

Library Focus:

Several issues ago I asked for others to share their Chess libraries with us. We had two takers. Thank you Ken and Andy. Let me know if you want to have your library be featured in a future issue. —Ed.

Long Room at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, photo by Mark Capron.

Ken Milutin

Tell Us a little bit about yourself.

I was born and raised in southern Delaware. I am married to my beautiful and supportive wife Sheri. We have two children and seven grandchildren, ages nine through twenty-two. I retired in February 2020 after a 30+ year career in the real estate appraisal industry. I, of course, love chess, enjoy travel, and regularly play pickleball.



Congrats on the retirement. Sounds like you are keeping busy. Any particular favorite travel locations? Is your wife your pickleball partner?

We enjoy traveling to Italy with our next trip planned in the early fall of this year. London is on my bucket list! Sheri tried pickleball, but it just wasn't her cup of tea. I enjoy mixing with different partners. The subdivision where we live has a very active pickleball community.

When did you begin playing chess?

My father first taught me at the age of six. I became a little more serious about the game in late junior high school. A leg injury had me missing several weeks of school. A neighbor, who was a good chess player, volunteered to check in on me during the day while my parents were at work. After he made sure any homework was completed, we would settle in for an afternoon of chess. When I finally was able to go back to school and back to our school chess club, I suddenly found that I had improved from the lower middle of our group to one of the top two or three players. That eventually led to an interest in postal and then over-the-board, rated chess.

Interestingly, I started out similar to you by playing postal first, then over the board. Do you still play postal chess?

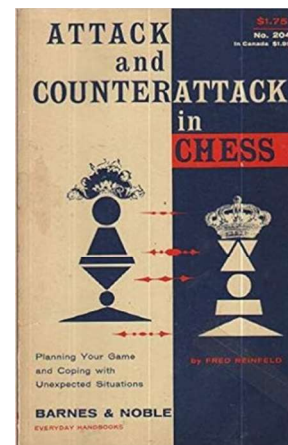
I gave up postal chess many years ago (mid-1980's). However, it has again tweaked my interest. I may pick it up again soon.

When did you begin collecting Chess books?

I obtained my first chess book around the age of twelve (about 1970). I guess I technically starting collecting chess books then, since I still have that first book. I was in a resort area in 1980 at the end of the season ... a small book store was going out of business and was vastly discounting its stock. I asked about chess books ... the manager appeared with two boxes of books on various games, of which maybe 15–20 were about chess. I bought them all! I collect chess sets as well. I am fortunate to have around 125 chess sets and about 900 chess books in my home office with numerous boxes of other chess books that are recent acquisitions I haven't cataloged and displayed yet. Of the sets, about one-third are antique/vintage (of those, eleven are antique Jaques sets) ... Plus, I have numerous sets that are reproductions. Some sets are just sentimental ... such as the first sets my parents gave me. Regarding the books ... probably almost half are antique/vintage ... My heaviest collecting focus is on tournaments. I only have a handful of books on openings, defenses or endings.

What was that first chess book you got?

My first chess book was *Attack and Counter Attack in Chess* by Fred Reinfeld.



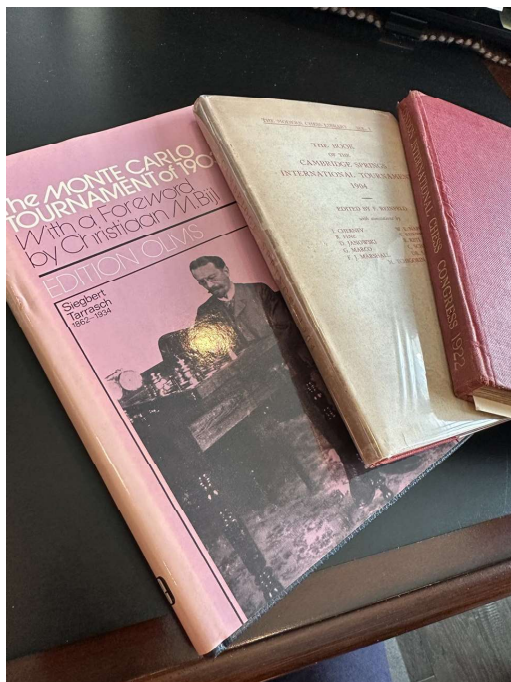
Did you see our last issue that featured Jon Crumiller and his amazing chess set collection?

