

Four Generations and 80 Years of Chess

J. Eugene Salomon

At age 95, I have just traveled from my New Jersey home to my native Gijon, Spain. I was invited to participate in a documentary/film, "*El Pequeno Peon*" (The Little Pawn) about the life of child chess prodigy Arturo Pomar. It was 80 years ago, in 1944, when I played chess against world champion Alekhine and soccer with "Arturito" (Pomar), right there, in the Gijon of my childhood. You could say that Pomar was Spain's "Bobby Fischer" in the 1940s. While my readers may not know it, he was also a U.S. Open Chess Champion.

While in Gijon, I was invited to be a panelist on a presentation held at the City Hall Conferences' building, about the World Health Organization's 10 year program: "*Década 2021-2030 del envejecimiento saludable*" (Decade of Healthy Ageing). I was introduced as a Life Master in both Chess and Bridge from the U.S., and my topic was "*Memoria y mantenimiento cognitivo en la práctica del Ajedrez y del Bridge*". (*Memory and Cognitive Maintenance Through the Playing of Chess and Bridge*.) Because I became a Life Master of the U.S. Chess Federation at age 70 and a Silver Life Master in Bridge when I was 92-93, the organizer (J.Carlos Herrero, an anthropologist and social educator) thought I was a good example to illustrate the subject. (During my exciting trip to Spain, I was able to give a big hug to my 102-year-old sister and have dinner with all my family in Madrid and Gijon.)

At my age, I am extremely fortunate to still have my wits about me, and I believe that 80 years of Chess and 70 years of Bridge are two of the reasons for that. Both games require strategy, planning, forethought, and consideration of multiple possible moves and their outcomes-activities that require a great deal of the mental stimulation that staves off age-related mental decline. I've also had the privilege of playing against incredibly skilled opponents of all ages and backgrounds, which pushed me to be constantly thinking and learning new strategies. Both games, in addition to my many years of work as a corporate executive (retired at age 65) and an independent consultant (still active today!) have kept me thinking, planning, and exercising my brain throughout my life.

As part of my mental exercise, I also include writing and I have now become a writer in my 90's. Below are two slides with my favorite articles and my last two books.



ARTÍCULOS

- **MÚSICA, AJEDREZ Y POESÍA. 2019.**
<http://www.historiadelaajedrezspanol.es/articulos/salomon/05.htm>
- **COINCIDENCES: Wars, Chess and Sugar. Chess, noviembre 2023.**
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-XFAfwRcIQK9MyBKc5JMH7SeQQJb89Jw/view?usp=sharing>
- **SWEET MEMORIES – A 95-year-old looks back on decades at the bridge table and the chessboard. J. E. Salomon. Bulletin ACBL, diciembre 2023.**
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xfYJHV1lb0Y5FJ6U2EsKyY1HYVb4rk8T/view?usp=sharing>



MIS DOS ÚLTIMOS LIBROS

- **Jugando en el tablero de la vida. J. E. Salomon y J. Cordero. Editorial Chessy, 2022**
- **Sweet Memories. Family, Friends, Chess and Sugar. J. E. Salomon y D. Dahl. SFB Multimedia, 2023**

The first book, a chess autobiography in Spanish-- "*Jugando en el Tablero de la Vida*" (Playing on the Board of Life, written with co-author Javier Cordero, and published by Chessy Editorial), contains 120 of my games. The second one, "Sweet Memories: Family, Friends, Chess, and Sugar," is a family historical book (1895-to date) written in English with co-author Diane Dahl. This book contains no games: it is a combination of the book of memoirs of my father ("Walking and Wondering under the Sign of the Cross in the Shadow of the Swastika") and my above-mentioned Spanish chess biographical book.

A week after my return from Gijon, I was one of the four panelists at a videotaped conference celebrating the 60th Anniversary of my chess club, TRCC (Toms River Chess Club). While I was never a Grandmaster nor a professional chess player, I feel honored to be listed in the club Hall of Fame, where my name appears next to Botvinnick, Karpov, Korchnoi, Petrosian, Tahl, and several other chess luminaries.

