The Admiralty Trilogy:
Past, Present, and Future

Larry Bond and Christopher Carlson

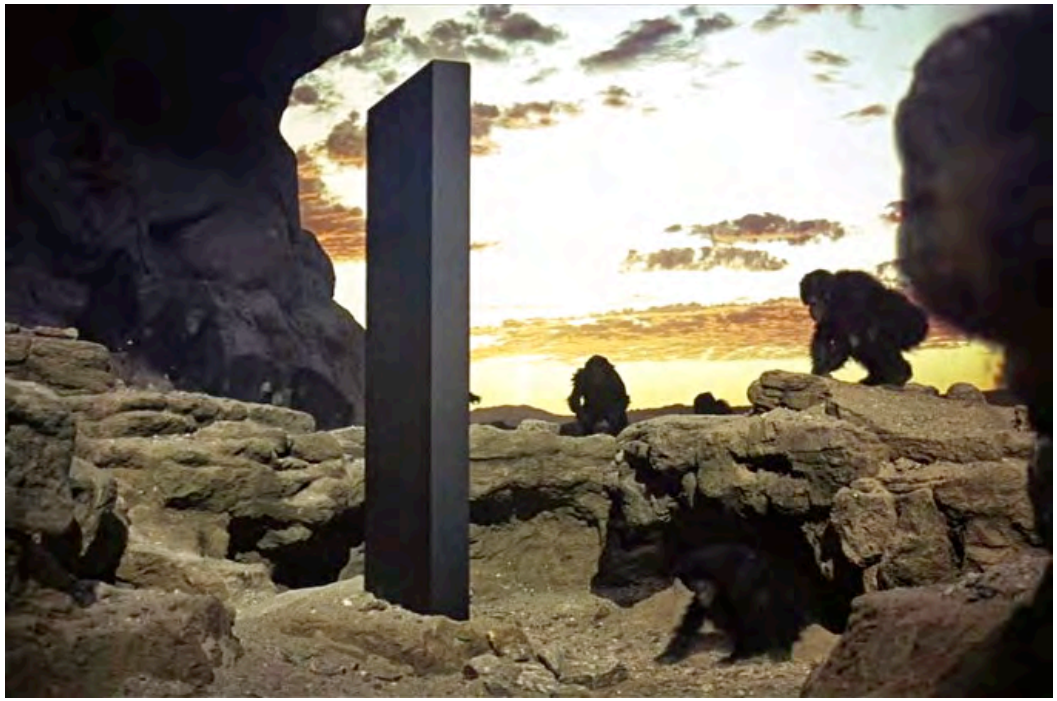
Historicon 2019

Admiralty Trilogy Seminar

In the Beginning…

- 1978 – LTJG Larry Bond was assigned to USS *McKean* (DD 784)
  - Long time wargamer, he read an article in the *Surface Warfare* magazine on the Naval Tactical Game (NAVTAG) and became inspired.
- Obtained a copy and started running games for the ship's wardroom.
  - Problem 1: The game was classified SECRET/NOFORN, had to be locked in a safe – wasn't very accessible, so rarely used by others.
  - Problem 2: The game used abstracted terms (gaming jargon) and mechanics – not easily understood.

Larry's Monolith Moment



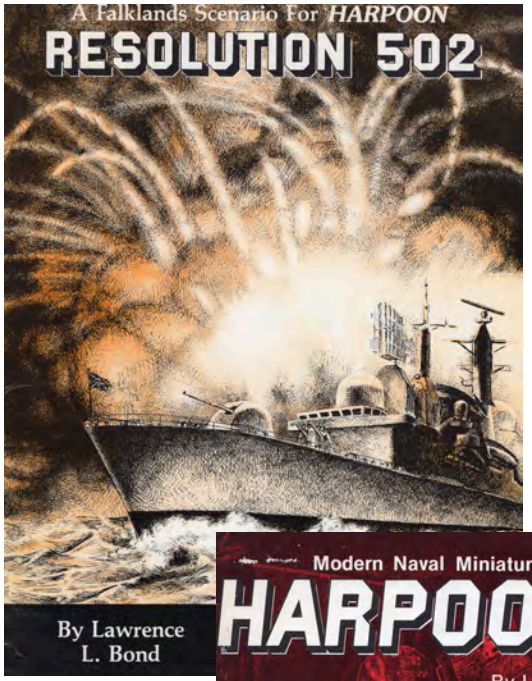
- For a wargame to have any value as a training tool, it had to be easily accessible and written in a meaningful way to inform the audience.
  - Unclassified data had to be used
  - Real world terms and mechanics had to be used
- As there wasn't a good off-the-shelf game readily available, so Larry started to design his own.

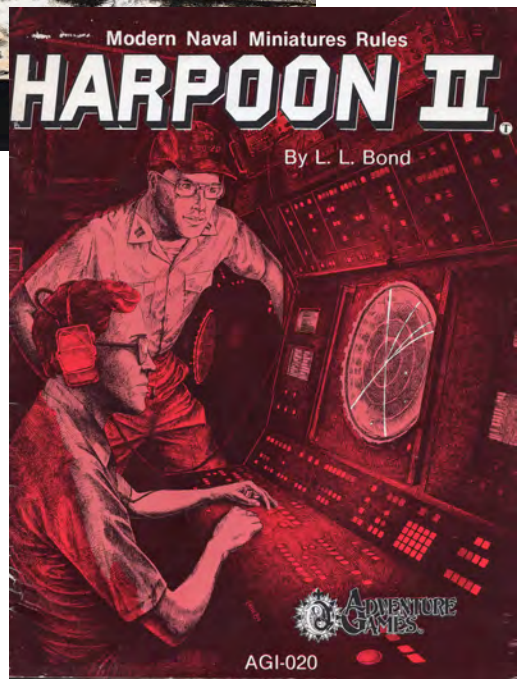
Birth of *Harpoon*

- First draft written by Spring 1979.
- Dave Arneson, of *D&D* fame, ran Adventure Games and published the first edition in April 1980.
- The game was well received and won the H.G. Wells award for best miniatures rules in 1982.
- Fall 1981 – enter in Chris Carlson and Michael Harris
  - Midshipmen 1/C at the University of Minnesota

Falklands War – *Harpoon* Test Drive

- Fast forward to the Falklands War, April - June 1982. First full scale modern naval war, using traditional elements of Seapower. Frantic note-taking and research of all available sources, produced the first *Harpoon* supplement, *Resolution 502*.
- Lessons learned from the conflict prompted a new, second edition in 1984.
- Sadly, Adventure Games ceased operations in the mid-1980s, and *Harpoon* needed a new home.



