

## THE CALIFORNIA CHESS REPORTER

-SPECIAL BULLETIN-  
AN ADDRESS BY JERRY G. SPANN,  
PRESIDENT OF THE U.S. CHESS FEDERATION



Left to right: Mrs. Charles Henderson, Jerry G. Spann, Mr. and Mrs. George Goehler.

On November 2, 1957, a banquet was held at the Gourmet Restaurant in Beverly Hills, where fifty persons assembled to open the U.S. Women's Championship and to meet with the new president of the U.S.C.F. Mr. Spann's talk turned out to be a major policy speech, and was deemed by the officers of the California State Chess Federation to be of enough importance to reproduce here for the membership.

Mr. Spann has a tough job. His successful promotion of the 1956 U.S. Open led to his being appointed chairman of the nominating committee; and when ten of the eleven persons nominated for president withdrew, he, being the eleventh, was drafted as president. He would have preferred to serve the Federation two or three terms from now, for business and personal reasons. But when he was drafted he determined that he would put the house in order. He confidently expects to turn over at the end of his three-year term a strong and prosperous national chess organization to a new president.

Mr. Chairman, Honored Guests and Friends:

It sure is nice to be here with all you fine people... I feel kinda like what I most certainly am not, a visiting potentate... the wonderful way you have welcomed me. My gracious hosts, Charles and Lyn Henderson, and your officers George Goehler, Irving Rivise, Mac McClain and, really, all of you have been grand. This alone makes the trip worthwhile.

The U. S. Women's Championship and Western Zonal is one of the two most important events in U. S. Chess. Speaking for the USCF I take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to Jaqueline Piatigorsky, Lena Grumette, George Goehler, Irving Rivise, Lyn Henderson and the others who have worked so hard, and so alone - as far as help from the National Organization is concerned, - in staging this most important event. One faulty concept that we hope to correct as far as future USCF events are concerned is the idea that local sponsors shall carry the entire burden of financing, planning and publicity for USCF National and International Events. All areas have a stake; the National Organization has a stake; so all should and must lend a hand. I know we are going to have a great tournament. Chess players everywhere will be watching with great interest.

This is a rather memorable occasion for me as it is my first formal talk, my first, shall we say, Report to the Constituency.

The new administration is enjoying that flush of the beatific that goes with administration change... the honeymoon is on... and the first three months show considerable progress. The USCF "New Look" is taking form. The system of Area-Aides, with McClain, Shipman, Jenkins and Hornstein shouldering USCF executive responsibility in their respective areas is proving successful; i. e., thanks to Walter Shipman we were able to work quickly and effectively in setting up a U. S. Championship and Western Zonal in the few months that were left to us this year (this was the deadline year as you know) by negotiating a co-sponsorship arrangement with the American Chess Foundation and tying it in with the Rosenwald Trophy Tournament.

Tom Jenkins of Michigan has already worked up the organizational plan and program for a national membership campaign. You will be hearing much about this in the next couple of months. The overall goal is to triple our membership in 1958, from two to six thousand. It is a campaign that will employ all the trappings, incentives, devices, competitions and prizes that make up any large nationwide sales promotion. In addition to the liaison activity with Area-Aides, my efforts have centered for the past three months on the CHESS LIFE EDITORSHIP and BUSINESS MANAGER projects. With respect to CHESS LIFE

I am pleased to report success. I am also pleased to say that I have been saving public announcement, naming the new Editor of CHESS LIFE, for this meeting. The USCF is exceedingly fortunate in having this important job taken over by that eminent American statesman, internationalist, New Englander, and excellent chess writer, Fred M. Wren of Perry, Maine.

Fred has just retired after a brilliant 35-year career in the State Department, although at age 56 he is still a young man in my books! He is best known to most chess players for that fine series of articles entitled "Tales of a Woodpusher" that ran in CHESS REVIEW a year ago. He has an open, cheerful personality, and has a very real interest in chess organization - and what is equally important, he has a multiplicity of contacts at home and abroad with chess organs, writers, editors, masters, and leaders.

Now, as to the BUSINESS MANAGER project... progress is necessarily slow for a number of extenuating reasons. As now set up there are four functions performed by the Business Manager:

- |                          |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Membership Secretary; | 3. Rating Statistician;   |
| 2. Promotional Manager;  | 4. Book and Supply Sales. |

Kenneth Harkness has been successful in building up some allied but outside chess promotional ventures; one is a new book now being readied for publication; another is in the T. V. field... on this coming Tuesday, Ken is scheduled to be on the \$ 64,000 Question program, as a referee. The contestant is to be an outstanding United States player, and it is expected and hoped that he will be on this program for five or six weeks. It takes no imagination at all to realize what this means to chess in the United States. But as far as the question at hand is concerned it does mean that Ken's activities outside of the USCF are expanding and there is some question as to how much time he will be able to give in his current capacity.

