

The Screw = The Screw is a column devoted to dead or "lost" characters. This feature will be run after the "body count" reaches a sufficient level. The Screw can also be used to tell a story of heroic or humorous death. (Yeh, this article is warped, but it's my newsletter.) The column will begin with two characters. The two characters come from Rudy's Cthulhu game and my AD&D game. In Rudy's Cthulhu game the group was fighting a magician in a lead mine. The magician turned Jeff Brickman's characters arm into ash! The spell also caused the unfortunate character to go insane. In my AD&D game Tod's gnome character was killed by a group of hob-goblins. Only two characters remained standing after this adventure.

Quote = During a Cthulhu game. Look for the pun... =

Rudy: "Jeff, do you have occult?"

Jeff: "No, I have a nine millimeter."

Note = I have lost the file for Newsletter #26. If anyone has a copy of this issue, please let me make a photocopy. Thanks.

Cake's Critique = *Strike Force* = Grade: B- = *Strike Force* is an old Hero Product that I have recently read for the first time. *Strike Force* was written by Aaron Alston and the art was done predominantly by Dennis Loubet. The supplement is around 100 pages and was designed as a Champions campaign universe. One of the things that I liked about the module was the amount of characters and villains included in the book. Some of the characters are famous to Champions gurus (Phosphene, Lorelei, etc...). The interior art was great, but the cover was poor. My big problem with the module is that it is obviously "somebodies" Champions universe. If *Strike Force* was done with a more "generic" universe theme it could have been good. Only buy the book if you want new villains or to read about Aaron's campaign.

Last Game = There were three games since the last issue. These games included my AD&D, Rudy's Cthulhu, and Deb's AD&D. My AD&D was mentioned above. Rudy's Cthulhu led the party to a sideline adventure. The sideline adventure involved a small hamlet near London and two werewolves. Deb's AD&D was a complete change. Several factors forced Debbie to change the adventure from a desert genre to aiding a group of dragons in a far off land. The new adventure involved killing an evil mage who was making a magic dust that could paralyze any of the metallic dragons. It turned out the mage was Herafara in a future dimension. The party managed to defeat Herafara II, but now how do we get away?

Upcoming Events = Pre-registration for Polycon is soon approaching. The deadline for early registration is April 15th. Let me know who is interested?

Note = This is the first Gazette on my new computer with my new printer. Hope you like the results!

The Screw = This week the screw is dedicated to my AD&D game. In my AD&D game last weekend, every character except the cavaliers died! Tod's barbarian died while fighting zombies, Debbie's goblin was cut down by the chaotic evil cavalier, and Reoscencrantz (the paladin's henchman) was killed in his sleep by the cavalier. Death was running ramped! Rick, a new player, played the unfortunate cavalier. I will have to decide what to do next...the Ruins of the Undermountain will be my next AD&D campaign run. It will take some time to design, but it promises to be a good time. Look for extensive dungeon crawling.



Slam-Con II = This years con will feature all of the fun of last years con. Some of the scheduled events include:

- * Trip to the game stores. Saturday morning the gang will visit D&J Hobbies and Pendragon Comics. Time to buy name brand games and supplies.
- * Annual Family Business Tournament = The mafioso of this event will be decided again. Plans to be a fun event. Can Rudy be dethroned as the raining "don"?

Please send your game ideas and any articles for the program so that they can be printed. If you have any events that you would like to see, or run, please contact me.

The con is on Friday May 24th to Monday May 27th. Slam-Con II will begin on Friday at 5:00 PM and continue through Monday at 12:00 AM. There may be an at the door registration for tournament prizes. Registration will not exceed \$10.00 each.

Last Game = The last games that were run include two AD&D adventures. One of the adventures Debbie ran and the other adventure I ran. My game came to a sudden halt. (See the above article.) Debbie's game saw the end of the dragon helper run. The party managed to talk to the dead sage and get the antidote to the metallic dragon paralyze dust. The party then gathered the forces with Andaron. The armies want the party to clear a forest of the evil that lurks there. This would allow the armies surprise access. The problem is that the characters are not convinced that liberating the forest is a good idea.