With Steve Doyle , past President of the U.S.C.F and past Vice-President of FIDE and also a distinguished member of the Hall of Fame.



But I digress- let's get back to the origin of my story and the 80 years of CHESS TEAMS in Spain, Cuba, Central America, and the U.S.

My father was born in Metz, France, then Germany, and my mother was born in Cardenas, Cuba, then part of Spain, in 1895. It was a magical year for chess- Capablanca, at age 7, was already a chess prodigy, and Jacques Mieses had just defeated the Cuban Champion Andres Clemente Vazquez in Havana, winning +4 =5 -1 (December 30, 1894 to January 12th, 1895). In Europe, one of the most historical tournaments on record (Hastings 1895) took place in England. The surprise winner was the American Harry Nelson Pillsbury, followed by Mikhail Chigorin, Emanuel Lasker (then World Champion), Siegbert Tarrasch, and William Steinitz (past World Champion, just defeated by Lasker the previous year.

My father was my first chess teacher, and he used these lessons as a bonding tool with his son and some of his grandsons. (I followed his model for years, culminating with the 1980 U.S Amateur Team Tournament when I was the Captain of the Team: "King Salomon and his three Knights"...my three sons, ages 17, 13 and 6).

In 1941, my father was a volunteer in the British army, fighting against Hitler at Dunkirk. He finally reached Gijon again, after the British advised all their volunteers to take back their civilian clothes and run, as they could not take care of saving them. My father did run, and eventually made it to San Juan de Luz (Saint-Jean-de-Luz), a French city next to the Spanish border. While he sought ways to get back to his wife and children in Gijon, Spain, my dad survived by giving lessons in chess and languages! As he wrote in his memoirs, "Playing chess, like playing music, one can nearly reach a state of nirvana."

After he was denied entrance to Spain, he crossed illegally

through the Pyrenees, a decision that landed him at a concentration camp for "undocumented aliens" He was eventually freed, provided that he would leave Spain...but that's another long and painful story.

My father obviously adored the game of chess, and I am fortunate that he chose to pass on his passion to me. As a teen in Madrid, Spain, I even enjoyed a short time in the national chess limelight in the 1940s when a newspaper called me a child prodigy- "the next Arturito Pomar." because I, as a 14-year-old, had beaten the reigning chess champion of Spain (José Sanz Aguado). During my intense teen years, I not only met World Champion Alexander Alekhine, but played alongside (and against) the biggest names in contemporary Spanish chess history. I was proud to call many of them my friends, and now, I am truly honored to be a participant in the documentary about Arturito Pomar that I mentioned earlier.

As an individual player, as well as having been part of outstanding chess teams, I achieved not only great results, but made even better friendships. Here is a chronological list:

MY CELEBRATION OF EIGHTY YEARS OF CHESS TEAMS:

- 1943: Team of the Casino de la Unión de los Gremios in my native Gijón, versus our arch-rival, the team from Oviedo. I won my game, we won the match, and I became a "hero" and was even compared with Arturito Pomar as a new "child prodigy" - at age 14!! (In those days, there were no children playing chess.)
- 1947: Club Maudes (Madrid)- Champions of the province of Castile (finishing ahead of Arturito Pomar's team).
- 1952: Club Cubanaleco (Havana)---Champions of Havana
- 1952: Club Capablanca (Havana) --- Flew to San Salvador to play against a team of Guatemala -El Salvador
- 1970s & 1980s: Westfield, N.J. Chess Club- Won multiple years of matches and team tournaments in New Jersey.
- 1978: As a High School volunteer coach, my team ("Christian Brothers Academy"--Lincroft, N.J) became New Jersey High School State Champion for the first time.
- 1980: We entered as a "Family Team" in the U.S. Amateur Chess Championship -- "King Salomon and his 3

Knights," comprised of my three sons and myself.

