

Scacchi a Hollywood

Di Edward Winter

Chess and Hollywood

Edward Winter



Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart

From page 182 of *Chess Review*, August 1938:

“Unless Ray Milland is suppressed, he will have all Hollywood playing chess in another month or two.” (Jimmie Fidler in the *New York Post*.)



Behind the scenes of the current hit, "Hostile Witness," at the Music Box Theater, Ray Milland tries to stump chess expert Norman Barrs (left) as Angela Thornton looks on during intermission.

Chess Review, July 1966, page 195

(2567)



Chess Review, May 1954, page 131

Page 14 of the January-February 1943 *American Chess Bulletin* quoted the following from the *New York Post*:

'Humphrey Bogart has started an idea that he hopes will be widely accepted. The Warner star is playing long distance chess games by mail with boys in the service.

It all started when a private, then stationed in this country, visited the set of *Casablanca*, still at the Hollywood Theatre where Bogart was playing chess with Sydney Greenstreet between scenes. The private offered to take on Bogart and a keen rivalry developed.

When the solidier was transferred to the South Pacific, he kept up the game by mail. Since starting the game with the solidier, Bogart has taken on several of his buddies by mail, playing simultaneously.'

(2610)



TIME OUT Lee Cobb (wearing vest) and Jimmy Stewart (next to Cobb) took a break from their acting chores in the 20th Century—Fox film "Call Northside 777" on location at the Los Angeles Times office. While Stewart kibitzed, Cobb tackled Timesman Wally Look (left) in an off-hand game. It ended in a draw.

Harry Matosian

Chess Review, February 1949, page 4

(2641)

A photograph of Harold Lloyd with Mary Bain on page 356 of the December 1951 *Chess Review*:



Though she is now the U. S. Women's Chess Champion, it seems Mrs. Mary Bain's favorite picture of herself is this, taken in Miami, Florida, and given to her daughter, Eva, by that scintillating cinema comedian, Harold Lloyd in 1947.

(2678)



James Dean (*Revista Internacional de Ajedrez*, January 1992, page 53)

The Gambit, July 1930 (pages 189-190) contained an item dated 19 June which began as follows:

‘Lively interest of the picture world in the newly organized Beverly Hills Chess Club was emphasized last Thursday evening when Cecil B. deMille, the famous producer, sent in his membership and was elected to the board of directors.’

It may be recalled that he refereed Capablanca’s game of living chess (Los Angeles, 1933) against Herman Steiner (see page 115 of *The Unknown Capablanca* by D. Hooper and D. Brandreth).

See also our feature article [Capablanca v Steiner \(Living Chess\)](#).

From John Donaldson (Berkeley, CA, USA):

'I have seen pictures of Capablanca and Steiner from Los Angeles 1933, but, until now, not this one with Cecil B. deMille:



It comes from the archives of Jacqueline Piatigorsky, whose chess mentor was Herman Steiner, and has been made available thanks to her family.'

It will be noted that Steiner has the white pieces. A [detail of the position](#) is provided.

(8030)

We see no reference to chess in *The Autobiography of Cecil B. deMille* edited by Donald Hayne (London, 1960).

C.N. 198 briefly discussed the meeting in the early 1920s between Reshevsky and Charlie Chaplin. There are two well-known photographs of the celebrities in play against each other; in addition, page 191 of *Chess Life & Review*, April 1979 reproduced a shot of the prodigy watching a game between Douglas Fairbanks and Charlie Chaplin.

A decade or so ago we noted that the following alleged game between Chaplin and Reshevsky had been published on page 414 of *Şah Cartea de Aur* by Constantin Ştefaniu (Bucharest, 1982), with a claim (devoid of any source) that it had been won by Reshevsky in New York in 1923:

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 exd4 4 e5 Ne4 5 Qe2 Nc5 6 Nxd4 Nc6 7 Be3 Nxd4 8 Bxd4 Ne6
9 Bc3 Be7 10 Nd2 O-O 11 Ne4 d5 12 O-O-O Bd7 13 Ng3 c5 14 Bd2 b5 15 Nf5 d4 16
h4 Nc7 17 Nxe7+ Qxe7 18 Bg5 Qe6 19 Kb1 Nd5 20 g3 Nb4 21 b3 Qa6 22 a4 Qa5 23
Kb2 bxa4 24 Ra1 Rab8 25 Kc1 a3 26 Bd2 Be6 27 Bxb4 cxb4 28 Qa6 Qc5 29 Bc4 Rbc8
30 White resigns.

We submitted the game-score to Frank Skoff, who scrutinized the matter in considerable detail in *Chess Life*, December 1992 (page 37) and June 1994 (page 10), reaching the following conclusion:

‘The game is a myth, to phrase it delicately, though some would bluntly call it a hoax. All that is left is the score, the origin of which is practically impossible to track down since it would have been copied from any game anywhere, or perhaps even composed by the perpetrator, man the myth-making animal in either case.’



Samuel Reshevsky and Charlie Chaplin (*American Chess Bulletin*, January 1922, page 2)

(2875)

Further to our material on page 258 of *Chess Facts and Fables* and in C.N. 7236, Olimpiu G. Urcan (Singapore) has found this report on page 18 of the *New York Evening Telegram*, 28 December 1921:

Child Prodigy Has Desire to Desert the Chess Board to Become a Great Singer



Copyright, Keystone View Co.

Samuel Rzeschewski, Polish prodigy, has returned to New York to enter school and study singing, after a triumphant trip through all parts of the United States.

**Samuel Rzeschewski, Ten Years Old, a Regular
Boy Who Wants a Real Home—Would Like
to Have His Brothers and Sisters with Him.**

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(7531)

Olimpiu G. Urcan also points out the [Süddeutsche Zeitung Photo](#) website. A search for 'Schach' yields many photographs of chess masters past and present. We note, for instance, a 1921 shot of Samuel Reshevsky boxing against the Hollywood prodigy Jackie Coogan.

(7784)



Max Euwe, Samuel Reshevsky, Herman Steiner and Clark Gable (*Chess Review*, March 1949, page 69)

(2931)



Harry Matosian
ADVICE On the set of M.G.M.'s *Cass Timberlane*, Lana Turner and Spencer Tracy (seated) are coached in a chess scene by chessmaster Herman Steiner (standing left) while George Sidney, director of the film, adds his advice.



Samuel Reshevsky, Bobby Fischer and José Ferrer (*Chess Review*, September 1961, page 267)

Which musical composer wrote, in consecutive years, two entirely different pieces which were both entitled *The Chess Game*?

(2978)

The composer was Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957). They were featured in the Errol Flynn films *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939) and *The Sea Hawk* (1940). Numerous recordings of the scores are available, the most complete ones apparently being from Varese Sarabande (VSD-5696 and VSD-47304 respectively).

(2986)

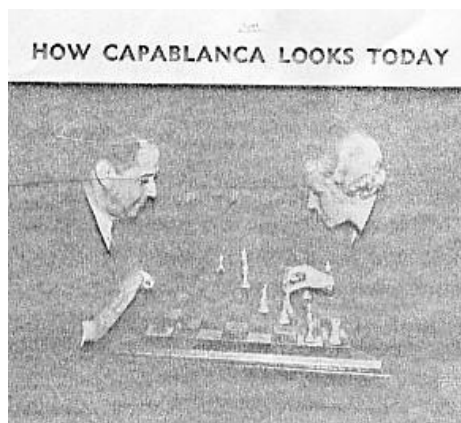
From *Chess Life*, 20 April 1961, page 117:

‘Frances Parkinson Keyes’ novel *The Chess Players* is under negotiation as a possible motion picture. Dealing with the life and love of Paul Morphy, there is speculation that Bobby Fischer may play the role of Morphy in the movie.’

(2982)

The tale that Capablanca ‘once’ refused to be photographed with an actress (‘Why should I give *her* publicity?’) is well known, but what are its origins?

Two shots of him with Hollywood actresses come to mind. The first we have available only in poor photocopy form, from an unidentified source which has this caption beneath: ‘José R. Capablanca, former world chess champion, showing the fine points of the game to Miss Finis Barton of the Hedda Gabler Company at the Playhouse, Los Angeles.’



The other item on that page is a crosstable of the ‘Southern California Major League Race’, a chess event won by Beverly Hills with six points out of seven, and we hope that this clue will permit a reader to trace the source and send us a better copy of the above picture.

The second shot comes from the end section of volume one of *Capablanca Leyenda y Realidad* by Miguel A. Sánchez (Havana, 1978). It is identified as ‘*Con Kay Frauce en Hollywood, 1933*’, but Kay Francis was meant. [See, however, C.N. 5996 below.]



(3454)

Lawrence Totaro (Las Vegas, NV, USA) sends this photograph of Mae Clarke (1910-92) with Capablanca in 1933:



A typewritten paragraph on the reverse side states that Capablanca ‘was the guest recently of Mae Clarke, actress, on the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer set making *Turn Back the Clock*’.

Capablanca was in Los Angeles in April 1933 (C.N. 4151). We see no mention of him in *Featured Player An Oral Autobiography of Mae Clarke* edited by James Curtis (Santa Barbara and London, 1996). The two photographs below come from that book:



In *Turn Back the Clock* (1933), where the character ages from 15 to 50.

(5996)

Further to C.N. 3454 above, which gave a small, poor-quality photograph of Capablanca at the chessboard with Finis Barton (1911-78), Olimpiu G. Urcan has found another shot, on page 10 of Part II of the *Los Angeles Times*, 11 April 1933:

A Queen in the Hand Is Worth—

Anyway Jose R. Capablanca, former world's champion chess master, thinks so. Beside Mr. Capablanca is Miss Finis Barton, of the Hedda Gabler company, and Dr. Herman Steiner, local chess master, who is a member of the Olympic Chess Game. Tonight the former champion will play a "living chess" match at the Los Angeles Athletic Club. Beautiful girls play the part of the pieces in this novel contest.



CAPABLANCA WILL PLAY "LIVING CHESS" MATCH

Queens, kings, bishops, knights, rooks and pawns impersonated by human beings, some of whom, according to Clark Thomas, who is arranging the spectacle, will show more animation, agility and intelligence than the wooden pieces ordinarily used in the game, will feature a gigantic "living chess" match to be played in the Los Angeles Athletic Club tonight at 8 o'clock.

Angeles appearance of Capablanca, who leaves for Mexico City Wednesday to match wits with the best players in the Mexican capital.

Pulchritudinous chorus girls and dancers from the Ernest Belcher troupe will impersonate the feminine characters of the game, while club athletes are to be decked out as kings, knights and such. Neuter roles, according to Thomas, will be

Can a high-quality copy of the photograph be found?

Regarding the game referred to, see [Capablanca v Steiner \(Living Chess\)](#).

