

pez, and he does still have the K-side pawn majority, a strength that is ever present in my mind and almost always a permanent endgame advantage! The Black pawn at g4 is nice, however, because it does kind of keep White's K at bay. And it will be hard for White to ever push f5 given how d4 is so solidly held by Black so White will likely never have a Knight there!

26...Kb7 27.Ne4 Rd8



28.Ndf6

This is an important move and decision in the game. The whole character of the game from here on rides on this move. Black has weaknesses in his K-side pawns and with Black's K way over on b7, White might very well have a hey-day over there! And White has some weakness in his Q-side pawns, or at least that's that it "looks" like. There could be some poison in those pawns, but pawns are pawns too! After the coming exchange of rooks, the resulting minor piece ending is critical. The "fine point" is that after Black puts his Knight on d4 (which happens next move), then f3 is a great outpost for it! And for the first time in the game, Black will have something that is in White's territory. Plus, if I put

my Bishop on d5 instead of taking the a2 pawn, then there are tactical threats involving the pin of the e4 knight.

28... Rxd2+ 29.Bxd2 Nd4!

For the first time in the game, Black's knight gets to a good square!

30.c3 Nf3 31.Nxh7

I thought at the time that 31.Be3 was absolutely required in light of my threat of ...Bd5 followed by ...Nxd2. But this was Game/30. Frank told me after the game that, given the short amount of time, he was focused on his own plans and only looking at what I could do on the Q-side. Computer analysis recommends 31.Be3= Bxf6 32.Nxf6 Bxa2 33.Nxg4 Ne1+ 34.Kf2 Nd3+ 35.Ke2 Nxb2 36.f5.

31...Bd5

Black is now simply winning a piece, or so I thought. But after 32.Nhf6!= Nxd2 33.Nxd5 Nxe4 34.Ne3 a5 35.Nxg4 White has three connected passed pawns for the piece. Had the time control been slower, Frank would probably have played that.

32.Nhg5?

Oops. Here's a common situation in fast time controls. While not in *actual* time trouble yet, Frank admitted that he rushed his move in order to avoid a future time scramble. He called it the pressure of the impending time pressure. In any case...

32...Nxd2! 0-1

Upcoming Stories for the next issue...

USCF-rated Match: Roland vs. Olsoy, July 9-August 1, 2012 (best of 12 games match)

ICA Summer Classic, Boise, ID, July 14-15, 2012

Mountain Home Summer Chess Tournament, Mountain Home, ID July 28, 2012

Upcoming Events...

Eastern Idaho Open (September 22-23, 2012, Pocatello, Idaho - NWC Grand Prix!)

Please visit the ICA web site at: www.idahocheessassociation.org

A Conversation with the Interim NWC Editor, Frank Niro

Frank Niro relocated to the Northwest in 2006 and, in that short amount of time, has been a resident of all three states. Initially, he lived in Port Orchard, WA, on the farm of radio personality Delilah Rene (www.delilah.com) while working on his memoir (only partially about chess) and volunteering as her business development manager.

He moved to Oregon City with his wife, Natasha, in 2007. Last year they moved to Idaho to be near her parents. Currently, he is on the faculty of Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, where he serves as Executive-in-Residence in the Sloan Program in Health Administration in the School of Human Ecology. In the

A Conversation with Frank Niro

(continued from previous page)

Spring of 2013, he will be returning to campus to co-teach (with his wife) a course entitled “Strategic and Business Planning for Healthcare Professionals.” His professional “bio” can be found on the Cornell University web site (www.human.cornell.edu/bio.cfm?netid=fan3).

Last fall, I had the unusual opportunity of driving to Crossville, TN, and visiting the offices of the United States Chess Federation with Frank. On the trip, my eyes were opened to his 45-year career promoting chess everywhere he has been. In a sense, this “interview” began on that trip. I would like to introduce you to the Frank Niro that I have come to know.

Jeff Roland: Welcome to Idaho. I understand that you were U.S. Chess Federation Executive Director from December 2001 to August 2003 and left for medical reasons. How did you come to choose Idaho as a place to settle down?

Frank Niro: Thank you. We love it here in the “Great Northwest.” Except for the absence of Fenway Park and *Dunkin’ Donuts* franchises, the area is perfect.

Yes, I was pretty ill back then. I probably should not have returned to work after my earlier stroke, at least not a job that required so much travel. I suffered a heart attack in March of 2003. Fortunately I was staying with Al Lawrence at the time and he literally saved my life by calling an ambulance in the middle of the night. He knew I was in trouble when I told him that it “felt like Steve Doyle was standing on my chest.” He still likes to tell people that story.

Then three weeks after having two stents inserted into my anterior descending artery, I went right back to the office. Following that, while on a trip to Tennessee to sign the paperwork for the new office in Crossville, I suffered a pulmonary embolism. It took five days for me to drive back to New York. As a result, I missed a bunch of critical meetings - most notably those involving our auditors - with the unfortunate result that the published financial statements for 2002 were overly conservative. I didn’t let anyone know how sick I was at the time. It was a dumb move because, when I couldn’t do it any more, it looked to some people like I was leaving for other reasons. My doctor advised me not to fly to Los Angeles for the

Natasha and Frank Niro, pictured here, met in West Seattle in 2006 and were married in Oregon City in 2007.



U.S. Open for fear of blood clots. So I did what I should have done a lot sooner and resigned. I was accused of disappearing without resigning and a variety of other nonsense. Following that, I became “persona non grata.” I prepared a detailed analysis of the USCF financial position and nobody in control wanted to hear what I had to say. I attended the Executive Board meeting in October 2003, along with the representatives of the City of Crossville and the buyer for our New York property. We weren’t even given the courtesy of being invited into the meeting. I addressed some of these issues publicly in 2009, so there’s no need to repeat it now. The details are located online at: <http://twchesssafari.blogspot.com/2009/03/resignation-great-laptop-caper.html>.

I moved to Connecticut to be near my son in 2004 and to Queens to share an apartment with Stephan Gerzadowiz around 2005. Then, in 2006, Delilah invited me to Seattle to work on my memoir. I met my wife, Tash, in West Seattle and we were married in Oregon City in 2007. We came to Meridian in March of 2010 so that we could spend more time with my in-laws.

