

For Appendix of The Road Jude Acers In Prison!

THE LAST STAND: JUDE COMES TO THE UTAH STATE PRISON
July 28, 1970
by Dennis Hansen Raymond

After five thousand miles, airplane terminals, bus stations and two hundred and five hamburgers, this is it! Number 16 - the Utah State Prison which is the last stop on a tour for brilliant chessmaster Jude Acers, a 26-year-old chess maniac who happens to be a noble chess showman and the most freaky, unexpected thing to happen in American chess since Bobby Fischer of Brooklyn bombed his elders and won the U.S. Title at age 13.

There stands Acers in the prison parking lot. He is six-feet, two-inches tall, weighs in at 190 is the world's fastest talker and winker, doesn't smoke, doesn't drink and likes girls very, very much. On paper he figures out as a living tragedy of our time (he has no family) - his mother was killed when he was six, his father dumped him in a Raleigh, North Carolina orphanage and later a mental hospital. Friendly, very gifted, and one of the most dangerous young players in the nation, Acers is a good guy but, well, kind of weird. He is an idealist who ruthlessly cuts through red tape to get things done. Uh-huh.

Now living in San Francisco, Jude Acers lived in Louisiana 14 years. He learned chess in Harahan, Louisiana, played thousands of games at the old YMCA Chess Club on Lee Circle in New Orleans and was, unbelievably, a rated chess master at age 17, the youngest ever (in the southern U.S.) "I'd have never made it if I was black...I'll always remember that above all things," he told me in Salt Lake City, earlier. Somehow he managed to suppress his chess craze to graduate from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge where "nothing but cockroaches moved after four in the afternoon."

Preparing to give a lecture for prisoners on "the most incredible games ever played," by using a large wall chessboard and huge chess pieces, Jude explained how comments about the games could be simplified so that his many children pupils could understand them easily. "You have to make people unafraid. You have to make them feel important, not stupid - tell them how easy chess is to learn, how easy it is to improve. But most important, you have to convince them what a fabulous teacher you are and that you're just dying to turn on all the chess lights for them." Uh-huh. It's so easy.

As Acers was talking he looked up at the guard towers of the prison to see the guards looking down at Acers. It's really hard for them to believe that Acers played 114 games simultaneously and won them all (a world record) - even if many of his opponents were children with their grandparents and despite repeated Acers' disclaimers that such exhibitions have absolutely nothing to do with his goal to be a great grandmaster. It's hard for even those who know him well to believe that this year he has held four internationally famous grandmasters to draws despite practically no chance to play seriously, except in ridiculous weekend tournaments throughout the nation which require a contestant to play two or even three games in one day.

Finally, Acers is by far the most erratic chess genius ever to trouble the hands of the United States Chess Federation which has proven on more than one occasion that it hasn't the faintest idea of what to do with him. The Federation, a conservatively run and fast-growing chess sparkplug with its headquarters in Newburgh, New York, flatly refused to sponsor or even endorse Acers tour of prisons. The Federation called Acers' idea a pipedream and pointed out that rarely if ever had a player without the title of International Grandmaster received any sponsorship for chess promotion of any kind. The fact that Acers had never had the slightest chance to play for the international ranking was, of course, ignored. And, in fact, no promotion of chess is really done by the Federation at all!

Other quarters were more sympathetic. Larry Evans, himself a world famous player and co-author of a highly successful book on U.S. Champion, Bobby Fischer's best games, urged Acers to seek the help of the American Chess Foundation and other sources while in the mood to promote chess. Evans wrote, "Acers has been both amazing and good for chess, and there is room for many types of players in the garden of chess, however strange." But all doors closed and the tour looked like a bummer.

Acers reaction was typical - angry, unforgiving. He did not reply to U.S. chess officials' later correspondence, wrote dozens of prisons, hospitals and chessplayers, and even attempted to interest Mrs. Jacquelyn Piatigorsky, (petite, energetic Los Angeles founder of the world's number-one-money chess event) in sponsoring his tour. She, like the U.S. Chess Federation was not certain that Acers could pull off a knock-em-dead-and-fun-for-everybody U.S. chess tour, much less entertain thousands of people in prisons, and she politely backed away. But the tremendous drive and enthusiasm Acers gets around his ideas came to the fore when the collapse of even a small western U.S. tour seemed imminent.

