

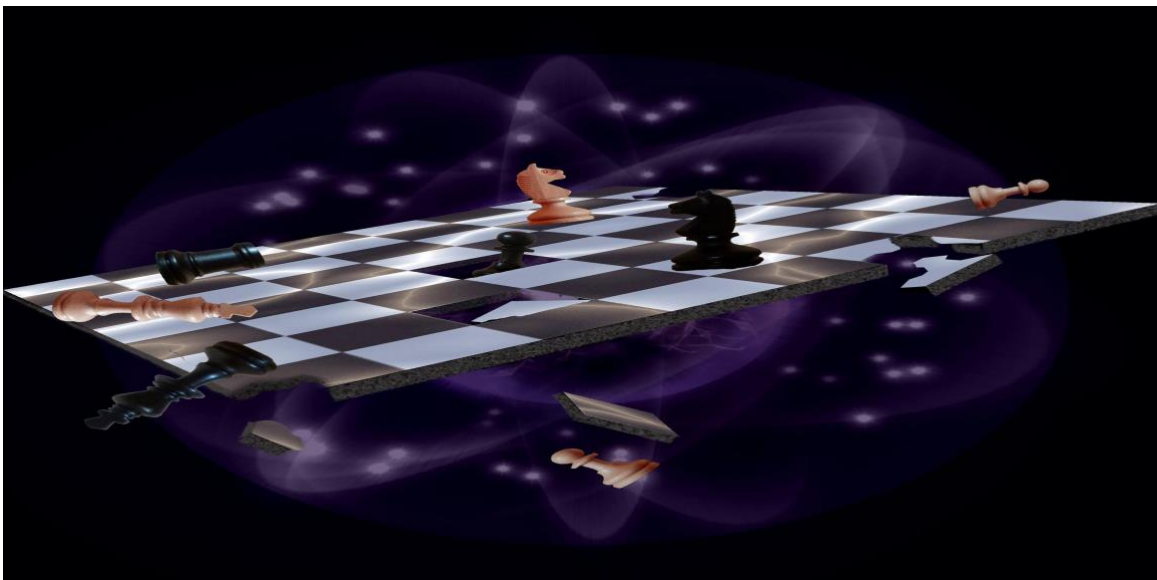


Chess for Unity Summer Story Contest

2022

.....

A Memorable Story on the Chess Journey!



Edited and designed by Arthur Xu, Jason Wang and Erick Zhao, October 2022

We are very honored to read the fantastic stories from some chess players in the past summer. Their stories described the most memorable tournaments they have played, and explained to us the meanings each chess piece holds for them, and why chess is their lifelong passion. We hope our readers will enjoy these stories as we do.

TOP STORIES



Why is chess my lifelong passion?

by **Ken Milutin**

"My name is Ken Milutin, and I have had a life-long passion for chess.....but this story is not about me. I am paying tribute to and sharing some of my interactions with a fine person and fellow chess player, Joseph Viggiano, and his lovely wife. I should have written this some years ago, but two issues of Chess Life, August 2011 and April 2012, prodded me to now share this story. I grew up in a very small town in southern Delaware. Taught by my father, I have enjoyed all things chess since about age 6. Now 54, I have not lost my love of the game nor the fondness for many of the people that I have met through chess. One such person was Joe Viggiano. I first briefly met Mr. Viggiano at a Delaware State Chess Championship in the late 70s. A retired teacher, Joe was a kindly older gentleman who liked wearing a "golf" hat and carrying his chess equipment in a white bowling ball leather bag. I never really found out much about Joe's early years except that he was of Italian heritage, was from a family of glassblowers, and that he had taught Latin. Joe and I lived about 30 minutes from each other, and I next met

him in the early 80s at a Central Delaware Chess Club meeting. He would later take me to my first World Open in 1987, and I was amazed at the people he knew and introduced me to.

As we grew to know each other, Joe learned that my new job occasionally took me on the road through the town where he lived. I (and other chess friends) had an open invitation to stop in for lunch or dinner and a game or two of chess. I took Joe up on his offer and was so glad I did. His wonderful wife Hildred (yes, Hildred) was a fabulous cook, and we had many a spirited game while having some great food on Joe's small screened porch at the front of his house. Such great memories. Joe was always fond of saying, "Well, there you go!" after the surprising conclusion of a game. While playing, Joe could lull you to sleep. He had the unfortunate habit of forgetting to punch his clock. So much so that his wife made him a small cardboard reminder to "Punch the CLOCK" that he would sometimes keep in front of him during a game. For as long as I knew him, Joe always had the same small standard analog clock. At one World Open, Joe was down two pieces to a young man who was clearly bored with the whole situation. Joe was also down on time because of the bad habit noted above. At first glance, it looked like the game would be coming to an end fast. As I looked at Joe's position, it was tricky, but with careful play, the young man should have no trouble putting Joe away. Frankly, I can't help checking my watch, wondering when Joe's game would end so we could grab a bite to eat. The young man constantly got up from the board after making quick moves. He would briskly walk over to a couple of friends huddled nearby and have a few whispers. Then he hurriedly returned when Joe would finally move (and not punch his ever-ticking analog clock).

