

## And my last web update My First Card

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People that work on **Magic**—well, designers specifically—like to tell the story of the first card they ever created. I get to tell that story now. It's not a particularly good story, but it is the only one I have. So here goes...

When I came to Wizards to run this website, I was recruited by Research & Development to play in the "Future Future League" (or FFL), which is the internal playtesting league that tries to balance upcoming sets for tournament-level constructed play. As my position was not in R&D, keeping up with sets a year in advance was often a daunting task—especially since the web content I was managing deals with current sets—but I eventually fell into a nice groove in which I'd simply ask the developers which cards they thought needed testing and build around those.

When a new block is introduced, however, no one quite knows what to test initially, and I'm on my own. Here is a deck I built during the first weeks of "Bacon" (what would become *Mirrodin*) playtesting in October of 2002:

### Magnetron Urzatron



#### Main Deck

60 cards

|                      |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 6 Forest             | 1 [Ring of Invisibility] |
| 4 Tree of Tales      | 4 Crop Rotation          |
| 4 Urza's Mine        | 2 Gate to the Aether     |
| 4 Urza's Power Plant | 4 Howling Mine           |
| 4 Urza's Tower       | 4 Icy Manipulator        |
| _____                | 3 Sculpting Steel        |
| 22 lands             | 4 Talisman of Impulse    |
| _____                | _____                    |
| 2 Clockwork Dragon   | 22 other spells          |
| 4 Forgotten Ancient  |                          |

- 4 Lodestone Myr
- 3 Solemn Simulacrum
- 3 Triskelion

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16 creatures



All these cards currently exist (although some were slightly different then) except for Ring of Invisibility, a piece of equipment that was moved off to *Darksteel*. Its role in the deck was mainly to try playing **Lodestone Myr** with equipment to see if it confused people.

When I first read **Lodestone Myr**, I fell in love with it simply because of its potential interaction with **Howling Mine**. **Lodestone Myr** was actually taken out of the set at one point early on—it was uncommon originally, and bogged down limited formats like no one's business—but I made a plea to the team to reconsider and they put it back in as a rare. So of course I had to play with it. Besides **Howling Mine**, the best tap-to-shut-off artifact in the environment at that time was **Gate to the Aether**. It cost 6, and it would reward me for having other monstrous permanents in my deck, so I went **Triskelion** and **Clockwork Dragon**. All those beefy artifacts were screaming for mana, and the logical answer was the Urza lands (or "Urzatron") from *Eighth Edition*, which was also being developed at that time.



That version of *Eighth Edition* also contained a card that made the Urzatron run as smooth as silk—the *Urza's Legacy* common **Crop Rotation**. Getting all three pieces in play on turn three happened in a significant portion of my games, and my opponents were often left reeling from a quick Dragon or a **Howling Mine**-fueled **Lodestone Myr**. The *Mirrodin* development team was not thrilled with me flopping huge threats with **Gate to the Aether** and then shutting it off to deny symmetry, so they removed the "if CARDNAME is untapped" clause. Sorry about that.



That same week, the *Eighth* team decided to pull **Crop Rotation** for two good reasons. One, it was the only card in the set that required an additional cost when playing it. Two, some R&D members felt that we shouldn't reprint cards that are restricted in Type 1 in the Core Set no matter how innocuous they might seem out of context, just to avoid sending mixed signals to our players. By restricting **Crop Rotation**, we are claiming that the card is too powerful, but by reintroducing it to Standard we would be saying that it wasn't, in fact, too powerful at all. Best to leave it out.

That's all well and good, but suddenly I had no Urzatron deck. And it was so fun, too. This was going to be the Urzatron's moment to shine. After all, it first appeared in a set with **Strip Mine**, putting it at a severe disadvantage. Later, the Urza lands were reprinted in *Chronicles*, but **Strip Mine** came back (in a lapse of judgment) concurrently in *Fourth Edition*. And when the Urza lands came back again in *Fifth Edition*, they were overshadowed by *Tempest's* **Wasteland**. How was an artifact lover to make a decent deck?! Well, the *Onslaught/Mirrodin/Eighth* environment had no nasty **Strip Mine** variants... if the 'Tron was ever going to get up and running, this was the time! But it needed more help!

Just as I asked to give **Lodestone Myr** a new lease on life, I asked Randy Buehler—*Mirrodin's* lead developer—to consider adding some sort of **Crop Rotation** replacement to *Mirrodin* so I could continue trying to make decent Urza land decks. He said he'd listen if I had something specific in mind. So I suggested, off the top of my head, "1: **Demonic Tutor** for any land."