Jeff Roland: So who in the chess world has influenced you most over the years?


Frank Niro: I feel very fortunate to have had many mentors, from Martin Morrison in the early days to Harold Dondis, George Mirijanian, Helen Warren, John McCrary and others. But if I had to choose one person whose support and advice I treasure most, it would be Dr. Tim Redman, twice the President of USCF. I met Tim at the U.S. Open in St. Paul 2000 when I was on the Board of the U.S. Chess Trust. He helped me gain a fellowship to work on a Ph.D. in Chess in Education at the University of Texas at Dallas, and he spent countless hours answering my questions about how to make chess more attractive to the masses. Tim taught me much about a lot of different subjects and put me on a good track in my life. I will always be grateful for his guidance. He is a behind-the-scenes guy, and I have tried to emulate him in that regard.

(continued on page 43)

Class E and Below				Class D and Below							
1	Patterson	Katie R	9	1	Buerer	Harry F	30.5	1	Richards	Jerrold	68.5
1	Blake	Lloyd	9	2	Lian	Hansen	17.5	2	Haining	Breck	38
3	Blake	Isaac R	8.5	2	Brahmarouthu	Abhinav	17.5	2	Dixon	Max L	38
4	Three tied at		6	4	Svetal	Scott M	17	4	Chalasanani	Sujatha D	36
				5	Botez	Andrea C C	14.5	5	Two tied at		34.5
Overall Leaders, by State											
1	Leslie	Cameron D	28.5	1	Raptis	Nick	109	1	Buck	Stephen J	100
2	Joshi	Kairav	27.5	2	Saputra	Yogi	77.5	2	Szabo	Marcell	82
3	Weyland	Ronald M	27	3	Gaikwad	Dagadu B	50	3	Bartron	Paul R	76
4	Williams	Richard R	22	4	Esler	Brian J	44	4	Zhang	Derek	73.5
5	Jaroski	Jeffrey A	21.5	5	Sato-Duncan	Takuma	34.5	5	Ramesh	Jothi N	70
6	Bodie	Brad	20	6	Sherrard	Jerry	34	6	Richards	Jerrold	68.5
7	Havrilla	Mark A	15.5	7	Fisette	Robert A	33	7	Pupols	Viktors	57
8	Kircher	Caleb P	10.5	7	Doddapaneni	Venkat S	33	8	Nagase	Toshihiro	56.5
9	Patterson	Kevin R	10	9	Cigan	Jason	32.5	9	Nagase	Masayuki	55.5
10	Patterson	Katie R	9	9	Sharan	Praveer	32.5	10	Lampman	Becca	55
10	Blake	Lloyd	9	11	Gay	Daniel Z	30.5	11	Wang	James	54.5

Players in Database: 2012

class	ID	OR	WA	Oth.	totals
Master	0	4	10	1	15
Expert	0	11	26	2	39
Class A	6	19	46	5	76
Class B	14	16	55	5	90
Class C	4	22	39	6	71
D-below	21	26	84	5	136
	45	98	260	24	427



Most active GP players				
Last	First	State	Rtg	events
	Stephen			
Buck	J	WA	1828	16
Szabo	Marcell	WA	1942	14
Piper	August	WA	1548	13
Ramesh	Jothi N	WA	1737	11
Raptis	Nick	OR	2335	11
Pupols	Viktors	WA	2227	10
	Five tied at			
				9

Conversation... continued from page 46

Jeff Roland: When we were in Crossville, I could tell that you harbor no bitterness toward USCF and that the staff members there have great respect for you. On the other hand, you remain on the Board of the Susan Polgar Foundation and it is common knowledge that Susan and the USCF recently had a bitter legal battle. Could you share a little about how you reconcile your loyalties to Susan and the USCF?

Frank Niro: Well, first of all, I have known Susan and her family since she was 15. When I left the USCF office she was the only person in the chess world who took the time to check on my health status and find out if there was anything I needed. So we are loyal friends and that will always continue to be so. I have been on the Board of the Susan Polgar Foundation for ten years and I'm the TD for the Susan Polgar National Girls Invitational. SPF is a great organization that does a lot to promote chess, particularly among young people.

As far as I am concerned, people have a right to pursue their legal options when they feel wronged. I don't know the details of the law suit and I don't need to. I know what's in Susan's heart and I admire what she has done for the game of chess. Right now there are five players on her Webster University chess team that will be playing in the upcoming Olympiad - for five different

countries! Obviously, she is respected most everywhere or she would not be able to attract Grandmasters from all over the world. By the way, GMs aren't the only chess players attending Texas Tech (where she recently left) or Webster University on scholarship.

For example, Vanita Young from Philadelphia just graduated from high school and will be attending Webster in the fall on scholarship. I saw her yesterday and she was giggling with gratitude. I heard from Chris, the dad of Idaho's Savannah Naccarato, and he told me that Savannah is focused on improving her play so that she too can earn a scholarship next year. And I'm willing to bet that she will!

(to be continued in September...)

Boise versus Twin Falls club match!

Since no entry fee was collected, and the last event held in April collected absolutely no donations, we decided this time we would give out a simple printed plain piece of paper with the tournament name and “1st Place” and “2nd Place” written on it. The winners would, as their prizes, get their picture taken with that piece of paper for inclusion in *Northwest Chess* magazine (a subtle way, perhaps, of building up the member/subscriber base in Idaho).

In the ICU, it’s not about money, ratings (we have them, but it’s not emphasized), or politics. It’s simply about chess, a good time, awesome chess friendships, and memories that last for years and years. The motto of the ICU is “Play the game”. That is exactly what happened at this very enjoyable event! Thank you, all who came, for playing.

