

INCLUDED WITH THIS ISSUE: 2021 ANNUAL BUYING GUIDE

CHESS LIFE



John D. Rockefeller V
Embraces Family Legacy with
\$3 Million Gift to US Chess

Chess Life

DECEMBER

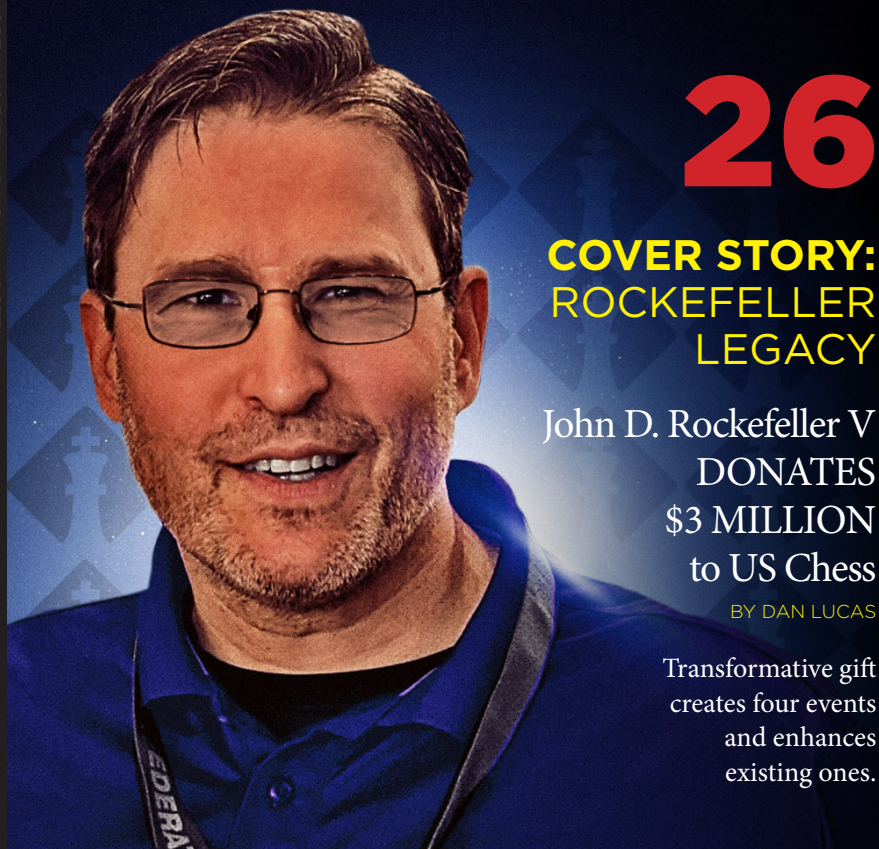
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Transformative gift
creates four events
and enhances
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JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER V Donates \$3 Million TO US CHESS

*Transformative gift creates four events
and enhances existing ones* By DAN LUCAS

Many dates stand out in US Chess history:

- **In 1939 the US Chess Federation was formed by the merger of the American Chess Federation and the National Chess Federation.**
- **In 1972 Bobby Fischer won the World Chess Championship.**
- **In 2008 the Saint Louis Chess Club opened, changing the landscape of American chess.**
- **In 2014 US Chess became a 501(c)(3).**

These were all transformative events in the history of our organization; to this list we can now add:

- **In 2020 John D. Rockefeller V donates three million dollars to US Chess to create new invitational events and enhance existing ones, making this the largest single gift ever made to US Chess.**

It is impossible to overstate the importance to US Chess of Rockefeller's unprecedented generosity and his vote of confidence in the future of our organization. The donation creates four events, enhances three existing events, renames one, adds to the scholarship funds for the scholastic events, and creates a book fund to further strengthen the invitationals. The endowments ensure the tournaments will be run and the funds will be awarded in perpetuity. This all directly speaks to our educational mission to "empower people, enrich lives, and enhance communities through chess."

US Chess Development Director Geoff Isaak says, "Occasionally a gift comes along that can potentially transform an organization, taking it from where it's been, to where it needs to be in the future. The endowments that John has created, as well as his pledge to invest in future events, are such gifts. John's extraordinary generosity provides an enduring foundation on which to further build our scholastic program."