Upcoming Events = Next issue will be the Slam-Con events list at the con. See you there! There will also be new campaigns mentioned next issue! Yes, I have not been sitting doing nothing for the past two months! Other articles include a paintball and RPG article from Scott and the Role of Computers section.

* BBQ AND HORSESHOES ON SUNDAY.

Slam-Con 2

This is an all Slam-Con 2 issue! This issue will act as the program guide for our wonderful little convention.

Welcome to Slam-Con 2: The Sequel! This years convention will include a great deal of events for everyone. Below is a schedule of the weekends events.

Friday May 24th:

Saturday May 25th:

11:00 AM = Trip to the comic and game stores. D&J Hobbies and Planet 10.

8:00 PM = *Carnival of Blood (An Exercise in Terror)* = Call of Cthulhu = 6 Players, 6-8 Hours = (Note: This is a non-campaign game. The Keeper of Arcane Lore will not be forgiving if he loses the family business tournament.) = Just north of Arkham sprawls the gaudy neon-lit pavilions of the North Star Amusement Arcade and Pleasure Pier fronting the Miskatonic River. Here young swains take their ladies on hot summer nights and children of all ages frolic the humid summer days away. Amid these happy surroundings a terror lies in wait, an ancient terror as old as Arkham itself. The terror waits and its hunger grows. Can this investigators stop this horror or will they be consumed by it?!

Sunday May 26th:

11:00 AM = Annual Family Business Tournament. Who will make the Most Wanted List this year? (Part of the registration will go the purchase of the trophy.)

12:00 PM = BBQ Lunch and Croquet. Bring your own B's (beef, beer, babes, etc...).

2:00 PM = *Operation Huxley* = Champions = 8 Players Max, 6 Hours = New peace treaties are signed, the Berlin wall is coming down, and now there is a world wide unification organization. Finally world peace may be at hand. This seems too easy... (This game will cause major ramifications in my Champions world.)

8:00 PM = *Strike Force: Shantipole* = Star Wars = 6 Players, 4-6 Hours = (Note: Any players and any races will work. Any space nut will do.) = *The Shantipole*, a new fighter, must be escorted back to the Rebellion High Command. You and your team must see the ship to safety. Sounds easy...as you emerge from hyperspace you find yourself surrounded by TIE fighters! Routine mission my ass!

Monday May 27th:

11:00 AM = Clean the house.

(Continued)

Role of Computers = (This is an article that I wanted to start regarding computers and role-playing games. Software reviews, and discussion can be covered in these articles.)

King's Quest V = Sierra On-Line has a new style that I like! Sierra is leading the way with the new graphical interaction interface. This interface is mouse driven and uses icons to control the characters actions. The entire game can be played with no keyboard input. (Except to type in the name of the saved game.) The mouse icon actually changes. For example, there is a mouth icon to talk to someone, there is a hand item to grab something, etc.. This makes the game a dream to play. The newly released *Space Quest IV* also uses this interface.

The graphics and sound on KQV are excellent. The background look like something out of a fairytale story . The scenery is painted and scanned. The music goes from the deep and ominous to the happy go lucky. A sound card is a must for KQV.

Another feature of KQV and SQIV is the memory usage. Usually games can't make use of the computers extended or expanded memory. Well these games make full use of the memory to speed game play and sound effects.

This game deserves an A+ rating. This game is game of the year material.

Article = *Paintball: The Ultimate Role-Playing Game* = (Here is an article that Scott found for me from Action Pursuit Games. I thought it a good article that deserved mention in this newsletter.) (P.S. Your full of crap if you think I am re-typing this! Attached to this document will be the article.)

Upcoming Events = Next Issue will be a Slam-Con II summary.