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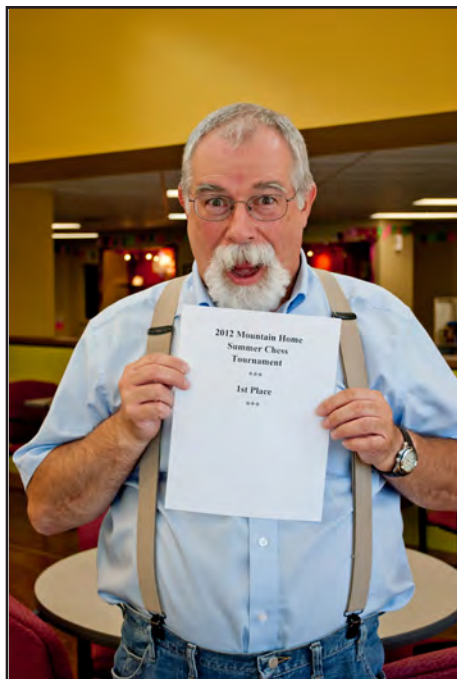
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Upcoming Events

See pages 30-32



Timothy Stewart (Meridian) - 1st Place, Mountain Home Summer Chess Tournament.

Photo credit: Jeff Roland



Cody Gorman (Eagle) - 2nd Place, Mountain Home Summer Chess Tournament.

Photo credit: Jeff Roland

A Conversation with the Editor, Frank Niro - Part II

Jeff Roland: Last month we were discussing the prospects for a talented young Idaho player, Savannah Naccarato, to win a chess scholarship. She’s an automatic qualifier to next year’s SPGI, is that right?

Frank Niro: Yes, that’s correct. As an alumna of the 2011 Susan Polgar Foundation Girls Invitational she gets an automatic invitation in 2013. Room & board for the week is covered for the reigning state champion. But if she can’t make the eight hour trip to the 2013 Idaho H.S. scholastic tournament, or if one of the other girls wins the title, there has already been a donor who has agreed to fund

the dormitory and meal fees for Savannah and one of her parents in St. Louis next July. I saw that she upset a 1767 player in round 1 of the Spokane Falls Open held in July, so she continues to improve steadily. I believe she is just a sophomore.

By the way, both Michaela Abernathy and Carmen Pemsler attended the 2012 Susan Polgar Foundation Invitational and did well. They both finished with 3.5-2.5 scores in a really tough field and, unfortunately, they had to play each other in round 5. On top of that, they were co-champions in the SPGI Bughouse event. There

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were three full scholarships to Webster University worth \$52,000 each given to the winners. It's such a good thing that more prestigious colleges are offering scholarships to chess players each year. And next year I understand that there may be a trip to play in a tournament in Europe added to the SPGI prize list.

Jeff Roland: I just read your two-part interview from December, 2002 & January, 2003 *Chess Life*. It seems that you had vision, clarity of thought, and the right leadership skills to turn things around for a struggling USCF. I realize that you were merely the "team leader" as you put it, and did not do much on your own, but still, you were instrumental, as a leader, in some very positive changes. What are some of your most notable achievements when you were Executive Director at USCF?

Frank Niro: Truthfully, I wasn't there long enough to accumulate a list of impressive achievements. I kept my finger in the dike, so to speak, and created a common vision for the organization that I presented at the U.S. Open in Cherry Hill, NJ, in 2002. In that sense, I planted a lot of seeds - to use a trite metaphor. Some of my ideas were eventually implemented, such as online submission of tournament reports for immediate ratings, and some were tossed out by those in power who followed me.

But if I had to pick a few things where I left a permanent mark, they would be the Sydney Samole World Chess Hall of Fame and Museum in Miami (now moved to St. Louis), plus the establishment and funding of the so-called "Dream Team" that won the Silver Medal at the 2004 Women's Chess Olympiad in Majorca and, as a



NWC Editor Frank Niro at the closing ceremony of the 2012 Susan Polgar Foundation Girls Invitational in St. Louis with GM Susan Polgar.

result, fostered the growth of chess among woman and young girls in the U.S. In addition, I had a lot of influence on the decision to relocate the USCF offices to Crossville, TN.

With respect to the Hall of Fame and Museum, most of the planning was done while I was President of the U.S. Chess Trust, which is the organization that owns most of the artifacts, but it became a reality when I was Executive Director. It was great to be part of that and, along the way, I collected some treasured memories and gained many important friends.

As far as the "Dream Team" is concerned, and this relates back to my friendship with Susan Polgar that we discussed last month, the intensive training that the women on the team received over the course of more than a year has paid immense dividends. Besides earning the overall Silver Medal, the first medal of any kind in the history of U.S. Women's chess, every Women's Champion of

the United States since 2004, up to and including 2012, was on that team.

A journalist by the name of Jeannette Cooperman wrote in the August 2012 *St. Louis Magazine* that, in 2003 I, as "U.S. Chess Federation's executive director begged Susan to come out of retirement." It made me laugh because I thought that I persuaded her to come out of retirement. But I guess begging was my method of persuasion.

It was a big decision for her. She received threats to kill her if she played against her native Hungary. In any case, the increase in chess related scholarships and women's chess activities as a result of Susan's efforts, together with the strong visionary support of the McCrary Board at USCF, is still providing benefits today. Unfortunately, for political reasons, her impact is neither well understood nor appreciated beyond those who take the time to analyze what has really happened in American chess during the past ten years.

Jeff Roland: The link to the article mentioned above can be found on the Idaho Chess Association web site. Coming next month, or as space permits: reasons that the USCF moved to Crossville TN. Also, Frank shares the story behind the SPICE program's move from Texas Tech to Webster University (short version), Al Lawrence and GM Alexander Onischuk recently moving to Texas Tech to preserve the chess program, and Steven Breckenridge's scholarship offer to attend Texas Tech, as well as Frank's upcoming memoir and - as he puts it - a "coup" a other things." Please visit the NWC web site if you wish to see Part I of this interview.

Luke's performance at the 2012 World Open wasn't the first time he has toppled a Grandmaster.