- 1985: It was an honor to win "Family Team First Place" with friend Steve Pozarek and his father and uncle (as their adopted fourth family team-mate) at the same Amateur Chess Championship.
- 2021: To celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the USATE (that my friend Steve Doyle has been running since its inception), I participated as captain of a Toms River Team "Oldest Team in Town" (average age 71). I did not lose any games, and at age 91 I won a prize as the oldest of the 1400 participants!
- 2024: To celebrate my recent start-up of the Harrogate Senior Chess Club, we visited the old Greenbriar Woodlands Chess Club, which I started 27 years ago when I first moved into that adult community. I played a 7-board simultaneous against a selection of players from both clubs and won all the games.

As proud as I believe my father was of my chess prowess, I am equally proud of having passed my love of chess down to my children, the third generation of Salomon chess players. As I mentioned above, my three sons and I formed a family team in 1980 at the US Amateur Chess Tournament. My oldest son, Gene, was part of the 1978 high school team I coached to a state chess championship, and at one time, my youngest son, Robbie, was the primary school state chess champion of New Jersey. Although all my children have taught their children to play, it is Robbie's son, Ben, who has continued the family tradition, becoming a 4th generation Salomon chess player.

Grandson Ben, son Robbie, and myself at the N.Y School Team Tournament in Saratoga, New York, when Ben was part of a Columbia Prep Team under the leadership of Sophia Rohde.



It is incredible to me that my father's passion for chess still continues strong after 4 generations. I am also very proud of my own 80 years playing the game of kings, and I hope that I have inspired others along the way.

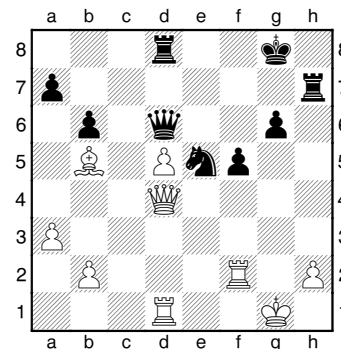
I have very pleasant memories of teams and also of games.

Here are some memorable games from my 80 years—two games from my teenage years (1947 Spain), another two (after not having played for 16 years) in my middle age, and finally, my farewell to chess when I played my last tournaments at age 70.

IM Pérez, Francisco José – Salomon, J. Eugene [B03] Training Match, Madrid 06.1947

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.gxf5 ♘g5 20.♙d2 ♘xe3+ 21.♙xe3 f6 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.♙c5 b6 24.♙d4 ♙d6 25.♘g4 ♞ad8 26.♞cd1 f5 27.♘e2 ♞f7 28.♞f2 ♞fd7 29.♘b5 ♞h7



Threatening 30...♞xh2 and 31...♘f3+!. 30.♘e2 ♞c8 31.♙h1 ♞c2! Black has had the upper hand for some time, but is now winning. 32.♙a4 ♘g4 A decisive shot. Probably even more powerful is 32...♘f3!, but White loses quickly in either case. 33.♙e8+ ♙g7 34.♞f4 ♞xh2+ 0-1

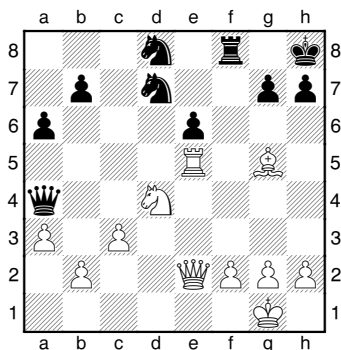
A month later we faced each other again at the Fourth Gijón International Tournament, where he was co-winner, tied with L. Prins. The game was again an Alekhine Defense Advance Variation, full of excitement and ending in a draw.

Salomon, J. Eugene – Medina García, Antonio [B53] Fourth Gijón International, 07.1947

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, my analysis indicated 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. The finish with 27.♙e7 and 28.b3 corralling the queen was a nice little trap, and even though Black could have avoided it with 27. ... ♖xe5!, I had the feeling at the time that he was going to fall into it!

