

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Mechanics' Institute Rebuilds After Historic 1906 Quake

In early 1906, Mechanics' Institute had 4,150 members and 135,000 volumes. After merging with the Mercantile Association in January 1906, the Institute's collection increased to 200,000 books. The April 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire devastated the Institute's collections, including irreplaceable files, but miraculously spared the contents of two safes and some records, notably the original Institute Constitution.

After the disaster, Mechanics' Institute swiftly erected a temporary building at Grove and Polk Streets, utilizing land purchased in 1881. By May 23, 1906, the Institute's temporary office was operational, and construction on a new building commenced on June 4th. Despite material delays and a shortage of workers, the new facility welcomed visitors by August, just four months after the catastrophe.



Above left: 31 Post Street, 1866-1906. Eadweard Muybridge. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Above right: 31 Post rubble, 1906. Turrill & Miller. Mechanics' Institute Library Archives.

Below: Temporary Building 1906-1909 between Larkin and Polk. Mechanics' Institute Library Archives.

James Lick plaque: The only wall standing on 31 Post held the James Lick plaque. It now hangs in the lobby of 57 Post.



Above Left: Kearney Street from Market Street, 1905. Balfe D. Johnson. **Below Left:** Geary Street from Van Ness, October, 1906. Balfe D. Johnson. San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. **Above Right:** Lafayette Park, to Nob Hill, April 18, 1906. W. J. Street. Marilyn Blaisdell Collection, San Francisco. **Above Center & Right:** Birdseye View of a portion of the burned district from captive airship, 1906. Geo Lawrence Co. of Chicago.

Grandmaster Christopher Woojin Yoo Interview

*He received the Falconer Award
presented by International
Master John Donaldson*

Mechanics' Institute: How did you start playing chess?

Young-Kyu Yoo [Grandmaster Yoo's father]: When Christopher was five, I attempted to teach him to play. Christopher couldn't remember the name of the pieces and how they moved, so I gave up. My wife suggested putting him into an after-school program. In two to three months, he became the first-grade champion in California. We realized then that he had a special skill.

Mechanics' Institute: Who inspires you?

Grandmaster Yoo: I am inspired by Garry Kasparov and Magnus Carlsen. I like checking their games. It's inspiring.

Mechanics' Institute: What is the best advice you've given?

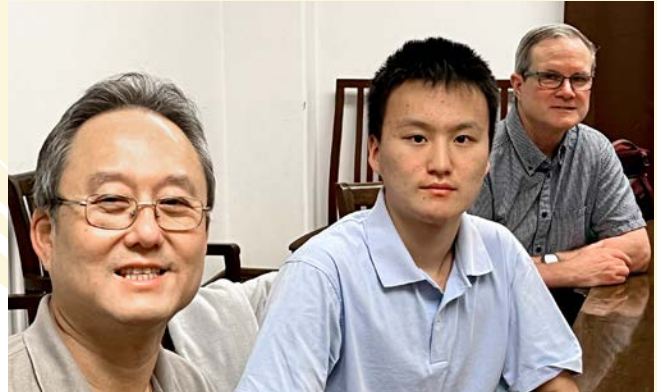
Grandmaster Yoo: Even after you lose, you have to get back into a good mindset to fight the next game. Get the loss behind you and stay mentally strong.

What is the best advice you've received?

Grandmaster Yoo: Do spend your time on critical moments. Woojin's father laughed during the interview saying, "I taught him that."

Mechanics' Institute: What impact did Mechanic Institute's chess room have on your career?

Grandmaster Yoo: I started coming regularly on weekends to play rated tournaments when I was six or seven years old.



Young-Kyu Yoo [left], Grandmaster Yoo [center], and International Master John Donaldson [right] chatting before the Falconer Award presentation.

Mechanics' Institute: Where do you plan to go to college?

Grandmaster Yoo: I am planning to attend college in St. Louis to be close to the St. Louis Chess Club.

Mechanics' Institute: What's next for you?

Grandmaster Yoo: I plan to play in a lot of tournaments over the next few years and am not a 100% sure yet, but I am thinking of pursuing chess professionally as a player or a coach. His father also mentioned to Woojin, "What about becoming a stockbroker?"

Mechanics' Institute: What else should we know about you and your career? Where you are now in your chess game?

Grandmaster Yoo: I've come this far from when I started. I'm still learning a lot. It's still tricky and there's a lot to learn.

International Master John Donaldson also spent time before GM Yoo's award ceremony for an interview with Mechanics' Institute.

Mechanics' Institute: What makes a player like GM Yoo special?

International Master Donaldson: GM Yoo is a young strong player who has had a passion for the game for a long time. He's one of the top twenty rated players in the world under the age of twenty-one. Not many at his age and his playing strength encompass being a top chess player and also is both a solver and composer of chess puzzles. Mechanics Institute has a long tradition of chess composers who have come through our doors such as AJ (Adolph J.) Fink, who was active during the first half of the 20 th century,

Left below & Center: Grandmaster Yoo demonstrating a chess puzzle that he designed.
Right: GM Yoo plays against chess coach, IM Elliott Winslow.



and gained an international reputation as a composer of hundreds of published chess problems, an expert in endgame studies, and an adjudicator of adjourned games. Neil Falconer [for whom the Falconer Award is named] was a big chess problem solver and would've loved to try to solve GM Yoo's problems.

Mechanics' Institute: Who else has won the Neil Falconer Award which Mechanics' Institute bestows to the highest rated junior player under 18 years of age in Northern California?

