

John S. Candelario

by Chris Candelario

From the 1930s to 1940s, Taos was the strongest chess community, because of the foreign artists residing there. Taos was an artist's community. My father, John S. Candelario, lived in Taos from 1946 to 1948 and became one of the strongest players in the state of NM. He was trained by several Russian émigrés who were masters at chess. My great grandfather, Jesús Sito Candelario, was a State Representative in the state's first legislature, 1912. He was also one of the founding fathers of the Santa Fé chess scene. I inherited one of his antique chess books circa 1875, G.H.D. Gossip that sold for \$25.00 in the 1930s!!! Jesús owned the Old Curio store on San Francisco Street. He adopted his grandson, my father and taught him chess. So my father grew up with an appreciation for chess from an early age.

My father, an honorable man, mentioned that he won several state chess tournaments for the title of New Mexico State Chess Champion. The years that he told me (and others) that he won the title was 1946, 1947, 1948 [Taos], 1951, 1952 [Santa Fé] and either 1957 or 1958 [with Jack Shaw?].

Later, strong players emerged from Los Alamos, like the nuclear physicist, Charles Critchfield, who is now gone, but mentioned that he knew my father to be a strong player. I won a beautiful exhibition game in the early 1980s from Charles and would later become friends with his son, Lewis - Louis Campos, the famous NM flamenco guitarist.

In the 1940s in Taos, the chess players held an annual chess championship to decide who was best in New Mexico, and as noted, my father won their tournament several times. He moved back to Santa Fé, New Mexico in 1949 (the year and place where I was born).

My father helped run the Santa Fe Chess Club with Dr. Mann, Warren Miller's father, and Ernest Knee, another famous photographer and the creator of the "Taos" style furniture. My father told me that they held the NM State Title and SF City Championships there several times where he again won the NM State Chess title.

By the late 50s, my father retired from the chess scene, but did continue to win club championships at the Lencic Barber Shop run by Jesús Mendoza. I would estimate John Candelario's chess playing strength between USCF 2150-2250. In the 1960s, my father trained me, but basically played no more chess from the 1970s on.

A few years ago, Jack Shaw mentioned to me that he also thought my father won the state title one of the years that he [Shaw] was credited, 1957-58, but I've been unable to reconnect with Mr. Shaw lately. Perhaps, we can straighten this out.

My father became a professional photographer and is considered by Steve Yates, NM Fine Arts Museum photo curator, to be the "Godfather of NM Photography". A book has been written and published on my father's work. John was Ansel Adams' location manager for many of his photos in and around New Mexico. My father studied under Jack Wesson, perhaps the greatest 20th century photographer. My father's mentors were Alfred Stiglitz and his wife Georgia O'Keeffe. John and Georgia remained friends throughout their lives.

My father also knew and recorded Frieda Lawrence on her readings of D.H. Lawrence's poetry. This was also done in

Taos. My father met my mother at the Mabel Dodge Lujan house just on the southern border of the Taos Pueblo. Tony Lujan, a Taos Indian, was also a good friend of John's. My father mentioned that we had distant Taos Pueblo cousins, Ben Marcus and family.

All in all, I remember my father said that he won the NM State Chess title in Taos the year my brother Marc was born, 1948. So for now, I formally request, until otherwise disputed, that it be recorded.