Slam Con II Review = Slam Con II was a great success! There were many exciting games and events. Don won the annual Family Business Tourney. Some memorable things include croquet, aerialist impaled on iron fences, and BBQ chicken.

Polycon Review = Polycon will be held on the weekend of June 22 and 23. We will be leaving at various times on Friday. Many events will be held at the con. I will have a Time Travel D.I. game planned.

P.I. Campaign = "*The Canon Club*" = My D.I. game will begin on the weekend after Polycon. If you do not have a character design sheet, please call me and I will get you a sheet. The campaign will revolve around a group of mystery solving sleuths. Character backgrounds are due on the Monday after Polycon. Please get me a photocopy of the background and the character sheet.

The Kid's Comic Review = *Swords of Shar Pei* = (Caliber Press, Thomas Sniegowski and Mark Masztal) = I'm getting better at this; this is the shortest one to date. Also, in order not to inundate John with unpublished comic reviews, I've decided to reduce my schedule to 1 review every 2 weeks. This week I'm reviewing a new comic, the first in a three part mini-series, *Swords of Shar Pei*.

This week I bought: *Mister E*, the follow-on to the Books of Magic series, *Sword of Shar Pei*, and two back issues I've been searching for (issues 1 and 2 of *Baker Street*, a very good comic I might add). Picking were pretty slim this week, but I was pleasantly surprised by *Swords of Shar Pei*. The comic is produced in black and white. The storyline is set in a feudal Japanese type society. Both these elements give the comic a *Lone Wolf and Cub* feel. The line art is bare, yet expressive and both the art and writing have a lot of depth and detail. I first found this comic in *Comic Shop News* #200. CSN previewed the comic and printed a short interview with one of the creators, Thomas Sniegowski. He said that the story was influenced by comics such as *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Ronin* and movies such as the *Seven Samurai* and the Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns. He also said that Mark Masztal's art was heavily influenced by Goseki Kojima and Frank Miller, among others. (*More in a week.*)

Last Game = The last games that were run are Tod's AD&D games. The first game saw the group start the search for a wizard's tomb. The second game the party reached the tomb and met the "frog men". The tomb was dangerous! Three of the five party members died in the adventure. The characters became victims of an ugly ghost! Only Debbie's ranger and my illusionist survived the night. The adventure continued to build when the characters discovered that the army of goblins is growing in large quantities.

Upcoming Events = Movie Review by Styles (if I can convince him...), etc...

Note = Thanks go to Don for helping type the following review.

The Kid's Comic Review = *Swords of Shar Pei* (Cont.) = (Caliber Press, Thomas Sniegowski and Mark Masztal) = The story is set in a post-holocaust world that was ravaged by a deadly plague. The plague destroyed most of the human population, but left the rest of the planet's lifeforms untouched. The planet is ruled by overlords that are the remnant of the great scientific lifeforms of the past. The overlords are also the people who eradicated the plague. The chief of the overlords is the god-head, the supreme ruler of the planet. In this world there exists innumerable genetic mutations that are the results of endless and on-going scientific experiments. One such mutation is the Shar Pei, another post-holocaust Ronin that was bred as a gladiator for "The Games." The Games are the typical Roman type blood bowls we've seen before. After distinguishing himself in The Games, Shar Pei is appointed body guard to the god-head where his courage and loyalty win him his freedom from slavery. Thus ends the first issue of *Swords of Shar Pei*. The first issue sets the stage for the real story to come which will presumably be Shar Pei's quest to explore himself and the world he inhabits. On the surface, the series may sound simplistic, but it is actually quite complex. The fact that the backdrop for the story is a planet restored to garden like beauty and not a rubble strewn, post apocalyptic wasteland is a real change. Also, despite my innate sympathy for the rebel and underdog, the God-head turns out, at first glance anyway, to be a gentle and benign ruler, Plato's Philosopher King in a sense. So my immediate distrust of authority is challenged in this book. So, there are many subtleties about the book that make it good reading and viewing. I think it will definitely appeal to those Nippon-philos out there. Abe and Ernie are you listening? I suggest you all give it a try. The kid's rating is 2 thumbs up, this comic is definitely worth picking up.

