

Eulogy for Graham Solomon

(18/07/1971 – 16/11/2017)

– philosopher and chess player –

by Maxwell Solomon

*“Only in the realm of praise may Grief
walk, nymph of the spring our tears have fed,”*

– Rilke

If you know how to weep, weep for Graham Solomon, a loving son to our mother Rose Solomon, a loving brother, a loving uncle, a loving cousin, and a loving friend.

*“All night long, we spoke
Of mysteries, solved and unsolved
Of the moon and stars –
Still lost were we.
And then it came ...*

An echo of nothingness.

*We locked in,
Embraced;
And parted,
United.”*

[A reading of the poem **United** dedicated to Graham Solomon,
from the poetry book **Loose Sketchings** (2017)]

Graham Solomon was a beautiful person, a beautiful soul. A free soul, he soared with eagles. He knew himself. He cherished his freedom. He broke with conventions, customs and traditions. He lived out his convictions. Of course, all that came at a price – which price he readily paid! Though he could have aimed and reached for the highest awards and prizes, it seems he was more interested in exploring the depths of his freedom. Graham was a beautiful soul. From the messages which streamed in on Facebook and Whatsapp friends and family paid tribute to him, describing Graham as follows:

*“A true gentleman”, “a man of faith”, “a genius”, “such a good person”
“it was like losing a brother”, “warm hearted”, “an awesome guy”,
“kind”, “an extraordinary personality and a phenomenal friend”, “an
amazing soul”, “lucky to be touched by his special magic”, “a wonderful
chess brother”, “no words to describe him”, “lucky to have a lovely
uncle”, and “struck by his quiet strength and humility”.*



Graham Solomon with his brother Maxwell

Graham Solomon was a deep thinker, a philosopher *par excellence*. He had profound insight into the complex and deep questions the great philosophers grappled with. From Socrates and Plato to Hegel and Kant, from Schopenhauer and Nietzsche to modern western philosophy, and the whole gamut of eastern

philosophy, Graham's philosophical depth ranged freely. With his clarity of thought and insight he unlocked secrets. In discussions and talks with him (which I always found enriching) I never felt that I was speaking to a person who was proud of his vast knowledge. Looking back, I should add that he had a special knack of reducing complex issues and questions down to the simplest.



... a thoughtful moment

Graham Solomon was a wonderful chess player. He was particularly attracted to the beauty of the game rather than pursuing top results and titles. A longstanding top South African chess player, he mainly played in team events rather than individual tournaments. He had won the prestigious WP League (Premier Division) title on five previous occasions with Mitchells Plain Chess Club, and most recently in October 2017 with MRL Chess Club. (The MRL Chess Club was founded by his great friend, Lourenzo van Niekerk, with whose family Graham shared a special affinity.) Whenever I visited him at home we would end up playing blitz chess. He always seemed to have the upper hand, and invariably he came out on top. I could not understand this! He was an outstanding coach having coached WP junior chess players as well as senior chess players from UWC Chess Club, MRL Chess Club and Mitchells Plain Chess

Club. Of course, he also had a hand in coaching South Africa's first and only grandmaster, GM Kenny Solomon.



Graham Solomon in his element, with the chessboard

If they should ask you one day who Graham Solomon was, say he was a wonderful chess player.

Should they ask you who Graham Solomon was, say he was a deep thinker, a philosopher *par excellence*.

Should they ever ask who Graham Solomon was, tell them that he was a beautiful soul.

Postscript:

- *This Eulogy was delivered at Graham Solomon's funeral on 25 November 2017.*
- *Graham Solomon was posthumously awarded the ChessWP Lifetime Achievement Award as well as the ChessWP Roll of Honour Award at the Chess Western Province Awards Ceremony on 5 December 2017.*



Members of MRL Chess Club - 2016 WP Team Blitz Champions



Graham with his siblings