Yes, I did! I have long admired Mr. Crumiller's collection and have read a couple of articles about it over the years. My own favorite set has to be my first antique set ... the one mentioned below that my wife Sheri gave to me for Christmas in the late 1990's. It is a circa late 1860's–1870 Jaques, standard size "Steinitz" set with original box and label. If I had to part with my collection, this would be the last set to go!



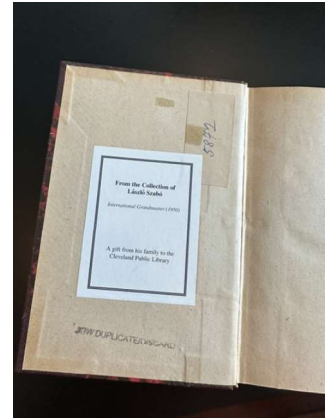
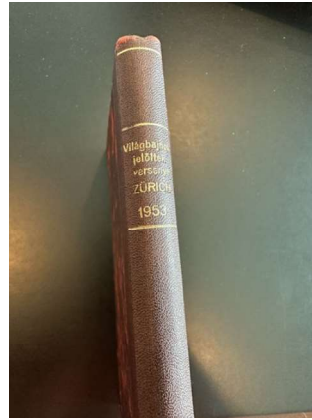
Some of my favorite books are tournament books as well. Do you have a few that are your favorites?

Several come to mind: *Cambridge Springs 1904* for its historical significance. *Zurich 1953* for the quality of the participants and games. The *Monte Carlo* books from the early 1900's, as well as *Cambridge Springs 1904* and *London International Chess Congress 1922* are some of my favorites. Here is a picture of three favorite tournament books: *Monte Carlo 1903*, *Cambridge Springs 1904* and *London 1922*.



What are some of your favorite books you have collected?

Over the last 10–12 years, the focus of my collection has been on antique/vintage tournament books, pre–1970. I especially enjoy the era from about 1900–1940. I like books on famous matches and players during that same era. I have a vintage, hard–back copy of *Zurich 1953* from the personal library of Laszlo Szabo.



Tell us a story or two about how you got some of these books?

Monte Carlo 1903 and *London 1922* were two of the first tournament books that I owned. I believe *London* came from a catalog or advertisement I saw in *Chess Life & Review*. I do not recall how I obtained *Monte Carlo*. I remember playing through the games in these books on one of the first chess sets my parents gave me.

What's your most prized possession?

That is tough to pin down ... I love several of my antique chess sets and books. I have an ivory chess set left to me by a dear chess friend. A retired judge, he was a member of our local chess club. He knew how much I loved all things chess and left me the set, noting that it would be "in good hands." As far as a favorite book? Several of my antique tournament books immediately come to mind. Picking just one would be impossible for me!





Do you have lots of your books autographed?

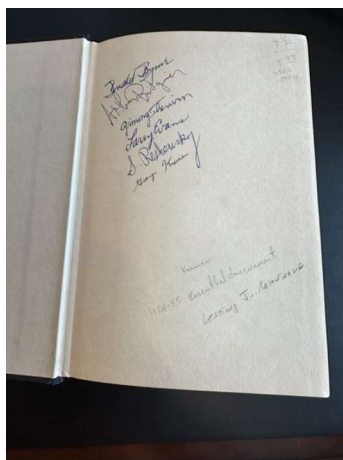
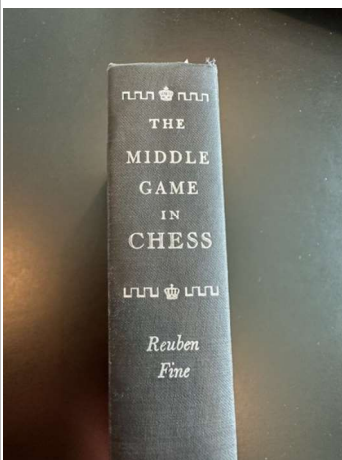
I have about 30 – 35 of my books autographed by famous players or authors.

