

## 1. Jacqueline Learns to Play Chess

*Jump in the Waves* Chapter Nine: "From Withholding to Competing"

Pages 24 - 25

"It is too early," I was told, "she will be in later." So I waited. Every few minutes I asked, "Is Miss Coque here? When will she arrive?" Then she really did arrive. The night nurse greeted her saying, "Jacqueline has been asking for you." Miss Coque smiled and said nothing. I just looked at her and waited. She hung her coat, spoke to the night nurse, read some papers. I started to doubt that she really had something for me. But I thought it was nice to have her around anyhow. When finally we were alone, she came to me, took a chair, and sat near the bed. Then she pulled out of her large pocketbook a small board. She opened the box containing little wooden pieces, placed them on the board, and explained, "This is the king and this is the queen, the knight, the rook, the pawns. Look, this moves this way, that goes there. If you put this here it can take that one off." And suddenly, I found myself moving the pieces, capturing hers, putting them back so they faced each other equally. I played with Miss Coque all day. I could not part with my new game. She was having fun too, which made the game even more thrilling. We played for hours, and suddenly the days went by quickly. I was surprised when I was told one morning, "Today you will get up." I had been in bed for several weeks, and when I stood up my legs buckled under me. But soon strength came back and Miss Coque said, "You won't need me anymore. You're well now." My stomach turned into an empty pit. "You can keep the chess set," she went on. "It's yours. Good-bye, dear, and good luck to you." She left me with Nanny and soon I was thrown back into the old routine.

Yes, the chess set was mine and I treasured it. But it lay dormant in its box. A new life was bubbling in me; I yearned to play but there was no one to play with. One evening my father said, "I'll play you a game." I jumped up to get the set and set up the pieces. "I haven't played for a long time," he said, "but I'll try." After a couple of games, he started playing slowly. It was his move and he was sitting and thinking. He didn't seem able to move. I couldn't understand. I was just pushing pieces and he was suffering. He tapped his fingers on the table, humming some monotonous little rhythm. "Well," I said, "it's your move." I was getting annoyed. He waited still longer, and finally moved. Although he had studied the position for such a long time, he left a knight where it could be taken. I grabbed the knight. "Oh, no. I didn't see it," he said. "I told you I hadn't played in a long time. I can't do it anymore." He got up and left.

I had won. But my father had walked off. He'd turned away from chess, from me. I sat alone in front of the chess board, frustrated, wanting to call him, "Come back! Play some more." But he'd left.

Now chess had become more than a game, more than a companion. It had created an exchange with my father. We had actually competed, and I'd tasted a win. But more important even than the win was my feeling for chess: I loved the game, the pieces, how they moved, the challenge to find the solution to the infinite combinations. I had actually fallen in love.

## **2. Jacqueline Competes in Correspondence Chess Tournaments**

*Jump in the Waves* Chapter 28: "Our First Few Years"

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But my real love was chess. Chess was part of my blood. Of course, in the winter there was no one to play with in Elizabethtown, so through a chess magazine, I started to play by correspondence, entering tournaments in which one played six games at the same time. That was perfect for me. I had a small pocket set which I always carried with me and I studied each position in great depth. Before mailing out a move, I was so anxious not to make an error, that even alone in the woods, my heart was beating hard. I went over each variation again and again. I had to win.

### **3. Jacqueline Meets Herman Steiner, a Future Friend and Coach**

*Jump in the Waves* Chapter 30: "Starting to Achieve"

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When things seemed difficult, chess was always there. I started to solve the weekly problems from the *Los Angeles Times* and sent in the results. The chess editor then was Herman Steiner, who had been the United States champion in 1948. At an auction, Grisha [Gregor Piatigorsky] and I were bidding for a garnet pin, and it turned out that our opponents were Herman and Selma Steiner. We started to talk, and Herman remembered that I had been solving the paper's chess problems. Then he took us to his home where he was running a chess club above the garage. "Sit down and play a game," he offered, and introduced me to a tall young man, a very heavy stutterer. I played and lost. As I got up from the table, Herman Steiner caught me by surprise when he said, "You have just played your first tournament game." Though my mind was far away from tournaments, I remained in this first one. I finished somewhere in the middle, but as I had a natural ability for combinations, I won the brilliancy prize.

#### **4. Jacqueline Participates in her First Women's United States Chess Championship**

*Jump in the Waves* Chapter 30: "Starting to Achieve"

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I started to study with Herman Steiner and spent many hours trying to improve my game. One day he told me that he had recommended that I be invited to play in the Women's U.S. Invitational National Championship. It was played in the Manhattan Chess Club in New York. Losing my first game was so traumatic that I wanted to thrash, beat, slash again. But there was nothing to slash. I had to be polite. So I left the club in Greenwich Village in the middle of the night, walked back alone to the Windsor Hotel on 58th Street. I didn't win the championship, but I held my own. So without realizing it, I had become one of the ten best women players in the United States. It did not mean enough to me. I hadn't won the tournament. I kept playing for the next three years.

## 5. Jacqueline Participates in the First Women's Chess Olympiad

*Jump in the Waves* Chapter 30: "Starting to Achieve"

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In 1954, the first Women's Chess Olympics was held in Emmen, Holland. United States champion, Gisella Gresser and I were the two representatives of our country. I was playing second board. There were twenty-six nations competing. Through our first tournament, we were divided into three groups. Mrs. Gresser and I landed in the second group, which we won, finishing eleventh. Mrs. Gresser left before the closing ceremony and I had to go up to receive the trophy. Everyone before me had made nice speeches, but when my turn came, I was totally unprepared. I froze. Searching for something to say, I hesitated for a moment, a long torturous moment. Then, too afraid to say something wrong, I walked off the stage without a word.

After playing in the first Chess Olympics, I came back to a normal life. I was still participating in tournaments, though I hated the pressure. Competitive chess is tiring beyond belief. It is always played at night, and at that time, in a room full of smoke. An average tournament game lasts four hours. I was immensely nervous before starting. In a game, from the first move on, tension mounts and keeps accumulating with no outlet. Sometimes, out of exhaustion, it's easy to make a weak move or blunder a minute or two before the end of the game, throwing away four hours of concentrated effort.

Chess is highly obsessional, compulsive, so after every game, the rest of the night is spent going over variations. Sometimes the game is not finished in four hours. After adjournment the position really needs studying, but if one stays up all night, it is even harder to be alert the next day. Some players have a second to help them study the adjourned position. I kept saying, "I hate tournaments. I will give them up. But how can I give up if I have not won the U.S. title?"

"If you win the U.S. you will want to go to the Interzonal and compete for the world championship," my husband said. "Oh, no," I answered. Somehow I was caught by surprise. It had never entered my head. Why hadn't I thought of it? Was it so different to be half a point behind the U.S. champion, or be Champion behind the World Champion? Was it just a title that I was after or was there a deeper meaning to my dreams?

Suddenly, winning the U.S. championship seemed a little less important. But I wasn't ready to give up.

A few years later, when my children were both away, and Grisha was starting to age, I did quit tournament chess. I was still roaming around the world with a distorted perspective, crushed by meaningless losses or over-elated by meaningless wins. I had played since I was six years old. Chess had an obsessional grip on me. Chess was my friend, my support. Chess was a refuge from unfairness. It had become part of my blood. Still today, when I am exhausted and sad, and hope disappears, my natural impulse is to flop in front of a chess board and start pushing pieces. Variations take form, rush forward, retreat, attack, defend. No, an error, try again. Interest and vitality, reborn, flow into combinations, soon become storms, a typhoon in a

teacup. It is ironic that chess and its combinations which are so sterile, also awake a passion, bring life. On the little board, pieces grow and shrink like birds in a muddy marsh.

## **6. Introduction to the Interviews in the Audio Tour**

Biography of International Master (IM) John Donaldson, chess historian and interviewer for the audio tour

John Donaldson has served as the Director of the Mechanics' Institute Chess Club of San Francisco since 1998 and worked for Yasser Seirawan's magazine, *Inside Chess* from 1988 to 2000. He has held the title of International Master since 1983 and has two norms for the Grandmaster title, but is proudest of captaining the U.S. national team on 15 occasions winning two gold, three silver and four bronze medals. Donaldson has authored over thirty books on the game including a two-volume work on Akiva Rubinstein with International Master Nikolay Minev. John, a chess historian, interviews the participants the audio tour for *Jacqueline Piatigorsky: Patron, Player, Pioneer*.



## 7. National Master Andrew Sacks Speaks about Jacqueline Piatigorsky

Recorded September 11, 2013

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.

## 8. Grandmaster James Tarjan Shares his Memories of Jacqueline Piatigorsky

Recorded: September 13, 2013

Grandmaster James Tarjan was the star pupil of the Student Chess Club of Los Angeles, one of the first juniors-only chess clubs in the United States, which the Piatigorsky Foundation ran through the Steiner Chess Club. He participated on five U.S. Chess Olympiad teams, earning four team and three individual medals. Tarjan's career record of 38½ points from 51 games, 75.5 percent in Olympiads, is one of the very best ever achieved by an American player. Here, he shares his memories of Jacqueline Piatigorsky, and her efforts in promoting chess among young players.

John Donaldson: Mrs. P., if I'm not mistaken, she arranged a match for you to play with Walter Browne, maybe like around '67, '68?

JT: I think I was, I'm remembering I was sixteen, so that was probably late in '68 or early in '69, that's correct. Yeah, that was another event, Walter... Walter had actually, we had flown together from New York after one of those U.S. Junior Championships, I think [it was] a year he won, and he said, "Well, I want to move to California [and] he got a ticket on the same plane with me, and we flew back and he spent the night with my parents and then my mom drove him down to Santa Monica, and he got a room and he lived in L.A. there for, I don't know, a year or two, before he moved to Berkeley, playing in the tournaments and stuff in L.A. so that's absolutely right, Mrs. P. arranged a match between the two of us, six game match.

