

Duke Departs

by Colonel Louis Zocchi

On the 29th of September, *Bruce Duke Seifried* passed away, leaving behind his wife *Annette Baker*, 6 children by his first wife and 2 adopted boys, *Benjamin* and *Daniel*. He was 83 when he succumbed to idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. Both of the American doctors he had seen, told him he had 18 months to 2 years left. Some how, he discovered a German MD named *Horst Kief*. *Doctor Kief* told *Duke* that he could not cure *Duke*, but every one of his patients had lived longer than the 2 years. *Duke* followed his Doctors orders and lived for 9.5 years while under his care. just before he died, *Duke* created 2 final masterpieces. He painted 3,000 figures for a *RICHARD THE FIRST* scenario with appropriate terrain background, and *ALEXANDER THE GREAT SCENARIO*, with appropriate background. This brings to 47, the number of scenario pieces with backgrounds and painted armies. Although *Duke* was famous for the flawless way he painted his armies, few people realize that he also crafted landscapes/terrain for the soldiers which were used to play out the battles. Many of *Dukes* terrain pieces appear as photographs in his book.

John Curry and *Jim Getz* wrote a book titled "*DUKE SEIFRIED AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN MINIATURE WARGAMING*", I ordered a copy from books a million and I think it cost \$25 plus \$5 for postage. Fortunately, *Duke* saw a copy of it before he passed on. The books ISBN number is 978-0-244-37318-4. This 120 page soft cover work provides 26 photos, a list of his awards, a complete set of MELE rules which *Duke* wrote in 1960. It was the first set of Napoleonic miniatures rules published in the U.S., and Napoleonic, which was published in 1979 and written by *Jim Getz* with the assistance of *Duke Seifried*. *Duke* has done a vast number of innovative things to make our hobby grow. In the beginning, we all joined the *Hobby Industry Association*. Because *Duke* had worked in a T.V. station WLW-D in Ohio, he knew that on many occasions, the program scheduled to play, didn't get aired because station staffers were trying to correct a problem it had. *Duke* told the H.I.A. directors, that because there were only 3 T.V. networks, in those days, it would be a smart idea to make a short 15 minute film about a hobby subject, which the networks could put on the air, when the regularly scheduled program could not be broadcast. Not only did H.I.A. like the idea, but they let *Duke* film it. Naturally, *Duke's* program provided 15 minutes of Napoleonic warfare figures, being painted and used in a game. One day, one of the networks had a regular show, fail to play as expected and *Dukes* 15 minute long hobby film was broadcast instead. The *Hobby Industry of America* was thrilled to get a free 15 minute plug which would have cost them thousands of dollars, if they had purchased 15 minutes of air time.

In the early days of our hobby, we called ourselves wargamers. However, war does not have a very good reputation. During one of our GAMA (Game Manufacturers Association) meetings, *Duke* suggested that we call ourselves

ADVENTURE GAMERS, and everyone like his suggestion. It covered the multiplicity of things we simulate and it offends no one.

When *Duke* opened his store, *Der Kriegspeiler*, he also began selling Napoleonic 25mm soldiers he had sculpted. Later he sculpted an excellent line of 15mm Napoleonic figures and sold both of them as Custom Cast. At that time, everyone making Napoleonic figures was selling them as single pieces, so the store owner would ring up 50 cents for each figure sold. *Duke* decided that his figures would be sold in a clear plastic blister pack, with 5 or 6 soldiers in each. That way, the store owner would charge \$2.50 or \$3 for each package sold.

After *Duke* and *Heritage Models* joined forces, *Duke* pioneered the water based paint and play system. In that package, the buyer would find paint, figures, brushes and an interesting set of simple role playing rules. Water based paint is easier to clean off of the brush. *Duke* had created a very superior and special paint for *Heritage* to use in this package.

Because *Duke* had so many armies to paint, he hit upon the scheme of gluing 5 or 6 of the same figures to a tongue depressor. Then he painted the lightest color first on each figure until all of the sticks were finished. After cleaning the brush with water, he painted the next darkest color on every stick, and continued this process until he applied the black, which was always the last color. This system sped up the painting step and allowed *Duke* to paint thousands of figures.