White: De Firmian, Nick
Black: Harmon-Vellotti, Luke
Philadelphia Open, 2011

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 Ne7 7.Nf3 Nbc6 8.Be2 Qa5 9.Bd2 Bd7 10.O-O c4 11.Ng5 h6 12.Nh3 O-O-O 13.Nf4 f6 14.exf6 gxf6 15.Nh5 Rdf8 16.Bg4 Qc7 17.Qf3 Ng6 18.Rfe1 f5 19.Bh3 e5 20.Qxd5 Nce7 21.Qf3 e4 22.Qg3 f4 23.Bxd7+ Qxd7 24.Qh3 Qxh3 25.gxh3 Rhg8 26.Rxe4 Rf5 27.Ng3 fxc3 28.hxc3 h5 29.Rae1 Kd7 30.Rb1 b6 31.a4 h4 32.g4 Rf3 33.a5 Nd5 34.axb6 axb6 35.Ra1 Ngf4 36.Re5 Kd6 37.Bxf4 Nxf4 38.Rb1 Rxh3 39.g5 Ne2+ 40.Kg2 Nf4+ 41.Kg1 Kc6 42.Rf5 Rf3 43.Rf6+ Kc7 44.Rfxb6 Rxc6+ 45.Kf1 Rh3 46.Ke1 Rg1+ 47.Kd2 Rxb1 48.Rxb1 Rf3 49.Rb4 h3 50.Rxc4+ Kd7 51.Ra4 Rxf2+ 52.Ke3 Rf1 53.Ra7+ Ke6 54.Rh7 Kf5 55.c4 Kg6 56.Rh8 Kg7 57.Rxh3 Nxf3 58.c5 Ng5 59.d5 Kf6 60.c6 Ke5 61.c4 Rf3+ 0-1

John Bryant should be a familiar name to those who followed our 2012 U.S. Open coverage last month. Bryant tied for first place with GMs Dmitry Gurevich and Manuel Leon Hoyos and lost an exciting Armageddon playoff for the title. At age 12, Luke had his way with Bryant too.

White: Harmon-Vellotti, Luke
Black: Bryant, John
Philadelphia Open, 2011

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 Nf6 4.Nc3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 a6 6.Be3 e5 7.Nb3 Be7 8.f3 Be6 9.Qd2 O-O 10.O-O-O Nbd7 11.g4 b5 12.h4 b4 13.Nd5 Bxd5 14.exd5 a5 15.Kb1 Nb6 16.Bxb6 Qxb6 17.Bd3 a4 18.Nc1 a3 19.b3 Qd4 20.c4 bxc3 21.Qc2 Qc5

22.Be4 Rfc8 23.Nd3 Qa5 24.Ne1 Rc5 25.Qd3 Rb8 26.Nc2 Rbb5 27.g5 Nxd5 28.Bxh7+ Kh8 29.Qf5 Ne3 30.Qxf7 Kxh7 31.Rc1 Nd5 32.g6+ Kh6 33.Qg8 Nf6 34.Qh8+ Kxg6 35.Rhg1+ Kf7 36.Rxc7+ Ke6 37.Re1 Qa4 38.Ka1 Qf4 39.Qa8 Qd2 40.Kb1 Rd5 41.Qc8+ 1-0

We will ask Luke, if possible, to annotate one or more of his games from Los Angeles.

Idaho's National Chess Champ

By the way, can you identify Idaho's only currently reigning United States Chess Champion? It is Dan E. Mayers of Sun Valley who has, for the past several years, been the United States Senior Open Champion in the Over-75 category.

Dan is 90 years old, a life member of the USCF with a current rating of 1880 (2000 FIDE). He is a "super-veteran" in the eyes of his chess competitors, and a strong one at that. He was rated over 2000 as recently as 2002 when he drew with GM Arnold Denker in the World Chess Hall of Fame Over-80 tournament in Miami.

With failing eyesight, Dan is unable to drive and usually plays in the large events around the country where he can take public transportation. Re-

cently, he wrote a letter to the editor of *Northwest Chess* with these remarks: "I would be happy to participate in Idaho chess tournaments if someone will have the courtesy to collect me from my Sun Valley condo and drive me to the tournament and back again. I do not drive and cannot afford a taxi... I would be most appreciative of your kind assistance."

So, if you or anyone in your circle of chess friends would like to support our current national champion in his quest to continue playing chess, please send an e-mail with specifics concerning the tournament for which you may be able to help to: editor@northwestchess.com. We will gladly help make the arrangements.

A Conversation with the Editor, Frank Niro – Part III (not!)

When I discussed the space requirements for this issue with the Editor, Frank Niro, he insisted that I include the news about Luke Harmon-Vellotti and the letter from Dan Mayers without waiting another month. He declared that, "if we need space then my interview will have to be the first thing to go." And so it is... Come back next month for the conclusion of the Conversation with the Editor. As a teaser, can you name the members of the 2004 U.S. Women's chess "Dream Team" pictured below?



25.exf5 Qe3 26.Qc1 Qxc1 27.Rxc1 Rhx5 28.Rcf1 Rxf2 29.Rxf2 Re8 30.Kf1 Re6 31.Re2 Rf6+ 32.Ke1 Kf7 33.Rf2 Rxf2 34.Kxf2 Kf6 35.Kf3 Ke5 36.Ke2 Ke4 37.h3 h6 38.h4 h5 39.a3 a5 40.a4 Ke5 41.Kd3 Kf5 42.Ke2 Ke4 43.Kf2 d3 44.c3 d2 45.Ke2 d1Q+ 46.Kxd1 Kf3 47.b4 1-0

Errata

In last month's issue, on page 33, we inadvertently left out moves 29 to 35 of the Harmon-Vellotti vs. Ramirez game. Here is the game in its entirety but this time with the added bonus of having notes by Luke Harmon-Vellotti.

White: Harmon-Vellotti, Luke
Black: Ramirez, Alejandro

[A42] World Open, Philadelphia
2012

[Notes by Luke Harmon-Vellotti]

1.d4

I had recently started playing d4, and this was only my third tournament game ever with d4. When Ramirez got to the board, he looked surprised when he saw that I had played d4, which was one of the reasons that I switched to d4 in the first place.

1...g6 2.c4 Bg7 3.Nc3 d6 4.e4 e5

I had never seen this move before, and so I did not know what to play here. The main move here is Nge2, and White is fine. The move I played, Be3, is also fine.

