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REVIEWED
HEAVY RAIN

REVIEWED
BIOSHOCK 2

PREVIEWED
FINAL FANTASY XIII

ALAN WAKE

**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE**
REMEDY'S SLEEPER
HIT FINALLY EMERGES
FROM THE DARKNESS

REVIEWED
DANTE'S INFERNO

PREVIEWED
BRINK

RAGE [MULTI] STAR TREK ONLINE [ ] ... TARS RACING [MULTI]
RESONANCE OF FATE [MULTI] W... ...ES [PS3] NIER [MULTI]
MAG [PS3] SUPER MONKEY BA... ...RAUMA TEAM [Wii]

BEHIND THE SCENES

QUEST FOR GLORY

Sierra On-Line dominated the graphic adventure genre in the 1980s, with series like King's Quest, Space Quest, and Leisure Suit Larry releasing successful sequels year after year. At the end of that golden decade, Sierra took a chance on a new Quest series that bucked the formula, with a curious adventure/RPG hybrid

■ The *Quest For Glory* games were full of Easter eggs – some funny, others just plain weird. Starving on the Tarna plains? If you're lucky, the Awful Waffle Walker will come to your aid…
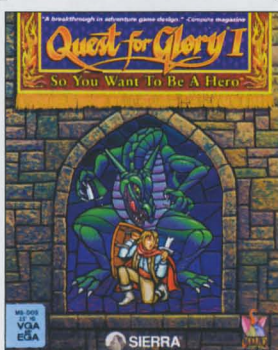
Released: 1989–1998
Format: Amiga, Atari ST, DOS, Macintosh, Windows
Publisher: Sierra On-Line
Developer: Sierra On-Line

KEY STAFF:
Lori Ann Cole
game designer
Corey Cole
game designer

QUEST FOR GLORY was conceived in 1988 when Lori's husband, Corey, was hired to help bring Sierra's catalogue to Atari ST. "We had been self-employed for a couple of years while working on a word processor for the Atari ST and raising our son," Lori recalls. "Sierra had published the first version of the *Ultima* game series by Lord British. They wanted something similar and were looking for someone who played role-playing games. A friend mentioned this to us, and Corey applied for the job." Lori's involvement soon followed, when she pitched her idea for a new series with a unique RPG spin.

