

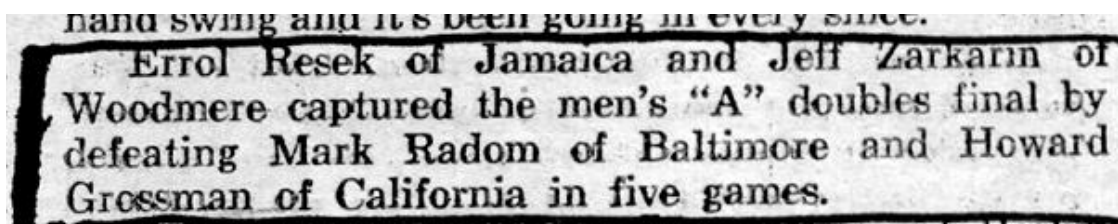
## Chapter 11 - Exposure

The year 1972 was an exciting time to be a part of the ping-pong community. During the previous spring, the U.S. Team had been invited to tour and play in the previously closed-to-the-west People's Republic of China, in the landmark event that led to a thaw in Chinese-American relations, and to the coining of the phrase "Ping-Pong Diplomacy". And now, in the spring of 1972, the Chinese Team was set for a return tour in the U.S., and the headlines were everywhere. Table Tennis was on a roll.

Mort, in a new role as promoter, was in the thick of it, working with the press, explaining, cajoling, trying to whip up interest. He, as well as other forward-thinking members of the association, knew that the Chinese visit was a one-time windfall that should be exploited *now*, in order to replace the game's basement image with a new, attractive, more marketable one. One idea, spearheaded by Mort and Tim Boggan, was to take the U.S. Open, annually held in mass-media "backwaters" such as Atlanta and Detroit, to New York for some big-city exposure. The LITTA, headed by Dave Cox and his operations team, was ready to host, and despite the misgivings of some of the more conservative members of the Executive Committee, the vote was made to move the venue to Long Island, where the event drew record player participation, good media coverage, and a large paying audience.

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It was at this U.S. Open that I won another (sort of) National Championship, the Men's Class "A" Doubles. Errol Resek, still one of the top 10 players in the U.S., was allowed to enter as my partner, and we won over a large, if not exactly elite, field.



Errol Resek and Jeff Zakarin win the Men's Class "A" Doubles title at the U.S. Open  
Newsday, 20 March 1972

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FAMILY PONG



**MORT ZAKARIN**

Mort giving a television interview during the Chinese Team's visit in 1972.  
Topics, January/February 1973

## WOMAN OF THE MONTH: EVELYN ZAKARIN

by Yvonne Kronlage

Evelyn Zakarin has been chosen Woman of the Month. I spoke to Evelyn while at the Canadian Championships in Toronto. She told me she'd started playing table tennis at the age of nine. Her parents weren't interested in the game but she did have an uncle who played and he taught her how. She eventually

went to Syracuse University and played there. Six years ago she went to the National Championships in New York and played with a pimple rubber paddle. "wow" she said. "What a shock I had there with all the sponge rackets."

Evelyn, her husband Mort, and their two children Jeff and Chuck

play at the Huntington Club in New York once or twice a week. Her inspiration for playing is her family. "It's a good way to get exercise and to keep fit, too," she said.

I asked her what she would like to see happen to improve table tennis, especially for Women and Juniors. Her answer was to see more College teams, High School teams and to have more money for prizes. She said the game needs to gain more respect and become a more important sport. She feels that juniors should be taught from the beginning the right way to play and should have opportunities to travel around the country gaining experience. A USTTA-sponsored coach would be a great asset. He should travel around to different clubs, teaching the right way to play and giving tips on how to help others.

Evelyn is not a top player but is improving fast. She loves the game and helps her husband by typing up table tennis correspondence. She accompanies her family to many tournaments throughout the country.

I asked her if she felt there should be any changes in the sport. She said that to bear down on illegal serves was very important; and also that there should be a rule that states when a ball is knocked off the table you should be able to catch it before it hits the floor.

Evelyn has other interests than just table tennis. She teaches art, plays bridge and tennis, and just loves to eat. She also helps her husband with his business by doing bookkeeping and typing.