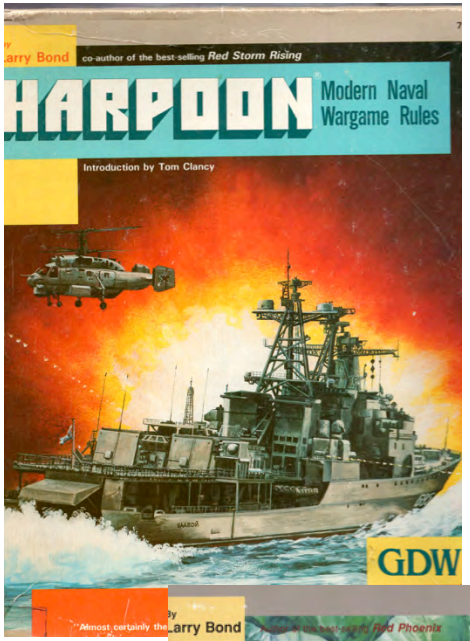


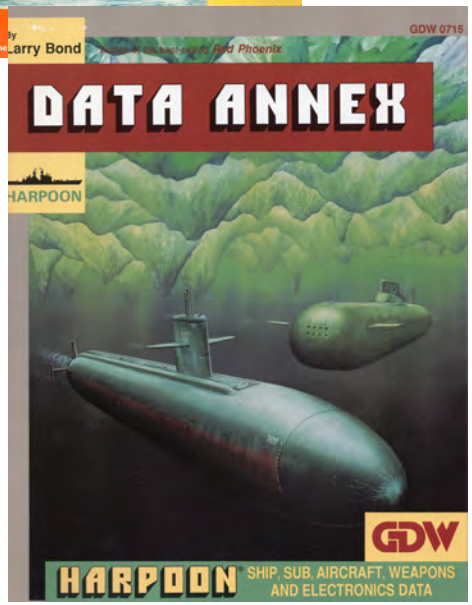
Harpoon 3rd Edition

- Marc Miller at Games Designers' Workshop (GDW) was a *Harpoo*n Fan, and agreed to publish the third edition.

- The first box set, with a much thicker data annex, was published in 1986.

- The game did very well, won the 1987 H.G. Wells award, and GDW enthusiastically backed additional supplements to support the rules.

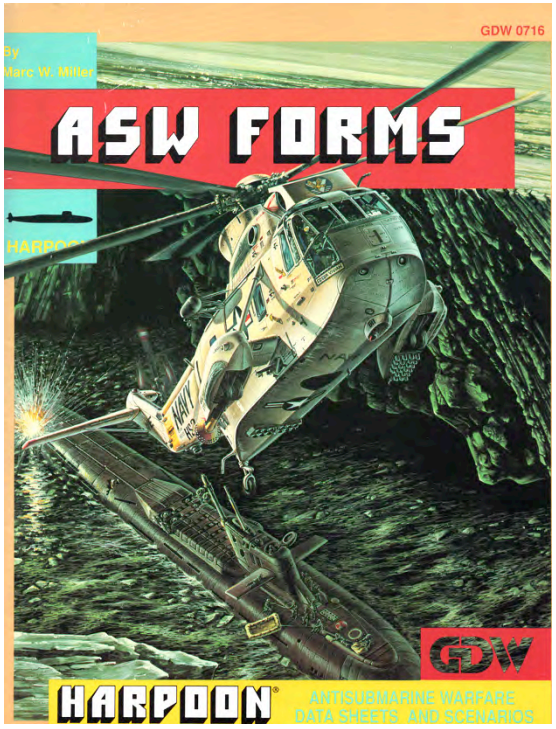




Harpoon 3rd Edition Supplements

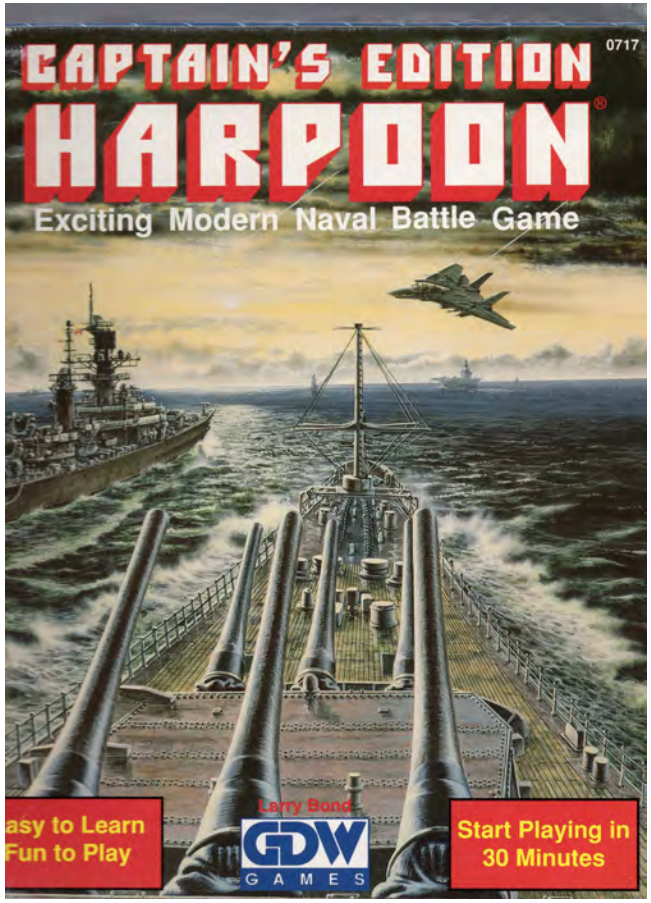
- *Battles of the Third World War*
  - Scenario set for a hypothetical Soviet-NATO conflict.
- *Troubled Waters*
  - Littoral warfare supplement written by Chris Carlson.
- *South Atlantic War*
  - Falklands supplement written by Ed Kettler.
- *Harpoon Naval Review 1994*
  - Written by Dave Schueler

Harpoon Forms Products



- Pre-filled out Form 10s and Form 20s prepared by Marc Miller.
  - These were player support products.