JD: So, really pretty much all your, a lot of your early che- important tournaments were events that were affiliated, as you said, I mean the ... California Junior Championship you won, and then all these U.S. Junior Closed that you played in, and also this match with Walter Browne, but it seems to me that your involvement with, your interaction with her didn't end at that point. It continued on, didn't it?

JT: What are you think- well, I'm not sure, what are you thinking of?

JD: I was thinking that she provided some support in the... I want to say in the early 1980s, I think maybe when you played in the Interzonal, or maybe it was after that in the, 'cause that would have been '79, but after that -

JT: I think in those years, again this is all sort of... She didn't need to be known for these things, but the gossip around at the time, was that she was supporting a number of things, the Closed U.S. Championships, maybe not singly, but importantly. I wouldn't be surprised [if she supported] an event that doesn't exist anymore, the Student Olympiads.

JD: Yes, she also supported that.

JT: The Student Olympiads. Sending the U.S. team there is a chunk of change. You probably could find this out in your records, so I was playing in both those events, while [she] was involved. The U.S. Olympic teams, probably... starting in - when was my first one was seventy...

JD: You played in '76, but did you play in '74?

JT: In '74, yeah. Gold medal on the second reserve.

JD: You had phenomenal results. I think your lifetime winning percentage is one of the top three or four players ever for the U.S.

JT: So, yeah, she was supporting all that U.S. Master stuff behind the scenes. That was the time I was playing in those events, absolutely. I also played [when the] Student Club [of Los Angeles] had entered a team. This is an institution that has come back with the Chess League now. They're playing by computer, I suppose now, between cities, but in those days there were city leagues, right? And there was a league, the chess clubs playing each other in the L.A. area, and we had - I'm not sure that that really required a backer to get that going, but I certainly played on the Student Club for a couple of years. It was fun, we had a team, and we were winning. We won a couple of times, you know by- there wasn't, there were a lot of good players after a few years in that Student Club, and we were beating up on our elders.

JD: If I'm not mistaken, Alan Pollard, and Kim Commons, and Jeff Kent, I think those were all fellow members of that club.

JT: It went on, the club went on past that Cashio location, for quite a number of years, but I left L.A. in '70 or '71 and moved to Berkeley, so my involvement with the L.A. chess scene was less after I moved out of town, of course.

JD: Now, when you first saw Mrs. Piatigorsky and you went to the Steiner Club, you mentioned you were just in your early teens and you know, you were just a young boy, but later as you got older, did you get to know her better any, did you maybe by the - sometime in the 1970s you might have crossed paths? Did you ever have a chance to talk to her when you were an adult?

JT: You know, once or twice, I remember a dinner, or an event lunch, like going over to her place in west L.A. there in Brentwood, with Arthur [Drucker] and Pal Benko, and looking at her sculptures and so forth. I must have been older at that point. She was always, you know, a very courteous, person. You know, obviously she loved chess, and that was kind of that.

## 9. Arthur Drucker Reminisces about the Piatigorsky Foundation

Recorded: September 13, 2013

Arthur Drucker was the perfect right hand man for Jacqueline Piatigorsky when she founded the Piatigorsky Foundation to promote chess. A school teacher in a tough inner city school in Los Angeles, as well as an expert-rated player, and finalist in the 1956 U.S. Olympic weightlifting trials, Drucker was a man of many talents who worked well with Jacqueline. He helped her realize many of her ideas, including bringing chess to underserved youth and people with physical disabilities. Drucker reflects upon Jacqueline Piatigorsky and the pioneering activities of the Piatigorsky Foundation.

John Donaldson: When was the first time that you met Mrs. Piatigorsky?

Arthur Drucker: I would say in about '63, at the Steiner Chess Club on Cashio.

JD: And, at that time, were you involved with her activities, or did that come later?

AD: That came - when I first met her I was not involved with her activities. I was a junior high school teacher in South Central Los Angeles at an all-black school.

JD: So if I understand it then, you really started working for her in 1966 about the time of the—

AD: Right after the Piatigorsky Cup, yes.

JD: Were you at that Piatigorsky Cup tournament?

AD: I was at every round, helping out with everything, etc. I didn't do wall-boy stuff, that was [what] the juniors did, but I helped out in many ways at the Second Cup.

JD: Did you have any interaction with any of the players?

AD: Not much, no.

JD: Do you remember like funny incidents, anything of that nature?

AD: Yes, a very funny incident was [Wolfgang] Unzicker- someone approached him while he was at a urinal and asked about his position, and he, with his German accent says, "Now you ask me about my position?"

JD: That's funny. Nowadays, we would be concerned about using electronic devices in the men's room. But ... at the urinal, that is a pretty funny thing.

AD: Right, there was no such thing. And another thing is people would hide a book somewhere, you know. There was no electronic way to cheat.

JD: Right, it was a different time. Now, by chance, were you at the reception that they had at the Piatigorskys where all the players went to her home?

AD: No, I wasn't. I don't remember being there. I might have been there. Now that I think about it, I might have been there, but I don't remember anything about it.

JD: Do you remember anything about Bobby, concerning the tournament?

AD: No, I really don't. Bobby gave an exhibition at the Student Club once, and we had a player named Bruce Antman, and he just liked the name.

JD: Right, Bruce Antman. I remember reading about that talk Bobby gave at the [Steiner Chess Club] for the best junior players, in which he discussed openings there with them. Do you remember anything about the people that were there by any chance? So Antman was definitely there, for one.

AD: Antman was there, [James] Tarjan, I think Andy Sacks, Peter Rhee, Roger Neustaedter, Rick Melniker, all the regulars from the Student Club, you know.

JD: And did you - I remember reading an account of Fischer's stay at the Piatigorsky Cup in '66 and he really liked the Miramar Hotel. I mean he really liked it, so much that he stayed a couple weeks after the tournament on the Piatigorskys' tab and they almost had to force him out of the hotel. Do you recall?

AD: I heard that. I don't know anything about it, I heard that. But I didn't know anything about it.

JD: Now, after the Piatigorsky Cup had finished, and you started working for Mrs. P., you were essentially sort of like her right hand man, is that correct?

AD: That's correct. Here are the things I did. I ran the Student Club every Saturday and then on Sunday I would come into the office at her home. I had my own office there and I would take care of whatever had to be done. We'd have a discussion about what's going on, if there was anything scholastically that had to be done, she'd tell me about it, or I would tell her about it. We'd discuss it. I ran the high school championship every year. I ran the junior high school championship every year, always saw the thing. At that time we weren't running an elementary school championship. I know now it's popular.

JD: What sort of attendance did you get for the final tournament for those events, you know, the championships?

AD: You might get fifty people in the high school championship, or maybe a little more. You might get that.

JD: I remember reading some account from your notes that you got like a couple hundred people for some of the finals.

AD: Yes, we did. We had this tournament that was L.A. City School tournament, where we'd have a high school section and a junior high school and an elementary school section all at the same day. They were held at Grant - Birmingham High School. Those were held at Birmingham High School. Before that we had some tournaments at L.A. High. We had the Tournament of Champions at L.A. High, we had the U.S. California Junior Championship at Los Angeles High School.

JD: Right, it was quite impressive. I mean, nowadays of course, scholastic chess is booming, but you know, going back close to fifty years, those numbers were huge. In addition to her scholastic programs, that Mrs. Piatigorsky organized, she also was sponsoring a lot of different programs and I noticed one of the things that she really was pretty much the founder of was the U.S. Junior Closed. Do you remember anything about what caused her to jump in on that?

AD: I think they might have asked her to come in on that. I started doing that right after she started doing that. You know what I'm saying? I started working for her right after it started. It was a strong tournament, every year it was a strong tournament. So many of the people became Grandmasters, Ken Rogoff, Sal Matera, Jim Tarjan, on, and on, and on.

JD: Yes, yes. And then besides the U.S. Junior Closed, she was also sponsoring - I mean, with other contributors - to the U.S. Championship, to the U.S. Women's Championship, student teams that would play in the Student Olympiads, representatives that would play in the World Junior, you know, it seemed like there was no end to what she was willing to support.

AD: She was, right, she was giving an awful lot of support to chess.

JD: And my understanding is that her support was not confined to just formal tournaments, but that she would also answer individual requests. Is that true? People would write to you and say, "I need money to go to - my high school wants to go to the High School National Championship, and we need help-"

AD: Yeah, there was some of that. It wasn't that extensive, I don't think. Yes, she supported a lot of chess, you know. I don't know what to say. For me, money was always an object, but for her, of course, money was no object. We didn't grow up like she did.

JD: Right. When you would meet with her on Sundays, it sounds like she wasn't only providing financial support; she was really interested in the different programs that she was supporting.

AD: Mmhm, she was.

JD: And everything I've heard about her involvement with the Piatigorsky Cups suggests that she was very much a perfectionist. Would you describe her as such?

AD: Yes, she definitely was. She was trying, I mean - if you're working in stone, it's a sculpture. You have to be a perfectionist because you can't make mistakes. Once you cut something away, it's gone.

JD: So in some ways, that was the perfect segue for her from chess to sculpting.

AD: Yes, she absolutely loved sculpting. She sculpted until she died.

JD: Now, do you know about her relationship with Sammy Reshevsky? In her records that we found, she had corresponded with him extensively and she would send him her game scores for him to analyze. Do you know what, anything about that?

AD: That was before we, that was when she was more serious in chess.

JD: I'm trying to think of that time period, but you're probably right. Do you remember anything about the organization of the tournament in 1968 that was involving [Vlastimil] Hort, [Leonid] Stein, and [Samuel] Reshevsky?

AD: Stein... Hmm... Yeah, I remember it was at the Steiner Club. There was another tournament, it was at '68. I'm thinking about this. There was a tournament being held in Eagle Rock or something like that.

JD: That was in '74, that was a different tournament.

AD: Right, right, right, okay.

JD: Now, Mrs. Piatigorsky around the period around 1966, would you see her around the Steiner Club regularly, or did she only go in on the rare occasion?

AD: A few times a month.

JD: Gotcha, gotcha.

AD: She wasn't there all the time when I was there. I was a regular member of the Steiner Club and I was there nearly every night.