Though she hadn't designed videogames before, Lori was an avid fan of tabletop RPGs – in fact, she and Corey met at a science fiction convention where he was running a *Dungeons & Dragons* game he wrote. The Coles preferred games where they defined their characters' personalities and participated in a story. As RPGs started appearing on computers, Lori found that they lacked the elements she enjoyed most: "Early RPGs were pretty primitive. They were mostly 'kill and loot the body' while running through a series of mazes. The other aspect you didn't see a lot was a sense of whimsy. I wanted to [create] memorable characters and an inspiring story. More than that, I wanted the player to feel as if he was the character on the screen, the choices he made affected what happened."
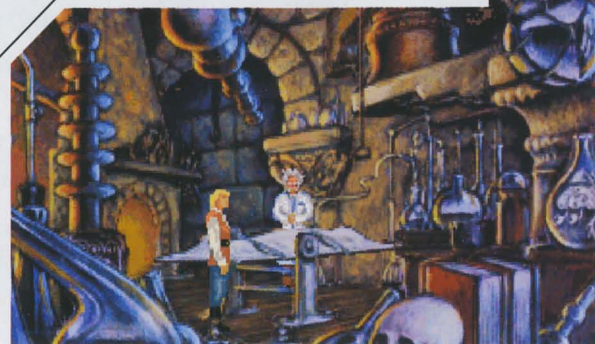
Lori's idea was to infuse Sierra's proven storytelling format with role-playing elements: "I took the fun parts of the RPG – the character improvements **CONTINUED >.**
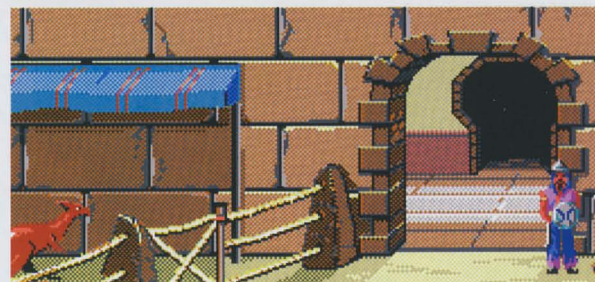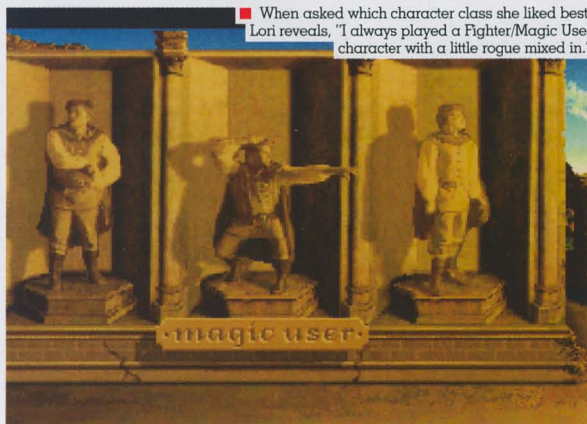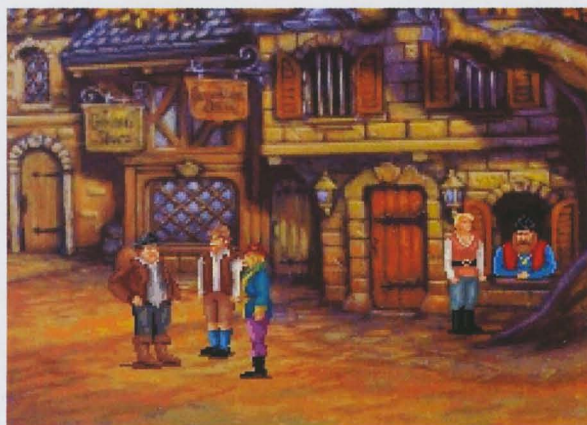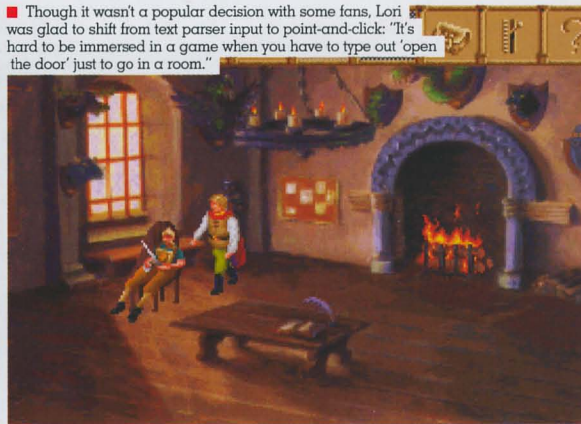
> **I WANTED THE PLAYER TO FEEL AS IF HE WAS THE CHARACTER ON THE SCREEN**

■ Though it wasn't a popular decision with some fans, Lori was glad to shift from text parser input to point-and-click: "It's hard to be immersed in a game when you have to type out 'open the door' just to go in a room."

fighter   magic user   thief

■ When asked which character class she liked best, Lori reveals, "I always played a Fighter/Magic User character with a little rogue mixed in."

·magic user·

Quest for Glory I   [score 64 of 500]

HERO'S TALE INN

SHERIFF

Posted by:
STEPURHAN

◢ It was the first RPG that made a decent stab at having a good story as well. The RPGs I'd played before tended to have stories that were an excuse for stringing a bunch of fights together. While there were plenty of fights in the game, there were also huge chunks where you had to use your brain and do a bit of exploring. Even the grand finale didn't end up going for the cliché of having to fight a creature bigger and tougher than all the creatures you'd fought before. A hunk of mindless monster-mashing has its place (usually after a bad day at work) but I'll go for something with a more cerebral element any time.

Posted by:
KADJI-KUN

◢ I have to say *QFG4* is the best. Great atmosphere, well done characters, great story progression, more-than-decent RPG battle mechanics, interesting quests – I really don't understand how some people dislike them, these quests are greatly superior to a lot of the RPGs of the time – good ending, interesting use of multiple classes to tackle various situations, cool magic system and awesome voice acting. The downside was the bugs. Thankfully, that is what patches are for.

