



FOR MARTY O'MALLEY

by Pedro Garcia

Marty O'Malley was determined to die at Bailey Park, the same place that had given him sustenance for years and years. When he woke that fateful morning (and he was glad he did wake up) he carried his unwilling body to the handball courts, at a slow gait, assisting himself by holding on to his Toyota, and drove the three blocks from his apartment, where he lived alone.

He had been hospitalized on and off weeks before, his old heart fighting him daily, too tired to return for another day of life despite Marty's protestations to the contrary. The battle waged between his desire and his body was leaning favorably to the body, and like an aging pugilist, past his prime and fading to oblivion, he wanted one more fight, one more opportunity to return to the proverbial ring. Harry from Bailey, another aging prizefighter mounting a Sisyphean battle, told me last week that no matter how old you get, no matter what you've accomplished out of life – kids, jobs, family, the joys, sadness, and elation of relationships – no matter how much life has given or taken from you, that you always want one more day, one more opportunity to rise, to open your eyes, to let your spirit absorb the greatness and wonder of consciousness.

On that inevitable morning, Marty's body was flailing away at him. He struggled to his car, probably taking with him new gloves and handballs recently delivered from the USHA that he stored in his trunk to provide to the other handball players who needed them, a thoughtful and voluntary gesture he generously gave to Bailey Park for as long as I can remember. He may have watched a handball video the night before, the tape still in the VCR. Or maybe he had a conversation with friends from the old country, talking about the new Irish players, like Paul Brady, whom he would bring to the park and would set up games for against the city's best players. When Satish won the Bailey Park Classic two years ago, Marty awarded him a Bailey Park T-shirt he had designed and made for the many handball tournaments he himself had organized for many years.

The morning that he left us, Marty parked his car across the street from Bailey, and he carried, with some difficulty, a folding chair that he placed under the large oak tree next to the A court. We were glad to see him there, as we had missed his presence, his watchful vigilance on the handball players, his genial banter with the other old-timers who themselves brought folding chairs under the large oak tree.

Marty's skin was drained of color, his frailty exposed by the bright and radiant sun on that perfect handball morning, the skies azure and cloudless, summer bursting in resplendent beauty. Marty sat and shook hands with everyone, answering questions about his health, assuring friends of his vitality, while his body was calling for an end.

Later that day, he moved his chair onto the middle handball court, a familiar position taken by the old-timers when the B court was empty and they wanted to be energized by the magnificent sun, the orb that sustains life and has done so for 5 billion years. Marty allowed the sun to radiate on him, feeling the pulsing energy on his face and on his arms, and in the middle of Bailey Park, among his comrades and the place that nourished his life for years and years, in a magical sacrifice, he died.

Afterwards, his collection of handball gloves and balls were sold and the profits were given to assist handball. A pot of flowers was laid under the large oak tree, and for many weeks the flowers lasted, wilting only slightly, and everyone commented on its longevity, as if Marty's spirit reinigorated the flowers in some cosmic metaphysical reincarnation.

I shook Marty's hands that morning, but there were things I never told him, and now that he's not here, I must say these words, and I believe that the other players would like to say them as well, and it is in the form of a letter, and it goes like this:

Dear Marty,

It takes a certain kind of person to be a handball player. You have to be resilient to arguments, curses, physical altercations, mental abuse, social isolation, family fights, all because you share a passion for handball, a microcosm of life itself. You have to engage in social camaraderie with others daily, for years and years, and this camaraderie becomes the daily ritual of not only life, but of love. Oh, we act like tough men, alpha individuals believing we are in control of life, but we are really boys, children playing a game, one that lasts forever.

By coming here and giving yourself that day, Marty, I didn't comprehend what you were telling me. But now I know.

What you were saying was that you loved us, probably more than anything else in this universe, and that love infected you to such a point that you were going to die in the place where your love was greatest.

What is wrong with us men? What is it that causes a man to withhold his emotions in some masculine bravura when what he really wants to share is the joy that this stupid game can bring? Why is it that now I write these words to stop my heart from failing?

I want to thank you Marty, for everything you've ever done for us, for treating the game with dignity and respect, for coming here day after day, for promoting handball at Bailey Park, and for giving your life so that Bailey may continue.

We told you many things that last day that your physical presence on Earth was here, but what we should have told you was that we loved you, Marty, and we miss you, and it hurts not to have you here.

So on this special day, in a small gesture of gratefulness and appreciation, in honor of a great and caring man, Bailey Park has changed its tournament name to the Marty O'Malley classic.

Peace be with you Marty. We love you. by Pedro Garcia



MARTY O' MALLEY CLASSIC (FORMER PEDRO GARCIA CLASSIC)

MEN'S OPEN SINGLES CHAMPION



Year	Champion	Runner-Up	Semifinalist	Semifinalist
Sept. 25, 2004	Cesar Sala	Satish Jagnandan	Raul Retian	Emmanuel Fuentes
July 19, 2003	Satish Jagnandan	Kendell Lewis	Eddie Maisonet	Robert "Iceman" Sostre
July 21, 2003	Satish Jagnandan	Kendell Lewis	Willie Polanco	Robert "Iceman" Sostre
2001	Satish Jagnandan	Kendell Lewis	Joe Kaplan	Eddie Maisonet
2000	Cesar Sala			
1999				
1998				
1997				