

2010-01-05

Highest Level with Modest Participation

Report by Michael Negele on the San Francisco Meeting 2009 (05/01/2010)

A Personal Experience Report of an "Old" European from the "Wide West" of the USA

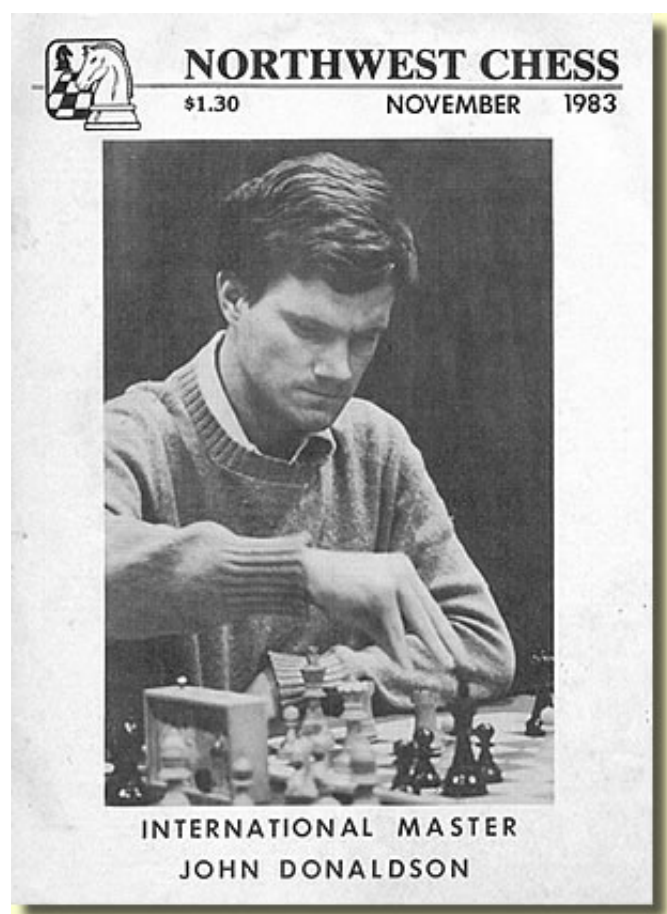
I was immediately enthused when at the excellently attended KWA meeting in New York in September 2007 the suggestion was accepted to meet in the fine rooms of the Mechanics' Institute at San Francisco in autumn 2009. Though it would not be new territory for me as in July 2004 on a business trip to Berkeley (CA) I had already had the chance to visit the chess club there together with my friends Andy Ansel and John Donaldson. [See [On the Gold Rush's track.](#)]



reading room

View of the library's

But nobody could suspect that after the fine meeting at Dresden 2008 where our future host had cordially invited us (>> [Dresden 2008](#)) a worldwide banking crisis would shake even the committed chess collectors.



John Donaldson achieved the IM title 1983 with a tournament in Lugano – those were the (chess) days!

So the lecture program from Friday, 9 October to Sunday, 11 October, prepared by John, our chairman (and former sunny state boy) Andy and other Californian members like Kerry Lawless and Yakov Zusmanovich, sounded very promising and – with the potential participation of GM Ian Rogers from Australia – of high quality.

But unfortunately there was a volley of refusals from Europe, moreover an Oracle event taking place simultaneously from Monday onwards boosted the hotel prices to prohibitive amounts at that weekend which also unfavorably influenced the interest in the USA.

Unperturbed by all bad news from stock markets and banks (and by additional job-related duties) I arranged for my participation.

The booking of a favorable BA flight via Düsseldorf and London was quickly done, the so accepted "Coach Class" a sacrifice to the "collector's budget".

Finally I can only say: It was a convenient flight with an astonishing good service, only a little boring ...



On Thursday afternoon (for me of course 1 am) I was received at the SFO with a short delay by my friend and local organizer John Donaldson who in the meantime had also picked up Jurgen Stigter - flown in from Amsterdam but coming from Delaware, i.e. Dale Brandreth with plenty of luggage.



View from Coit Tower at the imposing ocean of houses of San Francisco



By the - due to the last visit familiar - BART (Bay Area Rapid Transport) we went to Powell Station in Downtown SF where Jurgen and I – after a lengthy consultancy with John via e-mail – had found accommodation in the Handlery Union Square Hotel. (Scan on the right, click to enlarge.)
 Super centrally located, for me the first stay "at the heart" of one of the most beautiful cities of the world.

That it was then too "lively" overnight from Friday to Saturday which gave cause for a complaint, was exemplarily dealt with as well, just "US customer service like": the last night was for 80 US\$ less without grumbling, my room mate – blessed with a better sleep at night (as jet lag-free) – was mighty happy about that, for me the morning session of our KWA meeting was very "exhausting" as some pictures will show.