The impact of this gift will, quite literally, be felt for generations to come." The lineup is:

- **John D. Rockefeller III National Tournament of Elementary School State Champions (started 2020)**
- **GM Maurice Ashley National Tournament of K-3 State Champions (to begin by 2030)**
- **Paul Morphy National Tournament of K-1 State Champions (to begin by 2030)**
- **John T. Irwin National Tournament of Senior State Champions (renames the existing event in 2021)**
- **FM Sunil Weeramantry National Blitz Tournament of State Champions (started 2020)**
- **John D. Rockefeller IV State Invitationals Scholarship Fund (to begin by 2030)**
- **Sharon Percy Rockefeller State Invitationals Books Fund (to begin in 2021)**

The gifts for the invitationals are not closed funds; they are open funds to which anyone can contribute, potentially enhancing these important events even further. Rockefeller has already donated \$624,000 to US Chess, with the rest pledged in a structured manner over the next 25 years. Should this all come due tomorrow due to an unforeseen circumstance, the value of the gift is three million dollars; should the funds continue to funnel to US Chess through 2045, the ultimate gift value will be \$4.1 million. The other prominent state championship invitational events — the GM Arnold Denker National Tournament of High School State Champions, the Dewain Barber National Tournament of Middle School State Champions, and the WIM Ruth Haring National Tournament of Girls State Champions — continue and will benefit from the enhanced scholarship prizes and book funds.

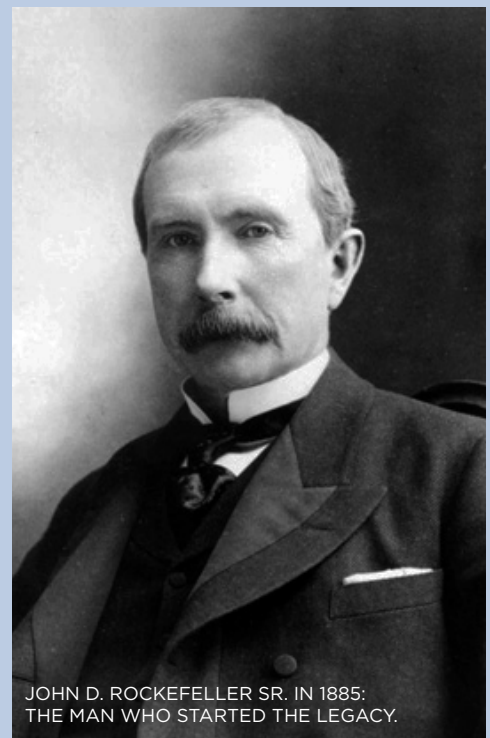
Who is John D. Rockefeller V?

"The Rockefeller family is an American industrial, political, and banking family that owns one of the world's largest fortunes." (*Wikipedia.com*) But this prominent, historic American family happens to include a chess guy — John Davison Rockefeller V of Maryland. He is a chess dad, Scholastic Director of the Maryland Chess Association, and active volunteer helping US Chess, especially as chair of the Development Committee and vice-chair of the Scholastic Council. He has lived in Baltimore, Maryland since 1995.

Rockefeller (all future references to John D. Rockefeller V will simply state "Rockefeller"; other family members will be specifically named) was born in West Virginia in 1969, one of four siblings. He is the son of John Davison "Jay" Rockefeller IV and Sharon Percy Rockefeller; his father was governor of and U.S. senator from West Virginia, and his mother is the Chief Executive Officer of the Washington, D.C. public TV and radio station WETA.

Rockefeller picks up the story himself: "After graduating from college in 1992, I was a Fulbright Scholar in Germany and lived there until 1995. By then I spoke German more fluently than English. In 1995 I declined acceptance into the doctoral program of the German department at Johns Hopkins University because I knew I wanted to teach American literature. So, I entered Hopkins's Writing Seminars department and later transitioned to the English department. In 2009 I earned a Ph.D. in American Literature from Johns Hopkins. I continued teaching until 2015 — several years as a Lecturer for the Writing Seminars department and several years as an Assistant Professor of American Literature and American History at Johns Hopkins's Peabody Institute."

Like so many adults who played as a child — a treasured family photo from 1977 shows him playing with his grandfather — eventually Rockefeller found his way back to chess as an adult, in his case influenced by his children: "In the summer of 2008, just



JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER SR. IN 1885:
THE MAN WHO STARTED THE LEGACY.

THE ROCKEFELLER FAMILY (OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT TO RIGHT): JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER III (GRANDFATHER), JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER V, SENATOR JOHN D. "JAY" ROCKEFELLER IV (FATHER), SHARON PERCY ROCKEFELLER (MOTHER).

before I sat down at a chess board with my daughters (who were six and eight) for the first time, I distinctly remember not being sure whether I could recall how all the pieces move. I was 38, hadn't touched a chess set in 26 years, had never played in a tournament, and didn't remember whether queenside castling was legal. A few weeks later I co-founded and started coaching the chess club at my daughters' all-girls school. I first heard of *en passant* only after I had started coaching, and it was not until my second year as a coach that I could explain it reliably."

