

The Gambit

Nebraska State Chess Archives

Richard Olson
“A Stalwart of Nebraska Chess”
Special issue



**Richard & Suzanne Olson on the General Jackson
Showboat in Nashville.
Picture taken October 2008**

May 2011

Gambit Editor: Kent Nelson

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From Kent's Corner

Welcome to a special issue of the *Gambit* featuring **Richard Olson**. For those of you not familiar with Richard, he is a long time chess organizer and director living in Clarks, Nebraska. He is the man behind the Merrick County Open and the Defenders of the Crown tournaments. Richard has organized and directed chess tournaments for years until poor health started rearing its ugly head. Despite Richard's health, he still found a way to hold tournaments this year.

Richard was kind enough to be interviewed and he came through in a very big way. I submitted a list of questions to Richard and he painstakingly took the time to write down his answers. I know this wasn't easy on Richard, doing anything when you are not feeling well is always a difficult task. But having written responses to my questions sure made my job as the interviewer much easier.

This interview is the only one I've done in my entire life. I wish to thank Richard for his patience and understanding as we worked together on this project.

I also want to thank John Watson for his teachings and techniques that I picked up from his interviews on ICC. I call them the big three... Preparation, Personalizing and Positivity are all characteristics of John's interviews which helped me a lot.

Please know for the record that no NSCA membership monies was used to pay for this *Gambit* issue. This issue was paid for by individual donations from NSCA officers. My thanks to them for their generosity.

All pictures courtesy of the Olson family. I hope you enjoy reading about Richard Olson as much as I enjoyed documenting his life and chess career.

Kent B Nelson

Richard, where were you born? Please tell us about your parents, brother and sisters and what it was like growing up? -KN

I was born in DeWitt, Iowa on January 6, 1933. My dad was 6 feet tall and weighed 180 pounds. He worked for the Iowa State Roads Dept. My mother had been a school teacher. We moved to a 120 acre farm three miles east of Long Grove when I was in 5th grade. My sister was 2 years younger than me. She worked in the house with my mother; I worked outside with my dad. In those days we put up loose hay and picked corn by hand. We had a dozen milk cows (milked by hand) and a dozen mother sows and 50 plus laying hens. We sold cream and fed skim milk to pigs. I often went hiking alone in the hills of and near our farm. Many times I hiked in the woods a mile north of our farm. This is now Scott County Park, Iowa. I was and still am a student of nature.

Education---where did you go to school? What were your school days like? Did you go to college? If so, what courses did you take? -KN

First I went to public school in DeWitt. Then I went to a one-room country school a half mile north of our farm-house. I always walked to and from school. I was a slow starter and the runt of the class in DeWitt. I enjoyed country school. In my spare time, picking what interested me, I read half the contents of a set of encyclopedias. I went to high school in DeWitt, Iowa.

The first three winters after high school I attended the winter quarter at Iowa State College in Ames. I picked my own courses; it was winter vacation. After military service, I went to Iowa State Teachers College, Cedar Falls, Iowa. I graduated with a B. A. Science degree, physics specialty & Math Minor. One thing I want to mention, a few weeks before I graduated (January 1960) a new student started a chess club on the campus. One Sunday afternoon he had several people come from other towns. An hour before the event he had me play the top man in Waterloo, Iowa. He attacked my King with a Knight and

the Queen. His next move was going to be checkmate. I sacrificed my Queen to remove the knight; that broke his attack. Two moves later I queened a pawn, but immediately lost her. But I gained a rook. That gave me the better position; it was time for the event to begin; my opponent resigned. The student organizer could not believe that I had defeated that man.

Richard, anyone who knows you understands you have deep Religious beliefs. Please share with us about our faith and why you have devoted your life to Christ?-KN

Why have I devoted my life to Christ? When we lived in DeWitt---When we were not visiting relatives in Scott County, my sister & I attended a Congregational Sunday School. Then the four of us would go to church. After we moved to the farm, we attended church once a year, on Easter. I heard the Gospel twice in a Baptist church in Ames, and again before I crossed the ocean as an army boy. I turned it down all three times. I did not like to have people telling me "I was a sinner that needed to get saved." I thought I was pretty good.



