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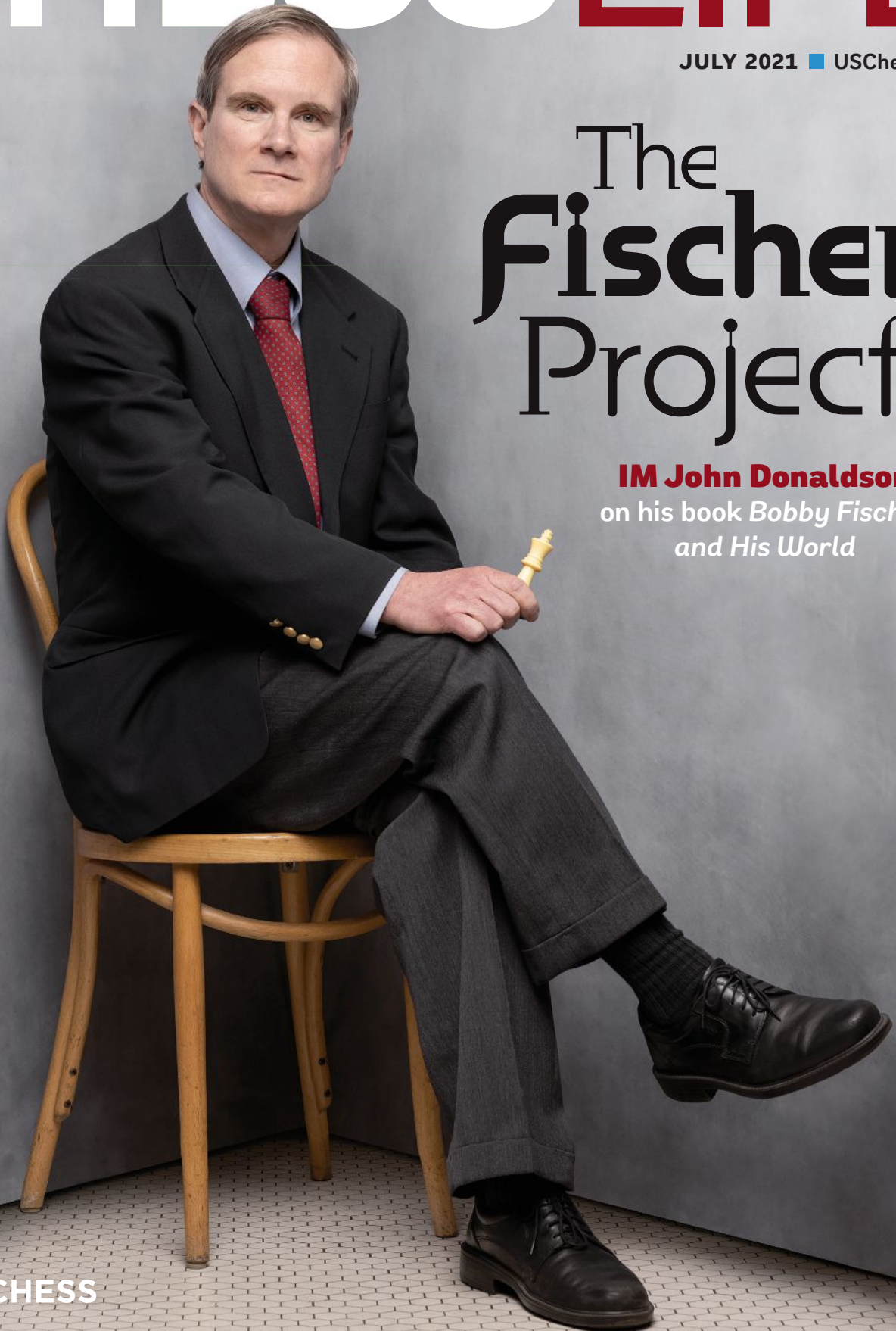
# CHESS LIFE

JULY 2021 ■ USChess.org

## The Fischer Project

**IM John Donaldson**

on his book *Bobby Fischer  
and His World*





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IM John Donaldson  
in the Mechanics'  
Institute Chess  
Room, May 2021

# The Fischer Project

**IM John Donaldson**  
on his ongoing Fischer  
project, some remaining  
Fischer mysteries, and  
his best game



PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
**IAN SPANIER**  
ON LOCATION AT  
MECHANICS' INSTITUTE,  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

**L**IKE MANY OF MY CONTEMPORARIES, I WAS inspired to take up tournament chess after watching Bobby Fischer win the World Championship. Along with millions of others, I followed the match in my daily newspaper and tuned in to watch Shelby Lyman's coverage on PBS. Shortly after Bobby's victory I paid my first visit to the Tacoma Chess Club and so began what is now nearing a 50-year involvement with the game.

Ten years ago, I began the research for what would come to be *Bobby Fischer and His World*. One of the motivations for writing this book was the opportunity to repay a debt of gratitude to Bobby for sparking my interest. Another was a desire to try to solve some of the countless mysteries in Fischer's life, both at the board and away from it. Finally, I wanted to pay tribute to the many unsung heroes of American chess during the 1950s and 1960s. The world was a much smaller place and US Chess, with fewer than 5,000 members when Fischer won his first U.S. Championship in 1958, was no exception. Despite constant financial difficulties, the organization punched well above its weight with a half dozen world class players and a first-rate magazine.

One thing I had no illusions about was writing a biography on Bobby. That job had already been done, and done well, by Frank



Brady in his masterful trilogy — two quite different editions of *Profile of a Prodigy* and *Endgame*. If you want to learn about Fischer's life from beginning to end, this is the place to start.

Likewise, Bobby's games have been well covered, both by him (*My 60 Memorable Games*) and others. Andy Soltis' *Bobby Fischer Rediscovered* does a particularly good job of covering Fischer's lesser-known masterpieces. Instead, my aim was to examine in more depth how he got to be so good so quickly as well as explore some of the lesser-known moments in his life.

