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Generations



The new monopoly makes major changes

By Peg DeMarco - Special to The News Herald

I didn't realize there was a brand new Monopoly game until I saw an ad for it this past Sunday on Nickelodeon. It was in between episodes of Spongebob Squarepants, our usual TV fare when my granddaughter is visiting.

Apparently, a modern banking version of the Monopoly game calling itself, "The Ultimate Banking Edition," was introduced in February 2016 at the annual toy show in New York. In this edition, all the colorful Monopoly money is gone. Yes, all those annoying white one dollar bills that took forever to count out when one landed on Boardwalk with not a dime to spare, and those coveted golden \$500 bills that were as scarce as an hour worth of TV without a political ad, are no more.

The new \$24.99 game features an all-in-one banking unit with touch technology so players can instantly buy properties, set rent, and tap their way to fortune or failure. Each player gets a bankcard and the unit keeps track of everyone's fortunes. It also scans the game's property cards and can boost or crash the market.

Traditional Monopoly play gets amped up by switching Chance and Community Chest cards with Event cards and Location spaces. Land on an Event Space and rents may be raised or lowered, a player may earn or lose money, or someone could get sent to Jail. Yes, they kept the good old jail square, the pass "Go," and even the same names of the properties.

The selling hype on the Monopoly website promises instant transactions and cashless gameplay, rising and falling property values, and technology that promises to make the game fast and fun. Players wave their debit cards to complete transactions rather than counting their cash and waiting for the banker to do the same.

The "Life Events" feature makes property values fluctuate, just like the actual real estate market. I'm thankful that they didn't include a square on the game board with a picture of a cliff should a player discover his stocks have bottomed out.

I magnified the parts and pieces of this new Monopoly game on my computer screen to figure out just what was included and was saddened to learn that the wonderful metal game pieces we loved as kids were replaced by four plastic pieces. The little dog (my favorite), the iron, thimble, top hat and shoe were no longer included in this new fancy game.

Sure, it's fast because players can focus on moving their plastic pieces around the board quickly, buying all the railroads, and knowing instantly how much it costs to build a hotel on Boardwalk. It's all done electronically, and the human banker, which usually was Mom or Dad, has been replaced by a computerized gizmo that does all the counting.

But I'm not so sure Hasbro will have a huge hit with this version of our beloved Monopoly. Playing as a youngster with Mom and Dad and my siblings were some of the best times of all and we weren't in a rush to hurry the game. We were actually glad to have some time with our parents and doing something that was fun. Sure, Dad let Mom float a couple of times when her top hat landed on his Boardwalk, but it was all in good fun.

The public, too, isn't that thrilled with the new version according to some reports I read. Some parents worry that kids will lose a learning opportunity if the banking unit does the math for them. And I question the "use of plastic" instead of cash as it's not the best lesson we should be teaching our children. Isn't too much plastic the malady that caused many of us to suffer through sleepless nights?

To me, we don't always have to change what worked so well in the past to keep up with the times. Monopoly is still the No. 1 game in the world according to the internet, so why not leave it alone?

It makes me wonder what they'll do to the board game "Clue," another childhood favorite. Could Col. Mustard get away with the murder of Mrs. Peacock in the library because his DNA wasn't found on the candlestick?

With a revised game, he might.