

# TO FORGE A FANTASY WORLD

## GREYHAWK'S CREATION

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So what do you do when a dozen eager adventurers are clamoring for more of what they love? In 1972 when adventure modules were a thing unknown, and fantasy world settings for role-playing games were unheard of, there was only one answer: Go to work on making up adventure materials, of course.

As most readers probably know, the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Game (1974) suggested during adventure sessions the use of outdoor terrain from another company's game board (For the record, that was Avalon Hill Company's Outdoor Survival game.). Even in a game where imagination is paramount, that sort of thing won't do for long. To add to the problems of the one directing game play, the Dungeon Master (DM), there were no dungeons! So, returning to that time, late in the year 1972, we begin the story of how the World of Greyhawk Fantasy Setting was born, how it grew, and how it matured. But without any ancestors, we first must learn what led up to the making of the first commercial fantasy world to use with a role-playing game, and then only can we move on to the actual process involved in regards to the product.

Because those new to role-playing games (RPGs) – and who at that time was otherwise? – tend to prefer the action and combat of a “dungeon crawl” to other aspects of the game for, my initial creative effort went principally into the creation of a coherent series of ever-deeper labyrinths. It seemed to me that Greyhawk was a suitable name, one that evoked the unusual, so I called the place where these dungeons were located “Greyhawk Castle”. The place was old, its upper works in ruins, but beneath them were vast subterranean mazes. Each level was named, the first being the Vaults, then came the Dungeons, the Lower Dungeons, the Crypts, and so forth. Past Catacombs and Labyrinth the daring delver eventually came to the Lesser and Greater Caves, then the Caverns, and finally, at level 13 to Maze where the Mad Archmage, Zagig, was manifest. From there the intrepid character was transported to the other side of the globe! Drawing and developing all that each of these dungeon levels contained took many months, so before the deepest part was finished, real life had moved on and the year 1973 had rapidly disappeared.

Well and good. The players were happy, except now and then the bold adventurers needed a place to go to sell off loot, seek the services of mages or clerics, as well as for a change of pace. In short, the players wanted a large community setting where they could manage special needs of their characters, and a place for those same swashbucklers to encounter the darker denizens of a city, experience other challenges quite different from those of underground dungeons. Where else, it seemed, than a city of the same name as the castle. So the City of Greyhawk sprung up as a single piece of graph paper around the same time that level four of the castle dungeon complex was being developed.

Only very gross details of the place were developed, save for the specific ones that the PCs (Player Characters) frequented. Thus there were about a dozen inns and taverns that had developed floor plans,

inhabitants, and so forth. There were a score or so other locations that were likewise detailed – several temples, a wizard's tower, the "Sages' Guild", the "Mercenaries Brotherhood", a few arms & armor dealers, merchant shops, and of course moneychangers and jewelers. The wizard was never very helpful, and that was a role that was most enjoyable for the DM to assume. Eventually an irate monk (played by Terry Kuntz) dared to paint that curmudgeony spell-worker's tower with red and white barber-pole strips. Of course the wizard took this in stride and styled himself the "Striped Mage of Greyhawk" thereafter. Another of the more amusing locations, this one of the merchant sort, was the "Mystical Trader" run by thieves who offered spurious magic items for sale, meantime doing the best to purloin the real ones possessed by the unsuspecting players. Naturally, this established changed locations frequently, and the proprietors altered their appearance with each removal.

Two major adventuring areas were thus solidly in play early on 1973. There were the castle ruins and its dungeons and there was the city, with key places that players' characters would likely visit indicated by color: red for a tavern or inn, gold for a money changer or gemner, gray for a weapon and arms dealer, green for a merchant, blue for a temple, purple for the place of a potent wizard, etc. Other areas around the city were developed on the spot as the need arose. As a matter of fact, all of the adventures in the City of Greyhawk were "winged", created from whole cloth on the spot, for being so immersed in the game it was quite easy to create exciting encounters, and play character roles suitable for such a fantasy city. The many players now active – out of some 30 total, 12 to 20 would typically show up for a play session – loved this. Even though the castle dungeon levels were deeper, the challenges greater, the rewards richer, proportionally more time was spent in "city adventuring."

