

OBITUARY – Sydney (Syd) Michael Kalinsky 1931 – 2021 DOB 30.8.1931

It is sad to report the passing of Syd Kalinsky, a major force in Essex and London chess, on 7th April 2021 after a short bout of ill health.

Syd was born into a poor East End Jewish family and, as his father was unable to work, due to TB, he had to leave school at the age of 14 to support the family. His first job in a sweat shop was short lived as Syd had little co-ordination and tailoring was not part of his repertoire. A stint at Stanley Gibbons, the postage stamp collectors' shop, followed but he had to leave when he also caught TB, a killer disease at the time. His luck was in as he became one of the first people to benefit from a new experimental course of treatment at a sanatorium in Switzerland, funded by the recently formed NHS.

He spent his time there playing correspondence chess and taking a correspondence course to become a qualified accountant. When he passed his final exams, the Board of the accountancy body at first refused to award the qualification as he held no passes in what is now the GCSE, a requirement at the time. However, the Secretary of the Institute persuaded the Board otherwise, as Syd had obtained the highest marks in the country for those accountancy exams.

He joined a firm in the West End, became a partner, and in time became the Senior Partner of London-based King & King.

Syd contacted me in January 1968 and offered me employment as he knew I was working as an agency accountant. However I soon discovered that his interest in me was more to do with my chess results with the Islington and North London Chess Club (a very strong club at that time). King & King had a team in the London Commercial Chess League and were soon to have their annual crunch match against IBM. The team needed beefing up! Over the years Syd employed many strong chess players in the firm including Ken and Ron Harman, Philip Rossiter, Paul Hutchison, Tim Wickens, Neal Cutler, Jim Howson and Richard O'Brien. Luckily for the other teams in the League, they did not all play at the same time. There was also a strong bridge team for a while consisting of staff and clients which won a national rubber bridge competition.

Syd was a regular Essex County player and a member of a very strong East Ham Chess Club in the London League. Members included Dr. Stefan Fazekas and Bob Wade – both IMs and British Champions in their time along with Peter Clarke, a stalwart of the English team. This eventually became the Cavendish Chess Club, named after the King & King office near Cavendish Square. Syd was President and a regular London League player, until Covid-19 stopped over-the-board chess. Cavendish won the London Chess League twice in the 1970s. Syd was also President of the venerable Ilford Chess Club for which he played in the Essex Leagues. Syd was also a prolific correspondence player. His highest grade was 183 in 1994.

I should also mention his running. He actually survived three bouts of TB during his lifetime with damage to his lungs. His solution was to very gradually build up his stamina for running which culminated in participation in a dozen London Marathons, all completed, and the raising of tens of thousands of pounds for the children's charity Dreams Come True.

He certainly made his mark on Essex and London chess and I leave you with a vision of Syd playing for Cavendish at the Essex team lightning tournament with pieces flying, the chess clock being banged, tea spilled and shouts of J'adoube reverberating around the hall.

He leaves a devoted wife Sheila, four children and many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Danny Wright 12.4.2021