Photo by Mal Anderson

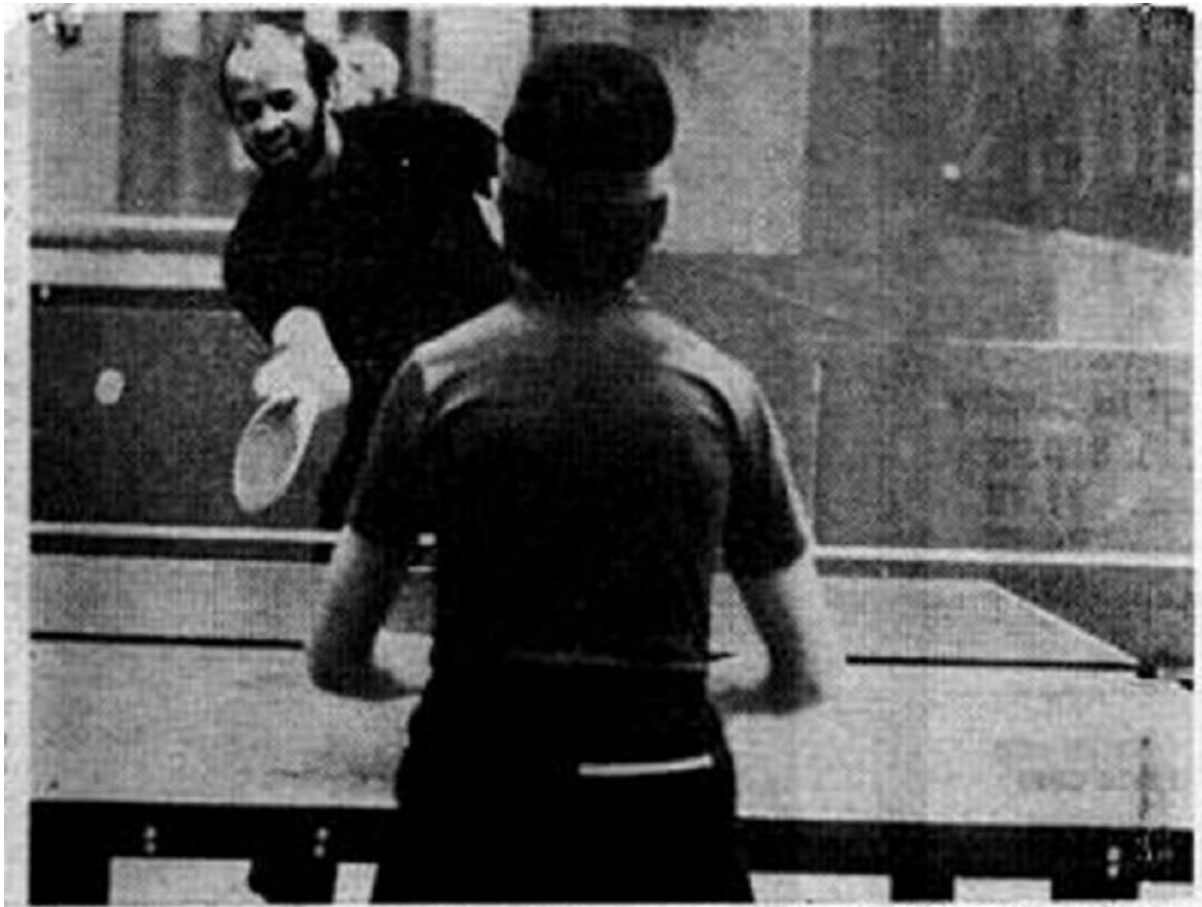
EVELYN ZAKARIN

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 1972

TABLE TENNIS TOPICS

Evelyn is selected as Woman of the Month.  
Topics, September/October 1972

## FAMILY PONG



*Newsday Photo by Don Jacobsen*

That fellow hitting the forehand chop is Newsday's Doug Smith. Former high school tennis rival of Arthur Ashe and a self-confessed ping-pong player of no mean talent, Doug entered the Suffolk County Open table tennis tournament with a good deal of confidence. That's why he's laughing.

Sports columnist Doug Smith plays against Jeff in the Suffolk County Open, and then writes (and laughs) about it. Article is on the following page.  
Newsday, 1 March 1972

# Exit Laughing, A Past Master

By Doug Smith

Farmingdale—From my perch in the gymnasium bleachers, I watched the two boys alternately clobber the Ping-Pong ball trapped between their paddle swings.

"Watch this kid," said my neighbor, pointing to 13-year-old Tim House, a left-hander. "He has a very severe upward motion which produces a lot of topspin. If you don't know what to do with it, the ball will fly away. It's a good loop."

But my attention was focused on Tim's opponent, 14-year-old Jeff Zakarin, who played with disquieting coolness. Each of his strokes was produced with computer-like efficiency. His deliberateness on the court was uncommon for one so young.

House and Zakarin were among the 25 juniors participating in the Suffolk County Open table tennis tournament last weekend. Last year, they teamed to capture the 13-under national title. Erol Resek and George Braithwaite, two nationally ranked New Yorkers, also played in the United States Table Tennis Association-sanctioned tourney, held on the Long Island Aggies campus.

For the sake of times remembered, I too played in the tournament. Briefly. Fourteen years had elapsed since I last played in a USTTA-sanctioned tourney. Before the day was over, I remembered why I had quit. I was outclassed.

I entered the Class C competition, allegedly the weakest of the four men's



Jeff Zakarin

divisions. With my \$2 bat (that's table tennis jargon for paddle), I figured I could still hold my own for at least a couple of rounds in the scrub division.

So I waited confidently at the officials' table while Dave Cox, the tourney chairman, went to get my opponent.

"Doug, meet your opposition," Cox said. "Jeff Zakarin." I felt my stomach move. "I think he'll give you a decent game. You'll be playing on Court 1, here in front of the stands."

Too dazed to speak, I smiled. It was my defensive smile, the one that lets me know, reflexively, when I'm nervous or humiliated. (When the situation becomes unbearable, I laugh.) I wobbled onto the court.

Jeff committed a number of errors in that first set and I managed to sneak a couple of backhand smashes past him. Not enough of either, though. He won, 21-16.

During the first point of the second game I hit a good forehand smash to Jeff's forehand. While completing my flawless follow-through, I saw a white blur bounce past me. Jeff had blasted my best smash. I smiled, a bit more fully.

"One serving zero," the scorekeeper said. With Jeff leading 10-2, it was time to change my strategy. Obviously, I moved four feet away from the table and became a chiseler (that's a defensive player who uses a lot of backspin). On the next point I chiseled a stiff backhand which landed short on Jeff's forehand. I watched Jeff's return shot roll to the back of the barrier after skipping off my end of the table.

When the score was 17-5 in favor of Jeff, I wore a broad grin. I think the final score was 21-6. I could only remember realizing that I had just blown my chance to go to China.

Jeff's father, Mort, greeted us at the edge of the court. He confessed that he had told Jeff to take it easy on me in that first set. He apparently didn't say anything about the second set.

Then came the crusher. Zakarin asked his son, "He plays nice, though, doesn't he, Jeff? Doesn't he, Jeff?"

During the long silence that followed the question, I slipped away, and had a hearty laugh.

NEWSDAY

Wednesday, March 1, 1972

Sports columnist Doug Smith plays against Jeff in the Suffolk County Open, and then writes (and laughs) about it.

Newsday, 1 March 1972

FAMILY PONG



*Photo by Steve Kazak*

**CHUCK ZAKARIN**

Chuck at the 1971 Canadian Open  
Topics, November/December 1971

## Chapter 12 - Summer of 1972

To this day, I can't imagine what my parents were thinking of, when they proposed to send me to a training camp in Sweden. I was 14, and had never been away from home on my own before, no less out of the country. Yet, the offer was there, and I excitedly accepted. We immediately started making the travel arrangements.

The big day soon arrived. My father explained to me that the girls in Sweden behaved a bit differently, handed me a box of condoms, and off I went! With my traveling partner, Carl Danner, I arrived in Kolboda, in the south of Sweden, a bit sleep-deprived, but excited to be training side-by-side for 3 weeks with other youngsters from all over Europe.

While our technical skills were on a par with those of our European counterparts, it was immediately clear that they had a big advantage over us when it came to physical conditioning, and it showed – not only at the table, but also on afternoon runs in the woods, and on the soccer field. In time, our conditioning improved, but the gap remained. On the last day, we went for another run in the woods following a rainstorm. The rain had apparently exposed some thick roots at the end of the trail, and as we finished our run, Carl and I both tripped and flew face-forward into the mud, one after the other, in front of everyone. “Two Americans down,” announced our trainer. Laughter all around.

All laughter aside, my new physical prowess had a major effect on my game. In the past, I had proven myself against other competitors my own age, but had never posed a real threat to adult players, who had a power advantage. For the first time, I could match power with power, and with my improved footwork and agility, I could now hold my own against top ranking players. At the Canadian Open later that summer, I earned a win over the U.S.'s #1 ranked Under 15 player.