## 10. International Master Anthony Saidy Shares Memories of the Steiner Chess Club

Recorded: September 12, 2013

International Master Anthony Saidy played in numerous U.S. Championships and authored the book *The Battle of Chess Ideas*. He shared his memories of legendary player Bobby Fischer in the 2011 documentary *Bobby Fischer Against the World*. Here, he reflects upon the legacy of the Piatigorsky Cups and the Steiner Chess Club.

John Donaldson: When did you first join the Steiner Chess Club and what is your initial memory of Mrs. Piatigorsky?

International Master Anthony Saidy: I came to Los Angeles in the middle of 1962 in order to become a medical intern, and contrary to the conventional wisdom, I didn't stick to medicine. I had to play some chess, and there was the Steiner Chess Club Championship that year, and for sure, I had to take part in it. My patients had to wait until the game was over, until I got back to the hospital in West L.A. I don't think I formally joined the club but I played in the Club Championship.

JD: And, if I'm not mistaken, you also won the Club Championship?

AS: Yes, I did. Undefeated.

JD: So, is that the first time you had seen Mrs. Piatigorsky, or you had seen her earlier when you were living in New York, and she had been out there to play in one of the Women's Championships or some other event?

AS: I may have met her at a U.S. Open, but I don't remember.

JD: You definitely got to know her when you were out in Los Angeles?

AS: Yes.

JD: In fact, if I'm not mistaken, you were a guest at her home on several occasions?

AS: That's correct. I had that pleasure.

JD: And did you remember anything about those meetings in her home? Did you give her lessons, were they parties, were they recitals of Gregor's? What exactly brought you to her - ?

AS: I think there was a reception for the participants in the second Piatigorsky Cup. I don't remember any music. My memory's a little vague, but I do remember the home on South Bundy Drive quite well, and I remember Gregor Piatigorsky and his scintillating personality.

JD: Now, if they're one and the same, the reception for the players was the - there's that famous cover of either *Chess Life* or *Chess Review* where [Bobby] Fischer is across the board from [Wolfgang] Unzicker, and they're replaying a game, and on their shoulders, taking in the surroundings are some of the other participants from the event. I think [Lajos] Portisch is one of them. But I'm curious, it sounds like those were the same events. There's always that famous blitz game that was played between Bobby Fischer and Bent Larsen that's given in *60 Memorable Games*, the one where it's Alekhine's Defense, and Fischer plays after Knight d7 he plays Knight takes f7. He actually goes for it instead of playing like [Mikhail] Tal did against Larsen, chickening out with Knight d7. I'm curious, by any chance was that blitz game played at that party?

AS: This I cannot confirm. In fact this particular party is muddled in my mind with a separate party that my friend, Sy Gomberg and his wife organized in Brentwood for the players, not being chess fans at all, but being great supporters of international peace and cooperation. That party I really remember better.

JD: And were pretty much all the participants for the event there or was it more like the western European players?

AS: I think most of the participants were there. I don't think Fischer was there. I think everybody was relaxed and having a good time, in an upscale West Los Angeles home with a swimming pool and Hollywood vibes, pictures of stars on the wall, reminiscences about the heyday, the Golden Age of Hollywood, stuff like that.

JD: Now when you played at the Steiner Club, and you were winning the Club Championship, do you have any memories of that, what that was like on the inside of it, I mean how it was furnished, how large it was, that sort of thing?

AS: Well, it was commodious. It was unlike the chess clubs in New York, which by comparison were cramped, and were not spick and span the way the Steiner Chess Club was. It was in a residential neighborhood. Different world from New York.

JD: And, did you happen to see who was the driving force behind it? Was Mrs. P. at the club the times when you were playing the Club Championship, or was she sort of behind the scenes?

AS: Mrs. P. was not a noisy, boisterous person. She had a way of organizing things, and getting things right without making a fuss. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised to see her picking up lint from the carpet, just so things looked right.

JD: So she was a real perfectionist?

AS: I would say so, yes.

JD: Now, when they had the tournament, the first Piatigorsky Cup in 1963, did you have anything to do with that tournament? Were you in Los Angeles at the time?

AS: I was out of the country at the time, so I really had no connection with that tournament. The second Cup was very important in my personal development because I was toying with the idea of being a chess professional, and here was these professionals doing their thing, and I was torn between devoting myself to medicine and my true love, which was chess.

JD: And did you get to attend a lot of the rounds for that tournament? Because I remember that you were battling for first place for much of the U.S. Open in Seattle, and those two tournaments overlapped.

AS: Did they overlap? Wait a second. They literally overlapped in time, did they?

JD: I have to check on that. If they didn't overlap, they were in extremely close proximity, but something makes me think that they might have overlapped for a brief period.

AS: Well certainly I was there for the first round of the U.S. Open in Seattle. I only visited the Piatigorsky Cup for a few days with my then wife, who had Russian descent and therefore had a natural affinity for most chess players.

JD: Now, during that '66 event, I know that you were a very good friend of Bobby Fischer's. You kind of were almost like an older brother to him growing up, and you had actually accompanied him as a second or like a guardian at some events. I think one was, was it Zurich 1960, was it that you accompanied him?

AS: '59, yeah.

JD: '59. So, you know, you guys knew each other quite well, you'd played in many events. Did you have any dealings with him during the 1966 tournament by any chance?

AS: Well, that was one of our periods of estrangement. We were not in touch from 1959 to around 1970. So, no.

JD: Woah. So you're saying that for all fans of *Bobby Fischer vs. the World* that from 1959 to 1970, you and Bobby exchanged very few words, you met over the board, but other than that, you had little contact, and it was only like from 1970 that you renewed your friendship, and that you performed your fireman of the century award, making sure that Bobby would make his way to Reykjavik.

AS: Can that be a formal award in red?

JD: It should be, you know chess players all around the world owe you a huge amount for that. If you hadn't been around, Bobby probably would have never got on that plane.

AS: I thank you for recognizing that.

JD: So that's interesting. So you didn't really have any contact with him in '66.

AS: Well we played in the U.S. Championships several times. We were proper with each other, but we were no longer buddy-buddies during that time.

JD: So, what brought about the sort of reconciliation, if you will?

AS: I think it was a gradual thing.

JD: Was he spending more time on the West Coast maybe by that point?

AS: Yes, he was in Pasadena when he was getting ready to play matches to become the World Champion and, of course, I wanted him to be the World Champion in the worst way.

JD: Well, you did everything you could to make it possible, there's no question about that. Now, during the '66 event did you maybe by chance have contact with some of the other players that played? I mean, you mentioned the one party that your friend hosted, so you had a chance to meet with them. Can you say something perhaps about some of the other people that participated in that event? The ones that were better known to you.

AS: I was close to Bent Larsen, because we had met at various chess events, and when his sister came to the United States, my family sponsored her, that was some formality at that time. Now, I think they, the United States wants to get all the Danes that it can, they don't want me to sponsor Pakistanis for example, but that was one relationship we had. And [Boris] Ivkov was to become a good buddy of mine in the future, played me over the board a few times. Boris Spassky was a very affable fellow, and easy to befriend. And I played him in the Soviet Union in our one game after he'd lost the title. We were pretty close, and he was pretty frank about the Soviet system. I don't think I could call [Tigran] Petrosian a friend. I do remember that after I lost a game to him in San Antonio, his wife came up to me and said, "You overlooked Bd3, yes?" But when I asked Petrosian where I'd gone wrong in the game, he said, "I'll tell you mañana [tomorrow]." Mañana never came on that. I didn't have the pleasure of knowing [Miguel] Najdorf. I met him once, he was certainly an ebullient character and lots of fun. Sammy Reshevsky- you could meet Sammy I would say, twenty times, and not be his buddy. And that was about the situation with me. Let's see, [Wolfgang] Unzicker...I played him once. He offered me a draw, and I respectfully declined and I won the game. Uh, but we were not conversing. I don't think his English was very good. He spoke Russian. Let's see... Jan Hein Donner I didn't know. So that, [Lajos] Portisch I barely knew. He was too correct to be a drinking pal or anything like that. So that covers them.

JD: It does. Now, Mrs. Piatigorsky, besides being involved with the Steiner Club or organizing the two great tournaments, she also had a lot of other activities, chess related, that she was

involved with: her programs for disadvantaged youth, her chess for the blind, and what have you. Were you involved with any of those programs?

AS: No, I wasn't. I was still trying to pursue a medical career very seriously. Still torn between two careers.

JD: But I think you still found time to like give simulms for like the Steiner Juniors, that sort of thing, I believe.

AS: I didn't give any simulms at the Steiner Club. I gave one at the Santa Monica Bay Chess Club, one or two. I don't remember, but my best memory of the Piatigorskys - the happiest one - was when Gregor invited me to a lecture he gave at U.S.C. on music. And at the close of the lecture, a student stood up and said, "Maestro, don't you think that playing the beautiful heart of music for a filthy dollar is a form of prostitution?" And Piatigorsky immediately said, "But every prostitute is different!"

JD: I see, I see. So he had a good sense of humor.

AS: I think so. He was pretty much in contrast to his wife, who always seemed to be serious and a little uptight. She was such a stickler for proper detail, and that's of course the reason why her tournaments were so well-organized and went on so well.

JD: Now, did you ever have occasion to play Jacqueline in any tournaments?

AS: No, I did not. Let me ask you a question. Why was there no third Piatigorsky Cup?

JD: You know, that's a very good question. In the course of doing some interviews, and doing some research, I've received some contradictory information. One is that, you know, when you look back in time at the tournaments, it seems like everything was very orderly, that the events were planned out in advance, everything went according to plan, and nothing deviated from the original schematic. That really wasn't in fact the case. There were a lot of hiccups along the way. Even the number of participants for the two tournaments, both changed along the way, with the fields getting larger rather than smaller. And part of that was because of uncertainty about whether they would have the Soviet participation.