8 --Cont. next page--

Throughout 15 prison and 16 small chess club exhibitions in the Western United States, Jude Acers began proceedings with the following two games. Let's stop the clock and marvel at

THE MOST INCREDIBLE GAMES EVER PLAYED (Selected and annotated by Jude Acers)

White: Hamppe Black: Mettner
VIENNA 1873 Vienna Game

1.P-K4, P-K4
2.N-QB3
The Vienna Game played for the Championship of Vienna!
2..... B-B4
3. N-QR4 ?!
Much analyzed at this time in Bilguier's handbook for example I have seen many master games where White made another lemon 3.P-B4? Allowing Black an immediate win 3.....BxN,4.RxB,Q-R5ch which Black never found in game after game!
3. BxPch!
4. KxB Q-R5ch
5. K-K3 Q-B5ch
6. K-Q3 P-Q4
7. K-B3 !
If 7. N-QB3,PxPch;8.NxP,B-KB4; 9.Q-K2,N-KB3; or if Q-K2,B-Q2!
7. QxKP
8. K-N3
If 8.P-QN3,Q-Q5 mate
8. N-QR3 !!
Inviting (a) 9.BxN,PxB;10.K-R3! R-QN1;11.P-B3,QxNP; 12.N-K2,B-N5 13.R-K1,QxRP (b) What Follows!
9. P-QR3!
If 9. P-B3,B-Q2;10.P-Q4,P-QN4;11. N-B5,NxN;12.PxN,Q-R5 mate. The text threatens 10. N-QB3 to be followed by 11.K-R2.
9. QxN ch !!!
Forced but just unbelievable. Black can't possibly have a mating net... or can he?
10. KxQ N-B4 ch
11. K-N4 P-QR4 ch !!
Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.
12. KxN
If 12.K-B3,P-Q5ch;13.K-B4,P-QN3!;14. K-Q5,P-KB3;15.B-N5ch,K-Q1 threatening 16.....B-K6ch;17.K-B6,R-R2; with the idea of 18.....N-K2 mate. Black would keep a draw in hand
despite a Queen minus vrs two lowly pawns! What happens now is both unexpected and beautiful.
12. N-K2 !
Threatens mate in two beginning with either 13....., B-Q2 or 13.....,P-QN3
13. B-N5ch ! K-Q1
14. B-B6 ! P-N3 ch
15. K-N5 NxB !
16. KxN !
If 16.K-R4,N-Q5!;17.Q-B1,B-Q2ch;18. Q-N5,BxQ mate.
16. B-N2 ch !!
17. K-N5 !
If 17.KxB,K-Q2 and Black mates in 3.
17. B-R3 ch !
18. K-B6 !!
Note 18.K-R4,B-B5! and mate in 1.

18. B-N2 ch
19. K-N5 B-R3 ch
20. K-B6 DRAW

The immortality of a Queen Sac!

White: E.Z. Adams Black: Carlos Torre
NEW ORLEANS 1920 Philidor's Def.

1. P-K4 P-K4
2. N-KB3 P-Q3
One of Torre's favorite defenses.
This game is so extraordinary that
many people believe Grandmaster Torre
actually played White but the open-
ing choice, the fact that Torre
practically never played 1.P-K4,
add the generally well established
regard for E.Z. Adams which this
annotator encountered many times
in Louisiana leads us to believe
that the game was played exactly as
presented here.
3. P-Q4 PxP
3., N-KB3 is perfectly good
Despite much analysis to the contrary.
4. QxP N-QB3
5. B-QN5 B-Q2
6. BxN BxB
7. N-B3 N-KB3
8. O-O !
Much better than the premature 8.B-KN5
seen in master games even today.
8. B-K2
9. N-Q5 ! BxN
10. PxP O-O
11. P-QB4 P-B3
12. R-K1 PxP
13. PxP P-QR4
14. B-Kn5 R-K1

14...., P-KR3 ! (Acers) Equalizes.
15. R-K2 ! R-QB1 ?
15...., P-KR3 is necessary.
16. R/1-K1
Believe it or not White has a posi-
tionally crunching game!
16. Q-Q2
17. BxN ! BxB
Leading to an absolutely fantastic
conclusion, Fascinating is 17...., PxP !
18. N-KR4 ! (Vuckovitch) but not the
dreamy 18.RxB7, QxR ! (18...., RxB7; 19.RxR,
QxR; 20.Q-N4ch spears a rook at QB8
and winds up a piece to the good !)
19.RxQ, R-B8ch and mate in three.
18. Q-KN4 !!! Q-N4
19. Q-QB4 !! ...
Not as many people asked on my tour;
19.P-QR4, QxR !; and wins.
19. Q-Q2
20. Q-QB7 !!! Q-N4 !
21. P-QR4 !!!
In my opinion the most interesting
move of the game. 21 QxNP ?, QxR ! and
again wins for Black.
21. QxRP
Now deflected, the Black Queen
cannot sacrifice at E2 and maybe
trapped.
22. R-K4 ! Q-N4
23. QxNP ! Black Resigns.
I hope that readers enjoy these
thrillers with a zest that at least
partially matches the interest that
thousands of people had in them
when I was traveling about. These
two games alone are all the evidence
one need offer that chess is the
most wonderful and thrilling of
all games. Jude Acers-Salt Lake City
July 30, 1970