Also that summer, I had for the first time, the opportunity to play in front of television cameras. O.K., so what if it was a little-watched Long Island cable TV channel, it was still quite an ego-booster. The television people came to film the Under 17 final of a locally-sponsored tournament in Suffolk County.

My opponent was a 15-year-old newcomer from Rockville Centre named Roger Sverdlik. Roger, who had started playing only a year earlier, was putting up a good fight, and we split the first two games. As the deciding third was about to start, the camera man announced that he was out of film and would have to stop and reload. My ego already brimming over, I

FAMILY PONG

maintained that I wasn't going to hold up play for any old camera man. At which point, tournament director Dave Cox, in his most authoritative English-accented voice, informed me that I could either wait, or bloody well go home right now. I waited, and went on to win 21-19 in a satisfying come-from-behind victory that was even more fun to watch a week later on television.

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**Ratings for 70-71** (Continued from Page 13)

		WOMEN'S			
No.	Name	Event	Rating	*	
1	01672 Sweeris, C.	W/ S	01823	14	
2	00685 Hicks, W.	W/ S	02005	17	
3	01738 Ogas, I.	W/ S	01839	10	
4	02018 Hildebrand, P.	W/ S	01609	11	
5	01605 Soltesz, O.	W/ S	01576	10	
6	00034 Angelinetta, H.	W/ S	01551	14	
7	00148 Bochenki, J.	W/ S	01534	15	
8	01409 Rosal, A.	W/ S	01504	14	
9	01188 Myers, D.	W/ S	01424	12	
10	02191 Ferguson, X.	W/ S	01403	12	
11	01522 Shahian, M.	W/ S	01398	12	
12	00306 Cooper, C.	W/ S	01394	19	
13	00689 Hildebrandt, S.	W/ S	01349	13	
14	01783 Varker, Jean	W/ S	01244	12	
15	01585 Smith, B.	W/ S	01176	12	
16	01121 Merz, D.	W/ S	01151	10	
17	01484 Schuer, S.	W/ S	01149	09	
17T	01939 Zakarin, E.	W/ S	01149	09	
19	01812 Walker, P.	W/ S	01110	09	
20	01464 Scheltema, K.	W/ S	01091	11	
21	02578 Brazda, L.	W/ S	01087	09	
22	01147 Miller, T.	W/ S	00250	09	
23	00307 Cooper, Ch.	W/ S	00223	09	

Evelyn is U.S. Women's #17 in the newly computerized rating list.  
Topics, March/April 1972

**METROPOLITAN OPEN (Farmingdale, N.Y., Nov. 17-19)**

MEN'S Final: J. Tannehill d. L. M. Chui, 7, -13, 18, 21. Semi: L. M. Chui d. G. Brathwaite, -21, 17, -16, 16, 12; J. Tannehill d. B. Bukiet, -20, 14, 19, 21.	Sverdluk -10, 19, 13. SENIOR SINGLES. Final: T. Boggan d. S. Schiff 19, 16. Semi: Boggan d. H. Deutsch 5, -16, 13; Schiff d. W. Shur -18, 19, 19. JR. 17. Final: D. J. McGraw d. M. Stern 11, 18, -18, 20. Semi: McGraw d. R. Rumble 19, 14;	Green- D. J. McGraw 17, 15; Dixon-Fleischhacker d. J. Andrews-P. Holder -18, 14, 13.
WOMEN'S ROUND ROBIN. #1 Evelyn Zakarin 2-0, #2 Helen Weiner 1-1.		MIXED DBS. Final: J. Tannehill-T. Green d. G. Brathwaite-P. Daly 19, 15. Semi: Tannehill-Green d. N. Fox-H. Weiner 10, 14;

Evelyn Wins Metropolitan Open Women's Singles title.  
Topics, January/February 1973



## Chapter 13 - Executive Committee

In the wake of the success of the 1972 U.S. Open, Tim Boggan ran for the presidency of the USTTA in a campaign against the conservative “old guard,” and was elected as the new president for a two-year term. Tim then approached Mort about becoming the USTTA Corresponding Secretary, the non-elected position on the 9-man Executive Committee traditionally appointed by the president.

**Mort:** *Tim and I had just left an LITTA meeting which was held at Danny Ganz’s home. We always met at Danny’s home because there was always an ample supply of Scotch whiskey on hand. We stopped for some pizza, and Tim asked me if I would be interested in the Corresponding Secretary appointment. I said no, but after a few beers and the promise that I wouldn’t have too much to do, I was talked into it.*

*At that time, I had no idea how the USTTA worked. But it didn’t take long for me to realize that no one on the Executive Committee knew anything about running such an organization, including Tim. He had no business sense. Hell, he couldn’t even handle his own finances.*

As an E.C. member, Mort made an outstanding contribution to the success of the U.S. Team to the 1973 World Championships in Yugoslavia, heading up a fundraising drive, and organizing a series of preparatory training camps for the team before the competition. This was a big step forward for our team, which in years past was sent to the World’s underfunded and unprepared. The USTTA had recently sponsored a series of Men’s and Women’s team trials (instead of relying on the not-always-impartial vote of the Selection Committee, as had been practiced in the past), and an exciting group of players had qualified for the team, including the *still* U.S. champion Dal-Joon Lee, and America’s new #1, the explosive 19-year-old Danny Seemiller. It was time to do things right.

**Mort:** *I was at a meeting of the Executive Committee, and I found out that each player was going to have to pay his own way. If you couldn’t afford to go, they would ask the next player in line. It was mind boggling, but true. That was the way the USTTA did things.*

*At that point, I suggested that we raise money, so that we could pay the team’s expenses. In this way, we would be able to send our best players. The other members of the E.C. laughed off my proposal, saying it couldn’t be done. I said “Bullshit.”*

*I took it upon myself to raise money for the team. I made a list of the people and companies that we should contact. Using the phone and writing letters, Evelyn and I made the contacts,*