In Dallas '57, which was really quite a great tournament, with eight-player double-round robin, the problem there was they just couldn't get the Soviets. And so Mrs. P. had the advantage, she had the connections - not just through other individuals, but even in her family - Gregor, he lobbied for the participation of [Tigran] Petrosian when he made a visit to the Soviet Union, I think to judge a Tchaikovsky competition. So she had that plus, but, that said, the tournaments never quite - they were never as smooth as they looked - on the inside, they were never as smooth as they looked on the outside and there was a lot of work involved.

One of the people that was a friend of hers that was involved in the organization, he said that she just got tired of running the tournament. Just so many details. And in part, it was probably a combination of the fact that she was a real perfectionist and wanted everything to be just so, and on the other hand, the tournaments might have continued longer if she was willing to delegate more. But that wasn't her personality. You know, she was willing to delegate under certain circumstances, but she wanted things to just be so, and she knew that if she did them herself, they were going to get done to her standards. So that was part of it.

I think another factor that could have contributed to the tournaments not being held any longer was that she was starting to shift some of her interests and by the early 1970s she was playing a lot less chess. She had stopped playing in U.S. Championships around mid-60s. And I think that had happened when she had finished second in the U.S. Women's Championship, and she just got within like three or four points of the rate of 2000 and then her subsequent results brought her back down. I think for a lot of chess players, you climb the mountain, you're within a few inches of the top, and then to fall back down, it's hard to start climbing up again. So I think those are definitely factors. You know, she was going a different direction, you know, difficulty organizing the tournament. I think also another factor might have been that Bobby was on his World Championship run, and pretty much any tournament that was organized at that time would have been second fiddle to his march through the Candidates Matches. So it wouldn't have had quite the luster that it had had previously. And assuming that they had been in three year cycles, '69 would have been the next one, so that would have been a little bit pre-Fischer run. So, you know, it's still conceivable it could have happened, but—

AS: Well that's certainly a good summary of all the reasons.

JD: Well, it is, but there's one other one. And of course that's always the one that would suggest that the players perhaps didn't enjoy, show their appreciation for the tournaments as much as they can. That was one of the arguments I heard initially, but after hearing a lot of interviews and doing a lot of reading, it seems like everyone remembers what a wonderful time they had there and how much they appreciated it, so I tend to think it was other factors. And these sort of tournaments, two big tournaments like that, it's spending close to a million dollars, it's—

AS: Well, I do remember from the tournament book that the acceptance of Spassky and Petrosian was only received in person by Gregor Piatigorsky in Moscow when he was on a tour. The Soviets could keep you guessing until the last minute. I personally experienced that very behavior, when I organized a reception for the Bolshoi Ballet at Cornell Medical School around 1959, and two weeks after the invitation was extended we got an answer on the eve of the date of the event and we had to scramble to get the supplies. So they keep their options open.

## **11. National Master Andrew Sacks Speaks about the Herman Steiner Chess Club**

Recorded: September 12, 2013

National Master Andrew Sacks was involved with both the Piatigorsky Foundation and the Steiner Chess Club as a player, writer, and helper. Mr. Sacks served as one of the wall-boys for the 1963 Piatigorsky Cup while in his teens, and has written several articles about his experiences at this event and the Steiner Chess Club at [www.chessdryad.com](http://www.chessdryad.com).

John Donaldson: When did you first join the Steiner Chess Club?

National Master Andrew Sacks: I first joined the Steiner Chess Club in 1961, when I was thirteen years old. It was then located on Beverly Boulevard in West Hollywood.

JD: Do you remember what it was like when you went into the Club? What was it - do you have any recollections of what it was like in the building itself?

AS: Yes, definitely. It was a converted apartment. You know the term duplex, well it was a fourplex - two apartment units downstairs, two apartment units upstairs. And the one on the west side upstairs was converted into the Herman Steiner Chess Club.

JD: And was this Mrs. Piatigorsky's doing, that they got this space?

AS: Very good question. The Steiner Club had had two or three locations before that. I don't know how it happened that that location was secured. I don't know that.

JD: And was that location used for example, for any of the [Bobby] Fischer - [Samuel] Reshevsky match games?

AS: No, it wasn't. You see, because it was a relatively large apartment with various rooms, it was certainly not capable of housing either a tournament that had eighty or a hundred players or comfortably a high-level tournament. So that's why also in 1961, coincidentally the year that I first got there, they opened the Cashio Street larger venue, and that's where the games from the Fischer - Reshevsky match were held.

JD: If I understand correctly, getting that property was Mrs. P's doing.

AS: Oh, totally. It was designed, yes. Lloyd Wright, that is, Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr.'s son, also a noted architect, was commissioned by the Piatigorskys to design that Cashio Street location.

JD: And what was that Club like, I mean, in terms of rough square footage, how would you describe it approximately?

AS: The Cashio Street, very interesting design of the interior of the building. It went, you walked in, there was a very large room, however it was relatively narrow, but long and it was slanted so

one walked up slightly as one walked to the back, where there was a sliding glass door and a patio. That patio was designed for - I don't know if it was designed for anything else - but during the games of the Fischer - Reshevsky match in L.A. and I was present at one of them, that's where Irving Rivise and others set up to do their analysis, that outside room, that patio.

JD: Well, it was good that they played that match in the summer. If they had done it in the winter, it may not have been an ideal space for—

AS: Right, and it was a covered patio, outside.

JD: So, in the main club property interior, it had room for maybe about a hundred people, would you say?

AS: Which property, the original?

JD: The one on Cashio.

AS: The one on Cashio could certainly hold a tournament with a hundred people. One hundred players, certainly. And I think that was the main impetus in opening it, because the Cashio Street location was much more suited to a large tournament. It was virtually impossible to have a large tournament at the Beverly Boulevard location. Now, by the way, when the Cashio Street location opened, the other location on Beverly Boulevard still continued and that was open for at least several years afterwards as well.

JD: So was it a situation where the Beverly one was used for sort of day-to-day activities and the one on Cashio was for special events?

AS: That is exactly correct.

JD: So the Fischer - Reshevsky match, that was sort of the christening of the club on Cashio.

AS: Definitely.

JD: And then, probably the second big event was the '62 U.S. Championship Playoff for the Interzonal spot between Reshevsky and [William] Addison.

AS: That is also true. The only thing I do not recall was, in '62, they also held the California Junior Championship there in which I played. The only question is which one preceded? In other words, was the Cal. Junior second or was the Playoffs second? But those were the first three major events held at Cashio Street, right.

JD: Now, talking more about the club. What was Mrs. P's involvement? Was it on a day-to-day basis or was it more—



AS: Yes, her involvement was surprisingly active. She was a figure one saw there weekly. I mean, it would have been very rare to go two or three weeks at the Beverly Boulevard location without seeing Mrs. P. there. She was actively involved.

JD: Now was she there primarily as a player or was she there as an administrator, or a little bit of both?

AS: Well, it was a little bit of both. I would say it was primarily as administrator. She had a gentleman chess player named Nathan Robinson who was a class player, who was managing the Beverly Boulevard club, but she was there. She was active. She was advising him. She was a presence always at Beverly Boulevard.

JD: Was George Goehler by any chance, involved with that club, or was that at a prior location?

AS: Exactly, that is a very interesting question. That gentleman I met later. I met him at the first [Piatigorsky] Cup tournament. No, he was not a visible presence at Beverly Boulevard, although all the word is that he had been at previous location or two.

JD: Were you present at any of the [Bobby] Fischer – [Samuel] Reshevsky match games?

AS: One of them.

JD: What sort of turnout did they generate?

AS: Very good turnout, it was practically full. I don't remember which match game it was that I attended. It was a drawn game. In the patio area, there were figures like Carl Pilnick, Irving Rivise, [and] Jack Moskowitz doing the analysis. It was very crowded. It was very full.

JD: And, moving on a little bit, now moving to '63, we come to the first Piatigorsky Cup, and if I'm correct, you served as a wall-boy there.

AS: Correct.

JD: It seems like Mrs. P. attended to every single detail. Is it really true that she bought all of you suits for the event?

AS: Yep, we wore blazers. She furnished us with our attire. She invited us to her house. Gregor played the cello. I cannot tell you how down to earth and friendly both of the Piatigorskys were to the junior players. Not only furnishing us with the professional attire, inviting us over to the house before the tournament started. She was so active in the first Cup doing tasks that from the outside one would think were too menial. Why would a millionairess, a Rothschild do such a thing? We had to arrive early, at least an hour before the games started. She was always there already. One time we saw her borrow from one of their janitorial staff a hand-vacuum, and Mrs.

Piatigorsky, who didn't think the janitorial staff had done quite as good a job as they should have, literally took a hand-vacuum and did some work to make things just perfect. Remarkable!

JD: Yeah, it really is remarkable. You wouldn't hear of too many patrons using a vacuum cleaner to touch everything up.

AS: Incredible! It was like nothing was beyond her. She wanted everything to be perfect, and if it took her to do it, she would simply do it. Unbelievable, but true.

JD: Now during the rounds as a wall-boy, what were your responsibilities?

AS: There was not the electronic assistance they had at the second Cup. Our responsibilities were to (each one of us was assigned to a board) write down all the moves and then at the big demonstration board behind us, make that move.

JD: Were there clocks that showed the spectators the time that had elapsed for each player?

AS: No, not at the first one. Not at the first Cup. There was electronic advancement in ways like that at the second Cup.

JD: So the spectators for the first one, they just had to observe the clock that was on the stage, and gauge the time from that.

AS: Right, if they could see it, but they did see the games progressing on large wall boards, demonstration boards.

JD: Now what was the mechanism to get the moves from those wall boards and from the playing hall to the commentary room?

AS: That was done by one or two of the wall-boys. There was something. I'd have to check. There were more wall-boys than there were games in progress because there were something like ten to twelve wall-boys; however, there were eight players, so only four games at a time. Therefore, each round, several were assigned to duties such as that.

JD: And my impression is, looking at the list of the names of some of the people I had heard of, the wall-boys, it was some of the stronger juniors who were members of the Steiner Chess Club.

AS: Correct. That's absolutely correct.

