

1608 42nd st.  
Sacramento 19, Calif.  
8 October, 1954.

Mr. Frank R. Graves  
202 Farm and Home Bldg.  
Fort Worth, Texas

Dear Mr. Graves:

I have no official capacity in Chess circles, other than being a director of the Central California Chess League. However, I am a past president of that organization, and an ex-director of the California State Chess Federation, and was instrumental in the formation of that body. The controversy presently raging in the USCF, although it has not received full publicity (for which I am thankful), is a matter to be deplored and immediately checked.

In the first place, anyone acquainted with Mr. McClain knows that his integrity and motives are beyond question. I know of no one who has done more for chess organization in California. The now well-known circular letter was the result of an attempt to make the USCF more palatable for California players, to whom he owes his first allegiance.

The letter covered six (6) points, which, in the light of subsequent events, merit a short discussion.

(1) Joint membership in the USCF and CSCF. This was important at the time, but is now a minor issue. Some heads should be able to work this out easily.

(2) Advantages of Joining USCF. I agreed with the letter almost 100% I feel that I should contribute to organized American Chess. Other advantages are non-existent as far as I am concerned.

(3) 5 Year Suspension. I know of this only from hearsay. If reports are true, such practice by the Business Manager should be condemned.

(4) Rating System. It cannot be accurate under the present system, except possibly for Senior Masters.

(5) Editor of Chess Life. I have been somewhat critical of editorial policies in the past, but have remained on excellent terms with the Editor. I regretted that the letter had anything to do with the Censure Resolution. However, the Editor has not been sparing of his criticism of others, and, as an editor, should be prepared to accept the mild criticism that was offered.

(6) Lack of Cooperation. This is obvious.

Since then, a question has arisen over the financial report. I am not an auditor, but several auditor-members have commented that it was "sloppy" to say the least. They were not surprised that it had been questioned.

I have advised Mr. McClain that he should not comment editorially on the subject. I sincerely hope that Mr. Major will also refrain. It certainly cannot help Chess in the United States, and more probably will cause untold harm. Alienation of California players can certainly do no good at this time. This is neither a threat nor a warning, merely a statement of a distinct possibility.

I therefore urge you to do all in your power to effect a cessation of hostilities. If there is merit in the California complaint, the deficiencies should be corrected. If there is not, an attempt should be made to convince us.

As my knowledge of Mr. Alexander's activities is but second hand, I have purposely avoided a discussion of this phase.

Yours very truly,

Neil T. Austin

cc: W.G. McClain  
Mont. Major.