One thing I learned early in my research was that Bobby was full of surprises. One of the most interesting was his participation in the Second Annual Dewar's Sports Celebrity Tennis Tournament held in Carlsbad, California, just outside San Diego. This event was held on June 5, 1972, a mere month before the start of the match in Reykjavik.

Among those competing was a veritable Who's Who of American sports stars of the time, including swimmer Mark Spitz, who would go on to win seven gold medals in the Olympics later that summer. There was also the infamous O.J. Simpson, but according to newspaper accounts, it was Bobby's autograph that all the other competitors wanted. Baseball great Hank Greenberg, the oldest competitor at age 60, teamed with USC Basketball coach Bob Boyd to win the event. Does anyone know how Bobby did? Has any other World Chess Champion competed against professional athletes?

*John is one of the nicest people I have met in the chess world. Ever since I first met him, he has been a positive force in my chess career, always encouraging me and pointing me in the right direction. John takes his job as U.S. Team Captain seriously, and there is no doubt in my mind that the team's success in recent years is not only due to the hard work of the players, but also John's. — GM RAY ROBSON*

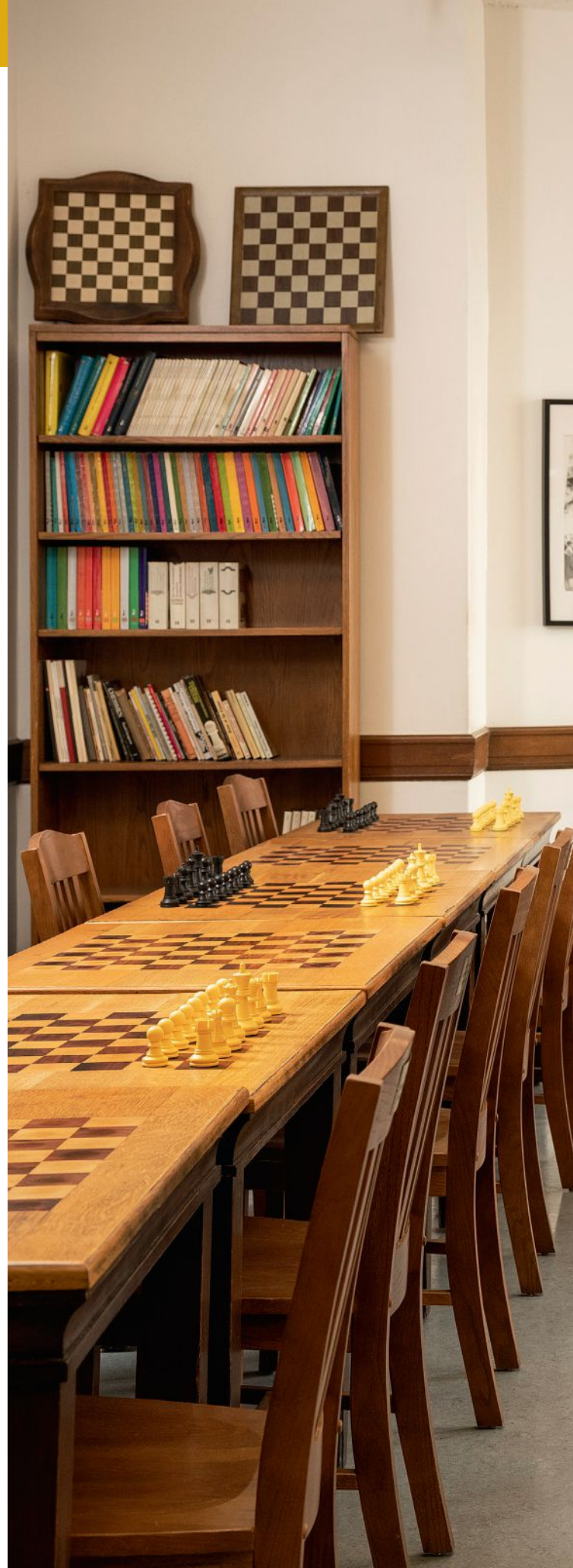
The discovery that the Marshall Chess Club has many of Bobby's missing games from early in his career was a real bombshell for me. How did they get there? Fischer's mother Regina left the family apartment to join the San Francisco to Moscow March for Peace in the fall of 1960. Before leaving she thought it prudent to transfer the family papers to her not-long-married daughter Joan for safekeeping.

Unbeknownst to Bobby, these papers included many of his early games played between 1955 and 1958.

These games were long thought lost forever, but they magically resurfaced when Joan's husband, Russell Targ, donated them to the Marshall Chess Club roughly a decade ago. The M.C.C.'s Board of Governors' fiduciary responsibilities have precluded the games from being released, but hopefully in the not-too-distant future, they will be. Among the highlights are some of the missing games from the Fischer-Matulovic training match.

The noted collector David De Lucia has amassed the largest collection of Fischer memorabilia in the world and generously shared many of these gems in the books *Bobby Fischer Uncensored* and *Bobby Fischer — Triumph and Despair*. One of the highlights is hidden in a hundred-page manuscript dated November 18, 1997. Most of this work deals with Fischer's fringe theories, including how the Kasparov-Karpov matches were fixed, but this 16-page

The Mechanics' Institute was organized in 1854 in San Francisco, California. Donaldson was M.I. Chess Director from 1998 through 2018.



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review of *Garry Kasparov Teaches Chess* and *Kasparov on the King's Indian* is vintage Bobby.

His dissections of Vasiukov-Lebedev, Moscow 1960, from the former and the 11th game of the 1990 World Championship match between the two Ks in the latter, is a real tour de force. Fischer points out numerous mistakes, including several analytical errors. Bobby, who had panned Yudovich's book on the King's Indian back in 1969 (a potboiler!), was a tough but fair reviewer.

