

Class Notes

Two alums prove it's all in the game

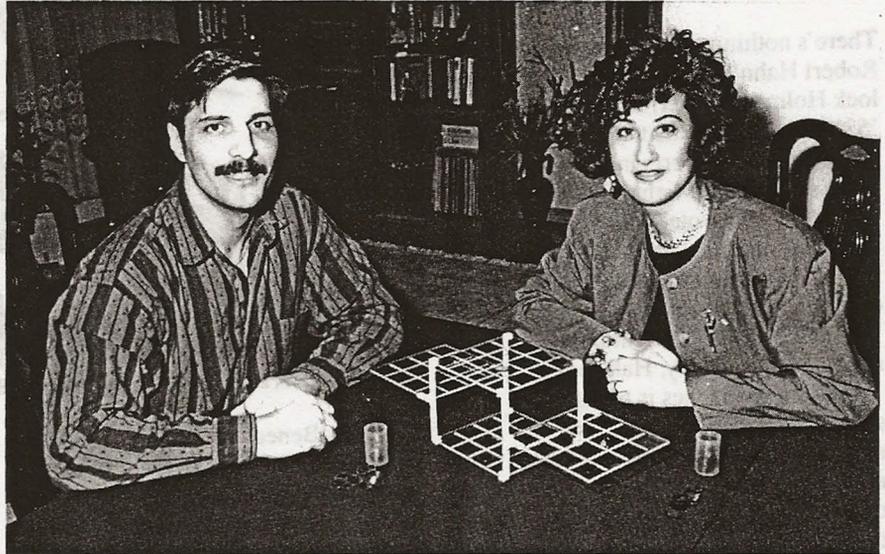
Tel-Games Ltd. may not have the name recognition of game-making giants Milton Bradley and Parker Brothers, but Loyola alums Telly (A&S '79) and Toula (Bus. '90) Courialis are gamers in the most literal sense of the word: they've created Megallo, a three-dimensional board game.

A hybrid of tic-tac-toe and chess, the game for two is simple to learn but not easy to win, according to inventor Telly. "I lose 50 percent of the time," he admitted. "It's a mind game that I believe can provide a lifetime of challenge. Players have to take apart numerical sequences in the mind while trying to trap and block the opponent and make a winning formation of their own playing pieces on the four-tier playing structure."

The game begins with a flip of a coin to determine player order, and follows three simple rules: a player's turn does not end until he removes his hand from a pawn; if a player scores a winning formation and fails to note this before removing his hand from a pawn, the opponent can claim the win for himself; and a tie game is settled by totaling the number of points marked on the squares claimed by the players' pawns, with the higher number winning. Megallo—which means "big" in Greek—also can be played for points, using somewhat different strategy.

The idea for Megallo sprouted when Telly was a teenager, doodling tic-tac-toe games during high school classes. "I came up with a paper, three-dimensional version of tic-tac-toe that was the predecessor to Megallo," he recalled. "As I went through college, including a master's degree in public administration from IIT, and began working in the criminal justice system and as a member of the Chicago Police Department, I'd occasionally wonder about the possibilities for producing my game. I worried that one day I'd walk into a store, see a game like my idea, and kick myself."

With the encouragement of Toula,



Telly and Toula Courialis with Megallo.

Telly resolved to begin work on his dream game in January 1990.

"While we were still dating, Telly drew a diagram of this game on a placemat at a restaurant," Toula said. "I said, 'Let's go with this. Why don't you get a patent?' And I began researching patents. I knew he was a really bright individual, and I believed in his ability to create this game."

"I'm imaginative and Telly is methodical," she continued. "That has made for a very strong match. Some people may think that we are unrealistic to put our money into a game, but we've actually been very thoughtful and logical about this process."

While Telly worked on the details of the game, including materials and manufacturing, Toula worked on the marketing. "I've been trying to zero in on our best possibilities for success," she explained. "I'm applying the marketing theory that I learned at Loyola. Our ideal is to sell the game through a major manufacturer; in the meantime, we are selling it ourselves and have gotten it on the shelves of an educational toy store in Park Ridge and another store in Hinsdale."

"Telly and I also test-marketed the game to children and adults, and we consistently received positive respons-

es," Toula reported. "One woman said her nephews played the game for two hours straight, and ignored the Nintendo."

Telly says he plans for the short term, and has no intentions of leaving his law enforcement unit at O'Hare International Airport. "This venture really isn't so much about making money as it is about accomplishment," he said. "For instance, it was very satisfying to see that I could get a patent. This game may not set the world on fire, but I would like to think that it could get a following like backgammon, as a game that people enjoy spending a few hours with."

"We hope to sell the game, but knowing that we made an idea a reality is our real reward," Toula added. "Talent and quality are necessary, but I want to tell others that they can make dreams happen, too."

Despite Telly's admission that he spent little time playing games before inventing Megallo, the Courialis are currently performing a patent search with plans to create a second game.

For more information about Megallo, contact Tel-Games Ltd. at (312) 693-2545.

—Monica M. Walk