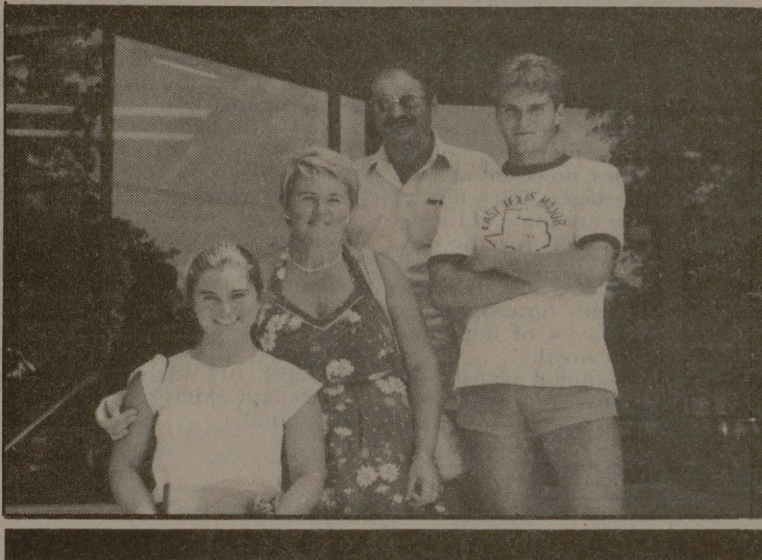


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Traditions-based board game to be in local bookstores soon

By SARAH OATES
 Staff Writer

Forget Trivial Pursuit. The hottest board game of the year may soon be rivaled by another game based on subjects much closer to the hearts of Texas A&M University students and alumni.

"College Days at Texas A&M," a game based entirely around University traditions, will be available in local bookstores Sept. 13, its inventor said Thursday.

"It's a pretty clean game," said Jon Word, a May graduate and the man who designed the game. "There's no references to beer or sex or anything. I think it will appeal to a lot of different people."

The game has four Aggie-symbol playing pieces: Old Sarge, senior boots, Reveille and the senior ring. Word said that players prepare for college, pick a major and then move their playing pieces down Highway 6 to campus.

Players advance their playing pieces or get cash bonuses for knowing University traditions, such as being able to sing the Aggie War Hymn. But players also can be penalized for such things as missing a yell practice. The game board has a pictorial view of campus.

Word said the game's success is "pretty iffy right now." He said he thinks the game will sell particularly well with alumni, but that he hopes everyone interested in Texas A&M will buy it.

A marketing survey by INVENT, the Institute for Ventures in New Technology, predicts that 3,200 copies of the game will sell by the end of the year. Word said that 5,000 copies are on the market.

The 23-year-old Word developed the game while living on campus and worked for two years to refine it.

He said that he and his roommate, Greg Budinger, "just kind of came up with the idea one night."