There was still nothing to notice about all that at Thursday night as after a nice dinner with John and Jurgen I could anyway only fall asleep after a day of 28 hours.



A swimming pool in the courtyard of the hotel invites to recreation, back left was our second, very quiet room.



From the Coit Tower too a wonderful view of Fisherman's Wharf, the marina and the famous Alcatraz Island

Then on Friday morning in great defogged weather the intended tour with Jurgen:

Through Chinatown and Little Italy to Coit Tower where in bright weather it was indispensable to record incomparable views of the Bay (and naturally of the former jail island of Alcatraz) as well as of the city with the dominating Transamerica Pyramid.



Financial institute in Chinatown – really picturesque!



This [web site](#) (in German only) informs about the origins of the Coit Tower.

In addition a [gallery](#) with own snapshots (10 photos).



Up to the Coit Tower!



The (central)

Transamerica Pyramid towers above the skyline of San Francisco

Then onwards via Telegraph Hill along the whole Lombard Street – just typical "Streets of San Francisco" with an enjoyable morning break at an artist café. Across the "flower hill", the famous section of Lombard Street, then across Russian Hill down to [Fisherman's Wharf](#).

From there the obligatory Cable Car tour back to Union Square, of course standing "undaunted by death" outside on the footboard.



[Lombard Street.](#)

Michael Negele at the famed twists of

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*Refreshment in the artist café –
on the right Jurgen Stigter flanked by two "Neanderthals"
(Click on pictures to enlarge)*



Victorian houses in Russian Hill quarter



Return by cable car

The following [gallery](#) offers further (25) photos of San Francisco.

Actually that would already do for two days, but at 3 pm we had an appointment with John at the Mechanics' Institute where soon afterwards Andy Ansel and other US participants joined us.



Jurgens Stigter as a mirror image!



Lawless and Andy Ansel in the Mechanics' Institute

Jurgens Stigter, Kerry

Further pictures of the Mechanics' Institute are waiting for you in this [gallery](#) (with 25 photos).

After a short tour of the chess club rooms we started out to Chinatown for dinner, afterwards Jurgens and I could – in company of Kerry Lawless – have a look at some "night life" in downtown. That the sleep was finally suboptimal – see above ...



Here you will enter Chinatown



Kerry Lawless

Jorgen Stigter and



Union Square at night, under the expert guide of Kerry we used the external elevator of the Westin Saint Francis Hotel for a "night view of the city".



Cable Car Turnaround [For details see [San Francisco Cable Cars](#) at Wikipedia]

However on Saturday morning I was quite astonished what an interesting group of participants had come about.

Indeed the participation of members was far below the numbers of NYC and Dresden, even still lower than at the comparably unfavorable KWA annual meeting 2006 at La Tour-de-Peiltz on Lake Geneva. But to my surprise Myron Samsin from Ottawa was present, with whom we discussed the book projects of the KWA.



Andy Ansel, Myron Samsin
and Andy Milburn

Moreover the CA boys Kerry, John and Yakov as well as Andy Ansel. Unfortunately Phil McCready from Seattle had to cancel at short notice because of a family matter, hence his lecture on Nikolai Minew (and self publication of chess books) was omitted. Lawrence Totaro from Las Vegas was missed as well, from the East Coast not a single chess friend came apart from Andy Ansel.



Andy Ansel, Yakov
Zusmanovich, Anthony Saidy and John Donaldson

Nevertheless there were numerous illustrious guests, such as Ian and Cathy Rogers who had made a stopover in San Francisco on their way back from China to Australia. On Sunday Ian had still given a training for the youth of the MI chess club. Besides IM Dr Anthony Saidy from LA who could tell a lot about Bobby Fischer and the US chess scene of the sixties to the eighties. Then the legendary but quite silent IM Walter Shipman, the Morphy book author Frisco Del Rosario and Robert Moore (formerly Anchorage, Alaska) who presented to the participants his nice elaboration on "Alaska's First Chess Champion", William Andrews Dickey (*20/10/1862 in Manchester, †Dec. 1939 in Seattle). A particular specialty as you will search in vain for W.A. Dickey in the "Gauge" volume.



