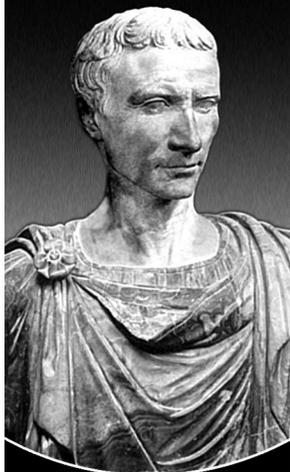


WHEN CAESAR

STOOD UPON THE
BANKS OF THE
RUBICON LOOKING
SOUTH TO ROME,
HE HESITATED.
BEFORE HIM STOOD
THE VAST, COMPLEX
MECHANISM OF THE
PAST, GLOWING
WITH A HOST OF
INTRICATELY WOVEN
STRATAGEMS.
WITH HIM, HE HAD
BUT ONE LEGION,
WEARY FROM EIGHT
YEARS OF BRUTAL WAR
WITH THE GAULS.
BUT WHEN CALLED
TO SURRENDER
HIMSELF TO THE
SENATE AND CERTAIN
EXILE, HE DID NOT
HESITATE.
HE CALLED HIS
LEGIONARIES TO
CROSS INTO ITALY,
TO CROSS
THE RUBICON.
AND AS HE DID SO,
HE SAID ONLY THIS:
ALEA IACTA EST!



JULIUS CAESAR

ALEA IACTA EST



"The Die is Cast" – An Editorial by Stephen Chenault

Remembering Gary Gygax

It is hard to know where to begin a story, and sometimes it is best to begin it at the end. It was an honor when Gail Gygax asked me to be one of the eulogists at Gary's funeral. She included me with his son Luke, James Ward and Harold Johnson, both old hounds from the TSR days. I don't really know what I said. I know that I went up there with a little outline, but I couldn't read my writing and so I just spoke. It was one of the hardest things I've ever done because as each word fell from my lips I knew that Gary was getting further and further away. As I neared the end, I could sense it was the end. I didn't want it to end.

I do not know by what strange twist of fate led my path from the little, skinny, skate board riding, comic book collecting D&D playing kid in 1977 to the doors of Gary Gygax. But who can answer such things?

On an August (or was it July) morning in 2001 I was working away in our Gen Con booth when an elderly gentleman came up and said, "Hey do you want to have a smoke?" or some such business. He was a bit portly, bearded with a pony tail and if memory serves, wearing a t-shirt. I stammered for a minute, obviously having no idea who this was. He noted my confusion and said "I'm Gary Gygax" in a most unassuming manner. Holy Crap I thought. This is HIM, not only the fellow who created the game but the fellow who we were going into business with. I opted to have a smoke with him.

Aside from Mac, none of us had any idea what Gary looked like. Though we had all played D&D for decades we never bothered to pay much attention to Gary. Why would we? He gave us the game and kept cranking out materials for it. We gamed two and three times a week throughout the 80s and into the 90s, breaking out the same old AD&D books we always had. Though we all knew who Gary was and that he had made the game and we had vague rumors of his ousting from TSR we didn't concern ourselves with such trivia, because we were gaming. Fact is, had

you asked any of us aside from Mac I doubt we could have explained why we had stopped buying TSR products, beyond the fact that than in the mid 1980s they began to drop in quality and get far too cumbersome to actually use at a table. "Rules, rules, rules" I used to grown and punish people by docking experience points if they quoted too many rules back at me. Beyond that, I didn't really know Lake Geneva was an actual town, giving it almost no thought what-so-ever and if I did, it was nothing more than as a minaret tower.

That belabors some other discussion though, which I will, in coming issues, detail. I have often wondered how it came to pass that Gary arrived at the booth and asked me to join him for a smoke.

The first time that any of us Trolls had any contact with Gary was at Gen Con 2000. Mac Golden had gone to one of his signings at the Hekaforge booth and had him sign a DMs Guide; he left him copies of our three modules and world setting. Later in the show Gary stopped by the booth and thanked Mac for the modules. Davis and I missed all this, no doubt out on a smoke break. I remember Mac dancing around in the booth like an idiot singing "you missed him again, you missed him again" or something along those lines. Unbeknownst to any of us of course and in a strange twist Davis had actually met Gary but didn't know it was Gary. Several times back in 2000 they had shared multiple smokes on the back loading dock at the Milwaukee Convention Center. They didn't realize they knew each other until the next Gen Con in 2001.

Several months after Mac's initial encounter, he suggested we contact Gary and see if he was interested in publishing some works as no one seemed to be working with him outside the Hekaforge press. A fact to which both of us were a little confused over. We figured it was a long shot, but what the hell, what did we have to lose?

So Mac or I emailed him, kind of a follow up email about the books we had dropped off, we really didn't expect to hear anything from him. But we did. Much like countless others we received an email from Gary Gygax. He wrote a very nice note thanking us for the books and remarking that they were much fun. This email prompted a conversation between Mac (then a partner in TLG) and myself that resulted in contacting both Gary and Chris Clark from Hekaforge about publishing opportunities. Gary had been trying to find a home for some remarkable books on role-playing. For our part we were more than anxious to give it a shot. Who could ask for more than serving as a publisher for Gary Gygax. Though I can't speak for Gary's motivations, I suspect that his natural inclination to help people prompted him to give us a chance. We were a little anxious, supposing we had discovered some gem the rest of the rapidly growing ranks of d20 publishers had somehow missed. We were amazed that no one was trying to tap this well spring.