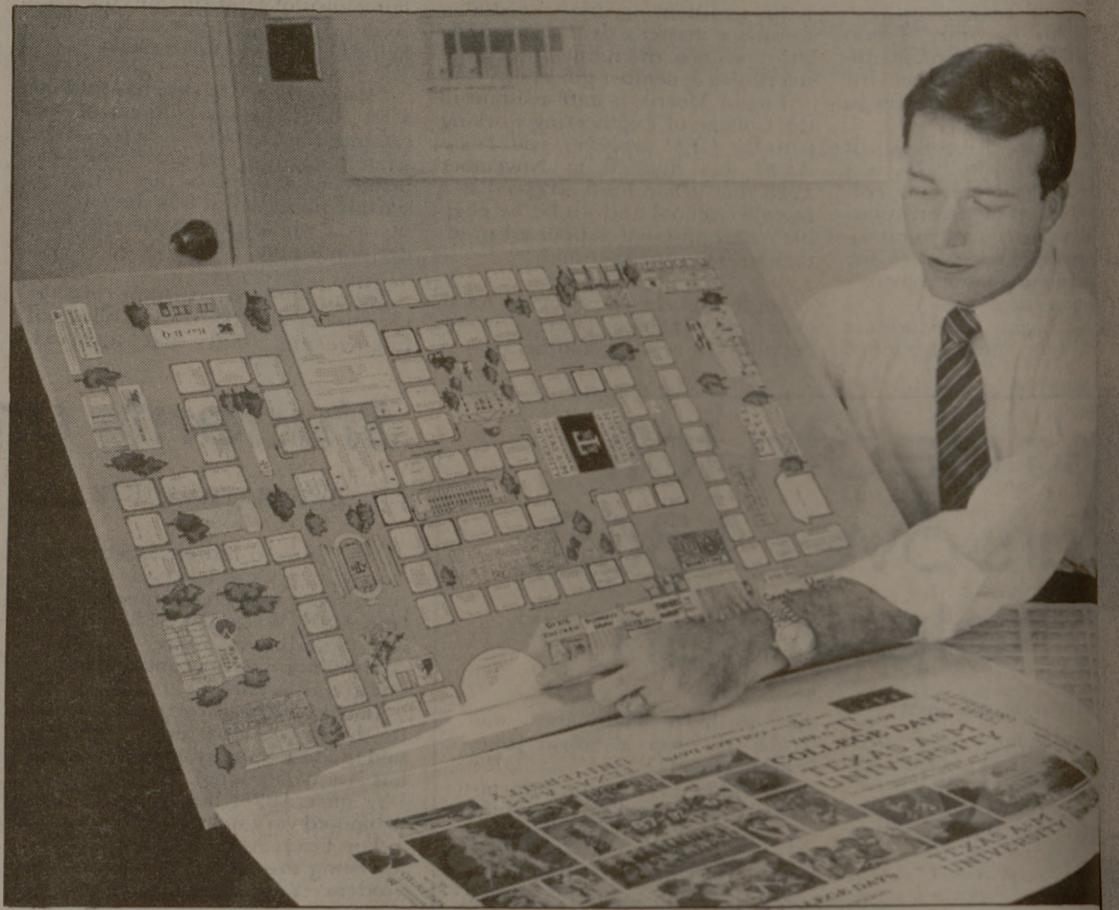
A member of the 12th Man kick-off team, Word said he spent the summer of 1983 working on the game.

"All I did was work out and go back to my room and work on the game," he said.

Word broke his hand during a football practice that fall, an injury that he said turned out to be a blessing.

"It gave me more time for the game," he said. "That Christmas and the following spring I played it all the time."

Word said his family contributed much to improving the game.



Recent Texas A&M graduate Jon Word with his game, "College Days at Texas A&M."

"I can't take full credit for it," he said. "My sister and roommate helped me a lot." Word's sister, Tami, is a sophomore at Texas A&M.

His father, Max Word, Texas A&M class of '52, helped raise money to back the project, and Word's mother is managing the marketing of the game.

Surprisingly, Word said he has never played many board games.

"I don't like them," he admitted. "Long board games frustrate me. I designed this one to only take about an hour."

He said the fact that he hasn't played many board games is a plus because it kept him from being influenced by other games.

"This game is more original. We put a lot of quality into it," Word said.

Word said the game is a great way for kids to learn about college.

"Parents can sit down with their kids and play the game to teach them about college," he said.

"I didn't want to go to Texas A&M that much, but my father said I could go to A&M and he'd pay for it, or I could go somewhere else and pay for it myself, so I went to A&M."

"Now I'm so glad I did. When you leave a school, you realize how devoted you are to it."

Word has a degree in industrial distribution and now sells X-ray equipment for Picker International. He said he has been inventing or selling things since he was a child.

"We used to dig bumper stickers out of the trash behind an auto parts store and sell them on the corner," he said. "Another time I dug a hole in this vacant lot and charged kids to get down into it."

During his freshman year at Texas A&M, Word invented a board for pilots that is sold nationally. The lap-board, "a board turned sideways," is available through the mail.

He said that if "College Days at Texas A&M" is a success, he will develop similar games for schools such as Ohio State University, the University of Notre Dame. A game may be developed for the University of Iowa.

"But if I do a game for Texas, I'm going to put my name in the in-itty-bitty letters," he said.

The game will be available at bookstores, and at Woolworth and AggieLand Flowers.

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