



## C O L U M N I S T S

*Hoisting the  
Hippopotamus*

Lev Alburt &  
Al Lawrence



## The Ghosts of Chess Heroes Past

All of us chess players are getting a long-awaited present this Christmas. We've never had one place to gather together the mementoes and artifacts of the world's greatest chess players. The closest we come are the books many of us treasure that tell the stories of our heroes. Stories and images from bygone days when hirsute masters wore stiffly upright, white collars and sat staidly in front of slowly moving pieces—to stories about this generation's greats, wearing anything from T-shirts to business suits, blitzing the pieces at the impatient new time controls.

We've never had one place until now, that is. And it's hard to overstate how important a step the new World Chess Hall of Fame and Sidney Samole Museum is. A world's first, it's both FIDE's and USCF's official Hall of Fame and Museum. The US has had a place since the late 1980s, of course. So we may be a bit nonchalant on the topic. And the very fact that the new Hall of Fame is glitzy, with its 45-foot "castle" tower highly visible from the Florida Turnpike in Miami, seems somehow ho-hum American, perhaps. We're surrounded with hyperbole. After all, it's the land where even the fact that a kitchen knife is sharp merits endless infomercials, since surely its keenness will make all the difference in our lives.

The "Hall of Fame" part of the new Museum's name bespeaks its recognition of the officially designated honorees of both FIDE and USCF. FIDE has begun this year with five—Morphy, Steinitz,



Lasker, Capablanca and Fischer. The USCF, which has been doing this for some time, inducts its 31<sup>st</sup> this December. *Photo: Plaques of some of the 31 US Hall of Famers.*

The “Museum” in its name refers to its collection of artifacts and other memorabilia. Such treasures don’t necessarily have to pertain to a Hall of Famer. Obviously, there are many important players who may never make it to that particular summit, but who were interesting, influential and important nevertheless.



### Cover Stories

Several of the displays contain mainstream US magazine covers that feature chess personalities. In Bobby Fischer’s display, for example, is the famous *Life Magazine* cover from November 12, 1971. If you invested the fifty-cent price 30 years ago, we hope you tucked this treasure away in a safe place. *Photo: Perhaps the most well known mainstream magazine cover dedicated to a chess personality*

*is this 1971, pre-world-championship shot of Bobby You-Know-Who. The cover is featured in one of his Hall-of-Fame displays.*

But go back even ten years earlier. Do you remember who the heart-throb of US chess used to be between the time we were all humming along with “Itsy-Bitsy, Teenie-Weenie Yellow Polka-dot Bikini” and the post-Cuban-missile-crisis phase of digging nuclear bomb shelters in our backyards? The August 7, 1961, issue of *Sports Illustrated* gave us a moody shot of many-time US Women’s Champ Lisa Lane on its cover. *Photo: America’s chess sweetheart? Yep, it happened, as this 1961 Sports Illustrated cover in the Hall of Fame documents. Millions handed over their quarters to see more shots of Lisa Lane inside.*

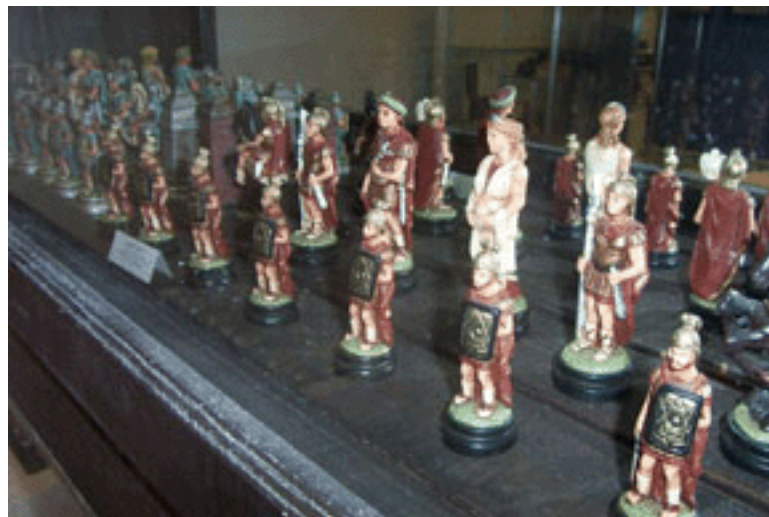




Skip back yet another thirty years plus. Who do you think shows up on the December 7, 1925, cover of *Time Magazine*—then in black and white, of course. A handsome chess world champion named José Raúl Capablanca. Fifteen cents would have gotten you, or your grandfather, this piece of history. Now you can come see it in the Hall's Capa display. *Photo: The 1925 Time Magazine cover of José Raúl Capablanca.*

### Chess Sets Fit for a King

In one corner of the 11,000-square-foot Museum, in a castle alcove, are dozens of sets donated by Floyd Sarisohn of Chess Collector's International. In a display that's been very appealing to the general public, a wide range of costly collector's sets peek out from behind locked glass cases.



