

## It Would Have Been The 50th Birthday For A Great New Yorker

Written by George Kimball

Wednesday, 17 February 2010 18:00

---

BROOKLYN, N.Y. --- Ten months after his passing, Artie Curry's friends gathered to celebrate what would have been his 50th birthday Thursday on the Brooklyn campus of St. Francis College, which bills itself as "the small college of big dreams." That the event was held on the fourth-floor basketball court at the Genovesi Center, where St. Francis plays its home game, was somewhat fitting, since for the last twenty years of his life Artie played twice a week in a pickup game known more for its egalitarian approach than its skill level.

HBO's Jim Lampley served as master of ceremonies, and there were boxing luminaries both on the dais and interspersed through the audience, but the birthday party guests also included a couple hundred college kids who'd never met Artie Curry and wouldn't have known him from Adam. They did, on the other hand, know Roy Jones Jr., and by the time the former light-heavyweight champion had concluded his own heartfelt reminiscence of his departed friend, they must have felt like they had known him too.

His name will become more and more familiar to the St. Francis students in the future. The establishment of the Arthur Curry Scholarship was announced on Thursday. Over \$150,000 has already been committed to endow the scholarship, and the first recipient, Venecia Hoyte, a sprinter on the St. Francis track team, was announced in conjunction with the day's festivities.

There was a proclamation from New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, describing the occasion as "an important opportunity to pay tribute to this great New Yorker, and "noting that "Mr. Curry formed strong bonds with boxers and earned the trust of athletes and HBO execs alike."

You could almost hear Artie exclaiming "Great New Yorker? Me?"

Throughout his lifetime Artie, with his easygoing yet earnest manner and his infectious smile, evinced a remarkable ability to light up a room just by walking into it. On Thursday's occasion his friends learned that that gift had not gone to the grave with him. There were, inevitably, a few tears as his memory was evoked. But, mostly, there were smiles.

Lampley, Roy Jones, boxing writer Tom Hauser, and former HBO sports president Seth Abraham all spoke, as did several college administrators and Artie's adoptive mother Lise Curry, who more than three decades ago opened her home and her heart to a rootless 17 year-old who was about to be cut loose by the system after spending most of his life kicking around through foster care.

Through an evolutionary process Artie had basically carved out his own job description, which essentially consisted of being the network's liaison between the suits in the offices, its on-air talent, and its roster of boxers. There had been some, like Jones, who at various times had fit into both of the latter two categories.

Another fitting that description was former two-time heavyweight champion George Foreman,

## It Would Have Been The 50th Birthday For A Great New Yorker

Written by George Kimball

Wednesday, 17 February 2010 18:00

---

who sent along his own message to the birthday celebrants and the college students: "Artie," wrote Foreman, "is what religion is all about. He was a walking Sunday School lesson. He treated people the way he wanted to be treated -- The Golden Rule. And the more you spoke with Artie, the more depth you found. He was very important to me, and I'm not just saying that because he's gone. Artie was one of my heroes."

"Artie was always selfless, no matter what might have been going on in his own life," said Abraham, who recalled that when he blew out a his knee in one of those geriatric basketball games a dozen years ago, Artie was not only a daily visitor to his hospital room, but a constant workout companion in the post-surgical rehab process.

When eventually came the day that Abraham was ready to test the knee under came conditions, he recalled, just before tip-off Artie pulled him aside.

"Light 'em up," the former mailroom clerk whispered to the company president. "I won't really guard you. I'll just be pretending."

"I guess you'd have to play basketball yourself," said Abraham, "to understand what it took for him to do that."

\* \* \* \*

For information on the Arthur Curry Scholarship Fund write to St. Francis College Office of Development and Alumni Affairs, 180 Remsen Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201, Phone (718) 489-5361, or Email [development@stfranciscollege.edu](mailto:development@stfranciscollege.edu)