

My Life in Chess

Mastering the Sunshine State

My Chess Legacy in Florida

Copyright © 2025 Thinkers Publishing, Belgium

Author: Larry Storch
Editor in Chief: Daniël Vanheirzeele
Typesetting: Primož Žerdin, Primož Riegler
Cover Design: Diriq
Cartoons: Indigenius

ISBN 9789493435094
D/2025/31732/18

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission from the publisher.

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Thinkers Publishing, 9850 Landegem, Belgium.

E-mail: info@thinkerspublishing.com
Website: www.thinkerspublishing.com

First edition 2025 by Thinkers Publishing.
This book is printed on environmentally friendly paper.

My Life in Chess

Mastering the Sunshine State

My Chess Legacy in Florida

Larry Storch

Thinkers Publishing 2025



Key to symbols

!	a good move	±	White has a serious advantage
?	a weak move	∓	Black has a serious advantage
!!	an excellent move	+−	White has a decisive advantage
??	a blunder	−+	Black has a decisive advantage
!?	an interesting move	→	with an attack
?!	a dubious move	↑	with initiative
□	only move	⇝	with counterplay
=	equality	Δ	with the idea of
∞	unclear position	⊃	better is
≡	with compensation for the sacrificed material	N	novelty
±	White stands slightly better	+	check
∓	Black stands slightly better	#	mate

Table of Contents

Preface.....	7
Introduction.....	9
Foreword by John Nardandrea	13
Foreword by Robert Persante.....	15

Chapter One

Early Development and The Orlando Chess Club	17
---	-----------

Chapter Two

USAT memories: The United States Amateur Team Tournament....	53
---	-----------

Chapter Three

The Middle Years: The Central Florida Chess Club and the Chase for the Life Master Title	95
The Pursuit of the Life Master Title.....	119

Chapter Four

Can You Play Chess at a High Level in Your 40s?	141
--	------------

Chapter Five

A New Century and New Milestones.....	199
--	------------

Chapter Six

Twilight of a Playing Career, Metamorphosis.....	261
---	------------

Chapter Seven

Promoting and Online Chess	297
---	------------

Appendix 1

Main Tournament Results	301
--------------------------------------	------------

Appendix 2

Amateur Team Tournaments.....	314
--------------------------------------	------------

Index of Openings (ECO)	316
--------------------------------------	------------

Index of Players.....	318
------------------------------	------------

Preface

Chess has always been more than just a game to me; it's a world of rewards and heartaches. I started my chess journey in 1974 at 23 and played continuously until retiring from OTB play in 2017. Over 43 years, I made lasting friendships and rivalries, won countless championships, and led teams to victory in major tournaments. After thumb surgery in June 2024 kept me home for four months, I finally compiled my experiences into a manuscript. My book details the highs and lows of my chess career and balancing it with family life. I was not a professional player; but an educator, teaching High School and College History and Economics. I had papers to grade and children to raise. My goal in both chess and education was to be the best I could be. I earned a Master's degree in Educational Leadership for my job, and worked hard to become a master, then an original Life Master in chess (you might say, I had a double master's degree). I was the Club Champion of the Orlando Chess Club and a five-time champion of the Central Florida Chess Club. How did I do it? Through relentless study and determined play, I forged myself into one of the most feared players in Florida. I also used my experiences to tutor young, talented chess players from Miles Ardaman to Daniel Ludwig. After my playing days were finished, I steered the Central Florida Chess Club as its president to unparalleled success.

Along with the stories of the tournaments I played are 121 completely annotated games. These games are the backbone of my career and contain my thoughts and strategies along with opening secrets I used to defeat my opponents. They show home preparation and creativity and resilience. The reader will get rewarded with games that carried me forward for 43 years.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention some of the players who inspired me over my long career. From the early days of the OCC with Mikel Petersen, Scott Mayer, Frank Redway, and Mark Ryan through the middle years of the CFCC when players like Mike Spedale and Nick Schoonmaker contributed significantly. A

special thank you to my wife, Shaune Storch, who always supported my chess career, and to John Nardandrea and Robert Persante, two of my best friends in the game. Finally, thank you to Wayne Strickland who never stopped badgering me to write this book.