JD: Now during the course of the tournament, you were sitting there as a wall-boy and you were observing the games. Did you happen to see any interesting situations develop that you might recall and share with us?

AS: Oh, definitely. One day, I think it might have been a weekend day, like a Saturday, maybe a Sunday, again we had to get there early, and my parents would drop me off. I mean these wall-boys, almost all of them, well I shouldn't say almost all, many of them could not drive yet. I was fifteen years old. My parents would drop me off a couple of hours early. One weekend day we saw [Miguel] Najdorf playing speed chess with [Tigran] Petrosian before the game, and [Paul] Keres was there, in a very jovial manner and after the game, their fingers are flying around the board without the pieces, showing, "If this, then this. If this, then that." And we were just, you know, dumbfounded, because of course, they could play blindfold chess, and of course we might have been strong junior players of 1800- or 1900 strength, but it was remarkable to us. That was one of the most memorable anecdotes, seeing Najdorf play a couple of five-minute games with Petrosian. And everyone, all of those players, was in the best possible mood. They were friendly to one another. They were happy. They were jovial.

JD: Now, you as a wall-boy, did you any contact with any of the players? Did they ever ask you for anything, or did they acknowledge your presence in some fashion?

AS: They didn't acknowledge our presence in too many fashions, but after the tournament, there was a gathering both of the wall-boys and the players at the Piatigorskys' house on Bundy Drive, and then there was a little bit of interplay if the kids had the nerve, you understand, to approach them, as some of us did, and we got their autographs and all of that. That was the main interplay. Oh! I can provide another anecdote. Samuel Reshevsky was playing. Samuel Reshevsky was an Orthodox Jew. There was a particular Saturday when he needed several young boys to help him participate in a ritual that he performed just before sundown. I was one of those boys who went there, because - I forget the exact term that Orthodox Jews have for that - there has to be a certain number present, a certain number of Jewish pres—

JD: A minyan perhaps.

AS: A minyan! Exactly. A minyan. And there has to be a certain number of Jewish boys present. And I was one who was at that relatively brief, but highly serious ceremony. That was very interesting. The man took his religion as seriously as anyone could take any religion.

## 12. International Master Jeremy Silman Reads a Passage from Pal Benko: My Life, Games, and Compositions

Recorded: September 10, 2013

International Master Jeremy Silman has won many important tournaments including the U.S., American, and National Opens but it is as a teacher and writer that he is best known. His most important work, *How to Reassess Your Chess*, has gone through four editions and sold over 100,000 copies making it one of the best-selling chess books of all time. Silman reads passages from his book *Pal Benko: My Life, Games, and Composition* which recount Benko's participation in the 1963 Piatigorsky Cup.

Though working on Wall Street guaranteed me security, I didn't like getting up every day at a specific time and much preferred the freedom of a chessplayer's life. Since I now had some money in the bank and was comfortably situated in my new country, I quit my job and became the only professional chessplayer (along with Fischer) in the United States.

With super-tournaments like Stockholm and Curaçao behind me, I didn't expect to participate in another such event for a long time to come. Imagine my delight when I was invited to the first Piatigorsky Cup in Los Angeles, a tournament sponsored by the world-famous cellist Gregor Piatigorsky and his wife.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Piatigorsky were very nice to us, and Gregor even gave us a cello recital next to his pool in his swimming trunks. Unfortunately, only one more Piatigorsky Cup was held, and then they refused to do anymore. Gregor told me that the players continually complained, and that he couldn't make anyone happy. At one point, Mrs. Piatigorsky had to carry the demo board to the event herself (none of the players would move a muscle to help), and the constant demands for more and more money turned the whole thing sour.

Though the tournament turned out to be doomed as an ongoing event, all the players experienced the usual array of thrills, horrors, triumphs, and vexations. One memory that stands out is when Soviet politics and Disneyland rammed heads. Since we were in Los Angeles, several of the players wanted to go to Disneyland. [Paul] Keres and [Tigran] Petrosian, acting like delighted little kids, were very excited about since Disneyland was a legend in the Soviet Union. However, when the day came to go there Petrosian said he felt ill and couldn't go, and Keres said he had stay with Tigran.

It turned out that Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev was visiting at that time and also wanted to go. However, Walt Disney wasn't impressed and said, "He can come if he buys his own ticket." Because there was no red carpet for Khrushchev, Disneyland was suddenly off limits to poor Keres and Petrosian—they didn't dare to go and get the Soviet politicals angry.

Also fresh in my mind is the insanity that occurred in the first round against [Samuel] Reshevsky. We were both in time pressure, and I was moving so quickly that I only noticed that his flag had fallen after we made the fortieth move. At the beginning of the tournament, it was made clear that the players didn't have to call the clock because the director would always be there to point out any such forfeiture.

Unfortunately, the director presiding over our game (a friend of Reshevsky's!) chose to ignore the time forfeiture. National Master Ronny Gross was watching the whole thing and was laughing, since he watched the director stare right at the clock and deliberately avoid making the only legal and correct call. In fact, Gross told me that Sammy's flag had fallen on move thirty eight.

Once I noticed myself I tried to claim the win. However, I had left a move out on my score sheet and it was move forty one when I pointed to the clock, so he snubbed my claim. Naturally, I protested, but none of the officials supported me since that would, in effect, point to the incompetence of the director. In the end, I lost this game. It was the first of three straight losses—certainly a miserable way to begin the event. My final score of four wins, seven losses, and three draws was not an auspicious start to my new professional career.

### **13. International Master Jeremy Silman Reads a Second Passage from Pal Benko: My Life, Games, and Compositions**

Recorded: September 10, 2013

International Master Jeremy Silman has won many important tournaments including the U.S., American, and National Opens, but it is as a teacher and writer that he is best known. His most important work, *How to Reassess Your Chess*, has gone through four editions and sold over 100,000 copies, making it one of the best-selling chess books of all time. Silman reads passages from his book *Pal Benko: My Life, Games, and Composition* which recount Benko's participation in the 1963 Piatigorsky Cup.

I only played three games with [Miguel] Najdorf over the course of my career. I had a win and a draw against him at the 1963 Piatigorsky Cup. Our only other game was played at Mar del Plata. It must be understood that Najdorf was an incredibly nice guy, but he would use every trick in the book to win. During his third game, we adjourned in a position where I was up a pawn in a Rook endgame. I didn't have a chance to analyze the position, and was thinking about a move when we resumed on the next day. Suddenly he looked at me—his face showing pain and some outrage at the same time—and said, "How can you do this to an old man like me? How can you play this out? I analyzed all night and it's a dead draw. A dead draw! I guarantee it. In fact, I'll bet you a \$1,000 it's a draw! A \$1,000!." I ignored him and tried to think, but he wouldn't shut up, he just kept gibbering on and on. Finally I just gave him the draw, anything to get some quiet. Then I went upstairs to my room and looked at the position. Instantly I saw that it was easily winning for me—he had been lying through his teeth! So I rushed downstairs and confronted him.

"Why did you lie to me like that? What in the hell is wrong with you? Why didn't you let me think?"

He just smiled, put his arm around me and said, "Don't worry about it. Come on, I'll take you out to a nice nightclub!" How could you stay mad at a guy like this?

#### **14. National Master Bruce Monson Reads Svetozar Gligoric's Memories of the 1963 Piatigorsky Cup**

Recorded: September 12, 2013

National Master Bruce Monson has long been known as one of the best players in Colorado where he works as a firefighter. The author of a book on the Belgrade Gambit and a contributor to *Pasadena 1932*, Monson is known as an outstanding chess archivist skilled at finding long lost historical information. He is currently at work on books on the Piatigorsky Cups and Herman Steiner. Here he reads Svetozar Gligoric's memories about the 1963 Piatigorsky Cup tournament.

Svetozar Gligoric is one of the legendary figures of chess in the twentieth century. Twelve times champion of his native Yugoslavia, Gligoric was one of the best players in the world in the 1950s and the 1960s. Though he won many important tournaments, Gligoric is likely to be best remembered for his contributions to opening theory, in particular, Kings Indian, Nimzo Indian, and Ruy Lopez. His column "Game of the Month", which appeared in magazines around the world for close to two decades, was a must-read for all serious players. Gligoric's autobiography and best games collection *I Play Against Pieces* typified his 'play the board and not the man' approach that set him apart from most of his rivals.

In my sixty years of being in chess competitions, not counting World War II, which forced me to a five year absence from chess as a youngster, my fondest memories belong to the Piatigorsky Cup of 1963. Players rather think gladly of their best results; my feelings here are free of vanity because this tournament was far from my greatest success. I remember it for bigger reasons: the unforgettable way that all the grandmasters were received and treated and for the significance of the event.

In Los Angeles 1963, I had the most erratic result. It was a double round-robin, and I was leading alone at the halfway mark with four and a half points, but in the second half I had the worst result of all my competitors with only one and a half points out of the remaining seven games. My explanation is that I had a hidden weakness, a dislike of long-lasting tension. Besides, I was not really the strongest favorite. In my wish to be friendly, I began accepting invitations in the second half to pleasant social occasions, breaking my rule of coming to each game well-rested and prepared. I am not looking here for an excuse. In a similar high class tournament in Dallas 1957, but without grandmasters from the U.S.S.R., I kept the lead throughout and having none of the above mentioned temptations, I shared first prize with [Samuel] Reshevsky.

Now, when writing this text after forty three years, I am eighty-three and still equally enchanted with memories of the first Piatigorsky Cup because of its dignity and the unrepeatable, beautiful atmosphere around it. Between the two World Wars, the U.S.A. had the strongest team in Chess Olympiads, but in the mid-years of the twentieth century there was a striking discrepancy between the great tradition of American chess and a lack of world class competitions on U.S. territory. The initiative of Mrs. Jacqueline Piatigorsky and her husband

Gregor, the world-renowned cellist, to be sponsors of great competitions in North America with even the World Champion in [them] came as a salvation from that situation, strongly influencing world chess.