When my army engineer unit was packing up to move from Korea to Japan I got hit across the nose by a swinging log chain. Why I did not hurt me or kill me I will never know. It did scare me. About two months later Chaplain Hal D. Carruth asked me if I would like to be baptized along with some others. He gave me a choice-I could be dunked at Yokota four miles away, or sprinkled here at Showa Mae, Japan. I chose to be sprinkled here before the men I lived with.

At that time I was hearing the Gospel three times a weekend: A singing & testimony meeting at Yakota Air Base Saturday nights. Baptist Chaplain Carruth's sermon Sunday mornings, and Sunday afternoon meetings at Mom & Pop Mincey's house in the suburbs of Tokyo. They kept talking about being "born again". I asked God to give me a "born again" experience.

When Chaplain Carruth put his wet hands on my head and said, "I baptize you in the name of the Father & the Son & the Holy Ghost.", I felt a tingling feeling, like an electric current coming out of his hands, through my head and down my neck and into my chest, and it felt like a light bulb lit up inside my chest. I consider that to be my "born again" experience.

The very next day Air Force Sergeant Bill Blyses started me on the Navigators Topical Memory System and their Keith L. Brooks Bible Study. He gave me little mentoring (he was working with another man) but he got me started good and I kept going. The next few years I memorized more than 4000 Bible verses.

Knowing where I am going was a big load off my mind. I want other people to go there too. The Topical Memory System was such a blessing to me that I wanted other people to take that course. I spoke to teen-age youth groups in more than 30 denominations; I lost count of how many churches. I gave B-Rations to the teenagers in hopes that they would order the course.

The Lord led me away from Navigators and into Child Evangelism Fellowship. I was Director over nine counties for more than 30 years. I ran many evangelistic county fair booths. One year I ran seven. We presented the Gospel to children using a flash-card book, and asked them to ask Jesus into their hearts. I reported the number of children and the number of "decisions" to my State Director each month. We often had more than 100 decisions in a fair. About ten years ago children quit coming into our booths, so we switched to handing out little Bibles-about the size of a book of matches with 55 Bible verses-half of them half verses. Several times I ordered 12,000 Little Bibles, to get the best price. I also juggled four balls and handed out Little Bibles to children ahead

of parades. Often we gave more than 400 at a parade. Our biggest day was 1700 in Columbus.

“I want people to go to heaven”.

*Please share with us how you met that lovely wife of yours?
How many years have you been married? Children?-KN*

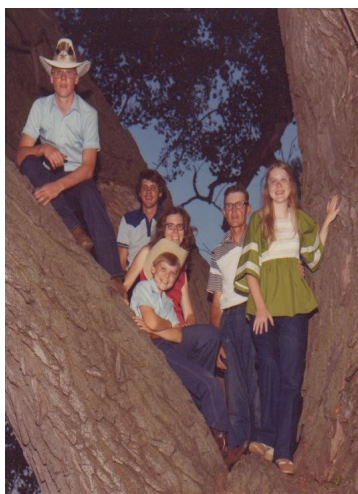


I met my wife Suzanne at Iowa State Teachers College in Cedar Falls, Iowa-now bigger and called the University of Northern Iowa. I was secretary of the Intervarsity Christian Fellowship chapter. President Dean Jungman brought her to some meetings. Two years later he was our Best Man.



Next June 17 will be our 50th Anniversary. We plan to have a big celebration in August after David gets home from Egypt. His request. We have five children in five states. Our oldest is a retarded daughter in Grand Island. David is a Public

Relations Officer, an infantry major now in Egypt. He served three times in Iraq. Daniel works in a cabinet making shop in Tulsa OK. He is an Army Reserves chaplain with the rank of Lt. Colonel. Rosalie married a dairy farmer in Wisconsin, who is now a carpenter. She home schools four, the oldest was adopted from Bulgaria. We visit them once each summer; last summer was our final trip anywhere. Stephen lives in Crescent, Iowa and works in an eye glass factory in Omaha. Stephen & Rosalie and family visit us every Thanksgiving. We open Christmas presents then.