The ingredients were typically American in a time when that description is practically dirty language. Like magic Acers found a team of super-willing helpers. They included first and foremost, a 53-year-old multi-millionaire named Karl Bach, a San Francisco insurance wizard who didn't waste time with formalities, and put Acers on the road. Two relatively unnoticed chess organizers, Richard Shorman, editor of a chess column in the Hayward Daily Review, and an Army sergeant in Sacramento, Chuck Singleton, both began booking Acers like mad despite onerous paperwork and the problem of finding out exactly where Acers was at any given time. Things really began to move. Acers' freebee exhibition was like something for nothing and nobody really believed it would work. But it did.

To see Acers give an exhibition, particularly a prison exhibition out in the sticks, is like seeing Midas turn a horribly barren street to gold. He is electrifying and loves chess so much that everyone forgets that he is not yet a grandmaster (he has won about 150 tournaments to date), that his official U.S. Chess Federation rating does not include credit for two of his finest performances last year, because a crazed, drunken chess official failed to submit the results to the U.S. Chess Federation and all records of them are supposedly lost. (Bitterly he often recalls the hundreds of hours of play and preparation, done for nothing).

But this last prison lecture and simultaneous chess exhibition, given before scarcely 40 prisoners and a strangely curious, ever increasing number of guards was, somehow, his very best.

One gets a good idea how things are going when Acers' glasses tumble down a ditch while he is wrestling with a wall chessboard which he uses for his chess talks. Both lens fall out and scatter. Acers is practically blind for chess-playing purposes without his glasses (too many years in dimly-lit hotel rooms, he explains). But, of course, being a super-confident darling of the gods and riding a star of destiny as well, has something to do with one's fate. Acers just trots into the ditch, finds both lenses, a little dusty, but miraculously intact - he snaps them into a slightly bent frame which is about five feet away and hops up with nary a broken stride. Happens every day. Ho-hum. Next business.

The next business is meeting Mr. Larsen, prison co-ordinator of gymnastics, boxing and games. He apologizes in advance for the "few" convicts the prison can muster for the event, knowing that Acers has played before standing-room-only crowds (two or three thousand people at Louisiana State University and numerous high schools).

Acers just flashes a huge smile, says, "Gosh, man - 40 people are just right...I've had only six, or seven sometimes in small club exhibitions. It doesn't matter. I give everything I have, everytime"

Larsen smiles too, still a little amazed at Jude standing there saying these words in rapid streams and complete with blinking blue eyes, all smiles with his shoes covered by the hot (99°) Utah dust. "You're too good to be true." Larsen mumbled, gladly leading us over to the entrance.

The feature of all prisons that bothers Jude Acers immediately and most is the electronic gate, the quiet, lockless steel doors that open without question only for him because his long hair and mod appearance tip off guards throughout the prison that he is neither friend nor foe. Again and again, no questions asked, he has made his way effortlessly through five, six or even seven doors which opened instantly at his approach to the gymnasium or library where every exhibition takes place. "I counted these doors, always," Jude told me. "I hated the way they opened so slickly, so cruelly. I know prisons fail, destroy people. How can men live without chicks around for long? I get lonely and freaked out after 20 days of just travelling, so how do those guys survive in there?" He gets no reply and moves down the hall through two more gates.

One thing that Jude is sure of is that every prison's grapevine is guaranteed to get his exhibition off the ground. Thanks to the publication of some of his best and most sensational games by a New York chessmaster Albert Horowitz (chess editor of the New York Times and Saturday Review). Jude can be certain that somebody, somewhere in every prison knows that something "far out" is coming to visit. And as Jude says, it only takes one to pass the word.

The one at the Utah State Prison was "Tiny", the prison champion who was waiting behind the third door. He was a man of few words, figuring Acers could play everything by ear. Acers listened to him carefully, silently and added only a question or two at the end. As I watched it occurred to me that every prison was Carnegie Hall to him with a thousand eyes and ears to be pleased. But I was still totally unprepared for the incredible two and one-half hour exhibition which was only minutes away.