After one such sequence, Joe straightened up in his chair and carefully studied the board. I looked a little more closely, and suddenly Joe's small remaining force looked very imposing. Then I saw it, and Joe saw it too. Mate in three! Joe made the first move of the combination, and to my surprise, punched his clock! The young man returned, looked carefully, then slumped in his chair and sat still as a rock for what seemed like 30 minutes. He finally responded, and Joe did as well, again punching his clock. It was over. The young man held out his hand and graciously acknowledged the defeat, and I think he was probably wondering what hit him. Joe then looked around and took on his trademark, softly said, "Well, there you go." A smile always comes to my face when I share that story. The April 2012 Chess Life issue cover features the "Winding Down" of the analog clock...frankly, I hope not.

To be closer to their family, Joe and his wife moved to Florida in October of 1994. I remember the day very well. I stopped in to say goodbye to my good friends, knowing now that Joe was in his late 80s, and very sadly, I probably never would see either of them again. I had tears in my eyes as I left that driveway and that small screened porch where we had many games and meals. We stayed in touch over the next couple of years. Unfortunately, a few years later, in 1997, Mr. Viggiano passed away. I received a few very touching letters from Hildred. We continued to correspond for a while. Sometime later, a large box arrived at my door. Upon opening it, I found a nice note from Hildred stating, "Joe would want you to have these." Inside were a number of old chess books (some autographed by famous players). To my surprise and delight, Joe's chess clock. The stories that the clock could tell. The following letter had a picture of Joe which I look at from time to time with great fondness. What cherished mementos from such fine people? I was in Florida in the fall of 2009 and tried to look up Hildred. I sadly found out that she had passed away that spring.



The final phase of this story references the August 2011 issue of Chess Life. Mr. Viggiano was the inventor of the "Post-A-Log". Those of us familiar with postal chess know what this is, a simple yet effective way to safely store all of your postal games in one neat zippered folder. THE PIECES WILL NOT MOVE UNTIL YOU MOVE THEM! While analyzing the games at night, Joe would fall asleep with a traditional slot-type recorder album for recording postal games. When Joe was dreaming of tricks on how to remember to

punch his clock, the recorder album would fall to the floor, spilling pieces everywhere from numerous games in progress. Joe came up with a great solution! The "Post-A-Log"! The August 2011 issue cover story is regarding the evolution of Correspondence Chess. Postal chess, I have heard, has greatly diminished in popularity due to email and the Internet, etc... Like the analog clock, postal chess may be a thing of the past in the not-too-distant future..., and again, I hope not.

Many of Joe's friends and I fondly reminisce about him because he is one of those unforgettable characters that will always remain with you. On rare occasions, my job still takes me to that same town where I shared those great games and wonderful meals with Joe and his wife. I slowly ride down the street and look at that house and screened porch. If I concentrate, I can still smell the aroma of those meals and imagine Joe in his golf hat with his bowling bag at his side saying, "Well, there you go."

Forgive me, my good friends at the Salisbury Maryland and Central Delaware Chess Clubs who knew Joe, for taking so long to write this. I hope this was a fitting tribute to two great people. Folks like Joe and his wife are those who make our game such a great one. In closing, I hope my old friend is smiling down at me, and I want to whisper to him softly, "Well, Joe, there you go."

Ken Milutin is a modest collector of antique chess sets and books, as well as an avid player. His father taught him to play chess around age six. He also enjoys teaching both students and adults who are new to the game. Ken assisted with establishing a chess club in a correctional institution in Somerset County MD, subsequently directing two USCF rated events there. He was the DE State Amateur Champion many years ago.

Chess for Unity *** Chess for UnityChess for Unity***Chess for Unity***

My most memorable tournament

by **Zichen Xu**

CLICK! My chess piece snapped into place. My opponent had set a trap, and the move I played had snared myself in it. My opponent played a few tricky moves and checkmated me.