(11598)

The photograph shown in C.N. 3454 has been traced to page 2 of the *North American Chess Reporter*, April-May 1933. Below, courtesy of the Cleveland Public Library, is a fine copy:

HOW CAPABLANCA LOOKS TODAY



Jose R. Capablanca, former world chess champion, showing the fine points of the game to Miss Finis Barton of the Hedda Gabler Company at the Playhouse, Los Angeles.

(11606)

From Jan Kalendovský (Brno, Czech Republic) comes a photograph (source unknown) of Alekhine at the studios of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer with Renée Adorée (1898-1933) and Fred Niblo (1874-1948):



Can it be confirmed that the photograph was taken during Alekhine's visit to Los Angeles in May 1929?

(5915)

In C.N. 5915 we tentatively suggested that a photograph of Alekhine at MGM was taken during his visit to Los Angeles in May 1929.

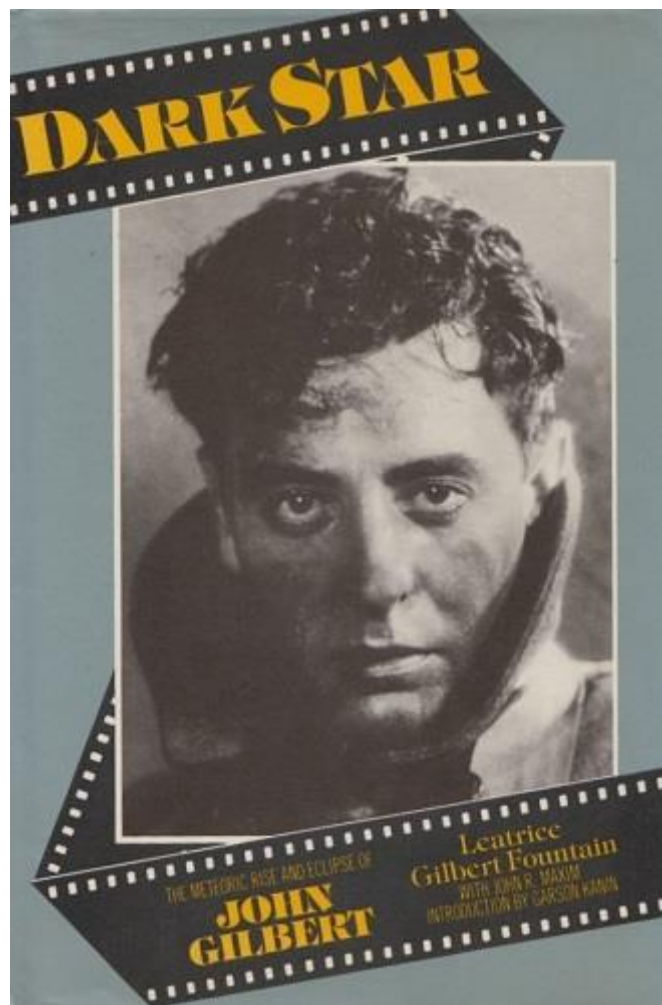
David Picken (Greasby, England) and Luc Winants (Boirs, Belgium) note that Renée Adorée played the role of a gypsy in an MGM film directed by Fred Niblo, [Redemption](#). Shot in 1929 and starring John Gilbert, it was not released until 1930. Without the production delays it would have been his first talking picture.

We add that *Redemption* was unsuccessful, as noted, for instance, on page 66 of *La fabuleuse histoire de la Metro Goldwyn Mayer en 1714 films* (Paris, 1977). See also pages 261-262 of volume one of *The Great Movie Stars* by D. Shipman (London, 1989). According to page 544 of *Close-Ups From the Golden Age of the Silent Cinema* by J.R. Finch and P.A. Elby (New York and London, 1978) Gilbert's 'greatest film was *The Big Parade* with Renée Adorée'.

(5922)

In connection with a photograph of Alekhine in Hollywood, C.N. 5922 referred to the actor John Gilbert (1899-1936). Information about his possible interest in chess is sought.

His daughter Leatrice Gilbert Fountain wrote a biography of him, *Dark Star* (London, 1985), and on page 253 she recalled that on Christmas Eve 1935, when she was 11, the many gifts ('wonderful impractical things') which John Gilbert gave her included an ivory chess set.



(10542)

C.N. 2221 raised the subject of the first chess master to act in a film. We suggested A.B. Hodges (1861-1944), on the basis of the following ‘Hodges in the Movies’ item on page 47 of the February 1918 *American Chess Bulletin*:

‘Albert B. Hodges, ex-United States chess champion, has made a number of appearances on the screen, notably as a member of the Russian Duma in *War Brides*, the Police Inspector in *The Auction Block*, the Coroner in *Empty Pockets* and the Butler in the new Brenon picture *False Faces*.’

Can any reader discover information about Hodges’ acting career?



Albert Beauregard Hodges

(3806)

As regards Albert B. Hodges’ alleged involvement in films in the second decade of the twentieth century, David Picken (Greasby, England) writes:

‘I have searched in the Internet Movie Database and the All Movie Guide database but have found nothing on Hodges, although the four films you mentioned are covered and cast-lists are given. It may be that Hodges was an “extra” or a very small bit part player who would not normally be credited. The films are:

War Brides. Released in 1916 as a short (eight minutes) by Selznick Pictures Corporation and directed by Herbert Brenon. The cast included Alla Nazimova and Richard Barthelmess.

The Auction Block. *Released in 1917 and directed by Laurence Trimble.*

Empty Pockets. *Released in 1918 and directed by Herbert Brenon.*

The False Faces. *Released in 1919 and directed by Irvin Willat. Brenon appears not to have had a connection with this film.'*

(3813)

Although many of the key details remain elusive, all available information on this aspect of the master's life is presented on pages 314-315 of an admirable new book, [Albert Beaugard Hodges](#) (subtitle: The Man Chess Made) by John S. Hilbert and Peter P. Lahde (Jefferson, 2008).



A.B. Hodges, front cover of the *Chess Review*, June-July 1941

(5737)

Some years ago (see pages 230-232 of *Kings, Commoners and Knaves*) we discussed chess connections involving Viveca Lindfors and Errol Flynn, who co-starred in the 1948 film *Adventures of Don Juan*. In passing we described Viveca Lindfors as ‘the only screen goddess lucky enough to marry a FIDE President’ (i.e. Folke Rogard). This 1946 photograph of the couple appeared in her autobiography *Viveka ... Viveca* (New York, 1981):



She was later married to the actor and writer George Tabori, and her book also has the following shot, ‘the first picture of the Tabori-Lindfors family in the house on 95th Street’:



A photograph of Viveca Lindfors from opposite page 63 of *Viveka ... Viveca*:



Errol Flynn (1909-59) is chiefly remembered for his swashbuckling films and off-screen embroilments, but he was also a vividly eloquent novelist and journalist.

He received a brief mention on page 79 of the 14 November 1937 issue of *CHESS*:

‘Errol Flynn is another film-star chess-ite.’

Page 61 of *Errol Flynn in Northampton* by Gerry Connelly (Corby, 1995) reported:

‘Flynn might not have been an Einstein or a Socrates, but he always took intelligent approaches to his film rôles, played chess well, could converse in a number of exotic languages, and worked productively as a writer.’

Flynn himself took lightly the claims made on his behalf. In an article entitled ‘My Plea for Privacy’ published in *Screen Guide* in 1937 he wrote:

‘As to my private life – well, there’s precious little of it left – but according to what I read in the newspapers, I am a master of such minor arts as boxing, fencing, wrestling,

jiu-jitsu, horsemanship, hunting, fishing, sailing, swimming, golf, tennis, chess, trap-shooting and jacks. I get up early in the morning and after dashing through Beethoven's *Etude in B Minor* I casually practise each and every one of the above sports, sometimes doing a little Indian club work with my disengaged hand.'

A photograph of Errol Flynn playing chess appeared in the book *From a Life of Adventure: The Writings of Errol Flynn* edited by Tony Thomas (Secaucus, 1980). Taken during the shooting of his 1942 film *They Died with Their Boots On*, it showed him locked in combat with Olivia de Havilland.



(*Kingpin*, 1998)

From our collection comes this photograph of Errol Flynn, inscribed by him in 1940:



And, as a tailpiece, an extract from page 8 of the new Gambit Publications book *Secrets of Attacking Chess* by Mihail Marin (London, 2005):

‘I am sure most of us have been captivated by the cape and sword movies of the 1960s, featuring such fine actors as Errol Flynn.’

Not exactly. Flynn died in 1959.

(3868)

What on earth has happened to the standards of accuracy and integrity usually applied by ChessBase.com in the past?

There is, for instance, an individual named [Albert Silver](#) who cobbles together articles by indiscriminately hoovering up images instantly available via an Internet search.

As regards the indiscriminate nature of his ‘work’, below is what appeared in (but has since been removed from) an article of his about chess and film stars which ChessBase.com posted on 23 February 2015:



Errol Flynn plays chess with director Compton Bennett on the set of That Forsyte Woman (1949)

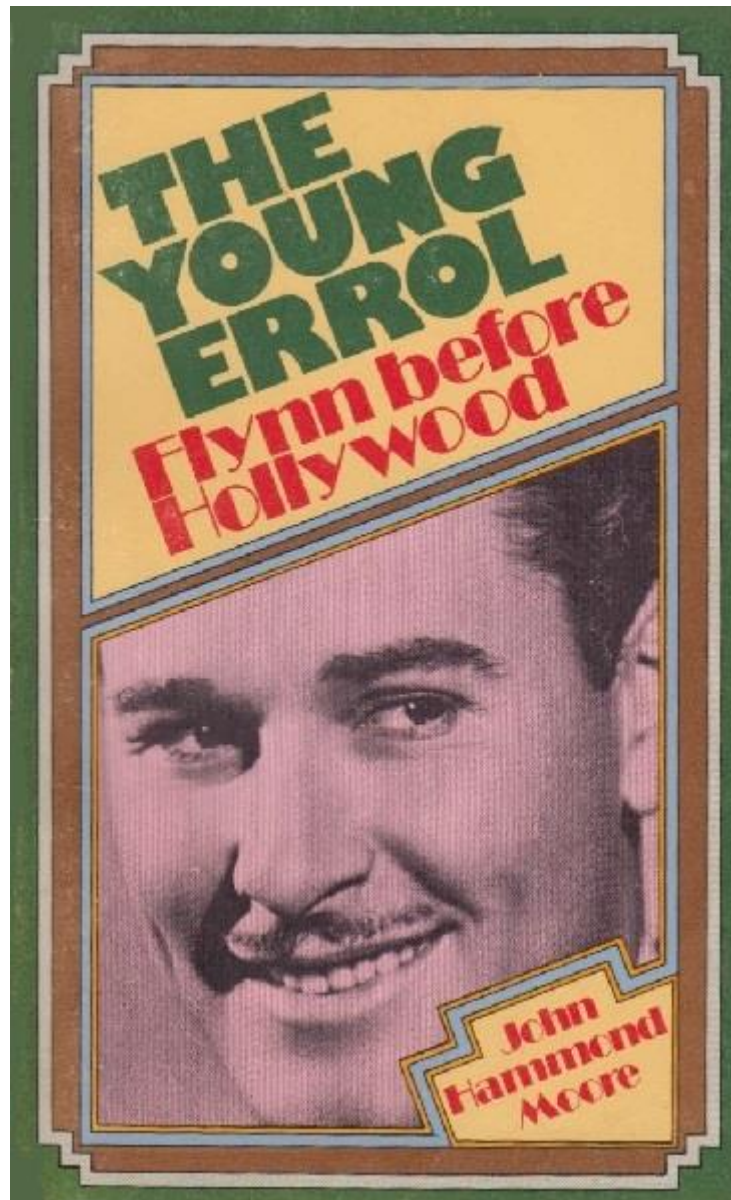
From page 14 of *C.J.S. Purdy, His Life, His Games and His Writings* by J. Hammond and R. Jamieson (Melbourne, 1982), in the chapter 'C.J.S. Purdy – His Life' by Anne Purdy, his widow:

Cecil's family was not one which seemed likely to produce a great chess figure. He was born in 1906, in Port Said, where his father was the British port doctor. When he was a year old the family moved to New Zealand, then to Tasmania, then to New South Wales — back to Tasmania during the war years, when both Dr. and Mrs. Purdy were overseas, finally settling in Sydney when Cecil was about twelve. In Hobart he had been for a while a pupil at the famous Old Hutchins School. Here he had as a classmate the future film star Errol Flynn, whom Cecil remembered as a sad little boy, the neglected and unwanted child of two brilliant, handsome and erratic parents. In

The Hutchins School was mentioned on pages 13-15 of *The Young Errol* by John Hammond Moore (Sydney, 1975), which asserted that Errol Flynn (born on 20 June 1909) was a pupil there:

'Errol began his formal education at the Franklin House School on Davey Street, but by 1918 was enrolled in the junior division of the Hutchins School, Hobart's most prestigious private, old-tie institution for miniature bluebloods.

... Errol lasted only one more term at Hutchins. (Australian schools traditionally operate on three terms of several months each from February to December.) In April of 1920 he entered Friends' School ...'



Different information is on pages 7 and 9 of *Errol Flynn The Tasmanian Story* by Don Norman (Hobart, 1981):

‘Errol first attended Franklin House School in July 1916, which was later incorporated in Hutchins Junior School in June 1917 ... Hutchins School is a prestigious establishment for boys begun in 1846 and modelled on the lines of the upper class English schools.

Errol went with the boys of Franklin House School to Hutchins Junior in June 1917, but remained there for only a short time before attending Albuera Street Model School ...

There is no explanation as to why Errol was taken away from Albuera Street School when he was ten years and ten months old and placed as a boarder at Friends School, a long established academy for girls and boys. He was nine months at Friends leaving on 20 December 1920.’

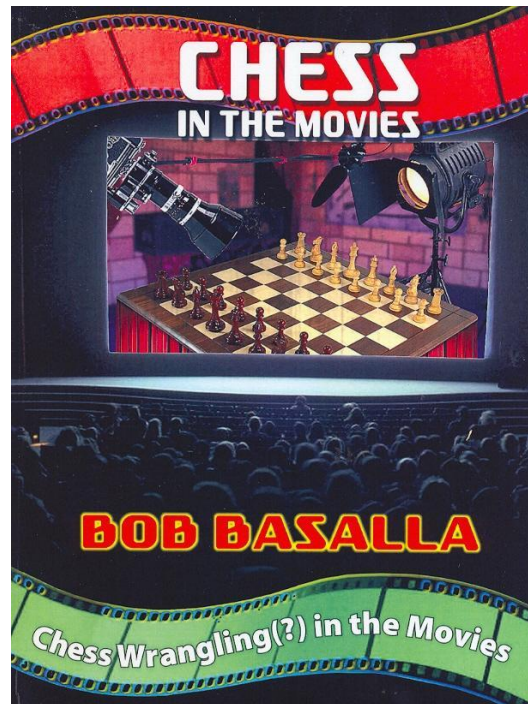
See too [C.J.S. Purdy](#).

Here is another photograph of Olivia de Havilland, from page 4 of *Errol & Olivia* by Robert Matzen (Pittsburgh, 2010):



The caption reads: ‘To escape an unhappy home life, Olivia de Havilland finds a creative outlet with the Saratoga Community Theatre. Here, at age 16, she plays Alice in *Alice in Wonderland*, her first acting role.’

(7095)



From the outset (i.e. even before the book arrived) we had rather low hopes of liking *Chess in the Movies* by Bob Basalla (Davenport, 2005), largely because of the dreaded words ‘vanity press’. When, however, the volume turned up, it immediately created a favourable impression as a well-produced 422-page paperback (large-size, in A to Z encyclopaedia format) containing a remarkable amount of fresh information.

Yet as we began to browse, focusing on productions about which we have written, disappointment took the upper hand. C.N. 3858 quoted P.H. Williams (in 1919) on the chess-related poster for *The Summer Girls*, but the book had no entry for it and there was no way of knowing whether this was an oversight or whether it was only the poster, and not the film itself, which had chess content. Then we looked at the brief entry for the 1987 Cuban/Soviet production *Capablanca* (pages 61-62). ‘The details I have gathered are sketchy’, writes Basalla, yet the film is readily available in video-cassette format. Nor was it encouraging to read on pages 393-394 that the 1925 Soviet film *Chess Fever* included documentary footage of Gideon Ståhlberg, who belonged to a later period or, on page 73, concerning the same film, that F.D. Yates was Canadian. Next, we consulted the entry (pages 94-95) for the 1984 Swiss film *Dangerous Moves*, where Basalla observes that the chess games were ‘created, the credits tell us, by someone named Nicolas Giffard’; whatever may be thought of Giffard’s chess writings, that seems an unattractively disparaging reference to an international master. We turned to the entry (pages 236-238) on *The Most Dangerous Match*, the chess-related episode of the television series *Columbo*. In the first paragraph the actor who played the murder victim is misidentified (it was Jack Kruschen, not Lloyd Bochner). Moreover, Basalla appears unaware of the circumstances of the position presented on page 237 (see [Chess and Television](#)).

All this was a poor start for *Chess in the Movies*, and it was a relief to find on pages 152-153 a good account of the Canadian production *The Great Chess Movie* (although Basalla really might have been expected to know that the problem attributed to Pope John Paul II is a hoax) and to see the author demonstrating fine critical faculties on pages 293-296 in his detailed discussion of *Searching for Bobby Fischer*. As we continued, examining other entries for films with which we could claim familiarity, a strange thing happened: the *série noire* had ended, and *Chess in the Movies* was growing on us. Basalla's love of both chess and the cinema is evident, and he has put an extraordinary amount of research into what is, after all, a brave venture, given that no remotely comparable book exists. He states on page 12 that errors are likely in such a large work, and of course they are inevitable in any book of substance. *Chess in the Movies*, which is available from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com), will certainly be scrutinized avidly by readers around the world, and the author invites corrections. We look forward to the prospect of a superb second edition.

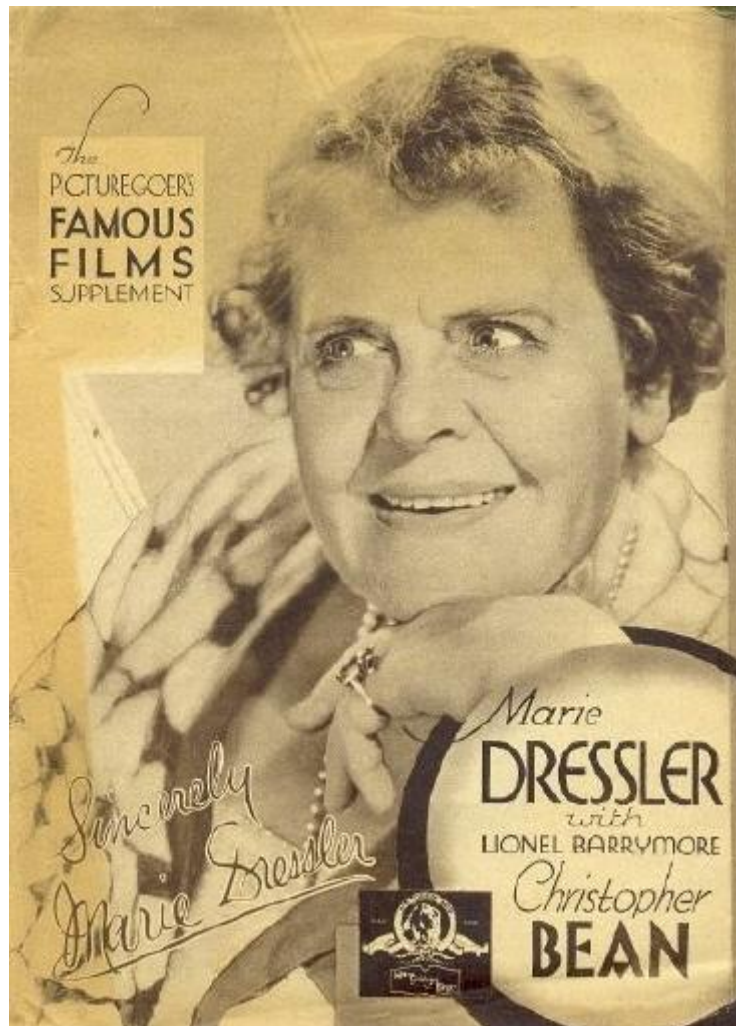
(3986)



Dr. Petar Trifunovich sends us this photo of Alain Delon as Marco Polo playing chess in the castle of the Great Mogul in a movie current in Europe at the time when he wrote.

Alain Delon (*Chess Review*, September 1968, page 265)

C.N. 2865 (see page 75 of *Chess Facts and Fables*) asked for relevant information about the actress Marie Dressler (1869-1934), given that page 218 of *Chess: Man vs Machine* by Bradley Ewart (London, 1980) mentioned her ‘among the notables who were said to have played Ajeeb at the Eden Musée and were invariably defeated at chess or checkers’. Corroboration is still being sought, no progress having been made so far.