IM Donaldson: Since the Falconer Award was established in the 1990s, in addition to GM Yoo, recipients include Grandmaster Sam Shankland who won the award three times and became U.S. champion; Grandmaster Daniel Naroditsky who won the award several times and became a very strong GM representing the U.S. in the World Team Chess Championship; Grandmaster Vinay Bhat who won medals in several World Youth Championships; and Gregory Young twice winner of the U.S. Junior Closed Championship.

Mechanics' Institute: As 15-time captain of the U.S. Chess Olympiad team, what do you see for the future of chess?

IM Donaldson: The U.S. Chess Federation just set a record for membership growth. They now have 117,000

members. I'd say about 60% are under 18 so there are a lot of junior youth playing and more females. In part, they were encouraged by watching *The Queen's Gambit*. During the pandemic, chess really lent itself well to online play. People were already playing there and the pandemic just increased the trend. The pandemic led to many top-level tournaments being played over the internet for the first time.

Mechanics' Institute: Do you agree that chess is the great equalizer?

IM Donaldson: It doesn't matter how big you are, how tall, nor does it matter how old you are or how young. Gender has no role. None of this is relevant, you just sit down and play. It's kind of an unusual activity where you can have a ten-year-old play an eighty-year-old and they meet on equal terms. They would have very little to talk about away from chess, but they can discuss the game they played quite avidly afterwards. Chess is very international. Outside of soccer and football, there's no other international sporting body that has as many member nations. Chess is also something you do not have to give up when you get older like tackle football. Another thing that makes it a great equalizer is that you have players across the economic gamut from the most well-to-do to the most modest playing togetherz. 🙌👥🧑🏻🧑🏼🧑🏽🧑🏾🧑🏿

Chess Tournaments



For a more complete listing, please go to: www.milibrary.org/chess/calendar

Saturday, June 1 | [1st Mike Goodall Memorial Tournament](#)

Monday, June 3 | [2024 Scholastic Bughouse Tournament](#)

Saturday to Sunday, June 22-23 | [58th Arthur Stamer Memorial Tournament \(FIDE-rated\)](#)

Tuesdays, July 9-August 20 | [1st Jeremy Silman Tuesday Night Marathon](#)

Tuesday, June 25 | [2024 Summer Celebration Blitz](#)

Thursday, June 27 | [Thursday Night Rapid](#)

Thursday, July 25 | [Mechanics' Institute Thursday Night Rapid-2024 July](#)

Saturday to Sunday, July 27-28 | [23rd Wilkerson Memorial Tournament \(FIDE-rated\)](#)

Staff Anniversaries Month started | Years worked

APRIL

Nate Lalau | Chess Coach **1**

MAY

Myles Cooper | Library Manager **9**
Craig Jackson | Collections Manager **33**

JUNE

Thu Le | Chess Coach **1**
Kevin Lum | Library Assistant **2**
Judit Sztaray | Lead Tournament Director **5**

Paul Whitehead Retires

It is with deep appreciation, recognition, and admiration that we share this message about Paul Whitehead's retirement from Mechanics' Institute on April 22. Having worked for Mechanics' Institute since 2012, Paul was first introduced to the Chess Club in 1972.

Upcoming Schedule

For a complete listing | milibrary.org/events

MAY

**CinemaLit: Elizabeth Taylor—
Actress & Superstar**

Friday, May 31 | 6:00 pm

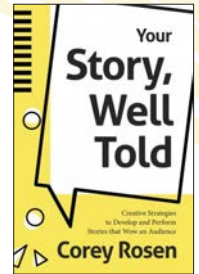
Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (1966)



**Monthly Storytelling Showcase
with Corey Rosen**

Wednesday, May 29 | 6:15 pm

Join a monthly evening of laughter and storytelling as local author & host of "The Moth," Corey Rosen. Roster includes: Larry Dorsey Jr., Ginger Parnes, Liz Morrison, & Devin Hawkins.



JUNE

**CinemaLit: Documentaries:
The Real and Surreal**

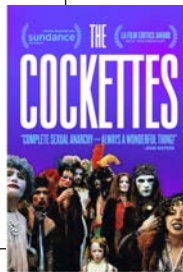
Friday, June 7 | 6:00 pm

The Cockettes (2002)

June 14 | **Spellbound (2002)**

June 21 | **Umberto Eco:
A Library of the World (2022)**

June 28 | **Television Event (2020)**



Monthly Chess Social

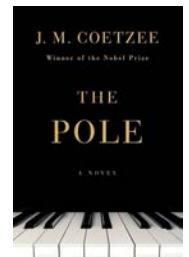
Friday, July 12 | 5:00 pm

Join the Chess Room for Chess Socials to unwind from the week with chess.

The Pole by J. M. Coetzee

Wednesday, July 10 | 6:00 pm

Discuss *The Pole* by J. M. Coetzee with fellow members. Our hybrid meetings take place in the 4th Floor Board Room at Mechanics' Institute and virtually on Zoom.



JULY

CinemaLit: Summer Musicals

Friday, July 12 | 6:00 pm

1776 (1972)

July 19 | **Hairspray (1988)**
w/special guest Joe Wicht

July 26 | **Dreamgirls (2006)**



Family Story Hour in the Library
Saturday, July 20 | 10:00 am

Gather round to hear stories and make crafts nestled in the 2nd Floor Library.

The rich variety of programs and services that we provide depend on support from members of our growing community like you.

**Generosity
& Growing
Community**

GIVE TODAY.