Rockefeller coached at his children's schools for a decade. He found himself to be an enthusiastic coach but soon learned that his true talent lay in organizing tournaments. In 2010 he became the scholastic director for Maryland Chess, giving him responsibility for organizing 21 annual scholastic tournaments, eventually overseeing

some 200 events during his tenure. He is a senior tournament director with 125 events directed as of September, 2020.

"The major asset I bring to tournament organizing," Rockefeller explains, "is that I remember the helpless feeling of being a first-time, clueless chess parent at a K-12 tournament, staring bewilderedly with barely any comprehension at wallcharts and yet responsible for getting several kids to their boards multiple times a day. When I design Maryland Chess's online tournament announcement pages and post hard-copy section details by the wallcharts and standings, I try to anticipate and answer all the questions first-time parents might have. I write Maryland Chess's K-12 web pages, administer K-12 online registrations, and handle K-12 correspondence. In 2011 I introduced increment time controls to nearly all of our K-12 tournaments. As far as I know, Maryland was the first state affiliate

Events and initiatives created by the Rocke



JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER III

NATIONAL TOURNAMENT OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STATE CHAMPIONS

WHO: John D. Rockefeller III (1906-1978) was Rockefeller's paternal grandfather. A philanthropist, he founded the Population Council in 1952, led the reconstituted Japan Society from 1952-1978, established the Asia Society in 1956, and spearheaded the development of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in the 1950s and 1960s.

WHY: Rockefeller says, "One day my daughters and I played what might have been our 500th game of Connect 4. Clearly, it was time for us to find a new game. I thought of a picture of my grandfather and me playing chess and decided to give chess a try. But by 2008 I hadn't played chess in 25 years and wasn't sure I could remember how all the pieces move. I soon fell back in love with chess all over again. Within days a friend and I started planning a chess club at our daughters' all-girls school, and within two months I competed in my first tournament."

DETAILS: This event for K-5 state champions from throughout the U.S. began in 2020.



GM MAURICE ASHLEY

NATIONAL TOURNAMENT OF K-3 STATE CHAMPIONS

WHO: Maurice Ashley (b. 1966) is the first Black grandmaster, achieving this status in 1999. He is in the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame, inducted in 2016. Born in Jamaica, his family moved to the U.S. when he was 12. Ashley has received multiple community service awards from city governments, universities, and community groups for his work.

WHY: Rockefeller admires Ashley's charisma and swagger when commenting on chess events, and how it is balanced by his humble, self-effacing nature. In his Hall of Fame acceptance speech, he called himself the least accomplished of his siblings; his sister was a boxing world champion, and his brother was a kickboxing world champion. He has devoted time, energy, and resources to promoting chess on the African continent. Further, Rockefeller says, "It is my honor to endow the Ashley tournament during the Trump era."

DETAILS: Already fully funded, the event will begin by 2030.

in the country to make 30-second increment time controls the standard for top sections at all boilerplate K-12 tournaments, as well as at state championships.

“As the strength of our players steadily improved during my first eight years with Maryland chess, we introduced new sections with dramatically higher floors and ceilings for our top sections. The Varsity section of our standard one-day tournaments draws players from several neighboring states because it has a floor of 1600 (which we enforce strictly) and features only two rounds of G90 +30 games. I’m proud to have helped cultivate a greater appreciation for slow chess in the Mid-Atlantic. Since 2012 Maryland Chess has run the Greater Mid-Atlantic Chess Championship, one of the five major scholastic tournaments sponsored by the Kasparov Chess Foundation.”

With such a background, it is no surprise that Rockefeller looked

for a way to marry his philanthropic heritage with his love of championship chess. This created the germ of an idea over a series of lengthy discussions with our Executive Director, Carol Meyer. (This should be noted by anyone interested in creating a new national event via a donation: Bring your proposal to the Executive Director first.) Meyer was increasingly impressed during these discussions, saying, “John’s enthusiasm for scholastic chess is virtually unmatched. He is an unwavering optimist, believing in the transformative power of the game to improve the lives of young players through competition, study, and friendships. US Chess and our community are grateful for his leadership giving and vision, which will extend invitational chess tournaments to more players across the various ages of membership.”

The idea crystallized into the following events and initiatives, detailed over these next four pages.

feller three million dollar donation



PAUL MORPHY

NATIONAL TOURNAMENT OF K-1 STATE CHAMPIONS

WHO: Paul Morphy (1837-1884) was born and died in New Orleans. Popularly known as the “Pride and the Sorrow of Chess” (called such because of his brilliant but short career), Morphy became America’s first (though unofficial) world chess champion, after defeating Adolf Anderssen in an 1858 match.

