

## LESSONS FROM MY GAMES

(Dedicated to Miguel Angel Nepomuceno)

By J. Eugene Salomon

In my first article in the April 2022 issue, there were some of my best games, played after age 65. Today, at age 93, I will focus on lessons from my games, starting with a few examples from my teenage years and continuing with my talking points from when I was a volunteer coach at schools and lecturer at chess clubs.

I will also highlight how, after retiring from competitive chess, I have remained connected to chess by writing about it.

My first serious tournaments were in Spain: 1946-1947 the Castile (Madrid) Individual and Team tournaments, and the Gijon 1947 - IV International Tournament. Those were followed by a memorable Havana, Cuba, 1952 Invitational Tournament to select the National Team for the Finland World Chess Olympiad. I ended up 6th of 14 players, qualifying for the team. When I decided not to participate, IM Rogelio Ortega, who had finished 7th, took my place. I didn't play chess again for 16 years.

After that long period of retirement, the memory of my father (deceased a few months earlier), inspired me to play at the 1968 New Jersey State Open Chess Championship . Playing for the first time in the U.S, I started as an "unrated player." I was a finalist and ended up with a "provisional master rating" over 2200. A few years later, I started teaching chess to my children, as well as to many other youngsters as a volunteer coach. Most notably, I helped the high school team of Christian Brothers Academy (where my sons attended), become N.J. State Champions in 1979-80.

Two of my last memorable tournaments were the Linares Open (1998) in Spain, and the World Open (also in 1998) in Philadelphia. After that, I retired from the grueling world of competitive chess. That enabled me to become more active as a lecturer and volunteer coach in schools.

About 15 years later, I began another phase of my connection with chess- writing about it. It all started in 2014. Steve Pozarek (past New Jersey State Open Chess Champion), Wayne Conover (FIDE Master and I.M in Correspondence Chess) and I wrote an e-Book reflecting our real-life story, called *40 Years of Friendship–100 Games of Chess*. The book covers our beautiful experience as key members of the Westfield Chess Club team, assembled by our unforgettable leader, Dennis Barry, in the early 1970's. The prologue, written by Steve, explains how we became friends, and lived together through some exciting years of New Jersey

chess history. Early in 2014, a team was being assembled that included old members of the Westfield Club and was essentially a Westfield Chess Club reunion. Steve was slated to play third board, and Wayne and I immediately decided to visit the tournament, to renew old acquaintances with the members of our team, and with other old friends who gather at this annual event. We also wanted to get a picture with our team to add to the book- here are Wayne, Steve and I with our friends from the great Westfield Chess Club of the 1970's, 40+ years later. . .



From left to right: Joe Graves, Wayne Conover, GM John Fedorowicz, FM Mark Pinto, Gene Salomon, and Steve Pozarek.

The new technology of computer interactive chess books was just starting, and we had the privilege of being one of the first 40 e-books published using the Forward Chess program.

<https://forwardchess.com/product/40-years-of-friendship-100-games-of-chess>

In that book, there is a chapter with the title *Lessons from our Games- Gene Salomon*. For this article I will only use 5-6 examples of my games.

Below are a few points that I used to recommend to the many youngsters I trained– including my three sons!

1. When you start studying chess, make sure to give top priority to studying the games of the great masters. Think: Capablanca, Alekhine, and Botvinnik; or Fischer, Kasparov, and Anand... preferably all of them!
2. From those games, you will soon learn that chess is not a game of "moves," it is a game of plans and ideas. You have

to think ahead. Decide what you want to accomplish and then look for the practical moves to achieve the positions that you wish to reach.

