



Acers uses portable 'board' in chess lessons.

PHOTO COURTESY ARKANSAS GAZETTE

# Chess Barbs

by Jude Acers (US senior master)

QUESTIONS YOU ASK JUDE ACERS: Q. Who influenced your development most, both as a showman and master? A. The Rolling Stones, Alexander Alekhine, Karl Bach, Mary Anne Jones, Helen Milner, Michael Botvinnik, Karl Cavanaugh, Albert Raymond, Mary Asher, Frank Thornally, the Poco Seco Singers, Samantha Beckett, Joe Bailey, Gail Persac, William Addison, Max Burkett, Boris Spassky, Paul Morphy, the Velvet Underground, the Five Americans, the Rays, the Dangleers, David Bronstein, Adolph Anderssen, Robert Caradien and a woman I met only ONCE named "Anita" in Specs Adlers Bar. Janis Joplin was the most tragic influence. She watched me play literally hundreds of games at the Coffee Gallery and said, "Hey, man, when ya going to show me how to play that crazy game?" I smiled and said, "Maybe later." Maybe next time . . . Sure. Q. Do you think it likely that you will ever play in U.S. tournaments again? A. No, not unless Edmondson will agree to meet me in a gunfight in El Paso. Q. Is it true you want to do a tour of small towns in Africa and Spain? A. Yes, also Mexico, England and all Russia as well. But that is in the distant future. I am trying to work out a beginner, intermediate and expert level lecture that can be delivered anywhere without losing my unique wit and candor in translation. Don't worry, guys, it's all in the mix! Q. What's the toughest exhibition you've ever given? A. Sonoma College, the Pittsburgh Chess Club and Buttner's Childrens Home in Lubbock, Texas were toughies. At Sonoma I forgot my glasses, was madly in love with a lady, gave a sloppy lecture, played poorly and unbelievably everyone was very courteous and nice anyway. They should have pushed me over the nearest cliff. At Pittsburgh in 1971

I arrived after 20 hours on a bus, absolutely dead and barely survived a difficult 18-board simultaneous. They, too, were nice people and my lecture seemed to go over like fireworks and my extreme humility was also totally unexpected. At Buttner's Childrens Home in Lubbock, Texas (1971) I taught 85 little orphans and retarded kids how to play. It was probably my greatest ever -- worthy of my class! Two hour's lecture and I owned the place. The whole affair seemed so impossible to sponsors that it was cancelled twice before I arrived in town at dawn. I went into a large store and talked them into giving me 20 chess sets for the exhibition and performed numerous other small miracles. It was murderous work, keeping their attention. I knew I was a sensation with these orphans and little ones, but had to double check at the end. "Am I not the greatest chess teacher in the world?" I whispered to my spellbound kiddies, and bowed gracefully. "YES!!!" was the deafening reply, and a friend two blocks away heard the hysterical enthusiasm from the new chess fanatics. A tiny girl trotted up and grabbed my hand. "Mr. Jude Acers, I like you very much," she said, kissing me on the cheek. My heart pounding, I gazed into the little one's eyes and said, "Gee, thanks. I like Mr. Jude Acers, too." Q. I've been reading your BARB chess column for about ten weeks and dig it. But you should really tell some of your incredible experiences as well. Last year I heard you address three chess clubs and was rocked out of my chair by your account of witnessing a murder, being held up by three men and dumped in a ditch with no clothes in Baton Rouge and being attacked by a man with a meat cleaver after you beat him about 20 games in a row. You have led a scary life and you should let it all hang out! A. Right. After the Spassky -- Fischer match I intend to do some full length visits to prisons for BARB readers and then pen a few sketches of my life which will win Pulitzer prizes for literature. But nobody will believe them . . . I am the luckiest chessplayer ever to tread sail. I have survived.