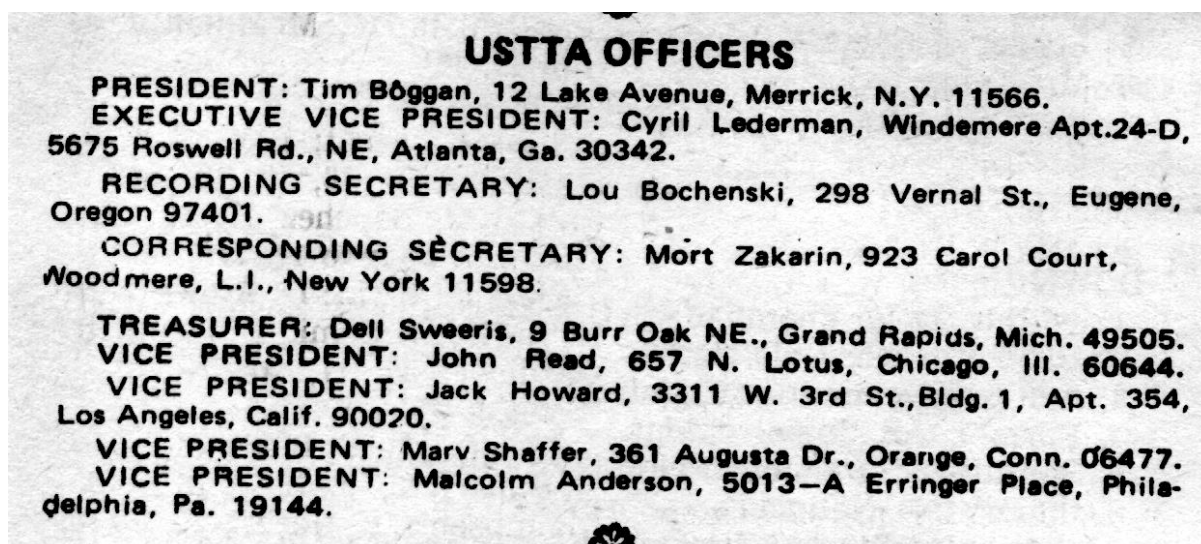
## FAMILY PONG

*and money started coming in. My own business suffered, but the drive was successful. No one would have to reach into their own pockets to make the trip.*

*At the same time, I started looking for a place to train the team. In the past, U.S. Teams would arrive at the World's ill-prepared for the competition. The players needed time to concentrate, to prepare themselves mentally as well as physically. Evelyn and I wrote to all the major resorts in the greater New York area, and two of them responded positively – the Colonie Hill on Long Island, and Mount Airy Lodge in the Poconos. Interestingly enough, I'm pretty sure that the Colonie Hill was run by the Mafia. It was built with the idea that it would be turned into a casino when gambling became legal on Long Island (it never did).*

*Following the U.S. Open in Detroit, the team trained for a week at the Colonie Hill, played in the Eastern Open on Long Island, and moved to Mount Airy Lodge for another week of training. I had a nice working relationship with the owner, Emil Wagner, who paid all the expenses, and with the Manager, Ron Logan, who set up a press conference, which was a nice sendoff for the team.*

*At another E.C. meeting shortly before the World's, it was being decided which officials would also have their travel expenses to Yugoslavia paid. It turned out that I wasn't on the list! I began cursing, knocked over a chair, and started to walk out. It was then that they reluctantly agreed to pay my expenses. I had been quite pleased with my contribution, but the incident left a bad taste in my mouth.*



Mort is appointed to the USTTA Executive Committee by new President Tim Boggan.  
Topics, May/June 1972

**Airy Mt. Lodge  
To  
Host  
U.S.  
Team**

*by Tim Boggan*

Largely through the efforts of Mort Zakarin, USTTA Executive Committeeman, Mt. Airy Lodge in the Pennsylvania Poconos has agreed to host the U. S. Team the week before it leaves on Mar. 30 for the Sarajevo World Championships.

Mt. Airy, as Mort and I well know from having recently been the guests of Ron Logan, the very cooperative General Manager there, is a magnificent resort (honeymoon suite with Roman bathtub and woodburning fireplace; villa with butler, maid, and chef that can accomodate a vacationing couple and a dozen of their friends). It also has just the right private, spacious, wooden floor training hall that a serious, single-minded Team needs.

Getting Mt. Airy means that the Team and its entourage will be able to think only about table tennis from the mid-March U.S. Open in Detroit, through the planned, re-scheduled Eastern Open the next weekend on Long Island, through the spring-training at Mt. Airy, through the group flight leaving from New York City to Yugoslavia, through the last-minute practice at Sarajevo.

No U.S. Team in almost anyone's memory will have been so together with its Captains and Coaches and cameras so long before going abroad and winning.

**Mort arranges a training camp for the U.S. Team at Mount Airy Lodge.  
Tim Boggan, Topics, November/December 1972**

## **Back The Team**

*by Tim Boggan*

Due to the efforts of Executive Committeeman Mort Zakarin, our U.S. Team will be hosted, given ideal training accommodations, the week after the National's by The Colonie Hills in Hauppague, N.Y. the week after the Eastern's by Mt. Airy Lodge in the Pa. Poconos. No U.S. Team in almost anyone's memory will have been so together with its Captain and Coaches and cameras so long before going abroad and winning.

Mort is also responsible for raising money for the International Team Fund - is continuing to convince more and more people that the United States can go abroad and come back a winner, even in table tennis... if everybody helps a little. Please give. The Team needs your backing.

Take advantage of the fact that the USTTA has a man like Mort, who's worked long and hard for the prestige of our sport, the prestige of our country. Please respond to his letters, his phone calls. It's every little man who's proud that can make table tennis big.

**Tim Boggan credits Mort with the organization of the  
U.S. Team training camps and fund-raising effort.  
Topics, January/February 1973**

## World Team Fund Appeal

*by Mort Zakarin*

As of this date the following table tennis firms have contributed to the United States International Team Fund:

General Sportscraft Co. Ltd.  
King Athletic Goods  
Jimmy McClure Table Tennis Co.  
Art Scharte, Jr.  
Walter R. Grody Sales Diversified  
Martin-Kitpatrick Co.  
Harvard Table Tennis Corp  
Fujii's of Miami  
Indian Industries

We'd like to thank these companies who have responded so quickly to our request for support.

We have received other generous checks from individuals who have been asked to contribute to the Team Fund. If you have been missed, and would like to contribute, please send your donation, made out to the U.S.T.T.A. International Team Fund, to:

Mort Zakarin,  
Corresponding Secretary,  
U.S.T.T.A.

