

Hunter respected quality in all things and disliked mediocrity; so it was in his attitudes about chess and the teaching of chess. He believed that young players, beginning players of any age, should have a chess environment which would provide the maximum opportunity for the full development of their potentials. During the early 60's, he was frankly dismayed by the seeming inability of the Memphis area to produce more strong players, and he felt that much of the blame lay with the Memphis Chess Club. In his judgment, certain members of the club were more concerned with establishing themselves as club-masters, in the literal sense, that they were with the game of chess--and were still less interested in seeing young players develop to challenge their positions. To be precise, Hunter did not feel that anyone was consciously inhibiting the growth of chess in the club; he simply felt that interrelated personality clashes were having an adverse effect that resulted in an unpleasant and unhealthy atmosphere for chess. After much consideration spread over many months, Hunter decided to retire from the Memphis Chess Club; he did not re-enter the club for several years, until he had cause to think the situation had improved.

During those years of absence, Hunter of course continued his study of the game and played at the unofficial club at his home. It was at this time that the old Pillsbury Club was reborn. There had been some speculation among younger players in the Memphis Chess Club as to just what and who the "Pillsbury rebels" were. They were simply a few players who enjoyed chess in a reasonably congenial environment. They irritated a few Memphis players by going to the state championships in Nashville in 1966 and 1967 and winning the team competition both times; they had the nerve, it seems, to engrave the victor's plaque "Pillsbury Chess Club"--which seemed appropriate since the Memphis Chess Club did not in fact win the competitions. Aside from its Nashville excursions, the Pillsbury Club activities consisted of matches among its members, joint studies of openings (which included the thorough dissection of members' pet lines so that all might learn a little more), doing studies and exercise in the middle game and endgame, and attention to any specific problem a member might be having with the object of helping him overcome his difficulty--though it might cost another member a point at times. The purposes of the Pillsbury Club were to improve the play of its members, to provide a pleasant setting for companionship as well as competition, and to make certain--when all its members could make it to Nashville--that the Tennessee team plaque would be properly engraved (the club failed to do so in its three appearances only in 1971 when one of its strongest members could not be present). Hunter was, of course, the activity director for the Pillsbury Club and, as such, demonstrated that chess clubs could indeed be fruitful endeavors. The Pillsbury Club, incidentally, was not a closed society; the chess players in Memphis at that time were well familiar with Hunter's home.

When Hunter rejoined the Memphis Chess Club in late 1971, no one could have known that he was to die of cancer in a year and a half. There were vague hints that could have suggested the disease had anyone been alert to such a possibility. A few weeks later Hunter began sleeping a bit longer each day. Where seven or eight hours sleep had served, he began to require progressively more sleep until by the fall of 1972, before his operation, he routinely needed twelve or more hours. His play, always restrained, seemed in retrospect lacking in energy in 1972; and, indeed, he often said that he did not seem to have as much energy as usual. He