Captain's Edition

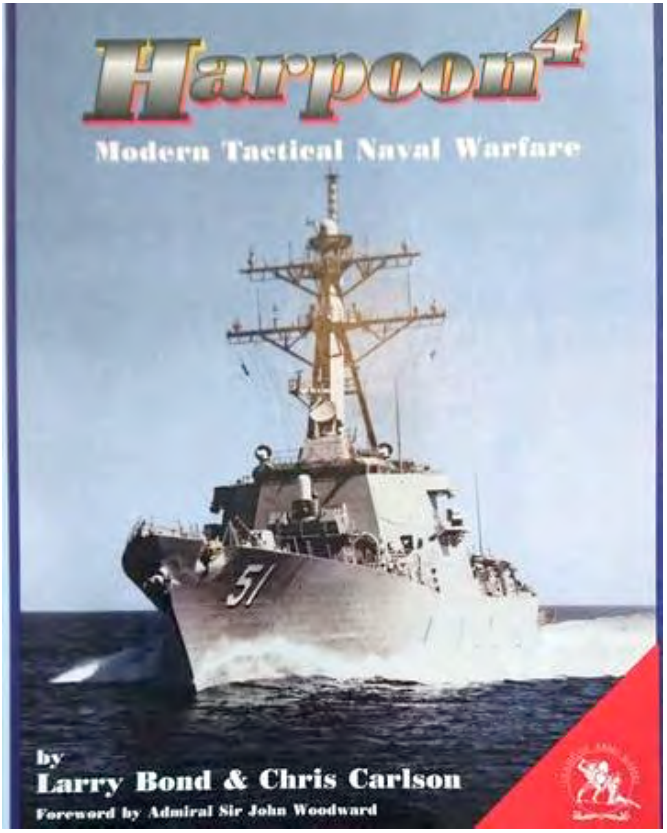


- A first attempt to speed play by highly abstracting the *Harpoon* game mechanics. Published in 1990.
- Not particularly successful, but was a good experiment on the use of multiple physical components.
  - Not a big fan of the plastic airliners
- Reinforced the concept that the game designer should be fully involved with the editing and production process.

The Start of the Trilogy

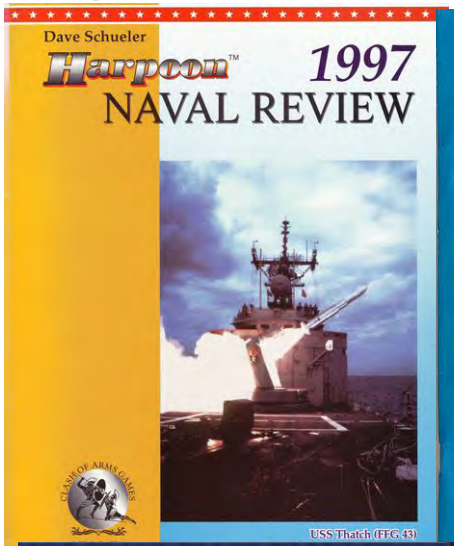
- GDW started running into financial difficulties, and we looked for a new publisher for our next project, a WW II expansion of *Harpoon* eventually called *Command at Sea*.
  - Signed on with Clash of Arms Games, *Command at Sea* was published in 1994.
- *Supermarina I*, written by John Gresham and Mike Markowitz, was published in 1995.

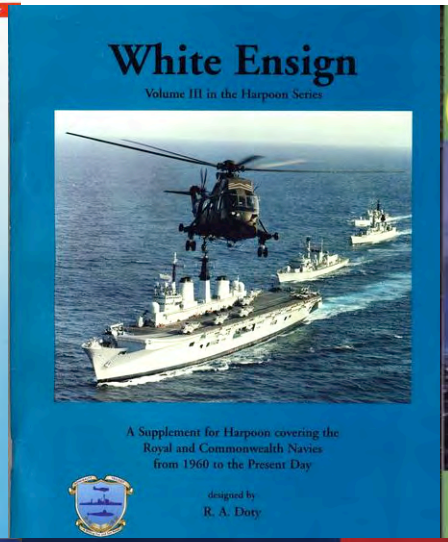
Harpoon^4

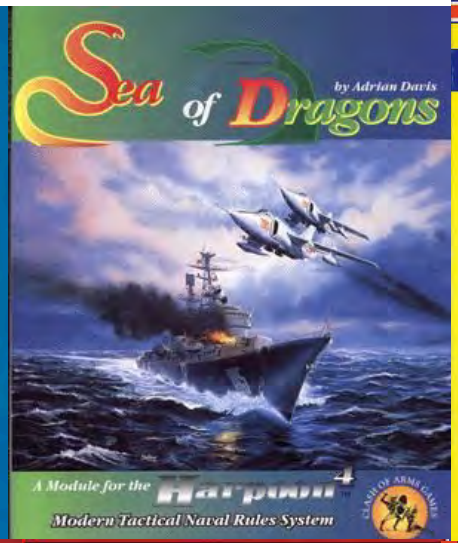


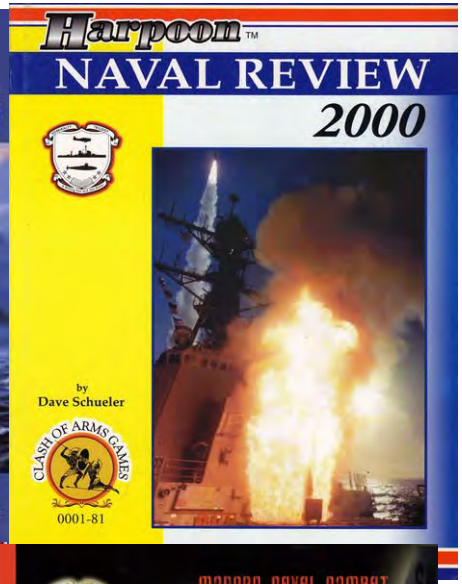
- Published by Clash of Arms in 1996.
  - A second printing with corrections came out in 2001.
- 1996 Origins Award Winner – Best Modern Day Game.

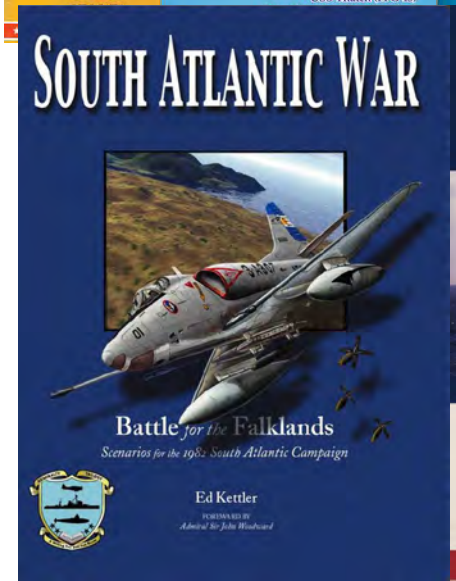
Supporting Two Games – *Harpoon*[4]