Note = For all of you D.I. players, "The Kid" from the "The Kid's Comic Review" is M.C.A. (Yes Chris, I am using M.C.A. and you can't do a thing about it!)

Last Game = The last game that we played included Cthulhu, Deb's AD&D, and a preview game of my 2nd Ed. AD&D game. Rudy's Cthulhu followed the group to Egypt. Along the way we acquired a new "companion". Deryl's character summoned and became a night gaunt! Heaven knows why he is still with us . . . In Deb's AD&D the group has trapped themselves in another dimension while attempting to destroy an evil tome (or is that tomb). My AD&D sneak preview had the group protecting a crazy woman out for revenge. Bob and James Z. made guest appearances.

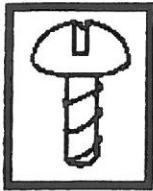
Upcoming Events = News on Pacificon soon! The convention will be held Saturday August 31st through Monday September 2nd at the Dunfey Hotel in San Mateo. Ask for days off early! More D.I. games to come.

The Kid's Comic Review = *Shade : The Changing Man* = Writer: Peter Milligan, Penciller: Chris Bachalo, and Inker: Mark Pennington. = Why howdy fellers,

Its the Kid again, back with another comic review. Sorry about the last months review, I know that it was a bit lengthy. You see the Sandman is such a great comic, I wanted to make sure that everyone was reading it. Anyway, this month I'm going to use a much shorter format. So, here goes.

There were several good comics out this week. I try to limit the number of comics I buy, you know I don't make a fortune as a HELO jock and that damn Camero of mine soaks up a lot of dough, but there are so many good ones out there that it's hard to decide. (D.I. players did not hear this!) This week I bought *Animal Man*, *Books of Magic*, *Green Arrow Annual*, *Lone Wolf and Cub*, *Shade the Changing Man*, and *Worlds Without End*. It was a tough decision trying to choose between *Shade The Changing Man* and *Books of Magic* as the best comic of the week. *Books of Magic* have been great and I strongly recommend them, but *Shade The Changing Man* has been nothing short of excellent. This book has developed from a quirky horror fantasy to a real tour de force of the comic genre. The comic seems to be building to some sort of a climax and the tension and danger portrayed in the story positively ooze from the page. Milligan has shifted the story from defining the Madness Stream and Shade's ability to combat it, to examining Shade's personality as a transplanted alien and the relationship between Shade and Kathy. The last issue, number 12, introduced a great new wrinkle. The murder of Troy Grenzer has reintroduced as a dark side of Shade's personality. The rationale is that while Shade is occupying Grenzer's body, the murderer's psyche is still inhabiting it also. The situation is especially dangerous and interesting because Kathy, Shade's love interest, is mortally afraid of Grenzer, the murderer of her parents. So the Shade is now dealing with the dilemma of how to protect Kathy from the dark side of his body, a side that he can't control, and still develop a relationship with the girl that he loves. To top it off, Grenzer is able to manipulate the Madness Vest without Shade's knowledge. When we Shade's body we don't know if it is Shade or Grenzer. It is a bit like the climactic scene in *Total Recall* when Arnie' is in the hotel on Mars and he is trying to figure out if he is still awake or still experiencing the computerized dream initiated at the beginning of the movie. Like Arnie', the audience doesn't know reality from fantasy until Arnie' takes a chance, blows away his supposed wife and the reality comes flooding in. Unfortunately for the audience, the movie takes a nose dive from this point on. Unless I miss my guess, Shade will continue to deliver. The roller coaster is climbing kiddies, slowly, but surely, so you better jump on before it is too late. The Kid's recommendation? *Shade The Changing Man* gets three snaps in a circle, the comic is really good.