923 Carol Court,  
Woodmere, New York 11598

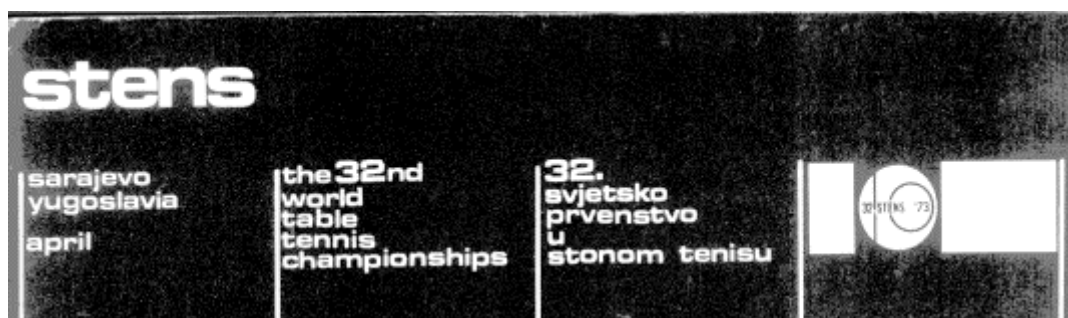
All those contributing \$50.00 or more to the U.S.T.T.A. International Team Fund will receive a beautiful wood plaque signifying their contribution to this cause. Those table tennis equipment companies who contribute to this fund will have their Company names listed in Table Tennis Topics.

Mort updates the USTTA membership on the state of the U.S. Team fund-raising drive.  
Topics, January/February 1973



The U.S. Team at Mount Airy Lodge training camp.  
Topics, May/June 1973

## Chapter 14 - World's, Part I



Evelyn and Mort were part of the entourage that left for the World Championships in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, in April 1973. While the players were busy preparing themselves for the big event, the others took the opportunity to see some of the beautifully rugged Balkans, and the historic sites that 20 years later, would be the scenes of the bloody civil war that marked the breakup of the Yugoslav republic.

**Mort:** *It seems that Yugoslavia was built on a 45-degree angle. Ev and I visited Zagreb, and then took a bus to Dubrovnik. During the trip, we hit a snowstorm. The bus was riding on the outer lane on a road that had no guard rails. One bad turn would have sent us hurtling down a ravine to certain death. Ev was truly frightened and decided to close her eyes. I was obviously too dumb to be scared – until I realized that the driver himself had slowed the bus down to a crawl. We all arrived safe and sound, though.*

**Evelyn:** *Walking around Sarajevo was even more dangerous than that! It seems that the local drivers enjoyed scaring pedestrians as they crossed the street. Instead of slowing down, they would actually accelerate as they approached the crosswalk. Naturally, we would have to run for it. If we had tripped and fallen in the street, there was no way that they could have stopped in time.*

As the championships started, Evelyn and Mort, having no official function to perform, filled in as cheerleaders. Our men's team, for years mired in the Second Division (for the teams ranked 17-32), was playing extremely well, and appeared to be a candidate for promotion to the elite First Division for the next championships, to be held two years later. This would not only be a great honor for the USTTA, but it would enable the U.S. team to compete against the world's best – the Chinese, Swedes, Japanese, Hungarians, etc. The enthusiastic U.S. bench was generating a lot of noise, as later reported in the Yugoslav press, "Americans Fight Hardest!"

## FAMILY PONG

The climax came during the match against Hong Kong. Losing four matches to two in the best-of-9 series, our champion, Dal-Joon Lee, found himself match point down, trailing 20-15 in the deciding 3<sup>rd</sup> game to his Hong Kong counterpart. But in an amazing display of nerve, and urged on by the nearly-hysterical Americans, Lee and the U.S. Team came back to pull out a miraculous 5-4 victory.

It wasn't enough, however. The team lost its last two matches to Denmark and Romania, falling short of promotion. It was a disheartening setback, yet everyone was proud with the team's unprecedented performance, and optimistic about the future of U.S. Table Tennis.



*Photo by Mal Anderson*

**MORT ZAKARIN (CENTER, TOP). LEFT TO RIGHT: PATTY MARTINEZ, SUE HILDEBRANDT, WOMEN'S COACH JACK HOWARD, ANGIE ROSAL, AND TEAM CAPTAIN BOB KAMINSKY AT THE 1973 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS IN SARAJEVO, YUGOSLAVIA.**

**Mort (standing) as U.S. Team Cheerleader.  
Topics, November/December 1973**

## FAMILY PONG



Mort at center of photo with fist in the air.  
Topics, May/June 1973

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The 1973 World Championships marked the appearance of another technological innovation that would again change the direction of the sport, the so-called “junk rubber”. The sponge-sandwich racket that allowed players to generate fast, spinny drives, put the advantage squarely in the hands of the attacking players. A frustrated defensive player had invented a new rubber surface that was not only impervious to spin, but would return the ball to the attacker in an unpredictable fashion.

To add to the confusion, players started putting the regular sandwich rubber on one side of the racket, and a sheet of junk rubber on the other side. Since the two sides of the racket looked similar, opposing players often had no idea of what was coming at them.

These new types of rubber, trade-named “Anti-Spin” and “Phantom”, came to be known by the sandwich “purists” as *junk rubber*. They changed the face of the game. Table tennis had always been problematic as a spectator sport, because of the unseen role of spin in the game.

## FAMILY PONG

With the new rubber, it had become incomprehensible to the average fan. Even for more experienced players such as ourselves, the change was revolutionary. Whereas athletic prowess had been a primary requirement for success, table tennis had become a game of technological deception and trickiness. For us, the junk rubber became a major source of frustration that would detract from our enjoyment of the sport, and would hasten our exit from the game.

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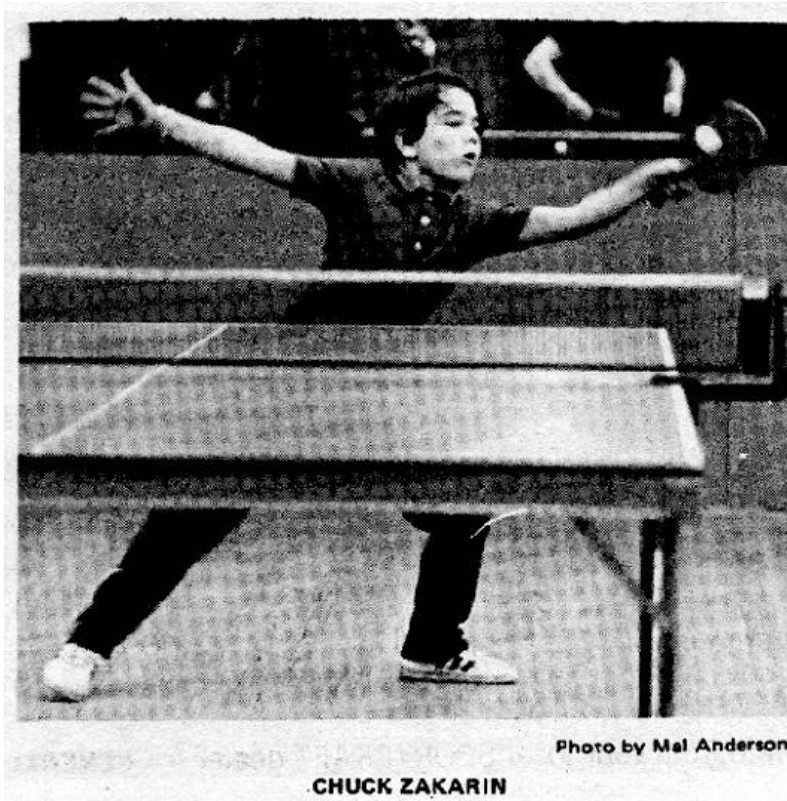
After a year as Corresponding Secretary, Mort protested when it was clear that Tim Boggan was going to support 10-time U.S. Champion Dick Miles in the upcoming Vice-Presidential election. Whereas Miles was Tim's most trusted advisor on the subject of table tennis, others, including Mort, believed that Miles only had self-interest at heart. Tim, despite Mort's protest, remained resolute in his support for Miles, and Mort (possibly also feeling the need to start earning a living again) quietly resigned and was replaced on the Executive Committee by Carl Danner's father, Fred.



