

CHess BIOGRAPHY OF DAVID LEES

For the past several years, the club has hosted an annual double quads event in November to memorialize a prominent chess player in our community who has been instrumental in promoting and advancing chess. This year, we share our memories about the late USCF NM David Lees. Mr. Lees was the key advocate and supporter of revitalizing the Western Massachusetts Chess Association (WMCA). Much of Mr. Lees' life can be chronicled in his highly popular memoirs, *The Chess Games of David Lees*. Mr. Lees called Springfield, MA, home, and he belonged to his hometown club since 1959. He was introduced to the game of chess at the age of eight and played chess at summer camps, where he had the grand opportunity to play with players of his own age. He entered the Air Force in the 1960s and won the 1965 Texas State Chess Championship and the 1965 U.S. Armed Forces Chess Championship in Washington, D.C. For his victory in the 1965 Armed Forces event, Mr. Lees received some chess playing equipment and a book inscribed: To the Chess Champion of the Armed Forces - with congratulations and best wishes from President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965. How cool was that! Mr. Lees suffered a heart attack in his thirties, but he was still determined to be an active and serious player and be heavily involved in chess politics throughout New England. The late Arkadijs Strazdins and David became best of friends over the decades, and Mr. Lees was invited annually to the NBCC to host a simultaneous chess exhibition usually in September to kick off the NBCC's fiscal year in style. WMCA would not exist without Master Lees; WMCA was David's bloodline. WMCA became a non-profit entity in the 1990s with the help of Mr. Lees. To end my story about this larger than life man, who possessed such energy, passion, and a deep devotion to WMCA, the legendary Dr. Platz once said of Mr. Lees, "so, you are the Dr. Platz of Springfield!" May you rest-in-peace, Mr. Lees, and thank you for everything that you have done to enrich this game for players of all skills. Some of the material used in this biography was taken from an article in *Chess Horizons* by Lee Enderlin.