In view of this, strong consideration is being given to increasing George Koltanowski's scope of activity in USCF Tournament Administration and Promotional Activity. In this event we might be able to enlist the capable services of Leah Koltanowski as USCF Membership Secretary.

Ken Harkness has indicated that in the event his scope of USCF activity narrows, he would be willing to stay on as USCF Rating Statistician. This leaves No. 4, Sales Books and Supplies. If ever there was an ornery, cantankerous, troublesome problem it's this one. Of course it's the heart of our difficulties with Al Horowitz and CHESS REVIEW... and this colors, somewhat adversely, our relationship with the American Chess Foundation.

As far as USCF finances are concerned, we are scratching along barely in the black, but except for our \$ 2500 CHESS LIFE debt, we are solvent. Unfortunately, 33-1/3% of our current financing stems from the sale of books and supplies. It is my feeling, generally, that it is the prime function of the Federation to promote the game of chess, sponsor tournament and chess teaching activity, and enlist members.. and not to engage in commercial enterprise. So we have another good reason for tripling our membership. We can attain complete solvency and decide, once and for all, and with unfettered hands, whether or not the sale of books and supplies is a legitimate Federation activity.

Early last summer I submitted an article which was printed by CHESS LIFE entitled "A Candidate Reports". With your kind permission I would like to read you the first paragraph of this article as these words were the springboard of my entry into the National Chess Arena:

Chess in America is on the brink (if you'll excuse the expression! of an unprecedented expansion. The signs are everywhere. Current emphasis on science, physics, T-V educational colossals, the lionizing of the Van Dorens, the Stroms, have no immediate connection with chess, but these are creating a wondrous setting and atmosphere for the spread of the royal game. If you pick up a book, magazine or newspaper today it is no longer uncommon to see some allusion to the game. When you go to a movie it is no great surprise if, somewhere in it, two of the characters are playing a game of chess, or if a table with chess pieces serves as a set property...ditto T-V programs. We see chess designs in clothing, furniture, draperies, interior decor and so forth. Far-fetched you say? Don't you believe it! And when it breaks through it will be an avalanche. Americans just have to do things in a big way!

I suppose I might, at this point, declare myself a prophet... but, of course, that would be ridiculous. For one thing I was saying what was on everyone's mind - if they had power of observation and any imagination at all. But there was a very grave factor not alluded to directly in my report now influencing chess expansion; that is connected with the SATELLITE AGE which has smashed into our existence with such shocking impact. There are two groups of people who were not so surprised by SPUTNIK. One, of course, is the American Scientists... the other is the American Chess Fraternity. We know - and have known for years to come what lengths the Russian Government has gone in the promotion of Chess - and particularly with the young. We know, for example, that it is a prominent part of the curriculum in elementary and secondary schools. We also know, much to our chagrin, that we have been getting our ears pinned back - but good! - regularly and relentlessly!!

I have just enough mid-western "suspicionism" in me to suspect that, as usual, there is some method in the Russian chess-madness! How many thousands of Fischers and Stroms have been uncovered at a tender age by this early exposure to chess, who have become grist for the Russian Scientific Mill, and who might have lived through a life-time hoeing that vodka base-ingredient, you know, potatoes! It is my humble opinion that chess is an excellent recruiting device which Russia (along with many other methods, of course) is tying in with their comprehensive specialized training program that produces 85,000 graduates in the field of pure science every year. . . compared with 25,000 annual science graduates in the United States.

You are reading accounts daily in your newspapers of the stepped up crash programs in scientific activity now in the planning stages in this country. Specialized training for students in secondary schools as well as in universities will play a big part in this overall program. And how do we find the raw material. . . the youngsters with the "proclivities"? They will have to be "discovered" by the thousands all over this nation, and quickly. Hundreds of tests will be used, but we have one sound suggestion (don't we?), and it's a game popular with youngsters, once they have been adequately exposed. I won't dwell on this because I'm sure you get the point. . . let's push this message. Talk to your congressmen, your school teachers, your school board members, anyone with influence who will listen!

