

Aggie Warcon '80 — what

By ROY BRAGG

Battalion Editor

It is 11 o'clock Friday night. Dave Bennet, his wife Crystal, and their friends Terry Watkins and Freeman Williams are sitting in a room on the fifth floor of the Rudder Tower. Weary, they have been in the same place five hours.

The room they are in is known as the headquarters of Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) at Warcon '80.

Warcon is the annual war gaming tournament at Texas A&M University. The convention is a gathering of people from all over Texas who like to play, buy and sell war games. It is sponsored by Gromets, the war gaming group on campus.

Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) is a role-playing game based on medieval society. In role-playing games, players adopt the persona of a member of another society and make the decisions the character would make in different situations — the players become the characters.

In D&D, characters slay dragons and other menaces trying to discover treasure in the wilderness or in underground dungeons. The overseer of a D&D "trip" is the Gamemaster. The GM has a map of the area in question and controls the environment and the flow of the game.

In a tournament situation, players are split into teams and each is given the same set of characters and placed in the same situation.

Warcon '80 is now only five hours old and it started going wrong even before it officially began.

Dave is the designer of the tournament dungeon and Freeman is a GM for the tournament. They were up all night in Huntsville Thursday typing the instructions for the tournament dungeon.

At 5 p.m., Dave, Crystal, Freeman and Terry, who is along for the ride, arrived in College Station with one copy of the official dungeon. By 8 p.m., they had run off 30 copies of the 29-page first round dungeon. The first round of play was scheduled to begin at 8:30. Several of the GMs were going to referee dungeons they knew nothing about.

Now, only a few hours later, things are not much better. Freeman has not managed to lose the headache he developed trying to get the dungeon copied in time. Terry, has returned with some food, but forgot the hot sauce. Dave is constantly answering questions from GMs or tournament officials about the dungeon.

With fatigue and boredom setting in, someone suggests a quick game of Nuclear War. The air of the room changes instantly; everyone smiles in anticipation, knowing what is going to happen.

Nuclear War is a war game with a difference. Instead of taking several hours, it can be played in a few minutes. Instead of complicated rules and involved strategy, it is based on diplomacy among nuclear powers. Players hurl nuclear bombs at each other and try to survive with the least number of casualties.

Terry pulls a copy of the game out of his briefcase. Freeman deals the cards, and the game is underway.

Only seconds into the game, Freeman starts launching missiles at Crystal, Terry starts launching missiles at Freeman, Crystal slings her firepower at Dave, and Dave sends his missiles at Crystal.

An excerpt from the game:

Dave: (To Crystal) Hah! Here's 20 megatons down your schnitzel! Ha-ha!

Freeman: (in a mock scream to Terry) Eat 50 megs, pigdog!

Dave: (To Crystal) Gimme 3 million people, woman..

Crystal: Oh yeah? Take this!

Crystal turns over a card and lays it on the table. Everyone howls in disbelief. Apparently, Crystal has developed the Doomsday Machine.

Dave: Yow! I'm wiped out!

Terry: (To himself) Here's 2 million people for propaganda.

In five minutes, the game is over. Most of life on earth has been destroyed. Terry is the winner, but he only has a few million people left.

Feeling refreshed, everyone is in a better mood after the game. The simulation of total nuclear war has acted as a catharsis for them. This is what war gaming is all about.

In addition to D&D and other role-playing games, Warcon features tournaments in board games — tactical military simulations — and miniature contests.

The tactical games have names like Panzerblitz (about German and Russian battles), Richtoffen's War (WW I aerial combat), Kingmaker (based on the War of the Roses), and Starfleet Battles (Starships battling in deep space).