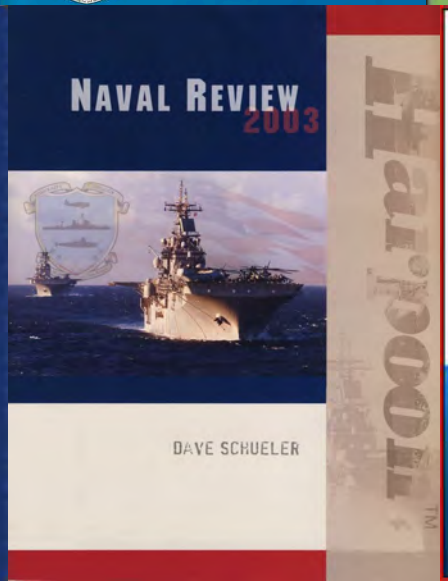


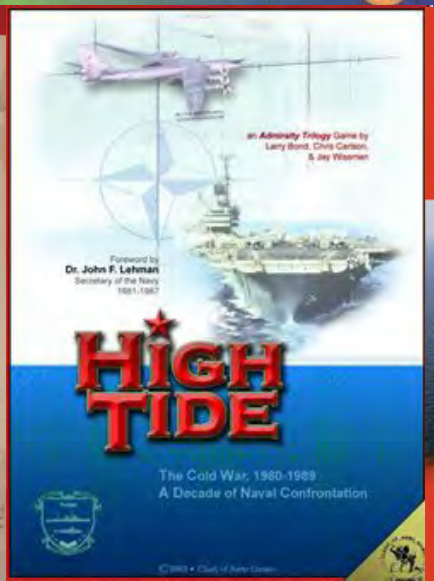


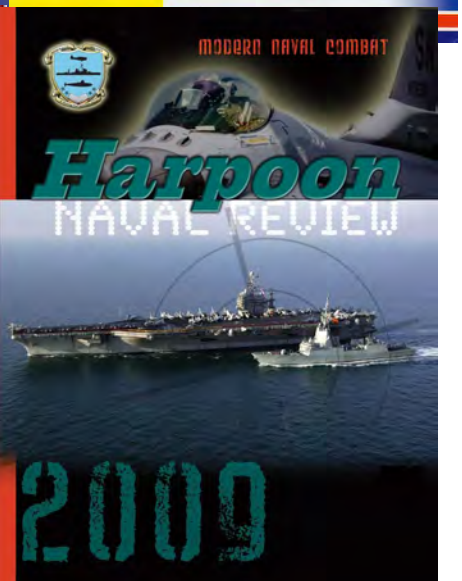




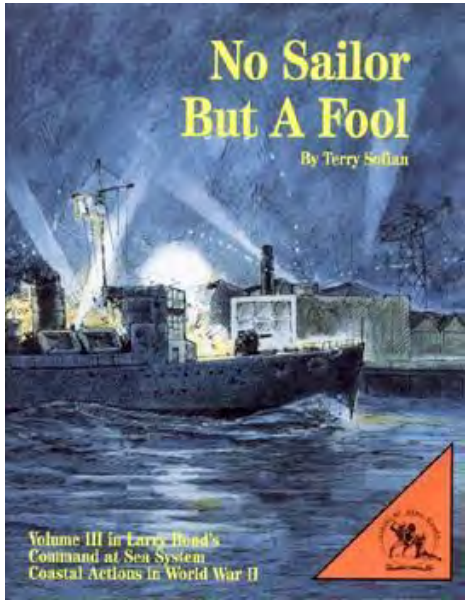


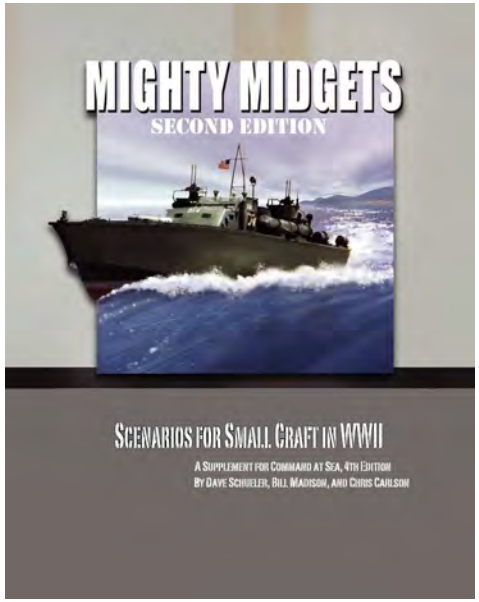


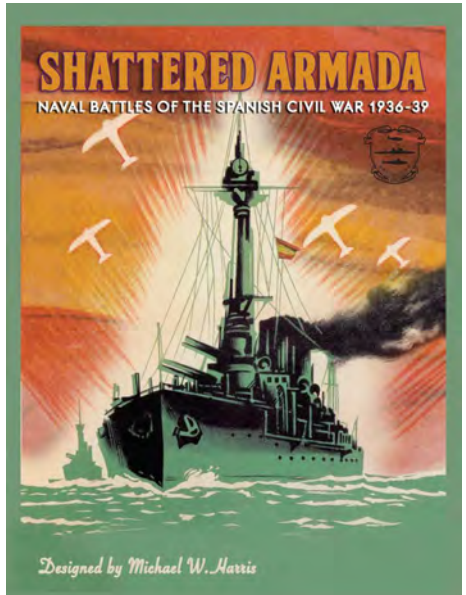




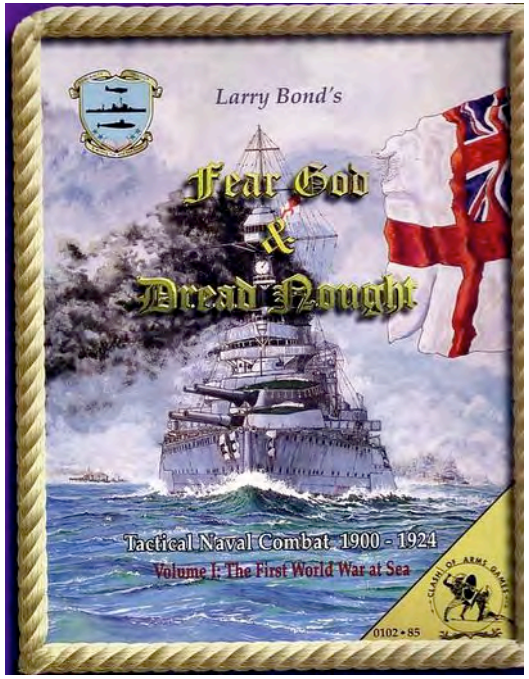
Supporting Two Games – *Command at Sea*

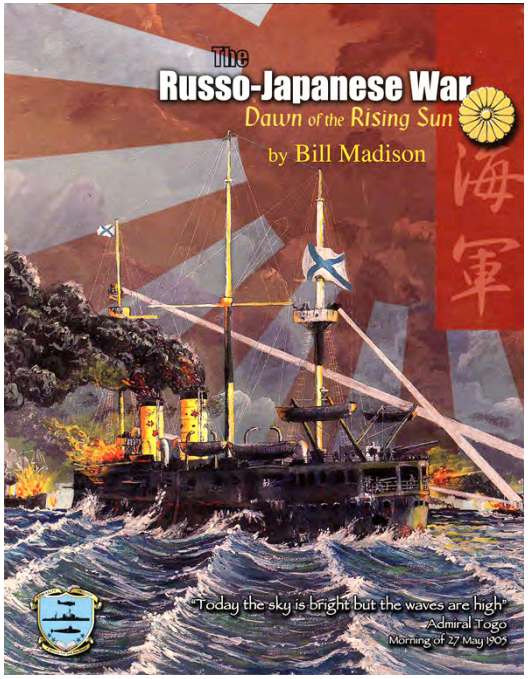






The Trilogy Completed



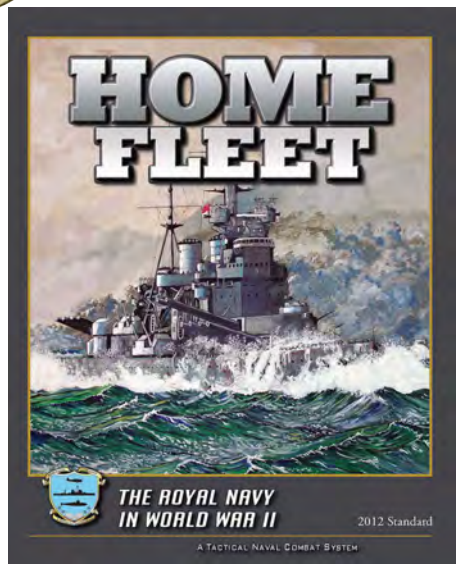


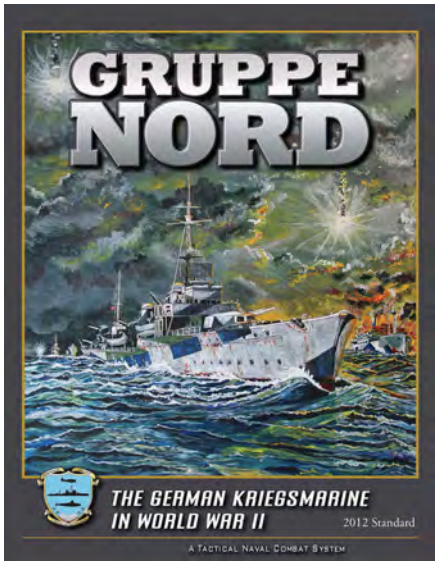
- *Fear God & Dread Nought* – published in 2001
  - 2001 Origins Best Historical Rules
  - 2001 Charles S. Roberts wargame graphics nominee
- *Dawn of the Rising Sun* – published in 2004
  - Written by Bill Madison
  - 2004 Origins Best Historical Miniatures Game

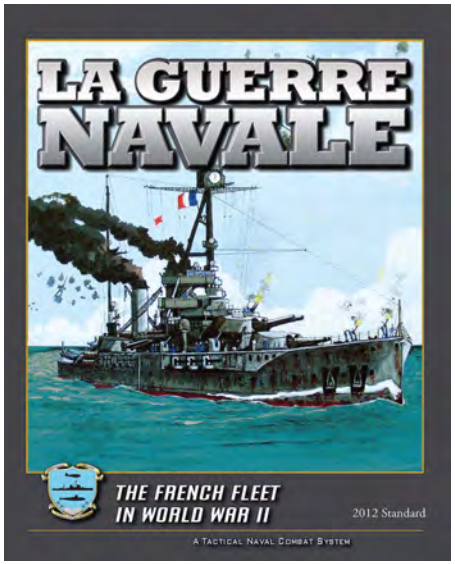
Harmonization Process

- During the design and production of *Fear God & Dread Nought* and *Dawn of the Rising Sun*, we discovered discontinuities in our modeling. The differences prevented us from linking *Command at Sea* and *Harpoon*[4] with the earlier era games and would interfere with the development of interwar products like *Bywater's War*.
