

# Chess Life



UNITED STATES CHESS FEDERATION

MAY 1983 / \$2.00

## A Novel Idea

Best-selling writer Walter Tevis  
brings chess to the masses

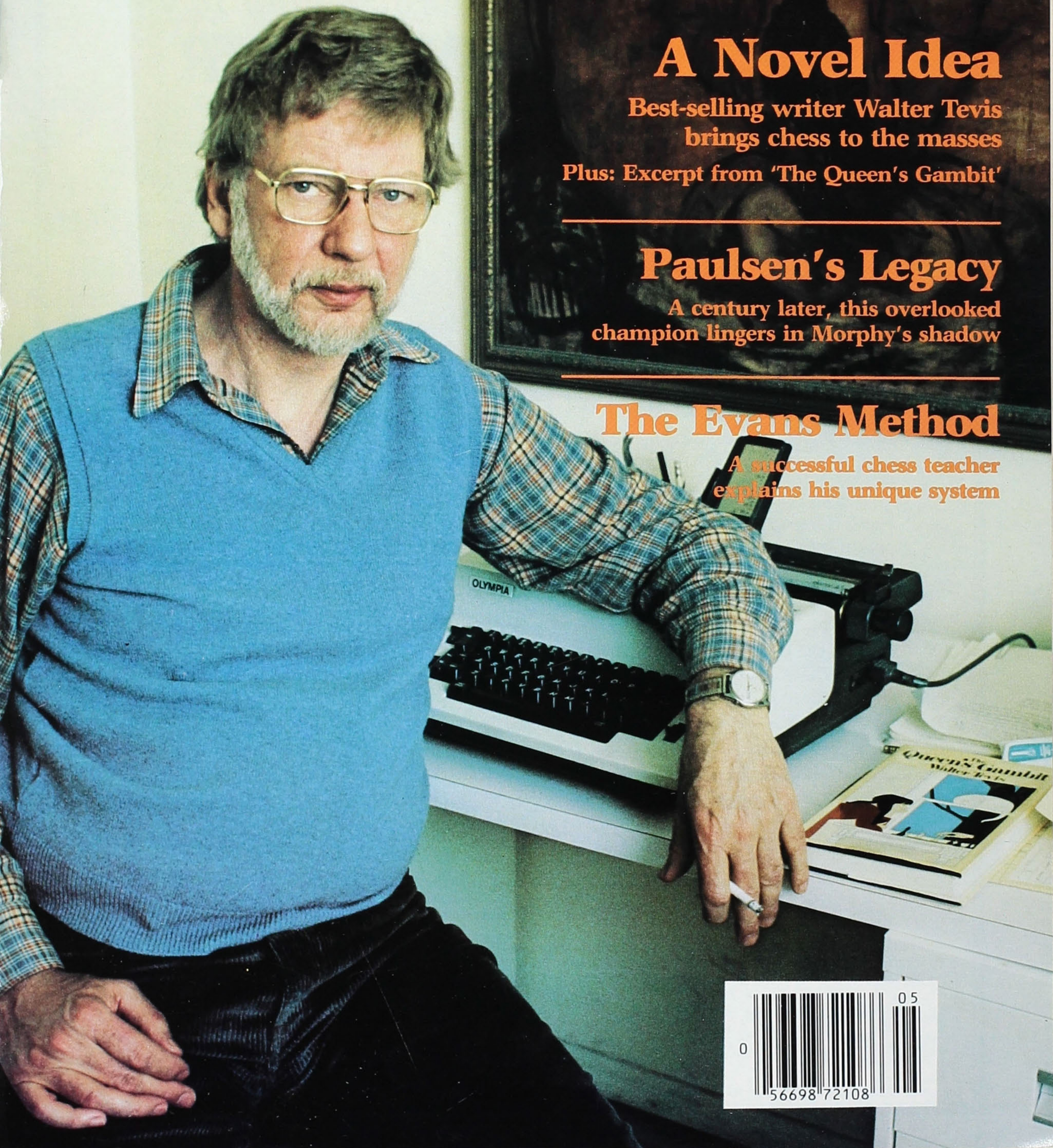
Plus: Excerpt from 'The Queen's Gambit'

## Paulsen's Legacy

A century later, this overlooked  
champion lingers in Morphy's shadow

## The Evans Method

A successful chess teacher  
explains his unique system





# REVIEWS



**The Queen's Gambit** By Walter Tevis; Random House 1983; 243 pages; hardcover lists for \$13.95.

BY GERARD DULLEA

**T**he *Queen's Gambit*, a new novel by Walter Tevis, demonstrates that the American dream is alive and as well as it ever was. Best known as the author of *The Hustler*, Tevis has chosen another unlikely subject for his readers' sympathy, this time a Kentucky orphan who is a chess prodigy. The novel follows her career from the basement of an orphanage to the very heights of world chess.

Despite the many differences large and small, Beth Harmon will recall Bobby Fischer to many readers. A natural player, she wins her state's championship in her first tournament, soon dominates American chess, and goes on to compete with the best players in the world before she is twenty, all as a principled loner. Along the way, she has several obstacles to overcome, not the least being her proclivities toward alcohol and tranquilizers.

Nit-picking readers will find a few deficiencies in the author's understanding of tournament procedures and so forth, but these are balanced by some fine insights on the same topics. Most of all, however, Tevis does a splendid job of capturing the gut-rending excitements, terrors, and elations of tournament chess. The realism is



heightened with plenty of chess jargon and some contemporary stars (such as Tigran Petrosian and Mikhail Tal) around the edges of the fictional drama.

*The Queen's Gambit* is thinner in most respects than Nabokov's *The Defense*, a result to be expected when the focus is more on a romantic plot than on the psychopathy of the central character, who happens to be a chess master. But even placing second in this competition is high praise for a chess novel.

*Dr. Gerry Dullea spent many years studying and teaching the art of fiction and the modern novel.*

**Three Double King Pawn Openings: Bishop's Opening, Hungarian Defense and Ponziani Opening** by Yakov Estrin; Chess Enterprises Inc. 1982; 86 pages; algebraic notation (USCF catalog number O222EP; \$4.95 to members).

BY ROBERT M. SNYDER

**F**ormer World Correspondence Champion Yakov Estrin gained wide acknowledgment for his classic work, *The Two Knights Defense*. The same accuracy and completeness is also found in *Three Double King Pawn Openings*.

Estrin goes into great detail on three less common lines: Bishop's Opening (1. e4 e5 2. Bc4), Hungarian Defense (1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Be7) and Ponziani Opening (1. e4 e5 2.



Nf3 Nc6 3. c3).

Estrin's analysis lacks the bias commonly found in specialty books on less popular openings. He updates much of the older material, and some improvements can be found over lines in the latest *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings*.

This book is recommended for the intermediate or advanced tournament player whose opening preparation requires the study of one of these openings. The analysis isn't suited for the beginning player.

One improvement could be made. The author has included only seven sample games, which could have been greatly expanded.

Even though the book has much of the quality found in *The Two Knights Defense*, it will never receive the same recognition because of the lack of popularity of the openings it covers.

*USCF National Master Robert M. Snyder is a professional chess teacher and writer from Garden Grove, Calif.*

**Ray Keene's Good Move Guide**, by Raymond Keene and Andrew Whitely; Oxford University Press 1982; 141 pages; paperback lists for \$9.95 (USCF catalog number GW638KP; \$8.95 to members).

BY KEN ROGOFF

**T**his book is designed to entertain as much as to instruct, and as long as you digest

it in that spirit, you will quite enjoy it.