To be fair to Kasparov, although both books came out under his name, it would not be surprising to learn he had little or nothing to do with them. Garry may not have read the fine print on the contract he signed while still a Soviet citizen. This may have required that a certain number of books appear with him listed as the author. It should also be pointed out that Raymond Keene, listed as the co-author for the King's Indian book, was churning out books at the time and was not known for quality control. All this said, Bobby's masterful review is fascinating and makes for compelling reading.



*John Donaldson is my go-to guy for questions about chess history. If he doesn't know it, it didn't happen.*  
**— IM JACK PETERS**

One can only wish he had focused on similar chess work (a book about the 1972 match for example) instead of making repeated visits to the dark side.

Bobby Fischer first appeared on the US Chess rating list on May 20, 1956, with an initial rating of 1726. Less than two years later, in March of 1958, he was rated 2626, having just won the U.S. Championship. Soon he would qualify for the Candidates and earn the grandmaster title. How does one explain this one-of-a-kind quantum leap of 900 points? While there's little question that this rapid advance was unprecedented, it's important to consider that US Chess ratings at the time were only calculated once a year. Bobby's true strength in the spring of 1956 was likely closer to strong Expert.

There is no single explanation for Fischer's big jump. When asked later Bobby said, "I just got good," but there is no denying the importance of his relationship with Jack Collins. The two first met during the 1956 U.S. Amateur Championship on Memorial Day weekend in

Construction on the current Mechanics' Institute building began in 1909. The circular staircase, designed by Albert Pissis, is seen here.

Asbury Park, New Jersey. Soon after Bobby became a fixture at the Collins' apartment, which doubled as the Hawthorne Chess Club.

The Hawthorne was to become Fischer's second home the next two years. It helped that Collins lived a short walk from Erasmus High School, which Bobby was attending at the time. Collins writes in *My Seven Chess Prodigies* about their daily routine, which would commence with Bobby spending his lunch hour with him before running back to classes. When school ended, Fischer would return to spend five- to six-hours studying chess before Regina got off work and picked up her son.

During his time at Collins' home Bobby studied thousands of master games, played training games (and lots of blitz), and also made heavy use of the first-rate library. Collins, rated 2375 when they first met, had been among the top 15 players in the United States the previous decade. His understanding of the game was likely even greater, as physical challenges affected his endurance during long tournament games.

Fischer was not the only strong player to frequent the Hawthorne. The Byrne brothers, Bill Lombardy, Raymond Weinstein, and a number of strong masters including Allen Kaufman, were all regulars. Bobby may not have had ChessBase or engines, but here he was able to fully immerse himself in the game. Combine this with an enormous capacity for study, two strong clubs in the Marshall and Manhattan, and a unique gift for the game ... it's clear that the ingredients for something exceptional to happen were all there.

Looking back, one realizes the role luck played in Fischer's meteoric rise. Had Regina not moved the family to New York when she did, there is no question that Bobby would never have realized his potential. Today, thanks to technology, strong players can appear anywhere. That was not true in the 1950s, where the Olympiad team and U.S. Championship were dominated by New Yorkers.

It was also fortuitous that Collins and Fischer lived less than two miles apart and that Erasmus High School was so close to the former's home. Collins and his sister Ethel moved to Stuyvesant Town in Manhattan in 1959. Imagine if they had done so a few years earlier! Bobby would undoubtedly still have become a very strong player, but not one of the all-time greats. ♠



## Influenced by a Legend BY IAN SPANIER

THERE I WAS, a 19-year-old intern at GQ Magazine when I walked the Scottish, white-haired, seersucker suit-wearing *LIFE*

magazine legend Harry Benson. I knew Benson's work from college, and was a huge fan (although I tried to play it cool). Benson took a liking to me, and a friendship formed. I was soon privy to Harry's tales of Presidents and Royals, celebrities and athletes, and of course, The Beatles. It was an honor to hear the greatest of

stories direct from the man whose work I'd admired for years. The stories continued when I was fortunate enough to assign Harry in one of my photo editor gigs.

Of course, knowing Harry's career, I was very familiar his pictures of Bobby Fischer. My favorites were the images of Fischer with a white horse in Iceland. Harry always acknowledged the knowing nature of animals, who read people just as he does ... with a very discerning eye.

Harry's portraits epitomized his ability to integrate himself with his subject, and to relentlessly press to get the shot. "Bring the job home, whatever it takes, that's your job," he'd tell me as we sat

enjoying pasta at Isle of Capri, his spot in New York City. I approach every shoot with that mantra firmly in my mind.

Sometimes I revisit images from masters like Benson, looking at their examples and exemplars to ground my work. Before this shoot, I sifted through Harry's images of Fischer, finding my own take on them. One difference here is that I was not embedded with Donaldson the way Harry was with Fischer, so I'd need to create that feel as best I could in our session. Whether I achieved it is ultimately in the eye of the beholder, but I left the Mechanics' Institute that day feeling like I'd brought it home, just as Harry taught me to.





The Fischer - Reshevsky match, 1961

# The 1961 Fischer-Reshevsky Match

An Excerpt from *Bobby Fischer and his World*

## THE MATCH

The Fischer - Reshevsky match was set for sixteen games, with the first four in New York, the next eight in Los Angeles, and the final four to be played in New York. The full sixteen games would be played regardless of one player reaching  $8\frac{1}{2}$  points prior.

New York City: July 16 (2pm), July 18 (5pm), July 20 (5pm), July 24 (5pm)

Los Angeles: July 27 (7:30pm), July 30 (7:30pm), Aug. 1

(7:30pm), Aug. 3 (7:30pm), Aug. 6 (7:30pm), Aug. 8 (7:30pm), Aug. 10 (7:30pm), Aug. 12 (7:30pm)

New York City: Aug. 15 (5pm), Aug. 17 (5pm), Aug. 20 (2pm), Aug. 22 (5pm)

Games one through four were played at the Empire Hotel in New York (44 West 63rd Street, near Lincoln Center), starting on Sunday, July 16, 1961. Why the games were played there instead of the Henry

Hudson Hotel at West 57th Street, where the Manhattan Chess Club was headquartered at the time, is not clear. It is but one unanswered question in a match that would have undoubtedly benefited from stricter regulations.

