

PEOPLE YOU SHOULD KNOW:

A Real Life, Authentic Genius

"The more tournaments I played in, the better my ratings started getting. Then my ratings started going up, and I became an expert."

The chess champion pointed to a table holding 7 or 8 large trophies. "All these are the trophies that I won from different cities.

My team just won the United States Team championship, in Somerset, N.J. It's an all - black team! That's the first time anything like that ever happened—an all - black team winning the championship!

"I was the only one on my team who was defeated."

Speaking is Charles Covington, a quiet - spoken Baltimorean who is full of surprises. Aside from being rated the number four chess player in the country, Covington also plays many other roles — and what's more plays them well.

Charles readily admits that his role of loving husband and father come first with him. His wife Becky, and 12-year-old daughter Tracy are integral parts of all his other activities.

Becky is effervescent and extroverted, and complementing Charles perfectly, as he is somewhat retiring and shy. It is Becky who makes his engagements, directs his public relations, and loves and supports him throughout.

Their living room is dominated by a huge chess set and a piano, for Charles is also a virtuoso musician who has performed around the world.

He performed at the White House with Ethel Ennis shortly before President Carter left office.

When asked about his musical career Charles said "I think I was born a musician. I can't remember, but my mother tells me that when I was in kinder garden, I walked up to a piano and played a complete melody with one finger. I have perfect pitch.

"I didn't try to play again until I was 18. I practiced during the time I spent in the service, and when I got out I played all the clubs in Baltimore.

Then I went to New York for a week - end and George Benson's manager heard me, so the next week I started playing with George Benson. That lasted for three years.

•He ranks among the top five black chess players in the country, holding an expert rating.

•He is a self-taught pianist/organist, who has played with top artists of today, and teaches at prestigious Peabody Conservatory.

•He is a proficient magician, having taught the subject, and continues to amaze people with his professional technique.

By Paula Brooks

"Since then I've played with a lot of celebrities: people like Milt Jackson, Sonny Stitt, Herbie, Ron Carter, J. J. Johnson, Charlie Rouse, Chuck Berry, and I've been playing with Ethel Ennis for the past 8 years.

"There's a lot of people I can't think of everybody right off - hand I'm on about 20 albums with other people, now I'm starting to work on mone of my own."

As a child, Charles was fascinated by magic, and found

himself spending much of his time in the library, reading avidly on the art. Long hours of study and practice paid off in the form of 10 cent donationa from neighborhood children.

Covington is now a master magician who has written an authoritative book on the subject for his fellow magicians.

Sepaking of his many talents, Charles said' I think magic and music come naturally to me — the other things I had to work at.



Charles Covington holds the plaque his team won in the recent National Amateur Chess Championships

Most musicians get kind of bored when they travel because they don't have anything to do, but I could always find a chess club, or a magic shop, or something. I'm also an artist - I have some pictures I can show you."

the interview was to focus on chess, however we came back to the original subject.

Questioned about his standing in comparison to other black professional chess players, Charles replied" I am among the top 5 black players in the country. Those are the actual ratings, but as far as actual strength, I can beat all of them.

"I am considered an expert because my rating falls between 2,100-2,900. The next category is Master, Senior Master, then Grand Master."

one's rating. Covington informed me.

"The more games you play and win, the higher your rating goes, and vice versa, if you lose, your rating goes down. You must play international, world class players, and the ratings are published periodically according to the results of the tournaments."

What would you have to do to play someone like Bobby Fischer? Charles looked determined as he said "I have to enter more international tournaments. I only entered three last year.

"I played Victor Korchnoi, who is a grand master, at a simultaneous exhibit, which is when one person plays many different people at the same time.

"I also played Nona Garrin-dashavilli, the Woman's World Champion, and Bent Larsen, a world class player from Denmark. All three games were ties. I plan to play more tournaments this year, and hopefully will play Bobby Fischer this year."

When asked how he first became interested in chess. Covington smilled. "My cousin showed me the moves about 15 years ago, and it sort of fascinated me right away. I went out and bought a book and studied.

"Then I started playing people and beating everybody. I thought I was good, but I wasn't as good as I thought I was. I was just beating

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