Ian and Cathy Rogers

with Anthony Saidy

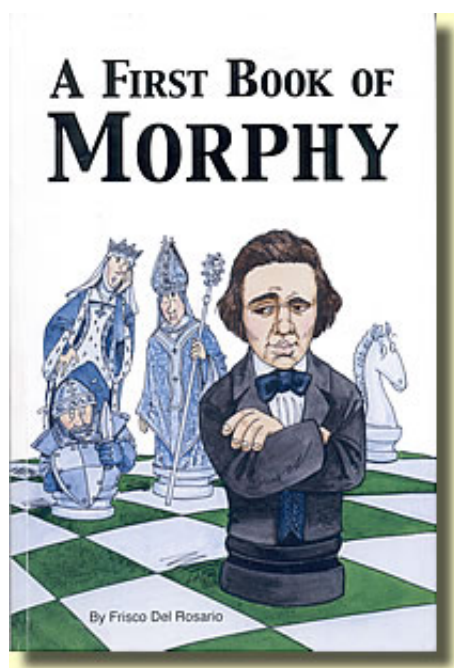


Walter Shipman, in the background Andy Ansel

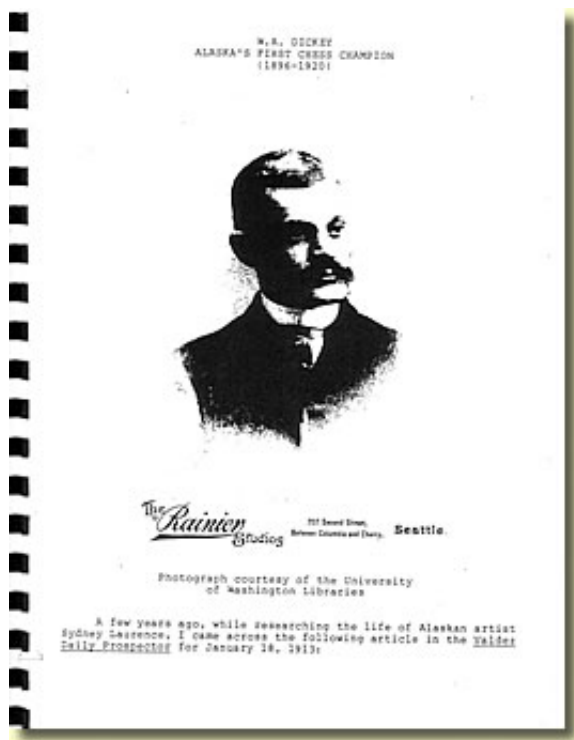
We link an [online contribution](#) about the U.S. Senior Open 2007 with some information on Walter Shipman.



Frisco Del Rosario autographing his Morphy textbook.



Frisco Del Rosarios Morphy book



Bob Moore's booklet on W.A. Dickey



Robert Moore was seated in the back corner of the auditorium



The young Andrew Smith (photo right) recorded the complete event by means of the latest technology, an appealing contrast to Richard Shorman (picture below) who shot his photos in the conventional way, printed them on the spot and delighted the participants with them. Very original. (According to Andy: Long-time columnist for the Hayward paper and fixture in the SF Bay Area chess scene.)

More about Richard Shorman at www.norcalchess.org/.
In addition: [Richard Shorman Lectures](#) at ChessDryad.Com.



Richard Shorman and Kerry

Lawless

The program of Saturday was so intensive that I had to postpone my presentation of the Lasker project to Sunday morning.

Saturday, 10 October

9.30–10.30 am

Tour of Mechanics' Chess Club and Library by IM John Donaldson.

10.30–11.30 am

Opening of the KWA meeting by Andy Ansel.

11.30 am – 12.45 pm

Major lecture by GM Ian Rogers on Cecil Purdy (a brilliant entertaining talk on Purdy's life which was totally devoted to chess. Presented very perceptively and very comprehensibly, a real highlight for the KWA. There were numerous questions and discussions.)

1.00–2.00 pm

Lunch at Taylor's Automat (hamburger restaurant at the piers).

2.30–4.00 pm

Yakov Zusmanovich's talk on Feodor Bohatirchuk (most interesting due to the many original documents shown, but maybe a little too copious. Yakov is just very enthusiastic about this partly also political project.)

4.00–4.45 pm

Talk by IM Anthony Saily about "My battles with Fischer" (Naturally very diverting and funny. There were many questions, unfortunately Tony Saily didn't join us in the evening.)

From 5.30 pm by BART to Berkeley.

7.00 pm Dinner in Udupi Palace (Indian restaurant).



Myron Samsin and Cathy Rogers

John Donaldson,



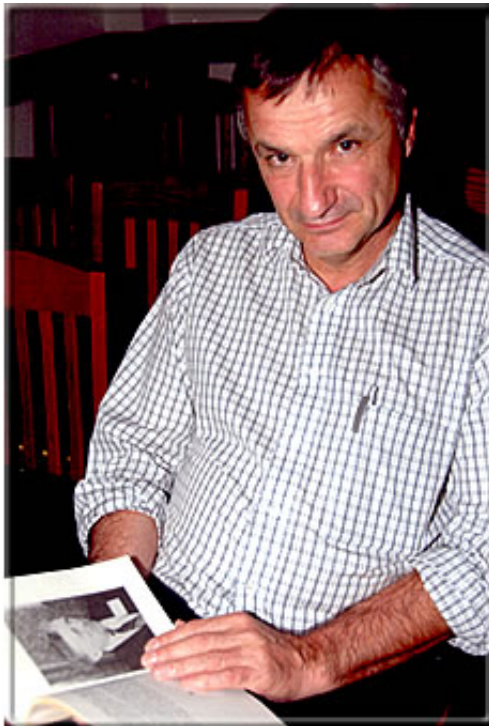
Ian Rogers giving a lecture on
Purdy



Yakov Zusmanovich
starts his presentation on Feodor Bohatirchuk



Feodor Bohatirchuk - "Free man in a free country"