The Fischer – Reshevsky match was sponsored by the American Chess Foundation and Jacqueline Piatigorsky. This was the first of several world class events that Piatigorsky would be involved with in the 1960s — the 1963 Interzonal playoff, the two Piatigorsky Cups, and the three-player playoff for the last spot in the 1968 Candidates matches being the others.

The first leg of the match went smoothly with no controversies on or off the board. The first two games were dramatic, Fischer and Reshevsky trading wins. Games three and four were draws, leaving the match tied when they left New York for Los Angeles.

Neither player had an official second, but International Master Bernard Zuckerman helped Bobby analyze his adjournment from game one:<sup>1</sup>

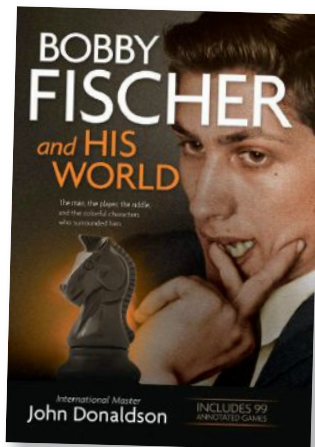
We found a draw in the rook and pawn ending (50. ... Kg7), but he saw a ghost and deviated at the board and ended up losing.

Incidentally Fischer's lapses in the endgame during the match led Reshevsky to claim the endgame was Bobby's weakness. He might have been weaker than Reshevsky in this phase of the game in 1961, but that certainly wasn't true later.

One thing that does stand out is how few Queen endings Fischer had during his career — only the games with Berliner (1957/58 U.S. Championship), Barcza (Zurich 1959) and Spassky (game nineteen of the 1992 match) come to mind.

After the fourth game on July 24, the players traveled to Los Angeles and resumed the match on July 27 at the brand-new Herman Steiner Chess Club. Located at 8801 Cashio Street in West Los Angeles (not far from Beverly Hills), the Steiner Chess Club flourished in the 1960s and early 1970s. Frank Lloyd Wright Jr., who had designed an addition to the Piatigorsky's home at 400 S. Bundy Drive, was the architect for the building that housed the Steiner Club.

<sup>1</sup> From an interview Zuckerman gave to the World Chess Hall of Fame in 2014.



This was the first public event at the club named for International Master Herman Steiner (1905–1955), a strong player and outstanding promoter of the game. Steiner was a good friend and chess teacher to Jacqueline Piatigorsky and raised her game from near-beginner to close to 2000 in just a few years.

The games in the Los Angeles stage of the match were held at two different locations — the Steiner Chess Club sharing honors with the Beverly Hilton Hotel. Games were adjourned after five hours of play, and all adjournments were played at the Steiner Chess Club, which would also have been the venue for the ill-fated twelfth game of the match. A pass to see the eight games of the match in Los Angeles cost \$10 (\$86 in 2020 dollars).

The referee for the Los Angeles leg was National Master Irving Rivise (1918–1976). A former USCF vice-president, Rivise grew up in New York but moved to Los Angeles after World War II. Well-liked and respected and a strong player to boot, Rivise was a natural to be the referee for the most important chess event held in southern California since Pasadena 1932. Alas, he would soon have his hands full.

The match provided many surprises. Contrary to Kashdan's prediction, Fischer did not win any games out of the opening. Reshevsky's adoption of the Accelerated Dragon variation of the Sicilian in the five games in which he played Black served him well. He willingly accepted slightly worse positions (as did Kramnik against Kasparov with his Berlin in their 2000 World Championship match) confident that he could hold. Sammy did lose a sharply played game that transposed into a Dragon in game two, but after that Bobby got little out of the openings and all four encounters were drawn. Clearly Fischer must have feared an improvement from the opening of game two, but giving up a sharp weapon might have been a mistake.

While Reshevsky stuck to his guns as Black, Fischer varied between the King's Indian and 1. ... Nf6 with 2. ... e6 against Sammy's habitual 1. d4. Examining the games more than five decades later, Fischer should have been one or two points ahead after eleven games, but he didn't take advantage of his opportunities.

Reshevsky was undoubtedly upset when he lost game five after achieving a winning position, but that was a full fight where the win was never simple and Fischer had to outplay his rival step-by-step to turn the game around. While it is true that had the match continued, Fischer would have had White in three of the five remaining games, the momentum had probably shifted a little to Reshevsky's side after the near death save in game eleven.

Round 8 (Game 33 in *Bobby Fischer and his World*) was arguably the biggest missed opportunity of the match.

## SICILIAN DEFENSE (B36)

GM Bobby Fischer

GM Sammy Reshevsky

New York/Los Angeles (8), 1961

### 1. e4 c5

Reshevsky answered 1. e4 throughout his career by either the Sicilian or 1. ... e5. One might have thought in this match Sammy would have chosen the supposedly more solid 1. ... e5 aiming to defend against the Ruy Lopez. The only problem with this is

that he would have been playing into one of Bobby's greatest strengths. Sure enough, when Reshevsky made the switch to 1. ... e5 at the Second Piatigorsky Cup in 1966 and at Sousse the following year, he paid the price and was dutifully ground down.

### 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 g6

The adoption of the Accelerated Dragon was an excellent practical choice by Reshevsky who was a firm believer in a "win with White and draw with Black philosophy" when facing strong opposition. The successful

implementation of this strategy was one of the things that made Sammy such a strong match player.