WHY: Rockefeller has a charming personal connection to Paul Morphy as a historical reference. As he used to walk his daughters to school and home from their weekly chess club, they would take turns calling out moves from various famous games, including Morphy’s “Opera House” game from 1858. Further, Rockefeller sees the Morphy and Ashley events almost as a pair due to the honorees both being “American world firsts.”

DETAILS: The event will begin by 2030, with full funding pledged by 2024.



FM SUNIL WEERAMANTRY

NATIONAL BLITZ TOURNAMENT OF STATE CHAMPIONS

WHO: Sunil Weeramantry (b.1951) has an extensive history as a volunteer with US Chess. Originally from Sri Lanka, he has become well known as the stepfather of GM Hikaru Nakamura, but he has his own stellar career as a coach, notably having started the Hunter College Campus School chess program in New York in 1979 and having founded the National Scholastic Chess Foundation in 1990.

WHY: Rockefeller and Weeramantry have been friends since meeting at the 2010 All-Girls National Championship. Rockefeller has been profoundly influenced by Weeramantry’s books *Best Lessons of a Chess Coach* and *Great Moves: Learning Chess Through History*.

DETAILS: This event began in 2020. All participants from the state championship events are invited to take part in this fun event that will kick off the festivities each year.



JOHN T. IRWIN

NATIONAL TOURNAMENT OF SENIOR STATE CHAMPIONS

WHO: Irwin (1940–2019) was an American poet and literary historian and poet. He was the Decker Professor in the Humanities and professor in The Writing Seminars and the English department at Johns Hopkins University. (~Wikipedia)

WHY: After taking a “Poe & Baudelaire” course in college, Rockefeller read Irwin’s *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance*, and it “blew me away,” Rockefeller says. He went on to write his senior thesis on Poe’s “The Gold-Bug” and referenced Irwin’s work extensively. This led to a meeting between the two at Johns Hopkins. Rockefeller fleshes out the story, adding, “While at Hopkins I read at least 10 times Irwin’s *The Mystery to a Solution: Poe, Borges, and the Analytical Detective Story*, which traces the influence of chess in their fiction. Irwin estimated himself to be an 1800-level player. In 1965 while he was an ensign in the Navy stationed in Hawaii and working in cryptography, Irwin finished second at the Oahu Championship after a particularly strong Smith-Morra Gambit in the Sicilian Defense. He included the notation as a footnote in his book.”

DETAILS: This event began in 2018 and will continue under the same format but with this new name, with full funding pledged by 2024.



JOHN D. “JAY” ROCKEFELLER IV

STATE INVATIONALS SCHOLARSHIP FUND

WHO: John D. “Jay” Rockefeller IV is Rockefeller’s father. Born in 1937, he served as a United States Senator from West Virginia from 1985–2015. He was first elected to the Senate in 1984 while in office as Governor of West Virginia, where he served from 1977–85.

WHY: Rockefeller has fond memories of tossing the frisbee with his father in the 1970s, which he thinks of while throwing the Aerobie (a ring-style frisbee) with his son John, also a chess player. He would also roughhouse with his dad outside and play math games with him at the dinner table. Jay would eventually help steer National Chess Day to passage in the Senate in 2010. He was our “My Best Move” subject in the October, 2017 issue.

DETAILS: This fund expands invitationals college scholarship prizes for all the scholastic events (not the seniors) for first through fifth places. Rockefeller is expanding the prizes so that first place is \$5,000, second place is \$4,000, third place is \$3,000, fourth place is \$2,000 and fifth place is \$1,000. With this gift second and third place are increased, and fourth and fifth place are added.



SHARON PERCY ROCKEFELLER

STATE INVATIONALS BOOKS FUND







WHO: Sharon Percy Rockefeller (b. 1944) is Rockefeller’s mother. She is the chief executive officer of the Washington, D.C. public TV and radio station WETA and was awarded the National Medal of Arts in 2019, as “a renowned champion of the arts, a generous supporter of charity, and a pioneer of new ideas and approaches in the field of public policy.”

WHY: During the current pandemic, Rockefeller decided to read Sunil Weeramantry’s *Great Moves: Learning Chess Through History*, and doing so during a time of such suffering in the U.S. and the world reminded him of life’s fragility, a lesson he had previously experienced following his own health scare in 2017 (from which he fully recovered). Creating a gift agreement such as this one could be done more speedily than revising his will. His mother is an avid reader.