For the first time I could have a look at the legendary autobiography of Bohatirchuk "My Path of Life to Wlassow and the Prague Manifest", published in San Francisco 1978 in Russian. (Michael Negele)



Anthony Saidy

on Bobby Fischer – a nearly inexhaustible subject.

Sunday, 11 October

9.30–11.00 am

Book market (Turned out to be a more disappointing affair as scarcely anything was offered. At least I found some customers, so I lost a little "weight". But that was more than once overcompensated by the books I received from the MI offered for sale ...)

11.00–11.30

Talk by the world's soon to be youngest author, 13-year-old FM Daniel Naroditsky (publisher New in Chess).

(A really memorable presentation as the father of the boy was naturally present as well, and he extensively paid attention to the favorable impression. For me it was rather unreal that a youngster reflects so earnestly in public on chess and his career as an author.)



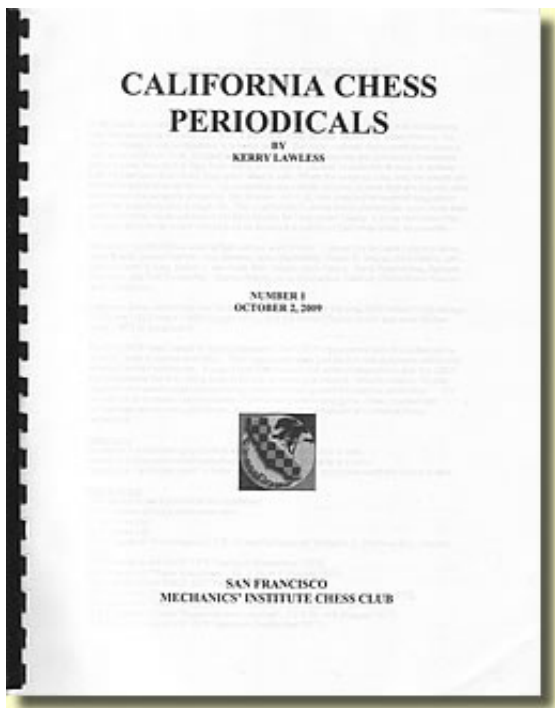
The phenomenon Daniel

Naroditsky

11.30 am – 12.15 pm

As already mentioned, the intended talk by Phil McCready on Nikolay Minev and self publishing had to be cancelled.

Instead my (usual) Lasker presentation which was well received.



Kerry Lawless' bibliography of Californian chess periodicals, each participant received a copy.

Then due to lack of time: perhaps too short appreciated the nice compilation of Kerry Lawless, quite a few were already "on tenterhooks" for departure.

12.15–12.45 pm

Talk by Kerry Lawless on

Chessdryad.com and California Periodicals.



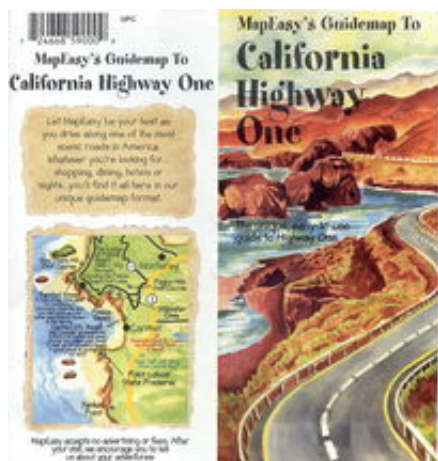
Kerry Lawless

In "time-trouble" the contribution of IM John Donaldson about the longest running regional periodical in the world (Northwest Chess 1947 to the present) had also to be cancelled.

12.45–1.00 pm

Thereafter time was short for the closing comments of Andy who appeared a little disappointed about the humble participation (both US and Europe). It remains to be seen if a majority will argue again for a 2011 event in the USA (Cleveland). Perhaps the interview with Lissa Waite is an opportunity to promote it a little.

After the rapid closing of the session I had the logistic problem to return to the airport with three pieces of luggage (and two hands), without arranging for a horrendous expensive taxi. It worked out and I could make another dream come true:



[MapEasy's Guidemap To California Highway One \(click to enlarge\)](#)

To drive by rental car in a southward direction along the world's dream-road, California Highway No. 1 from Monterey (Carmel) via Big Sur to Sanct Simeon (and Hearst Castle). But this is a different story completely faraway from chess.