Summer 1982

Dick & Suzanne Olson

From left to right

David-17 years

Daniel-16 years

Stephen-11 years

Rosalie-14 years



December 2007

L to R

Wayne & Andrew Fish, David &

Lois, Sue & Stephen Olson

Timothy, Rosalie, Andrea Fish

Suzanne & Dick + Elyssa Daniel

Olson

Janet & Lance and Jasmine Olson

not pictured

I understand a couple of your children played tournament chess and did well including earning state championship. Please tell us about this Richard.-KN

My son David won four games in five rounds in two Nebraska Tournaments: The Junior High Section when he was in ninth grade, and the High School section when he was in twelfth grade. That would give him second or third place each time, but he received nothing.

Rosalie had the good fortune of playing in Nebraska chess tournaments before Gary Marks got married and gave away many girl trophies. She won the girl state champion trophy in four Nebraska State Scholastic Tournaments: The Elementary section her sixth grade year. The Junior High Section her eighth grade year, and the High School Section her 10th & twelfth grade years. An Omaha girl won the girl state champion trophies her odd number years.

Rosalie won the girl champion trophy in three consecutive Mid America Scholastic tournaments: her 9th, 10th, & 11th grade years. Her 12th grade year it was the Region 7 tournament in Omaha. She won two of five games and the girl champion trophy. Region 7 was: Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, & Illinois. Rosalie played in some Nebraska State Women's tournaments. She won a 3rd place trophy and a 2nd place trophy.



Her best tournament was 3.5 wins in four rounds of her eleventh grade year Mid America Scholastic Tournament. She

won her first three games, and then played an Omaha boy. Omaha South kids kept whispering, “You already won your trophy. You can lose this game.” She played to a draw. The Iowa City team won the team trophy by 1/2 point. The Iowa City coach had each of his four players (one at a time) come and thank Rosalie for playing that game to a draw. In the Nebraska Scholastic in March that school-year three Omaha South boys defeated Rosalie, and their girl won the girl champion trophy.

Please tell us what your day job was before retiring?-KN

I was a self employed carpenter for 40 plus years. My specialty was shingling. I hand painted several houses, buildings and barns. I poured a lot of concrete and laid a lot of blocks. There was a house moving business in Clarks. I laid the foundations for several houses to move onto. I shingled and painted more than 30 church steeples.



Who taught you chess? Your age when you learned? Who did you play against?-KN

I taught myself to play chess by playing against myself when I was a kid. My mother had her father's ivory set and taught me how the pieces move. I was a 5th or 6th grader at the time.

How and why did you become interested in directing chess tournaments? What do you like better...playing or directing? -KN

I ran the first Merrick Country Open in 1979 to give the 20 plus local players a tournament to play in. If I would have to choose between running a tournament or playing, I would choose to play.

What was your most difficult and challenging directing situation? How did you handle it? Your thoughts about being a chess tournament director nowadays... is it worth it? As you know, it is a very thankless job! -KN

I had some trouble with kids making too much noise during various tournaments. Big city kids mostly but for the most part, kids are good. Some parents are picky too but nothing major.

Richard, many directors come and go. But you have been directing tournaments for decades. Your thoughts on why there is such a high "turnover" of directors. Why have you done it for so long and thank you for doing this! -KN

Tournament directors quit because few people are willing to work as hard as a rated tournament requires. I keep going because there are no other tournaments west of Lincoln.

What was your highest rating and as a player, please name some tournament results you are most proud of? -KN

My highest rating was 1602 twice. Then I fell to a 1500 floor and sat there for years, and had to play with the "big boys". Then they let me fall to a 1400 floor where I am now. I won the 9th annual Columbus Cornucopia reserve section once and 1st place in the 1998 Polar Bear reserve section once.

Back in my army days, I was K-8 Base Chess Champion in 1954. I have a nice little trophy. K-8 is the largest air base in Korea. It is south of Kunsan beside the Yellow Sea.

Can you point to or provide us the greatest game you have ever played? Please tell us about it. Your greatest upset? The highest rated player you have knocked off? -KN

I defeated Anton Sildmets once. This was in the quiet room in the Clarks School library. He had finished his 3rd round final game and was watching the game beside him. I had nothing to do, so I played him. He paid more attention to the game beside him then to the game he was playing. He gave me a free piece, and I beat him. I defeated a Class A player in Lincoln, I think his name was Drexel. He was closing in on my king in the middle of the board. He checked my king by placing a rook beside my king. The rook was not guarded, so my king captured it. That broke his attack and I won. I defeated John Stepp once. I defeated Bud Narveson: the clock beat him. We played the game out and he won.