Who are a few of these famous players or authors?

Some of the autographs I have obtained are: GM Robert & IM Donald Byrne, GM Walter Browne, GM Samuel Reshevsky, GM Art Bisguier, Dr. Holger Langer, just to name a few.

Any good stories about getting autographs?

One very good one: a very close friend and fellow chess player gifted me a special book for Christmas. The book itself is not an exceptionally rare one: it is a vintage hardback copy of Reuben Fine's *The Middle Game in Chess*. My friend obtained the book as a youngster. Having an interest in chess, his father took him to see some of the games being played in the 1954–1955 Lessing J. Rosenwald Tournament. There were 6 participants: Donald Byrne (didn't become IM until 1962), GM Art Bisguier, IM Jimmy Sherwin, IM Larry Evans (didn't receive the GM title until 1957), GM Sam Reshevsky and George Kramer. During the course of the tournament, my friend was able to obtain autographs from the first five noted above, but not Mr. Kramer. When the book was gifted to me, I made a feeble attempt to see if I could locate Mr. Kramer with no luck ... I shelved the book and forgot about it. Fast forward to the December 2019 issue of *Chess Life*. I was reading an article on the Dubrovnik Olympiad, and Mr. Kramer was mentioned. The author of the article noted that Mr. Kramer was still with us and was interviewed for the article (he was 88 in 2019). This prompted me to begin my search again. After some research, I found an article regarding a paper that Mr. Kramer (now Dr. Kramer) had written. In the on-line article, there was a link to send Dr. Kramer a message if you had questions or comments about the letter. I reached out and within a couple of days we were corresponding. Residing in New Jersey, he had me send him the book, which he kindly autographed and included a nice note ... I was very excited when I received the book! I now have all 6 autographs in one book! What luck that Dr. Kramer was still with us and was the only one who hadn't signed it! We have corresponded a couple of times since then and I hope to meet him someday soon. He noted that he has a son living in Delaware, only about 90 minutes from my home.



What strategies have you used to get books?

None really: I do follow various collector's sites as well as eBay etc. ... Many folks know I collect chess books and sets and keep an eye out for me!

What is your favorite bookstore to purchase from?

I really do not have a favorite. I live in an area where there are not a lot of book retailers or used book stores ... and the few that exist rarely have books on chess.

Have you gone to any of the book auctions?

No, I have not, but it is on my list to do some day!

Do you have a favorite publisher?

No, I do not, but I do like the vintage Bell books.

Have you written any books yourself?

No, I have never written any books, but I do enjoy writing and research. I did submit a story to *Chess Life* about ten years ago that they strongly considered publishing, but, ultimately, did not. One of my job responsibilities was corresponding with clients and staff regularly, submitting proposals, completing narratives for reports. Tasks that I enjoyed.

Do you read everything you have collected?

Read all cover to cover?? I would be lying to you if I answered yes, however, I have read many of them...especially the games collections of famous players and tournaments. I have opened and at least read part of every book that I have (in English).

What draws you to want more books?

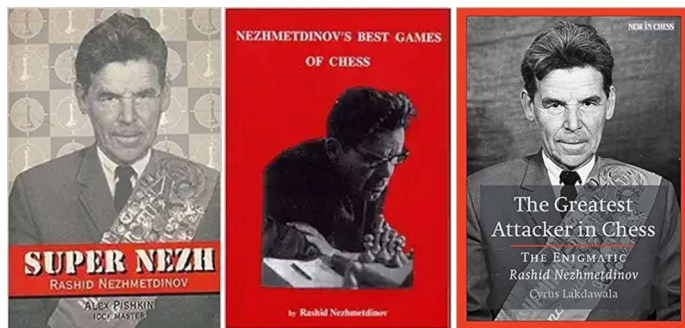
Excellent question and one that my wife asks me several times a year Since I enjoy tournament books, as I read through them, there are usually numerous references to other games from other tournaments ... I will check my library to see if I have that specific book and if not ... well ... that prompts me to want that title.

Who is your favorite player?