## Chapter 15 - Baby Battle Royale

The 1973-1974 season was a period of rapid improvement for Chuck. Part of this must be attributed to the practice sessions that Chuck and I held in our basement during school holidays. We tore ourselves away from our favorite television programs, and went downstairs to play, a half-hour here, an hour there. For Chuck, who never cared to practice much, the extra table time made an immediate difference in his level of play.

In the Veteran's Day Open, held in Philadelphia in November 1973, 11-year-old Chuck was entered in the talent-laden Boys Under 13 round-robin. Besides Chuck, the field included Eric Boggan, his older brother Scott, and *wunderkind* Rutledge Barry. Chuck opened with a loss to Eric, but displaying a level of concentration that we had never seen before, upset the favored Scott and Rutledge to finish in second place, an unparalleled achievement for Chuck.



Scotty McDowell 10, 14. Stanley d. Sharpe easily 10, 10, 17 and Balamoun beat Vichnin 12, -11, 15, 17. Stanley took the finals 7, 16, -15, 12. What a forehand!

In the Men's semi's Brathwaite d. Hammond 14, 19, 18-13 withdrew, as Sam couldn't overcome his severe stomach ache. Resek, who just barely squeaked past Peter Holder in the 1/4's 18, 11, -19, -18, 13, finally beat Chui on his fifth attempt -16, 18, 20, 18. Go Errol! Good thing, too, because we thought Jairie was going to have a heart attack! But Errol just could not overcome Brathwaite, who won the finals 15, 21, -21, 18.

George Rucker won the Esquires, Sid Jacobs coming in second. Rutledge Barry won the U-13, with Chuck Zakarin coming in second in some of the most amazing matches you've ever seen. Chuck is really going to be good someday soon. Roger Sverdlik won the U-17 over Jeff

(Continued on Page 39)

Chuck in top form.

Article by Herb Vichnin, Topics, November/December 1973

## FAMILY PONG

It was during this period that Chuck enjoyed a rare win over his friend and rival, Eric.

**Chuck:** *I had always lost to Eric, but at a certain point, I made a drastic improvement in my game and actually beat him! He got so angry that he started stomping on his racket, and then ran out of the hall, and disappeared. The police found him a few hours later, wandering along a major thoroughfare. He told them that he was going home.*

**JUNIOR 11 Final: R. Barry d.  
C. Zakarin 8, 21. Semi's: Barry d.  
S. Marullo 3,3; Zakarin d. E.  
Boggan 24, -17, 19.  
WOMEN'S DRIS Final: J**

**Chuck in Eastern Open Under 11 Final after a win over Eric Boggan.  
Topics, May/June 1973**

## Chapter 16 - Junior Team

Mort, who was no longer on the Executive Committee, began work on a new project in early 1974.

**Mort:** *A year had passed since the World's and the preparatory training camps that I had arranged. We had developed such a nice working relationship with the people at Mount Airy Lodge – it seemed a shame not to move that relationship forward. I came up with the idea of a one-week training camp for our best juniors. These young players were tomorrow's champions, and now was the time to invest in them. So I contacted Emil Wagner and Ron Logan with the proposal, and they agreed.*

*Around that time, I was informed that there would be a series of Junior Championships in Europe following the camp. Why not send a team? And so it was planned that in addition to the training camp, there would be a qualifying competition to select the team. I started another fund-raising drive to help pay the team's expenses.*

Mort contacted Errol Resek and Bong-Mo Lee (who was the coach of the Men's team at the Sarajevo world championships) to act as coaches, and invitations were sent out to the top juniors, based on the latest available ratings. Twelve boys and 4 girls. Yes, I was on the list, currently rated #10.

But, suddenly, an unexpected outcry came from the lower-rated players who had not been selected. Telephone calls started arriving, from this father, from that advocate, emotional pleas to expand the roster. Mort at first refused. Mount Airy Lodge had generously allocated a fixed number of rooms for the coaches and players – what could he do? Finally, Tim Boggan intervened, asking Mort to make room for more players. Mort again contacted the resort management. Yes, they could handle 6 more players. Everyone was happy.

Almost everyone. Another telephone call came in from John Soderberg, a talented youngster from Minnesota, who, despite the expansion of the roster to 18 boys, still didn't qualify for the camp. John was an excellent but streaky player who suffered from extreme lapses of concentration. A few weeks earlier, he had lost a match to Chuck, despite the wide gap between them in the rating list. This loss (and perhaps other losses) had lowered John's rating, and when the time came to pick the candidates for the camp, John was out of the running.

## FAMILY PONG

Despite the fact that his rating was simply too low, John felt that he had been arbitrarily excluded, that his loss to Chuck had somehow influenced Mort's opinion of John's playing ability. Mort kept trying to explain to John that the rating list was the sole consideration here. ("Dammit, John," he said, "I *know* you're a better player than Chuck!") The player selection was complete.

The days at Mount Airy Lodge were divided into morning and afternoon sessions. Mornings were reserved for training and instruction, while qualification matches leading to the selection of the Junior Team were played in the afternoon. I came to the camp in poor physical condition and out of practice. I was in the crucial 11<sup>th</sup> year in school, and with university applications being sent out, I was determined to improve my grades, even at the expense of playing time. But as the days progressed, I started feeling stronger and stronger.

By the end of the week, it had become apparent that I had a real shot at making the team. Sure enough, I was going to be one of the nine finalists who would compete on the last day for one of the 5 places on the team in a round-robin competition.