The authors have assembled seventy classic games spanning the years of Paul Morphy and Howard Staunton to Anatoly Karpov and Gary Kasparov. The body of the games are presented without annotation, but each is accompanied by a diagram depicting a key position. After you've studied a diagram long enough to convince yourself that you've guessed Capablanca's next move, you can read below to see why he didn't play that move or the other move you considered.

Intertwined with the discussion of candidate moves is a witty mix of chess history, philosophy, strategy, and psychology. It's a good book for reading over toast and coffee (tea and crumpets?) in the morning, or any time when you feel like reading a chess book but don't have a board handy.

Keene and Whitely irreverently rate the games with one to five stars for quality, and they rate the key moves with symbols standing for "bright," "inspired," and, on rare occasions, "flash of genius."

Jan Timman and Tony Miles earn a well deserved five stars for their Sicilian Dragon encounter at Bad Lauterberg in 1977. Timman's 24. Rd2!!(!) gets flash-of-genius accolades. (You'll have to buy the book to see it.) Anyone who plays a move like that deserves to be seeded into the candidates' matches!

"The best move in a chess game is often just as hard to find as the best thing to eat in a restaurant," the blurb tells us. Frankly, at first this comparison struck me as ridiculous. But the next few times I went out to eat, I kept finding myself thinking, "What would Bobby Fischer order in this situation?" Fortunately, my generally unreliable sources in the United Kingdom assure me that Ray Keene is working on a sequel to the present book entitled *Eat Like a Grandmaster*.

*Ken Rogoff is an international grandmaster who lives in Washington, D.C.*



# CHESS REVIEW

## PERSONALITIES

### Chess: A Novel Idea

BY MARCY SOLTIS

Ten years ago, writer Walter Tevis came up with this idea for the opening scene of a novel: a twenty-five-year-old alcoholic woman named Beth is living in a farm house in Ohio. The house is littered with paper chessboards, and there are empty liquor bottles all over the kitchen. Beth rents this house during the summer to be alone and study Rook-and-pawn endgames, but most of the time she uses the house as a place to drink. Despite the fact she is about to defend her U.S. Championship title, she has just gone on a weekend-long drinking binge. Beth pours herself a cup of instant coffee, then spikes it with a few slugs of gin before going to the dining room table to analyze chess positions. . . .

Tevis wrote one chapter, then abandoned the book while he pursued other writing projects, until he thought it was time to tackle the chess idea again.

"I had just finished a science-fiction novel. I was tired of inventing the whole universe and wanted to get back to writing about the real world."

He returned to his chess novel just a little over a year ago and made a few changes.

Beth is now an eight-year-old girl living in an orphanage; she is addicted to tranquilizers and is taught how the chessmen move by a janitor in the orphanage's basement. With all the revisions, some key things remained constant; the book was still about a female character and still about chess.

Tevis, fifty-five, whose novel *The Queen's Gambit* was named as an alternate by the Book-of-the-Month club, is better known for his science fiction and some of his earlier novels.

Most notable is *The Hustler*, a book about a pool shark that was subsequently turned into a successful screenplay starring Paul Newman and Jackie Gleason. And it was Tevis who, in *The Hustler*, coined the phrase "born loser."

Among his science-fiction novels is *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, which was also turned into a movie, starring rock-star David Bowie.

But it is fitting that Tevis should write about chess, because he has always been a big fan of the game and its players. He wrote a short story about chess several years ago for *Playboy* called "The King is Dead," and he once did an article for *Atlantic Monthly* about the National Open.

"People who say that chess is trivial and just a game aren't looking very hard at what they are doing in their lives that they claim to be important," he says.

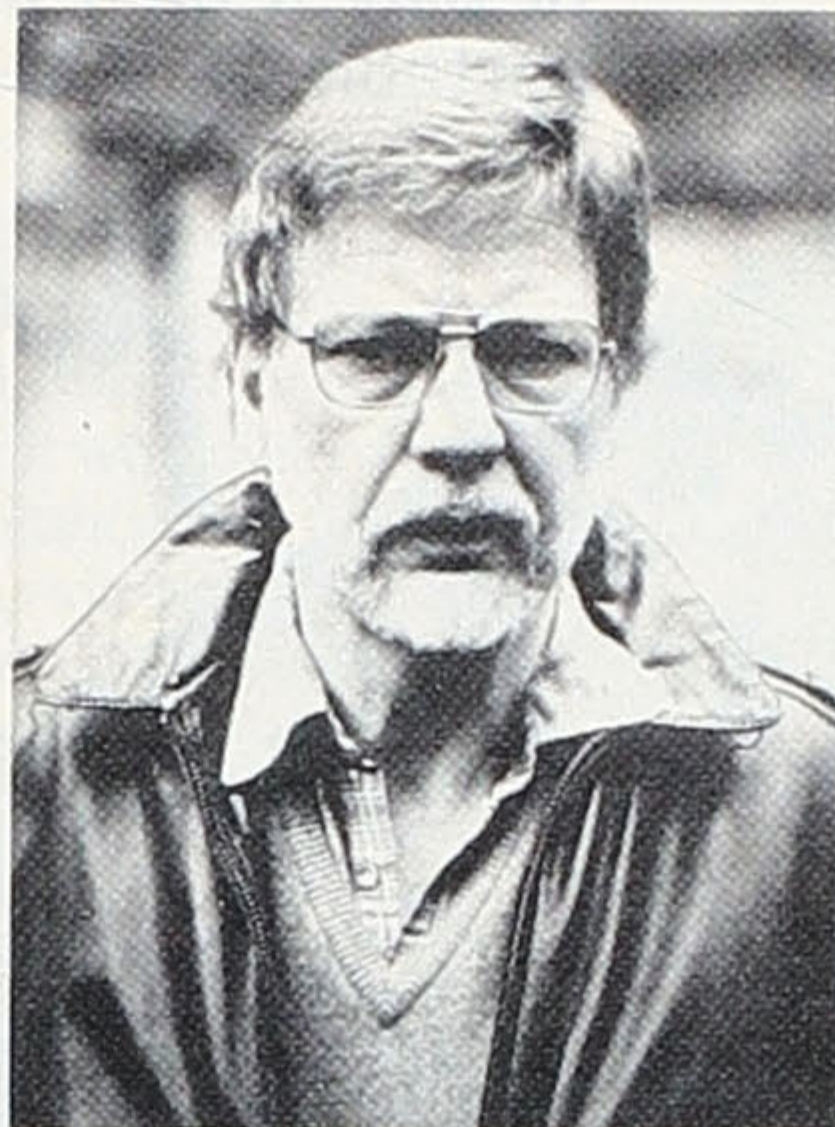
Tevis learned to play chess when he was eight, but it wasn't until he got older that his interest increased. He once owned a chess library of forty to fifty books and has played in close to twenty tournaments over the years. "Tournament chess makes me too nervous, though," says Tevis, whose rating is 1423. He enjoys speed chess and playing with his chess computer, but he says he was never able to study the game systematically.

Tevis found that he enjoyed writing about competition more than being a part of it. "I've done a lot more losing than winning," he says. He claims he's better at pool than chess, but finds similarities in the players of both games.

"You don't get the girls in high school by being a pool player or chessplayer," Tevis says. . . . Neither game is a team sport, both are male-dominated, and many players are loners who are trying to escape from personal problems.

"I like writing about people who are somewhat outcasts from society," says Tevis, "Highly intelligent, out of place characters. I like to write about alienation."

Tevis admits a good part of



Walter Tevis

PHOTO BY NIGEL EDDIS

*The Queen's Gambit* is autobiographical. "I'm using chess [in *The Queen's Gambit*] as a way of depicting a somewhat neurotic personality — somewhat like myself in my twenties."