I like several players, especially those active in the early to mid-1900's. Capablanca probably heads the list. I also love the games of Nezhmetdinov. GM Walter Browne is a more contemporary favorite. I had the pleasure of meeting and playing Mr. Browne in a simul in 2006 in Las Vegas. He was very gracious and informative, taking a few minutes at the end of the simul to go over our game, as well as inquiring about where I was from, family etc. ... He autographed a copy of *Wijk aan Zee 1974* for me, which was one of his excellent tournament successes.

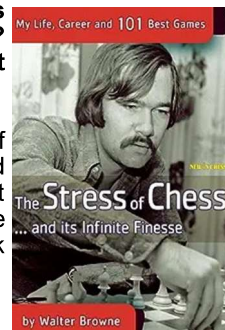
Do you have Nezhmetdinov's book *Super Nezh: Rashid Nezhmetdinov, Chess Assassin* published by Thinker's Press?

Yes, I do have this title as well as two others: *Nezhmetdinov's Best Games of Chess* and *The Greatest Attacker in Chess: The Enigmatic Rashid Nezhmetdinov*.



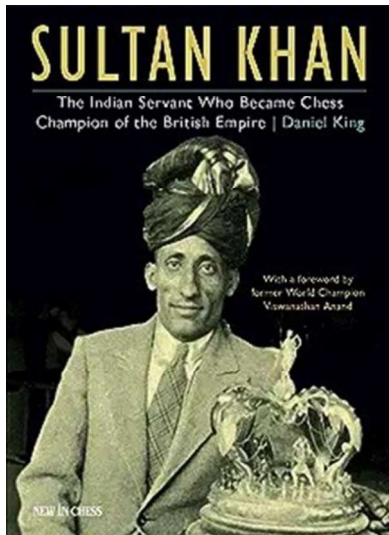
I enjoyed GM Walter Browne's biography book that came out a few years back *The Stress of Chess: My Life, Career and 101 Best Games*. Do you have this book? If so, what did you think of it? What stood out to me was the constant time trouble Browne had.

Yes, I do have this book. I found many of the games and some of the stories behind the games interesting. I do relate, in that time trouble is something I personally have struggled with in the past. I found the book to be enjoyable as well.



What is your favorite biography?

I picked up a copy of *Sultan Khan* by Daniel King a few years ago. I find his meteoric rise to the upper levels of chess fascinating. I enjoy playing through games from that era which adds to my enjoyment of the book.



What's your favorite opening book?

I enjoy KP Openings as white ... I like playing c3 against the Sicilian, so *The c3 Sicilian* by IM Gary Lane is one I reference a lot. Another book that has given me a number of quick wins as white is *New Sicilian Gambits* by GM Andrew Soltis.

Do you have a favorite endings book?

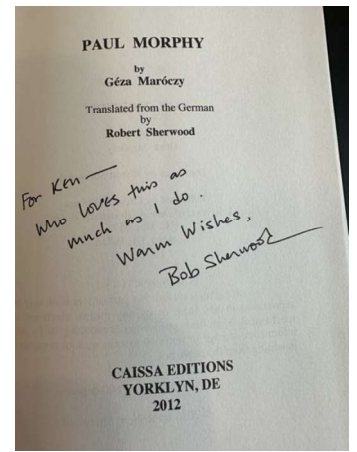
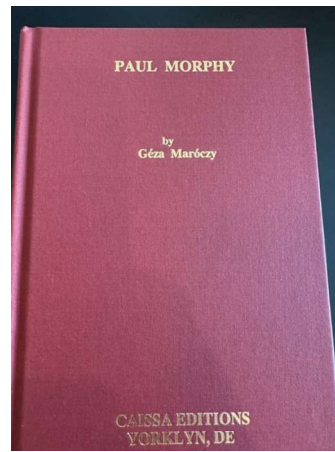
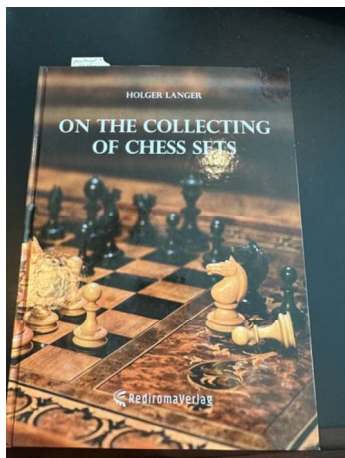
No, but I feel like you can't go wrong with *Basic Chess Endings* by Fine.

