

7. National Master Andrew Sacks Speaks about Jacqueline Piatigorsky

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John Donaldson: Did you have further contact with Mrs. P. throughout the years?

National Master Andrew Sacks: I was very fortunate, yes, to have further contact. It was contact through my association with the Student Chess Club of Los Angeles. Originally, the Herman Steiner Chess Club in 1961, very early '62, since there were a number of junior players, she formed the so-called Steiner Juniors Section. I was a member of it, Peter Rhee, Bruce Antman, a number of other young players. Not Jim Tarjan yet, he came in later. Then the venue changed to Cashio Street for tournaments. The Steiner Juniors metamorphosed into the Student Chess Club of L.A. run by Arthur Drucker. She delegated responsibility to Arthur Drucker. She was also present there, and we would see her there, also later on, much later, when I decided to do some freelance writing and wanted to write some things regarding her, regarding the Student Club, and regarding the first and second Cup, she invited me over to her house more than once. I was there three times, the last time in 2006, and I sat down with her, and she told me stories about the organization of the tournaments and various things like that. And also, of course, I wrote an article called "A Century of Style" about her, and I felt that it was, you know, absolutely imperative that I talk to her about it so it was a purely authorized article.

JD: So this article, "A Century of Style", it was written about her, I take it?

AS: After I wrote it, I brought a copy of it with me, and read her various passages to check, to make sure I was being one-hundred percent faithful to what happened and to, you understand, and yeah. One detail, for example was my understanding of the fact that originally the Cups were planned to be every two years and only eight players, and she said, "Yes, originally. But," she said, "Andy, you have no idea of the enormous amount of work it took." And that's why it took three years to have the second one, and to make a long story short, there were no others. And this was...it was an enormous amount of work. But of course the irony is, it's because she was so active, because she believed that she needed to do everything.

JD: Right, in an essay that Bent Larsen wrote he said that one of her, she had many admirable skills, but delegation was not her strong point.

AS: Nope, she wanted to do it herself.

JD: So, if you were to sum up any particular reason why there wasn't a third Cup, do you think it was mainly just because it was the work load, just a huge amount of work that was entailed? Or it might have been something else that contributed to...

AS: That...well, well, that's a very good question. That's a very good question, and of course for the second Cup, no doubt, there must have been challenges in getting Fischer there. All I know is you know, as they say from the horse's mouth, she said the reason was [that] it was too much work. It was just too much. The fact that there weren't further Cups.

JD: Now, at almost the same time, of course the tournament ends in '66, and I believe the, her association with the Steiner Club ended a couple years after that.

AS: Right, right. Her period of chess philanthropy as, you know, as seriously as they took it, as active as they were, uh, in the late '60s was dissipating, for whatever reasons, and it was not long after that, you know that she got into sculpture, and was converted one of her garages into a studio and was sculpting hours per day and became a fine arts patron in various respects. Right, her, the chess patronage, in the late '60s was waning, right.