For instance, in the orphanage Beth is routinely given "little green pills" that she becomes addicted to. Tevis drew from his own experience, having spent two years in a children's hospital between the ages of nine and eleven, where he says he was regularly given phenobarbital, a sedative. He is also a recovered alcoholic. "Beth's addiction to pills reflects that," he says.

"I was a very inward child . . . scared of sex — all of this is characterized in Beth.

"I was a smart kid who spent a lot of time in an institution. Beth is a smarter kid in a different kind of institution. . . .

"I felt I was talented as a writer. I learned very early in life that I could write fairly well. Beth is talented at chess and found that out very early. . . . To Beth, chess was an arcane mystery that could be explicated." Tevis even has his chess champion share his hatred of studying endgames.

"I love Beth. I'm touched by her ability to find what she can do best — stay with it — and be able to survive and deliver."

"You can't get by in chess on bull—. You have to be able to do it without luck or Uncle Joe's money."

The idea of writing about a male character never occurred to him. "I like smart women. I never even thought of writing

about a man. . . . The male characters I was writing about were starting to sound too similar. I wanted to write about what it would be like to be a woman from a man's point of view."

While Beth works her way to the top of the chess world, Tevis made a conscious effort not to have her do so by playing in women's tournaments. He says he doesn't know if there will ever be a woman champion as strong as the character he created, but he doesn't think there is any physical or biological reason why a woman couldn't become as strong as the top male grandmasters.

"I think it would be good if women didn't play in women's tournaments at all," he says. "Doing so only reinforces the notion of women's inferiority. I would like to see chess be a sexless game."

Tevis says he took ideas for characters and places from his own experiences — and when that didn't work, he invented them. (He says that Grandmaster Borgov somewhat resembles, physically, a younger version of Leonid Brezhnev — at least as far as his bushy eyebrows.)

But he emphasizes that he made no effort to portray any real chess personalities in his novel. In fact, he did not speak to any female chessplayers as part of his research.

Tevis was very upset that a pool player he says he never heard of before started calling himself "Minnesota Fats" after he created a character by that name in *The Hustler*. Because he was burned by that experience, he went out of his way in *The Queen's Gambit* to avoid having any man or woman in the chess world thinking that he or she was being used as any of the lead characters.

"I'm very proud of my characterizations and don't like to hear anyone say that they aren't original," says Tevis. "I don't like it to be thought that I'm just reporting on something that I've seen."

The games Beth plays were constructed around the actual moves from nineteenth-century



tournaments. "When I was writing up Beth's games, I found myself really getting into the imagined competition."

The U.S. Championship described in the novel was partly modeled after the 1975 Championship in Oberlin, Ohio, which Tevis attended.

"I was surprised by the somewhat depressing playing conditions — somewhat austere and unexciting," Tevis says. "It occurred to me that here were the best chessplayers in the country playing for the national championship that didn't have the class look of a first-rate high-school basketball game. . . .

"I'd like to see chess taken more seriously," he says. "I don't like seeing golf get all the money and attention that it does while chess gets none."

Tevis says a few film producers are considering *The Queen's Gambit* for a screenplay. He might also be interested in doing a sequel someday. "I'd still like to use that scene of Beth in her twenties in that farmhouse," he says. "You usually reach a peak in chess at a very young age — unlike brain surgeons [whose skill increases with age]," he says. "What happens then?"

At the end of the book, Beth is nineteen. In the final scene, after she's finished a prestigious Soviet tournament, Beth is at a loss for what to do all alone in this foreign country. She goes to a nearby park, sees an old man sitting alone in front of a chess set, and challenges him to a game. "The message here is," says Tevis, "when in doubt — play chess." ♣

*Marcy Soltis is a writer and chessplayer based in New York City.*

## NATIONAL EVENTS

# Scholastic Events Set For April

April is the biggest month for scholastic chess, with five U.S. national scholastic titles at stake in three different tournaments. More than 1,400 would-be titlists are expected to contest over 11,000 games to decide the five titles.

The action starts April 23-24 with the National Junior High Team and Individual Championships in Terre Haute, Indiana — host of last year's record-shattering Junior High Championships.

Terre Haute, in the heartland of the United States, expects a crowd that will top last year's record of 485. There are eighty trophies to be won — and an award for each entrant who completes the tournament, courtesy of the U.S. Chess Trust. Who will be the new Junior High champs?

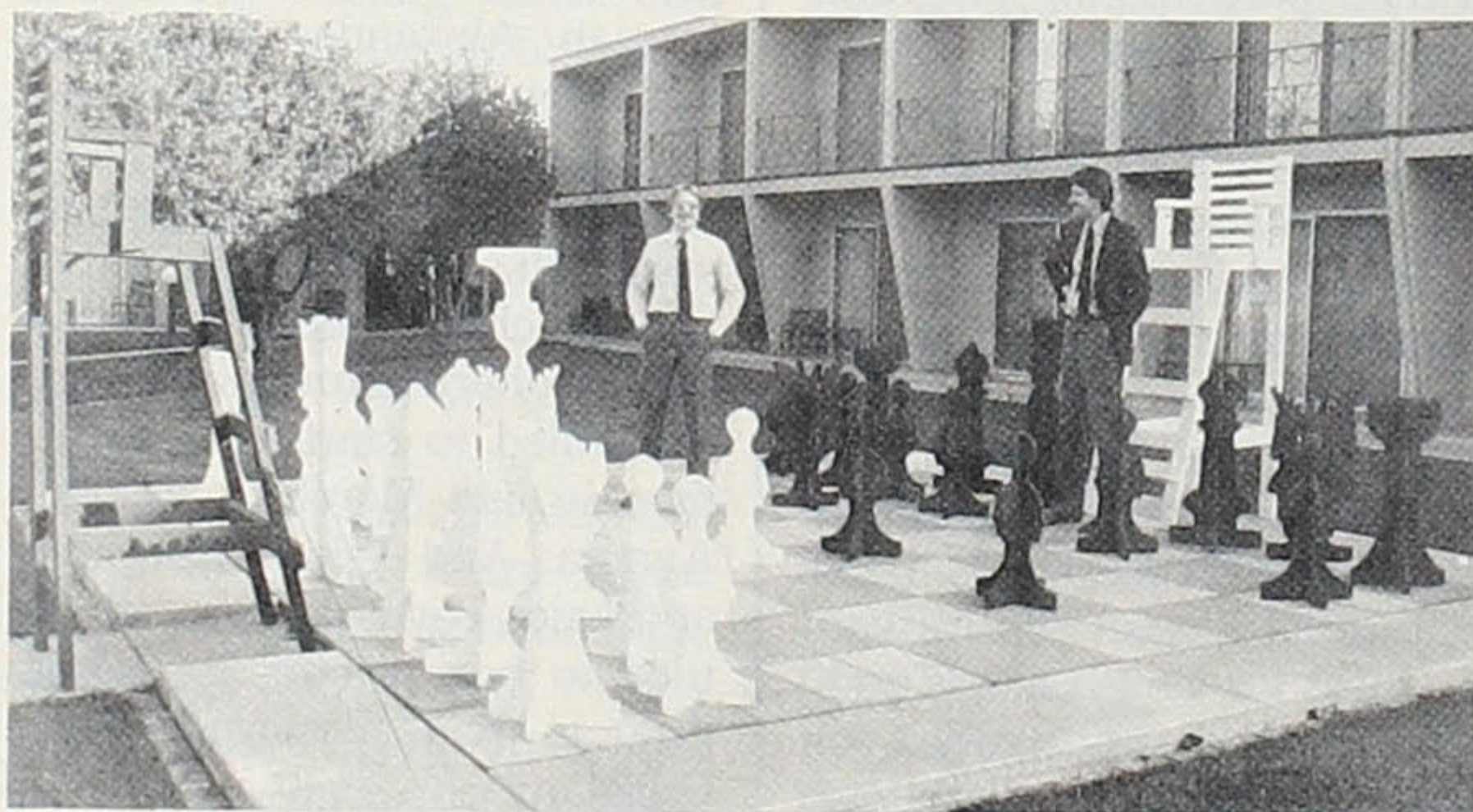
The following weekend, both the National High School Team Champions and the National Elementary Team and Individual Champions will be crowned.