I would also like to acknowledge my editor, Daniel Vanheirzeele and the hard-working people at Thinkers Publishing who believed in me and prepared this book.

Sincerely,
Larry Storch

Introduction

I did not become a chess player all by myself, I had some influential people along the way. I was born in Kew Gardens (Queens), New York on October 13, 1950, a surprise birthday present for my father, Solomon Storch who also shared my birthday. My dad was born in Berlin, Germany in 1913. He, his parents, and younger sister emigrated to the United States in 1921, settling in New York City like thousands of other immigrants of that time. Soon after my uncle, Israel was born. My mother's story was a little more unusual. Her parents, my grandparents were born in the 1890s in what was then Russia but today is Ukraine. My grandfather, Louis Slain, was a paymaster in the Russian army. In 1921 Russia was embroiled in a Civil War. The Bolsheviks had overthrown the Czarist regime in 1917, and the country was in the throes of another revolution when army officers and members of the bourgeoisie, the so called "Whites" revolted against the "Reds". So, the Slains were off to America, but things did not go as planned. My grandmother, Frieda was pregnant, and they only made it as far as Brussels, Belgium before my mother, Majorie Slain was born in April 1921. My grandfather traveled to the United States by ship, followed by my grandmother and mother who joined him several weeks later in New York City.

Many years and a World War later my dad and mom, who by this time had changed her name to Barbara, married. In 1948 my older brother Jeffrey was born and in 1952 my younger brother Robert. The family settled on Long Island in Plainview, New York. One of my earliest memories of chess came when I discovered that my dad had a beautiful Renaissance chess set. The white pieces were ivory, and the black ones were red. Although an avid bridge player, my dad taught me the chess moves. After my parents divorced in 1957, I spent countless weekends at my maternal grandparents' house where it turned out my Russian grandmother was a chess player. We often played chess on Friday nights as she sang Russian and Yiddish songs.

In 1964, when I was fourteen, my mother and two brothers followed her parents to Florida. We spent time in North Miami Beach before settling in Miramar

where my brothers and I went to high school. After high school, I attended the University of Florida in Gainesville. My major was political science, but my real passion was chess. I spent hours at the student union on campus playing random games and even some school tournaments. I made friends with some other chess players and bought my first chess books, Reuben Fine's *Chess the Easy Way* and Fred Reinfeld's *Great Short Games of the Chess Masters*.

After graduating from the University of Florida in 1972 I decided to get my teaching certificate and in 1973 got my first teaching job in the Orange County School district in Orlando, Florida, a career that would span 36 years until I retired in 2009. I was teaching Social Studies at Stonewall Jackson junior high school which today is known as Roberto Clemente Middle School. As was my habit, I kept a small chess set in the corner of my desk when one of my students, David Mayer, came up to me after class. "My brother can beat you at chess", he declared. So, in 1974 I met David's high school brother, Scott Mayer. That meeting changed my life. Scott explained to me that there was an organization called the United States Chess Federation and that it held rated tournaments. Wow, I was hooked. That spring Scott and I traveled to Tampa, and I played in my first tournament. I played in the reserve section and even beat the highest rated player in the section, the future two-time Florida state champion, Nick Paleveda. Eventually I got my first official rating, 1463 and was on my way. In the summer of 1974 Scott and I traveled to New York, and staying at my father's Brooklyn apartment, we played in the U.S. Open held at the Statler Hilton hotel in New York City which raised my rating to 1623.

It was at this time that I joined the Orlando Chess Club where I met the people that would shape my chess life. I focused on the top players of the club, Mark Ryan, Mike Petersen, Mike Dost, Frank Redway, Harold Alford and of course Scott Mayer. I was determined to join their ranks and make my mark in the chess world.

