galac-Tac master computer system.
- Store the information from those reports on the home PC for easy access and cross-referencing between turns.
- Assist in the interpretation and presentation of the current game position to make play easier.
- Assist in the production of the next turn sheet (turn input).
- Transmit that turn sheet directly to the master Galac-Tac computer system, avoiding difficulties both with producing readable printed turn sheets and with manual data entry.

Satisfying these goals made playing the game easier and more enjoyable for both the player and the Game Master. The programming started on DOS systems using modems, moved up to using Windows and BBS systems, and now in the Internet age it's doing what everyone expects all game programs to be able to do – use graphics to interact with players and the web to interact with the game system.

Features

The GTac Assistant is now a Windows-based application (written in a programming language called APL) that you can install on your own system to help you play Galac-Tac. The Galac-Tac website can show you copies of all of your empire's turns, but GTac also keeps

a record of everything that's happened in a more concise internal form, right on your own PC. It can, for instance, show you summary reports about your empire, keep track of additional information that you enter, export data that you can use in other ways, help guide you in building your turn input and uploading it to the web server, and, most usefully of all, it can show you composite, auto-updating, interactive, graphical maps on your screen that you can customize.

Using GTac

Let's take look at some of the features that are available to you...

The first thing you would do with GTac is create a new galaxy data file to store data from the Galac-Tac galaxy that you just started play in. There are three main facilities here that you'll use a lot: download a game turn, display a map, and enter your actions for the next turn. You'll also be able to produce a few different kinds of reports and use various tools, as needed. Let's discuss each of these areas.

Download Turn

Downloading the latest turn from the Talisman Games web site is a simple matter of selecting it from the menu. If this is the first time you've downloaded a turn, you'll be asked for your Talisman Games user name and password (since you don't want anyone else getting your turns). Each turn, GTac processes the data from the web site and adds the new information to its local database.

Display Map

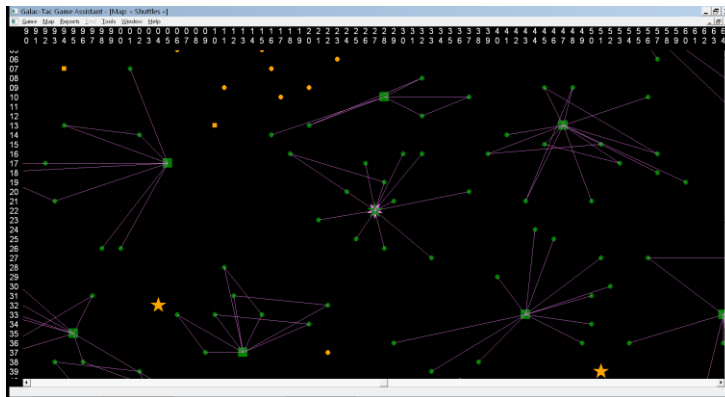
This is probably the most exciting feature of GTac – the ability to create your own map designs that are automatically kept up-to-date each turn of the game. I may have another article one day discussing more about how to accomplish this magic, but for now let's concentrate on the built-in maps that are available.

The first choice is just called a "Blank" map. It shows a lot of empty space (a grid of dots) with white five-pointed stars in their proper locations for this galaxy.

This map, or any of the other standard maps, can be used as a starting point to custom-create maps of your own design.

For convenience, there are a number of pre-defined maps available so that you don't have to create your own for commonly-needed information. For instance, you can ask for a map where your enemies' stars are each colored differently, or where you can see your shuttle routes displayed to make sure you're collecting all your PV income.

All maps provide a list of coordinates on the edges so you don't get lost. Hover your mouse cursor over a star, and it will tell you its location and some basic game information about it (information that you have discovered to date, of course).



An example of a "shuttle route" map.

Double-clicking on a star opens a box showing you many details, including what ships are there, what ships you have nearby, distances to other stars, and the complete summary of everything that's ever happened at that location. Right-clicking on a ship in one of those lists gives you the option of issuing a command to that ship without having to type it into your list of actions manually.

The big benefit of the mapping facility, though, is simply being able to see your empire rather than just looking at list of ships and coordinates on a

report. This is a tremendous improvement over the old printed text maps with penciled notations and hand-drawn ship paths, and they can still be printed with up-to-date information whenever desired.

Enter Actions

This opens a spreadsheet-like grid where you can enter your actions that you'd like performed on the next game turn, much like writing out the old paper turn sheets. However, this is a "smart entry" system.

First of all, it helps you enter valid Galac-Tac commands by spelling out the command name for you as soon as you've typed only a few characters.

Then, it makes notes for you in the grid reminding you of what arguments are needed for that command, so you'll type them in correctly without having to constantly refer to the manual. Each of these arguments is also checked to make sure it's valid, and then many of them are also checked to see if they're reasonable. For instance, a star location must be entered in the form 99-99 and it will object if you try to enter anything else. It will also remind you with a warning if there's no star actually at that location on the map. It will let you enter incorrect or questionable actions if you insist, but it tries its best to make sure you're not making inadvertent mistakes.

When you're done entering actions, you can ask GTac to check them for other common mistakes, such as giving a ship two conflicting orders, or spending more PI than you have available. When you're happy, you may then upload these actions directly to the Talisman Games web site for processing on the next due date.

Other options are also available, such as viewing the actions for older turns, typing in planned actions to be held for future turns, printing your action list, sorting the actions into a reasonable order, and even downloading actions that you entered on the web site when you were away from home.

Reports

Reports come in several flavors. One, for instance, is a printable report that gives you a one-page overall summary of

the important things happening in your empire. You can just display it on the screen, of course, or show just one section of it if that's all you're interested in.

Another report shows an on-screen list of all the ship designs that you've created (including the initial default designs). This makes it easier for you to choose what kinds of ships you'd like to build.

A third useful report is a current display of all your Production Centers and how much PI you have available to spend there. It includes columns for how much you've spent so far with your currently-entered actions, and how much is left. These numbers update continuously as you enter actions, so you'll always know when you're running out of PI.

Tools

There are several tools available to make your game play easier. For instance, designing a new ship type is a complicated and detailed process on paper, but the Ship Designer tool makes it a snap. Just enter what you'd like to have on your ship and it gives you all the specs, costs, and limitations for your proposed design without any fuss.

There's also an export tool that will give you access to GTac's database of information for any custom work you'd like to do on it. For instance, you may wish to build your own spreadsheet using all the stars that you own and your list of ships to do a special analysis for an attack you're planning.

Editing screens are also available to directly change some kinds of information that GTac stores. A list of star information is kept, for instance, but a game buddy may have told you about data he has collected that you would like to record without having obtained it through the game system.