Posted by:
DANTEBK

◢ *Quest For Glory* is one of the reasons I started playing PC games in the first place. The first time I finished *QFG2*, I was so touched by the final scene that I was almost moved to tears. My dream was to one day own the whole series and create a character that I'd port through each game so it would all be like a single storyline. I even went so far as to start a new game for each entry and write down the starting stats so I could make sure not to beat the previous game until I had at least those scores in each skill category.

The Strong, Silent Type

■ Adventure games are known for their dialogue. This is true of *Quest For Glory*, too – but the Hero himself rarely gets a word in edgeways. "I wanted the player to imagine what his character said and did. The character on the screen was the player's avatar in the game. So I tried very hard not to put words in his mouth," Lori explains. "It wasn't easy writing dialogue and interactions when I didn't really know what the character was thinking. Mostly I tried to think [about] what was the likeliest thing a player would want to do in a given situation, and then figured out the consequences. It was all about letting the player feel like he was in control." She adds, "Believe me, I knew every side character in and out! I let the side characters do all my talking." Katrina, the antagonist in *Shadows Of Darkness*, was one of her own favourites.

■ Lori liked the shift to the *Street Fighter*-style combat in *Shadows Of Darkness*: "You could think about your moves and really use some strategy in fighting. Or, if you were not an arcade game player, you could plot the type of moves you wanted to make and let the computer run the fight."

## THE PREMISE WAS SERIOUS, BUT LORI'S WRITING WAS FIRMLY TONGUE-IN-CHEEK

as the game progressed, the exploration, the monster-killing – and added them to the storytelling advantages of the graphic adventure game." Sierra's president, Ken Williams, signed off on the idea, and Lori was turned loose with a team of artists and programmers. She served as writer, art director and project manager. "My prior occupation had been [as a] preschool teacher, so I didn't exactly have the resume to demonstrate I could do such monumental tasks," she notes. "Talk about on-the-job training! Corey was assigned as the lead programmer on the project. Together, we created a fun game unlike any other on the market."

That game was *Hero's Quest: So You Want To Be A Hero*, the first of a proposed four-game series modelled after the narrative tradition of the Hero's Journey. *Hero's Quest* would take a character from newbie hero to king by virtue of his skill and wits, with each instalment bringing him to a new land with different customs to learn and challenges to overcome, until he proved he was worthy to rule.

The Coles wanted *Hero's Quest* to be more open-ended than Sierra's typically linear adventure games. They achieved this by giving players three character classes to choose from – Fighter, Thief, and Magic User – each with qualities that could be customized and built up during gameplay. Fighters could use brute force solutions such as throwing rocks or engaging in combat. Thieves were stealthy, with the ability to pick locks and steal. Magic users could learn a variety of spells. These diverse skills provided opportunities for side-quests and alternate puzzle solutions, making *Hero's Quest* replayable in a way that traditional adventure games weren't.

■■■ THE GAME OPENED with a blond-haired wannabe hero, a recent graduate of the Famous Adventurer's Correspondence School, arriving in the medieval hamlet of Spielburg. The Baron's son and daughter were missing, and the player character had to find them and restore order to earn the title of Hero. The premise may sound serious, but Lori's writing was firmly tongue-in-cheek, with abundant puns, pop-culture references and Easter eggs that made *Hero's Quest* stand out as much for its humour as it did for its hybrid gameplay. Technically, it was on par with other Sierra games of the time, with 16-color EGA graphics and a text parser interface.