3. Even at the end of the opening and then throughout the middlegame, you should keep an eye on possible “transitions” into the endgame. If you have a material advantage, it is generally advisable to simplify the game by exchanging pieces.
4. From the games of the masters and from your own practice, you will soon find that space and time are essential elements of the chess struggle.
5. Make sure you develop your pieces as quickly as possible. In general, you should not move a piece twice. You should also avoid getting your queen out too soon, since it will allow your opponent to gain tempo by attacking it.
6. Make sure that your pieces are well-placed. (A knight in the center attacks 8 squares, while the same knight at the edge of the board attacks only 4 squares or even less.)
7. Fast development of your pieces, obtaining the initiative, and maintaining constant pressure is a sure way to good results. Your opponent, under pressure, is prone to make weaker moves or to blunder.
8. Whenever your opponent makes a move, ask yourself: “Why did he move there? What is the threat?” If your opponent threatens a piece, before thinking about retreat or defense, ask yourself: “Can I disregard his threat by attacking something more valuable?”
9. Don’t become discouraged, even if you are in an inferior position. Sometimes you may lose a pawn in the opening and your opponent may become overconfident, or with dynamic play, you may even win the game.
10. Having a plan of action for your game, a clear analysis of the position (the weak and strong points) is essential, but you should never forget about the tactics, the beautiful opportunities that can decide games all of a sudden.
11. There are many “themes” for combinations: from the existence of undefended pieces, to the opportunity for a discovered check or a double check, to double attacks, the possibilities are fascinating. As a starting point you should become familiar with checkmate patterns. You should read some good books about “the art of combinations.”
12. Never assume that your opponent has to make the obvious move. “I’ll attack his queen, my opponent will have to move it;” or “I take his rook, he’ll take mine” is the type of dangerous thinking that is at the root of many combinations.
13. Frequently, young players become too involved in memorizing variations in the openings. I suggest that your progress in chess will be faster and more meaningful if you dedicate at least 80% of your study time to endings and combinations rather than the openings.
14. You will never become a true master unless you have a deep knowledge of the endgame – start practicing with pawn endings and move on to rook-and-pawn endings, which are the most frequent.
15. The value of the pieces is quite relative, depending on the position. A pawn on the seventh rank can be more valuable than a rook!
16. It is also important to coordinate the pieces. For example, a queen and knight are often superior to a queen and bishop, because they can coordinate beautifully for attack. Queen and knight can attack all squares (light and dark) while the bishop can only attack either the light or the dark squares.
17. A rook and a bishop are, in general, superior to a rook and a knight.
18. Bishops are superior to knights when there are pawns on both sides of the board. A knight’s value is greater when there are pawns only on one side. These are the natural consequences of the mobility of each piece.
19. Finally, analyze your own games thoroughly, especially the losses. The best way to improve is to understand the real reasons why you lost. For example: What caused you to choose a certain move that was an error? What did your opponent see or understand that you did not? These and many other questions can be answered through objectivity and by being self-critical about the reasons behind a defeat. By doing this type of analysis, you will go a long way towards preventing that same kind of error from occurring in future games.

The book *40 Years of Friendship: 100 Games of Chess* also contains 10 games selected by each of the three authors to illustrate the lessons. For this article, I will select only 5-6 of my games from my teenage years in Spain.

**GAME # 1 : CRITICAL POSITION, after 9...Qc7**

I was 16 years old. Routinely, every time my opponent moved, I asked myself: What's the reason and/or the threat of this move? If the threat had a refutation, by all means let him do it!

That was exactly what happened in this game: after Black move 9. ...♘c7 my opponent thought that he would win material should white proceed with 10. b4, with 10...♗xd4; 11. ♘c3 attacking my rook, Knight and Bishop at the same time...I just looked a move further down to see that with ♘c2 I would refute his plan...

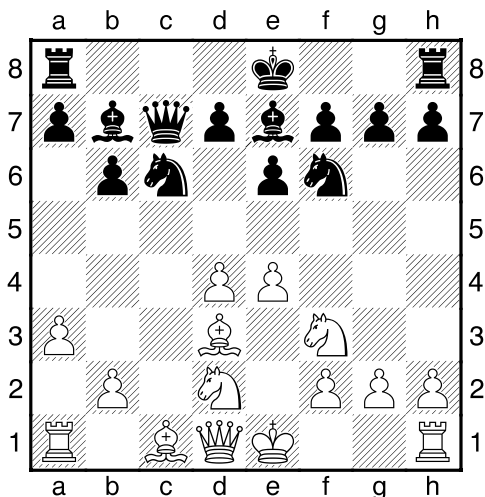
A valuable tool for combinations is when you can find that your opponent's threat has no merit and will backfire, by all means, play like you have not seen his threat!!

**J. Eugene Salomon – Jose Bugeda [A47]**

Maudes Club Championship, Madrid, Spain, February 1945

Perhaps because it was at the start of my chess career in Madrid, this game brings happy memories. José Bugeda, a strong club player, was a journalist and radio program host. After this game, I was invited to appear on his show for an interview about chess.