5.Be3 exd4 6.Bxd4 Nf6 7.f3 Nc6 8.Be3 O-O 9.Nge2 Ne5 10.Nd4 a6 11.Be2 c5

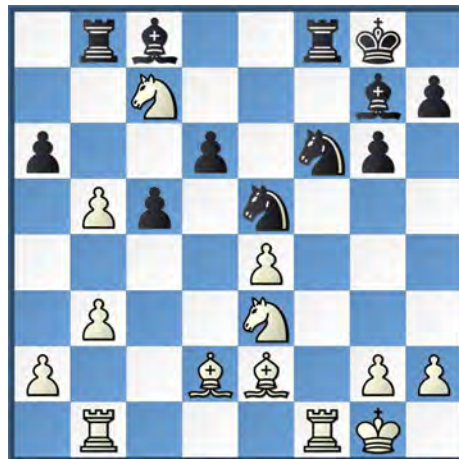
This move surprised me, as I did not think that he would want to weaken his d5 square. I think that he did this because he wanted to

push my knight away from its powerful post on d4.

12.Nc2 Be6 13.b3 Ne8 14.Qd2 Qa5 15.Nd5 Qxd2+ 16.Bxd2 b5 17.O-O Rb8 18.Rab1 f5 19.Nce3 fxe4 20.fxe4 Nf6

Originally, in this position, I had been planning to play Nxf6+ and accept that I had a slightly worse position. However, once I saw that I could play Nc7, I knew I would play it, because it gives him more chances to mess up.

21.Nc7 Bc8 22.cxb5



22...Nxe4??

This move is actually a blunder! This move allows me to get a practically winning endgame by force. His best move was 22...axb5 23.Bxb5 Bb7 24.Rbd1 Nxe4 25.Rxf8+ and now the position is approximately equal, but still very complicated. Bxf8 26.Be1.

23.Rxf8+ Bxf8 24.bxa6 Nxd2

In this position, Ramirez offered me a draw. However, I did not accept this draw because I knew that usually when a higher rated player offers a draw, it means that they have a bad position.

25.a7 Ra8 26.Nxa8 Nxb1 27.Nb6

Bb7 28.Ba6 Nc6 29.Bxb7 Nxa7 30.a4 Na3 31.Nbd5 Kf7 32.Kf1 Ke6 33.Ke2 Bg7 34.Kd3 Kd7 35.Ng4 h5 36.Ngf6+ Ke6

Once again, Ramirez offered me a draw here, and once again, I declined the draw offer, because I knew that I was winning here.

37.Ne4 Be5 38.g3 Kd7 39.Nf4 Nc6 40.Bxc6+ Kxc6 41.Nxg6 Bd4 42.Nf4 d5 43.Nd2 h4 44.gxh4 Be5 45.Ng6 Bxh2 46.h5 Bc7 47.h6 Bd8 48.Ne5+ Kc7 49.Ng4 1-0

Here, Ramirez resigned because he cannot stop my h-pawn from queening. I was very happy, as this was my first ever win with d4!

Luke Harmon-Vellotti

#1 Under 14 for both FIDE & USCF

Idaho's Luke Harmon-Vellotti, age 13, is now recognized as the best player in the United States under the age of 14. He has recently obtained the title of FIDE Master and has a USCF rating of 2411, FIDE rating of 2320, and Blitz of 2236.

Sources: www.sponsorluke.com and <http://susanpolgar.blogspot.com/>

A Conversation with the Editor, Frank Niro – Part III (Con- clusion)

Part I was in the August issue, part II was in the September issue. Due to so much recent activity, great stories, and limited space, the conclusion of this interview will regrettably have to wait until the December issue.

A Conversation with Frank Niro – Part III (Conclusion)

Editor's note: Part I of this interview was presented in the August issue, Part II in the September issue, and we conclude now with Part III. More information and additional interviews of Frank Niro in *Northwest Chess* and *Chess Life* can be found at <http://www.idahochessassociation.org/otherresults-frankniro-20120822.asp>.

Jeff Roland: Earlier we were discussing the 2004 Women's Olympiad team that won the Silver Medal for the U.S. in Mallorca. Who were the members of the training squad for that team?

Frank Niro: Anna Zatonskih, Rusa Golestani, Susan Polgar, Jennifer Shahade and Irina Krush.

Jeff Roland: So how did you get involved with the U.S.C.F. office?

Frank Niro: I started playing chess in the late 1960s as a hospital patient. The game helped my recovery in many ways besides just passing the time. It distracted me from my pain, assuaged my competitive instincts, gave me goals to pursue, provided mental exercise, and it taught me to plan ahead and deal with the consequences of my actions -- all the good stuff that chess players already know about.

In 1997, after I suffered a stroke, chess again became a part of my therapy. I had to give up hospital administration

because I could no longer handle the long hours, the travel and the stress. By January of 2000, I had thought about returning to work and applied for the USCF Executive Director's job when Mike Cavallo left, but at the time it was clear that I wasn't yet physically ready to do the job. The Executive Board was impressed with my ideas and asked me to stay involved. I became President of the U.S. Chess Trust with the encouragement of its founder, Harold Dondis.

As mentioned earlier, I started working on a Ph.D. in chess in education at the University of Texas at Dallas on Dr. Tim Redman's recommendation. Tim made me aware that George DeFeis had resigned from the USCF and suggested that I try it on an interim, voluntary basis. So I agreed to take the job until the 2002 U.S. Open at Cherry Hill, NJ.

Jeff Roland: But you stayed longer, didn't you?

Frank Niro: Yes, I did, and it was a mistake. My primary goals when I started were to increase memberships, improve internal systems and controls at the USCF office and develop a Strategic Plan for the organization. As a result of the strategic planning process, it became apparent that significant operating expense savings could be realized by changes in the workflow and supporting systems at the USCF headquarters in New Windsor, NY. At the same time, a potential buyer came forward prepared to pay fair market value for the existing property. With

and closest friends, to stay on until the relocation of the office.

Jeff Roland: So you sold the old building and implemented your plans in the new one, right?