After about a year in development, *Hero's Quest* released in 1989 to enormous success. It caught the attention of Milton Bradley, who had trademarked the title 'HeroQuest' for a board game, and Sierra was forced to rebrand the series *Quest For Glory*. "We had just released the first game and it was doing
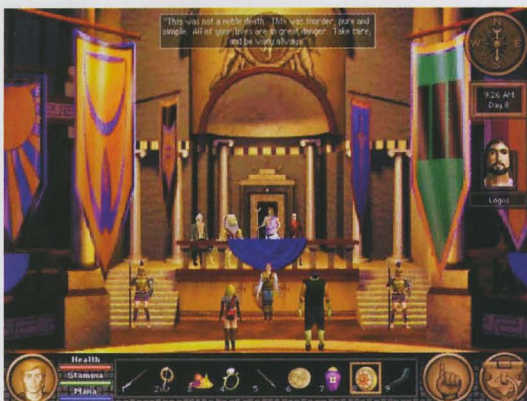
better than anyone expected," Lori says. "Now, as we were creating the second game, we couldn't use the same name. But it was just a name change – the games remained true to the heroic theme. The rename was a bit ironic because the games were not about gaining glory so much as about doing the right thing when it most counts. Sometimes, the player character even walked away from glory."

■■■ SUBTITLED *TRIAL BY FIRE*, the second game looked and played much like the first, although the setting had shifted to the Persian-influenced desert cities of Shapeir and Raseir. The game mechanics reflected the Hero's elevated status, starting with an innovative character import system. "The first game to let you bring characters across from one game to another was *Wizardry*," Lori explains. "[Corey and I] really enjoyed playing that game and were looking forward to playing the sequel with our characters that we had built up. However, when we started to play the sequel, our characters were stripped of all their abilities and had to start over. That was so not the way to do it." *Quest For Glory*'s import system preserved the Hero's name, class, stats, and some of his inventory, so players who chose to import a character could truly feel like part of the ongoing story.

While the import system may have eased the transition for the player, development was far from smooth. Lori recalls, "Every game we made was with a different team and with different situations. The first game [had] a small team of talented people, and most of them influenced the style and feel of the series. It was a pleasure to work with them. *Trial By Fire*, on the other hand, was like that in real life. It's no coincidence that the evil, twisted city, Raseir, is an anagram of Sierra, or that some of the villains in the game had names like some of the people we worked with at Sierra. It was not a happy time or place."

Since the Hero had gained experience during his fledgling adventure in Spielburg, the Coles made his second quest more complex for players by introducing a rigid time-based structure that presented frequent opportunities for hitting dead ends. It was a choice Lori later grew to regret: "*Trial by Fire* was the most unforgiving game in the series. You really had to pick up the clues and do the right thing by a given time limit or the world was destroyed. We learned from this mistake and never put arbitrary time limits in other games."
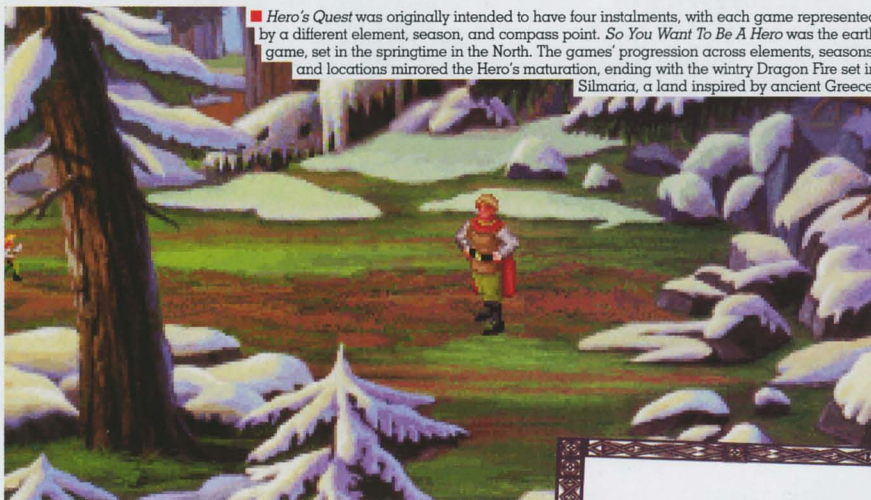
■ *Hero's Quest* was originally intended to have four instalments, with each game represented by a different element, season, and compass point. *So You Want To Be A Hero* was the earth game, set in the springtime in the North. The games' progression across elements, seasons, and locations mirrored the Hero's maturation, ending with the wintry Dragon Fire set in Silmaria, a land inspired by ancient Greece.