Acers just walked into the gymnasium and opened up. ("I don't like to wait around," he says). "Hello, I would like to convince you that chess is the most wonderful and thrilling game in the world. To do this I would like to show you two games selected from maybe fifty thousand games in my library - selected to show you just what makes chess so fabulous...I call them 'the most incredible games ever played'..." 9

Continued next page

It sounded like M-i-c-k-e-y M-o-u-s-e. I started to laugh, almost, that is. Because somehow he made the whole damn thing work. One by one he gained the absolute attention of everybody in the place, about 40 prisoners and a fast, increasing number of fascinated guards. "Everybody plays," one said later.

Silence reigned as step by step Acers explained what could have happened and why certain moves were played in two classic games. He gave colorful, accurate analysis and simplified everything so that everybody knew what was happening throughout. When he opened the floor for questions hands went up like rockets and he fielded even absolute beginner questions skillfully, marvelously - so that nobody felt stupid. But mostly it was his memory and perfect understanding of every move of the games that made everything click like a symphony of chess learning. The games he showed were in fact like the best ones he plays - imaginative, complex, shocking and deeply planned. When he finished his lecture after one and one-half hours (entirely without notes of course) the whole place went nuts.

People were standing, clapping, yelling - "Let's have some more man" - "Now man where in the hell do you think you're going? You ain't ever leavin' this place!" - "well, what are you stoppin' for man - keep-a-going" - "More!" - "Right on man - right on!" - "All right - all right" - and Jude Acers, world's greatest chess ham, loving every second of it, was standing there aglow, smiling... with only his mind he had torn the walls down. He winked at me.

"I try to go only where I am loved, wanted. You'll never believe where this philosophy was pushed into print - by Cassius Clay who said it in one form or another several times in 1967. Most Americans, particularly college and high school minds are negatively oriented toward the pure sensuality of pure mental combat which makes chess the world's most savage sport. Believe me, it makes pro-football and boxing resemble old lady pursuits like tiddly-winks.

"And chess is really a mental narcotic much stronger than artificially contrived ones, much more than the greatest game in the world. I've said this often but few really believe it. When I go to schools in fact, I have to work extra hard to interest people unless they are quite young groups. Then I go over like gangbusters."

Reflecting on chess as it really is, Jude Acers is surely someone who should know. "Chess is an easy game to learn and to improve. I've taught hundreds of children and some girls who can stand me for half an hour, too." But the horrible myths that chess is an old man's game (90% of the world's active professionals are under 40) and takes years to play (Jude beat 114 players at one time in eight and one-half hours) hurt people trying to teach and promote chess very badly. "I move so fast when I teach that people learning don't have time to remember that chess is supposed to be hard to learn," he says with a satisfied grin and another wink of confirmation. "They learn before they're afraid!"

To wrap up his prison exhibition he lectured on two of his own games emphasizing tactics and general chess strategy. I, for example, learned more in this 40 minutes than in all my previous ten years of chessplay.

He answered more questions and gave out autographed scoresheets from international master William Addison of San Francisco who had just returned from a Venezuela international tournament. "Addison and Robert Byrne of Indianapolis never get any publicity but they're two of about 20 players outside Russia that really know what's happening at the chessboard," Jude told the prisoners. "They're both real grandmasters and nobody in the United States even knows they are alive probably." Yet Addison only last year became one of three Americans to represent the U.S. in the world championship finals by placing second in the U.S. qualifying event, much like a ghost being elected president of the United States. Acers also mentioned Julio Kaplan, a 20-year-old super-star who won the Junior Championship of the world while living in Puerto Rico five years ago, and who recently drew with the world champion Boris Spassky of Russia as well as beating Bent Larsen of Denmark, the world's number one tournament player. Kaplan, now living in Berkeley while attending classes at the University of California, is going to be "just great" Acers said. The lecture ended to standing applause.

Then the final act. Acers took on everybody in the place simultaneously... moving from board to board like a robot. He won every game in one hour and ten minutes flat. Guards and convicts followed his every move with awe, thunderstruck at his arrogance, confidence and speed.

It was five minutes past nine. Someone from the prison office wanted to know "when the chess program would end." Acers finished off three games in four minutes and it was all over. Everyone was smiling. There was nothing more to do now but gather up chess equipment and shake hands. Somehow everyone wanted to touch Acers as if he were not real. This also had happened to him in other prisons before.

