

USCF PRESIDENT'S REPORT



by **John McCrary**

Fellow leaders of U.S. Chess:

In the past year, we have made progress, but we still face great challenges. To summarize where we have been:

INCREDIBLE CHALLENGES – OR, WHEN IT RAINS, IT POURS:

When this Board took over, we faced major inherited problems. These centered around declining revenue sources from various causes. We could not easily cut expenses to match the declining revenues, since many of our expenses are of a relatively fixed nature. For example, the number of staff and contributor fees needed to produce *Chess Life* does not decline with the number of readers. Furthermore, in Fall 2001 we inherited huge amounts of accounts payable, many quite overdue.

Only a month after assuming office came the tragic events of 9-11-2001. Many USCF members were directly affected by this national tragedy. The USCF suffered in the economic aftermath of 9-11-2001, as well. The resulting stock losses impacted our Life Member fund, and fund-raising dropped significantly for us just as it did everywhere.

The outbreak of war this spring cost us hundreds of entries to our National Scholastic Championships, as many schools and parents feared to travel. Budgetary woes in school districts also hurt travel funding for chess teams in some schools. Then, the record outbreak of Tennessee tornadoes, just four days before our National Elementary tournament in Nashville, cost many entries thanks to a totally unfounded rumor that the event had been canceled due to weather (although the site had been unaffected and the tournament weather was fine).

PROGRESS IN SPITE OF IT ALL:

In spite of the above challenges, we have accomplished many things, including:

1) Improved revenues: The revenues in most categories, including book-and-equipment sales and memberships, have increased significantly over the prior year.

2) *Chess Life* is changing to have more diversity and more new features, including material for beginning players of all ages.

3) Ratings are no longer deflating, according to monitoring by the Ratings Committee. This is a result of the changes designed by that committee in the past.

4) Our Executive Director, Frank Niro, has done much to heal the old political wounds that divide people in our governance. Frank has quietly and successfully prevented a number of potential crises through his personal skills, and by the "ounce of prevention" approach.

5) Our Executive Board has shown that it is possible to have a USCF Board that operates in a polite and professional manner, without the public disputes that have plagued board after board in the past. We have our differences of opinion, but they are resolved through compromise and consensus.

6) We sent both an overall team and a Women's team to the Olym-

piad. While the team results were disappointing, the stronger-than-expected showing by the Women's team gives great hope for the future.

Congratulations to GM Yasser Seirawan for his Silver Medal for Board 2!

CHALLENGES YET TO FACE:

In a larger sense, our biggest challenge is demographic. Our adult population is aging, while our young population of players are, for the most part, not becoming adult enthusiasts. This problem is not unique to the USCF. For example, the American Contract Bridge League is having a similar aging, with resultant decline, of its adult membership. Other national chess federations are facing similar problems.

Paradoxically, the number of adults who play chess is increasing vastly, while organized chess is declining! Theories abound, but nobody really knows the answer to the riddle of why new adult members are not being found in enough numbers to offset the losses in the older generation. My concern is that our society as a whole is forgetting how to use its brains. One look at the major network TV shows should show the low value that is now placed on higher-order thought processes. But that is just my theory.

Meanwhile, it is more important than ever for those of us who value organized chess to support the USCF. It is not possible for services to be provided at the same price forever; no business can do that! Yet some of our members will always think we should. We need support for membership dues as they presently stand. We need to encourage our members to renew on time.

THANKS GO TO:

So many people are working to help USCF that we hardly know where to start in expressing appreciation. If I gave names here I would inevitably leave out many who should have been included. The sad thing is that many local and state organizers do not receive the recognition they deserve. We have started a regular feature in *Chess Life* that is called "Chess News." It allows anyone to send in a short piece about local activities or anything of interest. However, at this time that feature is still being little used.

Let us hope for a productive meeting and a progressive year ahead!

John McCrary,
USCF President



U.S. Women's Olympiad training squad.
L. to R. Rusa Goletiani, Susan Polgar, Paul Truong,
Irina Krush, Jennifer Shahade, and Anna Zatonskih.

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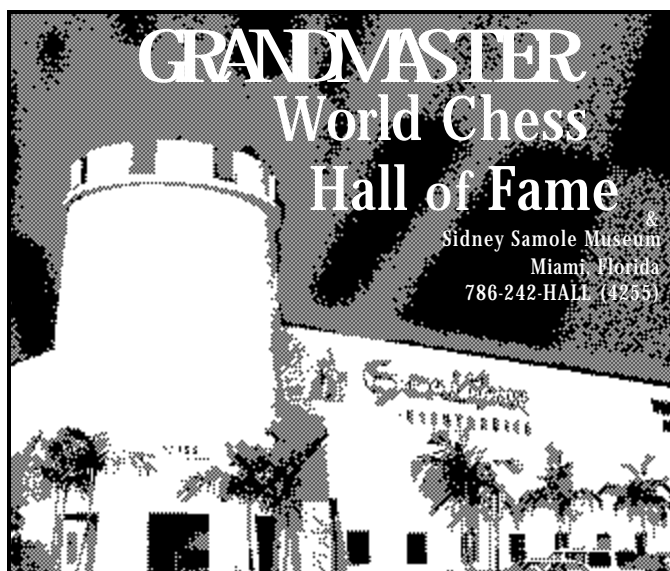
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