The inclusion of a new character class, the Paladin, had better results. Lori got the idea from the *Ultima* series, which introduced the concept of a Paladin in *Quest Of The Avatar*. "A Paladin is someone who does what he knows is right," she explains. "His character is not doing things because he wants fame or riches. He is doing things for the good of all. So he is the most heroic of all the character classes." In *Trial By Fire* and later sequels, any player could be presented with the chance to become a Paladin depending on choices made during play. This class was intentionally difficult to attain, but many fans did discover it thanks to the games' inherent replayability.

After *Trial By Fire* shipped in 1990, the Coles stepped back from their oeuvre to take a hard look at the storyline. Though Lori had intended to tell the Hero's story in four parts, she worried that he wasn't fully prepared to embark on the dangerous path she had in mind for the next instalment, *Shadows Of Darkness*. And fans had written in asking to see more of the Paladin Rakeesh, a character introduced in *Trial By Fire*. For these reasons, Lori and Corey decided to insert *Wages Of War*, a game that would take place in Rakeesh's African homeland of Tarna and prepare the Hero for the dark road ahead.

When this third game released in 1992, it made use of Sierra's new engine, boasting **CONTINUED >.**
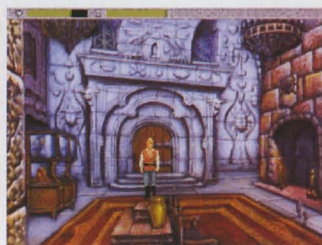

LORI ANN COLE AND COREY COLE
Game Designers
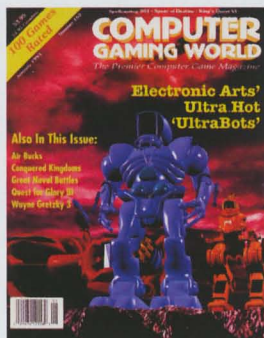
>. A GAMING EVOLUTION

The Coles liked the character creation in the *Ultima* games, but wanted their traits to influence the story. The result was *Quest For Glory*.

When the series was cancelled, the Coles created *Shannara* – another story-heavy RPG – for Legend Entertainment.

WHAT THEY SAID...

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD
The Premier Computer Game Magazine

Electronic Arts' Ultra Hot 'UltraBots'

Also In This Issue:
Air Bucks
Conquered Kingdoms
Great Novel Battles
Quest for Glory III
Wayne Gretzky's

With every new release in the *Quest For Glory* series, designers Lori and Corey Cole have been steadily improving the line, offering gamers an exciting mixture of hard-core fantasy role-playing and traditional graphic adventure games.

Computer Gaming World, Issue 102, January 1993

an Eastern European land with Transylvanian undertones, the creepy storyline saw the Hero facing off against the undead and the Dark One. Evil forces from previous games began to reappear, revealing the overarching yarn that the Coles had begun to spin back in 1989.

■■■ WITH A *STREET FIGHTER*-like combat system and more detailed graphics than any previous *Quest For Glory* game, *Shadows Of Darkness* marked a technical evolution for the series. It was the first instalment with native Windows support and the first released on CD-ROM with full voice acting. Unfortunately, the game suffered from serious production problems. "At the time, Sierra was plagued by managers who set too-short deadlines and [emphasized] the importance of the Christmas

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modern, 256-color VGA graphics and a point-and-click interface. Some fans complained that the streamlined controls made the game too easy, but Lori welcomed the change. "Parser-based games are hard. They really make you work to figure out how to do the simplest of actions. I personally hated playing them," she says. "I was glad to redesign the game system to do away with having to type out anything you wanted to do. This was one case [where] we had to disregard feedback from the core audience." A remake of the first game, also with VGA graphics and point-and-click controls, was released at around the same time.