Frank Niro: I wish it had been that simple. As you know, membership processing and ratings, the most visible side of the operation to USCF members, was system dependent. I wanted members and tournament directors to be able to look up tournament cross tables within 24 hours of processing, get immediate ratings, search for specific players, and download and print the results at home. Internal systems to better automate ratings and membership processing had to include pre-assignment of member ID numbers. The order entry system utilized by our sales staff was in dire need of streamlining for faster processing of orders. The USCF website had to be more functional, user friendly and current. Online processing of membership renewals and tournament reports needed to be quick and easy. It's hard to imagine that these things that are now taken for granted didn't exist ten years ago, but they did not.

There was no way we could accomplish all of these things within the constraints of the old building and computer system in NY. The books and equipment operation, bolstered by our special tax status and our affinity relationship with members, gave us a competitive advantage in the marketplace and represented \$3,000,000 in annual revenue to the USCF. This was a critical factor, in my opinion, in my plans to proceed forward. We couldn't make such a move until we figured out what was needed to revitalize our books and equipment operation. Finding someplace centrally located was one way to decrease shipping costs. As a minimum, we needed to operate more efficiently, expand the range of products in our catalog without expanding inventory in the warehouse, eliminate unprofitable concession

this in mind, I began exploring relocation options, locally and elsewhere, that would provide the opportunity for potential savings to be realized. I decided, against the recommendation of my doctor

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commitments at national tournaments, strengthen our partnerships, automate the processing of credit cards, reassign duties among staff, improve the web store appearance and functionality, reduce back orders, and develop favorable credit and payment terms with suppliers. Our new quarters had to be designed with these considerations in mind, so we couldn't just run out and lease space somewhere.

Jeff Roland: As a result the office then moved to Crossville, TN?

Frank Niro: Once again, it wasn't so simple. My first recommendation was to move to Miami, FL, in space next to the World Chess Hall of Fame and Museum on property owned by Excalibur Electronics. The President of Excalibur, Shane Samole, was a member of the U.S. Chess Trust Board and a principal benefactor of the Hall of Fame. The building, as envisioned, would be newly constructed on two floors, with one floor designed to our specifications and attached to the Hall of Fame. If needed, additional warehouse space was available. The total lease cost of \$96,000 annually was set as a target since it was felt that more than \$100,000 per year in operating cost savings could readily be achieved with such a move. In other words, the savings was more than the rental expense. This assumption was fundamental to the decision to relocate. Additionally, Mr. Samole agreed to handle the financing for the project. There was synergy in having the USCF office housed on the same campus as the World Chess Hall of Fame.

Relocation of the USCF headquarters to Miami was incorporated into the USCF strategic plan, which was accepted by acclamation at the 2002 delegates' meeting in Cherry Hill. But politics intervened and one of the delegates demanded that we look at Palm Beach Gardens, FL, shamefully suggesting that perhaps Mr. Samole, our biggest benefactor at the time, had a conflict of interest.

Jeff Roland: OK, but how did Tennessee get in the picture?

Frank Niro: By allowing all USCF members to suggest a new location. The Palm Beach Gardens effort was coordinated by a local organizing committee which was co-chaired by two USCF members including incoming Executive Board members Don Schultz and Joel Channing. A proposal was presented to the Executive Board for consideration at its meeting in Boca Raton in November 2002. The proposal contained a number of attractive elements including: (1) a new building in a desirable location, (2) 8,000 sq. ft. at \$11.75 per square foot under a ten-year lease, (3) a limited option to buy, and (4) substantial community financial support.

Since the Executive Board was entertaining a proposal other than Miami, it was recommended by some USCF delegates that a notice be put in *Chess Life* notifying our members that we were seeking proposals for possible new headquarters. Subsequently, we received inquiries from more than 20 communities, including the following:

Trenton, NJ; Mobile, AL; Kansas City, MO; Minot, ND; Cortland, NY; Bloomington, MN; Providence, RI; Lindsborg, KS; Atlanta, GA; San Francisco, CA; Portland, OR; Moab, UT; Rockford, IL; Dallas, TX; Salt Lake City, UT; Leesburg, VA; Durango, CO; Toms River, NJ; Crossville, TN; St. Louis, MO; Chandler, AZ; Indianapolis, IN; Louisville, KY; Lexington, KY; Newark, DE; San Diego, CA; Spokane, WA.

Jeff Roland: Really, all those places were considered, including some in the Northwest?

Frank Niro: Yes, the list is from the 2003 USCF Delegates' Call. I either visited or talked to a sponsor on the phone for every one of those locations. With respect to Spokane, for example, I spoke at length with Erik Anderson,

founder of America's Foundation for Chess (AF4C) in Kirkland, WA, who was a well known organizer of multiple U.S. Championships in the Seattle area and later in San Diego. He wanted the USCF to move to his hometown of Spokane. I was impressed by his presentation and still looking forward to seeing the city when I visited there for the Washington state championship in 2009. The location was problematic in regard to reducing shipping costs for books and equipment. So, after a few months, no further consideration was given to the potential site in Spokane. I realize from my discussions over the years that very few people are aware that Spokane and Portland were both considered as possible sites for the U.S.C.F.

Jeff Roland: What happened after that?

Frank Niro: Of the initial contacts, Crossville, Toms River, San Diego and Lindsborg provided special considerations that were comparable to Miami or Palm Beach Gardens. These were pursued further and Crossville was designated as a feasible back-up location in case the others fell through.

With respect to Palm Beach Gardens, we requested an option to buy at a specified price during the ten-year lease period. The developer responded that a future purchase would be at the current appraised value of the property at the time of purchase and could not be based on a previously agreed upon price. It would be a limited option in the sense that the developer would be free to sell to a third party at any time prior to the exercise of the option by the USCF, and USCF would be given an opportunity to bid prior to sale to another party. To me, that seemed like no option at all.

Of course, remaining in New Windsor was also an option. However, we had inadequate parking, poor layout, extensive future repair costs and antiquated systems. By not moving, the USCF would have saved relocation or sev-

erance costs for employees, retooling expenses and down time. It was estimated that it would cost approximately \$150,000 to orchestrate the move. Some of this (perhaps half) would be necessary to implement new systems even if we stayed in New Windsor. Nevertheless, I was able to demonstrate that a minimum of \$100,000 per year could be saved on an annual basis upon relocation. I felt, and the executive Board agreed, that if we can find a good business opportunity, we should cash out of our existing property and reinvest in a more suitable physical location.