When I arrived at Gen Con I was rather nervous about meeting this big time celebrity, and was really working hard to avoid it, assuming what everyone else assumes about celebrities, but what I met was anything but an out of reach star. Gary and I plopped down on some chairs outside behind the hall there in Milwaukee and lit up. He was smoking Camel Unfiltered, me Marlboro Reds. The conversation lingered on games for a moment or two, but we started in on some non-game related topics, probably politics, food, or some such and had a lively multi-smoke discussion. It was quite refreshing. Gary was very unassuming and relaxed, and we had a good time. In fact for the rest of the con, we had a number of smoke breaks, Davis and Todd joining us, had dinner, and hung out quite a bit. We had a formal dinner with him, Gail and Alex at the Old Town Serbian Gourmet Restaurant, one of his favorite haunts in the Twin Cities on Saturday and we all hit it off quite well.

It was a good time and started a long working relationship that bore fruit on multiple levels, both professional and personal.

Over the years we worked closely together, remaining in constant contact throughout 2001-2008. He came to Little Rock for a short spell and we would stop off in Lake Geneva on our way back from Gen Con or Gamefest there in Milwaukee. Eventually, at his urging, TLG paid for some conventions that at first were nothing more than an elaborate way to pay for a trip up north to Lake Geneva where we could hang out on the front porch and chat away. Of course both conventions began to grow quickly and that made it all the better.

I have a natural aversion to asking personal questions so rarely did I inquire into Gary's past, about his troubles, TSR and the like. It wasn't any of my business and I think that such discussions always detracted from his person and his

time. It really was only an incident in his life, much like the International Wargamers Association or any one of his dozens of endeavors. It set him on certain paths but in no way reflected on his creation. To many it was the defining moment by which he was and remains to be judged... what happened at TSR... to him, and to Davis and myself, it was nothing more than a scene in the life.

We all really enjoyed having fun with him and the years flew by.

But beyond all that Gary's story is so much more. I think that I came to realize this about a year or two ago. I noticed that very often, when the dust of company settled, and especially when Gary, Gail, Mark, Davis, and myself were sitting around that the conversation changed and Gary loved telling stories about his child hood. How he and one friend or the other found themselves on adventures, whether in the old Asylum or simply walking back from the movies. He always returned to these adventures. Listening to him talk, slow, methodical, his words carefully chosen, and his voice mellow with a hint of smokers gravel, it wasn't too hard for someone with an active imagination to find themselves in the 1940s Lake Geneva on a cold wintry night with shadows pursuing you all the way to the doorstep. I noted too, in rereading his Crusader articles about "How it all came to be" that the vast majority of these articles were about his child hood and the games they designed and played and the fun they had as kids.

I enjoyed listening to these stories as I've always been curious how people live and what influenced them. It's the historian in me I suppose. I like to know where things came from and beginnings are always the hardest to understand. It's easy to look at a story from the end or even the middle, but the beginning is always confused and muddled because no one really thinks they are starting a new story when they do. In Gary's tales I saw an adventurous young man, much like most of us are, eager to experience something other than the mundane traffic given to us by school and chores. He had that same drive that drives all children to explore. The difference with Gary is that through all his life's many ups and downs he never wholly lost that drive, that desire. Sure, it may have been dampened from time to time, but he seemed to remain a child at heart.

This was brought home in a huge way the day before the funeral. We were putting together some family collages for the ceremony so people could have a look at Gary before it all began, during and after. In this maelstrom of pictures I stumbled on one of Gary as a young man. Its black and white and he's standing on a wooded path with a satchel over his shoulder. Next to him stands a friend, I don't know who. They are looking at the camera, posing a little. Gary is cocky for sure and seems to be captured in the moment of play, far more than his friend. The sun is shining as there are

shadows in the brush. It looks warm, the perfect day for an adventure. I can see in Gary a reflection of myself, a young man, growing up, facing a world of responsibility and all the other claptrap that comes with age, but a desire, a deep-rooted desire to keep playing. To keep on kicking that can until well after the twilight of our youths have passed away. In that picture I see a reflection of us all and of the children we want to be even beyond the years of age.

That was the Gary I knew, that Gary in the picture. For in truth I don't think Gary ever forgot that young man. I think that's why things went not as Gary would have liked them to go. He never fully grasped that people were human and were not perhaps possessed of his motivations. In youth we are loyal to a fault, it is easy. We are headstrong, filled with pride. Our emotions are raw and we relish them. Gary never lost those raw emotions. Loyalty, honesty, gumption, humor and on the other side anger, unforgiving, these were the traits he possessed in great amounts. In his many life's triumphs these helped or hindered him as the situation demanded. But through them all, though possessed of the sharp mind of a business man, he was possessed of the heart of a child. Who, at the end of the day, and at the end of his days, loved to have fun, to play games?

That was Gary Gygax's gift to us. He brought the games of his spring, his youth, to us and told us to play and be merry and here's how. It's something we all want to do but only Gary had the actual drive to do it. He made it all possible, through his vision, tenacity, consistency, and just damned hard work.

It snowed here in Arkansas the morning Gary died. I took the kids to school a little late so they could play in it. I went into the office later than usual and I noted a voice mail on the phone but didn't think much of it, there's always voice mails on the TLG phone. A few minutes later the phone rang and it was Bill, Gary's son-in-law. It was too early for Bill to be calling. There was only one reason he would call. I watched the phone ring but I didn't answer it. It rang over and over again until it stopped. Eventually I listened to the voice mail. It was Ernie...

When I returned home from the funeral, some 8 days later, it was warm here. The tulip trees, crepe myrtles, and dogwoods were all in bloom. Spring comes fast here in Arkansas and if you don't watch for it, you'll miss it.