In *Wages Of War*, the Hero must prevent a war between two opposing tribes – a premise influenced by the occurrence of the Persian Gulf War. Though the trademark humour remained, the storyline was more realistic and less whimsical than in the earlier games, intended to help the Hero 'grow up' and gain the skill and perspective he needed to face the destiny that awaited him. And his was an inevitable fate; *Wages Of War* closed with a tantalizing cliffhanger that showed the Hero being snatched away from the final victory celebration by dark, powerful magic.
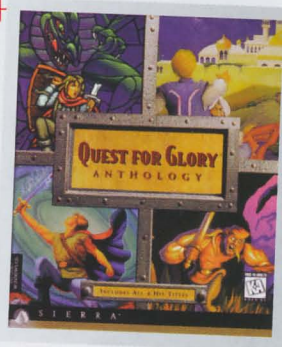
"*Shadows Of Darkness* will always be my favourite of the series," Lori says of the postponed chapter, which was finally released in 1993. "I got to incorporate all the horror movie tropes of vampires, werewolves, Edgar Allen Poe and HP Lovecraft together with a very moving plotline." Set in Mordavia,

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THE PREVIOUS GAMES HAD TAKEN A YEAR TO DEVELOP... DRAGON FIRE TOOK THREE

sales on the games," Lori recalls. "[Production of] *Shadows Of Darkness* started late because of system redesign and it was a very complex game. Rather than miss the Christmas season, they shipped the game with only a week in QA. Then the management couldn't understand why it was so buggy." Even though patches were issued, the rocky release was a disaster. "I was miserable," Lori says. "The game was virtually unplayable. It did not surprise me when Corey and I got laid off work several months later. I was truly sorry that I would never be able to finish the series."
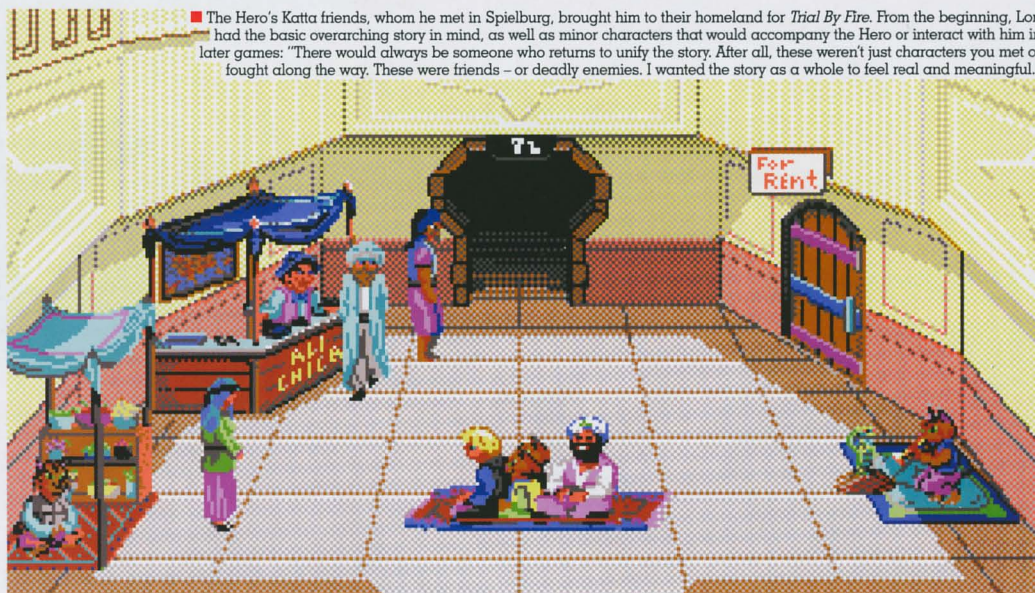

A 3-D ANIMATED FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING GAME
Hero's Quest
SO YOU WANT TO BE A HERO
SIERRA
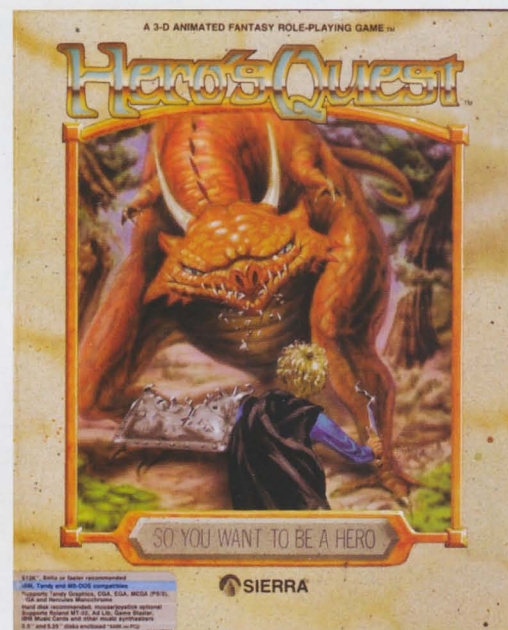
■ "It was an overwhelming best-seller for Sierra," Lori says of the first game, which was the most successful of the entire series.