  - Games all shared a common game mechanics, but modeling processes varied between the individual games.
- From 2004 - 2008 we worked to resolve these modeling conflicts and unify all games into a single coherent system – "Harmonization Process."
  - Re-organized the data annex structure, common rules format
  - Revision of the Gunnery Standard concept (0 – VI)
  - Energy content-based weapons effects
  - Revisions of the damage model (with a later revision in 2012)
  - Integrate rules expansion from other products

Atlantic Navies

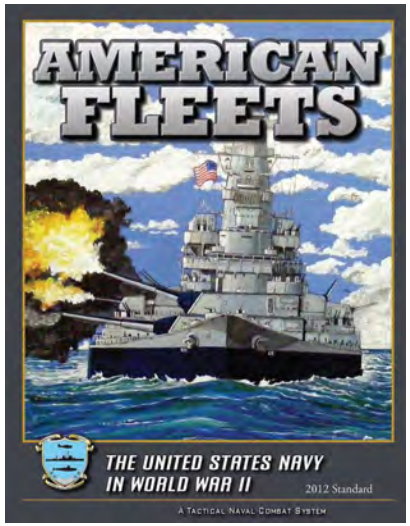


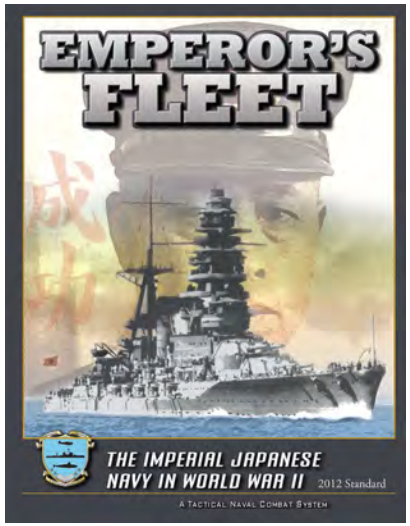


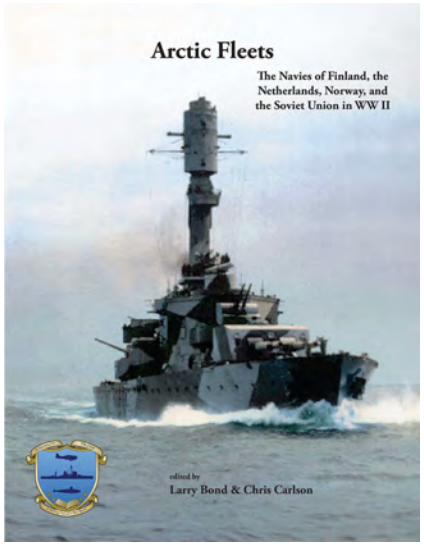


- *Atlantic Navies*, bundled with *Command at Sea* 4th edition.
  - Published in 2009, this was the first fruits of the Harmonization process
- Due to the sheer size of the ship and system database, we adopted the "*Fleet*" series to help reduce the workload and confusion inherent with multiple data annexes.