Front cover of a supplement to *The Picturegoer*, 1933

(4568)

C.N. 4229 referred to an Austrian webpage with a collection of [chess postcards](#). Page two of the ‘Herren’ section features the photograph of [Rudolph Valentino](#) mentioned in C.N. 3097 (see page 108 of *Chess Facts and Fables*). Further details are sought, and particularly since in the biographies of the silent film star (1895-1926) we recall no mention of chess.

(4758)

Luc Winants has forwarded to us the photograph of Rudolph Valentino (1895-1926) referred to in C.N. 4758. It comes from the collection of Daniël De Mol, to whom we are also grateful.



(4788)

See too [Chess Jottings](#).



From pages 319-320 of *Harpo Speaks!* (New York, 1961), the autobiography of Harpo Marx:

‘One day [in Moscow, autumn 1933] when there was no matinee I ducked out and went looking for some kind of action. In front of a good-sized theatre, one I hadn’t been in yet, there was an unusually long line of people. The line wasn’t moving. No tickets were being sold. It had to be something sensational with this many people waiting for a chance to get in.

Since the day I bought my outfit at the government store I had become used to the idea that foreigners didn’t stand in line. I went up to the box office and waved a dollar bill in the window. The cashier grabbed the buck and gave me a ticket. *Valootye* – foreign currency – worked like magic in Moscow.

The house was packed, and noisy. Most of the audience were standing or walking around, chatting, drinking and eating. Others were sleeping or reading. I had apparently come in during the intermission. Yet the curtain was raised and the stage was lit. Oddest of all was the setting on the stage. There was a small table and a chair. On the table were two telephones, and a bunch of knickknacks. Behind the table was a large, tilted mirror.

It was the longest intermission I ever sat through. Fifteen minutes passed. Twenty minutes. Twenty-five. Nobody seemed to mind waiting that long for the next act.

Then a buzzer sounded. People damn near trampled each other to get back to their seats. In 30 seconds the theatre was silent as a tomb. Everybody was watching the empty stage.

A boy, maybe ten or eleven years old, walks out from the wings. He sits at the table. He picks up the receiver of one of the telephones. He listens for a while, then hangs up

without saying anything. He moves one of the little props on the table. The joint is so quiet I can hear my wrist watch ticking. The boy moves another knickknack. A guy comes out, walks to the footlights, announces something to the audience, and the joint goes wild.

People jump to their feet. They yell and throw their hats in the air and embrace each other. The guy who made the announcement shakes hands with the boy and the cheers are deafening. This is absolutely the craziest show I ever saw.

Finally it dawned on me what I had been watching. A chess match.

The kid on the stage, I found out, had been playing the Polish chess champion and the Ukrainian champion, by long-distance telephone. It was nice to know the home team won, but it would have been nicer if I could have gotten my dollar back.'

A slightly abridged version of this text appeared on pages 206-207 of *King, Queen and Knight* by Norman Knight and Will Guy (London, 1975), where Harpo Marx's dates were given as '1893-1965' instead of 1888-1964. Knight and Guy added:

'There seems to be some mystery about the identity of this Soviet boy prodigy.'

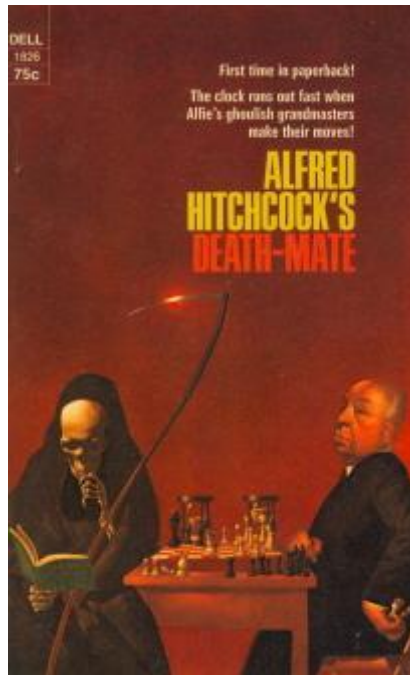
Can readers provide any information?

(5483)

Javier Asturiano Molina (Murcia, Spain) draws attention to the front cover of *Jaque y ... mate!* (Montevideo, 1976), a collection of mystery stories selected by Alfred Hitchcock:



The English edition was entitled *Death-Mate* (New York, 1973):



(5530)

Luca D'Ambrosio (Bolzano, Italy) informs us of a new novel about Capablanca, by Fabio Stassi: *La rivincita di Capablanca* (Rome, 2008):



Albert Frank (Brussels) asks which crime novel featured A. Troitzky's famous study (*Novoye Vremya*, 1895) with mate administered by a single bishop.

It was *The Bishop Murder Case* by S.S. van Dine (New York and London, 1929). We reproduce pages 264-265 of the edition published by Grosset & Dunlap, New York:

264	THE BISHOP MURDER CASE	THE NEMESIS	265
<p>"It doesn't strike me as a particularly unfavorable position for Pardee," ventured Vance.</p>	<p>"Me either. Can't see why he lost the game. Looks drawish to me." After a moment Arnesson referred to the scoresheet. "We'll run through the play and find out where the trouble lay." He made half a dozen moves; then, after several minutes' study, gave a grunt. "Ha! This is rather deep stuff of Rubinstein's. Amazing combination he began working up here. Subtle, by Gad! As I know Rubinstein, it took him a long time to figure it out. Slow, plodding chap."</p>	<p>now in the position they had occupied at the time of Pardee's resignation.*</p>	<p>"Out of curiosity," he said quietly, "I played the game through to the checkmate the other night.—I say, Mr. Arnesson; would you mind doin' the same. I could bear to hear your comment on it."</p>
<p>"It's possible, isn't it," suggested Vance, "that the working out of that combination explains the discrepancy in time between Black and White?"</p>	<p>"Oh, undoubtedly. Rubinstein must have been in good form not to have made the discrepancy greater. Planning the combination took him all of forty-five minutes—or I'm a duffer."</p>	<p>Arnesson studied the position closely for a few minutes. Then he turned his head slowly and lifted his eyes to Vance. A sardonic grin overspread his face.</p>	<p>"I grasp the point. Gad! What a situation! Five moves for Black to win through. And an almost unheard-of finale in chess. Can't recall a similar instance. The last move would be Bishop to Knight-7, mating. In other words, Pardee was beaten by the black bishop! Incredible!"†</p>
<p>"At what hour, would you say," asked Vance carelessly, "did Rubinstein use up that forty-five minutes?"</p>	<p>"Well, let's see. The play began at eleven: six moves before the combination started. . . . Oh, say, somewhere between half past eleven and half past twelve. . . . Yes, just about. Thirty moves before the adjournment: six moves beginning at eleven—that makes thirty-six; then on the forty-fourth move Rubinstein moved his pawn to Bishop-7-check, and Pardee resigned. . . . Yes—the working out of the combination was between eleven-thirty and twelve-thirty."</p>	<p>Professor Dillard put down his book.</p>	<p>"What's this?" he exclaimed, joining us at the chess table. "Pardee was defeated by the bishop?" He gave Vance a shrewd, admiring look. "You evidently had good reason, sir, for investigating that chess game. Pray overlook an old man's temper." He stood gazing down at the board with a sad, puzzled expression.</p>
<p>Vance regarded the men on the board, which were</p>		<p>Markham was frowning with deep perplexity.</p>	<p>"You say it's unusual for a bishop alone to mate?" he asked Arnesson.</p>
		<p>* For the benefit of the expert chess-player who may be academically interested I append the exact position of the game when Pardee resigned:—WHITE: King at QKt5q; Rook at QBS; Pawns at QR2 and Q2. BLACK: King at Q5; Knight at QKt5; Bishop at QR6; Pawns at QKt7 and QB7.</p>	<p>† The final five unplayed moves for Black to mate, as I later obtained them from Vance, were:—45. RxP; KtxR. 46. KxKt; P—Kt8 (Queen). 47. KxQ; K—Q6. 48. K—Rsq; K—B7. 49. P—Q8; B—Kt7 mate.</p>

Below is an item from page 55 of the March 1929 *American Chess Bulletin*:

Chess Editing in Ohio.

Alfred C. Thomas of Cleveland, whose victory over Capablanca in a simultaneous exhibition in 1926, was duly recorded in the Bulletin, is the latest addition to the ranks of chess editors in the United States. Mr. Thomas records the doings of Caissa's followers every week in the "Akron Sunday Times" of Akron, O. Often the poetic Muse stirs him to break into verse and there's no denying that this is one sure way in which to brighten up a chess column. A little poem now and then cheers up the dullest of us men, is his slogan and a good one.

Mr. Thomas is one of those who has read "The Bishop Murder Case," by S. S. Van Dine. He has examined the chess position, supposed to have occurred between one of the chess-playing characters and Rubinstein, and given in a foot note. As to this Mr. Thomas writes us:

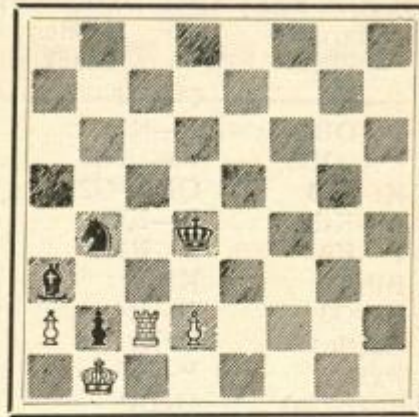
"I presume that you are aware that Pardee, the chess player in the story, need not have been mated by the black Bishop. The position, after White plays RxP, is as follows, using the Forsythe notation (see diagram).

"Pardee played White as follows against Rubinstein in the story: 45... KtxR; 46 KxKt, P—Kt8(Q)ch; 47 KxQ, K—Q6; 48 K—R, K—B7; 49 P—Q3, B—Kt7 mate.

"All of Pardee's moves were forced, after 46 KxKt, and you will note that Black proceeds to mate in five moves with the Black Bishop, which is made a great deal of in the story, almost all of one page being used up in describing what an unparalleled finale it is for a lone Bishop to accomplish a mate.

"Now, if Pardee, after Black had played 45... KtxR, had played 46 P—Q3! Black would have mated in five moves, but with the Kt, as follows: 46... K—B6; 47 P—Q4, Kt—K6; 48 P—Q5, Kt—QB5; 49 P—Q6, Kt—Q7 mate."

Black—Rubinstein



White—Pardee

Simultaneous Chess.

By Alfred C. Thomas.

Of all ambitions in the land,
Here's one you'd never guess;
I've often longed to try my hand
At Simultaneous Chess.

Those wizards of the game are great,
Altho' to me it's plain,
It only goes to demonstrate
The power of the brain.

There's just one thing that makes me sore,
I never could excuse,
That out of fifty games or more
There's always one they lose.

With such a score to be content!
It almost makes me grin;
I'd make a hundred straight per cent.
And NOT A SINGLE WIN!

