

Between a Rook and a Hard Spot!

Sherwood Moore

36 years of accumulated stories

TEN MAN CLOSED

This April the MCA membership voted to end the "TEN MAN CLOSED." With its demise on the horizon, here is how it came about. Michael Long moved from California to Livingston, Montana. Michael had been a former fire battalion chief. Arriving in Montana, he began playing chess. Michael's rating went into the 1800's and qualified for the "Six Man Closed." Directing the tournament, I instructed the players to arrive 20 minutes before the first round for the drawing of lots. The Six Man was played as a round robin, all players playing each other. Michael thought the Six Man lacked excitement. "What we need is to open the field! We need to give MORE players a chance to win the State Championship! We need MORE pizzazz!"

After two years, Michael finally convinced the membership to adopt the Ten Man. The problem was a 10 man tournament in 5 rounds was a nightmare to direct without a computer, and computer directing programs were just being developed. None of the state's tournament directors wanted to direct the tournament, including me! However, after much pleading, begging, and a guarantee from Michael that he would have a computer, program, and printer, I agreed to be the director.

The first problem was to arrive at a consensus for the playing site. Two players wanted Billings, two wanted Bozeman, two wanted Helena, two wanted Missoula, one wanted Coal Strip, and one Great Falls. Well, to heck with them! I choose Butte! If you're going to make someone unhappy, make them all unhappy!

Les Brennan was president of MCA. He called me up and asked, "Do you have name for the satellite tournament?"

I said, "How about the BIG PIT OPEN?"

Les sighed heavily. He did that frequently with me. "Sherwood, you cannot call it that."

John Barto had passed away earlier that spring. So I chimed in with, "How about we call it 'The Barto?'"

Les liked the idea.

I arrived in Butte to find that Michael did not have a computer, program, or printer. I had been suckered.

To make matters worse, there were 10 players for the 5 round Barto too! Thus, the fun began! Sigh!

If Dan and Gary agree to printing these pages, I will continue the story. In either case, this September

will be the final TEN MAN CLOSED. I bid it a fond farewell!