April 29 will find the first round of the High School Team Championship under way in San Jose, California. This is the first time the High School Team has been held on the West Coast, and hundreds of eager trophy hunters are sure to attend.

Awards include \$2,500 in scholarships and more than sixty trophies for winners in a number of categories. The tourney lasts until May 1.

On April 30, in Cordova, Tennessee (a suburb of Memphis), elementary school students from all over the country will begin battling for fifty-five trophies, five Kaisha chess clocks, and forty-eight chess sets! All this — plus the titles of National Elementary Team and National Elementary Individual Champions and U.S. Chess Trust Participation Awards too!

Down the road a piece, in Crossville, Tennessee, last year's National Elementary drew 336 — so look for a crowd April 30 to May 1. ♣



This unique outdoor chess set is featured at the San Jose Hyatt, site of the National High School Team Championship.

## GRAND PRIX

# Ivanov: Look at Him Go

Igor Ivanov is at it again. After only a couple of months into the 1983 Grand Prix race, the Canadian champion and international master has more than twice the number of points earned by his closest rivals.

Will Ivanov, winner of the 1982 race, become the Grand Prix's only repeat winner in 1983? Only time will tell.

Also among the early leaders are International Masters Nick deFirmian and Boris Kogan. Kogan, the runner-up in last year's contest, is always a top competitor in the Grand Prix.

The Grand Prix is a year-long contest sponsored by Church's Fried Chicken, Inc. Top point-getters will split \$18,500 in prizes at the end of the year, all donated by Church's.

For more details on the Grand Prix, see page 49.

These are the standings from events reported as of late February:

1. Igor Ivanov . . . . .	32.17
2. Nick deFirmian . . . . .	12.00
Richard Delaune . . . . .	12.00
Boris Kogan . . . . .	12.00
5. Asa Hoffman . . . . .	11.67
6. Don Marcott . . . . .	10.50
7. Michael Gatlin . . . . .	10.00
8. Jay Bonin . . . . .	6.67
9. Bruce Steinfeld . . . . .	6.00
10. Dan Blocker . . . . .	5.00
Joe Bradford . . . . .	5.00
Michael Brooks . . . . .	5.00
Timothy Brown . . . . .	5.00
Richard Carpenter . . . . .	5.00
Dan Lancry . . . . .	5.00

16. Joshua Bousum . . . . .	2.50
Michael Calogridis . . . . .	2.50
Victor Frias . . . . .	2.50
Dmitry Gurevich . . . . .	2.50
Sergei Kudrin . . . . .	2.50
Phillip Steinen . . . . .	2.50

## AMERICAN CLASSIC

# Memorial Day Classic Offers Chess Holiday

After three years, Lina Grumette's Memorial Day Classic already has enough history and success under its belt to be designated as an American Classic. This title, instituted by USCF to give recognition to tournaments that have attracted more than 400 players for three years straight, is next to the title of National Tournament in importance.

Indeed, this upcoming event easily qualified, drawing nearly 500 participants each year since its inception. Besides quantity, this tournament has gathered quality: grandmasters and international masters from all over the United States. They are lured by the large prize fund, the maximum 120 Grand Prix points, and the promise of top-level competition in sunny California.

The inaugural event in 1980 saw 478 players converge from twenty-four states and five foreign countries. GM Larry Evans decided to play after a three-year layoff from tournament chess. Four players tied with 5½-½: GMs Walter Browne, Larry Christiansen, and Peter Biyiasas (who defeated GM Lev Alburt) and IM Jack Peters. In case past history has become vague, let's not forget that Browne, Christiansen, and Evans tied for the U.S. Championship later that year. Yes, all three played in the Memorial Day Classic.

A slight increase in 1981 had 483 players jockeying for \$23,000 in prizes. GM Jim Tarjan was knocked off in a spectacular upset in round 2 by Karl Yee (2159). Browne downed Biyiasas in the last round to again climb into a four-way tie, this time with Christiansen, Peters and IM Nick deFirmian.