*Photo (left): The figures of this hand-painted set portray the officers and men of a Roman legion.*



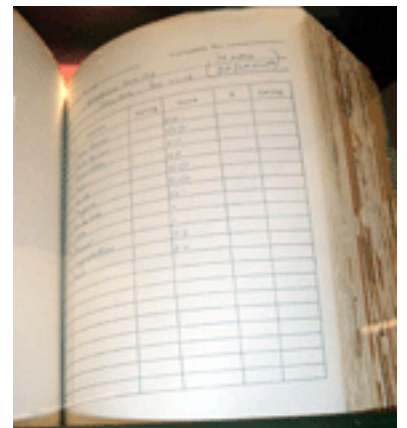
*Photo  
(left): On  
the  
collection's  
other  
extreme,  
this  
"American  
Gothic" set  
features  
rooks in  
the shape  
of  
outhouses.*

### **ELO's shoulders**

Besides the cover stories of chess, the World Chess Hall of Fame and Sidney Samole Museum tells some of the great, behind-the-scenes chess dramas and secrets—and occasionally even helps right an historical injustice. For example, take the issue of ratings. Nothing is dearer to a chess player's heart than his rating. (Well, of course everyone knows he's under-rated, but his rating, its ups and downs, however miniscule, are his ego's stock-market report.) Tournament chess simply wouldn't be imaginable without ratings.

Many know that Professor Arpad Elo was instrumental in initiating the first accurate rating system, one in essence still used by USCF and FIDE. In fact, FIDE's ratings are called the ELO system. Players around the world ask "What's your ELO?" ("ELO" always seems to be in all caps, leading many ignorant of its derivation to assume it's some kind of acronym.)

Indeed, Arpad Elo made a great contribution to our system. He's honored in our Hall of Fame. But his role was primarily that of a statistical fine-tuner. He stood squarely on the shoulders of another man who worked painstaking years to develop a reliable rating formula. His name was Kenneth Harkness, and his image adorns a silver plaque on the Hall of Fame as well. And a treasure more





interesting is the original, oversized notebook he used to rate both historic and contemporaneous tournaments, testing his theorems in his own hand. The book is both a monument to his labor and an insight into his genius. *Photo: Harkness' workbook, containing hundreds of pages of hypothetical ratings.*

### **Put yourself on the guest list!**

Interestingly, legions of people outside of the US welcome the new Miami Hall of Fame enthusiastically and plan to be at the Grand Opening taking place a week before Christmas, on Sunday, December 16 and Monday, December 17. Of course, many US residents will be there as well. The list of expected guests reads like Jeremy Gaige's *Chess Personalia*.

Chess leaders from all over the world will be there. Kirsan N. Ilyumzhinov will be flying in—immediately after the World Championship Qualifier in Moscow. Ilyumzhinov is a busy man; he's both President of FIDE and president of the Republic of Kalmkykia. FIDE Executive Director Emmanuel Omuko and David Jarrett, FIDE Treasurer will be there as well, to see their Museum for first time, and to see their first five inductees—Morphy, Steinitz, Lasker, Capablanca and Fisher—enshrined. FIDE has been very supportive of their new Hall.

USCF President John McCrary will attend and gavel in the latest US Chess Hall of Famer, GM Lubosh Kavalek. McCrary is a professional psychologist and a serious chess historian and collector. Frank Camaratta, USCF's Vice President of Finance and owner of The House of Staunton, will be there as well. McCrary and Camaratta have been among the two best friends the Museum has had in its start-up modes. Of course, Shane Samole, President of Excalibur Electronics, and his father Sidney before him, are the ones who had the vision and put up the wherewithal to construct the Hall's landmark building.

On Sunday, the 16<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Alex Panelas will cut the ceremonial ribbon. Shortly afterward, costumed members of the Florida Renaissance Historical Society—a group well known for their “live chess” performances—will put on a show with the famous

Morphy Opera-box game. During their well rehearsed versions, which take place on a 1,600-square-foot board, piece-confrontations are done with a dramatic flurry of sword-fighting. The captured are carried off on stretchers. After the stage-crafted carnage, Hall of Famers and other international chess stars will take on all comers in a simultaneous. *Photo: On-board combat by the Florida Renaissance Historical Society is “co-ed.”*



Why not give yourself a pre-Christmas present, and get warm in the process. Come to Miami to be part of history. You can see the whole schedule of events at [www.chessmuseum.org](http://www.chessmuseum.org). For a quick but reasonably priced reservation, call Allison at +1 (305) 932-5560, Extension 36. Or Email her at [allison@foresttravel.com](mailto:allison@foresttravel.com). Be sure to telephone co-author Al Lawrence at the Hall—786-242-4255 to reserve your place. Or Email him at [ChessMuseum@aol.com](mailto:ChessMuseum@aol.com).

This month, sadly, we must note the passing of two chess greats. Your co-authors knew them both and will miss them, as will millions of other. We're thankful that the new Hall of Fame and Museum gives us a place to mark their contributions for hundreds of years to come, so that future generations will get to know them as well.