I would like to comment on chess study in the 1970s. Long before chess playing programs, computers and databases, players would have to rely on books and magazines for their references. My study area consisted of several chess sets, dog-eared books, highlighters, pens, notepads and three by five cards which I kept in a metal container. Scott and I would often joke that our openings: he played the Najdorf, I played the Dragon, would be "busted" whenever our monthly issue of *Chess Life* reached our mailbox!

In this book I would like to tell the story of my chess journey where I rose to become the Orlando Chess Champion and later its president. I will detail the creation of the Central Florida Chess Club and how as its president it became the most successful club in Florida. I will detail the wars waged to become Central Florida Chess Club champion and the rivalries that were formed. I will also share stories from the U.S. Amateur tournaments which my team won five times. I will detail the struggle to become a USCF original Life Master while raising a family and teaching full time. Mostly, I will show some of the wonderful games I played, some with very important opening preparation, and give the reader insight into the battles waged over sixty-four squares. I hope you find the games and their stories as stirring as I do.

Larry Storch

Foreword by John Nardandrea

In the world of chess, true friendships maybe forged in the crucible of competition, both as a competitor and as a teammate in chess team competition. Larry Storch is a great friend and chess master. We have played 19 rated games against each other with roughly an even score, but even more impressive is that we played on the same team 23 times over more than 3 decades.

As teammates in the US Amateur Team competition, we had good fortune of winning the southeast regional several times. Larry is the best teammate, always concerned with what is best for the team, with little regard with his individual result. This speaks to his excellent character.

What distinguishes Larry as a player and teacher is his exceptional discipline, hard work, opening preparation and dedication to his craft. He combines excellent study with creative insight. I have always found his thoughts regarding chess to be helpful and impactful.

While many chess books are written by Grandmasters, Larry has accomplished something quite remarkable. As a 2200 and above chess master, he breaks down his chess games into understandable insight that will resonate with players across the rating spectrum. Whether you are a club member looking to improve, or a expert/master, you will find valuable lessons within these pages.

For those about to embark on this journey through Larry's games and insight, you are in excellent hands. Larry has the wisdom of a teacher and player who has for decades, never stopped studying, questioning, and has never lost his enthusiasm for the royal game.

What makes this book great is how it reflects Larry's character. He is patient, precise, and passionate about sharing the beauty of chess. His explanations carry the weight of decades of experience and chess competition. I am proud to

call Larry a friend, and I totally respect his chess ability. Let these pages be your guide, as Larry has been a guide to myself and so many others in the chess community. ENJOY!

John P. Nardandrea M.D.
Chess Master

Foreword by Robert Persante

Florida has been a powerhouse of chess for decades, having some of the highest rated players in the country. In the Florida world of chess, few stand out not only for their decade's long mastery of the game but also for their ability to transcend the boundaries of competition, to transform each tournament into a journey of personal growth, strategy, and art. This book is a testament to that rare breed of player—a chess master who not only seeks to conquer the chessboard but to understand the psychology behind this battle of minds.

I know all this firsthand, having played against him, having been on chess teams with him, having played in large tournaments he organized, and having spent hundreds of hours in informal speed chess, slapping the clock and blitzing out moves, sometimes all night and into dawn. Most importantly, through it all we have retained a wonderful friendship.

For those who have competed in tournaments with NM Lawrence Storch, the memories chronicled in these pages will feel familiar yet infinitely more colorful and profound. The book takes us beyond the surface of master-level chess, offering us a rare glimpse into the mindset of a player who has spent years honing not only his strategic acumen but his ability to communicate it. With each game he plays, there is more than just winning—there is a pursuit of meaning in every move, an exploration of how strategy, positional play, and resilience can merge into something greater than the game itself.

But this is not merely a collection of well-annotated games. It is a story of the extraordinary experiences of a top competitor. Through the lens of each tournament and match, the reader is invited into the dynamics that define the life of a chess master.

NM Lawrence Storch is not just a player; he is a storyteller, a thinker, and a career academic, having been a high school teacher and a college professor. Despite

his committed life as an educator, and one of the most active players in the state, he also found the time to become the best chess coach in Florida—and has many phenomenally successful students to prove it! And as you turn these pages, you will discover not only the moves he made but also the considerations behind them. You will gain insight into how a master reflects on his losses as much as his wins and how each game becomes a part of his development.