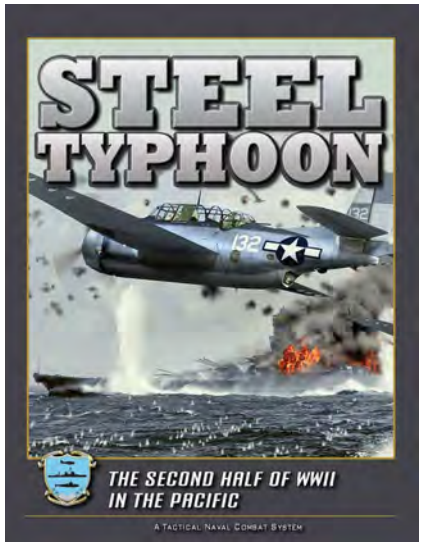
Fleet Series



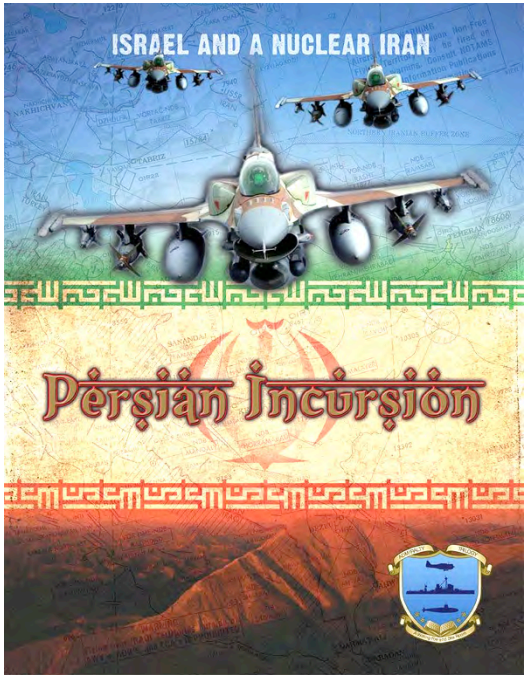




- The *Fleet* series largely contain data only, no scenarios.
  - The final volume of the *Fleet* series, *Arctic Fleets*, was published in 2019
- *Steel Typhoon*, by Ed Kettler, wrapped up the second half of the Pacific war.

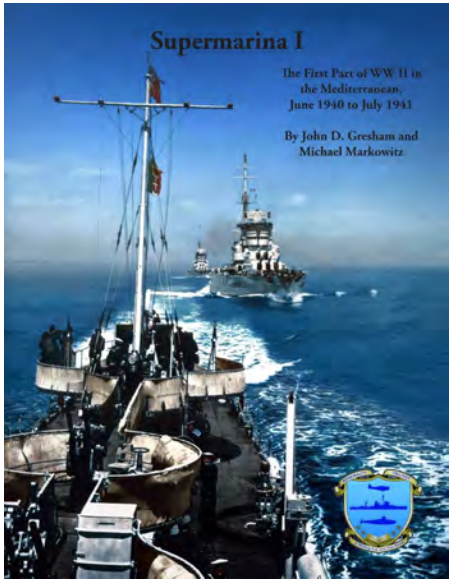


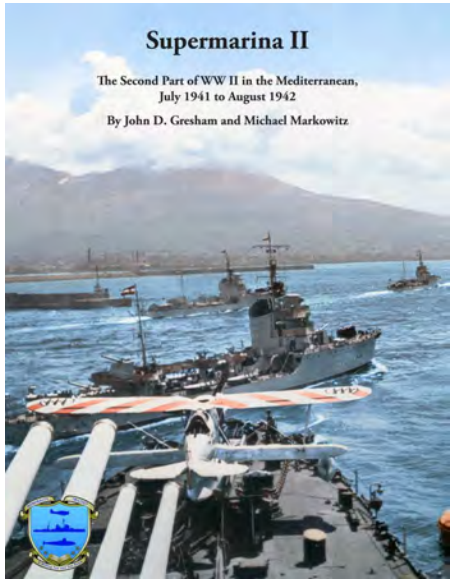
Persian Incursion



- With the Iranian nuclear program widely discussed on news casts, talk shows and in print, we decided to design a game that addresses how Israel could respond.
- Started out as a *Harpoon*[4] supplement but morphed into a board game with a card-based political event system designed by Jeff Dougherty.
- Generated considerable buzz within political/military circles.

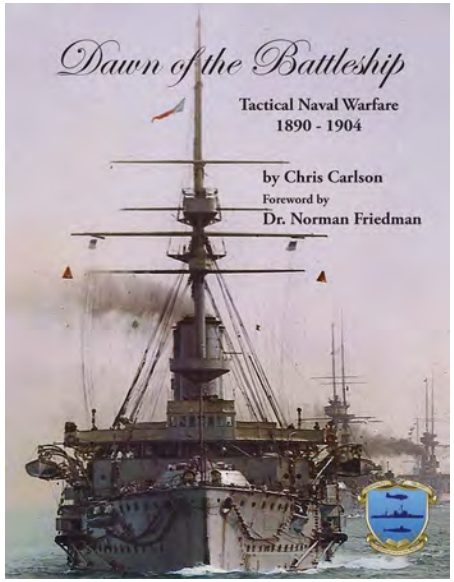
Admiralty Trilogy Group

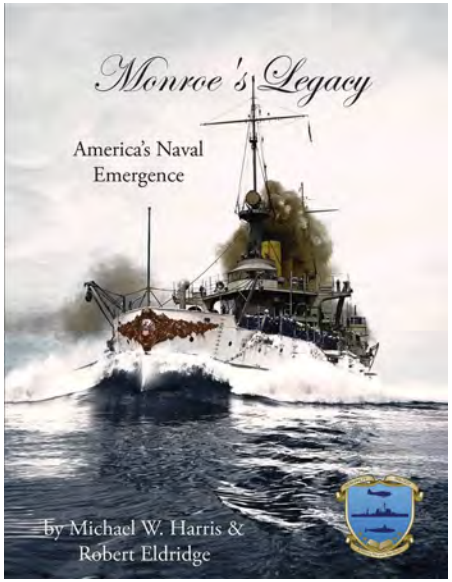




- In 2015, we left Clash of Arms Games and struck out on our own, forming the Admiralty Trilogy Group or ATG.
  - Focused on a new business model centered on digital production and distribution with the Wargame Vault.
- From 2015 – 2018, most of our production effort was focused on converting legacy products into updated digital versions.
- Published a non-game historical document, *Dance of the Vampires*.