1. d4 ♗f6 2. ♗f3 e6 3. e3 b6 4. ♗d3 ♗b7 5. ♗bd2 c5 6. c3 ♗c6 7. a3 ♗e7 8. e4 cxd4 9. cxd4 ♘c7



10. b4! 10. ♗xd4 11. ♗xd4 ♘c3 12. ♘c2! ♘xd4 13. ♗b2 ♘d6 14. e5 ♘d5 15. exf6 ♘xg2 16. ♗e4 ♗xe4 17. ♘xe4 ♘xe4+ 18. ♗xe4 gxf6 19. ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 20. ♗xf6 ♗g8 21. ♘e2 ♗c8 22. ♗ac1 ♗c6? 23. ♗xc6 dxc6 24. ♗d1 1-0

**GAME # 2 : CRITICAL POSITION, after 12. Qc2**

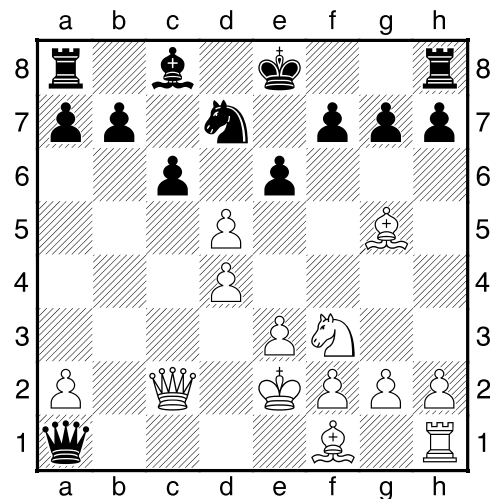
Future International Master and Spanish Champion Román Torán was an avid chess player at the age of 14-15. I was his senior by about two years, and we played frequent training matches during the summers of 1945 and 1946 in Gijon, Spain. I'm sure that no one can equal the favorable score that I have against my old friend!

Torán had prepared this surprise variation against the Cambridge Springs Defense that I was using against him. It was from the game Bogoljubow – V.D. Bush, Bad Nauheim 1936, and the claim was that the black queen was trapped after White's move 12. ♘c2!! (a novelty then, to refute 8. ...♗b4). With 12. ♘c2, White threatens 13. ♗d2 and 14. ♗b3, and if 13. ...a7-a5, then 14. g2-g3! V.D. Bush played 12...b6 and lost... I think that I found, over the board, the refutation to Bogoljubow's trap with 12...♗b6! I was as surprised as my friend Román was, and the post-mortem analysis formed the basis for an article I wrote for the magazine *Ajedrez Español* in January 1946.

**Román Torán – J. Eugene Salomon [D52]**

Training Match, Gijón, Spain, June 28, 1945

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. ♗c3 ♗f6 4. ♗g5 ♗bd7 5. e3 c6 6. ♗f3 ♘a5 7. ♘c2 ♗e4 8. cxd5 ♗b4 9. ♘xe4 ♗xc3+ 10. bxc3 ♘xc3+ 11. ♘e2 ♘xa1 12. ♘c2



♗b6 13. g4 ♗xd5 14. ♘d2 ♗b4 15. ♘c5 ♘xa2+ 16. ♘e1 ♗d5 17. e4 ♘b1+ 0-1

**GAME # 3: CRITICAL POSITION, after 14...Nxd5.**

Obviously white has been outplayed in the opening and has a positional disaster in his hands. Instead of "centralizing" his Queen with 15. ♘d4 it seems like he had to go to 15. ♘g3 ... to avoid losing the Queen...

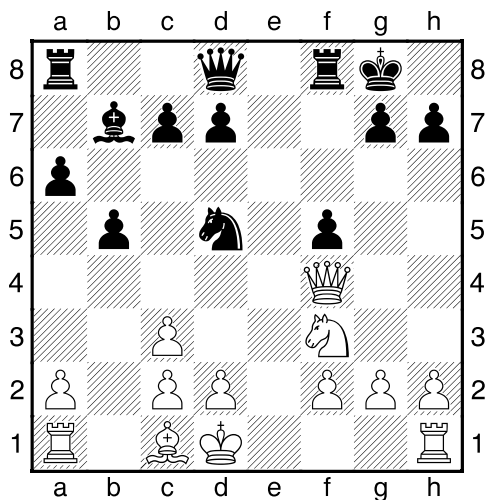
**Juan Manuel Fuentes – J. Eugene Salmon [C77]**  
 Maudes Club Championship, Madrid, Spain, November 1946

Juan Manuel Fuentes was one of the strongest players in Spain at the time. He had been experimenting with this variation of the Ruy Lopez Opening...which he abandoned right after this game. His move **9. ♖e4** goes clearly against the principle of not moving the same piece twice as you will lose a tempo...Probably best would have been **9. d4** (see diagram).