The Last Word

The GTac Assistant does get updates and improvements from time to time, and suggestions are welcome. Of course playing Galac-Tac the old-fashioned pencil-and-paper way works fine, but getting computer assistance from the GTac Assistant to help you at every stage of play makes it **so** much easier, and more fun, too! Be sure to download a free copy from the web site and give it a try.



"I take it that your turn results weren't quite what you were hoping for?"



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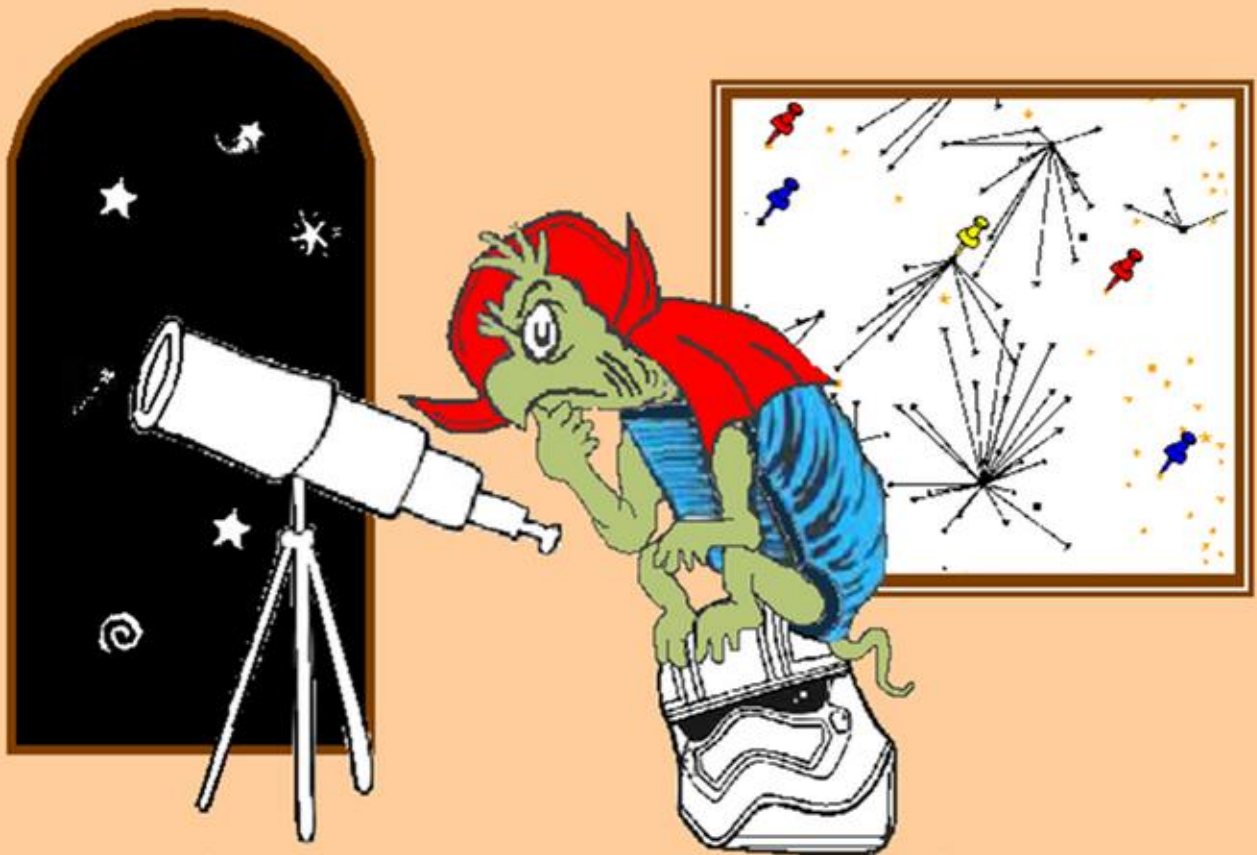
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Advances in the PBEM Experience

Alamaze 3rd Cycle

Rick McDowell

I wonder how hard it is for a [Suspense & Decision](#) reader to know how our hobby has advanced in recent times. So, I suggested game purveyors specifically let us players know what they have done in say the last five years to update and improve their game experience.

In 2013, I took back [Alamaze](#) from its North Carolina domicile, and felt there was a lot of work to do to provide a modern look and experience and provide new challenges and strategic considerations.

- There was a lot of rebalancing of kingdoms across 20 or so criteria, such as brigade composition, spell lists, artifacts, kingdom starting positions, victory types, the early strategic objective, and kingdom customization where the player chooses several potential enhancements to the kingdom.
- Turn results went from .txt to html, and while email results are still sent, players can access their results, rules, map and all components directly from our game website.
- We have left order entry forms and Excel sheets in the past, and now have a very nice order entry and verification site that about eliminates player input errors and tracks resources, available orders, providing instant analysis if any orders may not be successfully executed.
- By early 2015, we had introduced a complete rework of the game and its mechanics and kingdoms with the introduction of The 3rd Cycle: *The Choosing*. We went from a fixed set of 12 kingdoms to a set of 24 kingdoms that provide over 1000 potential combinations of active kingdoms in any one game.
- Our forum is an integral part of the Alamaze experience. Besides a friendly player community that happily answers gameplay questions, it is how players sign up for new games and discuss all things Alamaze related.
- We introduced our new DUEL format: a shorter, two player game on a smaller map perfect for introducing a new player to the game. A DUEL game is up to 18 turns, and is normally \$11.95 for the full game, but new players can play their first DUEL free.
- In January 2017, we introduced the much awaited "Ready Button," where a game advances to the next turn in about 2 minutes, once all players have pressed the button to indicate they are ready.

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The battle of the five armies



ALAMAZE: The Choosing

Overview and a Glimpse at Four Kingdoms

Rick McDowell

Alamaze is the award-winning fantasy adventure war-game for up to 12 players who contest to become Rex over Alamaze. Wrought with anticipation and layered with strategy, Alamaze features magic (over 100 spells and 80 artifacts), combat (more than 70 unit types that gain combat experience), economic development, covert activities, political influence, rebellions and usurpations, character development, 25 kingdom traits like Military Tradition and Magic Supremacy, 24 unique kingdoms including The Red Dragons, The Illusionist, The Rangers, The Lizard Kingdom and The Sacred Order. 12 kingdoms are active in any one game, providing over 1000 possible combinations of active kingdoms in The Choosing.

We'll take a quick look at the backdrop of The Choosing, our completely updated world of Alamaze and examine four of its kingdoms.