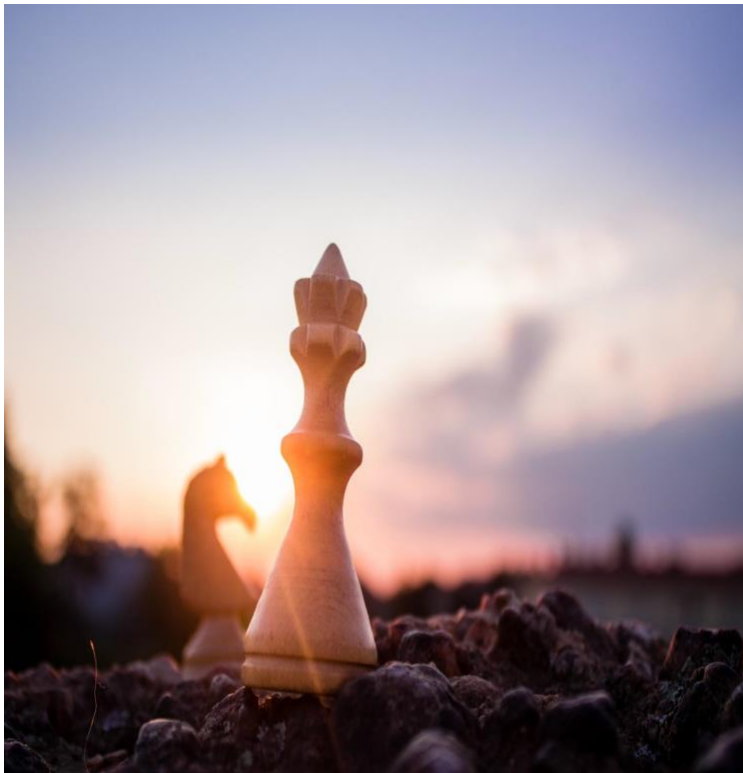
"Not again!" I shouted, banging my fist against the desk. I was in my room, and my parents rushed up to investigate.

“Zichen, darling,” my mom exclaimed, “If you want to play chess, play slowly and intelligently.”

“But I can’t remember that!”

“Try playing another game; think, and play slowly.” My mom reminded me, “The small, minor tournament is coming soon, and it’s only a warmup. The big tournament is only one week away!”

I felt nervous. I did not want to lose at the big tournament! My thoughts were interrupted by the din-dun of my fifth game of the day starting. A few moves into the game, my opponent



blundered. I, remembering to play slowly and think, discovered a tactic. I thoroughly thought about what would happen. Finally, I played the move. My opponent resigned on the first move of the tactic, seeing what would happen.

“Yes!” I yelled happily, “Yas, yes, yas! I finally won!” I was excited. My mom smiled, “I’m happy that you won, dear. You can play slowly like that every game and almost always win.”

The day of the small tournament arrived. I took a deep breath. Glancing at the enormous building that towered over me, I thought, this is it. I took another shaky breath and stepped inside. “Attention, please!” A loud voice boomed. “The K-3 section pairings are out.” My dad checked his phone. “Alright, Zichen, you’ll be playing Sebastian Danner at Board Nineteen. You’re playing White.” My heart thumped. I was so nervous that I forgot to play slowly. I blundered here and there and lost all my games.

“It’s okay.” My mom said, trying to comfort me. “You just have to remember to play slowly.” I engraved a mental note that shouted, “Play slowly!”

Finally, after tons of practice, I was ready for the big tournament. “Welp, Zichen, it looks like you’ll be playing Sebastian Danner again.” My dad said. “Good luck!” Sebastian and I played a classic Four Knights game, but he made a blunder. I caught it and played the best move. Sebastian resigned when he saw the unstoppable checkmate. The rest of my games were all the same. My opponents made a blunder which I caught, and they either resigned or got checkmated.

“Aaaand, it’s time for the awards ceremony!” The tournament director bellowed “In third, we have Mary Grace! In second, with a score of 4 out of 5, we have Sebastian Danner! In first, with a perfect score and all wins, we have Zichen Xu!” I felt like I was about to burst with happiness. I collected my hard-earned, big trophy and strolled back down with it and an even bigger smile.

At home, I felt amazing. I won the big tournament and remembered to play slowly. But for now, I headed for the kitchen.

I was hungry.

Zichen Xu is currently a 4th grader in Navy Elementary School in Fairfax, VA. Besides chess and writing, he also likes playing basketball and video games. Early this year, he won first place in the VA scholastic warm-up tournament K-5 section. Recently, in the 54th annual Atlantic Open U1000 section, he won 2nd place and got his first-ever \$400 cash prize.