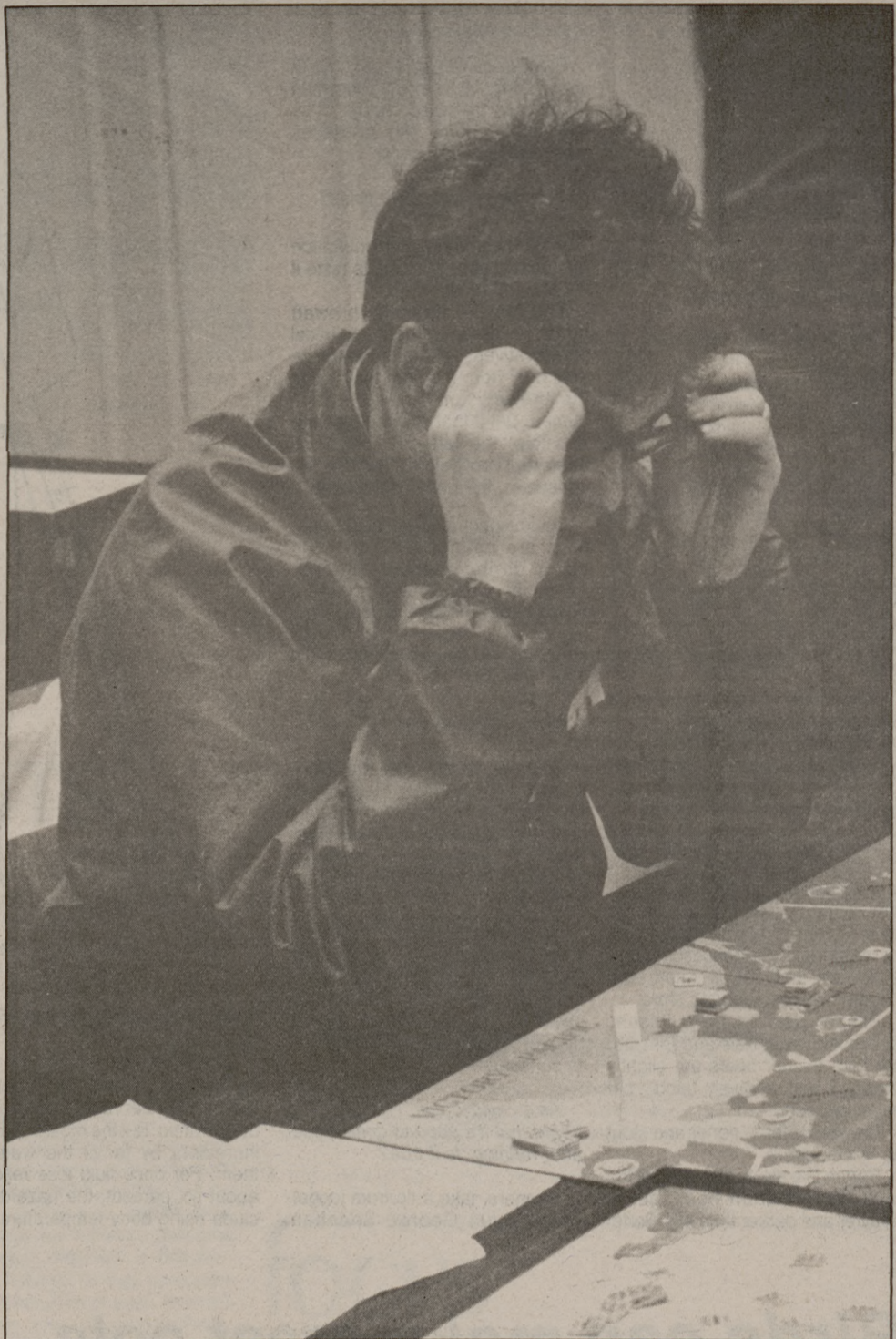
Miniatures are little figures made of high quality lead used in recreating battle scenes. They aren't your everyday toy soldiers.

Miniatures may be soldiers and artillery — from any time period — or modern tanks.

A few years ago, miniatures used to cost 60 cents each; now, the average cost is more than \$1.

In the corner of a large banquet room in the MSC, Paul Premazon and Ray Johnson are unloading their miniatures out of cigar boxes and setting them up on a 6 by 8 foot table. There are two or three tables set up for miniatures this year.

Paul and Ray are members of the Houston Miniature Association. This is their second trip to Warcon.



Doug Hensley, a faculty member, concentrates on his strategy before making his big move.



Some wargame fans collect pieces called miniatures. One person said to get a collection started c

Photos by Steve Cl

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