Dawn of the 3rd Cycle of Alamaze

Ultimately, the Second Cycle was so hotly contested that not only did one kingdom not prevail, but all were somewhat weakened. The Stone Giants, Trolls, and Witchlord have passed on either to diminished roles as Companions and not kingdoms, or have vanished completely.

The splintering of power was the signal that a new era was upon Alamaze: The Dawn of the 3rd Cycle, which has come to

be known as The Choosing.

During a century of respite, many new kingdoms, and many previous fiefdoms have come into relative prominence. There are now recognized 24 full kingdoms who may vie for power, and we estimate 22 additional Companion races than can field brigades that may serve several potential masters, as is the case with the four primary independent races of humans: the Northmen, Huns, Zamorans, and Westmen. In any reality that may unfold, there are likely 12 sovereign kingdoms actively pursuing an agenda. Humans have increased their control of territory, now thought to control not only the cities, but likely a town and village in each region in the vacuum created by the chaos of the 2nd Cycle. Some population centers never recovered from the destruction in 2nd Cycle, so overall population is reduced as well as Humans having more control.

Meanwhile magic capacity has increased. There seem to be many more spells and incantations invented or rediscovered than were known in 2nd Cycle. Kingdoms have focused on their strengths and have become renowned through what is known as Traits that interpret these characteristics.

But military science has increased at pace. There are many more tactical doctrines available, and some few kingdoms have advanced military traits such as Military Tradition, Stalwart, or perhaps even a pronounced quality of

Heroism. Dwarven Lords have begun fabricating War Machines, changing the nature of siege warfare.

Diplomats too have honed their skills, with Charisma being exploited by some, and the craft of deception and influence expressed through the duplicitous ability called Stir Unrest.

The old tradition of generations of the same bloodlines for High Priestess emerging has been complicated. Now it is difficult to identify a potential High Priestess, more preparation is necessary in passing what is called The Test to become a High Priestess, yet they have learned additional abilities.

Find your path, choose your way, execute your strategy my Liege. Your court, military, agents and wizards await your commands. We are now in the 3rd Cycle of Alamaze!

Attack by the 4th Red Dragon army group on the Dwarven city of Viperhead, located in area DK of Northern Mists:

Scouts had reported earlier that Viperhead showed the defenses of a growing city. Strong walls, stone towers, a dozen or more ballistas on the ramparts.

Early in the day, Lord Commander Reaver of Fire commanded his 4th Red Dragon army group to engage the city. The city walls will not aid the defenders very well against this flying attacker. Due to the industrious nature of the Dwarven, the city's battlements were reinforced against an attack. Due to the ruthless nature of the Red Dragon, the city's defenders were shaken by fear against a possible attack.

As the attackers swept down from the darkening sky to just above the flat grasslands, the first missiles sang out.... (more follows)



The Fantasy Kingdoms of Alamaze is a turn based, multi-player campaign styled game where each campaign will provide enjoyment for months, as players have several days between turns to consider their actions and implement their strategy in the grand tradition of text based PBEM gaming that Alamaze helped define.

The Realm of the Amazon Matriarchy



Kingdom
Motto: The
 Lioness Hunts
 the Prey

Leader Title:
 Holy Mother

**From Your
 High**

Councilor:
*We Amazons
 are not an
 ancient
 people, but*

established our kingdom by defeating the Westmen dynasty centuries ago. While we retain our wild ways including hunting from horseback, we have adapted the characteristics of other civilizations including a stable political system. Our belief in our gods is paramount, as is the training of our all women army. We do retain the services of various male Companion units, civilized and otherwise, and are entitled under treaty to recruit brigades of Westmen from towns and cities we control in times of need. Our Secrecy grants us a hidden capital, that may be in any terrain. We have mastery in the plains, and stand alone in that regard: those abilities will be important to our success, Holy Mother.

Traits: Trackers, Military Tradition, Devout, Riders, Adventurers, Healing, Secretive, Archers, Foreknowledge.

Special Orders and Abilities: Our Capital begins with a Temple constructed by our forbearers. +20% food production in plains PC's due to our hunting prowess. We have mastered the often decisive Flanking tactic. Our

knowledge of sun and heat provides that the Summer Attack advantage is granted.

Kingdom Brigade Description:

Exclusively female warriors, primarily light cavalry, carrying bow and spear, accompanied by fleet footed light infantry. Well trained and extremely adept in the plains. Exceptionally deadly in the plains.

Companions Available: Hill Giants, Wildlings, Apes, Zealots

Terrain Adeptness: Mastery in the Plains

Magical Prowess: Standard

Spells Available Earlier than Prowess

Base: Eagle Familiar, Dire Wolf Familiar, Healing

Foreknowledge: Bow of Heracles and The Last Herd of Winged Stallions.



The Onyx Imperium of the Dark Elves



Kingdom Motto: To the Strong, Everything!

Leader Title: Great Emperor

From Your Prime Minister: The Dark Elven Onyx Imperium

remains one of the most rigid and enduring feudal societies. Imperial succession, however, is often perilous, Sire: congratulations on having secured the throne without...mishap. The Onyx Imperium is well respected by friends and foes alike for having an array of strengths, including persuasive statesmen, impressive wizards, clever agents and a well-balanced military featuring black mailed and skilled medium cavalry. Our hatred of the pale ones, the High Elves of the so-called Golden Wood, is known to all. Our economy needs shoring up and our military is not among the largest. Both areas likely need to be addressed in order to expand greatly upon the frontiers of our Imperium. We likely have the greatest number of kingdom Traits due to our superior culture.

Traits: Cunning, Trackers, Order, Military Tradition, Ruthless, Riders, Feudal, Spy Network, Acuity, Resistance to Sleep. Archers.

Special Orders and Abilities: Our Riders trait grants us the ability to use the flanking tactic, other conditions being met. All of our other abilities are captured in the multitude of Traits we possess.

Kingdom Brigade Description: Known chiefly for their expert archery, the archers and infantry usually wear black leather and black helmets, while the cavalry component wears black ring mail and adorns their mounts with various intimidating headgear.

Companions Available: Orcs, Ogres, Centaurs, Great Bats, Wood Elves, Swampmen

Terrain Adeptness: Mastery in forest and swamp

Magical Prowess: Mastery

Spells Available Earlier than Prowess Base: Summon Death, Augment Title, Infuriate Populace, Cold Darkness, Plague, Famine, Summon Specters.



The Shadow Lands of the Necromancer



Kingdom
Motto: From
 Death:
 Eternal Life

Leader Title:
 Lord of the
 Undead

**From Your
 Disciple of
 Death:** *Lord
 of the
 Undead, your
 victory is all*

but assured, unless your mortal office holders fail in their missions. Your magic power is unsurpassed, your ability to both create and summon all sorts of undead in unprecedented and not threatened, your early achievement of many spells is a source of jealousy with your rivals. You will want to raise a wizard to be able to teleport an army group, as assembling an undead army group shouldn't take long. Woe to your enemies, Lord of the Undead.