What is the meaning behind each chess piece and what piece do you relate to the most?

“I think it reminds me of the value of teamwork. A person by themselves can only do so much, but when two or more people work together, they can accomplish great things.”



The Meanings behind chess pieces

by **Justin Mathew**

Chess is, without a doubt, one of the most intricate and complicated board games. The game has a variety of pieces, each having its unique movements. Each piece has its meaning and purpose for the game, and these individual purposes can be related to real life.

In the actual game, a pawn is the least important piece. It is regarded with the smallest value because it has the least flexible movements. One of the key principles of playing the pawn is that once it moves forward, it cannot move backward. *This principle helps us to understand the importance of making sure we are making the right life decisions. Some forward actions in life cannot be taken back.* Another key principle of pawn play is promotion. Strategic play allows a pawn to turn itself into any piece that a game needs it to be. This principle reminds us that hard work can transform us into the best version of ourselves.



The Queen's power demonstrates the strength and importance of a team leader. In attacking a castled King, the Queen is often the piece that leads the charge toward the opposing side. The Knight teaches us that being unique is good. The Knight moves in an L-shape, significantly differing from the other linear moving pieces. Its movement helps to make it one of the best pieces to achieve tactics. The Knight's moves are by far the hardest to calculate, which makes it a great attacking and defending piece. The King is the most important piece; when we lose the King, we lose the game. The King is weak and needs help from the more powerful pieces. That makes me understand that we should help the less fortunate. The Rook is a great piece but may

not be active in the opening or middle game. Due to its poor starting position and lack of mobility, rooks might not be very useful until the endgame. However, when the endgame starts, the rooks are often the best pieces on the board. Rooks demonstrate the importance of patience.

However, the piece that I relate to the most is the Bishop. The Bishop can only move diagonally on one square color. It is one of two pieces that cannot go on any square on the board. A singular Bishop can be very poor if your pawns or your opponent's pawns are placed in the same color square as your Bishop. Despite this, the bishop pair has become one of the most emphasized concepts in modern chess today. When these two pieces are aligned, the pieces synergize, becoming worth 7 points. The two different pieces working together cover the entire board and can move around any pawn chain. I think it reminds me of the value of teamwork. A person by themselves can only do so much, but when two or more people work together, they can accomplish great things.

Justin Mathew, 15 years old, has been playing chess since the age of 7. He has played over the board USCF chess since 2019. He secured his Class B norm after attending the U.S. Open in Rancho Mirage California, his first national tournament. He started and is President of the Shadow Creek High School Chess club. In his spare time, he enjoys playing and watching basketball and football.



My most memorable tournament

by **Hrishikesh Vedula**

My most memorable tournament was the 2021 National K-12 Grade Championship. I tied for 2nd place but got 4th under tiebreakers out of 138 participants in my grade. I was extremely happy because I secured a win in the final round after a monumental effort. My first, second and third were rather simple. But, my fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh were difficult. I won a tricky game in the fourth round, and in the sixth round, I broke through a dead draw and emerged victorious. In the seventh round I was struggling but managed to win. Unfortunately, in my fifth round, I got bulldozed and lost. I scored six points out of seven, landing me in fourth place by tiebreaks, and tying for second overall.

It affected my career so much because it was the first national tournament in which I placed in the top five. I was only eleven! I got a heavily weighted bronze medal. To me, that was the biggest accomplishment in my whole life! My rating didn't gain many points (only thirteen points), but it boosted my confidence because despite being my second tournament, I played some of the best games I have ever played in chess before. It made me truly believe that I could achieve a rating of 1900. The tournament hall was enormous and bigger than any playing hall I have ever played in. Another good thing about the tournament was that I made a lot of friends there. I even got an autograph of a famous National Master at the time (now a Fide Master).

To conclude, my most memorable tournament was the 2021 National K-12 Grade Championship where I got fourth place and got some pretty good wins, made some new friends, and met a famous person who is a Fide Master.

Hrishikesh Vedula, 11 years old and studying 6th grade in Cooperative Middle School, Stratham, New Hampshire. In school, my favorite subject is math. I play chess every Monday at my local chess club. Besides playing chess, I play basketball, soccer, and badminton too. Hrishikesh represented NewHampshire in the John D. Rockefeller III National Tournament of Elementary School State Champions twice in 2021 and 2022.

LEARN MORE about C4U ON OUR WEBSITE



Thank you for reading!