From the above-mentioned edition of van Dine's book comes this picture:



A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Picture.

THE MYSTERIOUS MURDERER FACES HIS SYMBOL, A BLACK CHESS BISHOP, AFTER HE HAS KILLED JOHN PARDEE.

The Bishop Murder Case.

(5948)

Christian Sánchez (Rosario, Argentina) sends a cutting from page 14 of *La Capital*, 7 November 1930:



The caption states that two Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer directors, David Burton and Nick Grinde, are discussing scenes from a film. We note that the two men co-directed the 1930 production *The Bishop Murder Case* (see C.N. 5948 above).

(6099)

Oliver Beck (Seattle, WA, USA) writes:

'A photograph showing Basil Rathbone, David Burton and Nick Grinde gathered around the same board as in C.N. 6099 appears on page 261 of the May 1979 issue of Chess Life & Review with the following caption:

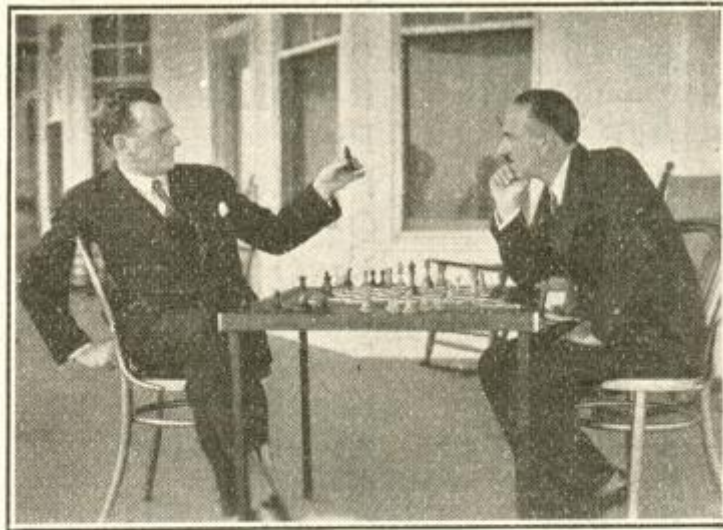
*"Basil Rathbone, before his series of film portrayals of Sherlock Holmes, with crew members discussing a scene in *The Bishop Murder Case*, in which he played supersleuth Philo Vance."*



It comes in an article entitled “Chess in the Cinema: Films of the Thirties”, one of a series of articles by Frank Brady which appeared in the magazine in 1979, and it discusses the film in some detail.’

(6105)

A photograph of Alekhine with the novelist was given in C.N. 5126 from page 129 of the July-August 1929 *American Chess Bulletin*:



Murder Will Out.

Dr. Alekhine, holding a black Bishop, is here shown on the veranda of the Hotel La Reine, face to face with S. S. Van Dine, author of mystery stories and otherwise known as Willard Huntington Wright.

In the light of Nunnally Johnson's article on the New York, 1924 tournament (C.N. 6881) we hoped to find some references to chess in *The Letters of Nunnally Johnson* selected and edited by Dorris Johnson and Ellen Leventhal (New York, 1981). The only (passing) mention of the game that has been found in the collection (which covers his correspondence from 1944 to 1976) is on page 249, in a letter dated 8 November 1974 from Johnson to Tom Dardis concerning F. Scott Fitzgerald:

I knew Scott only during his last few years and whenever he was not drinking he seemed to me to be as thoroughly alive and alert as anybody I ever knew. His biggest misfortune, which I doubt he ever realized, was that they paid him fat money at the very beginning. And even though he blew his chances with inadequate work he believed that he should continue to draw such salaries or even larger ones. But I'm afraid he simply couldn't hack it. He probably couldn't have played first class chess either. It was nothing against him. He had simply wandered away from the field where he was a master and was sludging around in an area for which he had no training or instinct. And this is not pure hearsay. I read some of the work he did alone and unaided by a collaborator and it was downright bad. Worst of all, it was shamelessly imitative. Realizing that he could not cut the mustard on his own, he echoed some pretty shoddy stuff.

In Hollywood, Johnson worked with and frequented a vast muster of celebrities. The photograph below, taken during the shooting of *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953), features, from left to right, Nunnally Johnson, Marilyn Monroe and Jean Negulesco:



(6904)

A brief article on page 97 of the April 1950 *Chess Review* had photographs of Jeff Chandler, Marta Toren (Märta Torén) and Donald O'Connor:

CHESS IS WHERE YOU FIND IT!

Chess has joy and solace for all—regardless of race, creed, color or condition. Everywhere you look—and often where you would not dream of looking—you may find some diligent group kept happy by chess.



Jeff Chandler, playing Black, seems to be cautioning Marta Toren not to take his Bishop—somewhat to the lady's skepticism. Both starred in Universal's recent picture, "Sword in the Desert."

MOST publicity releases of moving picture actors and actresses, engaged at chess-play, appear obviously posed. The one of Donald O'Connor at right, however, really does seem genuine.

We know, also, that many movie stars do play chess, not just pose at it. Humphrey Bogart is quite enthusiastic, played considerable chess-by-mail. He and Charles Boyer, moreover, have had many a game between "takes" when engaged on the same picture. And Franchot Tone is reputed to be quite expert at the game.

Mitzi Mayfair played in the Women's Tournament at Hollywood, 1945, and, as Lyn Henderson, in Postal Chess. And we have heard that Myrna Loy also represents the fair sex in occasional chess-play.

And why not? Chess is an all-absorbing game, well fitted to ease the strain of such nervous, exacting work as acting—by divorcing attention from all else.



Donald O'Connor, playing Black, seems to perplex his opponent (though Black has a mighty cramped position).

These pictures are by courtesy of Universal Pictures Company.

The item also referred to Franchot Tone and Myrna Loy, and we add the following from page 223 of the October 1937 *Chess Review*:

SCREEN STARS WHO PLAY CHESS



FRANCHOT TONE, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Star

Started playing chess while attending Columbia University, and its logical principles were a great fascination for him. He plays frequently today, often with Warren Newcombe, the painter and art director at the studios, and with Emil Seeberg, an electrician in the studio still department, who is particularly expert. They often play on the set between scenes. One game of chess took two weeks to play during the making of *The Gorgeous Hussy* because of Tone's frequent calls to the camera and Seeberg's to his own work. One day only one move was made in the entire day.

Tone has played chess for nearly ten years.



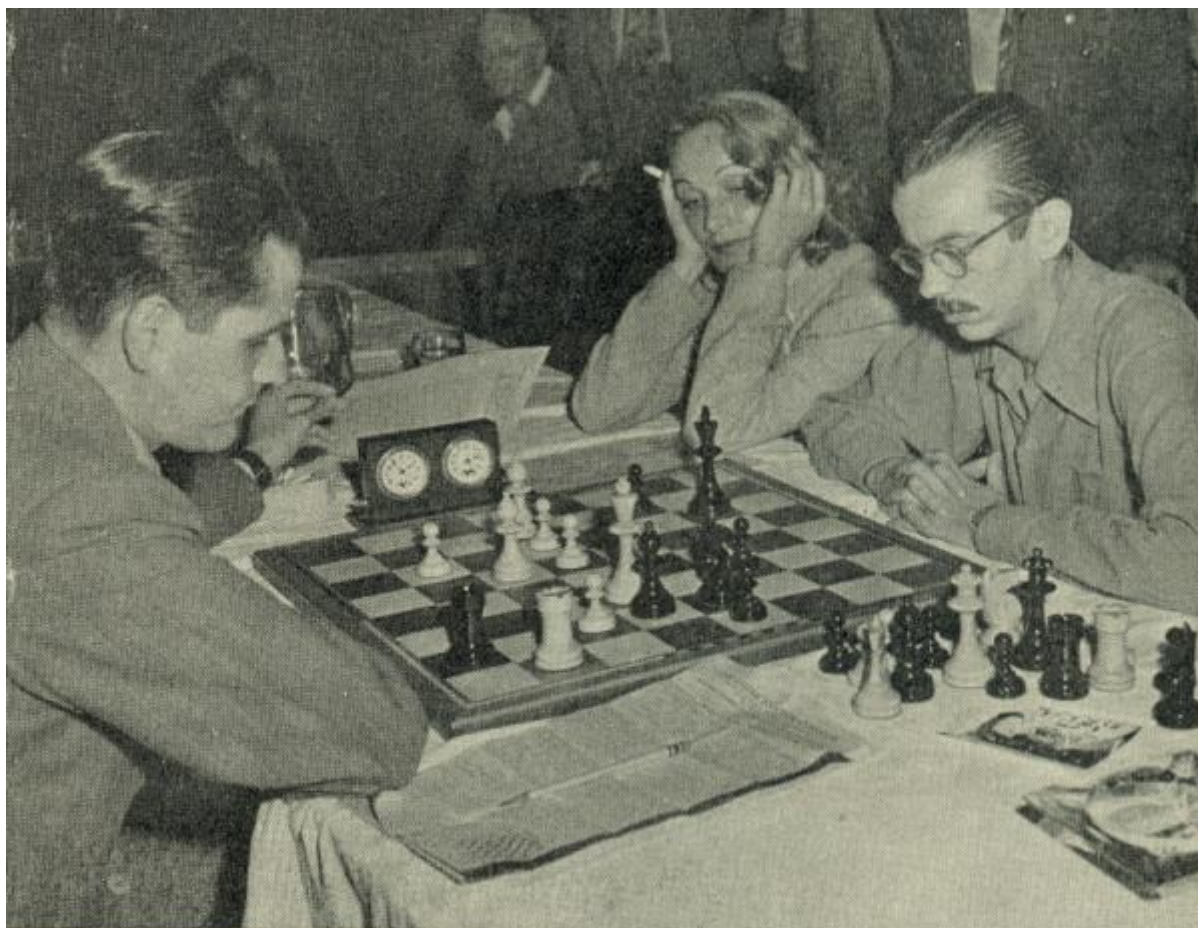
MYRNA LOY, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Star

Became interested in chess after watching Reginald Owen and Frank Morgan play. She has known the moves for about a year, and plays occasionally. She has no great knowledge of the game, but she is learning steadily.

During the F. I. D. E. Conferences at Stockholm, Roumania's bid for a team tourney next year at Bucharest was accepted.

Uruguay was admitted to membership in the Federation, paving the way for a joint invitation by Uruguay and the Argentine for a team tournament to be held at Buenos Aires in 1939.

The largest pictorial feature on Hollywood and chess that we have seen is on pages 26-35 of the October 1945 *Chess Review*, in connection with the Pan-American Congress (won by Reshevsky ahead of Fine). The film stars included Marlene Dietrich:



Hollywood celebrities were on hand during every round of the Pan-American Championship. Here Marlene Dietrich is an intent onlooker at the game between Dr. Jose Broderman (left) of Cuba and Hector Rossetto (right), Argentine Champion. Hollywood's interest will be an important factor in popularizing chess.