Traits: Order, Ruthless, Foreknowledge

Special Orders and Abilities:

Transmute the Damned to Zombies. Night Attack and Winter Attack are available. Various specialized spells for Undead (see spell list)

Kingdom Brigade Description: Many soldiers were formerly among the Damned, and received military training and equipment upgrades, and so fly their brigade banner as bannermen of the Necromancer. Normally equipped with black leather, shield and spear, with a

compliment of archers. It will be rare to see an exclusively Necro-kingdom brigade force given the great variety of summoned and companion brigades available.

Companions Available: Trolls, Orcs, Warg Riders, Damned, Goblins

Terrain Adeptness: Standard in all terrains

Magical Prowess: Supreme

Spells Available Earlier than Prowess

Base: Summon Death, summon Skeletons, Summon Ghouls, Summon Wights, Summon Demon, Summon High Demon

We possess the following artifacts:

Champion Stallions of 2nd Necromancer
 The Champion Stallions provide a patrol +7 movement points in addition to any other bonuses and +5 to morale of group in possession.

Great Red Bats of the Lost Caves
 1st Necromancer

Great Red Bats of the Lost Caves enable a division sized force (up to 5 brigades) the power of flight. Any destination within 7 areas (except water) can be reached. Groups with flight are not affected by Earthquake, Flash Flood, or Wall of Flame spells.

Mist Talisman of King Zanvar Overseer
 Magically hides emissary to be immune to a wizard's Locate Character spell.
 of this

Scrying Mirror of the Town Of Orodreth
 Acts as a Palantir artifact, No range limit.

The Underworld Cult of Secrets



Kingdom
Motto:
 Anything is
 Possible for
 the Right
 Price

Leader Title:
 Shadow
 Master

**From Our
 Master of
 Assassins:**
 Shadow

Master, hear my counsel. The Underworld has relied on guile, veiled threats, and nerves of steel to survive, and indeed, prosper. Of course, our Agents have been the key to this. The Underworld agents have grown expert at capturing some super-powerful emissaries which is easier than assassinating those beings, due to karmic patterns they detect.

We have strengthened our grip over agents everywhere. Our navy is formidable – pirates, as it were, which very nicely compensate for an anemic army.

Politically, we are currently better than average and can claim good initial regional reactions. We are accepted everywhere, if not loved. With very little drain on our economy to support a military, The Shadow Brotherhood can in time become a very formidable political power. Our many traits provide many fine advantages, although our strategy will be different from a military kingdom.

Traits: Cunning, Industrious, Adventurers, Foreknowledge, Forethought, Rich, Trick of the Trade, Secretive, Spy Network.

Special Orders and Abilities:

- The Underworld has great control over the hiring and training of agents throughout Alamaze. In game terms, this is reflected by the Underworld receiving 1500 gold each time an agent is hired by another kingdom.
- As the Underworld sponsors the training of agents throughout the land, they may also set the price of training, which can range from 2000 gold to 8,000 gold. The initial price of training is 5000 gold. The Underworld may vary this within the range by issuing the order to set training cost. Just put the new price you wish all kings to pay for training, plus or minus 1000 gold from the current cost.
- The Underworld has expanded its intelligence network. As a result, the Underworld can now issue orders to rescue prisoners or kidnap emissaries before the emissary can undertake his mission (it should be noted that wards and guards from the previous month will affect your agents chances).
- Underworld agents and fanatics cost only 50% of the normal cost for using agents for most of their missions; a level 4 agent costs the Underworld 1000 gold per mission.
- Underworld agents may undergo an intensive training and advance to level 4. This training cost you

- 6000 gold and will advance any lower level agent to level 4.

Kingdom Brigade Description:

Shadow Master, our kingdom troops are not envied by other kingdoms. Our brigades are mainly light infantry, lightly armored if at all, with some skirmishers for support. We shall not prevail on the backs of our kingdom troops. Over time, perhaps by winning a few battles and preserving our brigades and leaders that gain experience, we can really enhance our military by recruiting the formidable Companions we have had relationships with in the past: Hill Giants and Ogres.

Companions Available: Hill Giants, Ogres

Terrain Adeptness: Standard

Magical Prowess: Advantaged

Spells Available Earlier than Prowess

Base: Summon Death, Augment Title, Conjure Scandal, Curse, Lesser Masking, Locate Group or Character.

Foreknowledge: Demon Bane, Palantir Crisnia.

I hope you enjoyed learning a bit about how kingdoms in Alamaze have unique composition, capabilities, spell lists and cultural traits. Each kingdom plays differently and can implement any number of strategies, which may also vary at the player's discretion based on which kingdoms are active in any given game of Alamaze: The Choosing.

Visit our website at www.alamaze.co to learn more about the game and perhaps

establish an account at <https://www.alamaze.co/sign-up/>. We don't ask for credit card info, and in fact we are offering a free game of our two player contest, DUEL.

Alamaze is less expensive than you might think. Subscriptions start at \$19.95 monthly with two turns a week processed and in your hands right at noon Eastern time USA. So about \$2.22 a turn.

You can also explore our forum with its 33,000 posts over the last 3.5 years at <http://kingdomsofarcana.net/forum/index.php>. We have started more than 200 games of Alamaze in that time, so average about one new game starting per week.

Come experience Alamaze for yourself.





Announcing Another Alamaze Breakthrough:

THE READY BUTTON!

On New Year's Day 2017, Alamaze unleashed the highly anticipated Ready Button for its two player DUEL format games. See the free DUEL promotion below.

Instead of waiting for a scheduled deadline to arrive, players in DUEL advance to the next turn the minute after both players indicate they are "Ready" by pressing the new Ready Button. Players in DUEL decide which of the 24 kingdoms each will control in Centauria and agree to a maximum time between turns, which can be from minutes to a week. Some comments from players here in the past couple days on DUELS with the Ready Button:

"If you haven't tried playing a duel game with the ready button yet I **highly recommend** it. It is a fast paced addictive **adrenaline rush version of Alamaze.**" - *Hawk*

"**The "READY" button rocks.** I have already completed two duals since it came out. The first last 12 turns over 3 days and the second 9 turns over 2 days. It really is a lot of fun being able to keep your plan and objectives fresh in your mind." - *Jumpingfist*

"Enjoying my game so far. I've made a few rookie mistakes but so far I haven't repeated any. **Exciting stuff!**" - New player *Calidor*

"I played the full 18 turns the first time I played against my brother in our free duel. He caught my military twice out in the open and crushed me both times but my wily emissaries kept me in it till the game ended when it hit the max 18 turn cap". - *Imperial Tark*

ALAMAZE PRESENTS DUEL! PLAY FREE!