Last Game = Deb's AD&D campaign was run. The game saw the group getting killed by spirit cats, the guardian getting boxed, then grabbing the book!



The Screw = Sometimes people can be very unlucky. In the month of July, Jim Schaff had such a month. Everyone has had times like "Jim's July". Let me start from the beginning.

The first death was Rosencrantz. Rosencrantz is a hireling of Jim's PC in my AD&D campaign. He died from a stab in the night from a possessed PC. He died at first level. The second death was Mora'i. Mora'i is a first level thief from Tod's AD&D game. He died from the undead beast encountered on the island. The third character to go is Sean McGuire, a time travel D.I. character. He died on a train ride in the age of the cowboys. Sean died with 17 experience. The fourth death came to Herefara. Herefara died in Deb's AD&D game. He died, but was resurrected in August. The fifth death was Morgan Loch, a pirate hero character from Rudy's game. He died with only 6 experience.

Origin = Sparkle's Story = (This was composed by John Turner. He probably doesn't even know that I have this anymore, but I save everything. I found this after cleaning my files and decided that it is worth printing. Enjoy.)

Character Name: Sparkle

Secret I.D.: Yoshitomo Miyai

History/Origin: Miyai is a member of the Yoshitomo clan, one of the most famous samurai families in all of Japan. The family is famous for its blades. Yoshitomo weapons are by far the most valuable Japanese weapons in existence. The quality, workmanship, and supremely forged steel have been honored by the Japanese for centuries.

Miyai is the third son of Kasagi, elder member, and leader of the Yoshitomo clan. Being the third of five children, Miyai grew up without many of the problems associated with the youngest or the oldest. His immediate family is very close, and he has been taught to always uphold the Yoshitomo honor and tradition of excellence.

Mayai did well in school and decided on college in America, because of their superior computer science programs. He attended Cal Tech where he graduated with honors. At present he is living on the west coast, and working freelance for his clans electronics company in the Silicon Valley. Since graduation he has been working secretly on a software/hardware package to make the perfect sword. Computer designed, forged, and laser honed. He hopes to gain much praise and prestige for himself and his clan if he completes his task.

(How Sparkle got his powers next issue!)

Last Game = The last games we played were at Pacificon. Pacificon seemed to be a great success. I played in many great games. Best convention that I have been to for years! Next convention will be Rivalcon II! More news in a future issue!

Upcoming Events = More of Sparkles origin, Video game previews, and much more!

Origin = Sparkle's Story = (This was composed by John Turner.)

Character Name: Sparkle

Secret I.D.: Yoshitomo Miyai

History/Origin: (Cont.) Miyai's powers came abruptly, on the night of his 21st birthday. He was home in Japan. On his birthday he had visited the temple village Kamakura, outside of Tokoyo, as was common for young clan members on their 21st birthday. He had decided to stay the night and had went to a sacred grove at midnight to review his life. The grove had been sacred from ancient times and supposedly had great powers of good for the chosen of the grove. He sunk into a deep trance, he felt truly at one with the world. Slowly, he started noticing a glowing brightness. As he viewed his surroundings he became aware of a glowing balls of light encircling him, almost dancing in some sort of pattern. He viewed them in awe. They must certainly be Kami sprites, he thought to himself. They slowly tightened their circle and gradually Miyai was covered with sprites. A subliminal bond was established by this joining and Miyai understood that he could now call them at will. (Or even not at his will, for they had a certain intelligence and mischievousness about them.) He told no one of his experience and has spent the last two years learning what he can do with the sprites and his will.