The complete article is reproduced here, the illustrations being as follows:

[Page 26](#): Barbara Bates, Dawn Kennedy, Julie London, Jean Trent.

[Page 27](#): Reuben Fine, Carmen Miranda, J. Edward Bromberg, José Joaquín Araiza, Herbert Seidman

[Page 28](#): Samuel Reshevsky

[Page 29](#): Playing room

[Page 30](#): Roseanne Murray, Herman Steiner, Samuel Reshevsky, Weaver Adams, Marlene Dietrich, José Broderman, Héctor Rossetto

[Page 31](#): Mitzi Mayfair, Héctor Rossetto, Mary Bain, Mrs Harmath, Mrs von Sternberg, N. May Karff, Miss Roos, Linda Darnell, Roseanne Murray, Reuben Fine, Isaac Kashdan

[Page 32](#): Al Horowitz, Fritz Lang, Nigel Bruce, Basil Rathbone

[Page 33](#): Herman Pilnik, Samuel Reshevsky, Reuben Fine

[Page 34](#): Living chess; Earl Carroll girls

[Page 35](#): Barbara Hale, Bill Williams, Linda Darnell.

(7076)

The photographs given above included a shot of a game of living chess in August 1945, from page 34 of the October 1945 *Chess Review*. Luc Winants notes that a fine version is available on-line, courtesy of the [Los Angeles Times](#).

(7887)

Regarding the Pan-American tournament held in Hollywood in 1945, Luc Winants provides links to a number of photographs taken by Walter Sanders for *Life* and [available on-line](#) (using the key words *chess, Sanders, 1945*). Among the high-quality shots are the following:

[Linda Darnell and Herman Steiner](#)

[Playing hall](#)

[Héctor Rossetto v Reuben Fine \(watched by Carmen Miranda\)](#)

[Al Horowitz](#)

[Samuel Reshevsky](#)

[Herman Steiner](#)

[Reuben Fine](#)

[Reuben Fine and Jane Nigh](#)

[Jane Nigh and Reuben Fine](#)

[Reuben Fine and Jane Nigh.](#)

Page 28 of the 27 August 1945 issue had a photograph of [starlets playing on cubes of ice](#).

Mr Winants also notes this passage from page 211 of *The World's Great Chess Games* by R. Fine (New York, 1951):

versity, where literally half the student body attended . . . A chess tournament in Hollywood in 1945, just before the war ended. Lots of movie stars came to kibitz. Marlene Dietrich came with her entourage and asked us how we could play chess when men were dying. Linda Darnell, the most beautiful woman I've ever seen, stayed through the last two days, and helped Gregory Ratoff distribute the prizes. Her husband played me some games, and had his own version of the rules. When I beat him with the usual rules, he complained, "If you play my way, I can beat you." The movie stars were so famous and so insecure. . . . Capa fighting his battle

(7081)

See furthermore pages 48-49 of *The World's a Chessboard* by R. Fine (Philadelphia, 1948).

The readers' letters section of the November 1944 *Chess Review* included the following from Billy Wilder:

DAMES
JUST NUTS ABOUT YOUR
MAGAZINE BUT OMIGOSH
WHAT ARE THOSE THREE
DAMES DOING ON YOUR
AUGUST SEPTEMBER
COVER? PLEASE, PLEASE.
BILLY WILDER
Hollywood, Calif.

Playing chess, Are Hollywood
movie magnates getting jealous?
—Ed.

The front cover to which he was referring:

CHESS REVIEW

the picture chess magazine

**AUGUST-
SEPTEMBER
1944**

**CHESS - MATES
BY THE SEA**
(See Page 2)

35 CENTS

Subscription Rate
ONE YEAR \$3



Page 2 identified the group as comprising 'Mrs E.S. Jackson, Jr., Mrs G. Shainswit and Mrs A.S. Pinkus, wives of three of the contestants at the Ventnor City tourney'.

(7396)

Page 185 of the July-August 1963 *Chess Life* had this news item in its coverage of the Piatigorsky Cup tournament in Los Angeles:

‘Most commotion of the tournament to date was caused when Frank Sinatra and Mike Romanoff walked in. Tigran Petrosian temporarily lost his title as most-stared-at individual.

The City of Hope was holding a convention at the hotel, and some of the ladies spotted Sinatra. Result – a rush to the playing room that was halted by some fast blocking on the part of our officials.’

A photograph of Sinatra with Walter Browne (and with the time-honoured ‘board problem’) was published on page 24 of *Chess Life*, May 1982:



(7466)

In 1927, in his pre-Hollywood phase, Alfred Hitchcock directed *The Lodger*, starring Ivor Novello in the title role. It had a substantial chess scene with, secondarily, substantial fodder for boardistas, boardites and boardomaniacs (the terms coined in C.N. 11471).



The front cover of the June-July 1945 *Chess Review* featured Charles Boyer, Herman Steiner, Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart:

CHESS REVIEW

the picture chess magazine



Photo by Pat Clark, Warner Bros.

MOVIE STARS SPONSOR PAN AMERICAN CONGRESS

Lauren Bacall gives chessmaster Herman Steiner "the look" while Charles Boyer and Humphrey Bogart (both keen chessplayers) finish a game between takes on "The Confidential Agent" in which Boyer (left) is starring. The scene is Boyer's dressing room at the Warner Bros. Studio. These and other movie stars will take an active part in promoting and sponsoring the forthcoming Pan American Chess Congress at Los Angeles (see Chess Briefs).

JUNE - JULY, 1945

• ONE YEAR SUBSCRIPTION - \$3 •

35 CENTS

A further photograph from page 18 of the same issue:

Chessplaying movie stars (see front cover) will aid and sponsor the forthcoming Pan American Chess Congress at Los Angeles. Charles Boyer and Humphrey Bogart, pictured at the right with chessmaster Herman Steiner are both keen chessplayers and are helping to publicize the Congress. Bogart, who is a Director of the U. S. Chess Federation and of the California State Chess Association, will act as Master of Ceremonies. Boyer and other famous stars will attend and open the daily rounds of the master tournament. Other stars will play in the "living chess game."

Photo by Pat Clark, Warner Bros.



From page 143 of *CHESS*, April 1946:



Between scenes of the Warner Bros.' picture, *Confidential Agent*, Charles Boyer plays a game of chess with Dr. Walter O. Cruz, Chess Champion of Brazil, as Hector Rosetto and Herman Pilnik, Chess Masters of Argentina, and Herman Steiner, International Chess Master, look on from the back. Herman Steiner, London Tournament winner, is highest, Rosetto next, Pilnik seated.

The dancer and actress Mitzi Mayfair (1914-76) was mentioned in C.N. 7076, and she appeared with Héctor Rossetto in this photograph from page 31 of the October 1945 *Chess Review*:



The magazine noted that she had participated in the women's tournament in Hollywood under her married name, Mrs Charles Henderson.

Steven B. Dowd (Birmingham, AL, USA) adds that this biographical note was published on page 26 of *Chess Review*, November 1948:



LYN HENDERSON

Southwest Woman Champion

Mrs. Charles E. Henderson of Los Angeles, California, won the Southwest area championship in round 1 of our 1947 Women's Postal Chess Championship. In double-round competition with six others, from Oklahoma, Texas and California, she won all but one game, a draw with Mrs. Thelma F. Nelson of Pacific Palisades, California.

Mrs. Henderson is better known to our postalites as Lyn Henderson, but is still better known to the world as the former Mitzi Mayfair of Broadway and Hollywood fame. The movie, "Four Jills in a Jeep," was based on experiences from her overseas tours during the last war, with Kay Francis, Carole Landis and Martha Raye.

Lyn had been playing chess only three years when she started in the Women's Postal Championship. She took a few lessons from Herman Steiner because chess meant so much to her husband. She took them well, too; for, besides qualifying for the Women's Finals, she has three and a half points in the 1947-8 Golden Knights and has had a game published in our postal chess department.

Our correspondent also points out that the game referred to was on the inside back cover of *Chess Review*, October 1947:

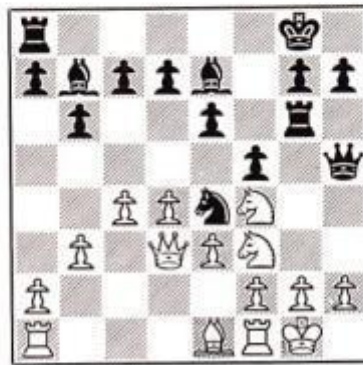
POSTAL GAME

The Best Defense

The theory of the Dutch "Defense" is that attack is the best defense, and a King-side attack in chess is the best attack. Here is an ideal example.

DUTCH DEFENSE

Helen Rosenkjar		Lyn Henderson	
White		Black	
1 P-Q4	P-KB4	9 B-K1	R-B3
2 P-QB4	P-K3	10 N-B3	N-R3
3 P-K3	N-KB3	11 B-Q3?	N-N5
4 N-KB3	P-QN3	12 Q-Q1	NxB
5 B-K2	B-N2	13 QxN	Q-K1
6 O-O	B-K2	14 P-QN3?	Q-R4
7 Q-B2	O-O	15 N-K2	R-N3
8 B-Q2	N-K5	16 N-B4



16 RxPch!
17 NxR QxN

Black won by adjudication, as there is no good defense to 18... N-B4!

Helen Rosenkjar – Lyn Henderson
Correspondence game
Dutch Defence

1 d4 f5 2 c4 e6 3 e3 Nf6 4 Nf3 b6 5 Be2 Bb7 6 O-O Be7 7 Qc2 O-O 8 Bd2 Ne4 9 Be1 Rf6 10 Nc3 Na6 11 Bd3 Nb4 12 Qd1 Nxd3 13 Qxd3 Qe8 14 b3 Qh5 15 Ne2 Rg6 16 Nf4 Rxd2+ 17 Nxd2 Qxf3 and 'Black won by adjudication'.

(7491)

The front-cover picture of *Chess Review*, October 1948:



From page 2:

‘If looks could kill, anyone facing Sid Caesar, comedy star of the hit musical *Make Mine Manhattan*, would die laughing. On the other hand, perhaps the wholesome beauty of Barbara Weaver, also a member of the company, offsets Caesar’s hilarious mugging.’

(7507)

Steven B. Dowd asks what grounds there may be for a statement at the [IMDb website](#) regarding the actor George Mathews (1911-84):

‘In private life, Mathews was the antithesis of the ruffians he often portrayed on screen: amicable and intelligent. Outside of his profession, he was an avid chessplayer and often participated in international tournaments.’