■ The Hero's Katta friends, whom he met in Spielburg, brought him to their homeland for *Trial By Fire*. From the beginning, Lori had the basic overarching story in mind, as well as minor characters that would accompany the Hero or interact with him in later games: "There would always be someone who returns to unify the story. After all, these weren't just characters you met or fought along the way. These were friends – or deadly enemies. I wanted the story as a whole to feel real and meaningful."

So, YOU Want To Be A Hero?

■ A few years ago Vivendi – then Sierra's parent company – re-released several of the classic adventure series in Windows-friendly bundles, but *Quest For Glory* was not among them. Your best bet for playing these games today is to pick them up on eBay, either individually or in the *Quest For Glory Collection Series* or *Quest for Glory Anthology* compilations issued in the 1990s. To get the games working on newer computers, use DOSBox and the fan-created patches available at www.sierrahelp.com. A fan remake of *Trial By Fire*, sanctioned by Vivendi and the Coles, is available for free download from www.agdinteractive.com. It has VGA graphics in the style of Sierra's *So You Want To Be A Hero* remake, and allows players to choose between point-and-click and text parser interaction during dialogue.

So were the fans – and they didn't take the cancellation lightly. Sierra went through major restructuring in the mid-Nineties, and fan petitions prompted the company's new management to revisit *Quest For Glory* with an eye toward breaking into the burgeoning 3D gaming market. Lori was invited to return as lead designer on *Dragon Fire*, a 3D role-playing game based on her series. While it wasn't the finale she had envisioned, she jumped at the opportunity: "I was thrilled with the possibility of completing the series. I also liked the possibilities of a three-dimensional world. The previous games were more adventure than role-playing. This [game] could go more RP in design, and I enjoyed playing RPGs much more than adventures." The storyline she and Corey had developed for their final *Quest For Glory* game – which would have been called *King's Crown*, had all gone as planned – was incorporated into *Dragon Fire*.

■■■ PREVIOUS GAMES IN the series had taken about a year to develop. With its increased technical requirements, *Dragon Fire* took three. "Part of that was because we had to create everything from the ground up in programming and art to go to a 3D system," Lori explains. "No one quite knew what was going to work. Rather than wait for the underlying system to be finished, the art, design, music and sound were done at the same time. All the art was redone several times to accommodate the changes in programming." In addition, Lori recalls that new creative restrictions were imposed on her traditionally tongue-in-cheek style: "It was the first time I was asked to rewrite some of the characters' dialogue. Someone felt that the seductive Nawar was too risqué. 'Is that a sword in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?' had to be cut." Even so, Lori managed to complete the story she'd started nearly a decade earlier, and the Hero finally completed his arduous journey.

In February 1999, a few months after *Dragon Fire*'s release, Sierra shut down its entire adventure game division and laid off the employees who made those games, including Lori Ann Cole. "It was a sad surprise," she remembers. "Unfortunately, times and game-playing habits had changed, and the Sierra adventure game market was mostly dead. Since *Quest For Glory* was labelled as an adventure game, it too suffered from preconceptions that adventure games were dinosaurs." The Coles considered setting up a new company of their own to build *Quest For Glory* mission packs using existing assets, but decided against it for cost reasons. Though Corey is still in the industry, Lori has taken a break from videogames. "I worked on several game and world designs since *Quest For Glory*, but they did not survive the changes in the economy," she says. "The only game I play now is *World Of Warcraft*. That's enough to satisfy my computer gaming desires."

