

# CANGAMES: Biggest and best yet

Daniel McEwen

Ottawa was alive. Under warm, sunny skies, spring blossomed into a city-wide celebration of winter's demise. Along the Rideau Canal, which meanders lazily through Canada's capital city, craft displays merged with concert stages. On Parliament Hill, blood-red tulips bobbed in time to the music that drifted up from Major's Hill Park while the Canadian flag, perched high atop the parliament buildings, snapped proudly in the crisp breezes.

But at University Centre on the University of Ottawa campus, the rest of the city was as far away as the Plane of Pandemonium. The 1980 Great Canadian Games Adventure, commonly called CANGAMES '80, had begun.

The convention got under way at 6 p.m. Friday, May 16, and the lineup for registration was immediately long. Cancon, as it is also known, is Canada's only major convention, and as such draws participants from across the country. This is the fourth year for the Ottawa organizers.

More players were involved this year, and this fact was reflected in a wider range of competitions. Everything from micro-armor to Monopoly awaited gamers along with the anticipated array of fantasy and role-playing tournaments. Also, like harpies in the bushes, the dealer's tables lured everyone at least once for a look at what's new and a chance to buy goods at less than usual prices. A showing of the films *The Boys in Company C* and *Wizards*, two lively games auctions and panels featuring the likes of Frank Chadwick, Jim Dunnigan and Canadian gaming experts Steve Newberg and John Mansfield kept the activity slate full. But, as with any con, it was the gaming that grabbed the attention.

The convention was centered in a cavernous, sunroofed common room that hosted various miniatures tournaments. Colorful armies of Seleucids clashed with Pontic warriors or the forces of Hannibal while Charlemagne's Carolingians battled phalanxes of heavily armored Romans, all under the judicious eye of referee Richard Wilson. Off in one corner, Dave Lee officiated a micro-armor conflict of Warsaw Pact forces and NATO military might in a 12-hour encounter that drew a constant crowd of observers.

Satelliting this central room were the smaller tournament rooms for the various board and fantasy game competitions. This year, CANGAMES organizers introduced a new twist to iron out a few wrinkles in tournament registrations. To prevent multiple registrations and the resulting no-shows, signups for specific tournaments

## Convention Schedule 1980

**ODYSSEY '80** (Aug. 8-10, 1980)—To be staged by the University of New Hampshire Simulations Games Club in the Memorial Union Building at the University of New Hampshire, Durham NH 03824. Gaming of all kinds will be represented, and several tournaments will be held. For further information, contact R. Bradford Chase, coordinator, c/o the club at the Memorial Union Building or at 44 Highbridge Drive, Dover NH 03820.

**GENCON XIII** (Aug. 21-24, 1980)—One of the largest gaming conventions held each year, featuring the AD&D Open, the largest single fantasy role-playing tournament ever held. It is sponsored and produced by TSR Hobbies, Inc., at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, located between Racine and Kenosha, Wis. For more information, contact Joe Orłowski at TSR Hobbies, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147

**PACIFICON '80** (Aug. 30-Sept. 1, 1980)—The largest dealer/manufacturer convention on the west coast. Will be held at the Dunfey Hotel in San Mateo, Calif. More information is available from David G. Hinkley, publicity chairman, Pacificon, P.O. Box 5833, San Jose CA 95150, phone (408) 374-9770 or (408) 371-4229.

started only one half-hour before the actual game was to begin. Lines formed instantly the moment a sign-up sheet was posted. The three D&D tourneys proved popular; for every one of the 60 people who participated in the Advanced competition, for example, organizer Jim Lamb had to turn away two more. This seems to give credence to the claim of veteran gamer Chris Shute of Ottawa that although miniatures take up most of the space and (being highly colorful) attract the most attention, it's the fantasy games that are beginning to dominate cons everywhere. Certainly by Saturday afternoon, the initial glamor of the miniature armies had worn off and most of the 450 people in attendance were deeply involved with a favorite game or trying to wade through the rules of their latest acquisition from the dealer's room. Even a televised Expos baseball game drew a small but rowdy crowd of fans.

Sunday's heavy rain dampened everything but gamers' spirits. First rounds of play had winnowed out many players and the remainder were setting in for a day of tough competition. By day's end the ranks had been thinned even further, heading into Monday's final rounds.

David Jones, a veteran of many conventions, claims that the marks of a good convention are: the number (the lower the better) of complaints hitting the organizers' desk, and the number of people standing around doing nothing (again, the lower the better). By those indicators, CANGAMES '80 was a smash. Complaints were generally limited to laments about the limited number of openings for some tournaments while the gaming was so intense in the common room that Asmodeus himself could have passed by unnoticed. Credit goes to Chairman Bruce Knight, Tournament Organizer Jim Lamb, Ramon Ross, Scott McGregor and a dozen others for performing a task that is difficult under the best of circumstances.

## HIGH FANTASY ADVENTURE GAMES




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