I defeated Bruce Draney in Karen Swartz's first tournament; it was unrated and in the Redeemer Baptist Church in Columbus. Bruce queened a pawn, and a few moves later permitted me to capture her, because he had a killer sequence of moves in his mind. But he overlooked that his castled king was locked behind a wall of three pawns. I made a move that made my next move a threaten check-mate; he was forced to open his escape hatch. That gave me the momentum and I won. Two weeks later in the rating supplement he was an expert (for a few weeks) My final game was against Gary Marks and I lost quickly.

Your thoughts about tournament chess when you started decades ago, as oppose to the game now? For example, player behavior? Chess computers? What would you like to change? Any advice for players and directors starting out? -KN

When I started tournaments the time controls were X moves in X minutes, 2nd time period using X moves in X minutes. The game is better with sudden death time controls. It speeds tournaments up.

During my first years in tournament chess the old style notation was used. Algebra notation took over, which is much better.

Player behavior: The first tournament I played in was in a gym on Main Street in Fremont. Chess was on one end of the court; a basketball was bouncing at the other end. Sometimes the basketball got into the chess area. Not good.

A mother came and took one of my high school players home that was hurt from one of my early tournaments. A kid had tripped a boy shooting a basketball. I had told my players to stay out of that gym. After that I always made sure the doors to the gym were locked in my tournament building.

The picture below is from the Defender of the Crown, October 2010. It was the first tournament for both of them. Matthew won two games & lost two and won the Junior trophy.



My two chess player pupils (Matthew left and Omar right) and my son David and daughter Rosalie, and I played on a

snowy Saturday in a Lutheran college north of Omaha. The next *Gambit* had an article saying what a good place we now had for tournaments. I later learned that several items were stolen from that building during that tournament. We never had another tournament there, and the director never ran another one.

My billfold disappeared at a tournament in Terry Cain's Methodist Church in Lincoln. I had to replace important papers and lost keepsakes that I wish I still had.

At our last tournament in the library in Aurora two boys refused to keep quiet. We were not permitted to have a tournament there again. We moved to the Lutheran school north east from Hampton.

Advice for new directors: Watch how a successful tournament director does things. Ask him if he will let you help him with a tournament or two. Have him check your work as you run your first one.

Advice for new players. Have an experienced player give you some advice. If you win half your games be satisfied; you will get better with experience. Keep a record of your moves. Study the games that you lose. See what your first mistake was; or what gave your opponent the advantage. Try to not make that mistake again.

Richard, earlier this year, I got word you were hospitalized with a life threatening lung condition. If I understood you correctly, your lungs were in very bad shape, possibly due to all the dust you were exposed to doing construction work. You were just being discharged from the hospital when we talked on the phone. I know you wear and use oxygen. Please update us on your health.-KN

I spent seven nights and seven days in Bryan Hospital in Lincoln on December 2nd thru the 9th, 2010. I went in with a

bad sinus infection. They killed it. If neglected it might well have killed me before now. My lungs are the worst that those doctors ever saw. One of them gave me this advice: 1. Do what you want to do. 2. Walk. If you can only take three steps, take three steps. (Few people in that hospital saw me when I was not in a wheelchair.) 3. Take it easy.

Before dismissing me the hospital people tried to persuade Suzanne to enter me into a nursing home. She refused. They did persuade her to sign me up for hospice care. During my first day home the hospice people brought their equipment and the Veterans Administration people took their equipment away. Suzanne is my caregiver, and she is a good one. I get young lady visitors every week; I am having fun.

The first week I was home I continued to lose weight and got down to 113 pounds. With the sinus infection dead, my body began to recover. I am now up to 122 pounds. Years ago my working weight was 145 pounds. I do what I want to do. But many things that I would like to do, I can't do because they cause me to puff too hard. It takes less and less to make me puff. But I now go further and faster before I sit down to puff. But then I puff hard and long. My physical (athletic) condition is better-from doing work. I now have a new breathing habit = at the end of an exhale stroke, I give an extra "puff" out. At the end of an inhale, I hold my breath a fraction of a second. The X Ray pictures show that the $\frac{1}{4}$ of my lungs that I am using is down at the bottom.

