

Co-creator of Dungeons & Dragons dies at 61

April 10 2009, By AMY FORLITI , Associated Press Writer



This undated photo provided by Malia Weinhagen shows Dave Arneson. Arneson, a co-creator of Dungeons & Dragons, died Tuesday, April 7, 2009 in St. Paul, Minn. He was 61. (AP Photo/Malia Weinhagen)

(AP) -- Dave Arneson, one of the co-creators of the Dungeons & Dragons fantasy game and a pioneer of role-playing entertainment, died after a two-year battle with cancer, his family said Thursday. He was 61.

Arneson's daughter, Malia Weinhagen of Maplewood, said her father died peacefully Tuesday in hospice care in St. Paul.

Arneson and Gary Gygax developed Dungeons & Dragons in 1974 using medieval characters and mythical creatures. The [game](#) known for its oddly shaped dice became a hit, particularly among teenage boys. It

eventually was turned into video games, books and movies. Gygax died in March 2008.

"The biggest thing about my dad's world is he wanted people to have fun in life," Weinhagen said. "I think we get distracted by the everyday things you have to do in life and we forget to enjoy life and have fun.

"But my dad never did," she said. "He just wanted people to have fun."

Dungeons & Dragons players create fictional characters and carry out their adventures with the help of complicated rules. The quintessential geek pastime, it spawned copycat games and later inspired a whole genre of computer games that's still growing in popularity.

"(Arneson) developed many of the fundamental ideas of role-playing: that each player controls just one hero, that heroes gain power through adventures, and that personality is as important as combat prowess," according to a statement from Wizards of the Coast, a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. that produces Dungeons & Dragons.

Blackmoor, a game Arneson was developing before D&D, was the "first-ever role-playing campaign and the prototype for all (role-playing game) campaigns since," the company said.

Arneson and Gygax were dedicated tabletop wargamers who recreated historical battles with painted miniature armies and fleets. They met in 1969 at a convention, and their first collaboration, along with Mike Carr, was a set of rules for sailing-ship battles called "Don't Give Up the Ship!"

In later years, Dave published other role-playing games and started his own game-publishing company and computer game company. He also taught classes in game design. He was inducted into the Academy of

Adventure Gaming Arts and Design Hall of Fame in 1984.

Weinhagen said her father enjoyed teaching game design at Full Sail University in Winter Park, Fla., in recent years, where he taught students to make a solid set of rules for their games.

"He said if you have a good foundation and a good set of rules, people would play the game again," Weinhagen said.

Arneson is survived by Weinhagen and two grandchildren. A public memorial service was planned April 20, from 4 to 8 p.m., at Bradshaw Funeral Home in St. Paul.

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Citation: Co-creator of Dungeons & Dragons dies at 61 (2009, April 10) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-04-co-creator-dungeons-dragons-dies.html>

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