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 (15...♗xe4? 16.♗xe4 ♙xe4 17.♙xe7 ♗xe7 18.♙xe6+ ♙f7 19.♙xf7+ ♙xf7 20.♗g5+ +-) 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 (25.b3!? ♙xb3 26.♗d2 ♙xc3 27.♗xc4 +-) 25...♙xd4 26.♗xd4 ♗d7

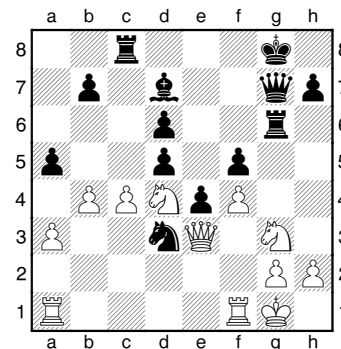


27.♙e7 ♙e8 (27...♗xe5 28.♙xf8 ♗g6 and Black can continue the game) 28.b3! (trapping the queen) 28...♙xd4 29.cxd4 ♗xe5 30.♙xd8 ♙xd8 31.♙xe5 1-0

**Pozarek, Stephen J. – Salomon, J. Eugene [E87]
New Jersey Open, 08.1968**

This was for me “a game to remember”! I had left chess in 1952. This NJ Open was my first tournament in the U.S. after 16 years of inactivity. It was a game in which I had in mind a beautiful combination, but unfortunately my opponent did not allow me to play it, as he resigned!. See the diagram and final comment.

1.c4 ♖f6 2.♗c3 g6 3.e4 d6 4.d4 ♙g7 5.f3 0-0 6.♙e3 e5 7.d5 a5 8.♙d3 ♗a6 9.♗ge2 ♗d7 10.♙d2 ♗b4 11.0-0 f5 12.exf5 gxf5 13.f4 ♗xd3 14.♙xd3 e4 15.♙d2 ♗c5 16.♙d4 ♙e7 17.♙xg7 ♙xg7 18.♗b5 ♙f7 19.♗ed4 ♗d3 20.b3 ♙d7 21.♙e3 ♙c8 22.a3 ♙f6=/+ 23.b4?! c6=/+ 24.♗c3 ♙g6 25.♗ce2? White's position has deteriorated considerably in the last three moves. This move was played with the vague hope of getting counterplay after Black captured on g2. 25...cxd5 Black has other ideas! 26.♗g3



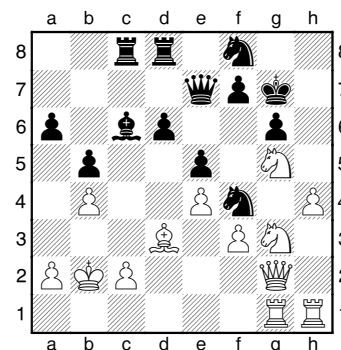
26...♙xc4! 0-1

27.♗dxf5 ♙xf5 28.♗xf5 ♙xg2+ 29.♙h1 ♙cc2 30.♗xg7 ♙xh2+ 31.♙g1 ♙cg2* was the planned finish!

Salomon, J. Eugene – Klug, Mitchell [B08] Atlantic Open, 12.1974

This game offers an example of the power of a discovered check. Just as in Pozarek-Crotto (see Game 89), it is also a ♗e6+! discovered check (move 26) leading to a pretty checkmate. When I played this game, I clearly visualized 28.♙f5++ when playing 21.♗e2. I knew in my heart that Black would be unable to resist the temptation of 25...♗f4 (the “I’ll attack his queen, he will have to move it” syndrome that’s at the root of so many combinations).

1.♗f3 ♗f6 2.d4 g6 3.♙f4 d6 4.♗c3 ♙g7 5.e4 ♗bd7 6.♙d2 0-0 7.♙h6 e5 8.♙xg7 ♙xg7 9.h4 h5 10.0-0-0 ♙e7 11.d5 ♗c5 12.♗g5 a6 13.b4! ♗cd7 14.f3 ♙d8 15.♙c4 b5 16.♙d3 ♗b8 17.♙b2 ♙b7 18.g4 ♗bd7 19.♙dg1 ♙ac8 20.♙g2 ♗f8 21.♗e2 c5 22.dxc6 ♙xc6 23.gxh5 ♗xh5 24.♗g3 Inviting the following move, which looks so natural and strong. 24...♗f4?