I am not a normal hospice patient: I use much more oxygen than any other. I planted seeds in my big garden, and I stuck dandelions in my front lawn. I can do anything while sitting on my hammock seat-cane, and reaching down with only one hand. And I can work while standing on one knee. But everything I do makes me puff. Some things that I did last fall I do not do now. I expect that some things that I do now I will not be able to do next fall. My health is gradually getting worse.

I am now planning on running a chess tournament in October in my house with 12 players.

Thank you Richard-KN

Award given before many people at a banquet that included speeches & music. I donated a lot of time to them. I shingled a big building one and a half times, painted the white twice and did mortar work and other projects.

USED OF THE LORD
IN HIS SERVICE
AS FAITHFUL SOLDIERS
IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE
AT
NEBRASKA CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS
MR. & MRS. RICHARD OLSON

WITH SINCERE APPRECIATION
FOR 30 YEARS OF SERVICE
TO THE VILLAGE OF CLARKS
PLANNING & ZONING
COMMITTEE
THIS PLAQUE IS PRESENTED TO RICHARD
OLSON
CLARKS NE
MARCH 11, 2009

Jim Swartz gave this trophy to me before everyone during his speech before the tournament. I was the House man and played in the Open. I lost all 4 games. I was the one that brought tournament chess to Columbus.

7th ANNUAL
CORNUCOPIA
CHESS TOURNAMENT
SPECIAL CHESS
PROMOTER AWARD

David Raines gave it to me along with 9 used trophies. I snuck it into Gary Marks' hands. He presented it to me during my speech ahead of the Defenders of the Crown Tournament last October. He knew nothing about it. I suspect it was all David Raines doing.

"I cherish this".

Appreciation
RICHARD G. OLSON
In Honor of
Directing and Sponsoring
Chess Tournaments in
Nebraska
For over 30 years!!!
Thanks!
Your Chess Friends

The Swartz Family Speaks...about Richard Olson

When thinking about Richard Olson: one is likely to remember chess. However, it would be impossible to confine ones thoughts simply to chess because there are many facets encompassing this very unique man. From chess to child evangelism he was always encouraging and supportive.

No remembrance of Richard would be complete without a chess memory. To set the scene, Richard would usually play in his own tournaments as a house player, to avoid disappointing someone with a bye (Richard seemed to think chess players came to chess tournaments to play chess). I remember one of my tournament games with Richard at one of his tournaments. I think I offered a draw. As he was slightly ahead, he told me that he thought he could beat me. I pointed to the chess clock – I had substantially more time left than he did as he was also running the tournament. I believe he agreed to the draw!

Also at these tournaments he would post his newsletters and articles that were written about him. I remember one such article posted at a Merrick County Chess Tournament. The article was about Richard and his work on church steeples. It was quite impressive. I also found it kind of scary – when I read the article and realized that Richard and my Dad were the same age, I knew I didn't want my Dad "dancing around" on any church steeples at his age!

When we ran chess tournaments, I remember the times when we would call "goodbye" to those going home from a chess tournaments in Columbus. Whenever Richard was leaving, and we called out "goodbye", he would always add something like, "good tournament". He's always been very encouraging inside the chess world or outside.

Of course, I must include something outside of chess. I remember checking out Kevin's 4-H exhibits at the Platte County Fair after they'd been judged, and finding a tract from Richard attached to one of Kevin's exhibits. At that point, I knew then that we'd find Richard with his Child Evangelization Fellowship outreach exhibit – the model train on its tracks – at the fair.

The Richard we know has always been a kind, encouraging man. Richard – we're glad we've met you and gotten to know you!-Karen, Jim and Kevin

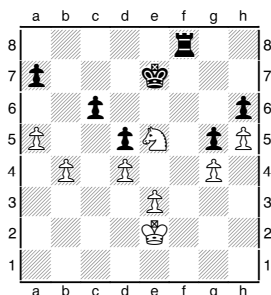
2000 Defenders of the Crown

White: Karen Swartz

Black: **Richard Olson**

Editor's note, I asked Richard to submit some of his best games. Being a modest and humble man, Richard submitted one draw and two losses. One loss was cut in place of another game against David Raines that turned to be a draw. He also submitted the game below against Karen Swartz. This might be the game reference by Karen Swartz on the previous page.