The most dramatic year was





# The Queen's Gambit

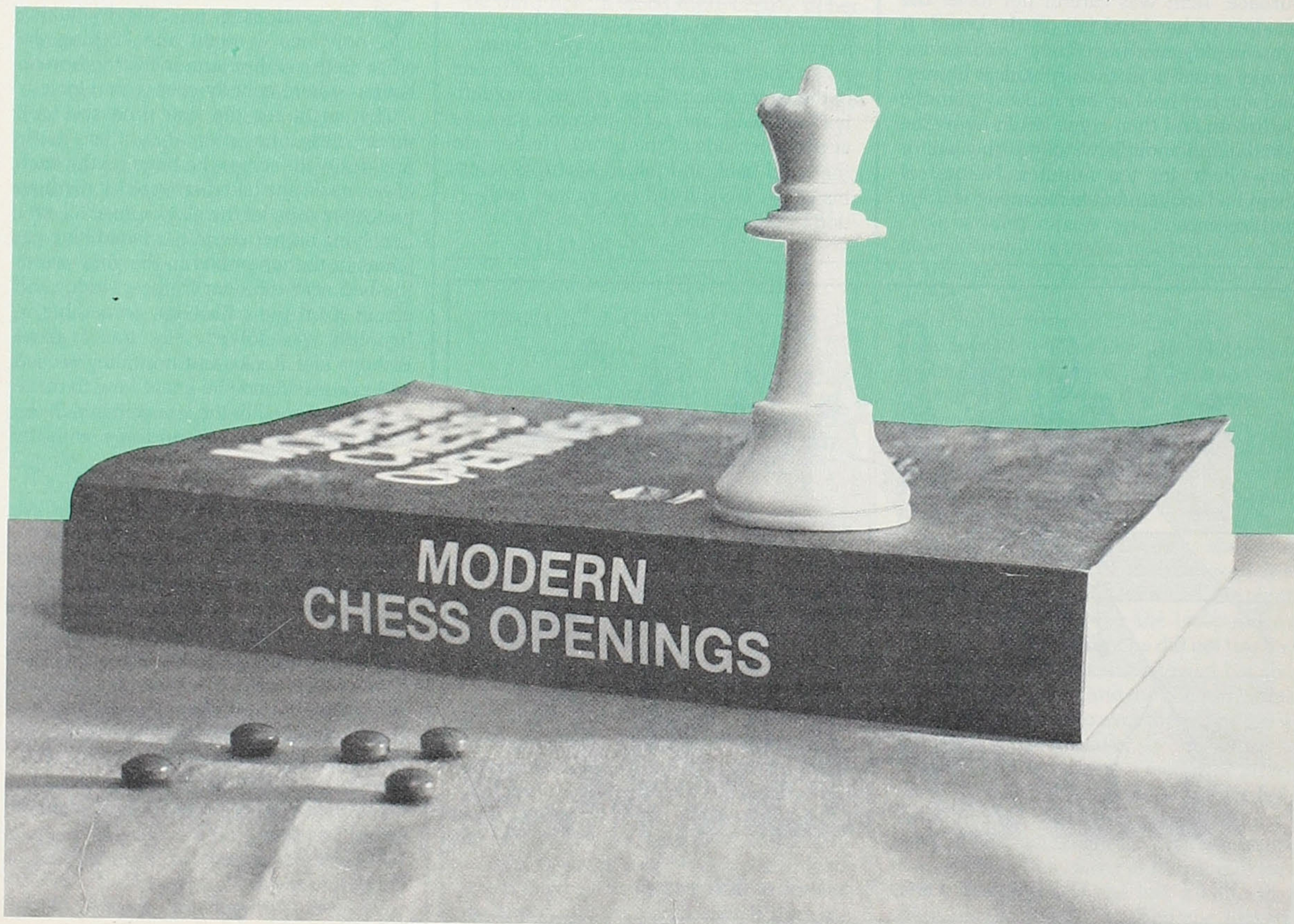
*By Walter Tevis*

*Editor's Note: The following is excerpted from the first chapter of The Queen's Gambit by Walter Tevis (copyright © 1983 by Walter Tevis). It is reprinted by permission of Random House Inc.*

**E**very Tuesday Miss Graham sent Beth down after Arithmetic to do the erasers. It was considered a privilege, and Beth was the best student in the class, even though at eight she was the youngest. She did not like the basement. It smelled musty, and she was afraid of the janitor. But she wanted to know more about the game he played on a board by himself.

One day she went over and stood near Mr. Shaibel, waiting for him to move a piece. The one he was touching was the one with a horse's head on a little pedestal. After a second he looked up at her with a

*Writer and chessplayer Walter Tevis makes his home in New York City. Two of his novels, The Hustler (1959) and The Man Who Fell to Earth (1963) were made into successful motion pictures.*





frown of irritation. "What do you want, child?" he said.

Normally she fled from any human encounter, especially with grown-ups, but this time she did not back away. "What's that game called?" she asked.

He stared at her. "You should be upstairs with the others."

She looked at him levelly; something about this man and the steadiness with which he played his mysterious game helped her hold tightly to what she wanted. "I don't want to be with the others," she said. "I want to know what game you're playing."

Mr. Shaibel folded his arms across his chest. He still did not look at Beth. "I don't play strangers."

He looked at her more closely. Then he shrugged. "It's called chess."

A bare light bulb hung from a black cord between Mr. Shaibel and the furnace. Beth was careful not to let the shadow of her head fall on the board. It was Sunday morning. They were having chapel upstairs in the orphanage library, and she had held up her hand to go to the bathroom and then come down here. She had been standing, watching the janitor play chess, for ten minutes. Neither of them had spoken, but he seemed to accept her presence.

He would stare at the pieces for minutes at a time, motionless, looking at them as though he hated them, and then reach out over his belly, pick one up by its top with his fingertips, hold it for a moment as though holding a dead mouse by the tail, and set it on another square. He did not look up at Beth.

Beth stood with the black shadow of her head on the concrete floor at her feet and watched the board, not taking her eyes from it, watching every move.

She had learned to save her tranquilizers until night. That helped her sleep. During the five months since she was put in Methuen Home, Beth had slept only with difficulty. But now she had a system. She would put the oblong pill in her mouth when Mr. Fergusen handed it to her at vitamin time, get it under her tongue, take a sip of the canned orange juice that came with the pill, swallow, and then when Mr. Fergusen had gone on to the next child, take the pill from her mouth and slip it into the pocket of her middy blouse. The pills had a hard coating and did not soften in the time they sat under her tongue.

Will you teach me?" Mr. Shaibel said nothing, did not even register the question with a movement of his head.

Her voice almost broke with the effort of her words, but she pushed them out anyway. "I want to learn to play chess."

Mr. Shaibel reached a fat hand out to one of the larger black pieces, picked it up deftly by its head, and set it down on a square at the other side of the board. He brought the hand back and folded his arms across his chest. He still did not look at Beth. "I don't play strangers."

The flat voice had the effect of a slap in the face. Beth turned and left, walking upstairs with the bad taste in her mouth.

"I'm not a stranger," she said to him two days later, "I live here."

Behind her head a small moth circled the bare bulb, and its dilute shadow crossed the board at regular intervals.

"You can teach me. I already know some of it, from watching."

"Girls don't play chess." Mr. Shaibel's voice was flat.

She looked at the dark ceiling overhead and forced herself to see the chessboard.

She steeled herself and took a step closer, pointing at, but not touching, one of cylindrical pieces that she had already labeled a cannon in her imagination. "This one moves up and down and back and forth. All the way, if there's space to move in."

Mr. Shaibel was silent for a while. Then he reached out and pointed at the one with what looked like a slashed lemon on its top. "And this one?"

Her heart leapt up. "On the diagonals."

You could save up pills by taking only one at night and keeping the other. Beth put the extras in her toothbrush holder, where nobody ever would look.

That night for the first time she took three pills, one after the other. Little prickles went across the hairs on the back of her neck; she had discovered something important. She let the glow spread all over her, lying on her cot in her faded blue pajamas in the worst bed in the girls' ward, the bed near the door to the corridor and across from the bathroom. Something in her life was solved. She knew about Bishops and Rooks and how they moved and captured, and she knew how to make herself feel good in the stomach and in the tense joints of her arms and legs, with the pills the orphanage gave her.

Okay, child," Mr. Shaibel said. "We can play chess now. I play White."

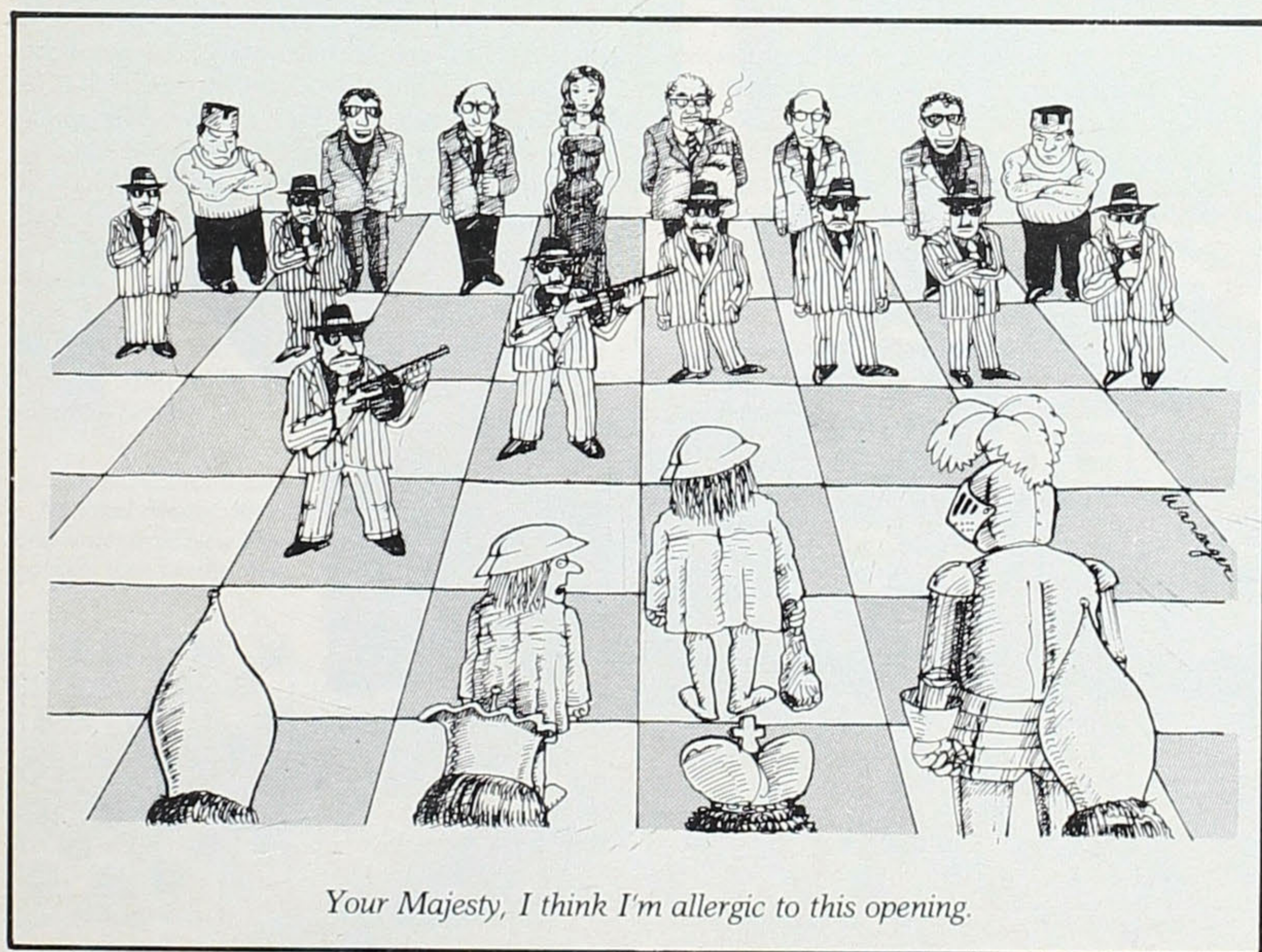
She had the erasers. It was after Arithmetic, and Geography was in ten minutes. "I don't have much time," she said. She had learned all the moves last Sunday, during the hour that chapel allowed her to be in the basement. No one ever missed her at chapel, as long as she checked in. But Geography was different. She was terrified of Mr. Schell, even though she was at the top of the class.