What I failed to consider was that certain valuable records might be destroyed or tossed out during the move and that if we dragged our feet making a decision, we might lose our potential buyer, a local developer by the name of Nicholas Cardaropoli.

In January 2003, the Executive Board voted on the USCF move of the national office to the proposed site in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, subject to the satisfactory sale of the property in New Windsor and that all the details of the Palm Beach Garden location be worked out by the Executive Director with oversight from a sub-committee appointed by the Executive Board.

The details of the PBG location included a 10-year lease, initial rent of \$11.75 per sq. ft., 3% maximum annual increase, evidence of assurance that the \$250,000 of local fundraising will be raised in the form of initiation of an active fundraising campaign, and

a reasonable amount of signed contingent pledges or actual donations demonstrating the achievability of the fundraising goal. Most importantly, a suitable 'Option to Buy' which would enable the USCF to eventually own the building at an affordable price and, if necessary, an option to get a renewable lease beyond the first 10-year period at comparable rental rates to the initial period.

During my meetings with developers in Florida, I made it clear that the section of the preliminary agreement relating to an option to buy was unacceptable since it did not meet two critical goals for the USCF. We wanted to own our property at some point in the future and not get to the end of our lease term with zero equity and no place to move, and we needed protection against both a huge rent expense increase after the tenth year and the sale of the building to a third party who may not be an acceptable landlord to us. The absence was a potential deal breaker. I stated it as such from the outset of our discussions.

In the meantime, proponents of the move to Miami withdrew their offer upon hearing of the vote to move to PBG. The main shortcoming of the Miami proposal was that the building would be physically attached to the Excalibur Electronics corporate headquarters and, therefore, a future purchase was not legally feasible.

We reviewed the proposals previously received to determine suitability for a back-up site if the details of the

PBG arrangement could not ultimately be resolved. The best of these was from Crossville, TN, and sponsored by Harry Sabine. It involved a donation from the City of three acres of property upon

which a new building could be constructed. The land would be used as a down payment on a mortgage so that the stream of payments made over 15 years would accrue equity and result in ownership. An intriguing proposal was also received from Island Heights, NJ, in which the office would be housed in an historical building overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and the mouth of the Tom's River. Ownership, however, was not a possibility in New Jersey.

After the May Executive Board meeting, I traveled to Florida to attempt to resolve the impasse with the Palm Beach Gardens developer and find out whether a Miami option was still viable and could potentially be resurrected. After that, I returned to Crossville to meet with bankers and other local officials to determine whether financing was available on affordable terms. In addition, I reviewed all other options on the table. The resulting travel caused the blood clots in my legs that resulted in my earlier stroke to recur.

I met with the PBG developer in his office on May 30, 2003. Don Schultz also attended the meeting as a member of the local organizing committee. The meeting was cordial but the developer made it clear that our expectation of an option to buy the property at a specified price could not be met. Furthermore, there would be no assurances regarding lease payments beyond the first ten years. I expressed our reluctance to place the USCF in jeopardy of getting ten years down the road with no equity and no affordable place to operate. We agreed that there could be no meeting of the minds and, therefore, the original deal conditionally approved by the EB was off the table.

Meanwhile, at my request, Shane Samole and Al Lawrence contacted the owner of the property adjacent to the World Chess Hall of Fame & Museum. The principal downside to the earlier Miami proposal was the lack of an ownership option. By building

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on property that we could own, the Miami alternative would be more desirable. On June 2, 2003, we learned that the property was committed for a proposed condominium development and, therefore, was no longer available to us.

I returned to Crossville on June 4, 2003. While there, I met with Harry Sabine and three local banks. I negotiated an agreement in writing to temporarily lease vacant property free of charge, including utilities, during the period prior to completion of our new building providing an important and economical staging opportunity to simplify the relocation process. I also signed a preliminary agreement with an architect that ultimately became a critical factor in the final decision to move to Crossville. The Crossville City Council voted to transfer three acres of land on O'Brien Avenue, without restrictions, to the USCF. The Governor, also a chess player, welcomed me to his office in Nashville and the Mayor of Crossville presented me with the Key to the City which, by the way, is now hanging on the wall of the Portland Chess Club.

All three banks were very receptive. All agreed that the land value was between \$150,000 and \$200,000 and could be used to fulfill the down payment requirement. Two of the three banks gave verbal approvals for construction loans and permanent mortgages before I left on June 7.

I concurred with the Executive Committee's vote on June 9, 2003 (5-1-1) to relocate the USCF headquarters in Crossville, Tennessee, contingent on the sale of the existing property in New Windsor, New York, and subject to approval by the LMA Committee to utilize the proceeds of the sale in connection with the move.

Jeff Roland: So that was the end of the discussion?

Frank Niro: Sadly, it wasn't, but we

don't have space to go into it here. The new Executive Board seated at Los Angeles in 2003, and led by Don Schultz and Joel Channing, reopened the Palm Beach Garden discussions forcing the resignations of John McCrary and Frank Camaratta from the E.B.. By that time, following a heart attack and a pulmonary embolism in July, I had resigned my position as U.S.C.F Executive Director. Mr. Cardaropoli walked away from the deal because he felt the USCF had acted in bad faith and, ironically, the new Board decided to outsource books and equipment despite the fact that the new office was to be located across the street from the post office, a site that I picked to facilitate future shipping from the USCF to its members.

Jeff Roland: In your 2002 *Chess Life* interview, you said that you try to get people to work together for the benefit of chess. One of the questions you asked me within ten minutes of our first meeting was "How do you feel about Idaho joining Northwest Chess?" And I said, "I'm all for it!" And then we made it happen! How did you come to see this as even a possibility? Why was there so much support for this idea when I addressed the Northwest Chess Board back in August 2011?

