

“The Joy is in the journey itself”... musings from a novice part 3

### **“Life Happens ... a Chess Hiatus”**

As this narrative continues, a common theme seen in most adult chess players is that life inevitably happens along the way. No exception here, at that time in the late 1980's I had three small kids and a wife who needed me home on the weekends instead of chasing a rating. I stopped playing for a few years. A lot of things had happened too. I was trying to get my career going in a state (Maine) that wasn't really cooperative for high technology. I kept finding jobs with lay-offs a year or two later when they sold. Then, my wife and I split up. After the divorce, I was raising 3 kids on my own as a single father with no time for chess.

I did re-marry someone ( a little too soon after the first) and we had a child. I took a relocation package from Digital in Augusta and moved to Worcester in 1995 The older ones were elementary school age.

The chess board was calling to me again. I found my way to the Worcester Chess club ( in West Boylston) where I met Geoff Polizoti and actually won a game with him before he became John Curdo's Stepson. That will probably be the last time I won him too since he was rocketing up the ratings ladder.

I started an elementary school team at my kids school. I got some sets from MACA. Once a week I would give an introductory 15 minute lesson followed by a club ladder game. I printed up a weekly newsletter with the ladder results. These kids were eager to see who was at the top.

I took a group of them to their first tournaments. Stephen Dahn was the director at the Cavendish club tournaments. Entering the room, you were greeted by a knight in armor. It was great décor for a chess event. My boys won some books and I lost some rating points. I really didn't mind, the kids were having fun.

Then life happened again. My second wife abandoned us to chase an old flame back in Maine. Now as a single father again with four kids in tow, I had to shelve the chess scene. I couldn't juggle the scholastic chess team along with caring for an 18 month old. The whole team was disappointed but the school and parents understood. That spring, the mayor of Worcester actually presented me with an award from the school for my efforts. I was touched.

Living in Worcester gave me a chance to regroup. It also meant that the occasional book author would come to Tatnuck Booksellers to have the book signed. Bruce Pandolfini is one of America's most prolific authors in chess. He happened to show up in Worcester to have his latest books signed. I took advantage of the opportunity. I even got one signed for my dad. I had my picture taken with the very personable author and sent it up to him. A tournament was held that day and I lost a considerable amount of points. Gee, on the

heels of my second divorce and struggling financially, you'd think I would have done better?

It was the later half of the 1990's and I started seeing this woman who also had three kids. Her son was interested in chess and so was her nephew. I showed them some of the things I taught my kids. I didn't push on them and I let them discover the game with gentle coaching from the side.

I went to school during this period to finish an engineering degree and start a post graduate degree. I realized securing a better financial future for the family was more important than chess. <sigh> Being responsible took precedence over losing more rating points.