

CHESS / NBCC BIOGRAPHY OF ROGER BESSETTE

Can you believe it? The NBCC is now hosting its fiftieth honorary event, which we celebrate for our dear friend and veteran member, Roger Bessette. Roger has a very long, rich, and diverse history with chess. He first learned how to play the game at six years old. He was taught by his father and his older brother, who was on the high school chess team. Although Roger enjoyed the game and learned quickly, even giving his much older brother solid competition, he only played casual games until the sophomore year of high school, when he joined the Chicopee High School chess team. Roger's early casual experience was helpful as he dominated the competition, primarily playing board 5 in high school team matches during his sophomore year. The following year, as a result of all the higher boards graduating, Roger was suddenly playing board 1 as a junior. Even playing on board 1, he had respectable results in team matches during his junior and senior years. He also had strong individual performances during high school. In his junior year, Roger came mere tie-break points away from reaching the Massachusetts high school state finals, placing second (with 3 wins and a draw) in the qualifying tournament. Roger continued playing chess during his freshman year of college. He played in the 1983 Pan American Intercollegiate Team Chess Championship, playing on board 3 on the 4-player team from Western New England College. In the eight-round event, Roger finished with 4 wins and 4 losses against mostly higher rated competition (all the losses against players rated over 2000). As a team, Western New England College scored 4.5 - 3.5 and won awards for both top team in their rating class and top small school. The overall winning team from Yale featured 3 future US Chess Champions: Joel Benjamin, Michael Wilder, and Inna Izrailov. After freshman year of college, Roger took an extended break from chess competition to pursue other interests. Many years later, the chess bug returned, and Roger joined the Springfield Chess Club. During his time at the SCC, he participated in a few club matches against none other than the NBCC. Some matches were held in Springfield and others in New Britain. The matches taking place in New Britain were held at the Quartette Club. These matches marked the first chess events Roger played in that were hosted by the NBCC. Roger took another extended break from chess as his daughter reached the age when extracurricular activities were numerous. His time became occupied with the responsibilities of coaching for his daughter's softball and basketball teams as well as handling her transportation to her various dance, music, and theater related events. She never developed an interest in playing chess, however, as the stage was her true calling. Eventually, Roger got back into chess and started attending quick tournaments at the Stafford Springs Chess Club, where he met Mark Bourque. Roger was looking for the opportunity to play in longer time control events, so Mark encouraged him to join the NBCC. Roger officially joined the NBCC in early 2017 and has played in many club events and has established many friendships ever since. Roger has also given an occasional lecture at the club and has helped with closing the club most weeks. He is an asset to our club, and we are grateful for his service. Roger is truly a personable and outgoing person, always giving to others. Outside of the club, Roger occasionally has played in area tournaments on the weekends. He also helped start a chess club at his place of work where they offer both online and OTB play to employees. This club also teaches employees newer to chess about how to play the game and improve their skills. Roger decided to have a team format for his tournament, a first for any honorary event the club has held. There were three matches. Each of the teams consisted of four players. The top match was won by FM Nelson Castaneda, USCF NM Suhas Kodali, Mario Guevara-Rodriguez, and Jithu Sajeevan. The middle match was won by Mark Bourque, Dennis Himes, Roger Bessette, and David Mashkov. And the lower match was won by Jithya Sajeevan, Vaibhav Singh, Michael Acosta, and Varshith Errabelly.