Reshevsky toyed with the Accelerated Dragon and Dragon during his career, but his main Sicilian weapon was the Taimanov (4. ... e6). Maybe he should have played the Accelerated more often. Everyone remembers his famous loss to Bobby (1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 g6 5. Nc3 Bg7 6. Be3 Nf6 7. Bc4 0-0 8. Bb3 Na5? 9. e5 Ne8? 10. Bxf7+! Kxf7 11. Ne6), but in sixteen games with this opening (including Maróczy Binds



Without *chess.com* or Chess24 to broadcast games, the playing hall in 1961 was packed with ardent fans of both players.

via English opening move orders) he lost only twice against very strong opposition! Of course, he only won once, but such results were in keeping with Reshevsky's strategy.

#### 5. c4

This move requires some explanation. Fischer's usual choice was 5. Nc3, but Reshevsky had held him twice quite easily with the offbeat 5. ... Bg7 6. Be3 Nf6 7. Bc4 0-0 8. Bb3 Ng4 9. Qxg4 Nxd4 with Bobby trying 10. Qd1 in game four and 10. Qh4 in game six.

Fischer definitely found this line frustrating to meet as in his only other encounter with it, against Ballard at a simultaneous in Wichita in 1964, he lost in the main line after 10. Qd1 Nxb3 11. axb3 b6 12. Bd4 (12. Qd5 Bxc3+! 13. bxc3 Qc7! was game four of the match) 12. ... f6.

While Fischer was skilled at playing the

Black side of the Maróczy, his performances with White (three draws) were less impressive.

#### 5. ... Nf6 6. Nc3 Nxd4 7. Qxd4 d6 8. Be2 Bg7 9. Be3 0-0 10. Qd1

Fischer varied with the inferior 10. Qd1 in game 10. Bobby later started playing this variation as Black, reaching it from English opening move orders. One wonders if Sammy's play in this match had an influence on him.

#### 10. ... Be6 11. 0-0 Qa5 12. Rac1

12. f4 Rfc8, draw was Fischer – Benko, U.S. Championship 1960/61. Played in the tenth round, it clinched Bobby's 4th title with a round to go.

Interesting is 12. ... Rac8 13. b3 b5 14. f5 and now either 14. ... Bd7 or 14. ... b4 gives Black an improved version of the normal line as Black has managed to play ... b7-b5 without the preparatory ... a7-a6, which means White is missing Ra1-c1. Also ...

Ra8-c8 may be better than the routine ... Rf8-c8 as the f7-square is not protected by only the king.

#### 12. ... Rfc8

This move order is often considered an inaccuracy, but it's not clear this is actually true. The correct move is held to be 12. ... a6 meeting 13. f4 with 13. ... b5, as 14. f5 allows 14. ... Bxc4.

#### 13. b3 a6 14. f4 Bg4

This looks like over-the-board improvisation by Reshevsky who borrows a well-known idea from the Dragon Sicilian — 1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 g6 6. Be2 Bg7 7. Be3 0-0 8. 0-0 Nc6 9. Nb3 Be6 10. f4 Qc8 11. Kh1 Bg4 is one example.

The more common played move, 14. ... b5, is answered by 15. f5 and Black has to retreat as c4 is protected. The standard "refutation" goes 15. ... Bd7 16. e5, but it is not at all clear White is better after 16. ... b4.

#### 15. Bd3 Bd7

White appears to have achieved what he was aiming for, but Black's position is still very resilient.

#### 16. h3

This does not look very impressive. Possibly Bobby would have done better with the more direct 16. b4 Qd8 17. Nd5 Nxd5 18. exd5 with a solid advantage.

*I am so proud that John Donaldson is my friend. He is without question one of the sincerest, kindest and most honest of men in the chess world. He is the man you want to be on your team whether as coach, manager, or shoulder to lean on. I have known him personally for almost ten years and in the chess world it is something when you can say, I don't just like this man, I trust this man. – GM WESLEY SO*

**16. ... Bc6 17. Qf2 Nd7 18. Nd5 Bxd5 19. exd5**

The structure reached after 19. exd5 is known to favor White if Black cannot achieve ... b7-b5 (for example if he is already committed to ... a7-a5). This is particularly true with the queens exchanged. Two good examples of White's chances in such positions are Gelfand–Mališauskas, Moskow 1989 and Gelfand–Andersson, Polanica-Zdrój 1997.

**19. ... b5**

Black has achieved a better version of the position reached at the end of the line starting with 16. b4.

**20. Rfe1 Nc5**

Black could have also tried 20. ... Rab8.

One move that is almost always useful in such positions is ... Bg7-f6 protecting the backward e-pawn and not fearing a trade of bishops, as after ... e7xf6 the damaged pawn structure is compensated by increased king safety and play on the dark squares.

**21. Bb1 bxc4 22. Rxc4 Nd7 23. Bd2 Qb6**

Reshevsky shows excellent judgment here as 23. ... Qd8 24. Rc6 would have been unpleasant.

**24. Rxc8+ Rxc8 25. Qxb6 Nxb6 26. Rxe7 Bc3!**

This was all nicely timed by Reshevsky who heads for a drawn ending.

26. ... Nxd5 27. Rd7 Bc3 28. Bxc3 Nxc3 transposes.

**27. Bxc3 Nxd5 28. Rd7 Nxc3?**

28. ... Rxc3! 29. Rxd6 Rc1+ 30. Kh2 Ne3 31. Bd3 Rd1 32. g4 Nc2 33. Rc6 Rd2+ 34. Kg1 Nd4 35. Rc8+ Kg7 36. Bxa6 Nf3+ 37. Kf1 Nh2+ 38. Ke1 Nf3+ forces the well-known rook and knight drawing sequence. Reshevsky, in his customary time pressure misses this, and now things start to go bad.

**29. Bd3 d5**

29. ... Nxa2 30. Bc4 would have been just what Fischer, later famous for his skill in

rook and bishop versus rook and knight endings, was looking for.

**30. Bxa6 Ra8 31. Rd6 Nxa2**

31. ... Rb8! was more accurate and very close to equal.