DUEL is our exciting new format in Alamaze, made doubly so with the introduction of the Ready Button. Just two kingdoms on the beautiful new Centauria map. Just one opposing player to consider and some elements like sea power removed, it is the best way for less experienced players to hone their Alamaze skills, as well as a brisk, intense contest for experienced players with a friend or rival frenemy. Join a DUEL with a friend, or join solo by posting in the DUEL Arena on the forum. As we introduce DUEL with the **Ready Button**, we are offering a **free game** of DUEL. Send an email to signup@alamaze.co indicating your desire to try DUEL free. We'll take it from there. No credit card info needed. Rules and Map are on the website and the forum. Experience Alamaze at no risk. It's your time.



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*Game of epic adventures and
imperial conquest*

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PBM Activity Corner

News, Developments, & Bragging Rights

From Game Companies and Game Moderators

Flying Buffalo, Inc.

Press release:

By the time you get this, I will have recently started a new World Wide Battle Plan Real Forces game, but we need a few more players for the next World Wide Battle Plan Equal Forces game. We only start them about once a year, so sign up now to get in on it. See our "waiting list" at:

<http://www.flyingbuffalo.com/waiting.htm>

- Rick Loomis, Flying Buffalo

Tribenet



Tribenet is an immersive game of Tribal Diplomacy, Expansion, Exploration, and Conquest set in a dynamic multi-player world.

There are no 'character types', so you, as a player, get to decide the fate and future of your Clan: All of your successes, and any of your failures, rest solely upon your choices and decisions.

The vast world is rich in geography, resources, and dangers, making the open-ended game fantastically diverse and intriguing.

New players are joining weekly, and now is a great time to get involved, as new world areas are being populated.

For more information, or to request a start-up, contact

Peter

peter.rzechorzek@optusnet.com.au

or visit

www.tribenet.com.au

Be sure to check out the game's [FaceBook page](#) as well!

Cheers Peter

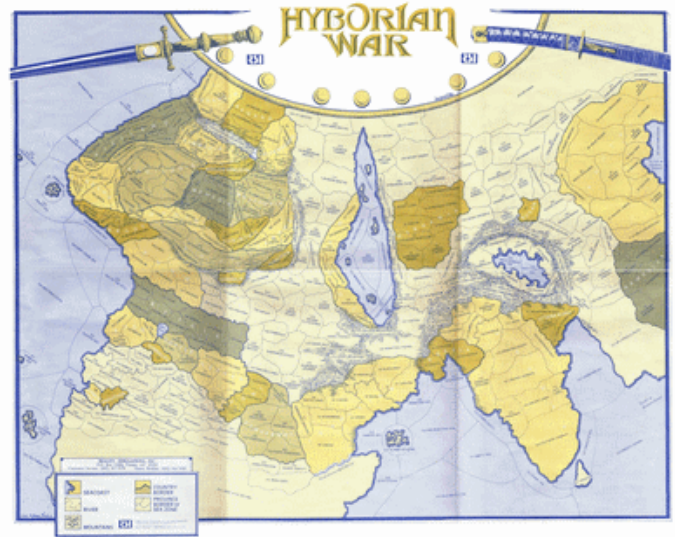


R. Danard Productions.

Besides the fact that "Productions R.Danard" is still running the game Adventurer Kings in French, with a goal to have a multi-language version available this year (depending on the time left by my main work), there will be a "Monster guide" released for AK.

Anyway, there will be some more work on the turn results to improve the output and the maps, and some work on a new game client program.

<https://www.facebook.com/AdventurerKings/>



Hyborian War



I Decided to Play a Game

Ever wonder why you don't get more players?

Charles Mosteller

On January 17th, 2017, I decided to play a game. It got harder, after that.

All that I wanted to do was to play a game. I didn't want to jump through a bunch of hoops. I didn't want to fight with software or with interfaces or with processes. No, all that I wanted was to play a game.

As the editor of [Suspense & Decision](#) magazine, and as the site administrator of the [PlayByMail.Net](#) website and of the [PBM Wiki](#), I am well aware of a number of games that are out there of the PBM or lineal descendant variety. Thus, many different starting points presented themselves to me.

Some, I have tried before. Others, I have not. Thus, with a degree of apprehension, I was off. I mean, after all, other people play these games, right? How hard can it be, right?

Rulebooks and learning curves will always present themselves as potential obstacles to games seeking more players. After all, reading a rulebook takes time. If past experience is any indicator, at all, most rule books for PBM games require more than one reading. They require studying. Studying is an ongoing investment of one's time.

Yet, time is a precious commodity. It is always in short supply! How do you play

games, though, if you don't read the rulebooks?

Learning curves, on the other hand, can make the time that one spends reading rule books seem trivial. There are the basics to grasp, and then there is the mastery of a game's finer points that tend to come with time. There's that word, again - *Time!*

Rather than make it hard on myself, though, I decided to pick a game that I have been wanting to try - [Alamaze!](#)

It's been tempting me for a while, actually. At times, I browse the Alamaze forum, lurking in the shadows and munching on morsels of interest posted by players of the game. Plus, I know the creator of the game, itself, and to top it all off, I even set-up the [Alamaze forum](#) many months back.

So, what could go wrong, eh?

Well, pull up a chair, and I'll tell you. I figured that it would probably be best, if I grabbed myself a copy of the Alamaze rulebook, and read through it, to try and get some degree of current familiarity with it, before actually signing up for a game of Alamaze to play.

So, I head over to the Alamaze forum, and I saw that link at the top of the forum - the one that says **Rulebook**.

The rulebook never loaded, though. Something was amiss. Something was wrong. No rulebook downloaded nor appeared on my monitor's screen. So, I clicked that tab in my web browser off, and I headed over to see what was behind Curtain #2 of my gaming options.

The next stop? [Takamo!](#) Sorry, Rick! I'll try Alamaze another day.

I tried Alamaze long, long ago, back when it was run by Reality Simulations, Inc.. Takamo, on the other hand, I never played, back in the day. Rather, I tried Takamo in more recent years, a couple of years back. I was just going to have to learn the rules of the game, and try to get into the swing of things.

Sounds simple, right?

I thought so, too. However, when I dropped in on the [Takamo forum](#), I discovered anew that I still can't access the Takamo forum as a registered user.

Dormancy in Cybernetic terms is relative, however. Long had Omega stirred in the quantum. I suppose that I could just try registering a different user name, there - but again, I didn't want to jump through hoops. I didn't want to fight interfaces or software - just *play, not solve problems*.