After their arrival, participants understood that the vital force of the tournament was Mrs. Piatigorsky. Months before, she attended to a myriad of matters for the full success of the organization of the tournament. Her pre-tournament tasks were complicated with the coming of the U.S.S.R. new world champion [Tigran] Petrosian and [Paul] Keres, and, with former U.S. Champion and member of victorious Olympic teams Isaac Kashdan, took the responsibilities of the director of the tournament. Every day, hours before the start of each round, Mrs. Piatigorsky was at the tournament site checking all the details to assure a smooth-running competition. Her devotion to the game was illustrated by the fact that she had a room for a chess studio at her beautiful home and was herself an accomplished chess player. As a lady of high social prestige, having loved chess so much she represented a welcome complement to the profession of visiting grandmasters. The warm cordiality of her husband, Mr. Piatigorsky, towards the participating grandmasters I took as his benevolence to his wife, and his wish to provide some help in her noble efforts. Years afterwards, I was accidentally shown a photo of myself playing Herman Steiner in Hollywood in 1952, and there was a gentleman sitting beside our table watching the game with interest. That person was Mr. Piatigorsky himself, eleven years before I knew Gregor personally. I realized my mistake; in fact, that Jacqueline was not the only chess fan in the family.

The very important part of my profound satisfaction in having played in the first Piatigorsky Cup is having been acquainted with the Piatigorsky couple. Both of them were tall, strong, good looking people. Their marriage was reminiscent of films in Hollywood, that factory of dreams. In a quiet way, Gregor and Jacqueline were famous for a variety of reasons. Being one generation behind them in age, they probably felt my deepest respect for them. My belief is that there is no art which can touch the human heart as deeply as music does. Gregor saw my enthusiasm for his art and gave me a gift, one of his LPs with a personal written dedication to it on me, of which I have been proud all these years since. Another time in the garden of the Piatigorskys' house at a friendly reception for the grandmasters, Gregor took his precious cello, sat close to me, and played a composition called "Prayer." Was it by Brahms? I did not hide my admiration for the heavenly sound of his noble instrument.

Chess and writing, these two occupations have been talking all the time of my professional career. To meet my ancient wish to learn music Gregor bides me to find the book called *Progressive Harmony*. I was reading from that book from time to time for the next forty years. It meant the beginning of my musical self-education. At age eighty one, I retired from all other activities, deciding to make music my only concern. At eighty two, with more knowledge, I began composing light music with the joyful slogans such as, "I have a new mission in life," and, "There is nothing that comes too late."

During my stay in California Mrs. Piatigorsky was equally kind to me. Jacqueline took me and several more guests to a first-class restaurant and offered us a meal, which I cannot forget. It



was seafood in Hawaii style: fish with tropical fruits, altogether having exquisite taste unknown before to me. Since I understood Russian too, Gregor complained once about the deterioration of the classical Russian language in the U.S.S.R. Mr. Piatigorsky spoke beautifully both in English and his native Russian and took care of translating to the audience Petrosian's speech at the final ceremony.

Several years later I happened to be in Los Angeles for different reasons. Knowing about my presence, the Piatigorsky couple did not miss the opportunity to invite me to their home and to a meal for three people only. Jacqueline, Gregor, and myself. Informed then of Gregor's failing health, I felt doubly touched and had to hide my sadness. He did not drink nor did Jacqueline, but she brought out an old bottle of French red wine for me. I was puzzled over the damp cork, strangely green in color, and took the bottle in my hands. That wine originated from 1900, the last year of the nineteenth century. I guess that such rarities must have been kept so long in the famous cellar of her brother Baron Rothschild in Paris. Returning to Europe, I boasted many times about the unreachable peak of my little-known career as a wine connoisseur. It was my last meeting with the Piatigorsky couple. I regret deeply that such a wonderful personality, healthy-looking Gregor could not win against his unexpected illness to stay together with Jacqueline in her heroic mid-nineties today. Their generous contribution to the art of chess will remain as a monument.

From Svetozar Gligoric's CD, *Life Is All We Have: How Did I Survive the Twentieth Century?*

Before it happened, I visited Hollywood for the first time in 1952. My dream was to have the perfect sound in listening to music at home, so I accepted a device of an expert in Los Angeles to buy the best JBL speakers. I presume this to be Armin Steiner. Placed in two table-sized boxes covered with a decorative lace, they cost me almost as much as a small car. Transporting them back to Belgrade was a real accomplishment of mine. I had to hire an Italian company which had a cargo flight for transportation over America and the Atlantic and then from Trieste, [Italy], by freight train. Speakers arrived at Belgrade. I was overwhelmed. The everyday connection with music was a precious middle support for me over the years.

## 15. Grandmaster Lajos Portisch Recalls the 1963 Piatigorsky Cup

Recorded: September 11, 2013

In this selection from a phone interview between Grandmaster Lajos Portisch and IM John Donaldson, Portisch recounts his happy memories of the 1966 Piatigorsky Cup, in which he participated. Portisch was a perennial candidate for the World Championship for over 20 years from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. The first player to defeat Samuel Reshevsky in a match, Portisch is probably best remembered for leading Hungary to first place in the 1978 Chess Olympiad—the only time the Soviet Union failed to take first place when they competed between 1952 and 1990.

Lajos Portisch: The first impression about Los Angeles and Santa Monica was that nobody walked down the street. You know, in Europe, there's a lot of walking. I always used to walk a lot when I was playing chess because physically, I factored myself fit, but I was the only person walking on the streets. There were plenty of cars around. I had never seen so many cars in Europe, of course, but in America... So I decided to buy a Ford Mustang after the tournament. I don't know if this car still exists or not, but a Ford Mustang was a very good American car and nice looking car at that moment. Well, I was hoping of course to maybe win the prize, but I didn't know of course the exact price of the Ford yet. We had discussed a problem - Mr. [Tigran] Petrosian, warned me, actually. He convinced me that probably I shall have some problems with the Ford in Europe, especially Hungary, with service. So I gave up the idea, and when I came back to Europe I bought my first Volkswagen Beetle. Also another funny story, you are from St. Louis, am I correct or not?

John Donaldson: Yes I am in St. Louis, yes.

LP: So you have a beautiful tournament that is in action now, yes?

JD: Yes. Today [Magnus] Carlsen and [Hikaru] Nakamura.

LP: Yes I know, unfortunately I cannot be there, even if it's only for nostalgia. So anyway, I read on the internet that the organizers offered to the players a very beautiful chess set. Is that correct?

JD: I believe it is, yes.

LP: Have you seen the chess set?

JD: Yes. It is a DGT set like they are using in the competitions now, but the difference is that, as you will know from your own experience when you played in tournaments before the electronic sets, the pieces were more properly weighted. Now with these DGT sets, the problem was how to have a nice wood set that is properly weighted that you can play with that can also—

LP: Oh, I understand. It's a wooden chess set.

JD: But the difference is that this one is heavily weighted because of—

LP: Yes, I know, because of the TV broadcast. Yes, I understand. This reminds me that we also had a problem with the chess sets in the Piatigorsky tournament. Actually, there was only one person who was not satisfied with the chess set that we got. It was Bobby Fischer. In the second half of this tournament, he had a special demand that he wanted to play [with] a specific chess set, but the pieces had these colors. Actually, the red color was there, either for white or for black. I don't know for which side it was the red color. And I don't remember what the other color was. I am not sure, but I think it was yellow. Anyway, I made a mistake because before our second game of the double-round event I said, "No, I am not going to play with those terribly-colored pieces." I insisted on the normal Staunton chess set. Bobby had to accept this, but then he had vengeance because he beat me terribly. I made a big mistake, so I should have accepted his favorite red chess set.

Okay, this is one more story - my favorite games, this is number three. I had a few interesting and good games then, especially my game against [Tigran] Petrosian. It was a really good game, and I played very well. I beat the champion - even Bobby came to me and congratulated me after Petrosian gave it up. So it was really a good game. But what is more interesting my first game with Bobby Fischer. I made a draw, a difficult draw.

Now if you don't mind, I have the book in my hands here. So you also asked how I estimated the book. I think it's a wonderful book actually. It's really a good book. I also annotated a few games. Well, the only problem could be that nowadays this English notation could be disturbing for young players because they are probably not used to reading the old English notation. You know what I mean, P-K4 and so on, not the algebraic notation. I was used to that because I had gone through [Reuben] Fine's endgame book with the English notation, so I'm able to read it.

Now, I want to read you what I wrote here during this complicated game. Unfortunately, I did not know that the whole line had been published in the May 1966 issue of *Chess Review*. I mean, the line that Bobby had adopted. I saw that Fischer had to sacrifice the exchange, but I did not realize that it was satisfactory for him. So it was a fighting game and I nearly lost it and after the 50<sup>th</sup> move. I have it here in the annotations. I write, "Fischer could now have forced the game as follows and so on."

This was also an interesting game of mine and also the last game against [Bent] Larsen. Also, I have to quote my notations. "As I had won a pawn, the rest should be only a matter of time. But the game decided third place in the tournament, and the tension was too great and I was too nervous. This can be the only explanation for my spoiling the game. On the other hand, it would tend to prove my theory that good and bad luck will approximately equalize each other. I had luck in my previous games and was due for bad luck." Well actually, when I had discussed my theory that good and bad luck should approximately equalize each other in the long run, [Samuel] Reshevsky couldn't agree with me. But later we had a long conversation, [and agreed] maybe in the long run but not in the short run.

So now we have to speak of the Piatigorskys. They were very nice persons. I have found the book he [Gregor] had given to me with his music notes in the first and second page, let me see. You know, of course, even in that time I already knew he was a great figure cellist. What he writes here to me, let me just see...

“For Lajos Portisch with Admiration and Friendship. Gregor Piatigorsky Los Angeles August, 1966.” And here there are some music notes, actually this is a C scale, well in English I think they say C measure because, I don’t know, are you familiar with music expressions?

JD: Yes, your interpretation is correct.