In sum, this book is a map of a mind at the highest levels of the craft. It is a work that will inspire chess players in their lifelong quest for mastery. As you read, I encourage you to approach it not just as a chess enthusiast, but as a fellow traveler through this chronical of Florida chess history.

Robert Persante
Chess Master, Life Master, and
Trial Lawyer

Chapter One

Early Development and The Orlando Chess Club

While events in 1974 included the aftermath of the 1973 oil crisis and the resignation of Richard Nixon as President of the U.S. following the Watergate scandal, I was just beginning my chess career. After playing in my first ever rated tournament in Tampa, I participated in as many events as I could. That summer I took Scott Mayer, my 8th grade History class student assistant's brother to New York City and played in the U.S. Open which was held at the Statler Hilton hotel in midtown Manhattan. It was one of the premiere chess events held each year and this one was no different. The winners were GMs Vlastimil Hort and Pal Benko. I finished with a respectable six points out of twelve games.

In 1975 I returned to New York City to play in the World Open. I won my first three games including a first-round win against WIM Dolly Teasley (okay, it was a forfeit win when she didn't show up for the game). I finished 6-3 in that tournament which propelled my rating up into the 1700s. I played in my first State Championship which was held in Miami, and I continued to play in local tournaments as well all the while raising my rating even more and even winning a few dollars.

In the 1970s, the Orlando Chess Club was a strong club which met on Wednesday and Friday nights as well as Sunday afternoons at an Orlando city facility. The top players were all rated 1900s and 2000s which when you calculate for rating inflation were masters and experts. Every year the club held its most prestigious event which it called the City Championship. In 1975 I played in my first one and

finished near the bottom of the cross table. Mark Ryan and Scott Mayer tied for first and played a match to determine a winner. After nine games, Ryan emerged victorious 3-1 with five draws. I kept studying as my library grew; books like Tartakower and DuMont's *500 Master Games* and assorted Chess Digest books were instrumental in my development.

In the summer of 1976, already elected club President, I took a big step in my desire to become a top player at the Orlando Chess Club. The club held a series of round robin events, and I played in almost all of them. In Round Robin number 3 I was the lowest rated player rated 1708 facing Mayer, Petersen, Ryan and Mike Dost, all experts and A-players. I won twice and drew twice to finish clear first, beating Ryan for the first time and defeating Dost. In my game with Mark, I learned a valuable lesson that would stick with me throughout my career. I achieved a winning position on move 25, but his grisly defense caused me to play 56 exhausting moves for the win. Never again would I take a win for granted and that trait added to my eventual success.

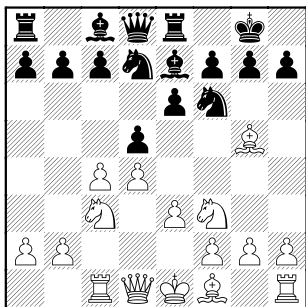
Storch Larry (1705) - Ryan Mark (1985)

Queen's Gambit Declined D63

OCC RR #3 (3), 1976

This was my first win against four-time Orlando City Champion, Mark Ryan.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗e7 4.♗f3 ♘f6
5.♗g5 ♗bd7 6.e3 o-o 7.♖c1 ♕e8



Mark was one of the toughest players

in Florida but was not known as a theoretician. He preferred off-beat lines or old lines to modern theory.

8.♗d3 c5 9.cxd5 exd5 10.o-o c4

Mark also was attracted to closed positions depriving opponents of counterplay.

11.♗b1 a6 12.♖e1 b5 13.e4?!

13.♗e5 ♗b7 14.f4 with a Pillsbury type of attack.

13...dxe4 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♗xe4 ♗b7
16.♗e5 ♗xe4 17.♗xe4 ♗xe4 18.♖xe4
♗d5 19.♖f3 ♗b4 20.♖f1 ♖ad8 21.♖e2!