

# CRIES FROM THE ATTIC™

## A HERO FALLS



**B**y the time this issue makes its way into your hands the news will have undoubtedly reached you first — on March 4th, 2008 an empty chair was pushed up to the table as Gary Gygax quietly passed away into the night.

This issue of *Knights of the Dinner Table* is dedicated to the man who gave us and our friends a reason to get together and socialize over the last three decades. The man who introduced the world to RPGs.

I had a lot I wanted to say about Gary in this editorial. I thought long and hard over it. I just can't seem to find the right words.

Like many of you reading this, I became enthralled with *D&D* years ago, and by default with the creative talents behind it — Gary Gygax, Dave Arneson, Frank Mentzer, Douglas Niles and too many other familiar names that appeared on the various *AD&D* books and supplements to mention here.

Gary of course was King among such royalty in our eyes. He was the face man of the game — the central authoritative voice who fed us rules and answers and kept us on the path. His columns in *Dragon* usually started with “Gentle Reader...” and we just knew he was talking to us and not *DOWN* to us.

He was something of a mythic character in our gaming group. Someone who lived far away in a misty land far to the north where he wrote in solitude in some lofty tower. At least that's how I pictured him.

We loved the game and we loved the man at the creative helm and looked forward to where the he and the game would take us.

Somewhere along the way, as often happens in the real world, the man and his creation became separated from one another. Call it bad business decisions, betrayal, just rewards, or a bad roll of the dice. Take your pick. It doesn't really matter.

All we knew is that Gary's voice had suddenly drawn silent where *D&D* was concerned and we missed him.

Years later I would meet Gary in person. I would discover he was a flesh and blood human. A man not without his faults (much like myself and my friends). I would also find he was one the most likeable men I've ever met.

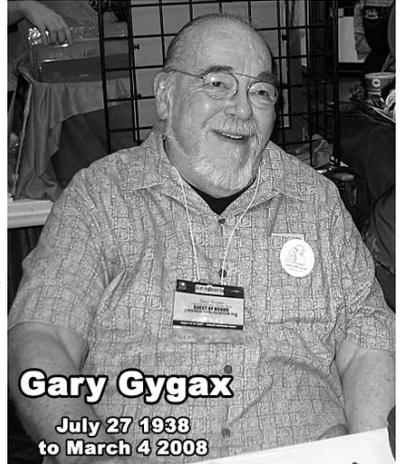
I've told the story more times than I can count. When I made my first awkward attempt to get into the games industry, I sent Gary a copy of the first issue of *SHADIS*.



Above: Gary in his front yard spinning a yarn at his Porch Party last June.

To my surprise he followed up with a letter with advice and much a needed boost to my confidence when he ended with, “Keep doing what you're doing.”

A few weeks later he gave my wife the shock of her life when he unexpectedly called up on the phone and the two chatted. Course she rubbed it in that I had missed the call.



For a while there I felt pretty special. Surely Gary saw something in me. Why else would he bother writing me back and then calling?

I would learn later that *THAT'S* just who Gary was. A man who instantly made you feel like his best friend. Who didn't measure a person based on his portfolio. Always offering advice. Picking up the phone. Sending out a letter for some surprised and elated gamer to open. A guy who opened up his house and front porch each week to complete strangers.

We had the privilege of attending Gary's funeral a few days ago. It was touching to see how many people who had never met the man had made the trek to sit there among Gary's close friends and family.

You had the feeling they weren't there because of Gary's celebrity status. Nor for the bragging rights of saying, “I was there.”

They were there because Gary had impacted their lives.

Within a few hours of Gary's death, emails began pouring in. The letter's page this issue is filled with stories and tributes to Gary from gamers from all over the world — wanting to share how Gary had touched their lives. I think they do a much better job of paying tribute to the man Gary Gygax than I ever could.

Some have forged life-long friendships at the table rolling dice. Others have found comfort during difficult times. Others acquired a love of reading by tackling the reading lists Gary was constantly providing. And others still felt they owed their chosen careers to Gary.

Me...? I'll always remember Gary as the guy with the contagious love for games and those who play them. The guy who had time for everyone. And who (as Frank Mentzer told me after Gary's funeral) “treated every person he met as an opportunity to make a new friend.”

Gary is credited for creating a game where there were no winners or losers. Yet in the end he left the table a winner none the less.

Surrounded by friends who will miss his presence. And tens of thousands of gamers who idolized him. He did alright for himself. And he left us one hell of a sandbox to play in.

Game On, Gary!

*Jolly R. Blackburn*

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March 7th, 2008