LP: Yes, yes, yes. C measure scale going down. But I must say that at that time, I was not brave enough to sing in their presence. And he didn’t play chess with us but he had very beautiful collections of chess sets. He had a very large room full with his collections. So this is what I remember as I can say. So maybe this where you can ask something.

JD: I’ve got a couple of questions for you. Do you remember when they arranged to have a photograph taken of all the participants in the tournament? I’ve seen a couple different pictures and the one, of course, we have on display in the exhibition that’s going along with the tournament is a correct one and all the players look very responsible and you know...

LP: Well let me see, all the player photographs are here in the book and also here on the first page there are Spassky, Mr. Piatigorsky, then Mrs. Piatigorsky, and Bobby Fischer. This is on the first page. This is correct. Do you have this?

JD: I do have it. The thing is that I’m not sure in the first book in 1963 they published a picture with all the participants.

LP: In ‘63, I think I had the book, but I can’t talk about it because I was not there.

JD: Understood. But in ‘66 when they took the group photo of you. I saw one version where Donner was making a very strange face and he looked like he might have been enjoying himself a lot. Maybe he...

LP: Well let me see. His photo is in the book?

JD: No, I don’t think it’s in the book. I think that they did not put the group photo in that particular tournament book, so I was just curious if you remembered the circumstances when—

LP: No, I unfortunately I don’t remember. I have the photograph with Donner and my game and we are probably just talking. He has his cigarette in his mouth, and I have very short hair here. Do you have the book actually?

JD: I know it in my mind. It's downstairs, but I know the pictures from this book very well now.

LP: I think that all the photos that are in this book are correct.

JD: I agree totally. There was one, see, when Mrs. Piatigorsky died last year.

LP: Yes, I know. It was sad news. I congratulated her actually on her ninety-ninth birthday. A gentleman had called me [to see] if I could send her some greetings, and I did. And I even wrote to her that I hoped I would be able to sing for her for the next birthday. Perhaps you might know that I am a singer also, but at that time I was not so experienced, so I was not brave enough. So I am sorry I cannot say anything else about the photos.

JD: Okay, that's fine. Now, as far as the atmosphere in the tournament, of course, Spassky was leading almost from the beginning, and he led more or less the whole tournament, but by the sixteenth round, Bobby had caught up to him, and they faced each other in the seventeenth round. And you'll remember Bobby was white on the Marshall Gambit, and Spassky defended very well, and the game ended a draw. Do you remember what the atmosphere was like in the tournament then?

LP: Well, I think it was a normal atmosphere. I remember there was a very nice swimming pool in the hotel I went down to. I was eager to swim almost every day in those days. So [Miguel] Najdorf rented a car, and he gave a lift to [Boris] Ivkov and this was the reason why Ivkov played so poorly in the tournament, because was really a terrible driver.

JD: I see.

LP: I sat in his car only once, one morning. But when he stopped at the traffic light, he [braked suddenly and] almost fell out of the car through the doors. His question was this: "Oh, how is the old Najdorf driving?" and his [Najdorf's] answer was, "Oh, perfect. Oh, Grandmaster, perfect." But of course, we looked at each other and say, "Perfect." But anyway, I had this driving lesson, I would say only once, but Ivkov with Najdorf, they were together very often. Now one more interesting story of course, after the tournament we had to go to the tax office.

JD: Tax office? Interesting.

LP: Interesting because again, it's Najdorf. He was very smart in some ways, you know. We were all together there, so we went to the lawyer, whoever he was, and we had to declare how much we won. But Najdorf started to talk, "Well, I have so many expenses, my daughter's in Argentina, I have to call them twice at least a day," and so on and so on. And of course, the officer, he was already angry, and he says, "Okay, okay, that's enough." And now [Jan Hein] Donner was not so smart, but he realized he had to pay more than Najdorf. And then he said, "Look, I was the last in the tournament, and now I have to pay more tax than Najdorf ahead of me" This now, this just reminds me, this is a funny story. You have to be very smart when you go to the tax office, of course.

JD: That's true, yes. I'm wondering. This was your first time to the United States if I'm not mistaken.

LP: Yes, this was my first trip to the United States actually. This is why I was surprised when I saw nobody walking in the streets. Yeah, yeah. I took a flight actually, Scandinavian Airlines from Copenhagen straight to Los Angeles. Of course, I wasn't used to American custom regulations. So [during the stopover] in Copenhagen I bought maybe some fruit, and probably I ate on the airplane. Somehow one piece of banana stayed in my handbag, so of course when I arrived to the airport in Los Angeles, all the luggage had to be checked by an officer with a not so nice look on his face. He threw out my banana without saying a word. I said, "Is this [the] American [way of] handling of foreigners - not so polite?" Throwing my last fruit to the basket without saying a word. Of course, he had to do it. I understand.

JD: Right. Now, what were the relations like between the players in the tournament? You mentioned for example like Ivkov and Najdorf were together, but I'm curious how the relations between Fischer and Spassky - did Bobby spend a lot of time with any of the other players?

LP: I don't think so. I don't remember if we were together. We were of course in the Piatigorskys' house, but I don't remember who was there. I don't remember if Bobby was there or not. Actually, I think they liked each other, so I would say we all were friends really, no matter how old you were or how young you were because that was the big difference with the older ones like Reshevsky and Najdorf. It was interesting how friendly we would be to each other. For example, you might remember that I won match against Sammy Reshevsky in 1964.

JD: I remember. It was the first match he ever lost.

LP: Yeah, he lost, and then he didn't talk to me for two years. And then suddenly in Santa Monica he started to communicate with me. He even invited me for a cup of coffee, which was offered to me by his wife. And then he explained to me the funny situation. He said, "Look, dear Lajos, you probably don't know how much I have to suffer here." I didn't dare to say Sammy because he was much older than me. I said, "Why?" Then he explained it to me. He said, "Because I have to eat kosher food." In Los Angeles and Santa Monica there are a lot of kosher restaurants and rabbis who eat kosher food. Then Reshevsky said, "No, rabbis' food is not enough kosher for me". He explained that he lost a lot of weight, although his wife was together with him, but his wife had to cook for themselves. So he explained it as [the reason] why he maybe didn't have such a good result. Because this is not published anywhere, but this very true. So at least I got a nice coffee and a cookie in the room, or maybe they were not even staying in the hotel. Maybe they were staying in an apartment somewhere because I don't remember if this was in the hotel apartment, or they were just staying in a private apartment, I'm not sure. Because his wife was there, that's for sure, I remember.

JD: She was probably the only wife that was at the tournament.

LP: Probably.

JD: She was probably the only wife, Mrs. Reshevsky.

LP: Well let me see. I was married at that time but my wife did not come.

JD: Oh, Petrosian's wife was there.

LP: That's true, that's true. Yes.

JD: But it sounds like it was a very wonderful atmosphere. I mean, the tournament location was only a block from the ocean and you had a nice swimming pool. The hotel was nice good enough.

LP: Everything was nice and perfect.

JD: The games were really of a high quality, for the most part. I mean, a lot of interesting and fighting games in the tournament.

LP: This was a really a fantastic tournament I would say.

JD: It's hard to find... Of course there were Candidates Tournaments in the 1950s, but in the 1960s when they switched to match play then there really weren't... [In] this tournament there were three world champions, you have yourself—

LP: This was at least as strong as a Candidates Tournament in those years.

JD: It was a very special tournament because even the players [like] Ivkov had been a candidate in '65...

LP: Ivkov was the best Yugoslav player at that time. He was in a better form than [Svetozar] Gligoric, who later, of course, took over his first place in Yugoslav. I would say the only [player] weaker than the others was this Mr. [Jan Hein] Donner. Maybe one more Russian [would have strengthened the tournament.] The places for the Russians were limited. There were only two Russians, [Tigran] Petrosian and [Boris] Spassky.

JD: Right, right. But even Donner was dangerous.

LP: I can say only one more interesting story. I can say this very clearly. Because when I got the invitation at that time, you know how the situation was in Hungary at that time. So we always had to get permission from the Hungarian Sports Office to go to America. Then the secretary, or the president, or the vice president... actually he was the vice president of the Sport Office. I got the call that he wanted to meet me in his office, and I had a feeling this wouldn't be a friendly

talk. Anyway, I went to his office and he said, "Lajos Portisch, you are not supposed to go to the United States."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "Because the Americans are bombing Vietnam."

I said to him whoever he was, I don't remember the name, "Look I don't think that if I don't go to the United States that the Americans would stop bombing Vietnam."

But really, if this would be the prize I could abstain from the tournament, but I told him that, I'm sure the Russians will be there, so I told him that, "Know for sure that I will be there because I don't accept your order so I will do my best so I will be there." So I then took some steps around him and got the permission so I went. I also called Petrosian because he had just had a [World Championship] match with Spassky. When I called Tigran and I asked what his reaction was or what they were going to do. He said, "Now Lajos let me finish my match with Spassky and then I will see what to do." Well he didn't answer me, but I heard from different sources that the Russians will be there so then I got the permission. I must say that it was not so easy of a situation in that time fifty years ago because the United States of America really had the war on Vietnam, that's history.

JD: Yes it is.

LP: That's history, but that was the reaction of the Hungarian sports authorities, also maybe of this vice president.

JD: Yes. Well thank you so much. I'm just trying to think. You have given me so much useful information that I know people are going to enjoy a lot. I mean a lot of interesting insights on the tournament. I replayed all your games from the event, I played the round three game over with Petrosian this morning, I played through it before in the tournament book. It was a really nice game, a very logical game. It was very well-played. Later in the end of the tournament you were in very good form and you went a couple of games in a row and you were very close to...

LP: Actually what I said in the annotation of my games with [Bent] Larsen, in a few games I had luck and in the other games had bad luck. I was lucky, for example, against Ivkov in my second game, which after I won, good luck and bad luck in the long run was my theory at that time. Now I am more pessimistic about this saying, but I am practically out of chess so this is not so important any longer.



