

# Widower is Not Playing Games

By Reg P. Wydeven  
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Last week, after an awesome Thanksgiving spent with family and friends, my family and I braved the crowds and went Black Friday shopping. We got a lot of great deals on some family-centric items, including some movies, video games, and board games.

I can't believe how many board games there are these days, including many I had never heard of. But it was nice to see some classics, including Monopoly, Clue and The Game of Life.

The Game of Life was released by Milton Bradley in 1960. It was different from other games at the time because instead of using dice, players spun a clicking wheel. The board was three-dimensional with a circuitous track, as opposed to a track that ran along the outside of the board. Players traveled along the track in a car and collected pegs, which represent spouses and children. To no one's surprise, the winner of the game is the richest player.

The game even has a 'Lawsuit' space on the board. According to Lorraine Markham, her late husband invented the game and including the Lawsuit space was prophetic.

In 2015, Lorraine filed suit in Rhode Island seeking to have her husband, Bill Markham, declared by the court to be the sole inventor and creator of The Game of Life. She also wants the right to terminate all licensing agreements for the game, as well as having the right to all future royalties.

Lorraine claims her husband's partner, Reuben Klamer, took credit for inventing the game. In addition, she asserts she is owed more than \$2 million in royalties from Klamer and Hasbro, who acquired Milton Bradley in 1984 and is based in Rhode Island.

In a pre-trial filing, Lorraine's lawyers wrote, "What was once a great partnership between Markham, a toy and game designer, and Klamer, a savvy marketer and promoter, has been tarnished by Klamer's unrelenting quest to steal the credit of developing the game for himself."

Klamer and Hasbro both refute Lorraine's claims. According to Klamer, to celebrate the company's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1960, Milton Bradley asked his company, which he owned with TV personality Art Linkletter, to develop a game. Klamer argues that he simply hired Markham to create a prototype. Klamer actually countersued Lorraine and asked the court to declare him as the game's inventor and that she has no rights to any royalties.

Klamer indicated he went into Milton Bradley's archives and found the company's first game, The Checkered Game of Life, which inspired The Game of Life. Klamer and Hasbro also insist that other people assisted Markham in designing the game, which changed dramatically from the original prototype.

While the suit was filed in Rhode Island, testimony is actually being taken in Los Angeles due to the advanced age of many of the witnesses.

Royalties for the game will be extremely valuable due to its immense popularity, having sold more than 30 million copies. It has been displayed at the Smithsonian Institution and was inducted into the Toy Hall of Fame in 2010. The game has been converted into an iPhone app, a video game, gambling machines, a television show, and it even spawned a book, 'The Game of Life: How to Succeed in Real Life No Matter Where You Land.'

A final ruling won't likely happen until the conclusion of the entire case, which could eventually include a trial by jury. So until then, everyone just has to play The Waiting Game.

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