September 1955

William Bills placed first in the Seafair open, with a 5½-1½ score. Robert Edberg and Dan Wade both finished with 4½-1½ and 19 Solkoff points to tie for 2/3 place. N. Rossolino, of Paris, France defeated Sam Reshevsky, to take first place in the U.S. Open. Washington players in the tournament did well; R. Brieger and W. Bills both scored 7-5, while V. Pupols and Gerald Soan scored 6-6, and Ted Warner 5½-6½. 14 pages in this issue.

September 1960

Jim McCormick easily won the Oregon Open with a score of 6½-1½. 2nd went to Garry Singer 5½-1½ in a fine showing. 32 players were in the tournament. In an upset, the United States student team, upset both Russia and Yugoslavia to take the World Championship for student teams. their score for this showing was 4½-1½. Ken Hartwig won the Walla Walla Valley Chess Championship with a perfect 5-0 score. A match was announced between Sam Reshevsky and Pal Benko. It would be a ten game match. \$1,00 would go to the winner and \$500 to the loser. R. Byrne won the U.S. Open with a 10½-1½ score.

September 1965

Dr. E. Macaskasy took the Seafair Open. 2nd went to K. Pullen and 3rd to V. Pupols, (he's sure showing up often this month!) all three of the players had a close final score, with the Doctor having a 5-1 score, as did Pullen. Pupols was right on their heels however with a 4½-1½ score. The Canadian Championship was won by Yanofsky, for the 8th time! His score was 19-1. The Ashland Chess Tournament was won by Ivars Dalbergs with a 5-0 score, followed by Aurthor Wang. Ah, but our encounters with Mr. Dalbergs yet! He also won the Oregon Chess Championship, with a 6-1 score. 23 pages this month.

Slowly we wound our way out, watched silently by "Tiny", Utah State Prison chess champion. Jude had been careful not to play him so as to leave one player around on which other chess players could build a chess club, an unbeaten champ. "Horowitz says it's not cool to beat everybody, but I never throw games," he confided. "Sometimes I offer a draw right away before the opponent has a chance to go wrong. This is to make sure I don't score a wipeout."

In the free air of the prison parking lot Mr. Larsen thanked Jude profusely and made interesting comparisons between boxing and chess promotion for prisons. He begged Acers to come again. Jude appeared flustered, uncertain. "Maybe next year, in February. It depends on what Karl Bach (The San Francisco millionaire who entirely backed the tour) or the Piatigorsky Foundation or the U.S. Chess Federation people think about it. Maybe somebody besides Bach will believe in me."

Suddenly there wasn't much more to say. The greatest chess exhibition I've seen or ever will see was over.

In a car headed for Salt Lake City Acers talked about chess in America. "You must understand that chess until very recently wasn't calculated to impress a guy's girlfriend, for example. She is interested in homemaking, children, certain weekly paychecks, and so-called security which is just barely mental survival. She's cosmetic conscious, white conscious, success conscious and simply isn't equipped to like chess and the potentially great young players that are springing up across the country. So, believe me, 90 percent of good, young talent quit chess study as well as tough master competition while in college because the status value of a really good master is zero they believe. Chicks are under terrible pressures that take them and those people around them away from any real interest in a mental game. And it's curtains for talent when chess vs. a beautiful gal is the feature bill!"

I couldn't help thinking about this statement as Jude was waiting for his San Francisco plane. He drew out a large magnetic chess set and began analyzing his favorite "Tarrasch Defense to the Queens Gambit" from analysis published in Schack Echo a German chess publication.

As he was moving one piece after another about in the terminal, a stunning brunette stopped and dropped beside him. "What are those little men doing?" she asked, eyes wide with interest.

"They're chess pieces," he said.

"Chess -- isn't that like checkers, a little?"

"Well gosh, not really. It's a thriller - diller game that's about one thousand, five hundred years old from either Persia or India."

Then Jude Acers fixed his blue eyes and flashing smile on the chick.

"Would you like me to teach you how to play this game? It's really easy - like presto - do you want to learn right now?" Jude says.

Transfixed, the woman snuggled a little closer and Jude snuggled a little closer and the chess lesson began. She was smiling all the while (her name was Beverly, by the way), and effortlessly followed his introductory lesson on how the pieces moved. She was charmed. She was fascinated. She wanted also to know just how great a teacher and player Jude was. Modest, humble Jude wasted no time in telling her the whole truth plus or minus a few details. He did manage to explain that he was not world champion...yet.

Agog, the beautiful Beverly purred, "You're amazing, Jude."

"I know", said Jude instantly.

"I mean, I always thought chess was a hard game for old meanies," she smiled sweetly.