

Here is another interview ICCF member Ray Kappel has done, this time with Corky Schakel. Enjoy.

Q: Briefly tell us about yourself.

A: The note I send to new opponents: Greetings from Lakeland, Minnesota, near Minneapolis. I am 72 years old, a retired engineer, and have been playing Correspondence Chess since 1972 (yes, Bobby Fischer era!). Good luck to you in this event.

(second part of answer): My wife, Sally, and I celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary last June, and are fortunate to have our daughter, son, and their families live nearby. I grew up in Des Moines IA, was a member of the Iowa State University varsity wrestling team for the '63-64 season, and received BS and MS degrees in Chemical Engineering in '66 and '68. We then moved to Minnesota, working for 3M Co. as a Chem. Engr. and Quality Assurance Manager, with applied statistics a great part of the job.

Q: When did you get interested in correspondence chess?

A: I got interested in chess between sessions of bridge tournaments watching speed chess games. Traveling every other weekend for bridge became too much time away from family. Correspondence Chess arrived for me in 1972 with the worldwide interest in the Fischer-Spassky match. CC allowed me to attend kids' events and enjoy my own competition. Then chess became endlessly fascinating, what fun! CC allows us older players to play long after marathon running has deteriorated to treadmill...

Q: What do you like about correspondence chess?

A: I played a few years over the board including the National Amateur in Wichita about 1980 (score sheets filed somewhere). I finished one game and could not remember if it was morning or afternoon...completely forgot playing that morning. CC requires a different kind of concentration, and precision. With mostly USCF games from 1972-2002, retirement with play via the internet let me phase into ICCF. Meeting players from around the world is a joy, as is just sitting and thinking through move possibilities. Of my 1400 CC games about half are USCF, the rest ICCF.

Q: What are your career highlights as a correspondence player?

A: Career highlights are easy: attending ICCF Congress as National Delegate from 2007-2015 allowed me to meet in person many people who I had known via email exchanges, setting up tournaments and helping new players get started. Meeting top players in the world, world champions, and even some who had written books that have been on my bookshelf for decades had me in awe. Working with all the ICCF volunteers has been a great

pleasure. Playing highlights are winning the 2003 and 2004 USCF Absolute, and one Golden Knights. Representing ICCF-US in Olympiad 16 Prelim and Final is unforgettable. Ten years later my rating has almost recovered from that last event!

Q: How do you select your moves, what is your method?

A: I have always dug into books for openings, and my own games ( long ago hand written on quadrille paper), trying to not lose a game the same as a previous loss! I try to understand the strengths and weaknesses of a position before making a move. Try is the operable word there, and thinking through the position is the great challenge of the game. There is nothing much special to do for analysis: search for possibilities in game databases, explore positions, and go deep into analysis looking for a win. Endgame table bases are a great help, some built into engine analysis, some online. It helps to back up one move at a time, and use the Y key to analyze second, third and even occasionally other fourth moves. Wolff Morrow's interview with you describes this very well. And when all of this does not work, I cheerfully resign and congratulate my opponent!

Q: Do you like the advent of computer in correspondence chess?

A: Computers allow us to play games in a few months instead of years with postcards overseas often very slow. Computers are a great aid for keeping track of analysis. Digital opening books and databases make it easier to look at past games. This is an impact of computers, not just impact from computer analysis. When I process applications for players new to ICCF I offer to help them get started. If they ask I warn that you will win few if any games passing along computer generated moves, but exploring ideas, both your own and computer generated, will be needed. It is a constant struggle to decide when to leave known territory: too early may mean that a move has not been played because it can be refuted, too late leads to draws.

Q: How does one improve in correspondence chess?

A: Staying up-to-date with games and software is important, others better at that than I am. Having fewer games with more time for analysis is a help, but for me just getting to play is more important. I'd like to blame it on age, but tend to play a little too fast, curious to see how the game would come **out**?! Note that ?! is chess notation for a dubious idea... Work smart and work hard is easier said than done.

Q: With so many draws in correspondence chess, how do one get wins?

A: Wins come from better analysis than the opponent; finding something new is very tough to do as competition levels increase. There are no big secret sure fire openings, or anything along those lines. Others may give you a better answer to this question. Players are

adjusting, looking deeper, but draws are still on the rise. There are rule changes to break ties in events, as well as a change made in the 50 move rule and to allow six piece tb mate claims. Other rule changes could come, stalemate being a loss for the player on move, a good idea that will affect a few games. And there is a statistical analysis underway to revise requirements for titles given the increased number of draws. We should be able to enjoy chess for years to come, and enjoy the play whether win, lose, or draw.