Then the trouble started. One of the boys, who had the highest ranking and was considered a sure thing to make the team, was rumored to have stolen some goods from the hotel store. Mort, publicly displaying his anger and embarrassment, held a pow-wow with the coaches, and decided to disqualify him from further competition and from a place on the European squad.

Suddenly, I found myself in a very uncomfortable position. With our #1 player out of the running, what would happen if I made the team by winning the last spot? All hell would break loose, I was convinced, in the biggest scandal since Watergate:

### **Father Eliminates Competition, Son is "Surprise" Winner**

And sure enough, my worst dream was becoming a reality. I was playing well, amassing a 4-3 record, and playing my last match against the tough Californian, Dean Galardi. A win would assure me a place on the team. In the deciding 3<sup>rd</sup> game, I started badly, but began catching up, pulling to 18-19 with Dean serving. At that moment, any feelings of guilt that may have quietly inhabited my subconscious came *screaming* to life, as I jabbed his short serve directly into the net. It was over.

## FAMILY PONG

Well, I didn't make the team, and with my 6<sup>th</sup> place finish, I was awarded the position "1<sup>st</sup> Alternate." Later, in the dining room, our waiter stopped by to console me. "Gee, I'm really sorry, Jeff," he said. "It's all right, John," I assured him. It *really was* all right. I had never been so happy to lose.

**U.S. JUNIORS  
TO GERMANY**

**Mt. Airy  
Hosts Clinic**

*by Mort Zakarin*

On March 24th through March 31st, 1974, I will be conducting a Table Tennis Clinic and Tournament at Mount Airy Lodge for our top junior players.

I have asked Bong Mo Lee to work with me at this Clinic, since I feel he did such an outstanding job with the World Men's Team. Bong Mo has accepted.

Mount Airy Lodge has again most generously offered their facility to the U.S.T.T.A. completely free of charge. On top of that, they have offered the services of their P.R. man to promote this venture.

To make sure this is perfectly fair to all, I would like to be able to pay all the expenses of bringing these juniors to this clinic. To do this we need money — \$1.00, \$5.00, \$10.00, \$50.00, more — anything you can spare. Those sending \$50.00 or more will receive a commemorative plaque.

At the end of the tournament, the top five junior boys will be chosen to represent our Country in Germany in the European Junior Championships to be held during Easter Vacation.

These juniors are the future of Table Tennis in the United States. They need your support. Please make all contributions payable to the U.S.T.T.A. Junior International Team Fund and send to:

Mort Zakarin,  
923 Carol Court,  
Woodmere, New York 11598

Mort announces the Junior Team camp & competition, and an appeal for funds.  
Topics, January/February 1974

FAMILY PONG



**Dell Sweeris, table tennis grand master, examines forehand form of Jeff Zakarin**

**Jeff at Dell Sweeris' training camp in Michigan.  
Grand Rapids Press, 5 August 1973**

## Chapter 17 - Chuck and Eric

The 1974 U.S. Open in Oklahoma City marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the U.S. Open. The championships were now held in late May, after the end of the traditional playing season. This meant that many of the world's top players, officially on vacation, were free to make the trip to America. The Open had become an international event, as teams from Sweden, Japan, Yugoslavia, and elsewhere came to participate.

It was in Oklahoma that Chuck and his partner Eric Boggan were involved in an amazing series of matches in the Boys Under 13 Doubles, the event that Timmy House and I had won 3 years earlier. Chuck, now 12, and Eric, aged 11, won their quarter-final, semi-final, and final matches in dramatic fashion, each decided in a 3-games-to-2 victory.

**Chuck:** *Playing doubles with Eric was insane. We'd constantly be screaming at each other, cursing each other. His father would usually be next to the court, shouting encouragement: "Fight, Eric! Fight, Goddammit!" Eric would turn around and yell back, "F... you, Tim!"*

The most memorable of the encounters was their semi-final match against the Californian Joe Napoles, and Phil Pinnell from Texas. As the match progressed, and the noises coming from the court started growing in their volume and intensity, more and more passers-by would stop to see what was going on. And what they saw was a pair of bad-tempered, foul-mouthed kids from New York at their "best". So it wasn't a surprise when the growing crowd of spectators started audibly rooting for their well-mannered opponents from the country. It was classic Hollywood, with good guys and bad guys.

In the meantime, Chuck and Eric had built up a seemingly insurmountable lead in the 5<sup>th</sup> game, but suddenly, the tables turned.

**Chuck:** *We were winning 19-13, and I started missing everything. We lost 7 points in a row, and suddenly, they had match point against us. The crowd was going wild. Eric wasn't exactly being supportive, either. He kept yelling at me, "Chuck! You're f...ing up! We're going to lose because of you!"*

In deuce, point after point was traded off as neither side was able to finish the other off. Finally, at 25-24, Chuck's topspin went in, and they had won!

## FAMILY PONG

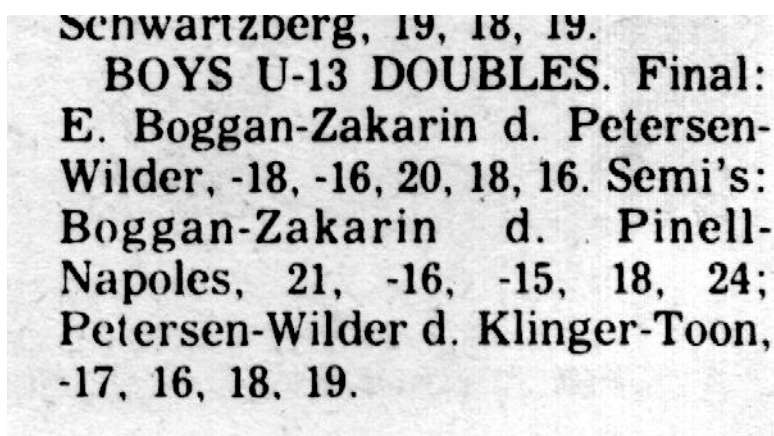
We were all overjoyed (and relieved) following the boys' victory in the semis, and then in the finals. From here, however, their paths would begin to diverge. By next year, Chuck would qualify for his Junior High School's tennis team, and his interest in table tennis would begin to wane. Eric, on the other hand, stayed with the sport. He became the youngest-ever U.S. Men's Singles Champion at age 15, and in 1983, at the age of 20, would be ranked #17 in the World.

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For me, personally, the story of the Open was the phenomenal accomplishment of my Long Island rival, Roger Sverdlik. Roger, who had started playing seriously only 3 years earlier, had improved rapidly, and became known for his quick topspin and his table smarts, as well as for a facade of apathy and self-deprecation, with which he could anesthetize an unsuspecting opponent.