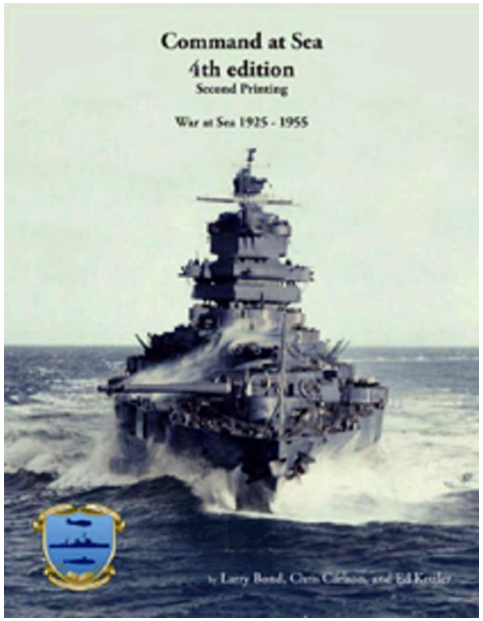
Trilogy or Tetralogy?

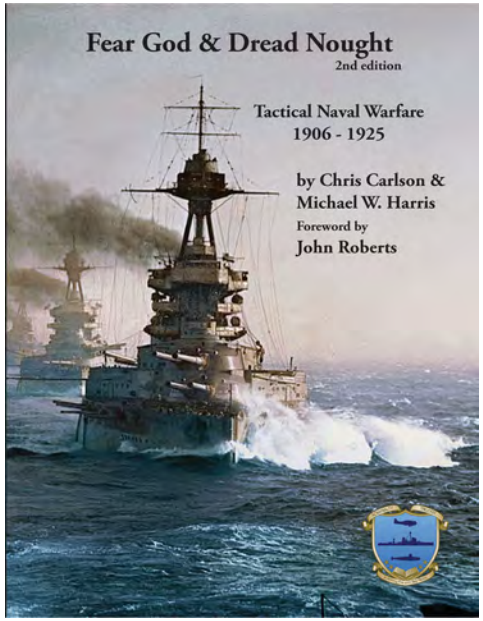


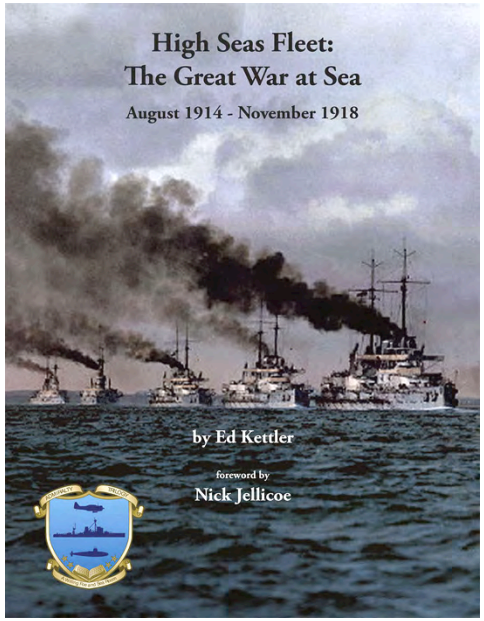


- Research showed that the early pre-dreadnought era could not be easily supported by *Fear God & Dread Nought*.
  - Directly affected the conversion of *Dawn of the Rising Sun*
- *Dawn of the Battleship*, published in 2016, bridged the gap and represented the latest evolution of ATG's gunnery standard and damage models.
- *Monroe's Legacy*, written by Bob Eldridge and Michael Harris, was the first supplement for this new game.

Updating Legacy Games

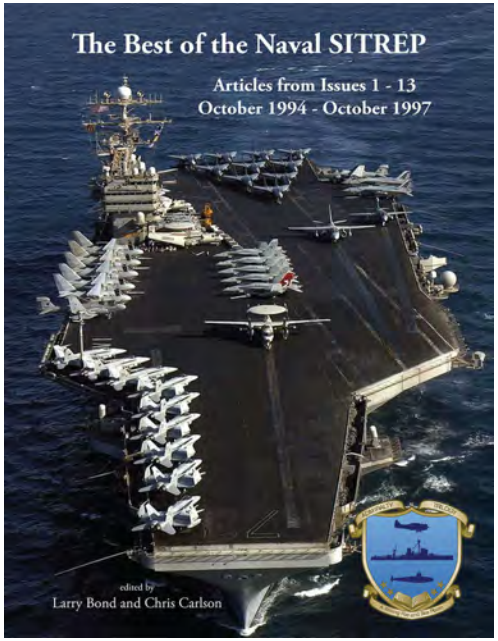


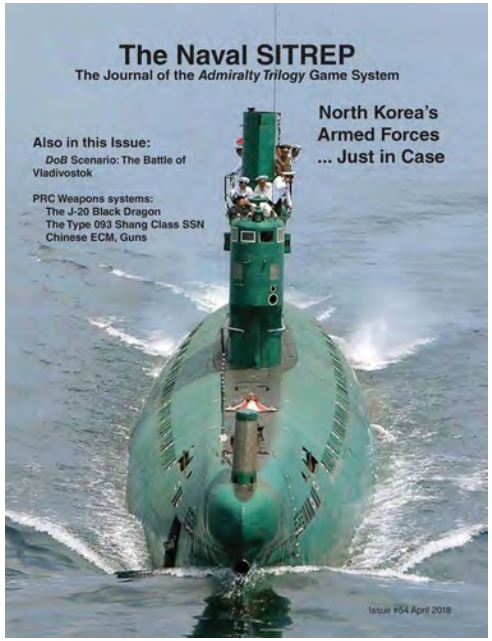




- Both *Command at Sea* and *Fear God & Dread Nought* completed a multi-year effort for digital production in 2017 and 2018.
  - Brought both games up-to-date with the results of the Harmonization Process.
- *Fear God & Dread Nought* also introduced new information on early fire control systems and optical range finders.