Frank Niro: At one time, late seventies I think, I was playing Robert Karch (WA) and Dick Vandenburg (ID) in correspondence chess at the same time, so I learned about chess in the Northwest long before I ever visited here for the first time. Karch sent me the article on his match against 12-year-old Yasser Seirawan and we became pen pals, more or less. He was anti-USCF and outspoken on a variety of subjects. At one point, and I don't recall the specifics, he mentioned Idaho leaving Northwest Chess while he was editor of the magazine and I asked Vandenburg about it. Once again, I don't remember the details, but I was unhappy that what seemed from a distance to be a petty feud should affect whether or

not the players in the region received such a good magazine.

So when I moved to Oregon in 2007 I asked some players why Idaho was not part of NWC and nobody seemed to know. Eric Holcomb told me he would love to see Idaho back in the organization. Then when I moved to Idaho I decided to ask you the same question and I called you initially for exactly that reason. Fortunately, you were willing to take the time to meet me for lunch at Rembrandt's in Eagle. Once you gave a positive response, I placed you on the agenda for the next NWC Board meeting even though I wasn't on the Board myself. I walked into the meeting, introduced you to everyone around the table, suggested that the three states get together and walked out of the room. What happened after that was on you, and I am pleased that it all worked out.

Jeff Roland: Over the years you have been a tournament director, an organizer, a national leader, a catalyst for change, a journalist, a coach and an ambassador for chess. How would you like to be remembered by the chess community?

Frank Niro: Actually, I wish to be remembered as an average chess player who was a friend to everyone who loved the game. To be honest, I'm learning as I grow older that none of that other stuff really matters.

Jeff Roland: Well, in that case, do you have a few favorite games that can share?

Frank Niro: Of course! I'll wrap it up with these, and you can cut me off when you run out of space.

The first is from the 1988 U.S. Open in Boston. It was a win with the black pieces against Expert Paul Ascolese from New York. The game pushed my rating over 2000 for the first time and it was published in the *Boston Globe* under the heading "Niro Doesn't Fiddle". Shortly afterwards I defeated National

Master David Vigorito, but the Ascolese game is still my favorite.

**Paul Ascolese (2154) -
Frank Niro (1983)**

[A10] US Open, Boston, MA,
(R6), Aug 12, 1988

1.c4 f5 2.g3 Nf6 3.Bg2 d6 4.Nc3 g6
5.e3 Bg7 6.d4 0-0 7.Nge2 c6 8.0-0
e5! 9.b3 10.Bb2 Nh5 11.Qd2 f4!?
12.exf4 exf4 13.gxf4 Bh6! 14.Qd3
Ndf6 15.Ne4 Nxe4 16.Bxe4 Qh4
17.Bc1 Bh3 18.Bg2



18...Bxg2! 19.Kxg2 Bxf4 20.Bxf4
Rxf4 21.Qe3 Re4! White resigns 0-1

In my early years I was mostly a postal chess player carrying as many as 150 games at a time. The following correspondence game was published in *Chess Life* by Alex Dunne and was played before the advent of strong computer chess engines. It is short and ends with a queen sac.

**Frank Niro (MA) -
Mike Foust (FL)**

APCT corr. ended Dec 10, 1983

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.d4 Nxd5 4.Nf3
Bg4 5.Be2 Nc6 6.c4 Nb6 7.0-0 e6
8.Nc3 Be7 9.d5 exd5 10.cxd5 Nb4
11.Qd4 Bxf3 12.Bxf3 Nc2 13.Qxg7
Bf6 14.Qg4 Nxa1 15.Re1+ Be7
16.Bg5 Rg8 17.Bxe7 Rxe4 18.Bc5+
Kd7 19.Bxg4+ f5 20.Bxf5# 1-0

This final game falls under the category of my most interesting game. It

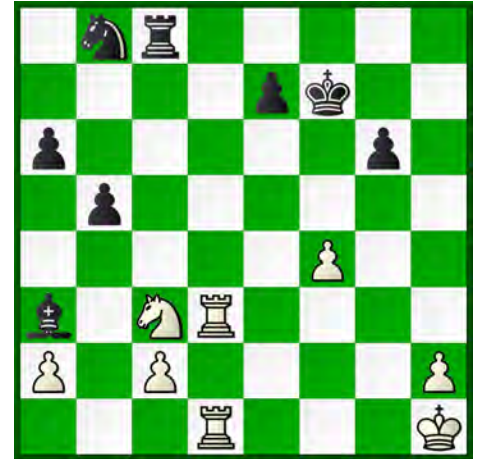
was played after my 1997 stroke and was only a draw. But it was against International Master Ronald Burnett of Tennessee. The game caught a lot of attention and was annotated by GMs Lubomir Ftacnik, Pal Benko and Lev Alburt. It was published both online and in a book by GM Alburt and Al Lawrence under the heading, "Hoisting the Hippopotamus." One reason it received so much attention is because I offered a draw in a winning position. The tactics weren't that easy to see though, at least not for me.

**Frank Niro (1700) -
Ronald Burnett (2420)**

Greenwich, CT, Jun 12, 2000

1.e4 g6 2.d4 Bg7 3.Nc3 d6 4.f4 a6
5.Nf3 b5 6.Bd3 Bb7 7.e5 Nh6 8.0-0
0-0 9.Qe2 c5 10.dxc5 dxc5 11.Be4
Bxe4 12.Qxe4 Ra7 13.Be3 Rc7
14.Rad1 Qe8 15.Nd5 Qc6 16.Ng5
Rb7 17.Kh1 Nf5 18.g4 Nxe3 19.Nxe3
h6 20.Qxc6 Nxc6 21.Ne4 c4 22.Nc5
Rc7 23.e6! Bxb2 24.exf7+ Rxf7
25.Ne6 Rc8 26.Rd7 Ba3 27.Rfd1 Kh7

28.Nd5 c3 29.g5! hxg5 30.Nxg5+
Kg7 31.Nxf7 Kxf7 32.Nxc3 Nb8
33.R7d3+- Draw agreed 1/2-1/2



Jeff Roland: Thanks for taking the time to share your chess insights and for all you have done to support chess in the Northwest.

Frank Niro: You're welcome. I wish you a long and successful tenure as Editor of *Northwest Chess*.



Frank Niro. Photo credit: Jami Anson