In Oklahoma City, Roger's game went "supernova", as he defeated three of North America's brightest young stars to win the Boys Under 17 Singles. It was an undeniable *tour de force* – he had made the breakthrough that I, up to that time, was only able to dream about. Of course, I was quite happy for Roger, who was a very nice guy. I don't, however, ever remember being more jealous of anyone than I was of Roger at that moment.

My only consolation was in the hope that next year, it would be *my* turn to win it all.



Schwartzberg, 19, 18, 19.  
BOYS U-13 DOUBLES. Final:  
E. Boggan-Zakarin d. Petersen-  
Wilder, -18, -16, 20, 18, 16. Semi's:  
Boggan-Zakarin d. Pinell-  
Napoles, 21, -16, -15, 18, 24;  
Petersen-Wilder d. Klinger-Toon,  
-17, 16, 18, 19.

Chuck and Eric win the Boys Under 13 Doubles National Championship.  
Topics, May/June 1974





Photo by Mal Anderson

**CHUCK ZAKARIN,  
U.S. U-13 DOUBLES CHAMP**

**Interviewer:** Eric, I understand that you've quite a temper. How is it that you got this temper? Do you know?

**Eric:** 'Cause I want to win so bad. If I miss some points I think I ought to get, I just get mad.

**Interviewer:** But if you lose your temper doesn't that have an effect on the rest of your game?

How can you continue to win if you get mad?

**Eric** (shrugs his shoulders, throws out his hands, makes a face, pauses....): What did you say again?

**Interviewer:** I said, if you lose your temper, doesn't that have an effect on the rest of your game? How can you continue to win if you get mad?

**Eric:** I don't know the answer to that one....Probably I lose points by doing it. But I can't help it.

**Eric** (wiggles a little in his chair as the interviewer writes on his note pad. Then, sotto voce, says): This is stupid.

**Interviewer:** But how is it that in winning both the U-11 Singles and the U-13 Doubles with Chuck Zakarin at the National's you

were often able to control your temper?

**Eric:** 'Cause that was a big tournament. Besides, in doubles I don't lose my temper as much as I do in singles.

**Interviewer:** Oh? Why is that?

**Eric:** Because I know my partner can wreck it up some too. I like playing doubles better because my partner makes mistakes. But of course if we'd have lost that 5th game against Pinell and Napoles, I would have been very upset with Chuck. I mean, we must have had them about 20-13.

**Interviewer:** Do you think you

Left: Chuck posting match results. Topics, May/June 1974.  
Right: Eric Boggan on controlling his temper, and on his doubles partner Chuck.  
Interview by Tim Boggan. Topics, May/June 1974.

LONG ISLAND PRESS, SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 1974

Generally speaking



# Table tennis: LI gold rush

By LARRY SHERMAN

Let's hear it for the Long Island table tennis players. They certainly left their mark at the largest-ever U.S. Open National championships in Oklahoma City on May 23-26.

Six Long Islanders brought home four silver medals and five gold. No other area approached this record and over 870 players competed.

The Tim Boggan family of Merrick accounted for three gold medals and two silver. Tim is president of the USTTA and used all his authority at the table to win the men's over-40 singles event while finishing second in the men's over-40 doubles with Henry Deschamps of Indiana.

Twelve-year old Scott Boggan was runnerup in the under-13 singles to Rutledge Birmingham Barry III (honest!) of New York City, 21-7, 21-12, 19-21, 21-17. Ten-year-old Eric Boggan won the under-11 National title, and, along with 12-year-old Chuck Zakarin of Woodmere, took the under-13 doubles crown.

**ALAN AND ROGER** Sverdlik of Rockville Centre teamed up in the men's A doubles championship and went to the finals before bowing to Richard Hicks of Indiana and Homer Brown of Kentucky. Alan, who is a student at Emory University in Georgia, is the No. 3 tennis player on the school team.

Seventeen-year-old Roger defeated 10-time National champion Dick Miles in the men's competition before losing to third-ranked Gil Joong Park. In the under-17 junior, Roger beat two of Canada's finest — Paul Klevinas in the quarterfinals, 21-16, 12-21, 21-19 15-21, 21-17, and in the finals defeated Steve Eclair, 21-14, 21-16, 18-21, 21-10.

Eric Boggan and Chuck Zakarin, despite their ages, have been playing as a doubles team for about four years. In their quarterfinal match against Ricky Hicks of Indiana and Jeff Williams of Ohio, they were down two games before winning, 19-21, 15-21, 21-13, 21-15, 21-14.

In their semifinal match, Eric and Chuck played the top-seeded team of Phil Pinnell of Texas and Joe Napoles of California. Chuck and Eric won the first game, 23-21, lost the next two, 16-21, 15-21, and came back to win the fourth, 21-18.

IN THE FIFTH and deciding game, the lead see-sawed until the Long Island kids jumped to a commanding 19-13 lead. But Chuck looped seven shots off the table and suddenly the score was 20-19, match point for Pinnell and Napoles.

Mort Zakarin, Chuck's father and executive vice-president of the LITTA, vividly recalled the play-by-play:

"Chuck looped to Pinnell's forehand and Pinnell's return set up Eric's smash to duce it at 20-all. The pressure continued to mount with first one, then the other taking the lead. Hundreds of players stopped their matches and surrounded the court to watch an amazing display of clutch shot-making by all four juniors. At 25-24, Chuck smashed through the final point to win, 26-24."

This brought Chuck and Eric to the finals where they faced the unseeded team of Todd Peterson of Nebraska and Mark Wilder of Alabama. The Long Islanders lost the first two games, 21-19, 21-15, and trailed in the third, 20-19.

"AT THAT POINT Chuck hit a loop drive to tie the game at 20-all," Mort explained. "Eric hit two winners to take the next two points and the game at 22-20. Eric and Chuck won the next game, 21-14, and went on to capture the fifth game, 21-15, for the championship."

"One of the reasons they play so well together," Mort commented, "is that Chuck is lefthanded and has a hard loop shot, and Eric, who is righthanded, can hit the put-away shot."

For the next exciting adventures of Chuck, Eric, et al., catch them in the Long Island Open at the Nassau County Arena in Long Beach on June 15 and 16. Co-sponsors are the LITTA and the Nassau County Department of Recreation and Parks.

All anxious to cash in on more gold and silver.

Mort did occasional ghost-writing for Larry Sherman of the Long Island Press. Here he reports on the successes of Long Island's representatives at the 1974 U.S. Open, and in particular on Chuck's and Eric's win in the Boys Under 13 Doubles.  
Long Island Press, 9 June 1974