What is your favorite tactics book?

I don't have a favorite, but all of the books about Tal are fun to play through for tactics.

Do you have a favorite book overall?

I enjoy all of my vintage, hard-back tournament books. Two recent acquisitions are *On the Collecting Of Chess Sets* by Holger Langer and *Paul Morphy* by Geza Maroczy. The former, which is an excellent book, is autographed by Dr. Langer and the latter was an autographed gift from the translator, Robert Sherwood.



Do you have a favorite game someone has played?

Actually, two or three. Of course, Bobby Fischer's "Game of The Century" comes out on top. Nezhmetdinov vs. Chernikov (Russian Federation Team Championship 1962) is another game that ranks near the top as does Larsen vs. Petrosian (Piatigorsky Cup, 1966).

Byrne, Donald - Fischer, Robert James [D97] New York Rosenwald-03 New York (8), 17.10.1956

1. f3 f6 2. c4 g6 3. c3 g7 4. d4 0-0 5. f4 d5 6. b3 dxc4 7. xc4 c6 8. e4 b7 9. d1 b6 10. c5 g4 11. g5 a4 12. a3 xc3 13. bxc3 xe4 14. ex7 b6 15. c4 xc3 16. c5 fe8+ 17. f1 e6 18. ab6 xc4+ 19. g1 e2+ 20. f1 xd4+ 21. g1 e2+ 22. f1 c3+ 23. g1 axb6 24. b4 a4 25. xb6 xd1 26. h3 xa2 27. h2 xf2 28. e1 xe1 29. d8+ f8 30. xe1 d5 31. f3 e4 32. b8 b5 33. h4 h5 34. e5 g7 35. g1 c5+ 36. f1 g3+ 37. e1 ab4+ 38. d1 ab3+ 39. c1 e2+ 40. b1 c3+ 41. c1 c2# 0-1

Nezhmetdinov, Rashid - Chernikov, Oleg L [B35] Rostov on Don Rostov on Don, 1962

1. e4 c5 2. f3 c6 3. d4 cxd4 4. xd4 g6 5. c3 g7 6. e3 f6 7. c4 0-0 8. ab3 g4 9. xg4 xd4 10. h4 a5 11. 0-0 f6 12. xf6 e2+ 13. xe2 exf6 14. c3 e8 15. d5 e6 16. d4 g7 17. ad1 d6 18. d3 d7 19. f3 b5 20. c3 d8 21. xf6 e2 22. xh7+ g8 23. h3 e5 24. f4 xf1 25. xf1 c8 26. d4 b5 27. g5 c7 28. xf7+ xf7 29. h8+ xh8 30. xf7+ h7 31. xd8 xe4 32. c6 xf4+ 33. e2 1-0

Larsen, Bent - Petrosian, Tigran V [B39] Piatigorsky-Cup 2nd Santa Monica (7), 27.07.1966

1. e4 c5 2. f3 c6 3. d4 cxd4 4. xd4 g6 5. e3 g7 6. c4 f6 7. c3 g4 8. xg4 xd4 9. d1 e6 10. d2 d6 11. e2 d7 12. 0-0 0-0 13. ad1 c6 14. d5 e8 15. f4 c7 16. f5 d6 17. g4 e5 18. fg6 hxg6 19. f2 f8 20. e5 xe5 21. h4 xd5 22. xd5 e6 23. f3 f6 24. h6 g7 25. xg6 f4 26. xf4 fxg6 27. e6+ f7 28. xf7 h8 29. g5 b5 30. g3 1-0

Anything else you would like to tell us?

Chess has allowed me to meet many interesting people, play in many different cities and venues, and expand my knowledge of other cultures. I once again have to thank my wonderful wife Sheri ... she has supported and encouraged my chess hobby, and is actually the one who sparked my interest in collecting antique chess sets and antique chess books. As a surprise Christmas present in 1998, she gave me an antique Jaques set. From that day, I was "all-in"...hook, line & sinker! Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to share my love of chess with you.