

MY BEST MOVE

MARK FINS

Author of New Novel
Imagine That

Entrepreneur,
Philanthropist

My best moves over the board are not likely to arouse any special attention. I doubt that GMs Magnus Carlsen or Hikaru Nakamura or any of those types are studying my games. But when the great Harold Dondis (now deceased, see April 2016 *Chess Life*) called to share his desire to resurrect the dying 97-year-old Boylston Chess Club, now fallen on hard times, I was interested to hear his plan.

I knew the club had been hard-pressed financially, barely breaking even and facing a whopping increase in market rent. To make things worse, the landlord refused to renew the lease, leaving the club only six months to find a new home. Harold and the dedicated Chris Chase began a feverish search for a new location. By far the best location was Norris Street in Cambridge, but there were big financial short-falls, including a much higher rent.

Why was chess so important to me, and what was the overall impact of chess upon my life? Where did chess rank on my charitable list? After all, there were many worthy groups needing support. Truthfully, unlike Harold, I didn't play at the Boylston Club that often any more—I spent much more time in the suburbs, at the Metrowest Chess Club.

As I considered the options, I was overtaken by a stirring vision: excited clusters of little kids crowded around a board, chattering, laughing and interrupting each other, moving each other's pieces to show their ideas.

And I saw those proud older players, at the club every week for a Thursday Night Swiss, a Friday Night Blitz or a Saturday Quad. What would they do if the club didn't survive? I was saddened as I pondered, like the Ghost of Christmas Future, the emptiness caused by the possible closure of the club.

It made me think about the day my father took out a wooden box some 63 years earlier. He took out strange and fascinating wooden pieces. Mesmerized, I looked on through the widened eyes of a four-year-old and chanted

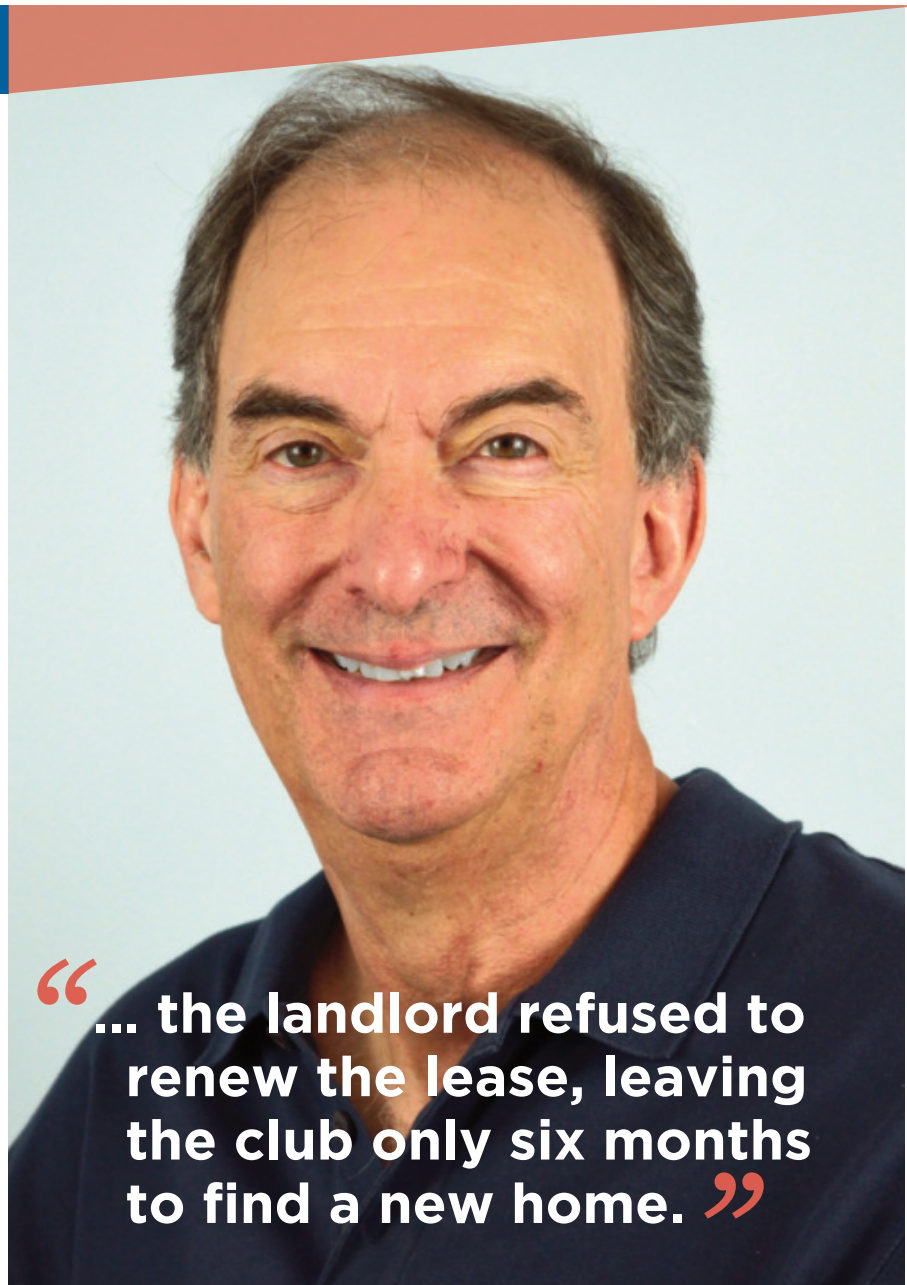
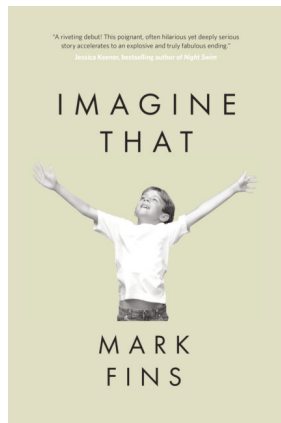


PHOTO: COURTESY OF SUBJECT

“... the landlord refused to renew the lease, leaving the club only six months to find a new home.”



the names of the pieces and the rules of their movement along with my dad.

I realized then that chess has had a tremendous influence on my life and my work as an entrepreneur and author. It taught me about the value of concrete analysis, the role of intuition, the certainty of consequences, the value of thinking ahead, and the importance of being objective in one's assessments.

And so I called Harold back and told him I'd happily match the contributions with my own, to give the club a full five-year respite.

At the time of this writing, the club is thriving, breaking even, and hosting an ever-increasing numbers of players and chess events.

I am on tour now with my new novel *Imagine That*, with numerous business interests to oversee. But chess is my siren song. As far as **My Best Move** is concerned, assisting the Boylston Chess Club certainly was one, but I know that my best is yet to come. ♠

Imagine That is available on amazon.com.