**32. Bb7 Rb8**

Reshevsky correctly decides his only drawing chances are with pawns on one side of the board. Instead 32. ... Ra7 33. Bxd5 Nc3 34. Bc4 leaves White with a queenside passed pawn in addition to extra material and a better minor piece.

**33. Bxd5 Nc1**

Run this game on a strong engine and you will see that White's advantage has increased substantially the last few moves. Fear not Reshevsky fans. Sammy knows exactly what he is doing. Winning chances for White require pawns on both sides of the board.

**34. f5**

34. Rd7 Nxb3 35. Rxf7 was an important alternative, as after the forced 35. ... Kh8, White gets a position very similar to the game, but with an extra pair of pawns on the board, which typically favors the side trying to win. While the player with the advantage normally tries to avoid pawn trades, here matters are not clear — in the game continuation Fischer benefits from Black's h-pawn becoming a target.

Normally this sort of ending would be drawn (remember White's rook pawn is of the wrong color) if Black's knight were on the kingside, but the question for him is how to get it there. Bobby wants to keep it off sides while advancing his king and pawns.

Objectively, Black should be able to hold, but in view of the torture he will endure the practical chances are more like 50/50 that White win or Black draws.

**34. ... gxf5 35. Rf6 Nxb3 36. Rxf5 Kh8 37. Rxf7 Nc5**

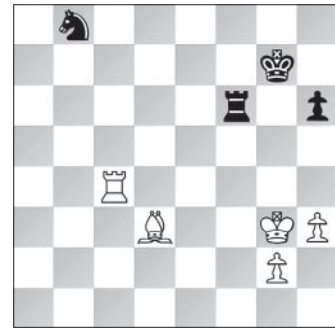
This is what Sammy has been aiming for. He is a pawn down, but all the action is on one side of the board. It doesn't help White that his h-pawn is the wrong color for his bishop.

**38. Rc7 Na6 39. Rc4**

This continues the campaign to keep the knight under house arrest. The more direct 39. Ra7 allows it to escape: for example 39. ... Nc5 40. Kf2 Rd8 41. Bf3 Nd3+ 42. Ke3 Ne5 43. Be4 Rd7 and Black draws comfortably.

**39. ... Rd8 40. Be6 Rd6 41. Bf5 Rf6 42. Bd3 h6 43. Kh2 Kg7 44. Kg3 Nb8??**

Reshevsky's understandable desire to get his knight back into play should have cost him the game. He had to continue to tread water with 44. ... Rd6 or 44. ... Rb6.

**45. Be4??**

"An incredible post-adjudgment lapse. Fischer told me he had arrived at this position in analysis, and had concluded that 45. Rc7+ Rf7 46. Rxf7+ Kxf7 47. Bb5! — stalemating the knight — lead to an easy win in the remaining king and pawn ending." [Larry Evans in *Chess Life*, October 1961, p. 295]

This is hard to understand, not only because Bobby had seen this in his adjournment analysis, but also because he had used exactly this idea to beat William Addison at the 1957 U.S. Open.

**45. ... Rf7 46. Bd5 Rd7 47. Bf3 Rf7 48. Bh5 Ra7 49. Rg4+ Kh8 50. Re4 Kg7**

Reshevsky still has to be careful. Consider that on the natural 50. ... Nd7? White has 51. Re8+ and Black must either allow a nasty pin or drop his h-pawn: 51. ... Kg7 52. Re7+ and now 52. ... Kf8 is met by 53. Rh7 while 52. ... Kh8 leaves Black totally paralyzed. In both cases White wins easily.

**51. Re6 Na6 52. Rg6+ Kh7 53. Rd6 Nc5 54. Bg6+ Kg7 55. Bf5 Ra6 56. Rd5 Ne6**

Finally Black's knight has reconnected with the rest of his army.

**57. Re5 Ra3+ 58. Kf2 Nf4 59. Re4 Nd5 60. Rg4+ Kf6 61. Be4 Ne7**

This is the perfect square for the knight where it is easily protected and guards the g6-square.

**62. Rf4+ Kg7 63. Bf3 Ra5 64. Rc4 Re5 65. Kg3 Re6 66. Rc7 Kf6 67. Kg4 Re5 68. h4 Rb5 69. Rc4 Rb6 70. Be4 Kf7 71. Rc7 Kf6 72. Kh5 Rb5+ 73. Kg4 Rb4 74. Kf3 Rb3+ 75. Kf2 Rb4 76. Ke3 Rb3+ 77. Kf4 Ng6+ 78. Kg4 Rb4 79. Rc6+ Kf7, draw.**

This had to be a bitter disappointment for Fischer who was better the entire game and missed a clear win. ♠

# Bona FIDEs

A nice, smooth win

*As fine an author and historian as John is, it's important to remember that he's also an excellent player. Here's one of his favorite games. ~ed.*

## QUEEN'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E14)

IM John Donaldson

GM Sergey Kudrin

U.S. Championship (7), Seattle, 2003

ANNOTATIONS BY  
IM JOHN DONALDSON

A smooth win over a quality opponent — Sergey played in 21 U.S. Championships between 1981 and 2010 — is always satisfying.

### 1. Nf3 c5 2. c4 b6 3. Nc3 Bb7 4. e3

This modest looking move packs more punch than one might suspect at first glance. It typically leads to isolated queen's pawn positions more commonly reached via 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. e3 or 1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 b6 4. e3.

### 4. ... Nf6 5. d4 cxd4 6. exd4 e6 7. Bd3 Be7 8. 0-0 d5

Black needs to play this now as 8. ... 0-0 is strongly met by 9. d5.

### 9. cxd5 Nxd5 10. Ne5

This move and the following one are not common in IQP positions. They are specifically aimed at taking advantage of Black's



early queenside fianchetto and the lack of a knight on f6.

### 10. ... 0-0 11. Qg4 Nxc3?!

Black's best move here is not entirely clear, but likely it is not the text.