This was initially surprising, as the lure of the hidden underground mazes and the many perils of the "wilderness" had been the primary interest of players. Now, with the mazes of the city before them, and the many strange encounters possible therein, the group began to focus on the urban setting about half the time. To manage this, this single map for the City of Greyhawk became four, and there was greater detailing of important areas thereon as a mnemonic device for the DM. Was the frantic pace of development thus reduced, the players' demands lessened, their need for places to adventure sated? Of course not.

The original band of bold adventures then recalled their derring-do in the "wilderness" (the old, generic mapboard for outdoor travel and action) and decided to venture away from castle ruins, dungeons, and city to see what lay in the land around. With colored pencils at hand and a sheet of plain paper, the region in which the City of Greyhawk lay was born in a night, enhanced in but a few more days' time. There were many features to explore. In the great lake to the north were both monsters and piratical foes. To the south was an ever-growing borderland where brigands and savage creatures lurked in hills and forests. Eastward were swamps, and past western steppes through which a mighty river flowed were mountains. All those places too were rife with threatening things. On the land were little hamlets and villages as well, places to stop, rest, re-supply, and throw an adventure in to the bargain as well. All of this remained undetailed – special encounters were not written up. A table with random encounters served where the imagination of the Dungeon Master failed. I was pleased the players accepted my

efforts with verve. In fact the rather limited region provided thus for their exploits might well have served for many months and could have been further developed at a moderate pace as they ventured further in one direction or another, save for one thing. Three of the most able and active of the players' characters were removed from the vicinity, carried far away indeed.

The few small states that lay around the City of Greyhawk were based on the medieval model, logical neighbors for a large, free city such as Greyhawk. Having read plenty of books dealing with the history, culture, and society of the Middle Ages, this was no problem. Here a strong kingdom, but with tumultuous marches bordering it. There a county palatine, and in the hinterlands robber barons and bandit lords. This was done randomly, based on terrain. If the geography was "favorable", than a feudal state was located in such a spot. Wild forests, marshes, great hills too were locations in which the outlaws, thieves, and worse lurked.

Hoist by my own petard! These three, separately, had attained the nadir (pinnacle in terms of success) of the dungeons, and thanks to Zagig were sent "clean through the earth" to a distant land. Having sown the seeds of my own undoing, how could I complain? So I was faced with major works of improvisation as one after another of these PCs (for the record Robilar, Tenser, and Terik) made their separate ways around the globe, seeking to reunite as they quested for their own homeland. While I was pleased with their enjoyment of the adventuring fare, it was less palatable to the DM. As it happened, each character decided on a different route for their trek. My capacity to invent interesting, different, and exciting material on the spot was stretched to the limit by a long series of one-character adventures, and I determined never to go through such a trial again. So as the triumphant trio of PCs who had penetrated to the lowest level of Castle Greyhawk and survived being sent as far from there as the world allowed received their well-earned laurels from their less enterprising fellows, as DM, more world building was feverishly in progress.

This time, though, I was creating on a far grander scale. I needed a world map, terrain, kingdoms, people and places. The shape of the lands and seas was not challenging, and the geographical features and major states of the many continents posed no problem. Details, though, were daunting and require a bit more explanation.

There are two methods of creating a fantasy world setting. The first, the one used to establish what was to become my campaign World of Greyhawk setting is the "pebble in the water". Using this method one drops a creative pebble. In this case that was the castle ruins and underlying dungeons. Just as a pebble spreads rings after it hits the water, so the DM develops the details of the fantastic world around the initial entry point. The second method is the "bulls eye" one. In this case the whole of the world is developed, with increasing detail as the target center, the place where adventuring will commence, is neared. The first way of doing things is quick and dirty, and that is all that was necessary when the process began - players were anxiously awaiting new challenges, literally each and every day. When so much of the globe had been traveled, player suddenly gained a new awakening. There was a wide world waiting to be seen. What lay beyond the marches of the free city they called home?

Using the aforementioned "bull's eye" method, I sketched out the whole of the world, then began to place more detailed terrain and countries in the region that surrounded Castle and City Greyhawk. So familiar had the latter name become, though, that it was the natural appellation for the entire world. My initial globe looked a good deal similar to our earth, so I named this fantastic parallel world "Oerth" to make certain that any and all players understood it was no past or future of our own planet, but a very different and magical place. All of this sufficed for scores of participants in the campaign that was then the only "Greyhawk". It remained that way until 1978.