### **Jack Collins, Chess Teacher of the Century**

At 5:30 AM December 3, Jack Collins died. He's a USCF Hall of Famer. The text in his significant display reads as follows:

## **John (“Jack”) Collins**

*John Collins is justly famous as the most influential chess teacher in US history. He taught many great US players, including Bobby Fischer, Robert Byrne and William Lombardy—all Hall of Famers honored in this Museum. The US Chess Federation officially proclaimed Collins “Chess Teacher of the Century.”*

*Collins is one of the few players who excelled nationally at both through-the-mail and over-the-board play, winning the US correspondence championship and ranking as one of the top OTB players in the US. A prolific author, he taught tens of thousands to play through his books.*

*Collins is particularly inspiring to young players. His legions of “Collins’ Kids” show up in important events such as the US Amateur Team East, where his contributions are honored annually.*

*The chess sets shown at bottom were his childhood sets. The book at left, bottom, was given to him by his father. The clock on the ledge is a special one (it sounds a tone after five seconds) that Collins used to train young Bobby Fischer.*



*Photo: A portion of the Collins display at the World*

**Tony Miles, British chess pioneer**

Fellow **ChessCafe** columnist Tony Miles recently passed away at the all-too-early age of 46. Some thirty years ago, Miles was one of the hottest prospects in chess. It's not stretching a comparison to say that Miles was to British chess what George Harrison, who died on November 30, was to British rock as a Beatle. Before Miles, British chess was hardly a factor on the world scene. Its glory days—when Staunton, Blackburn and even Steinitz walked the shores of the Thames—were a hundred years spent. Then Miles won the world junior championship and became the first modern British GM, beginning a British chess explosion that brought the island to arguably the world's number two spot—if one goes by ratings of top players—after the Soviet Union. Even the more recent British GMs owe a huge debt to Miles, who constructed the ladder rung-by-rung as he climbed it and which they all later clambered up to earn their titles.

Both co-authors Alburt and Lawrence knew Miles. Alburt first met him at an international tournament in Dubna, near Moscow, in the early 1970s, before Miles was a GM. Inspired by Bobby Fischer, Miles would then drink only milk and kept to himself—although he was quite pleasant to everyone. (In fact, Miles was always a sportsman.) Miles was a handsome teenager then, and Alburt remembers that Tony was a bit shocking with his very long, curly blond hair. Although such locks were not uncommon in the West in the 70s, the look was unusual behind the old Iron Curtain. Miles was a little eccentric, even then, but clearly a big talent. In fact, Alburt feels that with a little bit of luck, better organization and more dedication, Miles would have gone at least as far as Nigel Short or Jon Spielman, both world championship candidates. Tony, a creative genius, would frankly get bored at the humdrum moments when the most consistent professionals are able to focus on the mundane need to chalk up points. Certainly, Miles was at his best when challenged by circumstances. Once he was forced by a back problem to play while lying flat in a gurney. He did quite well. In fact, some of his opponents later said that his supine approach must have been an advantage, disconcerting his adversaries. Perhaps herein lies a twist to the old chess saw that no healthy chess player has ever



lost a game. It's likely that no healthy chess player without an outrageous alibi has ever lost to a confined-to-bed opponent. (Well, the rule-proving exception readily springs to mind, when a gracious and appreciative Andersen played Morphy in his sickbed. But that was in the days when men were men and pawns were nothing.) In reality, playing while lying in a rolling hospital bed should be no one's idea of an edge.

Lawrence first met Miles when the Brit changed his national affiliation to qualify, legitimately under the rules then valid, for the US Championship in 1988 and 1989. The other players vying for the championship were a bit apprehensive—Tony was the vanquisher of Karpov, by means of that famous ... a6 London game. The others felt that Tony was in "their" Championship only because of a loophole, that he really didn't reside in the US. Indeed, later the rules for US Championship qualification were significantly toughened. Lawrence was USCF's executive director when Miles played in 1989 Long Beach Championship and remembers one evening in particular. It was the evening of the awards ceremony.

Tony had not vanquished the others. In fact it was an unheralded 20-year-old Stuart Rachels, bottom-rated and seeded into the Championship only because he had won the US Junior, who took the crown, tying with Roman Dzindzichasvili and Yasser Seirawan. (Rachels is the only lowest-rated US Championship competitor ever to win the title.) At the time, Miles still wore his hair long and sported a moustache and close-cropped beard, looking much more like a stage-handsome Shakespearean actor than a chess player. Tony was neither rueful nor ungracious, politely participating in the dinner and awards. He was affable, low-key, witty and open. A member of the organizing team at one extended moment heaped verbal abuse, laced with very non-Shakespearean oaths, on Tony while he was dining in the hotel restaurant. Lawrence, at Tony's table, feared that the scene would turn into a public screaming match, perhaps within ear-shot of media. But Miles, bearing the expression of one looking down from a great height on a confused centipede, remained calm and soft-spoken. In fact, he then took part in the ceremony as if nothing untoward had happened. Lawrence found Tony extremely likable. Both your co-authors will miss you, Tony. May you find peace and beat world champions from every era with ...a6.

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Please email suggestions for future columns and other comments to [AlForChess@aol.com](mailto:AlForChess@aol.com). We enjoy your comments and learn from your criticism.

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