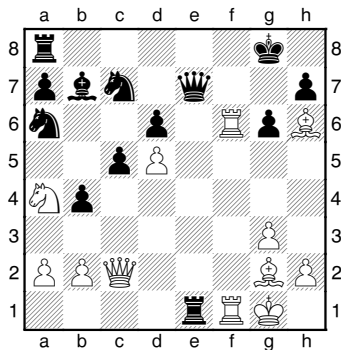
Except that it loses! 24...♗xg3 is necessary. 25.♗f5+! gxf5 25...♙f6 is best, although it still loses material. It would also deprive us of the beautiful finish. 26.♗e6+ ♙f6 27.♙g5+ ♙xe6 28.♙xf5* 1-0

Salomon, J. Eugene – Sargissian, Gabriel [A62]

V Linares Open, 01.1998

My opponent in this game was the World Under-14 Champion at the time. He has since become a grandmaster with a rating well up in the 2600 range.

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.g3 exd5
5.cxd5 d6 6.♟c3 g6 7.♟f3 ♟g7
8.♟g2 0-0 9.0-0 ♟a6 10.♟d2 ♟c7
11.♟c4 ♟fe8 12.e4 b5 13.♟a5 b4
14.♟c6 ♟d7 15.♟a4 ♟a6 16.♟c2 f6
17.f4 ♟ec7 18.♟e3 ♟e8 19.e5?! fxе5
20.fxе5 ♟xe5 21.♟xe5 ♟xe5 22.♟h6
♟b7 23.♟f6 ♟e7 24.♟af1 ♟e1?



The rook on f1 may be pinned, but it still participates in the attack, allowing the following beautiful shot.
25.♟xg6+!! h×g6 26.♟xg6+ ♟h8
27.♟g5 ♟xf1+ 28.♟xf1 ♟g8
29.♟f6+ ♟g7 30.♟h6+ ♟g8
31.♟xe7 ♟xe7 32.♟g6+ ♟h8
33.♟f6+ ♟g7 34.♟xd6 1-0

***This combination was published in Chess Informant 71, page 356.

Salomon, J. Eugene – Lenar, Murzan [E05] World Open, 06.1998

This game was published by Steve Doyle and Pete Tamburro in the Newark Star-Ledger. I loved their closing comment: "This game is a joyous celebration of original attacking chess. Bravo!"

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.♟f3 ♟e7 5.♟g2 0-0 6.0-0 dxc4 7.♟a4 a6 8.♟xc4 b5 9.♟c2 ♟b7 10.♟f4 ♟d6 11.♟bd2 ♟bd7 12.♟g5!? ♟xf4 13.gxf4 ♟xg2 14.♟xg2 c5 15.dxc5 ♟xc5 16.♟fd1 ♟e7 17.b4!? ♟a4 18.♟de4 g6

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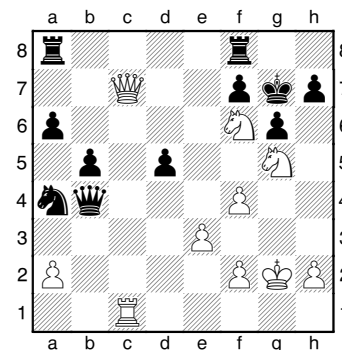
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19.♟ac1 ♟d5 20.e3 ♟xb4?! 21.♟xd5! exd5 22.♟f6+ ♟g7 23.♟c7!



♟e6+ is threatened. The knight on f6 cannot be captured because of 24.♟e5#. 23...♟b2 24.♟xd5 ♟ac8 25.♟e7 ♟xc1? 26.♟e6+ ♟h6 27.♟g5# 1-0