1.e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 c5 4. Be3 Nc6 5. Bb5 Qb6 6. Bxc6+ bxc6
7. b3 c4 8. Ne2 Ne7 9. O-O Nf5 10. Nd2 Ba6 11. Nf3 c3 12.
Re1 Qa5 13. a4 Be7 14. Qc1 h6 15. Nxc3 Bb4 16. Ne2 Bxe1
17. Qxe1 Qxe1+ 18. Rxe1 Nxe3 19. fxe3 Bxe2 20. Rxe2 O-O
21. Ne1 f6 22. exf6 Rxf6 23. Nd3 Rf8 24. Rf2 Rxf2 25. Nxf2
Rf5 26. Nd3 Rf8 27. Ne5 Rc8 28. Nd7 Rc7 29. Nc5 Kf7 30.
Kf2 Kf6 31. Kf3 e5 32. c3 exd4 33. cxd4 Kf5 34. h4 g5 35.
g4+ Kf6 36. h5 Kf7 37. Ke2 Ke7 38. a5 Kd6 39. b4 Rc8 40.
Nd3 Rb8 41. Kf3 Ke7 42. Ne5 Rf8+ 43. Ke2



Final Position-Draw

Quotable Quote

"I remember playing in several tournaments that Richard directed as I was growing up. In fact the first open event I ever won was one of his tournaments in Clarks, NE. I thought that Richard had a great enthusiasm for chess and was always very kind and supportive of me."

Keaton Kiewra
International Chess Master

Thoughts about Richard Olson

by

David Raines

When Kent Nelson asked me to write a few lines about Richard Olson for a special issue of the *Gambit*, I was not sure where to start. Since I've known Richard for about eighteen years or so, Richard is and will be viewed as a role model for everyone that gets to know him.

Without a doubt he is the most unselfish and giving persons I had the privilege to know. I can not help but think of what a great world this would be if there were more Richard Olson's around.

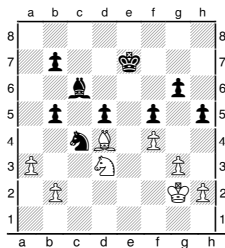
Richard once told me that he raised five kids (with a great wife) and never had any money. But all five turned out pretty good. I thought to myself of all the people who could not raise one child right with all the money in the world.

Chess has been called the Royal Game. I think that is because people like Richard play it. The following game played in 1993 at the Columbus Valentine. Richard had a rating of 1610 and mine was 1803. And as you can see I never got the upper hand on him.

White: David Raines

Black: Richard Olson

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Nc6 5.Nf3 Qb6 6.Qb3 cxd4 7.Qxb6
axb6 8.Bb5 dxc3 9.Nxc3 Bb4 10.Bd2 Nge7 11.0-0 0-0 12.a3 Bxc3
13.Bxc3 Bd7 14.Bd3 h6 15.Rac1 Ng6 16.g3 Na5 17.Nd2 Rfc8
18.Bd4 b5 19.f4 Nc4 20.Nb3 Bc6 21.Rfe1 Ne7 22.Re2 Nf5 23.Bxf5
exf5 24.e6 fxe6 25.Rxe6 Re8 26.Rce1 Rxe6 27.Rxe6 Re8 28.Nc5
Rxe6 29.Nxe6 g6 30.Kg2 Kf7 31.Nc5 h5 32.Kh3 Nd2 33.Kg2 Ke7
34.Nd3 Nc4 1/2-1/2-Final Position below



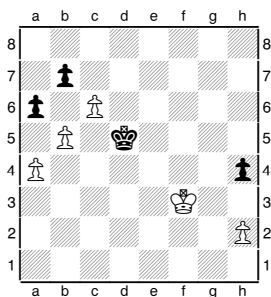
1989 Mid-American Scholastic

White: Kent Nelson

Black: **Richard Olson**

One of my hardest fought games against Richard. Richard fought me toe to toe well into the ending. If I had not studied pawn end games a few months before the following game, Richard may have won or drawn with his active king.