#### The Birth of the First Fantasy World Setting:

It was, as I recall, in the late autumn of 1978 that the need for a ready-made fantasy world was unquestionable. As a matter of fact, most adult Dungeon Masters did not have the time I did for developing a campaign setting. In contrast, younger ones did have the time, but these DMs typically lacked the knowledge of geography, mythology, history, and the rest that adults acquire over years of reading, research, and experience. There I was, finished writing the Dungeon Masters Guide for the AD&D Game with no hot project waiting. So I was asked, "Don't you have a campaign that could be used to create a fantasy world setting?" "Well, sort of" I had to confess. It was soon decided that I would provide the first world setting that TSR would publish, and I spent a couple of days pondering the task. How to go about this so as to furnish an immediately useful tool for all the DMs in need was daunting. After considerable thought, the answer came suddenly in a flash of inspiration.

I queried, "What size map paper was the maximum, and could the product have two such maps?" When the answers came, I closeted myself in my office with several blank maps with the familiar hexagon grid overlay, plenty of colored pencils, and a lined tablet for jotting down names - for those geographical features and places that would appear on the maps to be done. In two days time I had both of the sheets filled in with mountains and hills, lakes and rivers, forests and swamps, deserts and barrens. Boundary lines were omitted, save for those of the lakes, seas and oceans. Then it was time to detail the lands and cities of this place! The questions were what to include and how much detail? What was enough, what too much? The answer to the dilemma was not really a difficult one. Instead of creating a whole world, I was creating a great continent, Oerik, the immediately "familiar" lands around the City of Greyhawk and eastwards to be known as the Flanaess because of their original inhabitants, the Flan race. All suitably fanciful and evocative of a marvelous and magical place, I thought, especially when even more magical and strange names were added. I did my best to choose names that were evocative of the fantastic, the geography, or the desired cultural setting. Not a few of those appellations were drawn from the names of persons I knew. It is a most difficult task to come up with so many names for all sorts of things, that it stretched both imagination and patience, but soon enough the naming was completed to satisfaction of all concerned. The remainder of the planet would be mentioned in only the vaguest manner, disregarded as "unimportant", but a tantalizing matter for the reader to think about surely.

Over another week I placed cities and important towns, wrote in names on those two maps packed with

exciting adventure potential. Many of the names were meant to be evocative of danger, uncertainty, the exotic - the Joten Mountains, Land of Black Ice, Suss Forest, Scarlet Brotherhood, Horned Society, Dyvers and Ekbir to name a very few. Similarly, where did the Plains of the Paynims end, how far south did the Amedio Jungle stretch, and what, if anything, lay beyond it? No answer would the map or written accompaniment make, for such is the nature of a medieval-like fantasy world. For the rest, the mighty Lake of Unknown Depths, the Nyr Dyv, and its rivers were easy, material drawn straight from my own campaign. Indeed, the entire region immediately around the City of Greyhawk came from that source. The vast balance of the continent, that part illustrated, was new and wildly varying. In order to pack a world of adventure into no more than two map sheets, much diversity, and some pretty fanciful history to support the disparate peoples and states occupying the continent, was demanded.

As an aside, and a sort of Dungeon Master's "confession", there was another reason for making the material for the published fantasy world setting unique. At the time there were a score and more of regular players in the Greyhawk campaign that I ran with a co-DM, Rob Kuntz. (Rob had been recruited to share the duties with me because of the great size of the player group, and he did an excellent job.) Information regarding the City of Greyhawk and environs was not giving anything away to the players, but to go much beyond would indeed have seriously compromised the campaign. My hopes of maintaining two separate worlds were soon dashed, as the players we DMed insisted on the published material as the "correct" geographical information(!) regardless of what the author told them, so only that which was not covered in the World of Greyhawk Fantasy Setting remained unique to the Greyhawk campaign.

Writing the first, relatively small booklet to accompany the two maps took as long as all the rest of the process had. So some six weeks after being asked to devise a campaign world, I turned over the rough draft of what was soon to be published as the World of Greyhawk Fantasy Setting. What a break for me that Darlene was the artist assigned to the task of making my draft maps into something that would please the eye and soul of a fantasy gamer. Those two maps still draw admiring comments whenever they appear. In this case visual appeal remains a considerable factor for players in the Greyhawk world drama.