The janitor's voice was flat. "Now or never," he said.

"I have Geography . . ."

"Now or never."

She only thought a second before



Your Majesty, I think I'm allergic to this opening.





deciding. She had seen an old milk crate behind the furnace. She went and dragged it to the other end of the board, seated herself and said, "Move."

He beat her with what she was to learn later was called the Scholar's Mate, after four moves. It was quick, but not quick enough to keep her from being fifteen minutes late for Geography. She said she'd been in the bathroom.

Mr. Schell stood at the desk with his hands on his hips. He surveyed the class. "Have any of you young ladies seen this young lady in the 'Ladies'?"

There were subdued giggles. No hands were raised, not even Jolene's, although Beth had lied for her twice.

"And how many of you ladies were in the 'Ladies' before class?"

There were more giggles and three hands.

"And did any of you see Beth there? Washing her pretty little hands, perhaps?"

There was no response. Mr. Schell turned back to the board, where he had been listing the exports of Argentina, and added the word "Silver." For a moment Beth thought it was done with. But then he spoke, with his back to the class. "Five demerits," he said.

With ten demerits you were whipped on the behind with a leather strap. Beth had felt that strap only in her imagination, but her imagination expanded for a moment with a vision of pain like fire on the soft parts of herself. She put her hand to her heart, feeling in the bottom of the breast pocket of her blouse for this morning's pill. The fear reduced itself perceptibly. She vis-

ualized her toothbrush holder, the long, rectangular plastic container; it had four more pills in it now, there in the drawer of the little metal stand by her cot.

She replayed those  
two games in her mind  
with the new moves,  
and won them both.

That night she lay on her back in bed. She had not yet taken the pill in her hand. She listened to the night noises and noticed how they seemed to get louder as her eyes grew accustomed to the darkness. Down the hallway Mr. Byrne began talking to Mrs. Holland, at the desk. Beth's body grew taut at the sound. She blinked and looked at the dark ceiling overhead and forced herself to see the chessboard with its green and white squares. Then she put the pieces on their home squares: Rook, Knight, Bishop, Queen, King, and the row of pawns in front of them. Then she moved White's King-pawn up to the fourth row. She pushed Black's up. She could do this! It was simple. She went on, beginning to replay the game she had lost.

She brought Mr. Shaibel's Knight up to the third row. It stood there clearly in her mind on the green-and-white board on the ceiling of the ward.

The noises had already faded into a white, harmonious background. Beth lay happily in bed, playing chess.

He looked at the pawn  
sitting there for a  
moment and then  
reached out angrily and  
toppled his King.  
Neither of them  
said anything.

The pieces were set up. She cleaned the erasers hurriedly and then seated herself at the board. Mr. Shaibel had moved his King's pawn by the time she got there. She played her King's pawn, moving it two squares forward. She would not make any mistakes this time.

He responded to her move quickly and she immediately replied. They said nothing to each another, but kept moving. Beth could feel the tension and she liked it.

On the twentieth move Mr. Shaibel advanced a Knight when he shouldn't have and Beth was able to get a pawn to the sixth rank. He brought the Knight back. It was a wasted move and she felt a thrill when she saw him do it. She traded her Bishop for

the Knight. Then she pushed the pawn again. It would become a Queen on the next move.

He looked at it sitting there for a moment and then reached out angrily and toppled his King. Neither of them said anything. It was her first win. All of the tension was gone and what Beth felt inside herself was as wonderful as anything she had ever felt in her life.

She found she could miss lunch on Sundays and no one paid any attention. That gave her three hours with Mr. Shaibel, until he left for home at two-thirty. They did not talk, either of them. He always played the White pieces, moving first, and she the Black. She had thought about questioning this but decided not to.

One Sunday after a game he had barely managed to win, he said to her, "You should learn the Sicilian Defense."

She was still smarting from the loss. She had beaten him two games last week.

"What's that?" she asked irritably.

"When White moves pawn to King four, Black does this." He reached down and moved the White pawn two squares up the board, his almost invariable first move. Then he picked up the pawn in front of the Black Queen's Bishop and set it down two squares up toward the middle. It was the first time he had ever shown her anything like this.

"Then what?" she said.

He picked up the King's Knight and set it below and to the right of the pawn.

"Knight to KB3."

"What's KB3?"

"King's Bishop 3. Where I just put the Knight."

"The squares have names?"

He nodded impassively. She sensed that he was unwilling to give up even this much information. "If you play well, they have names."

She leaned forward. "Show me."

He looked down at her. "No. Not now."

This infuriated her. She understood well enough that a person likes to keep his secrets. She kept hers. Nevertheless, she wanted to lean across the board and slap his face and make him tell her. She sucked in her breath. "Is that the Sicilian Defense?"

He seemed relieved that she had dropped the subject of the names of the squares. "There's more," he said. He went on with it, showing her the basic moves and some variations. But he did not use the names of the squares. He showed her the Levenfish variations and the Najdorf variation and told her to go over them. She did it without a single mistake.

But when they played a real game afterward, he pushed his Queen's pawn forward, and she could see immediately that what he had just taught her was useless in this situation. She stared at him across the board, feeling that if she had a knife she could stab him with it. Then she looked



He showed her the Levenfish variation and the Najdorf variation and told her to go over them. She did it without a single mistake.

back to the board and moved her own Queen's pawn forward, determined to beat him.

He moved the pawn next to his Queen's pawn, the one in front of the Bishop. "Is that one of those things? Like the Sicilian Defense?" she asked.

"Openings." He did not look at her; he was watching the board.