After that, White's position becomes clearly inferior.

The position after **15. ♗d4**, deserves another diagram: the innocent looking **15. ... d6!** results in a pretty Knight sacrifice winning his Queen!

**1. e4 e5 2. ♟f3 ♞c6 3. ♠b5 a6 4. ♠a4 ♟f6 5. ♖e2 b5 6. ♠b3 ♠e7 7. ♠d5?! ♞x♟d5 8. ex♟d5 ♞b4 9. ♖e4 ♠b7 10. ♞c3 0-0 11. ♞d1 f5 12. ♖x♟e5 ♠f6 13. ♖f4 ♠xc3 14. bxc3 ♞xd5**



**15. ♗d4 d6 16. ♞e1 c5 17. ♖h4 ♞xc3+! 0-1**

**GAME # 4 : CRITICAL POSITION** after 29...Rh7.

Threatening **30...♞xh2** and **31...♞f3+**

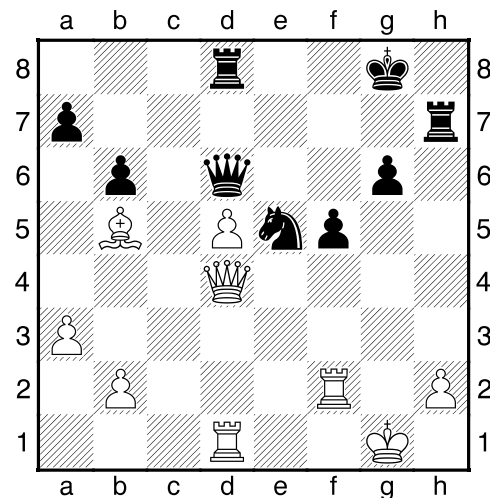
A good example of the Queen-Knight teamwork in combinations!

**Francisco José Pérez – J. Eugene Salomon [B03]**  
 Training Match, Madrid, Spain, June 1947

Francisco José Pérez (Champion of Castile in 1947 and of Spain in 1948) was one of the strongest players in the country in the 1940s. We played for the same club (Hogar de Maudes) and occasionally played training matches. Here is my favorite game against him.

**1. e4 ♟f6 2. e5 ♞d5 3. d4 d6 4. c4 ♞b6 5. f4 dxe5 6. fxe5 ♞c6 7. ♠e3 ♠f5 8. ♞c3 e6 9. ♞f3 ♞b4 10. ♞c1 c5 11. a3 cxd4 12. ♞xd4 ♞c6 13. ♞xf5 exf5 14. ♞d5 ♠e7**

**15. ♠e2 0-0 16. 0-0 g6 17. g4 ♞xd5 18. cxd5 ♞xe5 19. gx♟f5 ♠g5 20. ♖d2 ♠xe3+ 21. ♖xe3 f6 22. f×g6 h×g6 23. ♖c5 b6 24. ♖d4 ♖d6 25. ♠g4 ♞ad8 26. ♞cd1 f5 27. ♠e2 ♞f7 28. ♞f2 ♞fd7 29. ♠b5 ♞h7**



**30. ♠e2 ♞c8 31. ♖h1 ♞c2! 32. ♖a4 ♞g4 33. ♖e8+ ♖g7 34. ♞f4 ♞xh2+ 0-1**

A month later we faced each other again at the Fourth Gijón International Tournament, where he was co-winner, tied with L. Prins. The game was again an Alekhine Defense Advance Variation, full of excitement and ending in a draw.

**GAME # 5 : CRITICAL POSITION** after 26...Nd7.

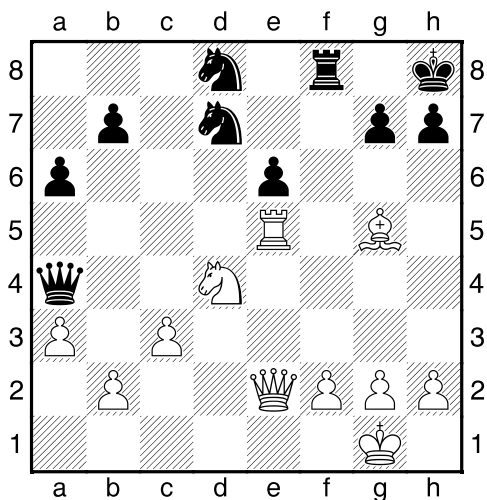
This position is a clear illustration of what I always insisted with the youngsters I trained : "If the opponent attacks your Bishop or your rook, before you retreat, think if you can attack something of more value... In this case I.M Medina was attacking my rook, so as a matter of routine I asked myself : "what happens if I attack his Queen?"... to my great surprise I realized that if I should move **27.b3**, his Queen only had a square to go: **27... ♖xa3...WOW!** What about if I play **27. ♠e7** attacking his rook but in effect protecting a3?... My instinct or my psychological reasoning told me that my opponent, seeing clearly that I was attacking his rook, would never suspect that in effect, I was not interested in his rook but his Queen!!... I still remember today the internal happiness of that win!