There are some secrets of success out here in California with respect to chess organization, which I hope to pick up during my short sojourn. I might add that during the first three months of this administration I have been doing a lot of looking and listening. I believe that most everyone sincerely believes in national organization and recognizes the need for it. As self-sufficient as you are out here with your fine organization, I am certain that you understand and appreciate the need for a strong United States Chess Federation.

Due to some untoward events in the past, unfortunate antagonisms have developed and the Federation has suffered. In spite of who is right and who is wrong, chess in the United States as a whole has suffered. I think by this time we now all accept the fact that we must work together in harmony. . . and keep our disagreements on an objective plane. I agree 100% with McClain, Phillips, Shipman and other chess leaders that disagreements are healthy, they reflect interest, and above all they should be aired, openly, honestly, and objectively. If I were to pick any single issue that I would stand on and pursue relentlessly during my three-year term, it is this particular point.

I must confess that I am here more or less with hat in hand. I urgently need your support. I petition you to become salesmen for the Federation... and its product: memberships.

Speaking as your Sales Manager, there are two salient points to be covered with respect to USCF membership and the sales approach. The first point is a rather "sticky" one. Personally, I feel strongly that national rating and national USCF membership go together. I realize that there are some injustices and that there are a number of chess leaders in the United States who disagree. So the proposal for 100% USCF membership of the players in a rated tournament has been put up to the Directors for a vote. Along with the ballot I issued a statement explaining my feelings on this matter, but making it plain that Directors should sound out the members and cast a consensus vote. Since only Directors have received this, I would like to read this statement to you because it outlines my general thinking on this whole subject:

"The proposed revision of Affiliation and Rating Regulations was discussed at length during the 1st Directors' Meeting in Cleveland, and although there are some arguments against a 'mandatory' system requiring USCF membership of all contestants in a USCF rated event, the arguments for, far outweigh those against, in my opinion. Those opposed point out certain injustices that will be inflicted... but so it is with any regulation, however democratic. But the over-riding argument for, is the big injustice now operative; almost three-fourths of the players now rated are not USCF members, so who carries the freight? Without national organization you cannot have a national rating system, and rating fees are but a 'dribble' as far as overall Federation operating costs are concerned.

"For the life of me, I have never understood the timidity some promoters and organizers have about asking chess players to join the Federation! In the past few months I have listened willingly to many complaints against the USCF, at the core of which is the inability of the Federation to do this or that because of its weak financial position... but what has really fractured me is the realization, after doing a little checking, that very few of these complainers are USCF members! I can get as impatient as the next guy and I have started 'checking it back' to them, and do you know what answer I am getting? It goes something like this: 'Why should I waste my time and money on an organization that is weak and ineffectual? When the USCF can put out a decent size newspaper with plenty of pictures, bring international events to the U.S., send teams abroad, and do things in a big way, I'll join!' That's like some Bankers I know, you can get a loan if you can prove you don't need it. These rugged individualists will join the USCF when it gets big and strong and doesn't need their support!

"Be that as it may, as Directors you are not to be over-persuaded by my arguments. You have a responsibility to your member-constituents (although I cannot visualize any member, since it is the member who is 'carrying the mail,' objecting, except possibly on grounds of 'moral precept,' a point raised by Past-President Phillips, which is not without its merits); you are obligated to sound out your members and cast a consensus vote."

The second point with respect to selling memberships has to do with what I have, for want of a better description, called, "psychic block." Somewhere way back in the nether-regions of our historic chess beginnings the idea was promulgated that chess was an inexpensive activity on which little or no money should be spent, and on which if there were any economies to be practiced, should be the No. 1 objective. I know generous men who think nothing of picking up a \$ 50 night club tab or indulging lavishly in this or that hobby, who are downright cheapskates when it comes to chess. I have listened in on hours of argument as to whether or not dues could be raised 50¢. And if you would take the time to follow some of the most ardent detractors around a while, you would find that the horses are not spared as far as expensive new fishing tackle, gunnery or photographic equipment is concerned. Let's promote the idea of spending money on the chess hobby. . . at least put it somewhere near the plane occupied by other hobbies. We would all be happy if we could do big things in chess. . . so let's do them! And certainly no one should feel that he can call himself a real member of the chess fraternity if he isn't a cardholder . . . a USCF member, and if he doesn't have a national rating. Let's get behind American chess by building a strong national organization. Thank you for your kind attention.

\*\*\*\*\*



Jerry G. Spann President, USCF