In it went, and there it stayed. And that's how **Sylvan Scrying** came to be. Like I said, not an awesome story, but I'm stuck with it as the tale of the first **Magic** card I ever created.

There's a sad ending and a happy ending to the story. The sad ending is that, as our *Mirrodin/Darksteel/Fifth Dawn* constructed environment has borne out, the Urzatron deck isn't really a major player. The pieces are there, so feel free to come up with your own builds, but I don't want to suggest that the invention of **Sylvan Scrying** will put **Urza's Power Plant** at the top of the Standard power rankings. The Urzatron is still a giant three-card combo, and it's just mana—it alone won't win you the game. I could never get it in shape to handle the tier-1 decks, but I'd love it if someone else could make it work out there in the "real world." I'll be watching. I'll also be mildly amused if my sole creation ends up restricted in Type 1 (and by default banned in 1.5) because it can get the dreaded **Tolarian Academy**. Time will tell.

The happy ending—at least happy for me—is that I started working in R&D today. **Sylvan Scrying** had little or nothing to do with it; I don't want you to think that by inventing one bland card I was invited to work on the game full time. But over the past two years I managed to carve out enough time during my week to help test stuff and discuss new cards with the gang in Research & Development, and I guess it paid off. It is very much a dream job. I was thrilled to see that I got a little bit of credit for my time in the *Eighth Edition* Core Game manual and the **Magic Online** manual, and if I could have continued working with the game at that level while still running this site, I'd have been perfectly content. But fate had different plans for me.

I was given a huge opportunity to impact **Magic** in a big way earlier this year when a fluke personnel change in R&D left them without enough people available to work on *Fifth Dawn* (then called "Tomato") design. Mark Rosewater—the lead designer—approached me to see if I wanted to be on the team, mainly to take notes and one day write a first-person account of the experience for the site, but I ended up surprising myself with what I was able to design, and many of my cards were used. I'll have to see what you—the players—think when *Fifth Dawn* comes out next year. Trust me, I have more exciting stuff than **Sylvan freakin' Scrying** in there. (The design team was Mark, Randy Buehler, and myself, plus a fellow named Greg Marques that Mark met in Chicago at a Pro Tour. It is basically a set designed by your friends from [MagicTheGathering.com](http://MagicTheGathering.com).)

As you can see, A led to B, and B to C, and when a developer position opened up in R&D, they believed me to be a natural fit. And that's where I am today.

I am no longer "the guy that runs the **Magic** site," and that saddens me a little. I put a couple good years into this beauty, shaping it into what it is today. I can leave with my head high, however, as our traffic is great, players all over the world know about us and read us every day, and we've made great leaps in the realm of player communication with key people here at Wizards. I know I've enjoyed it, and I'll miss making all the little graphics and message board threads that have become part of the fabric of my being.

There are big things in store for this site, and I'll be checking it every day to see how they play out. There are lots of devoted and talented people still involved with it, so it can only get even better from here. Stay tuned to [MagicTheGathering.com](http://MagicTheGathering.com) for more updates on what changes will be coming. This is not the end, but a beginning. It's all good!



This isn't the last you've seen of me. I've been writing **Magic** content for the web for many years now and I don't plan to stop. At the very least, I'll get back into doing coverage for our pro-level events, and I'm sure I'll be writing articles for this site again before too long.

I'd like to give a parting thank you to all the people that helped make my job as Content Manager a blast, and made MagicTheGathering.com what it is today.

**Outside of Wizards:** Anthony Alongi, Brian David-Marshall, Rei Nakazawa, Jay Moldenhauer-Salazar, Ben Bleiweiss, Toby Wachter, Bennie Smith, and Rune Horvik.

**Here at Wizards:** Doug Beyer, Kevin Endo, Tim Thomas, Wanda Gregory, Kyle Murray, Scott Rouse, Elena Moye, Wendy Wallace, Joe Hauck, Matt Stevens, Del Laugel, Bill Rose, Brady Dommermuth, Paul Barclay, Jeremy Cranford, Scott Norris, Corey Macourek, Jen Page, Mark Gottlieb, and Randy Buehler.

**At home:** my wife Anne and baby Athena for putting up with my long hours and occasional weekends at the office.

**Biggest props of all to:** Dan Stahl and Mark Rosewater, for concepting this site many months before I even got the job. I have to say it was a fine idea.

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*Don't send me any email... I'm already passing on 111,973 unread messages to my eventual successor.*