

61 Allen
1582
Tel. WOrth 2-3797

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Chess Hypnosis

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MADAM, IF YOU want to get rid of your husband introduce him somehow to chess.

Unless you play the game yourself, the odds are about even you'll seldom see him again.

And, husbands, it works even better in reverse: Some women chess addicts are really out of this world.

Living proofs of the perils of this ancient avenue to separation from reality are on exhibit nightly in a basement banquet room at the ocean-front Miramar hotel.

Upstairs, balmy breezes tease palm fronds on a tiki torch-lit patio splashed with gay frocks and Polynesian shirts.

Ignoring all this, some 700 men and a scattering of women slip downstairs night after night and take their places on hard chairs.

For five hours, they hypnotize themselves by staring fixedly at projection screens representing

the five boards at which 10 masters are battling for a record \$13,000 in prizes.

On each of the screens are 64 squares, and arranged at seeming random on the squares are up to 32 pieces called kings, queens, bishops, knights, rooks and pawns.

Every once in a long, long while one of the players moves a piece on his board, and a corresponding piece is moved on the screen.

Small sounds of approval—or wonder—escape from the crowd, then all quiet down and wait for the next move.

The scene is the month-long Piatigorsky cup tournament, sponsored by cellist Gregor Piatigorsky and his wife, Jacqueline, who is California women's chess champion.

Mrs. Piatigorsky designed the projection screens, an innovation in chess, after the linescore screens in bowling alleys. "They've increased attendance tremendously," she says. "Now,

and run fingers through their hair. for the first time, everybody can see what's going on."

Seated at the boards are world champion Tigran Petrosian and Boris Spassky of Russia, Lajos Portisch of Hungary, Miguel Najdorf of Argentina, Borislav Ivkov of Yugoslavia, Jorgen Bent Larsen of Denmark, Jan Donner of Holland, Wolfgang Unzicker of West Germany, and Samuel Resnevsky and Robert Fischer of the United States.

Fischer, 23 years old, is the "baby" of the tournament—he became a grand master at 15, the youngest to achieve the title.

Each player has 2½ hours to make 40 moves, or forfeit the game. As each moves, he punches a clock and his opponent's time-to-move starts. At first, the moves come slowly, up to half an hour apart. Later, with time running out, the moves may be only seconds apart.

When this happens, tension mounts. The 700-odd spectators sit on the edges of their chairs. Players squeeze their foreheads

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and run fingers through their hair.

If a game is not finished in five hours, the players adjourn until the next day. Many times in this tournament, the opponents agree that neither can win and they call a draw.

Now and then, however, the spectators are lucky. A brilliant attack succeeds in 20 or 30 moves: Checkmate! And the game is over.

At the end of five hours the 700 spectators—lawyers, doctors, insurance men, teachers, factory hands—rise slowly and return to reality.

They move up the stairs. The breeze is still playing, sounds of laughter and music drift across the lighted patio, but the addicts do not notice. Many of them have pocket-size chessboards in their hands and they are reconstructing the play.

Still hypnotized? Well, call it chess-nosis.