I would just pick what was behind Curtain #3. As they say, the third time's the charm, right?

Uh...*apparently, not.*

I headed over to [Clash of Legends](#). I knew that I would be welcome there. I

knew that they have a pretty good game system already in place there. I had even tried it, before, so that gave me an edge, right?

Wrong!

I logged in, when I got there. No problem. I find the sign up option, and then I browse the scenarios available for joining.

Uh...*sheesh!*

Don't want Game of Thrones. Hell, I've never even seen a single episode of the series on television. Don't want Greek Battles. Don't know what Battle for Arzhog is. Want War of Dwarves and Orcs!

Don't want two-player dwarves in miniature. Want dwarves in 20-player conflict!

To be or not to be?

To play or not to play? So, today, I opted to not play. I'll try, again, another day.

Lest I forget, I did try to download that Alamaze rulebook, again. Many minutes later, it was still a "no go." In fact, I wrote this article, waiting for that rulebook to load in my web browser.

No cigar!

Game companies and game moderators, ever wonder why your player base doesn't grow faster than it does? I'll give you a hint.

Lots of things! Obstacles, impediments, and limited choices are but three.

THE French Wargame Magazine

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OLD SCHOOL TACTICAL, vol. 1

LE FRONT DE L'EST POUR TOUS!

Le premier tome de la collection Old School Tactical est consacré à la guerre de tranchées de la Première Guerre mondiale. Ce livre est destiné à tous les amateurs de jeux de guerre et de modélisme. Il contient des règles de jeu, des scénarios de bataille et des conseils pour la mise en scène de la guerre de tranchées. Le livre est divisé en plusieurs chapitres qui abordent différents aspects de la guerre de tranchées, tels que la construction des tranchées, les tactiques de combat et les équipements utilisés.

Le deuxième tome de la collection Old School Tactical est consacré à la guerre de tranchées de la Première Guerre mondiale. Ce livre est destiné à tous les amateurs de jeux de guerre et de modélisme. Il contient des règles de jeu, des scénarios de bataille et des conseils pour la mise en scène de la guerre de tranchées. Le livre est divisé en plusieurs chapitres qui abordent différents aspects de la guerre de tranchées, tels que la construction des tranchées, les tactiques de combat et les équipements utilisés.

* Latin: woe to the vanquished



FLAGSHIP

...THE INDEPENDENT MAGAZINE FOR GAMERS...

Download back copies of Flagship!

PBeM - Spiele

Die Welt der E-Mail Spiele

"When I visit the PBeM-Spiele website and forum, I use the Google Translate extension for the Chrome web browser."

Charles Mosteller - Editor of Suspense & Decision magazine

ALAMAZE

... Return to the Lands of your Fathers ...



Jason Oates' Games

presents



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Back before there was an Internet,
there was PBM!

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[Alamaze](#)

[Hyborian War](#)

[PhoenixBSE](#)

[Eternal Sunshine Issue #121](#)

[Fans of Eternal Sunshine](#)

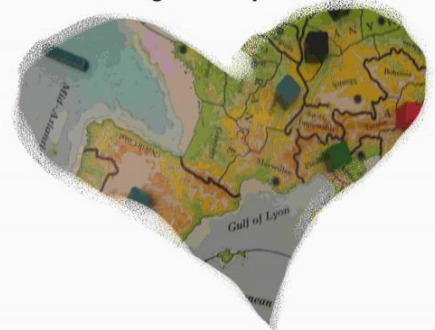
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Diplomacy World #136

After I lie to you, invade you, and destroy you...
Let's get some pizza!



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Winter 2016 Issue

Suspense & Decision



Hang your boredom high!

Be a gaming outlaw! Join the PBM Posse!

Looking to our Cousins

PBM Stands Shoulder to Shoulder with Giants

Bernd Jaehnigen

Before I start this exploration into adjacent game-spaces, I would like to say a few things about [Suspense & Decision](#). First and foremost by a wide margin, I offer deep and sincere thanks to Charles for mustering up the time and energy to make this magazine happen. Time and time again he has risen to grab the reins of a wayward hobby and lead it back to the rutted but serviceable road we are on. The gaps in between issues are not optimal, of course, but the positive force of having a magazine AT ALL greatly outweighs those temporal inconsistencies. Thanks Charles, for relighting this beacon of hope in the fog of PBM!

I myself have flaked repeatedly, as an editor, an article writer, a game developer, and a player. Even now, as I write this, I am well past the deadline Charles had given me for inclusion in the next issue. It is quite possible that I've missed it, and this will reach you one issue later than I intended. I recall warmly the days of high school, college, and early adulthood, when time was abundant

I took delight in each new submission, carefully edited and contributed my own bits of wisdom, and enlisted the help of my brother and girlfriend in handling print production and mailing. Truly it was a labor of love.

(even if money wasn't.) Back then, I edited a PBM journal for ONE GAME. Actually, it wasn't for a game, it was for one instance of a game -- one TEAM of players involved in one version of one game. At its peak, **Megatrends** had a circulation of 15, for the 15 players on our team. 16 if you count the courtesy copy we gave the moderator. (This was for the venerable [Empyrean Challenge](#), run by the estimable Vern Holford.)

The circulation count declined rapidly as the game progressed, as players dropped out, which highlights both the predominant problem in PBM and my own history of varying commitment. But rather than decline in value, that tiny little zine became a monthly bonanza of gaming fun for those of us still on the team.

I took delight in each new submission, carefully edited and contributed my own bits of wisdom, and enlisted the help of my brother and girlfriend in handling print production and mailing. Truly it was a labor of love.

In that same timeframe, my brother kicked off a rambling campaign of role-playing adventure by mail. His ad in **Metagaming's** house organ, **Interplay**, surprised him, by eliciting more than a dozen responses. He crafted a detailed turn-based fantasy RPG experience, drafted both a large "main turn" duplicated for all and small "private turns" for each player, and jackbooted everything through our cranky Apple II, complete with an ancient dot-matrix printer. His game, also a labor of love, forged multiple lasting friendships, a couple of cross-country visits, and at least one inspired follow-on game moderator. But as its coolness and intrigue grew, my brother's game ended up collapsing under its own weight. Each turn started demanding an epic amount of work, just as his available time started to shrink.

This may illustrate what has been interfering with the regularity of **Suspense & Decision**. Each issue is a magnificent opus, to me anyway, and I read every single word of it. But it's a giant amount of work. Many have suggested that it would be better to keep the scope small and have a regular release schedule. I am inclined to agree, though I am reluctant to interfere with

whatever magic spells Charles keeps weaving to get each issue done. I'd like to have a fresh new copy every month, but if it takes him a year, then so be it. My only urgent guidance is to not succumb to the forces of gravity that ultimately crushed **The Lords of Cidri**.