## 16. National Master Bruce Monson Reads Bent Larsen's Memories of the 1966 Piatigorsky Cup

National Master Bruce Monson, born 1967, has long been known as one of the best players in Colorado where he works as a firefighter. The author of a book on the Belgrade Gambit and a contributor to *Pasadena 1932*, Monson is known as an outstanding chess archivist skilled at finding long lost historical information. He is currently at work on books on the Piatigorsky Cups and Herman Steiner. Here, he reads Bent Larsen's reminiscences about the 1966 Piatigorsky Cup tournament.

Bent Larsen was one of the greatest chess players in the world in the 1960s and 1970s, qualifying for the Candidate Matches four times and reaching the semi-finals on three occasions. His fearless style was perfect for winning tournaments and was particularly successful in the late 1960s which led him to be placed on board 1 for the world ahead of Bobby Fischer in its match with the U.S.S.R. in 1970. Larsen was not only a great player, but also an outstanding writer. His book, *Larsen's Selected Games of Chess: 1948-1969*, is recognized as a classic.

Bruce Monson: The title of his essay is *Oh Yes, I Remember It Well*, and he is referring to Maurice Chevalier who sang also with a French accent. So the title, he says, is his and [he writes], "For Jacqueline, I wish you a long life. You have music and chess and that's already a good beginning."

*Oh Yes, I Remember It Well*

It was my second visit to the United States. The first had been to Dallas in 1957 and I had to get my fingerprints. In '66, that was not so because the Soviets felt it humiliating. The biggest pact was already at work - the understanding between the two superpowers. They did not want to start a disaster by mistake. What Dallas could not, the Piatigorskys could. The Soviet Union sent two representatives in '63 and again in '66. There were some problems, but they were solved, like in Zurich in 1959. But why talk only about individual tournaments? Why not remember the team events?

It started during the war as a suggestion from Washington D.C. After all, who won the chess Olympiads in the 1930s? Yes, the U.S. In 1939, it was very sad. They could not raise the necessary funds to attend the Olympiad. Anyway, the Allies in Moscow liked the idea of a radio match. But it was still war, let us beat the enemy first. When that was done the famous radio match in 1945, it showed the pyramid with Soviets on top. In 1940, the Chess Federation of the U.S.S.R. had a million players organized - much later it was 2 million under Yakov Rokhlin. To compare, in 1940, the recently created U.S.C.F. had only a thousand members and was practically bankrupt. Even so, this new idea of team matches was not completely forgotten, but they did not happen for other reasons: the Cold War, the Berlin Blockade, the Korean War, etc. In 1954, the Soviet team made a scandal in New York. They almost went home. It was all right to have limited mobility in the U.S.; for instance, in the Soviet Union, Novosibirsk was

absolutely forbidden to U.S. citizens, off limits. But they had forgotten to mention this nice place, really little more than a *dacha* where the Soviet ambassador to the U.N. spent his weekends. It was outside the limits of the Big Apple. Of course, what I remember most is the scandal, but I think the solution was a reasonable one. I remember a photo of the honorable guest at the entrance to the wonderful place in the country [referring to Glen Cove, Long Island].

In November 1957, the tension was so high that allowing the famous Russians in the Dallas/Fort Worth area was an impossibility, so that tournament went on without any Soviets. I don't recall who said, "In Los Angeles, it might have been a possibility." Of course, life is much easier for a Dane, so Uncle Sam now gave me permission for the rest of my life to solicit entry an unlimited number of times. I later carried that visa over from one passport to the next, but in the 1990s, the Uncle cancelled this agreement unilaterally, he did not ask me.

Oh yes, the tournament. It was well-organized and the Piatigorskys were wonderful hosts. He was an old elephant, and to hear him play the cello was something unforgettable. She was a more nervous animal, maybe a deer. She did not delegate well. She did many small things herself, and invented a new kind of demonstration board, which was real progress. And who had to tell the assistants, "The insurance pays that." It was a dentist who presented a bill for \$517. A drug addict got very angry when he could not enter. He went away, but came back with something big made of iron. The young man might have been killed.

Are we comparing with famous tournaments in Europe? Well, you would be surprised how unfriendly most of them were to spectators. Here, there was a commentators room. On a couple of the big days, it was too small. Nobody had really foreseen such a crowd. What do I mean "big day?" One of them was on July 31, and the tournament director Isaac Kashdan happened to be close to a phone, which rang that morning. He found himself in the role of press secretary with an important TV person on the other end.

[He answered,] "Hello, this is Kashdan."

[The reporter replied,] "Oh, I am in luck. I am so and so and you are the right person. I don't know so much about chess, but I understand that today our Bobby [Fischer] plays the World Champion [Tigran] Petrosian."

"That is correct," says Kashdan.

The reporter asked, "Then we can call this the most important match so far?"

"You certainly can," says Kashdan. "It decides who will be in last place after the first half."

Larsen continues, I don't know the rest but they came.

Back to the commentary room. Was it there in the venerable Hastings? No, but there was a press bulletin room, and I have heard Ritzson Murray shout something very loud when he was already in the tournament hall. In Beverwijk? No, but the bulletin room was located more discreetly and it was a cozy place. I like to watch them work, Barry Widious and [inaudible]. Well enough. But was I satisfied? Of course not. The sun, the California summer was too much for me. The same happened in Havana a couple of months later. Before I had really finished my explanation in my ridiculous Spanish, the doctor had put the apparatus on my arm.

[The doctor said,] "Yes, the organizers. They won't listen to me. They set up the air conditioning too strong. So I have all these chess masters coming to me. Look, your blood pressure is 142, you don't play today."

[Larsen replied,] "I have to play, doctor."

"Hm. But you come to me after the round, and it is really irresponsible conduct of the leaders of your federation to send you to such a different climate without a medical check. It makes me angry."

After the game, I had only gone up to 145 on my blood pressure, but I played badly. What else? A thousand things, but much more interesting for me than my readers I suppose. For example, it was nice to see Artie Zeller again. He was in the car with Larry Evans, Pal Benko, and little me when we went from Dallas to Los Angeles in 1957. "Well," says Artie, "I stayed on the coast. I make a living as a photographer now." He looked satisfied and so did his wife. But who was Artie? Remember Mae West and her troop of strong men? Artie was one of the troop. I think the show was called "Mr. Universe." I never met Mae, but I understand from Artie and later many others that she was quite a woman.

Or let me try this one about [Jan] Hein Donner walking up Wilshire Blvd around 9:00pm. Maybe I must interject that Hein had become a handsome man with a beautiful beard. That was not so for example in 1954. His plumage was a strange disorder, but now he walked up the longest street in the world. There were three places where you could buy a used car and too, those who were potential piano buyers. After a twenty minutes' walk, you found a tremendous mart open twenty four hours where you could buy a loaf of bread, but maybe halfway on the left side, there was a tempting sign: Bar. It really said, "Bar to the left, [inaudible] restaurant to the right." Maybe Hein was thirsty, but above all he was a child with a very developed curiosity. So he tried to enter and turn left, but a uniform person of the male gender stopped him.

[The uniformed person stated,] "No, no, stop. You know you have to show me some personal documents."

"But please," says Hein, "my passport is at the hotel in the safe."

"All very nice, but you youngsters all look the same."

“But sir, I am thirty-eight!”

After a closer look [the uniformed man said], “Okay you can go in. Nobody is capable to lie like that.”

Larsen continues. To me, this is funny even today. He was a friend. It is sad he had to leave so soon. I wanted to explain that I have already read Gliga’s [Svetozar Gligoric’s] essay. Beautiful. Especially the part about, at eighty-one, making music [was] his only concern. My own musical biography is different. I always loved music and I saw my mother’s love for piano, but I gave that instrument up when I was sixteen. So maybe. And about instruments, back to the cello. The most famous Danish cellist with Icelandic roots is Erling Blöndal Bengtsson. I promised to call him when I was back in Copenhagen. It was one of the first things. He was in the telephone book and he was at home. He answered the phone.

“Good afternoon, Professor, I am Bent Larsen and I bring you greetings from the Piatigorskys, but also a reminder.”

[Bengtsson replied,] “Yes, I know. I have been terribly busy these last months, but I promise at the beginning of next week I shall write them a good, long letter. You know, I spent three wonderful months at their home. They treated me like a son, but there is a problem with such people. It is difficult to give them gifts. I was lucky. I was going almost directly the Tchaikovsky Festival in Moscow. Gregor’s father was still alive and in good shape. So we traveled from Ukraine to Moscow, and I had the great pleasure of transmitting fresh greetings from his son and gave him some gifts. This was important for Gregor. They had not seen each other since 1916. As you may know, when the Revolution started, he was abroad with his professor. “

## **17. National Master Robert Jacobs Reminisces about the 1966 Piatigorsky Cup**

National Master Robert “Bob” Jacobs is one of the strongest players to ever live in Missouri and equally skilled at play over the board or by mail. He was the winner of the first U.S.C.F. Absolute Correspondence Championship in 1976. Before settling in St. Louis in 1970, Bob made his home in Los Angeles for twenty years. During this time he served as one of the commentators for the 1963 Piatigorsky Cup. Here he reminisces about the commentary for the 1966 Piatigorsky Cup.

John Donaldson: With the impression I had, they had excellent attendance which you can see from this photo and this would just be part of it. They would probably watch for a little while and then they would come and watch your show and go back and forth in the commentary room.

National Master Robert Jacobs: There are things about that commentary room, a few things that I do remember.

JD: Uh huh, yes.

RB: Well let’s see, in the ‘66 one I was there a little bit, not a prominent thing, but I dropped in and tried to help her a couple of times. I made the mistake, in the ‘66 one, because we were always able to get players to come in after their games. If they won the game they would be willing to answer questions and go over it. And after [Bobby] Fischer won a game I made the mistake of asking Fischer if he would come in and comment, and he wouldn’t even answer me. He walked by just cold as a fish. On the other hand, the best one we ever had to come in and comment was [Boris] Spassky whose English was unbelievably good. He damn near sounded American. He would give excellent commentary. He was just the highlight whenever we could get him in, and he was usually willing to come in.

JD: And he won a lot of fames in that tournament.

RJ: He just seemed like a super nice guy.