**Salomon, J. Eugene – Medina García, Antonio [B53]**  
 Fourth Gijón International, Gijón, Spain, July, 1947

Antonio Medina was then Champion of Spain. A few comments about this encounter: (1) I played **5. ♖xd4?!** in an effort to get out of "book lines" as soon as possible. Medina was a Sicilian expert, and I was not! (2) After Black's move **12...♖e8**, I thought that if I succeeded in eliminating Black's e7-bishop, I should get a superior position. The following 4-5 moves are the logical path.

**1. e4 c5 2. ♞f3 d6 3. d4 ♟f6 4. ♞c3 cxd4 5. ♖xd4 ♞c6 6. ♠b5 e5 7. ♖d3 a6 8. ♠c4 ♠e6 9. ♠xe6 fxe6 10. ♠g5 ♠e7 11. 0-0 0-0 12. ♞ad1 ♖e8 13. ♞e2 ♖g6 14. ♞g3**

♖ac8 15. ♗b3! ♘d8 16. ♘f5! ♚c7 17. ♘xe7+ ♜xe7 18. ♜xd6 ♗xe4 19. ♜e1 ♗g6 20. ♜xe5 ♖h8 21. ♗d3 ♗e8 22. ♗e2 ♗a4 23. a3 ♚c7 24. c3 ♚c4 25. ♚d4 ♜xd4 26. ♘xd4 ♘d7



27. ♘e7 ♜e8 28. b3! ♗xd4 29. cxd4 ♘xe5 30. ♘xd8 ♜xd8 31. ♗xe5 1-0

There is one last game that I played at age 91 which best illustrates my lessons, especially the one about not losing hope. It is a game I played in the 50th World Amateur Team - US Team East Tournament. I organized, and was the team captain of, "The Oldest Team in Town", one of several teams representing the Toms River Chess Club. (See picture below)



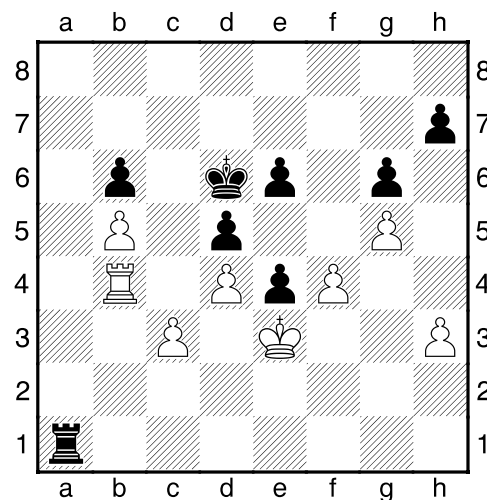
The Toms River Chess Club

I am third from left, kneeling; Steve Doyle (the historic organizer and one of the original members of the club) is in blue in the back row, and Steve Shoshin (most recent president of the club), is kneeling, third from right. The Toms River Chess Club just received the honor of being named "the best club in the United States" for 2021 by the USCF.

The game was analyzed by the magazine, Chess, of London in their article of April 2020. [http://www.historiadelaJedrezspanol.es/articulos/salomon/Chess\\_04\\_2020.pdf](http://www.historiadelaJedrezspanol.es/articulos/salomon/Chess_04_2020.pdf) (The original article can be found in the

April 2020 issue of the British magazine, Chess, on the website <http://www.chess.co.uk/>. I felt honored to appear in such a prestigious magazine founded by the legendary W.H. Wood, whom I met when I played against him at the Gijon IV International Tournament, in 1947.)

"The oldest participant was a certain Eugene Salomon. We know that many of you enjoyed Gene's article 'Chess for Life' in our January pages and we were delighted to see him in one of the Toms Rivers teams in Parsippany. As team captain Gene played just one of the two rounds each day, managing two draws and a win"...(Gene)"reached the following tricky rook endgame in Parsippany against a young man like one of the many that Gene trained in his High School Coaching years."



