



Toy soldiers, miniature battleships and imaginary wizards like these squared off at the

Memorial Student Center last weekend for Warcon V, an annual war games convention.

About 178 participated.

Battalion photo by Colin Crombie

**Warcon V: Choose your weapons**

**Wizards, warlords battle in MSC**

By JULIE SMILEY  
Battalion Reporter

Choose your weapons. Playing war has become an alternative to chess and checkers.

The Memorial Student Center was the battlefield Friday evening through Sunday afternoon where Warcon V contestants recreated battles from World War II to Napoleonic battles to fantasy skirmishes between wizards and dragons.

Contestants sprawled on the floor, measured angles and positioned miniature ships for battle. In another room, political strategy and intrigue kept contestants busy around a table in a war game called "Dungeons and Dragons."

Warcon V is the fifth war gaming convention sponsored by GROMETS. Games Replications, Military, Economic and Political Situations (GROMETS) is a Texas A&M University organization that serves as a subcommittee of the SC Recreation Committee.

WAR GAMES ARE grown men playing little kids' games, only the best are more complex and more real," said Sid Wegert, a freshman aerospace engineering major from San Antonio.

Wegert said he owns about 70 war games, which cost about \$8 each. He said most war games cost from \$3 to \$10 and are more than just fun.

The U.S. Military Academy uses a game, Firefight, to train officers. Wegert said.

During World War II, the Germans used a war game called Kriegsspiel, which means "war

game," to train their officers, said Larry Ball, a freshman mechanical engineering major from Lake Oswego, Ore.

Wegert and Ball competed in a naval miniature war game which reenacted a battle between British and German naval forces in January 1915. Each said he was in charge of one or two miniature ships and took orders from a commanding officer.

THEY SAID EACH battle move took about three minutes to make. The game lasted about eight hours, but the actual 1915 battle may have lasted only one or two hours.

The 1/3,600 scale lead ships positioned on the floor helped players accurately recreate weapon strength, ships damage, ship speed and weather conditions during the battle.

"The hobby is endless," said Wegert. "One night you can be Churchill or Hitler. You can be a general in charge of many troops or one officer in charge of one troop."

Only a small number of people play war games, Wegert said. be-

cause "a lot of people look at the book of rules for each game and get scared." He said they are like any other game, but instead of a box lid with rules, war games have a rules booklet.

BALL SAID WAR games can be played on the floor or on a board. War games can be played on the floor or on a map with miniature ships, weapons, troops, horses, or tanks. He said, "The temperament of the people determines the type of game they want to play."

Cruz Medina, a junior engineering technology major from El Paso, said he spends about 24 hours a month playing war games even though, "my dad thinks it's a sissy sport."

Medina said Avalon Hill and Simulations Publications Inc. (SPI) are two major war game companies. Medina said SPI sold about \$20 million of war games last year.

Six war game companies sold war games and equipment during Warcon V. Lee Sowers, a war games retail distributor and manufacturer

from Houston, said his sales have grown from \$100 to \$2,000 a week in two years. His company makes miniature ships, armor and starships.

"THIS CONVENTION IS not such a fantastic one as far as warcon go, but I would like to see the Texas A&M warcon built up to national interest," Sowers said. "I would like to see people make a trip to A&M for a war gaming convention."

Louis Zoccha, a war games dealer from Biloxi, Miss., said he started selling war games in 1968. He said he travels to Origins, the biggest pure war gaming convention in the United States, to sell his war game products.

Zoccha said about 4,000 war gamers from all over the United States attended Origins IV held in Wisconsin in 1978. He said Origins V will be held in Pennsylvania later this year.

Clay Cooper, 25, from Houston, summed up his interest in war games as he positioned miniature mounted soldiers for a Napoleonic battle. "It's the only hobby I have."

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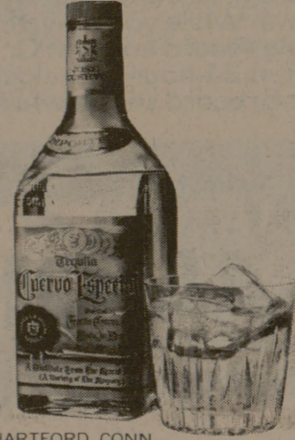
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