e4 e6 (I always felt the French was a good choice on Richard's part. Richard has always been a tough defensive player in my opinion). **2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e5 c5 5. Bd2 Nc6 6. Nb5 Bxd2+ 7. Qxd2 cxd4 8. Nd6+ Ke7 9. Qf4 f6 10. Qg3 g6 11. f4 Qa5+ 12. Kd1 Qb4 13. Kc1 Na5 14. a3 Qb6 15. b4 Nc4 16. Nxc4 dxc4 17. Bxc4 Bd7 18. Qd3 Rc8 19. Nf3 Qc6 20. Bb3 Qc3 21. Qxc3 dxc3 22. Re1 Bc6 23. exf6+ Kxf6 24. Rxe6+ Kg7 25. Ne1 Re8 26. Rxe8 Bxe8 27. Kb1 Nf6 28. Ka2 Bc6 29. Rd1 Re8 30. Bc4 Re4 31. Kb3 Rxf4 32. Kxc3 Ne4+ 33. Kb3 Rf2 34. Bd5 Nd2+ 35. Kc3 Ne4+ 36. Bxe4 Bxe4 37. Rd2 Rf7 38. Rd4 Bc6 39. g3 h5 40. Rf4 Rxf4 41. gxf4 Kf6 42. Kd4 Kf5 43. Nd3 Be4 44. Ke3 h4 45. Ne1 a6 46. c4 Bc6 47. Nf3 Bxf3 48. Kxf3 g5 49. fxg5 Kxg5 50. a4 Kf5 51. c5 Ke5 52. b5 Kd5 53. c6!**



Position after 53 c6!

53 bxc6 54. bxa6 Kd4 55. a7 c5 56. a8=Q and White later won. One of many tough and instructive games against Richard.

Reflections about Richard Olson

“Grace and Peace to you” is the phone greeting whenever I called Richard up. And I have called Richard a number of times over the years. But one call he made to me years ago, made a huge difference in my life. He wanted to know where I’ve been. Richard expressed a desire to have me return to chess and to play in his upcoming event.

I was deeply touched by Richard taking time out to call me. I was rather adrift at the time. I wasn’t playing chess and what little chess activity I had resulted in poor outcomes. I was very discouraged. At the time, my passion for chess was replaced by the glamour and glitz of casino gambling. I’ve very pleased to say the casino siren’s song is muted now. Thank you Richard for helping me.

I have known Richard for decades and I have played in a number of his tournaments. Richard’s tournaments were and are special events. First and foremost, it is run by a caring, competent and compassion tournament director in the person of Richard Olson. In addition, you can count having a good shot at winning something, either a custom made trophy or ribbon. But the trademark of Richard’s tournaments is that he’ll FEED you! Between rounds, for a very reasonable fee, pizza and pop would be provided to the tournament participants. I always thought that was really special from Richard. Of course, this also involved his family, his helpers and the communities of Clarks and Central City.

One of my earliest memories of Richard had to do with an entry fee. I had sent in a advance entry fee but couldn’t play in his event, (I think it had something to do with the weather but I’m not sure). Well, Richard certainly demonstrated to me he was a man of honor. He remembered that entry fee for months before it was used for another event. That sure impressed me. Richard was a guest at my home one weekend. He came down to Lincoln to direct the Midwest Open and Richard did his usual professional job running the event. He was a good guest.

I specifically remember Richard finding a small Bible by the nightstand (in the guest bedroom) and hearing Richard say words to the effect; *“Oh you have a Bible and its used!”* I got the biggest kick out of that comment.

I developed a better understanding of small town life when dealing with Richard. The degree of hospitability in terms of sharing food during tournaments stands out and the friendliness of people who know and care about each another, truly does exist in small town America. I’m glad I had a chance to experience this firsthand. Richard is a good role model and represented himself and the community very well. One year, the “community connections” made all the difference...I was having car trouble during a trip to Clarks and we (Anton Sildmets and I) were quite lucky to limp into Clarks in time for the chess tournament. I told Richard what happened and he made one quick call and within minutes a mechanic showed up, took my car in the shop and fixed it (turned out to be a clogged fuel filter) and charged me next to nothing. I felt like I was in Mayberry.



I learned some things about Richard during this interview that I wasn’t aware of before. Richard served our country. He was one of the “chosen frozen” and served in Korea. Richard, thank you for serving our country and bless your sons, David and Daniel, for their service too.

Now I know why Richard enjoyed finding that small Bible! Thank you Richard for being a man of substance and conviction. To me, you’ll always be ***“A Stalwart of Nebraska Chess”*** and a good friend.

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