

Nomination of Roy Truelson for the MN Chess Hall of Fame

by Nels Truelson

Beginning his tournament career in 1967, Roy Truelson won the top 8th grader trophy at the Minnesota State High School Championship. At the 1968 State High School event, he tied for 4th, finishing as the top Junior High School participant. Climbing to 13th place on the USCF Top Under 16 list, in his junior year Roy captured the 1970 Minnesota High School individual title with a perfect 7-0 score, leading his Washburn team to the state title as well. With academics being his priority, in the fall of his senior year Roy entered the University of Minnesota's early admissions program, and was thus unable to defend his title. Graduating at age 19, he then attended the University of Minnesota Law School. While not as active in chess during these years, Roy did participate in the Twin Cities Chess League (TCCL), as well as team chess events for the University of Minnesota. Settling into his peak playing years as an expert in the 1980s, Roy continued to play solid chess, with his share of upsets, but scoring no dramatic individual tournament victories. Roy has continued to play in TCCL this century, with his Rochester teams winning the Silver and Gold divisions in 2018 and 2019, respectively. All in all, a very respectable chess career, but the above has been presented, not as a pitch for a player candidate, but only as a background for understanding his contributions to Minnesota chess.

Roy has never sought the spotlight, grabbed for titles of prestige or power, been one to invite himself to a party, or otherwise stuck his nose where it was neither needed nor wanted. Rather, when things were not going right, or there were clear improvements to be made, or even rescuing to be effected, Roy was a man of action. Over the many years, he was thus recruited to resolve issues involving every one of Minnesota's chess institutions.

So it was with the TCCL. In early 1977, its Director pleaded for assistance in running the League, which was taking its toll. "Assistance" is what he got, and then some. For the next four years, in addition to playing in the League as well, Roy absorbed the Director's tasks in full. Securing the site, making the pairings, handling the money and prizes, and most importantly, producing and mailing out the monthly newsletter, which included the results, standings, and future pairings, Roy self-identified only as "Assistant Director." This was the only period in the history of the TCCL where a list of the names and addresses of all participants was maintained (all by hand in those days), and the newsletter mailed out each month to all such participants. After four years, the "Director" title was Roy's for his fifth and final year of running the League.

So it was with the restructuring of the MSCA. Among his numerous terms on the MSCA's Board of Directors, Roy was recruited to join the Board to act as Secretary from 1980 to 1982. In 1981, these duties undertaken included the incorporation of the MSCA with the MN Secretary of State. Always nice to have a lawyer on your Board of Directors.

So it was with the 1986-87 crisis. In late 1986, solvency issues befell the MSCA. With the financial viability of the upcoming Minnesota Open being put into question, no one seemed eager to take on the job of organizing it. Roy, then serving a three-year stretch as MSCA's Vice-

President, stepped in. Opposition on the Board advocated for raising both MSCA dues and tournament entry fees. Roy instead promoted a growth agenda. Maintaining reasonable (read: low) entry fees, he opted for controlling costs by eliminating all direct cash prizes, yet increasing the actual number of prizes by instead substituting many trophies and one-year free entry to MSCA tournaments. Despite the Board's skepticism, this scheme proved to be very popular. The 1987 Minnesota Open boasted a more than 14% increase in participation over the previous year, and Roy was thus called upon to organize the 1988 Minnesota Open, which also proved to be a success. The MSCA was returned to a sounder financial footing.

And so it was with the 1986 rescue of the MCJ and NCN. Before the days of the internet, the MCJ and NCN served as the central nervous system of the MSCA. But when so much of the production and distribution process involved long hours of manual labor, failures became the rule, rather than the exception. Regularly, MCJs and NCNs would be mailed out after (or very close to) the dates some of the events announced therein were to be held. The resulting meager attendance at these tournaments was sad, but easily predictable.

In the first half of 1986, the MCJ/NCN's editor had suffered a self-described "burn-out," and things came to a standstill. Roy was once again recruited for the Board of Directors and made Vice-President. There was no need to guess as to who would take over the editor position. At the time, the NCN was supposed to be published six times per year, with the MCJ incorporating the NCN on those dates when the MCJ would actually be published. Roy proposed a strict set of deadlines to be followed without exception, wherein the six NCNs and three MCJs would be mailed out each year on prescribed dates. As promised, for the next two years Roy made every single deadline, after which the editorship of the MCJ was passed on per pre-arrangement to its new custodian. Roy continued to remain editor of the NCN for the next two years, again meeting every deadline.

During these golden years of the MCJ, not only were all issues published in a timely manner, but healthy debates ensued via this forum available to all members. A regular submission of letters to the editor commenced (including from legends such as Arthur Bisguier and Curt Brasket), which has never been paralleled, before or since. This was an unprecedented era of membership involvement employing the written word. All tournament cross-tables were promptly published (many of which had to be laboriously typed up, as there was no USCF website to access with cross-tables ready to be merely pasted in), with accompanying articles whenever possible.

Now in his seventies, Roy continues chess promotion in the Rochester area. Since 2005, he has taught Community Ed. classes, and run summer camps for both elementary school and middle school students. From 2011 to 2023, he directed a year-round program for the Rochester Arts and Science Academy, and since 2017 served as coach at Mayo High School, for which he was honored with a "coach of the year" award. He has maintained a data base of some 1,700 students, recording their chess achievement levels in an array of graduated tests, so that when they exit and re-enter such activities, they need not repeat duplicate instruction. The

breadth, depth, and longevity of Roy Truelson's contributions to chess in Minnesota has been matched by few others, fully justifying his induction into the MN Chess Hall of Fame.