



## COLUMNISTS

### *From the Archives*

Hosted by  
Mark Donlan



### From the Archives...

Since it came online many years ago, **ChessCafe.com** has presented literally thousands of articles, reviews, columns and the like for the enjoyment of its worldwide readership. The good news is that almost all of this high quality material remains available in the **Archives**. The bad news is that this great collection of chess literature is now so large and extensive – and growing each week – that it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate it effectively. We decided that the occasional selection from the archives posted publicly online might be a welcomed addition to the regular fare.

Watch for an item to be posted online periodically throughout each month. We will update the **ChessCafe** home page whenever there has been a “new” item posted here. We hope you enjoy ***From the Archives...***

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The following is an excerpt from an unpublished manuscript by Hans Kmoch (1894-1973). Kmoch’s career as a player, journalist, and arbiter brought him into contact with some of the greatest players of all time. We extend our thanks to Burt Hochberg, who owns the manuscript, for allowing us to publish this excerpt, which he has edited especially for **ChessCafe**.

### Grandmasters I Have Known

by Hans Kmoch

#### **Frank James Marshall (1877-1944)**

I first saw Marshall when he gave an exhibition in Vienna a few years before World War I. I did not get to know him, however, until 1925, when he took part in the tournaments at Baden-Baden, Marienbad, and Moscow, all of which I attended as a reporter.

At Baden-Baden and Marienbad, Marshall was accompanied by his wife, Caroline, a lively and attractive woman who looked amazingly youthful. Both of them were eager to meet old friends and remember old times. Until war broke out in 1914, Europe had been where Frank Marshall had played most of his tournaments and collected most of his prizes. In the fateful summer of 1914 he participated in the Mannheim tournament, which had been scheduled for

seventeen rounds but was aborted after eleven.

The changed political atmosphere of postwar Europe sometimes deceived Marshall into making certain faux pas. It was not a good idea, for instance, to order Bismarck herring in Czechoslovakia in 1918. In Liuk (Liège), Belgium, where the players were lodged in a new but miserable hotel, Marshall publicly blamed the Germans for not retaining possession of the place so that it could be kept clean.



Marshall, though a fierce attacker over the board, was otherwise a peaceful, simple man. Certainly he was not a man of the pen. I noticed when he gave his autograph and he gave a great many of them he drew his name using several strokes instead of writing it in a single motion. In Moscow 1925, I was present when psychiatrists were handing out questionnaires to the participants. Marshall recoiled from the horrible task of filling his out. “No, no,” he protested. “Come after the tournament.” At the team tournament in Hamburg 1930, when he had just won a ten-mover against Petrov and was finishing the delicate job of correcting his scoresheet, I jokingly remarked that there might still be some errors. He defiantly offered to wager a cigar that there were none. I must say I really enjoyed that cigar.

An incident at the last round of an American tournament well illustrates Marshall’s sense of humor as well as his merciless efficiency in chess competition. His game was adjourned in the first session, and the position promised nothing but prolonged maneuvering leading nowhere. Marshall’s opponent, anxious to catch a train that day, offered a draw when the game was resumed, explaining that he needed to get home. Marshall wanted to know whether it was very important. On being told that it was, Marshall made his move, punched his clock, and said, “All right, go home.”

He always behaved with Victorian delicacy. At the tournament at Kissingen in

1928, there was an official named Dr. Bomhardt, whose name Marshall found offensive. (The reason for this is not quite clear. Perhaps the syllable “Bom” sounded to Marshall uncomfortably like “bum,” which is British slang for “buttocks” but is also mildly derogatory in American English.) “I’ll call him Dr. Hardt,” he told me. After Marshall’s death, I learned from his physician that he was so prudish that even giving him a medical examination was a problem.

Marshall liked to drink, and although he never got drunk like Alekhine or Stoltz, he did have one too many now and then. On one such occasion, at his own chess club in New York City, he gave a speech at a meeting to honor Oscar Chajes, who had died in 1928. Chajes, who was born under the Austrian monarchy but lived in New York and was a member of the Marshall club, had one of the most often mispronounced names in chess history. It is correctly pronounced KHAH-yes (a form of the Hebrew word for “life”). Réti reported how amusing it was at the Karlsbad tournament of 1923 to hear the wild variety of attempts to get the name right. I had noticed the same thing when Chajes once visited Vienna. It seemed to be especially difficult for English-speakers. On that day at the Marshall club, Marshall concluded his speech by saying: “I think it is good that the man died, because we couldn’t pronounce his name anyway.”

Pronunciation never bothered Marshall. He simply used English pronunciation when attempting to use his broken French or German, sometimes with funny results. At the Moscow tournament of 1925, when his game against Grünfeld had reached a crucial stage, he told me in his own special form of German that he was two pawns down for a “huge little attack.” (“kolossal wenig Angriff”).

Marshall’s career as a participant in international tournaments, most of them in Europe, ended in Liège 1930, where he did poorly. After that he played in Europe only as head of the United States team at the Olympiads in Prague 1931, Folkestone 1933, Warsaw 1935, and Stockholm 1937. On his way home from Stockholm he gave an exhibition in Amsterdam, and that was our last meeting. He had aged greatly in the six years since I had last seen him, but he still played well and he impressed me by expressing his admiration for a player who had just defeated him.

By the time I moved to New York, Frank J. Marshall, born August 10, 1877, was no longer alive. On November 9, 1944, while in New Jersey getting some provisions that were hard to obtain in New York during the war, he suffered a heart attack and collapsed on the street. A policeman brought Mrs. Marshall the news.

She continued to manage the Marshall Chess Club with the help of her son Frankie, and when Frankie died at the age of about fifty, she continued alone. I became better acquainted with her after I settled in New York and was named secretary of the Manhattan Chess Club. Caroline Marshall was no longer young, of course, and toward the end of the 1960s her deteriorating health forced her to retire. She died in 1971, having reached her mid-eighties.

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