

Strategic moves / by Mark Kaprielian

Here's how we got to where we are and why you haven't heard a whole lot from us.

I returned to the club in September of '94 after an absence of ten years, and found myself being asked to step in as president. The night I was elected was our first night at the Callahan Senior Center in Framingham. The club had to move from the Legion hall as the rent increase continually drained our Treasury and we found ourselves rushing toward bankruptcy. We found the Senior Center after lots of searching and the price was right: No Rent.

There were some drawbacks. The main room was too small, the skittles room was filled with junk and oversized desks. The bathrooms were not being maintained, there were no vending machines or water fountains, and we couldn't always get in the front door.

Things improved as we began purchasing things for the center in lieu of paying rent. We moved a lot of junk out of the room, then purchased eight-foot tables, put up bulletin boards, put in large trash barrels and bought fans. Over time our room turned out so well that the Center started using it as a general meeting room and held karate lessons in there as well. At this point we were only left with two central problems: we couldn't depend on the center being open each week, and sometimes half the chairs were in another building.

When I was first elected president, I had a number of plans to promote the club and increase membership. We did indeed pick up a good number of new members. but with the conditions we found ourselves in, I had a real problem with the idea of having even more people show up. I often arrived just in time to beg someone to let me in so I could prop open the door. And how many times would we not be able to get in, or not have enough chairs for everyone, before people would give up on the club? I figured once would be one time too many. With all this going on, the number of available tournament directors dwindled down, and we were also short of volunteers for tasks such as sending out flyers or doing the newsletter.

Happily, we found a new home in May: the Kennedy Senior Center in downtown Natick. While I regret moving from the town of our namesake, the site is a wonderful place to play chess:

- We're the only people there on Tuesday nights.
- We have our own set of keys to gain access to the facility.
- It's a clean, no-smoking facility in an excellent neighborhood with lots of free parking.
- There are vending machines for soda and candy, plus a full kitchen with coffee machine.
- The main room can accommodate about 30 boards, with two other rooms for skittles.

The only down side is that some of our long time members may have difficulty getting transportation to Natick. I will get information out in the near future so that we can work together to help all our members get to and from the new club location.

Now we can settle in and make the renamed Framingham/Metrowest Chess Club once again one of the strongest chess clubs in New England. If you're rusty, don't worry, there are plenty of fish in our little pond, it's just a question of how long you'll be one of them. Stop by the club -- the sharks are hungry!

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P.S. If you have email and would like to get on our automated email discussion and newlist, send us mail at mcc@world.std.com and we will subscribe you to the list. Please include your full name in the message.