Enough about that, for now. On to the topic of our esteemed cousins in gaming.

While it's often been said that PBM is dead, there is an awful lot of activity still out there. Even if you count only those more or less traditional games, now web-powered, there are more games running than one can possibly play at a time.

While it's often been said that PBM is dead, there is an awful lot of activity still out there. Even if you count only those more or less traditional games, now web-powered, there are more games running than one can possibly play at a time. But there are other neighboring regions of the gaming galaxy that are humming along too, and it can be instructive and inspiring to bear witness to their vibrancy.

Board games are just huge. I myself have a small but growing collection of modern euro-games. My local boardgame crew has expanded to two separate groups, so often I have an embarrassment of riches in terms of game-play opportunities. And these fellows have many hundreds of advanced games at their collective disposal. Further, there is an active network cooking up new players and

groups. The geek-factor of boardgaming is turning into something of a badge of honor now, as entry-level games like [Ticket to Ride](#) and [Catan](#) blaze new trails into the large pools of "muggles" (my friend's term for non-gamers) floating all around us.

[Boardgamegeek](#), the main forum for the hobby, is expertly managed and maintained and should serve as a shining example for anyone trying to buff up a niche hobby. Players are given many incentives to contribute (badges, avatars, freebies), and there is an annual donation drive. Designers leverage the platform to put out Kickstarters, gather feedback for revisions and enhancements, and in general just gather with their fan-base. And publishers have seen the value of the internet, even as they hawk cardboard. Some boardgames (and most wargames) are actually available to play online for free, through agreements with their publishers, which ultimately brings in far more customers than had they been stingy with the licensing.

Which brings me to that niche of niches, wargames. These hoary old beasts were proclaimed dead decades ago, but they keep kicking. In some ways, they are more alive than ever. My boardgame pal down the street bought me one for my birthday, both to be nice and to have in

our back pocket should there ever be just 2-3 of us on a given Friday. That was a \$90 sale that was ENABLED, not hindered, by the boardgame biz. An old wargame friend and I reconnected (through BGG) and he turned me on to a stupefyingly great game (A Victory Lost) depicting the German retreat-in-force out of the nether regions of Russia as their lines collapsed in World War II. So it's a small-ish depiction of an obscure set of military clashes, designed by a Japanese history buff, and it's all the rage in the niche community. Thousands of sales.

These hoary old beasts were proclaimed dead decades ago, but they keep kicking. In some ways, they are more alive than ever.

(And I must point out, as I have in the past, that wargames are what gave birth to PBM. One day, I'm going to dig into the vast online catalog of scanned issues of the old General magazine -- house organ of Avalon

Hill -- and post snippets from their "players wanted" ads. A perfect example of cousin-hobbies fostering each other. As wargamers tangled it up in the US mail, they began formulating ideas for games specifically DESIGNED to be played by mail. Now everyone go sign up for a game with [Flying Buffalo](#) as a gesture of gratitude.)

Larger than wargames, boardgames, pretty much anything else, looms the colossal computer game industry. Yet tides keep battering them and often their doom is writ large, even as they thrive. I remember walking the aisles of

computer stores, looking at shrink-wrapped titles for \$50 or \$60. Hundreds of choices. (I was on a team that made one.) Then as console gaming took over and computer stores themselves ebbed somewhat, those boxes of gamey fun started disappearing. But in their downward spiral they spawned sites like Steam and GOG, where literally thousands of titles can be bought online at steep discounts. The developers are out there, and the players are out there - the only thing missing is the retail middleman, and that's really no great loss.

That hobby thrives on player networking. Steam features "curators" who put together lists of related games along with a stream of in-depth reviews, [YouTube](#) play-throughs, advice, and feedback. Players are encouraged to contribute ideas, which are often routed back to them in the form of add-on content. And new games from tiny shops or single hobbyist-developers can find active customers if they are good. There are even games that are our close first-cousins, like Neptune's Pride by Iron Helmet Games. This is a space-empire building game that can be described as an extremely slow real-time strategy game. You check in a couple of times a day by phone and monitor your fleet movements, factory orders, intel reports, etc. Nothing happens so fast you can't react in time, but you do need to stay on top of it. In a way, this game models how the PBM hobby arose. It is a PBM-like game, running on the internet, that is specifically designed to leverage the

powers of internet gaming and asynchronous play. PBMs were basically wargames specifically designed to leverage the powers of the mail system and synchronous play.

Looming larger than all, of course, is the sports industry. Sports, which in my mind are vague simulations of primitive war gangs having at it on the field, have enthralled most of us for centuries. Yet, I dare to call these giants "cousins" of PBM. Why? Fantasy sports. A friend was once the Commissioner of his fantasy football league, and he walked me through the hobby a little bit. True fans are every bit as geeky and deep-into-the-niche as the groggiest of our PBM grognards. It's kind of incredible to witness the intensity of fandom and the depth of statistical mastery players muster in order to win each week. And it struck me, as my friends face lit up, that his daily excitement over each new development mirrored ours as we check on each new PBM turn. *It's exactly the same vibe.*

There is a lot we can learn by watching our cousins, and perhaps even pulling in some of their players. They do it with each other all the time.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bernd Jaehnigen is the Assistant Editor for Suspense & Decision magazine.

If he can miss a submission deadline, yet still get an article published, then so can yourself and others. So, give in to that temptation to write an article and send it in. Don't delay! Just write!

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4-Player and 8-Player Scenarios

FALLEN EMPIRES



Lead your tribe to glory, run a mercenary company, build the strongest settlement or be a political master on the continent of Clantium in Fallen Empires - a play by email Role play/Strategy game.

Fallen Empires is a Role Playing game by email. Each turn you, the player, send in your instructions as to movement, actions etc. to the Games Master (GM). The instructions are partly in the form of calculations on a spread sheet, and partly in the form of written instructions.

Email us at for more details: fallenemp@gmail.com

Or look at our Facebook page: <http://goo.gl/2rKO5Q>

Or read some of our Battle, Historical or Alliance reports: http://www.scribd.com/james_perrin_9



T r i b e N e t

TribeNet is an immersive game of Tribal Diplomacy, Expansion, Exploration, and Conquest set in a dynamic multi-player world.

There are no 'character types', so you, as a player, get to decide the fate and future of your Clan: All of your successes, and any of your failures, rest solely upon your choices and decisions.

The vast world is rich in geography, resources, and dangers, making the open-ended game fantastically diverse and intriguing.

New players are joining weekly, and now is a great time to get involved, as new world areas are being populated.

Request a start-up, today!