(8041)

A small feature on Frank Morgan from page 2 of the January 1938 *Chess Review*:



Florence Rice appeared on page 291 of the December 1937 *Chess Review*:



FLORENCE RICE, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Star
Is an enthusiastic amateur. She took up the game after watching Owen and Frank Morgan play on a set about a year ago. Like Myrna Loy, she is steadily improving as a chess player.

From our collection, a photograph of Maximilian Schell, in *Return from the Ashes*:



Copyright © 1965, United Artists. All rights reserved. Permission granted for Newspaper and Magazine reproduction. (Made in the U.S.A.)

THE MIRISCH CORPORATION Presents
A J. LEE THOMPSON PRODUCTION Starring
MAXIMILIAN SCHELL • SAMANTHA EGGAR • INGRID THULIN in
RETURN FROM THE ASHES
PANAVISION® • Released thru United Artists

Concerning the alleged game between Paul Limbos and Humphrey Bogart, see C.N. 8536.

Dan Scoones (Coquitlam, BC, Canada) draws attention to a set of [postage stamps](#):



Our correspondent notes that ‘Boris Spassky’ is Vladek Sheybal, who played the role of Kronsteen in the 1963 film *From Russia with Love*.



(9658)

From the 'Problem Pages' column by [P.H. Williams](#) on page 11 of the *Chess Amateur*, October 1919:

Chess and the Cinema.

The Cinema should reflect the spirit of the times. There is a poster in London, illustrating a drama called "The Summer Girls," where a lady and gentleman are playing chess. The latter's face, and the terrible furrows on his forehead, might suggest that he had a bad defence. But as there is clearly a lively bon-fire or explosion, in lurid red, immediately beneath his chair, his agitation is comprehensible.

Thus are the characteristics of the noble game set forth in Cinema-land, to show its calm and intellectual joys. But I may say that the Vesuvian manifestation is really well placed: for the gentleman, who appears to be playing the part of a mutton-chop with "delirium tremens," is clearly a villain. Any student of the six-act thrill in ten reels can see that, by the glint in his eye, and the "Ha-ha! Do not r-r-rrrove muh, gy-ur!" (which is probably projected in letter-press later on); these are infallible omens of criminality. Thus the conflagration is in accordance with decorum and morality. His ultimate cremation is inevitable. This sort of peaceful drama is a welcome relief from the never-ending views of sleuth-hounds, diamond tiaras, telephones,

revolvers, prancing cow-boys, lassos, detectives, collisions, marriage in balloons, poison-draughts, old ladies reading the Bible, cannibals, and so forth.

The [poster](#) for the film may be viewed on-line.

(10270)

C.N. 7076 had a reference to Helmut Dantine (1918-82) from page 26 of the October 1945 *Chess Review*:

Bromberg, Helmut Dantine, Frank Morgan, Nigel Bruce; actresses Myrna Loy, Linda Darnell, Maureen O'Sullivan, Mitzl Mayfair; directors Josef von Sternberg, Billy Wilder. The employees at Paramount Studios have recently organized their own chess club. Herman Steiner's flourishing Hollywood Chess Group has upwards of a hundred enthusiastic members. Chess is well on the way to becoming part of the everyday pattern of Hollywood life. In a recent interview (Silver Screen, June 1945) Humphrey Bogart was asked about the things that matter most to him. One of them is "Chess . . . right now Helmut Dantine and I move the Kings and Queens every day on the

set between takes. At the moment, I've got Dantine out on a limb." CHESS REVIEW readers will recall that the cover of the June-July issue featured a game between Boyer and Bogart, played during takes of "The Confidential Agent." Bogart is not only interested in the game; he is helping to popularize it by serving as one of the directors of the United States Chess Federation.

One of the happy results of Hollywood's absorption in chess has been an intelligent use of chess in movies—in such pictures, for example, as "Casablanca," "Blood and Sand" and "North Star." There is still room

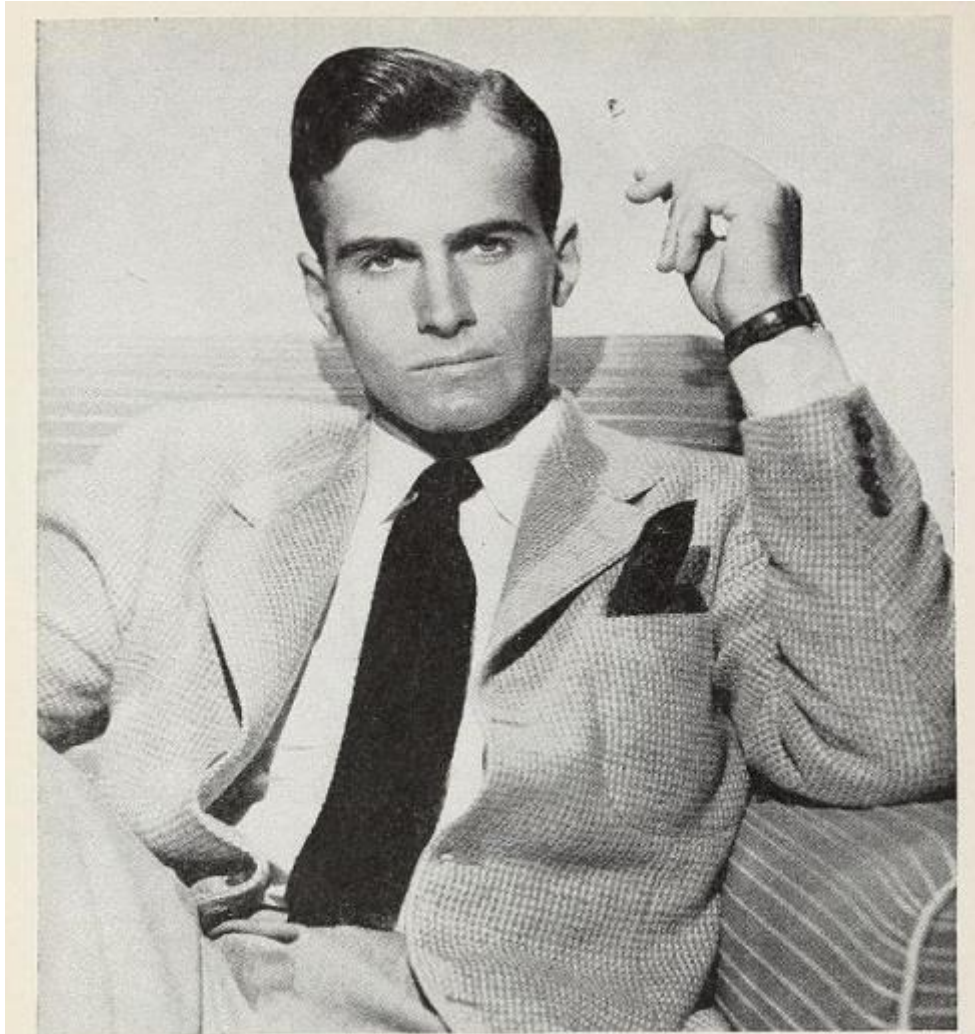
CHESS REVIEW, OCTOBER, 1945

Olimpiu G. Urcan provides some further material on the actor:

1) On page 36 of *Hollywood*, January 1943, Dorothy Haas wrote about Dantine:

'In addition to writing, his real hobby is chess. He and Humphrey Bogart played every day during the shooting of *Casablanca*. He likes all active sports and enjoys watching football and baseball.'

The accompanying photograph:



Helmut Dantine enjoys playing Nazis if he can make them more hated, for they ruined his diplomatic career in Austria. He's in Warners' *Edge of Darkness*

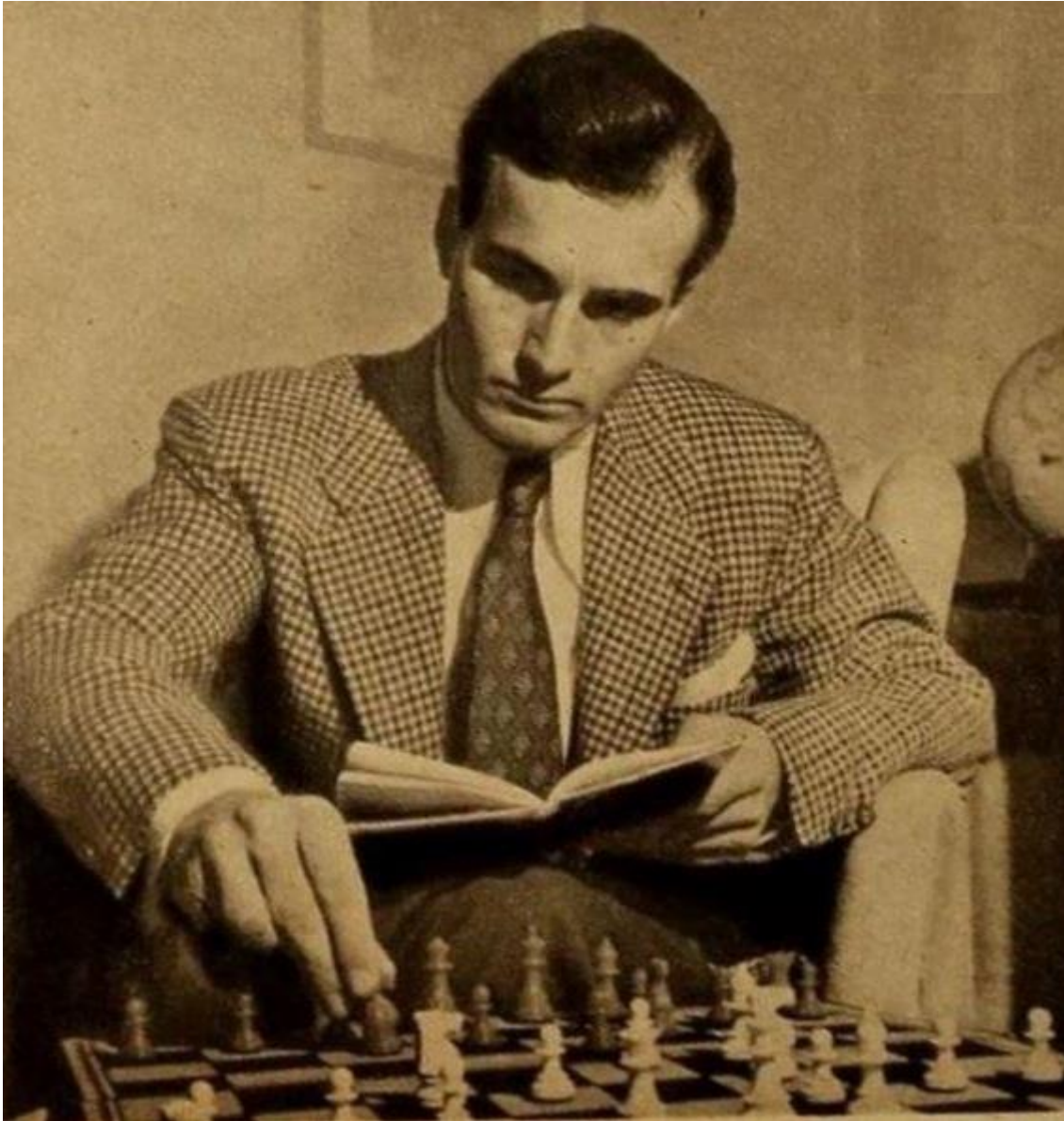
Bogart and Dantine in *Casablanca*:



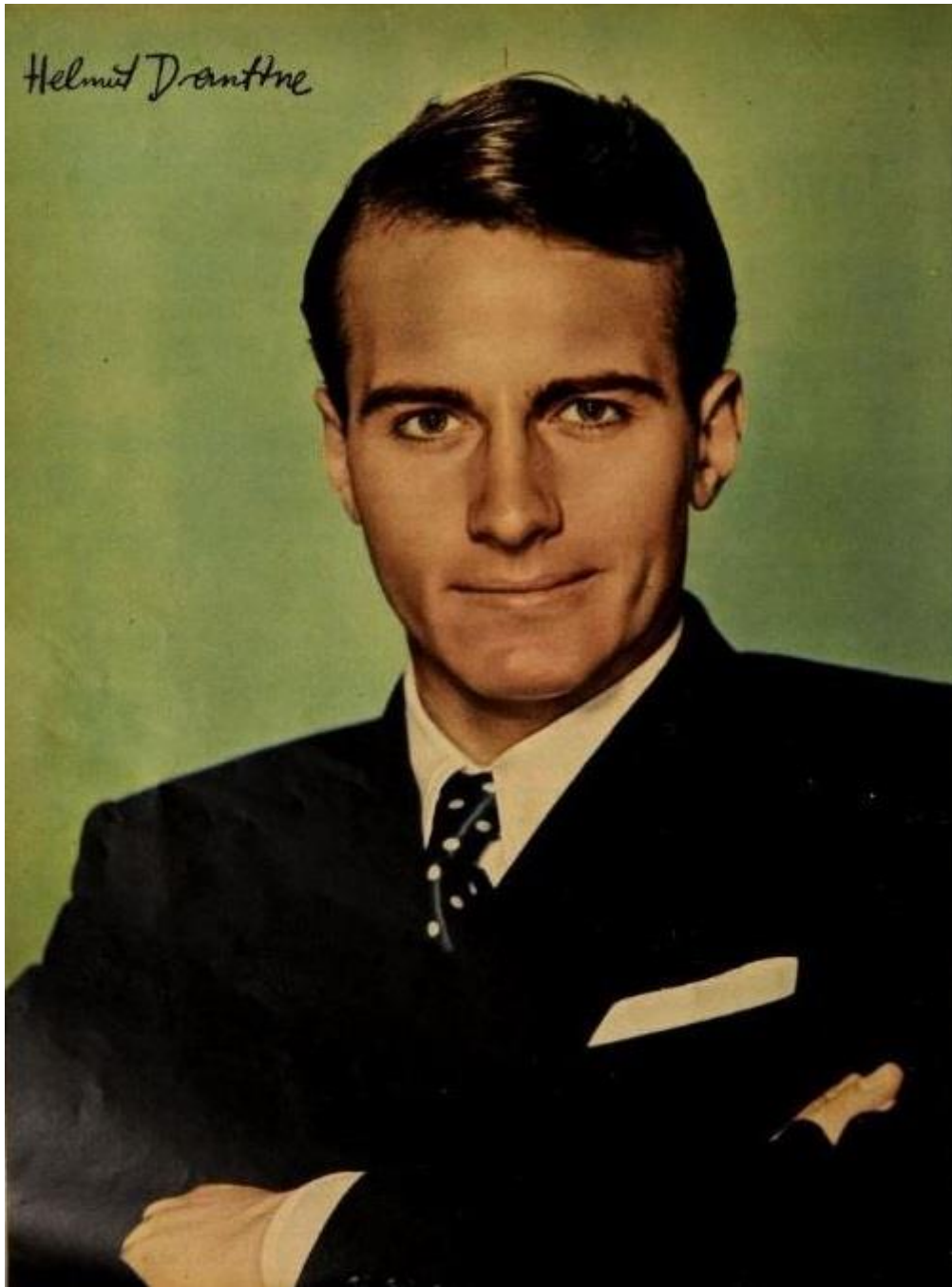
2) From the *Long Beach Independent*, 4 July 1943, page 16:

‘Helmut Dantine, featured in Warner Bros’ *Edge of Darkness*, has entered the National Association Chess tourney. Helmut was seventh-ranking player in Vienna.’

3) *Modern Screen*, June 1944, page 38 had this:



Dantine's role in *Passage to Marseille* was featured on page 56 of the same issue of *Modern Screen*, with this photograph:



From page 91 (text by Jack Carson):

right in keeping you might know Helmut's favorite diversion would be not gin-rummy, but chess.

chess-nuts . . .

He met a fellow chess-nut in Humphrey Bogart, by the way, out at Warners'. Bogie has been pushing pawns and rooks and things around for years between takes. So when he and Helmut discovered each other during "Passage to Marseille," it looked like they'd never finish the picture. Turned out Humphrey and Helmut are just about even in chess skill, which makes for those prolonged porings over the board before either makes a move. They started one game on "Passage to Marseille," and then when Helmut went on to another picture, they kept that game up by telephone. "This is B on Stage 2," the operator would hear, "to D on Stage 21—checkmate!"

Helmut even has a tiny portable chess board he lugs around in the glove compartment of his car, just in case. It has come in handy. A few weeks ago, a certain Hollywood starlet suffered a crush on Helmut, or maybe it was a publicity crush. Anyway, nothing would do but that Helmut take her out on a date. It was practically in the columns already so Helmut had to come through. The girl got all gusseted up for a large evening at the glamour gulches. But when Helmut arrived, he never said a thing about stepping out. Instead he unlimbered the chess board.

"Wh-what's *that*?" gasped the dismayed girl.

"Chess," repeated Helmut. "I'll teach you how to play. We'll have a wonderful evening." It may have been wonderful to Helmut, but the young star decided she could get along without another one. She hasn't bothered Helmut since.

4) A photograph of Dantine and Bogart at the chessboard, with George Tobias and Philip Dorn, was on page 12 of the 14 January 1944 edition of the *Salt Lake Tribune*. As shown below, it also appeared on page 393 of *Chess Life & Review*, July 1979:



e is the game.
 fense: 1. P-K4
 3-Q3 N-KB3 5.

During a lull in the shooting of Passage to Marseille (1944), Bogey plays chess with Helmut Dantine as George Tobias (with cigarette) and Philip Dorn watch.

5) From the *Olean Times Herald*, 27 December 1949, page 7 (and in other newspapers in late December 1949):

‘Helmut Dantine’s prowess at chess makes him puffier than any critics’ praises he ever won at acting. Whenever he’s in New York he can be found haunting the midtown chess parlors, and he’s never so happy as when one of the gray-bearded experts takes him on for a contest. His mail-box gets crammed with communiqués from other chess addicts, and he always has a dozen chess-by-mail opponents following wherever he may travel.’

(10495)

Mention of *Casablanca* in the item on Helmut Dantine (C.N. 10495) prompts Edward Hamelrath (Dresden, Germany) to point out a reference to Conrad Veidt on page 379 of the Carlsbad, 1929 tournament book:

XX. Runde.

Samstag, den 24. August.

Schon vom frühen Morgen an drängt heute das Volk. Wer sich das Turnier noch nicht angesehen hat, muß sich beeilen, denn heute wird die vorletzte Runde gespielt. Und wer das Turnier verfolgt hat, der muß heute erst recht zur Stelle sein, denn es geht um wichtige Platzentscheidungen, vor allem steht das Treffen Spielmann—Capablanca auf dem Programm. Die Schachbessenen wissen, daß sich der Kubaner speziell mit Spielmann etwas schwer tut und sie wissen auch, daß er voriges Jahr in Kissingen gegen Spielmann verloren hat. Ferner wissen sie (wahrscheinlich!), daß Spielmann kein Remisfreund ist und sind mit Recht auf einen scharfen Kampf gefaßt. Neugierige Häuse umrecken den Tisch, auch Conrad Veidt, der große Hollywooder, ist zu sehen; er ist Stammgast bei uns. •

Spielmann eröffnet mit dem Damengambit, Capablanca verteidigt orthodox; die Sachverständigen ersehen daraus, daß er es nur auf ein Remis abgesehen hat. Aber Spielmann legt scharf los, man erkennt, daß er die Absicht habe, lang zu rochieren und einen scharfen Königsangriff einzuleiten. Auch Capablanca scheint dies zu ahnen, denn er zögert mit



Conrad Veidt, *Hollywood*, February 1943, page 32

Chess in the Movies by Bob Basalla (C.N. 3986) mentions in connection with Veidt A *Man's Past* (1927), *Le joueur d'échecs* (1938) and *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940).

In *Le joueur d'échecs* Veidt played the role of von Kempelen. Below are two photographs from the *Sketch*, 22 June 1938, page 599:





(10499)

Olimpiu G. Urcan has provided this still from *The Thief of Bagdad*:



Ed Hamelrath draws attention to a webpage with many [behind-the-scenes](#) photographs taken during the production of *Casablanca*, including (fifth from the bottom) a shot of Humphrey Bogart playing chess against Paul Henreid.

(10612)



A "still" from the Metro-Goldwin-Mayer picture: "Knights of the Round Table." Though chess was unknown in King Arthur's time, much of the Arthur Legend is anachronistic—even the formal tournaments of Malory's and Tennyson's versions. So it seems highly appropriate to depict the chivalric game of chess in a picture of the very spirit of chivalry.

Chess Review, February 1954, page 38

Page 200 of *Chess in the Movies* by Bob Basalla (Davenport, 2005) identified Robert Taylor's opponent as Ava Gardner, instead of Maureen Swanson, in this film, *Knights of the Round Table*.

(11261)

Olimpiu G. Urcan has acquired permission from Mondadori for us to reproduce a photograph taken during the shooting of the 1967 film *A Countess from Hong Kong*:



Marlon Brando, Charlie Chaplin, Sophia Loren

(11405)

Concerning the 1930 film the 1930 production *The Bishop Murder Case*, see [The Single Bishop Mate](#).

Many chessplayers are sticklers for fact only regarding works of fiction.

Latest update: 10 June 2022.

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