Into the "continent", Oerik, were packed diverse human "races" and states. The considerations used for making up the human "races" were pretty much fanciful, based only loosely on our own history. The Flan people, the aboriginal inhabitants of Oerik continent, were based loosely on a combination of Africans and North American Indians. The Oerid and Suel peoples were mainly drawn from the Indo-European models. The Bakluni "race" was meant to suggest the Asian, combining the Near East and Central Asia. These races alone, or in combination, provided plenty of cultural potential. "Demi-humans" and "humanoids" - the mythological and fantastic peoples known as dwarves, elves, gnomes, hobgoblins, orcs, etc. - were just slipped into things by default. That is, the setting subsumed the lot had been there when the first human inhabitants came, and whatever prior history was particular to them, severally or jointly, was not known. At the time of introduction to the milieu, all records were of human origination, and included these non-human cousins to mankind in their pages only when such details related directly

to human events. Even in the "history" of the setting there appeared many unexplained, scantily detailed events. What was the cause of the geographical feature known as the Sea of Dust created during the "Rain of Colorless Fire" which occurred in the terrible Baklunish-Suloise Wars? Nowhere in that history is there mention of the Rift Canyon, but one glance at the map shows plainly it is an unnatural addition to the landscape.

Of course, a history of the peoples in regards the continent was necessary. Success in involving a reader means not merely suspension of disbelief. It demands an active belief when the reader is participating in the role-playing game activity. This I sketched out with plenty of dramatic references, but little detail so as to maintain both a sense of mystery and to enable those utilizing the world setting to inject a good deal of their own creativity into things without violating what was presented. The history also set the stage for potential "current" events in individual campaigns.

To add more verisimilitude to this make-believe world portion, things large and that seemed natural were included. Oerth has not one but two moons, has special names for the months and days of the week, and mighty deities of Good and Evil nature contending over it, and also some near-deities of once human kind. Of course, only its fauna, but even its flora had strange species, unknown to earth, and so forth. Alignments, the moral and ethical bent, were included in the regional information, as were valuable resources. All such background information was aimed at immersing the reader into the fabulous world so as to make it a place where one of adventurous bent would wish to be. That given, the many states of the place, their culture, society, and politics perforce take on more meaning. Bright heraldry was included to enable the reader to relate the states to medieval models. The formal "college" rules that are stringently applied to British heraldry were not followed in creating the armorial bearings used for the continent. While some of the rules and meanings of charges were retained, such post-medieval "laws" could and should be ignored by the creator of a fantastical world where those matters aren't governed by a government bureau. The would-be herald for a fantasy setting should have a solid knowledge of what is now accepted as canon, then create from there as imagination and the mythical world dictate.

Couple all that with the unexplained, and I hoped the world setting presented a great allure to the reader whose imagination reveled in the fantastic, be he the one who would direct the events (DM) or the player discovering and exploring his world through his Player Character. The World of Greyhawk Fantasy Setting was a place only slightly familiar, a fairy tale world of a sort, one in which marvelous and monstrous things in multitudes was to be discovered. From the first reading, it was made plain that it was a place where strange and wonderful things would occur, fell creatures confront the explorer, but no matter how many adventurers one had there, there were always more awaiting. All questions could never be answered, nor all places be known.

I can not stress too much the importance of having mystery in the world setting. If one is escaping reality by means of a fantasy game, the known must be minimal, sufficient for conveying a feeling of being a native to the make-believe world, but otherwise so nebulous as to promote the sense of wonder children display about our earth. This being all too soon lost in reality, the fairy tale and the fantastic story replace

the real, and the sense of wonder can continue. What the fantasy game world setting must provide is the environment to enable the participant to regain that feeling of the marvelous and inexplicable. The milieu is the vast stage upon which will be played countless dramas, and a few comedies and tragedies as well. What awaits, who will triumph, how events will turn out must never be fully answered. To do so brings one to an end as surely as does the last page of a novel. Unfortunately, many designers of world settings forget about this. If the author recalls the feeling of separation and loss when coming to the end of a much-loved book, then the matter will be moot. The milieu will be never-ending, unfold gradually, and always have some new mystery to explore, some challenge to overcome.