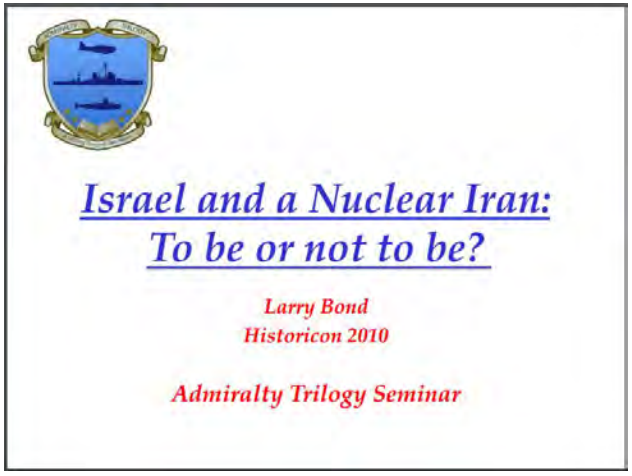
Naval SITREP - Content Production

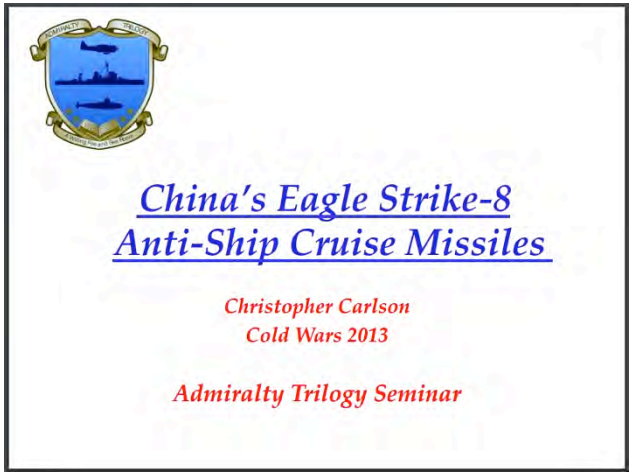




- The *Naval SITREP* is our bi-annual journal that supports all four games and provides a venue for rules updates, articles on system modeling, scenarios, and additional content.
  - In production since October 1994, Issue #56 published in April 2019
  - Started out as the *Harpoon SITREP* (1989) under GDW
  - Viking Forge sponsored the Naval SITREP from the Fall of 1994 to 1997
  - Clash of Arms picked up the sponsorship in 1998

Additional Content Production





- We also publish all our convention presentations and some detailed analytical products on the Admiralty Trilogy website.

- All of this extra content is designed to support our products with additional information that players can access and download at their convenience.

Stepping Out as a Publisher

- Published our first non-game related book on China's navies – *Modern Chinese Maritime Forces* by Manfred Meyer – in 2018.
- We went from contract signing to publication in just over six months and the experience wasn't unpleasant. Looking to expand our product line.

The Way Ahead

- The future is jammed packed with new products.
- *Harpoon V* is well into the design process. There are many changes in the works to simplify the game mechanics, or process load, while still preserving the key tactical decisions that need to be made.
- Supplements are in the works for all four core games.
  - *In Mahan's Wake – Dawn of the Battleship*
  - *War Plans – Fear God & Dread Nought*
  - WWI navies data annex supplement for the non-combatant nations
  - *Mighty Midgets II – Command at Sea*
  - *Troubled Waters II – Harpoon V*
  - The *Navy* series of data supplements for *Harpoon V*
- Always looking for new designers who want to work with us to get their scenario ideas out on the street.

Absent Friends and Colleagues

Leighton Kato
1955 - 2014

John Gresham
1957 - 2016

Robert Eldridge
1948 - 2017

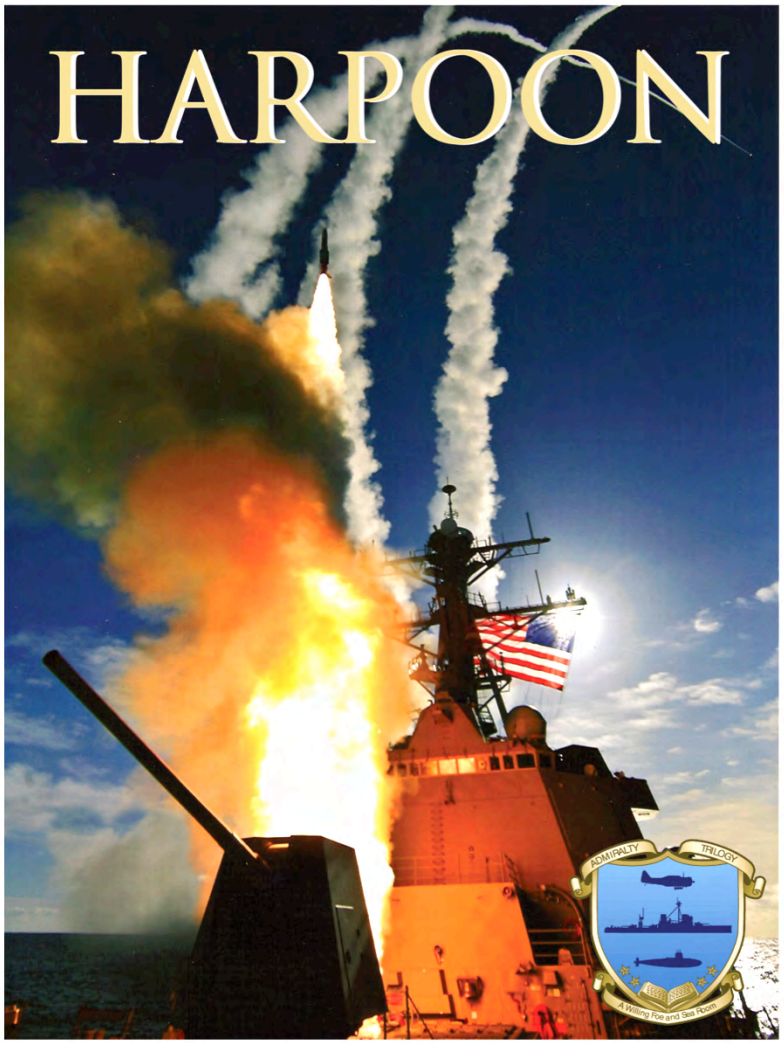
- We've lost colleagues who either designed game supplements for us and/or wrote articles for the *Naval SITREP*. We miss them the most during the HMGS conventions.

Absent Friends and Colleagues

Admiral Sir John Woodward
1932 - 2013

Dan McDonagh
1953 - 2016

Todd Kauderer
1955 - 2017

- These individuals played our games, provided useful observations and criticisms, and encouraged us to do better.

Questions?