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## Battle on the Board: Chess during World War II

June 25, 2015 – January 17, 2016



Courtesy of the U.S. Chess Federation (from *Chess Review*, March 1945;  
Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame, Gift of John Donaldson)

June 25, 2015 (Saint Louis, MO) – Today the World Chess Hall of Fame opens its newest exhibition, **Battle on the Board: Chess during World War II**, highlighting artifacts, stories, and imagery related to how chess aided service members as well as how the war affected the world of competitive chess. Though often used as a metaphor for battle, during times of conflict chess was often a source of relaxation, a means of passing long hours, and an aid in recuperation.

“This exhibit allows visitors to explore the subject of chess and war through the lens of World War II and offers insights into how wartime had a meaningful impact on the game. As we commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WWII, this exhibit is not only relevant but demonstrates how a game – modeled upon battle – can also provide a sense of home and community,” said Emily Allred, assistant curator at the World Chess Hall of Fame.

Exhibit highlights include:

- A prisoner-of-war chess set created by an American lieutenant while at Stalag Luft I, a POW camp near Barth, Germany. The set was loaned by the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, and made by 1st Lt. Harold L. Weachter, who carved the set himself so that he would have a means of passing time in the camp.

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- A chess set loaned by The National Museum of the Marine Corps, once owned by Mr. William Chittenden, who served in the Marines during World War II. Captured in China shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Chittenden purchased the set using rationed Red Cross cigarettes while in the Woo Sung POW camp. Separated from his chess set after he was transferred to another camp, Chittenden was reunited with the set 70 years later.
- Material from the collection of Gisela Gresser – a 1992 inductee to the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame – on loan from The John G. White Chess Collection at the Cleveland Public Library. Gresser used chess as a form of relief, teaching service members and visiting injured veterans to play the game.

The exhibit explores multiple themes which include: Chess as part of recreational activities for members of the military during their tours of duty; the United States' role in providing comfort to returning veterans and POW's through philanthropic organizations such as *Chess for the Wounded*; How the game was viewed and utilized during the time period in pop culture and in Hollywood; and the ways in which the war itself changed the competitive landscape of chess among the world's top players.

The vintage chess pieces, artifacts, photographs and prints will be exhibited on the third floor.

***Battle on the Board* opens on June 25 and runs through January 17, 2016. Admission to the World Chess Hall of Fame is free with a \$5 per person recommended donation. Visit [worldchesshof.org](http://worldchesshof.org) for details.**

#### **About the World Chess Hall of Fame**

4652 Maryland Avenue, Saint Louis MO, 63108 (314) 367-WCHF [www.worldchesshof.org](http://www.worldchesshof.org)

The World Chess Hall of Fame is a nonprofit organization committed to building awareness for the cultural and artistic significance of chess. It opened on September 9, 2011, in the Central West End after moving from previous locations in New York and Miami.

The WCHOF is housed in an historic 15,900 square-foot residence-turned-business and features the U.S. and World Chess Halls of Fame, displays of artifacts from the permanent collection, and exhibitions highlighting the great players, historic games, and rich cultural history of chess.

The WCHOF partners with the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis to provide innovative programming and outreach to local, national, and international audiences.

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