Fortunately, but certainly not by chance, I have been an avid consumer of imaginative literature since I was a little boy, a fan of fantasy and science fiction for a quarter of a century when I created the World of Greyhawk Fantasy Setting. Coupled with my love of history, extensive reading therein, the pursuit of fantasy and fiction stood me in good stead. I knew the pang of finishing a wonderful novel and understood the constraints of attempting to devise a fantasy world setting that sought to tell a story, as does a novel. Greyhawk was purposely written to be used with virtually any sort of fantasy campaign and with few repressive elements. Using information from our ancient and medieval history, with a dash of the early Renaissance included here and there for spice, the political and social reform of the milieu came as close to the fairy tale as a more "serious" presentation allowed. With that I added liberally from the concepts expressed by authors of imaginative literature - mainly swords & sorcery, but some considerable blend of other sort too, as anyone familiar with the bibliography in the original edition of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Game Dungeons Masters Guide knows. For example, the wonderfully imaginative treatments that authors L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt provided for Norse Mythology (The Incomplete Enchanter), Finnish Mythology (Wall of Serpents), and Celtic Mythology (The Green Magician), as well as to authored myth in the Castle of Iron, were great inspirational works. So too were Robert E. Howard's "Conan", Gardner Fox's "Kothar" swords and sorcery yarns, the post-apocalyptic The Black Flame by Stanley Weinbaum, and all manner of other imaginative novels and short stories falling between those. Indeed, horror of the Howard P. Lovecraft school, and "oriental mysteries" of the sort written by Sax Rohmer were taken into the fold as portions of their subject matter suited the milieu being created. Top that off with the wealth of interesting material to be found in Grimms' and Andrew Lang's fairy tales. A wealth of what is needed for forging a fantasy setting indeed!

If asked "What is the most important element of building a fantasy world?" my answer would be lengthy, for there is more than one critical element. The compelling fantasy world must be a blend of the known and fanciful, the beautiful and the repulsive, the harmless and the dangerous, reality mixed with liberally with fantasy. There must be spread a magical cloak of mystery, so that there will always be the unexplored, the unknown, and the unexpected.

Rather than continually revise and re-issue it, I had initially decided that new information for the World of Greyhawk Fantasy Setting should come through adventure modules taking place on the world. This worked very well for quite some time as a focused effort was made to devise scenarios placed on the world, adventures that more than incidentally revealed interesting information about the milieu. This

sort of cross-pollination served well for the world setting and adventure module alike.

From its initial form the Greyhawk world setting released in 1979 expanded into a boxed set with two booklets of information. Demand for more information brought the publication of the new version in 1983. As with the original release, the revised material did not reveal all there was to know about the place. A comparison of the first work and the second reveals that while some useful information for DMs was added, and more details of the pantheon of deities active in the Greyhawk setting were provided, the world was still a place where mystery abounded. All of the places on the map are not detailed, every strange name is not explained as to its origination, all governments are not exposed so as to be mundane. Recently, Wizards of the Coast, the company that purchased TSR in 1998, decided to revitalize Dungeons and Dragons and specifically Greyhawk, for the setting had languished for a considerable number of years as new and different world settings were released. Then it was decided that a "war" that virtually wiped out all of the former states and wiped the political slate clean would be beneficial. As the original creator of the world, I surely would have advised against such a thing. The initial reaction to the changed world setting was quite unfavorable. Soon after the release of the revised material, the setting was essentially shelved, supported only by devoted, diehard fans that remained active in their support of the milieu, vocal in their demands for the return of the setting. The solid bases behind the World of Greyhawk Fantasy Setting did not fail, certainly, and the adherents of it were at last heard! Now it is the "default" setting for the new Third Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Roleplaying Game. With the work I had put in over so many years, this action was quite gratifying as my labor of love would again be brought forward for gamers everywhere.