PBM Musings

"Glad someone out there still cares about PBM! It's getting thin in our ranks."

- Debbie Leonard,

Advanced Gaming Enterprises

"My first PBM were 'Its a crime' and then RSI had Hyborean War. While playing HW, Rick evidently had met Paul Brown - who I also did - in Tempe, AZ, right about when they offered Alamaze. What a coincidence! They ran it for about a year or so, and when it was gone, I stopped playing HW and started playing with Pegasus Productions when it was based out of NC. I also played YouRule! by Llucky Llama games, which was the only other game I found that offered enough complex components to make it a challenge. I was also into the Nintendo game console back then, playing Romance of the Three Kingdoms, and still have it along with couple dozen games."

- Thunderbolt,

Alamaze forum

"I came across an ad in Dragon Magazine in 1983 for Feudal Lords from Graaf Simulations. I was 14 at the time, and got instantly hooked. It was the greatest feeling to see that yellow envelope in the mailbox. Fast forward to 1999 or so, and I found Flying Buffalo in an internet search for Feudal Lords. I now play FL, Starweb, Riftlords, and Heroic Fantasy through FBI."

- Rushmore,

The Flying Buffalo Gamer Forum

"I'm pretty sure that's when I started playing. I was a young lad of 16 and just waiting for the turn to show up in the mailbox was arduous. But when it finally showed up it was so great. I would sit down with my original map and just read it over and over."

- Acererak,

Alamaze forum



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Where We're Heading...

Houston, repairs have been successful! Issue #15 is a go! We are resuming our mission in full. Do you copy? Over.

Issue #15 of *Suspense & Decision* magazine is an especially bittersweet memory for me, by the time that your eyes read these words to you. The publication deadline has been adhered to, but with this issue almost complete and in the throes of its final revisions, I encountered word on *Facebook* (while browsing casually for first one thing and then another) that Carol Mulholland had died.

By the time that the word reached me, it was already old news - but it wasn't old news to me. It descended full force! It impacted me head on! For the editor of a PBM magazine, it was some of the absolute worst news that one could be hit with.

Honest to God, it was terrible news! It was dreadful. It was tragedy in full form.

Nonetheless, death goes hand-in-hand with life, and I believe that it is beyond contestation that Carol fought the good fight for PBM. Truly, she was always a light shining brightly in and across the PBM industry and hobby, whether times were good or bad, whether people were playing postal games or whether they were not.

When her husband passed away years back, it was Carol who kept *Flagship* magazine going. Certainly, she had help, and she couldn't have accomplished nearly as much as she did for PBM, from a journalistic standpoint, without that help.

Even still, she was the face of *Flagship*. She was the High Priestess of play

by mail gaming. From America in the New World, Carol held sway in my view as the reigning Queen of PBM over there in the Old World. We were separated by an ocean of water, but in spirit and in love of the hobby, we weren't really separated, at all, her and I. *Long live the Queen!*

Oh, sure, we approached things from different perspectives and from different backgrounds. Our chosen approaches were colored and tempered by our own first-hand experiences. Our opinions varied, as is to be expected, but we shared a common passion.

Indeed, we share that passion, even still.

Carol Mulholland may no longer be with us, physically, but in spirit, she remains amongst our numbers, even still. Hers is a presence that can

never be removed from play by mail gaming. Her legacy to postal gaming could never be scrubbed away, though the full measure of her legacy, like all good things, cannot be quantified in mere numbers or in mere words.

In the aftermath of Carol's passing, PBM gaming needs YOU more than ever! It no longer has her as an active and directing force on the publication front nor on the convention front. If history is kind of any indicator at all, then it will likely take more than just a few of us to rise to the occasion to mimic what she accomplished during her tenure in an industry and a hobby that had play by mail written all over them.

If you are out there and reading this, if you also have any photographs of Carol Mulholland that you could see fit to send me

a copy of, I would like to gather them together for inclusion into a future issue as a tribute to her, as a visual reminder of who she was and of what she meant to our mutual hobby of postal gaming.



Carol Mulholland

Editor of Flagship magazine

Carol's heart for the postal genre of gaming was bigger than her technical expertise with software and hardware -

tools of the trade that enabled her to keep on publishing a PBM magazine when no one else did, when no one else would. But she made up for it with her tenacity and her persistence and her passion - *a passion for both postal gaming and for people.*

Long may her legacy endure!

Carol was loyal to both the hobby, and to those who aided her in her never-ending battle to get each new issue of *Flagship* published. Deadlines were not always met, but her persistence and her dedication continued to pay off with each issue that went to print.

Play by mail gaming has always presented considerable challenges to those who dared to try and ascend to the peaks of gaming pleasure that

the postal medium made possible.

Somewhere along the way on her journey through life, Carol Mulholland became swept up in play by mail gaming. Indeed, she became involved in many different facets of it. She knew the industry, and she came to know a great many faces and names associated with the hobby at large. Each one of those faces, and every last one of those names, became gems in the gaming crown and in the sceptre of publication that she laid claim to.

Issue #15 is the latest step in a path that remains ongoing. However, its significance is - and ever shall be - overshadowed by the sad news that fell from Heaven upon us this day.

Carol will never grace us, again, with her wit, her intelligence, or her sense of humor. She was one of a kind! The world continues to turn. We each go on with our lives. Play by mail gaming marches on. But I cannot

help but to pause and to reflect and to remember.

Wherever you are, Carol Mulholland, know that you are missed. Know that you made a net positive difference. Know that you remain as beloved, as ever.

Even still, it is like chewing on dirt, such is the taste that news of her passing leaves in my mouth. Between now and next issue, Issue #16, I shall trek again to the back issues of *Flagship* magazine - at least, the ones that I have copies of.

There, I will seek out her wisdom. I will try to find her personality between the pages. I shall look for shadows of her presence - that I might be better guided by them, going forward; that I might find stones of learning that yet remain unturned in her garden of passion that was *Flagship* magazine; that I might feel the breeze of her in the winds of memory that blow without ceasing.

I invite you, each and

every last one of you, to write in with your thoughts and your memories of Carol Mulholland and of *Flagship*, the magazine that she became the editor of by circumstances that were beyond her control.

They say that the pen is mightier than the sword, and Carol through her editorship of *Flagship* has given us a mighty legacy to behold. She has bequeathed unto us, one and all, a journal of her ongoing thought. It is scattered there, from page to page and across the volumes of individual issues that collectively comprise *Flagship* magazine - both during her reign as editor, and even before, when she served her magazine and her hobby in other capacities.

Though word of her death is a nail in all our coffins, nonetheless, in the wake of her passing, I choose to drink from the chalice of what she sought to represent on behalf of both her hobby and her readership.

PLAY

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