"Is it?"

He shrugged. "The Queen's Gambit."

She felt better. She had learned something more from him. She decided not to take the offered pawn, to leave the tension on the board. She liked it like that. She liked the power of the pieces, exerted along the files and diagonals. In the middle of the game, when the pieces were everywhere, the forces crisscrossing the board thrilled her. She brought out her King's Knight, feeling its power spread.

In twenty moves she had won both his Rooks, and he resigned.

She rolled over in bed and put a pillow over her head to block out the light from under the corridor door and began to think how you can use a Bishop and a Rook together to make a sudden check on the King. If you moved the Bishop, the King would be in check, and the Bishop would be free to do whatever it wanted to on the next move — even take the Queen. She lay there for quite a while, thinking excitedly of this powerful attack. Then she took the pillow off and rolled over on her back and made the chessboard on the ceiling and played over all her games with Mr. Shaibel, one at a time. She saw two places where she might have created the Rook-Bishop situation she had just invented. In one of them she could have forced it by a double threat and in the other she could have probably sneaked it in. She replayed those two games in her mind with the new moves, and won them both. She smiled happily to herself and fell asleep.

The chessboard was set up, and she saw to her surprise that the White pieces were facing her side and the milk crate was already in place. "Do I move first?" she said, incredulous.

"Yes. From now on we take turns. It's the way the game should be played."

She seated herself and moved the King's pawn. Mr. Shaibel wordlessly moved his Queen Bishop pawn. She hadn't forgotten the moves. She never forgot chess moves.

He played the Levenfish variation; she kept her eyes on his Bishop's command of the long diagonal, the way it was waiting to pounce. And she found a way to neutralize it on the seventeenth move. She was able to trade her own, weaker Bishop for it. Then she moved in with her Knight, brought a Rook out, and had him mated in ten more moves.

Mr. Shaibel seemed different today. He did not scowl as he always did when she beat him. He leaned forward and said, "I'll teach you chess notation."

She looked up at him.

"The names of the squares. I'll teach you now."

She blinked. "Am I good enough now?"

He started to say something and stopped. "How old are you, child?"

"Eight."

"Eight years old." He leaned farther forward — as far as his huge paunch would permit. "To tell you the truth of it, child, you are astounding."

King, Knight, pawn. The tensions on the board were enough to warp it. Then *whack!* Down came the Queen. Rooks at the bottom of the board, hemmed in at first, but ready, building up pressure and then removing the pressure in a single move. In General Science Miss Hadley had spoken of magnets, of "lines of force." Beth, nearly asleep with boredom, had waked up suddenly. Lines of force: Bishops on diagonals, Rooks on files.

She looked up at him.  
"Am I good enough now?" He leaned farther forward. "To tell you the truth of it, child, you are astounding."

The seats in the classroom could be like the squares. If Ralph were a Knight, she could pick him up and move him two seats up and one over, setting him on the empty desk next to Denise. This would check Bertrand, who sat in the front row and was, she decided, the King. She smiled, thinking of it.

Here," Mr. Shaibel said. He handed her something in a brown paper bag. It was noon on Sunday. She slipped the bag open. In it was a heavy paperback book — *Modern Chess Openings*.

Incredulously, she began to turn the pages. It was filled with long vertical columns of chess notations. There were little chessboard diagrams and chapter heads like "Queen's Pawn Openings" and "Indian Defense Systems." She looked up.

He was scowling at her. "It's the best book for you," he said. "It will tell you

what you want to know."

She said nothing but seated herself on her milk crate behind the board, holding the book tightly in her lap, and waited to play.

English was the duller class, with Mr. Espero's slow voice and the poets with names like John Greenleaf Whittier and William Cullen Bryant. "Whither midst falling dew; while glow the heavens with the last steps of day..." It was stupid. And he read every word aloud, with care.

She held *Modern Chess Openings* under her desk while Mr. Espero read. She went through variations one at a time, playing them out in her head. By the third day, the notations — P-K4; N-KB3 — leapt into her quick mind as solid pieces on real squares. She saw them easily; there was no need for a board. She could sit there with *Modern Chess Openings* in her lap, while Mr. Espero droned on about the enlargement of the spirit that great poetry gave us. In the back of the book were continuations down to the very end of the classic games, to twenty-seventh-move resignations or to draws on the fortieth, and she had learned to put the pieces through their entire ballet, sometimes catching her breath at the elegance of a combination or of a sacrifice or the restrained balance of forces in a position. And always her mind was on the win, or the potential for a win.

"For his gayer hours she has a voice of gladness and a smile and eloquence of beauty..." read Mr. Espero, while Beth's mind danced in awe to the geometrical rococo of chess, rapt, enraptured, drowning in the grand permutations as they opened to her soul, and her soul opened to them.

The next Sunday she beat Mr. Shaibel five games straight. She had been playing him for three months now, and she knew that he could no longer beat her. Not once. She anticipated every feint, every threat that he knew how to make. There was no way he could confuse her with his Knights, or keep a piece posted on a dangerous square, or embarrass her by pinning an important piece. She could see it coming and could prevent it, while continuing to set up for an attack.

When they had finished, he said, "You are eight years old?"

"Nine in November."

He nodded. "You will be here next Sunday?"

"Yes."

"Good. Be sure."

On Sunday there was another man in the basement with Mr. Shaibel. He was thin and wore a striped shirt and tie. "This is Mr. Ganz, from the chess club," Mr. Shaibel said.

"Chess club?" Beth echoed, looking him over. He seemed a little like Mr. Schell, even though he was smiling.



"We play at a club," Mr. Shaibel said.  
 "And I'm coach of the high school team. Duncan High," Mr. Ganz said. She had never heard of the school.

Beth did not know what to do to acknowledge these formalities, so she did nothing. All three of them were standing in the basement of the main building of the orphanage. Both men had to stoop.

"Would you like to play me a game?" Mr. Ganz asked.

For an answer Beth seated herself on the milk crate. There was a folding chair set up at the side of the board. Mr. Shaibel eased his heavy body into it and Mr. Ganz sat on the stool. He reached forward in a quick, nervous movement and picked up two pawns: one White and one Black. Then he cupped both hands around them, shook them together a moment and then extended both arms toward Beth with clenched fists.

"Choose a hand," Mr. Shaibel said.

"Why?"

"You play the color you choose."

"Oh." She reached out and barely touched Mr. Ganz's left hand. "This one."

He opened it. The Black pawn lay in his palm. "Sorry," he said, smiling. His smile made her uncomfortable.

The board already had the Black side facing Beth. Mr. Ganz put the pawns back on their squares, moved pawn to King four, and Beth relaxed. She had learned every line of the Sicilian from her book. She played the Queen Bishop's pawn to its fourth square. When he brought the Knight out, she decided to use the Najdorf.

But Mr. Ganz was a bit too smart for that. He was a better player than Mr. Shaibel. Still, she knew after a half dozen moves that he would be easy to beat, and she proceeded to do so, calmly and mercilessly, forcing him to resign after twenty-three moves.

She beat him twice more before he had to leave. In the last game he resigned on the fourteenth move, and he stared at her silently for a long time.

Mr. Ganz was back the next Sunday. He had his own chessboard with him. It had black and white squares, and the pieces were in a wooden box lined with red felt. They were made of polished wood; Beth could see the grain in the White ones. She reached out while Mr. Ganz was setting them up and lifted one of the Knights. It was heavier than the ones she had used and had a circle of green felt on the bottom. She had never thought about owning things, but she wanted this chess set.