DETAILS: This will be a recurring six-year cycle of books for 371 players in the seven invitational events that take place at the U.S. Open. A different group of books will be given to the participants each year; the year one list is made up of books focusing on Morphy and the early history of chess.

Other Notable Gifts to US Chess in 2019-2020

In addition to Rockefeller's gift, US Chess has been the grateful recipient of several other notable donations this past year. The scope and impact of these generous contributions are significant. Some address the immediate needs of US Chess programs, while other gifts anticipate future needs of the organization. This level of commitment to US Chess is a humbling testament to the confidence and trust our donors place in us to carry out our important mission, for which we are truly honored.

-  **ANONYMOUS:** An anonymous gift was made this year in the amount of \$104,445 to ensure that US Chess is represented at FIDE governance meetings. Our gratitude for this gift and its importance cannot be overstated. We are always thankful for donors who understand that sometimes there are obscure but essential and worthy costs.
-  **SAINT LOUIS CHESS CLUB:** Our abiding partnership and shared interests with the Saint Louis Chess Club make it a vital relationship in the United States chess community. Their steadfast support over the years has been instrumental in the success of important US Chess programs and tournaments. Their financial contribution over the years to US Chess is inestimable. This year alone, they made combined gifts of \$125,000, benefiting Women and Girls in Chess, and \$31,500 for the online Olympiad sponsorship.
-  **THE HERBERT B. JACLYN TRUST:** Dr. Herbert B. Jacklyn was a US Chess member and life-long chess player who felt that young, promising chess players should continue to develop their skills as they transition into adulthood. Dr. Jacklyn passed away in March of 2020 at the age of 95, but not before he gifted \$150,000 to US Chess through his estate plan by creating an endowment to help develop worthy chess players between the ages of 18 and 21.
-  **THE DANE E. HINRICHSSEN TRUST:** Dane Hinrichsen included US Chess in his estate plan by making an unrestricted gift of \$50,000. This allowed US Chess to use it where it is most needed. In this case, it was added to the US Chess Endowment.
-  **AMERICAN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION (AIE):** Sending our World Cadet, World Youth, and U-16 Olympiad delegations abroad to compete is a pricey proposition. AIE recognized this and generously stepped up by donating \$23,000 for team uniforms. Team uniforms play an important role in the morale and confidence of young players.
-  **RICHARD AND BARBARA SCHIFFRIN:** Women and Girls in Chess is a US Chess program that continues to garner considerable attention and support. The Schifffrins have been dedicated partners in a mutual quest to realize gender equity in the game of chess. They recently made a combined gift of \$50,000 to help fund the U.S. Women's Rapid Chess Championship, as well as the WIM Ruth Haring National Tournament of Girls State Champions.

If you have questions about making a tax-deductible gift to US Chess or have considered including US Chess in a planned gift or estate plan, please email us at development@uschess.org, or call the Development Office at (931) 787-3429. Remember, for those interested in donating to US Chess, gifts made specifically to US Chess are the only funds guaranteed to be used for US Chess programs.

THERE IS A PATH FOR ALL

Rockefeller's journey from playing chess with his grandfather to major donor to US Chess illustrates a key fact about our organization: No matter what your interest area in chess, there is a path to participation for you. Rated play is only the most visible aspect of US Chess. Be it playing, reading, organizing, volunteering, or philanthropy, there is an entryway into US Chess where you can make your mark and help the organization grow.

But this article, published in this giving season, especially celebrates the donation route. The Rockefeller family's philanthropic legacy dates back over a hundred years, to when John D. Rockefeller Sr. established the Rockefeller Foundation in 1913. In its Winter 2013 edition, *Philanthropy Magazine* wrote of [Rockefeller Sr.], "His charitable giving has continued for generations after his death, and his resources still work to promote the well-being of mankind." This is potentially a difficult burden to bear when you are the fifth namesake of the foundation's architect!

Rockefeller V says, "Because of my name, I'm very aware of my family legacy. However, I have always felt a bit disconnected from the older generation. Because I lost my grandfather [when I was eight years old] it made me think, not what do I want my legacy to be, but how can I help ensure that other kids and parents will have these great relationships, great opportunities. It's such an amazing thing to see so many parents and grandparents walking their adorable, young munchkins to the board at the start of a round. I had that experience with my three kids, but my grandfather never had that opportunity with me. I wish he had lived long enough to take me to my first tournament as a kid.

"Using wealth to shape the future is something Rockefellers have done for a long time. Starting in August of 2019, but especially during the first two months of COVID-19 in America, I decided it was time for me to do my part to continue the family legacy. I've never done anything approaching this scale of giving." 