Some of the venom behind 11. Qg4 can be seen in the line 11. ... Nd7?? 12. Bh6 Bf6 13. Qe4 and White is already winning.

The move 11. ... f5 solves some tactical issues, but at the cost of creating a weakness on e6. After 12. Qe2 Bf6 13. Bc4 White has a small but stable advantage.

Black's best try might be 11. ... Nf6 12. Qh4

Nbd7 (12. ... Ne4 13. Qh3 Qxd4 14. Bf4 Nf6 15. Ne2 Qa4 16. Rfc1 with Rc1-c4 to follow leads to difficult play for Black) 13. Rd1 Re8.

### 12. bxc3 Bf6?!

Better for White, but superior to the game continuation, is 12. ... Nd7 13. Bh6 Bf6 14. Rfe1.

### 13. Ba3?!

More precise is 13. Qh3! g6 14. Ng4 Nd7 (14. ... Bg7 15. Nh6+ Kh8 16. Ba3) 15. Nxf6+ Qxf6 16. Qg3 with Bg5 to follow leaves Black weak on the dark squares.

### 13. ... Bxe5?

Black should have played 13. ... Be7 14. Bxe7 Qxe7 15. Rae1 Nd7 16. f4, which Kopec and Ftacnik give as a slight advantage for White in their book *Winning the Won Game* on U.S. Championship brilliancy prize games. After 16. ... f5 Black actually looks pretty equal.

Probably 14. Bc1 is best hoping for a retry after 14. ... Bf6. The game continuation is

*John Donaldson is one of the greats of chess. When, in my role as the President of FIDE's Trainer's Commission, I needed an expert with impeccable integrity on chess literature as a judge for FIDE's Book of the Year award — joining the likes of GMs Yuri Averbakh and Nigel Short — John was the first person I asked. I'm told that he had to withdraw this year, as you cannot be a judge for an award you may well win. — GM JACOB AAGAARD*



Donaldson earned his International Master title in 1983, and has two Grandmaster norms to his name.

White aims to restrict any Black activity before initiating actions on the kingside. The direct 18. Re3 was also quite good.

**18. ... Bc6 19. Ba6 Rb8 20. Bd6 Ra8 21. Bc4 Qc8**



**22. Rd4!**

“A fine idea as the attacking rook will be much more dangerous on the 4th rank. White’s queen is usually strongest as the last piece in a heavy piece battery — in our game Qh3-g3, Rd4-g4. Usually when an attack gets to the point of a rook lift such as here, it spells the final phase and doom for the defender.” (Kopec and Ftacnik)

**22. ... Nf8 23. Rg4 Ng6 24. Qg3 Bd5 25. Bd3 Rd8**

25. ... Qxc3 26. Rd1 Red8 27. Rxc6! leads to a finish similar to the game continuation.

**26. c4 Bc6**



**27. Rxc6! fxc6 28. Qxc6 Rxd6**

Not 28. ... Qd7 29. Qh7+ Kf7 30. Bg6 mate.

**29. exd6 Qe8**

Or 29. ... Qf8 30. Rxe6 Qf7 31. Qh7+ Kf8 32. Re7.

**30. Qh7+ Kf8 31. Bg6, Black resigned. ♠**

a serious mistake and ultimately the losing move.

**14. Qh3!**



Here 14. Qh5 g6 15. Qxe5 Nc6 16. Qf4 is better for White but not nearly as convincing as the text.

**14. ... h6**

The best try as 14. ... g6 15. dxe5 Re8 16. Rad1 is even more difficult for Black as seen

in the following variation: 16. ... Qc7 17. Bd6 Qxc3 18. Rc1 Qd4 19. Rc7 Bd5? 20. Bxc6! hxc6 21. Rxf7 with mate to follow.

**15. dxe5**

Clearly the right choice playing for the initiative. White is certainly better after 15. Bxf8 Bxd4 16. cxd4 Kxf8, but with a pawn for the Exchange, no weaknesses, and the use of the d5-square, Black would have practical chances to resist.

**15. ... Re8**

15. ... Nd7 was of course possible but after 16. Bxf8 Black would not have a pawn for the Exchange.

**16. Rfe1 Nd7 17. Rad1 Rc8**

Kopec and Ftacnik offer the alternative 17. ... Qc8 18. Re3 Ba6, but after 19. Bc2 White is ready to start a decisive attack with Re3-g3 as Black has no defenders around his king.

**18. Bb5**



The immortal Jan Hein Donner used his best Boris Karloff (or Bela Lugosi?) impression to lighten the mood at the Second Piatigorsky Cup in 1966. An amused Bobby Fischer looks on.

# A Half Dozen Unsolved Bobby Fischer Mysteries

BY IM JOHN DONALDSON

IT MIGHT BE HARD TO BELIEVE, BUT THERE'S STILL A LOT we don't know about one of the chess world's most famous players.

In the course of my research for, and writing of, *Bobby Fischer and his World*, I found that the more I dug into Bobby's life, the more I encountered gaps in the records. Here are six of the biggest remaining Fischer mysteries. Perhaps a *Chess Life* reader holds the key to answering one or more of them?

## 1 400 MISSING SCORESHEETS FROM THE 1971 SIMUL TOUR OF ARGENTINA.

Shortly after his 1971 Candidates match with Tigran Petrosian ended, Bobby Fischer made a month long simul tour of Argentina in which

he played roughly 20 simultaneous exhibitions.

There were a couple of conditions that made these different. To begin with, Fischer faced only 20 players per simul, but the players were strong — most were rated 1800-2200, with some as high as 2400. Additionally, all players were required to keep score using carbon copy scoresheets. Bobby was to be given the top half for each game at the end of every exhibition. Several scoresheets that have surfaced from these simuls have yellow carbons, giving credence to Fischer's claim.