If one were to pose the question, "Do published game worlds evolve on their own - with their own synergy - or do they depend on the original creator's guidance?" I would answer "yes" and "possibly". Any vital world setting will certainly develop. Some do so with added details and supplemental information for the DM to use. Others evolve as Greyhawk did initially. My campaign was set therein, and when adventure scenarios were developed, such as the Village of Homlett and the Temple of Elemental Evil, and published, they caused changes within Greyhawk. So did material, "official" and otherwise, drawn from the six novels and one collection of short stories I wrote that were set in the milieu. Along with such offerings, a steady stream of articles in the Dragon Magazine brought new developments and lore to the milieu without revealing too much or so quantifying the setting as to fix it into a rigid place. (By that I mean a setting where imagination and innovation by the persons interacting with that setting were shackled. The world had bounds set by the game system it served, and its own nature as presented in the information booklets describing it. Beyond those broad boundaries, though, it was virtually wide open.) The best part of the Greyhawk work is its indeterminate world qualities where they count. This of course is the "magical cloak of mystery" mentioned earlier. States are known, detailed to some degree, but in general the sub-rosa information that the gamer is certain exists is left to the imagination, developed by the DM. When I was no longer there to assist in the direction of Greyhawk's development, events suggest rather graphically that some guidance by a knowledgeable person is needed to keep such a work from going wrong. When Wizards of the Coast took over the direction of the world setting, they took quick and able measures to restore its former luster. Interestingly, it seems that they

plan to empower the loyal fans of the World of Greyhawk Fantasy Setting to have a considerable voice, and hand, in its direction and ongoing development. This is a splendid idea since it is those fans that keep the world alive, changing, and growing.

What worries me is that the underlying mystery of the milieu could be lost. Those not fully cognizant of the absolute necessity of maintaining the secrets, the unknowns and unknowables, will possibly be prone to revealing too much. As a stage magician must never reveal how all tricks are managed, so too the fantasy world designer. Even as one bit of legerdemain is explained, another mystifying trick must be performed! Along with the mysterious goes the indeterminate. By definition and necessity, the Greyhawk milieu is freewheeling. More details of a state and its rulers mean less room for the DM to utilize that place in an unconstrained manner, for with additional knowledge comes additional boundaries, often narrow ones. A very tight timeline might facilitate the DM who desires to faithfully follow the "history" laid out by the publisher, but it is the bane of the more creative DM who desires to direct a more imaginative campaign.

On the other hand, such detail provides the structure needed for a world setting that is to be developed and further detailed by a larger audience. At least one sage has observed that this kind of enumeration and revelation is a double-edged sword. While access is thus far greater, it also removes much of the mysterious and fantastic from the milieu. As I mentioned, it seems that much of the development of the World of Greyhawk Fantasy Setting is going to be in the hands of the Role Playing Game Association. As diverse authors are called upon to contribute to the milieu, it is indeed necessary for them to have absolutes upon which to base their work. To deliver suitable work, they require definite information regarding many more aspects of the milieu than would be necessary to quantify were only one or a select handful of developers to provide such material.

It must also be mentioned that with the advent of the Internet Age, there is an online version of the fantasy setting. In order to create and utilize such a thing, the publisher is again required to detail the milieu so that it can be shared by a large number of player participants adventuring in the same timeline. The Living Greyhawk game is a most interesting use of work, and one that will develop such details as are not otherwise possible for a traditional paper-game design. There is currently some active concern expressed online as to "historical accuracy" and the like. That emphasizes the differing needs of fantasy worlds. No question that when one is shared by many persons all active in the same version of that world (unlike individual campaigns versions run by the many Dungeon Masters out there), very definite parameters and a rigid timeline are necessary.

I have been asked many times about what I would do differently if I were creating the World of Greyhawk Fantasy Setting today. Given that I hadn't done it back when I did, and I was still closely tied to the AD&D RPG system, the answer is plain. I'd likely do pretty much what I did then. After all, the work stood up very well and suffered only with some of the revisions. Even those were not fatal, and the new milieu is based on those changes. This is not to say that I now design fantasy worlds in the same way I did when I first sat down to create a magical milieu for other gamers to enjoy.

