

Te Ten what war gaming is all about



Chris Graham of San Antonio takes action in one of the many games Warcon '80 had to offer to its participants.



get a collection started costs about \$50, but some people have over \$3,000 invested in their collections.

ops by Steve Clark

During the week, Paul works in a furniture shop and Ray works for Bell telephone.

"We get together with our friends once or twice a week to play," Ray says.

A good Napoleonic takes an hour to set up and about five hours to play, Paul says.

"There are about 370 figures there," Paul says, pointing to the table, worth about \$300."

"This is about 25 percent of my total collection," he adds. "I probably have about \$3,000 invested in miniatures."

A person can start playing adequately, Ray says, for as little as \$50.

Because of the expense involved, there aren't a lot of people actively involved in miniatures.

"The market is so small," Paul says, "we know almost everyone in it."

Each of the miniatures on the table is 25mm tall and hand-painted. The painting is tedious, Ray says, but since it enhances the looks of his miniatures, it's worth it.

"It's all fun," Paul says. "It's a hobby I enjoy."

On Saturday morning, in another part of the MSC, there are men putting tiny little models of ships on the floor of a huge ballroom. This is a naval miniature battle.

I walk into the room and sit down on a chair on the edge of the battle area.

In this battle, players use tape measures to simulate sea battles. The scenario is based on a Japanese-American battle in WW II.

There is a row of two-inch long ships on one side of the room, each with a cardboard placard with a number written on it. Forty feet away, there is another row of ships.

As I walk in to watch the proceedings, I sit down on a chair on the edge of the room.

A tall man with thin gray hair and a tape measure at his side walks to the middle of the room.

"Okay, Japanese ships can fire now," he announces loudly. "Japanese ships, write out your orders and targets."

There is a flurry of activity as people from all over the room run over to their notepads and scribble instructions. Then, after a few minutes, the man pulls out the tape measure and hands it to someone on the Japanese side. He grabs the end of it and stretches it over to the American side.

"Okay," he yells over to the American side, "number five, who are you firing at?"

"Number 23," comes the reply. The man with the tape measure slides the tape over to an American ship. "A direct hit!" he says.

There is a great deal of rejoicing on the Japanese side. The Americans are conspiring on the other side of the room.

After the Japanese have completed their attack, there is a pause while the Americans prepare their attack. The man with the tape measure walks up to me and clears his throat.

"These chairs are coral reefs," he says to another man in an obvious reference to where I have chosen to sit. The other man leans over me — I could almost hear his heartbeat — and says "yeah, you're right."

When I hear that, I suddenly remember that I moved the chair about five or six feet so I could get a better view of the battle. I stand up and hurry out of the room, hoping that I haven't changed the course of history by moving the chair.

Meanwhile, the rest of convention is moving rapidly. The room where the war game dealers are set up is packed with potential customers. The board game tournaments are going on all over the MSC. The D&D tournament is not exactly behind schedule, but things are not going so smoothly.

Dave is still in D&D headquarters. He hasn't slept in two days. He's low on GMs, copies of the dungeon, sleep, and food. There are plenty of entries, though; there are 50 teams in a tournament set up for half that number. Dave isn't very happy about that.

Terry and Freeman are on the floor reading mail order catalogs. Dave is stapling together copies of the dungeon that will be used for the championship round of the tournament. Crystal is somewhere in the MSC making her rounds; she makes a 10-minute tour every hour of the various D&D rounds going on.

"I wanna go home," Freeman cries in a make-believe moan.

"Me too," Terry mumbles.

"I hope I never see this game again," Dave adds.

A knock on the door interrupts this terribly confusing conversation. Dave shuffles over and cracks the door open.

"Are you guys playing D&D in there?" asks the girl at the door. People have been knocking on the door since the convention started asking the same question — it's been that bad.

"No, this is the GM's room," Dave answers wearily.

"Well, they told me at the registration desk that..."

"They were wrong. This is the GM's room."

"Well," she says, "where are they playing D&D at?"

Dave explains to her that there is a considerable amount of non-tournament play going on, but that she'll have to go find it herself.

He closes the door and goes back to the table where the loose pages of the dungeon are waiting to be stapled together.

The door opens again and Crystal comes in, out of breath.

"Dave, there's a question in Room 402A. I think you'd better go up there."

Without a word, Dave grabs a copy of the dungeon and heads off for the elevator. Freeman and Terry continue to read their catalogues. Crystal flings herself onto a makeshift bed — four chairs pushed together with a rolled-up jacket as a pillow — and curls up, trying to sleep.

This is what war gaming is all about.