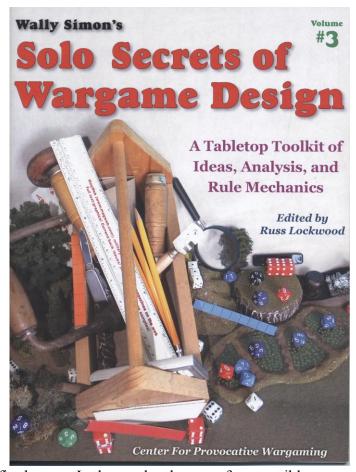# Wally Simon's Solo Secrets of Wargame Design
Edited by Russ Lockwood
Review by Rich Barbuto

This is volume #3 of Russ Lockwood's welcome and wonderful efforts to bring the best of Wally Simon to a new and wider audience. Wally was a longtime contributor to our hobby through *Potomac Wargamers Review*. His analytical mind - he was trained as a statistician – enhanced by a wealth of creativity, gave his readers innovative ways to consider the dynamics of combat and new ways to design and conduct the games they loved. And now Russ Lockwood brings this goodness to us again in the form of collections of edited essays.

Volume #3 explores solo gaming. It seems that Wally hardly wasted a weekend. If his usual gaming crowd failed to show, Wally wargamed by himself. His creative juices flowed, and the results were new techniques for the soloist. This volume includes a dozen essays spanning ten centuries of warfare. It is important to state here that Wally's techniques, while perhaps generated within a specific conflict, are very often directly applicable to other eras, with or without modification. For example, his essay titled "Scenario Generation" originated while trying to come to grips with an American Civil War scenario. His product is a well-thought out method to select a map and order of battle and to fairly easily generate a flow of reinforcements over time. Brilliant!

I particularly enjoyed "Good Morning, Vietnam." This game can be played solo or by multiple players against a common, card-driven adversary. Wally's playful side is displayed by his sub-titles: First Magic Card Ride, I Can't Get No Satisfaction, Break On Through To the Solo Side, and Last Sequence To Clarksville. A little more "math-driven" is "Rules are Greener." Simon uses an American Revolution scenario to display a methodology to generate responses of units undergoing a 'triggering' event, such as being approached, charged, or fired upon. In these rules there are four possible responses. A unit may fire, hold its position, retreat or charge. These tables are useful enough to 'automate' your opponent. Simon goes on to address how combinations of strength, casualties, and die rolls reduce a unit's efficiency level to eventually destroy the unit. To my mind, this was a bit too much math, but the technique will appeal to some gamers.

Wally Simon demonstrated other techniques using renaissance, medieval, World War II, and modern scenarios. All are food for thought and worthy of your consideration. Russ Lockwood offers a two-page essay titled "The Wally Quadfecta: Universal Guidelines for Good Game Design," that summarize a few 'principles' that appear frequently in Wally's rules. To whet the appetite, Russ names these four 'principles' as: The One-Third Chance, The 70% Terrain, Class A Abominations, and Sequence Trophy. There is a lot of good material in volume three to digest. As with all of Russ Lockwood's efforts to capture classic wargame materials, you will find them at **Caliver Books** (£15) and **On Military Matters** ($19).