Paladin's Software Review = Although several interesting data base programs have appeared recently, Mr. Merc asked me to write about entertainment software. Some of the recent Christmas titles will be appearing soon. Some of my favorite titles will have sequels released. These include Falcon 3.0, Secret of Monkey Island II, Indiana Jone II: Fate of Atlantis, Wing Commander II, Police Quest III, Leisure Larry V, Ultima VII, Sorcerer's Apprentice 201, Elvira II, Might and Magic III, Jetfighter II, Secret Weapons of the Luftwaiffe, Gunship 2000, and F117A Stealth Fighter! This is quite an impressive lineup. Several of these games will be reviewed as time and space permits. I have a new force beam modulator transfer routine to examine...

Last Game = A month has passed since the last issue. The sad part is that not much has happened. We played a game of AD&D at Rick's house. The group helped a group of female ninja attempt to gain their vengeance. It took place at the Yellow Poppy, a local drug den. So the woman left out some details when the group was hired. She forget to mention that they were ninja, that they were after revenge, that the keeper of the Yellow Poppy is their target...just a few details.

Upcoming Events = Next time, top ten computer games for 1991 from three sources! Also the return of an old entry, and a new soapbox topic! I can hardly wait!

Paladin's Software Review = Top 10 PC Games of 1991 = Again Mr. Merc has asked me to do one of these petty computer game reviews. After searching several computer networks I have crosslinked three of the most reliable sources. These sources include Computer Gaming World (CGW), the Software Publishers Association (SPA), and Entertainment Advertisement (EAD). Here is how these sources rated the top 10 PC games of 1991.

<u>Computer Gaming World:</u>	<u>Software Publishers Association:</u>	<u>Entertainment Advertisement:</u>
1. Wing Commander	1. King's Quest V	1. Chuck Yeager Air Combat
2. Railroad Tycoon	2. Jetfighter II	2. Eye of the Beholder
3. Red Baron	3. Wing Commander	3. Mavis Beacon Typing
4. Warlords	4. Space Quest IV	4. Death Knight of Krynn
5. Harpoon	5. Flight Simulator	5. Mario Andretti's Racing
6. Ultima VI	6. Eye of the Beholder	6. PGA Tour Golf
7. Lemmings	7. Sim City	7. Chessmaster 2100
8. Eye of the Beholder	8. A10 Tank Killer	8. Secret of Monkey Island
9. Yeager Air Combat	9. Links	9. Software Worlds Atlas
10. King's Quest V	10. Simearth	10. Life and Death

EAD rates all types of entertainment and home use software. Thus the entry of the typing tutor and atlas. Some of the surprises on these charts include Jetfighter II edging out Wing Commander in the SPA survey and Railroad Tycoon absent on two of the charts. All of these are guaranteed classics.

Soapbox = Cthulhu's Influences on Roleplaying = Cthulhu has played a major part of the role-playing game experience. Cthulhu is one of the first non-super, non-fantasy games to hit the market. It is the first horror role-playing game. It was first published in 1981. In the first year it won all three of the national awards for role-playing games. Cthulhu is published in five languages.

Sandy Peterson, the author of Call of Cthulhu, puts it best when she said:

"If you are already familiar with other role-playing games, be forewarned. Call of Cthulhu is quite a different phenomenon from most games, in which combat skills are all-important. Call of Cthulhu is an investigative game. Intellect, not brawn, is paramount. Your ability to read Latin may prove of more worth than your accuracy with .45 revolver. Of course, madness and death can lurk just around the corner, so be prepared!" Thanks for taking the combat character out of the limelight.

Product Grade = Western Hero = Grade: D+ = Western Hero is not new. There is little new information for the experienced Hero player or GM. The book contains some interesting NPCs and some excellent scenario ideas, but overall there is no new skills or clarifications. I was looking for some cool new gun combat moves and some interesting bar fight rule variations. These are not in Western Hero. Western Hero would have made a great D.I. supplement. The interior art is fair at best and the cover down right stinks. Buy Time Life for the art and D.I. for the rules.

New Stuff = Hero is in the works to produce a Cyber Hero book that will be released in April. I have heard some good things about this book.

Next Issue = Kid's Comic Review, Rival Con 2 summary, and a Champions product review!