Even though the Hero's quest has ended, Lori hopes to someday revive his legacy with a book series and other personal projects. She and Corey recently launched *The School For Heroes*, an online role-playing experience that they plan to supplement with a text adventure set at the Famous Adventurer's Correspondence School. "Right now, it's more of a real-life role-playing game than a fantasy one. People from around the world write about what they are doing in their life to become heroes," Lori says of the site. "As for computer games, *Dragon Fire* did complete the story arc for the tale. The Hero is now king (or chose not to be king) and is happily married to the woman of his dreams (whichever woman he chose). I believe in relatively happy-ever-afters, and the Hero of the series deserves a peaceful retirement. However, his children will have problems of their own... " ⓖ

Pictures courtesy of SierraVault Archives (sierra.gracenroark.net), Museum of Computer Adventure Game History (www.mocagh.org), and Adventure Gamers (www.adventuregamers.com).

its team to create the best games, regardless of ethnic background. So does it really need to state this? I actually feel sorry for companies that feel the need to defend themselves against any religious sect or group who will lash out at any small fact. *Assassin's Creed* is about storytelling. The way I see it is: if religion is as strong as it thinks it is, then it really need not worry about a group of people creating a game for pure entertainment value.

In the words of Mark Corrigan, we "hate political correctness gone mad", but we wouldn't go as far as to suggest that's the case here. A similar caveat prefaced the opening of the original *Assassin's Creed*, and we believe it has less to do with ensuring players are aware of Ubisoft's politically correct hiring process, and more due to the fact that the game's content has the potential to offend. *Assassin's Creed II* makes some stark claims about the origins of Christianity – The Truth video being a prime example. It's not very often that videogames shake the foundations of faith quite so boldly. Yes, it's just a story, but it's exactly this distortion of the source material for entertainment's sake – in this case The Bible – that's often the problem in the first place.

■ *Assassin's Creed II* deals with potentially dangerous territory in its re-writing of Christian tradition, although it's less likely to offend Christian sensibilities as EA's *Dante's Inferno*.

Subject: **Reviewing The Reviews**
From: Graham Stevens
- -

I would like to share a thought or two that popped into my mind on reading your review of *Modern Warfare 2* in issue 90. I have been reading games™ since I was in my teens – quite a few years ago now – and I often glance at the score before reading the review. If it's a very poor score and a game I'm not really interested in, I won't even bother to read the review (sorry to break that to you!). On the positive side, if the reverse is true – if it's a good score and a game I was not considering or a genre I don't usually like – I will then take the time to read through your words of wisdom. On reading the *Modern Warfare 2* review it is clear that we have two games in one. A multiplayer where controls, non-stop action and skill development are a key feature in determining the quality of the game, and a single-player campaign with all the previous factors but coupled with the importance of character development, clear story, clever pacing, and so on. Here's the crunch: I think it might be about time to review the scoring process used in the reviews. Maybe you should be considering giving a separate score for the single-player aspect and one for multiplayer. I have several friends who rarely play multiplayer. A game scored 9/10 based on amazing multiplayer is of very little interest to them. Another only ever plays multiplayer – a score for just the multiplayer aspect would definitely be of interest to him. I'm not advocating either. Personally I believe an experience including both single-player

and multiplayer is the way forward. But even as someone who plays both modes, I would be very interested to see a breakdown of scores for the different components. It would be an intriguing experiment for both you as game journalists and for us as avid readers.

As stated in our review guide, we do often split our reviews into two parts when it comes to multiplayer, given how integral a part it's come to play in modern gaming. However, this is usually due to online components not being available for review, or a sufficient enough community having not built up at the time. If a developer deems the multiplayer important enough to present at review stage – as was the case at the review event for *Modern Warfare 2* – then it will be incorporated into the main text. *Modern Warfare 2* is the pinnacle of a new type of product that has only come to prominence over the past few years: intense, triple-A single-player games that come coupled with a multiplayer that's just as significant to the overall package. As such, we felt a combined review – one that took in the game as a whole – was the best choice for a game as hugely anticipated as *Modern Warfare 2*.

■ *Modern Warfare 2*'s multiplayer is easily its strongest element, but there's a good deal of praise to be lavished on its robust single-player, too.

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