E.Salomon-I.Giesshir  
U.S. Amateur Teams East 2020

49. c4!? Trying to obtain some counterplay. 49...♖a3+ 50. ♖e2 ♜xh3? Falling into White's plans. Now it's only a draw. 51. c5+! ♖c7 51...bxc5? 52. dxc5+ ♜xc5 53. b6! 52. ♖a4 ♜b3 53. ♖a7+ ♖b8 54. cxb6 ♜xb5 55. ♖xh7 ♜xb6 56. ♜h6 ♜b2+ 57. ♖e3 ♜b3+ 58. ♖e2 ♖c7 59. ♖xg6 ♖d7 60. ♖g7+ ♖e8 61. ♖a7 ♜f3 62. g6 ♜xf4?? Black has certainly pushed the boat out in his quest to win and by now needed to find 62...♖f8 just to hold. 63. ♖a8+ 1-0 "

This game is a perfect illustration of my lesson number 9 (above) about not becoming discouraged, even in an inferior position ("with dynamic play, you may even win the game"). Technically, the best case scenario for me in this position was a draw, so I decided to look for complications and hope for the best. Towards the end, my young opponent made a mistake (which will certainly be a lesson for his future success in chess), and I surprisingly won this game. Aside from warming the heart of a nonagenarian, this game reaffirmed my lesson about never giving up.

Leaving lessons aside, in this new world of instant communication, internet and social media, as soon as our e-Book was published, I became portrayed in Spain as a "famous player from the 1940's". This is, I guess, one of the rare cases where old age

works to your advantage. I had started to play at a young age, at a time when chess was not played by children, and seldom by teenagers. Few players from my generation are still alive, and certainly none who have played against Alekhine, Arturito Pomar, J.M. Fuentes, A. Medina , F.J. Perez and Roman Toran in the Spain of the 1940's- with a much better than even score!!!

As I have mentioned before, in recent years I became quite active as a writer. My articles can be found on the web site of the Spanish chess historian and writer, Javier Cordero, who honored me with a page for my writings:

[http://www.historiadelaajedrezspanol.es/articulos/salomon\\_eng.htm](http://www.historiadelaajedrezspanol.es/articulos/salomon_eng.htm)

Three recent articles in English are:

1. **"Celebrating Chess: Clubs, Teams and Organizers"**, article published in the annual New Jersey State Chess Federation Magazine "Atlantic Chess News" February 2020

<https://njscf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ACN-2019-DONE1.pdf>

2. **"Chess for Life"** article published in the British magazine, *Chess*, January 2020.

[http://www.historiadelaajedrezspanol.es/articulos/salomon/Articulo\\_Chess.pdf](http://www.historiadelaajedrezspanol.es/articulos/salomon/Articulo_Chess.pdf)

3. **"Alekhine's Life Lesson and Chess After 65"** article published in "The Chess Journalist", April 2022" (pgs. 14-27)

[April 2022 issue of The Chess Journalist](#)

Finally, my dear reader, to add a little bit of a suspenseful ending to this article, I would like to announce that a leading Spanish chess book publisher, Chessy, has just published my book, *Jugando en el Tablero de la Vida (Playing on the Chessboard of Life)* written with Javier Cordero. I'm quite hopeful that the English version of the book about life intertwined with my 80 years of passion for chess will be available before the next issue of this magazine is published. I hope you'll enjoy reading these articles and the book as much as I have enjoyed writing them.

## IN MEMORIAM- Miguel Angel Nepomuceno

As this article was being readied for submission, I received the sad news about the passing of my dear friend, Miguel Ángel Nepomuceno. Miguel Angel was many things- an International Master in chess, a superb chess historian, famous author, journalist, a cherished friend, and my inspiration to begin writing. He honored me with a series of biographical articles in his column in Zenda in 2017 and was so fascinated by the story of my family that he insisted we were going to write it together- our masterpiece. Sadly, we never got the opportunity, but his confidence in me and the value of my stories is what motivates me to continue writing. To Miguel Angel- my *amigo para siempre*, my forever friend- I dedicate this article to you, and when I finally write the family story (and I will), I know you will be with me every step of the way. *Vaya con Dios, y descanse en paz.*



Myself, Miguel Angel, and my wife, Beatriz, in Madrid (2017)