Mr. Shaibel had set up his board in the usual place and got another milk crate for Mr. Ganz's board. The two boards were now side by side, with a foot of space between them. It was a sunny day, and bright light came in the windows, filtered

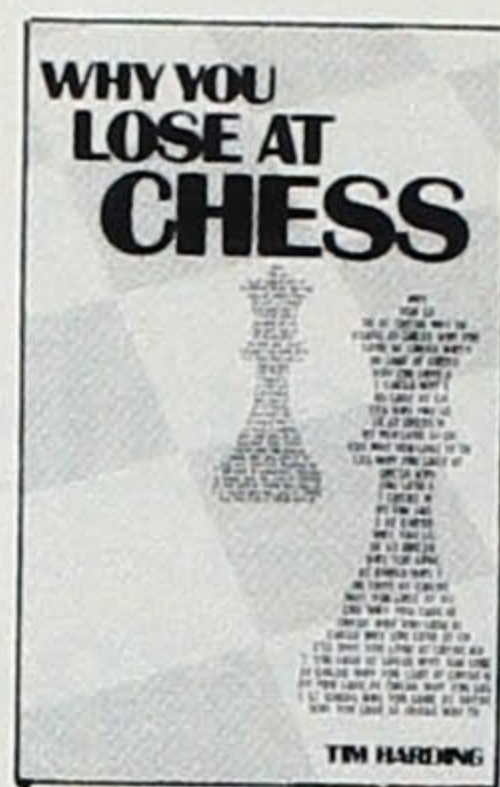
PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 35

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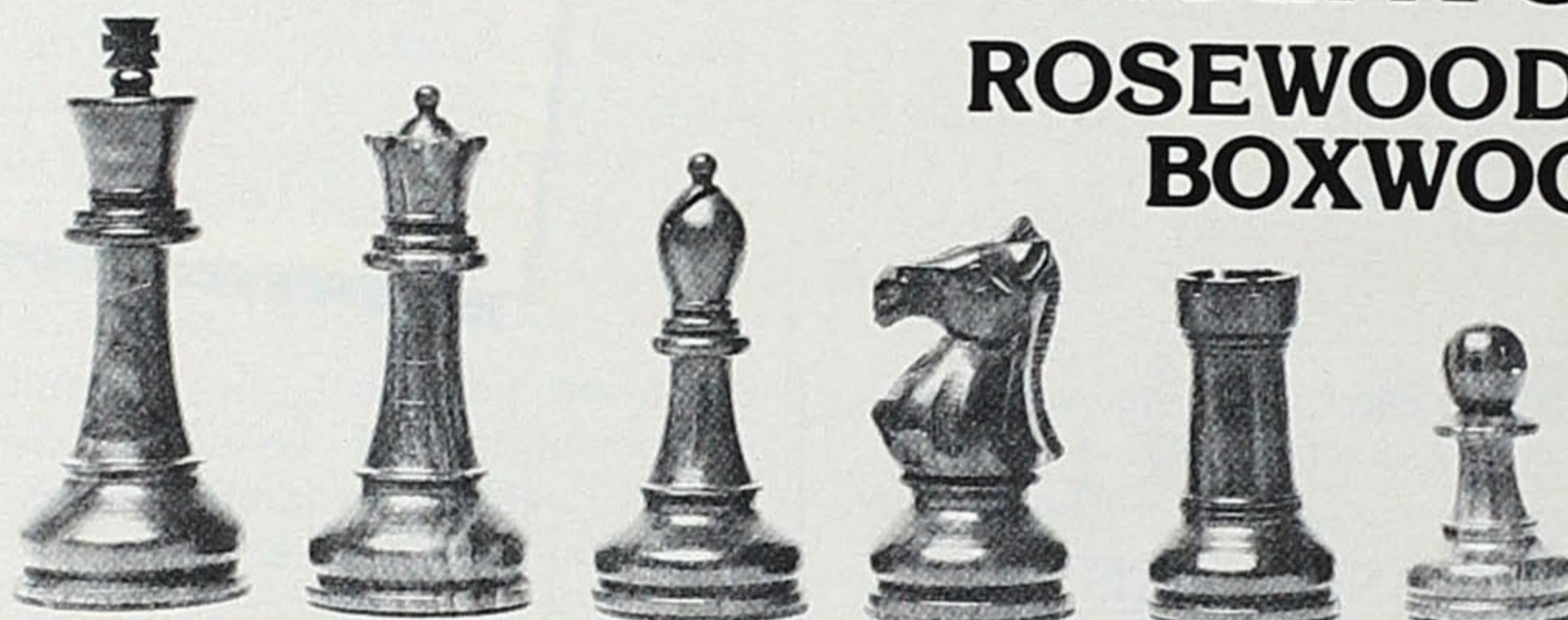
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## QUEEN'S GAMBIT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

through the short bushes by the walk at the edge of the building. Nobody spoke while the pieces were put on the boards. Mr. Ganz took the Knight gently from Beth's hand and set it on its home square. "We thought you could play us both," he said.

"At the same time?"

He nodded.

Her milk crate had been put between the boards. She had White for both games, and in both of them she played pawn to King four.

Mr. Ganz was a better player than Mr. Shaibel. Still, she knew after a half dozen moves that he would be easy to beat, and she proceeded to do so, calmly and mercilessly.

Mr. Shaibel replied with the Sicilian; Mr. Ganz played pawn to King four. She did not even have to pause and think about the continuations. She played both moves and looked out the window.

She beat them both effortlessly. Mr. Ganz set up the pieces, and they started again. This time she moved pawn to Queen four on both and followed it with pawn to Queen's Bishop four — the Queen's Gambit. She felt deeply relaxed, almost in a dream. She had taken seven tranquilizers at about midnight, and some of the languor was still in her.

About midway into the games she was staring out the window at a bush with pink blooms when she heard Mr. Ganz's voice saying, "Beth, I've moved my Bishop to Bishop five," and she replied dreamily, "Knight to King five." The bush seemed to glow in the spring sunlight.

"Bishop to Knight four," Mr. Ganz said.

"Queen to Queen four," Beth said, still not looking.

"Knight to Queen's Bishop three," Mr. Shaibel said gruffly.

"Bishop to Knight five," Beth said, her eyes on the pink blossoms.

"Pawn to Knight three." Mr. Ganz had a strange softness in his voice.

"Queen to Rook four check," Beth said.

She heard Mr. Ganz inhale sharply. After a second he said, "King to Bishop one."

"That's mate in three," Beth said, without turning. "First check is with the Knight. The King has the two dark squares, and the Bishop checks it. Then the Knight mates."

Mr. Ganz let out his breath slowly. "Jesus Christ!" he said.

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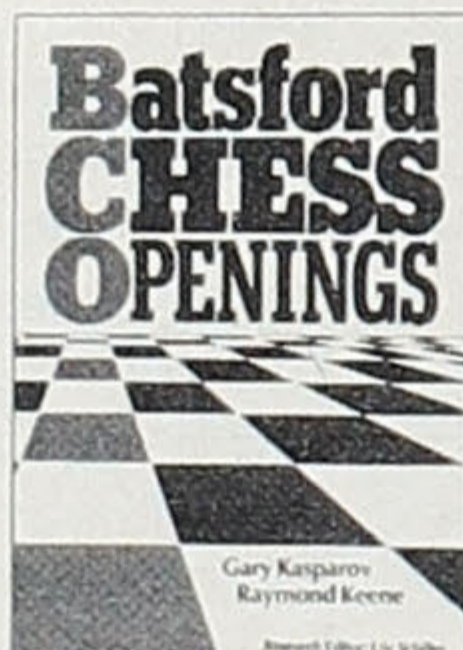
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