

Guest Editorial

CHESS IN CALIFORNIA

By Herman Steiner
Chess Editor, Los Angeles Times

IT IS difficult to ascertain just how CHESS really became so popular in California. We do know, however, that with the acquisition of many members to the United States Chess Federation, came a pronounced rise in chess interest. Through the medium of the chess column in the *Los Angeles Times*, plus tournament activities such as the Pan-American Tournament in 1945, plus the Denker-Steiner Match for the U. S. Championship Title, and all the publicity necessary to stimulate interest, evolved an unbelievable upward trend.

The history of chess in L.A. dates back to the organization of the L.A. Chess and Checker Club and in San Francisco of the Mechanics' Institute Library Chess Club where the average chess player of yesterday joined, paid his dues and played chess. Today it is quite different as seen by the rise of so many chess clubs. In the Metropolitan League alone in L. A. are represented thirteen teams, to say nothing of many not in the league.

The clubs of today, new and old, have programs which are designed to develop the young players as well as giving enjoyment to the veterans. This is accomplished by the arrangement of Lightning Chess Tournaments weekly, inter-club matches, individual matches—all of which make the members feel they are the pillar of the institution.

A great many clubs went wrong because they tried to force on their members work which they did not like. In every club are individuals who like the organizational work and upon them depends the success of the club. It would be wise therefore if upon application the member would be asked to pledge himself for organization work or just to play chess. The workers in the club should be the only ones eligible for officers.

In my experience as an organizer, I have found it always easier to acquire cooperation if the approach is in the mild form of suggestion, leaving it to the individual to choose to work (and it is work, believe it or not!). Constructive criticism functions in a club just as it does in any democratic way of life. Fortunately this is proven when the rich and poor alike can sit together and derive the same enjoyment and equality over the chessboard. By virtue of this alone, CHESS should flourish.

Here in California we strive to fill our ranks with enthusiastic followers of the royal game, particularly those who realize the importance of belonging to our U. S. Chess Federation.

In the past CHESS has been referred to as a "Game of War," and contrary to this, it is my belief that it is rather a "GAME OF PEACE" and its purpose is to create good will between all mankind!

☛ The views expressed in this Guest Editorial are not necessarily those of CHESS LIFE.