

## Generations



# Hang on to your board games

By Peg DeMarco, Special to the News Herald

The cartoon drawn by Dave Granlund.com featured in the Opinion section of the News Herald on March 24<sup>th</sup> depicting a son asking his father what a board game was in response to the headline on his father's newspaper that Monopoly had changed its game pieces caught my eye. It was clever and it was nice to take a breather from all the political cartoons.

I wasn't aware that Monopoly had changed its game tokens so I dug deeper to find out what it was all about. What else had Hasbro come up with to change America's favorite game?

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, Hasbro announced that the game's playing pieces have been revamped and the thimble, wheelbarrow and boot have "gotten the boot" in favor of more fan-friendly options.

The new lineup for the game includes a rubber ducky, a penguin and a T-Rex, joining old favorites, the Scottie dog, the top hat, a race car and a battleship as well as the recently added cat, which was swapped in for the iron after a similar fan vote in 2013.



The most recent online poll, held in January, drew more than 4.3 million votes from 146 countries. Of the 64 suggestions listed, 56 options, inspired by pop culture and social media, were entirely new, and included a bunny, TV, and a number of emojis. The other eight were the classic tokens, such as the top hat.

The new lineup was unveiled just ahead of World Monopoly Day, which was officially recognized on March 19. Hard to believe, but there have been 300 different versions of Monopoly to date!

So, what do I think of the new tokens? Well, I can see them getting rid of the iron in favor of the cat for two reasons. First, since 30.4% of US households are cat owners, compared to 36.5%

dog owners, cats are long overdue for token recognition (these were 2012 percentages so cats could be neck and neck today). Second, because not many people take the time to iron today (I don't even own one), I have a feeling in the not too distant future irons will become obsolete and a little girl will be asking her mother, "What's an iron?"

Ditto the thimble. My grandmother had one, together with a pin cushion and Singer sewing machine, but you won't find them in my house.

As far as the wheelbarrow, it was a little clumsy to begin with and didn't quite fit the grip of a determined Monopoly player, so I don't think it will be sorely missed other than by farmers who are Monopoly enthusiasts.

But I have to take issue with the elimination of the boot. This happened to be the token that Mom loved and Dad knew it, so he always seemed to roll the dice better and claimed the boot. Mom's second favorite was the Scottie dog, but it really didn't matter because Mom seemed to always secure Boardwalk and Park Place and Dad hit at least one of them when hotels lined her empire.

What was a little disturbing about the cartoon, however, was the fact that the son didn't know what a board game was. We're living in an era when families are more divided than ever due to so many outside influences. We cram 48-hours of activity into an 8 to 10-hour day, sort of like stuffing two pounds of bologna into a one-pound bag. It just doesn't work, and it isn't fair to the bologna.

Those Monopoly sessions meant time with Mom and Dad, something so important to us kids. According to an article in [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com), what your child (or grandchild) most wants and needs is to be with you with no goal in mind beyond the joy of spending time together. Nothing bolsters a child's self-esteem more than knowing he or she has your full attention (all phones turned off).

The article points out that as an added bonus, board games are also rich in learning opportunities to satisfy your child's competitive urges and the desire to master new skills and concepts; however, they don't need to be overtly academic to be educational because children also learn important social skills, such as communicating verbally, sharing, waiting, taking turns, and enjoying interaction with others.

And perhaps the most important lesson of all that kids can learn from board games? Luck is fickle and, good or bad, it can change in an instant such as when you're winning in Scrabble but have just drawn the Q with all the U's already on the board.

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