Since authoring the Greyhawk work I have designed a fair number of fantasy worlds, two of which were or are to be published. The Epic of Aerth setting for the MYTHUS FRPG done in 1992 is no longer in print. It presented a rather well-detailed world in which the unknowns lay in subterranean places, its hollow interior, and in a linked parallel mirror-image world where fairies ruled. The concept involved in its development was twofold: one part aimed at providing considerable details for GMs in regard to placing their game campaigns, and the other part meant to enable freelance authors who might desire to create adventure material for the milieu plenty of latitude for this. That is, while giving details for establishing and embellishing the campaign, I made a conscious effort to provide the opportunity for other designers to create for the world. At the same time the details provided for creating also left a milieu with room for the GMs' "home" campaigns to be innovative. Collaterally, the other places not so quantified as the surface of the Aerth, the subterranean, hollow center, and the linked fairie world, were even more open for the mysterious and magical than was my first fantasy milieu, Greyhawk.

In creating the LEJENDARY ADVENTURE Role-Playing Game most recently, I naturally included a milieu for it, the Lejendary Earth World Setting (LE). It is slated for release in the spring-summer of 2000. Anyone interested in information on the new game system and its world setting can access my website at <http://www.gygax.com/> and link from there for the relevant material. The milieu is a synthesis of the concepts of the Greyhawk setting and that of Aerth. The LE world is not as magic-intense or monster-ridden as the former, more so that the latter. The whole of the globe is detailed, but the states and peoples are treated only in summary manner. There are unexplored areas, but they are not packed with bizarre monsters and fanciful things. This milieu has a strange, if rather brief human history, economics, politics, and the mundane as well as the magical. Enough of the latter, in fact, as to make it an exciting place in which to adventure, whether dealing with humans or strange creatures. There are certainly subterranean realms. There are also inter-dimensional portals that lead to other worlds. But first

When the LE world was designed, the idea paramount in its format was to supply not only an immediate platform for Lejend Masters (LMs) to use, but also a guideline from which freelance authors could work. Immediately after completing the draft manuscript for the world setting, I continued development of a region of the globe so as to be able to provide prospective designers models for their own creative efforts in regard to world sourcebooks. What the LE world offers is a great place for ambitious LMs to create campaigns, as well as fertile ground for freelance game designers too. Because early adopters will be of creative LM mold, they will likely find the LE world setting book quite sufficient for their immediate needs. Two world sourcebooks are also to come for the next wave of Lejend Masters, while several others are already in development by freelancers! As the globe is detailed, special works will be designed so as to open the way into the highly mysterious and magical places that are hidden on, or are parallel to, the "known world".

There is clearly a balance possible between the direction of the original creator and those who subsequently develop that primary creation into a greater work. To function properly, though, the world must likely be planned for such purpose. The initial design must logically be done with such addition in

mind, the hand of diverse other creators being active. This sort of capacity has several facets, as were touched on here.

What is hoped for in this approach is to combine the best of all worlds... if you will pardon the pun. So to finally fully answer the last question, would I do it differently, yes. But that is qualified by having the benefit of considerable experience since I first began, and the ability to learn from others as I see the direction that other fantasy world builders are taking in their designs. Seriously, there is always the question that when one creates something new, and unless the effort is an immediate failure, that only the test of time can answer. While I am convinced that the approach that balances the known and the unknown, gives sketchy details immediately with the promise of more information to follow regularly, and offers much to game users and game produce designers alike, the verdict isn't in yet and may never be. So you now can share with me that minor twinge that comes from being a game designer. It might wow them in Peoria, but...

Prospective world builders, take heed! There is precious little commercial prospect for a fantasy milieu not tied to a corresponding role-playing game. Almost all current role-playing games have their own world settings. It is fine to be creative, develop a fantasy world for a game campaign or for the sheer joy doing such a thing. If it turns out splendidly, there just might be a chance that you can interest some producer of an online game, even a computer game publisher, in acquiring the property. Those are long shots, but I suspect the odds of success there are better than for paper publication. However, if a fantasy world happens to fit into the whole of the milieu in an overall scheme such as that I have devised for the LE world setting, the odds change. For example, the LEJENDARY ADVENTURE game system's campaigning milieu might well be augmented by a world that generally meshed with its creatures, was the home planet, or sphere of some race or species of beings encountered on the LE world. Even a strange, "unworldly" setting could interest the editors. (Actually, I envision some fairly unusual ones.) While I have no personal knowledge of similar approaches to fantasy milieu building, it is possible that other publishers have or will adopt a similar approach as to that taken for the LA game system, and so broaden the opportunities for creative writers and gamers out there.

In closing, dream on, and let the wonders of your world shine!