Duke played the guitar extremely well and wrote 5 or 6 very lovely melodies, each of which advertised a T.S.R. game. Then he searched the T.S.R. employee roster to find employees who could sing and play an instrument. *Michael Grey*, the designer of *Fortress America* and many other titles, played bass and sang with *Dukes* group, which was called the *Dragonettes*. While attending a *Gen Con*, I heard them perform the 5 songs *Duke* had written. They were all excellent performers and they sang all of *Dukes* songs in 4 part harmony.

Duke told me that he was concerned that *Paramount* would sue him for his science fiction song because it reminded everyone of the *Star Trek* theme, even though it sounded entirely different. I told *Duke* about a law suit that was brought against the composer of a song, which reminded people of a song created by another composer. The second composer lost his case when the defending lawyer told the judge, "There are thousands of fairy tales, each one of which begins with the words, 'ONCE UPON A TIME'".

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Duke could also play string bass and he taught guitar to many students who took lessons in *Duke's* home. *Duke* frequently played guitar and sang with small groups in many of the local areas in which he lived.

After a millionaire bought *Heritage* and *Custom Cast*, he told *Duke* to go out on the road and stay there until he could come back with \$10,000 worth of orders. Several days later *Duke* handed over the order for \$10,000 worth of goods. The millionaire then told *Duke* to go out and not come back until he had \$20,000 worth of orders. A week later *Duke* came back with orders for \$20,000 worth of product. The millionaire then told *Duke* to stay out until he had sold \$40,000 worth of products. 10 days later *Duke* returned with orders for \$40,000 worth of products. The millionaire then told *Duke* to stay out until he could return with \$80,000 worth of goods. That is when *Duke* told the millionaire that he saw no point in selling \$80,000 worth of goods when nothing on his first \$20,000 order had been shipped. Then *Duke* told the millionaire that he was going to work for *T.S.R.* and that *Heritage* would be out of business in 6 months or less. I believe *Heritage* folded after 5 months. The millionaire proved that the fastest way to make a small fortune in the Game business, is to start out with a large fortune.

I was attending a hobby show in Atlanta, where store owners came to see what was new in the market place, and to buy things for their shop. A man came to my booth and wanted to know what I was selling. I told him I was selling war games and unlike the *Milton Bradley* or *Parker Brothers* games, war games sell all year round. Furthermore, everything I was selling was guaranteed to sell in 6 months or less, and if it did not sell, he could return everything at my expense for a full refund. Then he asked me what was my minimum order, and I told him it was \$30.00. \$30 he shouted back at me. Why have you such an outrageous minimum order? I tried to remind him that it was all guaranteed to sell, but he continued to complain loudly about the \$30 minimum. After 3 or 4 minutes of loudly complaining about my \$30 minimum order, he left my booth and continued to repeat that my \$30 minimum order was a rip off, as he walked down the aisle.

As I stood there wondering what I said that was wrong and how could I have overcome his rejection of my \$30 minimum order, I realized that I needed to find the rest room. There was an empty booth opposite my booth and I knew that the rest room was very close to where I would come out, if I just walked through the empty booth. As I pulled the back curtain aside, so I could walk through, I discovered that I was in *Duke's* booth. The customer who had berated me for telling him I had a \$30 minimum order, was saying to *Duke*, "Oh my God, I can hardly believe it. So all I have to do is buy \$3,000 worth of your figures and you'll come to my store and teach my kids how to paint your figures?"

Duke Seifried's website: DukePix.SmugMug.com



Colonel Louis Zocchi

Colonel Louis Zocchi retired from *Zocchi Distributors* in 1997 and now concentrates on running his *GAME SCIENCE Dice Company*. He served for 5 years as *GAMA's* first Vice President and an improved and expanded version of the *Luftwaffe* game he designed for *Avalon Hill* has recently been reprinted by *Decision Games*.