These scoresheets became front page news when Bobby's Pasadena storage locker was auctioned off on January 10, 1999. Four days later a furious Fischer gave a radio interview in which he claimed he

had been robbed of his treasures, with some of the most important scoresheets from the 1971 Argentine simul tour.

Simul games can often be boring one-sided affairs but Bobby claimed these were different. Early in the tour Fischer came to the realization the Argentine amateurs he faced were strong practical players but out of touch with modern opening theory. Hence, Bobby tried to beat them as quickly as possible, or at least gain a significant advantage from the opening. According to Fischer this led to a number of instructive miniatures. Unfortunately, the dozen or so games that have surfaced from the tour don't emphasize this. They are primarily the rare games Fischer lost or drew — players typically don't like to publish their losses.

Now, some 22 years after the auction, no more remaining games have surfaced. Are they in the hands of a private collector, or were they thrown out years ago by someone who did not realize their significance? Is there a game like Fischer – Celle (game 50 in *My 60 Memorable Games*), from the 1964 clock simul in Davis, California, forgotten in a dusty drawer somewhere?

## 2) MISSING CROSSTABLE FROM THE 1963 NEW YORK STATE OPEN AND MOVES FROM FISCHER – RADOJČIĆ.

The 1963 New York State Open (not to be confused with the long-running New York State Championship) is the last tournament run on the Swiss System that Bobby Fischer played in. It was here he reintroduced Steinitz's 9. Nh3 (1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. Ng5 d5 5. exd5 Na5 6. Bb5+ c6 7. dxc6 bxc6 8. Be2 h6) into Grandmaster practice in his game against Bisguier (game 45 in *My 60 Memorable Games*).

Despite its historical importance no crosstable of this event has ever been published. For Fischer fans, the consequence is that one can only make an educated guess as to what order he played his games.

This is one mystery surrounding the event, but there is another. The only moves for Fischer – Radojčić are those given as a fragment in the notes to Fischer – Bisguier in *My 60 Memorable Games* which ends with White's 15th move. Frank Brady, who helped direct the event, reported in the *Poughkeepsie Journal* that Fischer won in 33 moves, but to date the last 18 moves of the game have not surfaced.

## 3) QUESTIONS ABOUT FISCHER'S PHOTO SESSION WITH CARL MYDANS, WHICH APPEARED IN LIFE MAGAZINE IN EARLY 1964.

Harry Benson's iconic photographs of Bobby Fischer appeared in *LIFE* magazine throughout 1971 and 1972, but he was not the first famous photographer to do a pictorial on Fischer for *Life*. That honor went to Carl Mydans, who took the images that accompanied Jane

*Anyone who meets John Donaldson immediately comes away with two impressions: first, that he is a deeply kind person, and secondly, that he is totally passionate about chess, to the point of being consumed by the game.*

*If you are a Fischer fan like me, John's book is a must-read. My students have the annoying habit of frequently borrowing my books, while infrequently returning them. This is one book I refuse to lend out!*

– IM CYRUS LAKDAWALA

Howard's article "One-Track Mastermind — Cocky boy wonder of chess begins to grow up" which appeared in the February 21, 1964, issue of *Life*.

It appears Mydans took the photos in 1962 in a variety of locations around New York City. These included the subway, an arcade, and a baseball game at Yankee Stadium (or maybe the Polo Grounds where the Mets played their first two seasons). Judging from the number of photographs that appeared in the article and several others found online, Mydans and Fischer must have spent several days together. Yet there seems to be no written account of this. The same holds true for Bobby and another legendary photographer, Philippe Halsman, who took several well-known images of Fischer in 1967.

## 4) LOUISIANA CHESS NEWSLETTER FOR 1964

Older state publications are among the rarest items in chess literature. Undervalued, they are often tossed away without a second thought, but frequently contain information to be found nowhere else. *The Louisiana Chess Newsletter* for 1964, edited by Woodrow Crew, is not to be found in the John G. White Collection in Cleveland or in the holdings of the great American chess archivist Andy Ansel.

Extant references to this publication suggest it offered in depth coverage of Bobby's exhibition in New Orleans on March 26th, 1964. Does any *Chess Life* reader have this publication?

## 5) BOBBY FISCHER AND LARRY EVANS TANDEM SIMUL

Fischer gave many simuls in his career particularly in 1964 and 1970-71, but apparently only one tandem simul. The exact date of this 1961 event remains a mystery. According to Larry Evans, who was his partner, the venue was John Fursa's Chess and Checker Club (aka the Fleahouse) which was located near Times Square.

This location is confirmed by Carl B. Wagner (not to be confused with the strong master and twice future U.S. Senior champion Carl E. Wagner) who was one of the participants. Wagner, then a 19-year-old college student, remembered that Bobby played the odd-numbered moves and Evans the even. He also painfully recalled his last-minute blunder. Most of the games had finished at this point and Fischer was moving so fast that the remaining participants felt like they were playing blitz.

Two games are known from this event, which may have been organized on short notice. The two grandmasters defeated Wagner but lost to Charles E. Gersch, a strong expert and soon-to-be master. Gersch is best remembered as a noted crossword composer whose work appeared in the *New York Times*. The final score for Fischer and Evans is unknown.

## 6) MISSING SCULPTURE OF BOBBY FISCHER

Bobby posed for the Yugoslav sculptor Florijan Mićković not long after finishing second at Bled 1961. Two years later Svetozar Gligorić accompanied the finished bust to New York. When Fischer moved to Los Angeles in 1968, he brought it with him. Sometime later the sculpture was put into the ill-fated storage locker.

Fortunately, there was (at least temporarily) a happy ending for this Fischer treasure. When it was put up for auction in early 1999 Bob Ellsworth was able to buy it back. Soon after Harry Sneider's son Rob took it to Budapest, where it was reunited with Bobby. What happened after this is unclear as Fischer did not take it with him to Iceland. It's possible it ended up with Pal Benko or Janos Rigo and presently resides with one of their families. ♠