

THE PASSING OF JOSEPH “JOE” MANSIGIAN

I am the bearer of very sad and tragic news for the NBCC community. I found out through Kevin Zimmerman, who is friends with Preston (who shared a home with Joseph Mansigian), that veteran member, former club president, and our beloved friend, Joseph “Joe” Mansigian suddenly passed away on April 12. Joe just turned seventy-seven on March 30.



Joe joined our family in 1970 and had a membership with our organization that spanned over five decades, one of the longest of any person in NBCC history. Joe recounted to me about his earliest experiences with the club, especially being warmly welcomed and greeted each and every week by its new president at the time, Arkadijs Strazdins. Joe said that his passion for the club was instilled by Mr. Strazdins. Joe enjoyed competing in all of the club’s activities, but he relished the blitz tournaments the most. During his peak, Joe attained a very high-class A rating, coming ever so close to expert level. In 1976, he won the New Britain City Chess Championship Reserve Tournament, which was his first major event victory in the club. In the club’s archives, as of April 2024, Joe ranked in the top 20 for earning the most wins or ties for first place in classical tournaments.

Beyond the chess board, Joe served the club very dutifully. From 1997 to 1998, he served as club secretary. In 2001, he was elected to serve as club vice president with then president-elect John Pasco, who recounted to me about his fond memories of Joe. In 2003, when John unfortunately left the club presidency, Joe stepped up to the mantle and became our newest spiritual leader. For the next seven years, I had the utmost pleasure of serving as his vice president, working on projects for the betterment of the club and for the welfare of its members. Joe carried on the many traditions that both Mr. Strazdins and John did for the club, but Joe incorporated some new and very interesting tournaments during his administration. In particular, he organized the first Arkadijs Strazdins Cup to honor and pay tribute to Mr. Strazdins for his fifty-plus years of service to our organization, and he created the beautiful ideas for the first Oktoberfest Open Chess Championship, an event to celebrate the German heritage of our long-established organization. In 2005, Joe organized the club’s first Christmas party. All of these activities still exist today because of Joe. In 2010, Joe stepped down from the NBCC presidency, but he remained a strong advocate and ambassador for our tight-knit community.

In his post-presidency years, you could find Joe playing chess at Borders and then Barnes & Noble on the weekends and at his chess friends’ homes. I organized a surprise party for Joe’s seventieth birthday at local restaurant, inviting many of his longtime friends. He was so thrilled! In 2019, under the Norman Burtness administration, Joe was honored with a lifetime membership for his many years of steadfast service to the club.

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic hit Joe very hard, forcing him to take many precautions because of his pre-existing medical conditions. He, therefore, decided that it was best to remain at home as much as possible, which meant taking a hiatus from the club. He returned to the club in 2023, playing in the Arkadijs Strazdins Cup and the New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship, which he recently told me that he was eagerly looking forward to playing in this event later this year. In late 2023, Joe’s health took a turn for the worse again, and he was forced to reside in a rehabilitation center to undergo treatment for spinal stenosis and kidney failure. A few months ago, FM Richard Bauer, Paul Gobell, and I paid Joe a visit at Apple Valley in Plainville. Joe was a such a gracious host by treating us to a pizza lunch. He really enjoyed the time that we spent with him. I had a chance to play a couple of games of chess with Joe. Both of these games were analyzed and posted on lichess.org by Rick.

If you never knew Joe, he was one of the most altruistic persons in our family. Like Mr. Strazdins, he treated everyone with dignity and respect regardless of who you were. His loss is a deep and sorrowful one for all of us in the NBCC. The last time I spoke with Joe, he said that he wanted to treat me to dinner or cook for me at his home, which he hoped to return to very soon. I, like many others, loved and admired Joe. May Joe be remembered as one of all-time greats in NBCC history, and may he rest in peace in heaven for all eternity.

The photo of Joe above was taken at the 2009 Zimmerman Games Day. He indeed loved the club’s social gatherings.